



### Review Article

## AN INSIGHT INTO CHARAKA SAMHITA SHARIRA STHANA- IN LIGHT OF TODAY'S MEDICAL PRACTICES AND NATIONAL POLICIES

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**KEYWORDS:** Ayurveda, Charaka Sharira, Embryology, Genetic, National Program, Paediatrics.

### ABSTRACT

**Background:** The subjects which are now a day brought in to light as scientific innovations are well described in background in the ancient Indian literature. Ayurveda, the indigenous system of medicine narrates about the genetic principles, embryology, antenatal care, post-partum care, and new born care in a systematic and stepwise manner in the eight chapters of *Charaka Samhita Sharira Sthana*. **Aim and Objectives:** To throw a light on the some hidden facts from *Charaka Samhita* revealing their resemblance with today's national medical practices and policies. **Material and methods:** Literature reviewed from different editions of *Charaka Samhita*, modern scientific literature on subjects like genetics, embryology, obstetrics and paediatrics have been reviewed. **Discussion:** *Charaka Samhita Sharira Sthana* is constructed in a very logical manner, which narrates the law of formation of universe and human life, microscopic to macroscopic transformation, consciousness, salvation, importance of non-consanguineous marriage and *Beeja Shuddhi* to prevent genetic diseases and syndromes, principles of genetics, formation and month wise growth and development of embryo, organogenesis, teratogenicity potentials, anatomy of foetus and nutrition of foetus, daily regime for pregnant lady *Garbhini Paricharya* (antenatal care), *Prasoota* and *Sutika Paricharya* (post-partum care), *Jatamatra Paricharya* (new born care) in detailed, scientific and step wise manner in eight chapters thoroughly; and found to be time tested with today's medical practices and national health policies. **Conclusion:** Charaka Samhita Sharira Sthana elaborates the principles of genetics, embryology, reproductive care, antenatal care, post natal care and new born care as practised in ancient India in scientific way which resembles today's RMNCH national program of Government of India.

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## INTRODUCTION

India is one among the few countries in the world having rich heritage of traditions, ritual practices and history of highly developed ancient era; health system is also not an exception for this. Ayurveda the indigenous system of medicine of India is said to be the foremost ancient and systematically arranged health science globally. All the cultural as well as scientific practices were at their best in ancient India. In addition it is considered as the science of life and not merely as the science of medicine. Ayu means the life and Veda means to know<sup>[1]</sup>, it means it is a science

which deals with the life and longevity. Ayurveda always emphasized on *Swasthasya Swasthya Rakshanam*<sup>[2]</sup> means the measures to be followed to maintain the health of healthy individuals. But even after with all efforts of *Swasthya Raksha* diseases occur, it focuses on the *Aturasya Vikara Prashamanam* means the treatment of the diseases of diseased persons. Ayurveda narrates the different protocols called as *Dinacharya*<sup>[3]</sup> (Daily health regime), *Ritucharya*<sup>[4]</sup> (seasonal health regime) and *Sadvritta* (moral and social etiquettes) for preservation of health and longevity along with

the different *Chikitsa Upakrama*<sup>[5]</sup> (treatment protocols). Thus Ayurveda has holistic approach towards diseases, health and life from theoretical and practical perspective.

Apart from this holistic approach, Ayurveda Acharyas were also aware about the implementation of health protocols and policies in synchronized, systematic and stepwise manner. This health related issues with their fundamentals were presented in orderly manner and preserved in the form of *Samhita Grantha*. The different order and organization of the chapters (*Adhyaya*) echoes the pearls of their ancient vision and wisdom. Charaka Samhita, one of the authentic and foremost tributary text of Ayurveda science narrates on formation of universe, male and female gametes, embryology, foetus, protocols of pregnancy and partum, post-partum care, and new born care in detail in the *Sharira Sthana*<sup>[6]</sup> (one of the section of the *Samhita*). This article highlights the ancient view of *Charaka* towards reproductive, maternal and child health care in succeeding paragraphs and conveys a key message to modern medical world on the ancient protocols and policies practised in India through the teachings of Ayurveda.

#### AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

To explore the scientific approach of the author to the subject in *Sharira Sthana* of *Charaka Samhita* in light of present day medical practices and national health care policies.

#### MATERIAL AND METHODS

For the present review work, different editions of *Charaka Samhita*, along with Sanskrit and Hindi commentaries on *Sharira Sthana* were critically reviewed. Data on health care practices and national health care policies were accessed from websites and literatures of official ministries, especially Ministry of Health and Family Welfare<sup>[7]</sup>, Government of India, textbooks of paediatrics<sup>[8-10]</sup> Family Welfare Survey Documents<sup>[11]</sup> etc. Other relevant documents were also screened from digital sources.

