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Faith for Life

**Handbook for Hindu, Jain, Buddhist and
Sikh Religious Leaders.**



Taking Lead In Maternal & Child Survival

Technical Content: Sunil Shah
Scriptural Content: Sunil Shah, Pandit Narendraji and Prof. Vyas.
Design & Layout: Forward Vision Communications

First Edition Published in 2010

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Please inform the Inter-Religious Council of Kenya (IRCK)
Mararo Road, off Gitanga Road, Nairobi, Kenya,
P.O. Box 6352 City Square 00200
Nairobi, Kenya.

Email: info@interreligiouscouncil.or.ke

Tel: +254 20 386 1397

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FOREWORD

It is because of the Supreme Brahman's will and grace that this Handbook has been compiled. As an expression of our gratitude we chant the *Gayatri Mantra* and pray:

"We pay obeisance and pray to the Supreme Brahman through the Sun Deity which represents the benevolent qualities of punctuality, selfless duty, self-sacrifice and enlightenment - to illumine and enrich us, through the fire of knowledge, with absolute cognition and determined faith in the Universal Brahman principles. We beg, through our devotion to righteousness, for God's grace to grant us the nobility of forgiveness and repentance to cleanse and strengthen our faith and therefore our dedication to the divinity of the Brahmanic principles. In all surrender, we plead to be eternally guided by humility, righteousness and dharma in all our thought and work.

Aum - Let there be peace in the universe, peace in the world and peace within me".

The Hindu faith for life book, a joint initiative of Hindu Council of Kenya, UNICEF, Ministry of Health (Kenya) and the Inter-religious Council of Kenya (IRCK) has been compiled to provide an understanding of the welfare and health of the child and mother based on scriptural exegesis. Inspired by the need to improve not just the survival but to foster proper upbringing and overall well-being of children, this project aims at improving the wholesome development and righteous relationship between mother and child through the meditative reflections of the spiritual sages etched in the Hindu holy scriptures.

The Hindu Council of Kenya (HCK), a constituent member of IRCK, undertook to compile these scriptural dictates that serve to improve mother and child welfare. HCK intends that the religious prescriptions serve to improve not just the basic survival, but serve as a repository of values and best-practices that can greatly enhance the all-round relation and well-being of the mother and child. Hindus believe that faith and spiritual living unravels the deeper meaning of life and gifts bodily, emotional, intellectual and spiritual integration.

The Hindu culture and religion provides a holistic approach to life that includes the *dharmic* responsibilities and ideal way of being and living from birth to death and beyond as one reincarnates. The eternal reflections contained herein, from the Hindu scriptures, are just a handful from the expansive wisdom of the ancient Hindu masters that can expedite the overall welfare of mother and child through holistic and disciplined living. The reflections also serve to remove misconceptions and fears of diseases and even of death.

The book has been compiled with contributions from numerous scholars and theologians based on relevant scriptural references. Indeed I would like to single out the enormous commitment and dedication exemplified by Sunil Shah, faithful scholar of *Vedantic* scriptures and *Dharma* and an expert in governance and elections, who championed this cause and elevated the Hindu Council status and honor in the face of challenges.

Finally, a profound prayer that the Hindu Faith for Life compilations conveys practical and relevant guidance to all parents and comprehensively enhances the family well-being.



Mr. S.B. Varma

Chairman

Hindu Council of Kenya.

Joint preface by UNICEF and IRCK

The *Faith for Life Handbook* is a culmination of a long-standing partnership between the Inter-Religious Council of Kenya, the Ministry of Public Health and Sanitation and UNICEF. The partnership builds on the mandate, role and influence of leaders of the different faith communities to advocate for the rights of children in Kenya. Through this partnership, we have seen the important role that faith communities can play in contributing to reduction of maternal and child morbidity and mortality.

The Child Survival and Development Strategy, launched in June 2009, also clearly articulates the role of partnerships, including faith communities, in increasing uptake of child survival and development services available at health facilities, and mobilising communities to adopt behaviours and practices at the household level that will ensure mothers and their children survive and thrive.

The Faith for Life Initiative, jointly conceived and implemented by the Inter-Religious Council of Kenya, the Ministry of Public Health and Sanitation and UNICEF, seeks to ensure survival and development of children, with faith communities taking a leading role. The initiative is premised on the fact that proper upbringing and survival of children ensures a solid community of believers for tomorrow.

Thus, leaders of faith communities have a critical role to ensure that children get the best opportunities in life for them to survive, develop and grow to their full potential. Cognisant of the overwhelming effects child survival, the faith community is expected to lead social change process by creating an open communication and support atmosphere about key developmental initiatives, including exclusive breastfeeding, disease prevention, immunisation, handwashing, nutrition, prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, sanitation and health seeking behaviours.

The *Faith for Life Handbook* is a compilation of appropriate messages on child survival and development, linked to the Muslim faith, which will be used by the faith communities for behaviour and social change communication.

Carefully selected verses from the Holy Bible, related to infant and young child feeding, disease prevention, hygiene and sanitation, have been compiled and provide the spiritual basis for promoting the high impact interventions outlined in the Child Survival and Development Strategy. Following each faith's religious teachings, there is a separate set of communication material that will be disseminated.

Leaders of faith communities will be able to use these theological reflections combined with technical information and actions to disseminate key messages during prayer and worship sessions.

This work is the result of a comprehensive consultation process at all levels. Leading and key leadership of Muslim faith, specialists from the Ministry of Public health and Sanitation, partner organizations and UNICEF have participated and contributed in conceptualisation, endorsement and finalisation of this handbook. We would, therefore, like to extend our thanks to all of them.

It is our hope that this work will support everyone, whether in a Mosque or homesteads, practically and passionately to ensure every child born in Kenya gets the best start in life, survives and thrives.



Dr. Olivia Yambi
Representative
UNICEF, Kenya

ACRONYMS

ACT	Artemisinin-based Combination Therapies
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ANC	Ante-Natal Care
ARI	Acute Respiratory Infection
CSD	Child Survival and Development Strategy
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
EAK	Evangelical Alliance of Kenya
F4L	Faith for Life
HCK	Hindu Council of Kenya
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HFS	Health Facility Survey
IMCI	Integrated Management of Child Illness
IMR	Infant Mortality Rate
IRCK	Inter-Religious Council of Kenya
IRS	Indoor Residual Spraying
KAIS	Kenya AIDS Indicator Survey
KDHS	Kenya Demographic and Health Survey
KEC-CS	Kenya Episcopal Council Catholic Secretariat
KFSSG	Kenya Food Security Steering Group
LBW	Low Birth Weight
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MMR	Maternal Mortality Rate
MOM	Ministry of Medical Services
MOPH&S	Ministry of Public Health and Sanitation
NCCK	National Council of Churches of Kenya
ORS	Oral Rehydration Salts
PMTCT	Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission
OAIC	Organization of African Instituted Churches
TB	Tuberculosis
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK

The *Faith for Life Handbook* has essential information which religious leaders and faith communities need to know to intervene on maternal and child survival. It has scriptural references and support that emphasise interventions on:

- i. Health Seeking Behaviours.
- ii. Mother and Child Health Care.
- iii. Mother and Child Nutrition.
- iv. Common Childhood Diseases.
- v. HIV and AIDS, and PMTCT.
- vi. Early Stimulation, Child Protection and Care
- vii. Safe Drinking Water and Cleanliness.

The Handbook supports the Child Survival and Development Strategy (CSD 2009-2015) by the Government of Kenya and it is aimed at complementing efforts by the Ministry of Public Health and Sanitation in implementing it.

It contains latest evidence and recommended actions at the community level aimed at reversing the alarming trends in maternal and child health. The engagement of faith communities is thus necessary to achieve the objective of reducing maternal and child deaths.

Each chapter, based on the particular intervention, outlines the situation of the particular intervention, the myths, misconceptions and wrong practices that have been associated with the intervention, the rationale behind the involvement and highlights of the intervention, the scriptural reference that recommends the correct practices to be adopted and, finally, key messages that need emphasis.

The Ministry of Public Health and Sanitation and UNICEF have supported the compilation process with technical inputs and material in line with the Government's Child Survival and Development (CSD) strategy. The faith communities embrace this strategic partnership.

IRCK welcomes input and comments on this Handbook, which can be sent to:



INTER-RELIGIOUS COUNCIL of KENYA

P.O. Box 6352 City Square 00200, Nairobi , Kenya

Tel: +254 20 386 1397

Email: info@interreligiouscouncil.or.ke

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This handbook is a culmination of the invaluable contributions of theologians from major faith umbrella organisations in the Kenya, together with staff from UNICEF and Ministry of Public Health and Sanitation officials. Accordingly, we acknowledge the generous help of the following persons in the compilation and validation process, in particular:

From Inter-Religious Council of Kenya and the Hindu Council of Kenya::

1. Prof. Yash Vyas
2. Dr. Sunil Shah
3. Dharm P. Ahluwalia
4. Ram Chandra Pandey
5. Yash Pal Angira
6. Pandit Narendraji
7. Savita Kulkarni
8. Shibani Sarkar
9. Mrs. Vyas
10. Romila P. Ahluwalia
11. Bina Shah
12. Himatbhai Doshi
13. Dharmesh Gohil
14. Nitin Malde.

From Unicef

1. Dr. Olivia Yambi,
Representative UNICEF Kenya
2. Dr. Juan Ortiz,
Deputy Representative
3. Suleman Malik, Chief C4D
4. Dr. Sanjiv Kumar
5. Linda Beyer
6. Jane Mbagi
7. Jayne Kariuki
8. Roselyn Mutemi-Wangahu
9. Grace Miheso
10. Dr. Vincent Orinda
11. John Obisa
12. Patricia K. Macharia
13. Scolastica Kunyiha
14. Samuel Wamuttu

From Ministry of Public Health & Sanitation

1. Dr. Priscillah Migiro
2. Dr. Salim A.H.
3. Elsa Odira
4. Selina Cherutich
5. Alex Mutua
6. Samson Thuo
7. Fredrick Ngeno
8. Phares Nkare
9. Farida Tomno
10. Grace Wasike
11. Charles Matanda
12. John Moro
13. John Kariuki
14. Rufus Owako
15. Oscar Kambona
16. Shaaban Mohamed
- Ministry of Education
17. Owino David - Nascop

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5. Pst. Samuel Makori - SDA
6. Pst. Kenneth Maena – SDA
7. Archbishop Mweresa Kivuli 2
- OAIC

IRCK Staff

1. Dr. Francis Kuria
– Executive Director
2. Jimmy Obuya - Programs Officer
Health and Children

From Health and Children Task Force

1. Steven Ngugi – National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCK)
2. Betty Malamba – Kenya Episcopal Conference Catholic Secretariat (KEC-CS)
3. Elvinah Ong'esa – Seventh Day Adventist Church (SDA)
4. Rose Njoka – Organisation of African Instituted Churches (OAIC)
5. Saida Wambui – National Muslim Leaders Forum (NAMLEF)
6. Linus Nthigai – Evangelical Alliance of Kenya (EAK)
7. Sabina Ng'ang'a
– Kenya Women of Faith Network

For the Hindu, who is a true disciple of the Hindu religion in its broadest context of *Sanataan Dharma* (Eternal Intrinsic Tenets), to nourish and care for the body, heart, mind and the soul is dutiful living and homogenous health. According to Hindu culture and religion, real happiness and integrated health is achieved through practicing the decrees in the ancient religion of *Sanaatan Dharma*.

*Sanaatan Dharma states the path of virtue and devotion as “the supreme medicine for curing the disease (suffering) called worldly existence (samsaara) and it is a tree to rest under for a world tired with wandering on the road of cyclic existence of afflictions”.*¹

Sanaatan Dharma

Hindu religion, correctly known as **Sanaatan Dharma** (“the eternal and intrinsic essence”) is an ancient religion such that science has been unable to establish its origin. In ancient times, the principles of *Sanaatan Dharma* were communicated through telepathic and intuitive means which in subsequent eras got replaced by verbal means. The oldest written scriptural texts have been dated at around ten thousand years ago.

Truth, absolute reality and righteousness are *Sanaatan Dharma’s* sheer anchors. Indeed Dharma itself means “living by the inherent righteousness and conscience through self-purification”. It is this capacity of *Viveka* (ability to distinguish between right and wrong and conform to the good principles) that separates humans from animals. Spiritual growth and purification comes from leading a dedicated life based on non-violence, love and compassion, righteous conduct and selfless service. The Truth may be realized through devotion to a particular aspect of the Supreme reality within. Hence the worship of a chosen deity and practices of introspection, self analysis, selfless actions, Ultimately the existence of the Supreme *Brahman* within is to be experienced and realized.

The earliest written **scriptures** are the *Vedas*, compiled in four volumes - *Rig, Yajur, Saama* and *Atharva*. The *Vedas*, besides providing divine wisdom,

¹ *Bodhichitta Parigrah -Jagatvayaadhjprashamanam bhayshajyamidattamam, bhavadhvabhramanashraantajagadvishraamapaadapaha.*

encompass multiple sciences including mathematics, physics, astronomy, civil and mechanical engineering, metallurgy, architecture, chemistry, medicine and surgery, philosophy, arts, literature, grammar and other new sciences that are being unearthed from the enormous span of the Vedas.

The Vedas gave rise to *Dharma Shaastras* such as *Manu*, *Paraashara*, *Yaajnyavalkya* and *Devala Smritis*, which are codes of conduct, rules and regulations for the orderly behavior and operations of humanity. The philosophy of *Vedanta*, derived from the Vedas, is contained in the phenomenal texts known as *Upanishads*. The *Upanishads* are the *Vedantic* expositions and elucidate the philosophies of purification and evolution to achieve purity and divinity.

The essences contained in the Vedas are illustrated in the *Puranas* (such as *Ramaayana*, *Mahaabhaarata* and *Shrimad Bhaagvatam*) as historical records (*Itihaasas*) of saints, spiritual masters and righteous champions, for the ordinary person to readily relate through different philosophies of *Saankhya Yoga*, *Raja Yoga*, *Bhakti Yoga* and *Karma yoga*.

The *Brahma Sutras* are compilations of aphorisms and principles providing the science of spirituality (*Brahmajnaana*). However the most common Hindu scripture in contemporary times is the *Bhagwad Geeta* (Dialogue with God) and constitutes a small but and extremely vital part of the *Mahaabhaarata*. The *Geeta* provides guidance on how the perennial struggles of life can be overcome through correct balance of the mind and accurate understanding of the reality of life and its challenges. The *Geeta* provides the much needed perspective of God-realization to conquer the difficulties, hindrances and struggles that are thrust by life and live an all-round healthy life:

“There is only one refulgent Being (God) who remains unnoticed in all living beings; by whom the whole universe is pervaded, who is the innermost entity (Atman) of all; who presides over all actions; who is the Lord of all, witness, conscience; the only one without a second and untouched by the three states (waking, dream and deep sleep)”²

²*Shvetaashvatra Upanishad - “Eko Devah Sarvabhooteshu Goodhah, Sarvavyaapee Sarvabhootaantaraatmaa, Karmaadhyakshah Sarvabhootaadhivaasah, Sakshee Chetaa Kevalo Nirgunashcha”*

*“The Jiva (Soul) in the body is an eternal portion of Myself. Seated in the Prakriti, it attracts the senses (five) - the mind being the sixth”.*³ Each soul is a part of the Supreme Being. However each soul has emerged to fulfill its responsibility and inquisitiveness. In so doing a soul acts and further conditions the *jiva* (soul).

The foundation of the *Sanataan Dharma* is the belief of *karma* (law of action - that every action is a cause for an eventual effect), reincarnation and that every living being has a soul. Depending on the quality of actions, the laws of *karma* decide whether bad or good eventually effects an individual and the family, not only in current lifetime but in subsequent lives for the reincarnated soul.

The composer *Santideva* said *“Death does not differentiate between deeds done and deeds undone. It disregards both health and ill-health. It makes no distinction between past karma done and the future yet undone”.*⁴ Meaning that God’s laws govern death and life and all one’s deeds will create a result in this life or another to influence one’s fate. Therefore why not strive for good *karma* only? *Santideva* further says *“Therefore my only worry how I could overcome suffering which is the inevitable consequence of evil karma”.*⁵

Every action, influences the soul’s onward journey. Hence the intense awareness and deep respect for sentient consciousness that forms the foundation for Hindu responsibility.

Sanaatan tradition promotes living with integrity, causing no harm to others and pursuing the spiritual path by living life according to the canons of *dharmā*. The ultimate goal is to reach *Moksha* or *Nirvana*, i.e. independence from the rebirth cycle by freeing the self from all impurities for the pure soul to surface in its full divinity.

*“Then that goal should be sought, reaching where one does not return again. I seek refuge in the Primal Purusha (Being), from whom has come forth this ancient activity of creation”.*⁶

³*Bhagwad Geeta - 15.7 - Mamai vaa mso jivaloke, jivabhuutah sanaatanah, manah-sasthaani 'ndriyaani, praktisthaani karsati.*

⁴*Bodhicharyaavataara - (II.33) - Krtaakrtaaparikshoyam Mrtyurvikshmrmbhaghatakah, svasthaasvasthairaviksvaasya aakasmikamahaashanih.*

⁵*Bodhicharyaavataara (II.62) - Iiyameva tu ma chintaa yuktaa raatridivam sadaa, ashubhaanniyatam dukkham nihsareyam tatah katham.*

⁶*Srimad Bhagwad Geeta - 15.4 - Tatah padam tat parimaargitavyam, yasmin gataa na nivartanti bhuuyah, tam eva caa dyam purusam prapadye yatah pravruttih puraani.*

This ultimate goal is what guides a Hindu through life and all behaviors. The pathway to achieving *Moksha*, provides deep significance and importance to religious practices and how these need to be incorporated into daily life, activities and relationships. *Sanaatan Dharma* prescribes righteous behavior as the primary requisite for every individual.

Righteous behavior begins by considering one's parents as the manifested representatives of God. The Vedic scriptures state that just as every individual has a spiritual-cord binding him/her to the Supreme Being, similarly each individual has a special cord fastened to the parents. In particular the umbilical cord binding the child to the mother is a representation of the even more special bond that one has to the mother.

Mother the Origin

Sanaatan Dharma bestows high esteem upon a Mother as the potential that emulates the miraculous power of life-giving and creation. Giving birth is inexplicable for any person. It creates an extraordinary bond between the parents and child. Hindus believe that this bond persists through many past lives and continues for innumerable lives.

Hindus consider a mother as an embodiment of God and is therefore appropriately revered and worshiped.⁷ It is the *dharmic* responsibility of every Hindu, to bestow great reverence for a mother as the humble and selfless cause of life. The *Vedic* literature states that the Supreme *Brahman*, upon wielding *Shakti* (supreme power), becomes *Ishwar* (God) and thereby performs the functions of creation, sustenance and destruction. *Shakti* is worshiped separately as the power of *Ishwar* and is given a feminine genre. It is believed that because of the power to give life, a mother is imbued with the powers of *Shakti* and a woman is called *Shaktiswarupini*. The *Vedic* sages say that the worship of the unseen divine *Shakti*, is made more accomplished by worshipping one's mother and womanhood as the closest manifestation of the essence of *Shakti*. A mother and motherliness is considered worthy of worship as the divine *Shakti* and provides the overwhelming experiences of compassion and selfless love.

⁷ "Matru Devo Bhava"

Since the ancient *Vedic* period, Hindu women have been held in the highest respect. In Hindu society, a woman is perceived as a sister or a mother, but not as a mere woman or an object of admiration. It is widely believed in the Hindu faith system that God's grace is freely availed where women are respectfully venerated. As a child, a woman is *kanya*, the goddess *Durga*. As a wife, she is *Patni*, *Ardhangini* and *Saha Dharma Charini* i.e a partner in the husband's religious responsibilities. As a mother, she is *matrudevobhava* i.e. worthy of worship (*poojanya*).

Since the planet earth is our home and everything arises from her, Hindus revere the planet earth as a Mother and is worshiped through *Vedic* prayers and specified offerings - *"Permeating the earth, I support all beings by my power and becoming the nectarine moon, I nourish all plants"*.⁸

Moreover, Hindus do not restrict the Supreme Being to any particular genre. Nevertheless, there is freedom to conceive according to one's sentiment although the *Vedic* scriptures state that the supreme Brahman has no attributes. Nonetheless God is not always depicted as male but also as female:

"O Durga devi, I bow to you the omnifarious, the sovereign of the entire creation, the omnipotent, and the source of all power. O Devi, protect us from all kinds of threats".⁹

Absolute Being, the One Queen, transcendental Goddess overwhelming the three states and hence called Tripura, who though undivided and whole, manifests the universe's variety in Her.¹⁰

The *Rig Veda* mentions several revered manifestations of the Supreme Goddess - *Prithvi* (Earth Goddess), *Aditi* (mother of the Deities), *Usha* (Presiding Deity of dawn), *Ratri* (Spirit of Night) and *Aranyani* (Lady of the forest).

⁸ *Srimad Nhwagwad Geeta - 15.13 - Gaam avisya ca bhutani, dhaarayaamy aham ojasaa, pusnaami cau sadhii sarvaah, somo bhutvaa rasaatmakah.*

⁹ *Durga Saptashatee - "Sarvasvaroope Sarvashe Sarvashakti Samanvite, Bhayabhistaahi No Devi Durgaadevi Namostute"*

¹⁰ *Tripura Rahasya*

Ayurveda

For the purpose of the Faith for Life, the science of medicine, diagnosis, treatment and surgery is relevant. The *Atharva Veda* details the science of health and medicine as **Ayurveda** - meaning the knowledge of vitality (for living life according to the principles of nature with endurance, longevity and durability). It explains maintenance of health, preventive care, curative therapy, diagnostics and treatment (pharmacy and pharmacology). The origins of *Ayurveda* can be traced to three original *Gurus* - Internal medicine (by *Atreya*), Surgery (by *Dhanvantri*) and gynecology and pediatrics (by *Vagbhata* of the *Kashyap* School). *Ayurvedic* literature is composed of three epochal works - *Charaka-samhita* (1st century BCE), *Sushruta-samhita* (4th century BCE) and *Ashtanga-hridaya* (6th century AD) and are referred to as *Brihat Trayi*. *Ayurveda* has eight main branches that include internal medicine, surgery, neurology, gynecology, embryology, midwifery, nutrition, dentistry, ophthalmology, rhinology, psychology, toxicology, genetics, rejuvenation and vitality and other specialized fields.

Ayurveda considers that there are eight fields of living and that disruption in any of the eight adversely affects health and longevity. The eight fields are - Spiritual life, wealth, career, caste (birth situation), relationships, creative play, psychological health and physical health. Holistic living is the art of engaging in each field in an integrated and balanced manner.

Ayurveda acknowledges that all things are composed of the five essential elements - Earth (solid), Water (liquid and flow), Fire (energy), Air (atmospheric) and Space (considered as an element). The *Vedas* provides a prayer for the worship of the elements “*Aum may the five elements, the life giving air, the nourishing earth, the (agni) food digesting - energy (fire), the juice promoting water, and the balance-maintaining sky (ether- space), make my body healthy and strong. I pray for thy blessings to live a hundred years in the company of my kith and kin and in wealth and prosperity*”.

The Vedic scriptures state - “*From the pure Soul emanates space, from space arises air, from air springs forth fire, from air and fire, water is generated, from water results earth, from earth plants emerge, from plants food is produced, and from food the body. Thus the body is composed of food. The eventual assimilation of food results in semen and seed through which beings*

*come about. All beings consume appropriate food and thus produce their progeny”.*¹¹

Ayurveda indicates that different proportions and compositions of these elements result in creating different human beings, creatures and all sentient and insentient things. Hindus believe in the power of God in everything that surrounds one, animate or inanimate. The differences amongst humans are due to their peculiar inherent subtle tendencies (*vasanas*) which determine the unique mix of the elements, which in turn determines the specific combination of dosha constituents (humors) that determine the peculiar *dosha* constitution of a person. The three dosha constituents are *Vatta* (Fluid- combination of the elements air and space), *Kapha* (Compact - combination of the elements water and earth and related to phlegm) and *Pitta* (Verve - combination of the elements fire and water and related to bile). These constituents combine in varying compositions to produce a unique homeostatic *dosha* type of a person and results in the peculiar idiosyncratic qualities of a person (physical, physiological, psychological, intellectual, behavioral, capacities, abilities and potentials).

The unique *dosha* type of a person determines the specific physiology and proper functioning of that human being. Health of a person is determined by ensuring that the balance of the special mix of the *dosha* type is maintained within certain limits and not disturbed. Any imbalance in the special *dosha* composition will disturb the *dosha* type and result in disease or poor health.

