

Sutika Paricharya: An Integrative Ayurvedic Perspective on Postpartum Recovery and Maternal Health

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ABSTRACT

The postpartum period represents a critical transitional phase in a woman's life, marked by profound anatomical, physiological, and psychological changes. Ayurveda conceptualises this phase as Sutika Kaal and prescribes a comprehensive and structured care regimen known as Sutika Paricharya to restore maternal health and prevent puerperal disorders. Following childbirth, the mother experiences predominance of Vata Dosha, depletion of bodily tissues (dhatu kshaya), impaired digestive and metabolic function (agnimandya), and reduced immunity, which collectively increase vulnerability to disease if not appropriately managed.

Classical Ayurvedic texts describe Sutika Paricharya as a holistic approach encompassing dietary regulation (Ahara), lifestyle practices (Vihara), psychological reassurance (Ashwasana), and therapeutic interventions. Measures such as Abhyanga, Parisheka, Udaraveshtana, Yonidhupana, and Snehapana are advocated to facilitate uterine involution, promote wound healing, enhance lactation, improve digestion, and restore physical strength. Progressive dietary protocols, including Yavagu, Yusha, and Mamsarasa, are designed to kindle Agni, pacify Vata, and ensure gradual tissue nourishment and recovery. Variations in the duration of Sutika Kaal and individualised care based on regional factors and maternal constitution further emphasise the personalised nature of this regimen.

In essence, Sutika Paricharya embodies an integrative and preventive model of postpartum care that aligns closely with contemporary understanding of puerperal physiology. Its systematic implementation supports safe recovery, minimises postpartum complications, and promotes long-term maternal health and reproductive well-being.

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KEYWORDS: *Sutika Paricharya; Postpartum care; Ayurveda; Puerperium; Maternal health.*

INTRODUCTION

A woman is fundamentally a mother and therefore the sole source of the continuation of the human species. Her health has been prioritized. Thus, Ayurveda recommends specific care at each period of a woman's life, including *Rajaswala Paricharya*, *Garbhini Paricharya*, and *Sutika Paricharya*.

As per modern science the word Puerperium, originating from Latin (puer = child, parus = bringing forth), is the interval following childbirth in which the mother's body, particularly the pelvic organs, reverts to its pre-pregnant anatomical and physiological condition.^[1]

In Ayurveda *Sutika*^[2] refers to the period following the expulsion of the fetus and placenta. Numerous transformations are taking place during *garbhavastha* and *sutikavastha*. Following birth, as a result of the strain of labor pain and the expulsion of *kleda* and blood, the *sutika's* body is considered to be *shoonya sharira*.^[3] Ayurveda asserts that approximately 74 types of ailments may manifest during this era if not adequately controlled.^[4] The initial week following delivery is critically significant for both the mother and the newborn, necessitating specialized attention and care for both parties throughout this period. Following delivery, the impairment of *vata* reduces

the mother's digestive ability, immunity, and vitality; therefore, proper care and management throughout the *sutika* time are crucial for augmenting physical strength and reestablishing *vata* equilibrium. Thus, Ayurveda advocates a specific dietary and lifestyle protocol termed *Sutika Paricharya* to prevent additional complications and rehabilitate maternal health.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

To review and assess the concept of *Sutika Paricharya* as delineated in classical Ayurvedic texts, and to emphasise its significance in promoting

comprehensive postpartum recovery through suitable dietary, lifestyle, and therapeutic interventions.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

This study was conducted as a conceptual literature review through systematic analysis of classical Ayurvedic texts and relevant contemporary literature on *Sutika Paricharya*.

SUTIKA KAAL

Sutika Kaal denotes the postpartum period. According to classical Ayurvedic texts, there are varying opinions regarding its exact duration.

Table 1: *Sutika kala* according to various *Acharyas*

| Acharya | Duration |
|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Acharya Charaka</i> | Duration not specified |
| <i>Acharya Sushruta</i> ^[5] | अध्यर्धमास 1 ^{1/2} month / 45 days |
| <i>Ashtang Samgraha</i> ^[6] | अध्यर्धमास, पुनरात्तवदर्शनादित्येके 1 ^{1/2} month / 45 days, Until the return of menstruation |
| <i>Ashtang Hridaya</i> ^[7] | मासादध्यर्धा, स्यात्पुनरात्तवदर्शनात् 1 ^{1/2} months / 45 days, until the return of menstruation |
| <i>Acharya Kashyapa</i> ^[8] | षड्भिर्मासैः प्रसूताया 6 months |
| <i>Acharya Bhavprakash</i> ^[9] | सार्धमासान्ते दृष्टे वा पुनरात्तवे 1 ^{1/2} month / 45 days, until the return of menstruation |
| <i>Yogratnakara</i> ^[10] | 1 ^{1/2} months / 45 days, until the return of menstruation |
| Modern Science -Immediate | Within 24 hours |
| Early | Up to 7 days |
| Remote ^[11] | Up to 6 weeks |

