

HEALTHY PARENTING IN CONTEXT OF AYURVEDA

***Reena Arora¹ and **Akhilesh Arora²**

¹Ayurvedic Clinic, M-5, Mukherjee Tower
Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi

***Email:** ayurvedicclinic2@gmail.com

²Department of Mechanical Engineering
Delhi Technological University, Delhi

****Email:** akhilesharora@dce.ac.in

In modern era, the concept of healthy parenting is missing. The people are following diet which is not healthy. The lack of knowledge of ayurvedic diet has deprived the modern society of the ancient knowledge of ayurveda which is best for prevention of diseases and upbringing of children. Accordingly in this paper, the principles of ayurveda are described in depth for healthy parenting. The focus here starts from conception of the child and care during pregnancy. It comprises of the *Shodash Samskaars* and many other aspects depending upon the type of *prakriti* of individual. The paper also discusses about the diet according to different types of children i.e. *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha Prakriti* to prevent diseases. It has been concluded that by following all the ayurvedic ways starting from conception, *dincharya* and *aahar vihar* will bring the best child in the society which has best qualities and these ayurvedic methods should be followed for making the society disease-free and cultured.

Keywords: Healthy parenting, *Shodash Samkaars*, *Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha*, Ayurvedic diet, Ayurvedic *dincharya*

Introduction

According to ayurveda, healthy parenting means the parenting should be best i.e. how can we be best parents and can give birth to *supraj* meaning the best child. It is penned in ayurveda that we do not need *bahupraj* i.e. many children, rather we need *supraj* i.e. best progeny. When we think of becoming parents then we should be familiar with what steps shall we take to become best parents. Ayurveda describes the course of action of becoming best parents. Some *Samskaaras* are

described in ayurvedic text for conception of noble baby i.e. *supraj* and these are explained in forthcoming paras.

Samskaaras

Proper daily regimen and seasonal regimen is advised to remain healthy. Our life can be happy or unhappy depending upon how much, we follow, these rules of best lifestyle.

For personal and social upliftment, certain actions are required to be performed during specific transitional phases of life. These

are called *Samskaars* (*Sacraments*) and are *sixteen* in number, thus termed as *Shodash Samskaar* or Sixteen Sacraments. *Shodash Sanskaras* or Sixteen Sacraments are advised to be performed at different age groups. These *samskaaras* are aimed at improving the health of the child and to inculcate the feeling of respect for the natural powers like sun, wind, moon, etc. These are the methods of conditioning of accumulated instincts and inculcation of virtuous disposition. The *Shodash Samskaaras* have a positive effect on the divine levels of human consciousness and hence have an impact on the physical and mental attributes.

A thorough review of childhood *Samskaaras* reveals that their aim is to prepare the baby for worldly life successfully, developing proper dietary habits, balanced and complete diet, prevention of ailments, adapt the child to

outer atmosphere for better survival, give unique identity and educate the baby to give the apt child to society for a good nation (Deepshikha and Kumar, 2014).

Classification of *Samskaaras*

The Sixteen *Samskaaras* can be classified into five categories:

1. *Gaarbhika Samskaar*: These are done by the couple to become parents.
2. *Shaishav Samskaar*: Related to child
3. *Shaikshnika Samskaar*: Related to education of child
4. *Aashramika Samskaar*: Related to married life
5. *Prayaan Samskaar*: Related to death

The description of above mentioned *samskaaras* is given below in the Table 1.

Table 1 : Description of *Samskaaras*

SAMSKAAR		Types	Brief Description
1. <i>Gaarbhika samskaar</i> (Related to pregnancy)	a.	<i>Garbhadhaan Samskaar</i>	These are done by the couple to become parents.
	b.	<i>Punswana Samskaar</i>	
	c.	<i>Seemantonnayan Samskaar</i>	
2. <i>Shaishav samskaar</i> (Related to child)	a.	<i>Jaatkarma Samskaar</i>	These are done by the parents for the child.
	b.	<i>Naamkaran Samskaar</i>	
	c.	<i>Nishkaraman Samskaar</i>	
	d.	<i>Annaprashan Samskaar</i>	
	e.	<i>Chudakaran Samskaar</i>	
	f.	<i>Karnavedhana Samskaar</i>	

3. Shaikshnika samskaar (Related to education of child)	a.	<i>Upanayan Samskaar</i>	These are done by the teacher for the student.
	b.	<i>Veda Arambha Samskaar</i>	
	c.	<i>Samaavartan Samskaar</i>	
4. Aashramika samskaar (Related to married life)	a.	<i>Vivaah Samskaar</i>	These are done by the person for self.
	b.	<i>Vaanprastha Samskaar</i>	
	c.	<i>Sanyaas Samskaar</i>	
5. Prayaan samskaar (Related to death)	a.	<i>Antyeshti Sanskaar</i>	After death of parents, this is done by the child.

