

“Critical Review Study on Balyakalin Sanskar and Its Benefits during Growth and Development of Children”

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda defines Sanskar as change in qualities of an individual¹. These were the rituals performed time to time from ante-natal period, birth till phase of life. Each Sanskar has its clinical as well as social importance. India has a rich cultural heritage where Hindu Dharma teaches a way of life, which has been refined over millennia to help individual lead to ultimate goal of ‘moksha prapti’ (i.e. happy, successful, healthy life). Number of Sanskara (Sacraments) are explained in different Hindu Dharma Granths are religious customs performed from birth to death of individual. Out of sixteen sanskar described eight are for ‘Balyaavstha’. In ayurveda the word *Sanskara* is introduced as ‘*Sanskaraohi Gunnantradhanam*’ which means qualitative enhancement carried out by incorporating or transforming the precise qualities. *Ayurveda* defines *sanskara* as change in qualities of an individual¹. These were the rituals performed time to time from ante-natal period, birth till phase of life. Each *sanskara* has its clinical as well as social importance.

In Balyakaleen sanskar mentioned out of sixteen sanskar like especially *Jatkarma* (Birth Ritual), *Nishkraman* (First outing), *Karnvedhan* (piercing the earlobes), *Annaprashn* (introducing complementary food) etc. are not only religious rites but they were aimed at preparing the baby for extra-uterine world and preventing the disease and building the immunity of child. Out of so many sanskaras only eight sanskar are important in paediatric practice. Application of these sanskar in today’s modern era as routine practice for children can help in development of holistic approach towards child’s health and early stimulation of immunity; than merely following vaccination schedule for healthy-immune progeny.

Keywords: *Ayurveda, Bal-Sanskara, Samskara Gunnantradhanam, Relevance, Development*

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is the science of life. It is the *Upveda* of *Atharvaveda*. Many topics in *Ayurveda* correlate well with religious texts of ancient India. Sanskar (ceremony) are the rituals performed during ante-natal, natal and post-natal period as described in Samhitas. By virtue of religious importance sixteen to forty sanskaras¹ are described in classical texts. But out of them only sixteen sanskaras have special importance in the life of an individual and out of sixteen three sanskaras are performed in antenatal period, eight sanskaras have clinical importance in paediatric age group and remaining five sanskaras are described for adult age group. Present paper is focused only on the eight *sanskaras* of paediatric age group. These *sanskara* are described right from the birth till five years of age.

The Sanskrit term “Sanskara” means religious customs. The word Sanskara is derived from root word „Kri” with „Sam” upsarga, which is being used for several meanings according to reference to context. Sanskara are mentioned in various Pauranic treatises. Actually, Sanskaras are long established practices, started in the ancient period and till now some of these are continuing. The “Sanskara” is used in a very wide senses viz. in the sense of education, cultivation and ornament, a purificatory rite or ceremony to change the qualities. In short, the Sanskara means those religious rites and ceremonies which sanctify the body mind and intellect, so the person may become fit for the society. In other word, Sanskara means “Gunnantaradhanam” which is used for transform the qualities. These sanskara are related to proper

growth and development of foetus and child. Any process which brings continuous positive change in a given material (Dravya), physical body (Shareera), intellectual capacity (Mana) and the personality (Aatma) is called Sanskar.

Each significant stage of the sacred life of human being was celebrated. According to the *Upanishad*, *Sanskara* go a long way in fulfilling the four pursuits of life i.e. *Dharma* (righteousness), *Artha* (wealth), *Kama* (work and pleasure) and *Moksha* (salvation). *Sanskara* prepare one for the next stage of growth. Though primarily considered as religious rites, they were relevant in context of child health and very important for early stimulation of immunity and child's complete wellbeing. Especially the *Balyakaleen* sanskar out of *Shodash Sanskar* described by *Maharishi Dayannada*¹ like *Jatkarma*, *Karnvedhan*, and *Annaprashansanskar* plays important role in building immunity in holistic way.

