

**A CRITICAL REVIEW OF LEHANA KARMA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO
SEASONAL INDICATIONS IN KAUMARBHRITYA*****Prof. Dr. Mahesh Narayan Gupta**

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ABSTRACT

Lehana Karma is an important pediatric procedure described in classical Ayurvedic texts, particularly in Kashyapa Samhita, referring to the administration of palatable, semi-solid formulations to children for nourishment, digestive support, cognitive enhancement, and disease prevention. Its relevance in contemporary pediatric practice is increasing due to concerns such as poor nutrition, recurrent infections, reduced immunity, and low acceptance of conventional dosage forms among children. This review critically examines the classical concept of Lehana Karma with emphasis on its seasonal indications, therapeutic utility, indications, contraindications, and modern clinical relevance in Kaumarbhritya. A literature-based review was conducted using primary Ayurvedic texts including Kashyapa Samhita, along with references from Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, and Ashtanga Sangraha, supplemented by contemporary literature to explore its clinical and scientific significance. The findings indicate that Lehana Karma is beneficial in selected children exhibiting poor sleep, inadequate nourishment, increased digestive power, Vata-Pitta predominance, and signs of weakness or suboptimal growth, while it is contraindicated in conditions such as weak digestion, excessive excretion, obesity, fever, diarrhea, jaundice, and other systemic disorders. Classical descriptions also highlight seasonal variations in the selection of Lehana dravya, reflecting an individualized approach to pediatric care. From a modern perspective, Lehana formulations may enhance palatability, treatment compliance, nutrient intake, immunity, and neurodevelopment, with many ingredients demonstrating rasayana, immunomodulatory, antioxidant, and growth-promoting properties. Overall, Lehana Karma represents a holistic pediatric intervention with strong classical foundations and promising contemporary relevance; however, further systematic experimental and clinical studies are required to validate its safety, efficacy, and mechanisms of action.

KEYWORDS: Lehana Karma, Kaumarbhritya, Kashyapa Samhita, seasonal indication, pediatric care, Rasayana, Immunity.**INTRODUCTION**

Childhood represents a critical period of rapid physical growth, neurological maturation, and immune system development. During these stages, appropriate nutrition, preventive healthcare, and measures to enhance resistance against diseases are essential for achieving optimal health and lifelong well-being.

Among the eight branches of Ayurveda, Kaumarbhritya is dedicated to the comprehensive care of infants and children. It encompasses neonatal care, nutrition, preventive medicine, developmental monitoring, and the management of childhood disorders. Ayurvedic principles recognize that children are in a continuous

state of growth and development, requiring therapeutic interventions that are safe, nourishing, and adapted to their physiological needs.

One of the unique pediatric practices described in Ayurvedic literature is Lehana Karma, which is elaborately explained in the *Lehanadhyaya* of the *Kashyapa Samhita*. The term *Lehana* refers to the administration of semi-solid or lickable herbal formulations prepared with suitable adjuvants such as honey, ghee, butter, or medicated preparations. These formulations are designed to be palatable and easily digestible for children while providing nutritional, immunomodulatory, cognitive, and therapeutic benefits.

The concept of Lehana extends beyond simple nutritional supplementation. Classical Ayurvedic texts describe it as a improve digestion and metabolism (*Agni*), enhance intellect (*Medha*), support physical strength (*Bala*), facilitate proper tissue nourishment (*Dhatu Poshana*), and encourage healthy growth and development. Depending on the child's age and physiological status, different Lehana formulations are recommended for infants who are exclusively breastfed (*Ksheerapa*), those receiving both milk and complementary foods (*Ksheerannada*), and older children consuming a regular diet (*Annada*).

The practice of Lehana has been described not only by the author of *Kashyapa Samhita* but also by classical Ayurvedic scholars such as Charaka, Sushruta, and Vagbhata under the context of *Jatakarma* and pediatric care. These texts recommend various herbal combinations to support healthy growth, enhance cognitive functions, improve immunity, and reduce susceptibility to recurrent childhood illnesses.

