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Review Article

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.

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. *Samskaras* 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 *Samskar*. *Mimamsa Darshan* also agreed with 16 *Samskar* told by Manu. In Hindu discipline 16 *Samskar*s are in practice. *Aarya Samaja* founder *Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati* also explained 16 *samskar*.

Now also, in Indian Society these 16 *Samskar*'s are in practice. These "16" *Samaskar*'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 *Garbhadhana*³. This *Samskar* should be performed only after marriage. Both partners should be complete *viryan* 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 *Samskar*.

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*⁴. 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 *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 conception⁶. This *Samskara* is performed basically with three main intentions, such as-

1. *Garbhadharanam*
2. *Ishtapatyagrahanam*
3. *Garbha sthapanam*

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 *sweta-sarshapa* and mixed in cured and given to drink or put 3-4 drops in right nostril for male child and in left nostril for female child. The drugs like *Lakshmana*, *Vatashringa*, *sahadeva*, *Jivaka* etc. pestle with cow's milk and juice

expressed. This milk is given to drink to *Garbhini*. The significance of this *Samskar* 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. Seemantonayana 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 month⁵. The word *Seemantonayana* 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 *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
<i>Garbhadhan</i>	<i>Jatakarma</i>	<i>Upanayan</i>	<i>Vivah</i>	<i>Anthesti</i>
<i>Pumsavana</i>	<i>Namkaran</i>	<i>Vedaranbha</i>	<i>Vanaprastha</i>	
<i>Simantonnayan</i>	<i>Nishkraman</i>	<i>Samavarthan</i>	<i>Sanyas.</i>	
	<i>Aanaprashan</i>			
	<i>Chudakarm</i>			
	<i>Karnavedhan</i>			

2. During childhood period:

a. Jatkarma Samskara:

The first *Samskara* to be done after birth is the *Jatakarma Samskara*. According to *Acharya charak*, immediately after the birth, *madhu* (Honey) and *Ghritha* (ghee) mixed together in equal quantity and should be given to the child⁷. *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 *Kumaragara*. 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. *Ghritha* 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 *Grita* in equal quantity is a *samyoga viruddha* which may help in developing immunity⁸.

b. Namakaran Samskara:

It is a religious ceremony conducted by family members in presence of relatives, *Vaidya*, and *brahaman*. This gives personal identity 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. *Vridhha Vagbhata* → Depends on health of child can be postponed up to 100th day.

For this ceremony, mother should take bath with *Sarvagandhodaka*, and wear clear, pleasant, white coloured dress and also wear various desired ornaments. The father should keep two names for his child by worshipping the *kuladevata*. He should give two names i.e. 1. *Nakshatrika Nama*. 2. *Abhiprayika Nama*. *Nakshatrika Nama* should be as per the *nakshatra* on which child is born. *Abhiprayika nama*, for male child should have even letters and that of odd for female child. In these *Abhiprayika 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 *Kumaragara*. 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 *Ghritha* or *Gorochana*, 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 *Prajapatya 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 *annaprashana* 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 *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 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 well⁹.

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 *Samskar* 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 *craniocynostosis*, 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. Upanayana 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 cloths 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*⁸.

Table 2: Difference of Upanayan Samsakara as per "Varna"

Varna	Age	Thread tied around waist,made of	Upper dress	Should carry stick of trees
<i>Brahaman</i>	8 yrs	<i>Munja grass</i>	Black Antelope	<i>Bilwa or palash</i>
<i>Kshatriay</i>	11 yrs	<i>Morrva fibers</i>	Spotted deer	<i>Vata or Khadira</i>
<i>Vaishya</i>	12 yrs	Hempen thread	He-goat	<i>Peelu or Udumbara</i>

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 mind⁴.

The person who undergoes *Vedarambha 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 *Gruhstashrama*. 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 *Brahma Tej* and now he can enter in *Gruhastashrama* 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 *Saptadi*.

This *Samskar* is done to enter in *Gruhastashrama*. *Vivaha* or marriage ceremony is done for a boy at the age of 21 years with a girl of 12 years¹⁰. 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 *Gruhastashrama* 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 *Mokshaprti*.

5. After death:

a. Anteshti 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 diseared person, the *Agni-samskar* 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 *chandan*, *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 shradha 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*, *Brahamana bhojana* etc.

DISCUSSION

Samskars are the event done before conception up to death of person; so it is having social as well as medical significance. By all above *Samskars*, 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 vritti* and become bright, intelligent and social. This is essential for building healthy and crime free society and country.

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