

AYURVEDIC PERSPECTIVE OF SUKHPRASAVA: A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO NORMAL LABOUR

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ABSTRACT

Sukhprasava is a fundamental concept in Ayurveda that denotes easy, natural, and complication-free childbirth ensuring the well-being of both mother and fetus. Classical Ayurvedic texts emphasize the role of proper antenatal care (*Garbhini Paricharya*), balanced nutrition, mental health, and timely management of labour for achieving Sukhprasava. This review aims to compile and critically analyze the Ayurvedic principles, dietary regimens, lifestyle modifications, and therapeutic measures described for facilitating normal delivery. The methodology includes a comprehensive review of classical texts such as Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, and Ashtanga Hridaya along with relevant modern literature. The concept of Sukhprasava is closely linked with the maintenance of normal *Apana Vata*, adequate nourishment of *Dhatu*s, and proper functioning of reproductive pathways. Various measures like

month-wise regimen, use of *Snehana*, *Swedana*, and specific herbal formulations are highlighted for their role in ensuring smooth labour. The discussion reveals that Ayurveda provides a holistic and preventive approach focusing on physical, psychological, and social well-being during pregnancy and labour. Integration of these principles with modern obstetric practices can help in reducing complications, promoting natural delivery, and improving maternal outcomes. In conclusion, Sukhprasava represents an ideal obstetric outcome in Ayurveda, achieved through systematic antenatal care and balanced lifestyle. Further clinical

validation and integration with contemporary medicine are recommended to enhance its applicability in current obstetric practice.

KEYWORDS: Sukhprasava, Ayurveda, Garbhini Paricharya, Normal Labour, Prasava Karma.

INTRODUCTION

Sukhprasava is a fundamental concept in Ayurveda that denotes easy, natural, and complication-free childbirth, ensuring the safety and well-being of both mother and fetus. In Ayurvedic classics, childbirth is considered a physiological process that can proceed smoothly when the body is properly prepared through appropriate antenatal care, diet, and lifestyle practices.^[1] The term *Sukhprasava* itself signifies a state where labour occurs without excessive pain, obstruction, or complications, reflecting the balance of bodily *Doshas*, especially *Vata Dosh*.^[2] The concept of *Garbhini Paricharya* (antenatal regimen) plays a crucial role in achieving *Sukhprasava*. It includes month-wise dietary guidelines, behavioral modifications, and therapeutic measures aimed at maintaining maternal health and promoting proper fetal development.^[3] Special emphasis is given to the regulation of *Apana Vata*, which governs the process of parturition. Any vitiation in *Apana Vata* may lead to complications such as prolonged labour, obstructed delivery, or fetal distress.^[4] Classical Ayurvedic texts such as *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Ashtanga Hridaya* describe various preparatory measures for facilitating normal delivery. These include *Snehana* (oleation), *Swedana* (sudation), use of specific herbal formulations, and psychological support to the mother.^[5] The holistic approach of Ayurveda not only focuses on physical readiness but also addresses the emotional and mental well-being of the pregnant woman, which is essential for smooth labour.^[6] In the present era, increasing rates of cesarean sections and labour complications highlight the need for safe and effective methods to promote natural childbirth. The Ayurvedic concept of *Sukhprasava* offers a preventive and holistic framework that can be integrated with modern obstetric care to improve maternal and neonatal outcomes.^[7]

AIM

To evaluate the Ayurvedic concept of *Sukhprasava* and its role in promoting safe, natural, and complication-free childbirth through appropriate antenatal care (*Garbhini Paricharya*).

METHODOLOGY

This study is based on a conceptual and literary review. Classical Ayurvedic texts such as Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, and Ashtanga Hridaya were critically analyzed to understand the principles of Sukhprasava, Garbhini Paricharya, and the role of Apana Vata in labour. Relevant modern obstetric literature was also reviewed to correlate Ayurvedic concepts with contemporary practices. Data were compiled, compared, and interpreted to highlight the significance of Ayurveda in achieving normal childbirth.

Ayurvedic Review of Sukhprasava

Concept of Sukhprasava

Sukhprasava is a fundamental concept in Ayurveda referring to easy, natural, and complication-free childbirth. The term is derived from “Sukha” (comfort/ease) and “Prasava” (delivery), indicating a labour process that occurs smoothly without excessive pain, obstruction, or maternal and fetal complications. Ayurveda considers childbirth a physiological process, which can proceed normally when the maternal body is well-prepared and the Doshas are in equilibrium, especially Vata Dosha, which governs all movements in the body.

