SUTIKA PARICHARYA - AN AYURVEDIC APPROACH TO POSTNATAL CARE

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda give importance to care of the mother at every stage of her life especially in antenatal and postnatal period. A postnatal period is the period beginning immediately after the separation of placenta and extending up to six weeks. Postnatal care is important to ensure a normal purperium with delivery of a healthy baby. In ayurvedic classics postnatal period is named as sutika paricharya. Due to pregnancy and delivery the woman becomes weak due to development of fetus and also empty bodied due to unsteadiness of all tissues, labour pains, excretion of kleda and blood. The world figure of maternal mortality ratio is estimated to be 400 per 100,000 live births. So health of the mother in purperium period is more important and must be given more attention to prevent any complication during this period. So ayurvedic classics described sutika paricharya which includes the regimen that helps the woman to regain her vitality and helps her body to revert back in pre – pregnant state. Sutika paricharya includes aahara, vihara, aushadhi, yogasana, some pathya and apathy etc. So health of the mother before pregnancy, during pregnancy and during purperium is important for safe motherhood and healthy childhood.

KEYWORDS: Sutika paricharya, purperium, postnatal period, pathya and apathy in sutika paricharya.
INTRODUCTION

Each phase of women life is beautiful and should be considered as gracious. Right from the moment that she entered the world, or when she steps in adolescence which makes her capable to be prepared to experience motherhood. According to Ayurvedic classics, women life is divided into three phases and Ayurveda has always given importance to care the female (stree) at every phase of her life in respect of Rajswala paricharya (Menstrual care), Garbhini paricharya (Antenatal care), Sutika paricharya (Postnatal care). Women is the foundation of the society. Ayurveda regards women and her ability to reproduce and care for children as the basis of family life. These qualities can only be manifested in society, if women are safe and protected. Sutika avastha is the important phase in women life. There are many changes occurring in garbhavastha and sutikavastha. After delivery due to exertion of labour pain and excretion of kleda and blood, sutika’s sharira is thought to be shoonya sharira.\[1\] Ayurveda stated that about 74 types of diseases can occur during this period if not managed properly.\[2]\[3\] First week soon after delivery is of immense importance for both sutika and newly born baby and hence during this period special attention and care is necessary for both. Due to vitiation of vata after delivery digestive power, immunity and strength of the mother becomes weak and therefore for increasing body strength and achieving vata balance proper care and management in the sutika is needed.

SUTIKA

In Ayurveda the term sutika (puerperal woman) can be used only after expulsion of placenta. Aacharya Kashyapa said that after delivery of the child the women can’t be called as sutika till the placenta is not expelled.\[4\] The word purperium is derived from latin – puer means child and parus, bringing forth. Currently it defines the time following delivery during which pregnancy induced maternal anatomical and physiological changes return to the non pregnant state.\[5\] Purperium is the period following childbirth during which the body tissue, specially the pelvic organs revert back approximately to the pre-pregnant state both anatomically and physiologically.\[6\] Involution is the process whereby the genital organs revert back approximately to the state as they were before pregnancy.\[7\]

SUTIKA KALA

Sutika kala is the period of postnatal phase. According to classics there are different opinion regarding the duration of this period. Aacharya Charaka has not given any specific duration,
however, all other classics have given definite period of specific dietetics etc. which can be considered as normal duration of purperium. This period of *sutika kala* is variable according to various aacharyas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aacharya</th>
<th>Sutika kala</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aacharya Charaka</td>
<td>Sutika kala is not exactly mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aacharya Sushruta</td>
<td>1(\frac{1}{2}) month i.e.45 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashtanga Sangraha</td>
<td>1(\frac{1}{2}) month i.e.45 days or up to recurrence of menses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashtang Hridya</td>
<td>1(\frac{1}{2}) month i.e.45 days or up to recurrence of menses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aacharya Kashyapa</td>
<td>6 month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acharya Bhavprakasha</td>
<td>1(\frac{1}{2}) month i.e.45 days or up to recurrence of menses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yogratnakara</td>
<td>1(\frac{1}{2}) month i.e.45 days or up to recurrence of menses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern</td>
<td>- Immediate Within 24 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Early</td>
<td>Up to 7 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Remote</td>
<td>Up to 6 weeks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**MATERIAL AND METHODS**

**SUTIKA PARICHARYA**

After delivery there is vitiation of *vata*; immunity and strength of the mother will be weak. Expulsion of fetus, loss of fluid, and exhaustion during labour are responsible for *dhatukshaya* and during this period even a minor ailment can cause a lot of harm to the body. In purperium many complications can occur as described in *ayurveda* about 74 diseases can occur during this period if not managed properly. So *sutika* must be given more attention to prevent these complications to occur during this period. *Ayurveda* has suggested a very good protocol during *sutika kala* which includes a detailed description of *aahara* (nutrition), *vihara* (life style), and *aushadhi* (medicine) to maintain the health of the women. *Sutika paricharya* is divided into three major components as follows.