In recent years, growing interest in preventive medicine, integrative healthcare, and natural immunomodulatory therapies has renewed scientific attention toward traditional Ayurvedic pediatric practices. Lehana Karma has emerged as an important area of research owing to its potential role in improving nutritional status, supporting immune function, promoting neurodevelopment, and preventing recurrent infections in children. Several of its ingredients possess documented antioxidant, adaptogenic, antimicrobial, and immunomodulatory properties, providing opportunities for scientific validation through modern biomedical research.

This review aims to critically explore the classical concept of Lehana Karma, its historical evolution, indications, contraindications, formulations, methods of administration, therapeutic significance and seasonal indication of lehan dravya, while identifying future research directions for its integration into contemporary pediatric healthcare.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The thoughts of rasayana, vajikarana, sadvritta, samskar, lehana karma, ahar-vihar, achar rasayana can be arranged under swasthasya urjaskar bhesaja. Lehana karma is one of them. All the Acharyas including Charak, Sushruta, Vagbhat had portrayed lehana under the jatakarma paricharya.

NIRUKTI OF LEHAN TERM

'Leha' word framed from 'Lih' Dhatu and 'Gha-j' pratyaya.^[1]

The term Lehana implies licking or passing the tongue over something.

LEHAN

Kashyap Samhita is the only classical text specifically dedicated to paediatrics. Infants and children are particularly vulnerable to various infections. To enhance their immunity and nourish the delicate tissues of the growing body, Acharya Kashyapa has elaborated on the concept of Lehana. Since infancy lays the foundation for a healthy or unhealthy life ahead-largely influenced by early childhood practices-Acharya Kashyapa has provided a detailed description of Lehana in his treatise.

It is quoted that Sukh(healthy state) and Dukh(disease) conditions of the child depends on Lehana.^[2]

INDICATIONS OF LEHANA^[3]

- Children who have predominance of Vata and pitta, (but) not of Kapha.
- Not satisfied with breast milk and cry inspite of repeated sucking.
- The children who do not sleep at night.
- Eat too much.
- Pass scanty urine and faeces.
- Children who have increased digestive power.
- Rent and slim body appearance.
- Though free from diseases yet scraggy.
- Do not pass urine and faeces even for three days.

Contraindications of Lehana^[4]

- Weak digestive power
- Sleepy child
- Passing excessive (in quantity and number) stool and urine.
- Stout-bodied
- Whose mother is not alive
- Have indigestion
- Receive guru (heavy) breast-milk
- The child of mother consuming all the Rasas.
- Who suffer from ENT illnesses, in Amaroga(disease of metabolism), fever, diarrhoea, jaundice, Shotha (oedema/inflammation), anaemia, cardiac diseases, dyspnoea, cough; diseases of rectum, urinary bladder and abdomen; flatulence, Ganda(enlarged thyroid), erysipelas, vomiting, anorexia, all Graha rogas and Alasaka.
- It should neither be given daily, nor after taking meals, not on bad day or on the day with strong wind; non-congenial and in excess amount should also not be given.

Sessional Indication of Lehana

In Ayurveda many types of lehan method are described but only Acharya Vagbhata in Astang Sangrah describe lehan according to season.

आरग्वधादिनिर्यूहे श्रुते शीतवसन्तयोः ।
वत्सकादियुतीबालां कुमारं प्राशयेद् घृतम् ॥
ग्रीष्मे वातातपक्ष्वेदैर्बालः क्लान्त्यत्यतो हिमम् ।
प्रातर् एव पिबेद् दुग्धं जीवनीयगणेः श्रुतम् ॥
सिता घृताढ्यान् सतृणांश्च लिह्यात् तदेव पीतकं ।
काकोलीशर्करामेदातुगाक्षीरजीवकैः ॥

कुष्ठरेण मूर्ध्नि लिप्येद् चन्दनेन शिशिरेऽपि ।
 रस्ना सरलसर्वगन्धिहीवेरचन्दनद्रवैः ॥
 सर्पिर्विदार्यादिजले साधितं लेहयेत् शुभम् ।
 प्रियालमज्जाकाकोलीविदारीकटुफलामृताः ।
 द्राक्षाजशृङ्गी दुग्धिका क्षीरशुक्ला हयादयः ॥ (अ.सं. १०)

In Vasanta, Hemanta, Shishira Ritu

Aragwadadi Gana Kwatha mixed with the drugs of Vatsakadi Gana and Kakolyadi Gana is boiled with Ghrita and administered.

