



Kashyap Samhita: A Review of History & Its Contribution to Kaumarbhritya

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Abstract: Kashyap Samhita, the only available source book on *Kaumarbhritya*, is presented in the form of compilations of teachings of *Acharya Kashyap* by his disciple *Vridhdha Jivaka*. With the lapse of time, the book was lost in oblivion and then resurrected by *Vatsya*, who procured it from *Anayasa*. This article reviews the history of this ancient text and various aspects related to its stages of development. The article also summarizes the contribution of Kashyap Samhita in field of *kaumarbhritya*, one of the eight branches of ayurveda, which deals with care and diseases of children.

Keywords: *Kashyap Samhita*, *Vridhdha Jivaka*, Significance of *Kashyap Samhita* in *Kaumarbhritya*, *Acharya Kashyap*, *Vatsya*

Introduction: *Vridhdha Jivaka Tantra*, popularly known as *Kashyap Samhita* is the only surviving classical text on *Kaumarbhritya*, one of the eight branches of ayurveda. It is a compendium based on the teachings of *Acharya Kashyap*, which was compiled by *Vridhdha Jivaka* and redacted by *Vatsya*. *Kaumarbhritya* is the branch of ayurveda dealing with care of infants and children, diseases and treatment of *Dhatri* (wet nurse or care taker of child), milk, its qualities and treatment of milk related disorders and diseases due to *bal grahas*.^[1] It must have been a fully developed, well flourished and practiced art of medicine in the ancient era of *ayurvedic* history. There were experts of the field as mentioned in Kalidasa's *Kumarbhrityakusala* and Kautilya's *Arthashastra* (*kumarbhrityakusala-raghu*. 3.12 and *kautilya arthashastra* 1.16.10). *Dalhana* in his commentary on first chapter of *uttar tantra* of *Sushruta Samhita* mentions the treatise of *Parvataka*, *Jivaka* and *Bandhak*. Much of the ayurvedic classics related to the subject suffered loss with the passage of time and most of them are not available today. However, we have been lucky enough that *Kashyap Samhita* which was also lost in oblivion was found by Nepal's Rajguru Pt. Hemraj Sharma and he took the pious task of putting the *tadapatra* manuscript together and got it published for the first time in year 1938 by

Choukhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi. Still many of the chapters of various *sthana* (sections) could not be collected as the *pandulipi* or manuscript was incomplete and broken in many portions. He has also composed the highly educative 'Upodghat' on *Kashyap Samhita*. It is in Newari script and deposited in Durbar library in Kathmandu. Present available book is probably one fourth or even less of its original form.

History:

Rajguru Hemraj Sharma has mentioned in 'upodghat' that "source material of this *samhita* is a book written on *tadapatra* (palm leaves). The size of papers (leaves) is 21.5" * 2.25" having six lines in each. The book begins with page 29 and ends with 264, in-between also pages, lines or words are missing. In spite of the script of the book being very old, the difference in writings indicates that it has been probably completed by two writers. The shape of script, indications of page numbers by letters at certain places, number of chapters and verses, length and width of leaves of *tada* indicate that probably this available book was written about 700-800 years back".^[2]

Presently, a hindi translation of *Kashyap Samhita* by Sri Satyapal Bhishagacharya and English translation by Prof. (Km) P.V.Tewari, published by Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi and Chaukhambha Visvabharati, Varanasi respectively are available.

The following is a deeper view of history of *Kashyap samhita*:

a) **Kashyap**: He was the preacher of *Kashyap samhita*. His full name is believed to be Marichi Kashyap. Several other scholars have been in history with the same name as *Kashyap*. One of them was the expert of toxicology, who is mentioned in *Mahabharat* (ancient epic of India). Another scholar with this name was *Vridhdha Kashyap*, who has been mentioned in third chapter of *sidhhi sthana* of *Kashyap samhita* and cited by *acharya Dalhan*.^[3]

b) **Vridhdha Jivaka**: He was the one who compiled the teachings of *acharya Kashyap* in form of *Vridhdha Jivaka tantra* or *Kashyap samhita*. It is said that the prefix 'Vridhdha' which means 'old' or 'elder' was attached to name of 'Jivaka' as he attained a vast knowledge in a small age i.e. though he was young in age, yet was old in wisdom. Also, it is said that young *Jivaka*, son of *Richika* took bath in the holy river Ganga near Haridwar, and emerged as an old man. The prefix also serves to differentiate him from another scholar of ayurveda with the name 'Jivaka', who was a specialist in *shalya* or surgery.^[3]

c) **Vatsya**: *Vatsya* who was a devotee of Lord Shiva, *Kashyap* as well as *Yaksha* redacted this book after procuring it from a *yaksha* named *Anayasa*. *Vatsya* was a descendant of *Bhrigu* and *Vridhdha Jivaka*, thus also called 'bhargava' i.e., belonging to family of *Bhrigu*. It is also possible that *Vatsya* derived this name

on the basis of place of his origin i.e. *Vatsa Desha*, which had Kaushambi as its capital. *Anayasa yaksha* also belonged to Kaushambi, thus it is logical that *Vatsya* obtained the book from him.^[3]

