

THE CHILDHOOD SAMSKARAS (RITES OF PASSAGE) AND ITS SCIENTIFIC APPRECIATION

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Abstract

A Samskara is a rite of passage, and virtually every world culture has such ceremonies. Rites of passage are ceremonies that mark important events in the life of an individual. Samskara also build a wakefulness of the attainment of social status and rights for the individual. Physician can also assess the proper growth and development of the child while performing the Samskaras. The number of Samskara varies in different Hindu Dharma Granthas (text books), it is about 16-40, but the applicable Samskara are 16 in number which spreads from Garbhadana to AnteysthiSamskara. Among these 16, only 11 will fall under the period up to childhood. Ayurveda also describes different Samskaras in the different period of life to mark, or to announce attainment of different milestones thus ensuring proper growth and also to differentiate them from the child with developmental delay.

Keywords:Samskara;Growth and development;Developmental delay.

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INTRODUCTION

Samskaras are those religious rites and ceremonies which sanctify the body, mind and intellect, so that person becomes fit for the society. In Ayurveda, the word Samskara is introduced as “SamskaraohiGunaanradhyanam” which means qualitative improvement carried out by incorporating the specific qualities (transforming of the qualities).^[1] Physician can also assess the proper growth and development of the child while performing these Samskaras. The Upanishads mention Samskaras as a means to grow and prosper in all four aspects of human pursuit - Dharma (righteousness), Artha (wealth), Karma and Kama (work and pleasure), and Moksha (salvation).^[2]

Samskaras are the turning points of life and need to be celebrated. Samskaras are great, time-tested tools in our traditional systems which help carve out a great personality. Apart from scriptural validation, history also proves to us the great effectiveness of these methods.^[3] The primary purpose of Samskaras is to attain spirituality and help realize moksha or the ultimate union with the divine. It is very clear that merely performing these sacraments will not lead to moksha. However not performing these Samskaras may make it impossible to attain moksha. At a secondary level the Samskaras are cultural events that provide occasions for family and friends to get together and bond. And it is this bonding that forms the basis for a peaceful life. At yet another level they provide an identity to the individual and link him to the society in which he or she lives. They enable the individual to understand the gravity of the various life stages and therefore live a more responsible life.^[4]

Number of Samskaras

The number of Samskara varies in different Hindu Dharma Granthas, it is about 16-40. In

Grihya sutra there is mentioning of 18-21 Samskaras. While in Manusmriti, 13 of them and in Gautama Grihya Sutra, 40 of them are explained. While the 16 Samskaras explained by MaharshiDayananda are widely accepted and taken into consideration by Ayurveda Acharyas. These 16 Samskaras are often referred to as the ShodasaSamskaras.^[5] They are:-

1. Garbhadana (Sacrament of Impregnation or Conception)
2. Pumsavana (Engendering a male issue)
3. Simantonayana (Hair-parting)
4. Jatakarma (Birth ritual)
5. Namakarana (Naming ceremony)
6. Nishkrama (First outing or outing ceremony)
7. Annaprashana (feeding ceremony)
8. Chudakarma or Mundan (Shaving of head)
9. Karnavedhana (Piercing the earlobes)
10. Upanayana (Sacred thread initiation)
11. Vedarambha (Beginning of vedic study)
12. Samavartana (End of studentship)
13. Vivaha (Marriage Ceremony)
14. Vanprastha (Renouncing the house holder's life)
15. Sanyasa (Leading the life of a monk)
16. Antyeshti (Death cremation)

Classification of Samskaras

Samskaras in pregnant lady (GarbhaSamskaras)

These are the Samskaras done during the period of pregnancy, thus can be referred to as the pre natal Samskaras. The three Samskaras which fall under Garbha Samskaras are Garbhadana (sacrament of impregnation or conception), Pumsavana (engendering a male issue) and Seemantonnayana Samskara (hair-parting).^[6]

