

IMPORTANCE OF PLAY & TOYS IN THE DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE OF CHILDREN**Dr. Rajeev Kumar Sharma***

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Article Received on 12/12/2021

Article Revised on 02/01/2022

Article Accepted on 24/01/2022

ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is one of the earliest medical systems that have got a strong scientific foundation formulated by experiments and observations of ancient wisdom. Kaumarbhritya (pediatrics) is one among eight branches of Ayurveda. Acharya Kashyapa has given prime importance to Kaumarbhritya for the very first time. As far as the branch pediatrics is concerned, in Ayurveda it accompanies a broad area. A toy is an item that is used in play. Playing with toy is an enjoyable means of training young children for life. Play is essential to development because it contributes to the cognitive, physical, social, and emotional well-being of children and youth. Toys and play plays an important role for early stimulation in a high risk child. Play is not a break from learning—it's the way for children learning.

KEYWORDS: Kaumarbhritya, Krida, Kridabhumi, Kridanaka, Toys etc.**INTRODUCTION**

Kaumarbhritya (pediatrics) is one among eight branches of Ayurveda. Acharya Kashyapa has given prime importance to Kaumarbhritya for the very first time. As far as the branch pediatrics is concerned, in Ayurveda it accompanies a broad area. Virtually every aspect of a growing child is connected with play. Now days, many textbooks of pediatrics are focusing more on pediatric diseases and its management, but the concept of toys, play and its importance remain untouched. Many years ago, Acharyas has described characteristics of Kumaragara (Neonatal care unit/pediatric ward), Kumaradhara (guardian), Kridanaka (toys) and Kridabhumi (play ground) which all are the pillars of a healthy and prosperous human being. Here, an effort is made to collect those aspects and validating that data with available evidence based references.

The origin of toys is prehistoric. Ayurvedic texts have very specifically advocated various musts while preparing toys because particular shapes may not be user friendly. Ashtang Samgraha has specifically mentioned the shapes of toys. Toys must be having the shape of vegetables, animals and birds like potato, cow, horse, sparrow etc. which induce Satvic Bhava in children. Surface of toy should be smooth with least tendency to injure delicate skin of child. Unnecessary curvatures and bends must be avoided in toys to be used in infants and early childhood.

Ancient Ayurvedic scholars had put sufficient attention to the toys i.e. amusement, safety and other aspects, which is evident from reference available in Ayurvedic texts. As per Kashyapa Samhita (Balkridkani Phishtamayani Jatusham) toys for infants/children need to be made from powdered wheat, rice, barely flour etc food materials including Laksha (lakh). Such toys are echo friendly because being devoid of harmful chemicals or any contamination.

CHARACTERISTICS OF PLAY GROUND (KRIDABHUMI)

Ashtang Samgrah (Ash. Sm. Utt. 1/47) and Kashyapa Samhita have specially described the characteristic of ground/ place, where infants/ children, are to play during early childhood because they are more prone to infection and physical injuries due to low levels of immune status and low physical tolerance. While describing these parameters, it has been stressed upon that the area of play must be devoid of curves and should be comparatively soft. Such play area should not possess hard gravels, any metal scrapes etc. The specific word 'Shuchaudeshah' has been referred which means the play ground needs to be very clean and safe. It also conveys that the particular part of land should not contain any infectious material. One must take care to select such a place where toxic fumes from industry cannot spoil the environment of the play area. The site must have cross ventilation and appropriate sunlight. The play space needs to be free from human and animal debris. Further, the play area must be free from sharp weapons, ponds and source of fire

(Shastratoya Agnivarjite). Infants and children, being unaware of do's and don'ts of play, can be injured to sharp articles made of metals, fire articles. Ayurvedic texts have specially mentioned specific decoctions of drugs so as to disinfect the play area for example (Kanamb Siktha Nimbodaken va) the decoction of Pippli, Siktha, or Nimba needs to be sprinkled over the play ground to disinfect it and thus the chances of infection. These drugs are known for their antiseptic, bactericidal /static properties.

IMPORTANCE OF PLAY IN DAILY LIFE

They look good while at play, when they learn while playing and play while learning. Playing is a part and parcel of child's protocol, in fact an inseparable and mandatory part of child's growth and development. One need not tell or guide or teach the child to play, it comes quite naturally and instinctively to the little ones.

Playing is the key for exploring and learning new things. It keeps the baby happy, healthy and fit. Playing is good for physical and mental health as well as for growth and development of the child. It also helps the child to socialize. Playing is a form of exercise to the growing child. Playing helps the child to express its emotions and talents; it is the early pointer towards healthy growth. Playing is an essential part of childhood life i.e. babies, toddlers and preschool as well as school-age children. Toys assist in development of children. Choosing the right toy offers many possibilities which can be very rewarding. Parents need to respect and understand more about the world of play and its great value for all babies and children.