A) *Aashwasana* (Psychological Reassurance)
B) *Aahara* (Normal diet in purperium)
C) *Vihara* (Normal daily activities and therapeutic procedures)

**A) Aashwasana (Psychological Reassurance)**

After expulsion of fetus, women should be immediately encouraged with sweet spoken words.\(^{[15]}\) It is a kind of *satvavajaya chikitsa*. It includes mental boosting which is required for the women to take care of herself and her baby.
B) Aahara (Normal diet in purperium)

According to modern science, dietary regimen during purperial period includes:
- Purperial women should take normal diet of her choice.
- As the patient is lactating additional protein, fat, minerals, vitamins, high caloric diet, plenty of fluids should be needed and all this is fulfilled by ayurvedic diet.

The motive of this dietary regimen is to improve the involution process, immunity, lactation, digestive power and ultimately restore her health.

Dietary regimen according to different aacharyas is summarized in the table 1.

**Table 2: Dietary regimen for sutika**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Samhita</th>
<th>Aahara Regimen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charaka Samhita[16]</td>
<td>- Ghrita, taila, vasa, majja medicated with pippali ( Piper longum Linn.), pippalimula, chayya (Piper retrofractum Vahl.), Chitraka (plumbago zeylanica Linn., Shunthi (zingiber officinale Rosc.) - Susinghdha yavagu ( liquid gruel of rice) medicated with above mentioned drugs for 5-7 days - Aapayana (brihana chikita)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sushruta Samhita[17]</td>
<td>- Sneha yavagu or kshira yavagu medicated with drugs of Vidarigandhadi gana from 3rd or 4th to 6th or 7th day. - Meat soup of wild animals medicated with yava, kola, kulattha cooked With Shali rice from 7th or 8th day to sutika kala.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vagbhata I[18]</td>
<td>- Liquid yavagu prepared with either milk or drugs of vidaryadi gana For 3,5 or 7 day - Yusha of yava, kola, kulattha from 4th, 6th or 8th day to 12th day - Laghu aahara ( light diet) - Meat soup of wild animals ( jangal mansarasa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vagbhata II[19]</td>
<td>- Panchkola churna alongwith ghrita or taila - Usna gudodaka or vatahara aushadhi sadhit peya for 2 to 3 days - Vidaryadigana siddha snehyukta yavagu or kshira yavagu from 4th to 7th day - Brihana diet from 8th to 12th day - After 12th day meat soup should be used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kashyapa Samhita[20]</td>
<td>- Manda (the clear supernatant water in which rice is boiled) 6th or 7th day - Snehapana - Lavaranarhit alpa snehayukta yavagu with pippali and nagar for 3 days - Sasneha lavan yavagu - Sasneha salavan kulattha yusha ( soup of Dolichous biflorus containing Salt and fat) - Meat soup of wild animals - Ghritabhrishta kushmanda (Benincasa hispida Cogn.), moolaka and ervaruka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harita Samhita[21]</td>
<td>- Fasting on 1st day - Nagar, Haritaki (Terminalia chebula Retz.) and Gudasevana on 2nd day - Ushna kulattha yusha pan on 2nd day - Panchkola yavagu on 3rd day - Chaturjat mishrit yavagu on 4th day - Shalishashti odana on 5th day</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In postnatal period vital elements are lost from *sutika* (*dhatukshaya*), she experiences weakness with low digestive power. *Aacharya* have mentioned special dietary regimen which helps *sutika* to regain her pre pregnancy status.

All *Aacharya* have suggested using of medicated *manda, peya, yavagu, ghrita, taila, vasa* (animal fat), *majja* (bone marrow) with herbs or decoction for first 3 to 7 days followed by medicated meat soup with light diet and these dietary regimen and herbal drugs have following properties.

1) *Manda, peya, yavagu* - *Balya* (strengthen the body), *tarpana* (nutritious), *Dhatuposhaka* (nutrition of dhatu), *vatashamana*.

2) *Pippali, Pipalimula* - Anti inflammatory, immunomodulator, antibacterial Activity.

