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An Introduction To Charak Samhitokta Rishi Markandeya and Evaluation of His Contribution To Ayurveda

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Abstract

The reference of sage *Markandeya* apart from Ayurveda is found in *Skanda Purana*, *Padma Purana*, *Markandeya Purana*, and Mahabharata. Maharishi *Markandeya* had got boon of longevity from lord Shiva. Hence, he lived long. His presence is seen during the *Ramayan* as well as during Mahabharata period. He had met the Ayodhya king lord Rama as well as the Hastenapur king Yudhishtira. He guided lord Rama about the ‘*Shraddha Karma*’ for his ancestors. When Maharishi *Markandeya* came to know about the gloomy state of King Yudhishtira, he guided him about the pilgrimage to get rid of the sins which *Pandavas* committed during Mahabharata war. He belonged to illustrious *Bhrigu* lineage. He participated in the symposium on embryonic organogenesis organized by Kashi king *Divodasa*. Maharishi *Markandeya* is also credited with the invention of medicinal preparation called ‘*Pancha-nimba choorna*’ along with *acharya Shaunaka*. Maharishi *Markandeya* was present in the conclave of rishis conducted beneath the mountains of Himalayas, some 5000 years ago. This not only shows his interest in the medical science but also put him as the caring person for the sufferings of mankind. Hence, it becomes essential to explore the life of sage *Markandeya* to know about his contribution to the Ayurveda.

Keywords – *Markandeya*, *Pancha-nimba choorna*

Introduction :

Maharishi *Markandeya* belonged to illustrious *Bhrigu* lineage. His father's name was *Mrukundu* and his mother's name was *Marudwati*. He had a son called *Vedashira*. In *Markandeya Purana*, Maharishi *Markandeya* explained regarding the evolution of the universe, evolution of Gods, sages etc, what are *Manvantaras*, division of *Kalpas*, situation of the *Manvantarasa* (time zones), expansion of the earth, location of underwater world *Patala* and different regions (*lokas*), movement of stars and planets etc. He participated in the symposium on embryonic organogenesis organized by *Kashi* king *Divodasa*. Maharishi *Markandeya* is also credited with the invention of medicinal preparation called '*Pancha-nimba choorna*' along with *acharya Shaunaka*. Maharishi *Markandeya* was present in the conclave of *rishis* conducted beneath the mountains of Himalayas, some 5000 years ago.^[1]

Material And Method :

Literary method of research is followed in this article. All the available *Ayurvedic* and *Indological* literature is explored to find the maximum information about the sage *Markandeya*.

Review Of Literature :

Lineage of *Markandeya Maharshi* :

Lord *Bramha's* one of the sons was *Bhrigu*. He married to the daughter of *Prajapati Daksha* called '*Khyati*'. *Bhrigu* from his wife *Khyati*, got 2 sons naming *Dhata* and *Vidhata* and 1 daughter namely *Lakshmi*. *Dhata* and *Vidhata* married to *Aayati* and *Niyati* respectively who were the daughters of mahatma *Meru*. From *Niyati*, *Bhrigu's* other son *Vidhata* got the son called '*Mrukundu*'. This

Mrukundu fathered a son called *Markandeya*. Thus, *Markandeya* was great grandson of illustrious *Brahmarishi Bhrigu*.^{[2] [3]}

Birth And Parenting of *Markandeya Muni* :

