



Review Article

## CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF KAUMARAGARA, KAUMARADHARA, KRIDABHOOMI AND KRIDANAKA W.S.R. TO NICU, CARE TAKER, PLAYGROUND AND TOYS IN CHILDREN

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### ABSTRACT

Ayurveda, often referred to as the "Science of Life," is a traditional system of medicine that originated in ancient India over 5,000 years ago. It's founded on the principle that health and wellness depend on a delicate balance between the mind, body and spirit. It emphasizes the importance of maintaining this balance for overall well-being. There are different branches of the Ayurvedic science and *Kaumarbhritya* is one of the eight branches of the system. The word *Kaumarbhritya* itself denote the importance of nourishment, support and maintenance of child. As a child is the future of great nation. In Ayurveda, *Bala Roga* encompasses a wide range of considerations and practices. Ensuring the well-being of newborn involves crucial protective rituals. Just as the establishment of a Special Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (SNICU) is pivotal in reducing neonatal mortality rates and enhancing the quality of life for surviving infants. Ayurveda emphasizes the meticulous arrangement of the *Sutikagriha* (puerperal room) and *Kaumaragara* (infant care room). This comprehensive approach aims to uphold stringent aseptic conditions and foster a healthy environment for both the mother and the newborn. The significance of toys and play in paediatric care has been overlooked, despite the ancient descriptions by *Acharyas* outlining the attributes of *Kaumaragara* (neonatal care unit/paediatric ward), *Kaumaradhara* (care-givers), *Kridabhoomi* (playground) and *Kridanaka* (toys). These elements are regarded as foundational to nurturing a thriving and flourishing individual.

### INTRODUCTION

*Kaumarbhritya* is among the eight branches of the system.<sup>[1]</sup> *Kaumarbhritya* signifies the essential aspects of nourishing, supporting and maintaining a child's well-being.<sup>[2]</sup> Thus, pediatric emergency is not a new concept. It only advances with time. So, thus the same is applied on management and prevention. *Kaumaragara* is a very broad term used for special neonatal intensive care unit, nursery, pediatric ward etc. Our *Acharyas* has already described them but some advancements are done according to the need of era. *Acharya Charaka* and *Acharya Vagbhata* mentioned *Kaumaragara* as a specific subject but same cannot be

applied for *Acharya Sushruta* and *Ashtanga Hridya*. Some other specific subjects like *Kaumaradhara*, *Kridabhoomi* and *Kridanaka* must come into light as they importantly play their role in child's life. In this modern or ancient world, need of baby sitters cannot be denied too. But in choosing them, special need is to be taken care of. Some of their qualities are also described in our ancient texts which must not be neglected. As the child grow, *Kridabhoomi* (playground) and *Kridanaka* (toys) play role in overall development of child. Play is crucial for cognitive, social, emotional and physical development.<sup>[3]</sup> It fosters curiosity, resilience and adaptability, all of which are essential skills for success in life. Depriving children of play can have serious consequences for their well-being and future prospects. Thus, surroundings are very important for any human being to grow, develop and flourish. Some evaluations revealed that environmental improvements can positively influence the health and well-being of both

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staff and patients in different healthcare settings. Researchers have explored the relationship between children and their environments, leading to introduce the concept of bidirectionality. This concept suggests that children not only influence their environments but are also influenced by them. In essence, every action prompts a reaction and it is through the dynamic interaction between the child and their environment that development takes place.<sup>[4]</sup>

### AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- To review the role of *Kaumaragara* (paediatric ward), *Kaumaradhara* (baby sitters), *Kridabhoomi* (playground) and *Kridanaka* (toys) as per ancient Ayurvedic beliefs.
- To reaffirm the principles of Ayurveda with evidence-based references.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

The details were collected from different Ayurvedic texts, reputed journals, articles, internet, literature for study and drawing inferences and justification. Other print media were also being searched for similar matter and were incorporated according to the need of the topic.