#### *Charaka Samhita Sharita Sthana: a brief review*

According to Acharya Charaka, *Sharira* (Physical body) is narrated from all the perspectives i.e. *Daivi* (supreme divinity level) and *Manusha* (human level) in the series of eight chapters and hence called as *Sharira Sthana*.<sup>[12]</sup> In these eight chapters the author had discussed different aspects of human life from different aspects such as spiritual, physiological, anatomical etc. with an insight in 8 chapters as given below.

In the first chapter named *Katidha Purushiya Sharira*, the author had established that

every entity of the universe have obscured their own origin in the origin of giant entire universe. This similarity of origin of all the subjects as well as objects of universe is the fundamental base of microscopic to macroscopic development and again macroscopic to microscopic relapse. Ayurveda believes in divinity and spirituality. Acharya Charaka put forth this theory of unique and universal formation of all the things of universe as the *Prakriti-Purusha Siddhanta* and described as *Vishva Utpatti*. The similarities between the foundation of universe and mankind at microscopic as well as macroscopic level are explained by Acharya Charaka through the concept of *Purusha* (consciousness, soul). To establish the harmony with super divinity through consciousness is the salvation, the main purpose of human birth. For this purpose *Naishthiki Chikitsa* had been explained

**Adhyaya Second-Atulya Gotriya Sharira:** After describing the formation of human at spiritual and microscopic level Acharya Charaka narrates the basic pillars of human body viz. humours (*Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*) at physical level in *Atulya Gotriya Adhyaya*. From the point of view of the conception, union of gametes and sharing of the genomic pool to form the best progeny is the pre-requisite and therefore characteristics of the couples has been discussed in this chapter. Couple attained sexual maturity belongs to *Atulya Gotriya* means different *Gotra*. Male and female partners should not belong to similar genetic tree and only such a couple should marry for better progeny to avoid genetic diseases in offspring. There is a chance of vitiation of the gametes with the *Dosha* due to faulty diet and life style practices. Vitiation of the *Beeja* or gametes will gives rise to genetic diseases in the child. According to Ayurveda *Beeja* carries the all necessary information required for the formation of all body parts. Healthy gametes or *Prakrita Beeja* controls and regulates the formation of healthy offspring without any anatomical deformity as well as the physiological malformation.

Vitiation of the part of *Beeja* controlling the formation of reproductive organ leads to the birth of child having anatomical deformity of genital system or functional derangements in sexual functions in future. These entire children will have either problem in sexual performance or fertility in future and labelled as *Trinaputrika*, *Varta*, *Vandhya*, *Shandha* etc., in *Charaka Sharira Sthana*. Combination of healthy *Matru* and *Pitru Beeja* (maternal and paternal gametes) along with good uterine internal environment, appropriate *Kala* (9 month period of gestation) is the key factor of *Garbha* or embryo formation. If there is defect in

any one of these factors, it gives rise to formation of foetus with congenital anomalies described as *Hinanga* (absence of part of organ or complete organ), *Adhikanga* (replication of part of organ or complete organ), *Vikrutanga* (defect in anatomical structure of organ) or *Vikrita Indriya* (defects in the sensory organs) by Acharya Charaka. In addition to genetical causes of congenital diseases, different physiological signs to detect the pregnancy, external signs in maternal body physique to identify the gender of baby are also explained in this chapter.

**Adhyaya Third- Khuddika Garbha Avakranti Sharira:** *Khuddika* means 'in short', and *Garbha Avakranti* means stepwise achievement of foetal growth and development. *Matruja Beeja* (maternal gamete), *Pitruja Beeja* (paternal gamete), *Rasa* (nutrients), *Satmya* (foetal adaptations), *Atmaja Bhava* (soul and spirituality) of the *Garbha*, *Sattva* (behavioural development) of the *Garbha* (foetus) are the six main stakes of human foetal development. As per the theory of *Charaka Sharira Sthana* there is development of different human body parts as well as behaviour from these six different stakes.