Mrukund muni was residing at *Kashi* (present day *Varanasi* city). He was childless. Hence, he along with his wife *Marudwati* started observing penance to please the lord, *Shiva*. Pleased with their penance lord *Shiva*, kept option before the couple either to accept the learned, religious, famed son with only 16 year's life or long-lived silly son. Duo accepted the first offer and accordingly lord *Shiva* blessed them. After some time *Marudwati* conceived. *Mrukund* muni performed the *pusanvahan samskara* in the first month and *seemantonayan samskara* in 8th month of pregnancy. After the delivery of the male child, *Jatakarma samskara* was performed by the *Veda Vyasa*. Assembly of *rishis* was gathered to greet the newborn baby. All of them blessed the baby while suggesting the *Rakshavidhan* (measures of child protection) *Nishkraman samskara* was done in the 4th month in which baby was taken out of the city to a temple. *Annaprashan samsakara* was done in the 6th month of age wherein semisolid food is given to the baby. When the baby was two and half years old, *Chudakarma samskara* was done in which the scalp hairs were cut. Soon after that *Karnavedhan samskara* was done in which ears were pierced to enhance the immunity. When the *Markandeya* was 5 years old, his *Veadarambha* and *Vidyadhyan samskara* was done to institute the formal education of *Vedas* and its branches (*upangas*). *Markandeya* completed his education and become well versed in all the branches of knowledge system.^[4]

Markandeya Getting Aware About His Short

Life Span :

After completing education, *Markandeya* muni came back home and started serving the parents very honestly as like noble son. But still, his parents were unhappy and uses to remain in sorrowful condition. Seeing them sorrowful, he asked them the reason. Accordingly, they told him about the conditional boon granted by the lord Shiva. And now as he attained the 16th year, disaster may fall on him anytime. Hearing this, young *Markandeya* reassured his parents saying that he will please the lord *shiva* and will get boon from him.^[5]

Markandeya Getting Boon From Lord Shiva :

After that *Markandeya* went to south and on the sea, shore created the *Shivalinga* and started worshipping it continuously. One day while he was worshipping the *Shivalinga*, king of death tried to took away his life but at the same time lord *shiva* came out of the *Shivalinga* and kicked away the death king *Yamaraj* and offered the endless life to the *Mrakandeya* muni. After this incident, *Mrakandeya* muni came back home and narrated the whole incident to his parents. His parents became much pleased on this accomplishment of their son.^{[6][7]}

The place of penance of *Markandeya Maharishi* is said to be in the *Sahyadri* mountain from where the river *Tungabhadra* and *Netravathi* flows. Whereas river *Netravathi* joins Arabian sea, river *Tungabhadra* joins river *Krishna* at *Sangameshwar* and empties in Bay of Bengal.

Marriage and Progeny of Markandeya :

After winning over the death, *Maharishi Markandeya* went home. His parents greeted him joyfully. Later *Maharshi Markandeya* married ritually. He fathered a son called *Vedashira*. After that he went to *Varanasi* and started observing the long penance under the banyan tree (*Akshay Vata*).^[8]

Guidance to Brahmarishi Vishwamitra :

When *Bramharishi Vishwamitra* was on penance in the forest, crown prince of *Ayodhya Satyavrata* alias *Trishanku* sheltered the family of sage *Vishwamitra*. In between sage *Vasishtha* conspired against king *Trishanku* and made him to leave the capital. *Trishanku* then did low quality works which were referred as 'Chandal Karma' during that time. When *Bramharishi Vishwamitra* returned from the penance and came to know about the care of his family taken by *Trishanku*, to remain grateful, he decided to restore the pride of *Trishanku*. First to get rid of the sins committed by *Trishanku*, sage *Vishwamitra* took him to the various places of worship (*teertas*) throughout the world. But could not make *Trishanku* pure. Hence, he decided to leave the earth. While returning from the *Achaleshwar* temple on the mountain *Arbuda* (Mount Abu in present day Rajasthan), he met with *Maharshi Markandeya* and told him his decision. Knowing this, *Maharshi Markandeya* guided sage *Vishwamitra* to go to the *Anarta Pradesh* (area near *Khambhat* gulf in present day *Gujrat*) where *Hatkeshwar Shivalinga* is present. At that place there is river called *Patal Ganga* which had come from the *Rasatala*. *Maharshi Markandeya* told that after bathing in that river, *Trishanku* would become pure.^[9]

