



Mother's Glow
RADIATING THE LIGHT WITHIN



An initiative of **SRI AUROBINDO FOUNDATION FOR INDIAN CULTURE**
Sri Aurobindo Society, Puducherry



Selected Papers

National Seminar on Prenatal Education: Ancient Indian Perspectives

April 11-12, 2019, Kanchipuram



Seminar organised by
Sri Aurobindo Foundation for Indian Culture (SAFIC), and
Sri Aurobindo Society (SAS), Pondicherry

Department of Sanskrit and Indian Culture,
Sri Chandrashekharendra Saraswathi
Vishwa Mahavidyalaya (SCSVMV),
Kanchipuram

Selected Papers

National Seminar on Prenatal Education: Ancient Indian Perspectives

April 11-12, 2019

Edited and Compiled by:

Sri Aurobindo Foundation for Indian Culture, Sri Aurobindo Society, Puducherry, 2019

www.safic.in

All rights concerning the content of the papers included in this volume belong to the authors. These papers were previously published in the official proceedings of the seminar and are included here with permission.

CREDITS

Content Editors:

Dr. Sampadananda Mishra, Director, SAFIC

Dr. Beloo Mehra, Senior Associate, SAFIC

Dr. Debajyoti Jena, Head, Dept of Sanskrit and IC, SCSVMV, Kanchipuram

Editorial Assistance:

Upasika Ghosh, Research Assistant, SAFIC

Content Compilation and Cover Design:

Tuhina Roy, SAFIC Intern



TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION TO THE SEMINAR

Sampadananda Mishra 3

SPIRITUAL DIMENSION OF FERTILITY, PREGNANCY AND CHILDBIRTH - AYURVEDIC PERSPECTIVE

P. Ram Manohar, 5

ROLE OF ANTENATAL YOGA IN POST NATAL LIFE

Yogacharya Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani 12

SPIRITUAL INSIGHTS ON LOVE AND HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS

Beloo Mehra 21

UNDERSTANDING CONCEPTS OF SHADBHAVAS - WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SUPRJANANA

Geetha Kumar 36

ANUVAMSHIKI SIDDHANTA – THE CONCEPT OF INHERITANCE THROUGH AN AYURVEDIC PERSPECTIVE

Indusree C Suseelan & Harshitha M S..... 47

CITTA-PARIKARMA – A YOGASŪTRA BASED FRAMEWORK FOR PRENATAL EDUCATION

Jayaraman Mahadevan..... 52

INDIAN WISDOM TRADITIONS ON PRENATAL EDUCATION, PREGNANCY AND PARENTING:

N. Kalyani..... 55

GARBHINI PARICHARYA – DIETICS, REGIMEN AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CARE IN PREGNANCY

Megha Udai..... 62

IMPORTANCE OF RAJASWALA PARICHARYA IN SUPRAJA JANMA

Mrudula, KS..... 72

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE POST-NATAL CEREMONIES ACCORDING TO THE GRHYA TEXTS

S. Ramaratnam..... 77

PRENATAL RITUALS IN THE VEDAS

R. Rangan 89

CONCEPT OF RAJASWALA PARICHARYA: TOOL TO ENHANCE FERTILITY

Roshni.K.P 94

THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSION OF PREGNANCY AND CHILDBIRTH: LESSONS FROM INDIAN TRADITION

Rutu Baldha 100

INTRODUCTION TO THE SEMINAR

Dr. Sampadananda Mishra

Director, Sri Aurobindo Foundation for Indian Culture

“The Education of a human being should begin at birth and continue throughout his life. Indeed, if we want this education to have its maximum result, it should begin even before birth...”

(The Mother, CWM, Vol. 12, p 9.)

When we look at the stories of Ashtavakra and Abhimanyu in the Mahabharata, we realize the value of educating the child much before the child is born, right from the day of conception, even much before the conception takes place. No wonder then the stories of many great souls of even our present age also reveal how consciously they were brought into the physical world. The ancient Indian seers and thinkers gave much importance to this aspect of the education. As per the Vedic tradition, a child has to be the result of intense prayers and aspirations and not the product of mere entertainment and conjugal enjoyment.

We find an immense body of materials in the Vedic tradition which deal with the prenatal samskaras or purificatory disciplines that helped, and will certainly help in present and future times, in educating a child from the moment of its conception in the mother’s womb.

In the Vedic tradition, there are three major types of scriptures dealing with different aspects of pre-natal education. There are scriptures such as *grihyasutras* and *smritigranthas* dealing with the rules of rituals and ceremonies to be performed by the parents to bring forth a child who is healthy and heroic, bright and brilliant. There are other scriptures such as *garbhopanishad* which deals with the Vedantic science of embryology, which tells us about with the physical growth of the embryo since the time of its formation till it becomes ready to be born as a child. The third type of scripture forms a part of Ayurveda and is known as *Kaumarabhritya* which deals with the pre-natal and post-natal care of the child. There is also a branch in Astrology which deals with the effects of planets on the unborn child.

Taking inspiration from the Vedic wisdom and the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on prenatal education, SAFIC has been engaged in various ways in creating a spiritual movement of creating a conscious

population (*supraja-janana*). On 4th November 2007, SAFIC had organized a one-day workshop at Pondicherry on the topic of Prenatal Education in Vedic Culture; this was organised in association with WEBOLIM, Bangalore. SAFIC has also designed a workshop module under the title “*Sambhūti*” which takes place at Pondicherry every year. Recently, SAFIC has launched its webpage ‘mothersglow.in’ [<https://mothersglow.in/>] for taking forward the ideas related to prenatal education and creating a greater awareness in the society.

This seminar in collaboration with SCSVMV is SAFIC’s first attempt in bringing many minds on a single platform for a greater sharing of the knowledge and generating more ideas with regard to various aspects of prenatal education from the Indian perspective. We hope this seminar will be adding much more value to the initiatives undertaken by SAFIC. We are indeed grateful to the authorities of SCSVMV and its organizing team for all their support and collaboration in this effort of SAFIC.

PLENARY SESSION

**SPIRITUAL DIMENSION OF FERTILITY, PREGNANCY AND CHILDBIRTH -
AYURVEDIC PERSPECTIVE**

Dr. P. Ram Manohar

Research Director, Amrita School of Ayurveda, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham (University), Kollam, Kerala

ABSTRACT

Fertility is a commitment of life to propagate itself. To preserve and propagate the experience, the wisdom that has been accumulated through the ages. When we think of fertility, we cannot but think of sexuality. In fact there are three dimensions to fertility. The physical or sexual, the biological or reproductive and the spiritual or evolutionary. It is as if the three guṇas participate in harmony to fulfill the deeper purpose of nature. The sexual dimension of fertility is the Tamasic component, the pull of pleasure, the power of Māyā that Nature uses as a bait to serve the purpose of reproduction. The biological dimension of fertility is the Rajasic component, that brings forth a new life form by dynamic organisation of matter. Transmitting encoded information accumulated through generations by passing on the genes. But in human life, fertility also fulfils the most important Satvic dimension of transmitting culture or samskāra, which is the quintessence of spiritual evolution in human life.

INTRODUCTION

The word Āyus means life cycle or life process. Āyus stands for all the events that characterise life from birth, growth, decay to death. According to Ayurveda, Āyus is a process through which the body, senses, mind and self coalesce to manifest life. Life is a continuous effort to sustain this collaboration and life finds a way to nourish and sustain itself by a process of dynamic adaptation. In spite of this, life moves towards degeneration, decay and death. In the wake of the inevitable destruction of the physical body, life finds other ways to perpetuate itself. And there are three ways in which life perpetuates itself, one is the continuous renewal of the tissues, the second is by biological reproduction and the third is by transmigration.

Life is the journey of fragmented consciousness that uses the psycho-spiritual apparatus of the body to defragment itself and dissolve in the ocean of supreme consciousness. And in this journey, which is called Āyu, the fragmented consciousness latches on to body after body until it unentangles itself from the clutches of the lower material nature. A new life is a renewed opportunity to continue in this journey of the expansion of consciousness, which is called as brahmacarya in Āyurveda - which literally means the the way or regimen (caryā) to grow and expand into limitless consciousness (brahman, from the root bṛh vardhane).

Brahmacarya - the path to expansion of consciousness

Ayurveda stands for a way of life with a primary focus on expansion of consciousness. Celibacy is an aspect of Brahmacarya and in Ayurveda it means regulation of sexuality, rather than its negation.

This idea is very clearly elucidated in the Carakasamhitā, where it is clarified that the goal of Rasāyana, the ultimate regimen for prolonging life span, is not just extended life span, but the expansion of consciousness into the state of Brahman, as was achieved by the sages of yore.

*na kevalam dīrghamihāyuraśnute rasāyanaṃ yo vidhivanniṣevate /
gatiṃ sa devarṣiniṣevitām śubhām prapadyate brahma tathaiti cākṣayaṃ //*

Carakasamhitā, Cikitsāsthāna, Chapter 1.1

It is interesting to note that in Ayurveda, Rasāyana is always followed by Vājīkaraṇa or reproductive medicine. The goal of Rasāyana is to achieve the development of well formed dhātus or tissues and to extend life span and health span. And in the process, to complete the psycho-spiritual evolution of the human mind to manifest consciousness in its fullness. Ayurveda considers the individual who has completed the process of Rasāyana to be worthy of fulfilling the biological goal of reproduction to ensure continuing of embodied life. Rasāyana, thus achieves a samskāra or transformation of the mind and body of the individual. Only a person who has attained the full development of the physical body and expansion of the mind can transfer this samskāra to the next generation and propagate the momentum and impetus for spiritual evolution. This is the meeting point of reproductive biology, sexuality and spirituality.

Reproductive Biology in Ayurveda

Reproductive biology is the mechanism through which the physical body is perpetually remade from the information transmitted by the parents. In Ayurveda this mechanism is likened to the coming together of the principles of *Agni* and *Soma*. The female reproductive element represents the *Agni Tattva* and the male reproductive element represents the *Soma Tattva*. Ironically enough, the male personality represents *Agni Tattva*, whereas the female personality represents the *Soma Tattva*. In other words, the *Agni Tattva* is present in a seed form in the female with a dominant *Soma* personality and the *Soma Tattva* is present in a seed form in the male with a dominant *Agni* personality.

Life manifests when *Agni* and *Soma* coalesce together in a delicate act of balance. *Agni* kindles the fire of transformation and *Soma* serves as the crucible as well as the substance that undergoes transformation expressing life. The heat from the sun represents *Agni Tattva* and the waters of the earth represent the *Soma Tattva*.

In Ayurveda, reproductive biology is the process through which the male and female exchange the most refined expressions of *Agni* and *Soma Tattva* to recreate new life.

This analogy is also the central theme of alchemy in Ayurveda, which is known as *Rasaśāstra*. *Rasa* is the life fluid. *Rasaśāstra* is the technique of creating the life fluid from inert matter. Or transforming inert matter into a form that can be accepted by the life fluid or *Rasa*. Mercury and Sulphur form the basis of this alchemical transformation of inert matter with Mercury representing semen and Sulphur the menstrual fluid of Lord Śiva and Goddess Pārvati.

Lord Śiva is the ultimate ascetic, a manifestation of the effects of *Rasāyana*, ever established in the state of expanded consciousness. Yet, he also represents the perfect virility, the purity of the reproductive element. Goddess Pārvati has to take extreme efforts to manifest the virility of Lord Śiva to create a progeny who is capable of annihilating demoniac beings in the world.

Sexuality for reproduction and spiritual evolution

Sexuality triggers the mechanism of the exchange of the *Agni Tattva* and *Soma Tattva* to recreate life. Thus, a major function of sexuality is to propagate reproductive biology. But in humans, sexuality also serves a higher function.

As discussed, the *Agni Tattva* is present in a seed form in the female and the *Soma Tattva* is present in a seed form in the male. The coming together of the male and female personalities can potentially nurture the development and complete manifestation of the *Agni* and *Soma Tattvas* that are dormant in the female and male. The *Agni* dominant personality of the male can kindle the awakening of the *Agni Tattva* that is dormant and in a seed form in the female. Like wise, the *Soma* dominant personality of the female can awaken the *Soma Tattva* that is dormant and in a seed form in the male.

The female ovum and the ovulation cycle are in sync with the waxing and waning of the moon, strengthening the idea of the association with the *Soma Tattva*.

The sexual element in the process of reproduction can open up the two individuals to kick start this process of inner transformation. A balancing of the *Agni Soma Tattvas* at the level of the personality of the individual prepares the person for a deep spiritual transformation.

In Ayurveda, both the skull and the uterus are compared to the conch. Conch is called in Sanskrit as *Śaṅkha*, which means auspicious (*śam*) space (*kha*). The uterus is the auspicious space where the *Agni* and *Soma Tattvas* unite to create new life, fulfilling the goal of biological reproduction.

The skull is the auspicious space where the *Agni* and *Soma Tattvas* unite to complete the process of psycho-spiritual evolution, which is possible if the male and female participate in this process with awareness.

This concept is symbolised by the application of the saffron and sandal pastes on the forehead by the female and male. After marriage, the female applies the saffron powder on the forehead in the upward direction. This symbolises the potential awakening of the *Agni Tattva* in the female under the influence of the male personality. The male applies the sandal paste in the upward direction on the forehead symbolising the potential awakening of the *Soma Tattva* in the male under the influence of the female personality.

Children who grow under the care of the parents who are transforming at the mental level by mutual nurturing of the *Agni* and *Soma Tattvas* become well grounded and kindle their spiritual evolution.

Preparation for pregnancy and childbirth

Ayurveda gives elaborate guidelines for conception, pregnancy, childbirth and neonatal care. Before conception, the quality of the *Śukra* (male reproductive element) and *Ārtava* (female reproductive element) is to be assessed and if necessary, treatment regimens are to be administered. Throughout the course of pregnancy, both the nutrition and mental disposition of the mother needs to be taken care of meticulously to nurture the balanced growth of both the body and mind of the growing fetus. According to Ayurveda, karmic engineering of the feotus can be done during the period of pregnancy. The growing feotus can respond to external stimuli and even learn while in the womb of mother. Ayurvedic texts state that human effort (*puruṣakāra*) can nullify the impact of *daiva* (effects of past deeds) if necessary interventions are made during the intrauterine life.

balī puruṣakāro hi daivamapyativartate |

(Aṣṭāṅghṛdayaṃ, Śārīrasthānaṃ, Chapter 1)

Thus the regimen for pregnancy, child birth and neonatal care in Ayurveda is aimed at the overall development of the new life with a specific emphasis on laying the foundations for spiritual evolution at a very early stage of life.

DISCUSSION

In Ayurveda, fertility, sexuality and reproductive biology serve a higher spiritual purpose of the transmission of *samskāra* so that not only continuity of life is ensured, but also the flame of spiritual transformation is transmitted from one generation to the other.

Pregnancy and child birth are described in the section of the classical texts called as *Śārīrasthānaṃ*. *Śārīra* is often translated as Anatomy and Physiology. In fact, *Śārīra* covers the entire life cycle of the individual from birth to death. It includes *Sṛṣṭisārīra* (the formation of the Macrocosm), *Garbhasārīra* (the formation of the

Microcosm), *Doṣaśārīra* (the functional organisation of the body), *Saṅkhyāśārīra* (the structural organisation of the body), *Marmaśārīra* (the vital points of the body), *Prakṛtiśārīra* (the constitution and personality) and *Vikṛtiśārīra* (the disorder and destruction of the body). Ayurveda students are expected to start the study, not by dissecting dead bodies but by witnessing child birth, the emergence of the microcosm by constituting the elements of the macrocosm.

The womb is the *Kṣetra* or the field in which the seed of new life is sown. The uterus is itself the temple of life. For that matter, the body itself is considered to be the *Kṣetra* for facilitating the spiritual evolution of life. In fact, the word *Kṣetra* means that which prevents spiritual decline of life. The Āyurvedic texts emphasise that the body is indispensable for spiritual evolution and must be protected by all means.

sarvamanyat parityajya śarīramanupālayet | tadabhāve hi bhāvānām sarvābhāvaḥ śarīriṇām ||

(Carakasamhitā, Nidānasthānaṃ, Chapter 6)

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it can be said that in Āyurveda, the *Śarīra* or the body is considered to be cause for bondage as well as the tool for liberation at the same time. Working with the body for psycho-spiritual evolution leads to liberation, while using it for sensual gratification leads to bondage.

When we appreciate this higher purpose of the body, then fertility, sexuality and reproductive biology converge to fulfill the higher aspirations of human spiritual evolution.

The sexual dimension of fertility represents the Tamasic component, the sensual attraction, the delusive power of *Māyā* that ensures continuity of life through reproduction. The sexual dimension of fertility also facilitates bonding between the mating couples and lays the foundation for a transformative exchange of the *Agni* and *Soma Tattvas* as well as a nurturing environment for the new life. The biological dimension of fertility represents *Rajas*, the creative and active force of nature that nurtures new life by systematic organisation of the material elements. In this process, genetic information is transmitted. The Sattwic element of fertility is *Samskāra* or the spiritual undercurrent that is transmitted from one generation to another that is fostered in the loving and transformative environment created by the spiritual embrace of the male and the female.

REFERENCES

1. *Charaka Samhita*, edited & translated by Prof. Sharma PV. Chaukhambha orientalia, Varanasi, 2004.
2. *Sushruta Samhita*, edited & translated by Kaviraj Ambikadatta Sastri. Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthana, Varanasi, 2008.
3. *Ashtanga Hridaya*, edited by Sadashiva, Hari & Shastri, Paradakara, Chaukhamba Surabharati Prakashan, Varanasi, 2014.

ROLE OF ANTENATAL YOGA IN POST NATAL LIFE

Yogacharya Dr. Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani

Director and Professor Yoga Therapy, Centre for Yoga Therapy, Education and Research (CYTER), Sri Balaji Vidyapeeth, Pondicherry

INTRODUCTION

Having been a medical practitioner many decades now, and having been exposed to the benefits of Yoga as a way of life since the past four decades, it amazes me that Yoga hasn't yet become an integral part in the preparation of this "life changing experience" of pregnancy and childbirth. It is deeply concerning to witness the lack of support an expectant mother receives towards preparing herself for childbirth leading to a feeling of stressful dread and debilitating exasperation.

It is often said that the knowledge of how to give birth without outside interventions lies deep within each woman and that successful childbirth depends on an acceptance of the process. Yoga as a way of life is an excellent tool to help the expectant mother dwell deep within herself and develop this spiritual awareness of her strengths with the realization of her blessings.

We must always remember that pregnancy and childbirth are a period of great change for the mother as well as for the entire family. It provides the opportunity to take another look at our life, bring about the necessary changes, and finally become a better human being as the result of this entire process that engineers a great sense of joy and confidence in the individual.

We must never forget that Yoga is not merely a preparation for pregnancy and child birth, but is a continuous preparation for the experience of one's whole life. Yoga is a boon that enables us to realise our blessings and manifest our potential. Pujya Swamiji, Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj, founder of ICYER at Ananda Ashram, Pondicherry (www.icyer.com) often used to say, "Yoga is not all about changing the world but is all about changing oneself".

EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL PREPARATION

Many stories from Indian tradition educate us about the maternal-child bonding that begins with conception and warn us against underestimating the power of this psychic bond. The great Rishi Ashtavakara, Prahalada and Abimanyu are just a few examples of so many incidents where the child in the womb was able to fully comprehend for itself the external environment and be born with amazing abilities.

Modern medicine has finally come to realize the importance of the maternal mental and emotional status in smoothening the entire process of pregnancy and childbirth. This has taken a long time in the coming. Grantly Dick-Read was one of the first medical doctors to suggest in the 1950's that emotional and physical preparation for birth encouraged more natural births. This concept that has been part of Indian traditional thought since time immemorial revolutionized the management of pregnancy in the West as it enabled the medical profession to understand that fear caused pain which in turn caused more fear which then caused more pain.

To facilitate better pregnancy and childbirth experiences, Grantly Dick-Read codified preparation classes that involved practicing deep relaxation, which could then be practiced during labour to reduce tension and pain. ⁽¹⁾ These techniques have been used for antenatal preparation for labour ever since but in recent times it is sad that these sessions have mostly become a place to share information rather than to prepare expectant mothers physically, mentally and emotionally for their “life changing” experience of motherhood.

YOGA FOR A HEALTHY PREGNANCY

Yoga has enormous potential to help expectant mothers prepare themselves physically, mentally, emotionally for this grand experience that can be a very spiritual one for so many people. Yoga as a way of life focuses on right living and right thinking while utilizing various tools for the overall psycho-physiological health of the mother and child. ⁽²⁾

The Jathis, Kriyas and Asanas help promote healthy functioning of all body systems while Pranayama creates psycho-somatic harmony with a *pranic* energisation of every cell of the body. Various Mudras and Bandhas such as Aswini Mudra and Moola Bandha can help tone up the pelvic musculature while others like the Yoni Mudra induce a sense of inner wellbeing. The various concentrative and contemplative practices help achieve an inner peace with the development of a deep sense of self-understanding. Yogic relaxation practices facilitate a balanced and relaxed anabolic inner environment that promotes the healthy growth and development of the baby with the facilitation of healing at all levels of being.

Yogic diet with a stress on natural life-giving foods and adequate hydration helps the mother nurture the child growing within herself and fortify herself for the challenging events to come. A balanced lacto-vegetarian diet rich in calcium, iron and other essential vitamins and minerals is advocated with training in the preparation of soups, salads and sprouts. Foods of the sattwic nature elevate the mother's consciousness thus helping to create an uplifting psycho-mental-spiritual inner environment developing the inherent potential of the child in a wonderful manner.

SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE OF THE BENEFITS OF YOGA IN PREGNANCY

Preliminary evidence from various scientific studies supports Yoga's potential efficacy, particularly if started early in the pregnancy. A study by Beddoe AE and colleagues showed that women practicing Yoga in their second trimester reported significant reductions in physical pain from baseline to post intervention compared with women in the third trimester whose pain increased. ⁽³⁾ Women in their third trimester showed greater reductions in perceived stress and trait anxiety.

Another study by Sun YC and colleagues reported that women who took part in the prenatal Yoga programme reported significantly fewer pregnancy discomforts at 38-40 weeks of gestation. ⁽⁴⁾ The subjects who participated in the Yoga programme exhibited higher outcome and self-efficacy expectancies during the active stage of labour and the second stage of labour. They also suggested that the provision of booklets and videos on Yoga during pregnancy may contribute to a reduction in pregnancy discomforts and improved childbirth self-efficacy.

Satyapriya M. and her team at NIMHANS ⁽⁵⁾ concluded that Yoga reduces perceived stress and improves adaptive autonomic response to stress in healthy pregnant women while Chuntharapat S. and colleagues ⁽⁶⁾ concluded that Yoga produced higher levels of maternal comfort during labor and 2hour post-labor with a decrease in subject evaluated labor pain. They also reported shorter duration of the first stage of labor, as well as the total time of labor in the subjects practicing Yoga.

A study by Narendran S. and colleagues at SVYASA ⁽⁷⁾ reported a lower trend in the occurrence of complications of pregnancy such as pregnancy-induced hypertension, intrauterine growth retardation and pre-term delivery in subjects who practiced Yoga. He also concluded that an integrated approach to Yoga during pregnancy is safe. It improves birth weight, decreases preterm labor, and decreases IUGR either in isolation or associated with PIH, with no increased complications. ⁽⁸⁾

A detailed review ⁽⁹⁾ reported that alternative therapies have been found effective for reducing pregnancy-related back and leg pain and nausea and for reducing depression and cortisol levels and the associated prematurity

rate. It also said that the labor research generally shows that alternative therapies reduce pain and thereby the need for medication.

Van den Bergh and colleagues ⁽¹⁰⁾ observed that there was a direct link between antenatal maternal mood and fetal behaviour, in the 14 independent prospective studies shows link between antenatal maternal anxiety or stress and cognitive behaviour and emotional problems in the child. The crossing of cortisol via a placenta, may affect the fetus thus, disturbing the ongoing process, of development of the HPA-axis, limbic system, and the prefrontal cortex and long-term effects of antenatal maternal anxiety or stress on the child is notable and therefore, programs to reduce maternal stress in a pregnancy are therefore recommended.

A recent study from our CYTER team at Sri Balaji Vidyapeeth in Pondicherry evaluated the immediate effect of Sukha Pranayama, a slow and deep breathing technique on maternal and fetal cardiovascular parameters. ⁽¹¹⁾ Single session pre-post comparison was done for 10 minutes of Sukha Pranayama in 12 pregnant women in their 3rd trimester. The study participants were guided to breathe in and out in a slow and regular manner for a count of 4 s each. Maternal cardiovascular parameters, namely mean heart rate (MHR), systolic pressure (SP), and diastolic pressure (DP), were measured before and after the session and rate-pressure product (RPP) derived with the formulae. Fetal heart rate (FHR) was derived from the nonstress test tracing. SP, MHR, FHR, and RPP reduced significantly after single session of Sukha Pranayama. The mothers reported that they felt more relaxed and also sensed active fetal movement while performing the pranayama. Reduction in maternal cardiovascular parameters may be attributed to reduced sympathetic activity coupled with enhanced vagal parasympathetic tone. Reduction in RPP signifies reduced myocardial oxygen consumption and load on the heart as evidenced by previous studies. These changes in cardiac autonomic status may enhance placental circulation, leading to healthier fetal development. This pilot study reiterated the importance of yoga for the psychosomatic health of maternal-fetal unit as an add-on relaxation technique.

