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**OVERALL RESPONSIBILITY OF THE AYURVEDIC PHYSICIAN TO PROTECT THE HEALTH OF CHILDREN - A CONCEPTUAL STUDY****S. P. Molligoda\*<sup>1</sup>, B. S. M. M. Sooriyaarachchi<sup>2</sup> and S. M. Palathiratne<sup>3</sup>**

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**ABSTRACT**

Child is the father of man. Child today governs the world tomorrow. Overall health of the children decides nations to come. Children's health is a decisive contributory factor of the future. Betterment of the country is totally dependent on the good health of the population and the same principle applies to the whole world. If the present child is healthy then only we could expect a healthy adult. Child population of the world is comparatively less than adults' population. Many current statistics prove that the overweight and obesity among children has increased dramatically in recent decades, with about one-third of children in the United States currently being either overweight or obese. Overweight in early childhood increases risk of obesity and

non-communicable diseases in adult life. These studies show that the health of children is at risk in present society. According to *Ayurveda*, child is brought up under the protection and guidance of parents and no way could the parents shelve their responsibilities. Till he or she comes to the stage of achieving *Dharma, Artha, Kama* and *Moksha (Caturvidhasampat)* on his own, parents should safe guard them securely.

**KEYWORDS:** Health, *Ayurveda*, Children.

**INTRODUCTION**

According to the United Nations estimate, a global average life expectancy of 72.6 years for 2019 – the global average today is higher than in any country back in 1950. The

global median age has increased from 21.5 years in 1970 to over 30 years in 2019. The global population breakdown by age shows that a quarter (26%) are younger than 14 years, 8% are older than 65, while half of the world population is the working age bracket between 25 and 65.<sup>[1]</sup> In spite of all, if anyone could lead a moral life and if he or she makes use of the *Karmic* action properly, that would be most valuable. All the actions and reactions according to ancient sages occurred in vicious cycles. It is not only for human beings but also for all animate and inanimate objects. It is extremely difficult to perceive through our senses. It could be understood by something beyond our ken. Any action we perform right now decides our next birth. In *Ayurveda* philosophy child health care is extensively discussed and place of prominence is given. Prior preparation before conception should be the first and foremost fact of concern if a married couple expects a better and healthy child. *Ayurveda* advocates the following of special regimens during specific periods such as; *Ritu Charya*, *Garbhini Paricharya*, *Sutika Paricharya*, etc in order to achieve maximum benefit for both mother and the child in each crucial stage. After the birth of the child, parents should provide wholesome food and adequate care to the child and should initiate the child in following *Bala Samskara*. Failure in the proper following of these regimens gives rise to the manifestation of a multitude of *Sahaja*, *Nija* and *Agantuja* diseases in the child. Therefore, we should initiate this discussion with a certain rational point in mind.

### AIM AND OBJECTIVE

Aim and objective of this research paper is to identify the responsibility and the role played by the *Ayurvedic* physician on health of children with reference to main *Ayurveda Samhita*.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

For the present review study, main *Samhita* of *Ayurveda*, other available resources in various languages, published articles in peer reviewed journals, related material available online, dictionaries and encyclopedia were referred to compile, analyze and describe data in a methodical and logical manner.

### RESULTS

**Marriage;** According to *Ayurveda* philosophy, marriage is legal license to bear children. *Acharya Caraka* mentioned that a person who is healthy and who desires to have a child should enter into sexual intercourse with a woman who is *Atulyagotra* (of a different clan), who is sexually strong, who is excited, who is free from any ailment and immediately after she has taken a bath completing her period of menstruation. *Ayurveda* states marriage should

be consumed with the person not of the same tribe, it should be outside their own tribe.<sup>[2]</sup> Therefore, *Ayurveda* physician should make aware the young generation in the society about this valuable fact before they enter the marriage life.

