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AYURVEDIC PERSPECTIVE ON SUPPORTIVE MANAGEMENT OF DOWN SYNDROME (TRISOMY 21): A CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Asmita Ashokrao Bhadre*, Shivkumar Martule

Mahagovinda Nivas, Ambedkar Society, Udgir, Dist. Latur, Maharashtra – 413517.

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***Corresponding Author: Asmita Ashokrao Bhadre**
Mahagovinda Nivas, Ambedkar Society, Udgir, Dist. Latur, Maharashtra – 413517.
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ABSTRACT

Down Syndrome (Trisomy 21) is the most common chromosomal disorder characterized by intellectual disability, hypotonia, distinctive facial features, developmental delay, and various systemic complications. While modern medicine offers supportive therapies, Ayurveda provides a holistic framework for understanding genetic and developmental disorders through concepts such as *Beejadushti*, *Beejabhaga Avayava Dushti*, *Prajnaparadha*, and *Garbha Sanskara*. This review explores Ayurvedic theories and supportive management strategies relevant to Down Syndrome. **Objectives: 1.** To analyze Down syndrome through Ayurvedic classical concepts. 2. To identify Ayurvedic measures that may support cognitive, neuromuscular, and systemic development in affected children. 3. To explore potential integrative approaches for improving quality of life and functional abilities. **Methods:** A conceptual review of classical Ayurvedic texts and contemporary scientific literature was conducted. Ayurvedic concepts related to congenital anomalies and supportive interventions like *Medhya Rasayana*, *Panchakarma*, diet, and lifestyle were analyzed. **Results:** Ayurveda correlates Down Syndrome with *Beejadushti* and impaired fetal development. Supportive measures such as *Medhya Rasayana* (*Brahmi*, *Mandukaparni*, *Shankhapushpi*), *Balya* and *Majjadhatu*-nourishing *dravyas*, along with therapies like *Abhyanga*, *Shirodhara*, *Nasya*, and *Basti*, may assist cognitive function, muscle tone, immunity, and overall development. These interventions do not cure chromosomal anomalies but can potentially improve quality of life and developmental outcomes. **Conclusion:** Ayurveda provides a holistic framework for understanding and supporting children with Down Syndrome. Integrative use of *Medhya*, *Rasayana* therapies, and gentle *Panchakarma* procedures can potentially enhance developmental abilities and quality of life. Further clinical evidence is needed to standardize protocols.

KEYWORDS: *Beejadushti*, Developmental Disorders, Down Syndrome, *Medhya Rasayana*, *Panchakarma*.

I. INTRODUCTION

Down syndrome is the most common chromosomal disorder, with an incidence of 1 in 700 live births worldwide.[1] It results from trisomy of chromosome 21, leading to characteristic phenotypic features such as flat facial profile, epicanthal folds, hypotonia, short stature, and variable intellectual disability.[2] Associated conditions include congenital heart disease, thyroid dysfunction, and recurrent infections.[3]

Ayurveda does not describe chromosomal abnormalities explicitly; however, the principles of *Beeja Dushti* (defects in ovum/sperm), *Garbha Vikaras* (fetal anomalies), and *Janmaja Vyadhis* (congenital disorders) provide insight into the origin and progression of such conditions. Classical texts emphasize *Garbhasanskara* (preconceptional and antenatal care) for healthy progeny, which correlates with preventive strategies for genetic and congenital disorders.[4]

This article aims to review Down syndrome in light of Ayurvedic principles and discuss possible supportive interventions to improve overall development and quality of life in affected children.

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK IN AYURVEDA

Genetic Disorders in Ayurveda

- Description of genetic disorders is seen in various text books of Ayurveda. According to **Charaka Samhita**, many factors are responsible for the abnormal *Samsthana, Varna* & *Indriya*. One of them is vitiation of ***Beeja*** **(ovum or sperm)** causes damage of genetic material-

"बीजात्म कर्माशय काल दौषै मातुस्तथाऽऽहारविहार दौषैः । कुर्वन्ति दोषा विविधानि दुष्टाः संस्थानवर्णेन्द्रिय वैकृतानि"।। (च.शा. २/२९)

Abnormal character or disease like blindness, deafness, etc. depend upon the vitiation of Beejabhaga presenting the particular organ or part of an organ with the Dosha.

Charaka explains mainly **five reasons** for the emergence of chromosomal disorders in a child.