   - Useful for recovery of the relaxed organs soon after delivery.
   - It stimulates liver and spleen, increases haemoglobin and appetite.
   - It has mild laxative action.

3) *Chavya* - Useful in loss of appetite, colic, piles

   - Mild laxative, diuretic, liver stimulant, blood cleanser, rejuvenator.

4) *Chitraka* - Useful in nervine weakness, oedema, liver and spleen disorder

   - Appetizer, digestive, anti- helminthic
   - Causes uterine contraction
   - Cures post partum disorders.

5) *Shunthi* - Stimulate digestion

   - Anti tumour, anti inflammatory, anti microbial.
   - Increase flow of urine thus decreases chances of urinary tract infection.

7) *Kola* - Rich source of calcium, phosphorus, vitamin A and C

   - Anti oxidant, wound healing, anti inflammatory.
   - mild laxative.
   - It has tranquilizing and sleep inducing effect.

8) *Kulathha* - Rich source of iron and manganese

   - antispasmodic.
   - Used in uterine disorders, piles and anaemia.

9) *Ervaruka* - It has 94% water content so keeps the body hydrated, regulates blood pressure, helps in digestion, diuretic.
- It contains magnesiu, potassium, silica, vitamin A, B, C and K
- Anti oxidant, osteotropic activity (maintains bone health)\textsuperscript{[33]}

10) Yava - Good source of fiber.
- It contain copper, phosphorus, zinc and vitamin E\textsuperscript{[34]}

C) Vihara (Normal daily activities and therapeutic procedures).
It incudes various regimen consisting of internal, external and local therapies beneficial for sutika. Table 2 shows differences in the opinion of Aacharyas regarding the vihara.

Table 3: Various regimen for internal, external and local therapies for sutika

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Samhita</th>
<th>Vihara Regimen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Charaka Samhita\textsuperscript{[35]} | - Snehpana (consumption of fat)  
- Abhyanga (massage) with taila or ghrita  
- Udarveshtana (abdominal tightening)  
- Parishechana (hot water pouring) |
| Sushruta Samhita\textsuperscript{[36]} | - Abhyanga (massage) with bala taila  
- Pan or Parishechana (hot water pouring) with or vatahara aushadhisiddha kwatha  
- Dushtashtonitshuddhi by taking pippali, pippalimula, hastapippali, chitarka, shrungver with ushna gudodaka  
- Women should avoid anger, exercise and coitus |
| Vagbhata I\textsuperscript{[37]} | - Abhyanga (massage) with bala taila  
- Snehpana (consumption of fat)  
- Udarveshtana (abdominal tightening) after massage of abdomen with taila or ghrita  
- Parishechana with ushnodaka (hot water pouring) in morning and evening before sneha and yavagupana  
- Abhyanga, udvartana (massage with dry herbal powder), parisheka and avgahana with jivniya, brihniya, madhur and vatahara drugs |
| Vagbhata II\textsuperscript{[38]} | - Yoni (vagina) and body mardana with taila  
- Snehpana (consumption of fat)  
- Dushtashtonitshuddhi (purification of blood)  
- Udarveshtana (abdominal tightening)  
- Abhyanga, udvartana (massage with dry herbal powder), parisheka and avgahana with jivniya, brihniya, madhur and vatahara drugs |
| Kashyapa Samhita\textsuperscript{[39]} | - Aashwasana (psychological reassurance)  
- Sanvahana (gentle massage)  
- Udarmandana (abdominal massage)  
- Udarveshtana (abdominal tightening)  
- Yoni snehana (vaginal oiling) – Sitting over a small chair covered with leather bag filled with hot bala taila  
- Yoni swedana (vaginal sudation)  
- Snana (bath)  
- Dhupana - fumigation of yoni with kushtha (Saussurea lappa Clarke), guggulu (Commiphora mukul Hook ex. Stocks) and aguru (Aquilaria agallocha Roxb.) mixed with ghrita. |
Fixing amulets of *trivritta* (*Operculina turpethum* Linn.) over her head.[46]

| Harita Samhita[41] | - Shonisuddhi (purification of blood)  
- Yonyabhyanga (vaginal massage)  
- Yoni swedana (vaginal sudation) |
| Bhavaprakasha Samhita[42] | - Nitya swedana (daily sudation)  
- Abhyanga (massage)  
- Yonipindana (covering of vagina) |
| Yogratnakara[43] | - Nitya swedana (daily sudation)  
- Abhyanga (massage) |

According to ayurveda Aacharya advised following regimen in *sutika paricharya*.

