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Concept of *sanskara* and developmental milestone relation

Krishna kumar¹, Sonam Chaudhary², Abhijit patil³

¹PG Scholar, Dept. of *Rachana Sharir*, Parul Institute of *Ayurved*, Parul University

²PG Scholar, Dept. of *Kaumarbhritya*, IPGT & RA, Jamnagar

³HOD, Prof., Dept. of *Rachana Sharir*, Parul Institute of *Ayurved*, Parul University

*Corresponding author:

Mobile No.: 9454322071/8840253453, Email : dr.krishna79@gmail.com

Abstract:

The *Samskara* are a series of sacraments, sacrifices and *rituals* that serve as rites of passage

and mark the different stages of human life and mark the entrance to a particular *Ashrama* (i.e. stage of life). In essence, all these rituals are of purification nature and give good qualities.

Sanskara means, in other words, "*Gunanta radhanam*" used to transform the qualities.

In different religious texts of *Hindu*, the number of *Sanskara* varies; it is about 16-40. But at present 16 *Sanskara* are as in practice which should be performed from conception to after death. These *Sanskara* are related to proper growth and development of fetus and child.

Keywords: *Sanskara*, Sacrament, Growth and Development.

Introduction:

The word *Sanskara* comes from the root word "Kri" with "Sam" upsarga, which is used according to context reference for several meanings. The *Sanskrit* term "*Sanskara*" means customs of religion. In various *Pauranic* treatises, *Sanskara* is mentioned. Actually *Sanskaras* are long-established practices, begun in ancient times, and some of them are still going on until now. In a very broad sense, the "*Sanskara*" is used. A purifying rite or ceremony to change qualities in the sense of education, cultivation and ornamentation. In short, the *Sanskara* means those religious rites and ceremonies that sanctify the mind and intellect of the body in order to make the person fit for society. *Sanskara* means, in other words, "*Gunantaradhanam*" used to transform the qualities. These *Sanskara*

have to do with proper fetus and child growth and development.

Materials & Methods:

The literary material is collected from the various texts, magazines and research journals of the classical *Ayurvedic* text and Pediatrics. After which classical description is correlated according to contemporary texts with changes in the developmental milestone.

Numbers of Sanskara:

The number of *Sanskara* varies in different Hindu religious texts; it is about 16-40.

- In *Grihya Sutra* there is mentioning of 18-21 *Sanskara*.
- In *Manusmriti*, 13
- In *Gautama Grihya Sutra*, 40

At present the applicable *Sanskara* are 16 (*Shodash*) in number.

Sanskara performed during prenatal period are

- *Garbhadan* (Conception)
- *Pumsavana* (Engendering a male issue)
- *Simantonayana* (Hair-parting)

Sanskara performed during postnatal period are

During neonatal period:

- *Jatakarma* (Birth rituals e.g. at the time when the child is being born)
- *Namakarana* (Naming ceremony)

During Infantile period:

- *Nishkrama* (Outing ceremony)
- *Upaveshan* (sitting ceremony)
- *Karnavedhan* (Piercing the earlobes)
- *Phalaprashana/Annaprashana* (feeding ceremony)

During Preschool period:

- *Chudakarma* or *Mundan* (Shaving of head)

During school age period:

- *Upanayana* (Sacred thread ceremony)
- *Vedarambha* (Beginning of Vedic study)

Sanskara performed during youth and later lives are:

- *Samavartan* (End of studentship)
- *Vivaha* (Marriage Ceremony)
- *Vanprastha* (Renouncing the householder's life)
- *Sanyyas* (Leading the life of a monk)

Sanskara performed after death:

- *Antyeshti* (Death ceremony)

Here in this article we are concerned with Garbha sanskara which are - *Garbhadhan*, *Pumsavana*, and *Simantonayana & Bal Sanskaras* which are - *Jata Karma* (birth rites), *Namakaran* (naming), *Nishkraman* (taking baby out of home), *Annaprashan* (starting solid feeding), *Chudakarma* (head shaving), *Karnavedhana* (piercing of the ear), *Upanayan* (thread ceremony) and *Vedarambha* (start of formal education)

