



Review of *Annaprashan Samskara* and complementary feeding in infant

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ABSTRACT

Weaning plays a major role in determining the nutritional status of a child. Poor weaning practices during infancy and early childhood results in malnutrition with impairment of cognitive and social development, poor school performance and reduced productivity in later life. The objective of this study is to know weaning practices of mothers of different terrain. Breast milk provides all of the nutrients, vitamins and minerals an infant needs for growth in the first six months; so no other liquids or foods are needed. However, from the age of six months, breast milk is no longer sufficient by itself. Nutrition remains their main concern. What to give? What is ideal period? What is ideal sequence of fruits and food article etc. Focusing on above described area, attempts are made to investigate beneficiary effect of anaaprashan sasmkara and complimentary feeding in infant.

Keywords - weaning, annaprashana, kaumarbhritya, nutrition.

INTRODUCTION

Aahar is considered as one among the three pillars of supporting life (*Tray Upstambha*).¹ *Ayurveda* considers diet as greatest *medicament*.² *Samskara*'s are explained in Indian literature right from the Vedic period. *Ayurvedic Samhita*'s have also described various *Samskara*'s with its time period and method. All *Samskara*'s mentioned in Indian literature are not having medical importance, among them few are of sociocultural importance. In scientific community, *Samskara*'s having medical importance is more important. *Samskara*'s like *Jatakarma*, *Annaprashana*, *Karnavedhana*, *Nishakramana*, *Upanayana* etc. have great importance in one's life. It is very important to evaluate importance of these *Samskara*'s scientifically and make people aware regarding positive effect of these cultural ceremonies.

First two years of life is considered a "critical window" of opportunity for ensuring children's appropriate growth and development through optimal feeding. Appropriate nutrition during infancy and early childhood ensures growth, health, and development of a child to its full potentia. Evidence based studies also

indicate that early nutritional inadequacy can lead

to long term impairment in growth and health of the growing child The National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-4 indicates that 35.75% children below 5 years are underweight, 38.4% are stunted and 21% wasted in country.³

Similarly; *Phakka* and *Parigarbhika* etc. are important nutritional disorders (*Kuposhanjanya Vyadhis*) described due to improper feeding practices in *ayurvedic* texts. As per UNICEF; proper breast feeding and complementary feeding are two interventions that are estimated to prevent 1/5th of total under- five mortality rate in developing countries⁴.

Methodology A review based study; information pertaining to this study was primarily obtained from various textbooks, clinical observations, research work and scientific studies. It is important to discuss various cultural ceremonies for exploring their timing, method, medical importance and scientific validity.

INFANTILE NUTRITION AT A GLANCE

Nutrition is well acknowledged factor essentially associated with growth and development of human being. Adequate nutrition during infancy and early childhood is fundamental requirement for the development of every child at his best potential. Childhood age especially infantile period is more susceptible period for risk of malnutrition and its related consequences due to higher requirement of nutrition of their body to cope up the need of growth and development. It is accepted that the period from birth to two years of age is a “critical window” for the promotion of optimal growth, health and behavioral development.⁵ Number of researches and studies in area of infantile and childhood morbidity as well as

mortality shows that this is the peak age for growth issues. This includes deficiencies of protein or/and energy and certain micronutrients; and common childhood illnesses such as diarrhea and other infectious diseases. After a child reaches two years of age, it is very difficult to reverse the stunting that has occurred earlier.⁶ World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF (The United Nations Children's Fund) recommend breastfeeding for a period of minimum 1 year with emphasis on feeding until 2 years with exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months of life.⁷ During this period infant after 6month of age will require complementary foods i.e. food given in addition to breast feeding. After six months of age, it becomes increasingly difficult for breastfed infants to meet their nutrient needs from human milk alone.⁸ Furthermore, most infants are developmentally ready for other foods at about six months.⁹ Thus, the consensus is that six months is the appropriate age at which to introduce complementary foods.¹⁰ The transition from exclusive breastfeeding to family foods, referred to as complementary feeding, typically covers the period from 6 to 18-24 months of age.¹⁰

Modern considerations in Complementary feeding: -

Guidelines for infant feeding mentioned in *Ayurveda* on par with modern infant nutrition practices in aspects of balanced nutrition, consistency, quantity and frequency of food. Balanced Nutrition:-As per WHO; the energy need for complementary foods for infant with “average” breast milk intake in developing countries are as¹¹

Energy requirement	Age
200 kcal/day	6 to 8 months
300 kcal/day	9 to 11 months
550 kcal/day	12 to 23 months

About Annaprashana

ANNAPRASHANA has very important role in the life of child. Child receives only milk before this ceremony but due to rapid growth and development of child different types of food are required. This ceremony came into practice during the *sutra period*, though the references are also available in the Vedas. According to the *grihya* sutras and *ayurvedic* texts this ceremony should be performed at the age of 5 or 6th months.

In *kashyap samhita*, *sanskara* has been described in very detail. According to him, ANNAPRASHAN sanskar should be performed at the age of tenth month and at the age of sixth month, there is provision of *phalprashana*. On the day of feeding ceremony, materials of sacrificial food are cleaned and cooked after the food has been prepared one oblation to speech with words (the god have generated the goddess, manifold animals speak her forth. May she, the sweet sounding, the highly praised one, come to us. SWAHA)¹².

