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REVIEW ARTICLE

CRITICAL REVIEW ON POST NATAL CARE IN AYURVEDA

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ABSTRACT:

The world figure of the maternal mortality ratio (MMR), is estimated to be 400 per 100,000 live births. There is a need to find solution to incorporate the knowledge of all health systems to overcome this problem. Proper adherence to post-natal regimen prescribed by Ayurveda results in faster recuperation and restoration of the health of the mother. Prescribed regimen ensures mother's physical charm, maintains a beautiful figure and retains health similar to her pre pregnancy days. The woman becomes weak or emaciated due to development of foetus and also empty bodied due to unsteadiness or languor of all tissues, labour pains and excretion of kleda (moisture) and blood. With this regimen she attains all the lost tissues and reaches her approximate pre pregnancy state. Use of basti (medicated enema), raktamokshana (bloodletting), virechana (strong purgation) and svedana (sudation) are contraindicated in this phase. Principle of Ayurvedic management advised by classics is alleviating vata dosha as well as one should decide on the basis of aggravation of doshas and strength (of the women). This article is foot step in the efforts to improve post natal health for women by wisdom of Ayurveda. These ancient practices from Ayurveda are consistent with the midwifery model of care and it's highlighting on personalizing long-term, most advantageous maternal health and preventing the need for medical intervention. All mothers must prefer these low-tech, natural and rational techniques.

Key Words: post natal care, puerperium, sutika, Ayurveda

INTRODUCTION:

The Tenth Revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10) defines a maternal death as the death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy, irrespective of the duration and site of the pregnancy, from any cause related to or

aggravated by the pregnancy or its management but not from accidental or incidental causes.¹ Maternal morbidity is extensive and under-recognized following delivery. Measures to reduce and alleviate it must be sought. Among mothers in the sample, 85% reported at least one health problem in hospital, rising to 87% (84-

90%) of those at home; 76% (71-81%) reported at least one health problem following eight weeks post-delivery.² The estimated number of maternal deaths in 2000 for the world was 529,000. These deaths were almost equally divided between Africa (251,000) and Asia (253,000), with about 4% (22,000) occurring in Latin America and the Caribbean and less than 1% (2500) in the more developed regions of the world. In terms of the maternal mortality ratio (MMR), the world figure is estimated to be 400 per 100,000 live births. By region, the MMR was highest in Africa (830), followed by Asia (330), Oceania (240), Latin America and the Caribbean (190), and the developed countries (20).³ Reviewing all these facts there is a need to find solution to incorporate the knowledge of all health systems to overcome this problem.

Stri-roga (Ayurvedic gynaecology): Ayurveda classics have described eight specialized branches. Among these, ‘kaumarbhritya-tantra’ branch deals with paediatrics. Charaka has used the term ‘kaumara-bhrityaka’; Sushruta ‘kaumara-bhritya’ or ‘kaumara-tantra’; Kashyapa ‘kaumara-bhritya’ and Vagbhata and Harita has used term ‘bala-chikitsa’. Only Sushruta and Kashyapa have detailed about the eight branches of Ayurveda. Though Harita has used term ‘bala-chikitsa’, he has included process of conception, and its maintenance, delivery, puerperium and treatment of diseases of children. To achieve the goal of conception, the knowledge of gynaecological disorders is

essential. First time Gananatha Sen has used has accepted the terms ‘prasuti-tantra’ and ‘kaumara-bhritya’ (paediatrics) as distinct specialities, however he has included stri-roga (gynaecology) under kaumara-bhritya.⁴ Due to development of foetus, instability of body tissues, exertion of labour pains and excretion of moisture and blood, the woman becomes very weak. Following regimen described by Ayurveda for post natal woman, she regains strength in tissues, achieves fast improvement and maintains her health.

