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(Raj), India.**ABSTRACT**

During the span of growth and development, an individual pass through the different phases of sensory, motor, neuromuscular, psychological and social developments. These various types of developments are termed as developmental milestones. These developments should occur at particular period otherwise called as delayed developmental milestones. *Ayurveda* describes different *Samskaras* in different period to mark attainment of these milestones that ensure proper growth and development. The number of *Samskaras* varies; it is about 20-40. *Samskaras* are considered as an important

cultural event of an individual's life right from the time of conception up to death possessing both socio-cultural as well as medical significance. These are the turning points of life of an individual and need to be celebrated. These rituals may enable physician to assess the growth and development of a child and diagnosis of disease while performing these *Samskaras*.

KEYWORDS (Index Terms): *Samskaras*, growth, developments, milestones, socio-culture.

INTRODUCTION

There are more than 40 *Samskars* mentioned in religious texts. The *Samskara* are a series of sacraments that serve as rites of passage, which is a ritual event that marks a person's progress from one status to another and mark the various stages of the human life and to signify entry to a *Ashrama*. The medical significance of these *Samskars* are now understood by modern world also. *Samskaras* represent several milestones of a child periodically representing the growth and development. Each *Samskara* makes the growing child to acquire a new talent with the disappearance of earlier immature skill which is called as *Gunantardhana*. Specific *Samskara* is to be performed at specific time or age of a child, which gives clear idea of growth and development that has happened in a child.

In Hindu culture it is believed that every aspect of life is sacred, so due to this reason each important stage, from conception to *Anteyeshthi* (death cremation) is distinguished as special rituals.

In *Ayurveda*, the word *Samskara* introduced as “*Samskara o Hi Gunaantradhyanum*” means qualitative improvement is carried out by incorporating the specific qualities (in various *Dravyas* or medicines as *Rasa aushadhi*).^[1]

The word *Samskar* is derived from root word ‘Kri’ with ‘Sam’ *Upsarga*, which is being used for several meanings for example in sense of education, cultivation, and training, rite or ceremony to change the qualities or intrinsic worth." *Samskara* or Sacraments give meaning to the teachings of the Vedas and Hindu religion. We need various *Samskara* from time to time for religious/spiritual motivation during this passage of life. *Samskara* are rites that are meant to purify and positively influence our lives throughout our growth and development, from conception until death. *Samskara* are religious rites which help direct our lives towards *Dharma* (righteous living). They help and guide us to higher levels of morality and spirituality.

Neonatal Samskara

Jatkarma Samskara: ceremony performed after birth or Birth rituals. As per *Acharya Charka*, on first day of birth, the child should be given first feeding of honey and *Ghritha* consecrated (or blessed) with mantra as given for this purpose. Thereafter, firstly milk from the right breast should be offered (or given) to the child². A water filled pitcher and consecrated with mantras should be kept near the head of baby, probably to maintain proper humidity in *Kumaragara*.

Acharya Sushruta says that on first day after performing *Nalakhedan*, the child should be sprinkled with cold water and then honey and *Ghritha* mixed with *Ananta* powder in small quantity and sanctified with *Mantras* should be given three times to baby. On second and third day *Ghritha* medicated with *lakshmana*, on fourth day honey and *Ghritha* in the amount which fills the palm of neonate (*Savapanital samita*) given two times as well as offer breast milk to baby.^[3]

Importance of Jatakarma samskara: Rooting and sucking reflex as well as sucking-swallowing coordination is assessed while offering honey and *Ghritha*.

Rooting reflex-onset 28 wks. of intrauterine life, well established 32 to 34 wks. of intrauterine life and disappear 3-4 month after birth. Elicited by the rooting or search is present in normal full term babies. When the baby cheek contacts the mother's Brest or the other parts, he "roots" for milk.

Sucking Reflexes: onset 28 wks. of intrauterine life, well established 32 to 34 wks. of intrauterine life and disappear 12month after birth. Elicited by the introducing a finger or teat into the mouth, when vigorous sucking will occur.

Swallowing Reflex. Onset begins around 12-13 wks. of intrauterine life. Full swallowing established at 32-36 wks. of intrauterine life. Their absence in a full-term baby would suggest a development defect.

