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Scientific Applicability of Shodas Sanskaras in Ayurveda

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Abstract:

The word Sanskara is derived from root word 'Kri' with 'Sam' upsarga, which is being used for several meanings according to reference to context. The Sanskrit term "Sanskara" means religious customs. In Ayurveda various Acharyas describe many type of Sanskara, in which 16 Sanskaras are performed in present era from the birth to the end. All these sanskaras are performed since Vedic period because it has some importance in development of Baby. In Present Era, there is need to understand its effect on scientific basis and simply its concept to adopt these in society easily and we got the ideal baby for this society. The main aim of performing Sanskaras are to preparing the baby for intrauterine and extra uterine life successfully, develop proper feeding habits, ensure adequate nutrition, prevent diseases, adapt to environment for further survival, give individual identity and educate the child.

Keywords : Sanskar, Sacrament, Rituals, Intrauterine, Extrauterine

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INTRODUCTION - The word *Sanskara* is derived from root word 'Kri' with 'Sam' *upsarga*, which is being used for several meanings according to reference to context. The Sanskrit term "*Sanskara*" means religious customs. In Ayurveda various *Acharyas* describe many type of *Sanskara*, in which 16 *Sanskaras* are performed in present era from the birth to the end. All these *sanskaras* are performed since Vedic period because it has some importance in development of Baby.

In Ayurveda, *Sanskara* means "Gunantaradhanam" which is used for transform the qualities. These *sanskara* are related to proper growth and development of fetus and child.

AIM & OBJECTIVE - To see the importance and applicability of *shodas sanskaras* in Ayurveda and their scientific approach.

MATERIALS & METHODS - The literary material is collected from the various classical *Ayurvedic* text and Pediatrics texts. The index, non-index medical journals were also included to collect information of relevant topic.

SANSKARA - At present the applicable *Sanskara* are 16 (*Shodash*) in number ; In which 11 are applicable in *kaumarbhritya*.

Sanskara performed during prenatal period are -

1. **GARBHADHAN** – This *Sanskara* relates to conception. The aim of this *Samskara* is to get high quality progeny. Married, 16 yrs. female

and 25 yrs. male having good health and complete *viryatva* in their body should undergo this *Sanskara* [1] *Charak* and *Kashyapa* have described the detail method of 'Putresti *yagya*' [2] This ceremony purify and refine male & female reproductive system, thus the born child will possess high qualities.

2. **PUNSAVAN** – The meaning of *Punsavana* is achieving progeny of desired sex. This is performed in second month or before *Vyaktibhava* [3]. According to *Charak* healthy *Shunga* (leaf buds) of banyan tree, *Dhanyamasha* and *Gaurasarsapa* should be taken with milk during *Pusyanakshatra* [4]. Similarly According to *Sushrut*, paste of *Jivaka*, *Rishbhaka*, *Apamarga* and *Sahachara* taken with milk [5]. The significance of this *Samskara* is to invoke celestial and excellent qualities in the child.

3. **SIMANTONAYAN** – It is derived from 'Seemant' which means brain, while 'Unayan' means development i.e. The ritual for the mental development of foetus. It is usually performed in 4th or 5th month. In *Ayurvedic* texts during period of pregnancy, *Acharyas* advised month wise various dietetic regimen and mode of conducts for pregnant woman which results in normal development of foetus who has good health, strength, voice, compactness etc [6]. *Acharya* also advised that if mother not follow proper advised lifestyle then it may result in *Doshas* vitiation which produce abnormalities of fetus (*Garbhvikriti*). The religious significance of

this Sanskara is to bring prosperity to the mother and long life to the unborn child.

Sanskara performed during postnatal period are –

4. **JATAKARMA** – Charaka has stated that after the cutting of umbilical cord, Jatakarma Sanskara should be performed. On first day of birth, the child should be given first feeding of honey and Ghrita consecrated with Mantra as given for this purpose. Thereafter, milk from the right breast should be offered to the child [7] Acharya Sushruta says that on first day after performing Nalachhedan, honey and Ghrita mixed with Ananta powder in minute quantity concerned with mantras should be offered to the newborn thrice a day. On second and third day Ghrita medicated with Lakshmana, on fourth day honey and Ghrita in the amount which fills the palm of neonate (Swapanitalsamita) given two times and after that breast feeding should be started [8].