Table 1: showing classification of different Samskaras according to different stages of age

Sl No.	Vaya Vargikarana (Different stages of age)		Samskaras done
1.	Garbhavastha (in pregnant lady)	Pre-natal period	Garbhadana Pumsavana Seemantonayana
		Neonatal period	Jatakarma Namakarana Nishkramana
2.	Balyavastha (in childhood)	Infantile period	Karnavedhana Annaprashana Chudakarana
		Pre-school / School age	Upanayana Vedharambha Samavarthana
3.	Yuvavastha (in adulthood)		Vivaha Vanaprastha Sanyasa Antyesti

Samskaras during childhood (Balyavastha)

This comprises of the Samskaras which fall under three sub divisions, such as;

Samskaras during the neonatal period

This refers to those Samskaras which are performed within the first month of life. It comprises of Jathakarma (birth ritual) and Namakarana Samskaras (naming ceremony).

Samskaras during the infancy

The term infant is typically applied to young children between the ages of 1 month and 12 months. The Samskaras contributing to this period are Nishkramana (first outing or outing ceremony), Annaprashana (feeding ceremony) and Karnavedana Samskaras (piercing the earlobes).

Samskaras during the pre-school or school age

The pre-school period starts at the age of 3 and so the Samskaras which are performed after this period contributes to this group. They are Chudakarma (shaving of head), Upanayana (sacred thread initiation) and Vedarambha Samskaras (beginning of vedic study).^[6]

Samskaras during adulthood (Yuvavastha)

Those Samskaras which are performed after the period of Balya (childhood) are cumulatively referred to as the adulthood Samskaras. It comprises of Samavartana (end of studentship), Vivaha (marriage ceremony), Vanaprastha (renouncing the house holder's life), Sanyasa (leading the life of a monk) and Antyesti Samskaras (death cremation). But in this paper this section will not be dealt since it falls out of the scope of the paper. The classification of different Samskaras according to different stages of age is shown in Table 1.^[6]

Samskaras in pregnant lady

1. GarbhadhanaSamskara

The word meaning of "Garbhadhana" is 'placing the seed in the womb.'^[7] Procreation is a compulsory duty enjoined to pay back his ancestral debt, except when either or both the partners are functionally unfit.^[8] The aim of this Samskara is to get high quality progeny. The auspicious day and time are fixed for Garbhadhana and the sacrament follows a set guide. According to Acharyas, this Samskara should be performed only after four years of marriage i.e., husband (25 years) and wife (16

years). Both the partners should be Purnaviryavan and should purify their bodies first by undergoing Shodhana procedures.^[9] The articulated mantras represented in this Samskara are essentially prayers offered to God to help the bride (female) conceive a good son.^[10]

The significance of this samskara is highly important, as these ceremonies purify and refine field (woman's reproductive system) and seed (sperms), thus the born child will possess high qualities. Thus this Samskara can be understood as an act which is mainly intended for reproduction which is the ultimate aim of life. This ceremony molds the mentality of the father in such a way that when he plants his seed in the womb of his wife, he will beget a child whose mind is completely saturated with devotion.^[11]

2. PumsavanaSamskara

The term Pumsavana literally means 'male procreation'. So, the process which is adopted for achieving progeny of desired sex is known as Pumsavana karma. Pumsavana is one of the Shodasha Karmas (sixteen rituals) performed.^[12] The day is fixed on the basis of lunar calendar on specific stars rising on that day; normally, when Punarvasu, Pushya, Anuradha, Moola, Shravana and Mrigashira stars (all are male stars) rise for the day. According to AcharyaCharaka, this should be performed after conception but before Vyaktibhava of organs (Prakvyakteebhavat) or upto 2 months while just after achievement of conception (Labdagarbhaya) according to Acharya Sushruta.^[13] This Samskara is performed basically with three main intentions such as Ishtapatyagrahanam (inhalation of drugs followed by coitus – for achievement of conception), Garbhadharanam (immediately after conception – for its proper implantation) and Garbhasthapanam (Before 3 months – for change of sex or for male progeny). Here the juice expressed from pestled roots of ShwetaBrihati (uprooted during