Suctorial pad: the roundness and fullness of the infant's cheeks are due to the presence in the cheek of a large pad of fat known as the suctorial pad. This lies anterior to the masseter, on the buccinator. It is pierced by the parotid duct and is represented in adult by the buccal pad of fat which is relatively much smaller. It is of assistance in the act of sucking. The new-born child, though edentulous, does not present the unsightly appearance of the toothless adult because the suctorial pad prevents infalling of the cheeks.

The *JatakarmaSamskara* also prove an as anefficient tool of examination to rule out oral anomalies such as cleft palate, natalteeth, fissured tongue, ankyloglossia, tracheo-esophageal fistula etc.

Applied aspect: Benefit of breast-feeding: Breast feeding at the earliest justafter delivery by healthy baby provesbeneficial to him and mother. Benefits of breast-feeding include itsnutritional values as right amount of Fattyacid, lactose, water and amino acidsfor human digestion, braindevelopment and growth.

Honey acts as source of energybecause it contains mainly fructose^[4] (about 38.5%) and glucose (about 31.0%) as well asvitamins and multimineral.^[5] Honey has antimicrobial properties & antibacterial activity againstcoagulase-negative staphylococci.

Ghrita has lubricating property. So, results in lubrication of the G.I.tract mucosa. *Ghrita* contains fat soluble vitaminssuch as A, D and E. It containssaturated fatty acids but of short chain fatty acid.

Namakarana Samskara (Naming Ceremony)

A sacrament for imposing of divinity in newly-born human child. Based on the arrangement of the constellations at birth, the child is named on a day fixed by caste tradition. The *Namkaran Samskara* (Naming Ceremony) of the child is normally performed on the tenth or twelfth day after birth.

Applied aspect of Namakarana Samskara

- a. A person name is foremost and defining aspect of his identity.
- b. During this ceremony, education is given to parents and other family members that the child should be given the atmosphere where his/her inherent qualities can be awakened.
- c. Name of a baby promotes the healthy psychology, good physical and mental development.
- d. Starting of late neonatal period.
- e. Disappearance of physiological jaundice.^[6] Persistence of jaundice after tenth day in neonate should be considered serious.
- f. Baby regains the birth weight.
- g. Umbilical cord falls normally after 5 to 10 days

Acharya Charaka has described *Ayupariksha* after naming ceremony, which decides the healthy and diseased condition of the baby.^[7]

Niskramana Samskara (First outing ceremony)

This *Samskara* is performed when the child is taken out of the home for the first time. According to *Acharya Kashyapa*, in fourth month, baby who had been given bath, adorned, wearing new clean clothes, possessing mustard, honey and *Ghrita* or *Gorochana*, along with *Dhatri* (wet nurse) should be taken out of the house and ready to enter the temple. Thereafter worshipping the *Agni* (burning fire) with *Ghrita* and *Akshata* and then after venerating the *Brahmana*, God *Vishnu*, *Skanda*, *Matrikas* and other family gods with *Gandh* (fragrances), *Pushpa* (flowers), *Dhupa* (fumigations), *Mala* (garlands) etc. gifts and eatable substances and so many other methods; thereafter reciting the *Brahmanas* and taking their blessings and saluting the *Guru*, should re-enter own house; having entered, the physician should recite the *Mantra* (hymen) for offering prayer.^[8]

Applied aspect of Nishkramana Samskara

1. During bath of baby, it is also a good time for a physician to check any deformity as well as clearing any stressor anxiety of parents related to baby.

2. During this ceremony following development changes appear in infant: At fourth month, infant is able to reach out for objects with both hands (Bilateral reach), able to roll over the bed, recognizes the mother and responds to her voice, anticipates the feed, 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.^[9]

3. Disappearance of grasping reflex (3-4 months), placing reflex (3-4 month), stepping reflex (3-4 months), rooting reflex (3-4 months), tonic neck (2-6 month), Moro's reflex (3-4 month) But persistence of these reflexes indicative of cerebral palsy.

4. At fourth month of age, infants are described as "hatching" socially, becoming interested in a wider world.^[10]

Karnavedhan Samskara

As per *Acharya Sushruta*, the child's ears are pierced for *Raksha-Nimit* (protection from diseases) and *Bhushan-Nimit* (ornamentation).^[11] According to *Acharya Kashyap*, expert physician (*Vaidya*) should pierce the ear of child, for achievement of religion (*Dharma*), desires (*Kama*) and wealth (*Artha*).^[12] By *Acharya Sushruta* and *Acharya Kashyapa*, this procedure must be performed by expert (*Kushal*) surgeon (*Bhishag*), not by inexperienced (*Agyani*) *Vaidya* which leads to various complications like fever, *Manyastambha*, *Hanutambha*, *Karnasula* etc.

