Rakshakarma in Child Health Care- A Review

Kalpana Patni¹* and Gaurav Sinha²

¹State Ayurvedic College and Hospital, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India
²Primary Health Center, Udham Singh Nagar, UKD, India

Abstract
Rakshakarma means protective measures. It is one of the important procedures extensively used in Ayurveda. It is one of the procedures involved in the resuscitation of the newborn. The concept of Rakshakarma in Ayurveda is quite efficient for providing a complete physical and psychological protective shield to the newborn. Protective measures for the newborn baby are taken to prevent the infections and to clean the environment, as well as to increase humoral immunity. The fumigation (dhupana) of the Sutikagara (sanatorium/labour room) by various drugs is mentioned to protect the baby from various opportunistic infections. Ayurvedic acharyas have advocated the use of clean and fumigated clothes, beddings etc. The various drugs mentioned in dhupana karma have antiseptic and antimicrobial properties which have been also proved experimentally in various studies. Plants protect by secreting natural phenols, flavonoids, isoflavones, glucosinolates, etc. These different chemicals are usually bitter, pungent or astringent in taste. In addition to their bactericidal or biological activity these substances may provide a defense against predators. Chanting hymns and practicing Yama and Niyama provide a psychological support to the patient, which is helpful for quick recovery and rehabilitation. Thus we can say that Rakshakarma procedure provides a complete physical and psychological protection to the mother and the child.

Keywords
Rakshakarma, Immunity, Protective Measures, Antisepsis, Vrana
INTRODUCTION

Raksha and its various derivatives occur predominantly in the Vedic texts means – to protect, guard, take care of, govern, to keep, to preserve, save, to avoid, to observe or to beware of, an evil spirit, a demon. Rakshakarma means protective measures. It is one of the important procedures extensively used and talked about in Ayurveda on different subjects. Charaka and Vagbhata spoke about Rakshakarma especially during child care. Rakshakarma is one of the procedures involved in the resuscitation of the newborn. Acharya Sushruta explained in detail about Rakshakarma in the management of wound and also patient going through surgery in pre-operative, operative and post operative phase. Rakshakarma is one of the sixty Upkrama (procedures) involved the management of Vrana (wound) in Sushruta Samhita. Dhupana, Mantra, Yama, and Niyama are the procedures performed for the Rakshakarma as described by Sushruta. Again during the chapters related with pregnancy there is a description about Rakshakarma for mother and baby care.

It was thus found, that the concept of Rakshakarma in Ayurveda is quite efficient for providing a complete physical and psychological protective shield to the patient. Protective measures for the new born baby are taken to prevent the infections and to clean the environment, as well as to increase humoral immunity.

Under Rakshakarma, Acharya Charaka gives detailed description related to protection of newborn (rakshakaram) related to antisepsis of clothing, beddings, and aseptic measures to prevent infections from surroundings. All around the Sutikagara (the place where mother and child both resides after delivery), the twigs of Adani, Khadira, Karakndu, Pilu, Parushakas should be hung, and Sarshapa (yellow mustard), Atasi, Tandulakan-kanika (rice particles) should be scattered on its floor. “Tandul Bali Home” should be done twice a day i.e, morning and evening. The musal (pestle) should be placed obliquely at the entry door. The fire should always lit by putting the dry wood of kana-kantak (ingudi) and Tinduka wood in the Sutikagara. A packet containing Vacha, Kustha, Kshomka, Hingu, Sarspa, Atasi, Lasuna, Guggulu etc. raksoghana dravyas should be hung on the door and similar dravyas should be tied around the neck of mother and the child. Well wishing skilled care taker women should be remain vigilant and attentive continuously in the sutikagara for the initial 10-12 days i.e, the baby should not be kept alone. The
Sutikagara should be fulfilled with gifts, auspicious recitations, blessings, praises, playing of music and musical instruments, foods and drinks, along with devoted, loyal and delighted persons. The person having the knowledge of Atharvaveda should perform ‘Shanti-Patha or Home’ in the morning and evening for the welfare of the mother and baby. Acharya Sushruta directed the neonate to be wrapped in kshauma (linen) cloth and made to sleep on a bed covered with soft linen. Twigs of pilu-badar-nimba-parushaka are to be used to gently fan the baby. A cotton tampon impregnated with oil (tailapichu) should be applied over the baby’s head daily. Fumigation with Rakshoghana dravyas should be done in the Sutikagara. These Rakshoghana drugs should be tied over the hands, feet, head and neck. Tila, Atsi, Sarshapa and Kana (rice particles) should be scattered all over the Sutikagara. The fire should be lit in the place. Else should be followed as described in Vranitopasniya context. There are sixty procedures for the management of wound, mentioned by Sushruta. Rakshakarma or Rakshavidhanis one of them. The wound should be fumigated by pain relieving and Rakshoghanafumes and the protection should be ensured by reciting hymns. Again Sushruta says, the wound should be fumigated with a mixture of powders of Guggulu, Agaru, Sarjarasa, Vacha, Sarshapa, Saindhava and the leaves of Nimba tree along with Ghrita. The left over Ghrita then applied over the region of heart and other vital parts of the patients. Afterwards protective hymns should be recited as – May Brahma and other gods counteract sorcery (Kritya) and the dread of evil spirits (Raksasa), serpent demons (Naga), devils (Pishacha), celestial musicians (Gandharva), souls of paternal ancestors (Pitra), spirits (Yaksha), evil spirits (Nishachara) etc. In the same context Sushruta further spoke about the protection of strength, intellect, psyche, and understanding from the blessing of god Indra, anu, Gandharva and Varuna respectively.

