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# Contribution of *Ashtanga Hridaya* in the field of *Kaumarbhritya*

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## ABSTRACT

*Vagbhata* is one of the three classic writers of *Ayurveda*, along with *Charaka* and *Sushruta*. It has attracted the attention of medical experts due to large number of commentaries by scholars of *Ayurveda* and translation into other languages. *Kaumarbhritya* is one of the eight branches of *Ayurveda* which presently deals with care of infants and children, their diseases and treatment. Though main text of this branch is considered to be *Kashyapa Samhita* which is incompletely available, thus scholars have to look upon other authoritative texts for knowledge of the subject. *Ashtanga Hridaya* being a comprehensive text and a part of *Brihatrayi* is apt for quenching thirst of knowledge. This article aims at reviewing the knowledge about *Kaumarbhritya* available in *Ashtanga Hridaya*. *Acharya Vagbhata* has mentioned about *Navjaat Shishu Paricharya* (concept of neonatal care), *Navjaata Shishu Pariksha* (Examination of newborn child), *Balyakala Samskara* (Childhood sacraments), *Garbhvyapada* (Fetal abnormalities), *Vayovibhajan* (Classification of age), *Prasavkaleenjanya Abhighata* (Birth injuries), *Balshosha* (Malnutrition in children), *Stanya* and *Stanya Dosh* (Breast milk and its related diseases), *Shishurudan* and *Vedna* (Different activities during cry and Pain), *Dantoubhedjanya Vyadhi* (Dentition related diseases), *Balayakala Vyadhi* (common diseases of infancy and childhood), *Lehana* (electuary), *Aushdhiya Yoga* (Formulations) used in children.

**Key words:** *Kaumarbhritya, Garbhvyapada, Lehana, Samskara, Vayovibhajan, Danttoudh Bhedjanya.*

## INTRODUCTION

The *Ashtanga Hridayam*, the “Heart or Essence of all the Eight Branches of *Ayurveda*,” is one of the primary ancient root texts of *Ayurveda*. Today, the *Ashtanga Hridayam* continues to serve as a root source for *Ayurvedic* philosophy and protocol, providing clear guidelines in all aspects of health. *Acharya Vagbhata*

is among the three classic writers of *Ayurveda* who have composed ‘*Brihatrayi*’ and *Vagbhata* is one of the most influential classical writers of *Ayurveda*. His work ‘*Ashtanga Hridaya*’ embraces the best parts of earlier treatise of *Acharya Charak* and *Sushruta* along with his original contributions. As the name suggests this *Samhita* possesses a treasure of knowledge of *Ashtanga Ayurveda* including that related to *Kaumarbhritya*. Many of the important topics of this branch are dealt with in *Uttar Tantra* and *Shareer Sthana* but the rest is scattered in the whole *Samhita*. A complete view of the *Samhita* reveals the concept and important contributions of this *Samhita* in field of *Kaumarbhritya*.

### *Navjata Shishu Paricharya* (Concept of Neonatal Care)

*Ashtanga Hridaya* describes in detail the care of a baby after birth including *Ulva Parimarjana* (cleaning of the vernix caseosa), *Pranapratyagaman*

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(resuscitative measures), *Naal Chedan* (cutting of umbilical cord), *Snana* (bathing), *Pichu Dharan* (external oleation), *Swarnaprashan* (ingestion of gold *Bhasma* with *Medhya* herbs), *Garbhodaka Vamana* (cleaning of stomach by emesis) and *Jata Karma* (initiation of feeding of newborn). Just after birth, vernix of baby should be removed by using *Saindhava* (rock salt) and *Ghee*. This dries the baby, gives sufficient tactile stimulus for breathing and prevents hypothermia. Two stones should be rubbed to make noise near the base of baby's ear or mastoid process.<sup>[1]</sup> This stimulates auditory nerve and helps in initiation of breathing. Chanting the holy *Mantras* is also prescribed. When the baby attains a proper breathing and cry, his umbilical cord should be cut at a distance of four *Angula* (fingers) from umbilicus, tied with a thread, suspended by neck and '*Kustha Taila*' be applied to it to prevent sepsis.<sup>[2]</sup> After this, oil soaked cotton should be placed on anterior fontanel of scalp.<sup>[3]</sup>