Ayurveda states: “A harmonious balance between work, play, exercise and rest must be maintained at all times with absolute vigilance, alertness and conscious of one’s true and ethical conduct”. The *Charak Samhita* states “When the three doshas are in equilibrium, the power of digestion is normal and such a person is healthy”.¹²

¹¹ *Atman akashaha, akashad vayuh, Vayoragmihi agnerapah adabhyaha prithvihi, pritivya aushadhayah, aushadhibhyonnan annat purushah sa vas asha purushah annarasamayaha.*

¹² *Charak Samhita - Samdoshas Samagnishds Samdhatu Malkriyah, Prasna tmendriy-manals Swasth ity midhiyale*

Prevention is better than cure - indicates that a person's behavior and life practices must conform to the inherent nature of the person (*dosha* type) and be based upon the principles of righteousness, goodness, harmony and morality. Depending on the *dosha* type of a person (can be identified by a *Vaidya* by simply checking the three strokes of the pulse), the person must observe certain life behaviors (scope of work, rest, specific diet and regimes). Any divergence from these prescriptions disturbs the *dosha* type and thereby escalates the vulnerability to disease or sickness. However if a person complies to the rules of his/her *dosha* type, then the person's holistic health (body mind and soul) is preserved or even enhanced with improved immunity and functioning.



HEALTH SEEKING BEHAVIORS

Introduction

Health seeking behaviours (HSB) are the practices that promote the enjoyment of good health for the wellbeing of an individual. This realisation contributes to making good health valued as an asset for all. HSB are the lifestyles that promote hygiene, keeping physically and mentally fit and also avoiding situations that would foster the spread of disease among the community.

Current Situation in Kenya

In Kenya, people go for self medication or over the counter prescriptions. This means that they seek health facility-based care late, hence poor compliance to treatment. In other cases, they resort to alternative medical care, for instance herbalists and witchdoctors since they believe that herbal medicine works better than conventional drugs.

Cultural and religious beliefs also interfere with health seeking behaviours, for instance people who object to blood transfusion even when needed.

Rationale

The bulk of the disease burden can be reduced by simple household practices such as hand-washing with soap, boiling water and exclusive breastfeeding.

Myths, Misconceptions and Wrong Practices

These include food taboos, not seeking medical care because of religious and cultural beliefs, ignorance of quality healthcare services and belief in traditional healers and witchdoctors.

Correct Practices to be Promoted

- i. Promote a child's mental and social development by being responsive to their needs for care and by encouraging the child's development through talking, playing, and providing a stimulating environment.

- ii. Ensure sick children receive appropriate and timely treatment.
- iii. Take appropriate actions to prevent and manage child injuries and accidents.
- iv. Dispose human and animal wastes safely and wash hands with soap and water after visiting the toilet, before preparing meals or feeding children.
- v. Avoid eating meat from dead or sick animals.
- vi. Ensure that drinking water is safe.
- vii. Protect your child from indoor (household) air pollution.
- viii. Follow recommendations given by health workers on treatment, follow-up and referral.
- ix. Ensure that every pregnant woman receives the recommended antenatal visits and doses of tetanus vaccination, and is supported by family and community in seeking appropriate care, especially at delivery and during the postpartum and lactation period.
- x. Involve fathers in the care of the child and in the family's reproductive health.
- xi. Ensure that your child's teeth are checked at a dental clinic once a year from ages one to five years.

Supportive Scriptural References

The Bhagwad Geeta differentiates between healthy (virtuous) and demoniac qualities -

*“Fearlessness, purity of heart, steadfastness in knowledge and Yoga, giving of charity, control of senses, worship and sacrifice, study of scriptures, austerity and straightforwardness, harmlessness, truthfulness, absence of anger, renunciation, tranquility of mind, abstaining from malicious talk, compassion to all creatures, absence of desire (pleasurable), gentleness, modesty, absence of fickleness, splendor, forgiveness, fortitude, purity, absence of malice, absence of pride, humility, - these are the qualities of those endowed with divine virtues and well being”.*¹³

“Hypocrisy, arrogance, pride, anger, harshness and ignorance are the marks of one who is born of demoniacal properties. Possessed of hypocrisy, conceit and

¹³ Bhagwad Geeta (XVI.1-3) *Abhayam sattvasamsuddhir jnaanayogavyavasthithi daanam damas ca yajnas ca svaadhyaayas tapa aarjavam, ahimsaa satyam akrodhas tyaagah saantir apaisunam dayaa bhutesv aloluptvam maardavam hrir acaapalam, tejah ksamaa dhrtih saucam adroho naa timaanitaa bhavanti sampadam daivim abhiaatasya bhaarata.*

*arrogance given to insatiable passion, adopting vain ideas through delusion, they engage in action with improper resolves. Bound by hundred ties of expectation, given over to passion and wrath, they strive to obtain wealth by unjust means for fulfillment of desires”.*¹⁴

The Bhagwad Geeta warns one of the consequences of demoniacal actions and qualities - *“The triple gate of hell is passion, anger and greed leading to the ruin of oneself, therefore one should abandon them”.*¹⁵

Selfless Conduct

Depending on one’s behavior (righteous or otherwise), any effort (action which uses certain energies depending on its level of righteousness) causes a certain imprint (emitted energy) to be dispersed into the atmospheric consciousness and eventually culminates into an effect targeting the person. If the action was good then a corresponding good eventually benefits the person; and vice versa. This concept of action (cause) and its inevitable result (effect) is the premise upon which the philosophy and disciplines of *Karma and Karma Yoga* have been intuited by the *Yogins* (sages).

The Hindu scriptures greatly emphasize on the philosophy of karma-yoga, which indicates that as the behavior, so does one receive (as one sows, so shall one reap). *“As one perceives, so shall the world appear”.*¹⁶ *Karma-yoga* (the discipline by which one becomes independent of the consequences of action) declares that each individual creates its own destiny through the deeds of thought, words and actions.

Actions by themselves cannot be bad. It is the motive (of the action) and attitude (of the performer) that determines the manner in which the result of the action will

¹⁴ *Bhagwad Geeta (XVI - 4,10,12) - dambho darpo timaanas ca krodhah paarusyam eva ca ajnaanam caa bhijaatsya paartha sampadam aasurim. Kaamam aasritya duspuuram dambhamaanamadaanvitaah mohaad ghrivaa sadgraahaan pravartante sucivrataah. Aasaapaasatair baddhaah kaamakrodhapaarayanaah ihante kaamabhogaartham anyaayenaa rthasamcayaan.*

¹⁵ *Bhagwad Geeta (XVI-21) - Trividhaam narakasye dam dvaaram naasanam aatmanah kaamah krodhas tathaa lobhas tasmaad etat trayam tyajet.*

¹⁶ *“Yatha drushti tatha shrushti”*

eventually affect the person. *Karma yoga* provides the rationale and reasoning for disciplining behavior through righteous actions and proper code of conduct.

*“The self alone is the friend of the self and the self alone is the enemy of the self”*¹⁷ -meaning that the person’s own actions determine the manner in which one’s life turns out.

Therefore *Patanjali’ Sutr*s and *Bhagawad Geeta* endorse a code of ethical conduct that includes the disciplines of *yama & niyama* (control of one’s attitude, perception, behavior and thinking):

*“For, the man who is regulated in diet and recreation, restrained in action, who is disciplined in sleeping and waking, gets rid of all sorrow”*¹⁸

Buddhism reveres those that have achieved complete self-control and is in command of their mind- *“I bow to all the reliquaries sheltering the bodhisattvas, to all the erudite preceptors and the venerable yatis, who have attained perfection through self-control”*.¹⁹

Performing actions is not condemned while laziness and inefficiency is condemned - *“He who outwardly restraining the organs of action, sits mentally dwelling on objects for sense gratification, that man of deluded intellect is a hypocrite”*.²⁰ Moreover since man must act, let all effort, thus, be genuine, efficient and righteous.

When actions are truly selfless and therefore efficient i.e. performed for the welfare of others and as many; then the eventual energies released by such righteous actions are profoundly pure and therefore influence the environment in a positive manner to ensure that the overall situation is more conducive to progressive results (such as timely and adequate rainfall, quality food production and harmony and peace amongst all beings).

¹⁷ *Bhagwad Geeta* 6.5 - *“Atmai va hy aatmano bandhur aatmai va ripur aatmanah”*

¹⁸ *Bhagwad Geeta* 6.17 - *“Yuktaahaaravihaarasya yuktachestasya karmasu, Yuktasvapa-naavabodhasya yogo bhavati duhkhaaha”*

¹⁹ *Saantideva Bodhisattvacharyaavataara* (2.25) -*Sarvachaytyani vandehm bodhisattvashryamstathaa, namah karomyupaathyaayaan abhivandyan yatimstathaa.*

²⁰ *Bhagwad Geeta* - 3.6 -*“Karmendriyaani samyamyaa ya aaste manasaa smaran indriya-arthaan vimuudhaatmaa mithyaacaarah sa ucyate”*

*“The fruit of virtuous actions is sattva (pure), while that of rajas is sorrow and that of tamas is ignorance. Of sattva is born knowledge (and therefore righteousness and goodness), of rajas undoubtedly is greed and tamas gives birth to negligence, stupor and ignorance (delusion)”.*²¹ **[Sattva, Tama and Rajas are explained in Cap 3 in relation to food types. However these qualities are applicable to any actions, items of beings].**

An analogy narrated in the *Vedas* and *Upanishads* is related to the conservation of the environment. Hindus and humanity are advised to exercise their responsibility in maintaining a clean and thriving environment and avoid pollution of the valuable elements of water, air and earth. Such diligence and dedicated care by people would ensure a healthy nutrient base for forest and food generation. In turn, the forest jungles purify the air and provide oxygen for animals. Quality fruits and vegetables, thus produced, guarantee nutritious food that even when consumed in small quantities would suffice and provide good health and healing. This enhances the overall well-being (psychological, mental, emotional and physical) and welfare of man who becomes more conducive to peaceful actions. If the environment is preserved and further improved, as a devout fulfillment of man’s duty and without seeking personal gains, the eventual oxygen and nutrients released and will contain the energies of benevolence and compassion - so assure the *Vedic* scriptures. The Hindu scriptures provide such prodigious reasoning and therefore emphasize selflessness and righteousness (living life as a *yajna* (selfless responsibility and sacrifice of personal gain) to help mankind) as the basis for achieving harmony and peace with fellow humans and nature.

*The Mahabharata explains “Through yajna, the energies and essences of the sacrificed are discharged into the atmosphere and eventually return as life giving rain for trees and plants on earth that in turn purify the air to maintain life”.*²²

Such emissions of goodwill energies by human beings, further tips the overall balance between good or bad that would result. Therefore it is recommended that

²¹ *Srimad Bhagwad - 14.16/17 - Karmanah sukrtasyaahuh saattvikam nirmalam phalam, rajasas tu phalam duhkham, ajnaanam tamasah phalam. Sattvaat samjaayate jnaanam, rajaso lobha eva ca, pramaadamohau tamaso bhavatojnaanam eva ca.*

²² *Mahabhaarata - Yatha praja pabhavati namasomya ivamalam, Agnou prasthahuti brahmannadityamupagachhati, Adityajjayatevrushthi vrushterannam tataha praja.*

when the faithful pray together for a common purpose, the plea is more likely to fructify than when praying alone.

The scriptures cry out to man to exert dedicatedly to achieve perfection and efficiency of work without the anticipation or anxiety of the results - *“The world gets bound by actions except those that are performed selflessly (altruistically as sacrifice), do therefore perform actions for the sake of sacrifice to the Lord, free of attachment of the result (achieve perfection of work rather than worrying about the outcome)”*²³

Thus it is vital for a person to regulate his/her behavior and thinking, such that it is righteous and duty-bound (*dharmic*) and does not bring about negativity such as malice, sickness or disharmony (individually, socially or with nature). In the ancient times, mammoth sacrificial rituals were performed. Since the level of purity was superior, every person participating had genuine commitment for worship and dedicated all efforts for the sacrificial rites and to the Supreme Lord. The sacrificial rites comprised chanting mantras, prayers, invocations, praises and offerings were presented into the sacrificial fire representing the Lord.

*“The offering to the holy fire, reaches the sun, from sun comes rain, through rain grows food, and by consuming food, beings and the world is born”*²⁴

The relation of man’s purity in working (as dedication to the Lord with faith) and the environment is further emphasized by the scriptures as follows:

*“From food, creatures come into being, food is produced by rain, rain ensues from sacrifice (yajna) and sacrifice through (selfless) pure action”*²⁵

“Therefore always efficiently do your duty by dedicating all action to the Supreme.

²³ *Srimad Bhagwad Geeta - 3.9 - “Yajnaarthaat karmano nyatra loko yam karmabandhanah tadartham karma kaunteya muktasangah samaacara”*

²⁴ *Manusmriti - 3.76 - “Agnou prastahutihi samyaadityamu patishthate, adityajjayaate vrishti vrushtheraannam tatah praajaah”.*

²⁵ *Srimad Bhagwad - 3.14 - “Annaad bhavanti bhuutani parjanyaad annasambhavah yajnaad bhavati parjanyo yajnah karmasamudbhavah”*

Doing work without attachment (expectation of the fruits), man attains the Supreme".²⁶

Thus to maintain life on earth and appreciate the purity of all elements and things, all work and actions should be performed as a *yajna* and dedicated to the Lord.

The *Bhagwad Geeta* and the *Upanishads* state that illness and health-related issues result from karma of the current and past lives. Nevertheless *karma yoga* states that the illness or difficulty resulting from past karma provides an opportunity to purify the karmic cause and thereby become liberated from the bond of that karma and evolve spiritually.

Ethical Conduct & Procreation:

The Vedic scriptures state "A persons primary duty is correct behavior so as to achieve lasting happiness in this birth, world and beyond. There is no piousness where there is no righteous behavior".²⁷

They also state "*Without the knowledge of the scriptures one is ignorant of right behavior, pure and healthy food will not be known and one will be shrouded in ignorance always suffering till untimely death*".²⁸

God declares, "*The Mahat Brahma (the Prakriti - Universe) is my womb, wherein I place the seed and from that is the birth of all beings*".²⁹ The mother's womb is a worldly representation of the Universal womb. It is the divine receptacle granted by God for the purpose of encapsulating and nourishing the formation of a being into which God breathes His life force (*prana*), that is a Soul.

²⁶ *Srimad Bhagwad - 3.19 - "Tasmaad asaktah satatam kaaryam karma samaacara asakto hy acharan karma param aapnoti puurusah.*

²⁷ *Acharah paramo dharmah, shrutyuktah smarta evacha, Tasmadasmin sadayukto, purushah pratyachchacha.*

²⁸ *Anabhyasen vedanaam acharasya cha varjanaat. Aalasyadanna doshaacya mriyurviprajighansati.*

²⁹ *Bhagwad Geeta - 14.3 - Mama yonir mahad brahma tasmin garbham dadhaamy aham, sambhavah sarvabhutaanaam tato bhavati bhaarata.*

Therefore copulation in marriage is respectfully to facilitate an ideal intention of procreation rather than for sensual pleasure. Thus if regulated and confined within marriage (monogamous) for procreation, then sexual activity is not considered harmful or sinful.

The scriptures state that unrestricted sensual pleasure causes one to become obsessed with the physical and material and makes one inordinately extrovert and sensual rather than subjective and in control of passions. *“Attachment and aversion for objects of the senses are rooted in the senses. Man should never come under their sway for these are stumbling blocks”.*³⁰

The ethical conducts of *yama* and *niyama* advice the regulation of the mind and control of sense-gratification (of which sex is considered licentious). *Vedic* scriptures states that a seeker has to turn away entirely from the invasion of the vital and physical by the sex-impulse - for if one does not conquer this, there can be no settling of the divine consciousness within the being. The scriptures consider sexual activity as a hindrance to spiritual progress and hence the paragon of *Bramachaarya* (celibacy through purification and ethical self-control). *“Sexual abstinence, when genuinely practiced (rather than forced suppression), is beneficial for the element in the retas (semen) is then converted into its other element which feeds the energies of the mental, vital and physical. This justifies the concept of Bramachaarya whereby retas is transformed to ojas”.*³¹

Therefore the act of copulation must emanate through pure intentions rather than sense gratification. *“Readily one indulges in carnal pleasures, only to result in diseases of the body. Although knowing that the ultimate end is death, even than man does not leave sinful behavior”.*³²

Unfortunately humanity has pursued the easy paths of pleasure through self-gratification and covetousness rather than the righteous path or working dedicatedly and for humanity.

³⁰ *Bhagwad Geeta 3.24 - Indriyasye ndriyasya arthe raagadvesau vyavasthitau taylor na vasam aagacchet tau hy asya paripanthinau.*

³¹ *Sri Aurbino - Bases of Yoga*

³² *Bhaja Govindam - V28 - Sukhatah kriyate raamaabhogah, paschaaddhanta sareere roghah, yadyapi lokemaranam saranam, tadapi na munchati paapaacharanam.*

*“The triple gate of hell is passion, anger and greed leading to the ruin of the self, therefore one should abandon them”.*³³

We therefore witness increasing destitution and suffering in the world whereby underage girls conceive leading to social strife not just in the family but in the greater human society (single mothers, orphans, rape, HIV-AIDS and other new diseases and infections, famine, droughts, climate change, violence and such other troubling results).

Human Birth

The Vedic scriptures multifariously state that a birth is the beginning of a new chapter in the soul’s journey. *Vedic* literature substantiates that all life forms have an *aatma* (soul) and Hindus revere all life forms. Moreover human birth is extremely precious due to its intellectual and devotional abilities to achieve progressive realization of spiritual liberation (evolution).

The *Bhagavat Purana* states: *“One who is sufficiently intelligent should, from the onset of life, use all abilities for devotional and righteous actions to achieve merit, since the human form is a temporary existence”.*

The *Charaka Samhita* (*Saarirathanam*, Section 6 para 13) of *Ayurveda* stipulates the factors responsible for promotion of strength - *“birth in a place and in times of strong men and during pleasant climate, healthy seed and uterus, nourishing food, good physique, good maintenance, healthy mind, natural disposition, youth, action and cheerfulness”.*

The *Srimad Bhagwatam* stipulates that unless one can as their *dharmic* responsibility discipline the child for righteousness and liberation (religious and spiritual dedication), one should NOT become a parent! Certainly the father’s roles and responsibility have to be observed and fulfilled diligently for the welfare of the whole family.

In the ancient times, married couples were able to conceive saintly children through special rituals, mantras and prayers. The purer the intentions, the greater are the potentials for moral excellence of the offspring.

³³ *Srimad Bhagwad Geeta 16.21 - Trividham narakasye dam dvaaram naasanam
aatmanah kaamah krodhas tathaa lobhas tasmaad rtat trayam tyajet.*

There are extensive references on conceiving in a holistic manner so that the child is exemplary in all aspects and the mother's health and motherliness is also assured. The *Kanva* recension of the *Satapatha Braahmana* scripture, narrates in detail the rules and procedures (rituals, prayers, mantras and attitude) to be followed for procreation and also provides options to determine and decide the sex and character of the future child.

The married couple, is further advised to follow the eight-fold disciplines recommended by *Patanjali Ashtanga Yoga*:

- **Yama** - Practice of *Ahimsa* (Non-violence), *Satya* (Truthfulness), *Asteya* (non-stealing), *Bramacharya* (celibacy) and *Aparigraha* (Non-covetousness).
- **Niyama** - Practice of Purity (body, mind and spirit), Contentment, Austerity (tolerance and perseverance), *Swadhyaya* (study and understanding of religious resulting in worship of God), *Ishwar Pranidhan* (dedication of all actions and work to God).
- **Yogaasana** - physical postures and exercises to stimulate and regulate the physiological organs and tissues.
- **Pranayama** - cleansing (toxins) and healing by regulated breathing and breath control to achieve control of life force (*prana*).
- **Pratyahara** - control of senses and mind from running after desires and sense gratification with the result of becoming less extrovert and more subjective).
- **Dharna** - cultivating powers of concentration, will and drive)
- **Dhyana** - development of the powers of logical thinking and intuition.
- **Samadhi** - Meditation and abidance in the *Atman* self.

The practice of *yoga* and *yogasanas* cultivates the ability to regulate the body, mind and spirit and therefore maintain a harmonious balance and integration. Moreover the true relation between the husband and wife is on an equal footing of mutual help and close collaboration to ensure a harmonious family environment and relationships.

Diet and lifestyle should be based on the rules prescribed by Ayurveda in order to ensure the overall well-being of the mother and child. Ayurveda states that the mother's bodily health, mental and emotional status influences the mind and body of the growing foetus.

The ideal day for conception is estimated according to the menstrual cycle and astrological orientations to ensure a suitable character and wholesomeness of the child. Towards the appointed day, the couple follows a worshipful routine and performs sacrificial rites, prayers and mantra chants to invoke the divine blessings for the emergence of a devout, dutiful and holistically healthy child.

Purificatory Rites (*Samskaaras*)

The *Vedic* scriptures prescribe purificatory rites called ***Samskaaras*** meant to provide meaning, structure, purpose and true understanding of life. The *Gautama Dharmashastra* prescribes 40 *Samskaaras*, the *Grihya sutras* of the *Vedas* have 18 while the legendary compiler of the Sanskrit code of conduct, Manu narrates 13 in the *Manusmriti*. Traditionally sixteen are usually observed to stimulate the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual well-being of an individual and achieve a wholesome understanding of life's purpose.

For the *Sanaatani*, life is sacred journey and every step from birth to death is marked and acknowledged through religious ceremonies. A *Samskaara* is an enduring impression etched into the malleable substance of a person's mind at a psychological point in life. These ceremonies deeply influence the soul and direct life along the path of dharma. *Samskaara* means perfection and the ceremonies lead to that perfection through purification and integration involving prayers and specific rituals. Each sacrament, properly observed, empowers spiritual life, preserves religious culture and establishes bonds with inner worlds as the soul consciously accepts each succeeding discovery and duty in the order of God's creation. *Samskaaras* solicit special blessings from the deities, religious masters, society, relatives, family and friends. These blessings have a markedly positive effect, stabilizing the mind so that the deeper meanings of life can unfold within us. Therefore the activities of the purificatory rites help to achieve purity through which the inherent personality of the individual becomes fully developed.

Through these sacred rites, a Hindu:

- Upholds religious values and social institutions
- Acknowledges religious duties.
- Confirms allegiance to the divinities and commits to a divine centered religious life.
- Accepts the appropriate status within the social order with humility as a consequence of his karma (deeds) in past lives.
- Pledges to earn merit for oneself, family, ancestors, future and society.
- Assures to become a refined and religious individual qualified to transcend the lower nature and awaken the higher.

The main Samskaaras relevant to children and mother are:

RITE	PURPOSE	IDEAL TIME
GARBADHANA	Conception	After Marriage, before Pregnancy
PUNSAVANA	Protection of foetus	2nd or 3rd month of pregnancy
SIMANTONNAYANA	Satisfy mother's needs	6th to 8th month of pregnancy
JAATKARMA	Healing after birth	At birth, before severing the cord
NAAMKARANA	Naming	10-12 days after birth
NISKRAMANA	Introduction to the world	3rd to 4th months
ANNA PRASSANA	Weaning	6th to 8th months
CUDA KARANA	Shaving off hair	1st to 3rd years
KARNAVEDHA	Ear piercing - Health seeking	3rd to 5th years
UPANAYANA	Spiritual Initiation	After 8th year

The *Samskaaras*, are to be conscientiously performed and are intended to purify an individual and promote better harmony with society, nature and God. They facilitate smooth transition from one phase of life to the next (infant, child, teenager, youth, adult, etc). These rites of passage are performed from before conception to after death. However only those that are performed to the end of childhood are indicated in this book.

Conception

The first of the sixteen *Samskaara* ceremonies is called *Garbadhana* - purification of the womb of the mother-to-be. Hindus believe that it is the responsibility of married persons to continue the human race and therefore soon after marriage. Maternity is considered the principal role of the married woman. True maternity begins with the conscious creation of a being with willed sculpting of a soul arriving to develop and utilize a new body according to prescribed rituals in the *Vedic* scriptures and some *Upanishads*.

Innumerable *Vedic* and Hindu scriptures state that to bear a child and construct the body almost subconsciously is not enough. The actualization commences when by the power of thought, will and prayer, the couple conceive and create a complete character capable of manifesting an ideal. With this effort, maternity becomes truly precious and sacred and one enters the glorious work of the Supreme Spirit. Thereby womanhood transcends the ordinary and animalistic instincts towards real humanity and true dharmic responsibility.