Sanskara During Intra- Uterine Period:

The three *Sanskara*'s are done before Birth of child and performed in 'mother'

Garbhadhana Sanskara:

This *Sanskara* has to do with conception. The goal of this *Sanskara* is to obtain a progeny of high quality. Only after marriage should it be performed. Both partners should be viryavan complete and should first purify their body through *shodhana* procedures. *Shodhan*'s significance is very important because it purifies the seeds of both partners, i.e. ovum and sperm, so the born child will have high qualities. Married, 16-year-old woman and 25-year-old woman. Males with good health and complete *viryatva* should undergo this *Sanskar*.^[1] Charak and Kashyapa described the detailed method of "Putresti yagna"^[2]

Significance of Garbhadhan Sanskara:

These ceremonies purify and refine the field (woman's reproductive system) and the seed (sperm) of the born child.

Punsavana Sanskara:

Punsavana's meaning is male procreation, so *Punsavana Karma* is known as the process that is adopted to achieve progeny of desired sex. This is done in or before *Vyakti bhava* in the second month.^[3] Different *Acaryas* prescribe, as their belief, different formulations for use in pregnant women that can result only in male procreation. *Dhanyamasha* and *Gaurasarsapa* should be taken with curd during *Pusyanakshatra*, according to *Charaka* healthy *Sunga* (leaf buds) of banyan tree^[4] Similarly, *Jivaka*, *Rishbhaka*, *Apamarga* and *Sahachara* paste taken with milk according to *Sushruta*^[5]

Significance of Punsavana Sanskara:

This Samskara's significance is to invoke in the child celestial and excellent qualities. This will strengthen the relationship between husband and wife and unite them with a common desire for male offspring.

Simantonayan Sanskara:

Seemantonnayana is derived from 'Seemanant' this word literally means brain, whereas 'Utnayan' literally means development (the ritual for fetal mental development). It usually takes place in the fourth or fifth or

sixth or seventh or eighth month. In Ayurvedic texts during pregnancy, Acharyas advised monthly on different dietary regimes and behaviors for pregnant women, resulting in normal fetal development with good health, strength, voice, compactness, etc.^[6]

Acharya also advised that if mother does not follow properly advised lifestyle then Dosha vitiation may result in fetal abnormalities (Garbhang-Vikriti).

Significance of Simantonayan sanskara:

This Samskara's religious significance is to bring prosperity to the mother and the unborn child's long life.

Sanskara During Neonatal Period:

Jatkarma Sanskara:

According to *Ghrihyasutra*, it should be performed before cutting the umbilical cord, whereas *Charaka* has stated that *Jatkarma Sanskara* should be performed after cutting the umbilical cord. The child should be given first feeding of honey on the first day of birth and *Ghrita* consecrated to *Mantra* for this purpose. The child should then be given milk from the right breast.^[7] Acharya Sushruta says that the newborn should be offered three times a day on the first day after performing *Nalachhe dan*, honey and *Ghrita* mixed with *Ananta* powder in minute mantras. *Ghrita* medicate

d with *Lakshmana* on the second and third day, honey on the fourth day, and *Ghrita* in the amount that fills the neonate palm (*Savapanitalsamita*) given twice, and after that breast feeding should begin.^[8] According to *Vagbhata*, the *Prajapatya* method should perform *Jatakarma* (birth ceremony).

Significance of Jatkarma Sanskara:

- The rooting and sucking reflex as well as the coordination of sucking - swallowing are evaluated while honey and ghee are offered.
- We should examine the baby in this ceremony to rule out anomalies such as cleft palate, hare lips, tracheo-oesophageal fistula, fissured tongue, etc.
- First feed initiates gastrointestinal movement and activates the intestine.
- It promotes breastfeeding and helps mothers with uterine involvement, reduces PPH and prevents pregnancy.
- Honey possesses antimicrobial properties and improves immunity.
- Honey and ghrita, respectively, are rich in carbohydrates and destiny, which can provide sufficient energy even in a minute.

