

AYURVEDIC PERSPECTIVES ON ANTENATAL CARE: A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF GARBHINI PARICHARYA

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ABSTRACT

Pregnancy represents a critical and transformative phase in a woman's life, requiring comprehensive care to ensure the well-being of both mother and fetus. In Ayurveda, *Garbhini Paricharya* refers to the systematic antenatal care regimen encompassing *Ahara* (diet), *Vihara* (lifestyle), and *Vichara* (mental and emotional well-being). Ayurveda emphasizes diet as the primary source of nourishment and therapeutic support for pregnant women. The classical texts describe a month-wise regimen (*Masanumasika Paricharya*), aimed at promoting optimal fetal growth and development while maintaining maternal health. The fundamental objectives of *Garbhini Paricharya* include *Sukhaprasava* (safe and uncomplicated delivery), *Anupaghata* (prevention of gestational

complications), and *Paripurnatva* (adequate growth and development of both mother and fetus). Additionally, Ayurveda advocates the use of specific herbal formulations such as *Shatavari*, *Yashtimadhu*, *Utpal*, and *Sariva* for managing intrauterine conditions. When combined with appropriate dietary practices and lifestyle modifications, these interventions may help prevent adverse outcomes such as *Nagodara*, *Upavishtaka*, and *Leenagarbha*. Thus, *Garbhini Paricharya* provides a holistic framework for antenatal care, integrating nutrition, lifestyle, mental well-being, and herbal therapeutics to support a healthy pregnancy and favorable maternal-fetal outcomes.

KEYWORDS: Garbhini Paricharya, Antenatal care, Ahara, Vihara, Vichara, Masanumasika Paricharya, Sukhaprasava, Maternal health, Fetal development.

INTRODUCTION

Pregnancy is a dynamic and transformative period characterized by significant physiological, psychological, and metabolic changes in a woman's body. Despite advances in healthcare, the prevalence of maternal mortality remains higher in developing countries compared to developed nations. The major contributing factors include hemorrhage, pregnancy-induced hypertension, obstructed labor, infections, and complications arising from unsafe abortions.

As fetal growth and development are entirely dependent on maternal health, it is essential that pregnant women receive adequate nutrition, proper care, and a supportive environment to ensure a healthy pregnancy outcome. Antenatal care plays a vital role in monitoring and promoting the well-being of both mother and fetus throughout the gestational period.

In Ayurveda, *Garbhini Paricharya* refers to a comprehensive antenatal care regimen designed to maintain maternal health from conception to delivery. It encompasses appropriate diet, lifestyle, and mental well-being, thereby facilitating optimal fetal development and reducing the risk of complications.

Manumasika Pathyaas: (Month Wise Dietary Regimen)

During pregnancy foetus starts to get nutrition from mother through placenta. Adequate nutrition is needed for monthly constant and proper growth of embryo. The requirement of nutrition varies according to developmental stage of foetus month wisely (Masanumasika vrudhi). Pregnancy imposes the extra nutrients requirement. Thus the dietetic requirements of the mother also changes month wise. By following these dietetic regimens prescribed, the pregnant woman remains healthy and delivers a baby having good health, energy, strength, complexion and voice.

MONTHS	Charak Samhita	Sushruta Samhita	Astanga Sangraha	Harita Samhita
1 st MONTH	Non medicated milk	Madhur, Sheet, Liquid Diet	Medicated milk	Madhuyashti, madhukapuspa with butter, honey and sweetened milk
2 nd MONTH	Milk medicated with madhura rasa (sweet taste) drugs	Madhur, Sheet, Liquid Diet	Same as Charaka Milk medicated with madhura rasa (sweet taste) drugs	Sweetened milk treated with kakoli 1