Meeting With Lord Rama :

Rishi *Markandeya* built his hermitage at *Pushkara*. Once lord Rama while on the way to forest, got information from *Atri* muni about holy *Pushkar Teerta* (hindu holy place at Rajasthan) and decided to visit it to offer *Pindadana* (donation of food bolus) to lost ancestors. When he reached there, he met with *Markandeya* muni and got the information about the *Shraddha* procedure. Accordingly, lord Rama performed the *Shraddha* of his ancestors.^[10]

Meeting With *Yudhishtira* :

After the Mahabharata war, king *Yudhishtira* was very much upset over the killings of his own relatives and teachers. Knowing such condition of king *Yudhishtira*, *Maharshi Markandeya* came at *Hasteenapur* to console him and gave him an advice to undertake a pilgrimage at *Varanasai* to get the mental peace. *Maharshi Markandeya* explained the importance of places of worship at *Varanasi* to *Yudhishtira* in detail. He told to the *Yudhishtira* that lord Shiva resides at *Varanasi*. The river *ganga* at *Varanasi* clears all the sins.^[11]
[12]

Conversation With *Krossthuka* :

Once Brahmin *Krossthuka* asked various questions to *Maharshi Markandeya* regarding the evolution of the world and the universe, evolution of Gods, sages etc, what are *Manvantaras*, division of *Kalpas*, situation of the *Manvantarasa*, expansion of the earth, location of underwater world *Patala* and different regions (*lokas*), movement of stars and planets etc. *Maharshi Markandeya* replied very well to the queries of *Bramhin Krossthuka*.^[13]

Explaining the Places of Worship To

Yudhishtira :

Rewa Khanda of *Skanda Purana* is the conversation between *Maharshi Markandeya* and *Yudhishtira*. In this section *Maharshi Markandeya*, narrated *Yudhishtira* about the evolution of river 'Narmada/Rewa' on the earth and fruits of worshipping and holy bath in it. He also told him about the various places of worship surrounding the river Narmada such as *Kapila Teertha*, *Bhrugu Teertha*, *Bhaskar Teertha*, *Varaha Teertha*, *Ganjai Teertha*, *Kalhanseshwar Teertha*, *Maheshwar Teertha*, *Amarkantak Teertha*, *Matanga Teertha*, *Ashok Vanika Teertha*, *Meghnad Teertha*, *Karnajeshwar Teertha*, *Dhanad Teertha*, *Gautameshwar Teertha*. In this section, *Maharshi Markandeya* also told the story of *kartaveerya Arjun*, *Parshuram*, *Vishwamitra* to the *Yudhishtira*. He also the stories of kings like *Mandhata*, *Banasura*, *Vasudana* and *Ravishchandra*.^[14]

Contribution To Ayurveda Participation in Ayurvedic Symposium :

As per *Sushrut Samhita*, sage *Markandeya* had participated in the debate with *acharya Kashiraj Dhanwantari* and others regarding organogenesis in *foetus*. *Maharshi Markandeya* was of the view that during embryonic organogenesis, first hands and feet gets evolved.^[15]

Medicinal Preparation – *Pancha-nimbadi*

Choorna :

Acharya Nischalkara in his commentary *Ratnaprabha* on *Chakradutta*, mentioned the medicinal formulation called 'Panchanimba *Choorna*' given by *acharya Markandeya* and

Bhadra Shaunaka for the treatment of *Kushtha* (skin diseases).^[16]

Intera-uterine Foetal Development As Per

Markandeya :

The sperm ejaculated during intercourse unite with the ovum to form the zygote. Then this zygote goes through the transformation in shapes from *Kalala* (Semisolid jelly), *Budbud* (like cluster of Bubbles), *Peshi* (Flesh like). As like the embryo sprout from the seed, the rest of the organs like fingers, legs, eyes, nose, ears, mouth, skin, nails, hairs sprout from this embryo. The embryo grows as *foetus* in a sac and get nutrition from the mother through umbilical cord.