This prevents hypothermia and any chances of injury. For bathing of baby, decoction of herbs should be used.<sup>[4]</sup> These have antiseptic properties and a favorable odor. The stomach of baby should be cleared by making him vomit with help of *Saindhav*, *Ghee* and *Vacha* (*Acorus calamus*).<sup>[5]</sup> This clears the ingested amniotic fluid and blood and prevents vomiting after feeds. After stomach wash, feeding is initiated by *Ghee* and honey. This gives energy and triggers passive immunity. On second and third day, *Lakshmana* treated *Ghee* is advised and exclusive breast feeding is to be started thereafter.<sup>[6]</sup> *Raksha Karma* is also described which uses herbs to ensure disinfection and prevent sepsis via clothes, cot or ward room of baby.<sup>[7]</sup>

### **Garbha Vyapada (Fetal Anomalies)**

*Vagbhata* mentions concept of *Upavishtaka*, *Nagodara* and *Lina Garbha* along with their treatment. These are the complications of pregnancy in which the fetus is post dated and intra uterine growth retarded. *Upavishtaka* is the condition in which there is copious vaginal discharge, fetus does not grow in size, but remains inside the womb

producing throbbing i.e., fetus is alive but growth retarded. Another condition in which the fetus is dry and emaciated is *Nagodara* in which the mother undergoes severe mental and physical stress, has vaginal leaking which causes aggravation of *Vata Dasha* with post term fetus. *Lina Garbha* is the one in which there is no throbbing.<sup>[8]</sup>

### **Shishurudan and Vedna (Concept of different activities during cry and pain)**

*Acharya Vagbhata* describes that pain in children should be understood by sudden and repeated crying. The part of body which the child touches often and does not allow to be touched by others (tenderness) is to be understood as having pain. Pain in the head should be understood by the closing of eyelids; pain in chest by biting of tongue and lips, dyspnea and clenching of the fist. Pain in abdomen is judged by constipation, vomiting, biting of breast, intestinal gurgling sound, flatulence, bending the back and elevating abdomen. Pain in urinary bladder and genitals is interpreted by obstruction to elimination of the feces and urine and frightened look.<sup>[9]</sup>

### **Navjaat Shishu Parikshan (Examination of Newborn)**

*Vagbhata* has also opined that wise physician should examine the baby commencing with head for deciding his life span based on features described in '*Prakriti Bhediya*'<sup>[10]</sup> chapter. In this chapter, *Acharya* has described features of various body parts like forehead, veins, face, head, tongue, mouth, eyes, chest, etc. and the corresponding life span of person having these features.<sup>[11]</sup>

### **Vayovibhajan (Classification of Age)**

*Vagbhata* has classified age into three stages. The period up to sixteen years of age is *Baala* (childhood) in which there occurs an increase in *Dhatu* (tissues), *Indriya* (senses) and *Ojas* (essence of *Dhatu*s responsible for strength); the period up to seventy years is *Madhya* (youth and middle age) in which there is no increase of tissues, then after seventy years there is *Khsaya* or depletion of tissues in old age<sup>[12]</sup> *Baala* is again divided into stages of *Kshiravartan*, *Ubhayavartan* and *Annavartan* i.e. child

feeding primarily upon milk, milk and solid and solid food respectively.<sup>[13]</sup>

### **Balasamskaras (Childhood Sacraments)**

*Samskaras* are rites performed with an objective of imparting positive qualities in a person. *Samskara* are disposition, character or behavioral traits, that exist as default from birth or prepared and perfected by a person over one's lifetime. The childhood *Samskara* aim at preparing the baby for extra uterine life successfully, develop proper feeding habits, ensure adequate nutrition, prevent diseases, adapt to environment for further survival, give individual identity and educate the child. *Acharya Vagbhata* prescribes '*Prajapatya Vidhi*' in *Jata Karma Samskara* described in texts of *Dharmashastra*.<sup>[14]</sup> *Vagbhata* has also described *Namakarana Samskara* to be done on 10<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> day<sup>[15]</sup> while he opines sixth month as appropriate time for *Annaprashan*.<sup>[16]</sup> *Karnavedhana* or piercing of ear lobes serves ornamental purpose as well as protects baby from diseases. *Ashtanga Hridaya* recommends an age of six, seven or eight months for this rite. It is to be done preferably in cold climate.<sup>[17]</sup> In the context of *Upvishtana Samskara* or sitting ceremony, *Vagbhata* has enumerated fifth month as the appropriate time.