Garbadhana is performed for fulfillment of one's parental obligations of procreation. It is to be performed before conception begins to ensure that the process of conceiving and nurturing the foetus is successful and that a child of wholesome health, virtuous character and spiritual disposition is conceived. This is based on the premise of the soul's previous existence and also that *Ayurveda* states that the mother's health and state of the mind actually influence the child's mind and body.

Before conception the parents are advised a strict nutritious and *sattvic* diet, regular exercise regimes, adequate rest and calmness (through control of desires and anxieties) through worship, prayers and *sadhanaa*. The couple and particularly the woman, that is to have the child, is placed in special conditions of beauty, peace and well-being in very harmonious settings and conditions, so that the child is formed in the best possible conditions.³⁴

Conception must take place when the couple is imbued in good thoughts so that goodness influences the conjugation of the seeds and consequently a child of sound health, sharp intellect and good character. The inner thoughts and feelings of the parents would affect the foetus and its character shall be shaped accordingly. Thus,

³⁴ *Sri Aurbindo - Ideal parent*

for each (husband and wife) the act of conceiving will be performed in complete and simple obedience to the divine law which inspires the identification in the conscience and will with the divine principle within oneself (the soul). For this the couple must understand the divine law and the principle within and must have had adequate practice of *sadhanaa* (worship). Among the individuals, the woman must be the first to realize the great potential of her child, as it is her special task to give birth to a superior specimen of a child.

After *Garbadhana*, two more pre-natal ceremonies are performed. The routines of worshiping God, religious practices, studying scriptures and prayerfulness would improve the health and happiness of the mother and be more conducive to the well-being of the child during and after pregnancy. This also facilitates a natural birth that is not excessively painful or laborious for the mother and child.

For *Sikhism*, *Guru Nanak* advocated a monogamous relationship that was not consanguineous. Every Sikh child is believed to possess the “divine spark” of the creator. Moreover, the point at which a baby is conceived represents the soul’s entry into the world. Conception is therefore a sacred act, carried out within the confines of a marriage that has been blessed in front of the *Guru Granth Sahib*. “*In the mother’s womb, life was enshrined and cherished. You were blessed with body and soul.*”³⁵

The *Vedic* scriptures impose strict punishments for illicit sex. The *Naarada Smriti* (1.12.15), forbids same-sex marriage or homosexual relations. The *Manusmriti* stipulates severe penalties for persons involved in homosexual relations, rape and extra marital relations.

Ayurveda (*Sushruta Samhita* Cap10 & 14) stipulates certain reproductive rules to be observed by a couple:

- Ayurveda (*Sushruta Samhita* Cap10 & 14) stipulates certain reproductive rules to be observed by a couple:
- Reproduction and reproductive activity can only occur within marriage between the married couple. Marriage cannot be consanguineous.
- Reproductive activity must take place in clean and legitimate surroundings.

³⁵ *Guru Granth Sahib - Guru Arjan, P. 1004*

- Reproductive activity is to be avoided
- On the 8th, 14th, 15th days of the lunar cycle.
- On the last days of the solar month.
- Around noon as this causes aggravation of the dosha balance.
- At midnight or early morning - the vatta and pitta dosha get imbalanced and disturbed.
- During advanced pregnancy, as this is injurious to the foetus and mother.
- With underage, deformed or elderly woman or another person's wife/husband as this transmits diseases and is detrimental to the semen, intellect and longevity of the man.
- With a person of same blood group.
- During menses as this causes weakening of sight, loss of longevity and vitality.
- When starving, fasting, thirsty or hungry states as this aggravates the dosha balance.
- When standing - as this brings about excessive loss of ojas (semen). Conservation of ojas strengthens immunity, blood production, intellectual and spiritual progress.
- When body is diseased - as this would damage the spleen or cause epilepsy.
- Incest, unnatural sexual activity (with animals) or withholding urges to urinate or defecate as this causes bladder concretions.

Key Messages

- Always consult a qualified healthcare giver whenever you are ill, in addition to prayer.**
- Observe the child for any unusual signs and symptoms that could lead to illnesses and seek help from a health worker.**
- Ensure regular visits to health facilities for professional care and health advice.**



a. Care of Pregnant Women

Introduction

Every pregnant woman always desires an uncomplicated pregnancy and, ultimately, a healthy baby. Every year, however, about 6,000 women and adolescent girls die in Kenya from pregnancy and childbirth related complications (KDHS 2008/2009).

Every year, some 10 million women and adolescent girls experience complications during pregnancy, many of which leave them and/or their children with infections and severe disabilities. Maternal deaths occur due to bleeding during or after delivery, obstructed labour, high blood pressure, and severe infections like malaria, HIV, severe anaemia or other pre-existing conditions. Malaria in pregnancy can lead to miscarriage, stillbirth or low birth weight, anaemia or severe illnesses.

More than 15 years since the launch of the Safe Motherhood Initiative (SMI), maternal and neo-natal mortality levels in Africa have sadly continued to rise instead of declining. While a few countries have experienced sustained reductions in maternal mortality, little or no progress has been achieved in countries with the highest levels of mortality, like Ethiopia and Nigeria, where the maternal mortality rate is over 1,000/100,000 live births. Of all maternal deaths occurring globally, 99 per cent of them are in developing countries, with the sub-Saharan Africa having the highest maternal mortality rate (MMR) of 900 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births.

Current Situation in Kenya

Maternal mortality levels in Kenya have remained unacceptably high at 410 deaths per 100,000 live births, with some regions reporting MMRs of over 1,000/100,000 live births. Neonatal mortality rate is estimated at 31 deaths per 1,000 live births (KDHS 2008/9). Most of these deaths are preventable.

Deliveries by skilled attendants increased from 40 to 43 per cent (KDHS 2008/9). This means that over 50 per cent of deliveries among Kenyan women are attended by unskilled persons, hence both mother and newborns are in danger should any complication arise during delivery or the post-natal period.

- i. Majority of women of reproductive age do not have any pre-pregnancy care, hence some women enter pregnancy with complications.
- ii. Most pregnant women attend antenatal clinics late and majority do not make all the four recommended visits for optimal care.
- iii. More than half of the women in Kenya deliver at home without a skilled birth attendant, putting them and their newborns at the risk of poorer birth outcomes.
- iv. Only 10 per cent of women in Kenya seek or utilise post-natal services as a critical point of care for mothers and babies.
- v. In places where access to care is limited, majority of mothers and their newborns die immediately after birth.

Rationale

Many women, including adolescent girls, have difficulty accessing quality health care due to poverty, distance, poor road networks, inadequate reproductive health information - especially among the rural and urban poor and women in semi-arid regions, pastoral and nomadic populations – inadequate services or cultural and religious practices.

Governments and local authorities, with support from non-governmental and community-based organisations, have a responsibility to address these issues to ensure women and their newborns receive the required quality health care.

Most pregnant women have pre-existing uncontrolled conditions, which may cause them complications in pregnancy. Majority of pregnant women attend ANC late and more than half of the pregnant women in Kenya are delivered by unskilled attendants. Majority do not seek post-natal care.

The major causes of maternal deaths include bleeding, infection after delivery, obstructed labour, complications caused by abortion and severe anaemia. The deaths can be prevented by early detection and treatment, with timely transportation to and care at a hospital with the necessary facilities.

Myths, Misconceptions and Wrong Practices

- i. Some communities believe that a woman should not say she is pregnant until it is physically visible for fear that the spirits will take away the pregnancy.
- ii. Some women believe that there are forced HIV tests at ANCs.
- iii. Some communities insist on certain ceremonies being performed on the placenta, hence they prefer delivery at home.
- iv. Some expectant women shun health facilities over claims that health workers physically beat or verbally abuse them during labour.

Correct Practices to be Promoted

A lack of recognition of danger signs during pregnancy and failure to take appropriate action, inadequate or lack of birth planning and preparedness, and the delays in seeking appropriate skilled care at a health facility are some of the contributory factors.

The risks of childbearing for the mother and her baby can be greatly reduced if:

- i. A woman is healthy and well nourished before becoming pregnant;
- ii. She has regular maternity care by a trained health worker at least four times during every pregnancy;
- iii. The birth is assisted by a skilled birth attendant, such as a doctor, nurse or midwife;
- iv. She and her baby have access to specialised care if there are complications; and
- v. She and her baby are checked regularly during the 24 hours after childbirth, in the first week, and again six weeks after giving birth.
- vi. Any pregnant mother can develop life-threatening complications. These can neither be predicted nor prevented. The families need to identify danger signs early and immediately transport the pregnant women to a hospital with facilities for services such as caesarian section and blood transfusion. These danger signs during pregnancy, delivery or after delivery include.
- vii. bleeding, severe headache, convulsions, breathlessness at rest, good labour pains without the baby moving and fever with chills and rigors.
- viii. Spacing children for at least two to three years apart improves the survival of both mother and child. All pregnant women should make at least four ANC visits, with the first visit within the first three months.
- ix. Every woman should visit a clinic for antenatal care as soon as she knows that she is pregnant.

- x. All pregnant women should have an individual birth plan (where to deliver, how to get there, who to assist you, family to put money aside, etc).
- xi. All mothers, including those who have delivered at home, should attend post-natal clinics for care within two days of delivery.
- xii. All women of childbearing age, including adolescent girls, need to be protected against tetanus for their own benefit and for their future babies. Over time, five doses of the tetanus vaccine are recommended for lifelong protection. A booster should be given during pregnancy if the woman has not yet received five doses.
- xiii. Girls who are educated, healthy and well-nourished are more likely to have a healthy pregnancy and healthy children. It is estimated that two maternal deaths can be prevented by every additional year of school attendance per 1,000 women.
- xiv. All pregnant women should brush their teeth after breakfast and after supper.
- xv. All pregnant women should visit a dental clinic at least twice for checkup.

Key Messages

- i. Every woman should attend ante-natal clinics as soon as she knows that she is pregnant.**
- ii. For the health of both mothers and children, a woman should wait until her last child is at least two years old before becoming pregnant again.**
- iii. All mothers, including those who deliver at home, should attend post-natal clinics for care within two days of delivery.**

b. New Born Care

Introduction

Kenya has one of the highest numbers of newborn deaths in Africa, with a neonatal mortality rate of 33 per 1,000 live births and approximately 43,600 deaths occurring every year. One in every 14 babies born in Kenya will die before their first birthday and about one in nine before their fifth birthday. The main causes of neonatal deaths are: severe infections, difficulty in breathing, pre-term birth, congenital anomalies, neonatal tetanus (two per cent) and diarrhoea. The rate of low birth weight babies in Kenya is 10 per cent.

Neonatal care, which is closely linked to maternal care, will need more attention if Kenya is to make any progress in meeting the Millennium Development Goals target in under-five mortality (33/1,000) and infant mortality (26/1,000) by 2015.

Newborns need round-the-clock care and love. They should be fed, and kept clean, warm and fed nutritiously. Mothers and fathers or other primary caregivers contribute to building the foundation of the babies' future health, happiness, growth, learning and development.

Every child should complete the recommended series of immunisations as they are important for the early protection against diseases that can cause poor growth, disability or death.

Current Situation in Kenya

The 2008/09 Kenya Demographic Health Survey has shown that the infant mortality rate (IMR) improved to 52 from 77 per 1,000 live births in 2003. The under-five mortality rate improved to 74 from 115 per 1,000 live births. The neonatal mortality rate, however, only reduced marginally from 33 to 31 per 1,000 live births, contributing to 42 per cent of the under-five mortality compared to 29 per cent in 2003.

The factors contributing to the deterioration of child health indicators are: malnutrition, a high incidence of diseases, inappropriate household caring practices, poor environmental and living conditions and the HIV and AIDS pandemic.

Over 80 per cent of under-five deaths in Kenya are from preventable causes: neonatal conditions, pneumonia, diarrhoea, malaria, HIV and AIDS, and malnutrition.

Rationale

Newborns are vulnerable and most of them die in the first day and week of life when care is low. This is because most women deliver at home without skilled care for themselves and their newborns. Yet, simple measures like early initiation and exclusive breastfeeding, warmth, hygienic practices like handwashing and cord care can contribute to survival.

Over 80 per cent of under five deaths in Kenya are from preventable causes: neonatal conditions, pneumonia, diarrhoea, malaria, HIV and AIDS, and malnutrition. Children in malaria endemic areas are twice likely to suffer from severe anaemia as those in epidemic areas.

Other factors contributing to the deterioration of child health indicators are: malnutrition, a high incidence of diseases, inappropriate household caring practices, poor environmental and living conditions and the HIV and AIDS pandemic.

Correct Practices to be Promoted

A newborn should always be:

- i. Kept close to and frequently held and cuddled by the mother, father or other primary caregiver.
- ii. Exclusively breastfed from birth through the first six months on demand and at least eight times in a 24-hour period, contributing to bonding between the infant and the mother and giving the baby immunity against infections.
- iii. Loved and given affection, attention, encouragement and stimulation from her or his family members, helping the baby to grow and learn rapidly.
- iv. Kept warm, clean, comfortable and safe, and changed regularly and burped after feeding. Cared for in a clean environment that helps to prevent infections.
- v. Provided with quality health care, including regular check-ups with timely immunisations and weighing to monitor growth.

Supportive Scriptural References

Pregnancy Rites & Care

During the third month of pregnancy, when the foetus is delicate, the *Punsavana Samskaara* (for desired foetus characteristics and protection) is performed. This is performed for the strong physical growth of the foetus so that it can overcome vulnerabilities. Primarily it is to determine the gender and character of the desired child. Through prayers and rituals, the deity governing gender is worshiped and invoked to provide the desired gender and character.

Ayurveda makes following recommendations for pregnant mothers:

- No restrictions are applied to the normal physical activity during pregnancy. Women are advised to continue their daily activities. This ensures stimulative physiology where the strength of the mother's body is supplemented. Only in exceptional cases e.g. Anemia, weakness or certain sickness, the expectant mother can avoid or reduce physical activity.
- After the fifth month of pregnancy, the mother is advised to take small doses of castor oil to prevent constipation or pressure developing in the abdominal area. Enema of saline water or castor oil can also be used every fifteen days. In case delivery is anticipated to be difficult (incase of first pregnancy or where the baby's size is large) about 25gms of castor oil is taken (preferably with tea or milk) to ensure easier delivery.
- After delivery, a solution of 10-20gms of Margosa bark boiled in water is taken every morning and night for about a week to purify impure blood that may have accumulated.
- Margosa fruit juice (about 10gms) mixed with honey can be taken daily morning (for about a week) to cure anemia. However if necessary iron supplements should be taken upon the doctor's advice.
- Powder (3gms) of dried Margosa fruit and leaves can be taken with honey in the morning and evening to reduce mineral deficiency.
- When a pregnant mother has jaundice and if detected early, 10gms juice of castor oil leaves can be taken daily morning for about a week to cure the jaundice and reduce swellings. It also assists in urinary and stomach disorders.

The *Vedic* scriptures state that the soul enters the foetus during the seventh month of pregnancy. There are several ceremonies that pertain to pregnancy and childbirth, e.g. *Simantonnayana* ceremony when prayers are offered in praise of the baby after the arrival of the spirit in the seventh month.

The *Simantonnayana Samskaara* (also known as *Valaiakappu*) is performed during the seventh month of pregnancy. It involves the oiling of the scalp and hair and parting of the hair seeking safe delivery. This is the equivalent of a baby shower and means 'satisfying the craving of the pregnant mother'. It is celebrated by women. Prayers are offered for the mother and child with emphasis on healthy mental development of the unborn child. Hindus believe that mental state of a pregnant woman affects the unborn child. Therefore this *Samskaara* seeks to ensure that the mother is satisfied enough to ensure the well-being and satisfaction of the child. The mother wears glass bangles on the hands, sound of which is believed to reach the womb to comfort the child. Traditionally the bangles are removed after birth and gifted to the midwife.

Traditionally, during the last three months of pregnancy, the mother is allowed to fulfill cravings for certain foods as it is believed that these cravings are due to the body's (mother and baby) needs. The mother is also entering a vulnerable period in the final stages of the pregnancy and therefore nutritional needs must be satisfied.

The expectant mother is advised to rest as much as possible after the seventh month of pregnancy. Hindu custom is for the expectant mother to return to her parental home allowing the expectant mother to recuperate as much as possible. This is also to ensure that the mother and baby stay together for proper care and relationship. She returns to the marital home not earlier than forty days after delivery, allowing enough time to exclusively care for the newborn after birth. It is advised that antenatal and postnatal clinic visits be maintained while at the maternal home.

Birth by its nature is not only one of the most traumatic experiences, but is also most significant. For both the mother and child, birth is defined by a metamorphosis of one's body and self. A woman's body changes to accommodate a child's existence, development and eventual release. The mother's soul harbors another soul within the body. The child literally comes into being, is formed and released from the mother through conception, maternity and birthing. It is a mutual process in which both parties are participating dependently on one another.

Birth Rites

The *Jaatakarma Samskaara* (also known as *Suwarna Prashan*) is performed sometime during or after birth to welcome the child into the family. The exact time of the baby's birth is importantly noted as Hindus consult horoscopes and astrological influences throughout the life, which can only be referenced, based on the astrological alignments (of planets and stars) at the specific time and date of the birth. The *Sanataan Dharma* considers a child as a gift from God and therefore should be nurtured from conception.

Special religious chants create auspiciousness and purification to remove any suffering, contamination and trauma for the mother and child during birth. Both mother and child are considered to be in vulnerable state after birth. Therefore confinement of mother and baby and perhaps temporary separation are considered to protect them from exposure to disease and negativities, having spent nine months in close proximity and mutual dependency.

In certain Hindu customs, the placenta may be disposed off by burying it in earth to prevent negative influences, which may affect the well-being and longevity of the child. Moreover breast-feeding a infant causes the mother's uterus to contract properly and rapidly. This contraction also aids to expel any remnants of the placenta in the womb. Nursing the baby also prevents any hemorrhage of the uterus.

The ceremony includes purification of the infant and mother with medicinal herbs especially after the strain of birth and rituals for the ceremonial cutting of the umbilical cord. The remnants of placenta or membranes on the baby should be removed immediately after birth. *Ayurveda* recommends that the baby's mouth should be cleansed with *ghee* and rock-salt and a linen pad soaked in ghee be kept on the baby's forehead to prevent cold affecting the baby's head and sinuses.

The baby is given oil massage as part of the purification process. Traditionally the barber's wife massages the mother with oils to relax the muscles and encourage removal of toxins and any contamination that may have gathered during pregnancy and birth processes. This is necessary to facilitate proper recovery after pregnancy and birthing.

Socially it marks the transition of the mother and child into the family and society after the pernicious process of birthing. The purification is one of the most important

ceremonies since both the mother and child are vulnerable to negativities during and after birthing, so declare the Vedic scriptures. The purification ceremony (*chatti*) may also be performed on the sixth day after delivery, traditionally considered the most appropriate time. The central figure during the *Chatti* is the father's eldest sister.

A Vedic prayer prescribed for the couple upon birth of the child - *"O Child, you are the source of pleasure and light, the most delightful factor. You belong to God and are of the Good name. You are the entity whose name we know. May God bless you to make us satisfied; May God provide us good progeny, brave children and grant us the means of protection"*.³⁶

The ceremony involves whispering prayers³⁷ and mantras into the infant's ears by the father (or a respected and virtuous elder) to promote well-being, tranquility and good tendencies in the child. The father (or another virtuous and respected elder) ceremoniously writes the sacred letter, *Aum*, on the neonate's tongue with an electuary of curds, honey or jaggery (unbleached brown sugar), ghee (clarified butter), juice of *Brahmi* leaves, using a gold rod or spoon. According to *Ayurveda*, clarified butter and *Brahmi* promotes healthy skin, sweet voice, memory, intellect, talent and virility.³⁸

The father then blesses the child "I place in you everything, earth, atmosphere and heaven".³⁹ The ritual signifies the commitment to guide the child with virtues and encourage intellectual development through *dharmic* caring and love.

The *Bodhichitta - Parigrah* states "I feel happy with joy in the virtue that relieves from suffering all beings in unhappy states. May these suffering ones dwell in joy with virtue".⁴⁰

³⁶ *Yajur Veda 7.29 Om Kaasi katmvasi Kasyayasi ko namaasi, Yasye te namaa man mahi yaam tva somena titripaam, Bhuur bhuvva swah rupragah prajabih sye gvang suriro virai suposhah bosheeh.*

³⁷ *I give thee the wisdom of jaggery (or honey) born of satvir (purity), the bountiful of long life and protected by the Gods, may you live a hundred years in this world.*

³⁸ *Sometimes honey is used in place of jaggery. However honey is known to contain Clostridium botulinum bacteria that creates toxicity in the infant's digestive tract causing botulism that adversely affects the nervous system and can be fatal. Thus medically, honey is not recommended for infants (the bacteria is harmless for adults or older children).*

³⁹ *Brihadaraanyaka Upanishad - Cap 6, Brahmana 4.25*

⁴⁰ *Bodhichitta - Parigrah - (III.1) Apaayaduhkhavishraamam sarvasattvayha krtam subham, anumode pramodena sukham tishthantu dukkhitaaha.*

An application (*tilak*) of kajal (*Kohl*) in the form of the sacred letter, Aum, is made on the forehead, between the infant's eyebrows or behind the ear by the father's eldest sister. This is said to prevent negative influences or emotional disturbances.

Sikhism does not prescribe any special birthing rituals. However, *Amrit* (sweetened water that is sanctified by prayers and chants) may be given (few drops) in the mouth of the baby as a blessing for its cleansing properties. Family members will be encouraged to meditate and say prayers for the new-born and the mother. The mother herself will try and meditate during labor and recall verses from the *Guru Granth Sahib*.

Parental Care and responsibility

After the purification and prayers ritual, female members of the family wash the mother's breasts and the initial milk is drained. Gentle squeezing of milk before nursing begins ensures potency of lactiferous tubules and prevents complications like vomiting, dyspnea, cough and fever in the neonate.

The ceremony ends with very first feed of the child. The father presents the child to the mother and gives the mother's right breast to the child to suckle while praying "*Your breast which is unfailing and refreshing, abundant, generous with which you nourish all worthy beings, Sarasvati (the Goddess of knowledge and learning), give it here to my wife for my baby to suckle from*".⁴¹

The prayer describes the high worth and value of the mother's milk as that which is the nectar from the Goddess *Sarasvati*, and that will facilitate the child to develop the faculties for learning in order to become wise and successful. The prayer is also so that the mother has abundant and good quality milk produced for the continuous nourishment, sturdy growth and good development of the child.

Although recognizing that mother's milk is the best nutrition for the infant, the *Ayurvedic* literature suggests that few drops of mother's milk be discarded before each feeding to purify the mammary tubules. Nonetheless, colostrums is the first yellowish colored mother's milk that exudes after birth. It is considered rich in antibodies and beneficial for the baby's immunity as it also cleanses the digestive tract and builds intestinal immunity.

⁴¹ *Brihadaraanyaka Upanishad -6.4.27 - Athainam maatre pradaaya stanam prayacchati, yas te stanah sasayo yo mayobhuuh, yo ratnadhaa vasuvid yah sudatrah.*

The *Manu Smriti* declares “Prosperity and auspiciousness is permanently instituted in a family where the husband is happy and content with the wife and the wife with the husband”.⁴² This emphasizes the importance of like-minded couples getting married in order to bring harmony and progress in the family. Moreover the couple must perform their *dharmic* responsibilities to each other and understand and diligently perform the duties of a husband, wife, mother and father to ensure that their individual responsibilities and roles to other members of family, relatives and society are fulfilled to perfection and excellence through mutual affection as prescribed in the *Manu Smriti*. This is the manner in which a family including the children can exist in tranquility and achieve success.

The *Mahaabhaarata* states that “just as all living beings live under the protection of their mother (in childhood), so also the different stages of life exist under the protection of the householder”.⁴³ Thus only in a peaceful household is it possible to worship God and perform all the responsibilities and duties required of a householder. The Hindu child grows up in a religious atmosphere; from birth to marriage, a number of religious ceremonies must be performed. The mother supervises many of these ceremonies with great care. She considers her household and herself blessed with the arrival of children. The true purpose of marriage is thus fulfilled.

For children to grow properly and fully blossom to their full potential, they need careful nurturing, guidance, love and understanding. Thus the mother, together with the father, is responsible for the future welfare of the family. The mother, out of pure selfless love for the child, takes care of the child. A strong bond of love and caring is built between the mother and child and according to the Hindu scriptures this bond is essential and eternal. Similarly the father provides food, shelter and security for the family; the family must serve saints, youth and elderly without expecting anything in return. This ensures the respect and credibility of the family and invokes the blessings of the Pure Souls.

