CONCEPT OF SHODASHA SAMSAKARA

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ABSTRACT

Ancient Indian literatures like Veda, Puran, Samhita etc. are rich with various knowledge regarding human health, behaviour, social conduct etc. In those Granthas, there are explanations about various Samaskaras. These Samaskaras are different in numbers as per different Granthas. Out of these various samaskaras, 16 Samaskaras, which are conducted from birth to death of individual has prime importance. Those Samaskaras suggest the change in life of person. Samaskaras gives guidance for how to face this change in life and increase good qualities in person. These Samaskaras helps to build good society and so as country. Samaskaras 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. Samaskaras are cultural events that provide occasions for family and friends to get together and bond. 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.

Keywords: Agni, Growth & Development, Manusmruti, Shodasha Samskara, Veda.

INTRODUCTION

Indian philosophy is very rich with ancient literatures written in Sanskrit. In almost all literature they gave the direction and rules to follow for maintaining the own as well as society health. These literatures explain the human life-cycle starting from garbhavakarti still death. During this lifecycle they mentioned different stages of age at which the human body face the internal as well as external changes. For this change these, philosophers told to celebrate and introduce the change to child and improve his/her life with more consciously. This celebration during change in life, they called as “Samskaras”. Samskara’s does not changes the quality but they increase and refine the good qualities1. Each Samskara makes the growing child to acquire a new talent as is called Gunaantaradhanam.

Use of Samskar:

Removal of Dosha, Fulfillment of deficiencies, Increase in good qualities of Body and Soul are the uses of Samskaras. Samskaras are the procedures by which the mala, dosha, bad qualities, and deficiencies are removed from body as well as soul and good qualities are introduced and increased in both of them2.

Number of Samskaras: Number of Samskara varies in different Hindu Granthas. Those are as follows-

1. Gautama Dharmasutra → 40
2. Vaikhanas Dharmasutra → 18
3. Jinsen in Mahapurana → 108
4. Sanyas Upanishad → 40
5. Manusmruti → 16

Like this, many philosophers explained different numbers of Samskars. Mimamsa Darshan also agreed with 16 Samskar told by Manu. In Hindu discipline 16 Samskars are in practice. Aarya Samaja founder Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati also explained 16 samskars.

Now also, in Indian Society these 16 Samsakar’s are in practice. These “16” Samskar’s can be divided as mention in Table 1.

1. Before Birth:
The three Samskara’s are done before Birth of child. These Samskara’s are performed in ‘mother’.

a. Garbhadhan Samskar:
The word meaning of Garbhadhana is placing the seed in the womb. The aim of this Samskara is to get high quality progeny. According to Acharyas, an auspicious day and time are fixed for Garbhadhana3. This Samskar should be performed only after marriage. Both partners should be complete viryavan and should purify their bodies first by undergoing shodhana procedures. The significance of shodhan is highly important as this purify the seeds of both partners i.e. ovum and sperm, thus the born child will possess high...
qualities. Married, 16 yrs female and 25 yrs. male having good health and complete viryatva in their body should undergo this Samskara.

b. Pumsavana Samskara:
The meaning of pumsavana is male procreation. The process which is adopted for achieving progeny of male sex is known as pumsavana karma. The day is fixed on the basis of lunar calendar on specific stars rising on that day; normally when punarvasu, Pushya, Anuradha, moolu, sravana and mrigshirsha stars (all are male stars) rise for the day. According to Acharya charak, this should be performed after conception but before organogenesis. According to Acharya Sushruta, this should be performed up to 2 months just after achievement of conception. This Samskara is performed basically with three main intentions, such as:
1. Garbhodhara
2. Ishtapatyagrahanam
3. Garbha shapanam

In this samskar, aerial roots of Vata are collected from Vata tree which is at east or north direction and where cows sit for rest. These roots are crusted with mash seed or ghee mixed with honey and ghee mixed together in equal quantity and should be given to the child. Mantras from different vedas, are selected as per Jati, Kula, and Verna, and should be enchanted in front of child. A mud pot filled with Abhimantrit Jal should be kept near the Head of child, which probably maintain the humidity in Kumara. According to Acharya Sushruta, after Nabhinal chedan, on first day, honey and ghee mixed with Ananta powder in small quantity is made to lick using Anamika finger, three times to the newborn. On 2nd and 3rd day honey and ghee medicated with Lakshmana is administered for three times. On 4th day honey and ghee in the amount which fills the palm of neonate should be given two times and after that mother’s milk is given. Ghrita is high caloric diet, which provides energy to child immediately. The rooting, sucking and swallowing reflexes are accessed 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 initial immunisation against allergic substances expressed. This milk is given to drink to Garbhini. The significance of this Samskara is to invoke divine and excellent qualities in the child. This will strengthen the relation of husband and wife, and bound them together by a common desire for male offspring.

