

**CONCEPT OF SAMSKARA IN AYURVEDA AND ITS UTILITY IN TODAY'S WORLD
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ABSTRACT

In the *Pauranic* era, different kinds of *Samskaras* have been talked about. According to Ayurveda, *Samskara* denotes the process of bringing all kinds of changes in the individual. It means to provide some good qualities to the person. The main objectives of *Samskara* are giving the child a good start in life, making sure that the diet and feeding are in the right direction, helping physical and mental development of the child. Thus, it is evident that one can understand *Samskara* as practices that are aimed at making the body and mind better through methods of purification. The childhood *Samskaras* are targeted primarily at ensuring the child is well-prepared for life outside the womb and has access to proper nutrition and development. *Samskaras* help in fulfilling the four objectives of living; *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kama* and *Moksha*. Therefore, it can be inferred that implementing the *Samskaras* during childhood of an individual means that every phase of life is included in the process of development, including the physical development, cognitive development and socio-psychological development.

KEYWORDS: *Ayurveda*, *Samskaras*, *Childhood*, *Dharma*, *Moksha*.**INTRODUCTION**

In Ayurveda, *Samskara* refers to transformation, purification or enhancement of the inherent qualities of a person. It includes some rites, ceremonies and practices designed for cleansing and nourishing an individual and supporting their growth physically, mentally, intellectually and spiritually. Those services exist at several stages of a person's life and mark the development milestones in the process of growing up. Many *Samskaras* are illustrated and performed throughout one's life cycle starting from conception until one's death. Some of the childhood rites are *Simantonnayana*, *Jatakarma*, *Namakarana*, *Nishkramana*, *Annaprashana*, *Chudakarma* (*Mundana*), *Karnavedha*, *Upanayana* attesting many significant and crucial moments in childhood. These ceremonies have not only a religious and cultural meaning, but they also

help to provide proper nutrition, adaptation, development and hygiene. Therefore, the meaning of *Samskara* is yet another traditional method and philosophy illustrating the complete development of an individual.

Childhood Samskaras

Among the 16 traditional practices, some *Samskaras* (**Figure 1**) stand out particularly when it comes to childhood and the early stages of development.

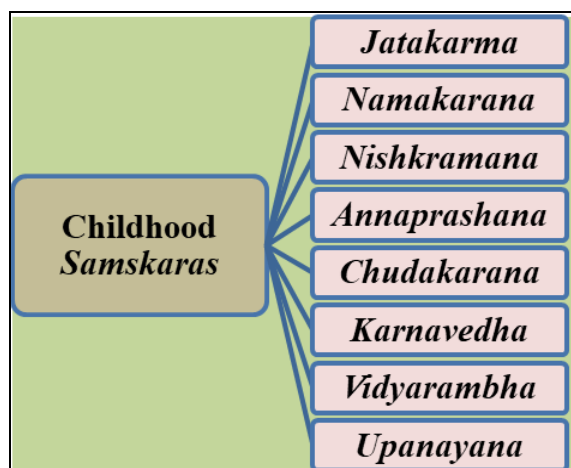


Figure 1: Childhood Samskaras as per Ayurveda.

- ✓ **Jatakarma:** This act is conducted right after the child is born, emphasizing the mother's initiation into breastfeeding, nurturing and building a strong relationship with the newborn.
- ✓ **Namakarana:** This is usually done on the 11th or 12th day after birth. The *Namakarana* ceremony is very important since it gives the newborn an identity within his/her family, as well as psychological and emotional acceptance as a member of the family.
- ✓ **Nishkramana:** The ceremony is done at about 4 months when the child sees the outside world for the first time.
- ✓ **Annaprashana:** This ceremony occurs at about 6 months when the child starts eating solid food.
- ✓ **Chudakarana:** This ceremony takes place between the ages of one and three.
- ✓ **Karnavedha:** This ceremony relates to the idea of piercing the ear, which is believed by many to have healing powers.

- ✓ **Vidyarambha:** This *Samskara* designates the first stage in learning, being related to the first steps of education, covering how letters work and basics of education.
- ✓ **Upanayana:** The stage of *Upanayana* usually symbolizes the beginning of educational process as well as normalization of living in regards to obligations, principles, and morals associated with education.

