



Review Article

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT IN CHILDREN- AN AYURVEDA REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

The emotional, social and physical development of young children has a direct effect on their overall development and on the adult, they will become. That is why understanding the need to invest in very young children is so important, so as to maximize their future well-being. From above description it is very clear that, childhood is very crucial time period of life, therefore, Ayurveda *Acharyas* have very well identified the importance of child growth and development and differentiated the health and diseases of children from adult. Ayurveda has established the independent branch for child rearing practices and treatment of childhood diseases and named as *Kaumarabhritya*. *Acharya Kashyapa* has described the care of the child right from the gestational age during pregnancy, during labour and after the birth up to the age of sixteen years of life. If one closely observed the chapters of *Kashyapa Samhita* keenly, one can find a central theme behind all the principles of Ayurveda practices. That central theme is the growth of baby. All the *Samskara* mentioned in Ayurveda, are child rearing measures and treatment protocols focusing on the growth of baby, and planned systematically without hampering or altering the growth of the child. Also, growth assessment in children has been very well described by Ayurveda *acharyas*.

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INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, the indigenous system of traditional Indian medicine, defines the aim of human life is to attain the *Chaturvidha Purushartha* i.e. *Dharma* (Righteousness, moral values), *Artha* (prosperity, economic values), *Kama* (Pleasure) and *Moksha* (liberation). For the achievement of those *Purushartha*, healthy and long life is the pre-requisite. According to basic theory of Ayurveda *Sharira* or body is mainly composed of three rudimentary units, *Dosha* (humor), *Dhatu* (tissues), and *Mala* (metabolic waste products), and health is maintained with balance or equilibrium between, *Dosha* (humor), *Dhatu* (tissues), and *Mala* (metabolic waste products). Balance between these basic three components is achieved by following *Dinacharya* (daily regimes and day to day activity) and *Ritucharya* (seasonal life style changes). In addition to above all regime to improve the health and to increase the longevity, Ayurveda explained *Rasayana* (rejuvenation) as special and unique

regime. *Dhatu*, in childhood, is the very unique feature of children which is essential to grow and differentiate them from that of adults. Considering the growing status of *Dhatu* *Acharya* emphasized to administer the *Rasayana* therapy in early age of life that is in childhood. As *Dhatu* grows in accelerated manner in children, if one administers proper nutritional diet and supplements there is healthy growth of child which makes the foundation of healthy and long life in future adulthood too.

The growth is narrated as *Vridhhi* in Ayurveda. But from clinical perspective *Vridhhi* can be harmful also and hence the appropriate word for healthy growth used by *Acharya* is '*Samvardhana*'.^[1]

Vridhhi* versus *Samvardhana

Vridhhi in Ayurveda classics is used for the increment in the *Dosha*, *Dhatu* or *Mala*. *Vridhhi* of *Dosha* and *Mala* is not good for health, while *Vridhhi* of *Dhatu* is very essential for the maintenance of health. Again, *Vridhhi* beyond optimum level of

Dhatu is also indicator of pathology in the body. As *Meda* and *Mamsa Vriddhi* leads to formation of different cysts and swelling in the body, *Rakta Vriddhi* leads to jaundice and splenomegaly etc., therefore the *Vriddhi* word is not appropriate for the healthy growth of tissues and especially for the overall growth of an individual.

On the contrary side *Samvardhana* literally means the *Samyaka* (proper), *Vardhana* (increment), and it reflects the growth without pathology. *Samvardhana* means the accurate or standard growth of all body tissues in appropriate manner which should be achieved at particular age. The same fact is supported by *Acharya Kashyapa* in *Sutra Sthana* in the explanation of *Samvardhana Ghrita* in *Lehana Adhyaya*. In the *Phalashruti* (indications) of *Samvardhana Ghrita* it has been said that, the consumption of the *Samvardhana Ghrita* causes healthy growth and described as '*Nirvyadhi Vardhate Shighram*' means causes healthy growth without occurrence of diseases or illness. In all *Samvardhana* is more closely related to healthy growth of child.

In short *Vriddhi* indicates the increment which is either physiological as well as pathological, secondly it is mainly concerned with the derivatives of *Dosha*, *Dhatu* and *Mala*. On the other hand *Samvardhana* indicates healthy growth always reflecting the physiological growth, and is mainly concerned with the holistic and integrate healthy growth of child.

