



Review Article

## CARE OF NEWBORN CHILD THROUGH SAMSKARA

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### ABSTRACT

A newborn child is a foundation of mature man. If a child gets proper care he grows properly and turns into the healthy individual. Ayurveda is the science that describes it into its branch named 'Kaumarbhritya'. Kaumarbhritya deals with every aspect related to child. The hindu mythologies and many Ayurvedic Acharyas describe 16-40 Samskara in which 16 are specific and begins even before the baby borns and lasts till he take his last breath. Samskara, a word from the Sanskrit language, has a number of context-dependent meanings, but they all roughly speak of "putting together, doing well, making perfect, a kind of solemn acknowledgement and getting ready," as well as "mental impression, recall." The Samskara are the religious rites and ceremonies for purification of the body, mind and intellect of an individual. Samskara are the impressions and dispositions that develop and accumulate deep inside a person, according to these schools, from perception, inference, choices, preparation, practice, interaction with others, thoughts, wilful actions and karma. All these Samskara are performed since the mythological era. Is it important in reality and contribute in the child's development, it is a question mark for the new generation. So we should find the logic behind their contribution. In today's era, there is a strong need to understand and make others to understand these Samskara on scientific basis and its concept to adopt easily and we could get the ideal baby. Samskara suggests concept of growth & development and examination of developmental milestones of a growing child.

### INTRODUCTION

The specific rituals/actions starting from the beginning of life to till death are known as 'Samskara' according to the hindu mythological texts. The etymology of word 'Samskara' fits correct here that 'Samskaro hi gunantaradhaanam'. The 'Samskara' improves and increases the quality of life as the various Acharya mention. There are total 16-40 Samskara in which 16 are the most specific.

The Samskara are described below:

#### 1. Samskara in intrauterine life

- Garbhadhan
- Punsvan
- Seemantonayan

The first two are described into Ayurvedic texts that are important to a clinician.

#### 2. Samskara after birth in Kumara

- Jat karma
- Namkaran
- Nishkraman
- Annaprashan
- Chudakarma
- Karnvedhan
- Upnayan
- Vedarambh

The eight comes under Kaumarbhritya branch.

#### 3. Samskara in the young and elderly person

- Samavartan
- Vivah
- Vanprasth

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- *Sanyas*
- *Antyeshti*.

### **Samskara after birth in Kumara**

The eight *Samskara* included in this are described by various *Acharyas* separately or uniquely.

#### ❖ **Jatkarma Samskara**

This is the first *Samskara* among the 16 described by Hindu mythology. The word '*Jatkarma*' indicates that after this *Samskara* a new one establish himself into this world after coming from the womb.

This is the universal truth that a creature needs nutrition for the survival. An embryo and foetus takes its nutrition from mother through placenta. But after coming into this world he needs instant nutrition. So this *Jatkarma Samskara* prepares a newborn for taking nutrition, so that the digestive system should start their function. That's why the Ayurvedic *Acharyas* used the *Ghee*, *Madhu* and *Swarna*.

- According to *Acharya Charaka*: A newborn should consume the *Madhu* and *Ghrta* and after it he should consume the milk from the mother's right breast's milk.
- According to *Acharya Sushrut*: A newborn should consume the *Madhu*, *Ghrta* and *Swarnchurna*.
- According to *Acharya Vagbhata*: *Jatkarma* should be done with *Prajapatya Vidhi*.
- According to *Acharya Dalhana*: It's a *Vedokta Karma*.<sup>[1]</sup>

#### **A Scientific approach towards Jatkarma Samskara**

According to the modern science we can assume that rooting and sucking reflex as well as sucking-swallowing-breathing coordination is assessed while offering honey and ghee. The newborn gets ready to suck by rooting. The infant will begin sucking when the roof of the mouth is touched. Starting at the 32<sup>nd</sup> week of pregnancy, this response takes around 36 weeks to fully develop. Because of this, premature babies may have a poor or undeveloped sucking ability. So in this way the *Acharya* were used to assume in the ancient times if the baby is premature or mature.