1) *Abhyanga* (massage)

*Abhyanga* (massage) with the help of ghrita and taila especially with *Bala taila* which is vatshamaka. *Rasayana* to mansa dhatu (muscle tissue).[44] *Tila* (*Sesamum indicum* Linn.) taila provides nourishment prevents skin from excessively getting dry[45] and thus prevents further dehydration in *sutika*. Massage tones up muscles of pelvic floor, abdominal and back tissue and relieves muscle spasm. *Abhyanga* soothes nervous and endocrine system, releases endorphin. It helps in improving both physical and mental well being and ultimately helps in reducing the stress during purperium.[46] *Yoni abhyanga* (vaginal oiling) tones up vagina and perineum and prevent laxity and prolapsed, alleviate pain and swelling of vagina.[47] It also heals vaginal and perineal wound.[48]

2) *Snehapana* (Consumption of fat)

It suppresses *vata dosha* in *sutika avastha* and increases appetite level. It also calms down mind, reduces mental stress and increases peristaltic movements of intestine.[49] *Snehapana* is given with drugs like Pippali, *Pippali mula*, Chavya, Chitraka etc. they have properties like katu, tikta rasa (taste) and ushna veerya (hot in potency) which in turn helps to digest sneha and act as appetizer.[50]

3) *Udarveshtanam* (Abdominal tightening)

Wrapping of abdomen with a big cloth results in getting back the abdomen as in pre pregnant state and also subsides *vata dosha*. [51] Due to abdominal tightening abdominal muscles becomes flattened, back support is also one of the benefits of this procedure, as it helps to straighten back after pregnancy, improving posture and reducing discomfort.[52]
4) **Dushtashonitshuddhi** (Purification of blood)

If some *doshas* or blood is left inside, powdered *pippli*, *pippalimula*, *hastipippali*, *chitraka* and *shringabera* with warm jaggery water should be given.[53] These drugs along with jaggary may cause uterine contraction and blood clots or abnormal blood which retained in the uterus can be excreted. *Kashyapa* advised *udarpeedana* for shonit shuddhi.

5) **Parisheka** (Hot water pouring)

*Parisheka* is done by pouring water stream so that after the delivery of baby the blood clots accumulated in the uterine cavity can be excreted properly and *vata dosha* also subsides. *Aacharya Vagbhata* advised *taila*, *ghrita* or decoction of *jivniya*, *brihaniya* and *madhura varga* drugs for *parisheka* due to their *vatashamaka* property.[54]

6) **Yonidhoopana** (Fumigaton of vagina)

In purperial period vaginal defence is lowered due to hypoestrogenic state and the patient is prone to infection so aseptic precautions are necessary during this period. The drugs used for *dhooopana* are *kushtha*, *guggulu*, *aguru* etc. which are known for their antibacterial property.

7) **Udvartana**

In this procedure, massage is done with powdered drugs.

8) **Snana** (bathing)

- *Aacharya vagbhata* has described that on auspicious period of 10\textsuperscript{th} or 12\textsuperscript{th} day, according to customs of family, the bathing ceremony of puerperal woman should be performed.
- *Ashtanga sangraha* advised *sutikotthana* (coming out of the house) instead of batha.

9) **Yoga**[55]

*Sutika avastha* is the crucial phase in women life women may suffer from various complications which are *kricchasadhya* or *asadhya* and it may hamper day to day activities. During pregnancy the woman gain about 10 – 12 kg weight. In the today’s modern era women are very much conscious about one’s look. So to reduce this weight gain strenuous exercise may be done which has deteriorous health effect like backache, joint pain, herniation, prolapsed uterus etc. also resulting in high mortality rate in *sutika*. To overcome this *yoga* plays an important role in maintaining physical and mental health of *sutika*. Various *yogasana* that can be performed by *sutika* in normal,forcep, ventose delivery and in LSCS are as follows.
### Table 4: Various asanas for sutika