c. Simantonnayana Samskara:
This is the last Samskara in the pregnancy period of a mother. It is usually performed in 4th or 5th or 6th or 7th or 8th month. The word Simantonnayana is derived from two words simant (Line that parts the hairs) and Unnayan (combing hairs from forehead to top).

This Samskar is done on same Nakshatra as that of Pumsavana. On an auspicious day wife should take bath and wear new cloths and the husband should start this Samskar. In this Samskar, husband should start Havan and gives 14 Aahutis in Havan by enchanting the mantra. After completion of Havan, he should take his wife at lonely place and let her sit over soft and comfortable chair. Then, he should take five things i.e. bunch of Gular, powder of sehi, Bunch of three kusha, thread, and steak of pipal or shirish tree and comb her hair with all above things. The combing action by husband may result pleasant frequencies enter in her body through the hair with all above things. The combing action by husband may result pleasant frequencies enter in her body through the sahasrar chakra and might stimulate the proper growth of foetus inside womb.

| Table 1: Gross division of Shodasha Samskara |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| **Before Birth** | **Childhood Period** | **For Education Purpose** | **For entering in “Aashrama”** | **After Death** |
| Garbhadhan | Jatakarma | Upanayan | Vivah | Anthesti |
| Pumsavana | Namkaran | Vedaranbha | Vanaprastha |
| Simantonnayan | Nishkraman | Samavartham | Sanyas, |
| | Aanaprashan | | | |
| | Chudakarm | | | |
| | Karnavedhan | | | |

2. During childhood period:
a. Jatakarma Samskara:
The first Samskara to be done after birth is the Jatakarma Samskara. According to Acharya charak, immediately after the birth, madhu (Honey) and Ghrita (ghee) mixed together in equal quantity and should be given to the child. Mantras from different vedas, are selected as per Jati, Kula, and Verna, and should be enchanted in front of child. A mud pot filled with Abhimantrit Jal should be kept near the Head of child, which probably maintain the humidity in Kumara. According to Acharya Sushruta, after Nabhinal chedan, on first day, honey and ghee mixed with Ananta powder in small quantity is made to lick using Anamika finger, three times to the newborn. On 2nd and 3rd day honey and ghee medicated with Lakshmana is administered for three times. On 4th day honey and ghee in the amount which fills the palm of neonate should be given two times and after that mother’s milk is given. Ghrita is high caloric diet, which provides energy to child immediately. The rooting, sucking and swallowing reflexes are accessed 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 initial immunisation against allergic substances as honey contains large amount of pollens. Giving madhu and Ghrita in equal quantity is a samyoga viruddha which may help in developing immunity.

b. Namkaran Samskara:
It is a religious ceremony conducted by family members in presence of relatives, Vaidya, and brahman. This gives personal indentity to the child. There are different opinions; for when to do this Samskar as per different acharya. They are as follows.
1. Charaka → 10th day of life
2. Sushruta and Laghu Vagbhata → 10th day on wards
3. Vriddha Vagbhata → Depends on health of child can be postponed up to 100th day.

For this ceremony, mother should take bath with Sarvagandhodakara, and wear clear, pleasant, white coloured dress and also wear various desired ornaments. The father should keep two names for his child by worshiping the kuladevata. He should give two names i.e. 1. Nakshatrika Nama. 2. Abhipravyaka Nama. Nakshatrika Nama should be as per the nakshatra on which child is born. Abhipravyaka nama, for male child should have even letters and that of odd for female child. In these Abhipravyaka Nama, Adi, Madhya and Antya Akshara should be arranged in special fashion.
c. Nishkramana Samskara:
This refers to the ceremony of taking the baby out of Kumaraagarama. This enables the baby to acclimatize with external environment. It is performed at 4th month (Vagbhata and Kashyapa) by father and mother (Gruhya Sutra). 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 Gorochoha, he along with Dhatri(wet nurse) should be taken out of the house and ready to enter the temple.