Acharyas have cited numerous durations for *Sutika*: 1^{1/2} months, menstrual return, and six months. Reproductive organ anatomic changes reach their prepregnancy stage after about six weeks, but ovarian and menstrual cycle resumption vary greatly. Some women restart their menstruation from the second month of delivery, while others wait one or two years. While individual variations exist, *Acharyas* have not set a fixed time limit, instead stating that menstruation should arrive within 1^{1/2} months. Considering reproductive system anatomical and physiological changes, six months may signal the return of menstruation.

SUTIKA PARICHARYA

The regimen to be followed during the postnatal period is categorised under *Sutika Paricharya*. The treatment principle includes

- *Ashwasana*
- *Agni Deepana*
- *Pachana*
- *Raktadhatu poshana*
- *Stanyavardhana*
- *Garbhashaya shodhana*
- *Vaat anulomana*
- *Dhatupusti & Balya vardhana*

Sutika paricharya is described in terms of both *Samanya* (General) and *Vishesh* (Specific) *paricharya*

SAMANYA PARICHARYA

Mani dharana ^[12]

An Amulet (*Mani*) of *Trivruta* should be worn on the head by *sutika*. It gives psychological support to her.

Sutika Snana ^[13]

The bathing ceremony should be conducted on the 10th or 12th day, in accordance with family tradition.

Aashwasana (Psychological Reassurance) ^[14]

After the expulsion of the fetus, the woman should be immediately comforted and reassured with cheerful and kind words. This practice, a type of *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa*, emphasises mental support for mothers to care for themselves and their newborns. After childbirth, *dhatu kshaya* and labor strain fatigue and sensitise the mother,

causing dread, worry, and anguish. *Ashwasana Chikitsa* emphasises compassion, clarity, emotional support, and calm to promote mental wellness. It reduces tension, prevents *Sutika Unmada and Shosha*, and boosts newborn care confidence. Balancing *Manas* and avoiding *Vata* aggravation speeds physical healing.

Ahara – Vihara

Traditionally, all classical texts recommend massage, oral intake of fats combined with medicine, and decoction for a duration of three to seven days post-delivery. The consumption of medicated rice gruel is recommended in the diet. It is recommended to consume meat soup from the seventh to the twelfth day of meditation. However, there is a minor disagreement of views regarding the list of drugs among various authors, as detailed below.

➤ According to Acharya Charaka ^[15]

| DURATION | AHARA | VIHARA |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| 5-7 Days | 1. <i>Snehapana with Panchakola churna</i> 2. <i>Susnigdha Yavagupana processed with pippalyadi churna</i> | 1) <i>Abhyanga (massage)</i> 2) <i>Udaraveshtana</i> |
| <i>Kramavat</i> | <i>Appyayan (bhrihana chikitsa)</i> <i>Swasthvritta palana</i> | 3) <i>Parishechana – Ubhayata kala</i> |

➤ According to Acharya Sushruta ^[16]

| DURATION | AHARA | VIHARA |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2-3 Days | 1) <i>Vatahara Aushadha siddha Kashaya pana.</i> 2) <i>Ushna gudodaka processed with pippalyadi dravyas</i> | 1) <i>Abhyanga with Bala taila</i> |
| 3 or 4 to 6 or 7 Days | <i>Sneha Yavagu or Ksheera Yavagu processed with vidarigandhadi gana</i> | 2) <i>Parisheka with Vatahara Dravyas</i> |
| 8 th Day | 1) <i>Jangala mamsarasa processed with Yava, kola, kulattha.</i> 2) <i>Shaliiodana bhojana</i> | 3) <i>Refrainment from anger, exercise, coitus and exertion.</i> |

➤ According to Acharya Vrudha Vagbhata ^[17]

| DURATION | AHARA | VIHARA |
|------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3 or 5 or 7 DAYS | 1) <i>Snehapana processed with panchkolachurna or yavani, upkunchika, chavya, chitraka, vyosha and saindhava.</i> 2) <i>Snehaayogy – vatahara/ laghupanchmola processed kwatha pana.</i> 3) <i>Ksheera yavagu pana processed with vidaryadigana</i> | 1) <i>Abhyanga with bala taila</i> 2) <i>Udara abhyanga with ghritha and taila</i> 3) <i>Udarveshtana</i> |
| 8-12 Days | 1) <i>Yava, Kola, Kulattha siddha Yushapana</i> 2) <i>Laghu annapana</i> | 4) <i>Ushnaodaka Parisheka – Ubhayata kala</i> |
| After 12 Days | 1) <i>Jangala Mamsarasa</i> 2) <i>Jeevaniya gana/ Brihmaniya Gana/ Madhura- Vatahara Dravaya siddha annapana</i> | 5) <i>Achadana</i> 6) <i>Avgahana</i> |