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Name of Asana</th>
<th>When to Perform</th>
<th>In LSCS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Suryanamaskara</td>
<td>After 2 wks</td>
<td>After 6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Siddhsana</td>
<td>After healing episiotomy wound</td>
<td>After 2 wks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ardha padmasana</td>
<td>After healing episiotomy wound</td>
<td>After 2 wks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Padmasana</td>
<td>After abhyas of Ardha padmasana</td>
<td>After Ardha padmasana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Pavanmuktasana</td>
<td>After 2 wks</td>
<td>After 6 wks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Sukhasana</td>
<td>Soon after delivery</td>
<td>After 7-10 days (after removal of stitches)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Vajrasana</td>
<td>After healing episiotomy wound</td>
<td>After 7-10 days (after removal of stitches)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Matsyendrasana</td>
<td>After 2 wks</td>
<td>After 6 wks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Janu shirsasana</td>
<td>After 2 wks</td>
<td>After 6 wks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Tadasana</td>
<td>After 2 wks</td>
<td>After 6 wks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Trikonasana</td>
<td>After 2 wks</td>
<td>After 6 wks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Halasana</td>
<td>After 2 wks</td>
<td>After 6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Utkatasana</td>
<td>After healing episiotomy wound</td>
<td>After removal of stitches on the abdomen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Passchimottanasana</td>
<td>After 6 wks</td>
<td>After 6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Bhujangasana</td>
<td>After 2 wks</td>
<td>After 6 wks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Ardha Shalabhasana and Shalabhasana</td>
<td>After 2 wks</td>
<td>After 6 wks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A] **Aacharya Kashyapa** has described the post natal management on the basis of residence place as follows[^66]

1) **For Aanupa desha (marshy land)**
   - In marshy land usually diseases of *vata* and *shleshma* occur.
   - Due to dominance of moisture in this area initially fat should not be used. Instead scum of boiled rice treated with appetizing and strength producing things should be given.
   - *Swedana* (sudation), sleeping in air free place (direct entry of air should not be there).
   - Use of all *ushna* (hot) drugs beneficial.
   - According to *Aacharya Chakrapani* Oleaginous substances should be avoided.

2) **For Jangala desha (wild or dry place)**
   - The woman of this area should be given *ghrita*, oil or any other oily articles in good quantity using decoction of *pippali* etc. drugs.
   - To the strong woman this oleaginous substances and to the weak woman rice gruel should be given for 3 or 5 nights.
   - This should follow the use of cereals mixed unctuous things in gradually increasing manner.

[^66]: Aacharya Kashyapa has described the post natal management on the basis of residence place as follows.
- She should often be irrigated with good quantity of hot water.
- She should avoid anger, exercise and coitus.

3) **For Sadharana desha (ordinary place i.e. neither marshy nor dry place)**
- Average management is advantageous.

4) **For woman of mleccha cast (foreigners)**.
- Use of blood, meat soup, eatable roots, rhizomes and fruits during this period.

B) **Purperial management according to sex of child**[^57]
- *Taila* or *ghrita* should be given for drinking in case of delivery of male or female child respectively.
- After proper digestion of this fat, rice gruel prepared with appetizing drugs should be given for 5 or 7 days.
- Then after scum of boiled rice should be given in a gradual manner.

C) **Pathya and Apathya for sutika (Do’s and Don’ts)**[^58]

- **Pathya (Do’s)**
  1. Adequate rest and diet is most important.
  2. *Sutika* should have bath with plenty of water.
  3. Boiled water should be taken for drinking purpose.
  4. *Parisheka*, *avgahana* etc. are always with lukewarm water.
  5. She should do *udarveshtana*.
  6. *Snehana* and *swedana* must be done every day as per desha and kala etc.
  7. *Aacharya Kashyapa* given the special indication of *manda* for *sutika*.

- **Apathya (Don’ts)**
  1. Physical and mental stress, anger etc.
  - Woman experiences lots of physical and mental stress during labour and get exhausted so exercise is contra indicated.
  - Emotional imbalances like anger, fear and depression seriously affects lactation[^59]
  2. Sexual intercourse
  - Sexual intercourse involves strain and friction of genital tract which is already lacerated and weakened during the process of labour resulting into injury, bleeding and infection.
  - The hypoestrogenic state following delivery makes vaginal epithelium thin and provides very little lubrication after sexual stimulation resulting into painful intercourse[^60]
  3. Cold water, cold wind and cold things etc. which aggravates *vata dosha*. 
4. There is contra indication of panchkarma for sutika.
- Due to administration of asthapana basti (evacuative enema) the aam dosha of sutika would be increased.\textsuperscript{[61]}
- Due to nasya karma\textsuperscript{[62]}, emaciation, anorexia, would be created in sutika.
- Also shiravedha (venesection)\textsuperscript{[63]}, virechana (purgatives)\textsuperscript{[64]} and swedana (sudation)\textsuperscript{[65]} are contra indicated.

CONCLUSION
Aim of purperium is to maintain maternal and infant health preventing any complication and to establish infant feeding. Ayurveda classics has given a scientific description of sutika parichrya. This regimen includes aahara, vihara, aushadhi, yogasana, pathya, apthya etc. which helps to regain her pre pregnant state.

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