More information on child care is provided under chapter of Early Stimulation, Child Protection and Care.

⁴³ *Mahaabhaarata - Anushaasnikā parva - Yathā Maataramaashritya Sarve Jeevanti Jantavah Tathā Grihaashramam Praapya Sarve Jeevanti Chaashramaah.*

⁴² *Manu Smriti (3-60): Santushto Bhaaryayaa Bhartaa Bhartraa Bhaaryaa Tathaiva Cha Yasminneva Kule Nityam Kalyaanam Tatra Vai dhruvam”*

Womanhood

The *Taittiriya* Brahman indicates that a man should perform sacrificial rites with the wife, who is called *patni*, because of her equal and equally important participation. The *Puranic Ramaayana* narrates how *Lord Rama* performed the *Ashvamedha Yajna* with the use of an idol of his wife, *Sita* to compensate the absence of *Sita*.

The *Rig Veda* emphasizes on the essential harmony of the marital couple without making any partner inferior. The Vedic scriptures admonish men to protect, hence the dictate that women must be under the protection of her father, husband or son without curbing her freedom to fulfill spiritual and scriptural duties. The most important Hindu guide for virtuous female behavior is the *Manusmriti* by the legendary *Manu* (200-300 BC). Indeed, the *Manusmriti* teaches that the protection of a woman by a man must be upon the woman's own volition rather than a scriptural right of man. *Manu* states "*Gods reside where women are respected and where they are insulted, all endeavor is useless*".⁴⁴

In ancient times, according to *Manu*, there were eight forms of marriages. In all these cases, the bride was gifted to the husband. This was the high value of a woman that she was a worthy gift for a man who would also value her so much as to accept her as a gift. Significantly there was no admonition that a dowry must be paid to the groom's family. However this has been replaced by callous economic ethos.

The scriptures extensively narrate family values. A woman is a pillar of the family and she moulds the child with teachings of *dharm*a (responsibility) and *sanskaara* (virtues and values). The *Vedas* accord respectable position to women.

The *Rig Veda* (2.17.6) permits equal share in property to the daughter who forever resides with her parents. A hymn of the *Atharva Veda* states, "*May women be united with handsome husbands. They should never be widows or in tears. May they be prosperous; May they wear gracious garments and beautiful ornaments and may they desire human rebirth to maintain perpetuity of humanity. A husband should request and praise his wife and obtain voluntary consent for copulation*".

⁴⁴ *Yatra naryatsu pujyante, remante tatra devtaa*

The *Puranic Mahaabharata* says “The wife is an equal half of the man, the best of friends....the roots of the three ends of life and of all that will help him in the other world. With a wife a man does mighty deeds, finds courage....a wife is the safest refuge....a man aflame with sorrow in his soulor sick with disease, finds comfort in his wifeas a man parched with heat finds relief in watereven a man in the grip of ragewill not be harsh to a womanremembering that on her depend thejoys of love, happiness and virtuefor the woman is the everlasting field ..in which the Self is born”.

Motherhood

A mother guides and disciplines her child with firmness and yet with that unique selfless motherly love. The mother’s blessings are regarded as a priority, for progress of her children in all walks of life e.g. customary for Hindus to daily bow down and touch the mother’s feet as a sign of respect, reverence and love.

The mother is the principal parent who nurtures infants and children to provide loving early-care and instill values during the primary years. Mother upholds the values in society. They maintain order and instill morals in the children that they raise to eventually produce suitable society.

It is the mother who nourishes the infant from her own body to build immunity. Later on the mother feeds the child with the correct food that is wholesome, well balanced and nutritious. This ensures a healthy body and a sound mind from an early age. The Hindu extended joint-family system assured that the child received additional care, training and protection from different family members and provide early opportunities for social development and maturity.

At congregational worship, the Mother Goddess is garlanded, honored with earthen lamps (*divas*) of ghee are lighted to represent divine illumination and sandalwood paste is applied on Her forehead. In the same way that a Hindu worships his/her God, the mother is revered. In her old age she is protected and cared for by her own children. The idea of placing her in a home to be cared for by others is abhorrent to Hindus. Caring for one’s mother (and father) until their departure from the world is considered a *dharmic* duty resulting in copious blessings of elders and the grace of God.

The sixth day after birth is considered auspicious. A white cotton thread is ceremoniously tied around the child's wrist, neck or ankle. The thread is fragile and falls off after a few days. Traditionally a pen and paper are placed near the baby on this day. It is believed that Goddess of learning (*Saraswati*) charts the child's future.

After childbirth the mother and child are not allowed to leave the house for six weeks. The six-week rule is essential as it permits critical recovery and recuperation before she takes on the added responsibility of the family, household or other exertions. In case of situations of body fluids such as lochia or menstruation, the mother is not supposed to be disturbed and preferably isolated to conserve all energies for recovery.

The *Sushruta Samhita* recommends that the mother should be anointed after delivery with the *vala-taila*. The mother should continue to observe the diet for at least 45-60 days after delivery. After this period she can replace the special maternity diet to her normal diet conforming to her *dosha* type. It is advisable to take castor oil to cleanse the digestive tract and the lymph system so that her physiology returns to normal. The mother should daily anoint her body with oil and wash with copious amount of tepid water to ensure that any excess fat stored in the body is utilized and to prevent stretch marks.

It is important that during this time and particularly for strict vegetarians, leafy vegetables are not avoided completely (they cause flatulence in the mother and therefore in nursed baby) to avoid malnutrition or anemia. Cultural awareness of traditional practices are vital for health providers to ensure the well being of the Hindu mother and child so that appropriate supplements and precautions can be advised to prevent or treat nutritional deficiencies.

Naturopathy

As explained, beings and nature have a synergistic relation. Therefore cures for illness and diseases are to be found in realizing how nature acts. Naturopathy is a branch of Ayurveda that recommends numerous methods of maintaining good health through eating balanced natural diet, and periodic detoxification by using observations of nature. Through naturopathy a person can recoup energy and achieve enduring immunity.

Naturopathy recommendations:

- Balanced nutritious and sattvic diet of unprocessed foods e.g. fresh vegetables, fruits, pulses.
- Refrain contaminating the environment & avoid areas that are polluted or unhygienic.
- Fast on specific days to discipline the cleansing of the body and regulate bodily functions of detoxification and excretion. Different fasts are prescribed to rest the internal organs and aid cleansing of them in order to improve efficiency.
- Sun rays have a purifying effect on the atmosphere and a person. Exposing oneself to the sun daily morning for about half hour improves appetite and enriches the blood.
- Have two meals daily - morning and evening. Before and after meals the mouth and hands should be thoroughly washed.
- Anointing (abhyanga) the body with oils develops a glossy softness for the skin, guards against the aggravation of the vatta and kapha, improves skin strength and gives a tone compatible with the body type.
- Sneha (oils) applications before and during bathing invigorates the root-principles (Dhatus) of the body organs in the same manner as water replenishes the roots of a plant.
- Anulepana or anointing the body with scented and herbal pastes relives fatigue and perspiration odor. It produces a sense of pleasure and improves the strength and the complexion of the body.
- Anointing and massaging the feet with oils stimulates pressure points to energize the various body organs and also aids good sleep.

Key Messages

- i. Every woman should attend ante-natal clinics as soon as she knows that she is pregnant.
- ii. For the health of both mothers and children, a woman should wait until her last child is at least two years old before becoming pregnant again.
- iii. All mothers, including those who deliver at home, should attend post-natal clinics for care within two days of delivery.



a. Good Nutrition

Introduction

More than one third of all child deaths every year around the world are attributed to malnutrition, specifically undernourishment, which weakens the body's resistance to illness.

If a woman is malnourished during pregnancy or if her child is malnourished during the first two years of life, the child's physical and mental growth and development will be slowed all through his or her life.

Malnutrition develops when the body does not get the proper amount of energy (calories), proteins, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins, minerals and other nutrients required to keep the organs and tissues healthy and functioning well. A child or adult can be malnourished by being undernourished or overnourished.

Current Situation in Kenya

In most parts of the world, malnutrition occurs when people are undernourished. The primary reasons for undernourishment, especially of children and women, are poverty, lack of food, repeated illnesses, inappropriate feeding practices, lack of care and poor hygiene. Undernourishment raises the risk of malnutrition, weakening the body's resistance to illness. If a woman is malnourished during pregnancy or if her child is malnourished during the first two years of life, the child's physical and mental growth and development may be slowed. This cannot be made up when the child is older; it will affect the child for the rest of his or her life.

Malnutrition is an underlying cause in up to 55 per cent of all childhood deaths, stunting is 35 per cent and underweight 16 per cent (KDHS 2008).

Rationale

If a child is malnourished during the first two years of life, their physical and mental growth and development are slowed. This cannot be corrected when the child is older – it will affect the child for the rest of his or her life. Malnutrition develops when the body does not get the proper amount of energy (calories), proteins, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins, minerals and other nutrients required to keep the organs and tissues healthy and functioning well. A child or adult can be malnourished by being undernourished or overnourished.

Correct Practices to be Promoted

- i. Exclusive breastfeeding is all an infant needs in the first six months of life. From six months to two years, introduce complimentary feeding in addition to breast milk.
- ii. Pregnant and breastfeeding mothers should eat adequate and balanced diet.
- iii. All post-natal mothers should be given vitamin A capsules immediately or within one month of delivery.
- iv. All children from the age of six months to five years should be given vitamin A capsules at a health facility every six months.
- v. Deworming should be done every six months on all children aged one to five years.
- vi. From birth to the age of two years, children should be weighed regularly to assess growth.
- vii. From the age of six to eight months, a child needs to eat two to three times per day and three to four times per day starting at nine months – in addition to breastfeeding.
- viii. After six months, give additional foods at least four times a day, plus breastfeeding.
- ix. Children need vitamin A to help resist illnesses, protect their eyesight and reduce the risk of death.
- x. Children need iron-rich foods to protect their physical and mental abilities and to prevent anaemia.
- xi. Iodine in a pregnant woman's and young child's diet is especially critical for the development of the child's brain.
- xii. A sick child should take additional fluids, regular meals and breastfeed.
- xiii. Children with symptoms of illness should be taken to a trained health

- worker or health facility for assessment and treatment.
- xiv. Avoid sugary foods e.g. sweets and biscuits.

Key Messages

- i. **Breast milk is the only food and drink an infant needs in the first six months of life. After six months, a baby needs a variety of other foods in addition to breast milk to ensure healthy growth and development.**
- ii. **Pregnant and breastfeeding mothers should eat adequate and balanced diet. For healthy growth, give your child a variety of nutritious and fresh food every day.**
- iii. **From the age of six to eight months – in addition to breastfeeding – a child needs to eat two to three times per day and three to four times per day starting at nine months.**

b. Exclusive Breastfeeding

Introduction

Babies who are breastfed are generally healthier and achieve optimal growth and development compared to those who are fed formula milk. If the vast majority of babies were exclusively breastfed in their first six months of life – meaning only breast milk and no other liquids or solids, not even water – it is estimated that the lives of at least 1.2 million children would be saved every year. If children continue to be breastfed for up to two years or more, the health and development of millions of children would be greatly improved.

Breastfeeding is the natural and recommended way of feeding all infants, even when artificial feeding is affordable, clean water is available, and good hygienic conditions for preparing and feeding infant formula exist.

Almost every mother can breastfeed successfully. All mothers, particularly those who might lack the confidence to breastfeed, need the encouragement and practical support of the baby's father and their families, friends and relatives. Health and community workers, women's organisations and employers can also provide support.

Current Situation in Kenya

The exclusive breastfeeding rate is at 13 per cent nationally (KDHS 2008). Only 32 per cent of babies are exclusively breastfed for six months. Therefore, the majority of infants are being exposed to an increased risk of disease daily and have lowered immunity because they are given foods and drinks other than breast milk before six months.

Kenya has over the past 20 years lost the gains that had been made to promote, protect and support breastfeeding, with a dramatic decline in facilities that were baby-friendly and existing confusion regarding the best source of infant feeding options for babies born to women who are HIV infected. Kenya is also one of the few countries that have not ratified the 1983 code for marketing of breast milk substitutes.

Rationale

Breastfeeding is the natural and recommended way of feeding all infants, even when artificial feeding is affordable, clean water is available, and good hygienic conditions for preparing and feeding infant formula exist.

Correct Practices to be Promoted

- i. Initiate breastfeeding of the baby immediately after birth. Do not give water, herbs or animal fats.
- ii. Breastfeed exclusively for the first six months.
- iii. Breastfeed the baby on demand.
- iv. After six months, give your baby additional nutritious food four times a day.
- v. Continue breastfeeding for up to two years and beyond.
- vi. Enhance growth monitoring and promotion at all levels of service delivery.
- vii. Newborn babies should be given to the mother to hold immediately after delivery.
- viii. Every mother can breastfeed successfully. Breastfeeding frequently causes production of more milk.
- ix. The risk of mother-to-child transmission of HIV is greater if the infant is given other foods, fluids and milk substitutes within the first six months, hence exclusive breastfeeding is encouraged.
- x. A mother who is regularly separated from her baby as a result of work and other responsibilities can express her breast milk so that another caregiver can safely feed the baby using clean containers. When expressing breast milk, the following should be observed:
 - All utensils used to feed your baby must always be cleaned with clean water and soap.
 - Wash your hands with soap and clean water before expressing breast milk.
 - Expressed breast milk can be stored for up to eight hours in a cool place.
 - Either the mother or someone else can feed the baby using a clean open cup. Even a newborn baby learns quickly how to drink from a cup.
 - Additional information on expressing breast milk can be obtained from a health worker.

Supportive Scriptural References

Nutrition is considered as a sacrament (*prashaad*) from God. Nutrition is the essence inside edible foods that the digestive process is able to extract for the purpose of nourishing the body.

Every meal, although granted by the Supreme Being, before being eaten, is first offered to the Supreme Being, Saints and Sages, five elements, ancestors and to the

mother to remind that one exists and experiences the grace purely because of all these other entities and due to the grace of the Supreme Being.

The *Yajur Veda* states a plea *“May I enjoy the life-bestowing food through the plants and medicines that contribute to health and vigor. May I utilize the science of air and water for the accomplishment of my deeds. May I get the essence of food from milk, honey and fruits. May I enjoy the abundance of good articles through objects full of manifold qualities”*.⁴⁵

Hindus recite the following prayer at meal times: *“Becoming the Vaishvaanara (energy) seated in the body of living beings and united with Prana (life force) and Apaana (food) breaths, I digest the fourfold food”*.⁴⁶

Hindu scriptures recommend vegetarianism. Although *Vedic* scriptures narrate animal sacrifices in the ancient eras, they also advise to accord the highest respect to all beings including animals. The Hindu scriptures consider the cow sacred. The cardinal rule of *Jainism*, *ahimsa* (universal compassion, empathetic altruism and non-violence) prohibits killing of any animals or trees or even to have a thought of harming any being. *Ahimsa* involves avoidance of violence in any form through word or deed, not only to human beings but also to all nature and requires reverence and compassion for all living beings (*Jiva dayaa*) at every step in daily life. The *Acharanga sutra* (1.7.1.5 - *Jainism*) states that *“the wise one neither gives pain to these bodies nor orders others to do so nor assents to their doing so”*.

The *Metta Sutta* (Loving kindness discourse) in *Theravada Buddhism* states - *“One should cultivate an unlimited loving mind towards all beings, the way a mother protects her child with her own life, without obstruction, anger or opposition to the whole world”*.

Food Types

Religious rules and values guide Hindus on food, diet and nutrition. Certain foods are only eaten at certain times of the year and during certain conditions. Failure to observe these rules and associated rituals can result in illness. In general, what is available by and within the habitat in a particular season is what is best for the person

⁴⁵ *Yajur veda* (3.20) - *Aum Andha sthandho vo bhaksheeya mahd stha maho vo bhaksheey oja sthorjam vo bhaksheeya raysaposhha stha rayasaposham vo bhaksheeya*

⁴⁶ *Bhagwad Geeta* - *Aham vaishvaanaro bhuutvaa, praaninaam deham aasritah, praanaapaanasamaayuktah, pachaamy annam chaturvidham.*

residing in the area. Also only corresponding foods can be mixed for consumption at a particular seating e.g. Fruits are usually not mixed with milk products and citrus fruits cannot be consumed with fleshy fruits (apples, pears, etc).

Classification of foods is provided in the Hindu scriptures according to the *guna* (character) of the food - goodness (*sattva*), dynamic (*rajas*) and passive (*tamas*). Each of these categories has a specific effect on the body, mind and behavior.

The *Bhagwad Geeta*⁴⁷ explains these qualities of the *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* categories:

Sattva, being pure, is luminous and free from sickness and provides happiness and righteousness. *Sattva* foods improve the duration of life, provides correct strength, health and happiness. *Sattva* foods are pure, wholesome and obtained naturally. They are juicy, oleaginous, substantial, agreeable and pleasing. Examples of *sattva* foods are milk, sugar (natural), wheat, fruits, vegetables, lentils, rice, herbs and spices. Moreover food should also be procured through honest means and also be prepared and consumed in clean and quiet surrounding and during a peaceful framework of mind.

Rajas, is the nature of passion providing agitation through the urgency to fulfill desires and enjoy the fruits of actions. *Rajas* foods provide immediate gratification but eventually may cause distress, unease, grief, misery and also disease. The preparations may be unbalanced, rich, bitter, sour, salty, dry, hot or pungent. Also excess consumption of food is considered *rajas*, even though *sattvic* foods may be consumed. *Rajas* foods include garlic, onion, chilies, pickles, excess salt and sugar and also food prepared with much endeavor, with intentions for sense gratification and that causes excess and extravagance.

Tamas creates negligence, sloth and lethargy. *Tamasic* foods cause distress, inertia, sluggishness and intoxication. It also includes foods obtained through violent means, half cooked, stale, putrefying or decaying substances. *Tamasic* foods are meats, eggs, fish, mushrooms, alcohol and frozen and over-cooked foods. Even good meals consumed in unhygienic conditions aggravate *tamas*.

⁴⁷ *Bhagwad Geeta Verses - 17.8/9/10* .

According to the *Bhagavad-Gita*, the purpose of food is to improve the duration of life, purify the mind and enhance bodily strength. Such foods are considered sattvic. Limited amounts of rajasic foods (chilies, salty, high protein, acid, or very rich food) are considered acceptable, but tamasic foods should be totally avoided. Sattvic foods are strongly recommended during pregnancy, postpartum and for weaning a child.

The emphasis is on ensuring that one's diet should as naturally correspond to the natural dosha type of the person. The following verses from the Bhagwad Geeta represent this rule:

"The food also which is dear to all is of three kinds. So are sacrifices, austerity and charity".⁴⁸ "The foods which promote longevity, purity, strength, health, happiness and cheerfulness are juicy, oleaginous, substantial and agreeable are dear to Sattvic people. Foods which are bitter, sour, salty, hot pungent, dry, burning are productive of pain, grief and disease are dear to Rajasic people. Food,s which are half cooked, rotten, stale, putrid, refuse and impure are dear to Taamasic".⁴⁹

Hindus are culturally vegetarians and the principle of ahimsa advocates non-violence and therefore not harming living beings including plants. Therefore foods that are derived from plants (usually by treating plants compassionately and not killing the whole plant, but only picking the fruits and vegetables of the plant) are considered *sattvic*. Food obtained compassionately and prepared dedicatedly with love is considered *sattvic*.

Ayurveda also classifies foods into heat and cold properties, respectively resembling sympathomimetic or para-sympathomimetic effect on the functions of various organs. Lentils, millet, aubergine and grapes are considered heat foods. Cereals, potatoes, milk and sugar are examples of cold foods. Nursing mothers can use this to assist an infant to recover from colds and fever. Pregnancy and

⁴⁸ *Bhagwad Geeta (XVII-7) - Aahaaras tv api sarvasya trividho bhavati priyah yajnas tapas tathaa daanam tesaam bhedam imam shrnu.*

⁴⁹ *Bhagwad geeta (XVII-8/9/10) - Aayusattvabalaarogyasukhapriitivivardhanaah rasyaah snigdhaah sthiraah hrdayaa aahaaraah sattvikapriyaah. Katvamlalavanaatyusnatiiksnaruuksavidaahinah aaharaa raajasasye staa duhkhasokaamaypradaah. Yaatayaamam gatatasam puuti paryusitam ca yat ucchistam api caa medhyam bhojanam taamasapriyam.*

nursing related practices are based on beliefs that heat foods are harmful and cold foods are beneficial. This is because pregnancy itself generates heat (excess energy) state and expecting mothers would be advised to balance this by eating cold foods. Ayurveda also recommends cold foods during early pregnancy to avoid miscarriages. Heat foods are recommended during the last stages of pregnancy to facilitate labor.

Pitta foods are usually salty, sour, spicy and rich and are classified as heat foods. They raise body temperature and excite emotions and feelings. Therefore cooling foods like cucumber and gourd would be beneficial. *Kapha* foods are usually sweet and bitter. They cool body temperature and metabolism, calm emotions and enhance cheerfulness. But foods like rice, curds and buttermilk should be avoided or not consumed in excess. Turmeric and black pepper is recommended for *kapha* types. For *vatta* constitutions, starchy foods should be avoided.

If the mother's *kapha dosha* is aggravated then this results in more viscous lactation that may increase the viscosity of secretions from the mouth, eyes and nose of the breast-fed baby and also may precipitate a cold.

Ayurveda emphasizes that foods be considered according to its quality, taste, taste after digestion and action on one's *dosha* constitution. *Ayurveda* emphasizes on proper diet based on the principles of *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha*. If these states are in equilibrium, then the *dosha* type of the person is undisturbed whereby digestion and metabolism are in order, tissues are in harmony, excretion of waste products is efficient and the individual is physically and mentally healthy. Therefore *Ayurveda* treats such disturbances or imbalances with meditation, special diets, specific exercises and herbal and natural remedies. It is important to supplement and harmonize these practices with any allopathic treatments.

Prenatal Nutrition

The *Bhela Samhita*, *Shaarirasthanam*, of the ancient Vedic period states that “the foetus does not eat in the womb. If it were to eat then there would be fecal matter, which actually does not exist. It is the umbilical cord at the navel of the child inside which is another vessel leading to the mother's heart that transports the nutrition from the mother”. Thus it is vital that the health and blood of the mother is

at an optimum condition in order for the foetus to be well nurtured. Besides mental and psychological factors, nutrition and food are important factor that determines the health of the mother.

In the first three months calcium is necessary for bone formation. Therefore generous quantities of milk are consumed. Milk, an organic substance, is readily absorbed and therefore is superior to calcium supplements. However in case of deficiencies, calcium supplements may be prescribed. Besides this iron and folic acid supplements may need to be taken in case the mother is deficient or suffers from nutritional anemia. .

The *Charaka Samhita* (Cap8-Para32) recommends the following regime during pregnancy, for the foetus to grow without malady: ⁵⁰

1st month - Cold milk (not boiled) and wholesome food in the evening and morning.

2nd month - Milk boiled with sweet medicines and herbs.

3rd Month - Milk mixed with honey and ghee.

4th Month - Milk with about 12gms of butter.

5th month - Ghee (made from milk).

6th & 7th months - Ghee (from milk) boiled with sweet medicines.

8th Month onwards- Milk porridge with ghee.

The *Charaka Samhita* recommends this specific recipes for the expecting mother - *“If the diet prescribed from 1st to 9th month is followed by the mother, then her placenta, pelvis, hip, sides and back become soft, the flatus attains downward movement, urine and stool become normal and are excreted with ease, the skin and nails attain softness, strength and luster, and thus she generates a desired child with excellence and health, easily on time”*. The section looks at good progeny and normal and relatively easier delivery as the objectives.

⁵⁰ *Prathame mase ankita cedgarbhamapanna, ksiramanupaskratath matravacchitath kale kale pibet, samtyameva ca bhojanath sayarh prataca bhunjita. Dyivite mase kiraneva ca madhurasadhasiddham. Tritiye mase kirarh madhusarpibhyamupasamsrjya. Chaturthe mase kiranavanitamakamatramaniyat. Panchame maase kirasarpib. Sasthe mase kirasarpir madhuraudhaksiraudhasiddham,tedeva saptame mase*

Naturopathy and *Ayurveda* recommends the following diet for expectant mothers for the benefit of the baby and for safe birth:

Breakfast: fresh fruit that is in season, grated raw carrot or mixed raw salad and milk. Dried fruit (raisins, prunes, dates, figs, apricots, etc) may also be taken.

