



RISHI KASHYAPA

The illustrious sage after whom the modern Kashmir is named

Sage Kashyapa is considered the author of a *Samhita*, (treatise), on *Ayurveda*. It is also called *Jivakiya Tantra*, the secrets of a healthy life, which is also, in a way, the definition of *Ayurveda*. It is considered a classic, referred to by practitioners, over the centuries. What is particularly interesting is that it deals with issues, which, in modern medicine, would be called pediatrics, concerned with young children's health and gynecology and obstetrics, concerned with women's reproductive health. Of course, these health care needs have always been there, but, only the science and technology of treatment have been changing.

It has been recognised, for some time, now that, for all countries, and especially, the developing countries, like India, the two most important investments should be in Health, and

Education of children, who survive the risks of infant and early mortality. More recently, there has been concern about obesity, life style diseases, and old age ailments. Both these issues of Health and Education were addressed, in ancient India, through *Ayurveda* and the *gurukulam*, respectively.

So, it is not surprising that several *rishis* have written on *Ayurveda*, building on past contributions, and adding their own, including on hitherto uncovered health issues. Among these, you may have heard of the *Charaka Samhita*, and the *Susruta Samhita*. There have also been many others, such as, *Ashtanga Hridaya*, *Sharangadhara Samhita*, *Madhav Nidan*, *Bhava Prakash*, and *Bhaishajya Ratnavali*.

When King Daksha offered several of his daughters, in marriage to Kashyapa, he probably had no choice. His

dharma, in that era, was to gracefully, accept them. Kashyapa had many children, who founded different clans. Well known to us, through the Ramayana, is Kashyapa's son Jatayu, and grandson Sampati. Another son, Vivasvat, founded the *Suryavamsa*, the Solar Dynasty. His great-grandson, Ikshvaku, became such a reputed king, that the dynasty got renamed as the Ikshvaku dynasty.


Another famous king, in that line, was Prithu Maharaj, who is credited with sowing the seeds of the later *Ramarajyam*. With another, illustrious descendent, king Raghu, it became *Raghuvamsam*, the Raghu dynasty. In Ramayana, Rama is referred to, quite reasonably, as a descendent of all three dynasties, which are one and the same.

Another son of Kashyapa, through his wife Aditi was Vamana, considered the fifth *avatar*, incarnation of Vishnu; the first human *avatar*, after the lion-faced *avatar* of Narasimha. You will know the story of Vamana dealing with the high ego of the otherwise competent king Bali. However, Vamana, the *avatar*, showed *daya*, mercy,

when Bali, and his ancestor, Prahlada, prayed to him. He is believed to have given Bali domain over the *Patala loka*, the underground world.

The *Onam* festival in Kerala is based on the belief that, on that day, every year, king Bali visits his beloved green kingdom and people. Some of us may consider it a myth. But, what a beautiful thought of the affection between a ruler and his land and people!

Kashyapa has been known and revered, both for his teachings, and the contributions of his talented descendents.

Like other Maharshis, Kashyapa is also famous for many other reasons. One that may immediately ring a bell with us is that modern Kashmir is named after him. It was named as Kashyapa-mira. As happens with many olden names, they get modified, usually into shorter versions. It finds mention in one of the early histories of Kashmir, called *Rajatarangini*, by the poet Kalhana, in the 8th century CE 

athreyamb@gmail.com

M.B.Athreya