- Ghrita increases samriti medha, kaanti, voice, oja, strength, vishahar, rakshoghan
- The use of gold (*suvaraprashan*) increases intellectual, digestive and metabolic power, strength, aayusha (providing longevity), teeth (*varnaya*), and *grahamapahum*.^[9]

Namkarana Sanskara:

Charak described this ceremony in detail. On the 10th day, drugs should purify mother and child with water, wear clean clothes, ornaments, touch propitious things, worship god and *brahmana*. After *Brahmana's Swastikavachana*, mother should sit holding the child's head east or north then the child's father prays to god and give the child two names one *Naksatrika* (similar to the birth planet) and the other *Abhiprayika* (desired name by which the child would be known in the family or society).

It should start with *Ghosaalphabets*, mid with *Antasth* (semivowel) and finish with *Usma-* alphabets. It should consist of two or four letters.^[10]

This ceremony should be held on the tenth day after birth, according to *Sushruta* and *Vagbhata*^[11] *Astanga Samgraha* said that this ceremony should take place on 10th da-

y or 12th day or 100th day or 1 year later.^[12]

Significance of *Namakaranana Sanskara:*

- The name of the baby provides identification and social and personal recovery
- This *Sanskara* provides a baby exam opportunity. The baby normally recovers from different traumas including cephal hematoma, fracture and dislocation, facial paralysis, and physiological jaundice. After ten days in neonate, persistence of jaundice should be considered serious.
- Baby regains birth weight on the 10th day following birth.
- Usually the umbilical cord falls after 5 to 10 days, but it can take longer

Sanskara During Infantile Period:

Nishkramana Sanskara:

This *Samskara* is performed for the first time when the child is removed from home. According to *Kashyapa* and *Astanga Samgraha*, baby bathed, adorned, wearing new clean clothes, possessing mustard, honey and *Ghrita* or *Gorochana*

should be taken out of the house and ready to enter the temple in the fourth month.^[13]

Significance of Niskramana Sanskara:

- By the fourth month, the child develops head holding capacity, turns his head towards a sound, i.e. a ringing temple bell, which provides an opportunity to examine his or her hearing capacity.
- By morning exposure to sunlight, vitamin D synthesis accelerates.
- The child's macular fixation and pupil adjustment / reaction can be observed by seeing the moon or sun
- In outdoor environments, infants develop resistance to adjustment in different atmospheres
- Disappearance of grasping reflex at 3-4 months, placement of reflex at 3-4 months, stepping of reflex at 3-4 months, rooting of reflex at 3-4 months, toning of neck at 2-6 months, reflex of Moro at 3-4 months. But persistence of these cerebral palsy-indicating reflexes.

Upaveshana Sanskara:

It should be done on the sixth month, according to *Kashyapa*. Baby should not be allowed to sit for a longer period of time, as per *Kashyapa*. If not properly observed, kyphosis, lumber region weakness, exhaustion, fever, constipation, urine retention and tym

pani is develop^[14]
Vagbhata said that the child should be placed on the ground during the 5th month on an auspicious day^[15]*Sushruta* also said that children should be allowed to sit gradually for a longer period of time

Significance of Upaveshana Sanskara:

- As per the developmental milestone, children can sit with support by the 5th to the 6th month, try to hold things and put them in their mouths
- It provides opportunities for sitting initiation and evaluates children's physical, neurological and psychological growth.

Karnavedhana Sanskara:

There are different views about performing this ceremony in *Ayurvedic* texts

This *Sanskara* should be performed at the 6th or 7th month, according to *Sushruta*^[16] According to *Vagbhata*, on an auspicious winter season day during the 6th, 7th or 8th month, keeping the child on a mother's lap than after ear should be pierced. In the case of males, the right ear pierced first while the left ear pierced in the case of females^[17]

Significance of Karnavedhana Sanskara:

- The purpose of this *Sanskara* is to protect and wear ornaments (*Raksh*

a-

Bhushana Nimittam) against many diseases.