**Physical and mental states of the parents;** Sperms of the father and ovum of the mother play a major role in bringing forth a healthy child. Allopathic medicine advocates and place heavy emphasis on balanced diet. Nevertheless, *Ayurveda* physicians strongly advocate six fronted tastes. According to *Ayurveda* medicine with the onset of senility; sex drive (libido) diminishes in adult people resulting in anxiety, worry diminution of semen due to diseases, emaciation, exertion, fasting, excessive indulgence with women, consumption, fear, suspicion, grief, witnessing of the faults in women, non-excitation of the female partner, absence of passionate determination and complete avoidance of sex acts. These reasons indirectly cause the birth of unhealthy baby.<sup>[3]</sup> Further it has been explained that a person who is sexually satisfied, does not possess power of entering into sex act with the women again, because this power is dependent upon excitement and the latter is dependent upon the strength of the body and the mind. Not only improving father's health but also improving the well-being of mother's, is a public health goal of vital importance for a healthy nation. Their well-being determines the health of the next generation and can help predict the future public health challenges for families, communities, and the health care system. Therefore, *Ayurveda* physicians should interfere with these occasions as much as possible. Subsequent studies have shown that maternal diseases like depression, anxiety, epilepsy, asthma, anemia and metabolic disorders; like diabetes are able to determine alterations in growth and fetal development.<sup>[4]</sup> Both uterine and vaginal diseases have to be considered too. *Acharya Caraka* stated that the following are the factors inflicting injury to the fetus (*Garbhopaghatakarabhava*); all things that are very heavy, hot, sharp and violent acts like intercourse, (wise people also prescribe the following precautionary measures with a view to avoiding any injury to the fetus). Red color apparel should not be used, and should not be consumed intoxicant wines, avoid meat, away from things as are unwholesome to the senses.<sup>[5]</sup> Because of that *Ayurveda* physicians should address maternal risk behaviors and provide women with support during their pregnancy. In addition to sperm and ovum following factors support in the growth of the fetus; *Satmya* (wholesomeness), *Rasa* (digestive products of the mother's food), *Sattva* (mind), *Garbhini Paricharya* (adoption of proper regimen by the mother during pregnancy), availability of nourishment to heart through

*Upasneha* (transudation) and *Upasveda* (conduction) respectively, proper time, instinctive or natural tendencies.<sup>[6]</sup>

As per *Ayurvedic* medicine uterus plays an important role in human reproduction. It is the organ where the implantation and nourishment of the fertilized ovum takes place. Uncertainty in the conceived woman when her ovum and uterus were not completely vitiated but simply afflicted by the circulating aggravated *Dosha* because of her indulgence in *Dosha* aggravating regimens; then one or many of the organs of the fetus derived from the maternal source (ovum) viz. skin, blood, etc. get deformed. These vitiated *Dosha* may afflict the *Bija* (generally meaning a division of the ovum or sperm which is responsible for the production of a particular organ – the nearest term in the parlance of modern genetics is chromosome) or the *Bijabhaga* (a part of the *Bija* – the nearest term in the parlance of modern genetics is the gene) and the corresponding organs derived from these *Bija* and *Bijabhaga* get deformed. As per the view of *Acarya Caraka*, it is said that when the *Bijabhaga* (part of the *Bija*) in the ovum of the mother which is responsible for the production of uterus is excessively vitiated, then she gives birth to a *Vandhya* (sterile child). When the *Bijabhagavayava* (only a fraction of the part of the *Bija*) in the ovum of the mother which is responsible for the production of the uterus is excessively vitiated, then she gives birth to a *Putipraja* (dead fetus). When the *Bijabhagavayava* which is responsible for the production of the uterus and also the portions of the *Bijabhaga* which are responsible for the production of organs that characterize a female, viz. breasts, genital organs, hair etc. in the ovum of the mother gets excessively vitiated then she gives birth to a child who is not a complete female but only having the feminine characteristics in abundance, such a type of child is known as *Varta* (can be correlated with Turner syndrome).<sup>[7]</sup> These points indicates prenatal and postpartum maternal health is critical to a mother's physical and mental well-being and contributes to her ability to render love and proper care to her newborn. Similarly, when the part of the *Bija* which is responsible for the production of the sperm in the fetus is excessively vitiated, then this gives birth to a male *Vandhya* (sterile child). When the *Bijabhagavayava* (only a fraction of the part of the *Bija*) which is responsible for the production of the sperm is excessively vitiated, then this gives birth to a *Putipraja* (whose child dies before delivery). When the *Bijabhagavayava* which is responsible for the production of sperm and also portions of the *Bijabhaga* which are responsible for the production of organs that characterize a male are excessively vitiated, then this gives birth to a child who is not a complete male but only having masculine characteristics in abundance, such a type of child is known as *Trinaputrika* (can be correlated

