



Review On Scientific Methodology Of Childhood Samskaras In Present Era.

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ABSTRACT:

India is a country with a rich and varied cultural heritage where Hindu Dharma is held in high esteem. Hindu dharma is not a religion but a way of life, which has been refined over millennia to help individuals lead successful lives. The unique relationship between Samskara (sacraments) and culture shapes one's lifetime by defining moments or goals that nourish, purify and grant dignity and decorum. The goal of *samskara* is to improve the culture as a whole. The *samskaras* are performed for the physical, social and religious development of the individual. Ancient Hindu mythology described sixteen *Samskara* for a person. This article will described in detail eight *samskara* for growth and development of children, along with their medical relevance: *Jatakarma* (birth rituals), *Namkaran* (naming the child), *Nishakraman* (first outing), *Annaprashan* (first feeding), *Chudakarna* (head shaving), *Karnachedan* (piercing the earlobes), *Upanayana* (thread ceremony) and *Vedarambha* (start of formal education).

KEY WORDS – *Samskara*, growth and development, *Jatakarma*, *Nishkraman*

INTRODUCTION:

In Ayurveda, the word *samskara* also introduced as “*Samskarao hi Gunaantradhyanum*” means qualitative improvement is carried out by incorporative the specific qualities. (in various dravyas or medicines as *rasa aushadhi*) (Charaka Samhita Vimansthana 1/21). The word Sanskara is derived from root word ‘*Kri*’ with ‘*Sam*’ *upsarga*, which is being used for several meaning for example in sense of education, cultivation and training, a purificatory rite or ceremony to change the qualities or intrinsic worth. *Samskara* (sacraments) are a religious customs(rite), rituals and sacrifices a religious ceremony. The life of the performer receives a higher sacredness after performing them, it is believed. In Hindu culture, *samskara* cover the entire life of an individual which begins from the moment he is conceived in the mother's womb till his death. *Samskara* (sacraments) is a religious rite and ceremony, which sanctify the body, mind and intellect of a child, so that child can become fit for the society. Though primarily considered as a religious rite, they were relevant in context of child health and provided opportunity for routine examination of child at regular intervals. *Samskara* prepare one for the next stage of growth. Thus, a detailed study of the classical description of *Samskara* is mandatory to understand its significance in child health and its aptness in present era.

NUMBER OF SAMSKARA

The number of Sanskara varies in different Hindu dharma granthas, it is about 16-40, but the applicable Sanskara are 16 (shodash) in number.

These are:

1. *Garbhadhan* (sacrament of impregnation or conception)
2. *Pumsavana* (engendering a male issue)
3. *Simantonayana* (hair-parting)

4. *Jatakarma* (birth rituals eg. At the time when the child is being born)
5. *Namakarana* (naming ceremony)
6. *Nishakrama* (first outing or outing ceremony)
7. *Annaprashana* (feeding ceremony)
8. *Chudakarma or mundane* (shaving of head)
9. *Karnavedhan* (piercing the earlobes)
10. *Upanayana* (sacred thread initiation)
11. *Vedarambha* (beginning of vedic study)
12. *Samavartan* (end of studentship)
13. *Vanprastha* (renouncing the householder's life)
14. *Vanprastha* (renouncing the householder's life)
15. *Sanyyas* (leading the life of a monk)
16. *Anteyeshti* (death cremation)

CLASSIFICATION OF SAMSKARA

- 1) The *samskara* can be categorising given above which range from conception (pre-birth) to funeral (post-death) ceremonies as:-
 - a) *Garbhastha* (pre-natal) *Samskaras*-
Garbhadan, Pumsavana, Simantoanayana.
 - b) *Balyawathantargata* (childhood) *samskaras*:
Jatakarma, Namkarana, Nishakramna, Annaprashana, Chudakarma, Karnavedhan.
 - c) *Adhyanartha* (educational) *Samskara*:
Vidyarambha, Upanayana, Vedarambha
 - d) *Grahasarthartha* (Marriage) *Samskara*: *Vivaha*
- 2) The *samskara* in *Balyaawastha* may be classified follows-
 - A. *Ksheerap kala*:
 - a. During Neonatal Period
Jatakarma, Namkarana
 - b. During Infantile Period:
Nishakramana, Annaprashan, Karnavedhan
 - B. *Ksheerannad/ Annad kala*:
 - a. During Toddler Period
Chudkarana Samskara
 - b. During Preschool and School Age
Upnayana Samskara, Vedarambha Samskara

Relevance of *Samskara* for growth and development of children are as follows,

1.JATKARMA SAMSKARA (Ceremony performed after birth or birth rituals)

Jatkarma is the birth rite which helps the baby transcend from intrauterine life to extra uterine life. Clearing the mouth of secretions clears airway and prevents aspiration. Cleaning the vernix provides tactile stimulation to the baby to make it breath or cry. Placing cotton soaked in ghee on head maintains temperature of the baby and provides insulation. It prevents heat loss from baby's head, which has the largest surface area, thus preventing hypothermia. Only after the baby is stabilised cord was cut, emphasizing on resuscitative measures. Tying the cord to baby's neck by thread prevents bleeding from cord

and minimizes chances of infection of cord while tying and at the same time nor letting it hang too loose. *Swarnaprashan* given to baby by *suvarna Bhasma*, honey and ghee serves the purpose of both nutrition and immunization. Honey and ghee have a high caloric value, giving energy to baby whose previous source of nutrition from placenta has stopped. Honey also serves as a mild allergen, which gives the first opportunity to baby's body to start the synthesis of antibodies, thus shielding the baby from infections. Also this first feed initiates gastrointestinal movements and activates the gut. *Swarna bhasma* gives physical protection to baby, enhances brain development and is in micro particles easily absorbable by baby's intestine. This *Lehana* (licking of medicine preparations) also gives an opportunity to physician to assess the rooting and sucking reflex of neonate. Use of Mantra in *Jata karma* gives psychological support to parents especially mother. A relaxed, confident attitude of mother helps the milk ejection reflex. Breast feeding is to be given on the first day so to ensure proper nutrition and protective immunoglobulin present in colostrum. Early initiation of breast feed also stimulates prolactin reflex. When the baby sucks, the nerve ending in the nipple carry message to the anterior pituitary which in turn release prolactin and that acts on the alveolar glands in the breast to stimulate milk secretion. It also stimulates oxytocin reflex which is the milk ejection reflex. The water filled earthen jar may serve cooling purpose or maintenance of humidity in baby's ward room.