### Explanation of *Kaumaragara* as per Different *Acharyas*

Various *Acharyas* describe *Kaumaragara* as one of the essential concept, as by *Acharya Charaka*<sup>[5]</sup> and *Acharya Vagbhata*<sup>[6]</sup>:

अतोऽनन्तरं कुमारगारविधिमुखाख्यास्यामः- वास्तुविद्याकुशलः  
प्रशस्तं रम्यमतमस्कं निवातं  
प्रवातैकदेशं दृढमपगतश्वापदपशुदंष्ट्रिमूषिकपतङ्गसुविभक्तसलि  
लोलूखलमूत्रवर्चःस्थानस्नानभूमिमहानसमुत्सुखं  
यथर्तुशयनासनास्तरणसंपन्नं कुर्यात्; तथा  
सुविहितरक्षाविधानबलिमङ्गलहोमप्रायश्चित्तं  
शुचिवृद्धवैद्यानुरक्तजनसम्पूर्णम् इति  
कुमारागारविधिः(च.शा.8/59)

प्रशस्तवास्तुशरणं सज्जोपकरणं शुचि । निर्वातं च प्रवातं च  
वृद्धस्त्रीवैद्यसेवितम् ॥ निर्मत्कुणाखुमशकमतमस्कं च शस्यते ।  
(अ. सं. उत्तरस्थान 1/32)

- *Kaumaragara* should be designed by a male skilled in *Vastu* (engineer), pleasant, best, should be well furnished for the child to live in, should have good qualities, pure etc.
- *Kaumaragara* should be protected from direct wind but proper ventilation must be there.
- It should not be dark but must have enough light. Prohibition of any kind of intense or bright or blazing light in *Kaumaragara*. Similarly, contemporary NICUs utilize modified techniques for the same purposes as those mentioned earlier,

including appropriate light sources, ventilation systems and hygiene protocols.

- There should be no dogs or other predatory animals, mosquitoes, rats, kites, bedbugs etc. in the house.
- There should be a different space for urinals, toilet, bathroom, kitchen etc.
- A house built for the child and bedding should be comfortable in every season and in that house where *Raksha Vidhana*, *Bali*, *Mangala*, *Homa* etc. have been done as per the rituals.
- *Kaumaragara* should only witness the people who are pure/old/doctor/well-wishers for the mother and child.
- The bedding, covering (clothes to cover or wear) of the child should be soft, small, pure i.e., clean and fragrant. It should be well suited as per the requirements of seasons. In today's era, modified techniques such as radiant warmers and air conditioners are used to create a thermoneutral environment for newborns in a similar manner.
- The bedding, covering etc. on which sweat has dried, which is dirty and on which urine or faeces have got stuck should not be used for the child. Such contaminated and dirty clothes should be discarded and new clothes should be used for the child. But if new clothes cannot be arranged due to any circumstances, then old clothes must be cleaned, washed and dried properly. As the use of contaminated clothes lead to various contagious diseases especially skin diseases.
- *Acharya Sushruta* mentioned that silk material should be used for child's clothing, bedding etc.<sup>[7]</sup>
- Clothes which are used as spread, covered or worn should be fumigated with drugs like *Rakshoghana*<sup>[8]</sup>, *Vacha*<sup>[9]</sup>, *Hingu*<sup>[10]</sup>, *Guggulu*, *Jatamansi* etc. which possess anti-microbial properties. Similarly, nowadays disinfectants are utilized to protect newborns from microbes and nosocomial infections.
- Importance of fumigation or *Dhoopana* mentioned by *Acharyas* are, *Acharya Kashyapa* described a different chapter and his saying
  1. "सर्वभूतरुजापहः" i.e., destroying of all diseases. It is mentioned that clarified butter (ghee), white mustard (*Sarso*), sweet flag (*Vacha*) makes *Gana-Dhoopa* which manages the *Bhoota Rogas* (diseases).<sup>[11]</sup>
  2. "वर्धयतिप्रजाः" i.e., for child growth. Ingredients like clarified butter (*Ghee*), mustard (*Sarso*), sweet flag (*Vacha*), asafetida (*Hingu*) etc.

