

**SUTIKA PARICHARYA A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF
AYURVEDIC POSTPARTUM CARE PRACTICES****Dr. Swetaprava Panda^{1*}, Dr. Manjusri Sahoo²**

¹PG Scholar, Gopabandhu Ayurveda Mahavidyalaya, Puri, Vip Road 752002
Puri, Odisha, India, 752002.

²Reader, PG Dept of PTSR, Gopabandhu Ayurveda Mahavidyalaya Puri.

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***Corresponding Author**

Dr. Swetaprava Panda

PG Scholar, Gopabandhu
Ayurveda Mahavidyalaya,
Puri, Vip Road 752002 Puri,
Odisha, India, 752002.

ABSTRACT

Sutika Paricharya represents the traditional Ayurvedic method for postpartum care, significantly contributing to the health and well-being of both mothers and their newborns. This practice, grounded in ancient knowledge, includes dietary guidelines, lifestyle adjustments, and therapeutic measures designed to restore the mother's physical and emotional equilibrium following childbirth. Ayurveda highlights the necessity of balancing the doshas, especially Vata, which tends to increase after delivery, while also focusing on rejuvenating Agni (digestive fire) and avoiding the buildup of Ama (toxins). This review examines the core principles, essential practices, and clinical implications of Sutika Paricharya, emphasizing its nutritional recommendations, herbal remedies, strategies for psychological and emotional support, as well as physical recovery through yoga and

massage. It also addresses Ayurvedic treatments for typical postpartum challenges and contrasts traditional methodologies with modern medical practices. With an increasing interest in integrative healthcare, it is crucial to understand and substantiate these ancient postpartum care techniques through scientific studies, which can offer important perspectives on their effectiveness and potential use in modern maternal health. The holistic and preventative aspects of Sutika Paricharya position it as a valuable complementary strategy for improving postpartum recovery and enhancing overall maternal health.\

KEYWORDS: Sutika Paricharya, Postpartum Care, Lactation, Yoga for Postpartum Recovery.

INTRODUCTION

The puerperium, or postnatal period, commences immediately after the placenta is delivered and typically lasts around six weeks, during which the uterus gradually returns to its pre-pregnancy size.^[1] According to modern medical science, this phase is critical, and Ayurveda highlights that improper management during this time can lead to as many as 74 potential disorders. A healthy mother is essential for raising a healthy child, making maternal care during the puerperium vital to Prevent complications and ensure safe motherhood and optimal child development. The sutikakala (puerperium) is particularly crucial for the well-being of both the mother and her newborn, with the first week post-delivery being especially significant. During this time, both the mother (sutika) and the baby require meticulous care. Delivery leads to vata aggravation, which weakens the mother's digestion, immunity, and physical strength, leaving her in a vulnerable state. Factors such as the expulsion of the fetus, loss of blood and fluids, and the physical strain of labor contribute to dhatukshaya (tissue depletion), further compromising immunity. Even minor health issues during this period can have severe consequences. To counter these challenges, the primary focus during sutikakala should be alleviating vitiated vata and restoring the mother's strength. Various Ayurvedic scholars recommend specific dietary practices and lifestyle measures, all aimed at pacifying vata and promoting nourishment (brimhana). These tailored regimens help stabilize the mother's health, ensuring her recovery and supporting the healthy growth of the child.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this review is to comprehensively explore and analyze the Ayurvedic approach to postpartum care, known as Sutika Paricharya, and its relevance in modern maternal healthcare.

The specific objectives include.

- To examine the historical background and classical references of Sutika Paricharya in Ayurveda.
- To elucidate the key principles and fundamental concepts, including Agni, Ama, and dosha balance in the postpartum
- To review and categorize dietary guidelines, lifestyle modifications, and therapeutic interventions recommended for postpartum women.
- To analyze the efficacy of Ayurvedic herbal formulations and medications in promoting postpartum recovery.

- To explore the role of yoga, physical exercises, and psychological well-being in postpartum rehabilitation.
- To discuss common postpartum complications and their Ayurvedic management.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This review is based on an extensive literature analysis of classical Ayurvedic texts, contemporary research articles, and clinical studies related to postpartum care. The methodology includes/

Primary Sources: Analysis of Ayurvedic texts such as Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Ashtanga Hridaya, and Kashyapa Samhita to understand the foundational principles of Sutika Paricharya.

