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“KASHYAP SAMHITA: A CLASSICAL TREASURE OF AYURVEDIC PEDIATRICS – A REVIEW”

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Abstract:

Kashyap Samhita is one of the classical texts of Ayurveda, attributed to Acharya Kashyapa, also known as Vriddha Jivaka. It holds a unique position in Ayurvedic literature for its detailed description of *Kaumarabhritya* (pediatrics), obstetrics, gynecology, and neonatal care. This review article highlights the historical significance, structure, subject matter, and clinical applications of *Kashyap Samhita*, with emphasis on its contributions to child health, preventive pediatrics, and maternal well-being. Despite its fragmentary preservation, the text provides invaluable insights that remain relevant in the contemporary context.

keywords Kashyap Samhita, Ayurvedic Pediatrics, Kaumarabhritya, Bala Roga

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, the ancient Indian system of medicine, is founded upon several classical treatises composed by great sages, among which *Kashyap Samhita* occupies a unique place. Also known as *Vridha Jivakiya Tantra*, it is regarded as the most authoritative text on *Kaumarabhritya* (pediatrics), one of the eight branches of Ayurveda. While Charaka emphasized internal medicine and Sushruta specialized in surgery, Kashyapa dedicated his efforts towards child health, maternal care, and preventive pediatrics, thereby laying the foundation for a distinct pediatric discipline in Ayurveda¹.

Materials and Methods

This review was carried out through a comprehensive study of the *Kashyap Samhita*, an ancient Ayurvedic text primarily focused on *Kaumarabhritya* (Ayurvedic pediatrics). The original Sanskrit text, along with its various commentaries, was critically examined to understand its unique contribution to pediatric health. Secondary sources including other Ayurvedic classical treatises (*Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Ashtanga Hridaya*) were referred for comparative analysis.

Additionally, relevant modern published literature such as books, peer-reviewed journals, and research articles

indexed in PubMed, Google Scholar, AYUSH Research Portal, and Shodhganga were explored using keywords like *Kashyap Samhita*, *Kaumarabhritya*, *Ayurvedic pediatrics*, *Bala Roga*. Both classical and contemporary references were reviewed to compile data on definitions, concepts, preventive and therapeutic principles, and unique contributions of *Kashyap Samhita*. Inclusion criteria comprised classical Ayurvedic references and authentic contemporary works directly related to *Kashyap Samhita* and Ayurvedic pediatrics. Non-Ayurvedic and irrelevant literature was excluded. The collected material was systematically categorized into sections such as historical background, textual structure, concepts of pediatrics, preventive pediatrics, therapeutic aspects, and relevance in present era.

The text is attributed to Acharya Kashyapa, though it was systematically compiled and propagated by his disciple Vridha Jivaka, and later redacted by Vatsya. According to historical accounts, Vatsya received the knowledge from a Yaksha named Anayasa, ensuring its transmission across generations². The composition of the text is tentatively placed between the 6th century BCE and 6th century CE, although its final compilation occurred much later³.

Kashyap Samhita is organized into eight principal Sthanas (sections)—Sutra, Nidana, Vimana, Sharira, Indriya, Chikitsa, Siddhi, and Kalpa—along with an additional Khila Sthana. Originally, it is believed to have contained around 120 chapters, but only a partial manuscript survives today, discovered in Nepal and published in the early 20th century⁴. This fragmentary preservation, while limiting, still provides remarkable insight into pediatric and maternal healthcare. The scope of the Samhita extends beyond pediatrics to include obstetrics (*Prasuti Tantra*), gynecology (*Stree Roga*), embryology (*Garbha Vigyana*), neonatal care, lactation, nutrition, growth and development milestones, and pediatric diseases. Distinct contributions include descriptions of *Stanya Pariksha* (examination of breast milk), *Stanya Dushti* (vitiation of breast milk), *Balagraha* (childhood afflictions attributed to external or microbial causes), and ritual-based preventive healthcare⁵.

In comparison with other Samhitas, Kashyapa emphasizes preventive pediatrics and public health. The text provides detailed protocols for breastfeeding, neonatal care, and early childhood development, which align with modern principles of pediatrics and preventive medicine⁶. For example, the

section *Lakshanadhyaya* deals with signs and clinical features of pediatric diseases, demonstrating systematic observation akin to present-day diagnostic methodologies⁷. Despite its incomplete transmission and redactional interpolations, *Kashyap Samhita* continues to guide Ayurvedic pediatrics (*Kaumarabhritya*), and is included as a primary reference in Ayurvedic education and clinical practice. Critical appraisal and validation of its concepts in the context of modern pediatrics can provide novel insights into integrative child healthcare⁸.