Panchamahabhuta and Samvardhana

The process of *Vriddhi* or *Samvardhana* started from the process of *Garbha* formation. *Garbha* is described as the union of *Shukra* (sperm), *Shonita* (ovum) and *Jivatma* with *Sattva* (Soul with mind). Once there is formation of *Garbha*, the *Vriddhi* started, inside the *Garbha*, according to fundamentals of Ayurveda *Panchamahabhuta* (five basic elements) i.e. *Prithvi*, *Jala*, *Teja*, *Vayu*, *Akasha* are chief constituents of all materialistic things of the universe. There is a transformation among these five basic elements with different permutations and combinations and there is formation of complex elements of the universe.

Garbha is also transformed through different phases by the *Panchamahabhuta* and there is formation of highly complex human embryo. During that transformation there is different role of different *Mahabhuta*. *Prithvi Mahabhuta* is responsible for increased in bulk (one can consider it as increased in cellular volume and bulk), *Jala Mahabhuta* is responsible for the unctuousness and binding between two molecules (one can consider it

as formation of amniotic fluid), *Agni Mahabhuta* is responsible for the transformation taking place in the embryo (one can consider it as tissue differentiation and formation of trigeminal disk as transformation), *Vayu Mahabhuta* is responsible for actual division and increase in the number of *Paramanu* in *Garbha* (one can consider it as cell division and increased in cell numbers) while *Aakasha Mahabhuta* is responsible for increased in volume and formation of channels as a space between two molecules.

All these, five *Mahabhuta* work co-ordinately and form the complex *Garbha*. From above description it is very clear that *Vayu* and *Akasha Mahabhuta* are most important *Mahabhuta* among all basic five elements. *Panchamahabhuta* plays crucial role, in the formation of *Garbha*, and even the growth of *Garbha*. Hence, it is very clear that, *Samvardhana* is very critical term used by *Acharya Kashyapa* for the growth of children.

Sharira and Growth Relation

Sharira literally means the physical body, and it is defined in Ayurveda as *Shiriyate Tat Shariram*; means the entity which gets continuously dipping. There is continuous tearing of all body tissues and molecules in day to day life of an individual. But at the same time of tearing there is repair and reproduction of body molecules. Hence there is maintenance of life with equilibrium between the process of tearing and repairing of body tissues. The same has explained earlier according to *Acharya Sushruta* there is increased rate of repairing and tissue regeneration in early phase of life or childhood, the rate of tearing and repairing as almost equal in adulthood while rate of tearing is greater in geriatric age. Therefore, there is increase in bulk of body from small newborn stage to large adulthood size through the childhood age.

Agni and Growth

From description it is very clear that, the increased rate of anabolic biochemical process or tissue repair and regeneration is the basic reason for the growth of child. Despite this fact, there is one more physiological factor is responsible for the growth of child and is called as *Agni* in Ayurveda. In broad sense *Agni* is an integration of all biochemical metabolic process, including digestion, absorption, assimilation, metabolism and excretion. Though there is increased rate of anabolism and adequate supply of diet to body, without the proper functioning of *Agni* healthy growth is not possible. As wisely said by *Acharya Charaka* that, even a good quality food in sufficient quantity is not able to

accelerate the healthy growth without the proper functioning of *Agni*.

Therefore, one has to take care of *Agni* keenly, to maintain the healthy metabolism, healthy growth and ultimately for healthy long life.

Aahara and Growth

Aahara is one of the basic requirements of all individuals. *Aahara* is very essential for sustaining the life. With the help of *Tridosha* and *Agni* human body transforms *Aahara* into *Dhatu*. Formation of adequate quantity of *Dhatu* is very important to sustain the life. Strength of *Dhatu* is in fact strength of an individual and in the same manner growth of *Dhatu* is growth of person.

Samanya Vishesh Siddhanta of Ayurveda in Relation to Growth and Development

As described in preceding paragraph that strength and growth of person is dependent upon the strength of *Dhatu* of that individual and the strength of *Sharira Dhatu* can be increased with the systematic and regular use of congenial diet and life style.

