



SUSHRUTA SAMHITA- AN ANCIENT TEXT OF ART OF SURGERY

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ABSTRACT

Sushruta is considered as one of the earliest surgeons of the recorded history. His contributions to surgery are well recognized for his innovative method of Rhinoplasty, Extra Capsular Lens Extraction in Cataract, Anal and Dental surgeries etc. Shushruta was one of the first to study the Human Anatomy, with the aid of a dead body. Shushruta has described surgery under eight heads, as asth-vidh shastra karma, along with some parasurgical procedures like Kshara, Agni And Jalauka Karma. Sushruta has also designed various types of Shastra, along with various Yantra and Upanyantras used to aid/ease surgical procedure. He also described various medications; concepts of pre and post operative care of patient which are used as such even in present era. Shushruta has given detailed description of management of wound (shasthi upkrama), types and management of Bhagna (fracture). Shushruta has also described the gradual development of foetus inside womb of mother, along with sign and symptoms of still birth, intra-uterine death of foetus. The latest definition of state of Health given by W.H.O. is influenced with the definition of Swasth given by Sushruta. Though the surgical society has evolved with time, but the basic concepts of surgery described by Sushruta are still applicable and relevant in this era.

KEYWORDS: Sushruta, Surgery, Marmas, Rhinoplasty, Swasth, Shastra Karma, etc.

INTRODUCTION

Sushruta- The Father of Surgery

Sushruta is considered as one of the earliest surgeons of the recorded history. His contributions to surgery are well recognized for his innovative method of Rhinoplasty, Extra Capsular Lens Extraction in Cataract, Anal and Dental surgeries etc. The practice of surgery has been recorded in India around 800 B.C. This need not come as a surprise because surgery (Shastrakarma) is one of the eight branches of Ayurveda which is the ancient Indian system of medicine and the oldest treatise dealing with surgery is the Shushruta-Samahita.

Concept of Human Anatomy & Physiology

Shushruta was one of the first to study the Human Anatomy. In the Shushruta Samahita he has described in detail the study of Anatomy with the aid of a dead body. Concept of Marmas (vital points of body), Dhatu, Twacha (layers of skin), Kala (membranes, lining internal tracts of body), Aashaya (organs with internal cavity / capacity) etc are relevant to present knowledge and are still an area of further research. Though the discovery of circulation is attributed to William Harvey, yet it is interesting to note that Sushruta had the knowledge of heart (Hridaya), its site and shape (Pundarikvat, Adhomukhi – like an inverted lotus) and

its role in circulation of “vital fluids”(Rasa etc) through the, channels“(Srotas, Dhamni Sira etc.

Surgical and Parasurgical Procedures

Shushruta has described surgery under eight heads Chedana (excision), Bhedana (incision), Lekhana (scraping), Vedhana (puncturing), Eishana (probing & exploration), Ahrana (extraction), Vishravana (bloodletting, evacuation) and Sivana (Suturing) along with some parasurgical procedures like Kshara, Agni And Jalauka Karma to be used instead of major surgical procedures, where major surgery cannot be performed at small facility/centers and on patient who are not willing for major surgery or on children etc.

Development of various surgical instruments

Sushruta has also designed various types of Shastra (20 types surgical instruments) along with various Yantra and Upanyantras (101 types of tools and instruments used to aid/ease surgical procedure). He designed various kinds of operative tools and techniques, to perform a number and variety of major and minor surgical procedures. He also described various medications; concepts of pre and post operative care of patient which are used as such even in present era.

Concept of pre and post- operative care

Sushruta's concept of keeping patient empty stomach or on light diet before performing any surgical procedure, concept of watching patient for proper movements of excretory and gastro-intestinal system (swa-marg pratipann mutra - vida- vata) during pre and post operative care, are still considered as a good vital sign of recovery. Signs of internal haemorrhage, abscess and growths (vahya- abhyantar vidradhi) and their management are remarkably relevant and applicable even in present era.

The Art of Wound and Fracture Management

Shushruta has given detailed description of management of wound (shasthi upkrama), types and management of Bhagna (fracture). Though treatment modalities have been changed with time but his concepts and principles are still used in management of wounds and fractures.

Embryology, Maternal and Prenatal Care

Shushruta has also described the gradual development of foetus inside womb of mother, Characters and external features of such changes seen in mother to evaluate proper growth of foetus. He prescribed specific regimen to be followed by mother before & during pregnancy, and even after delivery for maintenance of proper health of mother and infant both. He had also explained sign and symptoms of still birth, intra-uterine death of foetus, along with indication of surgical extraction of moodh-garbh which can be compared with emergency indications of cesarian section.

Management of Major Surgical Diseases

Concept of sign, symptoms and principles of management of Udar-roga especially Yakrit- Pleehodar (hepato and spleenomegaly), Jalodar (ascitic abdomen) Baddha-gudodar (intestinal obstruction), Chidrodara (intestinal perforation) as explained by Sushruta still forms the basis of diagnosis and line of management of these condition. Concept of colostomy, use of absorbable suturing material, types of sutures & suturing materials and maintenance of proper distance for suturing etc are seems to be influenced by surgical concepts of Sushruta.

Concept of Surgical Ethics and Need of Both Theoretical and Practical Knowledge

Sushruta has also explained importance of use of model (Yogya) and demo for practicing surgical procedures, and importance of following surgical ethics before entering into professional field. These concepts are of great value in present era.

Shushruta moved by his intense humane approach to life and equipped with superb surgical skills, did the operation of rhinoplasty with remarkable skill, grace and success. The details of the steps of this operation, as recorded in the Shushruta Samahita, are amazingly similar to the steps that are followed even today in such advanced plastic surgery.

Definition of Health State

The latest definition of state of Health given by W.H.O. as physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being is influenced with the definition of Swasth given by Sushruta, hundreds of years ago as,, prashann aatm-indriya-mana.

CONCLUSION

Though the surgical society has evolved with time and moved into advanced modalities with advancement in tools & technology and expansion of knowledge of human Anatomy and Patho-physiology, but the basic concepts of surgery described by Sushruta in ancient golden period of Ayurveda are still applicable and relevant in this era.

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