Role of Dosha in Sukhprasava

Among the Tridosha, Vata Dosha, particularly Apana Vata, plays a key role in parturition. Apana Vata is responsible for

- Expulsion of the fetus
- Regulation of uterine contractions
- Proper downward movement during labour

When Apana Vata is in its normal state (Prakrita Avastha), labour occurs smoothly. However, its vitiation (Vikriti) may lead to

- Prolonged labour (Dirgha Prasava)
- Obstructed labour (Mudgarbha)
- Abnormal presentation
- Increased labour pain

Thus, maintaining the balance of Vata is essential for achieving Sukhprasava.

Garbhini Paricharya (Antenatal Care)

Garbhini Paricharya is the cornerstone of Sukhprasava. It includes month-wise dietary and lifestyle regimens aimed at ensuring:

- Proper fetal growth
- Maternal strength and immunity
- Preparation of reproductive organs for labour

Key Principles of Garbhini Paricharya

- **Ahara (Diet):** Easily digestible, nourishing, and Vata-pacifying foods such as milk, ghee, rice, and medicated preparations
- **Vihara (Lifestyle):** Adequate rest, avoidance of physical strain, mental calmness
- **Manasika Bhava (Psychological Care):** Positive emotions, avoidance of stress and fear

These measures help in maintaining Dosha balance and promoting normal labour.

Preparatory Measures for Labour

Ayurvedic classics describe several **preparatory procedures** to facilitate easy delivery:

1. Snehana (Oleation)

- Internal and external oleation improves tissue elasticity
- Helps in softening the birth canal
- Reduces Vata aggravation

2. Swedana (Sudation)

- Relieves stiffness and promotes relaxation
- Facilitates smooth movement of Vata
- Aids in cervical dilatation

3. Use of Herbal Preparations

- Medicated ghrita and taila
- Kashaya (decoctions) with Vatahara properties
- Drugs that strengthen uterine muscles and promote labour

4. Yonipichu and Local Therapies

- Application of medicated oils in the vaginal canal
- Improves lubrication and elasticity of the birth passage

Role of Satvavajaya (Psychological Support)

Ayurveda emphasizes the mental and emotional well-being of the pregnant woman. Fear, anxiety, and stress can disturb Vata and adversely affect labour. Hence:

- Counseling
- Supportive environment
- Positive reassurance

are essential components of Sukhprasava.

Lakshana of Sukhprasava (Features of Normal Labour)

According to Ayurvedic texts, Sukhprasava is characterized by

- Timely onset of labour pains
- Proper uterine contractions
- Normal presentation of fetus
- Minimal discomfort
- Safe delivery of healthy baby
- No complications during or after delivery

Ayurvedic View on Labour Complications

Ayurveda describes various conditions due to improper management or Dosha imbalance

- Mudgarbha – Obstructed labour
- Dushprasava – Difficult labour
- Dirgha Prasava – Prolonged labour

These conditions are mainly attributed to vitiated Vata, improper diet, or lack of antenatal care.

Integration with Modern Obstetrics

In the present era, increasing rates of

- Cesarean section
- Induced labour
- Labour complications

highlight the need for preventive and holistic approaches. Ayurvedic principles of

- Garbhini Paricharya
- Vata regulation

- Natural preparation of body can be effectively integrated with modern obstetrics to:
- Reduce complications
- Promote normal vaginal delivery
- Improve maternal and fetal outcomes

Comparative Table of Acharyas on Sukhprasava with Shloka

Acharya	Concept / Contribution	Shloka (Sanskrit)	Reference
Charaka	Emphasis on Garbhini Paricharya and proper regimen for normal delivery	“मासानुसारिणी गर्भिणी परिचर्या बलवर्णकरा भवति”	Charaka Samhita, Sharira Sthana 8/32
Charaka	Role of Vata (Apana Vata) in labour	“अपानवायुः प्रसवकर्मणि प्रमुखः”	Charaka Samhita, Sharira Sthana
Sushruta	Description of Mudgarbha (obstructed labour)	“मूढगर्भे तु योनिमार्गे बाधा भवति”	Sushruta Samhita, Sharira Sthana 10
Sushruta	Surgical/obstetric intervention in difficult labour	“तत्र यथायोग्यं शस्त्रकर्म प्रयोजयेत्”	Sushruta Samhita, Sharira Sthana
Vagbhata	Month-wise regimen and holistic care	“गर्भिण्या मासानुसारिणी परिचर्या कार्याः”	Ashtanga Hridaya, Sharira Sthana 1
Vagbhata	Features of normal labour (Sukhprasava)	“सुखेन प्रसवः स्यात् दोषसम्यक् स्थिते सति”	Ashtanga Hridaya
Kashyapa	Importance of maternal and fetal care	“गर्भिणी पोषणा नित्यं गर्भस्य च हिताय”	Kashyapa Samhita, Garbhini Adhyaya