Let's have an insight into the significance of these Sixteen *Samskaaras*. These are the *samskaaras* which are mentioned for conception of a good baby as communicated earlier.

Abhimanyu learned the art of entering in the *chakra vyuh* during pregnancy, so imagine what type of attributes can be transferred to child during conception. *Tathagat* was also an example of prodigy.

1. Garbhadhan Samskaar

This is performed after marriage. It is the ground work for planning to achieve parenthood. It is a ritual for preparing husband and wife, physically and mentally, to beget a healthy progeny. In this period, Urad dal is indicated for females, for best quality of *raj* (ovum), and rice and milk for males for best quality of sperm. Cleaning procedures (like *Panchkarma* procedures) are also mentioned for both for good quality of sperm and ovum.

2. Pumsavana Samskaar

Pumsavana samskaar is done for a healthy child. Many things related to this are described in *Atharva Veda*. Banyan leaf extract is put in right nostril of wife by husband for

male child followed by feast for others. This can be used for some medical problems (if parents are suffering from a disease) which can be transmitted to girl child and it would be helpful in such cases.

Some specific diets like sesame, butter, milk and meat, etc., are advised to husband and wife.

3. Seemantonnayan Samskaar

This is done mainly in the 4th month or can also be done in the 6th or 8th month of pregnancy. During 4th month, proper development of fetus begins. The heart also starts functioning. During this time period the pregnant lady is called '*Dauhradini*' i.e having two hearts — one of the fetus and other of herself. The fetus becomes receptive and culminates its desires through mother. The development of brain and nervous system also starts. The nutritional requirements of fetus and pregnant lady are increased.

In this ceremony the pregnant lady is given, a complete and balanced food, gruel made with rice and lentils with ghee (clarified butter) to eat and encouraging words are whispered in her ears (for example your child is intelligent/ healthy, etc.). The blessings and encouraging words create an atmosphere of assurance

to the pregnant lady. She is advised to avoid factors that are harmful for the well-being of fetus.

4. Jaatkarma Samskaar

This is done immediately after birth. The mouth of the child is cleaned with moist cotton swab. Anterior fontanelle (*Brahma randhra*) is covered with tampon soaked in *ghrita* or oil. Then umbilical cord is cut. Striking sound or mantras (hymns) are chanted softly in the child's ears. *Ghrita* mixed with rock salt is given orally for clearing mucous. With these procedures the child is relieved from the troubles caused by compression in the vaginal canal or instruments used at the time of delivery.

Swarn Prashan Samskaar

Swarna prashan sanskar is one of the 16 essential rituals described in ayurveda for children. It is the process in which *Swarna bhasma* (purified ash of gold) is administered with fortified ghee prepared with herbal extracts, and honey in liquid or semisolid form.

Whom to administer: *Swaran prashan* can be given to age group of 0–16 years.

Time of administration: *Swaran prashan* can be done daily early in the morning, or atleast on every *Pushya nakshatra*— an auspicious day—which happens to come after every 27 days, given on this day it bestows excellent benefits.

Benefits of Swarna Prashan

Swarna prashana is very good for brain, digestion and energy. This is good for longevity also. Very auspicious and good for child because it brings goodness, optimistic attitude in life, good luck and more stamina to face mental and physical stresses. It creates

good personality of the child and good skin colour. It prevents problems associated during pregnancy. If it is administered regularly for 30 days then kid becomes brilliant and with strong immunity means infectitious diseases can not attack easily. If this is done regularly for six months, then child will be able to learn everything only by listening once.

Suryadarshan: Usually neonatal jaundice occur in children. To prevent this, it is advised to expose baby to sunlight.

