



Review Article

A CRITICAL APPRAISAL ON VARIOUS SAMSKARA'S WITH THEIR SCIENTIFIC AND MEDICAL IMPORTANCE IN PEDIATRIC AGE GROUP

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ABSTRACT

Samskara's are also known as cultural ceremonies. *Samskara's* are important cultural events in an individual's life right from the conception to death. These cultural events not only possess socio-cultural importance, but these also have great medical importance. It's important to know about timing, procedure and importance of these *Samskara's*. Important *Samskara's* in one's life includes *Garbha Dharan Samskara*, *Jatakarma Samskara*, *Niskramana Samskara*, *Upveshan Samskara*, *Karnvedhan Samskara*, *Phalaprashan Samskara*, *Annaprashan Samskara*, *Swarnaprashana*, *Vedarambha Samskara*.

Garbha Samskara is a method for a worth full child, to endow future generations with good health, noble quality and high intelligence by improving the innate quality of mankind. *Samskara's* like *Nishakraman*, *Upveshan*, *Suryadarsan* and *Chandra Darshana* work as an important tool of assessment of growth and development in children at different ages. *Samskara's* like *Karnavedha* enhances child immunity. *Swarnaprashan* helps in better intellectual growth and improved immunity. *Phalaprashan* and *Annaprashan* provide essential nutrients in the form of micro and macronutrients to the child. These cultural events also enhance child growth and development. *Aksharlekhan* or *Vedarambha Samskara* has great importance in child personality development. These cultural events also have scientific validity and proved medical importance. So it's need of hour that, one should understand the importance of these cultural event and make peoples aware regarding positive effects of various *Samskara's*.

KEYWORDS: *Annaprashana*, *Jatakarma*, *Karnavedhana*, *Nishakramana*, *Samskara's*.

INTRODUCTION

Samskara's are explained in Indian literature right from the *Vedic* period. *Ayurvedic Samhita's* have also described various *Samskara's* with its time period and method. All *Samskara's* mentioned in Indian literature are not having medical importance, among them few are of sociocultural importance. In scientific community, *Samskara's* having medical importance is more important. *Samskara's* like *Jatakarma*, *Annaprashana*, *Karnavedhana*, *Nishakramana*, *Upanayana* etc have great importance in one's life. It is very important to evaluate importance of these *Samskara's* scientifically and make people aware regarding positive effect of these cultural ceremonies. Children's are wealth of a nation. A country youth health status both physically and psychologically depends upon care taken in his childhood period. Cultural events are one of the vital events, which plays important role in better growth and development of child. These events also play vital role in early detection of any abnormality in child's growth and development.

Samskara's timing is also a very important aspect, because it denotes time related to important events for example *Jatakarma Samskara*^[1] at birth helps in eliciting the routing reflex, triggering the initial immunization and also gives sufficient stimulation to gastrointestinal intrinsic nerve plexus, thus help in passing the meconium as the earliest^[2].

Objectives

- To describe various *Samskara's* in detail along with their methods and time period.

- To elaborate importance and scientific validity of various *Samskara's*.

Methodology

A review based study; information pertaining to this study was primarily obtained from various textbooks, clinical observations, research work and scientific studies.

It is important to discuss various cultural ceremonies for exploring their timing, method, medical importance and scientific validity.

Discussion

Garbha Samskara

Garbha Samskara is made of two words *Garbha* and *Samskara*. *Garbha* means fetus and *Samskara* means to replace bad qualities by good ones.

Garbha Samskara is a method for a worth full child, to endow future generations with good health, noble quality and high intelligence by improving the innate quality of mankind. It is achieved by educating fetus for attaining a civilized, cultured, brilliant, beautiful, disease free offspring with physical strength and other qualities like humanity, sincerity, compassion, spirituality, loyalty, courage etc. which are the need for present era. In the 21st century with the development of science in the form of GOD's particle and other astounding technological growth on one side; there is increase in the prevalence of inhumane activities, crimes, addictions, suicidal attempts, terrorist activities etc. which is a matter of utmost concern for our future generation.

Jatakarma Samskara

The first *Samskara's* is to be done after birth is *Jatakarma Samskara's*. *Ayurvedic Acharya's* has given different opinion regarding this *Samskara's*.

Acharya Caraka: The baby should be given to ingest a mixture of honey and *Ghritha* processed with *Mantra*. After this the child should be advanced to feed from right breast of mother. *Udaka Khumbha Sthapana* ^[3] i.e. water pot processed with mantra should be kept along the side of the head of the baby. *Acharya Susruta* said that baby should be given to ingest a mixture of honey, *Ghritha* and *Ananta* (Gold).