Sutika-kala (Duration of post natal phase):

Post natal phase is named as ‘sutika kala’ in Ayurveda. This term is obtained from the word ‘prasuta’ (~mother following delivery). There are different opinions about the duration of this period, which ranges from six weeks to six months and some believe that it lasts until the re-establishment of menstrual cycle. Ayurveda classics has described management of sutika (~post natal woman), but Kashyapa has described in detail about it. He has mentioned that following delivery of child, the placenta is expelled; following that the women is called as ‘sutika’.⁵ Charaka has not given any specific time limit, however other classics have advised definite duration, i. e. 1 to 1.5 month for specific dietetic and behaviour regime. Sutika-kala (duration of puerperium/ post natal phase) mentioned by various Ayurveda classics can be tabulated as follows –

Table No. 1: Sutika-kala (Duration of post natal phase)

Ayurveda classic text	Sutika-kala (duration of puerperium)
Sushruta samhita	Following 1 ½ month of regulated specific dietetics and mode of life of the woman becomes free from the epithet of sutika and have cited the opinion of others that the women should be called sutika till she doesn’t restart her menstrual cycle ⁶

Ashtanga hridaya samhita	Same as Sushruta samhita, i. e. 1 ½ month ⁷
Kashyapa samhita	Six months ⁸
Yoga ratnakara	Special dietetic management for 1 month ⁹
Bhavaprakasha samhita	In addition agreeing explanation of Sushruta (i. e. 1 ½ month), he has cited that following subsidence of complications and aggravation of doshas, the woman should give up specific mode of life following 4 months ¹⁰

Reviewing views of Ayurveda classical texts, four opinions of exact durations of puerperium come out, i. e. 1 ½ month, re-manifestation of menstruation, four months and six months. Following delivery, ahara-rasa (food-juice) reaches the breasts and forms milk, remaining rasa getting transformed into the blood circulating in whole body reaches to reproductive system. Following achievement of refill of dhatus and steadiness of body, the blood gathered in uterus is discharged cyclically.¹¹

Sutika-paricharya (Regimen for post natal woman):

- A) Use of amulet – The post natal woman should fix amulet of trivrita (*Operuculina turpethum* – red).¹²
- B) General technique of life and diet – In general all Ayurveda classics have advised mardana (massage), oral administration of medicated oils/ghee and decoctions for three to seven days following delivery. Use of medicated rice gruels is recommended in diet. From seventh or twelfth day medicated meat yusha (soup) is directed. Various Ayurveda classics have advised about general technique of life and diet as follows –

I. According to Charaka samhita¹³

- When a post natal woman experiences hunger, she should be recommended pulverized pippali (*Piper longum Linn.*), chavya (*Pepper chaba*), chitraka (*Plumbago*

zeylanica Linn.) and pippalimula (*Piper longum radix*) with ghrita or oil and in the amount which she can assimilate easily.

- Following consuming this, her abdomen should be mardana (massage) and wrapped appropriately with a large clean cloth which produces compression of abdomen and it avoids occurrence of hallow space, which prohibits vitiation of vata.
- Following digestion of ghrita etc., liquid gruel prepared with rice and medicated with pippali (*Piper longum Linn.*) etc. herbs mentioned above and blended with ghrita should be given.
- During both the times, i.e. morning and evening bath with hot water should precede use of ghrita etc. and rice gruel. Chakrapani has stated that in the morning irrigation should be given before ingestion of unctuous material and should be repeated following its digestion, following-wards rice gruel should be given.
- Later than use of this regimen for five or seven nights (day and nights) gradual administration of brimhana materials (anabolic) should be done. This schedule is not suitable for the women of anupa-desha (marshy land), because in the persons of this area the kapha is dominant. This regimen is suitable for women of jangala (wild or dry) area.

