

## A STUDY ON THERAPEUTIC ROLE OF KARNVYADHANA (EAR PIERCING) SANSKARA

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### ABSTRACT

*Karnvyadhana* (Ear piercing) is one of the important Sanskaras mentioned in Hindu tradition. Ayurvedic scholar *Sushruta*, *Charaka*, *Kashayapa* and *Vagbhatta* also explained about the *Karnvyadhana Sanskara*. According to *Sushruta*, *Karnvyadhana Sanskara* is performed for *Raksha* (protective) and *Abhushana* (ornamental) purposes and so as *Charaka* and *Vagbhatta*. Ornamental use of *Karnvyadhana* has been easy to understand, but the protective phenomenon has not yet been clear. Keeping this in mind, current study was done in the light of Ayurvedic and Modern medicine, and it was found that *Karnvyadhana Sanskara* is useful to enhance the immunity of child and also safeguarding the child from further opportunistic infections.

**Key words:** *Rakshakarma*, *Karnvyadhana*, *Sanskara*, Immunity

### INTRODUCTION

***Karnvyadhana:*** Ear lobe piercing known as *Karnvyadhana Sanskara* is considered an important ceremony in Hindu traditions. There is no unanimity in regards to which year to perform the ear piercing ceremony. It is usually performed during sixth or seventh month or third, fifth or seventh year after child birth. An auspicious day and time is chosen for performing the ceremony, then, rituals are performed with prayers and earrings are offered to a child. According to a Hindu scripture, '*Dharma Sindu*,' *Karnvyadhana Sanskara* should be performed 10<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> day after birth of child, but most people, instead, perform it during sixth or seventh month after the child birth. There are beliefs that ear piercing is beneficial in regulating the menstrual cycle in female child and also beneficial in terms of safe guarding against hysteria and maintain-

ing the flow of electric current in human body<sup>1</sup>.

Also in the traditional Chinese medicine, wearing earrings has been regarded beneficial for health. It is said that piercing the ears has an acupuncture-effect on the body. In ancient China, ear ornaments had been developed for the health purposes rather than female embellishment purposes, with the hope for the acupunctural effects. Meanwhile, the father of Western medicine, Hippocrates, wrote about ear piercing and wearing earrings around 470 B.C. as a remedy and treatment for menstrual problems. Galen also wrote about the same thing. In ancient times, if there was a deficiency in energy or chi, gold earrings would be placed in a pierced acu-point for stimulation. Silver earrings were used if energy flows in excess. Gemstones were added for their therapeutic

effects. A ruby was used to regulate menstruation and to enhance fertility. An emerald was worn to prevent miscarriage and to aid in childbirth. Citrine was worn to boost sexual energy. These benefits were then transmitted through the gold or silver. In modern times, the traditional point for ear piercing is in the middle of the fleshy lobe. This part of the ear is the intuitive, third Eye, or psychic point.

It is very important that only gold, and not silver, be worn here on the ear lobe. Gold, combined with an amethyst or emerald (which are both traditionally regarded as very spiritual stones), will have an added positive effect on the function of intuition. Ancient people treated diseases of feminine Yin organs via earrings in the left ear and diseases of the male Yang organs via the right ear. The left side of the body is the feminine side and the right side of the body is masculine<sup>2</sup>.

According to *Sushruta Samhita*, the lobules of the ears of an infant are usually pierced through for protecting it and for the purpose of ornamentation as well. The piercing should be performed on a day of bright day light marked by the auspicious lunar and astral combinations and in the sixth or the seventh month of the year reckoned from its beginning. The child should be placed on the lap of its mother, and benedictions should be pronounced over it. Then having soothed it and lured it with toys and playthings, the physician should draw down with his left hand the lobules of its ears with a view to detect, with the help of the reflected sun light, apertures that are naturally found to exist in those localities. Then he should pierce them straight through with a needle held in his right hand, or with an awl or with a thick needle where the appendages would

be found to be too thick. The lobule of the right ear should be first pierced and then the left in the case of a male child, while the contrary should be the procedure in the case of a female. Plugs of cotton –lint should be then inserted in to the holes of the pricked ear-lobules, which should be lubricated or rubbed with any uncooked oil. A copious bleeding attended with pain would indicate that the needle has passed through a place other than the natural fissure described above; whereas the absence of any serious after-effect would give rise to the presumption that the piercing has been done through the right spot<sup>3</sup>.

It is also mentioned that inappropriate *Karnvyadhana* can prick the *kalika*, *Marmarika* and *Lohitika* nadis of ear, which can have serious adverse affects<sup>4</sup>.

## DISCUSSION

A study spearheaded by a Stanford University School of Medicine scientist has tracked the trajectories of key immune cells in response to short-term stress and traced, in great detail, how hormones triggered by such stress enhance immune readiness. The study, conducted in rats, adds weight to evidence that immune responsiveness is heightened, rather than suppressed as many believe, by the so-called "fight-or-flight" response. During study, the investigators were able to show that the massive redistribution of immune cells throughout the body was orchestrated by three hormones released by the adrenal glands, in different amounts and at different times, in response to the stress-inducing event.

The general pattern, Dhabhar said, was that norepinephrine is released early and is primarily involved in mobilizing all major immune-cell types -- monocytes, neutrophils

and lymphocytes -- into the blood. Epinephrine, also released early, mobilized monocytes and neutrophils into the blood, while nudging lymphocytes out into "battlefield" destinations such as skin. And corticosterone, released somewhat later, caused virtually all immune cell types to head out of circulation to the "battlefields." The overall effect of these movements is to bolster immune readiness. The response occurs across the animal kingdom, he added.

Ear piercing is a quick procedure, which probably triggered the same cascade of actions as described by Dr. Dhabhar of Stanford University<sup>5</sup>.

Any kind of mechanical trauma and inert material start antigen- antibody reaction in the body<sup>6</sup>. Therefore Ear piercing probably initiates antigen – antibody reaction in the body and by doing so keep body's immunity ready against opportunistic infections. The concept of wearing earring in right and left ear is based on yogic energetic anatomy of human body, in which right side of body is regulated by *Pingla* or *Solar Nadi*, which oversee the more masculine aspects of our personality and same way left side of body is govern by *Ida* or *Lunar Nadi*, which control the feminine aspect of our personality<sup>7</sup>. According to Microsystems of auricular acupuncture we can treat the whole body nearly by treating points on the external ear or auricle, in other words whole body is projected on to the auricle; another way of putting it is that the ear mirrors the whole body, or reflex the image of it. Thus it is clear that classic Chinese acupuncture points on the ear are in similar position to the various anatomical areas of the fetus<sup>8</sup>. Another question that arises here is whether *Karnvyadhana* should be done on lobe or pinna. Earlier times longer ear lobes were consi-

dered the sign of beauty, and therefore after ear piercing measures were taken to enlarge the lobule. During this process sometimes ear lobules get distorted or torn. Therefore *Sushruta* describe in detail 15 procedures of lobuloplasty<sup>9</sup>. This affirms that *Karnvyadhana* mentioned in Ayurveda is related to ear lobe piercing.

#### CONCLUSION:

*Karnvyadhana* has been practiced for centuries with two main objectives that are ornamental and protective. Recent advancements reaffirm it as immunity modulator procedures.

*Karnvyadhana* is performed on right ear first in male child and left ear first in female child, which is to balance and harmonize the male and female energy flow in the body organ system subsequently.

I hope this study opens up a window for future research which can be a collaborative with Ayurvedic *Marma*, Chinese acupuncture and western reflexology.

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