

ROLE OF PANCHAKARMA IN CHILD HEALTH CARE

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is an ancient system of holistic healing that originated thousands of years ago. It views health as a balance between the body, mind and spirit, and it emphasizes the importance of living in harmony with nature. *Ayurveda* explains the *Sharirika* and *Manasika* approaches in the treatment of disorders. Here, treatment is branched into two wings namely, *Shamana Chikitsa* (curative therapy) and *Shodhana Chikitsa* (detoxification therapy). *Shamana Chikitsa* includes *Deepana* (appetizer), *Pachana* (digestive) etc and *Shodhana Chikitsa* includes *Panchakarma* procedures which are best for uprooting the disease from root itself. *Panchakarma* is a cleansing and rejuvenating therapy that helps in removing toxins from the body and restore balance. This principle applies to children as well, regardless of age, as the basic constituents of the body are the same in all age groups, as explained by

Acharya Charaka. However, in children, physiological participation of *Dosha*, *Dushya* and *Mala* are less as compared to that in adults.^[1] Therefore, the type and prevalence of disease are also different in children and thus paediatric care needed utilization of various approaches for the management of *Bal Rogas* such as herbal remedies, disciplinary life style, *Rasayana*, *Lehana* and *Panchakarma*. *Acharya Kashyapa* has explained that in case of children, excessive use of *Shoshana*, *Samshodhana* and *Raktamokshana* therapies are contraindicated and instead they should be managed with *Snigdha*, *Sheeta* and *Madhura Annapana*, *Lepa* or *Parisheka* therapies.^[2] The strength of the child should be the main criteria rather than the age when adopting *Panchakarma* procedures in children. Factors such as *Bala* (strength), *Kala* (timing), *Desa* (location), *Agni* (digestive fire) etc., should be checked before employing the

treatment in any age group. Hence, the classics, especially the *Kashyapa Samhita*, explains *Panchakarma* in children with detailed explanations of *Snehana* (oleation therapy), eight types of *Swedana* (sudation therapy), *Vamana* (therapeutic vomiting) and *Virechana* (purgation) along with detailed explanations of *Basti* (enema) and *Nasya* (nasal administration). *Basti* is considered as nectar for the child. However, certain modifications in the classical pattern are required to make the treatment more justified in children.

KEYWORDS: Paediatrics, *Panchakarma*, *Snehana*, *Swedana*, *Shastikashali Pinda Sweda*, *Vamana*, *Basti*.

INTRODUCTION

The health status, growth and nutrition of a child during their formative years lays the foundation for their future. It is crucial to administer medicines judiciously to prevent diseases, utilizing remedies that are predominantly *Hridya*, *Sheeta* and *Madhura* in nature. According to *Acharya Kashyapa*, in the field of *Kaumarbhritya*, one must remain vigilant during treatment, as the clinical manifestation of diseases in children often present challenges in diagnosis, leading to confusion. Due to the limitations in presentation of symptom and disease manifestation in children, a precise diagnosis with a high index of suspicion is essential before implementing *Panchakarma Chikitsa*.

Panchakarma, an ancient therapeutic procedure, holds a significant place in medical practice, predating the emergence of other medical sciences. According to our classical texts, it is considered the most effective method for curing diseases at their roots. The *Panchakarma* process aims to restore the equilibrium of *Doshas*, thereby reducing the likelihood of recurrence. *Acharya Charaka* stated that the *Vasti* process constitutes half of *Kayachikitsa* management^[3], while *Acharya Sushruta* mentioned that *Raktamokshana* can cure half of the diseases in *Kayachikitsa*.^[4] Since *Vasti* and *Raktamokshana* are integral parts of *Panchakarma*, it can be inferred from these texts that all procedures within *Panchakarma* hold the potential to completely cure diseases without ambiguity.

Panchakarma offers a comprehensive solution for numerous ailments by restoring *Dosha* equilibrium, as emphasized by *Acharya Sushruta's* assertion that *Sama Dosha Samagni* (balance of *Doshas* and *Agni*) is fundamental to health.^[5]

Panchakarma in Balroga

The basic prerequisites for *Panchakarma* procedures i.e., *Purva Karma* involves *Deepana*, *Pachana* (administering oral medicines to improve digestion and enhance *Agni*), *Snehana* (oleation) and *Swedana* (hot fomentation). *Panchakarma* procedures (*Pradhana Karma*) such as *Vamana*, *Virechana*, *Basti* etc., are performed to flush out toxins from the body through the nearest tract i.e., either through the mouth or anus. Following these procedures, precautions and dietary regimens (*Paschat Karma*) are advised to prevent further complications, to achieve the desired results and restore the patient's body to the normal state.

The five therapies comprising *Panchakarma*^[6] are

1. *Vamana* – Therapeutic Emesis
2. *Virechana* – Therapeutic Purgation
3. *Niruha/ Asthapana Basti* – Decoction Enema
4. *Anuvasana Basti* – Oil and Ghee Enema, also known as unctuous Enema
5. *Nasya* - Nasal insufflation

Acharya Sushruta has regarded blood as the fourth *Dosha*^[7] and included *Raktamokshana*, i.e., bloodletting, as one of the five *Panchakarma* measures.