II. According to Sushruta samhita¹⁴

- Subsequent to applying mardana (massage) with bala (*Sida cordifolia Linn.*) -taila (illustrated under obstructed labour), the post natal women should be advised decoction of bhadradaru (*Berberis aristata De.*) etc. medicines useful for alleviating vata for oral management or irrigation.
- If some dosha(s) or blood is still left inside (some blood clots are retained in uterus), powered pippali (*Piper longum Linn.*), pippalimula, hasti-pippali (ambiguous drug, Chavaka's fruit) and chitraka (*Plumbago zeylanica Linn.*) with warm jaggery-water should be given. This should be continued for two or three days till the abnormal blood is properly excreted.
- Following-wards rice gruel prepared with the herbs of vidarigandhadi group and blended with ghrita or cow milk should be given for three days (from 3rd to 7th day following delivery.)
- Then (from 7th or 8th day) cooked shali rice with meat yusha (soup) of wild animals cooked with kola, yava and kulattha (*Dolichos biflorus Linn.*) should be advised considering her digestive power and strength.
- Generally the women should use hot water and should avoid anger, coitus and exercise. Dalhana has mentioned that irrigation should be done by pouring water in a stream, so that abnormal blood (accumulated in uterus) produced due to irrigation by garbha (delivery) is excreted properly and vata is also balanced.

III. According to Ashtanga Sangraha samhita¹⁵ -

- Mardana (massage) with bala-taila (oil prepared with *Sida cordifolia Linn.*) should be given to the post natal women.
- Following that if she feels hunger then she should be given unctuous materials blended with either powered yavani (*Trachispermum amami Linn. Sprague.*) or powder of panchakola (a compound of 5 herbs, viz., pippali - *Piper longum Linn.*, pippalimula - *Piper longum radix*, chavya - *Pepper chaba*, chitraka - *Plumbago zeylanica Linn.*, nagara - *Zingiber officinale Rosoe.*), chitraka (*Plumbago zeylanica Linn.*), chavya (*Pepper chaba*), sunthi (*Zingiber officinale Rosoe.*) and rock salt, in such a volume that she can digest in entire day.
- The women unfit for the use of oily materials should be given decoction of either laghu-panchamula or herbs which will alleviate vata.
- Following that oral intake of oily materials or decoction, her abdomen should be mardana (massage)d with ghrita and oil and wrapped with a cloth to avoid vitiation of vata liked to occur due to availability of hallow space.
- Later than digestion of unctuous material, liquid rice-gruel properly with either above revealed herbs or vidaryadi group of herbs or cow milk should be given in quantity which she can digest suitably.
- Throughout this entire period morning and evening irrigation with hot water should be done, utilize ghrita etc. or rice-gruel.
- This regime used for three, five or seven nights should be pursued by use of light diet with yusha (soup) of kola, yava or kulattha (*Dolichos biflorus Linn.*) following 12th nights following consideration of strength

and digestive capacity, gradual satiation or reinforcing should be done by use of meat yusha (soup) of wild animals; besides, oil, ghrita or decoction cooked with brimhaniya, jivaniya, vatashamaka and madhura (sweet) taste herbs should be employed for unguent, mardana (massage), irrigation and bathing.

IV. According to Ashtanga Hridaya samhita¹⁶

- Parallel description as Ashtanga sangraha samhita
- Mardana (massage) of perineal region along with body and use of hot jaggery-water identical to Sushruta.
- Arunadutta has elucidated that if meat recipes are used before 12 days, it calls the danger of infliction by skanda etc. grahas.

V. According to Kashyapa samhita¹⁷

- Post natal women should use specifically rakshoghna (antiseptic) and beneficial things.
- Detailed management should be done giving due consideration to place of residence (desha and videsha/ foreign country) and custom of family.
- The women immediately following delivery should be encouraged and made to lie down in hump-back-position with flexed things (either in knee-chest position or in lateral position with thighs flexed over abdomen and lower legs over thigh and back protuberant). Now her back should be rubbed and pressing the abdomen it's lower portioned should be mardana (massage)d and compressed in order to expel the dosha(s) remained following delivery.
- Later than this, abdomen and flanks should be wrapped with clean big cloth, by this wrapping abdomen reaches its proper place and vata also subsides.

