

POST-NATAL CARE IN AYURVEDA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SUTIKA PARICHARYA

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Abstract

Ayurveda elucidate due importance for the care of mother at every phase of her life especially when it comes to antenatal and postnatal care. Post natal care (post-natal) is a period following child birth which can be certainly co-related with Sutika paricharya explained in Ayurveda. In this stage mother should be educated to take care of herself and the new born baby. After delivery woman becomes weedy, also empty bodied due to physical and mental stress and debility at the level of reproductive organs. It is essential for a mother to deepen and gain the mental, emotional and spiritual resources needed to carry her through all the demands of family life, without feeling depleted. This paper highlights on various major components of Sutika Paricharya such as Ashwasana (Psychological Reassurance), Vihara and Aahara (Normal diet in puerperium) etc. Ayurveda prescribes numerous herbs to establish healthy status of the woman after delivery.

Key words: Sutika Paricharya; Ayurveda; Post natal care.

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INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda has always given importance to care the stree (female) at every phase of her life in respect of Rajaswala paricharya (menstrual care), Garbhini paricharya (Antenatal care) and Sutika paricharya (Post natal care). In Ayurveda, the term sutika (puerprial woman) can be used only after expulsion of placenta.^[1] Puerperium is a period following child birth during which the body tissues especially the pelvic organ revert back to the pre-pregnant state both anatomically & physiologically.^[2] During this time, women are recovering from their delivery and are beginning to care for the newborn. This period is used to make sure the mother is stable and to educate her to take care of the baby. After delivery woman becomes weak and also empty bodied due to unsteadiness or indolence of Dhatus, labour pains & excretion of Kleda (moisture) and blood. Mithyaachar (inappropriate physical and mental behavior) in this period definitely results in incurable diseases or diseases which are difficult to cure.^[3] After following proper puerperial care woman regain all the lost things and reaches pre-pregnancy status.^[4] In this health conscious era, with proper care, a suthika would gain the mental, emotional, and spiritual resources needed to carry her through all the demands of family life, without feeling depleted. In this study, special life style suggested by Ayurveda called Sutika Paricharya is discussed in detail to maintain the health of the delivered woman.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

When it comes to the postpartum care, Ayurveda suggests women to be treated with warmth, wetness and unctuousness as part of their therapy. This purpose can be achieved by rectifying food preparations according to the imbalance of Dosha, keeping the home warmer, providing appropriate rest and by administering daily peaceful massage with warm oil. Food preparations advised are aimed

at supporting digestion, restoration and lactation. After childbirth a woman's digestive fire is weakened and needs to be rekindled and nurtured. Ayurveda focuses on foods that are warm, wet, oily, and have sweet, sour and salty tastes, to bring equilibrium of Vata.

Present study protocol of Sutika Paricharya is divided into three major components as follows

1. Ashwasana (Psychological Reassurance)
2. Vihara (Normal daily activities and therapeutic procedures)
3. Aahara (Normal diet in puerperium)

Ashwasana (Psychological Reassurance)

After expulsion of fetus, woman should be immediately encouraged with sweet spoken words.^[5]

Vihara (Normal daily activities and therapeutic procedures)

It includes various regimens consisting of internal, external and or local therapies beneficial for Sutika. Table 1 shows differences in the opinion of Acharyas regarding the vihara.^{[6][7][8][9][10][11][12][13]}

Aahara (Normal diet in Post Natal Period)

Dietary regimen according to different Acharyas is summarized in Table 2.^{[6][7][11][12][14][15][16]}

DISCUSSION

Ashwasana (Psychological Reassurance) is the most important work which stabilizes psychology of puerpera. There is physical and emotional exhaustion following delivery, due to rigors of labour and inadequate sleep because of stress towards caring for a new born can pack a powerful exhausting punch.