Application of *Panchakarma* therapy in paediatrics is crucial. Childhood is a critical period for growth and development, encompassing physical, mental and social aspects. *Panchakarma* measures are equally effective in paediatric patients as they are in adults, provided precautions are taken to prevent complications. Some modifications in *Panchakarma* for paediatric practice have been explained to some extent in the classics.

Purvakarma

The set of procedures which facilitates the removal of toxins from the tissues is collectively called as *Poorvakarma*. These procedures help to move the morbid *Dosha* from *Shakha* (body tissues) to *Koshta* (G.I.T.) and improve the digestion of *Ama* (*Ama-Pachana*) at gut level as well as at cellular level within a duration of 3-7 days, supporting bio-purification.

Deepana and Pachana

The process of improving *Agni* holds great importance in normalizing body physiology. *Agni* is responsible for *Bala*, *Varna* and *Ayu*. In paediatric cases, medicines such as *Musta*, *Ativisha*, *Trikatu*, etc., can be used for *Deepana-Pachana* process.

Snehana

Snehana is crucial for making *Doshas* soluble, thereby facilitating their easy removal from natural orifices. It is a procedure by which required quantity of *Snigdha* is brought to the body by the use of *Sneha dravyas*.^[8] In paediatric cases, *Abhyanga* holds great importance in making the baby *Snigdha*, aiding in the myelination of nervous tissue during this developmental stage. Internal *Snehana* may not always be necessary as babies are already *Snigdha* due to their diet rich in milk, milk products and sweet items. If internal *Snehana* is required, *Pravicharana Sneha* should be opted for.

Swedana

Swedana or Sudation alleviates body stiffness, relieves heaviness and counteracts feelings of cold.^[9] It is of two types: *Sagni* and *Niragni Sweda*. In paediatric cases, caution must be exercised during the *Swedana* process due to the soft, delicate nature of the baby's skin and underdeveloped sweat glands. *Acharya Kashyapa* outlined two specific sudation processes: *Hasta* and *Pata Sweda*, which help prevent complications such as burns, fainting, skin discoloration, thirst and fever. Hand-based (*Hasta*) *Sweda* is applicable for children up to four months^[10], while cloth-based (*Pata*) *Sweda* is suitable for those above six years. Other techniques like *Nadi Sweda*, *Pinda Sweda* and *Avagaha Sweda* can be employed for children over one year of age.

- **Types:** *Acharya Kashyapa* mentioned 8 types of *Swedana Karma* - *Hasta*, *Pradeha*, *Nadi*, *Prastara*, *Sankara*, *Upanaha*, *Avagaha* and *Parisheka*.^[11]

- ***Shashtika Shali Pinda Sweda***

This is a commonly practised method of *Swedana* involving the application of *Shashtika Shali* (a variety of rice) in *Pottalis* (boluses tied in cloth) which is particularly beneficial for paediatric patients.

- **Materials and Equipment:** *Panchakarma Droni*, gas stove, vessels, cotton pieces (1ft x 1ft), cotton thread, medicated oils for *Abhyanga* (e.g. *Ksheerabala Taila*), medicated decoction (*Balamoola Kwatha*), cow milk - 1 litre, *Shashtika Shali* (special variety of rice) - 500gm.
- **Procedure:** The procedure involves cooking *Shashtika Shali* rice in milk and *Balamoola* decoction, making *Pottalis* from the cooked rice and heating them in a mixture of milk

and the same decoction. After massaging the patient with warm medicated oil, the warm *Pottalis* are gently applied over the body. Care must be taken to ensure that the heat is tolerable by touching the *Pottalis* over the dorsum of the patients' foot or the physicians' hand. The procedure lasts for about half to one hour, after which the body of the patient is wiped off with soft towels and the patient is advised to take rest before having bath with warm water. *Shashtika Shali Pinda Sweda* is a highly beneficial form of *Sankara Sweda*.

Pradhanakarma

Vamana

Bala is a stage characterized by a delicate body and mind, with the dominance of *Kapha Dosha*. Therefore, *Mridu Vamana*, where the stomach is filled with milk or breast milk followed by physical stimulation of the throat, has been recommended. *Acharya Kashyapa* mentioned that babies who repeatedly emit vitiated milk from their stomach will never suffer from diseases.^[12]

Upon the baby's first breath, *Acharya* also advised undergoing the process of *Garbhodaka Vamana* using *Saindhava* and *Ghrita*. In another context, he stated that babies who vomit milk after breastfeeding will never suffer from diseases due to the expulsion of excessive *Kapha Dosha*. *Acharya Kashyapa* also mentions the *Alpa*, *Madhyama* and *Uttama Matra* of *Vamana Vega* in children as 2-3, 4-5 and 6-7 respectively.^[13]

- **Complications of Vamana**

Dryness of throat, *Vataroga* (neuromuscular disorders), fresh bleeding, giddiness.