Secondary Sources: Review of research papers, journals, and studies published in indexed databases (PubMed, Google Scholar, AYUSH research portals) on Ayurvedic postpartum care.

Historical Background of Sutika Paricharya

The concept of Sutika Paricharya (postnatal care in Ayurveda) is deeply rooted in ancient Ayurvedic texts, emphasizing the care of the mother (sutika) during the puerperium to restore her health, balance doshas (especially vata), and ensure the well-being of both mother and child. The historical background of Sutika Paricharya is detailed in various classical Ayurveda Samhitas, including Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Ashtanga Hridaya, and Ashtanga Sangraha, among others. These texts outline specific guidelines for diet, lifestyle, and therapeutic interventions to address the physiological and psychological changes post-delivery.^[2,34]

Principles of Sutika Paricharya

Sutika Paricharya adheres to essential Ayurvedic principles that emphasize the equilibrium of doshas, with particular attention to Vata, which tends to become imbalanced following childbirth. The care program incorporates changes to the diet, herbal remedies, and therapeutic methods aimed at enhancing both the physical and mental well-being of the mother.

Key Principles of Sutika Paricharya^[5]

Vata Dosha Management: Postpartum, Vata dosha tends to become imbalanced, resulting in symptoms such as dryness, weakness, and a sense of instability. Ayurvedic approaches aim to calm Vata by emphasizing the consumption of warm, nourishing foods, engaging in oil massages (known as Abhyanga), and ensuring sufficient rest."

Agni Restoration: After childbirth, the digestive fire, known as Agni, is frequently diminished, leading to slower digestion. To rejuvenate Agni and avoid the buildup of Ama (toxins), it is beneficial to consume easily digestible foods, herbal decoctions, and spices like ginger, cumin, and fennel.

Strengthening Dhatus (Tissues): Postpartum recovery is centered on the replenishment of lost dhatus, or body tissues, in order to regain strength. It is advised to consume nutrient-dense foods, along with Rasayanas herbs known for their rejuvenating properties and medicated ghee to support the regeneration of tissues.

Srotas (Body Channels) Cleansing: Effective removal of bodily wastes and toxins is essential for overall health. Practices like gentle purging (Virechana) and herbal enemas (Basti) support the proper functioning of the digestive and excretory systems.

Emotional and Psychological Well-being: Ayurveda recognizes the significance of mental well-being following childbirth. Techniques like meditation, pranayama (which involves breath control), and the use of herbal remedies (such as Brahmi and Ashwagandha) are beneficial in alleviating anxiety and postpartum depression.^[6]

Enhancing Lactation: Ayurveda stresses the importance of including galactagogues such as Shatavari, Vidari, and Yashtimadhu in the diet to enhance both the quantity and quality of milk production, thereby providing the best nutrition for infants.^[7]

Gradual Physical Rehabilitation: Integrating light physical activities, yoga, and postnatal stretching routines plays a crucial role in regaining muscle tone and enhancing pelvic floor strength without overwhelming the body. Following these guidelines, Sutika Paricharya promotes a comprehensive strategy for postpartum recovery, prioritizing the mother's physical, emotional, and mental health.^[8]

Agni and Ama in the Postpartum Period

Agni, which refers to digestive fire, and Ama, the term for toxins, are essential elements in the recovery process after childbirth. In Ayurveda, Agni is regarded as fundamental to overall health, governing digestion, metabolism, and vitality. The physical and hormonal changes experienced during pregnancy and childbirth can diminish Agni, resulting in decreased digestive efficiency. This impairment can cause sluggish digestion and inadequate nutrient absorption, allowing for the buildup of Ama undigested food toxins that may lead to various health issues.^[9]

Importance of Agni in Postpartum Recovery

Restoration of Digestive Strength^[10]

During pregnancy and childbirth, a woman's Agni is often weakened due to physical and hormonal changes, blood loss, and the stress of delivery. According to Charaka Samhita (Sharira Sthana 8/48), the postpartum period is marked by a state of Dhātu Kshaya (depletion of body tissues) and Agnimandya (weakened digestive fire). A balanced Agni is essential to digest and assimilate nutrients to replenish the Dhatus (tissues) and support recovery.

Support for tissue regeneration^[11]

Postpartum recovery focuses on rebuilding Rasa Dhātu (plasma) and other tissues. Sushruta Samhita (Sharira Sthana 10/16) emphasizes that a strong Agni facilitates the transformation of food into Ojas (vital essence), which is crucial for immunity, energy, and mental clarity in the postpartum phase.