pushyanakshatra) should be instilled in woman's (herself) right nostril for son and left nostril for daughter. Or drugs like Lakshmana, Vatashringa (leaf buds of *Ficus benghalensis*), Sahadeva, Vishvadeva etc. pestled with cow's milk & juice expressed. 3-4 drops should be instilled in woman's right nostril for getting son (she should not spit it).^[14]

The significance of this Samskara is to invoke celestial (or divine) and excellent qualities in the child. This will instil confidence in the expectant mother that she can beget a male child.^[15] It strengthens the bond between husband and wife, bound together by a common desire for male offspring.^[16] Inserting the juice of the banyan tree was a device meant for preventing abortion and ensuring the birth of a male child. In the opinion of Acharya Susrutha, the banyan tree has got the properties of removing all kinds of troubles during pregnancy, e.g. excess of bile, burning etc. Insertion of medicine into nostrils is a common thing in the Hindu system of treatment; therefore, it is evident that the ritual prescribing it was undoubtedly founded on the medical experience of the people.^[17]

3. SeemantonayanaSamskara

This is the last Samskara of the pregnancy period of a mother.^[18] It is usually performed in fourth or sixth or seventh or eighth month. The word Seemantonayana is derived from two words Seemant (meaning the line of parting of hair) and Unnayan (meaning combing hair from the sides to the top). Seemantonayana thus means parting the wife's scalp hair, drawing the hair from the sides, upwards. As a result pleasant frequencies enter her body through the Sahasrar Chakra and facilitate the proper growth of the foetus. When performing a Samskara on the foetus in the womb, a flat earthen plate which represents the uterus is used. Just as for Pumsavana a lunar asterism with the masculine gender is necessary so also for Seemantonayana. If this Samskara is performed in a month with an even number

preferably in the fourth month then it proves most beneficial. Pumsavana is performed to conceive a male child while this rite is for the purification of the foetus. Just as having a son is important it is equally important that he should be born without deformities, good health and intelligence. For overall development of all organs of the foetus Simantonayana is important during pregnancy.^[19]

This Samskara is done to identify and support the conception and for the welfare of child too. The religious significance of this Samskara is to bring prosperity to the mother and long life to the unborn child. 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.^[20] Acharyas also advised that if mother not follow proper advised lifestyle then it may result in Doshas vitiation which produce abnormalities of foetus (Garbhanga Vikriti), affecting its appearance, complexion and Indriyas (sense organ).^[21] Foetus becomes viable after 28 weeks. Before this period, if the delivery occurs then the chance of survival of foetus is less. It may also be considered as a way to announce the pregnancy. As a result of this Samskara which is performed with spiritual emotion, the latent divine consciousness (Chaitanya) present in the pregnant woman has maximum effect on the foetus.^[19]

Samskaras during Balyavastha

1. Jaatakarma Samskara

This is the first and the foremost Samskara done to the child after birth. This Samskara is first referred in "Aschalayana sutra." It possesses Socio-cultural and medical importance. According to Acharya Charaka, immediately after the birth, baby should be given Madhu (honey) and Ghrita (ghee) mixed

together and the dose of both being not mentioned hence taken in equal quantity.^[22] Mantras are chanted before it and mantras are selected from different Vedas as per the Jati, Kula and Varna. Thereafter breast feeding should be started from the right breast. A pot filled with hot or cold water (as per the season) chanted with mantras should be kept near the head of the baby probably to maintain proper humidity in Kumaragara. Acharya Sushruta opines that after Nabhinala Chedana, on first day the child is revived with cold water sprinkling. Thereafter honey and ghee mixed with Ananta powder in small quantity and sanctified with mantras is made to lick using Anamika finger three times. On second and third day honey and ghee medicated with Lakshmana is administered for three times. On fourth day honey and ghee in the amount which fills the palm of neonate (Svapanitalsamita) given two times and after that mother's milk is given.^[23]