with Klinefelter syndrome). These deformities are caused by the vitiation of the sperm.<sup>[8]</sup> Among the other causes; food is the most prominent cause for vitiating sperm and ovum. The nutritional status of women and men before conception has profound implications for the growth, development and long-term health of their offspring. Hence *Ayurveda* physicians should intervene and accurately support them from the pre-conceptual period. Modern science also proved this fact and they say that food safety is especially important during pregnancy for two reasons. Hormonal changes during pregnancy weaken immune function, making a pregnant woman more vulnerable to food borne illnesses. The unborn baby (fetus) is more vulnerable to food borne illnesses because their immune system is not yet developed.<sup>[9]</sup> Meanwhile *Ayurveda* has mentioned that there are two vitiating factors other than *Tridosha* in the mind called *Rajas* and *Tamas*.<sup>[10]</sup> Vitiating of the body and the mind result in the manifestation of diseases in the mind too. Hence that is the responsibility of the physician to advise the parents how to sidestep those factors to safeguard their baby. To maintain the positive health of a child, physician should offer following advice to parents. Mother should properly resort to such food as are of contrary disposition to the locality, season and physical constitution of hers. Also should refrain from excessive utilization, wrong utilization and non-utilization of the time, intellect and objects of senses. Refrain from suppression of manifested urges etc. According to *Ayurvedic* view if a particular tissue element is to be increased and if the homologous dietary articles cannot be taken because of their non-availability or even if available, they cannot be used because of unsuitability, hateful disposition or any other cause; then food preparations of different nature but having the predominance of the attributes of the body elements to be promoted, should be used.<sup>[11]</sup>

**Period of childhood:** In addition to these points following factors are also important to the growth of a healthy child. Birth in a country, time, climate, nature where people are naturally strong, wholesome factors, excellence of mind, exercise, cheerful disposition are also of paramount importance. Furthermore, proper breast feeding is extremely essential for the betterment of the child. Breast milk helps to keep the child healthy and active. It supplies all the necessary nutrients in the proper proportions. It protects against allergies, sickness, obesity and diseases like diabetes and cancer. It protects against all kinds of infections.

**Nursery for the child:** Conferring to *Acharya Caraka* nursery should be constructed under guidance of an expert person. It should be commendable, beautiful, free from darkness,

sheltered from draught, admitting air only from one side, sturdy, free from animals, with good water storage, comfortable for living in all seasons, etc.<sup>[12]</sup>

**Sports:** Sports experiences assist the building of positive self-esteem in children. In addition, joining in sports can be a cooperative way of reducing stress and increasing feelings of physical and mental well-being; as well as fighting against juvenile delinquency, conflict and aggressive outbursts. Specially toys of children should be variegated, sound producing, beautiful, light, without sharp edge, incapable of being swallowed, fraught with no danger to life of the child.<sup>[13]</sup>

**Affliction of diseases:** If the child gets afflicted with any disease it should be properly diagnosed, with due regards to the specific nature, premonitory symptoms, signs and symptoms of the disease. Concurrently, characteristic features of the patient, drugs, locality, season and physical constitution of the children should be considered. Parents should be advised that unwholesome regimens should be gradually changed to wholesome ones and all things injurious for health should be avoided. By doing so, child gets endowed with excellent strength, complexion, physical constitution and span of life.<sup>[14]</sup> In this manner from childhood to youth, the child should be brought up till he is competent to perform religious rites and earn wealth on his own.<sup>[15]</sup>

## DISCUSSION

*Ayurveda* is a science which is not merely advisable for adults but also for all stages of life. As a medicine which approaches holistically, *Ayurveda* demonstrates the routine and rhythm for healthy development of children. Current busy lifestyle which does not contain a regular routine leads to a physically, mentally and spiritually unhealthy generation. Due to this condition, many bad consequences are resulting such as non-communicable diseases and psychological discrepancies for instances; restlessness, hyperactivity and anxiety. From the perspective of *Ayurveda*, this is an expression of imbalanced *Dosha*. An *Ayurvedic* approach is necessary to establish a daily routine that creates balance of body and mind, which can also help to restore the balance of *Dosha* in the first place.

## CONCLUSION

‘*Mens sano in corpora sano*’; Sound physical and mental health in children plays a major and significant role in producing a healthy nation, thus parents can’t afford to pay scant attention to the health of children. Negligence of this vital aspect would be tantamount to the detriment

of the health of the children in a particular nation at large. Necessary wholesome food with high nutritious value should be provided to the children, thereby reducing the risk of exposing them to multifarious diseases. By any stretch of imagination, we should not forget in fact the onus is again on the *Ayurveda* physician to take feasible measures to guarantee the safety of the children. Hence, the colossal responsibility on the shoulders of the *Ayurveda* physician to protect and safeguard the health of today's children, in order to accomplish a better and healthy nation in future is clear as crystal.

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