Lunch: Steamed vegetables, whole wheat breads and buttermilk.

Dinner: Raw salad of suitable vegetables, sprouted green gram or beans, whole wheat breads, butter or cottage cheese and dried fruit.

Ayurveda states that after delivery when there is an increase in *vata dosha*, it normally causes flatulence. The mother should therefore eat foods that decrease *vata*. Nursing mothers should especially avoid foods and vegetables that create flatulence, as they may cause colic for the baby. Gripe water made from dill seeds is also soothing and helpful for the baby.

Moreover, excessive intake of denatured foods, such as white flour, white sugar, refined cereals, meat and other refined products, during pregnancy causes the foetus to become bloated resulting in painful delivery. The weight of the baby should be about 3-3.5kg at birth. If the weight is more than that, delivery would be painful for the mother. Such a child will also be covered with unnecessary fat and watery tissue, which impede proper health. Therefore a correct and proper diet during pregnancy is critical for not only a painless childbirth but also for the child's health.

During the last two weeks of pregnancy expectant mothers are recommended 2-3gms of turmeric powder daily with warm milk. This is reputed to ease birthing while improving the health of mother and child. Being an analgesic, turmeric acts an herbal epidural during delivery.

A mother should also eat foods which promote production of milk, such as milk, ghee (clarified butter), barley, wheat, rice, coconut and spices like ginger, black pepper, cinnamon, cumin, asafetida, caraway and dill would assist in the physiological processes of the body. Small but frequent cold milk drinks are effective against nausea and vomiting experienced during the early months of pregnancy.

Katlu (or *panjiri*) prepared from wheat flour, butter, sugar, almonds, ginger, pistachios and other spices and herbs is given to the mother to restore energy after delivery. Other foods beneficial for the mother after delivery are eggplant, drumsticks and greens as they assist in lactation. Other foods useful for sufficient and quality lactation specified in the Vedic texts are wheat, rice, jaggery, ghee,

milk, garlic, onion (although garlic and onion are considered rajas and especially Jains would be averse to these foods). Salty, sour, astringent foods and fat-free diet is to be avoided. Such a diet is crucial for establishment of good lactation and also to prevent postnatal depression.

Hindu mothers can follow traditional herbal and *Ayurvedic* remedies combined with dietary and lifestyle changes. Some include ginger and lime juice with sugar for stomach problems, buttermilk stored overnight in iron containers for anemia, turmeric to treat colds, wounds, burns, cumin to assist digestion and rubbing the body with specific herbs to cure some illness.

No doubt, for the physiology of the expectant mother to function optimally, exercise must be maintained. The scriptures suggest that the mother must take regular walks up to the eighth month of pregnancy and also should continue to perform normal daily activities (household or profession). This ensures supple muscle and the pelvis will be maintained in a good condition to facilitate safe and easy birthing. The exercise should be within the capacity of the mother and all undue strain, worry or excitement should be avoided.

Allopathic doctors are becoming increasingly aware of their use and thereby focusing on the need to promote healing and health rather than merely treating symptoms.

Lactation & Nursing

The *Vedas* consider mother's milk and breasts symbolic of longevity and nectarine sweetness. The *Atharva Veda* describes "breast as a sacred pitcher of nectar". The *Yajur Veda* (17/87) states "Drink in the middle of the flood, O Agni (Fire deity), this breast stored full of sap, teeming with cooling water. Welcome this fountain of fragrant sweetness".

Ayurveda's Charak-samhita (8/52:957, 8/46:950) depicts the importance of breast-feeding and the *Kashyap-samhita* describes the qualities of breast milk as wholesome, life-giving divine nectar for the child and the compassion produced from the mother's love. Thus mother's milk is rich with emotional, intellectual and physical nutrients that help to build immunity and complete the maturity and efficiency of the body organs. Mother's milk also helps to purify and fully develop the digestive tract and capacity. The milk also provides the amino acids necessary for optimally completing any inherent process that may be developing in the baby.

Ayurvedic scriptures underscore the importance of breast-feeding for up to 18 months. “*Mother’s milk is the wholesome food for the growing infant and naturally formulated for the peculiar systemic needs of the particular child. The mother’s milk is the best nutrition for the growing infant to build immunity, strong bones and digestive capacity. It is a natural formulation to suit the systemic needs of the infant and mother.*”

Exclusive breast-feeding is conducted for at least six months as it is wholesome and indeed becomes even more so with the special bond between mother and child. However *Ayurvedic* texts state that ideally, if exclusive breast-feeding is continued until 6 months (or until weaning / teething) and thereafter as supplementary until the recommended period of 18-20 months then it is unlikely that the mother will become pregnant during that period. Contemporary investigations show that ovulation is likely to return sooner in women who breast-feed partially than those who breast-feed exclusively. Lack of exclusive breast-feeding mostly results from the mother’s feeling of “not enough milk”, which can be improved by appropriate counseling and confidence building. Nursing the baby is stopped or reduced in exceptional cases due to health or medical reasons or upon another pregnancy.

Delaying breast feeding until the second to fifth day after birth has been reported in *Brahminical* scriptures and the *Sushruta-samhita*. It is also stated that breast-feeding may not commence for the first two days. The delayed nursing is to ensure that the mother has recovered from the stress of delivery, that the physiological systems of the body have stopped the process of nurturing the womb and instead serve to assist the recovery of the mother and enhance lactation for nursing. However, when nursing is delayed for a few days, pre-lacteal feeds of water, ghee and jaggery have been recommended to assist in the evacuation of meconium - dark green substance forming the first feces.

Ayurveda states that when a mother has difficult delivery or prolonged labor, then lactation gets naturally delayed by about 2-4 days to protect the mother from weakening. The mother, therefore, cannot nurse the infant. When lactation begins, the mother should exclusively breast-feed the infant.

Breast milk has life-giving powers, which are highlighted in select quotations in the Hindu scriptures “*Shiva (God of eradication) grants Goddess Parvati her wish for*

a son by creating the son from part of her dress. The Goddess is skeptical. But the baby Ganeshji comes to life when he is nursed by Parvatiji”.

Moreover, nursing the baby with mother’s milk creates a bond between the mother and baby, which bond the Hindu scriptures state is vital to cultivate a special relationship that gives emotional security and strength to the baby. This is critical for the psychological well being of the baby.

Vedic scriptures state that the touch of the mother’s body and the smell of the mother’s milk stimulates digestion and digestive juices in the baby while the baby’s suckling, scent and touch stimulates proper lactation and milk production by the mother. According to Karma-yoga this bond is extremely crucial and necessary for the baby to get comfortably accustomed in a strange environment immediately after birth. Indeed as the *Puranic* scriptures state, this bond between the mother and child is not just within physical and emotional realms, but a karmic bond beyond time and lives and serves to elevate spirituality. As the *Vedic* scriptures illustrate, “the bond between the mother and child is the closest example of the selfless compassionate nature of God (*Ishwar*)”.

The Sushruta-samhita (III/10) describes the mother’s milk- “May four oceans, full of milk constantly abide in both the breasts, for the increase of the strength of your child. Drinking of the milk, whose sap is the immortal life divine; May your child gain long life as do the Gods by feeding on the beverage of immortality”.

Natural suckling and nursing is advocated by the *Vedic* scriptures rather than bottle-feeding (discharged mother’s milk or formula milk) except for medical reasons. Ayurveda states that formula-fed babies are likely to suffer from diseases, infections and obesity. There is no mention of bottle-feeding in the *Vedic* and *Ayurvedic* scriptures.

However Hindu historic texts have examples of wet nurses (*dhatri*) especially when the mother is unable or chose not to nurse. Wet nursing is useful when the mother has died, is sick, or has had breast diseases or abnormal milk/ lactation (vitiated milk). Wet nurses were thoroughly screened and were refused if “stricken with grief, depression, starved, tired, diseases, pregnant, having fever and if consuming food that causes indigestion or disease in the child”. Similarly this applies to a nursing mother also.

Ayurveda and naturopathy prescribe the following care that a mother (and parents) should observe when nursing:

1. Mother's health be looked after for successful lactation and care and careful examination of the breasts be conducted regularly. Maintain a regular check and take all precautions to avoid any illness during the nursing period.
2. Maintain modesty to prevent unnecessary excitement that affects milk production and infant care.
3. Ensure proper hygiene at all times of the hands, body and the breasts. Similarly maintain hygiene of the baby.
4. Treat the baby with affection at all times - especially when the baby demands feeds at night or shows signs of illness.
5. Avoid taking unnecessary food (excess of rajasic or tamasic) or medicines that will affect the baby adversely.
6. Ensure a sattvic diet that enhances the quality of the milk and the health of mother and baby.
7. Take supplements necessary to maintain health and the quality and quantity of lactation.
8. Conduct the Samskaaras ceremonies to enhance the well being of the child and family and cultivate an atmosphere of care for the child within the whole family.
9. Ensure a peaceful and religious environment as the baby develops to instill good values.

Vedic religion emphasizes on chastity and modesty as vital female qualities. The mother must be accorded privacy when breast feeding so as to avoid switching to bottle-feeding. Milk formula is only to be used in extreme cases upon medical recommendation.

The Anna Prashana Samskaara for weaning the baby is described in Chapter six.

Pediatric Care

Ayurveda states that the most important aspect of pediatrics or childhood is growth and development. Therefore proper diet, hygiene and child disciplining and care is

the gateway to overall sound health and future. Ayurveda emphasizes on feeding healthy, easily digestible vegetarian food to maintain efficient digestive system.

Eating Protocols

Ayurvedic and Naturopathy texts advice that one should eat slowly and thoroughly chew food. This ensures proper digestion and also prevents over eating. Gulping food is an expression of anxiety and nervousness. It is even recommended that liquids should also be swirled in the mouth and thoroughly mixed with saliva. It is also advised that one should not speak while eating as that distracts the digestive and assimilative capabilities. Eating is a process, which is performed respectfully, with humility and total awareness on the food and being. Therefore, distractions when eating, disturbs the awareness and results in the reduction of digestive capacity to extract the full nutritious potential from the food consumed.

In the Buddhist scriptures (*Samprajanya Rakshnama*) very simple instructions are provided for eating - *“One should not eat with an over filled mouth nor eat noisily nor wit the mouth wide open. One should not sit with legs outstretched nor should one rub both arms simultaneously”*.⁵¹

Food must be consumed in small morsels (and not big lumps and swallowed) and chewed thoroughly until it is completely liquidized. Food bites should fit adequately in the mouth rather than over filling it. While chewing, the mouth must remain closed and there should be no talking. Every attention and awareness must be given to eating.

When eating, legs must not be out stretched as this is considered unhealthy and disrespectful. The *Yogasanas* prescribe the cross-legged lotus (*padma* or half *padmasana*) posture when eating. This posture is ideal for conducting prayers and remaining in humble consciousness towards the food and elements being consumed and the presiding deities that provided that food. The posture facilitates proper secretion of enzymes and digestive juices necessary to digest the food. Food is also propagated properly through the digestive tract without causing blockages or eventual putrefaction. The required nutrients are efficiently absorbed also into the blood stream since the posture aids adequate blood circulation around the vital organs.

⁵¹ *Samprajanya Raksnama - Mukhapuram na bhunjita sashabdam prasritaananam, prajambapaadam naasita na baahuu mardayetsamam.*

The scriptures prescribe several prayers at meal time before partaking food. To make food hygienic, palatable and consumable, one should initially offer food to the Supreme Being. One such prayer is from the *Yajur Veda* (II.83) *“O Lord, the giver of food, May thou provide us with healthy and energy producing foods. Grant happiness to those that give food in charity. May all living beings be blessed with good energy giving food”*.⁵²

Key Messages

- i. All mothers should start breastfeeding immediately after birth.
- ii. Continue breastfeeding exclusively (give breast milk only) for the first six months.
- iii. After six months of exclusive breastfeeding, continue breastfeeding as you give your baby other nutritious foods for the next two years and beyond.

⁵² *Aum Annapate annasya no dehy Anamivasya, Shushminah pra pradataram tarisha urjam no dhehi dvipade chatushpade.*



a. Malaria

Introduction

Malaria is a parasitic disease, which is usually characterised by shivering, chills alternating with fever, headache and nausea and sometimes vomiting. After an interval free of fever, the cycle recurs either daily or every third day depending on the species of the malaria parasite. Malaria is transmitted through the bites of some mosquitoes. Sleeping under an insecticide-treated net is the best way to prevent bites.

All members of the community should be protected against mosquito bites, particularly young children and pregnant women. Protection is needed after sunset and before sunrise, when malaria mosquitoes bite.

Current Situation in Kenya

Malaria is the leading cause of morbidity and mortality in Kenya. Approximately 1.5 million women become pregnant each year in Kenya and the majority live in areas of moderate to intense transmission of malaria. Malaria infections pose a risk to the unborn child, leading to abortion, stillbirths, congenital infections, low birth weight, prematurity, intra-uterine growth retardation, and in the mother it leads to malaria illness and mortality.

Pregnancy related maternal mortality is estimated at 488/100,000 (KDHS 2008). Severe anaemia manifests in approximately 6,000 women during first pregnancy. Haemorrhage-complicating malaria related anaemia during pregnancy contributes significantly to maternal mortality. Other effects of malaria are severe anaemia, low birth weight and increased infant mortality.

Rationale

Malaria is very dangerous to pregnant women and children. In malaria-prone

areas, they should take anti-malarial tablets recommended by a trained health worker and by sleeping under an insecticide-treated mosquito net. A child with a fever should be examined immediately by a trained health worker and receive appropriate anti-malarial treatment as soon as possible if diagnosed with malaria. Artemisinin-based combination therapies (ACTs) are recommended by the World Health Organisation (WHO) for treatment of plasmodium falciparum malaria. It is the most serious type of malaria and causes nearly all malaria deaths.

Myths, Misconceptions and Current Wrong Practices

- i. People assume they have malaria when there is a sudden rise in body temperature or when the body feels weak.
- ii. Many people rely on over-the-counter treatment without prescriptions from clinicians.
- iii. People seek health care late after trying other forms of treatment.
- iv. Belief that nets sing at night or cause suffocation.
- v. Mosquitoes are still capable of penetrating through the nets.
- vi. Mosquitoes don't cause malaria.
- vii. Malaria is caused by eating mangoes or maize stalks.
- viii. Insecticide-treated mosquito nets are reserved for the father.
- ix. Insecticide-treated mosquito nets are used for fishing and other commercial purposes.

Correct Practices to be Promoted

- i. Ensure that all pregnant women and children under five years old sleep under treated nets.
- ii. Ensure that all pregnant women in malaria endemic areas receive two doses of S.P
- iii. In case of fever, take your child to the nearest health facility immediately.
- iv. All members of the family should always sleep under treated nets.
- v. Use wire mesh in buildings.
- vi. Apply larvicides.
- vii. Support indoor residual spraying (IRS) by qualified health officers.

Supportive Scriptural References

The most common childhood diseases are respiratory ailments, gastrointestinal diseases and the six vaccine-preventable diseases (tuberculosis, diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, polio and measles) often exacerbated by malnutrition. Since a child is developing and therefore does not have its full immunity and strength developed, it is important in contemporary times to immunize all children under one year old through vaccinations of BCG, measles, DPT (3 doses) and polio vaccines. Most diarrhea is treatable by oral re-hydrant salts. However in countries with tropical climates, malaria is a major disease. Moreover over the last 25 years HIV virus has caused AIDS. Furthermore the resistance to small pox, tuberculosis and malaria treatments has been mounting.

Ayurveda and Panchkarma

According to *Sushruta samhita*, *Sutra Sthaanam* and *Ayurveda*, diseases are divided into three classes - exogenous, endogenous and psychic or natural.⁵³ They are further divided into seven categories:

Endogenic	Exogenic	Cosmic
Hereditary (pre-conception factors)	Contagious	Origin (Nature and divine forces)
Hereditary (post-conception factors)	Seasonal	Natural to the body
Vitiation of humors (blood, yellow bile, phlegm and black bile).	-	-

Quality of life depends on the maintenance of a clean and healthy environment - both internal and external. An Ayurveda practitioner (Vaidya) can diagnose the entire physiological system of the human body by only checking the pulse beats. The *Vaidya* is able to detect any existing or developing disorder through any disturbances in the specific combination of the patient's dosha. Once the cause of imbalance is detected, an appropriate remedy is prescribed.

⁵³ *Tacca duhkham trividham aadhyaatmikam aadhibhautikam aadhidaivikamiti.*

Ayurvedic treatment known as *Panchkarma* is performed in three stages:

- *Purvakarma* - preparatory procedures that help the body discard toxins present in the stomach and tissues and help facilitate the toxins to move to the alimentary canal.
- *Pradhanakarma* - main treatment, designed according to each individual's needs.
- *Paschatkarma* - post treatment care includes diet regimen and the other do's and don'ts to prevent the same recurring.

Panchakarma aims at correcting the imbalance of the doshas so that their inherent equilibrium is maintained. During each season of the year, one or more of the doshas accumulate which causes an imbalance and makes the body vulnerable to illness. It involves five cleansing procedures:

1. *Vamana* - vomiting especially for *Kapha* related illness like asthma, cough, chronic colds, psoriasis, acne, arthritis, diabetes. This is a painless and drug induced emetic process.

2. *Virechana* - purgation for elimination of *pitta* related toxins. Treatments that stimulate bowel movement and used for expulsion of excess *pitta*.

3. *Nasya* - involves nasal cleansing by the application of medical oils or powders. The nostrils are considered the doorway to the brain. Nasal application of oils is helpful in conditions of allergic sinusitis, migraines and epilepsy. If the *Nasya* therapy has been carried out effectively, *Kapha* related toxins from the paranasal sinuses are eliminated and the region nourished. Due to this, the patient feels great relief in the head and clarity of the sense organs. Breathing becomes completely unobstructed giving sound sleep at night. Olfactory improvement is also felt. *Nasya* is excellent for chronic sinusitis, headaches, throat diseases, chronic colds, chest congestion, epilepsy, catarrh, migraine, voice constraint, eye diseases and cervical spondylitis.

4. *Vasti* - medicated enema is particularly useful for alleviating excess *Vata*. *Vasti's* effects are directly felt in the colon, the prime abode of the *Vata*. With the application of a series of purifying and nourishing *Vastis*, the morbid *doshas* and other toxins trapped for long in the tissues are eliminated. This restores the equilibrium of the humours. *Vasti* is good for spleen disorders, colic, calculus, kidney stones and many other diseases due to a *Vata* disorder. It helps in chronic constipation, low back pain, rheumatoid arthritis, obesity,

sciatica, various neurological disorders like multiple sclerosis, epilepsy, dystrophy and atrophy of nerves and muscles.

Sneha Vasti - is enema using medicated oil which remains in the colon and rectum for a short period of time to absorb the toxins and eliminate them out of the body

Nirooha Vasti - enema using a special combination of herbal decoctions, paste, powders and oils. It has an effect on the nervous system to help eliminate the imbalances in Vata.

5. RAKTHAMOKSHANA - to remove impurities from the blood through leech therapy or other methods. More details on leech therapy are in Chapter 7.

This 5-fold treatment during *Panchakarma* has not only been intended for elimination of disease-causing toxins but also to replenish the tissues with nourishment. This is why it is often termed as Rejuvenation Therapy. This therapy also combats neurological ailments like paralysis, arthritis, rheumatism, dermatological problems, and mental disorders.

Ayurveda Medicines

Ayurveda details herbs, plants, tree products and other organic or inorganic materials that are time tested (few relevant ones are indicated in the table below). The essence of *Ayurvedic* treatment is to remove the illness or disease from its root rather than treating the symptoms.

Sanskrit Name	Latin Name	Common name	Therapeutic use (according to Ayurveda)
Bael	Aegle Marmelos	Bael tree	Intestinal problems e.g. amoebic dysentery & diarrhea
Shikakai	Acacia concinna	acacia	Jaundice & malarial fever
Babool	Acacia nilotica	Indian gum Arabic tree	Diarrhea, Dysentery, diabetes
Totala Kwath	Oroxylum Indicum	Bael tree	Hepatitis and liver disorders
Kumari	Aloe vera	Indian aloe	Mild laxative, tonic
Yavatika	Andrographis paniculata		Used in malaria fever, useful in infant diarrhea
Shatavari	Asparagus racemosus	Asparagus	Nourishes female reproductive system & promotes lactation
Shvetajiraka	Cuminum cyminum	Cumin	Dysentery, diarrhea, inflammatory condition of bowels, nausea
Garjira	Daucus carota	Carrot	Physical weakness, problems before delivery
Lajjlu	Mimosa pudica		For gynecological disorders, amoebic dysentery, diarrhea
Fatakari		Alum	Bloody dysentery, intermittent fever, tonsillitis, mouth ulcers
Varatika		Cowrie shell	colic pains of all nature, dysentery, diarrhea, gastritis
Yashad bhasma		Natural zinc	Diarrhea, improves digestion
Pashanbhed	Bergenia Stracheyi		Calcuklus, Blood dysentery
Giloy	Tinospora Cordifolia		Fever, cough, low platelet count, dengue, malaria
Kalmegh	Andrographis Paniculata		Antipyretic for malaria fever
Neem	Azadirachta Indica		Antiseptic and blood purifier.
Tulasi	Ocimum Sanctum		Antipyretic, antiseptic and expectorant.
Jalnimb	Bacopa Monnieri		Antipyretic, antiseptic and expectorant.
Haldi	Cuccuma Longa		Blood purifier and antipyretic
Mulethi Kwath	Glycyrrhiza Glabra		Hyper acidity and flatulence
Putrajeevak	Putranjiva rexburghi		Infertility and Gynaecological disorders
Shivlengi	Bryonia laciniata		Infertility and Gynaecological disorders

The Lotus Sutra contains the parable for medicinal herbs:

The beneficent cloud is laden with moisture, the lighting gleams and flashes and the sound of thunder reverberates afar, causing the multitude to rejoice. The sun's rays are veiled and hidden, a clear coolness comes over the land; masses of darkness descends and spreads. The rain falls everywhere coming down on all four sides. Its flow and saturation are measureless, reaching to every area of the Earth, to the ravines and valleys of the mountains and streams, to the remote and secluded places where grow plants, bushes, medicinal herbs, trees large and small, a hundred grains, rice seedlings, sugar cane, grape vine. The rain moistens them all, none fails to receive its full share. The parched ground is everywhere watered, herbs and trees alike grow lush. What falls from the cloud is water of a single flavor, but the plants and trees, thickets and groves each accept moisture that is appropriate to its portion. Root, stem, limb, leaf the glow and hue of flower and fruit - one rain extends to them and all are able to become fresh and glossy. Whether their allotment of substance, form and nature is varied, the moisture they receive is one, but each grows and flourishes in its own way".

Therapeutic Yoga

The Yoga practices that are mainly used in therapeutics are the *Asanas*, *Pranayamas*, Meditation, *Kriyas* and Relaxation techniques which:

- Helps maintain the suppleness and flexibility of the muscles and joints
- Has a deeper effect on the tendons, ligaments, blood vessels, lymphatics and the nerves
- Brings about a co-ordination of mind and body movements
- Helps create an appreciation of the finer movements
- Improves the sharpness of the senses
- Helps us be aware and improve our breathing
- Helps us have a positive attitude and lighter approach
- Helps regulate digestion, respiratory rate and heart rate
- Improves memory, concentration and intelligence through *Pranayamas* and Meditation
- Helps cleanse our nostrils, upper respiratory passages, eyes through *Kriyas*

Asanas are the physical postures in Yoga. *Asanas* help in culturing the body entirely, focussing on different muscle groups, joints, tendons ligaments and the soft tissues, apart from the nerves and blood vessels. *Asanas* also bring about a

co-ordination of the mind with the body as there is total awareness to each and every slight body movement along with focus on breathing. One of the main Yoga asana is the *Suryanamaskar* comprising of a sequence of 12 postures, which completely fulfils the purpose of Yoga. The 12 postures are designed in such a way as to exercise each and every muscle group and joints in the body. It strengthens and stretches the entire body. Specific breathing is indispensable while performing the sequence. The pattern is such that the movements and the breathing are in perfect rhythm as in a dance sequence.

Kriyas are the purificatory techniques in Yoga, mainly cleansing of the nostrils, sinuses, eyes, digestive system and the excretory system through very simple means. *Kriyas* also help strengthen the nerves, sharpen the memory and strengthen the glands as well as purify them. Different methods include *Jalaneti*, *Sutraneti*, *Vamandhouthi*, *Sankhaprakshalana*, etc.