Acharya Susrutha seems to be more practical as he told that the feeding should be started only after attaining normalcy of the baby. The concept of tropic feed (a minimum amount of the feed given to the baby to initiate intestinal movements and to activate the gut) is completely fulfilled by Jatakarma Samskara. Ghrita is high caloric diet which provides immediate source of energy. The sucking, rooting and swallowing reflexes are usually checked before initiation of feeding which is served by this Samskara. Honey contains "Hemin" which is good for cleansing the respiratory tract and also helps in bowel evacuation. This may be considered as the initial step of developing immunity against allergic substances as honey contains large amount of pollens. Giving Madhu and Ghritain equal quantity is a Samyoga Viruddha which may help in developing immunity. Keeping a pot filled with water as per the season is simple, safe and accurate method of maintaining humidity inside the nursery.

2. NamakaranaSamskara

It is a religious ceremony conducted by the family members to keep name for the newborn child which gives personal identity to the child. A function of the ceremony is also for guardian devas (angels) to connect with the individual so they can start guiding him or her in their life. The NamakaranaSamskara can be a simple or elaborate ceremony.^[24] Naming ceremony though looks to be very simple has its impact throughout life of the child as that particular child is identified by that name. This is performed on 10th day of life (Charaka), from 10th day of life onwards (Sushruta and Laghu Vagbhata), can be postponed upto 100th day (Vridha Vagbhata) and on 12th day for male baby and on 13th day for female baby as per some other Acharyas.^{[25][26][27]} The Sutika mother should take bath with Sarvagandhodaka, ShvetaSarshapa and Lodhra, wear clean, unteared, holy white coloured dress and decorate herself with various desirous ornaments. The father should keep two names for his son by worshipping the Kula Devata like, Nakshatrika Nama and Abhiprayika Nama. The Nakshatrika Nama should be of same Nakshatra in which the child is born. In Abhiprayika Nama, Adi, Madhya and Antya Akshara should be arranged in special fashion. Adi Akshara should be Ghosha Varna while Madhya Akshara should be Kanthastha Varna like and Antya Akshara should be Ushma Varna. Sons name should have even letters and daughters name should have odd letters.

The name gives the personal identity to the child. It is an important tool for socialisation. The child should be named in a manner that is meaningful and reflects a dignified quality. 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. Name of a baby promotes the healthy psychology, good physical and mental development. Acharya Charaka has described

Ayupariksha after naming ceremony, which is deciding the healthy and diseased condition of the baby.^[28] As first 10 days of neonatal life is risky period, only after that the Namakarana Samskara should be conducted.

4. NishkramaSamskara

This refers to the ceremony of taking the baby out of Kumaragara. This enables the baby to acclimatize with external environment. It is performed at 4th month (Vagdhata and Kashyapa) by father and mother (Gruhya Sutra).^[29] Here the child is first time taken outside usually to a temple with Shankha Nada and chanting of Vedic mantras. The baby is given bath, adorned, wearing clean clothes, possessing mustard, honey and Ghrita or Gorochana, he 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 Gandha (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 for offering prayer.

This Samskara is important for observing the developmental milestones. As the child meets many unknown persons its reaction in the form of social smile, laugh, fear, anxiety or curiosity can be observed. By the end of 4th month child develops head control. In temple, the child reacts to sounds of bell by turning the head around. Here lifting of the head with complete head control can be observed. Also the 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) and Moro's reflex (3-4month). But persistence of these reflexes indicative of cerebral palsy.

