

International Journal of Research in Indian Medicine

Review on *Rakshoghna karma* for Care of Normal New born.

Shreya Chandrashekar Manore*¹, Kalpana Dhuri², Ashwini Shitre³

1. Assistant professor, Department of Balroga, D.Y Patil Deemed to be University, School of Ayurveda , Nerul, Navi Mumbai, Maharashtra, India)
2. Professor and H.O.D, Department of Balroga , D.Y Patil Deemed to be University, School of Ayurveda , Nerul, Navi Mumbai, Maharashtra, India) Email id- dhurikalpana34@gmail.com
3. Professor and H.O.D, Department of Balroga, Shri Vivekanand Nursing Home Trusts Ayurved College, Rahuri , Taluka – Rahuri, Ahmednagar, Maharashtra, India. Email id- dr.ashwini68@gmail.com

*Corresponding author: Contact No – 9167287752, Email id- shreyamanore05@gmail.com

ABSTRACT:

In today's day and age, many traditional baby care practices are being rejected for many reasons. The foremost reason being there is a simple lack of awareness as to why these practices were instituted and the benefits behind the herbs, metals and *dravyas* which are used in Ayurvedic baby care. The concept of *Rakshoghna karma* (Care of normal newborns) is described in both Ayurvedic as well as Modern science. The topics of Breastfeeding, Thermoregulation, Rooming-In, Bedding –In, Baby massage, Baby bath, and Baby clothing has been given utmost importance in Classical texts of *Ayurveda* as well as Texts of Neonatology. All these measures are taken to ensure Warmth and Temperature stability, Prevent cross-infection and enhance Love and affection between

Mother and Baby. *Ayurveda* is a broad and comprehensive Science. In this article, we have tried to sum up how the *Acharyas* have taken care of various aspects of the baby's health and used different techniques like herbal smoke, fumigation, use of medicinal herbs and *Dinacharya* practices like regular *Abhyanga Snana* to boost the baby's development.

KEYWORDS: *Rakshoghna karma*, Thermoregulation, Breast feeding, Rooming- In, Bedding- In, Baby bath, Baby clothing.

INTRODUCTION

Raksha karma (Care of normal newborns) has been given prime importance in the Discipline of Neonatology as well as Ayurvedic classical texts. The Care of normal

newborns can be implemented once the neonate is stabilized. It is desirable to keep the normal term neonates with their mothers rather than keeping them in a separate nursery. The health and survival of newborn baby depends upon the Health status of the mother and her Awareness, education and skills in her Mothercrafts.

The neonate at birth is considered as normal if-

1. The Birth weight is more than 2500 gm.
2. The gestational age is more than 37 weeks.
3. The Body weight is appropriate for dates (Between 10th and 90th Percentile).
4. 1 Minute *Apgar* score was 7 or more.
5. Baby not required any active Resuscitation.
6. Baby not have suffered from postnatal illness like Hypothermia, Hypoglycemia, Polycythemia, Respiratory distress syndrome and Sepsis requiring admission to NICU.
7. Mother not suffered from serious complications like Toxemia of pregnancy, Rh- Isoimmunization, Ante partum hemorrhage and Diabetes mellitus.

Following measures are implemented for Care of Normal newborns:

1. *Stanyapana* (Breast feeding)
2. Thermoregulation.
3. Rooming –In.
4. *Balashayya* (Bedding- In)
5. *Abhyanga* (Baby massage)

6. *Snana* (Bathing the baby)
7. *Dhoopana* (Fumigation)
8. *Manidharan* (Amulets)

1. **Breast feeding (Stanya pana) :**

Importance of Breast feeding has been given by Acharya Kashyap in context of Qualities of Ideal breast milk.

Avyahata balangaayurrogo vardhate sukham

Shishu dhaatreynapatti shuddha ksheerasya lakshanam

(*Kashyap samhita Sutrasthan 19*)

Babies who are exclusively breast feed, have an uninterrupted growth and development, provides immunity against various infectious diseases, thereby maintaining healthy state and quality of life of baby.

Qualities of Ideal Breast milk are given by Acharya Sushruta:

Naryastu madhuram stanyam kashaya anurasa hemam

Nasya aschottanayo pathyam jeevanam laghu deepanam

(*Sushrut samhita Sutrasthan 45/57*)

Ideal Breast milk is Sweet in taste, *Guru gunatmak* (Presence of required amount of fats, Proteins and Vitamins), *Snigdha* (Helping in nourishing *dhatu*s, enhancing weight gain of baby), *Sheeta* (Available at an optimum temperature) and imparts strength to baby.

