

AN AYURVEDA REVIEW ON SPIRITUAL AND RITUAL CONDUCTS OF BALA  
SAMSKARA

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## ABSTRACT

Bala Samskara refers to religious rituals and sacraments that play a significant role in religious ceremonies. These rituals not only address the spiritual aspects but also contribute to the social completion of an individual, granting them certain rights. Through qualitative improvements and specific ritual practices, Bala Samskara instills essential qualities in a person. Ayurveda described 16 major Bala Samskara. These rituals span from Garbhadan to Anteysthi Samskara. The purpose of Bala Samskara is to foster the growth and development of a child while providing religious guidance on how to care for them. These rituals and qualities are believed to be initiated at the very conception of the child and continue to influence them until adolescence. The practice of Bala Samskara as religious rituals holds great importance in the mental, physical, social, and spiritual development of a child. This article explores Ayurveda perspective on the concept of Bal-Samskara, emphasizing the significance of these rituals in shaping a person's life.

**KEYWORDS:** Ayurveda, Garbhadan, Samskara, Bala, Adolescence.

## INTRODUCTION

According to Indian philosophy, every stage of life is considered sacred, and as a result, specific rituals are performed from conception to cremation. These rituals known as *Bala Samskaras* which are essential for the physical, social and religious development of a child. *Bala Samskaras* involve religious rites and rituals performed during various ceremonies, elevating the person's spiritual significance. These sacraments encompass the worship of God and the recitation of *Mantras*, all serving the purpose of *Bala Samskara*.<sup>[1-3]</sup>

*Bala Samskaras* encompass the entirety of a person's life, starting from their time in the mother's womb and continuing until the completion of their life journey. *Bala Samskaras* act as rites of passage, guiding a person's progress from one psychological state to another. The term "*Samskar*" itself denotes the idea of cultivation, education, training, and the intrinsic worth of qualities.<sup>[3-5]</sup>

**Purpose of Bala Samskaras**

*Bala Samskaras* serve the purpose of offering prayers to the gods for a better future and seeking protection from harmful forces that disrupt human life at different stages.

Here are some key points about the significance of *Bala Samskaras*:

1. *Bala Samskaras* primarily aim to bring material prosperity to the individual. Through these ceremonies, prayers are offered to the deities for health, wealth and intellect of children.
2. *Bala Samskaras* also instill an awareness of the individual's social status and rights. They help to establish a sense of belonging and position within the community.
3. *Bala Samskaras* contribute to cultural enrichment. The various ceremonies associated with *Samskaras* play a role in the formation and development of a person's personality and values.
4. *Bala Samskaras* impart a higher sacredness to life. By performing these rituals, impurities associated with the body are cleansed. Additionally, *Bala Samskaras* represent a form of spiritual endeavor as they act as an external discipline to provide internal spiritual guidance.<sup>[5-7]</sup>

The *Samskara* in *Balyaawastha* may be classified into two major categories depending upon the age as depicted in **Figure 1**.

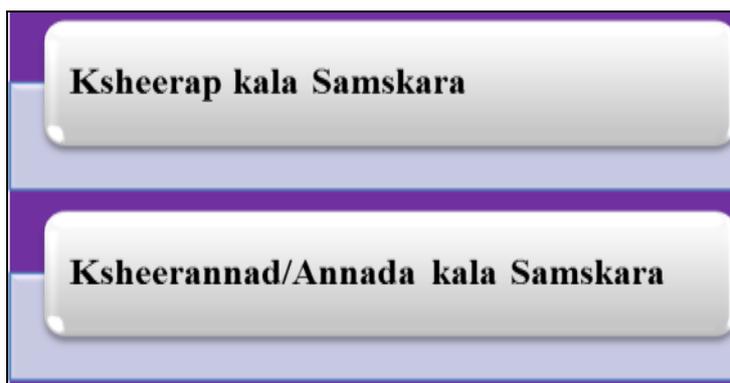


Figure 1: Categories of *Balyaawastha Samskara* depending upon the age of children.