According to Acharya Kashyapa, the teeth inseminated in fourth month are weak, decay early and are afflicted with many diseases.^[30]

At fourth month age, following developmental changes appear in infant such as the infant been able to reaching out for objects with both hand (Bidextrous reach), able to rolls over the bed, recognizes the mother and responds to her voice, anticipate the feeds, 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.^[31]

5. AnnaprashanaSamskara

This is the act of introduction of the solid food material for the first time. It is performed at 10th month (Kashyapa), 6th month (Susruta and Vagbhata) or 5th/6th month (Gruhya sutras).^[32] According to Kashyapa, on the day of ceremony in Prajapatya Nakshatra, cooked food is kept in between the square place prepared by besmearing the cow dung. The sign of swastika is made on that. A picture filled with water is also placed there. Physician is the performer of the ceremony. After offering the food to the Agni the remaining part of the food is offered to child for 3 or 5 times.^{[33][34]}

As teeth erupt in 6th month, introduction of solid food in 10th month is more justified. Scientifically right time for solid food as GIT is ready in terms of its enzymatic activity. Starting solid food before this time leads to fat accumulation which may be problematic afterwards. Prolonged breast feeding may lead to calcium deficiency disorders like rickets, scurvy etc. As growing child attains different milestones, its range of activities also increases and it needs more and more food substances. Only breast milk and even the other liquid food in the form of dal water and fruits may be insufficient to fulfil day to day needs of the baby. Rich carbohydrate, fatty & proteinaceous food in solid form can only

fulfil the need. Fruit juices should be given to the child from sixth month which are source of vitamins especially vitamin C. First meal offer to infant would be easily digested, light and soft as advised by Acharya Kashyapa. At age of 6 month, breast milk now not enough to fulfil the requirement of growing child. So, it is the accurate time to introduction of supplementary feeding as Phalprashana. Breast milk is deficient in iron, vitamin A, D, K and calcium, so by offering Phalprashana and Annprashana ceremony at this time with breast milk, we can reduce the deficiency of related essential vitamins. We can examine the six month infant which has following milestone (6): Starts 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. Primary teeth also start erupted e.g. central incisors (5-7 month), Lateral incisors (7-11 month, First molars (10-16 month).^[35]

6. ChudakarmaSamskara

This Samskara involves shaving the head (of a son). This is performed when sun is in Uttarayana. This is done within 1 yr/upto 3 yrs (Manusmriti and Gruya Sutra). This Samskarais performed in order to attain longevity, strength and radiance.^[36] This Samskara involves first shaving of the child's hair. The shaving blade should be harmless. According to Susrutha, the cutting of hairs, nail gives lightness, prosperity, courage and happiness.^{[37][38]} Special arrangement of top hairs called Shikha. But Sushruta gives the scientific explanation by telling that this area is the site of Sira and Sandhi and these top hairs protect this part.

The Samskara offers a chance for examination of the skull and stimulate the hair growth.^[39] Detection of abnormalities like craniocynostosis, wide sutures, microcephaly, macrocephaly, elevated or depressed fontanelle etc. Palpation of scalp carefully may also reveal cranial defects or craniotabes, a peculiar softening of the parietal bone so that gentle pressure produces a sensation similar to indenting a Ping-Pong ball. During scalp examination, inspect any cutaneous abnormalities such as cutis aplasia or abnormal hair whorls as they may suggest an underlying genetic disorder and it also offers protection of the child.

7. Karnavedhana Samskara

This is performed on 6th/7th/8th month (Susrutha and Vagbhata) or 3rd to 5th month (Parashara Gruhya Sutra).^[40] According to Sushruta, in auspicious Tithi (date), Muhurta and Naksatra, after reciting auspicious hymns, the child should be placed in the lap of wet-nurse or male attendant engaging and consoling him with toys; then the physician pulling the ear with his left hand should pierce the ears in the middle of the Karnapeetha where the skin is thinner (Daivakrita Chidra) with his right hand slowly and evenly by needle or awl in case of thin and thick lobes respectively.^[41] In male child first the right ear should be pierced but in female child, left ear should be pierced first and then the Pichuvarti be inserted, usually performed on auspicious day in winter season.

