



Dr. Anandibai Joshi (Joshee)

(March 31, 1865- February 26, 1887) first Indian woman to earn a medical degree from the United States.

Anandibai Joshi was born in the town of Kalyan in the Bombay Presidency of British India on March 31, 1865. Her given name was Yamuna. She was raised in a Marathi [Chitpavan Brahmin](#) family. As was the culture of that time and due to pressure from her mother, she was married at the age of 9 to a 30-year-old widower named Gopalrao Joshi who worked as a postal clerk.

After the wedding, he renamed her Anandibai. At the age of 14 she gave birth to a boy, who did not live past 10 days due to lack of medical care since the only local doctor was male and Christian, the couple realized the dearth of qualified native doctors. The loss of her son sparked an interest to study medicine to prevent the type of tragedy she endured. The type of medical care to prevent similar tragedies was much less common in her day, and Joshi felt that this was the area in which she could contribute.



Her husband was progressive in his thinking during a time where Indian societal norms had no education for women. While living in Calcutta, Gopalrao helped her learn Sanskrit and English; he also tutored her in math and encouraged her to pursue her interest in studying medicine. He believed that she should study medicine so much that he wrote a letter in 1880 to Royal Wilder, a well-known American missionary, stating her interest to study medicine in the United States and inquiring if there was a suitable post for her. His community in India, Gopalrao wrote, had condemned his idea of social reform, and opposed his wife's education on the grounds that it went against normative gender roles in Indian society. Gopalrao wanted the letter to facilitate an arrangement for his fourteen-year-old wife to study medicine in the United States, and he explicitly asked for assistance in doing so. The missionaries were willing to help only if she converted to Christianity, which was not acceptable to her. This letter was published in the Christian journal: "The Missionary Review of the World."

A reader of the journal, Theodocia Carpenter of Roselle New Jersey was impressed by both Anandibai's desire to study medicine and Gopalrao's support of his wife, she wrote to Anandubai and they became close friends referring to each other "aunt" and "niece." During this time, another physician couple named the Thorborns suggested that she apply to the Women's



Medical College of Pennsylvania. This was not perceived well by the Hindus who censured her immensely. The Christians supported her and wanted her to convert to Christianity.

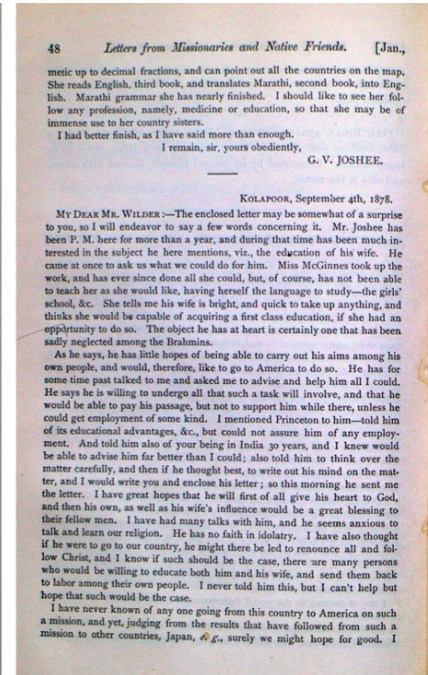
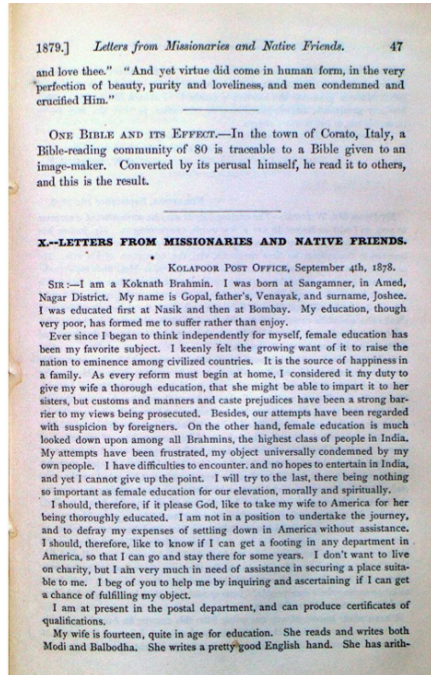
Before leaving India, Joshi gave a public speech in February 1883 in the eastern town of Serampore where Gopalrao was posted. The aim of the speech was to state her reasons for the journey to the United States and address the questions and opposition she had received. She spoke about the unfriendly states and stones thrown at her for defying social norms, and she promised to face difficulties with greater courage.

Regarding people's suspicions of her faith, she pledged to leave as a Hindu, and to return as a Hindu. To those just wondering why she would even take such a dangerous trip to an unfamiliar country, she reaffirmed the critical need for women in India to have access to medical care from Indian women. Her speech was well received, and financial contributions started pouring in from all over India.

Anandibai arrived in the United States in June of 1883 and Theodocia received her. Anandibai wrote to Women's Medical College which is now known as Drexel University College of Medicine asking to be admitted to their medical program which was the second women's medical program in the world. Rachel Bodley, dean of the college enrolled her, and she started her medical training at the age of 19.

On March 11, 1886, she graduated with her MD and her thesis topic "Obstetrics among Aryan Hindus." On her graduation, Queen Victoria sent her a congratulatory message. Word of her achievement soon reached India, where she received a job offer not long after graduation. The government of the princely state of Kohlapur, which is part of the modern-day state of Maharashtra, wanted to appoint her "Lady Doctor of Kohlapur" in charge of the female ward at the Albert Edward Hospital.

Her ship arrived in India in November 1886, but by this time, she was seriously ill, she had contracted tuberculosis. After a prolonged illness, she passed away on February 26, 1887, only one month before her 22nd birthday. Her ashes were sent to Theodocia Carpenter, who buried them in a family cemetery in Poughkeepsie, New York.





Dr. Joshi accomplished a great deal in a short yet eventful life. She persevered to study medicine in two cultures (Indian and American), which, at the time, even discouraged teaching women to read. She journeyed far from home and everything familiar for the sake of education and with a desire to use her medical knowledge for the welfare of others. And she inspired future generations to do the same.



Anandibai Joshee graduated from Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania (WMCP) in 1886. Seen here with [Kei Okami](#) (center) and [Sabat Islambooly](#) (right). All three completed their medical studies and each of them was among the first women from their respective countries to obtain a degree in Western medicine.

Learn more here:

<https://blogs.loc.gov/international-collections/2020/03/anandibai-joshee-the-first-indian-woman-to-earn-a-medical-degree-in-the-united-states/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anandi_Gopal_Joshi

<https://www.thequint.com/news/india/why-a-crater-on-venus-is-named-after-indias-dr-anandi-gopal-joshi#read-more>



<https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/google-doodle-google-celebrates-anandi-gopalrao-joshis-153rd-birthday-with-a-doodle-1830939>