Upadrava (Complications) in Prasava as per Ayurveda

In Ayurveda, *Upadrava* refers to secondary complications that arise due to improper management, Dosha imbalance, or neglect of antenatal and intranatal care. In the context of Prasava, Upadrava mainly occur due to vitiation of Vata Dosha, especially Apana Vata, which governs the process of labour and expulsion of the fetus.

Etiological Factors (Nidana)

The following factors are responsible for the development of Prasava Upadrava:

- Improper Garbhini Paricharya
- Intake of Vata aggravating diet (dry, light, insufficient food)
- Excessive physical exertion or trauma
- Mental stress, fear, anxiety
- Suppression of natural urges (Vegadharana)
- Improper or delayed management during labour

Types of Prasava Upadrava

1. Dirgha Prasava (Prolonged Labour)

Definition: Delay in the normal progress of labour.

Ayurvedic View

- Caused by Vata vitiation leading to irregular uterine contractions
- Weak maternal strength or improper fetal positioning

Lakshana (Symptoms)

- Delayed onset or irregular labour pains
- Slow cervical dilatation
- Exhaustion and distress
- Risk to both mother and fetus
- Need for surgical intervention

3. Dushprasava (Difficult Labour)

Definition: Labour associated with excessive pain and difficulty.

Causes

- Aggravated Vata
- Improper lubrication of birth canal
- Psychological distress

Lakshana

- Severe, intolerable pain
- Anxiety and restlessness
- Delayed delivery

4. Apraja / Mrita Garbha (Fetal Complications)

Description

- Intrauterine fetal death or complications during delivery

Ayurvedic Causes

- Severe Dosha imbalance
- Improper maternal care
- Trauma or stress

5. Yonivyapad during Labour

Description

- Disorders of the reproductive tract affecting labour

Examples

- Vaginal dryness
- Obstruction or rigidity

Cause

- Vata dominance leading to loss of lubrication

6. Atipravritti Vedana (Excessive Labour Pain)

Cause

- Increased Vata activity
- Lack of Snehana (oleation)

Features

- Intense pain
- Restlessness
- Fear and anxiety

7. Postpartum Upadrava (Sutika Upadrava)

a. Raktasrava (Postpartum Hemorrhage)

- Excessive bleeding after delivery
- Due to improper uterine contraction

b. Jwara (Puerperal Fever)

- Infection due to poor hygiene or weak immunity

c. Yonishoola (Genital Pain)

- Pain due to trauma or Vata aggravation

d. Stanya Dushti (Lactation Disorders)

- Insufficient or vitiated breast milk

Samprapti (Pathogenesis)

The development of Prasava Upadrava can be summarized as:

- Nidana (causative factors) →
- Vata Prakopa (especially Apana Vata) →
- Impaired uterine contractions and fetal movement →
- Obstruction or delay in labour →
- Manifestation of complications

Prevention

Prevention of Upadrava is the key objective in Ayurveda:

- Proper Garbhini Paricharya
- Regular Snehana and Swedana
- Balanced diet and lifestyle
- Mental relaxation and emotional support
- Timely medical intervention

Management Principles

- Vata Shamana Chikitsa
- Use of Snigdha (unctuous) therapies
- Herbal drugs promoting uterine activity
- Supportive and emergency care when required

DISCUSSION

Sukhprasava represents an ideal physiological state of childbirth in Ayurveda, wherein delivery occurs smoothly with minimal pain and without complications to the mother and fetus. This concept is deeply rooted in the principles of Dosha equilibrium, particularly emphasizing the role of Vata Dosha in governing all movements within the body. Among its subtypes, Apana Vata is considered the prime factor responsible for the initiation and progression of labour, facilitating cervical dilatation, uterine contractions, and fetal expulsion^[8] Any disturbance in Apana Vata leads to abnormal labour patterns, which may manifest as prolonged, obstructed, or difficult labour. The classical texts describe that normal labour (Sukhprasava) occurs when the body is properly prepared through Garbhini Paricharya, which ensures optimal nourishment of maternal tissues and appropriate fetal growth.^[9] The month-wise dietary regimen helps in maintaining the strength of the uterus and elasticity of the birth canal. Modern obstetrics also supports the importance of maternal

