



Arogyakalpadruma: The Essence Of Traditional Paediatrics In Kerala

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Abstract: Ayurveda , the ancient Indian bio science is a great scientific heritage of the nation. Kaumarabhrthya or Balachikitsa which includes treatment from pre pregnancy to childhood is the ancient Indian pediatrics that forms one of the eight limbs of Ayurveda.some traditional physicians of Kerala were having high expertise and knowledge in Balacikitsa, they have contributed much to this field . Those are examined and studied by Kaikkulangara Ramavarrier and has written Arogya kalpadruma in Sanskrit language with Malayalam commentary. The author paid more attention to the treatments and not for the theories probably because the theories were already revealed by Indian Medical classical authers. The word Bala used to denote children up to 16 years of age. KRV, the author of Arogya kalpadruma divides them into 11 groups and he prescribes the treatment according to this divisions.

This paper tries to analyze the tradition of child health care system of Kerala as depicted in Arogyakalpadruma.

Index Terms - Child health care, Kaumarabhrthya, Balachikitsa Tradition, Arogyakalpadruma.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda the ancient Indian bio science is a great scientific heritage of the nation. Propounders of Ayurveda have well designed the system of medical science by incorporating the elements from the ancient Indian texts such as Vedas Puranas and Ithihasas. Kaumarabhrthya or Balacikitsa which includes treatments from Pre- pregnancy to childhood is the ancient Indian Paediatrics that forms one of the eight limbs of Ayurveda. Indian classical Ayurvedic texts such as: Caraka Samhita, Susruta Samhita, Ashtangahridaya and Kasyapasamhita discuss child health care in clear and deailed terms. Eventhough, we come across the views of Caraka, Susruta, Vagbhata and Kasyapa in their context we can understand their difference in views and applications.

History of Kaumarabhrthya in Kerala.

The Ayurvedic treatments do not belong to any particular community or religion in Kerala. Some oldest Namboodiri families have under taken Ayurvedic treatments was their family duty i.e. Ashtangavaidyas or Ashtavaidyas. Not only brahmins, but also the persons who have got knowledge of Sanskrit had practical Ayurveda.

Kerala has made remarkable contributions to the field of paediatrics Arogyakalpadruma of Kaikkulangara Ramavarrier is considered to be the Bible of traditional paediatrics of Kerala. Some traditional Physicians of Kerala were having high expertise and knowledge in Balacikitsa. They have contributed much to this field. Those are examined and studied by KRV and has written Arogyakalpadruma in Sanskrit language with Malayalam commentary. The author paid more attention to the treatments and not for the theories probably because the theories were already revealed by Indian classical medical authors.

Author

KRV was born in Katangot village in Thalapilli Taluk, which is now situated in Thrissur district. His house Kailkkulangara Kizhakkevariyaam was situated near by Kaikkullagara Devi temple near Katangot in Thrissur district.. He was born in 1832 in Swathi star and lived up to 1896. Kaithkkott Bhattathiri, father of KRV was a scholar and a disciplinarian. Kaikkulangara Kizhakke Variyath Narayani Varasyar was his mother. Even as a child KRV showed astonishing brilliance and great talents. KRV has enlightened his knowledge not only in practical field. He had written two commentaries on Ashtangahridaya namely Bhavaprakasa and Sararthadarpana.

Mod of presentation

The method of presentation of this work is in a unique manner. In the first chapter the author states that the treatments included in Arogyakalpadruma are prescribed by the aged physicians and the work is decided to the youngsters in the field of traditional paediatrics. Indian medical text i.e, Carakasamhita, SushrutaSamhiita and Kashyapa Samhita were written in dialogue form while AKD is presented in statement model. Arogyakalpadruma bears treatment methods and patterns that are highly suitable to keralites. Keralites give importance to mantra along with medicine. In Some part of Arogyakalpadruma KRV says the required details of mantras are available in mantrakanta.

Content of the work.

The text divided into 40 chapters. The word Bala is used to denote children up to sixteen years of age. KRV divides them into 11 groups. They are, JataMatra (new born), Pakshatita (after 15 days), Atipakshati (one month), Trimasika (3 months), Shan masika (6 months), Ekabda (1 year old), Tryabda (Three year old), panchayana (5 year old), Ashtabda (8 years old), dashabdhha (10 years old) and Dasabdhha (12 years old) and he prescribes the treatments for child according to their 11 age group.

The kamarabhrithya lays an idealistic view about the procreation of the human progeny. It is known that human species has a natural urge for procreation. An ideal indulgence between the couples is recommended in the work. Married life is conceived chiefly for the procreation of healthy progeny and not for mere enjoyment in life. According to Kaumarabhrithya child health care should begin from the pre-pregnancy period. So it can be basically divided into the following three stages:

1. Pre-natal care
2. Natal care
3. Post natal care.

Pre-natal care

Ancient scholars emphasize that children should not be produced accidentally but by conscious effort. Ayurvedic scholars have suggested certain regulations for men and women desiring progeny comprising of the cleansing of the system, dietary schedules, spiritual practices and adherence to celibacy depending on one's habit. These are recommended as part of therapeutics, so that the psychological state of the mother should be perfect before and after conception until the birth of the child. According to Ayurvedic scholars the age, gotra or clan, the purity of sukra and arthava (sperm and ovum), the physical and psychological condition of parents etc. have an important role in the production of a good progeny.