Applied aspect

- According to the classic *karnavedhan* has dual benefits of protection and ornamentation. Ear lobules are rich in blood circulation. Presence of gold in this area will generate positive energy in the child.
- Ear lobules, according to acupressure and acupuncture principles, are cardio-pulmonary areas. Childhood period is more susceptible for these disorders. *Karnavedhan* and weaning of gold in that place would probably prevent this.
- 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.
- Gold is one of the best *Gara Vishahar Dravyas*. Probably weaning gold in vital part with rich nerve and blood supply reduces the effect of toxins within the body.
- *Karnavedhan Samskar* might help in early detection of bleeding and clotting disorders.

Annaprashana & phalaprashan Samskara (Firstfeeding of solid food)

In 6th month- *Phalaprashan* is advised by *Acharya Kashyapa* whereas *Annaprashan* is suggested by *Acharya Sushruta* and *Acharya Vagbhata*. In the 10th month, *Annaprashan Samskar* is indicated by *Acharya Kashyapa*.

1. According to *Acharya Sushruta*, the child at the age of six months, should be given food light and *Hitkar* (appropriate wholesome food).^[13]

2. *Acharya Vagbhata* advised that solid food should be offered to the child gradually simultaneously with discontinuing breast-milk.

3. *Acharya Kashyapa* has described *Annaprashana Samskara* in detail. Here, they advised feeding of various fruits in the sixth month. After eruption of teeth or in tenth month, the feeding of cereals (*Annaprashan*) should be done during auspicious day in *Prajapatya* constellation, after worshipping the gods and *Brahmanes* by cereals with meat and donations. Later *Acharya Kashyapa* also gives some yoga for nourishment of growing child^[14] as.

a. Prepare a *Avleha* by combination of old, husk free and well washed satior *Sashti* rice, mixed with oleaginous substances and salt. The powders of wheat and barley also should be given, according to congeniality.

b. *Ushnaleha* (electuary) cooked with *Vidanga*, *lavan*, are beneficial, to the one having diarrhoea.

c. To the one having predominance of *Pitta*, *Mrdvika* with honey and *Ghrita* should be given, and in predominance of *Vata*, diet with juice of *Matulunga* and salt.

d. The one knowing *Desh* (place of living), *Agni* (digestive power), strength and period, whenever observes the child as hungry, should give him the food according to congeniality with the gap of one or two periods.

Applied aspect of Annaprashana

1. Fruit juices should be given to the child from sixth month which are source of vitamins especially vitamin C.

2. First meal offered to infant would be easily digestible, light and soft as advised by *Acharya Kashyapa*.

3. At age of 6-month, breast milk now not enough to fulfil the requirement of growing child. So, it is the accurate time for introduction of supplementary feeding as *Phalprashan*.

4. Breast milk is deficient in iron, vitamin A, D, K and calcium^[15], so by offering *Phalprashan* and *Annprashan* ceremony at this time with breast milk, we can reduce the deficiency of related essential vitamins.

5. We can examine the six-month infant which has following milestone

Start sitting with own support (Sits in tripod fashion), Unidextrous reach, recognizes strangers or develops stranger anxiety, pronounce monosyllables (pa, ba, da etc.), lift the head and chest off the surface with weight bearing on hands, may roll from prone to supine, able to bear most of the weight on legs when holding the child in standing position. Similarly, tenth month corresponding milestones may also examine e.g. bisyllables, standing with support, sitting without support, waves bye-bye etc.

6. Primary teeth also start erupted e.g. Central incisors (5-7 month), Lateral incisors (7-11 month), First molars (10-16 month).^[16]

7. Like *Phal/Annprashan* introduction in *Ayurveda*, same principle followed in modern paediatrics as after six month of age weaning, which is the process of gradually introducing an infant to adult diet and withdrawing the supply of its mother's milk, offer foods which are soft, easily digestible and avoid foods with high allergenic potential.

8. IMNCI recommendation for breast feeding and complementary feeding for 6-12 month's are given as:

Breastfeed as often as the child wants. Give at least one *katori* at a time of: Mashed roti, rice/bread/biscuit mixed insweetened undiluted milk or Mashed roti/rice/bread mixed in thick dal with ghee/oil or khichadi with ghee. Add cooked vegetables Or Dalia/halwa/kheer prepared in milk or any cereal porridge cooked in milk or Mashed boiled/ fried potatoes. Offer Banana/biscuit/papaya/cheeko/mango as snacks in between the serving.