The *Jatakarma* can also prove an as an efficient tool of examination to rule out oral anomalies such as cleft palate, natal teeth, fissured tongue, ankyloglossia, tracheo-esophageal fistula etc. Honey used during this ceremony provide following benefit as:-

*Madhu* has *Sheet*, *Guru*, *Madhur* and *Kashaya* (in *Rasa*), *Raktapitta* and *Kapha-nasaka* as well as *Chhedan*. (*Charaka Samhita Sutrasthana* 27/245, *Hridya*, *Tridoshar* etc (*Sushruta Samhita Sutrasthana* 45/132). Honey also acts as source of energy because it contains mainly fructose (about 38.5%) and glucose (about 31.0%) as well as vitamins and multimineral. Honey has antimicrobial properties (antibacterial

activity against coagulase-negative staphylococci (V.M.French et al.). Honey also used in wound dressing (P.C.Molan et.al.).

Ghee has following effect on body: According to *Charaka*, ghee is useful to *Rasa*, *Shukra dhatus* and *Oja* (immunity), *Pitta-anilahara*, *Svra-varna-prashadanum* (*Charaka*)

*Samhita Sutrasthana* 13/14. By *Sushruta*, ghee increases *Samriti*, *Medha* (intellect), *Kaanti*, voice, *Oja*, strength, *Vishahar*, *Rakshoghan*.<sup>[2]</sup>

#### ❖ **Namkaran Samskara**

Most of the *Acharya* agree on a single statement that a newborn should be named on his 10<sup>th</sup> day after birth. It can be *Nakshatrik* or *Abhiprayik*.

#### **The Reasons Behind Naming**

Person's name is foremost and defining aspect of his identity. It is an important tool for socialisation. The child should be named in a manner that is meaningful and reflects a dignified quality. Parents and other family members are informed during this ritual that the child should be raised in a setting where his innate abilities can flourish.

- Name of a baby promotes the healthy psychology, good physical and mental development.
- *Acharya Charaka* has described *Ayu-pariksha* after naming ceremony, which is deciding the healthy and diseased condition of the baby (*Charaka Samhita Sharirsthana* 8/51).
- First 10 day are considered as high-risk period of newborn. Baby can die within a week in case of major congenital abnormalities, Rh incompatibility, severe birth asphyxia etc. Jaundice that persists in a newborn after 10 days should be taken seriously. So after completion of these periods *Naamkaran Samskara* is advised.
- This also indicates the end of early neonatal phase.
- It also important for maintaining medical records and to prevent neonatal exchange in nurseries.
- Status of the umbilical cord- falls and wound healing will be completed by 10th days.

#### ❖ **Nishkraman Samskara**

According to *Ashtang Sangraha* the newborn should be exposed to the external world into 4<sup>th</sup> month.

#### **The logics behind Nishkraman Samskara**

According to the modern science the neonate develops the strength to bear all the external pressures of the environment. His eyes can focus on a particular thing or the sunlight. The body develops immunity power, so the *Acharya* said the *Nishkraman Samskara* in the 4<sup>th</sup> month.

At fourth month age (during this ceremony), following development changes appear in infant: At fourth month, infant able to reaching out for objects with both hand (*Bidextrous reach*), able to rolls over

the bed, recognizes the mother and responds to her voice, anticipate the feeds, laugh loudly when talked by someone, responds to sound well, Starts cooing, curious and shows interest in surrounding environment, Able to fix eyes on external objects and adaptation to external environment begins.<sup>[3]</sup> At 4 month of age, infants are described as “hatching” socially, becoming interested in a wider world.<sup>[4]</sup>

#### • **Annaprashan Samskara**

*Acharya Sushrut* mentions that the child should start to eat Anna at 6<sup>th</sup> month, while *Acharya Kashyap* mentions that the child should start to eat fruits first at the 6<sup>th</sup> month. When the baby is 6 months old, he is just in the learning phase to chew. His first foods need to be soft so they're very easy to swallow, such as porridge or well mashed fruits and vegetables. May be this is the strong reason that *Acharya Kashyap* considers the *Falprashan Samskara* before the *Annaprashan*.

#### ❖ **Reasons of considering Falprashan first**

The child should consume the juices of fresh fruits; the reasons to do so are given below:

- Juice is the one way to introduce them to new flavors. It can also provide them with a good dose of vitamin C.
- Fruits such as banana, apple, papaya, chikoo, apricots, prunes, mango, and peaches are necessary for the overall growth and development of the baby.