Virechana

Administered cautiously in paediatric patients due to the risk of severe complications like dehydration, therapeutic purgation is a procedure aimed at eliminating vitiated *Doshas*, primarily *Pitta*, from the lower gastrointestinal tract through the anal route. While *Virechana*, a form of purgation, is indicated for children with *Pittaja Rogas*, it is advised to reserve this treatment for emergency situations whenever possible due to its potential risks. Nonetheless, *Virechana* is renowned for its effectiveness in *Pittaja* disorders, facilitating clarity of the sense organs and promoting the growth and development of the child.

The procedure involves administering purgative medicine on an empty stomach in early morning, with the dosage tailored to factors such as age, sex, strength of the patient and the

state of disease. *Virechana* typically begins approximately three hours after the medicine is taken, with the completion of bowel evacuation indicating successful purgation as per the described features for *Samyak Virechana*.

Following the *Virechana* procedure, patients are advised to rest completely and adhere to *Samsarjana Krama*. The assessment criteria for *Virechana* procedure are outlined in the classics, with number of *Vega* categorized into *Hina*, *Madhyama* and *Uttama*, and the quantity of medicine eliminated categorized as *Uttama*, *Madhyama* and *Hina Matra* of *Virechana* based on specific measurements. 10, 15, 30 *Vegas* of *Virechana* is considered as *Hina*, *Madhyama* and *Uttama Vega*, while 4, 3, 2 *Prastha* of the total medicine eliminated are considered as *Uttama*, *Madhyama* and *Hina Matra* of *Virechana*.

Revati, a childhood ailment, is one among the conditions curable by *Virechana*. The therapeutic agents commonly used for purgation include *Trivrit* (*Operculina turpethum*), *Eranda Taila* (Castor oil) and *Shankhini Taila* (Euphorbia oil).

- **Indications:** Constipation, *Krimi* (Worm infestation), *Kamala* (Jaundice), Chronic fever, Eczema, Allergic dermatitis, *Pakshaghata* (Hemiplegia), *Madhumeha* (Diabetes), *Arbuda* (Tumour), *Tamaka Shwasa* (Bronchial Asthma), *Galaganda* (Goitre) etc.
- **Contraindications:** *Krishna* (Emaciated patients), *Rajayakshma* (Tuberculosis), *Garbhini* (Pregnant women), *Navajwara* (Acute fever), *Hridroga* (Cardiac problems).
- **Complications:** Dehydration, Giddiness, Shock, Malena, Prolapsed rectum.

Basti

In childhood clinical practice, *Basti* is considered akin to nectar, as it can even be administered at the age of one year. *Basti* involves the administration of medicines in suspension form through the rectum or genitourinary tract using a specific apparatus called the *Basti Yantra* or enema can. However, *Niruha Basti*, a particular type of *Basti*, can potentially cause *Karshana* in a child, leading to poor development. To address this concern, *Acharya Kashyapa* recommended the use of *Anuvasana Basti*, where the quantity of oil should exceed that of the *Kashaya*.

Basti Karma is particularly useful in eliminating *Vata Dosha* and in diseases associated with *Vata Dosha*.^[14] Various formulations are commonly used in *Basti* therapy, including

Madhutailika Basti, Bala Guduchyadi Basti, Patolanimbadi Basti, Vaitarana Basti, Mustadi Yapana Basti and Tikta Ksheera Basti.

Nasya

Nasya, also known as nasal insufflation, involves the administration of medicines through the nostrils. It is primarily indicated for conditions where *Doshas* are aggravated and accumulated in the head and neck region. Various medicated oils and powders are used for *Nasya*, including *Panchendriya Vardhana Taila, Dhanvantara Taila, Anu Taila, Shadbindu Taila* and *Shunthi Churna* for *Pradhamana Nasya*.

There are two types of *Nasya* as mentioned by *Acharya Kashyapa: Brihana (Purana) Nasya* and *Karshana (Shodhana) Nasya*.^[15]

CONCLUSION

In paediatric care, various approaches are utilized to manage *Balroga*, including herbal remedies, disciplined lifestyle, *Rasayana, Lehana* and *Panchakarma*. *Panchakarma*, an integral component of *Chikitsa*, flourished at a time when other medical sciences were still in their infancy. According to our classical texts, it stands as the singular technique capable of curing diseases at their roots. The *Panchakarma* procedure has the efficacy to stabilize *Doshas*, thereby reducing the likelihood of relapse.

Acharya Charaka stated that in children, *Dosha, Dushya* and *Malas* in different *Vyadhi* are similar to adults but in smaller quantities, and their treatment modalities are determined based on the child's body weight, age and *Agni*. Whatever disease an adult suffers, a child undergoes a similar experience. *Panchakarma* therapy can easily be used in children with precautions. Various procedures, drugs, mode of administration, duration and frequency should be modified as per age, condition, severity, *Dosha, Desha, Kala* and *Prakriti* of the children.

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