Table 1: Various regimen of internal, external and or local therapies for Sutika

Charaka ^[6]	Sushruta ^[7]	Vridddha Vagbhata ^[8]	Vagbhata ^[9]	Kashyapa ^[10]	Others
Snehapana (Consumption of fats)	Abhyanga (Massage)	Abhyanga (Massage)	Yoni abhyanga (Vaginal massage)	Aashwasana (Psychological Reassurance)	Shonitashudhhi (Purification of Blood)
Abhyanga (Massage)	Parisinchana (Hot water pouring)	Snehpana (Consumption of fats)	Abhyanga (Massage)	Sanvahana (Gental massage)	Yonyabhyanga (Vaginal massage)
Udarveshtana (Abdomenal tightening)	Dushtashonitshudhi (Purification of Blood)	Udarveshtana (Abdomenal tightening)	Snehapana (Consumption of fats)	Udarmardana (abdominal massage)	Yoniswedana ^[11] (Vaginal sudation)
Parishechana (Hot water pouring)	Parishechana (Hot water pouring)	Abhyanga (Massage)	Dushtshonitashudhi (Purification of Blood)	Udarveshtana (Abdomenal tightening)	Nitya Swedan (Daily sudation)
		Udvartana (Massage with dry herbal powder)	Udarveshtana (Abdomenal tightening)	YoniSnehana (Vaginal oiling)	Abhyanga ^[12] (Massage)
				Yoni Swedan (Vaginal sudation)	Yonipindana (Covering of vagina)
				Snana (Bath)	Nitya swedan (Daily sudation)
				Dhupana (Medicated fumigation)	Abhyanga ^[13] (Massage)

So new mothers should be encouraged to talk about their feelings and fears with others. Psychological reassurance and consultation is very much important to avoid puerperial psychological disorders like the baby blues, postpartum depression, birth related post traumatic birth disorder and rare condition called postpartum psychosis.^[17]

Ancient Acharyas have advised Abhyanga (massage) with the help of Ghrita and Taila especially with Bala Taila which is Vatasanshamana, Rasayana (rejuvenative) to Mamsa dhathu (muscle tissues).^[18] Tila (*Sesamum indicum*) taila provides nourishment and prevents skin from getting excessively dry^[19] and thus prevents further dehydration in sutika.

Massage, tones up muscles of pelvic floor, abdominal and back tissues and relieves muscle spasm. It improves digestion and is also responsible for improved venous blood flow by dilating superficial blood vessels

which in turn prevents thrombosis. Abhyanga (massage) soothes nervous & endocrine system, releases endorphin (the feel good hormone) which improves both physical & mental well being, thus reducing the stress during puerperium.^[20] Yoni Abhyanga (vaginal oiling) tones up vagina and perineum and prevents laxity and prolapse, alleviates pain and swelling of vagina.^[21] It also heals vaginal and perineal wounds.^[22]

Snehapana (Consumption of fats) alleviates Vata dosha in Sutika awastha, increases appetite level. It also calms down mind and reduces mental stress and increases peristaltic movements of the intestine.^[23] Snehapana is given with drugs like Pippali (*Piper longum*), Pippali mula (Root of *Piper longum*), Chavya (*Piper retrofractum*) or Chitraka (*Plumbago zeylanica*) etc. because they are Katu (pungent), Tikta (bitter) in taste and Ushna Veerya (hot in potency) which in turn helps to digest Sneha and act as a appetizer.^[24]