MALARIA

Mosquitoes breed in stagnant and dirty water. Flowing water and the sun's rays purify water. Today with the deterioration of the environment, insecticides and pesticides are preferred to control vermin.

The Vedic and *Puranic* scriptures provide advice on plants and trees that are beneficial for purifying the air. Since there were no insecticide-treated mosquito nets in the ancient eras, specific plants and trees were used to deter mosquito breeding. Herbal plants also provided ready access to treatment of diseases.

Remedies & Preventive Measures

Jainism advocates the practice of non-violence (*ahimsa*) - that no living beings should be intentionally harmed. Therefore for prevention of malaria, pro-active measures are outlined that focus on deterrence and prevention rather than eradication of mosquitoes or other vermin.

Ayurveda emphasizes on prevention and therefore advocate cleanliness, regular detoxification processes and fasting and also the regular consumption of decoctions of such herbal medicines prepared according to the *Ayurvedic* principles and prescriptions. Application of insect repellants is more humane.

Ayurveda states that the holy-basil plant (*Tulasi*), controls excessive *kapha* and

vatta. Indeed the holy-basil has been venerated in the narratives of the *Puranic* scriptures and explain the advent and rationale of the holy-basil plant.

Tulasi is an insect repellent. It is claimed to generate a high amount of oxygen at daytime compared to other plants of similar size. It also cures cough and colds,

For deterring and removing mosquitoes the following ahimsic care is advised:

1. Cleanliness in the environment and residential areas must be thorough and regular to deter vermin including mosquitoes from breeding.
2. Where practical avoid use of pesticides and chemicals within the home. Although these kill insects, the chemicals also harm humans. Killing of beings is against the principles of ahimsa.
3. Cleansing surfaces with antiseptics and detergents deters and prevents breeding of vermin.
4. Disposal of waste and sewage must be hygienic and immediate.
5. Citronella or tangerine oil applied on the body, repels mosquitoes.

stimulates the heart and purifies the blood, removes body odor, promotes and improves digestion. It is an anti-pyretic and stimulates perspiration and therefore excretion of toxins and waste. It also decreases soft tissue inflammation and edema.

Tulasi syrup, made by boiling leaves with black pepper and sugar, consumed every three hours, treats malaria. Decoction of *tulasi* leaves is used to cure malaria fever. The *Tulasi* plant generates a high amount of oxygen during day time compared to other plants of similar size. It also repels mosquitoes.⁵⁴ Its branches can be used to clean teeth and cures gum infections.

Malaria fever can also be cured by taking ground mixture of 10 leaves of chaff flowers (*Apamarg*), 10 seeds of black-pepper and 10gms of garlic. The mixture is formed into 5 tablets and a tablet is taken to cure fever.

The *Margosa* (*neem*) tree leaves is used to cure malaria. The flowers, bark and leaves of *Margosa* tree have anti-bacterial properties. The smoke from burning

⁵⁴ *Tulasi katu tiktoshna, surabhih shleshmavaatjit, Jantu bhootakrimi hara, ruchikridvaat shanty krit*

Margosa leaves, repel mosquitoes (This is considered safer for humans and the environment than using insecticide sprays). They can be ground, boiled and applied on diseased parts of the body.

Even planting *Margosa* trees deters mosquitoes from breeding in adjacent areas. A few drops of its oil extract can be effective in controlling *pitta*.⁵⁵

For recurring (*quartan*) malaria fever, mixture of lime and lemon juice consumed in water is effective.

However besides this, *Ayurveda* also stresses the importance of timely treatment and consulting expert or professional practitioners. *Artemesin*, a herbal extract, is used to cure resistant strains of malaria. Moreover it must be emphasized that the *Falciparum* parasite that causes malaria, has evolved over the centuries and the treatment of more resistant strains needs to be a complimentary between preventive, alternative and allopathic medicines.

The *Yajur Veda* (19.90) states prayer for health “*Oh powerful God, grant me power. Make my body sound. Remove weakness and grant me strength. Provide me with intelligence, conscience and perception. Grant me righteous determination to destroy sins. Grant me resoluteness and tolerance*”.⁵⁶

Key Messages

- i. Administer ACT as the correct treatment for malaria after proper diagnosis through a laboratory test at a health facility. ACT is free in government health facilities.
- ii. Everybody should sleep under an insecticide-treated net.
- iii. Support indoor residual spraying by a qualified health officer in malaria prone areas

⁵⁵ *Chakshushyam nimb pushpancha, krimipitta vish pranut, Batalam katu pakam syat, sarvaarochak naashanam 1-883 Nimbah tikta rasah sheeto, laghushleshmaashva pittanaashanam, Kushtha kand branam hanti, lepaahaaraadi sheetalah 1-884*

⁵⁶ *Aum tejo si tejo mayi dhehi, Aum Vryamas viryam mayi dhehi, Aum Balmasi balam mayi dhehi, Aum Ojo syojo mayi dhehi, Aum manurasi manyum mayi shehi, Aum saho si saho mayi dhehi.*

DIARRHEA

Ayurveda considers diarrhea as the body's natural mechanism to evacuate toxins, poisons, infections and anything that is harmful to the body. Therefore in most cases, simple remedy of re-hydration (water and salts) while abstaining from normal food relieves diarrhea. However diarrhea is a problem when it is persistent and bloody.

Some remedies stated by *Ayurveda* for diarrhea and related symptoms are:

1. Gripping pains & runny stools - Grind 10 holy-basil leaves with 1 gm cumin powder and some honey. Drink this mixture in water 3-4 times daily.
2. Diarrhea - Take 30ml lemon juice in water. Add sugar and salt to taste. This reduces diarrhea and replaces lost minerals.
3. Intestinal infection and diarrhea - To cure fever cut a lemon into two halves. In one half fill black pepper and salt and in the second half fill sugar. Heat the two halves and let the patient suck the lemons halves.
4. Diarrhea - Grind 10gms bael powder with rice water and add sugar to taste. It relieves diarrhea after 3-4 doses and is used for expectant mothers.
5. Dysentery - Grind the roasted unripe bael fruit and extract the juice. Add jaggery to taste. Let patient drink 3 times daily for 10-15 days to cure dysentery.
6. Bloody and mucus stools - 10gms castor oil is prescribed. Also alum (tiny quantity) taken in warm water assists to precipitate any inorganic poisons in the intestine and cures bleeding.
7. Stomach pains - Juice of one lemon in warm water with 10gms castor oil be given at bedtime.
8. Flatulence - Grind the seeds of the bael fruit and cook in four times the milk. When the milk thickens, add 1 part of jaggery. Take 15gms of the jam to eradicate flatulence.
9. Diarrhea / Dysentery - Indian gum boiled in water or fried in ghee and mixed with jaggery can be eaten to act as a sponge and suck up intestinal infections and also replenish minerals.
10. Diarrhea in small children - Grind pinch of nutmeg powder in ghee and add jaggery to taste. Give 2-3 times daily to reduce loose motions and colic pains.
11. Anthelmintic - Cumin conditions the intestines to remove and worm infestation and also soothes inflammation of the bowels.

Key Messages

- i. Give ORS to children who have diarrhoea. ORS is available at the chemist, local shops and at the nearest health facilities.
- ii. Give additional fluids available at home e.g. soups and clean water, to all children who have diarrhoea.
- iii. Good hygiene practices and use of safe drinking water protects against diarrhoea. Hands should be thoroughly washed with soap and water or a substitute, such as ash and water, after visiting the toilet and after contact with faeces, and before touching or preparing food or feeding children.

Pneumonia

Ayurveda states that pneumonia is caused due to aggravation of the *vatta dosha*. This reduces immunity and may be further suppressed with wrong diets, inadequate rest or other existing illness (HIV). It is also vital that the mother breast feeds the child exclusively to cultivate strong immunity.

Ayurveda states that aggravation of the *Kapha dosha* triggers production of viscous phlegm and mucus that can harbor dirt and dust within the lungs and throat. *Ayurveda* recommends adequate intake of water (1-1.5 liter for a child and 2 liters for an adult) to maintain a cleaner internal system that prevents contaminants accumulating around the facial sinuses, throat, intestines and organ ducts. This will ensure fewer pollutants entering the lungs thereby reducing chances for lung infections.

It is therefore vital to maintain a clean internal and external environment. Children should be educated on proper hygiene and cleaning of the mouth, eyes (washing to remove debris), nose (properly blowing the nose especially early morning and before bedtime), ears (removal of ear wax) and throat (gargles).

Ayurveda prescribes *Neti* for maintaining free passage of air in both nostrils. This is done by pouring saline water through one nostril and removing from the other nostril. If done on a regular basis then there are fewer chances of children having colds, flu, pneumonia and such related illness.

Therefore during hot weather or spring-time when there is more dust and pollen blowing around, foods that stimulate *kapha dosha* should be reduced. Also when a patient has pneumonia *kapha* foods should not be taken. For pneumonia and lung infections, Ayurveda advises intake of raw fruit juices (pineapple, orange, tangerine, lemon) or vegetable juices (carrots, tomatoes, celery) for about 10 days.

Tea of *Tulasi* leaves with cinnamon, ginger, cloves and black pepper mixed with sugar or jaggery can be taken 3-4 times daily to reduce fever, expel excess mucus and invigorate the body immune system. The combination has a heat effect and will reduce the aggravated *kapha dosha*.

Other *Ayurvedic* recommendations are *sitopaladi*, *punarnala*, *pipali*, *abhrak nhasama* and *chyvanprash*, *ashwagandha* and *triphala*). Tea made by boiling *fenugreek* seeds assists the body to perspire, reduce fever and expel toxins.

Yogasanas that can be practiced when having lung infections are *Ardha Chakrasana* (wheel posture) and *Dhanurasana* (Bow posture). These assist in discharging toxins from the intestines and lungs.

However all these must be used upon the advice of proper *Vaidya* practitioners. In case of severe infection of the lungs and fever, the body would require allopathic treatment of antibiotics and an appropriate medical practitioner should be consulted.

Key Messages

- i. Ensure that your child completes all recommended immunisations.
- ii. Whenever your child has a cough or difficult breathing, they should be taken to a health provider for treatment.
- iii. Ensure your house is properly ventilated and that there is free circulation of clean air.



PREVENTION OF MOTHER-TO-CHILD TRANSMISSION

a. HIV and AIDS

Introduction

HIV is the virus that causes AIDS. HIV touches the lives of children and families in every country in the world. Over two million children under 15 years are living with HIV. Millions more are affected by HIV (living in families with infected members). An estimated 17.5 million children have lost one or both parents to AIDS; more than 14 million of these children live in sub-Saharan Africa (KAIS 2007).

HIV is transmitted through:

- i. Unprotected sex with an HIV-infected person;
- ii. HIV-infected woman to her baby during pregnancy, childbirth or breastfeeding;
- iii. Blood from HIV-contaminated syringes, needles or other sharp instruments and from transfusion with HIV-contaminated blood. HIV is not transmitted through casual contact or by other means.

Current Situation in Kenya

The 2007 KAIS indicates that 7.4 per cent of Kenyans aged between 15 and 64 years are infected with HIV. This means that about 1.4 million adults are living with HIV. More women are infected with HIV (8.7 per cent) compared to men (5.6 per cent). The number of people infected with HIV in Kenya is currently 2.2 million. Recent national surveillance data showed a prevalence of 6.1 per cent among adults, which indicated a decline from the previous figure of 13.5 per cent.

In the general population, women are slightly more likely to be infected than men, with teenage girls being at high risk of HIV infection. Pregnant women form five per cent of the total population (KDHS, 2002). This translates to 1.2 million. Families and communities, especially women and girls, are the first lines of

protection and care for children living with or affected by HIV. Families should receive the support they need to provide their children with a nurturing and protective environment. Keeping HIV-positive mothers and fathers alive and healthy is vital for children's growth, development and stability.

Without the security of the family, children run a greater risk of being exploited and discriminated against. Adolescents and young people aged between 15 and 24 years old accounted for about 45 per cent of all new HIV infections among people aged 15 and older in 2007. HIV is more common among adolescent girls and young women than adolescent boys and young men. Life skills education is critical for children, adolescents and young people so that they acquire the knowledge and skills to make healthy life choices.

Rationale

Children are among the most vulnerable to HIV. But they typically receive the fewest services. The condition can progress rapidly in young children. Antiretroviral drugs are used to treat HIV because they restore the immune system and delay progression to AIDS. However, most children infected with HIV do not begin taking these drugs until they are five to nine years old. If infected infants and children are diagnosed early, receive effective treatment and take antiretroviral drugs as prescribed, they have a better chance to grow, learn, develop and have dreams for the future. Although HIV is still incurable, it is a manageable condition.

Myths, Misconceptions and Wrong Practices

HIV and AIDS are transmitted by:

- Casual contact e.g. shaking hands, or hugging;
- Use of public telephones, drinking containers, swimming or sharing a drink;
- Mosquito bites; and
- Donating blood.

Correct Practices to be Promoted

- i. Everybody should take a HIV test to establish their status.
- ii. If tested positive, initiate early care.
- iii. If negative, stay negative.
- iv. All pregnant women and their partners should be tested for HIV.

- v. All children born to HIV positive mothers should be tested at six weeks.
- vi. All HIV positive mothers should exclusively breastfeed for six months, then stop gradually except for those who meet the AFASS criteria (those who can Afford, Feasible, Acceptable, Sustainable and Safe replacement feeds).
- vii. All pregnant women who suspect that they, their partners or family members are infected with HIV, have been exposed to HIV or live in a setting with a generalised HIV epidemic should take a HIV test and undergo counselling.
- viii. Parents or other caregivers should talk with their daughters and sons about relationships, sex, their vulnerability to HIV infection, sexual harassment, violence and peer pressure.
- ix. Parents, teachers, peer leaders and other role models should provide adolescents with a safe environment and a range of life skills that can help them make healthy choices and practice healthy behaviour.
- x. Children and adolescents should actively participate in making and implementing decisions on HIV prevention, care and support that affect them, their families and their communities.
- xi. All people living with HIV should know their rights.

Key Messages

- i. Everybody is encouraged to take a HIV test to establish their status as the first step of prevention.
- ii. People living with HIV should visit the nearest health facility for access to appropriate services and support.
- iii. Every one should show love and compassion to children and adults living with or affected by HIV.

b. Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission

Introduction

Prevention of mother-to-child transmission services are delivered through antenatal care services and are available in 60 per cent of health facilities. In many countries, pregnancy is the only time when women seek health services. This provides them an important opportunity to receive an HIV test and counseling whether in high or low-level epidemic areas.

If a woman is found to be HIV positive, she should have access to counselling, referrals, HIV care and treatment, and other healthcare services. Healthcare and support services for the mother will help reduce the risk of HIV transmission to the baby. A pregnant woman infected with HIV can take anti-retroviral drugs to help improve her own health and reduce the chances of her child becoming infected.

The risk of transmitting HIV to infants may be reduced to less than two per cent if pregnant women receive comprehensive counselling, health care and antiretroviral treatment during pregnancy and through the first six months after childbirth. This is often part of the comprehensive prevention of the mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) programme.

An HIV-positive mother of a newborn should get information and skills to select the best feeding option for her baby. She should receive nutrition and healthcare counselling for the newborn and herself and be supported in having her child tested and treated for exposure to HIV. She should be informed that babies born to HIV-positive women who have not taken anti-retrovirals during pregnancy have a one in three chances of being born with HIV. Without intervention, half of the babies infected with HIV die before they are two years.

Current Situation in Kenya

Initially, the uptake of PMTCT services was low, but since the opt-out strategy was adopted, 86 per cent of women now accept testing. However, the followup of mothers found to be HIV positive is still low, partly due to the late attendance of ANC and the low numbers of women who deliver under skilled attendance.

Most mothers in Kenya begin their ANC visits in the third trimester. The late antenatal clinic attendance limits the benefits that can be gained from the various

interventions provided within the focused antenatal care package of iron and foliate supplementation, intermittent presumptive treatment for malaria and provision of insecticide-treated nets. It also includes early recognition, management of maternal danger signs and management of conditions, such as preclampsia, anaemia, antepartum haemorrhage, screening for TB, syphilis and HIV counselling and testing to prevent mother-to-child transmission. All this would significantly impact on not only maternal, but also newborn and child survival.

In the general population, women are slightly more likely to be infected than men, with teenage girls being at high risk of HIV infection.

Rationale

The risk of transmitting HIV to infants may be reduced to less than two per cent if pregnant women receive comprehensive counselling, health care and antiretroviral treatment during pregnancy and through the first six months after childbirth. This is often part of the comprehensive PMTCT programme.

Supportive Scriptural References

Sanaatan Dharma has explained in great detail that the status of the mother's mind, emotions and body greatly influences not just the development of the child in the womb, but even the eventual qualities of the born child and the inherent behavior patterns that the child will develop through life.

The *Sushruta Samhita* states "In the fourth month of pregnancy, the division of all major and minor organs occurs. Because the heart is present, the gaining of consciousness also becomes evident. Therefore the foetus in the fourth month seeks sense objects. The foetus communicates these desires to the mother. If these desires are ignored, the child can become hunchbacked, crippled, lame, paralytic, dwarfed, cross eyed or blind. Therefore an expecting mother who righteously gets what she desires is satisfied and generates energetic and long-living child".

The *Garbadhana*, *Punsavana*, *Simantonayana Samskaaras* are performed for having a child of a desired or specific gender, intelligence, capabilities and constitution. *Kaumrabhritya* has recognised that the mental and physical states of the mother directly influence the health of the child. It is now

scientifically accepted that not just bodily characteristics, but even spiritual, physiological and psychological traits are transmitted by the mother to the child in the womb.

Moreover the bond between the mother and infant is so interdependent and connected that the baby also stimulates certain functions of the mother. The *Sushruta-samhita* states that the sight, sound or touch of the baby by the mother, is enough to promote lactation in the mother and moreover the baby recognizes the mother through the peculiar feel, taste and smell of the mother and the milk. This is due to the special bond between baby and mother that has continued from past lives through karmic links.

The *Sushruta samhita* recommends complete rest, avoidance of physical exertion, hunger and sexual excitement after delivery. This is to ensure complete recuperation by the mother to avoid subsequent early pregnancy and miscarriages in the future. It is also a *Sanaatani* doctrine that breast feeding for the full term of the prescribed period, besides developing proper immunity and physiology of the baby, also prevents complications in future pregnancies.

The *Charaka Samhita* (Cap 4-Para 30) states certain genetic facts: “When in her blood, a part of the ovum/ sperm that has reached the uterus is vitiated, then she produces a sterile girl child. Also when in her blood, a chromosome of the sperm or ovum is vitiated, then she gives birth to a stillborn child. When a gene that causes female organs (in the child) is vitiated, then the mother germinates a non-female with female characteristics”. This deals with the adverse effects of the humors of the ovum and the male seed that has reached the uterus for conception.

Miscarriage and still-births are sensitive issues for a Hindu mother and her family. It would be considered that the events are influenced by *karmic* processes. The couple may prefer to deal with matter privately and through medical and religious counseling.

Nevertheless, with proper behavior, practices mentioned for the *Garbadhana Samskaara*, proper care and deliberate influence over the unborn child qualities and the prescribed care for the infant would ensure that transmission of disease or disabilities can be prevented or overcome. The child can also be made to develop certain abilities

that overcome diseases or disabilities that cannot be avoided due to karmic reasons. Although HIV-AIDS is a recent affliction, the principles of health and treatment according to the *Vedic* scriptures remain the same. It is human behavior that needs to change and conform to *Sanaatan Dharma* religion and *Vedic* spiritual principles to overcome *karmic*, genetic and hereditary causes of diseases and also avoid emergence of new diseases and infections in the future. The Vedic scriptures insist on righteous, decent and moral behavior and determined elimination of anger, greed, lust, covetousness and hatred in order to ensure the well-being of humanity.

As has been said, the disciplines required to be observed and practiced in adolescent and youth years and also during marriage regarding civilized and cultured character with observance of chastity, celibacy, faithfulness and virtuousness (*bramachaarya* and others detailed in Chapter one) must be advocated and explained. Religious leaders need to ensure that morality and ethics of relationships are properly understood. Also the consequences of not abiding to the rules of relationships and marriage must also be notified.

The Vedas classify life into four very specific Aashrams (stages), each with its own code of conduct and each ranging 20-25 years - Firstly, Bramachaarya (scholarly, self-development, disciplining, self-control and celibate living), secondly, Grihastha (responsible in marriage and to family, occupation and householder duties and living), thirdly, Vaanaprastha (dedicated more towards religious life and gradual withdrawal from mundane living) and lastly, Sanyaasa (spiritual living). Compliance to this structure and system of social, economic, religious and spiritual living, ensures harmonious existence according to ones physical, emotional, intellectual development and nature, at all stages of life. This system prevents disharmony and reduces suffering, negativities and vulnerability and moreover enhances intellectual and spiritual evolution. It provides the basis for a holistic manner of living life. Each of the aashram is described in detail in the scriptures with specific aims and goals corresponding to each stage.

Thus the Vedas, Bahgwad Geeta, Bhagwatam and the various Sanaatan codes of conduct prescribe dharmic (ethical, moral and righteous) living at each stage of life that must be followed in order to transcend individual limitations, tendencies and vulnerabilities imposed by the three Gunas (Sattva, Rajas and Tamas):

“The fruit of virtuous actions is sattva - virtuous, while that of rajas is sorrow and that of tamas is ignorance and pain”.⁵⁷

“The Gunas born of Prakriti (matter) bind the imperishable Soul to the body of an individual”.⁵⁸

“When the Soul in the body has overcome the three Gunas, out of which the body has evolved, one is freed from death, decay and pain and attains immortality”.⁵⁹ Therefore the responsibility of each person to live in dharma as a responsible life is critical in avoiding disease, suffering and unhappiness. Thus even when a mother has a disease, she can actually prevent the transmission of such affliction to the child in the womb by loving and righteous living as prescribed by the Vedic scriptures. Moreover it is the role of healthy individuals to assist the suffering and diseased in a compassionate manner to fulfill dharmic obligations and overcome karmic bonds.

The Lord has assured *“One who serves me with unswerving devotion, he crosses beyond the Gunas and he becomes fit for realizing Brahman (God). For I am the abode of the Imperishable Brahman, the immortal of everlasting Dharma (righteousness) and of unending bliss”*.⁶⁰

Ayurveda, Yogasana, Pranayam and Sattvic diets can be strictly adhered to by persons with HIV-AIDS to regain immunity and even contain the virus. There are numerous examples in the *Sanaatan Dharma* texts, where correct and disciplined change in behavior and spiritual orientation overcame even severe cancers. In fact the *Vedic* and *Sanaatan* scriptures are replete with lives of of Saints and even ordinary persons that had dreadful cancers and yet lived wholesome and happy lives. *Sanaatan Dharma* teaches one to persevere, tolerate and forebear while also refraining from denial and stigmatization with greater emphasis on compassion, forgiveness and harmony.

⁵⁷ Bhagwad Geeta (14.16) - *Karmanah sukritasyaa huh saattvikam nirmalam phalam rajass tu phalam dukkham ajnaanam tamasah phalam.*

⁵⁸ Bhagwad Geeta (14.5) - *Saattvam rajas tama iti gunaah prakrutisambhavaah nibadhnanti mahaabaaho dehe dehinam avyayam.*

⁵⁹ Bhagwad Geeta (14.20) - *Gunaan etaan atiitya trin dehi dehasamudbhavaan janmamrtyujataadukhkhair vimukto mrtam asnute.*

⁶⁰ Bhagwad Geeta (14.26/27)- *Maam ca yo vyabhicaarena bhaktiyogena sevate sa gunaan samtityai taan brahmabhuyaya kalpate. Brahmano hi pratisthaa ham amrutasyaa vyayasya ca saasvatasya ca dharmasya sukhasyai kaantikasya ca.*

Key Messages

- i. All pregnant women should attend at least four antenatal clinics, and ensure they get tested for HIV.
- ii. All women should ensure they deliver in a health facility, if HIV positive, they should receive services to prevent the child from getting the HIV virus.
- iii. HIV positive mothers should exclusively breast feed for six months, and ensure the baby is on HIV drugs during this period and afterwards.



EARLY STIMULATION, CHILD PROTECTION¹ AND CARE

Introduction

Parents are their children's primary and most important educators and caregivers and therefore play a significant role in providing care and safeguarding the rights of young children. Early stimulation and care sets the stage for how children will learn and interact with others throughout life and is required for brain development. Newborn babies can see, hear, taste, smell and feel and early stimulation builds on these basic facts.