As neonate possess a developing immune system which is different from adults as result of initially living in semi allogenic sterile environment to then being exposed to microbial rich surrounding became highly susceptible to infections. It is estimated that 40% of the annual 3 million worldwide neonatal deaths are result from infections². Thus, a detailed study of the classical description of *Sanskara* in *Bhruhatrayi* and *Kashyap samhita* is mandatory to understand its significance in boosting child's immunity and its aptness in present era.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:

1. To study in detail *Balyakaleen Sanskara* in children and its Relevance.
2. To understand the rationality behind various sanskaras from birth to childhood.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The materials were collected from the classical *Ayurvedic* literatures, magazines and research journals. All the online and offline literature is screened to understand the concept. *Sanskaras* represent periodical assessment of growth and development of child from birth. As the *sanskaras* are performed at specific time or age of child, it gives clear idea regarding growth and development of child. Hence it is important to know and understand the concept behind timing, procedure and their importance shown in particular phase. These rituals events not only hold the socio-cultural importance but also have great medical importance. Hence it is need of the hour to understand their importance and make people aware regarding their positive effect on health of their progeny.

NUMBER OF SAMSKARADURING KSHIRAPKALA: -

The number of *Sanskara* varies in different Hindu dharma *Granthas*, it is about 16-40, but the applicable *Sanskara* are 16 (*Shodash*) in number. Out of which *Sanskar* in *Balyaavstha* can be classified as (*Infantile Sanskar*): -

(Table no.1)

a.	During Neonatal Period	<i>Jatkarma, Namkarana</i>
b.	During Infantile Period	<i>Nishkraman, Annaprashan, Karnvedhan</i>

Table 2: Showing Sanskaras their timing and procedure^{2,3,4,5,6}.

S.N.	<i>Sanskara</i>	Timing	Procedure
1.	<i>Jatkarma Sanskar</i>	After birth on First Day	Honey & Ghee with mantra or Gold as a first feed.
2.	<i>Namakaran Sanskar</i>	10th / 12th / 100th day/ 1 year •	<i>Nakshatrika</i> (Based on birth planet) and <i>Abhiprayik</i> (desired) name relating to father and grandfather.
3.	<i>Suryodaya & Chandrodaya Darshan</i>	1 st or 3 rd month	Child is allowed to see and worship rising sun and moon.
4.	<i>Nishkraman Sanskar</i>	4 th month	Child is taken out of <i>Kumaragara</i> for the first time.
5.	<i>Upaveshan Sanskar</i>	5 th or 6 th month	Child is allowed to sit in proper manner.
6.	<i>Karnavedhan Sanskar</i>	6 th /7 th /8 th month	Piercing of ear to wear ornament and protection.
7.	<i>Phalaprashan/Annaprashan Sanskar</i>	6 th or 10 th month	Child is given fruit juices or soft diet in required quantity.
8.	<i>Chudakarma Sanskar</i>	1 st or 3 rd year	Child's head is shaved showing value of hygiene.
9.	<i>Upanayan sanskar</i>	5 th year	Child is introduced for education officially.

Classical Description of Balyakaleen Sanskar and its relevance in immunity build up: -

I. *Jata Karma Sanskara*:

The word '*Jata*' means born or brought into existence³. This is the first *Sanskara* performed after birth of a baby. According to *Acharya Charak*⁴, after the initial stabilization of baby (*Prana pratyagamana*) and cord cutting, *Jata Karma* should be performed.

First of all, the child should be given honey and ghee impregnated with *mantra* prescribed for this purpose in *Veda*. Thereafter, following the same procedure, milk from the right breast should be given to the child. An earthen jar filled with water should be impregnated with *mantra* and kept near the head of the child. *Acharya Sushruta*⁵ has opined *Jata karma* as cleaning the vernix on newborn's body, clearing newborn's mouth by *Saindhava* (rock salt) and *Sarpi* (ghee) and placing a ghee-soaked cotton on baby's head. This is followed by cutting of umbilical cord at distance of eight *Angula* from baby's skin and tying it by thread which is tied to baby's neck. After this baby should be given to lick gold *Bhasma* mixed with honey and ghee i.e. *Swarnaprashan*. *Acharya Vagbhata* prescribes *Prajapatya vidhi* in *Jata Karma* described in texts of *Dharmashastra*.⁶

Relevance:

Jata karma 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 and hence chances of infection. 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 and sustain baby's vulnerable period. Only after the baby is stabilized 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 by soiling in stool and urine. Moreover, honey and ghee provide energy to baby even in minute quantity. Ghee contains Omega-3 fatty acid and DHA contents of ghee helps in better brain growth and development '*Swarnaprashan*' given to baby by gold *Bhasma*, honey and ghee serves the purpose of both nutrition and immunization. Honey (*madhu*) 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 *Swarna* (gold) *Bhasma* gives physical protection to baby, enhances brain development. 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 as to ensure proper nutrition and protective immunoglobulin present in colostrum which helps in building first line of defence as innate immunity.

2. *Nishkraman Sanskara*:

It is the ceremony of invoking God's blessings to expose the newcomer to the outside world and to pray for the wellbeing of the baby. In the fourth month after giving bath, the baby should wear new cloths and ornaments and should be taken to the family temple, i.e. out of the house for the first time⁷. In the temple religious offering should be offered to the god. The baby should be blessed by the priest and elders and should be taken back home.

Relevance:

Nishkraman Sanskara is taking out the baby for the first time. The time described for this in our texts is fourth month which is appropriate as by this time baby develops enough immunity and tolerance to external environment. As study says neonate shows significant immune variation at birth, converging at approximately 3 months along a stereotypical path, early life first few months especially cell mediated immunity is not developed so baby's immune system can't fight viruses or bacteria and hence it's important to not exposed baby to external surrounding in early 4 months; with this ceremony can exposed to child first time in unfamiliar but divine environment in holistic way.

3. *Surya Chandra Darshana*: (Exposing baby to sun and moonlight):

After completing the immediate management of the born child, after performing protective measures, auspicious oblations and other means of securing prosperity, showing of the rising sun along with its worship and showing of moon in first part of night should be done in the first month itself¹⁵.

Relevance:

Exposing the baby to early morning sun is essential for photo-conversion by the ultraviolet band of sunlight for synthesis of Vitamin D and prevention of the baby from physiological jaundice improves baby's immunity and prevents deficiency diseases like rickets.

4. *Karnvedhan Sanskara*:

Pricking of the ears serves ornamental purpose as well as protect baby from diseases. Our *Acharya* have recommended sixth, seventh or eighth month for this rite in cold climate.⁸ The child should be held in lap and ear pricked in center of lobule, avoiding blood vessels and nerves by seeing it against sunlight. Increasing of pierced hole should be done by oil-soaked cotton or small *Nimba* (*Azadirachta indica*) twig or smooth earring made of lead⁹.

Relevance:

Ear piercing inflicts a small injury and triggers active immune mechanism of baby. It thus prepares the immunity of baby against any possible infection or 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

5. Annaprashan Sanskar:

The physician should prescribe feeding of various fruits in sixth month. Later after eruption of teeth or in tenth month, feeding of cereals should be started. Acharya *Kashyapa* also indicates feeding of meat soup. Food should be mashed properly before giving and mouth should be cleaned by water after feed. Diet amount should be increased gradually. Acharya *Vagbhata* as well as *Sushruta* opine sixth month as appropriate time for Annaprashan^{10,11} which helps in maintaining the nutrition and prevent from infections and helps to proper growth and development of child. Various Disease and Constitution specific diet also mentioned in different *Samhitas*.

Ashtang Sangrah and Ashtang hridaya

- Modak made from marrow of Priyal, Madhuk, Madhu, Laja, Sitopala.
- Modak made from Dhataki pushpa, Sharkara, Lajatarpan
- Modak prepared with Bala, Bilwa, Sharkara, laj saktu (Floor of Laja)¹²

Relevance:

Modern day paediatrician follows IYCF guideline for feeding; according to which exclusive breast feeding 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 (*sumrdidam*) to avoid difficulty in deglutition¹³. Cleaning by *Jal Achamana* (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's i.e. *Phalprashan* ceremony¹⁴. In weaning period there are more chances of malnutrition and infections; to avoid it proper and timely introduction of weaning is very important. Complementary and supplementary foods mentioned in classical texts are well enough to provide balanced nutrition for the growing child. Hence maintain health and prevent malnutrition and recurrent infections.