According to Vagbhata, Jatakarma (birth ceremony) should be performed by Prajapatya method. By this ceremony we should examine the Rooting and Sucking reflex as well as Sucking - Swallowing coordination is assessed while offering honey and ghee. We should also examine the baby to rule out anomalies such as cleft palate, hare lips, tracheoesophageal fistula, fissured tongue etc. First feed initiates gastrointestinal movements and activates the gut. It promotes breastfeeding as well as beneficial to mother for helps in uterine involution, reduces PPH and protect against pregnancy. Honey has antimicrobial

properties and enhances immunity. Honey and ghrita is rich source of carbohydrate and fat respectively which can provide adequate energy even in a minute quantity. Ghrita increases smriti, medha, kaanti, voice, oja, strength, vishahar, rakshoghan. Use of gold (suvarnprashan) increases intellect, digestive and metabolic power, strength, aayu, increase complexion (varnya) [9].

5. **NAMAKARAN** – Charak has given detail description of this ceremony. On 10th day, mother and child should take bath with water purify by drugs, wear clean cloths, ornaments, touch auspicious things, worship god and brahmana. After Swastikavachana by Brahmana, mother should sit keeping head of the child towards the east or north then father of the child prays to god and give two names to the child - one Naksatrika (similarity to the planet of birth) and the other Abhiprayika (desired name by which the baby would be known in family or society). It should begin with Ghosa alphabets, middle with Antasth and end with Usma alphabets. It should be composed of either two or four letters [10].

According to Sushrut and Vagbhata, this ceremony should be performed on the tenth day after birth [11]. Astanga Samgraha has stated that this ceremony have to be performed on 10th day or 12th day or 100th day or after 1 year [12]. This Sanskara provides opportunity for examination of baby. Normally, the baby recovers from various traumas including cephal hematoma, fracture and dislocation, facial palsy and physiological jaundice. Persistence of

jaundice after tenth day in neonate should be considered serious. Baby regains the birth weight on 10th day after birth. Umbilical cord falls normally after 5 to 10 days but may take longer.

6. **NISHKRAMAN** – This Samskara is performed when the child is taken out of the home for the first time. According to Kashyapa and Astanga Samgraha, in fourth month, baby who having been given bath, adorned, wearing new clean clothes, possessing mustard, honey and Ghrita or Gorochana, along with Dhatri should be taken out of the house and ready to enter the temple [13]. By 4th month child develops head holding capacity, turns his head towards a sound i.e. ringing bell of a temple, this provides the opportunity to examine its hearing capacity. By expose to the sunlight at morning, the synthesis of vitamin D accelerates. By seeing moon or sun, the macular fixation and pupillary adjustment of the child can be observed. In external environment, infant develops resistance power to adjust in different atmosphere. Disappearance of grasping reflex at 3-4 months, placing reflex at 3-4 month, stepping reflex at 3-4 months, rooting reflex at 3-4 months, tonic neck at 2-6 month, Moro's reflex at 3-4month. But persistence of these reflexes indicative of cerebral palsy.

7. **ANNAPRASHAN** – According to Kashyapa, Phalaprashana should be advised at the age of 6th month while in 10th month or after eruption of teeth, Annaprashana should be indicated.[14] According to Sushrut, the child

at the age of six months, should be given food light and Hitkar. According to Vagbhat on the 6th month, solid food should be given to the child gradually as much as he required as he goes on and breast feeding should be gradually discontinued [15]. Fruit juices provides adequate amount of Vitamin C which is deficient breast in milk of mother, cow or any other milk.

At age of 6 month, breast milk now not enough to fulfil the requirement of growing child. So, it is the accurate time to introduce light and digestible supplementary feeding at the beginning as fruit juices i.e. Phalprashana and gradually it is to be replaced by cereal diet i.e. Annaprashana. It provides essential nutrients like Iron in adequate quantity, which is deficient in mother milk. After eruption of teeth gradual weaning should be done and child should be given substitute fruit juices as well as light and digestible nutrient cereals. It brings out the change of taste in the baby and different type of taste sensation develop properly. It initiates proper enzymatic function of G.I.T. for the digestion of protein, carbohydrate and fat etc.