Importance of Jatakarma samskara

- The first feeding with honey and *Ghritha* gives sufficient stimulation to gastrointestinal intrinsic nerve plexus. This helps in passing the meconium as the earliest.
- It also helps in triggering the initial immunization.
- *Ghritha* and honey mixture provides energy to newborn.
- It helps in eliciting the rooting reflex.
- *Ghritha* contains Omega-3 fatty acid and DHA, which helps in better brain growth and development^[4].
- *Udaka Kumbha Staphana* near child head is more scientific than cool caps advised by modern science, because it doesn't cause hypothermia, at the same time it provides humidity of surrounding environment and so as to prevent drying up of mucous lining of respiratory tract and prevent dryness of the skin, along with that it prevent child brain cortex from hyperthermia.

Swarnaprashan

Procedure: The child should be faced towards east and gold should be rubbed on a clean washed stone with a little amount of water then it should be mixed with honey and *Ghritha*, be given to child for licking.

Importance of Swarnaprashan

- By continuous use for one month, the child becomes extremely intelligent.
- By continuous use for six months, the child becomes *Shrutadhara* i.e., able to retain what-so-ever he/she hears.
- Gold increases immunity. *Swarna Bhasma* promotes immunity through phagocytosis and found to be effective in motor neuron diseases in small dose.^[5]

Namakarana Samskara ^[6]

It is a cultural event of "Naming the baby".

Age of child

According to *Acharya Caraka*: 10th day after birth by father.

According to *Acharya Susruta*: 10th day after birth by both father and mother.

According to *Acharya Vridha Vagbhata*: 10th, 12th, 100th day or 1 year of age.

Characteristics of Names

1. *Nashatrika*: based on the constellation present at the time of birth.

2. *Abhiprayika*: it should be similar to that of the preceding three generations.

Importance of Namakarana Samskara

- The naming ceremony has impact throughout the life of the child, as the particular child is identified by that name.
- Time period for ceremony by *Acharya's* is generally 10th day. It is important to understand that maximum number of deaths of a child occurs in early neonatal period i.e. first 7 days of life. So naming ceremony before 10th day can result in bad emotional impact on parents or family, if child dies in this time period.

Dolashayana Samskara

In this cultural event child is transferred to the cradle.

Age of child

Males: 12th day after birth.

Females: 13th day after birth.

Importance of Dolashayana samskara

It is probably supposed that child should receive continuous and constant attention in mother's bed till starting 12/13 days. So mother can easily identify and detect any warning sign as child recovers from the fatigue involved in the birth. By this time child generally has no jaundice and sleeps comfortably with swinging movement in the cradle.

Suryodaya Darshan/ Chandra Darshan Samskara ^[7]

Acharya Kashyapa has advised that during first month at a befitting time the child should be made to see and worship the rising sun and moon in the night.

Age of child

According to *Acharya Kashyapa*: 1st month.

According to *Dharma Sindhu Sara*: 3rd month.

Importance of *Suryodaya Darshan/ Chandra Darshan samskara*:

- It helps in testing of the child to look at objects, allows macular fixation.
- It explores the child to UV rays, which helps in warding off the rickets by the formation of Vit D₃ in the skin.

Nishkramana Samskara ^[8]

Age of child: 4th month.

Procedure: *Nishkramana Samskara* is the ceremony of talking the baby out of the *Kumaragar*. The baby having bathed adorned and worn new clothes and possessing the *Rakshoghna Aushada* like *Sidharthaka*, honey, *Ghritha* etc., should be bought out. The baby should be made enter in the temple after worshiping the burning fire; *Brahman's*, god *Vishnu*, *Skanda* and receiving their blessing should reenter their own house.

Importance of Nishkramana Samskara

- By 4th month, child should develop head control to be carried out to the temple.
- Reaction to social contact by a smile or laugh and produce sound with pleasure helps in assessment of respective milestones.
- By this *Samskara*, child is exposed to some sort of external environment stimuli, mainly visual and

auditory. By this we can also assess the visual and auditory milestones.

- By 3-4 months the child turns his head towards the source of sound. In temple, ringing bell helps in observing a pattern of evolving maturity of hearing or checking the development milestone of child hearing.
- By 3-4 months the child fixate intently on an object shown to him.

Upaveshana Samskara^[9]

It is a ceremony of making the baby sit without support in a proposed manner to ensure the activity, growth and development of baby.