6. Chudakarma Sanskar

- This ceremony gives chance to examine skull for dermatitis, hair growth, microcephaly, wide suture, craniotabes and anterior fontanel.
- This ceremony also establishes the concept of physical hygiene in child.

7. Upanayan sanskar /vedarambha sanskar

- Upanayan or vedarambha sanskar is the facility to assess intellectual power of child whether he or she is able to start the education.
- This is the best time to start the child's carrier to develop the intellectual, psychological and personality.
- By this time child learns to walk, run, climb stairs, knows gender, holds pencil, tells story, learns to wear shoes and socks and toilet training is initiated which can be noted accordingly.
- Thread tied around the waist allows to assess the nutrition of child.

Benefits of Bala Samskaras

- ✓ *Bala Samskaras* promotes both mental and physical well-being, instilling the assurance to confront life's obstacles with resilience.
- ✓ It is believed that *Bala Samskaras* purifies the blood, enhancing circulation and delivering increased oxygen to every organ.
- ✓ By energizing the body, *Bala Samskaras* brings about a revitalized state.
- ✓ *Bala Samskaras* rejuvenates the mind, elevating concentration and intellectual capacity.
- ✓ Through directing energy towards humanitarian causes, *Bala Samskaras* help in cultivating a strong character.
- ✓ These practices also help in eliminating vices such as ego, pride, selfishness, greed and envy, etc.
- ✓ *Bala Samskaras* bestows moral and physical equilibrium throughout one's life journey.

DISCUSSION

The present study was undertaken with the objectives of studying the details regarding immunity in children and its correlation with *Balyakaleen Sanskara*. The literature available regarding the concepts under the study has been studied thoroughly. All the *Sanskaras* when taken are meant for growth, development, and immunological strength of the children. The *Sanskaras* when executed perfectly may prove effective with special respect to children's immunity. The *Sanskara* described by Acharyas of *Ayurveda* has a holistic approach. These can be considered as rituals rites to be done but may be having some immunological benefit. The literature available is studied here. The studies for the

effectiveness of these *Sanskara* described in *Samhitas* in today's era has to be carried out. It is the timely need to assess the effects of *Sanskara* and its scientific basis for the social beneficence.

Benefits of hindu samskaras –

1. Samskaras provide sound mental and physical health and the confidence to face life's challenges.
2. They are believed to purify blood and increase blood circulation, sending more oxygen to every organ.
3. Samskaras can energize the body and revitalizes it.
4. They can increase physical strength and stamina to work for longer period of time.
5. They rejuvenate the mind and enhance concentration and intellectual capacity.
6. Samskaras give a sense of belonging, culture, and refined sensibilities.
7. They direct energy to humanitarian causes thereby building a strong character.
8. Samskaras kill vices, such as pride, ego, selfishness, envy, greed and fear.
9. They bestow moral and physical balance throughout life.
10. Samskaras give the confidence to face death bravely owing to a contented and righteous life.

CONCLUSION

Sanskars has been considered as an essential rule for the human being and so it is mandatory to observe this rule. A person who does not observe these sixteen Sanskars in his life, his life is rendered incomplete. Or if one or two Sanskars are left out, there remains its defect in his life. Without Sanskars Swabhav-Dosh, Vani vartan-Dosh, Aacharan-Dosh, Drasti- Dosh, Dosh of Physical and mental deformity, lack of noble qualities of DharmGyan- Vairagya etc., intolerance towards family etc. are found in human life. In this present paper, it can be concluded that *Bal-Sanskara* are not only the religious customs but they aimed at preparing the baby for extra uterine life successfully, ensure proper growth, adequate nutrition, prevent diseases, builds the immunity by its early stimulation. In present era there is need of hour to understand its effect on scientific basis and simply its concept to adopt this in society as routine practice as we follow the NIS schedule for vaccination; for aiming ideal immune disease-free healthy progeny for the society. From the study of literature, it is observed that Sanskaras in children provides opportunity to assess their development and is a very useful tool for screening of developmental delay. It is evident from the critical analysis that these sanskar along with growth and development parameters forms the collaborative tool for examination of children.

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