Table 2: Dietary regimen for Sutika

Charak ^[6]	Sushrut ^[7]	Vridddha Vagbhata ^[14]	Vagbhata ^[15]	Kashyapa ^[16]	Other
Susnigdha Yavagu Aapyayana (Ingestion of Rice Gruel)	Vidarigandhandi, Yava, kola, kulattha sidhha (Snehayavagu (Rice Gruel medicated with group of drugs starting from (<i>Desmodium Gangeticum</i> . And the drugs like <i>Hordeum vulgare</i> , <i>Ziziphus jujube</i> , <i>Dolichous biflorus</i> .) Snigdha Jangalrasa (Non veg. Soup) Shalyodana (Rice)	Vidaryadigan kwathen (Decoction of Group of drugs starting from (<i>Desmodium Gangeticum</i>) laghuna ksheeren (Light Milk) or Yavagu dravam (liquid Rice Gruel) Yush of Yava, kola kulattha (Soup of pulses medicated with <i>Hordeum vulgare</i> , <i>Ziziphus jujube</i> , <i>Dolichous biflorus</i>) Laghu Aahar (Light Diet) Jangalras(non veg soup) Jeevaniya, Brimhaniya, Madhur, Vatahar sidhha Hridya Annapana (Consumption of Restorative, Nutritious, Sweet and pleasant diet)	Vatoghna Aushadha Sadhit Peya (liquid diet medicated with herbs useful in decreasing vata dosha) Vidaryadi Varg Siddha Yavagu either Snehasidhha or Ksheersidhha (Rice Gruel prepared from Group of drugs starting from <i>Desmodium gangeticum</i> either with ghee or with milk) Brimhan (Nutrition) after 7 days Pishitsevan (consumption of meat) after 12 days	Manda (the clear supernatant water in which rice is boiled) Pippali Nagarashritam Alpa Sneha Saindhav Rahit Yavagu (Low fat and without salt Rice Gruel medicated with <i>Piper longum</i> and <i>Zingiber officinale</i>) Sasneha Lavan Yavagu (Rice Gruel containing fat and salt) Sasneha Salavan Kulattha Yush (Soup of <i>Dolichous biflorus</i> containing salt and fat) Jangal Mansaras (Non veg. Soup) Kushmand, Mulaka, Yervaruka Ghritbhritani (Consumption of <i>Benincasa hispida</i> , <i>Raphanus sativus</i> , <i>Cucumis sativus</i> fried with ghee)	Upvasa & Nagar Haritaki, Guda sevana 1 st day (On 1 st day fast and consumption mixture of <i>Zingiber officinale</i> and <i>Terminalia chebula</i> with jaggery) Ushna Kullatha Yusha 2 nd day (On 2 nd day hot Soup of <i>Dolichous biflorus</i>) Panchakol Yavagu 3 rd day (On 3 rd day Rice Gruel medicated with <i>Piper longum</i> , <i>Piper chaba</i> , <i>Plumbago zeylanica</i> and <i>Zingiber officinale</i>) Chaturjat Mishrit Yavagu 4 th day (On 4 th day Rice Gruel mixed with <i>Cinnamomum Zeylanicum</i> , <i>Elettaria cardamomum</i> , <i>Cinnamomum tamala</i> and <i>Mesua ferrea</i>) Shalishashti Odan 5 th day ^[11] (On 5 th day rice having maturity 60 days boiled with water) Snigdha, pathya, alpa, bhojan prayoga ^[12] (Light & beneficial Diet)

Udaraveshtana (Abdominal tightening) wrapping of abdomen with a big cloth results in getting back the abdomen to its proper place and also the vata dosha subsides.^[25] Absence of hollow space due to abdominal tightening prevents Vata Dosha from causing diseases.^[7]

Abdominal tightening can be helpful to relocate disfigured & displaced organs during pregnancy to its normal anatomical structure and position. It mainly helps the uterus to shrink back to its normal size, as it often occupies maximum room in the stomach just after birth.

The stretched abdominal muscles are also flattened with the help of this tightening. Additionally, the article of clothing can help to regain elasticity of abdominal skin. Ultimately, back support is also one of the benefits of this procedure, as it helps to straighten back after pregnancy, improving posture and reducing discomfort associated with postpartum back.^[26]

In Dushtashonitshuddhi (Purification of blood) drugs of Panchakola are given with warmed jaggery water for excretion of Dushta Shonita (vitiated blood) from uterus. These drugs along with jaggery may cause uterine contraction and hence blood clots or abnormal blood can be excreted. Kashyapa advised Udarapedana (abdominal compression) for Shonita shuddhi. This may facilitate uterine stimulation inducing contraction which may result in expulsion of residual blood clots.

Parisheka (Hot water Pouring) is done by pouring water in a stream, so that abnormal blood clots accumulated in uterine cavity after the delivery of Garbha excreted properly and Vata Dosha also subsides.^[27] Vagbhata advised Bruhana, Madhura drugs decoction for Parisheka as these are well known for their Vatashamaka properties.

Yonidhoopana (Fumigation of Vagina) in puerperium vaginal defense is lowered due to hypoestrogenic state and patient is prone for infection so aseptic precautions are necessary to puerperial sepsis. The drugs used for Dhoopana e.g. Kushtha (*Saussurea lappa*), Guggulu (*Commiphora mukul*) Agar (Aquilaria agallocha) are well known for their antibacterial properties.^[28] In Yonipindana (Covering of Vagina) vagina is advised to cover completely. This restricts entry of Vata and prevents vagina from various infections.

In Udvardana, massage is done with powdered drug. Exercise is must for maintaining good health in normal human being. In Sutika

exercise is contraindicated as her body condition will not allow her to do active work. Instead she has been advised for total rest. Both Abhyanga and Udwartana are type of passive exercise. This can be considered as midway which will provide benefits of exercise devoid of active movements of her body part.