5. Naamkaran Samskaar

This is performed on 10th day after birth or within a month. The name to be kept should have auspicious meaning e.g. symbolising progress or any great personality, etc. By the 10th day child recovers from trauma, if any, during child birth and it is the appropriate time to examine the child properly.

6. Nishkraman Samskaar

This ceremony is done in 4th month after birth. The child is taken to a place of worship. At birth, a newborn's vision is immature, brain is not ready to process all the visual information. By 3 to 4 months, baby is able to move the eyes together and can track moving objects. They also start to gain depth perception and develop full colour and distance vision. At four months the baby reacts to sounds, smiles on hearing familiar voice, tries to reach objects with hands and holds and let go of an object. Child also have increased eye contact with parents and others. So, this is the period when all the motor and sense organs of the baby are becoming mature. This *samskaar* is aimed at improving the health of the child and to inculcate the feeling of respect for the natural powers like sun, wind, moon, etc.

7. Annapraashan Samskaar

This ceremony is performed in the 6th month after birth. By six months, the digestive system of child is developed and teeth start appearing. In this ritual, solid food is administered for the first time with the aim of sowing seeds of purity in *Annamaya kosha* of the child. It increases the healthy growth and development of the baby. During this ceremony, *Kheer* (a porridge made with milk and rice) mixed with honey, ghee (clarified butter), basil and water of Ganges river is given to eat in very small quantity. With this food, the traits indoctrinated in the child are *Kheer*–health, Honey–sweetness, Ghee–congeniality, Basil–destroyer of diseases or evils, Water of Ganges river–purity. It teaches piousness of food.

8. Chudakaran Samskaar

Also called *Mundan* or Tonsure Ceremony. This ceremony is performed at the age between 1 and 3 years. In this ritual head of the child is shaved, leaving a tuft of hair called *Shikha* or *Chuda*. *Shikha* signifies one pointed focus on spiritual goal and devotion to God. The *Chudakaran Samskaar* aims at eradication of beastly tendencies and sowing seeds of cultural consciousness in the child. It is said that birth hair carries undesirable ideas and traits from past birth. So, they need to be removed and new ideas full of eminence should be grown in its place. It also aids in examining the proper growth and development of head.

During teething period, the child suffers from various diseases and the Skull or Anterior Fontanelle is the indicator of status of child's health. The sunken fontanelle indicates dehydration whereas bulging fontanelle indicates increased intracranial pressure. The

Anterior Fontanelle closes at one and half to two years of age after birth. The point on head where *shikha* is kept, is the vital spot (*Marma*) called *Adhipati*. Any injury to this part causes loss of consciousness, coma, injury to brain or sudden death. So, the *shikha* is a covering of the vital spot.

9. Karnavedhana Samskaar

In this ceremony ears are pierced. This is done on the 10th or 12th day after birth or at 6th or 7th month. The ear should be pierced by the experienced person in proper light. After that medicated oil is applied for healing. This is aimed at developing immune response of the body to the external trauma. A study [Sing and Verm, 2012] has shown encouraging results with a visible improvement of immune status in children with *Karnavedhana* as compared to non *Karnavedhana* children. Improvement was seen in gastro intestinal system and respiratory system. Severity and duration of infection was reduced to 75 per cent. Immunity was triggered after *Karnavedhana*.

10. Upanayana Samskaar

In this ceremony the child goes to the teacher. In ancient times, children stayed with the *Guru* (teacher) in *gurukul* and attained education. The child is told to follow celibacy. It is a sort of second birth. The child gets the body of knowledge that is not destroyable contrary to his gross physical body.

11. Vedarambha Samskaar

It is performed at the age of four years. This *samskaar* marks the start of formal education. But now a days children do many other things at this age which are not good for them like playing games on mobile rather than studying vedas.

12. Samaavartan Samskaar

After attaining knowledge and following celibacy, when disciple attains adulthood, he is ready to enter the married life and returns to his parents home. As this *samskaar* is the stepping stone for entrance in *Grihasta Ashrama* (householder's life), a ceremonial bath is given to the passing out students.

13. Vivaah Samskaar

This is the foundation of all the *samskaaras*. It is also the essence of creation. The aim of marriage is the confluence of feminine and masculine energy for the purpose of creation. Practicing of virtues like sacrifice for each other, forgiveness, patience, satisfaction with each other during married life helps in the path of spirituality.