Production of breast milk^[12]

Agni supports the production of breast milk (Stanya) by ensuring proper digestion and nutrient absorption, as described in Ashtanga Hridaya (Uttara Sthana 1/24).

Energy Restoration: Rekindling Agni helps restore physical energy and vitality, reducing postpartum fatigue.

Balancing Doshas: A well-functioning digestive fire helps in pacifying aggravated Vata dosha, preventing postpartum complications such as bloating, constipation, and anxiety.

Effects of Ama Accumulation

Digestive Disturbances^[13]

Ama arises from impaired Agni, which is common in postpartum women due to physical exhaustion, blood and fluid loss, and the energy demands of lactation. This leads to symptoms such as bloating, gas, constipation, or indigestion. A coated tongue, particularly with a thick white layer, is a key indicator of Ama accumulation in the digestive system. If the baby exhibits similar symptoms (e.g., gas or colic), it may reflect the mother's Ama influencing breast milk quality.

Fatigue and Low Energy Levels^[14]

Ama clogs the body's channels (Srotas), impeding nutrient assimilation and energy flow. In postpartum women, this exacerbates fatigue, as the body is already depleted from childbirth. The presence of Ama can make mothers feel sluggish or heavy after meals, further draining vitality needed for recovery and caregiving.

Weakened Immunity^[15]

Ama compromises the immune system by obstructing the body's natural defense mechanisms. In postpartum women, this increases susceptibility to infections, which is particularly concerning during the vulnerable Sutika period. A buildup of Ama can also delay tissue repair and recovery, prolonging physical weakness.

Impact on Lactation and Infant Health^[16]

Ama in the mother's body can affect the quality of breast milk, potentially leading to digestive issues or skin conditions (e.g., heat rashes or baby acne) in the infant. Ayurvedic texts emphasize that a mother's diet and digestive health directly influence lactation and the baby's well-being. Excessive Ama may necessitate adjustments in maternal diet or herbal intake to prevent transferring toxins to the infant.

Emotional and Mental Disturbances^[17]

Ama clouds mental clarity and aggravates Vata, contributing to emotional instability, such as postpartum anxiety, irritability, or mild depression. The postpartum period is already vulnerable to mental stress due to Vata imbalance, and Ama worsens symptoms like brain fog or difficulty focusing, impacting maternal well-being and bonding with the baby.

Ayurvedic Approaches to Strengthen Agni and Eliminate Ama

Dietary Modifications

- Consumption of warm, easily digestible foods such as rice gruel (peya), moong dal soup, and spiced herbal decoctions.
- Inclusion of Agni-enhancing spices like ginger, cumin, black pepper, and fennel.
- Avoidance of heavy, cold, and processed foods that increase Ama formation.

Herbal Support^[18]

- Use of Deepana (digestive stimulants) and Pachana (digestive aids) such as Trikatu (a combination of ginger, black pepper, and long pepper) and Hingwashtak churna.
- Intake of Rasayanas (rejuvenating herbs) like Ashwagandha and Guduchi to enhance digestion and immunity.

Lifestyle Adjustments

- Regular intake of warm water or herbal teas to support digestion and detoxification.
- Gentle Abhyanga (oil massage) with warm sesame oil to stimulate circulation and aid toxin elimination.
- Mild physical activity, including postnatal yoga and pranayama, to support metabolic function and mental well-being.

Sutika Paricharya Practices

This program consists of organized care methods that include oil massages, medicated baths, herbal remedies, and dietary changes to facilitate a seamless recovery. Sutika Paricharya aims to rebuild strength, improve immunity, and support emotional balance in new mothers.

Herbal Formulations and Medications

Herbal formulations are essential in Ayurvedic postpartum care, as they assist in recovery, rejuvenation, and the prevention of potential complications. Ayurveda suggests particular herbal combinations that target digestion, hormonal equilibrium, lactation support, immunity enhancement, and mental health.^[19]

Key Ayurvedic Herbal Formulations for Postpartum Recovery^[20, 21, 22]

1. Dashamoola Arishta: Known for its Vata-pacifying properties, it helps in relieving postpartum fatigue, promoting digestion, and strengthening the uterus.