Age of child

Acharya Vagbhata: 5th month.

Acharya Kashyapa: 6th month.

Duration of sitting: 1 *Muhurata* (not more than 48 minutes).

Preparation of baby

The baby should be bathed, adorned and dressed in intact clothes. The ceremony should be done, after worshiping of god and satisfying the *Brahmins* by diets and donation. The site of sitting has to be smeared with cow dung and toys should be placed hereby. The baby should be made to sit for a *Muhurata* at a time facing eastwards in the middle of the site. After this, child should be lifted up carefully. The whole process has to be repeated daily.

One has to take care that child should not made to sit for long duration as it can result in weakness of hip, tiredness, fever, retention of feces, urine and flatus etc.

Importance of Upaveshana Samskara

- *Upaveshana Samskara* explains accurate timing for sitting of child. Sitting in early age can leads to complications like vitiation of *Vata Dosha*, fever, pain and arrest in further growth.
- According to modern science also, child should start sitting in tripod position by this age. So it helps in assessment of gross motor milestone of child. By this age child should developed unidextrous reach for a toy or object.
- Introduction to toys in this ceremony provides visual, auditory and sensory stimulation to child, so finally helps in better growth and developments. Toys introduction to child also provides psychological satisfaction to child.

Phalprashana and Annaprashana Samskara^[10]

Phalprashana

Acharya Kashyapa said that child should be given fruit juices from the age of 6 months.

Annaprashana

Age of child

Acharya Kashyapa: 10th month

Acharya Susruta: 6th month

Dharma Sindhu Sara: between 6-12 months, depending on availability of milk. For male child, in even months and for female, child in odd months.

Procedure

Annaprashana should be done on an auspicious day. After igniting fire, a delicious diet comprising of cereals and drinks made from meat of *Laavaka*, *Kapinjala* etc., should be first offered as oblation to the fire along with chanting of mantras. After oblation, the remaining food made soft by mashing is given to child 3 or 5 times in a quantity equal to that of a thumb (*Angustha Matra*).

Importance of Annaprashana Samskara

- Fruit juices provide vitamin c and other nutrients to child.
- By this time the child digestive system get ready to digest complex food substances.
- According to modern science also, Milk fulfils all the requirement of the child up to the age of 6 months. Weaning food is needed after 6 months of age for fulfilling nutritional requirements of child. A child who receives solid food late suffers from a number of ailments deficiency diseases.
- Teeth eruption also starts in child by this time.

Karnavedhana Samskara^[11]

Karnavedhana Samskara is one of the important *Samskara* with medical and socio-cultural relevance.

Age of child

Acharya Susruta: 6th or 7th month in *Shukla Paksha*.

Acharya Vagbhata: 6th or 7th or 8th month in *Hima Agama* (winter season).

Dharma Shastra: 6th, 7th, 8th, 12th month.

Procedure

The right ear in male and left ear in female should be punctured first. The physician having punching needle with his right hand and the ear lobe with other hand. The site of the puncture should be in the middle of the ear lobe (*Devakrita Chidra*) slightly towards the cheeks, where there is maximum translucency from the light source. The puncturing should be done with a single and straight stroke; it should be neither downward, high up, nor downward.

Importance of Karnavedhana Samskara

Puncturing ear may help to active immune mechanism so as to bring a secondary immunity against several infections.

A published research work concluded that "Auricular acupuncture appears to modify the autonomic dysfunction by increasing parasympathetic activity. In clinical trials, auricular electroacupuncture reduced seizure frequency and attenuated seizure severity. Animal results showed that auricular electroacupuncture suppressed epileptic discharges in electroencephalogram traces^[12].

Upanayana or Vedarambha Samskara

It is introduction of education facility to child.

Importance of Upanayana or Vedarambha Samskara

- It helps in building of child intellectual, psychological and personality development.
- It also plays an important role in making of a child's carrier and finally child will not be a burden on

society or family. Child will play a vital role in making bright future of a country.

CONCLUSION

Samskara's are vital events or ceremonies in one's life. We can conclude that cultural ceremonies not only have social importance, but also have a great medical importance. One should follow proper *Samskara* according to the chronological age of child. It will help child in better growth and development. It will also help child in adjusting in the external environment. It can also play important role in child psychological development and final personality. *Samskara's* also helps in assessment of growth and development and also in early detection of growth and developmental disorders. So it is need of hour to utilize these cultural ceremonies for a healthy and better child, final a better nation.

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