So basically it becomes so important for us, especially parents, the inner circle of the child and teachers to encourage the child to play and help in bringing innovation and education gradually into the play format. Initially the child needs a safe playground or a play-station or an independent space to play at liberty. Along with the ground, variety of toys should be provided to the child while taking caution that harmful toys are not kept around the child.

Ayurvedic pediatrics was the first among the medical sciences to emphasize on these important aspects of the child's development i.e. the need of playground (Kreedha Bhoomi) and toys (Kreedanaka) which are child's best friends.

KASHYAP'S DESCRIPTION OF TOYS (Kashyap Samhita Khil. Sth. 12/8)

Kashyapa is the master of Ayurvedic pediatrics. His area of expertise is child-care. The number and variety of toys mentioned by Kashyap in Kashyap Samhita hints towards the extensive knowledge of the art of toy-making, the variety and diversity with which the toys were made with precision, the materials and colors used to finish them, the concept of learning brought about in the form of toys (toys were made with purpose of

playing and as study materials which helps the children in primary learning of basics of the materials in and around them), the knowledge of role of toys in physical and mental development of child and the importance given towards upbringing of child in a healthy and playful way blended with learning experience, fun and enjoyment.

The toys have been mentioned and elaborated in the context of Upaveshana (sitting the child) and Phala Prashana (feeding fruits to the child). The toys were also made out of ground / mashed rice or delicious dishes, good enough for the child to eat.

KREEDA BHUMI (THE PLAYGROUND)

Playing is important for the child, but the playground is equally important. Ayurveda has emphasized on the nature of playground which should be provided for the child to play. Utmost care should be taken to choose the area in which the child plays. It should be free from all sorts of risks and danger.

The characteristics of an ideal play ground have been explained as below – Ashtanga Sangraha Uttara Tantra 1/47.

Samaa – The ground should be even and leveled, safe enough to play. If the ground is not leveled and uneven, the child may fall and injure self.

Nishastra – The play ground should be devoid of sharp instruments which could injure the child while playing.

Nirupala Sharkara – The ground should be devoid of dung, excreta, stones, dust, sand, the land should be sterile and safe. We know that an anxious and playful child tends to put anything in its vicinity into its mouth.

Vella Ooshana Kana Ambhobhihi Siktaa Nimba Udakena Vaa – The mud in the play ground should be sterilized and disinfected by spraying water mixed with paste or powder of Vella (Embelia ribes), Ooshana (black pepper) and Kana (Long pepper) or with Nimba Udaka (water boiled with neem leaves).

CHARACTERISTICS OF PLAY IN DIFFERENT PHYSICAL PROBLEMS IN CHILDREN'S



PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED IN VISUAL IMPAIRED CHARACTERISTIC OF PLAY

- Encourage symbolic representation & to use more imagination and fantasy.
- Support play by providing the opportunity to explore in a safe & familiar environments.
- Stimulate their other senses like hearing and touch.
- Noisy toys such as wooden duck that quacks when move.

IN HEARING IMPAIRED CHARACTERISTIC OF PLAY

- Children with hearing impairments are less affected in their play than children with visual impairments.
- Learning of language should be initiated early.
- Should create interest in make-believe play or fantasy play.
- Talking to your baby and singing are the most important things.

MOTOR IMPAIRMENT CHARACTERISTIC OF PLAY

- Play that involves physical activity.
- Use of wheel chairs and other physical assistance devices it can provide support to carry out daily self care activities.
- Accept the child's limitation and modify their play.
- Focus on maximizing abilities – utilize individual strengths.

CHARACTERISTICS OF PLAY IN DIFFERENT MENTAL PROBLEMS IN CHILDREN'S



MENTAL DISABILITIES CHARACTERISTIC OF PLAY

- ☞ Child initiated activities should be encouraged
- ☞ Less sophisticated and more functional play should be preferred*
- ☞ Parents and care givers should be taught to be playful and responsive to their children.
- ☞ Should encourage social interaction between children.

LANGUAGE DISABILITIES CHARACTERISTIC OF PLAY

- ☞ Engage them in make-believe play
- ☞ Encourage exhibit symbolic play
- ☞ Include complexity in their play activities

AT RISK CHARACTERISTIC OF PLAY

- Sensor - motor play, symbolic play and social play.
- The play of sensor-motor of at - risk children develops similar to that of non-risk, but if play indicates differences, it can give EARLY INTERVENTION of a possible delay.
- At risk children should be stimulated with play and toys at early stages of development.

CONCLUSION

Play is essential to development because it contributes to the cognitive, physical, social, and emotional well-being of children and youth. Toys and play plays an important role for early stimulation in a high risk child. Play is not a break from learning—it's the way children learn. Playful children are happier, better adjusted and more cooperative. Children play longer when a wide variety of toys is available. Playful children are more physically active, creative, humorous, imaginative, emotionally expressive, curious and communicative. Think inclusion and adaptation for differently abled children. Playful children may be more popular in the society than those who play less. Be in the moment, father and mother each have an unique contribution to make their children to play. Conventional games are better than video games. Life style disorders can be prevented by the active play e.g. obesity depression etc.

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