According to Ayurveda human body is the reflection of the nature, and hence whatever occurs or happened in the human body or *Sharira* reflects and can be correlated with the external environmental events or activity; as explained in *Charaka Samhita*, that human is the counterfeit of universe. Ayurveda *Acharya* has observed the qualities of the food and categorized them on the basis of *Rasa Panchaka* and gives direction of their uses according to requirement of human body in different environmental conditions. For this organization and categorization of food *Acharya* follow very basic principal of *Samanya Vishesh Siddhanta*, which defines the similarities and differences on the basis of qualities and properties of *Sharira Bhava* (content of human body) and *Aahara Dravya* (food or diet). There is tendency of the *Sharira Bhava* to get increased with the use of food or diet resembling its properties, e.g. regular consumption of meat is well known to increase the muscle bulk in individual, similarly regular use of milk increased the *Kapha Dosha* in individual. Similarly, regular consumption of milk improves the lactation in women.

From above description it is clear that, the regular and adequate use of the congenial diet which having properties similar to the *Sharira Dhatu* is very helpful to maintain and improve the bulk of *Sharira Dhatu*.

Shashtika Shali (red rice), *Mudga* (green gram), *Godhuma* (wheat), *Saindhava* (rock salt), *Kshira* (milk), *Ghrita* (Ghee), *Madhu* (honey), and

Mamsa (meat) are few examples of congenial diet improving the *Sharira Vriddhi* (physical growth) and *Sharira Bala* (physical strength).

Sharira Bala (Physical Strength) Versus Sharira Vriddhi (Physical Growth)

Though *Sharira Bala* as well as *Sharira Vriddhi* depends upon regular use of healthy diets, *Sharira Vriddhi* achieved earlier than strength as increment in *Dhatu* is initial step and persistent growth over a period of time imparts the strength. *Vriddhi* is quantitative parameter while *Bala* is qualitative parameter of *Sharira Bhava* assessment. *Vriddhi* can be achieved with the increment in the bulk of single *Dhatu* like *Rasa*, *Mamsa* etc., and *Bala* is overall effect of qualitative growth of all *Rasadi Sapta Dhatu* and *Oja*. *Oja* is considered as the essence of all *Sharira Sapta Dhatu*^[2] and terminal or ultimate exquisite entity produced at the end of metabolism. *Oja* provides the strength, complexion, growth, and immunity to individual. Therefore, one can say that, *Sharira Bhava Vriddhi* is the initial step in the achievement of quality of strength, complexion and immunity.

Considering this interrelation between *Vriddhi* and *Bala* *Acharya Charaka* has mentioned the *Sharira Vriddhikara Bhava* and *Bala Vriddhikara Bhava* one after the other in *Sharira Sthana*. Simultaneously, *Acharya Charaka* has mentioned *Brimhaniya Mahakashaya* and *Balya Mahakashaya* in the same way one is for *Sharira Vriddhi* and other is for *Bala Vriddhi*.

Brimhaniya Mahakashaya^[3]- *Kshirini*, *Rajakshavaka*, *Ashvagandha*, *Kakoli*, *Kshirakakoli*, *Mudgaparni*, *Mashaparni*, *Jeevanti*, *Madhuka*.

Balya Mahakashaya^[4]- *Endri*, *Rishabhaka*, *Atirasa*, *Rishyaprokta*, *Payasya*, *Ashvagandha*, *Sthira*, *Rohini*, *Bala*, *Atibala*.

Ayurveda Bala Vriddhikara Bhava^[5]

Acharya Charaka has been enlisted the group of conditions to improve the *Bala* of individual in *Sharira Sthana*. The details of each as per below.

- *Balvat Deshe Janma*- The individual born in a locality, where the population has strong physical strength and immunity.
- *Balvat Purushe Janma*- The individual born in family in which naturally in heritage of good strength and immunity.
- *Balvta Kale Janma*- The individual born in healthy season like *Hemanta* and *Shishira Ritu*. As *Bala* or strength is on higher side in these *Ritu*.
- *Sattva Sampat*- The individual having good psychological stress bearing capacity have good physical strength.

- *Satmya Sampat* - The individual having *Satmya* (practice or adaptation) to all *Rasa* in diet and practices congenial dietary practice has good physical strength.
- *Aahara Sampat* - As already explained above, the person practicing congenial and healthy diet practices bears good physical strength.
- *Guna Sampata* - The individual practicing the life style to bear the *Guna* or properties similar to *Dhatu* or body tissues, have good physical strength.
- *Sukha Kalayoga* - In all there should be a synchronization and coordination of above mentioned factor is also essential to bear and maintain the good physical strength.
- *Bija Kshetra Sampat* - The individual having the quality *Bija* or genome inherited by healthy and strong parents bears the good physical strength.
- *Svabhav Samsiddha* - In addition to above all there is a natural and constitutional impact on the strength of individual.
- *Youvana* - It is quite normal that *Bala* or strength is maximum in *Youvana Avastha* as *Dhatu* have achieved complete maturity and at peak level of growth and development.