- She should always sit over a small chair covered with leather-bag filled with hot bala-taila (oil prepared with *Sida cordifolia Linn.*), with this her yoni becomes healthy.
- Svedana (sudation) in the yoni (perineal region and vagina) should be given with oil prepared with priyangu etc. herbs.
- Following proper svedana (sudation), hot water bath should be given followed by rest.
- After overcoming the tiredness fumigation with agaru (*Aqalaria agallocha*), guggulu (*Commiphora mukul Hook ex stocks.*) and kushtha (*Sassurea luppa*) blended with ghrita should be done.
- As per her strength and digestive power scum of boiled rice should be given for 3 or 5 days. Then the women using beneficial diet should take orally unctuous recipes (oil, ghrita etc.).
- Following digestion of this oil etc. salt free rice gruel blended with little quantity of unctuous material and pulverized pippali (*Piper longum Linn.*) and sunthi (*Zingiber officinale Roscoe.*) should be given. This should follow (following sixth or seven days) use of rice gruel blended with sufficient quantity of salt and unctuous materials, then meat yusha (soup) of wild animals and yusha (soup) of kulattha (*Dolichos biflorus Linn.*) blended with unctuous material, salt and sour recipes and kushmanda (*Benincasa hispida Thum.*), cucumber, radish etc. vegetables fried in ghrita.
- Following delivery the women should use snehana (oleation), svedana (sudation) and hot water for a month.

- The management of post natal women should be with due consideration of customs as well as beneficial things or diet of the family and also place of residence.

VI. According to Harita Samhita¹⁸

- Following delivery the decoction of arjuna (*Terminalia arjuna*), lodhra (*Symplocos racemosa Roxb.*), devadaru (*Cedrus deodara*), kadamba (*Anthocephalus indicus A. Rich.*) and bijaka (*Pterocarpus marsupium Linn.*) should be given for cleansing rakta (blood) and yoni (uterus). Vaginal filling with oil and mardana (massage) followed by svedana (sudation) with hot water should be done.
- Following fasting for 1st day, on 2nd day in the morning sunthi and haritaki with jaggery, then in the following noon warm yusha (soup) of kulattha (*Dolichos biflorus Linn.*) should be given. Rice-gruel blended with chaturjataka (a compound of 4 herbs, viz., tvak – *Cinamonum zeylonicum*, ela – *Elettaria cardamomum*, tamalapatra – *Cinamonum tamal*, nagakeshara – *Musua ferrea*) or panchakola (a compound of 5 herbs, viz., pippali – *Piper longum Linn.*, pippalimula – *Piper longum radix*, chavya – *Pepper chaba*, chitraka – *Plumbago zeylanica Linn.*, nagara – *Zingiber officinale Rosoe.*), should be given on 3rd and 4th day correspondingly, on 5th day cooked shali or shastika prescribed in diet. This regimen should continue for 10 or 15 days.
- The wise physician should allow the post natal women to see or meet other women on 12th day.

VII. According to Bhava-prakasha¹⁹

- Post natal women should use congenial diet and mode of life; give up exercise, coitus, anger and cold air.
- She should use unctuous, light, congenial diet and daily svedana (sudation) and mardana (massage) for one month with full alertness.

VIII. According to Yoga-ratnakara²⁰

- Immediately following delivery her vaginal canal should be pressed to avoid entry of air.

IX. According to Sharangadhara samhita

- He has advised svedana (sudation)²¹ and use of bala taila (oil prepared with *Sida cordifolia Linn.*) following delivery.²²
- C) Prohibited panchakarma (purificatory therapies) – Use of asthapana-basti (enema),²³ siravedha (venesection),²⁴ nasya (sternutatory administration of herbs through nose),²⁵ virechana (purgatives)²⁶ and svedana (sudation)²⁷ - are contra-indicated, however, Sharangdhara has advised svedana (sudation) and use of bala taila following delivery. Asthapana basti is contraindicated because it increases ama-dosha.²⁸ If nasya is given to post natal women, she develops emaciation, anorexia and body ache.²⁹

Benefits of above regimen: The women become weak and emaciated due to growth of foetus, and also empty body due to instability of all the dhatu(s), labour pains and excretion of kleda (moisture) and rakta (blood). With this regimen she attains all the lost things and reaches her pre-pregnancy stage.³⁰