All the soft organs like skin, blood, muscle tissues, adipose tissue, heart, liver, spleen, gall bladder, lungs, kidneys, stomach, large and small intestines, abdominal fat are originated from *Matrija Beeja*. All the tough body parts like scalp and body hairs, nails, bones, tendons, blood vessels are derived from *Pitruja Beeja*. Longevity, memory, happiness, sorrow, intellect, confidence, ego, efforts, greed, affections, and vitality are of *Atmaja* (spiritual) origin. Growth of foetus, maintenance of viability of foetus, satiety, strength and enthusiasm are derived from the *Rasa bhava* (nutritional cradle) of the individual. Healthiness, enthusiasm, satisfaction, voice, complexion, gratification of child in future depend on the *Satmyaja* (adaptability of diet and environment) *Bhava*. Devotion, Character, Almightyness, fear, temperament, solemnity, constancy are the *Sattvaja* (Behavioural) origin features of foetus. In addition if there is vitiation of the part of *Beeja* forming *Anga- Avayava* (body part or organ), there will be *Vikriti* (deformity) of that particular organ through vitiation of any one of these six factors.

Briefly *Garbha* is the combination of *Matruja*, *Pitruja*, *Rasaja*, *Atmaja*, *Satmyaja*, and *Sattvaja Bhava* and hence Acharya Charaka coined this chapter of *Sharira Sthana* as *Khuddika Garbha Avakranti Shariram*.

**Adhyaya fourth-Mahat Garbha Avakranti Sharira:** Growth and development of foetus in month wise manner during embryonic life is explained as *Mahat Garbha Avakranti Adhyaya*. Embryo is like an adhesive steak form in first month of pregnancy and no organ differentiation is possible at this stage of embryonic life. According to Acharya Charaka second month of pregnancy is crucial as sex differentiation of foetus occurs in second month. There is differentiation of all the organs and multiple systems abruptly and simultaneously during third month of gestation. As organs starts to develop, formation of heart is expressed in the form of greed by foetus in fourth month of the pregnancy and one should provide the all wills of foetus through maternal affection to particular food stuffs. The increase in the foetal muscle mass and blood volume is characteristics of fifth month of gestation, while improvement in the complexion and strength of the foetus is sixth month of developmental milestone of foetal growth. In seventh month of embryonic development all the body tissues as well as the internal organs like heart attains the maximum anatomical and physiological maturity. During eighth month it is said that, there is instability in vital functions and viability of foetus and therefore the child taking birth in eighth month have suspicious viability and life. Ninth month onwards is said to be a *Prakrita Prasava Kala* or delivery period.

**Adhyaya Fifth -Purusha Vichaya Sharira:** Human is the creation of the universal force and hence all the external assets in the world shows resemblance with that of human characters and this consideration is said to be *Loka Purusha Samya Siddhanta* in *Charaka Samhita*. After explaining the resemblance of universal assets with that of human characters; at the end of chapter Acharya Charaka narrates the *Satya Buddhi* means a spiritual vision to behave with compassion. All these aspects are called as *Naishthiki Chikitsa* (spiritual treatment) for salvation. Throughout this chapter one can find the description of the cause and effect relationship between human and universe and basic aim of the generation of universe and mankind.

**Adhyaya Sixth: Sharira Vichaya Sharira:** *Sharira* means a human body and *Vichaya* means to dissect and to analyse, it means the chapter which deals with dissection and analysis of body parts of human is called as *Sharira Vichaya Adhyaya*. Analysis through the perspective of *Gurvadi Guna* or physical properties like heavy, light etc., cause and effect relationship between diet and digestion capacity, measures to increase the strength and immunity are the cornerstone of this chapter. This chapter

describes about the formation and maintenance of human physique to increase and longevity of human being.

**Adhyaya Seventh: Sankhya Sharira:** *Sankhya* means a number. Numbers or counts of different body parts, structures and organs are explained in detail in this chapter. The formation of body tissue and *Pancha Bhautika Samghatana* (five basic elemental constitution) viz. *Prithvi* (solid), *Jala* (Liquid), *Teja* (heat and light), *Vayu* (air molecules) and *Akasha* (vacuum or space) of different body parts has been explained in this chapter. Elemental constitution along with the numbers in human physique is the core description in this chapter.

**Adhyaya eighth: Jatisutriya Adhyaya:** Mentions about the menstrual health, laws of intercourse, conception, procedures to maintain gestation, diet or drugs causing abortion, symptoms of IUGR (Intra Uterine Growth Retardation), treatment during pregnancy to prevent IUGR, *Garbhini Paricharya* (month wise regimen for pregnant lady), measures for easy delivery, measures for easy and timely fall of placenta, protocols to prevent and manage post-partum complications, immediate care of new born babies including *Pranapratyagamana* (resuscitation), cleansing of baby, umbilical cord cutting and post cord cutting care of umbilical cord, *Raksha Karma* means disinfectant care for mother and baby, *Prakriti Parikshana* (examination of new born baby for congenital anomalies), *Dhatri* (wet nurse), qualities of breast milk and measures to purify and increase the breast milk, foundation of *Sutikagara* (Delivery and post-partum wards), foundation of *Kumaragara* (infant rearing room), bed and cloth of child, ornaments and toys of child in detailed and in very scientific manner.