2. NAMAKARAN SAMSKARA (Naming ceremony of baby)

Name of an individual signifies his identity and individuality. The appropriate time for naming ceremony in tenth day onwards. This is the time when child has successfully passed the vulnerable early neonatal period (birth to seven days) which bears maximum risk of infections, sepsis, neonatal jaundice, etc. Naming ceremony thus provides an opportunity for examination of baby in late neonatal period. As new born health is indeed the key to child health and survival, *Namkaran Samskara* has an important place. As the name is given by father, it helps develop a parental bonding with baby and understanding of parental responsibilities. Bathing of mother and baby with medicated water also ensures hygiene and disinfection. *Londhra* used has *Shothnashaka* (reduced inflammation) and *Vranaropaka* (wound healing) properties and is categorized under *Artava sangrahaniya* (controls excessive vaginal bleeding). Keeping the baby's head towards north or east where maximum illumination of sunlight is present makes any inflammation on head like unsubsidized cephalahematoma visible.

3. NISHKRAMAN SAMSKARA

Nishkraman samskara is taking out the baby for the first time. The time described for this in our texts is fourth month which is appropriate by this time baby develops enough immunity and tolerance to external environment. The presence of a Vaidya on this occasion provides an opportunity for routine check-up and examination of normal milestones development in the baby like presence of neck holding, no head lag when pulled to sit, head above the plane of trunk on ventral suspension, hand eye coordination, bidextrous grasp approach to a dangling ring, laughing loud, social smile and recognition of mother. During this *samskara* the baby gets in an unfamiliar environment when his reaction in form of social smile, anxiety, fear, laugh or reaction to sound of bell can be observed. Persistence of primitive reflexes, if any can also be noticed.

4. ANNAPRASHANA SAMSKARA

Modern day paediatricians recommend exclusive breast feed till six months, supplemental food should be started only after that. This is exactly the same as recommended by our authors. The food is properly mashed to avoid difficulty in deglutition. Cleaning by *Jal Acamana* (water) indicates the highly developed sense of oral hygiene. Specific food which is beneficial in respective diseases is also prescribed. Starting the intake of fruits offers energy as well as vital vitamins and minerals to baby. This ceremony can also be useful for assessment of developmental milestones like rolling over, Sitting with own support in tripod fashion, unidextrous reach, stranger anxiety and monosyllabic speech at sixth month. Teeth eruption in children also begins around this age. Hence proper dentition is also to be looked for. Similarly *annaprashan* at tenth month offers assessment of bisyllabic speech, waving bye-bye, immature pincer grasp and standing with support. Weight of child can also be assessed.

5.CHUDAKARMA SAMSKARA

Acharya Sushruta opines that *Shikha* (special arrangement of hair on top on scalp which is left during *Chudakarma samskara*) is the site of *sira* (vessels) and *Sandhi* (sutures) and hair acts as a protective layer. Cutting of hair gives lightness and prosperity. This *samskara* gives a chance for examination of skull and growth of hair. Detection of abnormalities like craniocynostosis, wide sutures, microcephaly, macrocephaly, elevated or depressed fonanelle etc. palpation of scalp carefully may also reveal cranial defects or craniotabes.

6.KARNAVEDHANA SAMSKARA

Ear piercing inflicts a small injury and triggers active immune mechanism of baby. It thus prepares the immunity of baby against any possible infection injury. Modes to increase the pierced hole offer lubrication and prevention of wound infection. Selection of winter for the procedure also decreases chance of infection. Holding ear lobule against sun visualizes course of fine vessels, to avoid bleeding.

7.UPANAYANA SAMSKARA

After the *upanayana* is performed, the young lad becomes a *Dvija* ie. Twice born as this Samskara signifies spiritual rebirth. The brain growth of the child gets completed up to the age of 5yrs. So Manu's opinion of starting the education by 5 years looks to be more logical. A thread tied around the waist may serve the purpose of assessment of the physical growth and to rule out the malnutrition.

8.VEDARAMBHA

Starting formal education at five years is apt in today's era also, as by this time a normal child learns to walk, run, climb stairs, tell his name and gender, play cooperatively in a group, copy simple diagrams, use pencil, say song, poem, feed by himself and can go to toilet alone. Thus, a child of this age can adjust well if sent to *Gurukul* (formal school). It is also time for assessment of mental growth of child.

CONCLUSION:

Samskara are rites performed with an objective of imparting positive potentials in a person. The childhood *Samskara* aim at preparing the baby for extra uterine life successfully, develop proper feeding habits, ensure adequate nutrition, prevent diseases, adapt to environment for further survival, give individual identity and educate the child. It takes care of not only physical health but also prevents various psychosocial discrepancies, imparts higher sanctity to life, thus making him a responsible youth of good character who proves to be an asset to the society. *Samskara* described in *Ayurvedic* texts are based on the various stages of child growth and developments and hence provide a rational guideline toward his care during celebrating different ceremonies from very conception to childhood.

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