

World's First Paediatricians: Kashyapa and Jeevaka

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Abstract

The World's first Paediatricians Kashyapa and Jeevaka were Indians, who lived in the sixth century B.C. and whose pioneering works on the child care and children's diseases were as relevant today as many of the modern concepts of child health. The first manuscripts on the management of children, some years before Christ, were Kashyapa Samhita and Vridha Jeevaka Tantra, both scholarly treatises on child care and children's diseases brought out by Jeevaka, Kashyapa's pupil. The chapter on Kumarbhrata (i.e. service to children) in his Sushruta Samhita, the classical encyclopedia of Ayurvedic medicine, was perhaps the first record of paediatrics anywhere in the World.[1]

Keywords: World's first paediatrician; Kashyapa; Kashyapa Samhita; Jeevaka; Vridha Jeevaka Tantra.

Kashyapa

He was Father of the Devas and Asuras and also one of the Saptarshi Brahmins. According to Hindu Mythology, he is the son of Marichi, one of the ten sons (Manasa-putras) of the Creator Brahma. The Prajapati Daksha gave his thirteen daughters in marriage to Kashyap. Kashyapa was the author of the treatise



Kashyap Samhita, or Braddha Jivakiya Tantra, which is considered, a classical reference book on Ayurveda especially in the fields of Ayurvedic pediatrics, gynecology and obstetrics.[2]

Contributions to Paediatrics

Galactogouges recipe

- Nadika with jaggery treated properly with hing & jati, milk, meat juice and wine are good for increasing milk production.
- Use of ghrita, oil and enemas is also helpful.

Milk Purifying Recipe

- He described drugs used for destroying raksans (antiseptics).
- This milk should be given with honey for Kasha.

Teeth Eruption

- Dentition is one of the important landmark in assessing the growth and development of child.

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(Received on 14.06.2013, accepted on 09.07.2013)

Study of Embryology

- He described fertilization and development of embryo.

Diarrhoea

- Discoloration of body
- Uneasiness in mouth
- Insomnia
- These features develop before manifestation of diarrhoea

Colic

- Child rejects the breast, Cries, Sleeps in supine position, Has stiffness of abdomen, Cold & perspiration on face

Vomiting

- Child is seized with sleepiness & yawning

Dyspnoea and Hiccups

- Child who signs hot breath from chest develops dyspnoea
- Child having sudden airy eructation develops hiccups.

*Marasmus**Definition of Phakka (Marasmus)*

When a child after attaining 1 year of age does not go (walk) on his feet, he is known to have Phakka or marasmus.

Classification of Marasmus: marasmus due to

- 1) Due to ingestion of breast milk
- 2) Due to presence of embryo or fetus
- 3) Complication of an another disease

Kashyapa, the ancient rishi, due to his remarkable contribution to the field of paediatrics, can be considered as the first paediatrician in the world.[3]



Jeevak Kaumarbhritya (525-450 B.C.)

Jeevak kaumarbhritya was a Physician of Gautama Buddha in 6th Century B.C.

He was the first "Historical" doctor of India and the world, whose skill and excellence in field of Medical science had no bounds. He was not a doctor of any particular state but his work field was the whole "Aryavart" (Northern & Central India and he was a doctor of both ordinary and extra-ordinary people. Jeevaka was the son of a courtesan Salavati and a prince Kumara (Kumara Bhartrika or one brought up by Kumara is another title of Jeevaka in Buddhist tradition). He wanted to cultivate one art or science which could be of eternal benefit to humanity.

From Bihar his birth-place in the East, he went to another end of the country's western tip, Taxila (a.k.a. Takshashila, now in Pakistan). University of Taxila was famous for imparting medical sciences along with metaphysics and mathematics.[4]

Jeevaka studied medicine for seven years and the time had come to test his proficiency. His teacher gave him a spade and pick axe and asked him to examine every plant growing around Taxila for a Yojana (twelve miles) and bring a plant which has no medicinal value. Jeevaka obeyed and examined every plant (specified) and reported that he did not find any plant which had no medicinal property. The teacher was satisfied that Jeevaka had become adept.

This brilliant student was poor and could not pay fees to his Guru. Instead the Guru himself gave him a petty amount to last for a day or two after which Jeevaka had to subsist on his newly gained knowledge and also undertake journey back home thousand miles away. On the way, he learnt that a rich merchant's wife was suffering from bad migraine for seven years. Jeevaka volunteered to cure her. Her husband gave him 16,000 gold coins along with a coach for further travel. [5]

Later he operated on another business man's skull for worms and cured him. A ruler was cured of fistula on way to Benaras. A Shreshthi's son while performing a gymnastic feat had got his intestines entangled and could not digest food or ease himself in the normal way. He looked very pale and his veins appeared prominent all over the body. Jeevaka performed a very difficult and complicated surgery and rectified the condition, put the intestines in correct position and stitched the skin. By the time Jeevaka reached his hometown near Sravasti, he had become rich and famous. He became the court-physician of Bimbisara, a king.

Jeevaka is remembered for his big charities. The monastery he dedicated to his guru

Buddha lasted for several centuries. Jeevaka introduced several healthy habits and routines in the daily life of the community.

He was a devoted Vipassana mediator and reached advanced stages in his spiritual path.[6]

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