d. Annaprashana Samskara:
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). According to Kashyapa, on the day of ceremony in Prajapatiya Nakshatra, cooked food is kept in between the square place prepared by the cow dung. The sign of swastika is made on that. 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. The annaprashanaa is advised to be performed at a social function in which whatever the object the child touches first is said to be associated with him during his life time for e.g. a pen, a coin, or an eatable like Paayasam which are arranged on the altar and the child is left to decide his luck by crawling.

e. Karnavedhana Samskara:
This is performed on 6th / 7th / 8th month (Susrutha and Vagbhata) or 3rd to 5th month (Parashara Gruhya Sutra). According to Sushruta, in auspicious Tithi, Muhurta and Nakshatra, 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 Childra) with his right hand slowly and evenly by needle orawl in case of thick lobes respectively. 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. It offers protection to the child from the influence of evil demons by way of stimulating the immunization mechanism and serves the ornamental purpose as well.

f. Chudakarma Samskara:
The chudakarma Samskar or the tonsure ceremony, where tufts of hair are remained and remaining hair are removed. This is advised to be performed after 1 year for a Brahmin; during 3rd year for a Kshatriya and in 7th year for a Vaishya. This Samskara is performed when sun is in Uttarayana. This Samskara is performed in order to attain longevity, strength and radiance. 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. Special arrangement of top hairs called Shikha. But Sushruta give the scientific explanation by telling that this area is the site of Sira and Sandhi and these top hairs protect this part. This Samskara offers a chance for examination of the skull and stimulate the hair growth. Detection of abnormalities like craniohypostosis, wide sutures, microcephaly, macrocephaly, elevated or depressed fontanel 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.

3. for Educational Purpose:
a. Upamayana Samskara
This Samskara is the first step in long life journey towards the goal of self-realization. On an auspicious day, child is left to home of Guru for professional study, is the upanayana Samskara. Here boy is handed over to the teacher for his education. For this Samskar, child should take bath and wear new clothes then take food with all family members, then, his teacher should seat near Agni and allow child to seat at right side to him. Then, child should enchant mantras after his teacher. By this mantra Guru give advice child to pray Agni, God, Guru and all elderly family members. Then, he should pray god for his long life, health and good intellectual power. After this, guru took the child with himself for his future, professional education. It is performed for a BRAHMIN, KSHATRIYA and VAISHYA at the age of 8, 11 and 12 years i.e. before the starting of puberty and not after the completion of 16, 22 and 24 years respectively. They are provided with a sacred thread girdle made of MUNJA grass, MOORVA fibres and hempen threads respectively and an upper dress of the skins of black antelope, of spotted deer and of a he-goat in the same order. They should carry in order, a prescribed staff of appropriate length of BILWA or PALAASA; VATA or KHADIRA; and PEELU or UDUMBARA.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Varna</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Thread tied around waist, made of</th>
<th>Upper dress</th>
<th>Should carry stick of trees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brahman</td>
<td>8 yrs</td>
<td>Munja grass</td>
<td>Black Antelope</td>
<td>Bilwa or palash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kshatriya</td>
<td>11 yrs</td>
<td>Morrya fibers</td>
<td>Spotted deer</td>
<td>Vata or Khadira</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaishya</td>
<td>12 yrs</td>
<td>Hempen thread</td>
<td>He-goat</td>
<td>Peelu or Udumbara</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By this Samskara child becomes Dvija i.e. twice born or signifies a spiritual rebirth. The brain growth of child completed up to the age of 5 yrs, so Manu's opinion of starting education by 5yrs looks to be more logical. A thread tied around the waist may serve the purpose of assessment of physical growth and to rule out the malnutrition. This thread might aware him about his responsibility towards society, Guru and Mata-Pita.
b. Vedaranbha Samskara:
Veda’s are the symbol of knowledge. After performing upanayan Samskara, child is sent to Gurukul for his education. In shravan month, on auspicious day of pornima, teacher starts this Samskara. This age group is adolescent age group which is very fluctuating. To avoid the child to attract towards bad habits and bad things to do he is sent to Gurukul, far away from his home. There Guru gives him the professional knowledge as per his interest and skill. There is no provision of such education to kshudra, but Acharya Charak explained that if kshudra is having qualities to take education then allow him for the same. In this Samskara, Guru told child about Dharma, and good habits, which keeps him away from misbehaviour and he will take his education with healthy mind.