This was developed into a full-fledged evaluation of maternal and fetal wellbeing through Nada Yoga that evaluated the immediate effect of Pranava Pranayama on maternal and fetal cardiovascular parameters in 60 pregnant women. ⁽¹²⁾ Yogic intervention included listening to OM chanting using headphone and performing Pranava Pranayama compared to a control group that only had breath awareness. It was found that Nada Yoga offers many benefits to pregnant women and the fetus. There were significant changes in maternal heart rate (MHR) and fetal heart rate (FHR) immediately after single session attributed to normalization of autonomic cardiovascular rhythms. The response regarding FHR was more significant while listening to OM and Pranava Pranayama. Mothers experienced more fetal activity especially during the chanting of Makara phase (Mmm...) during Pranava Pranayama and reported they felt more relaxed and comfortable while listening to OM.

SUGGESTED YOGA PRACTICES DURING PREGNANCY

The entire duration of the pregnancy is traditionally divided into three trimesters and hence the Yoga practices also may be advised under this classification ⁽²⁾

In the 1st trimester, standing postures such as Ardhakati Chakra Asana and Trikona Asana can be introduced to create a sense of stability. ‘On the floor’ postures such as Nikunja or Bala Asana along with the Chatushpada Asana, Chatushpada Kriya and the Vyagraha Pranayama can be taught to reduce the potentiality of back pain. Postures such as Eka Pada and Dwi Pada Uttanpada Asana, Hala Asana and Sarvanga Asana may be taught if the person has some previous experience of Yoga as they create a healthy neuroendocrine feedback along with the toning-up of the abdomino-pelvic musculature. Variations of the Utkat Asana as well as the Baddhakona Asana and Kriya are to be introduced right away to help open up the pelvis to facilitate the healthy delivery later. Aswini Mudra and Moola Bandha create a healthy flow of Pranic energy in the urogenital region. Relaxation practices such as Shava Asana with the Savitri Pranayama are to be taught. Pranava Pranayama creates a harmonious inner environment that is conducive to the creation of a healthy child right from day-one.

Continuing into the 2nd trimester, practices such as the Supta Baddhakona Asana, Mehru Asana, Nava Asana may be introduced while the Nikunja Asana, Baddhakona Asana and Kriya are continued with Aswini Mudra and Moola Bandha. Jathara Parivrittana Asana may be introduced if possible to open up the pelvis in a healthy manner. Relaxation practices such as Kaya Kriya, Tala Kriya and Yoga Nidra may be introduced. Practices on the face may not be possible and if there is too much tension in Shava Asana, then the relaxation may be done in Nishpanda Asana on the side. Kukkriya Pranayama is added to strengthen the diaphragm and create a sense of optimistic energy.

In the 3rd trimester, the main practices are the Chatus Pada Asana and Chatus Pada Kriya along with the Vyagraha Pranayama. Moola Bandha and Aswini Mudra in Baddhakona Asana are continued while Bhramari Pranayama is added to reduce stress-based anxiety levels. Yoga Nidra, Anuloma Viloma Kriya and other practices can be used to produce a calm and steady mind with an optimistic outlook.

During the delivery, deep breathing may be done and the abdomino-pelvic muscular strength obtained from previous months of practice is used to facilitate a healthy delivery through the flexible pelvis. A positive attitude with the feeling of a deep sense of love towards the new born will enhance the spiritual nature of the whole process.

Post-natal practices may be started in a few weeks’ time following the delivery and are aimed at enhancing a swift and healthy physiological return to the pre-pregnant state. Baddhakona Asana and Kriya along with the

Chatus Pada Asana and Kriya are key elements of this programme. Vyagraha Pranayama, Pranava Pranayama and Savitri Pranayama in Shava Asana help to repair tissue damage as well as facilitate healing at all levels. Aswini Mudra and Moola Bandha help focus the energies in the pelvis while the Uddiyana Bandha, Eka Pada Uttanpada Asana, Dwi Pada Uttanpada Asana and Nava Asana help the mother to regain abdomino-pelvic muscular tone at the earliest. Pavanamukta Kriya and the Vakra Asana help to correct any spinal displacements while the Surya Pranayama helps burn up excess weight that accumulated in the pregnant period. The importance of the right diet and positive attitude towards parenting is to be encouraged at all stages to produce a state of excellent psycho-physiological health and harmony.

The role of the father in the whole process must never be underestimated and his involvement in both the practical Yoga sessions as well as in the adoption of a Yogic diet with positive attitudes is vital for the success of the programme. Yoga can help the family top bond together and such a bond is a boon to the entire social unit that is based on healthy inter-personal relationships.

A word of caution

All Yoga practices must be learnt from a competent and qualified Yoga teacher / therapist and performed with a common-sense based approach. Postures such as Dhanur Asana and other “on the face postures” that exert great pressure on the uterus and impair flow of blood to the fetus must be avoided. Inverted postures may result in ‘falls’ that can cause many complications while the rapid breathing practices such as Kapalabhati must be done with caution. The mother must be helped to develop an inner sense of knowing what is happening within her own body during the practices and if she senses anything wrong must stop the practice immediately and consult the Yoga therapist immediately. In the final trimester it is better to be aware of how even simple things like jumping into postures or sudden change in position may cause premature rupture of membranes. The list of practices that are safe / unsafe will of course depend on the mother’s previous Yoga experience, on how long she has been practicing Yoga, and on the type of practices she has been doing previously. On the whole, it is better to be safe at all times rather than sorry later.

CHILDBIRTH– A NATURAL STATE OF BLISS

My beloved mother and Guru Ammaji, Yogacharini Meenakshi Devi Bhavanani has so beautifully said, *“I must confess that bearing, delivering and raising my son has been the single most significant spiritual experience of my life, my first real initiation into the blissful state of Yoga – a oneness and communion with the Universe on a nearly mystical level”*.⁽¹³⁾

In her book, “Yoga for Expectant Mothers and Others” (www.icyer.in), she has beautifully described the Samadhi-like experience of my birth 47 years ago as follows:

“I really felt as though I had slipped into a Samadhi by mistake. Completely drained, relaxed, limp, receptive, I felt a bliss, which I had never felt before in my whole life. As though a purpose had been accomplished, as though I had achieved what I had set out to do, difficult though the task had been, as though I had somehow repaid a debt, which I had contracted by my own birth. I felt tremendous love for everyone, for my husband, for the doctors, for the nurses, for the Universe, for the good green earth, and the beautiful warm sun...but most all, I felt an immense, overpowering love and devotion to the small little creature that the doctors immediately put into my arms. It was mine, and from that day, I would be responsible for the growth into light of another little human soul. My baby smiled at me, he really did, even though he could not see, and I smiled and smiled back at him, for surely, he was the most beautiful, perfect, intelligent and fantastic child ever born to the Universe! And even as I thought that thought, I realized how many others must have experienced the same feelings, looking for the first time at the first child born to them, and I felt wonderful communion with all mothers who had ever lived and all those who would ever pass through this marvelous experience. Certainly, we shared a secret; certainly, we had something more precious than the most rare of gems; certainly, we were blessed by life itself to be brought so close to that mystical core which creates, out of nothing but a few cells of matter and a few sparks of energy, such a marvelous creature as the new-born child”. “I took my pen to paper and wrote these words. “I was given life... I gave life... a debt repaid with interest... I have returned what I was given a hundred-fold. Was there such perfect beauty in my own body... once, long, long ago...Did my mother also see...God move one step beyond herself...in me? And thus, on the crest of these overpowering, ecstatic emotions, did the Yoga of Motherhood rush into my life... a whole new phase of my Yoga Sadhana had begun... with Ananda!”

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Indian culture understands this and respects the mother as the ‘First God’, even before ‘Father’ and ‘Guru’. It may be said that motherhood is the ultimate Yoga Sadhana. The attainment of motherhood is the height of egolessness, which is the goal of all spirituality.

To be such a ‘Mother’, one who is consciously aware of the great spiritual nature of pregnancy and childbirth, it is necessary that our young girls start the practice of Yoga at the earliest and continue it into their adulthood. When this is done, healthy and conscious conception is facilitated. This along with the inculcation of

healthy and positive attitudes towards child bearing and child rearing will lay down a firm foundation for the production of healthy and spiritually potent children who can transform the future of our planet into a 'Garden of Eden'.

REFERENCES

1. Ferguson P. *Yoga for Pregnancy*. Thesis submitted to ICYER, Ananda Ashram, Pondicherry for Yoga step-by-step correspondence course final certification examination. www.icyer.com
2. Bhavanani AB. *Yoga Chikitsa: The application of Yoga as a Therapy*. Dhivyananda Creations, Iyyanar Nagar, Pondicherry. 2013.
3. Beddoe AE, Paul Yang CP, Kennedy HP, Weiss SJ, Lee KA. *The effects of mindfulness-based Yoga during pregnancy on maternal psychological and physical distress*. Journal of Obstetric, Gynecologic, & Neonatal Nursing 2009;38 (3):310-19.
4. Sun YC, Hung YC, Chang Y, Kuo SC. *Effects of a prenatal Yoga programme on the discomforts of pregnancy and maternal childbirth self-efficacy in Taiwan*. Midwifery 2010; 26 (6):31-6.
5. Satyapriya M, Nagendra HR, Nagarathna R, Padmalatha V. *Effect of integrated Yoga on stress and heart rate variability in pregnant women*. International Journal of Gynecology & Obstetrics 2009; 104(3):218-22.
6. Chuntharapat S, Petpichetchian W, Hatthakit U. *Yoga during pregnancy: effects on maternal comfort, labor pain and birth outcomes*. Complementary Therapies in Clinical Practice 2008;14(2):105-15.
7. Narendran S, Nagarathna R, Gunasheela S, Nagendra HR. *Efficacy of Yoga in pregnant women with abnormal Doppler study of umbilical and uterine arteries*. Journal of the Indian Medical Association 2005; 103(1):12-4, 16-7.
8. Narendran S, Nagarathna R, Narendran V, Gunasheela S, Nagendra HR. *Efficacy of Yoga on pregnancy outcome*. Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine 2005; 11 (2): 237-44.
9. Field T. *Pregnancy and labor alternative therapy research*. Alternative Therapies in Health And Medicine 2008;14(5):28-34.

10. Van den Bergh BRH, Mulder EJH, Mennes M, Glover V. *Antenatal maternal anxiety and stress and the neurobehavioural development of the fetus and child: Links and possible mechanisms. A review.* Neuroscience Biobehaviour Review 2005; 29(2) :237–58.
11. Vasundhara VR, Bhavanani AB, Ramanathan M, Ghose S, Dayanidy G. *Immediate effect of sukha pranayama: A slow and deep breathing technique on maternal and fetal cardiovascular parameters.* Yoga Mimamsa 2018; 50:49-52.
12. Vasundhara VR. *Immediate effect of Pranava Pranayama on fetal and maternal cardiovascular parameters.* Unpublished MPhil (Yoga Therapy) dissertation. 2018.
13. Bhavanani MD. *The Yoga of Motherhood.* www.discover-Yoga-online.com/pregnancy-and-Yoga.html

SPIRITUAL INSIGHTS ON LOVE AND HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS

Dr. Beloo Mehra

Senior Associate, Sri Aurobindo Foundation for Indian Culture (SAFIC)

Sri Aurobindo Society, Pondicherry

INTRODUCTION

Love and relationships are the root of all human life as lived in our familial and societal contexts. But ordinarily, most people do not take the trouble to examine and understand the nature of these two things. Life situations generally have a way of making people experience several different aspects of human love and relationships, in the process creating a variety of emotions in them, ranging all the way from pleasure to pain, from passion to indifference, from happiness to sadness, from calmness to rage, and so on. Such ups and downs cause much turmoil in people's lives – outer and inner, and also lead to strained and troubled relationships.

By becoming deeply aware of the nature of human love and becoming more conscious of how this human love expresses through different relationships in our lives we can prepare ourselves more effectively to deal with the changing life situations which are inevitable. By becoming conscious observers of the various emotions – not all of which may necessarily be grounded in love – that fill up the space of our human relationships we can also avoid going through unnecessary turmoil in our outer lives and needless disturbances in our inner lives.

Our hope is that through our discussion today, we will be inspired to become more aware of the deeper nature of human love and the ways it expresses through various human relationships. We have included this topic based on the premise that in present times much of what young people learn about love and relationships is through popular culture – fiction, films, television and social media. Most of the times such unfiltered exposure to a variety of influences, most of which are not necessarily educative but rather meant to stimulate the lower nature of the individual – instincts, passion, and sensations, can end up creating more confusing and muddled understanding of these things.

It is important, therefore, to examine the nature of human love and relationships using a deeper psycho-spiritual view of human nature, given to us by the great yogis, sages and seers who have not only explored the depths of human nature but have also raised themselves to the highest heights of consciousness. No human

experience is insignificant in their wider view of life and existence. And that's why we are able to find relevant insights on almost all aspects of life in their writings and teachings. We hope the discussants in our panel today will bring to light some of these insights as applicable to the topics of love and human relationships.

LOVE, A UNIVERSAL FORCE

Let us first ask ourselves – what is the essential nature of love? Is there more than one kind of love? Is love a personal thing or something more universal in nature? What does it mean when people use the expression ‘falling in love’?

The Mother of Sri Aurobindo Ashram describes love as one of the great universal forces, adding:

“...[love] exists by itself and its movement is free and independent of the objects in which and through which it manifests. It manifests wherever it finds a possibility for manifestation, wherever there is receptivity, wherever there is some opening for it. What you call love and think of as a personal or individual thing is only your capacity to receive and manifest this universal force. But because it is universal, it is not therefore an unconscious force; it is a supremely conscious Power. Consciously it seeks for its manifestation and realisation upon earth; consciously it chooses its instruments, awakens to its vibrations those who are capable of an answer, endeavours to realise in them that which is its eternal aim, and when the instrument is not fit, drops it and turns to look for others. Men think that they have suddenly fallen in love; they see their love come and grow and then it fades – or, it may be, endures a little longer in some who are more specially fitted for its more lasting movement. But their sense in this of a personal experience all their own was an illusion. It was a wave from the everlasting sea of universal love.” (CWM, Vol. 3, p. 69)

It is indeed quite liberating when we can see that love that we experience as an individual comes to us as a wave from an everlasting sea of universal love. A question then naturally arises – what does it mean to be receptive and open to the force of love? And related to this is the question – how should an individual become a fit instrument for love to manifest through him or her?

Love is Complete Self-Giving

Our sages have explained that the entire universe, this manifestation, is essentially an act of Love – Love of the Divine, the Perfect Consciousness. The manifestation of the love of the Divine in the world is an act of supreme self-giving. But why does this act doesn't seem like love to our ignorant minds? Because such an act of supreme self-giving does not clothe itself in a superficial sentiment, it makes no demand in exchange for what it has done, no show of its sacrifice, explains the Mother. And that truly is the what love is about – complete self-giving.

The love of the Supreme for its creation is a movement to help awaken in the world a longing to get back to its essential divinity. In human terms, it simply means that love is a force that awakens in human beings a yearning to get to their true source, that deep oneness within. This for a long, long time is expressed through loving another human being. No matter how distorted or deformed human love is due to the imperfections of the human nature and human egoism, at its deepest depth lies the longing for uniting with the Divine.

What Does Love Seek?

According to Sri Aurobindo, love seeks for two things, eternity and intensity. In his chapters on Yoga of Divine Love (ordinarily referred to as Bhakti Yoga in the Indian tradition) in his work 'The Synthesis of Yoga' he writes that this seeking for eternity and for intensity is instinctive and self-born in the relation of the Lover and Beloved (CWSA, Vol. 23, p. 569). This relation is the basis of the religion of the Vaishnavas, the yearning of the human soul for the Supreme Beloved.

We see such seeking of love also manifesting in the human lovers. When a person first falls in love with another, that love is highly intense at the beginning. And of course, never for a moment does the person think that this love will not last forever. The common phrase "happily ever after" is reflective of this seeking for eternity and intensity.

Rama's lament for Sita after she is kidnapped, as presented by Rishi Valmiki in the Aranya Kanda of Ramayana is a wonderful example of such deep intensity and eternity that love seeks.

Love is also a seeking for mutual possession, and in a relation of the lover and beloved, this demand for mutual possession becomes absolute. However, the desire of possession still assumes a difference between the two – lover and beloved. The deeper seeking is that of a oneness, "of two souls merging into each other and becoming one" (Sri Aurobindo, CWSA, Vol. 23, p. 569). This is what will ultimately satisfy the lover.

We find great examples of this intense yearning in the love poetry written across various cultures. Kālidāsa, the great Sanskrit master-poet of sensuous beauty dealt with human emotions in a very delicate way. In Act III of Vikramorvasie, we find some beautiful description of the deep yearning of a lover who is unable to sleep because of not being with his beloved, and who is also unable to paint a picture of her beloved because he is worried that his tears may spoil her sweet face drawn on the paper.

Love is also a seeker for beauty and delight. And again, in the love of a lover for his beloved this yearning is eternally satisfied in the vision and the touch and the joy of the beloved. A lover finds the highest possible ecstasy both of the heart-consciousness and of every fiber of the being only when he or she is with his or her beloved.

We find a good example of such yearning of love for beauty and delight in Kālidāsa's Meghdūtam. The story is of a husband banished for a year from his home and wife. The husband sends "his imagination travelling on the wings of the northward-bound cloud over the sacred places, the great cities and rivers of India to the snowbound Himalaya and the homes of the Gods. There his mind sees his wife, breathes to her all its sorrow and longing and prays for an answering message. The love described may not be on the highest altitudes, but it is utterly real and human, full of enduring warmth, tenderness & passion, of strife and joy, tears and kisses, the daily food of love" (Sri Aurobindo, CWSA, Vol. 1, p. 238).

Sri Aurobindo reminds that this relation between a lover and the beloved demands the most and, even when it reaches the greatest intensities it is still the least satisfied. This is because only in the Divine can love – any love – find its real and its utter satisfaction.

Love, Sacrifice and Ego

While it is the ego, a formation of Prakriti, which gives an individual a sense of separate existence, it must be understood that an ego is in reality not and can neither be independent nor separate. It cannot live to itself even if it were able to, because in truth all beings are linked together by a secret Oneness. An individual's growth happens only when he or she moves away from the separate existence and interacts, relates, cooperates, and unites with other beings. And this is where the play of ego comes in. A relation of love between two human beings demands, rather necessitates a spirit of self-giving and sacrifice. But, most often, this sacrifice is done unconsciously, egoistically and without knowledge or acceptance of the true meaning of the self-giving. The vast majority of people experience love in this way – limited and tortured by the smallness and suffering of the ego.

The strong need that human beings have for love, an irresistible push and seeking for it – all these are essentially an impulse given by the force of Divine love which acts behind the human longing and seeking. This divine force touches millions of instruments, trying always, always failing. But this constant touch prepares these instruments till one day the capacity of true self-giving, the capacity of true love awakes in them.

"Not for the sake of the wife," says Yajnavalkya in the Upanishad, "but for the sake of the Self is the wife dear to us." This in the lower sense of the individual self is the hard fact behind the coloured and passionate professions of egoistic love; but in a higher sense it is the inner significance of that same love too which is not egoistic but divine. All true love and all sacrifice are in their essence Nature's contradiction of the primary egoism and its separative error; it is her attempt to turn from a necessary first fragmentation towards a recovered oneness. ... The law of sacrifice travels in Nature towards its culmination in this complete and unreserved self-giving; it awakens the consciousness of one common self in the giver and the object of the sacrifice. This culmination of sacrifice is the height even of human love and devotion when it tries to become divine; for there too the highest

peak of love points into a heaven of complete mutual self-giving, its summit is the rapturous fusing of two souls into one.” (Sri Aurobindo, Vol. 23, pp. 107-108)

NATURE OF HUMAN LOVE

Human love, says the Mother, “is not a need of the soul, but rather a concession it makes for a time to the ego.” (CWM, Vol. 14, p. 120). This sounds startling to our ordinary intelligence, given that our ideas about love are almost entirely shaped by what our popular culture and popular romantic literature and films tell us about it. We throw the word ‘soulmate’ so casually, without even realising that we don’t know what is this thing called soul. It is perhaps the false soul of desire in us which creates this illusion.

Ego, an instrument of nature, which gives us a sense of separate existence, also seeks its own separate love, exclusively for itself. This love is coloured by all the different forms in which ego expresses itself, which may be understood as egoism. However, since all love is indeed a universal force, there is not only a similarity but rather an identity between human love and Divine love. At the same time there is much deformity or degradation that love goes through as it manifests in the ordinary human instruments. The Mother gives a good explanation for how a narrow and personal human love becomes far removed from a wide, universal Divine love. Often, the need for human love is simply in obedience to a vital attraction for another, emerging as a natural instinct. But to the extent that it is not that, human love “is the need to have a Divine for oneself alone, at one’s entire and exclusive disposal, a Divine who is one’s personal property and to whom one gives oneself totally only if the gift is reciprocated. Instead of enlarging oneself to the size of the Divine and having a love as vast as the universe, one tries to reduce the Divine to one’s own size and have His love for oneself alone” (CWM, Vol. 14, p. 120).

True Love

True love, says the Mother, is something very deep and calm in its intensity. It is not a passion of the ordinary emotive heart, but a psychic quality. More importantly, true love finds its delight and satisfaction in itself. It does not need to manifest itself in any exterior ‘acts of love’, sensational or affectionate.

Most human love is far removed from this true love. Most human beings in ordinary relations speak of their right to be loved, but love’s only right, if at all it has one, is the right of self-giving, says the Mother. Without self-giving there is no love. But an honest self-reflection and observation around us will tell us how rare is true self-giving in human love, which is in actuality full of selfishness and demands.

True love simply is! It doesn't impose itself or demands love in return. It is sufficient by itself. It is a source of immutable happiness. Very rarely does one experience this true love in ordinary life. But here again it is important to remember a note of caution that the Mother adds – “It is not the love that someone feels for you that can make you happy, it is the love you feel for others that makes you happy: for you receive the love that you give from the Divine, who loves eternally and unfailingly” (p. 122). In other words, it is the love that one simply feels for others, love that one gives to others which can be purified and refined to the status of becoming true, pure love. Because it is only the love that one gives which brings joy and calmness. Love that insists that it needs reciprocation can never be true love.

Human Nature Deforms Love

An important point to understand about love is that the distortions and deformations that we see in the apparent workings of the divine force of Love actually belong to its instruments through which it manifests. These limitations of the human instrument range from obscurity and ignorance to selfishness and egoism.

Our sages and seers help us see that all love is essentially a seeking for the union of the self with the Divine. In its purity, love asks for nothing and is only about giving. The initial movement of love in human beings may carry some sense of purity and divinity, an idea of self-forgetfulness and self-giving may be prominent for some time, but over time the persistent and limited human nature that is full of desires and attachments distort that initial pure movement of love.

This last point is a very common experience with people, almost a universal experience one can say. But the question to ask here is this – why does it happen like this? The vital part in us, the life-force in us is the seat of all desires, passions, impulses and instincts. When we primarily live in vital consciousness, especially the lower vital, or in other words, when we are primarily ruled by the movements of this vital part in us, we find ourselves getting more attached to our desires and passions, our emotions and feelings. We are more clinging and lot less generous in our feelings. Our ego is primarily identified with the vital and it is this vital ego that dictates our responses, behaviour patterns and attitudes toward love. Even our love and liking are egoistic if it is mostly driven by the lower vital which is concerned with small egoistic movements such as lust, greed, jealousy, envy, vanity, pride etc.

Love is a thing of the heart, it is often said. In ordinary parlance, what people generally refer to as the heart is simply an emotive heart, full of emotions more or less similar to the animal's, but more variously developed. It is important to understand the nature of these emotions because that will help us see how the movement of love whose origin lies in the Supreme Force of Divine Love gets degraded so much when it comes to the level of ordinary human love. Sri Aurobindo helps us with these words:

“Its emotions are governed by egoistic passion, blind instinctive affections and all the play of the life-impulses with their imperfections, perversions, often sordid degradations, — a heart besieged and given over to the lusts, desires, wraths, intense or fierce demands or little greeds and mean pettinesses of an obscure and fallen life force and debased by its slavery to any and every impulse. This mixture of the emotive heart and the sensational hungering vital creates in man a false soul of desire...” (CWSA, Vol. 23, p. 150)

This false soul of desire colours the movement of love with its petty instincts of clinging to its object of desire, which it sees as its object of love. And when there is desire, there is bound to be expectation; in this instance, expectation of being loved in return for loving the other. This is often the beginning of much degradation in love.

LOVE GROWS AND PURIFIES ITSELF

“Love of man, love of woman, love of things, love of thy neighbour, love of thy country, love of animals, love of humanity are all the love of God reflected in these living images. So love and grow mighty to enjoy all, to help all and to love for ever.” (Sri Aurobindo, CWSA, Vol. 12, p. 491)

All love is only one Love, pure and true in its essential nature. It is the imperfection of the human nature that degrades and deforms it by bringing in all sorts of petty vital instincts of possession, jealousy, attachment, lust etc. But as we walk on the path of purifying our vital nature, the love in us also gets purified and grows more and more to its true nature.