3 rd MONTH	Milk with honey and ghrita	Madhur, Sheet, Liquid Diet	Milk with honey and ghrita	Krishara
4 th MONTH	Milk with butter	Cooked shashti rice with curd, dainty and pleasant food mixed with milk & butter and Jangal mansa	Milk with one tola (12gm) of butter ¹⁹	Medicated cooked rice
5 th MONTH	Ghrita prepared with butter extracted from milk	Cooked shastika rice with milk, jangal mansa along with dainty food mixed with milk and ghrita	Same as Charaka	Payasa
6 th MONTH	Ghrita prepared from milk medicated with madhura (sweet) drugs	Ghrita or rice gruel medicated with gokshura	Same as Charaka	Sweetened curd
7 th MONTH	Same as in sixth month	Ghrita medicated with prithakaparnyadi group of drugs	Same as Charaka	Ghritakhanda (a sweet dish)
8 th MONTH	KshiraYawagu mixed with ghrita	Asthapanabasti with decoction of badari mixed with bala,atibala, satapuspa,patala etc.,honey and ghrita Asthapan is followed by Anuvasana basti of oil medicated with milk, madhura drug	Kshirayawagu mixed with ghrita, asthapanabasti with decoction of badari, anuvasana basti with oil medicated with Madura drugs	Ghritapuraka
9 th MONTH	Anuvasanabasti with oil prepared with drugs of Madhura (sweet) group, vaginal tampon of this oil	Unctuous gruels and jangal mansa rus up to the period of delivery	Same as Charaka	Different varieties of cereals

Clinical Importance of Garbhini Paricharya

First Trimester

The first trimester is a critical phase marked by embryogenesis, during which rapid cellular differentiation and organ formation occur. This stage demands increased nutritional support and energy to facilitate proper fetal development. Ayurveda recommends easily digestible, nourishing foods such as *Kshira* (milk), *Ghrita* (clarified butter), *Krusara* (medicated gruel), and *Payasa* (milk-based preparations), along with milk medicated with *Madhura* (sweet-tasting) herbs to meet these requirements.

During this period, many women experience nausea and vomiting, which may lead to reduced dietary intake, dehydration, and nutritional deficiencies. The administration of cold, sweet, and liquid diets, particularly milk-based preparations, is advised to maintain hydration and ensure adequate nourishment.

Furthermore, drugs belonging to the *Madhura Rasa* group possess anabolic and nourishing properties, which help in maintaining maternal health and supporting optimal fetal growth and development during early pregnancy.

Second Trimester

The second trimester is characterized by rapid growth and development of fetal tissues, particularly muscular structures. From the fourth month onwards, there is an increased requirement for proteins to support this development. Ayurveda recommends nutrient-dense foods such as milk and its derivatives (*Kshira*, cheese, butter), along with appropriately indicated meat preparations, to fulfill these demands.

Milk is considered highly beneficial due to its nourishing and stabilizing properties, promoting both maternal strength and fetal growth. Additionally, *Shashti Shali* (a type of rice) advised in *Garbhini Paricharya* is rich in carbohydrates and serves as an important source of energy.

Meat preparations, when indicated, contribute to fetal nourishment and aid in the development of muscular tissue. Toward the end of the second trimester, many women may experience edema, particularly in the lower extremities, due to fluid retention. In such conditions, *Ghrita* medicated with *Gokshura* is recommended, as it possesses diuretic properties that help in reducing water retention and preventing associated complications.

Third Trimester

The third trimester is a crucial phase focused on the maturation of the fetus and preparation of the mother's body for labor. Ayurveda recommends the use of *Ghrita* medicated with *Prithakparnayadi Gana*, which possesses diuretic, anabolic, and tissue-nourishing properties. These formulations also help in alleviating emaciation and balancing *Pitta* and *Kapha*, thereby supporting maternal and fetal health, particularly during the seventh month.

In the eighth month, the intake of *Yavagu* (medicated gruel) is advised due to its *Balya* (strength-promoting) and *Brimhana* (nourishing) properties, which contribute to overall nourishment of both mother and fetus.

Constipation is a common concern in late pregnancy due to *Vata* aggravation. Administration of *Asthapana Vasti* (decoction enema) during the eighth month is recommended for *Vata Anulomana*, which helps relieve constipation and may aid in regulating uterine function by influencing the autonomic control of the myometrium, thereby facilitating labor.

Additionally, the application of an oil-soaked vaginal tampon is suggested to provide lubrication to the cervix, vaginal canal, and perineum, promoting ease during normal labor. It may also help maintain local hygiene and reduce the risk of puerperal infections. Regular use is believed to support neuromuscular coordination involved in labor.