Parent's age

Age of parents is an essential factor for a healthy progeny. Ancient scholars have formulated age bars for humans based on their observation. Vedas have mentioned the natural age of women for marriage and their physical and psychological relevance of it.

KRV has also mentioned the suitable age for men and women to begin sexual life. He prescribes the age of man to be twenty and woman to be at least sixteen for get married. Sexual indulgence above and below the said period would not bring desired effect. Otherwise, there are more chances for the progeny to become an unhealthy child or patient.

All scholars have given great importance to the age factor for a healthy progeny. Biologically a person (Mother or Father) can produce a healthy progeny, only after attaining the sexual maturity. According to the scholars, the marriageable age and the appropriate age for conception is after sixteen. Nowadays also early marriage practice is prevalent in some parts of Kerala and in other parts of India. But the Government of India has prohibited child marriage since 1978.

Healthy sperm and Ovum

Various Ayurvedic scholars of the ancient period have described the abnormalities of sperm and ovum as the causes of an unhealthy child. Caraka has vividly explained the importance of planning for a good progeny. When there is cohabitation of a man having undamaged sperm and a woman having an undamaged genital tract, ovum and uterus after the menstruation and consequently when the conscious

(self) impelled by mind descends in to the zygote situated in the uterus, the embryo is formed. Susruta has further elaborated this subject. According to Susruta, conception of baby under ideal conditions is comparable to that of a healthy plant. A combination of four factors i.e. proper season (Ritu) good soil (kshetra) vigorous seeds (bija from semen and ovum) and nutrients (ambu) are highly essential. According to KRV a wise physician is one who advises proper care for the menstruation of girls who have completed their twelfth year. It can also be done in the 13th or 15th year. It is for preventing any complication occurring to the menstruation cycle. If it is not done in the above said years, it can also be done when the menstrual problems begin. Proper care for boys should be done at the age of sixteen, for preventing any afflictions of sperm. This can also be done at the age of eighteen or twenty.

Natal Care

Child health care is of supreme significance. Bringing up a child in a healthy manner is a hazardous task. Proper natal care is essential, as a society would be benefitted only by the birth of a healthy child who can be brought up as an ideal citizen.

AKD mentions the measures to protect the foetus in detail. He prescribes that the expectant mother should take milk boiled with different medicaments in every month or she may use the milk processed with balj in all months to protect the foetus.

POST- NATAL PERIOD

There are several significant process of treatment that need to be done scientifically just after the birth of the baby. If these things are not performed without meticulous accuracy and utmost sense of hygiene, it may lead to disastrous consequences in the later growth of the child.

Care of the New born

The care of newborn includes cleaning, separating of umbilical cord, feeding, bathing, clothing, maintenance of the body temperature and protection from infections.

According to KRV after delivery, the newborn has thin mucus like coating all over the body. It can be cleaned with a mixture of saindhava salt powder [rock salt] and butter. After three minutes it can be removed from the body with the help of a coconut leaf. Susruta also indicates that the body of new born should be cleaned using saindhava lavana, a (rock salt) Vagbhata too mentions that the body of newborn should be cleaned with saindhava salt and ghee.

Separation of the infant by cutting the umbilical cord

Cutting the umbilical cord for removal of the placenta from the body of the new born is a process to be done very carefully and seriously as it's a mile-stone in the life of the child. Improper and careless cutting of cord may cause several complications. During intra-uterine life, the foetus collects its nutrition from other through umbilical cord. After birth of a child, the umbilical cord must be tied first and cut after with a sharp edged knife at a distance of four fingers from the umbilicus only on complete recovery of the child from fatigue associated with deliver. The other end of the thread so tied should be loosely placed around the neck. The kushta oil has to be sprinkled on the navel.

The Indian classical texts have different opinions in the case of measurement and mode of cutting the umbilical cord.

Cutting material and preventive care

The cutting material has an important role in this procedure. The cutting instrument should be sharp edged and it should be free from corpuscles. KRV did not give any specific clarification about the instrument. But he advises to apply the kushta medicated oil in the umbilical region as a preventive measure. But at the same time the Indian classical authors have elaborately described it. Caraka prescribed that the cutting instrument should be a sharp edged knife [ardha- dharasastra] made of gold, silver or iron. *Ashtangasangraha* prescribes the use of sharp knife. Traditional midwives of Kerala say that they use sterilized sharp edged knife or blade and turmeric baked in wood coal is powdered and tied in cloth is used to cover the umbilical region. The tribals of Kerala (Adimali in Iduki, Ranni in Patthanamthita the southern districts of Kerala) have been following ancient methods. The tribal midwives have been using sharp edged bamboo pieces to cut the umbilical cord. Now a days IMCH (Institute of Maternity and Child Health, Calicut) has started a training programme for the aboriginals to make them aware of the use of scissors in this field.