“At first one loves only when one is loved.

“Next, one loves spontaneously, but one wants to be loved in return.

“Then one loves even if one is not loved, but one still wants one’s love to be accepted.

“And finally, one loves purely and simply, without any other need or joy than that of loving.” (The Mother, CWM, Vol. 14, p. 122)

There is a progressive nature to our inner growth, but it requires sincere effort and an intense aspiration for self-purification. It can be said that all human love, even in all its deformations is a practice ground for us. Human love also widens and expands as we expand our circle of care and affection – from one single object of love to love for more people, from love for our immediate family to love for the wider community, from love for our community to love for the nation, and from there to love for the humanity and all creatures, love for nature and mother earth.

By such widening we slowly begin to break away from the confines of our limited ego, our separate existence. It is also important to recognize that even when it is not really a feeling of love for all, the widening of one's self through sympathy, goodwill, universal benevolence and beneficence, one begins to mentally and emotionally escape from the first limits of one's ego. This becomes a good preparation for the human instrument in its capacity to love. This is what is meant by gradually becoming more open and receptive to the universal force of love.

Because of the present imperfections of human nature, there are bound to be innumerable sorrows, troubles, regrets, difficulties along the path of love. There is bound to be much pain and agony, much heartache and despair. But if instead of allowing these to cause disappointment in us if we somehow learn to see these as 'learnings' on the path of love, we continue to make progress with our work of self-purification and inner growth. All human love is thus a preparation to experience the divine love.

HUMAN LOVE AND RELATIONS

Love between human beings expresses itself through various relations – parent-child, siblings, married couple, lover and beloved, friendship, extended family, etc. Then there is also the relation between humans and animals. What is the nature of love across some of these relations, and how it may be raised to a higher movement? It is important to explore this question and its related aspects.

Love of Parents for Children

So many stories and books have been written, movies have been made about the love of parents for their children, especially the love of a mother. Maternal love is often considered the most unconditional love. But is it really so? Is any human love unconditional in the truest sense? What about the role of the mother as a disciplinarian for the child? As an adult responsible for teaching the child the right values and give a positive start in life, doesn't a parent also expect the child to behave in a certain way? How does such expectation or desire change the nature of the parental love? And what about the case where there is more than child? Does a mother love all her children equally?

Most of the instinctive answers to such questions, in our ordinary experience are shaped by the stories of motherhood we have heard in our lives, the books we have read, the films we have watched. Each culture has created its own myths and stories, its own ideals of motherhood. In India, we have the countless stories of Yashoda's love for Krishna and Kaushalya's love for Rama. Stories of father's love for their children are also not wanting. We have Dashratha who even gives up his life when separated from his first-born son, Rama.

The Mahabharata presents to us many different examples of parental love, some of which actually compel us to dig deeper into the nature of parental love. For instance, on one side we have Dhritrashtra who is so attached to his sons that he is even unable to stop them from doing all kinds of wrong and adharmic actions. On the other side, we also have Kunti who finally admits to Karna that he is in fact her first-born son whom she had given away because she was unmarried at the time. But she chooses to tell him about this truth only when she finds out that Karna would be fighting against her other five sons and has also taken a vow to kill Arjuna. There are many such stories that throw light on different aspects of parental love and in particular the love of a mother, helping us to move beyond the unthinking idea that a mother's love is unconditional in all cases.

The Mother was once asked the question – “what kind of love do parents have for their children? Let us read her response and reflect carefully on it.

“What kind? A human love, don't they? Like all human loves: frightfully mixed, with all sorts of things. The need of possession, a formidable egoism. At first, I must tell you that a wonderful picture has been painted... many books written, wonderful things said about a mother's love for her children. I assure you that except for the capacity of speaking about the subject in flowery phrases, the love of the higher animals like the... well, the mammals for their children is exactly of the same nature: the same devotion, the same self-forgetfulness, the same self-denial, the same care for education, the same patience, the same... I have seen absolutely marvellous things, and if they had been written down and applied to a woman instead of to a cat, superb novels would have been made, people would have said: “What a person! How marvellously devoted are these women in their maternal love!” Exactly the same thing. Only, cats could not use flowery language. That's all. They could not write books and make speeches, that is the only difference. But I have seen absolutely astonishing things. And that kind of self-giving and self-oblivion—as soon as there is the beginning of love, it comes. But men... I sincerely believe, from all that I have studied, that there is perhaps a greater purity in animals for they do not think, while human beings with their mental power, their capacity of reflecting, reasoning, analysing, studying, all that, oh! They spoil the most lovely movement. They begin to calculate, reason, doubt, organise.

“Take, for instance, parents. At the risk of removing many illusions in your consciousness, I must tell you something about the source of a mother's love for her child. It is because this child is made of her very own substance, and for quite a long time, relatively long, the material link, the link of substance, between mother and child is extremely close—it is as though a bit of her flesh had been taken out and put apart at a distance—and it is only much later that the tie between the two is completely cut. There is a kind of tie, of subtle sensation, such that the mother feels exactly what the child feels, as she would feel it in herself. That then is the material basis of the mother's attachment for the child. It is a basis of material identity, nothing else but that. Feeling comes much

later (it may come earlier, that depends on people), but I am speaking of the majority: feeling comes only long afterwards, and it is conditioned. There are all kinds of things.... I could speak to you for hours on the subject. But still this must not be mixed up with love. It is a material identification which makes the mother feel intimately, feel quite concretely and tangibly what the child is feeling: if the child receives a shock, well, the mother feels it. This lasts at least for two months.

“This is the basis. The rest comes from people’s nature, their state of development, their consciousness, education and capacity for feeling. This is added to the first. And then there are all the collective suggestions that make up all sorts of stories—for people are wonderful at constructing stories. They write novels about everything. They have used their minds to build up their imaginations which go round in the atmosphere and then are caught just like that. So some catch a certain type of these, others another kind, and then, as imagination is a force of propulsion, with it one begins to act, and then finally one makes a novel of one’s life, if he is in the least imaginative.... This has absolutely nothing to do with the true consciousness, with the psychic being, nothing at all, but people come and talk to you in flowery language and tell you stories—all these are wandering imaginations. If one could see, that is, if you could see this mental atmosphere, that of the physical mind, which is circulating everywhere, making you move, making you feel, making you think, making you act, oh, good heavens! You would lose many of your illusions about your personality. But indeed it is like that. Whether one knows it or not, it is like that” (CWM, Vol. 6, pp 106-108).

Now doesn’t this radically alter our view of paternal and maternal love for the child?

Duties toward Family

Having briefly explored the nature of parental love let us now look at the children’s duty toward their parents. The notion of family duties is an important one for people in the grihastha stage of their life. Dharmashastra-s and also our itihāsa-s have spoken much about this, we read about some of these duties of the householders in a previous unit. Here we look at a different dimension with regard to these duties.

Service to parents is part of family and social duty. But here again, one’s attitude toward such duty is important to consider. The psychic element of love and the quality of self-giving will not be there if one does it only as a social obligation, or even for the sake of attachment to the parents.

The important thing to remember is that even when living in the family and fulfilling one’s social duties, one can prepare oneself for higher goal in life of spiritual release. This can be done by consciously remembering the Divine in all and by doing all one’s duties as a sacrifice for the sake of the Divine. This will not only help the

person evolve inwardly, but also free oneself from the chains of attachment which only bring misery and suffering. This is how love for parents can purify itself and grow more toward its true psychic quality.

Even the earning of money and looking after family affairs can be and be done in a spirit of entire detachment if one truly wants to evolve in one's consciousness through family life.

Love between Friends

In ordinary life, friendships are generally founded upon shared interests, similar views toward life and its goals, regular association such as being school or college mates or work colleagues, etc. In some rare cases, there is a natural genuine mutual affection, even when there may not be much commonality on the surface. We find one of the most wonderful examples of such true friendship in the story of Krishna and Sudama. In the Mahabharata we also find the story of friendship between Duryodhana and Karna which can be a good subject of study for the dilemma between one's duty toward a friend and one's duty toward dharma, the right and the true.

The play of human egoism is active in relation between friends just like in all human relationships. This is what also gives them a fleeting character, as we commonly hear people speak of friends who change with time.

It is important that more and more people begin to see friendship, brotherhood, love to be sacred things, rooted in the soul, and not as things "broken at every moment by the movements of the ego, soiled and spoiled and destroyed by the passions, jealousies, treacheries to which the vital is prone" (Sri Aurobindo, CWSA, Vol. 31, p. 295). For that to happen, much purification of the vital is necessary. All clinging, all insistence for possession, petty emotions, sentimentalism, feeling of hurt, pride, envy etc. have to fall away if one wants to experience true affection. Love and affection have to be rebased on a deeper and higher consciousness.

FROM LOVE HUMAN TO LOVE DIVINE

We all crave for affection and love, it is one of the basic human needs. We try to satisfy this need through all our loves – love for the family, love for the beloved, love for friends, etc. And somehow or the other, at some point in time we go through much pain and struggle on account of love. We have seen why that is so. Thus, despite all our loves, something in us remains dissatisfied, our thirst for love remains unquenched.

"The thirst for affection and love is a human need, but it can be quenched only if it turns towards the Divine. As long as it seeks satisfaction in human beings, it will always be disappointed or wounded." (The Mother, CWM, Vol. 14, p. 121)

Sri Aurobindo gives a solution to overcome such disappointment, such disillusionment. In many cases this is often the start of seeking for something deeper, something more lasting in nature, something eternal. Out of a disenchantment with imperfect and impermanent human love comes a new beginning for some, beginning of a seeking for love divine, love that is true.

Establishing the consciousness on a psychic level instead of vital ego, on a purer and higher mental, vital and physical consciousness essentially means that all relations based on human love should be gradually centred in and around the Divine. All relations should pass from the vital to the spiritual basis. This means that jealousy, strife, hatred, aversion, rancour and all other evil vital feelings should be altogether abandoned. All egoistic love and attachment will have to disappear also. There must be a real living and lasting unity behind the love.

The way to this ideal of spiritually rooted love and relationships is different for different people.

For some the way is to leave everything else to follow the Divine alone, the way of the ascetic. However, this doesn't really mean an aversion for anybody any more than it means aversion for the world and life. "It only means absorption in one's central aim, with the idea that once that is attained it will be easy to found all relations on the true basis, to become truly united with others in the heart and the spirit and the life, united in the spiritual truth and in the Divine." (Sri Aurobindo, CWSA, Vol. 31, p. 289).

But there is also another way, the path of purification and transformation of the vital.

"The other way is to go forward from where one is, seeking the Divine centrally and subordinating all else to that, but not putting everything else aside, rather seeking to transform gradually and progressively whatever is capable of such transformation. All the things that are not wanted in the relation, – impurity, jealousy, anger, egoistic demand, – drop away as the inner being grows purer and is replaced by the unity of soul with soul and the binding together of the social life in the hoop of the Divine." (Sri Aurobindo, CWSA, Vol. 31, p. 289)

This is the path toward an integral perfection. This is the path that leads the individual and the collective to a greater Harmony – within and without, and to a deeper Love, love that heals, love that quenches the deepest thirst.

KABIR ON LOVE

We can't have a discussion on the nature of love and not speak of Sant Kabir. A mystic poet and saint of the 15-16th century, Kabir has had an immense influence on Indian philosophy as well as on Indian poetry. He was one of the most prominent figures of the Bhakti movement in North India. The name 'Kabir' comes from the Arabic word 'al-Kabir' which means "The Great", and it is also the 37th name of God in Islam.

Though there is debate on his parentage, Kabir was known to have been brought up in a family of poor Muslim weavers in Kashi. Though Kabir did not receive any formal education and was initiated into the trade of weaving, it is believed that the Vaishnava saint Swami Ramananda was his guru. Kabir is credited with having authored a considerable amount of poetical work in the form of songs and couplets (which are called doha-s). Kabir's poems were termed as "bāñīs" (utterances) by his followers, because these were first envisioned by Kabir and uttered in a heightened state of consciousness. His poems were uttered in Hindi, with influences of the vernacular dialects of Awadhi, Brij, and Bhojpuri.

Although Kabir wrote no systematic treatise on his poetic works, some of these were written down by two of his disciples, Bhāgodās and Dharmadās. Some were recorded by Guru Arjun Dev (the fifth Guru of Sikhs) in the Guru Granth Sahib (the religious text of Sikhism) in their undistorted form. Much of it however was passed on as oral tradition with certain modifications and distortions across the centuries. Kabir's legacy is still carried forward by 'Kabir Panth', a community that attributes him as its founder.

Many of this dohas on Love speak of the highest truths about love – human and divine, and compel us to reflect on the depth of the truth hidden in the few simple words. Let us conclude by presenting a selection of his dohas on love.

आगि आंचि सहना सुगम, सुगम खडग की धार

नेह निबाहन ऐक रास, महा कठिन ब्यबहार।

Bearing heat of fire is easy, the blade of sword is easy

Maintaining love in the same way is a very difficult practise.

प्रेम पियाला सो पिये शीश दक्षिना देय

लोभी शीश ना दे सके, नाम प्रेम का लेय।

Only he can drink the cup of love who can donate his head

A greedy can never sacrifice his head he can only howl the name of love.

प्रीति बहुत संसार मे, नाना बिधि की सोय

उत्तम प्रीति सो जानिय, राम नाम से जो होय।

There are various types of love in the world

The best type of love is that which is with the name of Ram.

प्रेम प्रेम सब कोई कहै, प्रेम ना चिन्है कोई

जा मारग हरि जी मिलै, प्रेम कहाये सोई।

Everyone says he is in love, but no one knows true love

The road on which the God meets, is that true love.

यह तो घर है प्रेम का, उंचा अधिक ऐकांत

सीस काटि पग तर धरै, तब पैठे कोई संत।

This is the home of love, very high and lonely

One who cuts his head and keeps under his feet, only then saint can enter into this house.

सबै रसायन हम किया, प्रेम समान ना कोये

रंचक तन मे संचरै, सब तन कंचन होये।

I took all medicines but nothing is like love

Even if a little amount of it runs in the heart, the whole body turns gold.

पीया चाहै प्रेम रस, राखा चाहै मान

दोय खड़ ऐक म्यान मे, देखा सुना ना कान।

Prenatal Education: Ancient Indian Perspectives

Either you drink the juice of love, or keep the pride

Two swords can never adjust in one sheath, it has never been seen or heard.

REFERENCES

Sri Aurobindo, Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo (CWSA). Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust. Volumes 1, 12, 23, 31

The Mother, Complete Works of the Mother (CWM). Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust. Volumes 3, 6, 14

UNDERSTANDING CONCEPTS OF SHADBHAVAS - WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SUPRJANANA

Dr. Geetha Kumar

Reader, Department of Rachana Shareera, SJSACH, Nazarathpet, Chennai

This research paper is the result of a focused literature review. Classical references on Ayurvedic literature and modern medicine on subject of Embryology & Genetics were referred from the library of Sri Jayendra Saraswathy Ayurveda College, Chennai and related websites. Literature collected was critically analyzed and the key findings are presented here.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is an ancient and universal system of health and healing that can be used beneficially in any culture, in any era, by anyone. Mother Nature has provided the capacity of reproduction to all living beings, enabling them to preserve their species. Human being, the most evolved creature, is fully aware of the significance of better progeny. This has been true in all times. The references available in our ancient texts clearly indicate its significance.

In earlier times, medical study was not limited to only the disease and treatment aspects. Allied branches were also given equal importance. It was a matter of curiosity for our ancient healers to learn about the mystery of reproduction, ultimately motivating them to explore the related secrets. Result of their efforts have been preserved and documented in ancient Ayurvedic texts. We can get sufficient references in these texts regarding the intricate details of foetal development as well as many other aspects of conception, pregnancy, childbirth etc.

Despite the advancements in diagnostic techniques and therapeutic interventions, medical science today has failed to keep the incidence of congenital malformations under control. Ayurveda, the ancient Indian medical

system, gave due emphasis to this and postulated various measures to minimize the risks. These measures start well before conception.

According to Ayurvedic principles, the proper preparation of the parents is an essential prerequisite for a healthy progeny. Pre-conception care is a set of interventions that identifies biomedical, behavioral and social risks to the health of the mother and the baby. It includes both – prevention and management, emphasizing health issues that require action before conception, very early in pregnancy, for maximal impact.

For meeting the objective of healthy progeny, Ayurveda scholars gave importance to six procreative factors (*Shadgarbhkarabhavas*) which are: *Matrija*, *Pitrija*, *Aatmaja*, *Rasaja*, *Satmyaja*, and *Sattvaja*¹. Neither mother nor father, nor the congenial atmosphere or different varieties of food, or the soul, or the mind transmigrated from other world can be sole causative factor for the formation of foetus². The conglomeration of these procreative factors is must for healthy progeny. The physical, mental, social, and spiritual well-being of the person, proper nutrition of the mother during pregnancy, and practice of a wholesome regimen, play a prime role in achieving a healthy offspring, thus structuring a healthy family, society, and nation. Negligence toward any of these factors can become a cause for unhealthy and defective childbirth and/or congenital malformations.

ROLE OF HERIDITY IN EMBRYOLOGY

Charaka has said that there are six factors which are collectively responsible for proper development of an embryo which also include hereditary factors. They are known as *shadbhava samudaya*.

1. *Mataruja* or Maternal factors
2. *Pitrija* or paternal factors
3. *Atmaja* or Atma (soul)
4. *Satmyaja* or factors for which growing embryo has tolerance and acceptability
5. *Rasaja* or Nutritional factors
6. *Satwaja* or Psychic factors

All the six factors act collectively while the embryo is growing. In absence of even single factor embryo will not grow properly. Ayurveda also believes that through the growth process of every organ is initiated at one and the same time; a few organs develop early whereas a few develop afterwards. This collective initiation of growth process has been accepted by all Ayurvedic embryologists under the heading of '*yugpat vikas krama*'. This theory was postulated by Dhanvantari³.

Following body parts or organs respectively develop from respective *bhavas*⁴:

Matruja bhavas: Skin, blood, plasma, muscle tissue, fat, umbilicus, heart, pancreas, gall bladder liver, spleen kidney, urinary bladder, stomach, duodenum, small intestine, omentum, rectum, anal canal and anus.

Pitruja bhava: Hair, secondary sexual characters like beard, axillaries and groin hair and teeth blood vessels, bony tissues, nails, ligament, tendon, semen, and sperm.

Atmaja bhava: It awards independent life span to every individual (whether it is short life span, average life span or long life span), control on actions of sensory organs, vital energy, facial look, body built, voice, complexion, psycho-metaphysical principles such as forbearance, sense of happiness, grief, jealousy, good or composed psychic development, intelligence, inspiration, pain, desire, ego and memory.

Satmyja bhava: An embryo cannot grow properly if it is not provided acceptable or agreeable nutrition through maternal diet. The *satmyaja* factor is responsible for awarding health, inclination to work, non greedy attitude, undemanding and unbecoming behavior, perception, capacity of organs, speech articulation, valour, and glow, ideal semen for reproduction, continued sense of happiness, and general awareness in sense.

Rasaja bhava: In absence of nutritional factors mother and foetus both cannot survive and thus no proper foetal growth takes place. Therefore, the mother must intake all antenatal nutritive essentials like fruits, vitamins or minerals etc. The aspects which grow properly because of the influence of *rasaja* factors are: growth and decay of body, vitality, body built, survival and viable factors, growth factors for proper development of body parts and organs, metabolism, strength, spirit, and also rejuvenating and immune factors.

Satvaja bhava: *Mana* or *satva* arrives from previous body (*purva janma*) by *punarjanma* (rebirth). This is why many a times one recalls or recaps the events of previous life (*purva janma*). Such persons who remember previous life events are known as *jatismar*. The properties which are awarded by *satva* factors are love, affection, good conduct, sanctity in life, belief on god, prowess, spirit, jealousy, maintenance of past memory, attachment, sacrifice, sense, anger, chivalrous character, fear, tiredness, kind heartedness, activeness, lethargy, and sensuous temperament. Status of *satva* or *mana* varies from person to person. Some are of *rajas* temperament, some have more of *tamas*, and some are *sattvic*.

CONTRIBUTION OF SHADBHAVAS

If mother and father are the solely responsible or capable elements of producing an embryo, all those couple desirous of having child of a particular sex will have the child according to their wish. No couple will ever remain childless or with a progeny of unwanted sex⁵. The embryo is born from the mother and the father. Placentation is not possible without mother and father, in fact, male and female gametes. Female reproductive organs are one among the several essential factors of conception⁶.

If only *atma* is accepted as creator of another *atma* it could have preferred to transmit its very qualities to the species of its choice. But it is not so, thus only *atma* is not capable of producing⁷.

Embryo is not derived only from congenial, wholesome or suitable diet. If it was so, then only those couples using suitable diet possessing high quality of *rasa* would have had progeny⁸.

The *satwa* does not descend from outer world, if it was so, all the happenings of previous life would not have remained unheard, unseen, unknown. But one does not remember anything of previous life⁹.

The mother, the father, and *atma* etc. – all these factors are not totally independent for their functioning. Some of the functions are performed independently, some depending upon one another's deeds, in some cases these interdependencies are much potent and in others not so.

DISCUSSION

Probable Correlation of *Shadbhavas*

Matrija-Pitrija Bhavas: One of the most important concepts concerning heredity has been thoroughly presented in Ayurvedic literature. *Kula* or *Gotra* of parents, age at the time of conception, health of the reproductive organs of the parents, time of conception, *bija* of mother and father, maternal diet during pregnancy, drugs and medicines taken by a woman during her pregnancy, and any disease in the mother during her pregnancy, can affect the health and normalcy of a foetus. Genetic imprinting and inheritance of traits for humans are explained through Mendel's model of inheritance. Mendel deduced that inheritance depends upon discrete units of inheritance, called factors or genes. Autosomal traits are associated with a single gene on an autosome (non-sex chromosome). They are called 'dominant' because a single copy—inherited from either parent—is enough to cause this trait to appear. Autosomal recessive trait is one pattern of inheritance for a trait, disease, or disorder to be passed on through families.

X-linked genes are found on the X-sex chromosome. X-linked genes just like autosomal genes have both dominant and recessive types. Recessive X-linked disorders are rarely seen in females and usually only affect males, while Y-linked inheritance occurs when a gene, trait, or disorder is transferred through the Y chromosome. Since Y chromosomes can only be found in males, Y-linked traits are only passed on from father to son. Certain genes are expressed either from the maternal or the paternal genome as a result of genomic imprinting, a process that confers functional differences on parental genomes during mammalian development^{10,11}.

Epigenetic inheritance is an unconventional finding. It goes against the idea that inheritance happens only through the DNA code that passes from parent to offspring. It means that a parent's experiences, in the form of epigenetic tags, can be passed down to future generations. The genome changes slowly, through the processes of random mutation and natural selection. It takes many generations for a genetic trait to become common in a population. The epigenome, on the other hand, can change rapidly in response to signals from the environment. And epigenetic changes can happen in many individuals at once. Through epigenetic inheritance, some of the experiences of the parents may pass to future generations. At the same time, the epigenome remains flexible as environmental conditions continue to change. Epigenetic inheritance may allow an organism to continually adjust its gene expression to fit its environment – without changing its DNA code¹².

Additionally, it must be added that adequate availability of nutrition in maternal blood and its transfer across placenta are essential for normal growth of the foetus. Malnutrition in the mother affects foetal growth and can possibly cause foetal malformation¹³.

Aatmaja bhava: Why do in spite of same family, time of birth, nutrition, we find differences in the lifespan and psycho-metaphysical aspects, even among the twins? Why do same initial pathological features produce different diseases in different people; why do they manifest quickly in some, whereas in others there is a long latent period? Such unexplained or idiopathic factors are due to the *atmaja bhava*. The effect of what is done during the previous life is known as *daiva*. The effect of what is done during the present life is known as *purushakara*.

All living beings possess an inherent drive to evolve, to become the highest possible expression of life and to fully realize themselves. Personal development is the willful co-operation with this natural evolutionary process. During the lower stages of human development, material ambitions and an egotistical nature are justified because *atma* (deeds of previous life) drive us on wards and upwards.

Sattvaja bhavas: Human being possess instinct and intelligence. All these things may not happen without the presence of *Manasa* (psyche). *Dauhrida avastha* of *garbhini* (special desires of a pregnant woman) are a very evident manifestation of the *Sattvaja Bhava*. Acharyas have clearly specified that the suppression of desires of the *Dauhridi* (*pregnant woman*) may influence the psychology of both the mother and fetus¹⁴.

Prenatal and perinatal psychology is an interdisciplinary study of the foundations of health in body, mind, emotions and in enduring response patterns to life. It explores the psychological and psycho-physiological effects and implications of the earliest experiences of the individual, before birth ('prenatal'), as well as during and immediately after childbirth ('perinatal') on the health and learning ability of the individual and on their relationships. As a broad field it has developed a variety of curative and preventive interventions for the unborn, at childbirth, for the newborn, infants, and adults who are adversely affected by early prenatal and perinatal dysfunction and trauma.