#### **Some fruits are given below with their importance in baby's life**

- Apples– Are really easy for the baby to digest, and the soluble fibre they contain helps with constipation.
- Pears – Are gentle on the baby's tummy and make excellent weaning food as they're low in natural chemicals. Try pureeing and serving in yoghurt.
- Bananas – Contain slow-release sugars, bananas are great for sustained energy and have a naturally baby-friendly consistency.
- Apricots – Not only do apricots contain iron, potassium and beta-carotene, they are also a good source of fibre.
- Avocados – An excellent source of unsaturated fats, great for healthy heart functioning.
- Blueberries – Have one of the highest antioxidant capacities of any fruit, giving them anti-inflammatory properties.
- Peaches – Have vitamin C and niacin (vitamin B3) to help support brain health and cognition
- Mandarins – Nice and juicy for your baby's enjoyment, mandarins contain potassium, a nutrient to help a healthy nervous system.<sup>[5]</sup>

#### **The logics behind Annaprashan Samskara**

The baby's body needs the extra energy and nutrients to help him to keep growing. Waiting too long may cause the baby to stop gaining weight at a healthy rate, and put him at risk of becoming thin and weak. A baby should feed solid foods at 10 months because at this time he starts growing teeth to cut the solid items easily.

#### ❖ **Chudakarma**

*Kashyap Samhita* describes about this *Samskara* in *Sutra Sthana's Chudakarniya Adhyaay*. *Chudakarm/Chudakaran* means, first hair cutting, also known as *Keshacchedana* or *Mundan Samskara*.

*Chudakarm Samskara* should be done according to:

- *Manu Smriti* (2/140) = 1st year or max. 3-5 year.
- *Parashkar Grahyasutra* (2/1/1) = in 1st year.
- *Aaswalayan Grahyasutra* (1/17/1) = in 3rd year.

#### **Importance of Chudakarma Samskara**

The *Chudakarma Samskara* blesses the child with good health, courage, longevity and prosperity.

- In *Sushrut Samhita*, *Sushrut* points out the importance and benefit of *Chudakarana* or *Mundan Samskara*, that near the top of the inside of the head is the joint of a very important artery (*Shira*) and a critical juncture (*Sandhi*). In the eddy of hairs, there is a vital spot called the '*Adhipati*' and even any minor injury to this part of the head causes immediate death.
- In some traditions, a small amount of hair is left during shaving. It is said that this peak provides protection to the brain.
- After shaving of head, the size and shape of the head should be documented carefully for normal or abnormal findings.
- A tower-head, or oxycephalic skull, suggests premature closure of sutures and is associated with various forms of inherited craniosynostosis.
- Marked venous distension may be observed during inspection of the scalp for any vein prominence because of increased ICP and thrombosis of the superior sagittal Sinus.
- Various neurodevelopment abnormalities may be revealed by gross evaluation of anthropomorphic aspects of the face.
- Palpation of scalp carefully may also reveal cranial defects or craniotabes, a peculiar softening of the parietal bone so that gentle pressure produces a sensation similar to indenting a Ping-Pong ball.<sup>[6]</sup>
- Auscultation of the skull is an important adjunct to a neurologic examination.
- The anterior fontanel is the largest fontanel and is placed at the junction of the sagittal suture, coronal suture and frontal suture. The anterior fontanelle is

not completely closed until about the middle of the second year (between 12 to 18 months of age).

- Examination of anterior fontanel is useful clinical as excessively large AF and its delayed closure is present in following condition: Malnutrition, Hydrocephalus, Cretinism, Down syndrome, Trisomies 13 and 18, rickets, pituitary dwarf etc. Bulging anterior fontanel is sign of raised intracranial pressure exclude crying infants, hydrocephalus, vitamin A poisoning, urea cycle enzyme defects, vitamin D dependent rickets etc.
- The skull may be unduly small as in microcephaly or generalised craniostenosis, Trisomies 13 and 21, Lissencephaly, cerebral dysgenesis etc., or large hydrocephalous, hydrocephaly, cerebral gigantism, porencephaly, and intracranial tumors etc.<sup>[7]</sup>

#### ❖ **Karnvedhan Samskara**

- Piercing the ear lobules in 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> month. There are different views about performing this ceremony in Ayurvedic texts:
- According to *Sushruta* in 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> month (*Sushruta Samhita Sutrasthana* 16/3).
- According to *Vagbhata* in 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> month (*Astanga Hyridya Uttaratantra* 1/28-32).
- There is a chapter named “*Chudakarniye*” in *Kashyapa samhita (Kashyapa Samhita Sutrasthana)*.

