

Concept of Child Care in Ayurveda

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Editorial

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Children are the future of a society. A healthy child can only make a society strong and healthy. Any child having any deficit or disability either in body or mind is only a burden of the nation. Realizing the fact the world is now paying utmost attention on the care of the mothers who are the main sources of giving birth to the child. An unhealthy mother can never give birth to a healthy child and a child not having good health at birth can never become a healthy adult. The International agencies are funding huge amount of fund for systematic care of the expecting mothers and children.

A child, constitutionally, after birth remains weak in all respects due to its underdeveloped immunity and body constituents. They are not matured in respect of their intelligence, wisdom and physical activities. They consider all the things around them as same and behave in same way. Hence they are vulnerable to injury, infection, disease etc. Considering the fact special care for the children is being taken in the families by the parents and other members and also in the society by the administration, specially by taking special care to induce immunity and regular observations to monitor their all round development.

Ayurveda, being the ancient health system has also showed interest in the field which is self explanatory. The main classics of Ayurveda, Charaka Samhita, Susruta Samhita and Ashtanga Hridaya/Sangraha discussed on child care elaborately in the special chapters.

The great Indian scholar, Charaka, who is admitted to be the father of Medicine, discussed about child care in the 8th chapter of Sharirasthana (Jatisutriya Shariradhyaya - the chapter that deals with the structural formation of the body) and 30th

chapter of Chikitsasthana (Yonivyapachchikitsitamadhyayam – the chapter that deals with various types of female diseases).

Susruta, the father of Surgery gives some guidelines about childbirth and care in the 10th chapter of Sharirasthana (Garbhiniyakarana Sharira – the chapter that deals with the knowledge of the pregnant woman).

Ashtanga Sangraha, which contains the concepts of Charaka and Susruta with some additions and subtractions from his own experience has taken the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th chapter of Uttarasthana (Balopacharaniya – discussion on the procedures of care of child, Balamayapratishedha – discussion on the prevention and treatment of the diseases of childhood, Balagrahavijnaniya – discussion on the identification of the harmful agents for the children and Balagrahapratishedha – discussion on prevention and treatment of the diseases of the children caused by some external agents respectively) to discuss about the children.

Some interesting facts of the descriptions of the ancient Ayurvedic scholars in relation to child care are –

1. Starting of the care of the child since their intra- uterine life. Conception in proper physical and mental condition of the father and mother at a favorable environment is getting importance in the classics. Interesting guidelines in this aspect are mentioned.
2. “Maternal health is always an important determinant of the health of the child” considering the fact an attractive recommendation is given regarding the diet and regimen of the pregnant lady.

3. The physicians, nurses and attendants are guided with the necessary guidelines to assist the lady who is going to deliver a child as there are many dangers during delivery that can cause harm to not only the mother but also to the child if proper attention is not paid.
4. After delivery of the child all the cares like cutting of the Umbilical Cord, cleaning of the body, resuscitation etc. are also discussed elaborately in scientific manner.
5. In respect of time when there will be physical and mental development of the child constant monitoring and support is necessary. For this purpose interesting guidelines are provided.
6. The necessary qualities of the places to keep the child, the process of giving bath, food, dress etc. are also mentioned scientifically.
7. Since the children are immatured both physically and mentally so the dolls and other playing objects should always be attractive but at the same time should never get any harmful structure. This is the advice about the preparation of the playing objects of the children.
8. Appropriate immunity is must for a child to develop proper growth and disease free health. So, for the purpose immunization with use of some drugs is advised which are interesting.

Reasonability and scientific approach of the ancient scholars of Health Science (Ayurveda) needs study and analysis which is the need of the hour.

Let us try to understand and evaluate the concepts of our ancestors.