Apathyakara Vihara (Contraindicated Activities during post natal period)

During post natal care, Sutika has been advised to avoid factors such as Vyayama (Exercise), Maithuna (Sexual Intercourse), Krodha (Anger), Sheetasevana (breezy things).^[29] Women experiences lots of physical and mental stress during labour and get exhausted. This may be the reason behind restricting her from exercise. Emotional imbalances like anger, fear and depression badly affect lactation^[30] Consumption of cold things aggravates Vata Dosha. Sexual intercourse involves strain & friction of genital tract which is already lacerated & weakened during the process of labour resulting into injury, bleeding & infection. The hypoestrogenic state following delivery makes vaginal epithelium thin and provides very little lubrication after sexual stimulation resulting into painful intercourse.^[31] Also there are chances of pregnancy which may affect breast feeding.

AAHARA (Dietary regimen during post natal care)

In post natal period vital nutrients are lost from Sutika (dhatukshaya), she experiences weakness with low digestive power. It is the period to replenish the vital elements lost during pregnancy. Ancient Acharyas have mentioned special dietary regimen which helps Sutika to regain her pre pregnancy status.

Diet

All Acharyas have suggested using of medicated Manda, Peya, Yavagu, (Rice Gruels) various fats (Ghrita (Clarified Butter), Taila (oil), Vasa (animal fat), Majja (bone marrow) with herbs or decoction for 1st 3 to 7 days followed by medicated meat soup with light diet. Manda, peya, yavagu are known for their Balya (strengthen the body), Tarpana (nutritious), dhatuposhana (Nutrition of dhatus) & vatanashana (pacify the vitiated vata) properties which are helpful in regaining lost nutrients.^[32] Kashyapa seems to suggest dietary regimen resembling to Sansarjana Krama where it is followed according to Agni.

The use of different herbs during dietary regimen is suggested due to their highly useful therapeutic and nutritional value.

Pippali, Pippalimula (Fruit & root of *Piper longum* Linn.) is anti inflammatory,^[33] potent immunomodulator^[34] & shows anti bacterial activity^[35]. It is also useful for the recovery of the relaxed organs soon after delivery.^[36] It stimulates liver and spleen, increases haemoglobin and appetite. It has mild laxative action.^[37] It enhances blood flow towards GI tract which results in absorption of active medicaments. Chavya (*Piper chaba* Trel. & Yunck) is useful in loss of appetite, colic, piles, has mild laxative action, diuretic, liver stimulant, blood cleansing and rejuvenating properties.^[38] Chitraka (*Plumbago zeylanica* Linn.) is useful in nervine weakness, oedema, liver & spleen disorder, appetizer, digestive, anti-helminthic, febrifuge, causes uterine contractions, cures postpartum disorders.^[39] Shunthi (*Zingiber officinale* Roscoe) is known to stimulate digestion. It has anti tumour, anti inflammatory anti microbial property. Useful in nervine weakness increases flow of urine thus decreased chances of urinary tract infections.^[40] Kola (*Ziziphus jujube* Mill.) is a good source of calcium, phosphorus, Vitamin

A & C. It has anti oxidant, wound healing and anti inflammatory properties. Helpful in hypertension, fatigue and assists action of other herbs, given in indigestion and is mild laxative. It has a tranquillizing and sleep inducing effect.^[41] Kulatha (*Dolichous biflorus* Linn.) is an excellent source of iron, molybdenum and manganese.^[42] It has antispasmodic activity and is used in uterine disorders, piles and anemia.^[43] Ervaruka (*Cucumis sativus* Linn.) It has 94% water content, keeps the body hydrated, regulates blood pressure, aids in digestion and acts as a diuretic. It contains magnesium, potassium, silica, vitamin A, B, C and K. Vitamin K has antioxidant and osteotrophic activity (maintains bone health)^[44] Yava (*Hordeum vulgare* Linn.) is a good source of fiber. It contains copper, phosphorus, zinc and Vitamin E.^[45] Therefore the above mentioned drugs are administered during suthika kala for the wellbeing of the suthika.

CONCLUSION

Ayurveda is ultimate science of life focusing every minute aspect of various stages of human life. Sutika paricharya is one of its concepts explaining the importance of reestablishment of health of a woman after delivery; directing physicians and Sutika to adapt certain changes in the daily activities, diet, mental and social behaviour. After a thorough review of various classical texts, it can be concluded that Ayurveda has executed the post natal care (Sutika Paricharya) in a meticulous fashion focusing on every aspect required to nurture and replenish the health of woman and avoid postpartum complications.

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