1. ***Beeja Dosha*** **(बीज दोष)**- defects are in chromosome, gene etc.
2. ***Atma Karma*** **(आत्म कर्म)** - Inherited by parents as dominant or recessive traits and fresh mutations in chromosomes.
3. ***Ashaya Dosha*** **(आशय दोष)**- Defects structure of genital tract. (uterus, testis, ovary).
4. ***Kala Dosha*** **(काल दोष)** - Due to time factor like structure of genital trat. late primi where incidences of Down's Syndrome are maximum due to prolonged exposure of the ovarian follicles to the body and to environmental hazards.
5. ***Matru Ahara and Vihara*** **(मातृ आहार)**- Abnormal food and regimen, exposure to radiations, folic-acid deficiency with neural-tube defects (Mutation).

Classical Ayurvedic Interpretation of Down syndrome

- Classical Ayurvedic texts do not directly address Down syndrome and many other mental disorders.
- Down syndrome falls in the ***Adhyatmika*** branch of diseases which includes conditions with a spiritual cause, those coming from a past life.
- *Adhyatmika* disorders primarily affect *Buddhi* (intellect), *Smruti* (memory) and *Dhruti* (learning capacity and attention).
- Adhyatmika diseases include many **Genetic and Congenital disorders**.
- Genetic disorders, such as Down syndrome, can also be categorized as ***Adhi Bala Pravrutta*** indicating that they occur before conception.

Ayurvedic Approach towards Down syndrome

Down syndrome हा एक अनुवंशिक व्याधी आहे.

हेतु – बीजभागावयवदुष्टी (Genetic Disorder)

"यस्य-यस्य ह्यङ्गावयवस्य बीजे-बीजभाग उपतप्तो भवति तस्य-तस्याङ्गावयवस्य विकृतिरूपजायते, नोपजायते चानुपतापात्, तस्मादुभयोपपत्तिरप्यत्र"।

- Whatever *Avayava* denoting *Beeja* or *Beejabhaga* (quality and quantity), is affected by the vitiated Dosha that (that) one *Avayava* gets abnormality. Here, *Beeja* and *Beejabhaga*, may be considered as gametes and chromosomes, respectively.
- In Charaka, the effect of environmental and dietary factors in causing *Beeja, Beejabhaga Dosha* is clearly mentioned.

1. ***Beeja Dushti*** **(Genetic Basis)** - Defects in *Shukra* (sperm) and *Shonita* (ovum) due to improper diet, lifestyle, age, or Karmic factors lead to abnormalities in *Garbha Avayavas* (fetal organs).[5] This concept aligns with modern understanding of chromosomal nondisjunction causing Trisomy 21.
2. ***Garbha Vikaras*** **(Fetal Malformations)** - Intrauterine malnourishment and disturbed Rasadhatu supply contribute to poor development of intellect (*Dhi*), memory (*Smriti*), and motor functions. Hypotonia and delayed milestones can be understood as *Vata-Kapha Dushti* with *Majja Dhatu Kshaya*.

3. **Dosha Involvement**

- *Kapha* dominance → hypotonia, lethargy, broad facial features.
- *Vata* imbalance → delayed milestones, speech issues, and behavioral irregularities.
- *Pitta* derangement → metabolic and endocrine comorbidities (thyroid disorders, congenital heart disease).

Management of Down syndrome according to Ayurveda

A. Ayurvedic Supportive Management

1. Preventive Care (Preconception & Antenatal)

Garbhasanskara: Shodhana (detoxification via *Panchakarma*) and *Rasayana* (rejuvenation) before conception for purification of gametes.

Antenatal care: Use of *Rasayana dravyas* like *Shatavari, Amalaki, Guduchi*, and *Ashwagandha* for optimal Garbha Poshanam.

2. Child-Centered Interventions

a. Bal Panchakarma

A. बाह्य चिकीत्सा:-

1. *Abhyanga* with *Balya-Medhya tailas* (*Bala Taila, Ksheerabala Taila*) for neuromuscular tone.
2. **उद्धवर्तन / धान्यम्लधारा** - as per Dosha predominance and Bala of patient.
3. **स्नेहन** - धन्वन्तर तैल, महामाष तैल, महानारायण तैल, कार्पासस्थाद्य तैल.
4. **षष्ठीशाली पिंडस्वेद** / मांसपिंडस्वेद
5. **शिरोधारा** - *Shirodhara* / *Shiro Pichu* with *Brahmi Taila* for calming effect and improving concentration.