- Active immunity for the child to initiate antigen-antibody reaction

Phalaprashana/Annaprashana Sanskara:

Phalaprashana (fruit juices) should be advised at the age of 6 months, according to *Kashyapa*, while *Annaprashana* (cereal feeding) should be indicated in the 10th month or after teeth eruption^[18] According to *Sushruta*, food light and *Hitkar* (appropriate healthy food) should be given to the child at the age of six months. According to *Vagbhat* on the 6th month, solid food should be gradually given to the child as much as it needs and breast feeding should be phased out^[19]

Significance of *Annaprashana Sanskara:*

- Fruit juices provide a sufficient amount of vitamin C that is deficient in mother's milk, cow's milk or any other milk
- At the age of 6 months, breast milk is not sufficient to meet the growing child's requirements. It is therefore the right time to introduce light and digestible additional feeding as fruit juices at the beginning, i.e. *Phalaprashana* is to be replaced by a gradual diet of cereals i.e. *Annaprashana*, of course.

- It provides an adequate quantity of essential nutrients such as Fe that is deficient in mother's milk.
- Gradual weaning should be done after teeth eruption and replacement fruit juices should be given to children as well as light and digestible nutrient cereals.
- It produces a change in the baby's taste and different types of taste sensation develop correctly.
- Starts the proper enzymatic function of G.I.T. for protein, carbohydrate and fat digestion, etc.

Sanskara during Preschool Period:

Chudakarana Sanskara:

According to *Ghrihya Sutra* and *Manusmriti Chudakarana 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* (nutritive), *Vrishya* (aphrodisiac), *Ayushya* (increase longevity), *Suchi* (Cleanliness) and *Rupavirajana* (increase personality)^[20]

Significance of *Chudakarana Sanskara:*

- Chudakarana Sanskara provides an opportunity to examine the child's fontanel. The anterior fontanel normally closes by 18 to 24 months in a healthy child. It is possible to properly evaluate delayed closure due to dehydration, meningitis.

Sanskara during School Age Period:

Upanayana Sanskara:

According to *Manusmriti*, this ceremony takes place on the 5th, 6th and 8th year in *Brahmin*, *Kshatriya* and *Vaishya*. They are provided with a sacred thread girdle made of MUNJA grass. No clear cut references are available for this ceremony in *Ayurvedic* classics. But *Shshruta* and *Vagbhata* gave the time to begin education once the child fits the same^[21]

Significance of Upanayana Sanskara:

- The purpose of assessing physical growth to rule out malnutrition may be to thread around the *tail*.
- Assessment of brain maturity to perform intellectual activities during school age.
- To initiate the child's sense of responsibility and spiritual well-being.
- This thread could make him aware of his responsibility to society, Guru and mother-father.

Vedarambha Sanskara:

The teacher should initiate the child who has the ability to learn to the study connected with his cast. He should always teach the right way of life and politeness. So he won't easily succumb to the bad sensual activity with the beginning of his youth^[22]

Significance of Vedarambha Sanskara:

- This *Sanskara* provides society with religious worship, humanity, self-control and acceptance.
- By this time a normal child learns to walk, to run, to climb stairs, to tell his name and gender, to play cooperatively in a group, to copy simple diagrams, to use pencils, to say songs, poems, stories, to feed himself and toilet alone, to gain ability, strength and ability to learn, so it is also time to evaluate child development.

Conclusion:

I can conclude in this paper that the *Sanskaras* are a series of sacraments, sacrifices and *rituals* that serve as passage rites and mark the different stages of human life.

The main objective of performing *Sanskaras* is to successfully prepare the baby for intrauterine and extra uterine life, develop proper nutritional habits, ensure adequate nutrition, prevent diseases, adapt to survival environment, give individual identity and educate the child.

We can see, therefore, that knowledge of the developmental milestone^[23] was clearly

described under the heading of *Sanskara* in Ayurveda classics.

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