14. Vaanprastha Samskaar

This *samskaar* represents the partial retreat from active life. This phase of life should be passed in the service of the nation, community and welfare of self through gaining and imparting knowledge. A good society will be formed by the experiences of learned people. As this stage is the onset of old age, degeneration of all vital elements in the body begin. So during this period the person should take care of his health and follow daily routine of oil massage, exercise, meditation, taking balanced and healthy food according to the digestive capacity, as it helps in maintaining health and slows down degeneration.

15. Sanyaas Samskaar

During this stage of life, one prepares for total giving up of worldly pleasures and life as a preparation for leaving the mundane world.

16. Antyeshti Samskaar

This is the ritual of cremation of mortal remains. It is the last sacrificial act of the person's earthly existence.

Ayurveda emphasises that *Supraja* i.e 'healthy progeny' is the foundation of progressive and healthy society and the *Shodash Samskaar* (Sixteen Sacraments) help in achieving the ultimate goal of physical well-being of a person.

Garbhini Paricharya (Monthly regimen of pregnant lady as described in Ayurveda text for having a healthy child)

- First Month: Cold milk frequently after conception.
- Second Month: Milk cooked with *kakolyadi gan* of medicines (*Lal* and *Sutrasthana*)
- Third Month: Milk mixed with honey and ghee frequently.
- Fourth Month: Butter mixed in milk or only butter.
- Fifth Month: Desi ghee mixed in milk or only ghee.
- Sixth Month: Milk cooked with *madhurgan* medicines.
- Seventh Month: Same as sixth month.
- Eighth Month: Yavagu cooked in milk with added ghee should be taken frequently. By taking this type of diet, the pregnant lady would be able to maintain her health as well as a healthy child with strength, good complexion and stamina will be born.
- Ninth Month: *Anuvasan basti* with *madhurgan* medicines should be given.

This regimen is described to prevent complications of pregnancy, for normal delivery and a healthy baby.

Ayurvedic Way of Upbringing Children

The three *doshas* (*Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*), or mind-body principles, are the core of Ayurveda. Physical and mental health of child is based on balance of these three doshas i.e. *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*. These three doshas are found in each cell and tissue of the human body, on the micro and the macro levels on the basis of which their functioning is done. *Vata* is the source of transmission of nature's intellect. It governs whatever is flowing, whether it's your child's nervous impulses, creativity or elimination. It helps in the flow of intelligence. *Pitta* governs transformation, metabolism, digestion processes, and endocrine processes. *Kapha* governs structure, cohesion, and mass. The emotional elements given to a child by (a) *Vata* leads to brightness and cheerfulness, (b) *Pitta* to the leadership qualities and (c) *Kapha* the calm serenity. Thus a child is an exceptional amalgamation of the three *doshas*.

Prakriti

According to Ayurveda seven types of *Prakriti* is described, *Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha*, *Vata pitta*, *Pitta kapha*, *Vata kapha*, *Vata Pitta Kapha*. By accessing constitution, many diseases can be prevented. Lifestyle can be advised according to constitution.

Practical Application of Tridoshas

Parents should know the constitution of their child formed at the time of birth, which is a unique combination of three humors. If some imbalance occurs at the time of conception, *prakriti* is affected by this. For making *prakriti* best, it has been mentioned in previous section how to conceive. Personalised treatment and preventive health is prevalent now which can be easily achieved by knowing *prakriti* of the person. Once you are aware

about constitution which can be known by consultation with an Ayurvedic doctor, possible ailments which may occur in future can be known. Accordingly diet and lifestyle can be changed, so that the child can grow well without any problem. Even carrier can be decided better by knowing constitution. It's also helpful in matrimonial alliance.

A good child is like blooming flowers which cannot be stopped if no obstacles are there. All can enjoy when the child is growing happily and healthy.

Ayurveda is India's 5,000 year old "Science of Life," and it is an art of living in harmony with nature. Ayurveda gives us tools for living that we can apply to every aspect of our life, especially parenting. Your *dosha* is your Ayurveda mind and body constitution. We each have all three of the *doshas* in our physiology, just in different proportions, so your *dosha* is unique and personal; it is like your fingerprint. Parenting is an application of love in our daily lives. Our children give us the opportunity to experience and express love, every day. As parents, we have a very unique relationship with each of our children.