## DISCUSSION

India is a land of saints and spiritual peoples, having a far future vision millennium years ahead, and therefore almost in all domain of knowledge Indian ancient scholars got the place at Everest through their intellect and visionary task even in today's evidence based scientific era. Ayurveda explained preventive as well as curative aspects towards health in all the outlooks. Ayurveda emphasized on Reproductive health and is at key significance, as it is essential for healthy and long living progeny formation. Therefore, since ancient time, persuaded protocols have been decided for reproductive health and care of new offsprings. Ayurveda narrates in detail about the formation of gametes, appropriate age for the formation of gametes, protocols to be followed during menstrual cycle, appropriate age for marriage, appropriate couple for marriage, procedure of intercourse and

conception, protocols to be followed during pregnancy, parturition and post-partum phase, care of new-born babies. All these care are described with guidelines and protocols and termed as *Beeja Shuddhi* (purification procedures for healthy gamete formation), *Garbhini Paricharya* (Antenatal care-ANC), *Jatamatra Paricharya* (neonatal care).

Ayurveda considers all this area of health under the heading of *Kaumarabhritya*. *Kaumarabhritya*<sup>[13]</sup> is a branch of Ayurveda that deals with the practice of child rearing, care of growth and development of child, purifying the vitiated breast milk of mother and wet nurse, management of the childhood diseases and management of the childhood disease that occurred due to the evil spirits. From this definition it is clear that *Kaumarbhritya* covers reproductive, maternal, neonatal and child health.

Ayurveda put forth the subject in very systematic and scientific manner in verses or *Shloka* form. A series of *Shloka* form one chapter or *Adhyaya*. Cluster of *Adhyaya* having relevant information about the particular portion of subject is termed as *Sthana*. Every *Sthana* shows connectivity to next and ultimately takes a form known as *Samhita*. *Charaka Samhita* is one of the ancient and authentic texts available today. Knowledge and treatment guidelines explained in *Charaka Samhita* are widely popular and are used in day to day clinical practices. In *Sharira Sthana* Acharya Charaka has explained about the formation of the universe and human being. Clinical perspectives of all these eight chapters of *Sharira Sthana* of Charaka Samhita are discussed in succeeding paragraphs.

### Adhyaya one – Katidha Purushiya Sharira

From clinical point of view the knowledge of basic foundation of human body with microscopic to macroscopic development is very essential to understand the anomalies occurring at the time of formation of human body. Knowledge about the consciousness and its role in the formation of human being is key factor for physician to understand the congenital and behavioural diseases.

### Adhyaya Second: Atulya Gotriya Sharira

From clinical point of view this chapter throws light on the selection of couple for marriage to obtain the healthy offsprings. *Atulya Gotra Vivaha* is the non-consanguineous marriage which is proven as the one of the solution to overcome genetic diseases. Different conditions explained by Charaka as *Trinputrika*, *Varta*, *Vandhya* resembles with persons with ambiguous sex and genetic

syndromes like Turner, Klinefelter syndrome. All these facts about the formation of foetus explained in Charaka Samhita are coming into the light nowadays through the knowledge of genetics, embryology and obstetrical science. Signs of detection of pregnancy explained by Acharya Charaka resembles with today's physiological changes in pregnant women. *Hinanga, Adhikanga, Vikritanga* concepts of Charaka are the backbone of all today's concepts of dysgenesis, agenesis of organ and congenital defects or anomalies.

### **Adhyaya Third - Khuddika Garbha Avakranti Sharira**

From clinical point of view formation of different organs from different *Matruja Beeja, Pitruja Beeja* and *Rasaja Bhava* explained by Acharya Charaka resembles the trigeminal embryonic disc formation and differentiation of different organs and systems during early embryonic period of development from respective germinal layers. Clinical message from Acharya Charaka is that, the outcome of pregnancy is the overall effect of quality of sperm, ovum, maternal diet, environment and life style of mother during gestation and fate of foetus.

### **Adhyaya fourth-Mahat Garbha Avakranti Sharira**

From clinical point of view all these embryological growth and development described in Ayurveda texts match up to certain extent with today's embryological growth, and administration of month wise diet regimen to mother with keeping fundamentals of month wise foetal development in mind, will help to achieve good outcome of pregnancy with minimal complication to mother as well as the baby. Considering the month wise stages of embryonic development physician has to plan for the treatment or regimen for pregnant women.