2. **नस्य** - क्षीरबला 101 आवर्त 4 - 4 drops .... 5 दिवस

3. **जिव्हाप्रतिसारण** - वचा चूर्ण + अकरकरा चूर्ण + खदिर चूर्ण
4. **बस्ती** - *Matra Basti* with *Ksheerabala Taila* for strengthening *Majja Dhatu.*
5. **राजयापन बस्ती** - मात्राबस्ती - सिंधूवारएरंड तेल- 20 ml निरूहराजयापन बस्ती – बृहत् छागलाद्य घृत 20ml + महानारायण तेल 20ml + राजयापन बस्तीचा क्षीरकषाय 150 ml + मध 20 ml

B. अभ्यंतरचिकित्सा

b. *Medhya Rasayana* (Cognitive Enhancers)

- *Brahmi* (Bacopa monnieri) – enhances memory and learning.
- *Mandukaparni* (Centella asiatica) – improves intellect.
- *Shankhapushpi* (Convolvulus pluricaulis) – reduces anxiety and hyperactivity.
- *Yashtimadhu* (Glycyrrhiza glabra) – promotes cognition and speech.

c. *Balya* and *Ojasvardhak Dravyas* - *Ashwagandha, Bala, Vidari, Ghrita, Ksheera*.

d. *Swarna Prashana* – administration of gold bhasma with ghee, honey, and *Medhya* herbs for immunity and neurodevelopment.

❖ **0 ते 5 वर्षापर्यंत**

1) सुवर्णयुक्त सारस्वतारिष्ट - 5ml रात्री एकदा....15 दिवस
2) ब्राम्ही घृत + वचा घृत + मधु - 2 gm as रसायन
3) नारसिंह रसायन - 5gm OD with उष्णोदक - *15 दिवस then मृदुविरेचन*

5 वर्षानंतर

1) पंचामृत लोह गुगुळ - 1 BD with warm water
2) वराविशालाद्य कषाय - 5ml BD for 15 days
3) बलारिष्ट - 10 ml BD with जल
4) बृहत वात चिंतामणी रस 10 tab. + सुवर्णमालिनी वसंत - 10 tab. + अश्वगंधा चूर्ण - 40 gm + शतावरी चूर्ण - 30 gm + गुडुची चूर्ण - 30 gm ---- 3 gm Churna BD after food for 20 days

***Ahara* and *Vihara* (Lifestyle & Diet)**

- Diet: *Satvika ahara* rich in milk, ghee, nuts, fresh fruits. Avoid *Rajasika* and *Tamasika* food (junk, preserved food).
- *Vihara*: *Yoga*, *Pranayama*, music therapy, and play therapy to stimulate cognitive and emotional growth.

DISCUSSION

Down syndrome, though not described directly in Ayurvedic texts, can be understood through concepts such as *Beejadushti*, *Beejabhaga Avayava Dushti*, and *Garbha Vikaras*, which explain congenital and genetic abnormalities.

Ayurvedic principles correlate Trisomy 21 with defects in gametes and impaired fetal development. Supportive measures including *Medhya Rasayana, Balya–Majja*-nourishing herbs, *Abhyanga, Shirodhara, Nasya,* and *Basti* may help improve cognition, muscle tone, immunity, and developmental milestones.

Overall, the review suggests that although Ayurveda cannot alter the underlying chromosomal anomaly, integrated supportive management may improve functional abilities, developmental milestones, and quality of life. However, clinical validation through well-designed research studies is needed to establish standardized protocols and evidence-based guidelines.

CONCLUSION

Down syndrome is a congenital chromosomal disorder presenting with intellectual disability, hypotonia, delayed development, and multiple systemic concerns. Ayurveda provides a comprehensive conceptual understanding of genetic and developmental disorders through principles like *Beejadushti and Garbha Vikara*.

Ayurvedic supportive care—including *Medhya Rasayana, Balya and Majja*-nourishing therapies, *Panchakarma* procedures, and holistic lifestyle interventions—may help enhance cognitive abilities, neuromuscular strength, immunity, and overall well-being in children with Down syndrome. These therapies do not cure the genetic condition but may significantly improve functional outcomes and quality of life.

There is a strong potential for integrative approaches combining Ayurvedic supportive care with contemporary rehabilitative therapies. Future clinical research is essential to establish therapeutic efficacy, safety, and standardized treatment protocols.

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