The types of emotions that are developed in the womb vary. Babies in the womb are believed to be able to recognize love, happiness, sadness and stress. Talking or playing music is believed to comfort a baby in the womb, and help the baby understand the emotion of love. Hearing voices outside the womb will also help the baby determine the difference between happiness and sadness based on pitch and sound level of voices. In addition, the emotion or feeling of stress is evident in the baby if the mother is also under stress. A rise in the mother's blood pressure will trigger a response in the baby's blood pressure as well.

Satmyaja bhavas: These factors influence embryonic, foetal, and post-natal development, particularly in aspects of tolerance, adaptability and acceptability. The movement of the tubal/uterine fluid, the chemical diversity, and their interaction produce a unique environment able to support embryo development and modulate gene expression. Successful implantation is an absolute requirement for the reproduction. The process by which a foreign implantation occurs during the putative implantation window, in which the maternal endometrium is ready to accept the blastocyst, also plays a specific role. From the viewpoint of the future embryo, the goal of implantation is to invade maternal tissue and gain access to nutrients essential for its survival and development. From the perspective of the future embryo, preparation consists of the expression of numerous receptors and adhesion molecules on the outside of the preimplantation blastocyst and the production of cytokines and other mediators. The process of implantation encompasses several distinct stages: apposition, adhesion, penetration, and trophoblast invasion. These steps can only take place during the window of implantation.

Although the foetal genome plays an important role in determining the growth potential in utero, increasing evidence suggests that the intrauterine environment is a major determinant of foetal growth. For example, embryo-transfer studies show that it is the recipient mother rather than the donor mother that more

strongly influences foetal growth. There is also evidence that the intrauterine environment of the individual foetus may be of greater importance in the etiology of chronic diseases in adults than the genetics of the fetus.

Rasaja bhavas: Among intrauterine environmental factors, nutrition plays the most critical role in influencing placental and foetal growth. Foetal growth is also influenced by hormone secreted from placenta, and genetic factors. At the beginning embryo gets nutrition from trophoblast, after implantation from endometrium. However, as embryo grows this simple nutritive system becomes insufficient and placenta develops to take up the function of nutrition, respiration and excretion.

Nutrition is the major intrauterine environmental factor that alters expression of the foetal genome and may have lifelong consequences. Alterations in foetal nutrition and endocrine status may result in developmental adaptations that permanently change the structure, physiology, and metabolism of the offspring, thereby predisposing individuals to metabolic, endocrine, and cardiovascular diseases in adult life.

For instance, in twin pregnancies, a baby with foetal growth retardation is more likely to develop non-insulin dependent (type-II) diabetes mellitus than a sibling with normal foetal growth. Intrauterine growth restriction (IUGR) refers to poor growth of a foetus while in the mother's womb during pregnancy. The causes can be many, but most often involve poor maternal nutrition or lack of adequate oxygen supply to the foetus. IUGR affects 3-10% of pregnancies. 20% of stillborn infants have IUGR. Perinatal mortality rates are 4-8 times higher for infants with IUGR, and morbidity is present in 50% of surviving infants¹⁷.

PREVENTIVE AND SUPPORTIVE MEASURES

Routine prenatal screening can help the parents take preventive measures which can help reduce genetic disorders and mortality, and also help identify promotive measures for facilitating desirable qualities in progeny.

Before pregnancy

In Ashtanta Hridyam, the ideal age for conception has been described as 16 years for female and 25 for male.¹⁸ Since both the partners are full of valour and vigour at this age, the child also possesses these qualities. The marriages should be performed in auspicious ways. Similarly, very young and older woman should not be impregnated. During impregnation, diet, mode of life used by the couple, psychological status of the couple, specific season, odd or even days of conception, position during coitus, all these factors influence the process of embryogenesis.

- I. Advice should be given to couples to complete their intended family size preferably before the age of 35 years, especially for women. The incidence of chromosomal disorders and spontaneous abortion rises after the mother's age of 35 years. For example, first pregnancy after the age of 35 increases risk of breast carcinoma. Disorders due to new dominant mutations increase with advanced paternal age.
- i) Information regarding the deleterious effects on the developing embryo of smoking, alcohol intake, unsupervised medication, exposure to X-rays, and certain mutagens should be made available to women prior to pregnancy.
 - ii) When the couple is informed of the possibility that they are at an increased risk of having a genetically abnormal child, they can choose to plan the conception according to medical advice and can make use of the genetic services available. Primary prevention of genetic disorders depends largely on preconception information, screening, and counseling.
 - iii) The high rate of traditional same *gotra* marriages¹⁹ which increase the frequency of autosomal recessive disorders, can be avoided by imparting this knowledge to people.
 - iv) Treatment of existing pathological conditions of parents is important, because major malformations are determined very early during embryonic development.
 - v) In preconception period, man and woman should prepare the body by purificatory measures. The man properly oiled with *ghrita*, having observed celibacy for one month after taking *Sali* rice with milk, and woman oiled with oil, taken food prepared with oil and *masha*, having observed chastity for one month, should have coitus. Probably these measures promote healthy progeny. Supplementing the woman's diet as advised in '*Ritumati paricharya*'²⁰ and '*Garbhini Paricharya*'²¹, with *madhura*, *sheeta*, *drava* in the first months after conception, strengthens female genital system and reduces the risk congenital malformations.
 - vi) Environment and psychology of a woman should be favourable and promote good health. She should avoid suppression of natural urges, thoughts likely to promote anger and fear, and use of articles likely to produce diseases during pregnancy. She should avoid daily and excessive use of sweet, sour, salty, hot, pungent, astringent food items. The risk of miscarriage, congenital abnormality and foetal growth retardation can be minimized through avoidance of smoking and alcohol intake during pregnancy²².
- II. Advice regarding nutrition: Throughout the reproductive years, and particularly prior to conception, evidence suggests that an optimal diet reduces the frequency of unsuccessful pregnancy outcomes and severe congenital malformations.

During pregnancy

- I. Charaka says that the pregnant woman desirous of producing the healthy and good-looking child should give up non congenial diet and mode of life and protect herself by doing good conduct and using congenial diet and mode of life. Importance also has been given to fulfillment of the longing of mother (doughrida) as suppression of desires may influence psychology of mother and foetus.
- II. Specific dietetic regimen has been prescribed for woman having normal development of foetus, so that she delivers the child possessing good health, energy or strength, voice, and compactness. Similarly, physical strain, psychological stress, purifying procedures have been described as Garbhopghatkar bhavas²³. Several environmental agents (teratogens) can cause damage during the prenatal period. These include prescription and nonprescription drugs, illegal drugs, tobacco, alcohol, environmental pollutants, infectious disease agents such as the rubella virus and the toxoplasmosis bacterium, maternal malnutrition, maternal emotional stress, and Rh factor blood incompatibility between mother and child. During each visit these regimens should be explained to the pregnant woman along with its benefits and hazards.

CONCLUSION

For meeting the objective of a healthy progeny, *Ayurveda* scholars felt the importance of six procreative factors (*Shadgarbhakarabhavas*): *Matrija* (maternal), *Pitrija* (paternal), *Atmaja* (Soul), *Rasaja* (Nutritional), *Satmyaja* (Wholesomeness), and *Sattvaja* (Psyche / Mind). The congruence of these procreative factors is a must for healthy progeny. Healthy mother, father (good code of conduct), practice of a wholesome regimen and a healthy mind (psychological status of parents) play a prime role in achieving a healthy offspring, thus structuring a healthy family, society, and nation.

Each procreative factor is assigned with a certain organogenesis / functional / psychological phenomenon, to develop in the forthcoming baby, during its intrauterine life. A lag on the part of any of these procreative factors will lead to physical, functional or psychological defects, which can be contributed by the respective factor.

Preconception counseling can play a vital role not only in achieving the goal of a healthy progeny, but also in preventing congenital and genetic disorders. *Garbhakara Bhavas* are not only the factors that bring progeny, but they are the carriers of the organogenesis and other traits to the foetus. The normal transmitted traits through any of the *Garbhakara Bhavas* can be modified by the preventive / curative measures, if they are not

permanent or serious or major. Antenatal care, right from the preconception to full-term delivery will certainly play a key role in the prevention of congenital and genetic disorders and promotion of good health.

If an individual's genetic mutation is in the positive (*Satvik*) direction, positive thoughts always arise in his mind and if the environment is congenial and healthy, he will be strong, both physically and spiritually. However, if the genetic mutation is in the negative (*Tamasic*) mode, the individual will be physically weak and spiritually impoverished.

REFERENCES

1. *Charaka Samhita, Shrira sthana, 3/3*, edited and translated by Pt Kashinah Shastri. Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sanshana, 4th ed. 1994, p. 737
2. *Charaka Samhita, Shrira sthana, 3/3*, edited and translated by Pt Kashinah Shastri. Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sanshana, 4th ed. 1994, p. 737
3. *Charaka Samhita, Shrira sthana, 6/21*, edited and translated by Pt Kashinah Shastri. Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sanshana, 4th ed. 1994, p. 768
4. *Sushruta Samhita, Shrira sthana, 3/31*, edited and translated by Kaviraj Ambikadatta Sastri. Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sanshana, reprint, 2008. p. 27
5. *Charaka Samhita, Shrira sthana, 3/2*, edited and translated by Pt Kashinah Shastri. Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sanshana, 4th ed. 1994, p. 739
6. *Sushruta Samhita, Shrira sthana, 2/33*, edited and translated by Kaviraj Ambikadatta Sastri. Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sanshana, reprint, 2008. p. 55
7. *Charaka Samhita, Shrira sthana, 3/2*, edited and translated by Pt Kashinah Shastri. Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sanshana, 4th ed. 1994, p. 740
8. *Charaka Samhita, Shrira sthana, 3/2*, edited and translated by Pt Kashinah Shastri. Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sanshana, 4th ed. 1994, p. 740
9. *Charaka Samhita, Shrira sthana, 3/2*, edited and translated by Pt Kashinah Shastri. Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sanshana, 4th ed. 1994, p. 741
10. Chial, H. (2008) *Mendelian genetics: Patterns of inheritance and single-gene disorders*. Nature Education ,1(1):63

11. Mendelian inheritance - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mendelian_inheritance
12. Youngson, N.A. and Whitelaw, E. (2008). *Transgenerational epigenetic effects*. Annual Reviews in Genomics and Human Genetics 9: 233-57.
Kaati, G., Bygren, L.O., Pembrey, M., and Sjöström, J. (2007). *Transgenerational response to nutrition, early life circumstances and longevity*. European Journal of Human Genetics 15: 784-790.
13. Inderbir Singh, G P Pal. *Human Embryology*- 8th ed. India: Macmillan Publishers.
14. *Sushruta Samhita, Shrirashthana*, 3/16,17,18, edited & translated by Kaviraj Ambikadatta Sastri. Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sanshana, reprint, 2008, p. 24
15. Guoyao Wu, Fuller W. Bazer, Timothy A. Cudd, Cynthia J. Meininger, and Thomas E. Spencer, *Maternal Nutrition and Foetal Development*.
16. David Shaffer & Katherine Kip, *Developmental Psychology: Childhood and Adolescence*.
17. British Nutrition Foundation. *Nutrition and Development: Short- and Long-Term Consequences for Health*.
18. Vaidya Lalchandra, *Astanga Hridayam, Shareerasthana* 1/8,9, New Delhi: Motilal Banarasidas, 1990.
19. *Charaka Samhita, Shrirashthana*, 2/3, edited & translated by Prof. Sharma PV. Chaukhambha orientalia, 9th ed., 2004., p.724
20. *Sushruta Samhita, Shrirashthana*, 2/26, edited & translated by Kaviraj Ambikadatta Sastri. Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sanshana, reprint, 2008, p. 13
21. *Sushruta Samhita, Shrirashthana*, 3/30, edited & translated by Kaviraj Ambikadatta Sastri. Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sanshana, reprint, 2008, p. 14
22. *Sushruta Samhita, Shrirashthana*, 10, edited & translated by Kaviraj Ambikadatta Sastri. Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sanshana, reprint, 2008. p. 73
23. *Charaka Samhita, Shrirashthana*, 4/18, edited and translated by Pt Kashinath Shastri. Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sanshana, 4th ed. 1994, p. 765

ANUVAMSHIKI SIDDHANTA – THE CONCEPT OF INHERITANCE THROUGH AN AYURVEDIC PERSPECTIVE

Dr. Indusree C Suseelan & Dr. Harshitha M S

*Assistant Professor, Dept. of Shareera Rachana, Sri Jayendra Saraswathi Ayurveda College, Nazarathpet,
Chennai*

*Assistant Professor, Dept. of Shareera Rachana, Sri Dharmasthala Manjunatheshwara College of Ayurveda &
Hospital, Udupi, Karnataka, India*

INTRODUCTION

According to Indian philosophy, the *Sristi nirmana parampara* (evolution of the universe) was understood on the basis of the *Karya karana siddhanta* i.e. the theory of predicting the *karya* (effect) by looking at the *karana* (cause) and deducting the *karana* by looking at the *karya*. *Anuvamshiki siddhanta* is one among the *karya karana siddhanta* which is based on predicting the *karya* by understanding the *karana* – the *karya* or the future product will be the *anurupa* of the *karana* (similar to the cause). The concept of *Anuvamshiki siddhanta* is very similar to the concept of inheritance. This *siddhanta* (theory) propounds about factors such as *Beeja* (seed), *Beeja bhaga* (part of seed) and *Beeja bhaga avayava* (portion of part of seed) which influence the occurrence of hereditary diseases such as deformities in growing foetus, infertility, sterility and sexual perversions.

OBJECTIVE OF THIS STUDY

This study aims to critically analyze the concept of *Anuvamshiki siddhanta* given in literature with special reference to the concept of inheritance. References from Ayurveda literary works such as chapters from Charaka Samhita - *Shareera sthana*^[1] and Susruta Samhita - *Shareera sthana*^[2] were collected, reviewed and analyzed.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Ayurvedic classics propound that if the part of the seed (*Sukra* or *Artava*) which is responsible for the formation of a particular organ is vitiated, it will result in the vitiation of that respective organ. If it is not vitiated, then there would not be any vitiation of the respective organ. So both the possibilities are there (i.e. the respective organs of the progeny may or may not be vitiated depending upon the vitiation or otherwise of the part of the seed

responsible for the formation of such organs). *Beeja*, *Beeja bhaga* and *Beeja bhaga avayava* are mentioned as the important factors responsible for hereditary defects.

Beeja refers to *Sukra* (male gamete) and *Sonitha* (female gamete). *Beeja bhaga* refers to the part of *beeja* responsible for production of particular *avayava* of the body (chromosomes), and *Beeja bhaga avayava* refers to the part of *Beeja bhaga* responsible for production of a particular part of an organ (genes). The sense organs of all living beings are derived from the *Atma* (soul) and influenced by the *Purvakarma* i.e. deeds of the past life.^[3]

Disorders due to *Beeja dusti*

Beeja dosa can be considered as due to the *asuddha sukra artava* (vitiated female gamete). These include the diseases of *yoni* (uterus). Here in this context the diseases caused due to the *beeja dosa* (vitiated gamete) and *Beeja bhaga dosa* (chromosomes) could be considered. Many such disease conditions are mentioned including *Jataja Prameha* (congenital diabetics), *Sahaja Arshas* (congenital hemorrhoids) and *Kusta roga* (congenital leprosy).

Disorders due to *Beeja bhaga* and *Beeja bhaga avayava dusti*

If a woman conceives when her *artava* (gamete) and uterus were not completely vitiated but simply afflicted by the circulating aggravated *dosa* because of her indulgence in *dosa* aggravating regimes, one or many of the organs of the foetus derived from the maternal source (*artava*) get deformed. These vitiated *dosa* may afflict the *beeja* or the *Beeja bhaga* of the foetus by which the corresponding derived organs gets deformed. When the *Beeja bhaga* (part of *beeja*) in the *artava* of the mother which is responsible for the production of *garbhaashaya* (uterus) is excessively vitiated, then she gives birth to a sterile child called as *Vandhya praja*. When the *Beeja bhaga avayava* (a fraction of the part of the *beeja*) in the *artava* of the mother which is responsible for the production of the *garbhaasaya* is excessively vitiated, then she gives birth to a *Putipraja* (who delivers dead foetus). When the *Beeja bhaga avayava*, in the *artava* of the mother, responsible for the production of the uterus, and also the portions of the *beejabhaga* responsible for the production of organs that characterize a female, such as breast and genital organs, get excessively vitiated, then she gives birth to a child who is not a complete female but only having the feminine characteristics in abundance - such a type of child is known as *Vaarta*.^[4]

In males, similar to females, when the part of the *beeja* which is responsible for the production of *sukra* (male gamete) in the foetus is excessively vitiated, then this gives birth to a sterile child i.e. a *Vandhya praja*. When the *Beeja bhaga avayava* (a fraction of the part of *beeja*) which is responsible for the production of *sukra* is excessively vitiated, then it gives birth to a *Putipraja* (whose child dies before delivery). When the *Beeja bhaga avayava* which is responsible for the production of *sukra* and the *Beeja bhaga* which is responsible for the

production of organs that characterize a male, are excessively vitiated, this gives birth to a child who is not a complete male but only having masculine characteristics in abundance. Such a type of child is known as *Trinaputrika*.^[5]

The *beeja dosa* mentioned above are also caused due to factors such as *Aatma dosa* (sinful deeds of previous life), *Aashaya dosa* (destruction of genital organs), *Kaala dosa* (defects due to improper regimes) and *Maatruja aahara vihara dosa* (improper diet of mother).^[6]

RESULTS

The references related to the concept of *Anuvamshiki siddhanta* was seen in 3rd chapter of Charaka Samhita *Shareera sthana*. Acharya Charaka mentions factors such as *Beeja*, *Beeja bhaga* and *Beeja bhaga avayava* as being responsible for inducing hereditary. *Beeja* refers to *Sukra* and *Sonitha*, it can be considered as male and female gametes respectively. *Beeja bhaga* as part of *beeja*, can be considered in relation with chromosomes. *Beeja bhaga avayava* refers to the part of *beeja bhaga*, it can be considered as the genes which constitute the chromosomes. The review of concepts from Acharya Charaka shows that this can be related with the modern concept of inheritance. Acharya Charaka also mentions factors which are responsible for vitiation of these three factors such as *beeja*, *atmakarma*, *ashaya*, *kala* and *aahara vihara* of the mother.

DISCUSSION

The concept of *Anuvamshiki siddhanta* is very similar to the concept of inheritance. The variation and hereditary play an important role in the survival of individual during the evolution of the universe. The term variation is concerned with the forces or influences due to which no two organisms are exactly alike. Heredity refers to the study of the factors responsible for the resemblance between parents and their offspring. Variation helps the individual to generate a new trait or feature which may help in the survival in the given period of time, while hereditary helps in carrying these variations to the next generation for their survival. If these variations are not inherited then they are of no use even if it is unique or very useful. Two progenies of the same father and mother will show characteristic features of parent(s), some similar features to each other and also some unique features. Factors such as *Beeja*, *Beeja bhaga* and *Beeja bhaga avayava* influence the occurrence of hereditary diseases which affects the future generations.

Beeja meaning seed can be considered as the male and female gametes responsible for formation of foetus. Gametes include sperm in males and ovum in females. Any vitiation of *beeja* can be taken as disease of the gametes resulting in the deformities in growing foetus. Conditions such as congenital diabetics, congenital hemorrhoids and congenital leprosy are mentioned as caused due to vitiation of *beeja*. The progeny of a leper will

not be affected unless his sperm is affected with the disease pathogen.^[7] Similarly the progeny of a blind person will be affected with blindness only if his or her sperm or ovum is affected. In the context of *napumsaka* (hermaphrodite) leading to sexual perversions such as *Asekya*, *Sougandika*, *Kumbhika*, *Dwireta*, *Pavanendriya* and *Samskaravahi* where sperm and ovum of the progeny are affected and the progeny becomes infertile can also be considered as those caused by *beeja vikruti*.

Beeja bhaga referring to a part of *beeja* can be considered in relation with chromosomes as they are responsible for the inheritance of characters of a particular species. Chromosomes are the chromatin of the interphase nucleus which is closely coiled in the form of rod-like basophilic structures. *Beeja bhaga avayava* refers to the part of *beejabhaga*, it can be considered as the genes which constitute the chromosomes. Genes are the structural units of inheritance stored in chromosomes. The conditions caused due to the vitiation of *Beeja bhaga* and *Beeja bhaga avayava* include *vandhya praja*, *putipraja*, *vaarta* and *trinaputrika*. All these conditions are related to structural deformities of male and female genital organs of the foetus along with afflictions in their secondary sexual characters, finally resulting in sterility of the progeny.

The factors responsible for congenital deformities such as defects in *beeja*, *atmakarma*, *ashaya*, *kala* and *aahara vihara* of the mother produce vitiation of *tridosha* (*vata*, *pitta* and *kapha*) resulting in the impairment of the *samsthana* (shape), *varna* (colour), *indriya* (sense organs), *avayava* (organs) in the *garbha* (offspring). *Aatma dosha* here refers to *Purvakarmaphala* (deeds of previous life). *Aashaya dosa* refers to defects of *garbhaashaya* and *sukraashaya* leading to *sukraashayavikattana* (destruction of male genital organs). *Kaala dosa* refers to defects due to improper regime during *Ritumatikala* (ovulation). *Maatruja aahara vihara dosa* refers to improper diet and regimes of mother during *garbhadana kala* (pregnancy). The deformities of sense organs are mentioned as due to *Atma dosa* i.e., sinful deeds of previous life. Ayurveda mentions methods to prevent the vitiation of such factors including *prayaschita karma* (various religious rituals and rites) to prevent *atma dosa*, proper *aahara* and *vihara* during *Ritumatikala* (ovulation) and *garbhadana kala* (pregnancy). This knowledge can be utilized for preventing hereditary disorders and genetic counseling.

CONCLUSION

Anuvamshiki siddhanta discusses about the factors such as *Beeja* (gametes), *Beeja bhaga* (chromosomes) and *Beeja bhaga avayava* (genes) that are mentioned as responsible for inducing hereditary. Defects in these factors cause deformities in growing foetus, infertility, sterility and sexual perversions. This theory can be related with the concept of inheritance. The knowledge regarding the concept of inheritance can be used to prevent the heredity defects and genetic counseling. This can be achieved by following the regimens mentioned in Ayurvedic classics during ovulation and pregnancy period, which will lead to the formation of healthy offspring.

REFERENCES

1. Acharya Agnivesha. Acharya Charaka, Vaidya Yadavji Trikamji Acharya, editors. Acharya Chakrapani Dutta. *Charaka Samhita with Ayurvedadipika Commentary*. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan; 2008, p.738, pp. 314-5.
2. Acharya Sushruta. Vaidya Yadavji Trikamji Acharya, Narayanaram Acharya editors. Acharya Dalhana. *Sushruta Samhita with Nibandha Sangraha commentary*. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Surabharati Prakashan; 2008, p. 824, p. 273.
3. Acharya Agnivesha. Acharya Charaka, Vaidya Yadavji Trikamji Acharya, editors. Acharya Chakrapani Dutta. *Charaka Samhita with Ayurvedadipika Commentary*. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan; 2008, p. 738, pp. 314-5.
4. Acharya Agnivesha. Acharya Charaka, Vaidya Yadavji Trikamji Acharya, editors. Acharya Chakrapani Dutta. *Charaka Samhita with Ayurvedadipika Commentary*. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan; 2008, p. 738, pp. 321-2.
5. Acharya Agnivesha. Acharya Charaka, Vaidya Yadavji Trikamji Acharya, editors. Acharya Chakrapani Dutta. *Charaka Samhita with Ayurvedadipika Commentary*. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan; 2008, p.738, p. 322.
6. Acharya Agnivesha. Acharya Charaka, Vaidya Yadavji Trikamji Acharya, editors. Acharya Chakrapani Dutta. *Charaka Samhita with Ayurvedadipika Commentary*. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan; 2008. p. 738, p. 305.
7. Acharya Sushruta. Vaidya Yadavji Trikamji Acharya, Narayanaram Acharya editors. Acharya Dalhana. *Sushruta Samhita with Nibandha Sangraha commentary*. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Surabharati Prakashan; 2008, p. 824, p. 273.

CITTA-PARIKARMA – A YOGASŪTRA BASED FRAMEWORK FOR PRENATAL EDUCATION

Dr. Jayaraman Mahadevan

Director, Research Department
Krishnamacyara Yoga Mandiram, Chennai

Vyasa's commentary to Yogasūtra 1.33 introduces a term called Parikarma for the *citta* –

यस्य चित्तस्यावस्थितस्येदं शास्त्रेण परिकर्म निर्दिश्यते

Parikarma means tools for preparing the mind. It refers to the set of seven methods suggested by Sage Patañjali from Sūtra 1.33 to 1.39. In the context of Yogasūtra, these tools prepare the mind for higher yogic pursuit called *Samāpatti* (*Samādhi*).

Interestingly, going by the etymology, the word *Samāpatti* means becoming/transformation. This seminar is also about a transformation. It is a transformation from womanhood to motherhood. This transformation also needs preparation of various kinds. Mental preparation is the foremost preparation that is required.