### **Adhyaya Fifth -Purusha Vichaya Sharira**

From clinical point of view all this correlation helps during the treatment of psychosomatic and psychological illnesses. The knowledge of cause and effect relationship is the fundamental of the Ayurveda treatment and diagnosis.

### **Adhyaya Sixth: Sharira Vichaya Sharira**

From clinical point of view application of *Gurvadi Guna* or physical properties of the assets in the universe, and *Bala Vridhdhikara Bhava* (immunity and strength enhancing measures) to mother during pregnancy helps to form the healthy and strong foetus.

### **Adhyaya Seventh: Sankhya Sharira**

From clinical point of view this chapter is useful in diagnosis and differential diagnosis of the

disease from Ayurveda perspective. Increased or decreased number of the body parts or organs is indicative of genetic or embryological defects, and hence this chapter gives Ayurveda insight to look into genetic and embryological diseases.

### **Adhyaya eighth: Jatisutriya Adhyaya**

From clinical point of view this chapter of the Sharira Sthana emphasized on prevention of abortions, Antenatal care, postnatal care, post-partum care, new born care and child rearing practices. Government of India has established and administered health policies through systematic steps called as National Health Program<sup>[14]</sup> by health workers. All these National Program run through different health centres ranging from primary health centre as grass root to a Health ministry at its apex. Family Welfare department of Ministry of Health has planned a Reproductive, Maternal, Neonatal, and Child Health [RMNCH]<sup>[15]</sup> program, as a primary National Health Program for paediatrics and maternity health. The program is regarding all health protocols of child health right from conception up to attaining adulthood. All these health policies regarding child and maternal care are protocol and infrastructure based including NBCU<sup>[16]</sup> (New Born Care Unit) SNCU<sup>[17]</sup> (Special Neonatal Care Unit), NICU<sup>[18]</sup> (Neonatal Intensive Care Unit) and following the health care guidelines. Reproductive and Maternal health covers the use of contraceptives, conceptions, antenatal care and Post-partum care of mother at delivery and ante natal care centres. Identifying high risk pregnancies, prevention of health hazards and nutritional deficiencies, and ultimately care to improve the outcome of delivery through minimum maternal and neonatal morbidity and mortality are certain primary goals<sup>[19]</sup> of the RMNCH Program.

To summarise these eight chapters of *Charaka Samhita Sharira Sthana*, it gives a bright insight about the microscopic to macroscopic transformation of universe, aim of human life, spirituality, importance of non-consanguineous marriage, importance and procedures for purification of gametes, measures for prevention of infertility and genetic diseases in community, knowledge of formation of embryo and month wise development until attaining complete maturity as full term foetus, antenatal care as *Garbhini Paricharya*, Partum care as *Prasoota Paricharya*, post-partum care as *Sutika Paricharya*, new born care as *Jatamatra Paricharya* and New born Care unit (NBCU) as *Kumaragara*. All this description resembles with today's principles of Genetics, embryology, antenatal care, New born care and National health policies in very scientific ways.

At the end of discussion it is clear that, every animate being has the tendency to reproduce the progeny. For the production of superior genes and offspring to withstand newer environmental and survival challenges, humans have developed certain protocols as antenatal care that should be followed in pregnancy. The first written treatise on Ayurveda, Charaka Samhita narrates this ancient approach of antenatal care in 8 chapters of Sharira Sthana. Charaka Sharira starts from *Avyakta* level of *Aatma* or *Purusha* and ends with *Vyakta* level i.e. newborn human, thorough scientific background of genetics, embryology, antenatal, and natal and postnatal care. Productions of healthy and viable productive gametes, proper structural and functional development of genital organs are certain prerequisites of reproduction. *Atulya Gotra Vivaha* i.e. Non-consanguineous marriage at particular age of maturity, coitus as per classical way for facilitating conception, and following of the *Garbhini Paricharya* (monthly dietary as well as daily routine) are core parts of ancient antenatal care. Though the approach and wisdom of Acharya Charaka in Sharira Sthana is far beyond what has been tried to explain in this article; but this is an attempt to see the Charaka Samhita with today's modern insight.

#### CONCLUSION

Approach of Acharya Charaka towards reproductive, maternal, neonatal and child health is sequential, scientific and seems to be time tested suggesting Charaka Sharira as ancient version of today's genetics, embryology, maternal care, neonatal care and 'National RMNCH (Reproductive, Maternal, Neonatal and Child health) program' approach, which defines the preventive as well as curative approach towards Reproductive, Maternal and Neonatal Health.

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