Throughout pregnancy, the use of milk and drugs of the *Madhura Rasa* group is emphasized. Milk is considered a complete food, while *Madhura* substances exhibit anabolic and nourishing properties, thereby supporting maternal health and optimal fetal growth and development.

Garbhopaghatkar Bhavas (Factors Likely To Harm The Foetus)

1. Charak- use of excessive heavy, hot and pungent substances, harsh and violent activity.
2. Sushrut-Vyavaya, Vyayama, Atitarpan, Atikarsan, Divaswapna Ratrijagaran, Shoka, Yanaavarohana, Bhaya, Utkatasana, Sonitamoksan, Vegadharan, Snehan etc.
3. Vagbhata- Tikсна Ausadh, Vyavaya, Vyayama.
4. Kashyap- Should not look at declining moon, setting sun and both the rahu, she should not remain for long in acutely erect or flexed posture and carry heavy weight for long, avoid tremoring, excessive laughing and trauma, use of cold water and garlic.

All These Contraindication Can Be Grouped Under Following Headings.

Contraindications During Pregnancy (*Garbhini Paricharya*).

Category	Description	Potential Effects
Physical and Psychological Strain	Activities causing excessive physical exertion (e.g., heavy exercise) or emotional stress (e.g., grief, anxiety). Excessive coitus and overexertion should be avoided.	May precipitate miscarriage or other pregnancy complications.
Mechanical and Postural Factors	Heavy weight lifting, excessive vehicle riding, prolonged squatting in abnormal posture, and extended supine position.	Increased intra-abdominal pressure, impaired uteroplacental blood flow, leading to fetal distress or intrauterine death.
Exposure to Shock or Disturbing Environments	Exposure to emotionally disturbing situations such as visiting cremation grounds or experiencing sudden shock.	May lead to psychological stress and increase the risk of abortion or fetal abnormalities.
Dietary Excess and Overnutrition	Overeating or excessive intake leading to over-satiation and weight gain in mother and fetus.	Risk of pregnancy toxemia, fetal macrosomia, and complications during labor.
Environmental Factors	Exposure to environmental influences such as eclipses, as described in classical texts.	Traditionally believed to cause fetal abnormalities.
Inappropriate Therapeutic Interventions	Use of strong purificatory therapies such as emesis (<i>Vamana</i>) and other <i>Shodhana</i> procedures.	May stimulate uterine contractions and increase the risk of miscarriage.

CONCLUSION

Pregnancy and childbirth represent natural and vital processes that require comprehensive care to ensure the well-being of both mother and fetus. In Ayurveda, the care of a pregnant woman is considered equivalent to the care of the developing fetus; hence, she should be provided with a supportive environment, appropriate nutrition, and protection from factors that may adversely affect fetal development.

The concept of *Garbhini Paricharya*, as described by classical Ayurvedic scholars, emphasizes systematic care from conception to delivery. It integrates dietary regulation, lifestyle modification, and mental well-being to promote optimal maternal health and facilitate *Sukhaprasava* (safe and uncomplicated delivery).

Ayurvedic principles recognize that the requirements of the developing embryo and fetus vary across different stages of pregnancy. Accordingly, a month-wise regimen is prescribed to meet these changing needs. Notably, many of these ancient guidelines align with

contemporary concepts of prenatal care, highlighting their scientific relevance and applicability.

Thus, *Garbhini Paricharya* provides a holistic and time-tested approach to antenatal care, supporting healthy pregnancy outcomes through individualized and stage-specific management.

DISCUSSION

Garbhini Paricharya provides a holistic framework for antenatal care, integrating diet, lifestyle, and mental well-being. The trimester-wise regimen reflects an understanding of the changing needs of the mother and fetus, with emphasis on nourishment during early pregnancy, enhanced nutritional support during fetal growth, and preparatory measures for labor in the later stages. The use of *Madhura Rasa* substances and milk highlights their anabolic and supportive role in maternal and fetal health. Additionally, the outlined contraindications stress the avoidance of physical strain, psychological stress, and inappropriate interventions. These principles closely align with modern antenatal care practices, underscoring the relevance of Ayurvedic guidelines in promoting safe pregnancy and healthy fetal development.

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