Bathing

Bath gives fresh energy and cleanliness. After the cutting of umbilical cord the new born baby should be bathed in medicated water. KRV advised to use the luke warm decoction of the bark of Ksheeravriksha or the luke warm decoction of sandal etc. or the water heated by dipping the hot rod made of gold or silver.

Feeding

After the bath, the newborn is given the powder of gold and dhatri mixed with honey and ghee internally. Otherwise the drugs trayanti, ugra, abhaya, tarkshya and gold are powdered well and added with honey and ghee are given

After 3-4 days of birth dhamanias (milk carrying channels) of the woman open and secretion of milk starts. So Ayurveda physicians have prescribed different types of feeding schedule. Honey mixed with ghee and durva is given to the new born baby accompanied by sacred mantras. On first day, this will be given three times. The next day a medicine prepared by mixing the juice of lakshmana with the kalka of the drug lakshmana added with honey is given three times. From the next day onwards the baby is given ghee till the breast feeding begins. KRV further prescribes a small quantity of butter which fits the inner palm of a baby to be provided to the new born till the beginning of breast feeding.

Clothes and Bed

Cleanliness will help the infant from several diseases. The body of mother also to be kept clean always. Ayurvedic scholars have emphasized that the beds, bed sheets and clothes used for children must be light and soft. KRV says the bed and clothes should be changed on the eleventh day of birth.

Lactating mother (Dhatri)

In India child care practices in the traditional societies have been handed down through generations with each generation and family introducing minor changes, appropriate to their current cultural contexts. However, we can understand that our ancestors having some ideas and following several theories. In the case of childcare practice our ancestors depict the importance of lactating mother (dhatri) and their qualities also.

Dhatri or upamata means a female caretaker of a child. Ayurvedic scholars gave importance to the care dhatri also. If the dhatri has any physical or mental problem, it would affect the child quickly. Our pura, as also have stories about dhatries. Yasoda, the foster mother of Krishna is very famous in stories. Foster mother has an important role in our tradition. No one can forget the loving foster mother of Krishna. Yasoda shows us how to care a child with love.

Ancient scholars have given much importance to mother's milk, as it was considered very useful and nutritious and the right of a child. However, in the absence of mother's milk, a woman was arranged to breastfeed the child.

KRV suggests that in the absence of mother's milk, it is good to employ two lactating mothers to feed the child. He mentions the minimum qualities of foster mother. She should not be physically or mentally challenged, must be devoid of any diseases, middle aged, having children, of the same cast of child's mother and should have kept brahmacharya. KRV points out how the care of foster mother should be done and prescribes several types of medicaments to increase the breast milk. He concentrates more on the mental stage of the foster mother because, in the case of psychological problems in foster mother, it directly or indirectly affects the child. So he suggests in case the breast milk secretion diminishes due to grief, necessary steps for making the mother happy, have to be adopted. The food prepared with Shashtika rice added with ghee is good to increase the breast milk.

It is notable that KRV and Vagbhata have similar opinion regarding the appointment of two lactating mothers. But no other scholars accept this because it may cause the occurrence of various diseases. The concept of appointment of dhatri in the absence of mother's milk, which prevailed in ancient India, is something unique. The system prevailed in Egypt also. There, use of a lactating mother (dhatri) for infant feeding began first in the Ptolemaic period (fourth century BC), through Greek influence.

Some common disorders of children

In Arogyakalpadruma describes almost 340 diseases, their symptoms, sub divisions of some diseases and their treatments. In ancient Kerala, balavisarpa was a very common disease among children. This is often misunderstood as a skin problem in other systems of medicine. According to traditional Ayurvedic scholars of Kerala approaches, Karappan is not only a dermatological problem but also it includes all types of diseases, which affect the immune system of the body. *Arogyakalapadruma* defines as many as 51 kinds of Visarpas (Erysipelas)

According to KRV some scholars divide the disease epilepsy into 18 types.

KRV considers fever as the king among diseases.

KRV specified almost twelve types of fever and their treatments.

Kaumarabhrtya, one of the eight branches of Ayurveda, is the conventional Indian science of Ayurvedic paediatrics. Ancient Indian classical Sanskrit texts in Ayurveda have dealt with all aspects of child health care in a balanced and sober manner. The work attempts a thorough study of Arogyakalpadruma is thus the traditional bible of Kerala paediatrics, which was codified according to the prevailing customs, and practices

of Kerala. It also includes the various medical practices, which were referred in the classic texts of ancient India. *AKD* gives more attention to treatments. The author has not given more description about the child related rituals and not discusses the philosophical matters like classical texts. Vallathol Narayana Menon has poetically translated *Arogyakalpadruma* in to Malayalam.

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