

# “Effect of Balyakaleen Sanskar on children’s immunity in the present modern era: A Literature Review”

*Dr. Satish Bhagwan Nagrik*  
PG Scholar Kaumarbhritya Dept, LRP  
College, Islampur, Sangali, Maharashtra, India

*Dr. Jostna Ahir,*  
Reader Kaumarbhritya Dept, LRP College,  
Islampur, Sangali, Maharashtra, India

*Dr. Pandurang Naranyanrao Tekale*  
PG Scholar Shalakyia  
PMTs Ayurved Mahavidyalaya, Shevgaon,  
Ahmednagar, India

*Dr. Andhalkar R V MS (Shalakyia),*  
HOD Shalakyia Dept,  
PMTs Ayurved Mahavidyalaya, Shevgaon,  
Ahmednagar, India

*Dr. Gauri Ramesh Hukkeri*  
PG Scholar Kaumarbhritya Dept, LRP  
College, Islampur, Sangali, Maharashtra, India

*Dr. Swaranjalee Mahajan*  
PG Scholar Panchakarma Dept, LRP College  
Islampur, Sangli, Maharashtra, India

## ABSTRACT

India has a rich cultural heritage where Hindu Dharma teaches a way of life, which has been refined over millennia to help individual lead to ultimate goal of ‘*moksha prapti*’ (i.e. happy, successful, healthylife). Number of Sanskara (Sacraments) are explained in different Hindu Dharma Granths are religious customs performed from birth to death of individual. Out of sixteen sanskar described eight are for ‘*Balyavस्था*’. In ayurveda the word *Sanskara* is introduced as ‘*Sanskaraohi Gunnantradhyanam*’ which means qualitative enhancement carried out by incorporating or transforming the precise qualities.

In Balyakaleen sanskar mentioned out of sixteen sanskar like especially *Jatkarma* (Birth Ritual), *Nishkraman* (First outing), *Karnvedhan* (piercing the earlobes), *Annaprashn* (introducing complementary food) etc. are not only religious rites but they were aimed at preparing the baby for extra-uterine world and preventing the disease and building the immunity of child. Application of these sanskar in today’s modern era as routine practice for children can help in development of holistic approach towards child’s health and early stimulation of immunity; than merely following vaccination schedule for healthy-immune progeny.

**Keywords:** -Bal-Sanskara, Jatkarma, Karnvedhan, Annaprashan, Immunity building.

## INTRODUCTION

India has a rich cultural heritage where Hindu Dharma teaches a way of life, which has been refined over millennia to help individual lead to ultimate goal of ‘*moksha prapti*’ (i.e. happy, successful, healthylife). *Ayurveda* is the science of life. It is the *Upveda* of *Atharvaveda*. Many topics in *Ayurveda* correlate well with religious texts of ancient India.

Each significant stage of the sacred life of human being was celebrated. According to the *Upanishad*, *Sanskara* go a long way in fulfilling the four pursuit of life i.e. *Dharma* (righteousness), *Artha* (wealth), *Kama* (work and pleasure) and *Moksha* (salvation). *Sanskara* prepare one for the next stage of growth. Though primarily considered as religious rites, they were relevant in context of child health and very important for early stimulation of immunity and child’s complete wellbeing. Especially the *Balyakaleen* sanskar out of *Shodash Sanskar* described by *Maharishi Dayanada*<sup>1</sup> like *Jatkarma*, *Karnvedhan*, and *Annaprashnsanskara* plays important role in building immunity in holistic way.

As neonate possess a developing immune system which is different from adults as result of initially living in semi allogenic sterile environment to then being exposed to microbial rich surrounding became highly susceptible to infections. It is estimated that 40% of the annual 3 million worldwide neonatal deaths are result from infections<sup>2</sup>. Thus, a detailed study of the classical description of *Sanskara* in *Bhruhatrayi* and *Kashyap samhita* is mandatory to understand its significance in boosting child's immunity and its aptness in present era.

### AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:

1. To study in detail regarding immunity in children and its correlation with *Balyakaleen Sanskara*.
2. To study the effects of *Balyakaleen Sanskara* in today's modern era regarding immunity.

### Material and Methods

The materials were collected from the classical *Ayurvedic* literatures, magazines and research journals.