Unique Contributions of Kashyap Samhita

Domain	Unique Contribution	Significance
Pediatrics (Kaumarabhritya)	Systematic approach to child care from conception to adolescence	Earliest specialized pediatric text
Neonatal Care	Umbilical cord care, swaddling, sleep, hygiene	Preventive neonatal health
Breast Milk	<i>Stanya Pariksha</i> (milk testing), <i>Stanya Dushti</i>	Early understanding of lactation science

Domain	Unique Contribution	Significance
	types	
Balagraha	Description of pediatric afflictions attributed to external/microbial causes	Proto-concept of infections/epilepsy
Immunity	<i>Suvarna Prashana</i> (gold administration)	Concept similar to vaccination & immune-boosting
Nutrition	Breastfeeding, weaning (<i>Annaprashana</i>), seasonal regimen	Preventing malnutrition & growth delay
Rituals/ Samskaras	<i>Jatakarma</i> , <i>Namakarana</i> , <i>Annaprashana</i> , <i>Karnavedhana</i>	Blend of cultural & health benefits

Discussion

Kashyap Samhita occupies a distinguished position in Ayurvedic literature, as it focuses predominantly on Kaumarabhritya, the branch concerned with pediatric care, maternal health, and preventive practices. The text underlines the notion that the foundation of health

begins at conception, thereby advocating maternal care (*Garbhini Paricharya*) and neonatal protocols as essential prerequisites for healthy progeny. This preventive orientation highlights the foresight of Kashyapa in recognizing the long-term impact of maternal nutrition, emotional stability, and lifestyle on child health.

A remarkable contribution of this Samhita is its detailed account of breast milk (*Stanya*)—its qualities, methods of testing, types of vitiation (*Stanya Dushti*), and its direct correlation with infant health. The *Stanya Pariksha* includes innovative techniques, such as placing a drop of milk in water to observe its dispersal pattern, which indirectly assesses digestibility and suitability for the infant. Modern pediatrics echoes this understanding, recognizing breast milk as a dynamic biofluid influenced by maternal health, diet, and psychological state. Thus, Kashyapa's descriptions can be seen as early empirical observations aligning with modern lactation science.

Equally significant are the references to Balagraha, a group of pediatric afflictions described in detail. While traditionally associated with external or unseen forces, modern scholars interpret these as early attempts to describe infectious or idiopathic childhood illnesses. For instance, the symptom

complexes attributed to *Shakuni Graha* or *Skanda Graha* bear resemblance to conditions like epilepsy and respiratory infections. The emphasis on both therapeutic measures (herbs, rituals, fumigation) and preventive approaches (purification, hygiene, mother–infant bonding) reflects an integrated model of disease management.

In terms of developmental pediatrics, *Kashyap Samhita* outlines physical and psychological milestones. The *Samskaras*—such as *Jatakarma*, *Namakaran*, *Annaprashana*, and *Karnavedhana*—are not merely ritualistic but carry health-related significance, including hygienic practices, social recognition, nutritional transitions, and sensory development. Such integration of cultural and medical domains underscores the holistic vision of Ayurveda, where health is inseparable from social and spiritual contexts.

The *Samhita* also delineates dietetics in childhood, emphasizing light, easily digestible foods, seasonal regimens, and gradual introduction of solid foods through *Annaprashana*. Contemporary nutritional science supports the importance of exclusive breastfeeding, timely weaning, and dietary diversity to prevent malnutrition and ensure immune competence. This convergence illustrates the timelessness of Kashyapa's insights.

From a critical perspective, however, certain limitations must be acknowledged. The fragmentary state of the text has led to loss of several chapters, including parts of *Lakshanadhyaya*, resulting in gaps in clinical detail. Furthermore, the redaction by Vriddha Jivaka and Vatsya raises questions about textual integrity and the possibility of later interpolations. Comparative philological studies suggest stylistic differences across chapters, hinting at layered authorship rather than a single cohesive voice. These issues complicate scholarly interpretation and necessitate cautious analysis when extrapolating concepts into modern practice.

Conclusion

Kashyap Samhita is a pioneering Ayurvedic text that gives primary importance to pediatrics, maternal health, and preventive care. Its detailed guidance on conception, pregnancy, neonatal protocols, breastfeeding, child development, and pediatric disorders highlights the foresight of Acharya Kashyapa in establishing a holistic framework for child healthcare. Unique concepts such as *Stanya Pariksha*, *Stanya Dushti*, *Balagraha*, and *Suvarna Prashana* demonstrate its integrative approach, combining clinical observation with cultural and spiritual practices.

Despite being preserved in a fragmentary form, the text continues to guide Ayurvedic pediatrics through its emphasis on preventive medicine, nutrition, rituals, and psychosomatic balance. Its teachings resonate with many modern pediatric principles, particularly in the areas of maternal–child health, immunity building, and developmental care. The *Kashyap Samhita* thus remains not only a classical treasure of Ayurveda but also a timeless resource that can inspire contemporary integrative healthcare approaches for children and mothers.

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