In Greeshma Ritu (Summer)

Cold milk processed with Jeevaneeya Gana drugs is mixed with Ghrita and Sugar. **Mantha (मन्थ)** prepared from Sattu is indicated, as it relieves fatigue caused by summer.

Special Indications In Greeshma Ritu

- If a child is habituated to drinking excess water, Ghrita should not be administered.
- For children habituated to Ghrita, Siddha Ghrita prepared with **Kakoli, Sharkara, Meda, Vamshalochana, Madhuyashti and Jeevaka** should be administered.
- During summer season, **cooling Lepa** should be applied over the head.

In Sharad Ritu

Pundarika, Madhuka, Mudgaparni, Mashaparni, Chirayata, Kakoli, Vidari, Katphala, Amrita, Draksha, Ajashringi, Dugdika, Ksheera Shukla, Ashwagandha, Madhuka, Kusuma, Meda, Mahameda, Rishabhaka and Jeevaka are used to prepare Siddha Ghrita.

Advantages of Lehana

Lehana has several important advantages, especially in infants and growing children:

1. Palatable and easy to administer

Lehana preparations are usually sweet in taste and therefore more acceptable to children. Compared to Vati, Churna, and Kwatha, they are easier to give and better tolerated.

2. Supports caloric demand in growing children

Children are habitually active and engaged in play and daily activities, which increases their energy requirements. Lehana can help meet this additional nutritional demand.

3. Promotes digestion and appetite

Lehana helps improve Agni, supports proper digestion, and may prevent common digestive disturbances.

4. Provides essential nourishment

During childhood, rapid growth and development require adequate fats, proteins, carbohydrates, amino acids, vitamins, and minerals. Lehana formulations can support these nutritional needs.

5. Supports cognitive development

Since many Lehana preparations are Medhya in nature, they may help in the development of intellect, memory, and overall neurological growth, especially during the early years of life.

6. May help in nutritional supplementation

In children with poor intake or mild nutritional deficiency, Lehana may serve as a supportive nutritional measure.

7. Can be useful in selected situations as an alternative support to breast milk

As described in classical texts, and only under appropriate indications and contraindications, Lehana may serve a supplementary role in infants.

8. Enhances immunity

Lehana may strengthen Vyadhi-kshamatva and help improve the body's resistance against infections, showing a vaccine-like protective effect in a broader sense.

9. Supports overall growth and development

Regular and appropriate use of Lehana may contribute to both physical and mental development, thereby improving the child's overall health.

10. Long-term beneficial effects

As emphasized by Acharya Kashyapa, Lehana has importance not only for present health but also for future happiness and wellbeing, highlighting its value as an essential pediatric therapy.

Clinical Advantages of Lehana in Present-Day Pediatric Practice

1. Enhanced Palatability and Treatment Compliance^[5]

Lehana is a semisolid, sweet-tasting formulation prepared with *Madhu* (honey), *Guda* (jaggery), sugar, or other *Madhura Dravyas*. This dosage form significantly improves the palatability of herbal medicines, thereby increasing treatment acceptance and compliance among infants and young children who often refuse conventional dosage forms such as powders, tablets, and decoctions.

2. Improved Drug Bioavailability Through Buccal and Sublingual Absorption^[6]

The viscous consistency of Lehana prolongs its contact time with the oral mucosa. This prolonged mucosal retention may facilitate buccal and sublingual absorption of bioactive phytoconstituents, allowing partial bypass of first-pass hepatic metabolism and resulting in a more rapid onset of pharmacological action.

3. Nutritional Supplementation and Growth Promotion^[7]

Lehana formulations frequently contain nutrient-rich ingredients such as Ghrita, Madhu, Guda, and various

herbal drugs possessing *Brimhana* (anabolic) and *Balya* (strength-promoting) properties. These formulations provide carbohydrates, essential micronutrients, trace elements, and phytochemicals that support normal growth, tissue nourishment, and overall physical development in children.