In Chikitsa Sthan, Sushruta says that wounds and patients should be protected from invisible creatures (Nishachara) by procedures like Dhupana and protective energy of the prophylactic prayer. He further advocated Yama and Niyama as a part of Rakshakarma. (Five Yama are non-violence, truthfulness, non-stealing, celibacy and abstinence from litigation. Five Niyama are cleanliness, satisfaction,
nance, spiritual study, service of the preceptor). Acharya Vagbhata described similar *rakshakarama* as described by Charaka in addition. Vagbhatta has also counselled use of herbs as *Brahmi*, *Indryana*, *Jivaka* and *Rishbhakato* be tied around hands or neck of the newborn. Dhupan should be done by *Gugglu*, *Agru*, *Sarjrasa* and *GauraSarspa*. Vagbhatta also mentions use of *Balvachafar* it promotes *medha* (intelligence), *smriti* (memory), health and longevity of the baby. In *Astangasamgraha*, Vagbhata described to tie a cotton pouch containing *Hingu*, *Vacha*, *Turuska* and *Sarshapa*, on the upper frame of door and head side of bed and also in the neck of infant and mother. Further there is mention of *Dhupanafor* baby’s apartment consisting of dried crow feathers along with *Trivrta*, *Vacha*, *Kustha*, *Srivesta*, *Sarshapa*, added with little *Ghrita*. Acharaya Vagabhata has also advised the use of protective measures on the 6th night of birth (*SasthiRatri*). He says that on 6th night of birth of the newborn, all family members and friends remain awaken and *rakasakarma* should be performed by offering sacrifices. Ancient scholars have observed very closely about the most crucial period of infancy and marked it up to six days. Care of 6th night indicates that from birth to 6th days period, babies are most susceptible to various infections and other complication. After one week, the incidence of infections and complication reduce, therefore the chances of survival increase. According to *Aroyakalpdruma*, *Kumaramaragara* should be fumigated. The horns, hooves of *Krishna*, *Saralu*, *Laya*, *Avi-Dears* and *Gandaka* along with *Gojihva* and *ShewtaSharshapa* (white mustard) are taken in equal amount, powdered and mixed with butter and heated. The fumes generated (*Dhupana*) helps to protect the child.

**Properties of Raksha karma drugs:**

The phytochemical screening demonstrated the presence of different types of compounds like terpenoids, tannins, deoxy sugars, saponins, phenolic compounds, and flavonoids which may contribute for the antimicrobial action of the above medicinal plants. The methanolic extract of *Acacia catechu* (*Khadira*) was found to have antimicrobial activities against six species of pathogenic and non-pathogenic microorganisms: *Bacillus subtilis*, *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Salmonella typhi*, *Escherichia coli*, *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* and *Candida albicans*. Mustard can be used as an effective antimicrobial agent. Mustard Essential Oil affects the...
concentration of intracellular component, such as ATP in both Pseudomonas and Staphylococcus aureus, bacteria and affects the pH suggesting that cytoplasmic membrane is involved in the antimicrobial action of mustard EO\textsuperscript{12,13}. The ethanolic extract of ZizyphussativaGaertn (Badri) fruit contains anti-inflammatory, analgesic, antipyretic, bronchodilator and antimicrobial activities\textsuperscript{14}. The essential oil, chloroform extract and seven sesquiterpenoids compounds newly isolated from the oleogum-resin of \textit{Commiphoramukul}(Guggul) showed a wide range of inhibiting activity against both Gram (+) and Gram (−) bacteria. This suggests the antibacterial activity \textit{C. mukul}\textsuperscript{15}. Acoruscalamus Linn. Rhizomes(Vacha) was found to have antimicrobial activities on various microorganisms including bacteria, yeasts and filamentous fungi\textsuperscript{16}. The aqueous and methanol extracts of\textit{AquilariaagallochaRoxb.}(Agaru) along with dry powder of leaf and bark of the plant was screened for the presence of phytochemicals. Also they were tested for antibacterial activity against pathogenic bacteria such as \textit{Shigella}flexneri, \textit{Bacillus} brevis, \textit{Pseudomonas} aeruginosa and \textit{Bacillus} subtilis. The result indicates the presence of alkaloids, anthroquinones, triterpenoids, tannins, fixed oils and fats and glycosides in methanol extracts whereas saponins, fixed oils and fats, alkaloids and triterpenoids were found in the aqueous extracts\textsuperscript{17}. \textit{Aconitum heterophyllum}(Ateesa) also contains potent antibacterial properties. Two new aconitine-type norditerpenoid alkaloids 6-dehydroacetylsepaconitine (1) and 13-hydroxylappaconitine (2), along with three known norditerpenoid alkaloids lycocotonine, delphatine and lappaconitine were isolated from the roots of the \textit{Aconitum heterophyllum} Wall. These compounds exhibited significant antibacterial activity. The structure of compound 1 and 2 were deduced on the basis of their spectral data\textsuperscript{18}. The essential oils of Ferula asafetida have potent antibacterial effect\textsuperscript{19}.