### **Dantubhedjanya Vyadhiyan (Dentition related diseases)**

Eruption of teeth is considered to be a cause for diseases such as *Jwara* (Fever), *Atisara* (Diarrhea), *Kasa* (Cough), *Chardi* (Vomiting), *Shirashoola* (Headache), *Abhishyanda* (conjunctivitis), *Pothaki* (Stye) and *Visarpa* (Skin disease). There is no *Dosha* which is not vitiated during eruption of teeth i.e. no part of body is without pain.<sup>[18]</sup> Predominance of *Vata Dosha* is considered the cause for late dentition and grinding of teeth during sleep.<sup>[19]</sup> *Vagbhata* has also described *Krimidanta* (Dental caries) and *Dantaharsha* (Hyper sensitivity of teeth).<sup>[20]</sup> An eye disease named '*Kukunaka*' which occurs exclusively in children having eruption of teeth. The child has swelling of eyes, coppery-red color and difficulty of vision, pain and stickiness in eyelids. The child often rubs his ears, nose and eyes.<sup>[21]</sup>

### **Concept of Lehana (Electuary)**

*Acharya Vagbhata* describes drug combinations comprising of gold as one of the contents namely *Swaran* (Gold), *Shweta Vacha* (*Acorus calamus*), *Kushta* (*Saussuria lappa*) or *Arkapushpi* (*Holostemma adakodien*), *Swarna* (Gold) or *Swaran* (Gold), *Matsyakshak*, *Shankhapushpi* (*Convolvulus pluricaulis*) or *Kaidarya* (*Murraya koenigi*), *Swaran* (Gold) and *Vacha* (*Acorus calamus*). These four groups of drugs when consumed mixed with honey and Ghee, for a period of one year bestow good body growth, intelligence, strength, toned skin color and beneficial as a whole. Formulations used in *Lehan Karma* are *Ashtanga Ghrita*, *Saraswat Ghrita* And *Vachadi Ghrita*.<sup>[22]</sup>

### **Stanya and Stanya Dosha (Concept of Breast Milk and related Impurities)**

*Vagbhata* has aptly described properties of unvitiated and vitiated breast milk. The milk which becomes homogenous and mixes evenly with water and does not have clinical features like presence of any *Dosha*, is the pure and unvitiated breast milk. The milk which is vitiated by *Vata* floats on water, is astringent, frothy, has less fat content and causes obstruction to the feces and urine. The milk which is vitiated by *Pitta* is hot, sour and pungent, produces yellow colored lines in water and gives rise to burning sensation in the alimentary tract of the child and the milk which is vitiated by *Kapha* is slightly salty, thick, sinks in water and is slimy. Features of two and three *Doshas* are found together when it is vitiated by two and three *Doshas* simultaneously. Milk possessing the features of the *Doshas*, when consumed gives rise to diseases arising from the corresponding *Doshas*.<sup>[23]</sup>

### **Prasvakaleenjanya Abhighat (Birth Injuries)**

*Ashtanga Hridaya* describes a condition named '*Upshirshak*' which is similar to birth injury, caput succedaneum. It is described as the condition caused by vitiated *Vata* entering the scalp of fetus during delivery resulting in a swelling which is devoid of pain and of the same color as skin.<sup>[24]</sup> No need of any treatment for this.

### Balayakala Vyadhiyan (Common diseases of infancy and childhood)

'Rajika' is skin eruption which is painful, hard, resembling mustard seeds in shape, size and color, arising on whole body due to sweat and heat.<sup>[25]</sup> The breast milk vitiated by three *Doshas* has bad smell and resembles water; by drinking it the child eliminates hard or thin frothy feces of varied colors along with discomfort in abdomen. Urine is yellow, white and thick. Fever, loss of appetite, thirst, vomiting, belching, yawning, twisting of body, moaning, shivering, giddiness and ulceration of nose, eyes and mouth develop. This disease is called 'Kshiralasaka'.<sup>[26]</sup> Due to sticking of the feces or sweat on anal region, ulcers arising from *Rakta* and *Kapha* develop in the anal region of child which are coppery in color with itching, accompanied with many secondary diseases. Some authors called this as 'Matrika Dosh' or 'Ahiputana', yet others call it *Prishtaru*, *Gudakutta* or *Anamaka*.<sup>[27]</sup> *Apana Vata* aggravated by suppression of urges of *Mala* (Feces) and *Vata* (Flatus), makes the anal canal constricted with difficult and painful defecation. This disease is known as 'Ruddhaguda'.<sup>[28]</sup> *Acharya* has enumerated herbs for treatment of *Mridbhakshan Janya Vyadhi* (diseases due to pica).<sup>[29]</sup>