Ayurveda Sharira Vriddhikara Bhava^[6]

- *Kalayoga* - for the optimum growth of the body, optimum period is required and is considered under the *Kala Yoga* in Ayurveda. E.g. there is early sixteen years of life are very essential for proper growth as explained by *Acharya Charaka* that *Dhatu* are in *Vivardhamana* phase (accelerated growing phase).
- *Svabhava Samsiddhi* - There is a natural and constitutional tendency of body to grow, the only important thing is that the rate of grow and at the same time the rate of destruction varies from age to age. And hence there is actual physical growth in the form increase in *Pramana* and *Samhanana* of individual especially in childhood.
- *Aahara Saushthava* - as *Aahara* is the basic requirement of *Shiryamana Sharira* (daily diminishing *Sharira*), the *Saushthava* or excellence and quality of food highly affects the quality of generating *Dhatu* or body tissue and ultimately affecting the overall growth of child. Hence though there is natural tendency of body to grow in childhood one should use healthy and congenial diet which imparts highest level of strength and growth to the growing child. Therefore, *Acharya* wisely said that the *Sharira* developed with the *Saushthava Aahara* has optimum growth and strength. On one hand *Aahara Saushthava* indicating the excellence and

quality of diet, simultaneously on the other hand the sufficient quantity of diet is also essential issue to follow to complete the nutritional demand of child.

- *Avighata* - It literally means the absence of any disease, physical or psychological trauma or scarcity in nutrition. Whenever there is continuous supply of healthy diet and pleasant environment without interruption and warm emotional support there is healthy growth and development of child.

After the conceptual reviewing of *Dhatu, Bala, Bala Vriddhi* and *Sharira Vriddhi*, one can inferred that growth and development of child is mostly depend on the quality and quantity of diet and the emotional support while child rearing. Among these factors also the diet is of utmost important in the health issues related to growth of child. As children are choosy in nature and more concern regarding the taste of food, *Acharya Charaka* quoted nicely about the drug administration to children. The diet as well as drug to be administered to the child should be

Madhurani - It should be sweet in taste as children prefer sweet taste food.

Kashayani - It should be liquid or semisolid form as children prefer that easily digestible food with good water contents.

Ayurveda Growth Assessment

In Ayurveda there is no direct reference of assessment of growth or *Samvardhna* but the *Ayu Parikshana^[7,8]* explained in *Kashyapa* and *Charaka Samhita* resembles the certain points like *Parimana* of different organs and circumferences of different body parts; which can be considered as the Ayurveda growth assessment parameters.

According to *Acharya Charaka* and *Vagbhata Ayu Parikshana* should be done after the *Namakarana Samskara*. On the basis of findings of physical examination, *Vaidya* should decide the life span of the newborn. Ayurveda describe the symptoms of *Dirghayu* or long-life span as follows.

1. **Hair** - soft, scanty, moist, having strong roots, and black colored hairs are precious.
2. **Skin** - *Sthira* (immovable) and *Bahala* (thick) is suggestive of good life span.
3. **Head** - *Shadangula Utsedha* (8cm in length) and *Dvadashangula Vistara* (25 cm Anterioposterior length) is considered as normal.
4. **Forehead** - should be broad, even, and bones of temporal region should be properly fused, (means neither completely fused nor widely spaced) there should be vertical and