Kashyap has described the procedure in detail. On the day of food ceremony, in *prajapatya nakshtra*, the cooked food is placed in between the square plate by besmearing of the cow dung and sign of swastika is made on it. A pitcher placed with water is also placed there. Physician is performer of the ceremony. After offering the food to *agni*, the remaining part of the food is offered to the child. The remaining food made soft by mashing is given to child 3 to 5 times in a quantity equal to that of a thumb (*Angustha Matra*).

Consistency:

Infants can eat pureed, mashed and semisolid foods beginning at six months. *Kashyapa* has suggested feeding of various fruits in the 6th month (*Phalprashan*) which can be given as puree or in mashed form. By 8 months, most infants can also eat finger foods. And by 12 months, most children can eat the same types of foods as consumed by the rest of the family. For small children, the food should not contain particulate matter that may trigger gag reflex or vomiting. Thin gruels do not provide enough energy; young infant particularly during 6-9 months requires thick but smooth mixtures. Food that sticks on to spoon is the right consistency. *Kashyapa* suggests that after eruption of teeth or in 10th month, feeding of cereals (*Annaprashan*) should be done after making food soft in consistency by mashing (*sumrudidam*).¹³

Quantity : At 6 months of age, feed should be started with small amount as much as 1-2 teaspoons and the quantity is increased gradually as the child gets older and starts to accept food better. *Kashyapa* suggests that quantity of food to be given to the child should be equal to size of thumb in the beginning and should be fortified effectively¹⁴. Child should be given time to adapt gradually from smaller quantity to larger quantity.

Frequency: An average healthy breastfed infant needs complementary foods 2-3 times per day at 6-8 months of age and 3-4 times per day at 9-24 months. For children of 12-24 months of age, additional nutritious snacks such as a piece of fruit should also be offered 1-2 times per day. If energy density or amount of food per meal is low or the

child is no longer breastfed, more frequent meals should be provided¹⁵. As per *ayurvedic* aspect diet should be given according to agnibal of child.

Ayurvedic complimentary food

Acharya Kashyapa has mentioned that after 12th month, child should be fed with gruels prepared with husk free *Sali* and *Shashtika* rice mixed with oleaginous substances and salt. Rice rich in carbohydrate and also contains vitamins and minerals like Iron, Zinc, Calcium etc. It is a good promoter of nourishment and is easily digestible. *Godhuma* (Wheat) and *Yava* (Barley) powders can be cooked and given to the child according to congeniality. *Godhuma* (*Triticum aestivum*) contains carbohydrates, proteins, fatty acids, minerals etc. and has body nourishing and *immunomodulatory* actions. *Yava* (*Hordeum vulgare*) contains starch, sugars, fats, proteins and glycosides. It imparts strength of body. Gruels prepared out of these cereals can be given to the child with proper fortification of nutrients. *Vidanga* (*Embelia ribes*) cooked with salt and oleaginous substances is also beneficial to the child and in one having diarrhea, *Kodrava* (*Paspalum scrobiculatum* Linn.) should be mixed¹⁶. *Vidanga* is beneficial to treat *helminthic* and other gastrointestinal disorders. *Kodrava* or *Kodo* millet is a good substitute for wheat or rice and is rich in fiber content. It has good antioxidant activity which helps in managing persistent gastrointestinal disturbances. Adding lavana to food improves palatability, kindles digestive fire and increases bioavailability. Energy density of the food is increased by adding *sneha dravyas*. *Acharya Vagbhata* has

prescribed various nutritional supplements in the form of *Modaka* (sweet balls),¹⁷ to cope up with the nutritional deficiencies and other gastrointestinal related disorders arising during weaning period. These are preparations specially developed to meet the nutritional needs of the infant as the usual family diets in our country are often inadequate for proper growth of the child. ***PriyalaMajjadi Modaka***- This weaning food can be used for improving infant's nutritional status and is prepared by using powders of *priyalamajja* (*Buchanania lanzan*), *yasthimadhu* (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*), *laja* (Parched paddy), *sitopala* (*sugarcandy*) and *madhu* (honey). It is easily palatable and is rich in nutrients. Both *Priyala* and *Yashti* are sweet in taste and pacify *vata-pitta*. They have nourishing properties of all tissues and promotes strength. It is called as *Preenana Modaka*. Like *Dhatakyadimodak*, *Balabilwadi modak*, *Deepan modak* preparation are also mentioned.

CONCLUSION

Most infants gradually reduce the volume and frequency of their demand of breast milk between six to twelve months of age. As the demand for breast milk decreases, mother's supply will also gradually decrease. Therefore it is time when weaning should be initiated. Prolonged breast feeding after this period develops rickets, scurvy and anemia in the child. Thus *Annaprashan sanskar* is not only a religious ceremony, but it also draws attention of parents to start supplementary feeding from the stipulated period. Complementary and supplementary foods mentioned in classical texts are well enough to provide balanced nutrition for the

growing child. Based on the principles of complementary feeding mentioned in *Ayurveda*, infant foods have to be formulated considering current availability, acceptability, nutritional status and cost effectiveness of ingredients. Thus, one can bring out a solution for bridging the nutritional crisis commonly occurring during weaning period through proper diet. As diet is greatest medicament (*ahar mahabhaishjya*) mentioned in classics. Thus this ceremony gives proper time for weaning of a child and we can access developmental milestone such as appearance of first tooth, functioning of digestive powers, motor & fine skill development.

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