The Vedic lore has many interpretations of various layers that include - *ādhiyājñika*, *ādhidāivika*, *ādhibhautika* and *ādhyātmika* strata. Yogasūtra is not a Vedic text but taking the cue of multiple interpretations from the Vedic interpretations, an *ādhiprāsūtika* (on the prenatal layer) interpretation is attempted for those Yogasūtras which are aimed at providing guidelines for mental preparation for motherhood.

The very definition of a Sūtra also accommodates or validates this kind of an interpretation. Of the six characteristics of a Sūtra “*viśvatomukham*” is the fourth character – Sūtra is that which has multiple facets or dimensions or that which is universal (the other five are *alpākṣaram asandigdham*, *sāravat*, *astobham*, *anavadyam*). A Sūtra is multi-layered and universal and hence a dimension or facet that is applicable to the context of prenatal education and the mind associated therein is attempted here.

The seven Parikarma Sūtras (1.33 to 1.39) in a way present seven check boxes. By checking those boxes, a would-be-mother can feel assured that she is going through the right kind of mental preparation that is prescribed by the highly respected Sage Patañjali whose teachings are now embraced by the entire universe with open arms.

It is very well known that *citta-kṣobha* (afflictions of the mind) and *citta-vikṣepa* or *citta-cāñcalyam* (distractions of the mind) are the causes of psychological and psycho-somatic problems which are at the root of sympathetic nervous response. These are, certainly, not desirable to anyone and especially for an expecting mother.

As per the Sūtras, *citta-parikarmas* prepare the mind by guiding it to a state to *citta-prasādanam* (pleasant state of mind) and *citta-sthairyam* (steady state of mind) which are opposites of *citta-kṣobha* and *citta-vikṣepa* or *citta-cāñcalyam*. In scientific terms, it can be stated that Yogic practices lead to para-sympathetic nervous responses.

The summary of the content of the *citta-parikarmas*, which are proposed to be elaborated with examples during the presentation, is as under -

1.33 – मैत्रीकरुणामुदितोपेक्षाणां सुखदुःखपुण्यापुण्यविषयाणां भावनातश्चितप्रसादनम् ॥

ideal emotional responses situations and individuals

1.34 – प्रच्छर्दनविधारणाभ्यां वा प्राणस्य ॥

regulation of the breath

1.35 – विषयवती वा प्रवृत्तिरुत्पन्ना मनसः स्थितिनिबन्धनी ॥

Conducive/calming Sensory experiences

1.36 – विशोका वा ज्योतिष्मती ॥

avoidance of state of depression by having positive thoughts

1.37 – वीतरागविषयं वा चित्तम् ॥

Learning about emulate-able personalities or learning from the experiences of elders

1.38 – स्वप्ननिद्राज्ञानालम्बनं वा ॥

Taking note of the dream and deep sleep experiences

1.39 – यथाभिमतध्यानाद्वा ॥

Allowing the mind to dwell upon/meditate upon desirable objects of focus

These tools, as can be noted, cover a range of activities that influence the mind including – emotional responses, positive thoughts, breath regulation, conducive sensory exposure, sleep and visualizations. These include physiological and psychological factors. Hence, they are multipronged and holistic. Further, support from empirical research on these aspects of prenatal education and ancient wisdom which is available from other texts and experiential teachings of *ācāryas* like Sri Krishnamacharya can be utilized to make these more effective.

Further, these *parikarma-s* can also be useful in following ways:

- They can be utilized as a framework or a standard of reference to develop a holistic prenatal education model.
- They can help organize preexisting knowledge on prenatal learnings related to the mind.
- They can be considered as a sound starting point upon which the super-structure of prenatal education can be developed elaborately.
- They can help prepare educational modules as appropriate for the three trimesters of pregnancy – as a preventive strategy.
- They can serve as a range of therapeutic tools that help manage and overcome problems during pre-natal period.

Thus *citta-parikarma*, promises to be a useful contribution from the Yogasūtras which can open up a lot of possibilities of study, research and application in the field of prenatal education.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Śāstrī, G. D. (Ed.) (2007). *Sāṃga Yogadarśana or Yoga Darśana of Patañjali, with the Scholium of Vyāsa and the Commentaries Tatvavaiśārādī, Pātañjalarahasya, Yogavārtika and Bhāsvatī of Vācaspati Miśra*. In R. Sarasvatī, Vijñānabhikṣu, and H. Āraṇya. Varanasi, India: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Bhavan
2. Nāthamuni (1998). *Yoga Rahasya*. Chennai: Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram
3. Hayase, M. & Shimada, M. (2018). *Effects of maternity yoga on the autonomic nervous system during pregnancy*. Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology Research. 44(10):1887-1895.
4. Gong, H, Ni, C., Shen, X., Wu, T., & Jiang, C. (2015). *Yoga for prenatal depression: a systematic review and meta-analysis*. BMC Psychiatry, 15 (1):14.

INDIAN WISDOM TRADITIONS ON PRENATAL EDUCATION, PREGNANCY AND PARENTING: SIGNIFICANCE FOR TODAY

Dr. N. Kalyani

Founder, Dhyan Baby & KKG Empowering Kids

PREAMBLE

In recent years, growing attention is being given to harmonious living. With terrorism and cruelty tearing up certain parts of our planet, every person and every leader is attempting to find ways to bring end to such acts. To achieve a harmonious society, we need people with high levels of IQ (Intelligence Quotient), EQ (Emotional Quotient) and SQ (Spiritual Quotient).

Though the above characteristics can be developed by proper raising and nurturing of the child after the birth, it is much better to start inculcating these things when the brain is being formed and when every sense organ is activated in different period of pregnancy in mother's womb.

Let us consider this. Does everyone seeing a particular incident through his or her eyes register the same information in the brain? Certainly not. It depends on how they have honed their brains, not only from the birth but even before, from when they were in mother's womb.

Also consider this. We still have unanswered questions such as why the children from the same father and mother behave differently or develop entirely contradicting characters. If it is genes, as the science believes, which determines the character and transfers it hereditarily, then how does it explain the possibility of having children with entirely different characteristics borne of the same parents. Some other factors are also there which can help explain such disparity.

Our ancestors knew that good education starts right from the mother's womb. It is all in the hands of mother-to-be to inculcate wisdom to the child when it is still in her womb.

THE PROBLEMS FACED BY MODERN MOTHERS-TO-BE

The challenges faced by the modern mothers-to-be are not the same faced by their counterparts some centuries ago. The modern society has become much more complex, and so a well-adjusted and well-balanced individual must develop in himself or herself all the characteristics that can help him or her manage the ever-

increasing complexities of modern lifestyles. Not only has the raising of the child become more complex, but taking care of foetus during pregnancy period has also become a more complex art.

It has become almost mandatory to have regular prenatal health care visits by the pregnant woman to maintain her health as well as that of the foetus. Iron deficiency anaemia, gestational diabetes, depression and anxiety, infections, hyperemesis gravidarum, miscarriage, placenta previa, preeclampsia, etc. are several of the health complications cited by modern medical science which could develop in the pregnant women. Were our ancestors, say women in the Vedic age, aware of these? Yet so many of them were able to give birth to highly evolved human beings who contributed so much to the society and humanity.

Though modern medical facilities are now available, almost everywhere, to the pregnant women to help take care of her physical health matters, facilities to take care of her psychological concerns are still often missing. While it is true that psychological care can also be provided by proper family and environmental support, unfortunately with the modern style of living, many of these support structures are not readily available. The good thing is that nowadays there are several organisations which offer special programmes like Yoga, breathing and relaxation techniques especially for pregnant women. There are also many books and articles on internet to inform pregnant women about the detailed nature of care they must take during pregnancy.

Despite all this what is lacking is an awareness and education about conscious conception, conscious pregnancy and conscious birth experience. These concepts are not new and have in fact been well described in our ancient Vedas and Puranas.

At the Dhyانبaby programme, we are facilitating such awareness based on insights gleaned from the Vedas and Ayurveda to help the mothers-to-be apply some of the traditional practices which have often been ignored in the mainstream pregnancy support and care programmes. These practices, we have found, can help the mothers give birth to more conscious and gifted children.

DHYANBABY AS A PRE-NATAL EDUCATION

The first school for every man or woman is his/her mother's womb. The great teacher is the expectant mother. The 9 to 10 months period in the mother's womb is in fact the true foundation for the mankind. How the mother pays attention during her pregnancy period has a huge impact on the experience of the child throughout his or her life. There is no other time in life when mother and baby are better able to communicate and share the most intimate feelings than the pregnancy period. In fact, there is no way a pregnant mother can hide her emotions from her unborn child.

Historical and Scientific Evidence

Learning in the womb has a long history. In Hindu mythology we have the story of Abimanyu who learned about the method of entering the impenetrable chakravyuha (a circular grid like military arrangement) when he was in Subadhra's, his mother's womb. Later during the Kurukshetra war he could easily break into the chakravyuha but he was unaware of the way to come out. That was because he couldn't hear about how to come out of the formation, because Subadhra had fallen asleep when that part was being narrated by Krishna.

Scientifically also it has been proved that the baby listens to the heartbeat of the mother, her voice and also responds to music during its time in the womb. Similarly, the baby is able to identify a mantra or a story repeated by the mother and such practices enhance the concentration and listening skills of the child.

Doctors always recommend that a woman must be physically and mentally healthy during her pregnancy period. A mother's mental state of being reaches her foetus. During a recent research, two non-English speaking expectant mothers were asked to listen to English audio tapes. One lady was given an audio-tape with American accented English while the other lady was given one with British accent. When the children were around 4 years old, it was found that their English knowledge was remarkable with the respective accents even though they were not native speakers of English language.

IS DHYANBABY A PRENATAL MEDITATION TECHNIQUE?

I have been administering the prenatal meditation therapies for the past 20 years. I started with few expectant mothers in and around Rajapalayam, which is my native place. Now these therapy programmes are being conducted in Coimbatore, Chennai and in Gujarat. Also, I have taken about 18,000 sessions through phone or skype to help many expectant mothers all over the world.

Meditation is now commonly accepted as an effective alternative medicine technique. It is now practiced worldwide and there is plenty of evidence of its healing effects. It is classified under mind-body medicine which takes a holistic approach to health that values the inter-connection between mind, body and spirit. It works under the premise that the mind can affect the bodily functions and symptoms.

In meditation, people regulate their attention or systematically focus on particular aspects of inner or outer experience. Meditation usually involves sitting or resting quietly, often with the eyes closed. Sometimes it involves the repetitive sounding of a phrase (a mantra) meant to help the person focus. The most highly studied forms of meditation are transcendental meditation and mindfulness meditation.

Meditation has been shown to have favourable effects on heart and blood vessel (cardiovascular) function, immunity, and brain activity, such as increased activity in parts of the brain associated with mental clarity. Meditation often induces physical relaxation, mental calmness, and favourable emotional states such as loving-kindness and even-temperedness. Meditation fosters the capacity for metacognitive awareness (the ability to stand back from and witness the contents of consciousness). Metacognitive awareness interrupts habitual and reflexive responses to stress and improves tolerance of and coping with emotional distress.

Most meditation practices were developed within a religious or spiritual context and held as their ultimate goal some type of spiritual growth, personal transformation, or transcendental experience. As a health care intervention, however, meditation may be effective regardless of people's cultural or religious background. Meditation has been shown to offer numerous health benefits, including relieving stress, anxiety, depression, insomnia, pain, and symptoms of chronic disorders such as cancer or cardiovascular disorders. Meditation is also used to promote wellness.

Studies on the use of mindfulness meditation found that it seemed to help with symptoms of anxiety. One controlled study with a group of healthy workers found more brain activity in an area linked to positive emotional states in those who meditated. The same study found that those who meditated had a better immune response to the influenza vaccine than those who did not meditate.

In a controlled study of ninety cancer patients who did mindfulness meditation for 7 weeks, 31% had fewer symptoms of stress and 65% had fewer episodes of mood disturbance than those who did not meditate. Some studies have also suggested that more meditation improves the chance of a positive outcome.

THE KINDS OF THERAPY GIVEN IN DHYANBABY PROGRAMME

Dhyanbaby adapts scientifically proven therapeutic approaches. A programme of monthly therapies based on the foetus' neuron development and the mother's mental and emotional state of mind has been created.

Initially we observe the expectant mother's emotional state of mind and accordingly give the therapy. There are 6 kinds of therapeutic treatment. We start the treatment from the 4th month onwards up to the 9th month. This is because there are 250,000 neurons at the 4th month and this keeps increasing to almost 10 lakhs at the 9th month.

4th Month Therapy

We start with the “Receiving with Delight” or “Welcome to the Womb” therapy. In most cultural and religious traditions, it is believed that it is at the 4th month the soul from the universe selects its mother and enters the womb giving life to the foetus. The best a mother-to-be and father-to-be can give to the soul who has selected them as parents is to welcome the soul with all their best physical, emotional and mental preparation. This is what is emphasised in the “Welcome to the Womb” therapy during this month.

5th Month Therapy

The 5th month therapy is the “Organ Enrichment” therapy. The organs develop during this period. Here the therapy involves stimulating them so that the foetus grows in to a healthy baby. When we stimulate these neurons, the organs are automatically stimulated and develop very well. It is known that healthy organs comprise a healthy body. In short, during the 5th month, we only stimulate these organs and aid the baby in developing into a healthy and intelligent human being.

6th Month Therapy

The 6th month is the “IQ Enrichment” therapy. This month’s therapy is important as the IQ develops in this stage. How important is IQ and knowledge? IQ does not develop due to external factors. Each neuron in our brain can form a link with one lakh other neurons. The links between these neurons later develop into intelligence. So, the baby’s intelligence depends on how many links have been formed. Now how is this intelligence developed?

Our research says that it is developed through our 5 sense organs, namely - Vision, Olfactory, Audio, Gustatory and Touch sense. For example, when the neurons related to vision are stimulated in the foetus, the baby after birth will be able to observe several things with the help of his or her eyes. What the baby sees causes an immediate imprint in his or her brain. Not many of us are able to utilise all that we are capable of observing because these are not registered in our brains. The neurons that have the capacity to convert information to knowledge, and possibly knowledge to wisdom develop mainly during the 6th month. So, when we give a particular kind of therapy during this month, the respective neurons are highly stimulated and the chances of the baby being born intelligent are very high.

7th Month Therapy

We do the ‘EQ Development’ therapy during the 7th month. With the help of this therapy we enhance the baby’s emotion and maturity level. The 7th month is interesting because the foetus starts dreaming at this stage. Normally, when human beings dream many neurons are activated. Imagine a foetus that has actually not seen the external world. When it starts dreaming, the related neurons develop at a very high speed with a certain amount of power.

It is during this time that the foetus develops EQ – emotional quotient. How important is this emotional quotient? The foetus does not just receive food from its mother. But it also receives its mother’s thoughts, emotions, feelings and state of mind through the placenta. How does this affect the baby? For example, if an expectant mother gets scared after seeing a horror movie, her heart beats at 140 times per minute. Getting scared is an emotion associated with the mind but this state of mind affects her physical body.

When a foetus is growing within a woman, it is not considered as a different person but as a part of the woman. A baby is considered as a single entity only when he or she starts breathing independently. But that is not the case with a foetus. So, the chances of the baby being affected by the mother’s physical, mental and emotional state of mind are very high. Since the foetus is growing in the womb, it has a great capacity of absorbing anything, positive or negative, coming through the placenta. When, we feed the expectant mother with positive thoughts, the inputs directly reach the foetus. This helps in giving an intellectual and responsible human being to this society.

8th Month Therapy

The 8th month “SQ Therapy” concentrates on developing the spiritual quotient level of the baby. Why do we need to give this therapy at this stage and what are its benefits? By giving the SQ therapy, the other quotients develop easily and also the organs are well stimulated.

9th Month Therapy

The 9th month is the “Life Enrichment” or “Birth Secret” therapy. This is the month where the baby will be reaching its full growth peak and getting ready to enter the new world. This period of time gives importance to the words and thoughts of the parents. The baby inside is fully grown and can now keenly and sharply observe and listen to the words and respond to the emotions behind the words. In this month much importance is given on chatting with the baby.

CONCLUSION

This month-based therapy programme at Dhyانبaby has been proven to be effective, as per the reports received by the satisfied and happy parents. We help provide the child right atmosphere to grow and develop. We assist the mothers-to-be make themselves as the right atmosphere and to make a life-long bond with their child, while he or she is still in the womb. We have developed a unique programme to enhance and enrich the mental, emotional and spiritual development of the child when it is still in its mother's womb as foetus. This programme makes the expectant mother to focus and channelize her thoughts and actions through month-based therapies as briefly described above.

GARBHINI PARICHARYA – DIETICS, REGIMEN AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CARE IN PREGNANCY – INSIGHTS FROM AYURVEDA

Dr. Megha Udai

*Asst Professor, Dept. of Prasuti Tantra and Stree Roga, Muniyal Institute of Ayurveda Medical Sciences,
Manipal, Karnataka*

INTRODUCTION

Ayu in simple words means life and *veda* means knowledge, so literally Ayurveda means knowledge or science of life. The main basic principle is “*swasthasya swastha rakshanam*” and “*aaturasya rogprashamanam*”. For the purpose of *swasthya rakshna*, Acharya has explained *dinacharya*, *rutucharya* etc. Pregnancy is an important phase in a woman’s life and any negligence in this period may become harmful to both the mother and the baby. The care of pregnant woman reflects on the quality and health of the offspring. Giving birth to healthy child is important, thus, pregnant women deserve most importance in the society. To prevent various complications and to provide a safe environment to the pregnant lady and her growing offspring, Acharyas explained detailed systemic and month wise regimen for *garbhini* i.e. *Garbhini Paricharya* (Antenatal care).

Nothing quite explains the feeling of having a life growing inside us. But meanwhile a pregnant woman also experiences a fair share of mood swings, courtesy of hormonal changes. It is precisely here that Ayurveda explains the role of *aahara*, *vihara* and *vichara* for her physical and psychological well-being which obviously brings out positivity in the physical, intellectual, spiritual and psychological development of the foetus too.

DISCUSSION

Garbhini Paricharya includes *Aahara*, *Vihara*, modifications in psychological behaviour. These *aahara*, *vihara* and *vichara* have a direct effect on the health of the mother and child. They help in proper development of the foetus, its delivery, and maintaining the health of the mother during postpartum period.

Table no. 1: Showing Garbhopaghatkara Bhavas described in Brihatrayee

Charaka	Pungent – hot drugs, exercise, coitus
Sushruta	Coitus, exercise, excessive satiation (santarpana), emaciation (apatarpana) Sleeping in day, awakening in night, riding on vehicle, squatting position (utkatukasana), oleation (snehana), bloodletting, suppression of natural urge
Ashtang hrudaya	Excessive coitus, exercise, carrying heavy weight, squatting or abnormal position, anger, fear, excitement, suppression of natural urges, fasting, excessive walking, hot, heavy, vishtambhi (hard to digest) food, sleeping in supine position, bloodletting, purifying measures (shodhan karmas), use of wine or meat
Harita	Coitus, exercise, anger, grief, walking, use of pulses, edibles producing burning sensation, heavy or sour substances, surana (<i>Amorphophallus campanulatus</i> Blume), garlic (<i>Allium Sativum</i> Linn), onion (<i>Allium cepa</i> Linn.)
Kashyapa	Erect or flexed position for long time, excessive laughing and trauma, use of cold water and garlic, avoid looking at declining moon, setting sun, perform oblation of ghrita for pacification

Garbhashtapaka dravyas counteract the effect of *garbhopaghatkara bhavas* and help in proper maintenance of health and development of mother and foetus. Charaka and Kashyapa have prescribed certain drugs during pregnancy. Kashyapa has advised these to be used as a routine by pregnant woman. Routine use of these drugs might be beneficial for maintenance of proper health, growth and development of mother and foetus respectively. Charaka enumerated aindri (*Bacopa monnieri* Linn.), bramhi (*Centella asiatica* Linn.), shatvirya (*Cynodon dactylon* Pers.), etc.

As per a WHO report in 2000, it is suggested that everyday approximately 830 women die from preventable causes related to pregnancy and child birth. To reduce this rate, proper *garbhini paricharya* (antenatal care) is the need of the day. Acharya Harita (10th century) has given enormous emphasis upon *garbhini paricharya* and has documented special dietary as well as behavioural regimen in context to growth and development of foetus.

WHAT IS GARBHINI PARICHARYA?

Garbhini paricharya refers to the complete spectrum of antenatal care including *ahara*, *vihara* and *vichara* for pregnant women for the benefit of both mother and foetus. Acharya Harita, Acharya Charaka and Acharya Susrutha have prescribed month-wise dietary schedule with respect to the growth and development of foetus. However, the scientific interpretation and validation of these points needs to be interpreted in today's era, hence an attempt has been made in this manuscript to explore the month-wise regimen for a pregnant woman described in Harita Samhita evidencing the scientific justification of this regimen.

Table:2 Opinions of different Acharyas about Garbhini Paricharya

	Prathama	Dvitiya	Tritiya	Chathurtha	Pachami	Shashti	Saptami	Ashtama	Navama
Charaka	Non medicated ksheera	kheera medicated with madhur drugs	Milk With honey and ghrita	Milk with butter	ghrita prepared with butter extracted from milk	Ghrita medicated with drugs of madhur groups	same with sixth month	yavagu prepared with milk and mixed with ghrita ⁴	Anuvasana vasti with oil prepared with drugs of madhur groups, vaginal tampon with this very oil
Sushruta	sweet, cold and liquid diet	sweet, cold and liquid diet	sweet, cold and liquid diet	Cooked sasti rice with curd, dainty and pleasant food mixed with milk and butter and meat of wild animals	cooked sasti rice with milk, meat of wild animals along with dainty food mixed with milk and ghrita	Ghrita medicated with prithakparnyadi group of drugs	ghrita medicated with prithak parnyadi group of drugs	asthapan vasti followed by anuvasan vasti	Gruel and meat soup of wild animals
Vagbhata	medicated milk	milk medicated with madhur drugs	milk with honey and ghrita	Milk with one tola of butter	ghrita prepared with butter	Ghrita medicated with drugs of madhur groups	Same as Charaka	yavagu prepared with dugdha mixed with ghrita	Same with Charaka Samhita
Harita	madhuyasti, madhuka puspa with butter, honey and sweetened mil	sweetened milk treated with kakoli	Krisara	medicated cooked rice	Payasa	Sweetened curd	Ghrita khanda	Ghritapurak	Different varieties of cereals

PRATHAMA MASA

Acharya Charaka advices garbhini should take non-medicated milk in first month, whereas Acharya Sushruta has advocated madhura, sheeta and drava aahara. Acharya Vagbhata in Astanga Sangraha has advised

medicated milk and Acharya Harita has advised to consume Madhuyashti, Madhukapuspa with navaneeta, madhu and sweetened milk.

Interpretation

Among other similar aahara dravya, Ksheera is considered uttamam. During first trimester of pregnancy, most of the women experience nausea, vomiting, and loss of appetite, where these above said madhura, sheeta, dravaahara like ksheera prevent dehydration and provide optimum nourishment. At the same time its laghu, so that it is easy to digest and also facilitates agnideepti.

Yastimadhu (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*) has been described in eleven mahakashaya by Acharya Charaka, also in both chardi nigrahana (anti-emetics) and vamanopaga (adjuvants in emetic therapy) as it acts as antiemetic in lower dose and emetic in a higher dose. Parushaka (*Grewia asiatica* Roxb.) is rich in iron, calcium, potassium, sodium & vitamin C. It is useful in anaemia due to the presence of iron. Madhuka (*Madhuca indica*) contains albumin, saponin and act as a galactagogue. Moreover, yastimadhu is a sahayaka drug (adjuvant). So it acts better when conjugating with other drugs. As a whole, yastimadhu combined with parusaka / madhuka / both of these with navaneeta (type of butter), madhu (honey), and sarkara (sugar) is given in order to relieve vomiting, dehydration, anaemia that arises in first month.

Acharya Harita has described the foetus to be formed as a ghana from a liquid stage (budbuda), so madhura rasa has been given which is comprised of jala and prithvi mahabhuta which may promote this solidification.

DVITIYA MASA

In the second month, Acharya Charaka has advocated milk medicated with drugs of madhura rasa. Acharya Sushruta has prescribed madhura, sheeta, dravapraaya aahara and Acharya Vagbhata has advised milk medicated with madhura dravyas whereas Acharya Harita has prescribed sweetened milk treated with Kakoli (*Roscoca procera* Wall.) in second month of pregnancy.

Interpretation

According to Acharya Susrutha, in the first trimester, madhura sheeta and dravayapraya aahara has been advised. This is the time when pregnant women experience nausea, vomiting and dehydration, which could be counteracted with such a diet and ensure quality and optimum nourishment.

Kakoli (*Roscoca procera* Wall.) is a jivaneeya dravya (vitalizer) described both in jeevaneeya mahakashya by Acharya Charaka and jeevaneeya gana by Bhavprakasha. As there is more chance of miscarriage in second month, so jeevaneeya dravya should be added to the diet of garbhini. It is also valya (tonic), brihaniya (nutrients), diuretic, stanyajanana (galactagogue) in actions.