Specific advice on the basis of place of residence: Kashyapa has described the post natal management on the basis of residence place as follows -

- I. For anupa dehsa (marshy land) - In marshy land usually diseases of vata and kapha occur. Because of supremacy of humidity in this area initially fat should not used; instead scum of boiled rice treated with appetizing and strength producing things should be given. Svedana (sudation), sleeping in air free place. Employing maximum ushna (hot) herbs is useful.³¹ Chakrapani has clarified that unctuous material should be prohibited.³²
- II. For jangala desha (wild or dry place) - She should be given ghrita or oil or any other unctuous recipe in good quantity using decoction of pippali etc. herbs (described under general management). For strong women this unctuous material and to the weak women rice gruel should be given for 3 or 5 nights. It should follow the use cereals blended with unctuous things in regularly increasing method. She should often be irrigated with good quantity of hot water and should avoid anger, exercise and coitus.³³ Kashyapa has mentioned that in such places diseases of vata and pitta

frequently takes place. As unctuous materials are affable in this areas that should be used in large amount.³⁴ Chakrapani has also mentioned that oily materials should be used in superior amount.³⁵

- III. For sadharana desha (ordinary or neither marshy nor dry place) - Average (in use of neither to unctuous nor dry material) management is advantageous.³⁶
- IV. For women of mleccha cast (foreigners) - Utilize blood, meat yusha (soup), rhizomes, eatable roots and fruits throughout this phase.³⁷

Bath of post natal woman: Vagbhata has described that on auspicious period of 10th or 12th day, according to customs of family, the bathing ceremony of post natal women should be performed.³⁸ Ashtanga hridaya samhita has mentioned 'sutikotthana' (coming out of the house) in its place of bath.³⁹

Discussion:

Sutika paricharya (post natal care in Ayurveda) is thoroughly explained in classical texts of Ayurveda.

Drug/Therapy	Action/Effect
Sunthi (<i>Zingiber officinale Rosoe.</i>)	Increases digestive power as well as does garbhashaya shodhana to remove lochia and other retained products of conceptus.
Haritaki (<i>Terminalia chebula</i>)	Does vatanulomana which helps to wash out the abnormal contents from uterus.
Jaggery	Supports digestive power as well as balances vata.
Kulattha (<i>Dolichos biflorus Linn.</i>)	Cleanses abnormal blood through uterus as well it will decrease kleda (abnormal moisture).
Chaturjataka, panchakola	These drugs are digestive and possessing nice odour which will helpful improving digestive power and makes pleasant to eat by soothing mind.
Shali, shastika, meat	Restores lost nutrients.

Oils/ghee	Strengthen digestive system, balances vata and helpful in evading cold infection.
Pippali (<i>Piper longum</i> Linn.), pippalimula (<i>Piper longum radix</i>), chavya (<i>Pepper chaba</i>), chitraka (<i>Plumbago zeylanica</i> Linn.),	Improves weak digestive power, gives good odour to eatables and also acts as garbhashaya shodhaka.
Bala-taila	Assists to strengthen the muscles, ligaments, joints and tendons of the whole body. It is also useful for soothing skin and relieving pain
Irrigation	Abnormal blood (accumulated in uterus) is excreted properly, balances vata and enhances process of involution
Mardana (massage)	Rapid penetration of oil deep into tissues, consequently supports appropriate operation of vata and body channels by improved transdermal assimilation of nutrients
Wrapping of abdomen	Produces compression of abdomen and it avoids occurrence of hallow space, which prohibits vitiation of vata.

We can summarize benefits of post natal cares in Ayurveda as follows -

1. Strengthen and improves digestion power
2. Tones muscles, calms nerves and greases all joints
3. Helps woman's body reverse into her normal shape
4. Increases psychological alertness, apparent thinking and emotional steadiness

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5. Effortless lactation and more restful feeding

CONCLUSION:

These ancient practices from Ayurveda are consistent with the midwifery model of care and it's highlighting on personalizing long-term, most advantageous maternal health and preventing the need for medical intervention. All mothers must prefer these low-tech, natural and rational techniques.

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