Injury produced by piercing the ear may initiate the antigen antibody reaction providing passive immunity to the child. This act also activates the immune mechanism so as to bring a secondary immunity against several infections. This rite is intended to open the inner ears of the child for receiving sacred sounds. This also possesses deep mystical and symbolic significance. It is believed that

merely hearing sacred sounds has merit in that it cleanses sin and nurtures the spirit.^[42]

8. Upanayana Samskara

This Samskara is the first step on this long journey towards the goal of self-realization.^[43] It correlate with pre-school age (3-6 years). Amongst all the Samskaras, the Upanayana Samskara is considered to be of foremost value. Though far less common, it is also sometimes conducted for girls. In some regions of modern North India, the ceremony is often conducted as an immediate precursor to wedding ceremonies, instead of during adolescence, while in other regions it is almost always associated with adolescence with regards to this it is very important. The child enters studentship and a life of perfect discipline which involves Brahmacharya (celibacy). Here the boy is handed over to the teacher for his education. The teacher performs the Samskara with Savitri Mantra. A thread is tied around the waist of the child. Sacred thread is made up of Munga grass and fibres of Murva (*Sansevieria roxburghiana*) and hempen threads.^[44-45] Boy should wear the dress made up of skin of black antelope, spotted deer and he goat respectively. And it is given with stick of Bilwa (*Aegle marmelos*) or Palasha (*Butea monosperma*), Vata (*Ficus benghalensis*) or Kadhira (*Acacia catechu*) and Peelu (*Salvadora persica*) or Udumbara (*Ficus racemosa*). This Samskara alarms the child regarding his responsibilities. This is performed between 6-8 years of age. According to Gruhya Sutras, it is performed at 8 yrs (Brahmins), 11 yrs (Kshatriyas) and 12 yrs (Vaishyas). While according to Manusmriti, it is done at 5 yrs (Brahmins), 6 yrs (Kshatriyas) and 8 yrs (Vaishyas). This is done before starting of puberty and not after completion of Yuva Avastha.

This Samskara signifies a spiritual rebirth as it were. After the Upanayana is performed the young lad becomes a dvija i.e. twice born.^[46] Change in age may be change in the physical

and intellectual power, attaining the skills and also need of the subject. The brain growth of the child gets completed up to the age of 5 years. So Manu's opinion of starting the education by 5 years looks to be more logical. A thread tied around the waist may serve the purpose of assessment of the physical growth and to rule out the malnutrition.

9. VedarambhaSamskara

The Samskara is variously named, it is called Vidyarambha, Akshararambha, Aksharasvikarana and Akshara lekhana by different writers.^[47] As the child acquires capacity, strength to learn and education should be started. Usually performed at 8th year.^[48] This Samskara correlates with school age (6-12 years age). On the tongue of the child the letters "Hari Sri GanapatayeNamahAvignamastu" and all the alphabets are written with a piece of gold. The child is made to write the same letters from "Hari Sri" onwards with its index finger on raw rice in a bell metal vessel and the child is made to utter each word when it is written. Either the father of the child or an eminent teacher officiates at this ritual.^[49] In this Samskara, each student, according to his lineage, masters his own branch of the Vedas. It signifies the student's commitment to learning and the teacher's to teaching, and involves a Homa and many prayers.^[50]

Also there are four other Samskaras which does not fall under the above mentioned 16 Samskaras, but still significant to the context. They are:-

1. Dolashayana Samskara

Here the child is transferred to the Dola (cradle) for the first time after the delivery thus allowing it to be separated from the mother. It is performed after 12 days. It is probably supposed that a child receive continuous and constant attention in mother's bed till 12-13 days after birth so that minor

abnormalities and change in the behaviour can be observed. The child having been found well and doing well physically is now transferred to the cradle where the sleep is comfortable with swinging movements. This Samskara helps in maintaining the temperature as neonate faces much threats of hypothermia in the first month. The swinging movements induce the sleep and the baby can survive by its own. It also aids for the vestibular stimulation. Done when the child has recovered from the fatigue of birth injuries, having no jaundice and when the Nabhi (umbilicus) is healed well.^[51]