- 2. Ashwagandha Churna:** A powerful adaptogen that reduces stress, enhances immunity, and improves strength and vitality.
- 3. Shatavari Kalpa:** An essential formulation for boosting lactation, hormonal balance, and overall reproductive health,
- 4. Hingwashtak Churna:** Helps in digestion, reduces bloating, and prevents constipation, which is common after childbirth.
- 5. Guduchi Satva:** Supports immunity, aids in tissue healing, and helps in post-delivery detoxification.
- 6. Bala Taila:** Used in Abhyanga (oil massage) to strengthen muscles, improve circulation, and support postpartum recovery.
- 7. Trikatu Churna:** Aids in digestion by stimulating Agni, preventing the accumulation of Ama.
- 8. Kalyanaka Ghrita:** A medicated ghee formulation known for its benefits in supporting mental health and preventing postpartum depression.
- 9. Lohasava:** Helps in managing postpartum anemia and restores energy levels by replenishing iron stores in the body.
- 10. Jeerakarishtha:** A digestive tonic that enhances metabolism, supports uterine contraction, and aids in lactation.

Ayurvedic Perspective on Postpartum Mental Health

Ayurveda connects emotional disturbances after childbirth to an imbalance in Vata dosha, a key element that regulates the nervous system. When Vata is out of balance, it can result in symptoms such as restlessness, insomnia, mood fluctuations, and increased stress levels. Additionally, the loss of Ojas, which is considered vital energy, during delivery adds to emotional susceptibility. Consequently, Ayurvedic postpartum care focuses on nurturing and stabilizing practices that aim to balance Vata and replenish Ojas.^[23]

Ayurvedic Practices for Mental and Emotional Well-being^[24,25]

Abhyanga (Oil Massage): Regular application of warm medicated oils such as Bala Taila and Ksheerabala Taila helps to calm the nervous system, relieve stress, and promote better sleep.

Medhya Rasayanas (Mind-Rejuvenation herbs):- Herbs such as Brahmi, Ashwagandha, Shankhapushpi, and Guduchi help enhance cognitive function, reduce anxiety, and promote relaxation.

Satvika Aahara (Nourishing Diet): A diet rich in warm, easily digestible, and nourishing foods such as ghee, milk, and dates supports mental clarity and emotional stability.

Mantra and Meditation: Chanting Vedic mantras and practicing meditation techniques like Pranayama and mindfulness help in stress management and emotional balance.

Adequate Rest and Sleep: Proper rest and a regulated sleep schedule are essential for restoring the mind and preventing fatigue-related stress.

Social Support and Emotional Bonding: Engaging with family, sharing responsibilities, and seeking support from elders or counselors helps in emotional healing.

Physical Exercise and Yoga for Postpartum Recovery^[26]

Gentle yoga asanas like Baddha Konasana and Bhujangasana to strengthen pelvic muscles.

Pranayama techniques to regulate breathing and reduce stress.

Mild stretching exercises to enhance flexibility and relieve muscle tension.

Breastfeeding and Lactation Support in Ayurveda

In Ayurvedic medicine, breast milk is viewed as an upadhatu, or secondary tissue, derived from Rasa dhatu, which is considered plasma. When Rasa dhatu is well-nourished, it promotes healthy and plentiful lactation. However, disturbances in the Vata and Pitta doshas can adversely affect milk supply, potentially causing insufficient lactation, low milk quality, or elevated body heat. Consequently, Ayurveda stresses the importance of a nourishing diet, effective stress management, and the incorporation of particular herbs to enhance lactation.^[27]

Dietary and Lifestyle Recommendations for Healthy Lactation^[28]

Nutrient-Dense Foods

Ayurveda recommends warm, moist, and easily digestible foods such as milk, ghee, rice, moong dal, and cooked vegetables to enhance milk production.

Consumption of sweet, nourishing, and hydrating foods like dates, almonds, coconut, and jaggery is encouraged.

Including spices like fennel, cumin, and fenugreek in meals helps stimulate lactation.

Hydration^[29]

Drinking warm fluids, including herbal teas, milk with ghee, and warm water, ensures optimal hydration and milk flow.

Excess consumption of caffeinated or cooling drinks is discouraged, as they can aggravate Vata and Pitta doshas.

Proper Rest and Stress Management^[30]

Stress and fatigue can impair lactation. Ayurvedic practices such as meditation, pranayama, and gentle oil massages help relax the mother and improve milk flow.

Support from family and a positive environment enhance emotional stability and encourage effective breastfeeding.