Khila Sthana of Kashyap Samhita:

Kashyap samhita is divided into eight sthanas (sections) excluding *Khila sthana*. *Khila sthana* in the book was added later on, because in initial enumeration of eight sections of the book (*sutra, nidana, vimana, shareer, indriya, chikitsa, siddhi* and *kalpa*) it is not included, but is added in subsequent description.^[4]

It is believed that the *Khila sthana* was added by *Vatsya*, while some authors believe it to be added by an anonymous author after *Vatsya*.^[5] When this *Khil sthana* was being written, probably major part of the original book was available, as it mentions that “twenty four types of measurements of diet are described in *Rasa Vimana* chapter”.^[6] However, this chapter is not found in presently available *Kashyap samhita*.

Other books with the title ‘Kashyap samhita’:

1. A work called *Kashyap samhita* is noted in Burnell’s catalogue of Tanjore library (mss no. XLT p-70). In Aufrecht’s catalogue also this manuscript is included (p-88). This book is in the form of discussions between *Uma* and *Maheshwara* (Deities in Hindu mythology) and deals with the etiology and treatment of diseases including prayers to *Rudra, Shiva* and *Vishnu*. This book has very scarce matter pertaining to *kaumarbhritya*.^[7]

2. A manuscript entitled ‘*Kashyap rog nidanam*’ is enlisted in GOML Vol. XXIII no. 13112. This book is incomplete and gives types and distinguishing characteristics of different diseases and their treatment. However, this book is nowhere near to presently accepted *Kashyap samhita*.^[7]

3. Dalhana in the commentary on twenty seventh chapter of *Uttar tantra* of *Sushruta samhita* has cited a book named ‘*Kashyapadi tantra*’.^[7]

4. A book on toxicology, named ‘*Kashyap samhita*’ is published from Madras. It deals with snakes, insects, poisonous drugs etc. and is not related to *kaumarbhritya*.^[7]

5. In the library of Sampurnanand Sanskrit Vishwavidyalaya, there is a manuscript entitled ‘*Kashyap samhita*’ in which good number of drug preparations containing metallic contents are included. Hence it cannot be earlier than 12th or 13th century.^[7]

6. Another manuscript with the name ‘*Kashyap samhita*’ has been found in Newari language kept at Saraswati Bhawan, Varanasi. But it deals mainly with etiology and treatment of diseases and does not propound *kaumarbhritya* as its main subject. It also includes considerable usage of *rasa* preparations in treatment, which renders its time to be after 11th A.D.^[7]

Contributions of *Kashyap Samhita* in *Kaumarbhritya*:

Kashyap samhita is the only available treatise on *Kaumarbhritya* today. Following are its contributions in this field:

1. *Kaumarbhritya* is the main subject matter of *Kashyap samhita*. This is the only classical text which places *kaumarbhritya* on first position while enumerating the eight branches of ayurveda.^[8] It compares significance of *kaumarbhritya* in *ashtanga ayurveda* to that of lord Agni (fire) amongst various deities.^[9]

2. Acharya *Kashyap* has described eight types of *sweda* (sudation) namely, *hasta sweda* (hand sudation), *pradeha* (sudation with an ointment), *nadi* (pipe sudation), *prastara* (bed sudation), *sankar* (bolus sudation), *upnaha* (poultice sudation), *avgaha* (bath sudation) and *parisheka sweda* (shower sudation). *Hasta swedan* is indicated exclusively for infants upto four months.^[10]

3. *Kashyap samhita* has classified children according to financial condition of their parents as *ishwar putra* (upper class), *madhyam putra* (middle class) and *daridra putra* (poor class). He holds the view that though all diseases afflict children equally but their *satmya* (tolerance or immunity), fee paying capacity, affordability to good quality diet and medicine varies.^[11]

4. Acharya *Kashyap* has devoted a separate chapter of *sutra sthana* on the topic '*karnavedhana*' or ear lobe piercing. This chapter is incomplete in presently available *Samhita* but the *slokas* (verses) suggest that the chapter contained detailed information regarding when, how, where to pierce and the complications of ear lobe piercing. He has even prohibited less experienced *vaidya* (physician) to perform *karnavedhana* of children of royal or affluent families.^[12] This suggests that this art was greatly developed and performing it required considerable expertise.