We interact with them on so many different levels at the same time. We can be a parent, teacher, friend, psychologist, advisor, disciplinarian, coach, referee, or whatever!

Mind-body type does have genetic components, but a family doesn't necessarily have to be dominant in one *dosha* or another. A *Kapha* mother and father very well could have a *Pitta* child. When you know your child's dominant *dosha*, you are better able to handle the myriad of things that come up at any given moment. You are better able to parent from a place of love rather than expectation. You know, for example, that your *Vata* child may

have some anxiety about a friend's sleepover, or that our *Kapha* child may need two different alarm clocks to get up in the morning.

Kapha Kids

Kapha children are usually heavy weight. They have more stamina to fight with diseases. They are usually foodie. Their diets should be controlled to prevent weight gain. These children are very caring and loving. They will never initiate a talk, because they feel shy, but once started, they are very jolly kids. They want to sit easily, so there should be enough physical activities to prevent *kapha* problems. They love gardening, so they should be advised to do this and other outdoor games also to keep them fit. They have sweet voice, so they can be motivated to sing. They are true friends and very loyal kids.

Pitta Kids

The children with *Pitta* predominant humor usually love to play baseball, basketball, soccer and hockey. They are workaholic and work hard to get on the top and win prizes. They try all sports with maximum efforts. Their memory is sharp and they love studying. They very easily loose temper. *Aachar rasayan* can be advised to them for good social behaviour. They have good managerial skill.

Vata Kids

The children who see dreams with open eyes are usually *vata* predominant. They are able to tell stories and have very good imaginative powers. They are quick witted and have a good presence of mind. They are often viewed as unable to concentrate. Substantially, *Vata* is tiny. They are not much muscular children, with narrow buttocks and shoulders. Their hunger differs, sometimes more or less because

of *vishamajirn* property of *Vata*. Its very difficult for them to gain weight. Children with *vata* predominant humor are fast learners. Usually kids with attention deficit hyperactive disease are *vata* predominant. They can learn more better by simply listening to a lecture rather than studying. They like multichannel approach of learning including hearing things, seeing, touching and experiencing them. *Vata* kids are very good in creating new things, acting, making caricature, etc. Lots of love and care is needed to balance *vata* predominant humor in children.

Growing and Glowing

Parenting is not affected by how many children you have. As a nurturer you know that two kids cannot be nurtured in the same way. Ayurveda humors give us tools to better nurture our children and to assist our kids.

Some children don't like a particular diet which may be due to their *dosha* predominance but we force them to eat. But they are not always right. We should judge on our own.

Conclusion

In this paper we have mentioned how to conceive a *supraj* (the best child), *shodash samaskaaras*, *garbhini paricharya*, ayurvedic ways of upbringing according to constitution (*vata*, *pitta* and *kapha* etc.) and life style according to *doshas* for the complete development of a child according to Ayurveda so that diseases can be prevented upto some extent. A cultured and good society can be shaped upto some extent by following all these.

References

- DEEPSHIKHA, R. AND A. KUMAR. 2014. Critical Analysis of Childhood Sanskaras (sacraments) in Light of Contemporary Science. *International Journal of Ayurveda and Pharma Research*, Vol. 2, No. 2. pp. 95–100.
- DEY, S., AND P. PAHWA. 2014. Prakriti and its Associations with Metabolism, Chronic Diseases and Genotypes: Possibilities of New Born Screening and a Lifetime of Personalised Prevention. *Journal of Ayurveda and Integrative Medicine*. Vol. 5, No. 1. pp. 15–24.
- LAL, C. Sutrasthan (Chapter 38). *Sushrut Samhita*. Motilal Banarsidass Publishing. Vol. 1, No. 10, p. 1907. Calcutta.
- SHASTRI, K. AND G. CHATURVEDI. 2014. Sharir Sthan, Chapter 8, shlok 32. *Caraka Samhita*. Chaukhamba Bharti Academy, Varanasi.
- SINGH, K. AND B. VERMA. 2012. An Approach to Samskara in Ayurveda. *International Journal of Ayurvedic Medicine*. Vol. 3, No. 3. Punjab.