### NUMBER OF SAMSKARADURING KSHIRAPKALA: -

The number of *Sanskara* varies in different Hindu dharma *Granthas*, it is about 16-40, but the applicable *Sanskara* are 16 (*Shodash*) in number. Out of which *Sanskara* in *Balyaavstha* can be classified as (*Infantile Sanskar*): -

a.	During Neonatal Period	<i>Jatkarma, Namkarana</i>
b.	During Infantile Period	<i>Nishkraman, Annaprashan, Karnvedhan</i>

(Table no.1)

### Classical Description of Balyakaleen Sanskar and its relevance in immunity build up: -

#### I. *Jata Karma Sanskara*:

The word '*Jata*' means born or brought into existence<sup>3</sup>. This is the first *Sanskara* performed after birth of a baby. According to *Acharya Charak*<sup>4</sup>, after the initial stabilization of baby (*Prana pratyagamana*) and cord cutting, *Jata Karma* should be performed.

First of all, the child should be given honey and ghee impregnated with *mantra* prescribed for this purpose in *Veda*. Thereafter, following the same procedure, milk from the right breast should be given to the child. An earthen jar filled with water should be impregnated with *mantra* and kept near the head of the child. *Acharya Sushruta*<sup>5</sup> has opined *Jata karma* as cleaning the vernix on newborn's body, clearing newborn's mouth by *Saindhava* (rock salt) and *Sarpi* (ghee) and placing a ghee-soaked cotton on baby's head. This is followed by cutting of umbilical cord at distance of eight *Angula* from baby's skin and tying it by thread which is tied to baby's neck. After this baby should be given to lick gold *Bhasma* mixed with honey and ghee i.e. *Swarnaprashan*. *Acharya Vagbhata* prescribes *Prajapatya vidhi* in *Jata Karma* described in texts of *Dharmashastra*.<sup>6</sup>

#### Relevance:

*Jata karma* is the birth rite which helps the baby transcend from intrauterine life to extra uterine life. Clearing the mouth of secretions clears airway and prevents aspiration and hence chances of infection. Placing cotton soaked in ghee on head maintains temperature of the baby and provides insulation. It prevents heat loss from baby's head, which has the largest surface area, thus preventing hypothermia and sustain baby's vulnerable period. Only after the baby is stabilized cord was cut, emphasizing on

resuscitative measures. Tying the cord to baby's neck by thread prevents bleeding from cord and minimizes chances of infection of cord by soiling in stool and urine.

'*Swarnaprashan*' given to baby by gold *Bhasma*, honey and ghee serves the purpose of both nutrition and immunization. Honey (*madhu*) also serves as a mild allergen, which gives the first opportunity to baby's body to start the synthesis of antibodies, thus shielding the baby from infections *Swarna* (gold) *Bhasma* gives physical protection to baby, enhances brain development. Use of *Mantra* in *Jata karma* gives psychological support to parents especially mother. A relaxed, confident attitude of mother helps the milk ejection reflex. Breast feeding is to be given on the first day so as to ensure proper nutrition and protective immunoglobulin present in colostrum which helps in building first line of defense as innate immunity.

## II. *Nishkraman Sanskara:*

It is the ceremony of invoking God's blessings to expose the newcomer to the outside world and to pray for the wellbeing of the baby. In the fourth month after giving bath, the baby should wear new cloths and ornaments and should be taken to the family temple, i.e. out of the house for the first time<sup>7</sup>. In the temple religious offering should be offered to the god. The baby should be blessed by the priest and elders and should be taken back home.

### Relevance:

*Nishkraman Sanskara* is taking out the baby for the first time. The time described for this in our texts is fourth month which is appropriate as by this time baby develops enough immunity and tolerance to external environment. As study says neonate shows significant immune variation at birth, converging at approximately 3 months along a stereotypical path, early life first few months especially cell mediated immunity is not developed so baby's immune system can't fight viruses or bacteria and hence it's important to not expose baby to external surrounding in early 4 months; with this ceremony can expose to child first time in unfamiliar but divine environment in holistic way.

## III. *Karnvedhan Sanskara:*

Pricking of the ears serves ornamental purpose as well as protect baby from diseases. Our *Acharya* have recommended sixth, seventh or eighth month for this rite in cold climate.<sup>8</sup> The child should be held in lap and ear pricked in center of lobule, avoiding blood vessels and nerves by seeing it against sunlight. Increasing of pierced hole should be done by oil-soaked cotton or small *Nimba* (*Azadirachta indica*) twig or smooth earring made of lead<sup>9</sup>.