#### **Purpose of Karnvedhan Samskara**

By *Sushruta (Sushruta Samhita Sutrasthana* 16/3, the child's ears are pierced for the purpose of *Raksha-nimit* (protection from diseases) and *Bhushan-nimit* (ornamentation).

According to *Kashyapa (Kashyapa Samhita Sutrasthana)*, the experienced and expert physician (*Vaidya*) should pierce the ear of child, for achievement of religion (*Dharma*), desires (*Kama*) and wealth (*Artha*). It seems that this procedure may stimulate the strengthening of immune system in response to injury to the ear lobules which initiate antigen-antibody reaction in early life period.

*Karnavedha* is considered a *Vedic* rite of passage with symbolic spiritual significance. Some people think it's meant to ready the inner ears to hear sacred sounds. Concentrated sacred sound hearing is seen as desirable because it purifies the mind and strengthens the spirit.

Asthma is thought to be treated or prevented in China via acupuncture and acupressure applied to a specific location on the ear.

There is a naturally occurring, tiny microscopic depression below the ear lobe that is connected to nerve endings that are associated to conditions like bronchial asthma, coughing, and tuberculosis.

Chinese science of acupuncture states that the root cause of some diseases lies in the subtle regions of every organ in the body.

Whenever that particular place is punctured, the associated disease gets vanished. Study of this science was done and recorded in the *Vedas* much earlier and the *Samskara* of piercing the ear lobes was already implemented on both genders of kids.<sup>[8]</sup>

#### ❖ **Upnayan Samskara**

*Upnayan*= Up (near) + *Nayan* (bringing). This *Samskara* performed before initiation of education or 5<sup>th</sup> year of age. This is interpreted to imply that parents bring their children close to their teachers, and that knowledge sends a child close to *Brahmatwa*.

Hence, the student is called '*Brahmachari*'. A detailed procedure is to be followed by the disciple (*Shishya*) on the instructions of his teachers (*Guru*) while starting the study of Ayurveda as in *Charaka (Charaka Samhita Vimanasthana* 8/7-13), *Sushruta (Sushruta Samhita Sutrasthana)* and *Kashyapa (Kashyapa Samhita Vimanasthana, Shishoopkramniya)*. This *Samskara* is related with the children of pre-school age that means the age of 3-6 years. Amongst all the *Samskara*, the *Upanayana Samskara* is considered to be of foremost value.

#### **Importance of Upnayan Samskara**

*Upanayanam* is traditionally contemplated as equal to new birth in the religious world. The sacred thread strands stand for the purity of thoughts, acts, and words of the wearer. Through the *Upanayanam* ceremony, the child is introduced to the concept of *Brahman* and thus becomes certified to the way the life of a *Brahmachari* according to the guidelines of the *Manusmriti*. In Hinduism wearing sacred thread is extremely significant as it denotes the starting of education for the child. *Upanayana* ritual symbolises the end of an era in a boy's life and the initiation into another. But, in modern times, this ritual can be conducted when a man gets married.

#### ❖ **Vedarambh Samskara**

This is a special *Samskara* performed in the 5<sup>th</sup> year of life. Basically, this indicates closure of preschool age to school age. The child made to learn alphabets and general numbers and starts the process of learning the *Vedas*. He will be totally separated from his home environment during his study period so that he can focus solely on his studies.

In early childhood, child is very active, interested, creative, faithful to teacher, with help of teacher to mould him all required knowledge of one specific field. Professional course will be completed by 18<sup>th</sup> year and he will be available to the society for service or to render his duty.

**CONCLUSION**

The healthy foundation of a child's life based on *Samskara*. The *Samskara* mentioned in Ayurveda gives a scientific approach that how they are so essential in the development of a child. Every *Samskara* contributes in the physical and mental health. So it is today's need to learn and perform these *Samskara* for betterment of the child.

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