- semicircular lines over forehead, and forehead should be muscular.
5. **Ears** - both ears should be long, strong, similar, and ear lobules should be big, ears should be inclined from back to front, with strong tragus, and with big external ear meatus; such ears are excellent.
 6. **Eyebrows** - should incline to downward direction medially, both the eyebrows should not meet each other, should not be more large and both the eyebrows should be similar.
 7. **Eyes** - both the eyes should be equal, lens should be symmetrical, cornea-sclera-pupils should be differentiable from each other and should be healthy, with *Teja Guna*, and all parts of eyes like eyelids etc. should be strong.
 8. **Nose** - broad, straight, able to take deep breath, vomer (partition bone of nose) of nose should be straight; tip of nose should be inclined downward and nose should be good looking.
 9. **Mouth Cavity** - should be broad, straight, and the mouth cavity with properly fixed teeth is suggestive of good life span of newborn baby.
 10. **Tongue** - with proper dimension, soft, thin, and pink in color is ideal.
 11. **Palate**- palate should be soft, moderately muscular, warm and red in color.
 12. **Swara** (Sound) - sound should be strong, big, having no hoarseness, *Anunadita* (producing nasal component of sound), *Gambhira* (deep), and with patience. It is difficult to assess the voice of newborn but with the hearing of cry one can judge this.
 13. **Lips** - lips, which are thicker, and are more lean are not precious; lips should have proper dimensions (length and width), lips should be able to close the mouth cavity on keeping close, and red colored lips are precious.
 14. **Mandible** (lower jaw) - both fragments of mandible should be strong and big.
 15. **Neck** - neck should be round and moderate in length.
 16. **Chest** - chest should be broad and muscular.
 17. **Manubrium** and Spine - should be covered with musculature.
 18. **Breasts** - both the breasts should be moderate distance apart.
 19. **Rib Cage** - Ribs should be strong and non-palpable.
 20. **Arms, Thighs, and Digits** - all should be round and long.
 21. **Palm and Sole**- palm and sole should be muscular.
 22. **Nails** - nails should be moist, strong, stable, *Tamra* (red), having shape like turtles back i.e. elevated in centre and depressed at periphery.
 23. **Umbilicus** - umbilicus should be Dextro-rotated and elevated at periphery.
 24. **Kati** (lower back) - *Kati* should be less than 1/3 of the chest and muscular.
 25. **Buttocks**- should be round shape, stable, muscular, and moderately elevated.
 26. **Thighs**- should be round and muscular
 27. **Shank** - shank should be moderately built, similar with the legs of deer and should be muscular.
 28. **Ankle** - ankle that is moderately built is preferable.
 29. Upper part of the legs should be turtle shape.

“This *Ayu Parikshana Vidhi* is reminiscent of the great vision and observation power of Ayurveda ancestors. It is very useful to decide the prognosis of *Ayu* and health of newborn and is useful to guide the *Vaidya* to administer the newborn care to keep newborn healthy and increased longevity of the baby.”

All these measurements and assessments of organs are the basic anthropometrical assessment in children explained in Ayurveda.

Samskara and Development

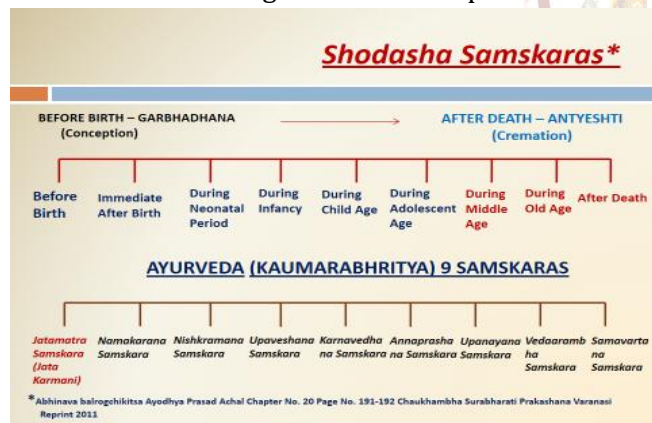
The word *Samskara* is constructed with *Sam* and *Kara*. *Sam* is the *Upasarga* suggesting the *Samyak* means appropriate. While *Kara* is the word formed with the *Kru Dhatu* (*Atmanepada Lut Pratyaye*) and which means doing or to do or to be done.

Indian traditions have given prime importance to the *Samskara*. *Samskara* is nothing but a procedure done intentionally to achieve a definite goal. In humans, *Samskara* are done at specific age, considering the specific changes in human body at that particular age of life. Every *Samskara* has its own importance at the respective age, targeting the specific expected milestone of human life. From the medical point of view human ancestors had planned the *Samskara* to achieve those milestones with ease and in appropriate manner. The numbers of *Samskara* are described in scattered manner throughout the ancient literatures. Among all these, there are sixteen important *Samskara* which are of major concern and termed as *Shodasha Samskara*.^[9] These *Shodasha Samskara* starts with *Garbhaadhana* (conception/impregnation) and ends at *Antyeshhti* (the last rite of cremation), i.e. from the starting point of life to the end of life. Out of these 16