Chudakaram (or Mundan) Samskara: This *Samskara* involves shaving the head (of a son). There is a chapter named "*Chudakarniye*" in *Kashyapa Samhita*.^[17] This *Samskara* involves

first shaving of the child's hair. According to *Acharya Sushruta*, the cutting of hairs, nail gives lightness, prosperity, courage and happiness.

Importance of Chudakaram Samskara

1. *Acharya Charaka* described general examination of infant in detail. During examination of skull or cranium, skull without defect, wellformed, slightly larger than usual, yet not disproportionate to the body and resembling an open umbrella is deemed favourable.

2. At one-year age *Balaawastha* changes to *Annada Awastha* and according to *Acharya Sushruta* *ksherrpa* changes to *ksheerannada* at one year, at three-year age starts *Annada* stage.

3. Diagnosis of *Phakka Roga* (1 year) made as by *Acharya Kashyapa*.^[18]

4. After shaving of head, the size and shape of the head should be documented carefully for normal or abnormal findings.

5. A tower-head, or oxycephalic skull, suggests premature closure of sutures and is associated with various forms of inherited craniosynostosis.

6. 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. During scalp examination, inspect any cutaneous abnormalities such as cutis aplasia or abnormal hair whorls as they may suggest an underlying genetic disorder.^[19]

7. Various neurodevelopmental abnormalities may be revealed by gross evaluation of anthropomorphic aspects of the face.

8. Palpation of scalp carefully may also reveal cranial defects or cranio-tabes, a peculiar softening of the parietal bone so that gentle pressure produces a sensation like indenting a Ping-Pong ball.

9. Auscultation of the skull is an important adjunct to a neurologic examination.

10. The anterior fontanel (AF) 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 asexcessively large AF and its delayedclosure is present in many conditions: Malnutrition, Hydrocephalus, Cretinism, Downsyndrome, Trisomy's 13 and 18, rickets, pituitary dwarf etc. Bulginganterior fontanel is sign ofraised intracranial pressure excludecrying infants, hydrocephalus, vitamin A poisoning, Urea cycleenzyme defects, Vitamin Ddependent rickets etc.

11. The skull may be unduly small as in microcephaly or generalised craniostenosis, Trisomies 13 and 21, Lissencephaly, cerebral dysgenesisetc. or large in hydrocephalous, Hydrocephaly, cerebral gigantism, porencephaly, and intracranial tumours etc.^[20]

12. At one-year infant followingmilestones developed such as walkwithout support, mature pincer graspdeveloped, starts turning pages ofbook and scribble, playing simpleball game, first molar eruptionoccurs (16-20 month).

Upanayana Samskara: (Threading Ceremony): A detailed procedure is to befollowed by the disciple (*Shishya*) on theinstructions of his teachers (*Guru*) whilestarting the study of *Ayurveda* as in *Charaka*.^[21] This *Samskara* correlate with pre-school age (3-6 years). Amongst all the *Samskara*, the *Upanayana Samaskara*is of foremost value. Thechild enters studentship and a life ofperfect discipline which involves *Brahmacharya* (celibacy).

Vedarambha (Beginning Vedicstudy) Samskara: According to *Acharya Sushruta*^[22] as the child acquires capacity, strengthto learn and education should be started. This *Samskara* correlates with school age (6-12 years age). In this *Samskara*, eachstudent, according to his lineage, masters his own branch of the *Vedas*.

CONCLUSION

1. Every*Samskara* as mentioned in our *Samhitas* are indirectly or directly related to the developmental milestones of the new born. They are infecting the turning points in the growth and development of an infant which also checks the process and time of proper growth that should takes place at the right time and in the right manner.

2. The traditional ceremonies explained in *Samhitas* in the form of *Samskaras* have scientific basis and logic which can also be proved by the present day evidenced based contemporary sciences.

3. These traditional *Samskaras* which are on the verge of extinction from the Indian culture should be preserved, propagated and inculcated in the present scenario to enhance the clinical side of *Ayurvedic* classics along with the enrichment of *Vedic* culture.
4. These rituals or customs also provide a rational guideline toward the care of the new born during celebrating different ceremonies from very conception to childhood.

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