2. Sooryodayadarshana / Chandrodaya Samskara

Here the child is made to see and worship the rising sun and moon. It is usually performed at 1st month (Kashyapa) or 3rd month (Dharma sindhusara). This Samskara has got the advantage of testing the development of the child in its ability to look at the objects allowing macular fixation. Exposing the child to ultraviolet rays helps in rickets by formation of vitamin D in the skin. It is proved that only sun rays of Suryodayakala have wavelength of ultraviolet rays which is beneficial to stimulate the production of vitamin D. This is diagnostic tests that if child is not able to fix the vision or not able to see moving sun or the moon by the end of one month development of the child is slow and special care should be given.^[51]

3. Upaveshana Samskara

This is the ceremony of making a normal baby to sit with support. It is performed at 5th month (Ashtanga Sangraha) or 6th month (Kashyapa). Daily the child is trained to sit for a while and thus by 12 months of age, he shall be able to sit without support. This is a method of giving stimulus for the ability to sit in a normally growing child. It also assess the different milestones such as rolling over, sitting with support, sitting without support, crawling, creeping etc.^[51]

4. Aksharalekhana Samskara

Here the child is made to learn alphabets. The age at which child gets the ability to learn varies from individual to individual. Usually the child should be able to learn by 5 years. And Aksharalekhana Samskara is performed in the 5th year of the life on an auspicious day while sun moves in Uttarayana. Having noticed the field of interest to learn he is educated accordingly. This Samskara is an initiation to learn the writing language.^[51]

DISCUSSION

Samskaras can be understood as the important cultural events in an individual's life from birth to death possessing socio-cultural as well as medical significance. It signifies Growth and development and the ceremonial announcement of milestones achieved providing with periodical screening. Samskaras provide sound mental and physical health and the confidence to face life's challenges. They are believed to purify blood and increase blood circulation, sending more oxygen to every organ. Samskaras can energize the body and revitalizes it. They can increase physical strength and stamina to work for longer period of time. They rejuvenate the mind and enhance concentration and intellectual capacity. Samskaras give a sense of belonging, culture, and refined sensibilities. They direct energy to humanitarian causes thereby building a strong character. They bestow moral and physical balance throughout life. They give the confidence to face death bravely owing to a contented and righteous life. These Samskaras bind an individual to the community that nurture the feeling of brotherhood. A person whose actions are connected to the others around him would definitely think twice before committing a sin. Lack of Samskaras give rise to indulging in individual physical pleasures and fanning one's animal instincts. The inner demon is aroused that leads to the degeneration of oneself and the society as a whole. When a

person is not aware of his moorings in society he runs his own selfish race against the world and the greed to pitch him over others leads to destruction of not only his self but the entire human community. So, the Samskaras act as a moral code of conduct for the society. In the span of growth and development person passes through the different phases of motor, sensory, neuromuscular, social and mental development and these are termed as developmental milestones. They should occur in the given time otherwise termed as delayed developmental milestones. Ayurveda also describes different Samskaras in the different period of life to mark, or to announce attainment of different milestones thus ensuring proper growth and also to differentiate them from the child with developmental delay. Introducing the newer faculties like Upaveshana or the protective measures like Karnavedhana in the form of Samskara to bring about refinement in the growth activity of the child. Each Samskara make the child to acquire a new talent and is called as Gunantaradhanam.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that the Samskara are solemn ceremonies and are to be performed in accordance with set procedures. This practice is the rich heritage handed down the centuries by our forefathers and the sages. These rituals prepare the mind to assimilate not only the Vedic knowledge but also make one a person of character. Samskara 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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