### Balshosha (Malnutrition in children)

*Balashosha* is a malnutrition disorder described by *Vagbhata*. According to him sleeping too much during daytime, drinking cold water, drinking breast milk vitiated by *Kapha* causes blockage of *Rasavaha srotas*. The child develops loss of appetite, nasal catarrh, fever and cough. The child becomes emaciated with his face and eyes being greasy and white. This disease is treated by herbs which increase *Agni* and give nourishment.<sup>[30]</sup>

### Bala Grahas (Specific disorders of childhood)

*Acharya Vagbhat* given twelve *Balgraha* i.e. *Skanda*, *Skandapsmara*, *Naigmesha*, *Shava*, *Pitra*, *Shakuni*, *Pootana*, *Sheetpootana*, *Adrishtpootana*, *Revati*, *Shushakrevati*, *Mukhmandika Graha* these are the names of all *Graha* out of which first five are *Purasha Graha* (male) and last seven are *Stri Graha* (female).

*Acharya Vagbhata* describes the general features of these *Bal Grahas*, the clinical features of individual *Grahas*, *Gandha*, etiology and treatment in detail.<sup>[31]</sup> Types of *Gandha* in all *Grahas* are given below:

Graha	Gandha (smell)
Skanda	Vasa Gandhi
Skandapsmar	Pooyashonit
Naigmesha	Bastamgandhata
Shavagraha	Vitsagandhatavm
Pitragraha	Shavgandhata
Shakuni Graham	Shakunigandhatavm
Pootana Graham	Kaakvat Pootigandhata
Sheetpootana	Vasagandhi
Andhpootana	Matsyagandhi
Mukhmandika	Gomootra
Revati	Bastgandhi
Shushakrevati	Mridugandhavam

### Aushdhiya Yoga (Formulations)

According to the drug *Acharya Vagbhata* which is mentioned for which disease should apply over the breast of mother for one *Muhurhat* i.e. 48 minutes and then wash with water and breastfeed the baby the baby free from disease.<sup>[32]</sup> Some *Aushdhiya Yoga* (Formulations) given by *Acharya Vagbhat* in *Kaumarbhritya* are given below:<sup>[33]</sup>

- *Rajnaydi Churna* - *Atisaar* (Diarrhoea), *Jwar* (Fever), *Kamla* (Jaundice), *Pandu* (Anemia)
- *Kashyap Ghrita* - *Dantoubhedjanya Vikara* (Dentition related diseases)
- *Dantoubhedak Ghrita* - *Dantoutpatti* (For eruption of teeth)
- *Shishushoshnashak Ghrita* - *Balshosha* (Malnutrition)

- *Dadiamchatusam - Atisaara* (Diarrhoea)
- *Shoshnasahk tail - Balshosha* (Malnutrition)
- *Lakshadi taila - Jwara* (Fever), *Unmada* (Psychosis), *Apsmara* (Epilepsy)
- *Lavangchatusam - Atisaara* (Diarrhoea)
- *Baalkutajavleha - Aamshool* (Colicky pain due to indigestion), *Raktstrav* (Bleeding disorders),
- *Kumarkalyan rasa - Jwar* (Fever), *Shwas* (Dyspnea), *Paarigrbhik rog* (Kwashiorker), *Atisaara* (Diarrhoea)
- *Ashwagandha Ghrita - Pushtikar* (Strengthen the body)
- *Kumarkalyanghrit - Pushtikark* (Strengthen the body), *Agnidiptikar* (Increase digestive power),
- *Piplaydighrit - Dantoudbhvanaya Roga* (Dentition related diseases)
- *Arvindasav - Grahadosh nivarak* (Specific disorders of childhood)
- *Shishukalyanak Ghrita - Bhootounmad nashak* (Exogenous psychosis)
- *Ashtang Ghrita, Sarswat Ghrita, Vachadi Ghrita, Vachadi churan*- these four formulations are used as *Medhakar* (Brain tonic) and *Smritikara* (Enhancement of memory) as *Lehan Dravya*.

## CONCLUSION

*Ashtanga Hridaya* is the third major treatise on Ayurveda and most legitimate and extensive summary of Ayurvedic principles. It is neither a very brief nor an elaborate form of *Ashtanga Samghra*. *Ashtanga Hridaya* deals with eight *angas* and *Bala Chikitsa* is one of them. *Kaumarbhritya* is a branch of Ayurveda which presently deals with care of infants and children, their diseases and their treatment. Though main text of this branch is considered to be *Kashyapa Samhita* which is incompletely available. So, *Ashtanga Hridaya* being a comprehensive text and a part of *Bhrithrayi* is apt of quenching thirst of knowledge. It describes all the important concepts of

*Kaumarbhritya*, diseases of children and their practical treatment.

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