TRUTEEYA MASA

In the third month of pregnancy, Acharya Charaka has advised milk with madhu and ghrita. Acharya Sushruta has advocated Madhura sheeta dravyaapraya aahara. Acharya Vagbhata in Astanga Sangraha, has described milk with honey and ghrita in the third month of pregnancy, whereas Acharya Harita has prescribed krishara (a special formulation of rice) to garbhini. Acharya Harita has described the formation of hasta, pada and sira in foetus. Krishra, being comprised of guru guna and prithvi mahabhuta may help in it. Krishara (boiled and cooked gruel of different cereals) acts upon excretory system as it is malamutrakari (repellent of faecal and urine). In addition to that, the formation of excretory system of foetus starts in third month.

Brief Development of Foetus

Whole gestational period is divided into 3 stages - a) germinal period (1-3rd week) b) embryonic period (3- 8th week) and c) foetal period (3rd month till delivery).

Germinal period

Main events in this period are fertilization, cleavage, implantation, formation of germ layers.

Ksheera has vata shamaka property which would help in controlled cell division; and also Prithvi and Jala mahabhuta predominant which helps in shaping of embryo.

Embryonic period

Organogenesis occurs where 3 germ layers undergo individual variation and most of the tissue abdominal organs are formed. This is a very crucial period, where no medicines are preferred as it may interfere organogenesis or cause teratogenicity. Only folic acid should be advised for production of methionine (for methylation reaction of DNA). Acharya Kashyapa explains garbha is unstable till four months, hence, no medicines are to be given, only seethe, madhura, dravaahara and ksheera which is a natural source of folic acid, carbohydrate, fat, protein (almost all amino acids) and all vitamins (except Vitamin C), minerals and enzymes essential for foetal and mother nourishment. Ksheera is an external source for Progesterone, the hormone needed to continue pregnancy. Nourishment of foetus till vyaktagarbha (conspicuous body parts) is through upasneha (attraction) and upasneha (osmosis) from the mother.

CHATURTHA MASA

Acharya Charaka has advised milk with butter. Acharya Sushruta has prescribed cooked shasti rice (*Oryza sativa* Linn.) with curd and pleasant food mixed with butter and meat of wild animals. Acharya Vagbhata in Astanga Sangraha has advised milk with one tola (12 gm) of butter. Acharya Harita has prescribed medicated Krutodana (cooked rice) in the fourth month of pregnancy. In fourth month, Acharya Harita has described the formation of loma in foetus as there is description of sthiratva in fourth month which is a pitrujabhava.

Interpretation

In chaturtha masa, pleasant food mixed with ksheera and navaneetha along with jangala mamsa rasa has been prescribed. The third stage when foetus has rapid growth and development with complete placental development requires increased nutritional requirement. Krutodana (medicated cooked rice) comprises of carbohydrates which is the primary component for the growth of foetus in second trimester.

Jangala mamsa (meat) which has high source of biological proteins, vitamins, fat, minerals (iron and other minerals) and endogenous antioxidants and other bioactive substances which supply good number of calories and high protein content, help in musculature tissue formation of foetus. Iron and B complex vitamins help in blood formation; other vitamins, minerals and protein help in nourishment of body

PANCHAMA MASA

Acharya Charaka has advocated ghrita prepared with butter extracted from milk. Acharya Sushruta has advised cooked sasthika with milk, meat of wild animals along with daily food mixed with milk and ghrita rice in the fifth month of pregnancy. In Astanga Sangraha, Acharya Vagbhatta has advised ghrita prepared with butter extracted from milk whereas Acharya Harita has emphasized on payasa.

Interpretation

Aahara mixed with ghruta and ksheera or mixed with Ksheera, ghruta and jangala mamsa helps in rapid growth of foetus and better nourishment of both garbha and garbhini. Need of iron supplements is slight during first trimester of pregnancy, not mandatory, hence can avoid risk of aggravating nausea and vomiting as Ayurveda has highlighted increased supplementation of iron in the form of mamsa from 4th month which is better than a drug form. Acharya Harita has described the foetus will be sujiva (lively), hence Payasa acts as brihmniya and balya which is necessary in fifth month as the garbhini becomes krisha in this period.

SHASHTHAMA MASA

In Charaka Samhita, Acharya has advised ghrita prepared from milk medicated with madhura (sweet) drugs in sixth month of pregnancy. In Sushruta Samhita, Acharya has advocated ghrita or rice gruel medicated with Gokshura (*Tribulus terrestris* Linn.). In Astanga Sangraha, Acharya has described ghrita prepared from milk medicated with madhura (sweet) drugs in sixth month of pregnancy. In Harita Samhita, Acharya has described sweetened curd in sixth month. Acharya Harita has described that there will be sphurana (quivering) in foetus which may be sign of formation of locomotors and nervous system along with various reflex.

Interpretation

In Harita Samhita, sweetened curd has been prescribed in sixth month because curd is rich in vitamins A & D, calcium, proteins, probiotics. It cools down the body temperature and calms the emotional centre in order to prevent the anxiety. It also prevents the pigmentations i.e., Kikissa (striae gravidarum) that appears in the sixth month. At this time, ghritha or yavagu (rice gruel) prepared with gokshura are advised. Yavagu gives strength to the body tissues and passifies vata dosha. Gokshura (Tribulus terrestris) has diuretic and nephroprotective properties. Ayurveda also describes the qualities of gokshura as mootravirechaniya (diuretic), sthothahara (anti-inflammatory) and krimighna (anti-bacterial). So, it helps to reduce edema and other complication of water accumulation by gravid uterus in later months of pregnancy; it also helps in preventing pre-eclamptic toxemia of pregnancy.

SAPTAMA MASA

In Charaka Samhita, Acharya has emphasized on ghritha prepared from milk medicated with madhura (sweet) drugs in seventh month of pregnancy. In Sushruta Samhita, Acharya has advised ghritha medicated with prithakparnyadi group of drugs. In Astanga sangraha, Acharya has ghritha prepared from milk medicated with madhura (sweet) drugs in seventh month of pregnancy. In Harita Samhita, Acharya has prescribed Ghrithakhandha (a sweet dish), comprised of ghritha which contains good fats to create brown fat in order to maintain the body temperature of foetus.

Interpretation

Ghritha medicated with phrithakparnyadi (vidarigandhadi) group is diuretic, anti-inflammatory, prajasthapana (procreant), vayasthapana (rejuvenator), balya (tonic), bhrumana (weight promoting), angamardaprashamana (restorative), and pacifies vata and pitta. Vidarigandha (Desmodium gangeticum) has the calming, strengthening and anti-inflammatory properties. Researchers say it has analgesic, diuretic, cardio tonic and carminative activities. During the 7th month foetal lung gets maturity, so steroids help in the lung maturity of the foetus. Brihati (solanum indicum), one of the medicinal plant of the Vidarigandhadi group has chemical constituents which are steroidal alkaloids and steroids and help in lung maturity of the foetus.

ASHTAMA MASA

In Charaka Samhita, Acharya has prescribed yavagu along with dugdha and sarpi in eighth month of pregnancy. In Sushruta Samhita, Acharya has advocated asthapana basti (non-oily enema). Acharya Chakara and Vagbhata have advised Anuvasana vasti with oil prepared with the drug of madhura gana and vaginal tampon of oil. In Astanga Sangraha, Acharya vagbhata has advised yavagu along with dugdha and sarpi. In Harita Samhita,

Acharya has advised Ghritapuraka for the pregnant women. Acharya Harita has described the formation of jatharagni (digestive fire) in foetus as a result of continuous ingestion of ghrithakhandra and ghritapuraka.

Interpretation of eighth and ninth month

From ashtama masa up to parsava kaala, snigdha yavagu (rice gruel mixed with ghruta) and jangala mamsa rasa should be given to garbhini. Snigdha yavagu gives strength to the body, nourishes the body tissue and pacifies vata dosha. Mamsa being rich source of protein, vitamins, iron and other mineral, fat and good number of calories, helps in formation of musculature tissue, blood tissue and gives nourishment to foetus and mother. Ghritapuraka also contains ghrita which is required for the formation of ojas as it becomes unstable in the eighth month. So, it is quite essential at this time.

Foetus being separate physiological entity, it meets its needs even at the cost of reducing the mother's resources. The demands of the growing garbha are usually not effectively met; 2/3rd of the total calcium, 3/5th of total proteins and 4/5th of total iron are drained from mother during last 3 months.

Hence, during last months of pregnancy, Acharya Susruta has mentioned drugs which are rich in proteins, calcium and iron. Acharya Charaka has also mentioned milk and its products during whole garbhini paricharya. During tritiya masa Acharya Charaka advised madhu and ghruta. Madhu is a rich source of energy. Ghruta and kshoudra provide immunity; also pollens in madhu trigger the macrophages and increase generalised immunity. In third trimester, basti (enema) helps to relieve constipation, expulsion of purana mala, strengthens myometrium and also helps in regulating their function during labour. Yoni pichu (cotton balls soaked with medicated oil which are kept in the vagina) help in lubrication of the garbhasthan (uterus and cervix) and garbhamarga (vaginal canal and perineum).

PSYCHOLOGICAL CARE OF GARBHINI

Practice of particular Yogasanas and Pranayama during this problematic condition is helpful. Some amount of breathlessness is common during pregnancy, due to the effect of progesterone and fall in arterial CO₂ pressure. Mechanical and biochemical changes in pregnancy influence maternal respiration function and gaseous exchange.

Yoga and pranayama should be practiced based on the current health status of the pregnant woman. Supine and inverted poses in particular can decrease edema of the legs, because they improve the draining of the retained fluid from the limbs. At the same time, they are done in a way that opens the rib cage and facilitates breathing. They improve the blood flow from the periphery to the trunk, so the blood flow to the vital organs of the mother and the foetus is also improved.

Yogasanas can help with difficulties such as heartburn and constipation and also prevent the formation of gallstones or stagnation of urine in ureter. Supine positions or twists are helpful because of their stimulating effect on the entire digestive tract. Along with regular ANC, practice of Yogasana and Pranayama is of great help in maintaining regular blood pressure. These yogic procedures also bring the neurohumoral pattern to normalcy. In addition, they also improve the functional efficiency of all the organs and tissues by improving their microcirculation. Doing shavasana in left lateral position lessens the effect of venacaval compression. It increases renal blood flow, improves the placental perfusion, and reduces the blood pressure.

CONCLUSION

The ahara-vihara advised by our Acharyas thousands of years ago in classical texts of Ayurveda for pregnancy is totally scientific and can be proven on scientific parameters. It fulfils the complete motto of garbhini paricharya and to ensure successful stanya pana. Researches show supplementation of essential nutrients in form of natural sources during pregnancy is better than drugs. This has proved beneficial to both garbhini and foetus and to ultimately get a supraja, endowed with all superior qualities, i.e., physically, psychologically, spiritually and socially an able individual.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author would like to thank all staffs of Muniyal Institute of Ayurveda Medical Sciences for providing with the facilities, references and the guidance for completing this paper.

REFERENCES

1. Shastri, Ambikadutta. *Sushruta Samhita*. Varanasi; Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan: Sharirsthana, 2014.
2. Tiwari, P.V. *Kashyapa Samhita*. Varanasi; Chaukhambha Visvabharati: Sharirsthana, 2016
3. Tripathi, Harihar Prasad. Editor. *Harita Samhita.Tritiya sthana* 49/1, 2, 3, Chaukhamba Krishnadas Academy, Varanasi; 2009.
4. Sastri, K N. *Charaka Samhita (purvardha) with Vidyotii Hindi commentary*. Reprinted Varanasi: Chaukhamba Bharati Academy; 2005.
5. Dutta, D C. *Text Book of Obstetrics*.6th Reprint. New Delhi: New Central Book Agency; 2006.
6. Singh Archana, Singh Vishvender, Rao Prasanna N,Bhat Gayatri N V, *Adarsh Prathima. A critical analysis on nutritional qualities of food indicated in Garbhini paricharya (prenatal care)*. Int. J. Res Ayurveda Pharm. 2014.

7. Sadashiva, Hari & Shastri, Paradakara, editors. *Acharya Arunadatta. Ashtanga Hrudaya with Sarvangasundara Commentary. Sutrasthana* chapter 5 verse 20-22, Varanasi: Chaukhamba Surabharati Prakashan; 2014.
8. Dash, Shibani et al. *Garbhini Paricharya (Ante-Natal Care), View of Harita Samhita (A Treatise of 10th Century)*. Indo Ameri J of Pharm Research; 2017

IMPORTANCE OF RAJASWALA PARICHARYA IN SUPRAJA JANMA

Dr. Mrudula, KS

*Assistant professor, Dept of Prasuti Tantra and Stree Roga,
Yenepoya Ayurveda Medical College and Hospital, Mangalore*

INTRODUCTION

“Giving birth and being born brings us into the essence of creation, where the human spirit is courageous and bold and the body, a miracle of wisdom.” (Harriette Hartigan)

Pregnancy is a beautiful phase in a woman’s life because it gives her the joy and fulfilment which comes from bringing a new life into the world. Pregnancy is not just a physical alteration of the female body; it is also an emotional change that leaves a lasting impact on a woman’s life and alters her perspective entirely. It is through these nine months that she develops the patience, understanding, strength and courage that is needed to give birth.

Ayurveda, the ancient science of life has given utmost importance for women’s health. There are particular Paricharyas i.e., rules and regulations exclusively mentioned for women during various transitional periods of her life. These include Rajaswala paricharya (rules and regulations to be followed during menstruation), Garbhini Paricharya (rules and regulations to be followed during pregnancy), Sutika paricharya (do’s and don’ts to be followed during post-natal period), etc. This clearly shows the importance that was given to the health of a woman during ancient times.

IMPORTANCE OF RAJASWALA PARICHARYA

In this current competitive world, a healthy and intelligent offspring with a long life is desired by all the parents. Training of baby to induce desired psychological individuality in the womb during pregnancy has its roots in cultural tradition and folklore. The practice of the same, professionally with the help of various training programmes, is gaining popularity since a decade. Science reveals the fact that the anatomical, physiological and psychological built up of an offspring is dependent on parents who provide ‘genes’ for specific characteristics that are found in the child. Yet the effect of diet, surroundings, maternal emotions, diseases like tuberculosis and other infections, medications, all have proven effect on the foetus in the womb¹.

Rajaswala is the largest and the most important period in the lifetime of a woman as it is the fertile period necessary for reproduction. The paricharyas prescribed for this phase help a woman to adapt well to the physiological and psychological changes taking place in the body during the menstruation and thus prevent occurrence of diseases. It also helps in conceiving a healthy offspring.

The prevalence and incidence of gynaecological disorders is increasing day by day. Modern diet and lifestyle have increased the incidence of menstrual irregularities, PCOD, infertility etc. It is fully clear that the quality of menstruation reflects the reproductive health of a female. Hence, to maintain the quality of menstruation by following some do's and don'ts, these paricharyas have been mentioned by our Acharyas long back.

POSSIBLE CLINICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF RAJASWALA PARICHARYA AS GARBHADANA PURVA SAMSKARA

Four essential factors are mentioned by Acharya Sushruta for the formation of Garbha. These are: Ritu (period nearing to ovulation), Kshetra (healthy female reproductive organ), Ambu (nourishing substances), Beeja (healthy sperm and Ovum)². Further Acharya Vagabhata added the terms Shudda Shukra and Shudda Rakta as the essential factors for the formation of Garbha.³ This further supports the importance of Rajaswala paricharya and its significance in the attainment of Supraja (healthy offspring).

Paricharyas particularly prescribed for Rajaswala stree according to different authors are as follows:⁴

1. The woman should harbour only good thoughts.
2. Avoid bath, external anointments etc.
3. Avoid decoration or avoid wearing the jewelleries.
4. Should sleep on mattress of *Darbha* Grass and should avoid day sleep.
5. Should eat little quantity of food prepared from *yava* and milk, holding it either in a leaf, earthen plate or the hands.
6. Should observe celibacy.
7. Should avoid excess exercise etc.

Acharya Bhavamishra further added that if one is not following these paricharyas due to one or other reason, it may result in “Garbho doshastadaapnuyaat,” that is, it may hamper the future offspring⁵. This further clearly suggests the importance of following these paricharyas and its relation with future conception.

DISCUSSION

Let us look at some possible explanations for these paricharyas with the support of modern evidence from physiology, psychology, biology and other areas.

- Oestrogen levels are closely linked with women’s emotional well-being as oestrogen affects the part of the brain that control emotions. The rise in oestrogen levels helps to suppress the stress hormone adrenaline and corticosterol⁶.
- During the menstruation the level of oestrogen is low which may lead to impulsive decision making. Hence, if a woman harbours good thoughts, it will help to overcome the instability of emotions⁷.
- According to modern physiology, it is observed that there is fluctuation and high temperature during menstrual cycle. During the phase of menstruation, if head bath is taken it will hamper the homeostasis maintained by the hypothalamus leading to many uterine disorders⁸.
- Limiting the water treatments may also prevent various ascending infections through vagina due to altered pH level.
- The plant Darbha (*Desmostachya bipinnata*) is proven to have anti-microbial property. Due to its pittahara property, it may also give soothing effect to menstruating lady and may help in maintaining the body temperature which is fluctuating due to altered hormonal level⁹.
- Light food or havishya anna is advised for maintaining the agni in the person. Because menstruation is a natural shodhana process of body, accordingly to increase the agni in the person these foods might have been advised for the menstruating woman¹⁰.
- Maintaining celibacy or avoiding sexual intercourse during this period might have been advised to avoid infections as the pH of vagina during this period is altered and may become the source of microorganisms.
- Avoiding excess exercise may help the woman to restore her energy, thereby preventing vaata dosha from its prakupita avastha and various yoni vyapaths.
- Regarding the diet advised during this period, it is very clear from a study by Boland et al (2001) that nutritional state prior to pregnancy can influence oocyte and embryo development which can impact both the ability to establish pregnancy and the health of the developing foetus¹¹.

- Nutritional balance can influence oocyte and embryo development. For example, ovulation rate is reduced by under-nutrition and increased by short-term high energy and protein supplementation, or infusion of glucose in sheep (Downing *et al.*, 1995; Nottle *et al.*, 1997; Boland *et al.*, 2001)¹². It is thus very clear that importance of avoiding teekshna, katu aahara during pre-conceptional period can influence the foetal development.

CONCLUSION

It is a known fact that Rajaswala paricharya was being followed by our ancestors as a routine practice. And it is also a known fact that incidence of PCOD, infertility and menstrual irregularities in earlier times was much less as compared to present scenario. Rajaswala paricharya can be considered among effective preconception measures as it fulfils the need of shudda aartava and shudda beeja for the attainment of shreyasi praja.

REFERENCES

1. Jasmine Gujarathi, Ritesh Gujarathi. *Garbha Samskara-Prenatal Education: Concepts, Practice and Prospects*, JAHM, 2014 Jan; 2(1),40p. Available from: www.jahm.in
2. Premavati Tewari, *Ayurvediya Prasuti Tantram evam Stree Roga, Part1*, 2nd ed, Chaukhambha orientalia, 2010; 86p.
3. Premavati Tewari, *Ayurvediya Prasuti Tantram evam Stree Roga, Part1*, 2nd ed, Chaukhambha orientalia, 2010; 86p.
4. Minal D Bhusevar, Madhuri A.Pachghare, *A Review Study of Rajaswala Paricharya Correlating with Menstruation, in Present Era*, World journal of pharmaceuticals research, 2017 ;6(3), 427-434p. Available from: www.wjpr.net.
5. Premavati Tewari, *Ayurvediya Prasuti Tantram evam Stree Roga, Part1*, 2nd ed, Chaukhambha orientalia, 2010; 68p.
6. Minal D Bhusevar, Madhuri A.Pachghare, *A Review Study of Rajaswala Paricharya Correlating with Menstruation, in Present Era*, World journal of pharmaceuticals research, 2017 ;6(3), 427-434p. Available from: www.wjpr.net

7. Minal D Bhusevar, Madhuri A.Pachghare, *A Review Study of Rajaswala Paricharya Correlating with Menstruation, in Present Era*, World journal of pharmaceuticals research, 2017 ;6(3), 427-434p. Available from: www.wjpr.net
8. Minal D Bhusevar, Madhuri A.Pachghare, *A Review Study of Rajaswala Paricharya Correlating with Menstruation, in Present Era*, World journal of pharmaceuticals research, 2017 ;6(3), 427-434p. Available from: www.wjpr.net
9. Minal D Bhusevar, Madhuri A.Pachghare, *A Review Study of Rajaswala Paricharya Correlating with Menstruation, in Present Era*, World journal of pharmaceuticals research, 2017 ;6(3), 427-434p. Available from: www.wjpr.net
10. Minal D Bhusevar, Madhuri A.Pachghare, *A Review Study of Rajaswala Paricharya Correlating with Menstruation, in Present Era*, World journal of pharmaceuticals research, 2017 ;6(3), 427-434p. Available from: www.wjpr.net
11. Karen L Kind, Vivienne M Moore, Michael J Davies, *Diet around Conception and During Pregnancy- Effects on Fetal and Neonatal Outcomes*, Reproductive bio medicine, 2016 Mar; 12(5), 532-541p. Available from: www.rbmonline.com/Article/2178
12. Karen L Kind, Vivienne M Moore, Michael J Davies, *Diet around Conception and During Pregnancy- Effects on Fetal and Neonatal Outcomes*, Reproductive bio medicine, 2016 Mar; 12(5), 532-541p. Available from: www.rbmonline.com/Article/2178

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE POST-NATAL CEREMONIES ACCORDING TO THE GRHYA TEXTS

Dr. S. Ramaratnam

Vice Chancellor, Jagadguru Kripalu University, Odisha

This paper gives a brief account of the important post-natal ceremonies that are described in the *Gṛhyasūtra* texts, and also describes their significance.

THE JĀTAKARMA

The *Jātakarma* is performed at the birth of a child. It is prescribed by all the *Gṛhyasūtra* writers. The *Brahmapurāṇa* gives a religious significance to this ceremony. When a child is born in the family, the gods and the forefathers come and rejoice, and therefore worship, offering of gifts and the oblations into the fire are to be performed to mark the occasion.

तत्र दद्यात् सुवर्णं च भूमिं गां तुरगं तथा ।

छत्रं छागं च माल्यं च शयनं चासनं गृहम् ॥ (quoted in the *Vīramitrodaya*, I. 199)

At the time of the birth, the child carries certain *doṣas* or defects—the defect of having stayed in the mother's womb for ten months, the defect of having carried the sins of the previous births and so on. In order to obviate the defects, the ritual is performed.

A few days before the delivery of the child, the delivery room should get ready. Water, lamps, medicinal herbs and wiping cloth should be kept ready. When the expectant mother develops labour pains, she is taken to the delivery room and is made to lie on her back. A plant called *tūryantī* is to be placed by the side of the mother (*Āgniveśya*, xiv; *Hiraṇyakeśin* ii, 2-8). *Gobila* (2.7.13) and the *Khādīra* (2.2.28 ff). *Gṛhyasūtras* prescribe a *homa* called *soṣyantī* for the sake of easy and safe delivery. Water from a river taken along the current should be brought

in a new earthen pot and it should be sprinkled on her. The *tūryantī* should be tied to her feet and the husband should recite a few mantras (*Āpastamba Mantrapāṭha*, 2.11.15-18,) touching the head of his wife.

Immediately after the birth of the child, the father should recite the following mantra and touch the child.

दिवस्पतिं प्रथमं जज्ञे अग्निरस्मत् द्वितीयं परि जातवेदाः ।

तृतीयमप्सु नृमणा अजस्रमिन्धान एवं जरते स्वाधीः ॥ (2.12.1)

‘O *Agni*, the knower of the sacrifice, you rose first from the heavens (in the form of lightening), then from us (by the churning of the *araṇi* fire sticks) and then the fire, the benefactor of men, rose from the waters. A good man always worships *Agni*.’

A few more mantras in praise of *Agni* are also pronounced. Then the father takes the child on his lap and pronounces the mantra:

अस्मिन्नहं सहस्रं पुष्यामि एधमानः स्वे वशे । (2.12.12)

‘May I attain more and more prosperity. May I attain a thousand and odd objects of desire through this son’.

The name relating to the constellation of the child should be pronounced. Then the child is addressed thus:

अङ्गात् अङ्गात् संभवसि हृदयात् अधिजायसे

आत्मा वै पुत्रनामासि स जीव शरदश्शतं (2.12.13)

‘You are born from every limb of mine and from my heart. You are my soul in the name of son. May you live for a hundred autumns.’

अश्मा भव परशुर्भव हिरण्यमस्तुतं भव

पशुमस्त्वा हिम्कारेण अभिजिघ्राम्यसौ पुनः (2.12.14)

‘May you be a stone (in strength); May you be an axe (in sharpness); May you be gold undiminished. I smell you like the cow smelling its calf with a ‘*him*’ sound’.

Then the father chants a mantra gently in the right ear of the child:

मेधां ते देवस्सविता मेधां ते सरस्वती

मेधां ते अश्विनौ देवौ आधत्तां पुष्करस्रजा ॥ (2.12.15)

‘May Lord *Savitā* grant you intellect. May Goddess *Sarasvatī* grant you intellect. May the *Aśvins* wearing lotus garlands grant you intellect.’