Early stimulation occurs when adults (parents or other caregivers) provide materials, experiences, language and love to a child. The way parents interact with their young children and the experiences they provide them have a big impact on their youngster's emotional development, learning skills, and how they function later in life. Touching, holding, rocking, talking, listening and reading, or just playing with a child dramatically influences the youngster's brain development.

A child needs to feel safe, know that they are special and feel confident about what to expect from their environment. A child also needs discipline, a balanced experience of freedom and limits, and be exposed to a diverse environment filled with books, music and appropriate toys.

Parents can best meet these needs by providing a healthy, loving, safe, and emotionally balanced home environment. Children raised by caring, attentive parents in predictable environments are better learners than those who experience less attention in less secure settings.

¹*Disciplining of the child in this context means providing guidance, follow-up and continued supervision of the child's development so that the child appreciates and understands the rationale behind the disciplinary measure. The Constitution of Kenya prohibits corporal punishment and UNICEF (and the Faith for Life material) does not advocate for any form of corporal punishment or abuse of children.*

Current Situation in Kenya

In Kenya, very few children have birth certification, meaning they are not legally registered, especially in rural areas. Children are involved in labour in houses and farms. Other problems afflicting children include:

- i. Most children are not protected from violence – including defilement, sexual abuse and physical injuries.
- ii. Some children are not taken to health facilities for treatment of diseases and preventive measures e.g. immunisation.
- iii. Late enrollment of children in school has a negative impact.
- iv. Preference of male child for schooling in some communities leads to discrimination of girls.
- v. Introduction to early schooling before the recommended age e.g at two years.

Rationale

The family has a primary role in raising children that cannot be replaced. The parent's love for their children draws from them what is best. The fullest expression of the parents' love for the children is the task of educating them. The love of parents to their children is the source of all educational activity.

Fatherhood and motherhood represent a responsibility, which is both spiritual and physical. Parents should develop a profound esteem for the dignity of the child and a great respect for their rights. The smaller the child is, the more it is in need of everything, when it is sick, suffering or handicapped.

Correct Practices to be Promoted

- i. Every child should be legally registered and have a birth certificate.
- ii. Every child has a right to healthcare, good nutrition and education.
- iii. Every child has a right to be protected from harm, abuse and discrimination.
- iv. Every child deserves compassion and parental love.
- v. Providing parental love is integral to the formations of: a) Honesty, b)
- vi. Integrity, c) Humility, d) Fair play, e) Obedience, d) Courtesy and e) Religious practice (holistic growth)
- vii. Every child has a right to special care if they have disabilities, impairment or special needs.

Supportive Scriptural References

In order to provide adequate time for the mother and baby to recover from the process of birthing, the actual name giving ceremony (*Naamakarana Samskaara*) is performed after the tenth day after birth. The name is chosen from specific syllables corresponding to the *Vedic* astrology and astronomy on the day and time of the child's birth. *Jyotisha* is an analysis system that provides the behavioral dispositions based on past lives, present influences and future tendencies. An experienced priest may even be able to predict the baby's future behavior and tendencies to allow the parents to make suitable adjustments in the upbringing of the child.

Sikhs name the baby on the fortieth day in a simple ceremony (*Naama Karana*). *Ardas* (prayers) are recited. The *Guru Granth Sahib* is opened at random and the first letter from the top of the left page denotes the first letter of the child's name. *Sikh* names have special religious meanings. Many Sikh names are not gender specific. After the name the suffix *Singh* is added for boys and suffix *Kaur* for girls. The baby may be presented with a *Kara* (bangle) at this stage if it was not done on the thirteenth day.

Following the naming ceremony, the first outing ceremony (*Niskramana Samskaara*) follows. This sacrament prepares the baby for the first contact with the world. Traditionally this happens after three lunar moons (approximately three months). Upon discharge from hospital, the baby can be suitably covered to protect against any vulnerabilities to environmental influences. Thereafter, it is essential to perform this *samskaara* as prescribed.

The baby is taken to the family shrine or deity and then exposed to the sun's rays (Hindus consider the Sun to be the representation of the Truth and *Dharma*). It is thought that by now the baby is ready to absorb the sun's rays for production of vitamins and also stimulate the skin. (Medical science has shown that the skin generates vitamin D when exposed to the milder sun's rays during sunrise without causing any harmful effects). Vitamin D is essential for proper bone development of the baby.

Prayers for favorable environment and atmosphere are chanted. Sandalwood paste is applied to the infant's forehead. The sandalwood (*chandana*) also assists the baby for any healing required. Offerings are made to the family deity. The baby also receives sacred beads usually made of holy basil wood (*tulasi*). *Tulasi* plant is

known to generate high oxygen and is used to improve development of connective and protein tissues.

In *Sikhism*, a few days after birth, the immediate family will take the baby to the *Gurudwara* (Sikh temple) to present the baby to the *Guru Granth Sahib* and to recite hymns and *kirtans* expressive of thankfulness. *Karhah Prashad* (sacred rice pudding) is partaken.

There have been cases where parents do not take sick babies to the doctor before the first outing ceremony for fear of transgression of their religious duties. However the Hindu tradition is pragmatic whereby for health reasons, ritual practices can be adjusted. The child's health should take priority from religious orientation also. Hindu religious duties are also classified as mandatory and optional depending on circumstances.

Weaning

The *Anna Prashana Samskaara* commences the weaning period and usually is performed in the sixth month for males and the fifth month for females. The ceremony of weaning should be performed when it is certain that the child is able to digest food. The *Sushruta -sanhita* observes that children weaned early usually remain lean throughout life. Early weaning can lead to protuberant abdomen. Similarly late weaning (beyond one year) can be detrimental to the mother's health and also for the full development of the child's digestive system. Teething usually determines the time for weaning ceremony.

Since the child is sensitive during this time, it is recommended that about 2-3 weeks prior to commencement of weaning (at the ceremony), undiluted fruit juices be given to the child to prepare the digestive tract for solid foods. These should be continued after weaning. The ceremony also recommends feeding the infant with sanctified rice milk. The child's attitude may change during this period as it cries for food or demands more frequent feeds. This is a sign of the child becoming aware of its needs and becoming accustomed to the environment.

It is considered that at this time the child's innate tendencies are manifesting. Ceremonies that include special prayers to determine the child's inborn tendencies are performed whereby the child is offered certain objects (scriptural

book, money, food and earth). Depending on which object or objects stimulate, the child's nature and vocational tendency can be determined and then appropriately supported.

During the ceremony, the father feeds the child food mixed with curds, jaggery, honey and ghee while narrating the following prayer - *"O Lord of food; Give us food nourishing and string. Uplift the giver, bestow strength on us men and animals"*.

The *Yajur Veda* (11/83) explains about weaning - *"To make a child bright and intelligent, rice with curds and ghee should be fed to the child with the prayer - A share of food; O Lord of food; vouchsafe us invigorating food that brings no sickness onward, still onward lead the giver. Grant us maintenance both for quadruped and bipeds"*.

The *Anna Prashana Samskaara* does not mean that milk feeds be stopped. Milk feeds should be continued beyond the six-month period, to avoid deficiencies of iron and vitamins A, C and D. As recommended, breast-feeding is ideally continued till the age of 18 months. However the frequency is gradually reduced as other foods are substituted. Foods given to the child after the ceremony should ideally be of the *sattva guna*. *Ayurvedic* pediatrics recommends certain foods for the infant:

1. Liquid diet of fruit juices, soups and mashed vegetables.
2. Husk free and well-washed rice (especially aged rice) mixed with oleaginous foods e.g. Lentils and ghee.
3. Wheat and barley flours porridge.
4. Soft fruits like grapes, tangerines, melons. (For pitta constitution (*dosha* type), grapes with honey and ghee is ideal).
5. Boiled water mixed with jaggery (that also assists in constipation), mild tea, cow or goat milk.

Immunity & Security

Ayurveda (*Kaumarbharaty*a section) also recommends certain tonics (*rasayan*) and herbal remedies that help to fully develop the child and also prevent illnesses. To stimulate immunity, *Svarna bhasma* (gold ash) mixed with *Brahmi* (*Centella asiatica*) paste (improves intellectual development), *Sankhapushpi* (*Convolvulus pluricaulis*), ghee and honey can be taken regularly.

While hygiene, diet and disciplining remain aspects for child development and care, it is important to establish psychological security and intellectual potentials. This is readily achieved through loving care and making the child understand religious principles through *Puranic* scriptures and texts.

Loving care is the emphasis between parents & child for a healthy relationship that will blossom the inherent qualities of the child. Certain diseases result due to poor care or love accorded to the child. Such situations precipitate into psychosomatic causes for chronic diseases later in life.

Purificatory rights

After the age of 6 months, the *Karnavedha Samskaara* (ear piercing ceremony) is performed with prayers and mantras. Customarily, the ceremony is performed when the child is much older - around 3 years old. This is to enhance the health and strength of the child. Gold is considered a pure element and therefore earrings of gold are inserted into the pierced earlobe. Ayurveda and Chinese traditional health systems have identified numerous pressure points (nerve points) linked to almost every organ in the body along the outer ear. Stimulation of these pressure points energizes and stimulates the particular organ to function optimally. The Hindu scriptures indicate that this ceremony is to prevent chronic diseases and to strengthen the immunity of the child.

The next *Samskaara* is the *Cuda Karana* that includes the shaving of the child scalp. In some cases the *Karnavedha* is performed at the same time. It is performed for all children, whether male or female. It is considered to remove impurities and bestows a keen vision, longevity, general well being, strength and beauty. Ideally the hair is shaved between the 1st to 3rd years of the child. In some cultures, a small tuft of hair called *shikha*, is left on the posterior scalp of a male child. It signifies and enhances pioussness and humility in the child.

Immunisation

Although in the ancient times when the Hindu scriptures were written, immunization was not a practice. However, introducing certain substances into the body either indirectly or directly into the blood stream to build immunity against the effects of

those substances has been detailed in the *Ayurvedic* texts.

The *Kashyap Samhita* and *Kaumarbhrutya Tantra (Balopacharaniya)* of *Ayurveda*, deal with pre-natal, natal and post-natal care and disciplines. They describe natural ways to build immunity in children. One of the gentlest and easiest ways to cultivate immunity and maintain vitality in infants is specific oil massage (*snehana*), *yogasana* and *pranic* breathing practices of yoga. It is recommended that the mother give regular oil massages to the infant to aid blood circulation, skin development, and removal of excretions through the skin. Applications of castor oil also encourage removal of toxins from the body and the intestines. Immunity is also dependent on the removal of toxins from the body. *Ayurveda* prescribes easy methods for detoxification such as saline laxatives, purgatives, oil massages, certain *yogasanas* and morning vomiting after consumption of warm water.

Since children's skin is more permeable than adult's skin, it is suggested to make use of herbs with the massage oil. Apart from oil massage, medicated bath is quintessential in maintaining the overall health of the newborn. Moreover, basic hygiene is necessary to shield the child from diseases and infections. Therefore, the mouth of the infant should be washed properly, but gently after feeds. The nose, ears and eyes should also be cleaned frequently on a daily basis to ensure that debris and secretions do not cause blockage of these important organs that aid in breathing and also excretion. Washing certain specific organs of the infant can be done with saline water.

Moreover adequate rest is crucial for infants to develop fully biologically. At least 14-16 hours of daily sleep is necessary for infants up to the age of 10 months. Since diseases result due to psychosomatic reasons, it is also vital that the child receives proper psychological care and advice. Instilling fears in infants and children is prohibited.

Ayurveda recommends the following paste for measles and chickenpox to heal the pox scars:

Grind equal quantity of *Apamarg* and *Turmeric* and make a paste with water. Apply the paste on nails (hands and feet) and on the forehead. It relieves the fever and also soothes the pox away. The *Apamarg* root paste can also be applied on the pox eruptions to prevent itching and pain.

It is prudent to regularly de-worm children between the ages of 2-5 years since they

have a habit of placing all items in the mouth. The sterility of objects cannot be guaranteed and therefore it is prudent to de-worm the child periodically (preferably every 6 months) to prevent anemia developing.

Early Stimulation and Training

The *Vedic* and *Puranic* scriptures state that the education of a person begins before birth. There are numerous examples in the *Ramayana* and *Mahabhaaratha* where the foetus gains knowledge through the learning of and study by the mother. In fact this transmission of knowledge was deliberately used to enlighten specific know-hoes to the child while still in the womb. The purposes of the *Garbadhana Samskaara* besides acquiring a child of certain virtuous character and specific abilities, is also to ensure that those inherent potentials permit the child to readily learn and understand useful disciplines and studies while still in the womb, with the assistance of the mother's faculties.

Moreover the Vedic scriptures emphasize that in order to be able to educate a child, one must first educate oneself to become conscious and master of oneself so that one does not set a bad example to one's child. Therefore the *Puranic* texts decree that during pregnancy, a mother has to be extremely careful of what she thinks, speaks and hears for it would influence the child. Moreover once the child is born, it is through example that education and disciplining becomes effective. To speak good words and give wise advice to a child has little effect if one does not set an example of what one teaches.

Parents usually have a high ideal and act in accordance with it. This influences the child and gradually the child reflects this ideal. In return the child naturally cultivates appropriate respect and admiration for the parents. The Vedic scripture state that a child considers the parents as demigods and will always try to emulate as best as possible what the parents do.

"To love to learn is the most precious gift that one can make to a child; to learn always and everywhere".⁶¹

⁶¹ *Sri Aurbindo - The Mother*

The Yoga and Ayurveda texts recommend certain specific early childhood care and stimulation:

1. Once the child is able to make use of the limbs, the child be guided methodically and regularly on the movement of the body parts in form of exercises. This ensures proper functioning and balanced growth of muscles while preventing any stiffening of joints and spine.
2. Stimulate the child to regulate feeding, sleeping, evacuation and all other habits that need to be developed to formulate a disciplined life for better health and body functions in later life. This also makes the responsibility of the parents and family easier once the habits are set.
3. Teach the child with loving care to distinguish between needs and desires.
4. Guide the child to develop a taste for healthy and simple food that is also substantial and appetizing. Preferably the food should correspond to the child's dosha type.
5. Discipline the child to eat according to hunger, the right quantity (Ayurvedic texts suggest that the correct amount of food be consumed at meals - the stomach should have a third of food, a third of water and a third of air). Food should not be for the purpose of gluttony.
6. Make the child understand that food is for the strength and health of the body and not for pleasure of the palate.
7. Teach the child from early years to observe cleanliness and hygienic habits. The parents, while training the child on cleanliness, should not instill the fear of illness in the child.
8. The child must have sufficient sleep. In the cradle, the baby sleeps longer. The number of hours of sleep diminish as the child grows. Upon maturity, sleep should not be longer than eight hours in a quiet and ventilated place. The child should not be made to stay up late.
9. Children should not be scolded without good reason and only when indispensable. Encourage the child to confess voluntarily in case of wrong doings. Kindness and affection be employed in explaining to the child any wrongs.
10. Prevent any fear between the child and parent. Fear is pernicious means of education and it gives birth to deceit and lies.
11. Emphasize on the beauty of strength, good health and balance. Beauty and grace emerges when harmony is established among the different parts of the body and mind.
12. Ideally parents should care for the child themselves rather than nannies.
13. Assiduously teach the children to know themselves so that they can blossom their full potential.

Socialization

Socialization for a Hindu child begins in the womb rather than after birth. It also becomes a pivotal time for the family to display values, traditions and history as these are passed on to the child. This conveys implicit Hindu values and sets the parameters for a Hindu sense of value. Early life rituals not only instill old traditions but are used to shape new identities for the mother and child. Tradition is literally passed on to the child through folk and religious practices in which forefathers are invoked. *Puranic* stories and values are narrated to the mother during maternity to ensure that the baby understand the society and environment into which it is going to be born. The narration also educates the child on what is expected of him/her towards the society.

The *Puranic* scriptures advice on how parents and children relate to each other on many dimensions (love, authority, dependence, etc) and in many kinds of interaction (involving care, control, instruction, companionship). For children parents are the most important individuals. Parents act in the role of designer (arrange play setting), mediator (initiating and relating the child to peers in relationships and situations), supervisor (observing and advising) and consultant (clarifying doubts) to modify and cultivate the way in which children relate. Indeed the *Vedic* texts suggest that the parents are the first *Guru*. Parents can teach in different ways, by example, explanation, direction and guidance. Therefore if the parents follow a systematic approach then *Sanaatan Dharma* would be fully integrated into the child's life even in adult life.

Establishing correct behavior skills and patterns for good relationships largely depends on the intensity of infant-mother attachment formed in the early years. Indeed the child is the responsibility of the parents till s/he comes of age. However in Hindu culture and tradition, the child always remains the responsibility of the parents. Moreover the parents must imbibe good values in the child as their karmic responsibility, such that when the parents become old, the child fulfills the *Vedic, karmic*, righteous and moral responsibility of looking after the parents. Therefore the manner in which this relationship is formed, with love, care, respect and discipline by both the father and mother, is significant for the future of the child.

Mentoring

Hinduism emphasizes on nine key qualities to be cultivated in a child - Self-concept, self correction and disciplining, self-control, confidence and clarity,

contentment, pious character, proficiency in resolving challenges, parental and elders respect and prejudice-free consciousness. Through these disciplinary processes, the child should be taught the four traditional Hindu goals of life - *Artha* (abundance), *Kama* (love and compassion), *Dharma* (responsibility and abundance in religious principles) and *Moksha* (liberation from rebirth and overcome the fear of death).

Patanjali Ashtang Yoga provides the *niyamas* and *yamas* to be practiced. Non-injury, truthfulness, non-stealing, patience, compassion, steadfastness, honesty, moderation and purity are the *Yamas*. Remorse, contentment, charity, faith, worship, religious practices, austerity and tolerance are the *Niyamas*.

These are to develop a orderly self-control. Moreover self-control is also cultivated through an emphasis on the Hindu imperative to maintain chastity (*brahmacharya*). The Hindu Rishis have repeatedly advised *“Children who see their mother and father resolving differences through mature dialogue and discussion or in the home shrine through prayer and meditation will emulate the same in their life to become the elite of society, the pillars of strength for society in times of difficulty, will uphold the principles of dharma and not succumb to the temptations of the lower self”*.

The *Vedic* scriptures emphasize the three great God-given powers - *Iccha* (power to desire the correct), *Kriya* (power to act and exert an effort) and *Jnaana* (power of wisdom) - that must be explained and illustrated to children so that they begin to have a vision and missions for their life.

Moreover it is also said by the Hindu saints that *“Children are treated with respect, for they may be incarnations of a relative or a master and have taken birth for past karma and to fulfill righteous responsibility (dharma)”*.

Jainism emphasizes that it is important for the child to develop faith in *karma*, reincarnation and the existence of an all-pervasive Divinity creates an attitude of reverence, benevolence, compassion and *Ahimsa*. Children should also be taught the basics of meditation at an early age, including sitting in the correct upright postures, regulating the breath (*pranayama*) and performing *hatha yoga* to quiet the mental and physical energies. These practices will assist them to remain centered, which will mature into deeper inner experiences later in life.

Infant Care

The *Sushruta Samhita* advises that a child must be handled with care so as not to cause any discomfort. A baby should not be suddenly aroused (from sleep), nor abruptly raised or laid down. The baby must be treated gently at all times even when made to exercise. An attempt to seat the baby, when it is not able to, may cause damage to the spine. An infant should be lovingly fondled and handled.

An infant should also be guarded against exposure to the rain, severe sun or the flash of lightning. The infant should be sheltered as much as possible.

Key Messages

- i. Parents should ensure their children are legally registered and have birth certificates.
- ii. Parents should ensure their children take nutritious food, have access to basic healthcare and education and are protected from any harm, abuse and discrimination.
- iii. Parents should engage their children in interactions that promote positive development and growth e.g. playing, singing and talking.



a. Safe Drinking Water

Introduction

All water that people drink and use should come from a safe source or be purified. Containers for carrying and storing water need to be kept clean inside and outside, and covered to keep the water clean. Where necessary, home-based water treatment, such as boiling, filtering, adding chlorine or disinfecting with sunlight, should be used to purify the water.

Families have fewer illnesses when they have an adequate supply of safe water and know how to keep it clean and free from germs. If the water is not safe, it can be purified using low-cost solutions at home. It can be:

- i. Boiled;
- ii. Cleaned through a filter;
- iii. Purified with chlorine; or
- iv. Disinfected with sunlight or other simple measures.

The trained health worker or extension agent should have information on locally available home treatments. Safe water sources include properly constructed and maintained piped systems, public standpipes, boreholes, pond sand filters, protected dug wells, protected springs and rainwater collection. Water from unsafe sources – rivers, dams, lakes, ponds, streams, canals, irrigation channels, unprotected wells and springs – is best avoided. If necessary, it can be made safer by the home-based water treatment methods referred to above. Water should be safely stored in a covered clean container.

Current Situation in Kenya

- i. Forty six per cent of Kenyans have no access to basic sanitation; therefore, their activities have direct impact on water safety.
- ii. Forty two per cent of Kenyans have no access to safe water supply and therefore, it's a big challenge to ensure affordable and safe drinking water, especially at household level. It requires partnerships, consultative and sector wide approach.

- iii. The national average distances to domestic water points have increased to 25-30kms from seven kilometres.
- iv. The average quantity of water available for domestic use has reduced to five litres per person daily from 10 litres per person, per day (KFSSG 2009).
- v. There are constant outbreaks of waterborne diseases, which are a major concern to the ministry.

Rationale

Children are more vulnerable than any other age group to the ill effects of unsafe water, poor sanitation and lack of hygiene. These contribute to 88 per cent of deaths from diarrhoeal diseases. Children under five years old account for nearly 90 per cent of deaths from diarrhoea.

Myths, Misconceptions and Current Wrong Practices

- i. Inadequate use of sanitation facilities in rural areas.
- ii. Cultural practices i.e. inability to share toilets with in-laws.
- iii. Avoiding boiled and /or chlorine-treated water due to its 'taste'.
- iv. Belief that a baby's faeces is free from disease.
- v. Alternative sanitation options.

Correct Practices to be Promoted

- i. Boil or treat drinking water.
- ii. Store drinking water in clean, covered containers.
- iii. Drink water using clean containers.
- iv. Drinking water sources should be protected from contamination – animal drinking points should be separated from those of people.
- v. Avoid the use of pesticides or chemicals anywhere near a water source.
- vi. Use of clean covered containers to store drinking water.
- vii. Protection of water sources.
- viii. Drink water with less than 2ppm fluoride as advised by health workers.

Key Messages

- i. **Collect drinking water hygienically.**
- ii. **Boil or treat and store water in clean covered containers before drinking.**
- iii. **Ensure water sources are protected from contamination.**

b. Cleanliness

Introduction

A healthy and hygienic environment is actualised by safe, adequate water supply, sufficient sanitation and appropriate hygiene promotion. The health benefits of safe and adequate water, improved sanitation and hygiene are broad in scope, ranging from reductions in diarrhoea, intestinal worms, ecto-parasites, infections and trachoma, to enhanced psycho-social well-being afforded through such factors as the dignity that goes with using a clean toilet or latrine.

Many illnesses can be prevented by good hygienic practices: washing hands with soap and water (or a substitute, such as ash and water) after visiting a toilet or cleaning a child who has defecated, using clean toilets or latrines, disposing of faeces away from play and living areas and water sources, washing hands before handling food, using water from safe sources, disinfecting drinking water if its safety is in question, and keeping food and water clean.

Parents and caregivers should wash their hands with soap and water:

- i. After cleaning an infant or young child who has defecated.
- ii. Before and after handling food.
- iii. After visiting latrines or toilets.
- iv. Before feeding young children.

Parents and caregivers need to help children develop the habit of washing their hands with soap before eating and after using the latrine or toilet. Where soap is not available, ash and water can be used. Animal and human faeces should be kept away from houses, paths, water sources and children's play areas.

Current Situation in Kenya

Many illnesses, especially diarrhoea, come from germs found in human faeces. If the germs get into water or onto food, hands, utensils or surfaces used for preparing and serving food, they can be swallowed and cause illnesses. Safe disposal of all faeces – both human and animal – is the single most important action to prevent the spread of germs by people or flies. Emphasis should be put on proper disposal of human and animal waste. Some households do not have toilets and where they have, they do not share them with in-laws.

Rationale

Water is one of the most essential elements of life. God has made every living thing dependent on water for its very existence. Every day, the body excretes two to three litres of water; some 1.4 litres through the kidneys, about 0.8 litres through the skin, 0.8 litres through the lungs and a very small amount through the intestines. This loss is compensated for by the fluid intake in food and drink.