5. *Kashyap* described drug doses of children with respect to their age or weight. He says that a newborn should be given medicine in a dose equal to weight of a *vidangaphala* (fruit of *Embelia ripes*), the dose should be increased according to the weight of baby but should not be greater than the weight of an *amlaka* fruit (*Embellica officinalis*).^[13]

6. *Kashyap samhita* also gives dose of *ghrita* (Ghee) according to age from birth to eight months.^[14] The treatise also describes dose according to formulation and modes of administration namely, *churna* (powder), *kashaya* (decoction) and *kalka* (paste).^[15]

7. The classic has described ten *balgraha* and vitiation of breast milk by *balgraha*. Under influence of *shakuni* (a type of *balgraha*), breast milk gets bitter and pungent, becomes sweet and bitter under influence of *putana* and has features of all three *doshas* when inflicted by *skanda* and *shashti graha*.^[16]

8. Clinical features of child consuming different types of breast milk have been described. The child has increased quantity or frequency of faeces and urine when he consumes sweet milk whereas retention of urine and faeces is seen in babies consuming astringent milk. Oil colored milk imparts good strength and one who consumes *ghrita* colored milk becomes very rich. Smoke colored milk makes the baby famous and pure milk imparts all positive qualities in baby.^[17]

9. *Kashyap* has described in detail *stanya* or breast milk including its formation,^[18,19] ejection,^[20,21] qualities of pure milk,^[22] properties of milk^[23] and its nectar like qualities.^[24]

10. *Stanyashodhaka* medicines (for treatment of breast milk vitiation) are described and also their administration according to dosha and congenial and non congenial diet during the treatment is dealt with.^[25,26,27]

11. Medicines to increase breast milk production have been enumerated.^[28]

12. *Kashyap acharya* has devoted a separate chapter for *Lehan* (electuaries) in which he has dealt with indications and contraindications of *lehan*, *swarnaprashan* (administration of gold preparations) and various *lehan yoga* (*lehan* formulations).^[29]

13. *Kashyap samhita* has a chapter named '*Dantjanmika*' which throws light on proper timing of teething, qualities of teeth erupted in fourth to seventh months, qualities of ideal teeth and gums, names and number of teeth.^[30]

14. *Acharya Kashyap* has expounded '*vedanadhyaya*' which deals with clinical features of various diseases in children and is useful in clinical practice.^[31]

15. In the '*shishyopnayaniya*' chapter of *vimana sthana* (third section of this treatise), *acharya* has described the procedure of *shishyopnayan sanskara* (induction ceremony of desciple) and ideal qualities of a *shishya* (student) and *guru* (teacher).^[32]

16. *Dhatri chikitsa* (treatment of wet nurse) has been dealt with in a separate chapter and it is said that the wellbeing of a baby is dependent on *Dhatri*.^[33]

17. *Phakka roga* (malnutrition) has been exclusively described by *acharya Kashyap*. It is divided according to basic etiology as *kshiraja*, *garbhaja* and *vyadhija phakka* (due to breast milk, pregnant mother and chronic diseases respectively).^[34]

18. *Kashyap samhita* has described '*arikilak*', a skin disease of children.^[35]

19. *Kashyap* has divided childhood in *garbha* (fetus), *bal* (infant) and *kumar* (child).^[36]

20. *Jataharini* is described in 'Revati kalpadhyaya'. It deals with the various diseases which lead to mortality of fetus and neonates.^[37]
21. *Kashyap* has described importance of *Dhupa kalpa* (fumigation) in children.^[38]
22. He has elaborately dealt with *Panchkarma* in children.^[39]
23. '*Kukunaka*', an eye disease in infants has been described by *Kashyap samhita*.^[40]
24. This samhita stresses upon the importance of diet in children and terms it as '*mahabhaishajya*'.^[41]
25. *Kashyap* has described ideal type of water to be taken in various seasons.^[42]
26. *Kashyap samhita* has described '*charmada*' in children dependant primarily on breast milk.^[43]
27. The samhita has described *suryadarshan*, *chandradarshan*, *nishkraman*, *phalprashan* and *annaprashan sanskara*.^[44,45,46,47]
28. Several issues of psychology are also described as can be seen in description of toys to be placed in *kumaragaar* (nursery). They should be beautiful but not fearful. The environment should be pleasant and child should never be frightened.^[48]

Conclusion:

Kashyap samhita has dealt mainly with the care of children, their diseases and treatment. It also elaborates child nutrition, development, psychology, ideal physical and mental characteristics, *lehan* and various childhood *sanskaras* (sacraments). It is thus undoubtedly the most authoritative text of *Kaumarbhritya*. The current scenario of knowledge of *Kaumarbhritya* holds its source to this classic, which would have been in greater depths, if we had the text in its complete original form.

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