The Baby should be put to breast of mother as soon as the mother has recovered from fatigue of labour. All mothers must be emotionally and physiologically motivated during pregnancy to avoid encountering difficulties, to

establish successful Breast feeding. The Colostrum (Milk secreted on first 3 days of life) should not be discarded but given to baby as it is rich in energy, proteins, protective Antibodies and Cellular elements. The physiological inadequacy of lactation during 1st three days of nursing should not be considered as an excuse for supplementing Breast feeding. Introduction of supplementary feeds during this period will cause Delayed establishment of Lactation. Baby should receive exclusive Breast feeding devoid of water during first 6 months of life .Such babies have better weight gain as they will drink more milk when thirsty.

Breast feeding has multiple advantages like very economical, convenient, physiologically it is the sweetest milk with high lactose content and easily digestible protein, Biochemically it contains whey protein (80%), a-lacto albumin and Lactoferrin and rest is Caesin (20%), microbiologically it is sterile with least chance of Contamination. Lactoferrin is Bacteriostatic and inhibits E. coli, immunologically, it is extremely safe and non allergenic.

2. Thermoregulation :

Acharya Charak has mentioned few measures for temperature maintenance in newborns. The classical text focuses on methods to prevent hypothermia in newborns which were implemented in Olden days.

- a. *Udaka kumbha sthapan*: A pot filled with water should be kept above the level of head of Baby

and mother. Pot is tied with *pottali* of *Rakshoghna dravyas* (*Atasi, vacha, kustha, lashuna, guggula* , etc)

Scientific importance – Helps in maintaining humidity in room, especially in summer months. *Rakshoghna dravyas* tied around mud pot with water has Disinfectant, Bacteriostatic and Antiseptic properties, Same procedure can be used in winter months using Mud pot with Hot water to maintain temperature.

- b. Burning of Wooden pieces of *Tinduka* in *Sutikaagar*.

Scientific importance – Prevention of hypothermia to baby by ensuring warmth in room.

- c. Lamp of mustard oil kept in postnatal rooms.

Scientific importance – Helps in keeping room warm.

The newborns are vulnerable to develop hypothermia especially in winter months. Baby bath should be delayed to next day of birth, once its temperature is stabilized. The baby should be kept dry and well swaddled. In winter, linen and clothes of baby should be prewarmed. When the trunk is warm to touch and extremities are warm and pink, it assures that baby doesn't have Cold stress.

3. Rooming –In :

Isolation of mother and baby in the initial days prevents exposure of baby to cold and safeguards against occurrence of infections. Baby should be nursed in close proximity

to mother, so that it gains heat from maternal warmth.

According to *Acharya Charak*, Mother and baby should be isolated in *Sutikaagar*. Lady attendee should be kept for helping the mother as she is exhausted by the stress of delivery. They should be experienced, Soft spoken, clean and hygienic.

According to *Acharya Sushrut*, Fanning the Baby with tender leaves of *Pilu, Badar, Nimba, parushak* is advised.

Scientific importance –Rooming-In helps in facilitating moral support to mother, Prevents cross infections, Practicing of fanning baby with above mentioned leaves ensures a well ventilated atmosphere in *Sutikaagar*.

4. Bedding- In :

Acharya Charak has given characteristic features of *Shishu-shayya* (Bed of the baby). The bed and linen used for baby should be clean, light and fragrant. The soiled garments with feces, urine and sweat should be discarded immediately. Bed and clothes of baby should be fumigated with *Yava, sarshap, atasi, hingu, guggul, Vacha, Jatamansi, Ashok and Rohini*. New clothing should be used after washing and drying. *Kshouma vastra* and *Kshouma shayya* is preferred.

Scientific importance : Changing soiled garments immediately prevents Infections and hypothermia. Fumigating clothes with prescribed herbs helps in maintaining Asepsis. Using cotton

clothing helps to maintain temperature and keeps baby warm. Washing new clothes of baby and then using them prevents allergic reactions.

The Clothes of baby should be loose, soft and preferably made of cotton. They should be open on the front or back for ease of wearing. Use of large buttons should be avoided. The woolen clothes should not be stored and preserved with Moth balls due to potential risk of developing severe jaundice in a baby who is G6PD deficient.

5. Baby massage (Abhyanga):

According to *Acharya Charak, Sushrut and Vagbhat, Abyanga* should be done prior to bathing the baby. Application of *Bala* oil for massaging is preferred.