The person who undergoes Vedaranbha Samskara is called Dwija because it is beginning of his second life.

g. Samavartan Samskara:
After taking professional education from teacher, student is allowed to go to his home. After completion of study with satisfaction of teacher in Shuklapaksha, student should give Guru-Dakshna to his teacher and with his permission leave the Gurukula.

This Samskara is done by the Guru after completion of education. This Samskara is the gate-way for child to enter into Gruhasthrama. After taking, professional education up to age of 25 yrs. from guru in Gurukula, guru with is well satisfaction allow child to go to his home to serve his family as well as society. The person becomes bright and have glow on his face due to completion of his education. Then, his teacher allows him to take bath. After taking bath the student is allowed to wear Anjan in eyes, ornaments rich cloths and foot wears and his face is shown to him in mirror, then teacher tell him that he is glowing with Bhrama Tej and now he can enter in Gruhasthrama and serve for family and society and sent to his home.

4. for entry in Aashrama:
a. Vivaha Samskara:
This Samskara indicate initiation of the marital life of man. For Vivaha male should select female as his wife with the help of norms given in the Veda and Purana. Then vivaha Samskar should conducted by brahman according to Dharmvidhana. This Samskara is prohibited without performing Samavartana Samskara and is completed with Saptapadi. This Samskar is done to enter in Gruhasthrama. Vivaha or marriage ceremony is done for a boy at the age of 21 years with a girl of 12 years. Nocturnal emissions occur for the first time in boys a year after secondary sex changes, yet relative infertility may extend up to 25 years in boys and 16 years in girls. This is the reason that sexual intercourse i.e. Garbhadhan is advised after attaining this age. In Indian society, vivaha is done with dharmanushthana, Yagya-yaga and for the purpose of santan prapti and maintain status in society.

b. Vanaprastha Samskara:
After spending life up to 50 years age in Gruhasthrama and after completing marriage of children. Then, person should leave all responsibility to his son, and then he should go in lonely place with or without his wife. In vana, he should take Gramya aahar and avoid all pleasure things. There he should study about Veda and Dharma. This will give opportunity to his child to make decision in his life and overcome all difficulty with own knowledge and intelligence.

c. Sanyasa Samskara:
In vanaprasthashrama, person spends certain years in Vana. At certain stage again he become virakta, then he should leave vana-Aashrama and without wearing cloths and take daily very few amount of food, he should start to walk alone journey. He should only keep one steak and only one cloth with him. He should travel continuously from one place to another. The person, who overcome all his Indriya are able to become Sanyasi and going towards Mokshapraapti.

5. After death:
a. Anteshi Samskara:
One, who got life, will definitely die on one day. Death is the only pure truth. Dead body should be burn in Agni. In death of shishu, Sanyashi and certain diseased person, the Agni-sanskar should not be done, but they should be buried in soil or left in flowing water. Bath should be given to dead body and covered with new cloths. Then, body should be burned in woods of chandhan, Tila and Keshar. Fire should be made from head and go towards legs by son.

After that, on 10th, 13th day relatives should come together and remember him. After one year of death again Varshika shradhha Karma should be done in presence of all relatives. Only son is having right to give Agani to his father after death. After that he should do Pindadana, Asthi-sanchaya, Asthi-prvaha, kesh-chedan, Brahmaana bhojana etc.

**DISCUSSION**

Samkars are the event done before conception up to death of person; so it is having social as well as medical significanace. By all above Samkars, we can access the growth and development of child and can diagnosis any defect at certain age, which will help child to increase his skill of work as well as mental ability. This, also make person aware of his duty towards society and teach him how to behave in society, so that we can make crime free society. During the process of growth and development of child, undergoes different mental and physical changes in his body. Samkars help him to accept only good qualities and avoid bad conducts. Samkars also make aware of his responsibilities towards parents, wife, children and society.

**CONCLUSION**

Samkars are the ceremonies described in many of Hindu literatures. This practice is being conducted since Vedic period. This makes person literate and social. Samkars described in Ayurvedic text, can be compared with various stages of growth and development. By performing all these Samkara with religious conduct, person, avoid all bad conduct i.e. Pashvika, Aasuri vratti and become bright, intelligent and social. This is essential for building healthy and crime free society and country.

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