makes *Kaumara- Dhoopa* which is used as promoter for child growth.<sup>[12]</sup>

- Other Ayurvedic texts like in *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Bhasjiya Ratnavali*, *Yogratnakara* also mentioned the use of *Dhoopana Karma* for various therapeutic uses. *Yogratnakara* mentioned *Dhoopana Karma* for killing bugs, etc.<sup>[13]</sup>

### Clinical Significance of *Kaumaragata*

Neonatal Intensive Care Units (NICUs) play a critical role in healthcare by providing specialized care to newborns who are ill or premature. Here are the key points highlighting their clinical significance such as NICUs are equipped to handle premature babies who may have underdeveloped organs. This specialized care increases their chances of survival and long-term health. Newborns with conditions such as respiratory distress syndrome, infections, congenital abnormalities and other critical health issues receive intensive care that is crucial for stabilization and recovery. Some of the advanced medical technology are developed according to the need of modern era as they are equipped with advanced technology and equipment, such as ventilators, incubators and monitoring systems, which are essential for monitoring and supporting the vital functions of fragile infants. NICUs provide support and education to parents, helping them understand their baby's condition, care needs and how to participate in the care process, which is crucial for the family's overall well-being. The intensive care provided in NICUs has significantly improved survival rates and health outcomes for high-risk newborns, leading to better long-term development and quality of life. NICUs are often involved in research and clinical trials aimed at improving neonatal care practices, leading to continuous advancements in treatments and technologies that benefit future generations of newborns. In summary, NICUs are vital for the survival and health of newborns with complex medical needs, providing the necessary environment, expertise and technology to ensure the best possible outcomes.

### *Kaumaradhara*<sup>[14]</sup>

अभियुक्तः सदाचारो नातिस्थूलो न लोलुपः कुमारधारः  
कर्तव्यस्तत्राद्यो बालचित्तवित् ॥ अधार्मिकम् दुराचारः स्थूलो  
विकटगामिनम् । करोति लोलुपो बालं घस्मरत्वेन रोगिणम् ॥ (अ.  
सं. उत्तरस्थान 1/57)

A babysitter is someone who cares for a child and can also be referred to as their guardian or caretaker. As per *Ashtanga Sangraha*, the person who takes care of the child should be virtuous, not too fat (*Medasvi*), should not be lazy, free of greed/non-greedy and understand the mind of the child. The immoralities of *Kaumaradhara* make great impact on child's physical and mental health. If the baby sitter

himself is non-religious, cruel, misanthrope etc. makes the child greedy. If the baby sitter is greedy for food, makes the child glutton ultimately leads to various health issues.

### Clinical significance of *Kaumaradhara*<sup>[15]</sup>

Some understandings are there of how early interactions and relationships with caregivers can exert a strong effect on the survival and healthy development of young children. There are some theories and findings describe children's development. Contemporary psychological theories of how children develop assumed that the infant was passive and dependent on the environment for stimulation. Psychoanalytic theory, particularly Object Relations Theory and early child psychoanalysts based their theories on insightful observations of infants in relationships with other people. They postulated that babies had an inborn sensitivity to the emotions of others and to the ongoing interactions between themselves and their caregivers. They believed that these interactions were highly significant for the child's healthy psychological development and that insensitive care, neglect or abuse could distort or delay their development.

