



CONCEPTS OF SAMSKARAS IN RELATION TO GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF CHILD

Dr Sarita. S. Neeralakeri

Assistant Professor, Department of Kaumarabhrithya, Ayurveda Mahavidyalaya Hubli.

Dr Ravindra. G. Varma*

Associate Professor, Department of Shalaky Tantra, Ayurveda Mahavidyalaya Hubli. *Corresponding Author

ABSTRACT

Samskaro hi gunantara dhanam i.e. the process which brings changes is known as *Samskara*. *Samskara* is used to convey different meanings in different context, *Nyaya Darshana* says *Samskara* is a sense of producing self-reproductive capacity with impression creating quality. In pediatrics we have two words with respect to maturation of the body that is growth and development. Growth is objective phenomenon with increase in the size of the body due to cell growth and easily measured by height weight etc. Development is more subjective and functional involves many facets like structural, psychological, social, moral aspect. It is very difficult to quantify development but appreciated. Modern science used the word developmental milestones at different ages of life where they expect the minimum development in all the above told facets. Particular *Samskara* is performed at a particular age to assess and recheck the expected levels of growth and development to that age.

KEYWORDS : *Samskara*, Growth, Development, Child.

INTRODUCTION:

In Ayurveda importance is given to *Samskara* and explained in detail. The word *Samskara* has been extensively used in a day to day social life, literature and philosophical interpretations. Any process which brings continuous positive changes in the body, intellectual capacity and personality is called as *Samskara*. According to *Meemamskara*, *Samskara* is a ceremony for purification of sacrificial material and according to *Jaimini Sutra*, *Samskara* is a purpose whereas *Tantravartika* says *Samskara* is art and rituals which impart the fitness. So which brings changes in life can be termed as *Samskara* may be in the form of education, cultivation, refinement, polishing embellishment, arrangement decoration, modification.

To a given age, child is expected to fulfill required criteria and achieve certain level of structural, functional, social and lingual maturity, which is called as normal developmental milestones and if it lags behind then it is called as delay developmental milestones. Meaning of *Samskara* is subjective in childhood practice, many *Samskaras* are performed at various levels as we know development starts from conception and continue till death, similarly number of *Samskaras* from birth to death explained(1).

The term growth and development are often used together they are not interchangeable because they represent two different facets of the dynamics of change, those of quantity and quality. Growth and development usually proceed concurrently but may not always be interrelated; growth denotes a net increasing the size of the tissues, it is largely attributed to multiplication of cells and increase in the intracellular substance. Development specifies maturation of functions it is related to the maturation and myelination of the nervous system and indicates acquisition of a variety of skills for optimal functioning of the individual.(2)

Growth and development of children is a continuous and orderly process, sequence of growth is same but the pace of development can be non-uniform, growth pattern of every individual is unique but general pattern of growth in human being is cephalocaudal.(3) Assessment of growth can be done by Nutritional anthropometry, Bone age, Dental age, Milestones and Road to health card.(4) Methods of assessment of development are largely based on work of Arnold Gessel. Where we assess the child development in terms of gross motor, fine motor adaptive, personal, social and language.(5)

In Ayurveda anthropometric values in growth are not given much importance as they are fallacious. However the various

measurements of body in one's own anguli are described by *Vagbhata* and *Charaka*, which we can calculate according to the person. The mental development and psychological functions the child carries out, are rather the best index to assess the growth and development. The pattern of physical growth depends on one's nationality, the stature of parents and on one's own self. However the length of a child should be 3 ½ times the length of his fore arm. The mid-thigh circumference is about 30 angulis. (6)

Materials and methods

Religiously description of 40 *Samskaras* are available. Among which some important *Samskaras* are performed in childhood.(7)

The first *Samskara* done after birth is *Jatakarma Samskara*. Where mixture of *madhu* and *grita* is given to the child, a pot filled with water is kept at head side with *mantroucharana* and immediately breast feeding is started.(8) This *Samskara* gives an opportunity to examine the baby immediately after birth where primitive reflexes are checked of newborn.