Ayurvedic Herbs and Formulations for Lactation Support

Ayurveda offers various herbal remedies known as Stanyajanana (galactagogues) to enhance milk secretion and maintain the health of both mother and baby.

Shatavari (*Asparagus racemosus*)

Shatavari is a highly effective herb known for its ability to enhance lactation. It contributes to hormonal balance, increases milk production, and supports the nourishment of Rasa dhatu. This herb can be taken in powdered form mixed with milk or incorporated into Ayurvedic preparations such as Shatavari Ghrita.^[31]

Vidarikand (*Pueraria tuberosa*)

Acts as a rejuvenating tonic and enhances milk production while also strengthening maternal. Health.

Fenugreek (*Methi*)

Commonly used to stimulate lactation, fenugreek seeds can be consumed as tea or included in meals.

Fennel (*Saunf*)

A mild galactagogue that improves digestion, prevents colic in infants, and enhances milk production.

Common Postpartum Complications and Ayurvedic Management

Ayurveda addresses various postpartum complications through holistic interventions:

Postpartum fatigue: Managed through Rasayanas (rejuvenating herbs) like Ashwagandha.

Constipation: Treated with Triphala and ghee to ensure smooth bowel movements.

Postnatal bleeding (Lochia): Controlled with herbs like Ashoka and Lodhra.

Mastitis (breast infection): Managed with turmeric, neem paste, and warm oil massages.

DISCUSSION

1. Dietary Guidelines (Pathya-Apathya)

Warm, easily digestible, and nourishing foods such as rice gruel, ghee, and herbal decoctions.

Avoidance of heavy, cold, and processed foods to prevent digestive imbalances.

Inclusion of galactagogues like fenugreek, shatavari, and garlic to enhance lactation.

Consumption of soups, herbal teas, and medicated milk preparations to promote digestion and immunity.

2. Lifestyle and Daily Regimen (Dinacharya)

Adequate rest and restricted physical exertion to facilitate healing.

Oil massages (Abhyanga) with medicated oils like Bala taila for muscle relaxation and rejuvenation.

Warm water baths with herbal infusions to promote circulation and detoxification.

Encouragement of gentle exercises like yoga and breathing techniques to improve physical and mental well-being.

3. Therapeutic Interventions

Panchakarma therapies, such as mild Virechana (purgation), to eliminate accumulated toxins.

Herbal formulations like Dashamoola kwatha and Ashwagandha to enhance immunity and vitality.

Uterine tonics and rejuvenators like Ashoka and Lodhra to support reproductive health and regulate hormonal balance.

Use of Ayurvedic enemas (Basti) to support digestive health and prevent constipation.

Psychological and Emotional Well-being

Postpartum depression and anxiety are prevalent issues that many new mothers face.

Ayurveda provides beneficial approaches to tackle these challenges, including practices such as meditation, Pranayama (breathing techniques), and the use of herbal adaptogens like Brahmi and Jatamansi. Furthermore, traditional texts highlight the importance of support from family and social networks in promoting the emotional health of mothers.^[32]

CONCLUSION

Sutika Paricharya signifies a well-established and comprehensive method for recovering after childbirth, focusing on the physical, emotional, and psychological aspects of well-being. Adhering to its guidelines helps new mothers navigate the transition into motherhood more smoothly, resulting in increased energy, hormone balance, and improved lactation. Numerous scientific studies have started to corroborate these ancient practices, affirming their significance in contemporary maternal healthcare. By merging Ayurvedic postpartum care with modern medical practices, there is an opportunity to address deficiencies in traditional maternal care, leading to a more thorough, personalized, and preventive strategy. Ayurvedic recommendations on diet, herbal remedies, and lifestyle adjustments offer viable solutions for postpartum challenges such as breastfeeding difficulties, digestive issues, and mental health problems. Additionally, practices like yoga, meditation, and therapeutic oil massages endorsed by Ayurveda can foster maternal recovery and emotional health. As the global demand for natural and holistic healthcare rises, increased clinical research and the standardization of Ayurvedic postpartum techniques can aid in their integration into conventional healthcare systems. Collaborative initiatives between Ayurvedic specialists and contemporary healthcare providers can enhance maternal care, ultimately benefiting both mothers and their infants. Sutika Paricharya exemplifies the enduring wisdom of ancient healing practices, providing essential insights that can enhance the safety, health, and satisfaction of postpartum experiences for women globally.

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