Correct Practices to be Promoted

- i. Drink water using clean containers.
- ii. Always use a toilet.
- iii. Dispose baby faeces in a toilet or bury it.
- iv. Wash your hands before preparing, serving or eating food and before feeding children.
- v. Wash your hands after using the toilet, changing a baby, handling animals and raw food.
- vi. Wash your hands with clean running water and soap.
- vii. Washing the face with soap and water everyday helps to prevent eye infections.
- viii. Raw or leftover food should be washed or cooked. Cooked food should be eaten without delay or thoroughly reheated.
- ix. Food, utensils and food preparation surfaces should be kept clean. Food should be stored in covered containers.
- x. All household refuse should be safely disposed.
- xi. All children above one year should be dewormed twice every year.

Supportive Scriptural References

Water is one of the *panchmahabhutas* (five great elements - space, air, fire, water and earth) – building blocks of life and universe. Water is life and without water life perishes. The Vedic scriptures also dedicate a Lord of water, *Varuna* that is considered the Lord of sustenance. Water also comprises 75% of the human body.

The *Rig Veda* (10.9.3) states, *“Let pleasant essence of water be useful like the mothers who for the well being of the children give their breast to suckle”*.⁶²

⁶² *Rig Veda (10.9.3) - Aum Yo vah shivtamo rasastasya bhajyateh nah. Ushatiriv matrah.*

“Indeed water is medicine, water is the dispeller of the cause of disease and it is itself the remedy for all ills”.⁶³

The *Prthvi Sukta* (12th chapter of the Atharva Veda) mentions a prayer for the Earth - *“Obeissance to the Earth; may only pure water flow for our bodies. May all the water on Earth remain pure and unpolluted, May harmful substance be away from us”.*

The *Rig Veda* (7.49) narrates a prayer to the water - *“The water of the sky or that which flow or those that are dug or those that arise by themselves, those pure and clear waters that seek the oceans, let these waters who are Goddesses help me here and now”.*

A *Vedic* prayer dedicated to the inherent value in the waters emphasizes the importance of the purity of water - *“May this Earth with incessant attendance of flowing water, by day and night, grant us abundant nutrition and radiance”.*

The *Atharva Veda* also narrates the healing property of water - *“Torrents of water pour from snow covered hills to meet the rivers ad sea. This pure waters from the heavens provides medicine and cure the pain in the heart”.*⁶⁴

Spiritual Cleansing

The *Manu Smriti* states *“Water purifies body, Truth purifies the mind. Learning and dexterity purifies the soul and knowledge purifies the intellect”.*⁶⁵

When bathing, it is recommended in Hindu scriptures to invoke the sacred waters of the rivers named after the *Vedic* deities, and thereby solicit the powers of curing negativity (mind), disease (body) and agitations (emotional), and of purification and healing: *“Ganga Cha Yamune Chaiva Godaavari Saraswati Narmade Sindhu Kaaveri Jalesmin Sannidhim Kuru”.*

⁶³ *Rig Veda* (10.9.2) - *Aum indra ubhesha jiraapo vmivachanih. Aapah sarvasya bshhajistaast krinvantu Bshhajjan.*

⁶⁴ *Atharva Veda* (6.24.1) - *Om hiimvatah pra sravanti samha sangamah, Aapo ha mahyam tad devir dadan haddyoot bshhajjan*

⁶⁵ *Manu Smriti* - *Adabhirgatrani Shudhyanti manoh Satyen Shudhyati, Vidyatapobhyam bhutatma buddhir dnyanen Shudhyati*

However it is the planet earth that eventually provides us clean water and nutritious food. The *Bhoo Suktam* verse in the Vedas praises the earth as the mother of all living beings: “O Mother Earth, Obeisance to you, who is the *Mahee* (qualified to be worshipped), *Vishnupatni* (Protector and sustainer of the Universe), *Vasundharaa* (Repository of all preciousness), *Lakshmi* (Giver of prosperity and elegance), *Jalashayane* (ever cooling and soothing like water), *Vishwambharaa* (substratum of the world). Thus the Mother Earth deserves absolute reverence as it provides the means to cleanse.

Indeed the idea of cleanliness and bathing is not just for physical cleansing, but also for holistic and wholesome cleaning. Certainly bathing and maintaining cleanliness assists to keep diseases and infections away, but the concept of cleanliness must be understood broadly to include one’s daily routines, consuming clean food, ensuring that the environment and surroundings are maintained clean and in pure states and that all work is conducted with clean (honest) methods and pure intentions. The concept is to be further assimilated to include the cleanliness (purification) of thoughts, emotions and the motives of all actions.

According to the *Vedic* scriptures, the daily routine of bathing is not just to ensure bodily health, but to heighten one’s thinking into achieving higher goals of cleanliness and purification such that the principles of cleanliness and purification become truly integrated into our psyche such that everything we do has physical, psychological and emotional cleanliness and purity. “*The demoniac do not know the way of life (actions), nor renunciation, neither are they aware of cleanliness, purity nor good conduct or truth is found in them*”.⁶⁶

Therefore the *Vedas* recommend *sadhanaa* (worship and rituals), that includes purification, cleaning and healing processes like *jaapa*, *bhakti*, *kirtan*, *bhajan*, such that our inner core (the mind) is pure and always with good and seraphic intentions. Science has proven that all diseases are psychosomatic and that even the emergence of new infectious bacteria or viruses is because of human behavior and thinking. Therefore if the mind is maintained pure and sanctified, then the strength of that purity ensures protection against obstacles and afflictions of the physiology or emotions. In fact, the ancient *Rishis* had the powers to purify not just the external or material but even sins of others.

⁶⁶ *Bhagwad Geeta - 16.7 - Pravrttim ca nivrttim ca janaa na vidor aasuraah na saucam naa caa caaro na satyam tesu vidyate.*

The *Vedic* scriptures state that as one establishes in purity, the individual achieves yoga (union with God) through the sublimation of the personalized and egotistical character and therefore becoming diviner. Thus one becomes more lustrous and steadfast unto the atman (pure Soul). In so doing, there are lesser chances of getting diseases.

Selfless giving is a virtuous act for Hindus. Hindus are therefore eager to donate blood or even donate an organ as an altruistic responsibility. Moreover *Ayurvedic* texts recommend that for a healthy person to donate blood further stimulates blood production, the fresh supply of which acts as a cleansing and healing process for the body.

The *Rigveda* describes the soul as: “*That Supreme spirit is the protector of all, pervades all and illumines all things. He is glorious, friendly, the best and greatest, adorable, the controller and the mighty*”.⁶⁷ This is the eventual goal of an individual, as stipulated by the Vedas, to achieve the protection from all afflictions through Gods grace.

Detoxification

Ayurveda prescribes the *panchakarma* (five methods of elimination) for detoxification or elimination of aggravated and vitiated *doshas* to enhance physiological cleanliness, healing and prevention of disease:

- *Vamana* - Induced emesis (vomiting to remove bile toxins)
- *Virechana* - Medical purgation (laxative)
- *Nasya* - Nasal administration
- *Anuvasan Basti* - Medicinal enema (oil base) & *Niruha Basti* - Enema (decoction base).
- *Raktamokshana* - Blood letting

These detoxification methods eliminate unhealthy substances thereby purifying the body and rejuvenating the individual. *Charaka Samhita* (Cap 16-Para 17-21) states:

- For the person whose abdomen is thus cleansed, metabolism improves, disease subsides and normalcy returns.
- Sense faculties, mind, intellect and skin color improve. Assimilation and

⁶⁷ *Rig Veda 1-164-46: Indram Mitram Varunamagniraahuratho Divyah Sa Suparno Garutmaan Ekam Sadvipraa Bahudhaa Vadantyagnim Yamam Maatarishvaanamaahuh.*

other processes begin to work better and therefore nourishment, strength, and virility improve.

- Regular *panchakarma* reduces aging and prevents disease.

Symbiosis

The *Sushruta Samhita* (13.19) states that a patient can be cleansed and treated with leeches (for blood-letting) by placing them on the area where infection or poisons needs to be removed. Ayurveda states that a paste of mustard, turmeric and incense is applied on the leeches after which the leeches are soaked in water for 48 minutes. This rejuvenates the leeches and removes their tiredness. The leeches are then applied to the wound or area to be treated. The leech is covered with smooth wet white cotton bandage. Only the mouth of the leech is left uncovered. The leech will bite at the wound and remove the poisoned or infected blood. It is suggested that if the leech does not bite, feed it with a drop of milk or blood from the wound.

In the medical sector, leeches are used in osteoarthritis of the knee.⁶⁸ The saliva of the leech has vasodilators (to open blood vessels), *hyaluronidase* (enzyme to breakdown connective tissue hyaluronic) and *hirudin* (to inhibit blood clotting). Leeches are also used to cure infection of leg ulcers in diabetics.

Non-violence

Cleanliness is also maintaining the environment, surroundings, the home and especially food, clean and healthy. Mosquitoes, bed bugs, cockroaches and such other insects, fungus and bacteria breed where the environment is unclean or has stagnant water that has waste in it. TB is also contracted where air-circulation is poor and therefore unclean.

Jainism scriptures do not advocate killing of life (*ahmisa*) but permit the use of repellants (for insects, bugs, bacteria and fungi). Therefore Jainism advocates absolute and strict cleanliness of the body, home, workplace and environment and further of the purity of actions and thoughts.

⁶⁸ *Effectiveness of Leech Therapy - Dr Andreas Michalsen, Germany - Annals of Internal Medicine.*

If the earth and nature with all its waters, air, and diversity of living beings are respected and taken care of by humans, then the medicinal and holistic properties within the elements and beings of nature benefit humans. The *Vedic* scriptures illustrate that in ancient times, man did not consume away herbs and natural medicines. Man had the intuitive capacity to mentally tune into a particular plant to understand and extract its healing property by worshipping the particular plant. This would negate the actual destruction of plants and beings to make medicines. This is the *Vedic dharmic* way of living.

Hygiene and Nature

The *Vedas* state an appeal *“Purify us from all sides, Earth is the mother and I am the son of Earth”*.⁶⁹ - meaning that the cleansing and purification process is intricately intertwined with nature.

As described in the *Upanishads* and mentioned above the clean preparation of food and also the honest and sincere means of earning an income enhance the *sattvic* quality of that food. When *sattvic* means of earning, purchasing and preparing food are practiced, the food consumed produces a pure inner environment within the body and averts disease and creates healing.

The great saint *Adi Sankracharya* implores that *“one must cultivate a healthy disregard for and an attitude of detachment from the body vanities. No doubt the body is to be looked after for it serves us. Keep it clean, beautiful, fed, clothed and washed; just as we serve all the other vehicles that we use. Do serve the body, but always with a firm and steady understanding that this is only an instrument to achieve ampler fields”*.⁷⁰

It is the Hindu tradition to remove shoes before entering homes. This is to ensure that any dirt or harmful substances that may have accumulated on the shoes does not enter the home and contaminate food or kitchen where food is prepared.

⁶⁹ *Atharva Veda (12.1.12) - Taasu no dhehyabhi nah, pawaswa maata bhumi, Putro aham prithwiyaah.*

⁷⁰ *Bhaja Govindam - Swami Chinmayananda.*

Although the *Sanaatana* scriptures state that the body is temporary and to be used as a tool, the decrees also emphasize on the importance of maintenance and hygiene - “*Throwing spittle in the open is not good. Also condemnable is to urinate (or defecate) in water (river or lake) or on land usable by others*”.⁷¹ Vedas state that the land and water have their presiding deities who must be paid their due deference when using these great gifts of nature. Thus one must carefully dispose-off human waste (preferably buried in earth so that it is naturally converted to useful material -manure, urea or biogas).

Purity

Purity, while implying a strict sense of physical cleanliness, its *Sanaatan* significance extends to social, ceremonial, mental, emotional, psychic and spiritual purity.

Overall the following are general Vedic rules to be observed for purity:

1. **Cleanliness** - maintain a clean home environment that is uncluttered to create a strong spiritual vibration and inhibit negative forces. Let there be ample fresh air, adequate natural sun light and ensure there is beauty within and outside the house.
2. **Personal Health** - Maintain a balanced *ayurvedic* diet, moderate daily exercise, *hatha yoga* and vigorous work for strength and health.
3. **Bathing** - removes somnolence, fatigue and lethargy. It cleanses the body off perspiration and prevents itching. It stimulates osmotic excretion through the skin and also between the blood and lymph systems. The *Vedic* scriptures state that washing the feet relieves fatigue and cools the nerve that links the eyes, healing eye problems.
4. **Well-Being** - Mental and spiritual purity through daily meditation, introspection, *saadhana*, worship, scriptural study, right living and thinking. Applying cold water to the head provides an invigorating feeling (The *Chikitsa Sthanam* (14) states that pouring hot water on the head impedes eyesight. Also bathing is not

⁷¹ *Samprajanya Rakshnama - Dntakaashthasya khedasya visarjanamapaavratam, neshtam jale sthale bhogye mutradeshrchaapi garhitam.*

- prescribed when having diarrhea, eye and ear problems.)
5. **Purity and Food** - What one does not intend to buy is not touched in the market. When cooking food, it is not tasted. Also one does not touch lips to a water vessel used by others. Also when food is partaken, it is not offered or shared with others.
 6. **Offerings** - Flowers that are to be used in worship and offered to God are not sniffed. Even the smell is for God. Offerings are carried with both hands on the right side of body so as not to be breathed upon. All items are thoroughly and carefully washed, wrapped and covered.
 7. **Wash room utility** - It is recommended By *Vastu Shastra* (Science of holistic architecture) that latrines should be located as far away as possible from other house rooms. Latrines should not be near the kitchen or pantry.
 8. **Left Hand** - The left hand that is used for washing the body after defecation or urinating is not used to give anything to others.
 9. **Footwear** - Shoes usually being unclean and having dirt are not worn inside the temple or houses. Also nobody should be touched with the shoes or feet.

Key Messages

- i. Collect drinking water hygienically.
- ii. Boil or treat and store water in clean covered containers before drinking.
- iii. Ensure water sources are protected from contamination.

ROLE OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS

In the *Vedantic* tradition, babies when born are welcomed back into the world and family tradition and culture, since it is considered that there have been previous lives of the baby. The human form is considered a great privilege and the child is made to understand this. Therefore the most important responsibility of the religious master and child is to pursue the philosophy and practice of God realization. To facilitate this process of spiritual development through the disciplining of the body, mind and intellect, the *Samskaara* purificatory rites are performed and implored to the parents.

The Vidyarambha Samskaara performed in the fifth year of the child, marks the beginning of study and in particular the Sanskrit alphabet that not only develops the vocal chords but also stimulates the development of the brain. This is in preparation for the study of the Vedic holy texts. The ceremony comprises of the father or the teacher guiding the child to write the Sanskrit letters with the fingers. The child is made to understand the concept and purpose of education by the priest in the context of religion, worship and family tradition. Prayers or mantras are also written by the child such that religious principles become the foundation of the child's formal education and family living.

The *Upanayana Samskaara* (*Upa*= approach, *Nayana* = in the presence of God), is a religious initiation ceremony aimed to cultivate a God consciousness in the child. It also links the child to God through a Guru (master) that has a lineage of spiritual masters and whose principle responsibility is to teach and explain the Vedic knowledge. This ceremony is performed when the child's personality and character are just emerging. Therefore the intention is to mould the child's personality according to the righteous and moral dictates of religion.

The ceremony also marks the transition of the child to student whereby the natural dispositions (*guna*), talents, skills (*varna*) and values (*sanskara*) are further cultivated along the principles of good behavior. The child is also considered as twice born (*dwija*) whereby besides the biological mother and father, the spiritual master or Guru becomes the father and the scriptures are considered the mother. The Guru's

task is to impart ethics and morals to the child to ensure that the child's upbringing is for the welfare of humanity and the purpose in life is to evolve spiritually.

The ceremony initiates the disciplining processes of the three entities of the being - body, heart (emotions) and intellect - with the aim of their eventual integration as instruments of the higher spiritual consciousness. To commemorate this, the child is presented with a sacred thread draped over the left shoulder and worn diagonally across the chest. The child is also taught how to narrate the special *Gayatri Mantra* which he is to chant three times daily (at dawn, noon and dusk). The thread is composed of three separate cords (representing the three *gunas*, the three entities, the three states of being) tied into a knot (representing the higher spiritual soul) i.e. the three states of human being which must be integrated to culminate in the establishment of the self in the *Atman* (Holy Spirit).

In case of Sikhism, Sikhs are essentially divided into two main groups: the baptized and the non-baptized. The *Pahul* or baptism ceremony (*Amrit Sanskar*) is undertaken when an individual fully comprehends the implications of such an act. Hence, it is rare for a pre-pubescent child to be baptized. There is no upper age limit to baptism, which is encouraged for both men and women. The ceremony takes place in the presence of the Holy *Guru Granth Sahib* (Holy Book). Here the principles of Sikh faith and other key instructions on how a baptized Sikh must live are imparted to the initiate. These include devotion to God; service to mankind; justice and defending it; and protection of the weak.

Upon acceptance of these instructions, five handfuls of *Amrit* (nectar of immortality—prepared by pouring water and sugar pellets into a steel bowl and stirring the mixture with a double edged dagger while selected verses from the *Guru Granth Sahib* are sung aloud) are drunk by the initiate and five handfuls are sprinkled over hair and eyes. If a person does not have a *Sikh* name, they now take one. The person is thus formally admitted to the *Khalsa* (baptized) community. It now becomes obligatory for such a person to wear the symbols of *Sikh* identity—*Kes* (uncut hair), *Kangha* (comb to keep hair tidy symbolizing clarity of mind), *Kirpan* (sword signifying justice and freedom), *Kara* (steel bracelet worn on right hand - symbolizing God's strength and infinity) and *Kachha* (short breeches signifying commitment to purity).

In the ancient *Vedic* times, the boy student would move away from home and live in simplicity with the Spiritual Master to learn the Vedas and scriptures. This was

the formal education that the child would receive. All students were treated equally without any bias or provision of preferences. Living with the religious Master was without luxury in order to maintain purity of the mind and stimulate thinking of the real purposes of life, become disciplined and respectful of all things in nature, cultivate steadfastness upon moral and ethical conduct and imbibe a deep sense of responsibility and philanthropy. These are the obligations and duties of religious leaders to children and students.

No doubt religious leaders should also ensure that the family environment and the character of the mother and father are evolved enough and suitable for the well being and upbringing of the child.

For the Buddhist disciple it is vital to practice the codes of conduct contained in the *Akaasagarbha Suutra* and the *Shiksaasmucchaya*. The *Bodhicharyaavataara* states "Practice the teachings. What purpose can mere reading serve? How can a sick person be cured merely by the reading of medical texts" ⁷² - emphasizing on preventive care through righteous conduct. Other scriptures that narrate the right conduct as a human are the *Jain Vachnaamrut*, *Manusmriti* and *Patanjali Yoga sutras* also explain the ethical conduct for developing integrity and an integrated being for spiritual evolution.

All *Sanaatan* scriptures repeatedly warn one against anger as it destroys all wholesome conduct such as charity, worship and merit collected during different lives. Moreover anger is injurious to one's health (bodily and psychological). The *Manjushri Vikridita sutra* defines *pratigha* as that which kills or destroys merit collected over the ages.⁷³

"There is no sin greater than hatred and no penance greater than forbearance".⁷⁴ Hatred and jealousy are like canker (necrotic fungal disease that destroys the tree bark) and produce ill-will and illness. Hatred gradually eats away all merit that may be the cause of good health and well being. It is considered a barb embedded

⁷² *Bodhicharyaavataara (III-109) - Kayenaiva pathisyami vaakpaathena tu ki bhavet, chikitsaapaathamaatrena roginaha ki bhavishyati.*

⁷³ *Kalpashatopachitam kushalam pratohanti tenochyate pratigha iti.*

⁷⁴ *Kshanti Parmita - "Na cha dveshasamam paapam na cha kshantisamam tapaha tasmaatkshaantim prayatnena bhaavayedvidvidhairnayeyha*

in the heart and the mind does not experience peace, nor joy of love nor sleep or patience. Thus, the Vedic scriptures state, that hatred causes the diseases of the heart, liver and kidney. Patience is a great virtue. It steels the mind against the onslaught of hatred. Forgiveness is a sign of prowess and not weakness. The scriptures consider forgiveness as the ornament of the brave and well-being with merit for good *karma*.

The *Chaandogya Upanishad* says: *“Just as the bees produce honey by extracting the juices of flowers, so do the righteous and devoted make their honey by extracting the juices of the actions prescribed in the Rig Veda.”*⁷⁵ *“These brooded on the Rig Veda, and similarly on Yajur Veda, Saama Veda and Atharva Veda, from it, thus brooded upon, issued forth, as its essence, fame, splendor, vigor of the senses, virility, food and health”.*⁷⁶

The Upanishads insist on the importance of ethical life. *“For those who cannot realize, the reason which is not in contradiction with the Vedas and the scriptures is the eye”.*⁷⁷ Thus the Upanishads, the conclusions of the Vedas and themselves called Vedanta, repudiate the doctrine of the self-sufficiency of the ego and lay great emphasis on moral virtues. Man is responsible for his acts. Evil is the free action of the individual that uses the freedom of choice for personal exaltation. *“The Vedas don to purify the ethically unworthy”.*⁷⁸ Man is of the divine race, but he also has in him the element of non-being, which exposes him to evil. An individual must illumine what is dark and strengthen what is weak within. His entire being should labour to become one with the Divine. One should relinquish selfish likes and dislikes. The Divine cannot use our mind and body so long as we wish to use them for our ends. Enjoy through renunciation is the advice of the *Isa Upanishad*.

Work by itself does not provide liberation. It cleanses the mind, purifies the heart and produces illumination, which is the immediate condition of salvation. Contemplation is the way to cleanse the mind, heart and the body. It means

⁷⁵ *Chaandogya Upanishad - III.1.2- “Tasya ye praanco rashmayah taa evaasya praacyo madhunaadyah rica eva madhukritah rgveda eva puspam, taa amrita aapah taa vaa etaa ricah.*

⁷⁶ *Chaandogya Upanishad - III.1.3, 2.2, 3.2,4.2.*

⁷⁷ *Brihadaraanyaka Upanishad - Veda saastraavirodhi yas tarkas caksur apashyataam.*

⁷⁸ *Vasistha Darma Shastra (VI.3) - Aacaara hiinam na punanti vedaah.*

suspension of mental activity, withdrawal into the interior solitude where the soul is absorbed in the fruitful silence of God. One must overflow with a love that communicates what it knows to others. Saints and religious masters with abundant power and tireless energy work for transfiguring of men and the changing of the course of secular history.

The *Taittiriya Upanishad* provides the students duties. The student should not be negligent of truth, virtue, welfare, prosperity, study and teaching. He should perform only those acts that are irreproachable. In case of doubt, the student should follow the practice of those *Braahmanas* who are competent to judge, apt, devoted, not harsh lovers of virtue. All the virtues are brought three broad categories - *Dama* (Self control and restraint), *Daana* (self sacrifice) and *Daya* (Compassion). All religious leaders need to advocate these values and set examples based on these cardinal guides.

The *Brahma Purana* states “*The wise man overcame anger through mind control, lust through renunciation of desire. He can attain mastery over sleep by developing the quality of sattva. Through steadfastness he should protect the organ of generation and the stomach. With the help pf the yes he should protect the hands and feet. Through the power of the mind he should protect the eyes and the ears through conduct he should protect the mind and speech. Through constant vigilance he should shed fear ad through the service of the wise he should overcome pride*”.⁷⁹

This is the duty of religious leaders and masters. Nonetheless, in the *Bhaagvata* the Lord says that “*Anyone who does not care for the people who are in need of care and simply takes to the worship of God, his effort is wasted*”.⁸⁰

Therefore the religious leaders need to be patient with worshipers and followers of the scriptures to explain and encourage the people who are in urgent need of reform and rehabilitation so that worship becomes practice in daily life. It has been repeatedly said that the religious leaders must set an example and fulfill the responsibility of bringing peace through correction of man’s behavior.

⁷⁹ *Brahma Purana - Krodham shamenajayati, kaamam samkalpa varjanaat sattva samsevanaad dhiiro nidraam uchhettum arhati. Dhrtiyya shissnodaram rakset paani paadam ca cakusaa caksuh srotram ca manasaa mano vaacam ca karmanaa apramaadaad bhayam jahyaad dambham praaajnopasevanat.*

⁸⁰ *Geeta - Yo maam sarvesu bhuutesu santam aatmaanam ishvaram hitvaarcaam bhajate maudhyaad bhasmay eva juhti sah.*

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