Darma Sindhura explains *Vardhapana Vidhi Samskara*, which means cutting of the umbilical cord, followed by on the tithi of birth during every month of first year and subsequently once during every year on the day and month of his birth usually in the form of a festival is celebrated. This ceremony connected with birthday festival where a pediatrician gets an opportunity to check the child physical and emotional growth. This *Samskara* mainly tells the time of examination.(9)

Namakarana Samskara, the procedure of naming ceremony which is done on 10th day. We have opportunity to check the status of umbilical stump and weight of the baby which will be same as that of birth weight. Naming ceremony give the personal identity to the child.(10)

Nishkramana Samskara is done at 4th month, where baby is carried out of the home for first time to a temple (11). Here we can check the head control and social development in child, as coming in contact with strangers.

Upaveshana Samskara is a special procedure mentioned in *Kashyapa Samhita* where the infant is educated to sit with support on the floor and same is daily practiced for few minutes from 6 months onwards. While doing this *Samskara* some of the playing articles are also introduced to the child for first time (12). While doing this *Samskara* we can check whether child is able to sit with support or not, hand to hand coordination, hand to mouth coordination,

hand skills, hand to eye coordination, reaching the objects, this all milestones we can check.

Kashyapa advised Phala prashana Samskara at 6th month and Annaprashana Samskara at 10th month. Phala prashana means fruit juice is given to child and Annaprashana means solid food is given to child (13). Here correct time for weaning and with what weaning should be started is explained very beautifully. While doing this procedure we can check the tolerance of food material and teeth eruption.

As per the classics Karnavedhana Samskara is done at 6th, 7th or 8th month, where procedure ear lobes are pierced. This Samskara is explained for Raksha karma (protection) and Aabushna (ornament) purpose (14). Wound of ear may act as a buffering mechanism for stimulation of body's immune system and ornaments exerts a continuous pressure and give stimulatory effects.⁽¹⁵⁾

Chudakarma Samskara is done around 1st year, where first time shaving of the scalp hair is done (16), this is adopted for examination of skull, assessment of bone growth and to identify the deformities of skull.

Akshara Lekhana Samskara is done at 5 years, where child is practice to write a few words(17). As maximum development of brain occurs at 5 years, so child is able to understand the letters. Ability of understanding in the child, we can assess in this Samskara.

Upanayan Samskara is a special Samskara where the child is handover to teacher for he is education purpose and done around 8th to 12th year of life(18). Here we can decide the field of interest in child as teacher is the best person to judge.

DISCUSSION:

The growth and development are indicator of general health and nutrition of the individual and community. It is also used for public health screening, evaluation of social action, susceptibility of a body for adoption. Growth and development also has clinical importance to diagnose the developmental delay problems.⁽¹⁹⁾

Ayurveda explains different Samskaras at different periods of life to announce attainment of different milestones of development. Timing of different Samskaras match with a certain milestones of development Samskaras performed at different ages in a social gathering by inviting relatives, experts and respected people, it create a self-awareness in an individual. Which help to realize the individual about the newer responsibilities duties in that age. Reminding the parents about the development of child and adaptation to the changes in diet, care, social interactions, sexual growth are also the aim of Samskara.⁽²⁰⁾

In Indian culture when child attains the important milestones, the family members will distribute some sweets at social gathering with pleasure. For example when baby roll overs, when child developed the complete social smile, if the child is able to sit without support, when the child starts creep and crawl, crosses the threshold of the doorways and when child start the speaking by syllable. In all this occasions different types of dishes are distributed.(21)

Conclusion:

1. Samskaras are not only meant for the checking of growth and development of child, these Samskaras are also protective measures for child.

2. Samskaras also explains some important aspects of the child development like naming, outing, weaning, starting the education.

3. Samskaras are also a part of religious right to inculcate in the child of Purusharth's Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha.

4. Samskaras are done in social gathering mainly to announce the child is fit for the society.

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