He then mixes ghee and honey in a cup, takes a drop or two through a gold piece (a ring, for example) and gives it to the child, chanting the mantra:

त्वयि मेधां त्वयि प्रजां त्वय्यग्निः तेजो दधातु

त्वयि मेधां त्वयि प्रजां त्वयीन्द्रः इन्द्रियं दधातु

त्वयि मेधां त्वयि प्रजां त्वयि सूर्यो भ्राजो दधातु (2.12.16-18)

‘May *Agni* grant you intellect, progeny and spiritual luster. May *Indra* grant you intellect, progeny and physical strength. May *Sūrya* grant you intellect, progeny and brilliance’.

The child is then given a sacred bath, followed by the utterance of the mantra:

क्षेत्रियै त्वा निर्ऋत्यै त्वा दुहो मुञ्चामि वरुणस्य पाशात्

अनागसं ब्रह्मणे त्वा करोमि शिवे ते द्यावापृथिवी उभे इमे (2.12.19)

‘(By this bath) I protect you from incurable diseases. I save you from the demons. I guard you from treacherous persons. I protect you from the bonds of *Varuṇa* (or from water borne diseases). Removing all the sins, I make you fit for Vedic studies. I will make the worlds favourable to you.’

With four more mantras, the blessings of *Agni*, *Sūrya* and other gods are sought and a wish that the child may be freed from all diseases, is expressed.

A mixture of ghee and curds is taken in a brass cup and one or two drops of the mixture is given to the child by pronouncing ‘*bhusvāha, bhuvāsvāha, suvasvāha*’. The remaining part of the mixture should be mixed in water and given to the cows. The child is then placed on the lap of the mother with a mantra:

मा ते कुमारं रक्षोऽवधीन्मा धेनुरत्यासारिणी ।

प्रिया धनस्य भूया एधमाना स्वे गृहे ॥ (2.13.1)

‘May not any evil spirit kill your child; May not any animal kill this child; Let there be growing prosperity in the house. May you be attached to this child.’

Then the husband makes the wife feed the child with her right breast, while pronouncing a mantra and wishing that the child may live long.

अयं कुमारो जरां जयतु दीर्घमायुः

यस्मै त्वं स्तन प्रत्याय आयुर्वचो यशो बलम् ॥ (2.13.2)

Then the father should touch the bed of the child and chant two more mantras addressed to Mother Earth, in benediction:

यत्ते सुसीमे हृदयं वेदाऽहं तत्प्रजापतौ ।

वेदाम तस्य ते वयं माऽहं पौत्रामघं रुदम् ॥ (2.13.4)

‘O Mother Earth, May I not shed tears at any time on account of this son. O Mother, protect him with four types of herbs’. Then the child is placed on the bed. Water divinities should be invoked in the pot full of river water that had already been brought, with a prayer that the child should be protected by them.

आपस्सुप्तेषु जाग्रत रक्षांसि निरितो नुदध्वं । (2.13.6)

As the next step, the father should establish a separate fire near the entrance of the delivery room and perform a *homa* with mustard seeds and rice husk.

अयं कलिं पतयन्तं श्वानमिवोद्वृद्धं ।

अजां वाशितामिव मरुतः पर्याध्वं स्वाहा ॥ (2.13.7)

By this and seven other mantras, the gods are requested to drive away the evil spirits and diseases. For the next ten days also the mixture of the mustard seeds and the rice husk should be thrown into the fire without the pronouncement of any mantra.

The *Jātakarma* described above is according to the *Āpastamba* school. We may note that *Āpastamba* does not prescribe any *homa* except in the last stage when the mixture of mustard seeds and the rice husk is thrown into the fire.

But *Bodhāyana* prescribes a *homa* in the beginning itself with part of the *puruṣasūkta* hymn beginning with:

अद्भ्यः संभूतः पृथिव्यै रसाच्च विश्वकर्मणः समवर्तताधि

तस्य त्वष्टा विदधद्रूपमेति तत्पुरुषस्य विश्वमायानुमग्रे (*Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*, 3.8)

Then with six mantras beginning from *kṣetriyāitvā*, the child is given a sacred bath as in *Āpastamba*. The father then takes the child on his lap with the mantra ‘*āṅgāt āṅgāt*’. Then he smells the child’s head with the mantra ‘*aśmā bhava ...*’. The name of the child relating the constellation of stars should be pronounced then. Five mantras beginning with ‘*agnirāyusmān*’ should be pronounced in the ear of the child. These mantras come under the *nāmakaraṇa* or naming ceremony, according to the *Āpastamba* school (*Āp. Mantrapāṭha*, 2.14, 5-9). Then from a mixture of curd, ghee and honey, the father gives a drop or two to the child through a golden jewel by pronouncing ten mantras beginning from ‘*prāṇo rakṣati ...*’ (*Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*, 2.5.1.1.)

प्राणो रक्षति विश्वमेजत् इर्यो भूत्वा बहुधा बहूनि । स इत्सर्वं व्यानशे ॥

‘It is the *prāṇa* (the vital air) which sustains all this universe. It assumes several forms such as *apāna* etc. and guides all the living beings. It is indeed all pervading.’

Likewise, *manas* (mind), *vāk* (speech), *caḥṣus* (eyes) and *śrotra* (ears) are praised. The intention is that the child should be endowed with all these faculties in a proper way.

When the child is taken on her lap by the mother, the mantra ‘*sadī tvam.*’ (*Taittirīya Sam.* 4.1.9.3) should be pronounced. Then the breasts are addressed with a mantra:

यस्ते स्तनः शशयुर्यो मयोभूर्यः सुम्रयुः सुहवोयः सुदन्नः ।

येन विश्वा पुष्यांसि वार्याणि सरस्वति तमिह घातवे कः ॥ (*Atharva Veda*, 7.10.1)

‘The breast of thine, exhaustless and delightful, good to invoke, beneficent, free giver, wherewith thou feedest all things that are choicest, bring that, *Sarasvatī*, that we may drain it.’

The child sucking the breasts is blessed thus: (*Tai. Samhitā*, 1.4)

द्यौस्ते पृष्ठं रक्षतु वायुरूरु अश्विनौ च स्तनं धयन्तं सविताभिरक्षतु ।

आवाससः परिधानात् बृहस्पतिः विश्वेदेवा अभिरक्षन्तु पश्चात् ॥

We may note that in *Āpastamba* tradition, this mantra is recited during a *homa* following the *saptapadī* in wedding ceremony (*Ap. Mantrapāṭha*, 1.4.10; See also HG 1.19.7). The sprinkling of water from the pot is followed next as in *Āpastamba*.

After the customary *devayajña* and *ullekhana* a *pakvahoma* is to be performed. The mantras prescribed are, ‘*harim harantaṃ....*’ (*Tai. Āra*, 3.15.1) etc. An *ājyāhuti* is performed next with the mantra ‘*sadyascakamanaya...*’ (*Tai. Āra*, 3.15). *Bodhāyana* also recommends a *homa* with the mixture of mustard seeds and the rice husk but the mantras prescribed are different. It consists of fifteen mantras, one of which occurs in the *R̥gveda* (IV.4.1).

कृणुष्व पाजः प्रसितिं न पृथ्वीं याहि राजेवामवां इभेन ।

तृष्णीमनु प्रसितिं द्रूणानोऽस्तासि विध्य रक्षसस्तपिष्ठैः ॥

‘Put forth thy strength, *Agni*, as a fowler spreads a capacious snare; proceed like a king attended by his followers and the elephant. Thou art the scatterer of thy foes; following the swift moving host, consume the *Rākṣasas* with thy fiercest flames’ (Tr. Wilson).

The other mantras are also in praise of *Agni* and his powers to destroy the foes. There are also prayers for protection and prosperity. The last stanza runs thus:

अयात्ते अग्ने समिधा विधेम प्रति स्तोमं शस्यमानं गृभाय ।

दहाशसो रक्षसः पाह्यस्मान् द्रुहो निदो मित्रमहो अवद्यात् ॥

‘May we propitiate *Agni* by this fuel; accept the praise that is recited by us. Consume the terrible *Rākṣasas*; thou who art to be honoured by thy friends; preserve us from the reproach of the oppressor and the reviler’.

A comparison between *Āpastamba* and *Bodhāyana* reveals certain interesting points. *Āpastamba* does not prescribe any proper *homa* for *Jātakarma*, but no ritual is complete without a *homa* in the Vedic tradition. It is quite befitting, therefore, that *Bodhāyana* prescribes a *homa* with the *puruṣasūkta* mantra which is quite significant. While the *puruṣasūkta* refers to the origin of the primordial *puruṣa*, the *jātakarma* refers to the birth of a mortal *puruṣa* and after all the *jīvātman* is not essentially different from the *paramātman* according to the relevant *Upaniṣad* texts and the *Advaita* school of philosophy. Hence, the *puruṣasūkta homa* as prescribed by *Bodhāyana* is fully significant.

According to *Āpastamba*, the father recites a few mantras, takes the child on his lap, smells it, gives a mixture of ghee and honey to the child and then only the child is given a bath. It may not be hygienic to take a new born child on the lap, smell it and give a mixture of ghee and honey to it immediately after its birth. On the

other hand, *Bodhāyana* recommends a bath first and then only the smelling etc. should take place. *Bodhāyana*'s recommendation seems to be more logical and practicable. *Bodhāyana* also recommends the recitation of hymns relating to the vital airs, the mind, the ear etc. which are quite befitting the occasion since it is the wish of every father that his child should be endowed with all the faculties intact.

According to some of the later digests and manuals, the *Jātakarma* should be performed on the tenth day after the birth and this is followed uniformly by all the performers belonging to any of the schools of *Gṛhyasūtra* in the present day.

NĀMAKARAṆA

The name giving ceremony is followed by people of all religions throughout the world in some form or other. The name giving ceremony or *Nāmakaraṇa* as prescribed by the *Gṛhyasūtras* has many interesting features. The *Āpastamba Gṛhyasūtra* says:

दशम्यां उत्थितायां स्नातायां पुत्रस्य नाम दधाति पिता मातेति ।

On the tenth day after the delivery, the mother and the child are given a bath. Then the father and the mother should decide on the name of the child.

There are discussions on how many syllables a name should consist of, what are the letters that may or may not be included in the name and the like. *Āpastamba* (15.9) says:

द्व्यक्षरं चतुरक्षरं वा नाम पूर्वमाख्यातोत्तरम् ।

दीर्घाभिनिष्ठानान्तं घोषवदादि अन्तरन्तरस्यम् ।।

The name given to a son may consist of two or four syllables. The first part of the name should refer to an object and be a 'subanta' and the last part should refer to an action and end in 'kvip' suffix. The name may end with 'visarga' or a long syllable. The 'ghoṣa' letters (the last three letters of each 'varga', the semi-vowels and 'ha') should be placed in the beginning. It should have the 'antastha' letters (ya, ra, la, va) in the middle. For example, a two syllable name may be like 'Gīrdaḥ'. *Gīrdaḥ* is dissolved as 'gīr dadāti iti', that is, one who gives speech. It satisfies all the conditions. A four syllable name may be like 'Hiraṇyadaḥ', one who gives gold. The first part of the word 'hiraṇya' is a subanta and it refers to an object namely gold. The name ends with 'daḥ' which refers to the act of giving. The 'ghoṣa' letter 'ha' is in the beginning, the 'antastha' 'ra' is in the middle and it ends with 'visarga'. 'Upasargas' or prefixes like 'su' may be added to the names, as in 'Sudarśanaḥ'.

Names of girls may consist of odd number of syllables. It should not contain harsh sounding letters in it. It may consist of the 1st, 3rd or 5th letter of a *varga* and the letters *ya, ra, la, śa* and *sa*. Examples are *Pārvatī, Bhārati* etc.

In the course of the *Nāmakaraṇa*, the mantras ‘*aṅgāt aṅgā....*’ and ‘*aśmā bhava.....*’ must be recited. The five mantras beginning from ‘*agnirāyusmān bhava...*’ must be recited in the right ear of the child.

Bodhāyana prescribes a *homa* with the *Prājāpatya sūkta* for the *Nāmakaraṇa* ceremony. He also says that the name may refer to a sage or a deity or one of the forefathers of the family. The *Nāmakaraṇa* ceremony may be performed on the 10th or the 12th day after the birth of the child. It should be preceded by *punṣyāhavācana* or a purificatory ritual. The name with reference to the constellation of the star of the child may be pronounced aloud but the child’s second name should be kept as a secret.

UTTHĀNA

Utthāna literally means ‘getting up’. Here in the context of the post-natal rituals, it refers to a minor ritual that marks the occasion when the mother gets up from the bed for the first time after the birth of the child. Only the *Gṛhyasūtras* of *Śāṅkhāyana, Hiranyakeśin, Bharadvāja* and *Vaikhānasa* refer to it. It is performed ten days after the birth of the child. The father and the mother have a holy bath and wash their heads too. The child is also given a bath. The father will cook a mess of food in that same fire that has been kept from her confinement. He will make oblations to the *tithi* (referring to the day of the bright or dark fortnight and the name of the month) of the child’s birth and to three constellations abutting the star of the child and their presiding deities. He then makes two other oblations dedicated to *Agni* with prescribed mantras. The prayer runs thus (the meaning alone is given):

‘May this *Agni*, the excellent one, give thee today life for our prayers; give us life that we may live long’ and ‘Life giving *Agni*, be strong by the *homas*. May thy face and thy seat be full of *ghee*, the sweet honey of the cow; protect us like a father protecting his son’. One more oblation dedicated to *Soma* is also offered with a *Rgveda* mantra (I.91.7).

त्वं सोम महे भगं त्वं यून् ऋतायते । दक्षं दधासि जीवसे ॥

‘Thou *Soma* who are the keeper of the law, givest bliss to both old and young and energy that he may live long’.

Vaikhānasa Gṛhyasūtra prescribes *homas* to *Dhātā* and other gods. Five oblations are offered to *Varuṇa* with mantras ‘*yete śataṁ varuṇa, uduttamam, ayāścāgne.....*’ and ‘*āpasṛjantu snigdhāni.....*’ and a *mūlahoma* as prescribed.

It is obvious that the *Utthāna* comes after the *Jātakarma* but precedes the *Nāmakaraṇa*. The ten-day period is crucial for both the mother and the child. Hence, a thanksgiving ceremony dedicated to the gods is performed on the tenth day after the birth of the child and that is called *Utthāna*.

ANNAPRĀŚANA

Annaprāśana is described by most of the *Gṛhyasūtras*. The ritual pertains to the first time feeding of solid food to the child. Food is considered as Brahman or God (*annam brahmeti vyajānāt...*) and therefore *Annaprāśana* is significant. It is performed in the sixth month of the child on an auspicious day.

After the preliminary rites like *nāndī*, a mixture of honey, curds, ghee and cooked rice is to be taken in a silver plate and the child is to be fed with the pronouncement of the mantra:

भूरपां त्वौषधीनां रसं प्राशयामि शिवास्त आप ।

ओषधयस्सन्त्वनमोवास्त आप ओषधयस्सन्तु शर्मन् ।

‘I am feeding you with the essence of earth (honey), milk (curds and ghee) and plants (rice). May these contribute to your welfare.’

Then he chants ‘*bhūh, bhuvah, suvah, bhūrbhuvassuvah*’ and feeds the child. The remaining portion of the food is given to the mother.

Śāṅkhāyana prescribes feeding of the child with goat’s flesh followed by the recitation of the *Rgveda* mantras, beginning with IV.4.5. Other *Gṛhyasūtras* make small changes from this general practice. *Rg*, IV.4.5:

ऊर्ध्वो भव प्रति विध्याध्यस्मदाविष्कृणुष्व दैव्यान्यग्ने ।

अवस्थिरा तनुहि यातुजूनां जामिमजामिं प्र मृणीहि शत्रून् ॥

‘Rise *Agni*, drive off those who fight against us. Make manifest thine own celestial vigour’ (*Rg*. IV.4.5).

PRAVĀSA ĀGAMANA (UPANIṢKRAMAṆA)

This ritual is meant for taking the child out of the house for the first time. It is performed in the fourth month. On an auspicious day the child is taken out and is made to see the Sun. The mantras from the *Rgveda*, IV.40.5, X.88.11 and I.50.1 are recited.

हंसः शुचिषद् वसुरन्तरिक्षसद् होता वेदिषद् अतिथिर्दुरोगसद् ।

नृसद् वरसद् ऋतसद् व्योमसद् अब्जा गोजा ऋतजा अद्रिजा ऋतम् ॥

‘The *Hamsa* housed in light, the *Vasu* in mid-air, the priest beside the altar, in the house of the guest. Dweller in noblest place, mid men, in truth, in sky, born of flood, kine, truth, mountain, he is holy law’ (*Rg.* IV. 40. 5).

यदेदेनमदधुर्यज्ञियासो दिवि देवाः सूर्यमादितेयम् ।

यदा चरिष्णू मिथुनावभूतामादित प्रापश्यन् भुवनानि विश्वा ॥

‘What time the gods, whose due is worship, set him as *Sūrya*, the son of *Aditi*, in heaven. When the Pair ever wandering, sprang to being all creatures that existed looked upon them’ (*Rg.* X. 88. 11).

उदु त्यं जातवेदसं देवं वहन्ति केतवः । दृशे विश्वाय सूर्यम् ॥

‘His bright rays bear him up aloft, the God who knoweth all that lives, *Sūrya*, that all may look on him’ (*Rg.* I.50.1).

Vaikhānasa Gr̥hyasūtra prescribes the recitation of the mantra ‘*kanikradt.....*’ when the child is taken out. He also says that the child is to be taken first to the temple of *Kumāra* (son of *Śiva* and *Pārvatī*). After worship in the temple they return home and the father performs a *homa* with the mantra ‘*somasya tvā....*’, makes the child sit on his lap and pronounces ‘*āyuse vardhase...*’ and smells his head. After pronouncing the mantra, ‘*āyuste viśvataḥ....*’ he whispers into his ear the names of gods or the mantra ‘*om namo nārāyaṇāya*’.

VARṢAVARDHANA

Varṣavardhana is celebrated on the completion of one year for the child. In fact, it is to be performed every year on the same *tithi* of the child’s birth day. After the preliminaries, a *homa* is performed with rice and ghee. A few mantras (eight of them) are chanted and oblations are offered (the first three mantras are quoted and for the rest only translation is given here. *Dharmakoṣa-* Vol. III, p. 2245).

यो ब्रह्मा ब्रह्मण उज्जहार प्राणैशिशरः कृत्तिवासाः पिनाकी ।तस्मै जुहोमि हविषा ॥

‘May Lord *Śiva* grant us long life. I offer oblations to him who is of the form of Supreme Being; -- to him who is clad in the elephant’s hide, who bears *Pināka* bow and who plucked out the head of *Brahma*’.

विभ्राजमानस्सरितस्य मध्याद्रोचमानो धर्मरुचियं आगात् ।

समृत्युपाशातपनुद्य घोरा निहायुषेणो घृतमत्तु देवः स्वाहा ॥

ईशानाय देवाय इदं न मम ।

‘May he partake our oblations for our long life – he who comes out of the waters in the form of Sun, shining brilliantly, the favourite deity of all, resplendent like the Sun of the summer season. May he set at naught the premature death’.

ब्रह्मज्योतिर्ब्रह्मपत्नीषु गर्भं यमादधात् पुरुरूपं जयन्तम् ।

सुवर्णरम्भग्रहमर्कमर्ज्यं तमायुषे वर्धयामो घृतेन स्वाहा ॥

‘We offer oblations to that Lord who granted life to the baby growing in the womb of this wife of mine and made it victorious and bright with luster. We pray for the growth of the child bearing the form of the Sun’.

‘We offer oblations for the satiation of that mother deity (*Vidyā*), and for the long life of this child—that deity who is the originator of the brilliant Supreme Spirit itself and which has several forms as *Śrīh*, *Lakṣmī*, *Aubalā*, *Ambikā*, *Gūmpinī* and *Indrasenā*’.

‘May the *Devatas* accept our oblations, -- the *devatas* who are the cause of all beings of the world and the caused, who take multifarious forms, who remain formless as well as with forms and who are associated with their respective consorts, sons and attendants’.

‘May the gods who are of different forms and ancient, destroy the negative forces that are bent on disrupting our life. We offer oblations to all these gods. May they not injure us, our children and grandchildren’.

‘May that Supreme Being eat our oblations for our long life—that Supreme Being who was one and only before the creations, who manifested himself as all these creations and from whom protectors of beings arose and in whom all the worlds get merged ultimately’.

‘We offer oblations for long life seeking blessings from eight *Vasus*, eleven *Rudras*, twelve *Ādityas*, seven *Maruts*, the *Sādhyas*, the *Rbhus*, the *Yakṣas*, the *Gandharvas*, the *Bhṛgus*, *Aṅgiras*, *Serpent deities* and *departed fathers*.’

CONCLUSION

The post-natal ceremonies had great significance in early times when the child mortality was very high. Due to various factors, today they are not performed strictly according to the ritual texts. *Jātakarma*, *Utthāna* and *Nāmakaraṇa* are performed on the same day, that is, on the tenth day after the birth of the child. *Annaprāśana*,

Upaniṣkramaṇa and *Varṣavardhana* are performed together on the first birthday celebration of the child. But it is advisable to follow the tradition and perform the rituals at appropriate time as prescribed in the ritual texts. They will go a long way in ensuring a healthy and long life for the children and contribute to the growth of their intellect and prosperity. Ultimately it will benefit the entire family.

PRENATAL RITUALS IN THE VEDAS

Dr. R. Rangan

*Visiting Professor, SVYASA Yoga University;
Founder President, Shruti Ram Gurukulam and Vidyavati Veda Patashala*

INTRODUCTION

Samskaras are the Vedic rituals and ceremonies which are performed on special occasions like marriage, birth, and death, to acculturate the psyche and physique of the being. Among the sixteen samskaras which are performed to prepare the mind three samskaras are performed even before the birth of the child. These are – Garbhadhanam, Pumsavanam and Simanta-Unnayanam. Immediately after birth, another samskara called Jatakarma is performed.

GARBHADHANAM

Garbhadhanam is the ceremony of making the womb. It is a ritual which has to be conducted for intercourse. Vedas unlike some religious texts do not consider intercourse as a sin. Intercourse also here is taken in the sense of worship. Intercourse on the micro level is represented in the Vedas as the cosmic Srishti on macro level. Srishti is the union of Prakriti and Purusha through which things get manifested. In the same way, sex is also a union through which the beings are born. Intercourse plays a vital role in giving birth to the children. The couple should have a tranquil mind when they get united through sex to bring a virtuous child. The couple should not get together with a disturbed mind. This ceremony also is called as Ritu Shanti which means the peace at due time and Samaveshana which means to enter together.

The couple after marriage should be in celibacy for three days. They should go to sleep together. But they should not have sex. When they lay down with each other, a samit (a wooden pestle) separates the couple. This creates a psychological balance. They get introduced to each other during these three days. Only after three days sex is permitted. This ritual is the consecration of both bija (seed-male) and kshetra (field-female).

The ceremony starts with Anujna, starting the ritual with the blessings of the elders. The limbs of this ceremony to be performed in the morning are: Achamana (sipping the water thrice), Vigneshvara Puja (worship

of Lord Ganesha), Samkalpa (Resolution), Kumbha Sthapanam (establishing the vessel filled with pure water with mango leaf and turmeric), Varuna & Vishnu Avahana (charging Vishnu-power and Varuna-power in the water), Shanti Japa (recitation of mantras which create harmony with Vishnu Gayatri, opening mantras of 4 Vedas, Suktas of Apa, Pavamana, Varuna, Vishnu, Rudra, Brahma, Sri and Purusha), Homa (offering the oblations to the Divine in the sacred fire; offering Samit with the recitation of Vishnu Sukta, offering Anna with the oblation of Brahma Sukta and offering ghee with the oblation of Rudra Sukta) and Jayadhi Homa (representing Indra's Victory).

At the evening, Aupasana (offering oblations to fire with Mantra) is performed. After that at the night, Samaveshana (couple having union) is permitted.

Through all the morning rituals the soil gets prepared, as the minds of the couple stay in equilibrium and peace through the rituals. Even before having union few mantras have to be recited to sanctify the process of sex. These mantras pray for a good progeny which has to be fashioned by all Divine forces.

विष्णुर्योनिं कल्पयतु त्वष्टा रूपाणि पिंशतु। आसिंचतु प्रजापतिधारता गर्भं दधातु ते॥

गर्भं धेहि सिनीवालि गर्भं धेहि सरस्वति। गर्भं ते अश्विनौ देवावाधत्तां पुष्करस्रजा॥

यथा पृथिव्यग्निगभार् द्यौर्यथेन्द्रेण गर्भिणी। वायुर्यथा दिशां गर्भं एवं गर्भं दधामि ते॥

“May Vishnu design the Yoni. May Tvashta design the form. May Prajapati make to flow. May Dhata make her to bear the womb. O Sinvali! Hold the womb. O Sarasvati! Hold the womb. May Ashvins hold the womb. As the Mother Earth has fire in her womb, as sky has Indra in her womb, as directions have air in their womb, I sow the womb in you.”