accepted *Samskara*, the first three are performed before birth of an individual, and the next nine are performed during childhood period. The next three *Samskara* are performed after one attains adulthood with the last being *Antyeshti*, the cremation of dead body. With this classification it's clear that there are only nine *Samskara* are of pediatric concern from birth to adolescent age i.e. 1.*Jatakarma Samskara*, 2.*Namakarana Samskara*, 3.*Nishkramana Samskara*, 4.*Upaveshana Samskara*, 5.*Karnavedhana Samskara*, 6.*Annaprashana Samskara*, 7. *Upanayana Samskara*, 8. *Vedarambha Samskara* 9. *Samavartana Samskara*.

From religious perspective *Samskara* are done for ritual purposes. The word *Samskara* is derived from the Sanskrit root meaning "to refine". In the classical Sanskrit literature, the word *Samskara* is used in a very wide sense: in the sense of education, cultivation, training, making perfect, refining, polishing, embellishment, impression, form, mould, operation, impression on the sub-conscious mind, a purificatory rite, a sacred rite or ceremony, consecration, sanctification and hallowing; idea, notion and conception; effect of work, merit of action etc.

If one looks the *Samskara* from Ayurveda perspective one will find that it not only of ritual concerned but having the medical importance.



Picture: *Shodasha Samskara*^[10]

Purpose of *Samskaras* ^[11]

(1) Cultural - The variety of rites and rituals related to the *Samskara* help in the formation and development of personality. In the *Parashara Smruti* it is said, "Just as a picture is painted with various colors, so the character of a person is formed by undergoing various *Samskara*." Thus, the Hindu sages realized the need of consciously guiding and molding the character of individuals, instead of letting them grow in a haphazard manner.

(2) Spiritual - According to the seers, *Samskaras* impart a higher sanctity to life. Impurities

associated with the material body are eradicated by performing *Samskara*. The whole body is consecrated and made a fit dwelling place for the *Aatma*. According to the *Atri Smruti* a man is born a *Shudra*; by performing the *Upanayana Samskara* he becomes a *Dvija* (twice born); by acquiring the Vedic lore he becomes a *Vipra* (an inspired poet); and by realizing Brahman (God) he becomes a Brahmin. The *Samskara* are a form of spiritual endeavor (*Sadhana*) - an external discipline for internal spiritual edification. Thus, the entire life of a Hindu is one grand sacrament. The *Isha Upanishad* reveals that the final goal of the *Samskara*, by observing the rites and rituals is "to transcend the bondage of *Samsara* and cross the ocean of death." To this we can add that after transcending the cycle of births and deaths, the *Aatma* attains *Paramatma* - the Lord *Purushottam*.

DISCUSSION

Children are different from adults in many perspective, but growth is the unique feature that differentiates the children totally from adult. Growth is an essential feature responsible and which is required to attain the adulthood from childhood. India has the great heritage of Ayurveda as health science and describes the child health under the heading of *Kaumarbhryta*. *Kashyapa Samhita*, an ancient classical text book on child care and cure practices has narrated in details about the growth of child and measures to ensure the healthy growth and development. Ayurveda acharyas have not only described the importance of child growth and development but also have given various measures and methods to attain good and healthy growth in children. Ayurveda, considers growth in the form of *Dhatu Pushti* (nourishment of body tissue), *Samhanana* (improvement in the bulk of body tissues and organs), and *Pramana* (improvement in the measurement of body parts like head, chest etc.). Same has been considered as anthropometry in today's modern science. In humans, *Samskara* are done at specific age, considering the specific changes in human body at that particular age of life. Every *Samskara* has its own importance at the respective age, targeting the specific expected milestone of human life. From the medical point of view human ancestors had planned the *Samskara* to achieve those milestones with ease and in appropriate manner. Thus, the aspect of child growth and development is very well covered by ancient Ayurveda scholars keeping in mind the need and necessity of child health.

CONCLUSION

Kaumarbhritya is an ever-changing field which requires continuous updating. In Ayurveda growth and development is thoroughly explained in the classics as *Samvardhana* and *Samskara* respectively. All the principles and procedures of *Samvardhana*, *Samskara* are scientific, time tested, safe. This shows the wisdom of Ayurveda in the field of growth and development and demanding better research strategies from *Kaumarbhritya-Vid* for mainstreaming the Ayurveda Principles of growth and development with today's modern child rearing practices.

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