### Relevance:

Ear piercing inflicts a small injury and triggers active immune mechanism of baby. It thus prepares the immunity of baby against any possible infection or injury. Modes to increase the pierced hole offer lubrication and prevention of wound infection. Selection of winter for the procedure also decreases chance of infection

## IV. *Annaprashan Sanskar:*

The physician should prescribe feeding of various fruits in sixth month. Later after eruption of teeth or in tenth month, feeding of cereals should be started. *Acharya Kashyapa* also indicates feeding of meat soup. Food should be mashed properly before giving and mouth should be cleaned by water after feed. Diet amount should be increased gradually.

*Acharya Vagbhata* as well as *Sushruta* opine sixth month as appropriate time for *Annaprashan*<sup>10,11</sup> which helps in maintaining the nutrition and prevent from infections and helps to proper growth and

development of child. Various Disease and Constitution specific diet also mentioned in different *Samhitas*.

### Disease and Constitution specific diet mentioned in different *Samhitas*:

	Name of samhita	Disease and Constitution specific diet
1.	<i>Ashtang Sangrah and Ashtang hridaya</i>	a) <i>Modak</i> made from marrow of <i>Priyal, Madhuk, Madhu, Laja, Sitopala</i> . b) <i>Modak</i> made from <i>Dhataki pushpa, Sharkara, Lajatarpan</i> c) <i>Modak</i> prepared with <i>Bala, Bilwa, Sharkara, laj saktu</i> (Floor of <i>Laja</i> ) <sup>12</sup>
2.	<i>Kashyap Samhita</i>	a) Cooked liquid made with husk free well washed <i>Sali</i> or <i>Shasti</i> Rice. b) The powders of Wheat and Barley can also give according to congeniality c) Hot electuary cooked with <i>Vidanga</i> salt, oleaginous substances plus <i>Kodrava</i>
3.	<i>According to Doshaavstha</i> - <i>Pittadikya</i> - <i>Vatadikya</i>	a) <i>Mrdvika</i> with <i>ghrita</i> and honey. b) <i>Matulunga</i> juice and salt

(Table no.2)

### Relevance:

Modern day pediatrician follows IYCF guideline for feeding; according to which exclusive breast feeding till six months, supplemental food should be started only after that. This is exactly the same as recommended by our authors. The food is properly mashed (*sumrddidam*) to avoid difficulty in deglutition<sup>13</sup>. Cleaning by *Jal Achamana* (water) indicates the highly developed sense of oral hygiene. Specific food which is beneficial in respective diseases is also prescribed. Starting the intake of fruits offers energy as well as vital vitamins and minerals to baby's i.e. *Phalprashan* ceremony<sup>14</sup>. In weaning period there are more chances of malnutrition and infections; to avoid it proper and timely introduction of weaning is very important. Complementary and supplementary foods mentioned in classical texts are well enough to provide balanced nutrition for the growing child. Hence maintain health and prevent malnutrition and recurrent infections.

### IV. *Surya Chandra Darshana*:(Exposing baby to sun and moonlight):

After completing the immediate management of the born child, after performing protective measures, auspicious oblations and other means of securing prosperity, showing of the rising sun along with its worship and showing of moon in first part of night should be done in the first month itself<sup>15</sup>.

### Relevance:

Exposing the baby to early morning sun is essential for photo-conversion by the ultraviolet band of sunlight for synthesis of Vitamin D and prevention of the baby from physiological jaundice improves baby's immunity and prevents deficiency diseases like rickets.

### DISCUSSION:

The present study was undertaken with the objectives of studying the details regarding immunity in children and its correlation with *Balyakaleen Sanskara*. The literature available regarding the concepts under the study has been studied thoroughly. All the *Sanskaras* when taken are meant for growth, development, and immunological strength of the children. The *Sanskaras* when executed perfectly may prove effective with special respect to children's immunity. The *Sanskara* described by *Acharyas* of *Ayurveda* has a holistic approach. These can be considered as rituals rites to be done but may be having some immunological benefit. The literature available is studied here. The studies for the effectiveness of these *Sanskara* described in *Samhitas* in today's era has to be carried out. It is the timely need to assess the effects of *Sanskara* and its scientific basis for the social beneficence.

**CONCLUSION: -**

In this present paper, it can be concluded that *Bal-Sanskara* are not only the religious customs but they aimed at preparing the baby for extra uterine life successfully, ensure proper growth, adequate nutrition, prevent diseases, builds the immunity by its early stimulation. In present era there is need of hour to understand its effect on scientific basis and simply its concept to adopt this in society as routine practice as we follow the NIS schedule for vaccination; for aiming ideal immune disease free healthy progeny for the society.

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