Foetal Position In Womb As Per Markandeya

Purana :

As like coconut, the *foetus* stays upside down (*Occipito* anterior) in the intrauterine life and grows. It's both thighs and knees lie together and hands stays inside the thighs and knees. Thumb is upward and fingers stay in front of the thighs. Eyes remain on the knee joint and nose in the middle of the thighs. Both arms are adjacent to the lateral of the thighs. Staying in this position, *foetus* grows in intrauterine life. *Foetus* gets nutrition from mother through umbilical cord.^[17]

Maharishi *Markandeya* was present in the famous conference that held almost 5000 years ago beneath the mountain Himalaya in which sages discussed about the diseases in society. In this conference, all the sages unanimously selected sage *Bharadwaja* as their leader to bring Ayurveda from the God king *Indra*. After bringing the knowledge of Ayurveda from the *Indra*, sage *Bharadwaja* taught it to all the *Rishis* and *Munis* present in the first conference as

mentioned by *acharya Charaka*. Hence, it is likely that as like other rishis, sage *Markandeya* may have created his own treatise on Ayurveda which is not available today.

Observation :

Maharishi *Markandeya* in nutshell

1	Originator	Brahma
2	Great grand father + mother	<i>Bhrigu + Khyati</i>
3	Grand Father + Grand mother	<i>Vidhata + Niyati</i>
4	Father + Mother	<i>Mrukundu + Marudwati</i>
5	Son	<i>Vedashira</i>
6	Lineage	<i>Bhrigu Vansha</i>
7	Boon from	Lord <i>Mahadeva</i>
8	Contemporary sages	<i>Vishwamitra, Vasishtha, Agasti</i>
9	Contemporary <i>Ramayan</i> king	<i>Trishanku & Rama</i>
10	Contemporary <i>Mahabharat</i> king	<i>Yudhishtira</i>
11	Ayurvedic contribution	<i>Pancha-nimba Choorna</i> Intrauterine <i>foetal</i> development Participation in Ayurvedic symposium

Discussion :

Maharishi *Markandeya* had got boon of longevity from lord *Shiva*. Hence, he lived long. His presence is seen during the *Ramayan* as well as during *Mahabharata* period. He had met the *Ayodhya* king lord *Rama* as well as the *Hastinapur* king *Yudhishtira*. He guided lord *Rama* about the 'Shraddha Karma' for his ancestors. When Maharishi *Markandeya* came to know about the gloomy state of King *Yudhishtira*, he guided him about the pilgrimage to get rid of the sins which *Pandavas* committed during *Mahabharata* war. He

belonged to illustrious *Bhrigu* lineage. Even when his short life was predicted by many, he did not give up but kept on exploring the ways to get rid of the fate. He relieved the anxiety of his short life by devotion to lord Shiva. He also participated in the symposium on embryonic organogenesis organized by *Kashiraj Divodasa*. Maharishi *Markandeya* is also credited with the invention of medicinal preparation called '*Pancha-nimba coorna*' along with *acharya Shaunaka*.

Conclusion :

Maharishi *Markandeya* was not only present in the famous conference that held almost 5000 years ago beneath the mountain Himalaya in which sages discussed about the diseases in society but also participated in the symposium on embryonic organogenesis organized by *Kashiraj Divodasa*. Maharishi *Markandeya* is also credited with the invention of medicinal preparation called '*Pancha-nimba coorna*' along with *acharya Shaunaka*. Maharishi *Markandeya* had also given the vivid description of intrauterine *foetal* growth. Maharishi *Markandeya* learnt Ayurveda from Maharishi *Bhardwaja* and in turn may have created his own treatise called '*Markandeya Samhita*' which is unavailable today.

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Declaration :

Conflict of Interest : None

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प्रज्वालितो ज्ञानमयः प्रदीपः ॥