Scientific importance – *Bala* oil has nourishing effect, Massaging baby ensures good sleep, prevents dryness of skin. Most babies enjoy oil massage, cry less and sleep better. This improves the circulation and muscle tone, provides additional energy to the baby, because oil gets absorbed from thin skin of the baby. Reduces trans-epidermal water loss and improves thermoregulation. Uses of non-irritant oils like coconut oil, sesame oil, olive oil, sunflower oil are advised. Use of Mineral oils should be avoided as they may clog skin pores. Use of mustard oil should be avoided as it may be pungent to eyes and irritable to baby's skin. Baby should be placed over cleaned cotton bed sheet in a supine position. Massaging should

be gently from above downwards. Procedure can be repeated after keeping baby in prone position. Massage is best performed after 1 hour of feed. Average massage should last for about 15-20 min.

6. Bathing the baby : (Snana)

According to *Acharya Charak*, bathing of baby should be postponed till baby is stabilized after birth. According to *Acharya Charak* and *Acharya Sushrut*, *Ksheerivriksha kashaya* and water processed with Metals like red iron, silver, gold, *Kapittha patra kashay* should be used for baby bath. According to *Acharya Vagbhat*, water boiled with *Jeevaniya gana dravyas* can be used.

Scientific importance –

Dravyas used in *ksheerivriksha kashaya* (*Ashwattha, udumbar, Plakshya, vata* and *nyagodar*) are *Sheeta, kashaya* and *pittaghna* in properties. They act as antiseptic and are ideal for delicate skin of baby. *Kapittha patra* is *pitta kapha nashak*, ideal for babies bath and soothing babies delicate skin.

At birth, baby must be cleaned off Blood, mucus and *meconium* before shifting to Post natal ward. The baby should be bathed next day using lukewarm water. It is ideal to use a Mild acidic (pH 5.5) liquid baby wash or mild cleanser. There should be no Centralized bathing of babies as this often results in Cross infection. Dip baths should be avoided till Cord has fallen. Soap should be applied from smaller areas of Head, then proceeding downwards to prevent exposure. Eyes should be cleaned using one sterile water soaked swab for each eye. Bottom should be washed in the end

to prevent contamination of healthy areas of skin.

DISCUSSION

Clinical Significance of *Rakshoghna karma*

- This was another age-old tradition where it was ensured that the baby gets the best environment in his room. For this, the baby's room has to be fumigated with *Ayurvedic* resins and leaves to counter negative energies and infuse positivity in the room. *Rakshakarma*, aim to protect the new born baby from various infections as in use of clean clothes, beddings etc. The various drugs mentioned in *dhupana karma* have antiseptic and antimicrobial properties; fumigation of the *sutikagara* by various *dhupana* drugs is mentioned to protect the baby from various opportunistic infections/diseases. Medicinal Fumigation is part of ayurvedic baby care practices suggested in Ayurveda to cleanse Air and Space that surround the infant and the mother. Certain herbs are better suited to the medium of smoke, so we are able to absorb their properties better while doing Medicinal Fumigation. *Brahmi, heeng, gugulu* and *jatamansi* can be used to fumigate a baby's room and clothes. This also helps by *neutralising* the germs in the air.
- Although, since then a rapid progression in Neonatology owing to technological advances in

biological sciences have taken place yet the *Ayurvedic acharyas* have to be credited for keeping in place a very rational newborn care regimen.

- It is evident that with respect to *rakshakarma*, *Ayurvedic acharyas* have advocated measures which aim to protect the newborn baby from various infections as in use of clean clothes; beddings etc. The fumigation of the *sutikagara* (sanatorium/labour room) by various drugs is mentioned to protect the baby from various opportunistic infections/diseases. The various drugs mentioned in *dhupana karma* have antiseptic and antimicrobial properties which have been proved so experimentally in various studies in recent times.

CONCLUSION

- Appropriate hygiene is advised throughout the newborn care to decrease infection episodes during infancy.
- Various procedures were advised in the management of newborn child by *Acharyas* with a few differences in opinion regarding the sequences of those procedures.
- In *ayurveda*, Breast feeding, Thermoregulation, Rooming –In, Bedding –In , Baby massage, Baby bath, Baby clothing *Raksha karma* are the procedures involved in the newborn care.
- The measures of new born care describe in our ancient texts indicate their wisdom regarding

resuscitation, prevention of hypothermia; maintain hygiene for prevention of infection and normal breathing.

- The steps described by *Acharya* are close to modern day principles of newborn care and basic resuscitation of new born baby. It means principle of Newborn care is not changed but now a day's used in a modified way.

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Conflict of Interest: Non

Source of funding: Nil

Cite this article:

*"Review on Rakshoghna karma for Care of Normal New born."
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Ayurline: International Journal of Research In Indian Medicine 2022; 6(2):01-07