4. Stimulation of Digestive Function^[8]

The carbohydrate-rich composition of *Lehana* stimulates salivary secretion and initiates enzymatic digestion within the oral cavity. From an Ayurvedic perspective, *Lehana* enhances *Agni* (digestive capacity), thereby promoting proper digestion, nutrient assimilation, and metabolism.

5. Rapid Energy Source^[9]

The presence of simple carbohydrates derived from honey and jaggery provides an instant source of energy. This property is particularly beneficial in children with poor nutritional status, convalescence, chronic illness, or increased metabolic demands.

6. Immunomodulatory and Rasayana Potential^[10]

Many *Lehana* formulations described in *Kashyapa Samhita* incorporate Rasayana herbs such as Swarna, Guduchi, Yashtimadhu, Brahmi, and Pippali. These ingredients are traditionally believed to enhance *Vyadhikshamatva* (host resistance), improve cognitive development, strengthen immunity, and promote healthy physical and mental growth. Contemporary pharmacological studies also demonstrate antioxidant, immunomodulatory, adaptogenic, and neuroprotective activities of several of these herbs.

7. Suitable Vehicle for Pediatric Drug Delivery^[11]

Lehana serves as an effective pediatric drug-delivery system by masking unpleasant taste, improving ease of administration, and ensuring accurate dosing. This pharmaceutical approach minimizes treatment refusal and enhances therapeutic adherence in pediatric practice.

8. Therapeutic Utility in Nutritional Disorders^[12]

Classical references indicate that *Lehana* is particularly beneficial in children suffering from nutritional insufficiency, delayed growth, recurrent infections, malabsorption, and conditions associated with inadequate breastfeeding. However, administration should be preceded by adequate digestive capacity (*Agni*) to ensure optimal digestion and assimilation.

9. Holistic Promotion of Child Health^[13]

Unlike formulations intended solely for symptomatic relief, *Lehana* combines nutritional supplementation with therapeutic herbal interventions. This dual action contributes to improved growth, enhanced immunity, better cognitive function, and maintenance of overall pediatric health, aligning with the Ayurvedic objective of promoting *Bala*, *Medha*, *Varna*, and *Vyadhikshamatva*.

DISCUSSION

Children are more vulnerable to infections and diseases because their immunity is still developing. Therefore, the main goal in this age group should be prevention of disease and promotion of healthy physical and mental growth. *Lehana*, along with Rasayana principles, can play an important role in achieving this aim. When used in proper dose and combined with national nutritional programmes and other child health initiatives, it may help improve growth, development, immunity, and social wellbeing of children.

CONCLUSION

Lehana Karma is an important and well-established pediatric therapeutic procedure described in classical Ayurvedic literature, particularly in *Kashyapa Samhita*, and supported by references in the works of Charaka, Sushruta, and Vagbhata. It represents a holistic approach to child health by combining nourishment, palatability, digestive support, cognitive enhancement, and disease prevention. The classical texts clearly indicate that *Lehana* should be administered only in appropriately selected children, after considering age, digestive capacity, seasonal variation, and contraindications. Its formulations, especially those containing madhura dravyas, ghrita, madhu, and rasayana herbs, are designed not only to support physical growth but also to improve bala, medha, dhatu poshana, and vyadhikshamatva.

From a modern scientific perspective, *Lehana* has significant relevance in present-day pediatric practice because it may improve treatment compliance, offer nutritional support, and potentially exert immunomodulatory, antioxidant, and neuroprotective effects. Its seasonal indication further reflects the precision and adaptability of Ayurvedic pediatrics, showing that therapy was individualized according to environmental and physiological needs. However, despite its strong classical foundation and promising clinical significance, *Lehana Karma* requires systematic scientific evaluation through well-designed experimental and clinical studies to validate its efficacy, safety, and mechanism of action. Thus, *Lehana Karma* can be regarded as a valuable Ayurvedic pediatric intervention with considerable potential for integration into contemporary child healthcare.

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