➤ According to Acharya Laghu Vagbhata ^[18]

| DURATION | AHARA | VIHARA |
|---------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2-3 Days | 1) <i>Snehapana – Ghritha or Taila processed with panchkola churna</i> 2) <i>Ushnaodakapana or Vatahara Dravya siddha kwatha pana</i> 3) <i>Peya pana</i> | 1) <i>Yoni abhyanga & Sarvadaihika abhyanga</i> 2) <i>Udara Abhyanga</i> 3) <i>Udaraveshtana</i> |
| 4-7 Days | <i>Sneha yavagu or Ksheera yavagu processed with vidaryadigana</i> | 4) <i>Udarvartana</i> |
| 8-12 Days | <i>Brihmna diet</i> | 5) <i>Parisheka</i> |
| After 12 Days | <i>Mamsarasa</i> | 6) <i>Avgahana</i> |

➤ **According to Acharya Kashyapa** ^[19]

| DURATION | AHARA | VIHARA |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3-5 Days or 5-7 Days | 1) Manda pana 2) Sneha pana 3) Sneha lavana rahita Yavagupana processed with pippali and nagra | 1) Ashwasana 2) Samvahana 3) Udara abhyanga |
| 7-12 Days | Sneha and Lavana yukta yavagu pana | 4) Udaraveshstana |
| 12 th Day | 1) Sneha and lavan yukta kulattha yushapana 2) Jangala mamsarasa 3) Ghruta bharjit- Kushmanda, Moolaka and Ervaruka | 5) Yoni snehana 6) Yoni swedana 7) Snana 8) Yoni dhupana – with kushtha, aguru, guggulu mixed wiyh ghruta |

➤ **According to Acharya Haritha** ^[20]

| DURATION | AHARA | VIHARA |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| After Prasava | Kwatha of lodhra, arjunadi dravya | 1) Yoni Purana |
| 1 st Day | Upavasa | |
| 2 nd Day | 1) Nagra, Haritaki and Gudasevana 2) Ushna Kulattha yushapana | 2) Abhyanga |
| 3 rd Day | Panchkola siddha yavagupana | 3) Ushnajala Swedana |
| 4 th Day | Chaturjataka mishrita yavagupana | |
| 5A/10/15 Days | Shali shashtika odana | 4) Mangalya vachana |

VISHISHTA PARICHARYA ^[21]

It is explained based on -:

- Types of Deshas
- Gender of child

According to Deshas

| DESHA | AHARA | VIHARA |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Anupa Desha | 1) Snehapana Varjita 2) Manda processed with agnibalvardhaka dravyas 3) Ushna drvyas sevana | 1) Swedana 2) Nivatashayana |
| Jangala Desha (3-5 Days) | 1) Snehapana with pippalyadi Kashaya anupana 2) Snigdha Annapana | 1) Ushnaodaka Parisheka 2) Refrainment from anger, exercise and coitus. |
| Sadharana Desha | Sadharana ahara | Sadharana vihara |

According to Gender

| DURATION | GENDER | PATHYA |
|----------|--------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5-7 Days | Male | 1) Taila pana 2) Yavagu pana processed with deepaniya aushadh. |
| 5-7 Days | Female | 1) Ghruta pana 2) Yavagu pana processed with deepaniya aushadh. |
| Later | | Mandadi prayoga |

DISCUSSION

Abhyanga: *Sthanika* (udara or yoni) or *sarvadaihika* with *Ghruta* and *Taila*, especially *Bala Taila*. In postpartum *Vata* predominance and *dhatu kshaya*, *Bala Taila's Vata-shamaka*, *Shramahara*, and *Mamsa-dhatu Rasayana* qualities are useful. *Abhyanga* improves tissue strength, tones the pelvic

floor, abdominal, and back muscles, and relieves muscle spasm and restlessness. *Abhyanga* aids lochial drainage by calming *Vata* and increasing circulation. *Yoni Abhyanga* strengthens vaginal and perineal tissues, avoids laxity and prolapse, relieves discomfort, and speeds wound healing, helping the *Sutika* repair anatomically and functionally. ^{[22][23][24]}