### *Kridabhoomi*<sup>[16,17]</sup>

क्रीडाभूमिः समाकार्या निश्शस्त्रोपलशर्करा ।  
वेल्लोषणकणाम्भोभिः सिक्ता निम्बोदकेन वा जातुषं  
घोषवच्चित्रमत्रासं रमणं बृहत् । अतीक्ष्णाग्रं गवाश्वदिमाङ्गल्यमथ  
वा फलम् ॥ (अ. सं. उत्तरस्थान 1/60)

While play holds significance for a child's development, equal attention must be given to the playground itself. Ayurveda emphasizes the importance of selecting a suitable environment for children to play in. Careful consideration should be given to ensure that the chosen area is devoid of any hazards or dangers. Some characteristics features given in *Ashtanga Sangraha* as the playground should be in level and smooth (*Samaa*), free from any debris such as iron weapons, spikes, thorns, needles, stones, pebbles or dust (*Nishastra* and *Nirupala Sharkara*). It should provide a comfortable surface for children to play on. Sprinkling the ground with a solution (*Siddha Jala*) of *Nimba* (*Azadiracta indica* Linn.) leaves or prepared water infused with *Vidanga* (*Embelia ribes*), *Maricha* (*Piper nigrum*) etc., can enhance the play environment (*Vella Ooshana Kana Ambhobhihi Siktaa Nimba Udakena Vaa*).

### Clinical Significance of *Kridabhoomi*<sup>[18]</sup>

An environment that is safe fosters exploration and encourages play behaviours in children. Environment should support learning through the senses. One of the foundational principles of early childhood education is that the senses play a large role

in children's development and that a carefully designed environment support children's exploration through their senses. The process for supporting the intellectual skills includes the development of a child-directed environment that is both rich in choice and content. From this child-directed environment, children learn habits of mind that allow them to interpret experiences.

### **Kridanaka**

क्रीडनकानि खलु कुमारस्य विचित्राणि घोषवन्त्यभिरामाणि  
चागुरूणि चातीक्ष्णाग्राणि चानास्यप्रवेशीनि चाप्राणिहराणि  
चावित्रासनानि स्युः ॥ (च. शा. 8/ 63)

Toys and play are integral and cherished aspects of childhood, universally embraced by children regardless of their family background or socioeconomic status. Each child possesses their own array of toys or games tailored to their individual circumstances.

Characteristic features of toys according to different *Acharyas* are as-

- According to *Acharya Charaka*, there should be many types of toys for a child, those that make some sound, attractive to look at, light, those that do not have sharp edges and cannot enter the mouth. There should not be toys that cause death and fear to the child. [19]
- According to *Ashtanga Sangraha*, toys should ideally be crafted from materials like *Laksha* offering vibrant colours, appealing designs and pleasant sounds, while being larger in size. They should not be pointed or frightening to children. Instead, they could take the form of various animals such as horses or cows, as well as colourful flowers, fruits and other symbols of auspiciousness. [20]
- According to *Acharya Kashyapa*, on any auspicious day of the sixth month, after worshipping the deity and satisfying the *Brahmins* and reciting of *Swasti Recitationa*, make a round or square altar of four hands' size by plastering it with cow dung and water at a sacred place in the middle of the house or *Vastu* (big building). Near that altar, some toys made up of precious stones of gold, silver, copper, bronze, lead, iron, pearls etc and other toys made up of edible items like *Pishti* etc should be kept there. Toys of different kind of shapes of animals and birds should also be placed. Toys according to different gender should also be there. After this, the child should be bathed in the same manner, adorned with ornaments and new clothes and made to sit in the middle of the circle facing east for a while. After a while of sitting in middle of

circle, the child holds, touches or pulls any kind of toy describe his *Prakriti*. The features of toys are described as these should be bright, light, not hard, not too sharp, not too crooked, not very new, easy to be pulled from one place to other and that are interesting with various kinds of sound producing effects. [21]

- Since the age of *Sindhu* civilization, hundreds of toys are acquired, which were used by children for their entertainment. In that civilization, few common toys were- bull with moving head, monkey sliding on rope, whistle made of clay, figures of birds etc.
- Children's toys as have survived at *Taxila* (4<sup>th</sup> Century B.C.) are mainly of terra-cotta. That being the commonest and least destructible materials. [22]
- *Mahābhārata* has given description of flying of birds after tying with thread. It was the favourite game of children during those days. [23]
- The poet *Aśvaghoṣa* has written that *Gautama Buddha* in his childhood was offered to play with toys-elephant, deer, horse and bulls with chariot. [24]