**DISCUSSION**

From the above description, it is evident that with respect to \textit{Rakshakarma}, Ayurvedic \textit{acharyas} have advocated measures which aim to protect the newborn baby from various infections as with the use of clean clothes, beddings etc. The fumigation (\textit{dhupana}) of the \textit{Sutikagara}(sanatorium/labour room) by various drugs is mentioned to protect the baby from various opportunistic infections.
The various drugs mentioned in dhupana karma have antiseptic and antimicrobial properties which have been also proved experimentally in various studies. As per ancient text, room should be kept warm by fire, lighting in the room. Nowadays, Radiant warmer are available for this purpose.

Present neonatal care includes special aseptic measures to be adopted aiming to prevent any infection of the newborn. Right from the initiation of birth process, measures for sepsis and antisepsis such as clean hands, clean surface, use of sterile surgical instruments (blade/scissor), clean handling of the cord, use of surgical mask, gloves etc. are to be religiously followed until handling and resuscitation of the newborn baby. Appropriate hygiene is advised throughout the newborn care to decrease infection episodes during infancy.

Proper sterilization is helpful in early recovery and fumigation with different chemicals is one of the methods to achieve sterilization. Same principle also applies during mother and child care. From literature review it is clear that from ancient Ayurvedic medicine there was concept of safety of diseased person with regards to evil spirits. Ayurveda speaks about care of diseased person from evil spirits and also give enough importance to safeguard the patient from visibly present creatures, as insects etc. What we found interesting in Ayurvedic literature is the use of different kinds of herbs during preparing different kinds of decoction or placing them near the mother and the child’s body or spreading them over the room and also fumigating with their smoke. Here we need to look for the antimicrobial properties of these different herbs based on their ayurvedic and modern pharmacological properties. In a recent study it was found that plants also protect themselves against being eaten by secreting natural pesticides and other toxins, phenols, flavonoids, isoflavones, glucosinolates, etc. These different chemicals are usually bitter, pungent or astringent in taste. In addition to their bactericidal or biological activity these substances may provide a defense against predators.

When we look up the herbs used for different purpose of Rakshakarma in ayurveda, we found that most of these herbs are bitter, astringent and pungent in taste, because of the presence of different chemical constituents in them. These herbs have bactericidal and insecticidal activities which safeguard the patient from infections. In a recent clinical study, it was found that fumigation with a mixture of traditional
Chinese medicine promotes wound healing and prevents the wound of postoperative complications, including pain relief, reduce swelling and infection etc. Wound Healing on the 1st Fumigation on the Mixed Hemorrhoid Complications of Postoperative Wound Healing and Postoperative Pain Edema. Another aspect is related with hymn chanting and homa in the room of the patient probably a kind of psychological counseling to the patient, so she can feel well, safe and cared. This is to provide a positive environment for the healing of wound and also support to the mother in post partum phase to avoid any kind of stress. Recent studies add to growing evidence that psychology impacts wound repair, and highlight in particular the positive role of social support on modulating the negative effects of stress.

CONCLUSION
From the above description it is evident that, Rakshakarma was used extensively in the cases of mother and child care. In earlier times there were different kinds of decoctions of herbs were used for cleaning the wound. Same context Sushruta also give enough importance to Rakshakarma procedure, where he spoke about the use of Dhupana (Fumigation) of different herbs around the wound and patients and the room of the patient. After delivery the mother and the newborn baby, both can be well compared with a wounded person and need special care. Ayurvedic Acharyas have advocated measures which aim to protect the newborn baby from various infections as in use of clean clothes, beddings etc. Dhupana (fumigation) of the Sutikagary by various herbs is mentioned to protect the baby from various infections. It is probably because of the antiseptic and antimicrobial property of Dhupan karma. This procedure can be correlated with that of fumigation procedure of sterilization in current modern medical practices. Chanting hymns and practicing Yama and Niyama provide a psychological support to the patient, which is helpful for quick recovery and rehabilitation of the patients. Thus we can say that Rakshakarma procedure provides a complete physical and psychological protection to the mother and the child.
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