*Ksheerap kala Samskara* performed during neonatal period which includes *Jatakarma* and *Namkarana*. Similarly *Nishkramana*, *Annaprashan/Phalaprashana* and *Karnavedhan* are performed during infantile period.

*Ksheerannad/Annada kala Samskara* is performed during toddler period which includes *Chudkarana Samskara*. Similarly *Upnayana Samskara* and *Vedarambha Samskara* are performed during preschool and school age.

*Bala Samskara* plays a vital role in enhancing overall development and eliminating undesirable attributes. It serves as a pathway to comprehend the profound philosophy of *Vedas* and religious texts. In early childhood, *Bala Samskara* imparts religious and spiritual knowledge, instilling the significance of life's various stages. Through *Bala Samskara*, individuals undergo mental purification, leading to positive character transformation. It motivates individuals to embrace their *Dharma* and fosters high levels of morality and spirituality, enriching their lives profoundly.<sup>[6-8]</sup>

#### **Bala Samskara Number**

1. *Garbhadan* (Sacrament of impregnation or conception)
2. *Pumsavana* (Engendering a male issue)
3. *Simantonayana* (Hair-parting)
4. *Jatakarma* (Birth rituals e.g. at the time when the child is being born)
5. *Namakarana* (Naming ceremony)
6. *Nishkrama* (First outing or outing ceremony)
7. *Annaprashana* (Feeding ceremony)
8. *Chudakarma* or *Mundan* (Shaving of head)
9. *Karnavedhan* (Piercing the earlobes)
10. *Upanayana* (Sacred thread initiation)
11. *Vedarambha* (Beginning of *vedic* study)
12. *Samavartan* (End of studentship)
13. *Vivaha* (Marriage ceremony)
14. *Vanprastha* (Renouncing the householder's life)
15. *Sannyas* (Leading the life of a monk)
16. *Anteyeshthi* (Death cremation)

*Garbhadan*, *Pumsavana* and *Simantonayana* are prenatal rituals. *Annaprashana*, *Chudakarma* and *Karnavedhan* are described as childhood *Samskaras*.

*Vidyarambha*, *Upanayana* and *Vedarambha* are described as educational *Bala Samskara*.

#### **Factors associated with Bala Samskara**

**Conception and environmental factors:** The process of conception is influenced by environmental factors. These may include aspects like environmental, lifestyle and climatic factors that can affect reproductive capabilities.

**Cleansing measures:** *Bala Samskara* related to conception likely involves purification practices that the couple or expectant mother may need to follow to prepare themselves physically and mentally for parenthood.

**Psychological impact on the fetus:** The psychological state of the woman during pregnancy could have an effect on the fetus. This highlights the significance of mental well-being during this crucial period.<sup>[9-11]</sup>

#### **Benefits of Bala Samskaras**

- ✓ *Bala Samskaras* promote both mental and physical well-being, instilling the assurance to confront life's obstacles with resilience.
- ✓ It is believed that *Bala Samskaras* purify the blood, enhancing circulation and delivering increased oxygen to every organ.
- ✓ By energizing the body, *Bala Samskaras* bring about a revitalized state.
- ✓ *Bala Samskaras* rejuvenate the mind, elevating concentration and intellectual capacity.
- ✓ Through directing energy towards humanitarian causes, *Bala Samskaras* help in cultivating a strong character.
- ✓ These practices also help in eliminating vices such as ego, pride, selfishness, greed and envy, etc.
- ✓ *Bala Samskaras* bestow moral and physical equilibrium throughout one's life journey.

#### **CONCLUSION**

*Bala Samskaras*, also known as sacraments, which are religious rituals that encompass specific ceremonies. *Bala Samskara*, in particular, varies according to the different stages of childhood. It significantly influences the growth and development of children, offering

valuable insights into their care. These *Samskaras* bestow beneficial effects from the conception period to early childhood.

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