Role in Growth and Development

The childhood *Samskaras* are done in early stages of life and are traditionally linked to significant milestones in the development of the physical, sensory, nutritional, intellectual, and psychological aspects of the child. *Jatakarma*, which is done at birth, helps the newborn adapt, begin feeding process, obtain nutrition and create strong bond with mother. *Namakarana*, gives a social identity and comforts the child psychologically. *Nishkramana* is done in the 4th month and represents the child's first contact with the world and supports development of senses. *Annaprashana*, is the first introduction of solid food. *Chudakarana* highlights hygiene, rejuvenation and is held simultaneously with increased movement, autonomy, and engagement in games. *Karnavedha* is linked to the activation of *Marma*, devotion to sensory development, protection of health and cultural unification. *Vidyarambha* indicates preparedness to formal education and enhances language abilities, creativity, intelligence and memory. *Upanayana* opens the doors to formal learning and discipline life style. These *Samskara* are performed in specific age of childhood (**Table 1**) thus helps in each stage of growing days.

Table 1: Samskara and age of their practices.

S. No.	Samskara	Age
1	<i>Namakarana</i>	10 th or 12 th day after birth
2	<i>Nishkramana</i>	3 rd or 4 th month
3	<i>Annaprashana</i>	6 th –8 th month
4	<i>Chudakarana (Mundan)</i>	1 st –3 rd year
5	<i>Karnavedha</i>	1 st –3 rd year
6	<i>Vidyarambha</i>	Around 5 years
7	<i>Upanayana</i>	5 th –8 th year
8	<i>Keshanta</i>	Around 16 years / puberty

Application in Today's Practices

Annaprashana refers to the ceremony of giving the child his or her first bite of solid food. This ceremony can still be relevant in today's context by introducing wholesome food gradually and in a timely manner. One should ensure that the food is easy to digest and freshly prepared.

Samskaras usually allowed monitoring developmental milestones of the child. This ancient wisdom can still be used due to the availability of pediatric consultations and developmental checkups of the child. Thus, monitoring

of developmental milestones gives a chance to reveal any possible defects promptly.

Samskaras highlight the importance of developing positive qualities needed for a successful personality. Nowadays, parents can follow this concept by using positive parenting. Application of *Dinacharya* can introduce into childhood through consistency in daily routines. This can mean a regular mealtime, sufficient amount of sleep, hygiene maintenance, opportunities to be active and play in the open air, proper time for education and relaxation activities, all of which would

promote healthy rhythms in the body, help digestion and strengthen immunity.

Abhyanga is one of the forms of nurturing childcare. Besides its importance in traditional Indian medicine, massage makes it possible for the parent and child to interact and maintain close verbal and non-verbal communication. Massaging children correctly may enhance the outcomes of the process in making it relax and develop good physical buildup.

Considering modern principles of *Samskara* application, it is necessary to incorporate scientific reasoning proving possible effects of every particular *Samskara* on child's development in physical as well as psychological, cognitive, and social terms:

- ✓ *Jatakarma*, for instance, can find a place in modern neonatal practices of breastfeeding initiation, skin-to-skin contact, bonding, thermoregulation, and adaptation to life after birth.
- ✓ In a similar way, *Annaprashana* can be explained in terms of complementary feeding which ensures appropriate nutrition after a certain period.
- ✓ *Karnavedha* can be analyzed from a scientific point of view offering justification that, although it is culturally important, there is no convincing supporting evidence proving the impact of ear piercing on general health and hearing; thus, any method has to be sterile and aftercare carried out properly to mitigate the risk of infection.
- ✓ *Nishkramana* can be compared with gradual introduction to environment and stimuli.
- ✓ *Vidyarambha* can correlate with early education.

Every particular *Samskara* should be not just ritual but also explain all of the advantages from the modern scientific perspective in physiological, nutritional, psychological, and social terms with clear distinction between evidence-based efficiency and traditional beliefs.

CONCLUSION

Samskara signifies the process of purification, transformation and improvement of a person's characteristics within the Ayurvedic system. This includes customs or procedures that focus on physical, intellectual, psychological, emotional and spiritual growth. *Kaumarbhritya*, the branch of Ayurveda dedicated to children's health considers various *Samskaras* in development from birth through childhood. The major childhood *Samskaras* including *Jatakarma*, *Namakarana*, *Nishkramana*, *Annaprashana*, *Chudakarana*, *Karnavedha*, *Vidyarambha* and *Upanayana* incorporate cultural values of food, nutrition, cleanliness, sensory, educational, behavioral and psychological development. The concepts can be applied in modern pediatric practice including complementary feeding, development assessment, parenting, hygiene and physical exercises, etc.

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