### **Clinical significance of Kridanaka** [25]

Toys help the child by increasing their capacity of imagination. Various kind of toys are there which work multi purposely like child learn about different animals, storytelling and these are also soft to chew, non-toxic etc. There are *Mantra*-chanting toys are also present. The toys also help to determine the milestones of child. At the age of 2 months, by the sight of toys child's arms get activated which indicates their fine motor development. The tower of blocks activity helps children develop their small hand muscles. By carefully stacking blocks like 2, 3, 6 or even 9 blocks on top of each other, kids learn to control their fingers and hands more precisely. As no. of blocks increase gradually with age like making of train, bridge etc. help us to determine the proper growth and development of child. This also helps them improve their grip and coordination, which are important skills for writing, drawing and doing other tasks that require using their hands. This description focuses on how the activity directly supports the development of fine motor skills through engaging and age-appropriate play.

### **DISCUSSION**

When comparing *Kaumaragara* with modern Special Care Neonatal Units in neonatology, it becomes evident that Ayurvedic nursing homes adhered to highly recommended aseptic measures even before the emergence of modern neonatology. According to Ayurvedic classics, the ideal environment should be expansive, pleasant, well-ventilated, well-lit, protected

from drafts, free from insects, pests and animals. Also adapting clothing, linen must also be there. Similarly, modern neonatal and paediatric care units implement modified techniques and well-appointed setups with essential equipment, adequate lighting, ventilation, humidity and temperature control, medications and other necessities meeting the fundamental requirements of such units. In today's fast-paced lifestyle and competitive environment, parents often find it challenging to dedicate sufficient time to their children, leading to a growing trend of relying on baby sitters or utilizing crèches and day care centres or hostels. While replicating an ancient methodology entirely may not be feasible, certain adaptations can prove beneficial. Approach of parents towards the baby care centres are also related to the environment provided by them. The most important space in which activities will be performed is the play area. The play area of infants needs to be configured so that they can grasp and reach age-appropriate toys or pull themselves up when practicing standing or walking (Vance & Boals, 1989). Infants will need to be down on the floor exploring their environments with toys to look at, listening to things around them, feeling, chewing, pushing, pulling, stacking, rolling, turning, squeezing and shaking. When children are engaged in play in any type of environment (either indoor or outdoor), they are naturally involved with some physical movement. Researchers on physical education and movement emphasize that the preschool years are a fundamental period for the development of motor or other skills. The play area must be kept clean and free from any potentially dangerous items such as knives, sharp or pointed toys and small objects that could be swallowed and endanger the child's life.<sup>[26]</sup> Now, play is essential for the healthy development of children across all age groups. It impacts every aspect of their growth, providing them with opportunities to explore themselves, understand others and engage with the physical world (Catron & Allen, 2007). Play fosters social, emotional, cognitive and physical development in unique ways that cannot be replicated through other means. Through play activities, children learn to interact with their peers and develop fundamental understandings about the world around them. The Multiple Benefits of Play are as development of motor skills, sharpening of the senses, expression of emotions- empathy, sharing, turn taking- harmony, ordering, sequencing, vocabulary growth and increased concentration, flexibility, role taking, expansion of imagination and creativity, delay of gratification etc.

## CONCLUSION

Childhood is a very first and vulnerable stage of a life. Thus, a child has to pay a heavy price for a little carelessness. That is why *Acharyas* has described the construction and importance of *Kaumaragara*. As all the facilities are kept there for the babies so child can be properly taken care of and any kind of emergency condition can be avoided. Thus, for future, a healthy state can be maintained. Similarly, importance of *Kaumaradhara*, *Kridabhoomi* and *Kridanaka* is also explained. As these things affects the mental health of the child with his physical health. There is a saying in *Ayurveda* that *Dhatu*, *Dosha* and *Mala* should remain in *Sama* condition, in the same way, a happy mind is also important.

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