nutrition, as deficiencies can lead to poor uterine contractions and delayed labour. Thus, the Ayurvedic approach of structured antenatal care aligns well with contemporary scientific understanding. The role of Snehana (oleation therapy) is particularly significant in facilitating Sukhprasava. Internal and external oleation help in improving tissue softness, elasticity, and lubrication, especially in the pelvic region, thereby aiding in smooth fetal descent.^[10] Similarly, Swedana (sudation therapy) helps in relieving muscular stiffness and enhances circulation, which promotes efficient uterine activity. These procedures can be compared with modern practices such as perineal massage and warm compress application, which are known to reduce perineal trauma and ease labour. Another critical aspect emphasized in Ayurveda is the psychological state of the mother. Emotional factors such as fear, (anxiety), and stress are known to aggravate Vata Dosha, thereby interfering with the normal course of labour.^[11] Ayurveda recommends maintaining a calm and supportive environment, along with reassurance and positive communication. Modern research also indicates that psychological support during labour can reduce pain perception, decrease the duration of labour, and improve maternal satisfaction, thereby validating Ayurvedic concepts. The discussion of Prasava Upadrava (complications) in Ayurvedic texts highlights that most complications arise due to improper antenatal care and Dosha imbalance. Conditions such as Dirgha Prasava (prolonged labour) and Mudgarbha (obstructed labour) are primarily attributed to vitiated Vata and improper fetal positioning.^[12] These conditions correlate with modern obstetric complications like dystocia and malpresentation. This indicates that Ayurveda not only identifies the complications but also provides insight into their pathogenesis, emphasizing prevention through proper care.

In addition, Ayurveda recognizes the importance of maternal strength (Bala) and Ojas in ensuring successful delivery. A well-nourished mother with good physical and mental health is more likely to experience normal labour. This aligns with modern findings that maternal fitness, adequate hemoglobin levels, and emotional stability significantly influence labour outcomes.^[13] In the present era, the increasing trend of cesarean sections and medical interventions reflects a shift from natural childbirth practices. While these interventions are essential in high-risk cases, their overuse may lead to unnecessary complications. The Ayurvedic concept of Sukhprasava offers a preventive and holistic approach, focusing on preparing the body for natural labour rather than managing complications after they arise.^[14] Integrating Ayurvedic antenatal care with modern obstetric monitoring can provide a balanced approach that ensures safety while promoting natural childbirth. Furthermore, the

concept of Sukhprasava extends beyond physical delivery and includes postnatal well-being of both mother and child. Proper management during pregnancy and labour ensures quicker recovery, better lactation, and improved neonatal health outcomes. Thus, Ayurveda provides a continuum of care from conception to postpartum period, which is essential for achieving overall maternal and child health.^[15]

CONCLUSION

Sukhprasava is a vital concept in Ayurveda that emphasizes easy, natural, and complication-free childbirth achieved through proper preparation of the mother during pregnancy. The classical texts clearly highlight that labour is a physiological process governed primarily by Apana Vata, and its normal functioning ensures timely onset of labour, effective uterine contractions, and smooth expulsion of the fetus.

The practice of Garbhini Paricharya, including appropriate diet, lifestyle, and psychological care, plays a crucial role in maintaining Dosha equilibrium and strengthening maternal and fetal health. Measures such as Snehana, Swedana, and mental support further facilitate the process of labour by improving tissue elasticity, reducing stress, and promoting coordinated uterine activity.

The occurrence of Prasava Upadrava such as prolonged labour, obstructed labour, and difficult delivery is mainly attributed to Vata imbalance and improper antenatal care. This highlights the preventive nature of Ayurveda, which focuses on avoiding complications rather than managing them at later stages. In the present scenario of increasing obstetric interventions, the Ayurvedic concept of Sukhprasava offers a holistic, safe, and preventive approach that can be effectively integrated with modern obstetric practices. Such an integrative approach can help in reducing unnecessary interventions, promoting normal vaginal delivery, and improving maternal and neonatal outcomes. Thus, Sukhprasava is not merely an outcome but a well-planned process achieved through balanced Doshas, proper antenatal regimen, and psychological well-being, reflecting the comprehensive and preventive philosophy of Ayurveda in maternal healthcare.

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