Parisheka & Avagaha: The medicinal pouring of warm liquid over the body, helps reduce *Vata Dosha*, which is physiologically worsened after childbirth. Known for its *Vata-Kaphahara*, *Vedanahara*, *Agnideepaka*, *Twak-prasadana*, and *Srotovishodhana* characteristics, *Parisheka* improves local circulation and clears blocked channels. This helps expel lochia from the uterus postpartum and restore *Vata balance*, purifying the uterus and repairing the *Sutika*.^[25]

Udaraveshtana (Pattabandana): It alleviates *Vata Dosha* accumulation by constricting the abdominal cavity created post-delivery. Wrapping the belly with a cotton towel post-bathing offers support to the abdomen and lower back, facilitates uterine involution, enhances posture, and assists in early postpartum recovery.^[26]

Yonidhupana: In *Sutika Paricharya*, *yonidhupana* is a crucial local treatment due to weakened vaginal defenses postpartum, increasing infection risk. Fumigation supports episiotomy wounds and vaginal and perineal cleanliness. Drugs like *Kuṣṭha*, *Agaru*, and *Guggulu*, with *Jantughna*, *Kandughna*, *Śothahara*, *Vraṇa-śodhana*, and *Ropana* properties, promote safe and comfortable puerperal recovery by preventing infection, reducing inflammation and itching, and promoting wound cleansing and healing.^[27]

Garbhashayashodhana: Combining *Panchakola* with heated *Gudodaka* aids in the removal of *Dushita Shonita* (vitiating blood) and remaining morbid matter from the uterine cavity. The measures regulate lochial discharge and promote physiological uterine involution. Use of *Garbhashaya-shodhaka* and *Sankochaka* medicines helps eliminate *sheṣha dosha*, restore uterine tone, and prevent postpartum problems, promoting normal uterine recovery throughout puerperal time.^[28]

Snehapana: *Snehapana* (*Ghrita/Taila/Vasa/Majja*) is combined with substances such as Pippali, Pippalimoola, Chavya, Chitraka, Shrungavera, Yavani, and Upakunchika. These medications jointly exhibit *Agnideepana*, *Vata-shamana*, and *Amapachana* qualities, which are crucial during the postpartum phase marked by diminished digestive fire and *Vata* predominance. The combination enhances digestive efficiency, fosters optimal metabolism, stimulates appetite, and aids in tissue nourishment, consequently promoting systemic restoration of the *Sutika*.^[29]

Sneha yavagu or Ksheera yavagu: *Yavagupana* given as *manda* or *peya* with *sneha* or *kwatha*. It stimulates the *Agni*, possesses *Grahi* properties, is *Laghu* in nature, exhibits *Dhatuposhana* and *Tarpana*

characteristics, is easily digestible and absorbable, reduces thirst, and maintains hydration levels in the body. *Kṣheera Yavagu*, rich in milk, provides energy, proteins, vitamins, and calcium for postpartum recovery, nursing, and *Sutika* nutritional replenishment.^[30]

Yusha: *Yusha* is given to the *Sutika* and is composed of *Yava*, *Kola*, and *Kulatha*. It is a semisolid substance, abundant in protein. *Yuṣha* aids in progressive strength restoration without straining the digestive system. Through *Agnideepana* activity, it boosts metabolism, functions as *Balya* and *Puṣṭikara*, and promotes tissue nourishment and recuperation. *Svedajanana* and *Prasadaka* qualities help relieve stiffness, improve circulation, and promote physical comfort, aiding to postpartum recovery in *Sutika*.^{[31][32]}

Mamsa rasa: *Mamsa rasa* rich in iron, vitamins, amino acids, and trace elements, promotes *Dhatu kṣhaya puraṇa* and haemoglobin levels, supporting postpartum recovery. With its *Balya* and *Bṛumhaṇa* qualities, it boosts energy, supports tissue repair, and enhances breast milk quality and nutritional value, promoting maternal health and infant nutrition.^[33]

CONCLUSION

SUTIKA PARICHARYA denotes the specific postnatal care protocol outlined in Ayurveda for mothers following childbirth. Post-delivery, there is a disturbance of *vata*; the mother's immunity and strength will be compromised. The expulsion of the fetus, fluid loss, and fatigue during labor contribute to *dhatukshaya*, and during this time, even a trivial ailment can inflict significant harm on the body. Therefore, *sutika* requires increased attention to avert the occurrence of these complications during this period. This regimen is generally recommended for a duration of 1½ months (or extended in specific instances) and emphasises the restoration of *agni* (digestive fire), the equilibrium of *vata*, wound healing, and support for lactation. Proper *Sutika Paricharya* guarantees enduring well-being and equips the mother for healthy subsequent pregnancies.

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