8. **CHUDAKARMA** – According to Ghrihya Sutra and Manusmriti, Chudakarma Sanskara should be performed at the end of 1st year and before expiry of 3rd year. There is a chapter named Chudakarniya in Kashyapa Samhita, but there is no reference available regarding Chudakarma procedure because chapter is incomplete from beginning. Charak has mentioned the utility of Chudakarana as Paustika, Vrishya, Ayushya, Shuchi and Rupavirajana [16]. Chudakarana Sanskara

gives a chance to examine fontanel of the child. Normally in healthy child, anterior fontanel closes by 18 to 24 months. Delayed closure due to dehydration, meningitis can be assessed properly.

9. **KARNAVEDHAN** – There are different views about performing this ceremony in ayurvedic texts. According to Sushrut, this Sanskara should be performed at 6th or 7th month [17]. According to Vagbhata, during 6th, 7th or 8th month on an auspicious day in winter season, keeping child on a lap of mother than after ear should be pierced. The right ear pierced first in case of male while left ear in case of female [18]. The purpose of this Sanskara is to protect the child from many diseases and to wear ornament (Raksha Bhushana Nimittam). To initiate antigen-antibody reaction, providing active immunity to the child, this samskara is performed.

10. **UPANAYAN** – According to Manusmriti, this ceremony is carried out on 5th, 6th, and 8th year in Brahmin, Kshatriya and Vaishya respectively. They are provided with a sacred thread girdle made of MUNJA grass. There is no any clear cut references are available regarding this ceremony in Ayurvedic classics. However Shshruta and Vagbhata have given the time of starting the education as soon as child fit for the same [19]. Thread around waist may serve the purpose to assess the physical growth to rule out malnutrition. Assessment of maturity of brain to perform intellectual activities during school going age is done. To initiate sense of responsibility as well as spiritual well-being of the child. This

thread might aware him about his responsibility towards society, teacher and parents.

11. **VEDARAMBHA** – The child who has gain the capacity to learn should be initiated to the study connected with its cast by the teacher. He should teach right living and politeness always. So that with the commencement of youth he will not easily succumb to the bad sensual activity [20]. This sanskara provides religious cult, humanity, self control and acceptability with the society. By this time a normal child learns to walk, run, climb stairs, tell his name and gender, play co-operatively in a group, copy simple diagrams, use pencil, say song, poem, story, feed by himself and can go to toilet alone, acquire capacity, strength and capacity to learn so it is also time for assess the development of child. In Present Era, there is need to understand these effect on scientific basis and simply its concept to adopt these in society easily and we got the ideal baby for this society.

DISCUSSION - Kashyap Samhita is well known text for child development and fulfillment. Acharya Kashyap specify 16 type of Sanskar particularly from the birth to the end. Out of these describe very important 8 Sanskar, which are having scientifically helpful to nourishment of baby physically as well as mentally. Jaatkarm Sanskar is helpful to prevent infectious disorders of baby as well as mother. In Karnvedhan Sanskar, act such as acupuncher that's effect to release adrenalin secretion which is support to all

organism of inner level. Chudakarm Sanskar particularly helpful in personal and social hygiene that's preventing again infectious disorders. Upnayan and Vedarambhba Sanskar are markedly Improved actively of child and begins to successful person in future.

CONCLUSION - The *Sanskaras* are a series of sacraments, sacrifices and rituals that serve as rites of passage and mark the various stages of the human life. These Sanskar are step points of life from where life enters in new phase. These sanskars establish baby and atmosphere to accomplish with situations. The main aim of performing *Sanskaras* are to preparing the baby for intrauterine and extrauterine life successfully, develop proper feeding habits, ensure adequate nutrition, prevent diseases, adapt to environment for further survival, give individual identity and educate the child. Sanskara described in Ayurvedic texts are based on the various stages of child growth and developments and hence provide a rational guideline toward his care during celebrating different ceremonies from very conception to childhood.

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