PUMSAVANAM

This ceremony is performed with an intent to get a heroic child. It is performed before the movement of foetus takes place, 2 to 4 months from the date of conception.

Day 1: Ceremonies performed are: Udaka Shanti (recitation of a collection of various important mantras from the Vedas), Pratisara Bandha (tying the thread with turmeric as a protective force).

Day 2: Ceremonies performed are: Anujna (getting the blessings to start the ritual), Homa in Aupasana Agni (offering the oblations to the Divine in the sacred fire), Pouring the sap of banyan tree in the nostril of wife.

Two girls who have not attained puberty bring nyagrodha (banyan) shoots. Husband crushes them and pours the essence in the nostril of the wife. Nyagrodha represents heroism and Strength.

SIMANTA- UNNAYANAM

This ceremony is conducted to make the pregnant woman happy. A happy woman gives birth to a healthy child. The psychological qualities such as satisfaction, happiness, peace, harmony and bliss help the mother give birth to a healthy child. During this samskara the husband fulfills any particular desire of wife. This ceremony makes her happy as she adorns herself with bangles, listens to soft Sama Veda music and also enjoys herself with fun and frolic. This ceremony is conducted sometime during the four- to eight-month period after conception. The limbs of this ceremony are: Udaka shanti japa, Pratisara bandha, Anujna, Homa, Simanta Unnayana (parting of hair in the upward direction with consecrated porcupine quill having white spots, bunch of darbha grass and a bunch of unripe fruits of Udumbara tree (symbol of fertility), Veena gana (playing Sama Veda through Veena), tying shoots of corn (prosperity), Mouna (silence) and Meditation.

JATAKARAMA

Jatakarma is a ritual which should be performed as soon as the child is born. Many of the psychological problems are related to the imbalance in the circumstance in which the child is born. To remove such imbalances this ritual is performed. Therefore, this ritual is significant. As soon as the child is born it should feel very comfortable and it should feel that it is taken care of and loved. Though the child does not know any language, it can feel. It can feel happy when it is loved and taken care of. It can feel sad when it is getting ignored. Jatakarma is to show the child that it is being taken care of by the new relatives that it is seeing. The father recites these Mantras touching the child.

दिवस्परि प्रथमं जज्ञे अग्निरस्मद् द्वितीयं परि जातवेदाः ।

तृतीयमप्सु नृमणा अजस्रमिन्धान एनं जरते स्वाधीः ॥

उशिक्पावको अरतिः सुमेधा मर्ते ष्वग्निरमृतो निधायि ।

इयर्ति धूममरुषं भरिभ्रद्रुच्छुक्रेण शोचिषा यामिनक्षत् ॥

विश्वस्य केतुर्भुवनस्य गर्भ आ रोदसी अपृणाज्जायमानः ।

वीडुं चिदद्रिमभिनत्परायन् जना यदग्निमयजन्त पंच ॥

“Agni is born first in space. He is born within us next. Then he is born within the water. With auspicious meditation one kindles and invokes him. The lovable, pure, unattached, intelligent and immortal Agni is established. He emits smoke bearing the light and with that shining light illumines the space. He is the consciousness of all, the womb of the world. Being born he fulfills the sky and earth. He breaks even the strong rocks. Five classes of people worship him.”

अंगादंगात् सम्भवसि हृदयादधि जायसे। आत्मा वै पुत्रनामासि स जीव शरदः शतम्॥

“You are born from our every limb. You are born of our heart. our soul gets manifested as our child. May you be for hundred years.”

Parts of this ceremony are –

1. Touching the shoulders, keeping the child in the lap and kissing
2. Smelling the forehead and murmuring in the right ear

अश्मा भव परशुर्भव हिरण्यमस्तुतं भव। पशूनां त्वा हिकारेणाभिजिघ्राम्यसौ ॥

“May you be a rock. May you be axe. May you be pure gold. I smell you with the ‘Hinkara’ of cow.”

3. Feeding honey, ghee mixture through a dharba
4. Sprinkling of the water

शं ते अग्निः सहाद्भिरस्तु शं द्यावापृथिवी सहौषधीभिः।

शमन्तरिक्षं सह वातेन ते शं ते चतस्रः प्रदिशो भवन्तु ॥

“May Agni with water bestow welfare to you. May sky and earth with herbs bestow welfare. May atmosphere bestow welfare to you with air. May the directions bestow welfare to you.”

5. Smearing the tongue with mixture
6. Keeping the child on the lap of the mother
7. Right breast feeding

अयं कुमारो जरां धयतु दीर्घमायुः। यस्मै त्वं स्तन प्रप्यायायुर्वर्चो यशो बलम्॥

“May this child drink the long life span up to its old age with splendor, glory and strength when it drinks the breast.”

8. Touching and addressing the ground where the child is born

यद्भूमेहृदयं दिवि चन्द्रमसि श्रितम्। तदुर्वि पश्यं माहं पौत्रमधं रुदम्॥

“The shadow of earth is in moon. O Mother Earth! May I see it. May I not see my progeny crying.”

9. Laying the child on the ground

10. Keeping the water vessel near the head of the child

11. Homa with mixture of mustard and husk to create fumigatory effects.

Oblations are offered mainly to Maruts, Agni and Brihaspati.

These are the various ceremonies prescribed in the Vedic texts to educate the child with love, peace and harmony. The child also gets educated with mantra-power, meditation, symphony of Sama Veda and Yoga.

CONCEPT OF RAJASWALA PARICHARYA: TOOL TO ENHANCE FERTILITY

Dr. Roshni K.P

Associate Professor and HOD, Kriyasarira, SJS Ayurveda College, Chennai

INTRODUCTION

Menstruation is a natural unique phenomenon in women's lives and the female is called as rajaswala during that period. It is considered to be the mirror of reproductive health. The time period from the menarche to the menopause is called the menstrual period. The definition of stree is -- "Styayati yasmat garbha iti stree". Our Acharyas have spoken of things such as 'swarthabudhi paratheshu' and 'streetuloke pratishtita' – which show the importance of the health of stree in Ayurveda.

Women pass through three stages in life – Bala (childhood), Rajaswala (menstrual period), and Vridha (old age). Among them, rajaswala period is the largest and the most important period. It belongs to the middle stage of life as it is pitta predominant time and also the hormone regulating period. Acharya Charaka has said that the woman is the origin of progeny and also considered as the best vajikarana dravya. The health of a woman during the reproductive stage of her life determines the health of the progeny.

The female who is menstruating is termed as 'Rajaswala'. The nirukti is 'raja asti asya iti' which means she who possesses the rajas. This stage is divided into: Tarunee (puberty and adolescence – 16-32 years) and Adhirudha (climacteric – 33-50 years). The synonyms of rajaswala are: atreyee, malini, pushpavati, ritumati etc.

Charya or Paricharya means certain measures to be followed regarding food habits and lifestyle for healthy life. In Ayurveda, acharyas mention different charyas for maintaining the health like garbhini charya, soothika charya, rajaswala charya, etc. The charyas or code of conduct mentioned for a rajaswala stree is termed as rajaswala charya, and sadly is the most neglected part of the health concerns in the society today. Ayurveda mentions about following this rajaswala paricharya from the moment of appearance of menstrual flow, for a period of three days. The charya should include both mental and physical rest. During the period female should maintain good thoughts and follow the rituals with a pleasant mind.

The Rajaswala Paricharya helps a woman to cope up with her physiological changes taking place in the body during the rajaswala period. It will help women to become healthy, both physically and mentally during the menstrual cycle. The rajaswala paricharya acts as an important tool to enhance fertility and is amply discussed in classic Ayurvedic texts. Fertility is the capacity to reproduce or the state of being fertile. A healthy woman is needed for a healthy baby. Rajaswala Paricharya helps to prevent gynecological diseases and safeguards reproductive health. The maintenance of hygiene during this period of menstruation avoids the chances of occurrence of infertility. Acharyas have mentioned aharas and acharas which are indicated and contraindicated for maintaining the health. Along with acharas, aharas are also very much essential because the menstrual bleeding is a type of natural shodana process.

DIET INDICATED

Due to increased pressure in the body at the time of menstruation, the bile secretion reduces which can lead to further complications. So, to increase the agni (digestive fire), proper diet should be used during the rajaswala kala. Acharyas mentioned that havisya or yavaka are good agnivaradhaka ahara, keeping the same directly over palm or in a utensil made of clay or leaves. Yava is guru, seetha, madhura and sara, and these gunas will increase faeces and vata. The vataprakopa can be diminished by adding milk. The havisya is the meal made up of ghee, sali rice, and milk. This should be given to the rajaswala stree. Thus, the diet has its own effect on the health. The banana leaves are natural antioxidants that fight against free radicals and therefore, help in preventing diseases. The utensils made of clay have alkaline properties. It neutralizes the pH balance of the food by interacting with acids in food. This also enhances the digestion along with the diet.

DIET CONTRAINDICATED

A woman during the rajaswala kala should avoid tikshna (pungent), katu (spicy) and lavana (salty) foods because these increase the menstrual flow and thus result in vataprakopa. Brimhana ahara also should be avoided because it causes stambhana.

ACHARAS CONTRAINDICATED AND INDICATED

- Darbhasamstharashayini – Acharyas mention that during the time of menstruation, a woman should sleep on the bed made of darbha spread over the ground. From the Vedic time onwards darbha has its importance in various rituals. The kusha grass protects the body from the negative energies and from toxic radiations.

Even though it is difficult to practice, in present days the usage of darbha grass by a rajaswala helps to protect her from the mobile phone radiations.

- Divaswapna – She should avoid sleeping in the daytime. Sleeping in daytime leads to the production of kapha dosha which further produces Ama.
- Anjanam - She should avoid the application of Anjana.
- Ashrupata – She should avoid shedding of tears during the time of rajaswala.
- Snana – Acharyas mentioned ‘snanam dukhasahatvena’. If she takes bath, the stambhana occurs and menstrual bleeding decreases. So, she should avoid snana.
- Anulepa and Abhyanga – Avoid oil massaging and smearing sandal paste on the body.
- Hasana and Kadana – Laughing and talking too much is contraindicated.
- Nakhachedana – She should avoid plucking of nails. During the time of menstruation, the body becomes weak. After the ritucharya shodana, the circulation of blood, that is, the nutritional supply occurs fast by accepting more nutrients.
- Pradhavana and Vyayama – Running and too much exercise should be avoided. During the time, the body becomes weak due to the raktha srava and there will be hormonal changes. Excess exertion leads to vata prakopa and rasa dusti. If it is repeated continuously, this leads to infertility. Athivyayama eradicates the body like the lion destroys the elephant which is of bigger size.
- Use of Swedana karma, Vamana, Nasya karma are contraindicated because these cause dosha prakopa.
- Coitus is contraindicated during the menstruation. Intercourse during this time only worsens the condition for the well-being of the woman and infections may occur too.
- She should not adorn herself with ornaments thus avoiding sexual attraction.

The menstruating woman has to follow the charya during the menstruation for the first 3 days. On the 4th day, she should take bath and wear white garments with flowers and ornaments and worship God. Then she should indulge in sexual intercourse for achieving a good progeny. If the woman does not follow the charyas properly, the dosha vitiation occurs and it further affects the foetus. Following abnormalities may occur to the foetus:

TABLE 1: Contraindicated actions of the mother cause abnormalities in the child

Action of mother	Abnormalities of Foetus
Divaswapna (Day sleeping)	Swapasheela (Over sleeping)
Use of Anjana (Collyrium)	Dagdha (Partial Blindness)
Rodhana (Weeping)	Vikrita Drishti (Defective vision)
Snanam (Bathing)	Dukha sheela (Sadish)
Abhyanga (Oil Massage)	Kushta (Skin disorders)
Nakhapakarata (Paring of the nail)	Kunakhi (Deformity of the nail)
Pradhavana (Fast running)	Unsteady, both mentally and physically
Hasana (Laughing)	The black colour of lip and thumb
Pralapa (Over-talking)	Talkative
Atishabdha sravana (Overhearing)	Deafness
Combing the hair	Baldness
Exposure to the breeze and too much exertion	Mentally troubled
Use of nasya	Menstrual abnormalities

If the copulation occurs on the first day of menstruation, it affects the health, lusture and vision of the husband. During this time, the entry of sperm into the canal is not possible and does not result in pregnancy. So, acharyas indicated brahmacharya at the time of menstruation, also it has negative impact on the well-being of the woman. Even though it is difficult to get pregnant during the time of menstruation, Acharya Kashyapa describes the effect on the child if pregnancy occurs.

TABLE 2: Effect on the baby when the pregnancy occurs in menstruation

Menstruation	Effect on the Baby
First Day	No pregnancy/intrauterine death
Second Day	Abortion/ Stillbirth
Third Day	Defective body part and short life
Fourth Day	Normal and healthy life

DISCUSSION

The state of health of a society is closely linked with the state of health of its women. Menstrual hygiene and health are very essential, especially in today's time, because a large population is unaware about the do's and don'ts. This increases the chances of complications associated with fertility, pregnancy and childbirth.

After ritukala, when the shodana occurs completely, the raktha shows the colour of pure blood like that of gold, indragopa, padma, alaktaka, gunja phala. If menstruation occurs for some more days than the normal time, the vata prakopa and krodha, shoka like emotional characters appear. In modern science, these features are said to occur due to the hormonal changes. The removal of complete shedding of the endometrium is very much essential, otherwise it retains inside the uterus leading to PCOD. If the vata prakopa occur in the body due to nithya sevan of contraindications, it in turn slowly increases the pitta and kapha, and then vitiates malas and dhatus. This can be one of the causes for infertility.

If the part of beeja responsible for the development of a particular body part is defective, the abnormality will be manifested. This can be related with the chromosomal abnormalities or sex hormone deformity. For example, when the beeja baaga which gets transformed into the semi-lunar valve is defective, then it causes corresponding defects in the offspring.

From the time of Samhita Kala, acharyas have explained the necessary do's and don'ts for the menstruating women, but nowadays we can't follow all of these due to the hectic work schedules of the women. So, the charyas can be followed as per the convenience and time schedules during busy days. Proper menstrual hygiene and health may also be done by maintaining cleanliness of private parts, use of sanitary napkins, frequent

changing of sanitary napkins and washing hands with soap. Menstrual hygiene management should be a part of an expanded definition and agenda for sexual and reproductive health services. Poor menstrual hygiene can negatively affect women's health.

CONCLUSION

To achieve conception Acharya Susruta has described four essential factors for fertility, Ritu – Normal menstrual cycle/proper fertile period, Kshetra – Physiologically adequate and healthy internal organs of reproduction, Ambu – Good nutritional status of mother, and Beeja - Healthy ovum and spermatozoa. The woman's part in the formation of and offspring is much greater because all these four factors are related to her. Ayurveda gives prime importance to preventive aspects and elaborates "Rajaswala Charya" or the care during menstrual cycles and during menarche to prevent and cure gynecological disorders.

By following the Rajaswala paricharya with some modifications, women will be able to maintain equilibrium of health during the most sensitive period of their lives. Rajaswala paricharya help women respond healthily to the drastic physical and cyclic changes during the menstrual cycle.

THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSION OF PREGNANCY AND CHILDBIRTH: LESSONS FROM INDIAN TRADITION

Rutu Baldha

Program Coordinator, AURO Navjeevan Sanskar Sikshan Kendra,
AURO University, Surat

*“The world was a conception and a birth
Of Spirit in Matter into living forms,
And Nature bore the Immortal in her womb,
That she might climb through him to eternal life.”¹ (Sri Aurobindo)*

The world today desires peace, stability, and constancy. In a time of uncertainties, the question of world peace is essential to the development of the human psyche. Hence, the question arises – how are we to achieve this peace? How do we make the world a better place? According to the world, the answer to this question is in India. In India, *adhyatma* is considered to be a parallel to science. The external world which can be seen with the naked eye is what is accepted and studied by science, whereas *adhyatma* means exploring the inner world through and beyond the journey of the senses - *Indriya*, mind - *manas*, intellect - *buddhi*, ego- *ahankaara*, soul - *atman*.

आत्मनि अधि इति अध्यात्म

The science that leads one beyond the *atman* is considered to be *adhyatma*.²

The contemporary sciences assess and classify a human being using instruments such as Intelligence Quotient, Emotional Intelligence, and Social Intelligence (IQ, EQ, and SQ), which are then used to characterize a person’s usefulness for the society. But recent studies suggest that these three quotients are dependent upon the

¹ “Savitri” by Sri Aurobindo

² आत्मानं ब्रह्माधिकृत्य इति कुल्लूकभट्टः – The famous commentator of the *Amarakosha* has further explained *adhyatma* to be one that is inclined towards *brahman*.

Spiritual Quotient. In order to develop a spiritual quotient, it is claimed that certain processes should be implemented from the time when the person is in the mother's womb, and even before he or she was conceived. If such is the connection between one's spiritual quotient and the exposure one has during one's time in the mother's womb, it becomes important to study the impact of spirituality during pregnancy and childbirth.

ADHYATMA

Throughout the ages, the world has looked towards India for guidance and leadership in spiritual pursuit and spiritual fulfilment. *Adhyatma* is not something that one can learn through a class or a course, it is a lifelong pursuit of evolving and growing in the soul. In today's modern society, materialistic Western ideals have replaced ancient Vedic values of life and nature. This has led to a dichotomy of individualism versus dharmic universalism in human thought. Where the development of the soul or *atman* used to be the guiding force of life, now there is only me, myself and I, focusing on selfish endeavors pursued with an abstract concept of life as a passage of time that human beings are forced to bear due to the merciless endeavor of some supernatural power in creating mankind. With this in mind, the question arises – how are humans supposed to walk through the paths of life?

In India, where we still attempt to follow the Vedic³ way of life, spirituality (henceforth referred to as *adhyatma* whenever used in the Indian context) takes a slightly different definition. While other cultures tend to mix spirituality with religion, Vedic culture has always seen *adhyatma* as a way to experience the world through different perspectives⁴. *Adhyatma* takes a slightly different approach toward life than science does by approaching the universe with three *pramanas*:

- *Pratyaksha* - that which is accepted by the six senses
- *Anumaana / Upamaana* - that which is accepted through inference or context
- *Aapta* - that which is accepted through faith in a person of exalted character

The progressive and flexible thought process of the Vedic tradition develops the ability to observe the world as a spiritual playground where character development is gradually acquired over the span of various

³ The word "Vedic" is preferred instead of "Indian" due to its traditional value. The term "Vedic" explains the rich intellectual heritage of the tradition and its holistic view of the world. Additionally, the meaning of the term has also been distorted with various philosophies that have originated from Western perspectives, creating beliefs that tend to be a little inconsistent with Vedic perspectives. Despite this patchwork of beliefs, "Vedic" is still the best term to explain the topic presented here.

⁴ The darshana shastras are an all-encompassing plethora of philosophy which cover every aspect of human thinking and perception of the world. There are six systems of thought in the Indian tradition: *Nyaya*, *Vaisheshika*, *Sankhya*, *Yoga*, *Mimansa*, and *Vedanta*.

lifetimes. To facilitate this process our rishis have gifted us with the *shodasha sanskaras*⁵ in order to ensure the well-being of the foetus and facilitate the transition into parenthood.

Spirituality is correlated to the *sanskaras* as they are all imperative to spiritual development of the child before and after birth. To this end, we can see *adhyatma* as a guiding force in the improvement of the quality of human life. The *sanskara* that we are primarily concerned with here is the *Garbhadhaana*, or conception, and the complementing *sanskaras* (*pumsavana*, *seemantonnayanam*, *jaatakarma*, *naamakaranam*). Their impact will also be examined here.

SHODASHA SANSKARA - GARBHA SANSKARA

The *shodasha sanskara* were developed by the rishis to not only protect the body from various diseases, but to also develop the mind and its inner processes such as memory, reasoning, problem solving, decision making etc. For instance, the *suvarna prashana* is used to enhance the mind power of a child, similarly the *karnavedha sanskara* is performed to develop better immunity.

According to the Vedic tradition, *Garbha Sanskara* is an integral part of child development. While the physical development of the foetus is also important, the mental and spiritual development of the foetus play an important role in its lifelong progress. At the risk of treading into the metaphysical, the Vedic tradition takes the possible influences of past lives into account while performing the *shodasha sanskaras* on the child before and after birth to ensure that it is ready to face any deficiencies that he or she may have developed. The word *sanskara* itself reflects this.

संस्करोति इति संस्कारः

Sanskaras are the process of imbuing any particular thing or person with qualities.

Another explanation that is accepted is:

संस्कारो हि गुणान्तराधानम्

The gradual metamorphosis of a life through the application of various qualities that are infused into the child at various stages from conception to birth and then throughout their life.

⁵ It is commonly accepted that there are *shodasha sanskaras* as depicted by Manu, but different rishis have attempted to categorize them according to their various properties. For example, Gautam rishi has them spread into forty different *sanskaras* according to three different types.

In this process there are three main parts that are to be considered:

Gunaadhaanam

This aspect is best portrayed through the example of a potter. When a potter makes a pot he goes through the effort of shaping it, firing it, and then painting it. This process ensures that there is a certain characteristic to clay that results in its ability to store water and keep it cool as well. In a similar manner, while the human body is processed through the *shodasha sanskaras*, the *atman* is refined through the various qualities that are imbued in it during the process.

Doshaapakarshanam

This facet of the *sanskaras* is focused on filtering through the impurities of the inner elements such as the mind (sub-conscious, unconscious, conscious, intellect etc.) just like a diamond is refined through many processes after it has been mined.

Heenanga poorti

The processes that are performed upon the human body such as *yagnopaveetam* and *karnachhedanam* are considered to be a part of this approach.

FOUR KEY FACTORS INFLUENCING THE FOETUS AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

There are four major facets that influence the foetus and its development:

- *Beeja bhāva* - Quality of the seed
- *Aatmaja bhāva*
- *Deshaj bhāva* - Environment
- *Matruj bhāva* - the nine months of pregnancy

The Vedic tradition highlights certain historical characters that display the importance of *garbha sanskara* and integrate all the four characteristics mentioned above. We would like to highlight four major characters in order to illustrate this explanation:

1. Ashtavakra, son of Sujata
2. Prahalada, son of Kayadu
3. Abhimanyu, son of Subhadra
4. Alarka, son of Madalasa

Ashtavakra

The son of Sujata and grandson of the Acharya Kahoda, this legendary thinker has been an inspiration to many who have been plagued by the stigma of deformity. While the story seems to be fantastical, the fact remains that through the *aapta pramana* we, in the Indian tradition, accept the stories as true and believe in the capacity of the shastras to improve the quality of human life. When Ashtavakra was in the womb, his mother Sujata used to sit in on her father's lectures on philosophy. One day, the child spoke up from within the womb and corrected his grandfather on an error he had made in his reasoning.

Prahalada

The son of Kayadu and the grandson of the infamous rakshasa Hiranyakashipu, Prahalada borne of a rakshasi and raised in an ashram where he was taught by Narada, was a devotee of Lord Vishnu. The story goes that the Indra and his fellow *devataa* were threatened by the powerful child that was growing in Kayadu's womb and threatened its birth, prompting Kayadu to take refuge in an ashram. Through Narada's teachings the resulting child grew up to be a Vishnu *bhakta* and went on to be the cause of Hiranyakashipu's demise.

Abhimanyu

Perhaps the most popular example that we can find is Abhimanyu's incomplete knowledge of the *chakravyuha* formation used in battlefield. Once Krishna was explaining the different battle formations to Subhadra, but she happened to fall asleep in the middle of the narration. As a result, Abhimanyu who was in her womb at the time only knew how to enter a *chakravyuha* but not how to defeat it and exit safely. This led to his untimely and heroic demise, making him immortal in the pages of history.

Alarka

शुद्धोसि बुद्धोसि निरंजनोऽसि

संसारमाया परिवर्जितोऽसि ।

संसारस्वप्नं त्यज मोहनिद्रा

मदालसोल्लसपमुवाच पुत्रम् ॥

Another popular story is Madalasa Upakhyana of the Markandeya Purana. This is a lengthy composition where Madalasa conditions her children to be righteous and free from the trappings of the material world. As a result, three out of her four children became enlightened and left society for a life of spiritual bliss while the fourth son, despite an interruption in the *upadesha* went on to become an exemplar king.

अहिरसि आयुरसि सर्वतः प्रतिष्ठाऽसि धाता त्वां
दधातु विधाता त्वां दधातु ब्रह्मवर्चसा भव ।
ब्रह्मा बृहस्पतिर्विष्णुः सोमः सूर्यस्थथाऽश्विनौ
भगोऽथ मित्रावरुणौ वीरं ददतु मे सुतम् ॥⁶

INTEGRAL PART OF CONCEPTION, PREGNANCY AND CHILDBIRTH

Garbha sanskara is an integral part of pregnancy in the Indian tradition. In this first of the *shodasha sanskara* there is an emphasis on the systematic conception of a child. In accordance with this, there is a verse in the Bhagavada Gita that explains the reason for a *jīva* to take root in a particular womb:

प्राप्य पुण्यकृतं लोकान् उषित्वा शाश्वतिः समाः ।
शुचीनां श्रीमतां गेहे योगभ्रष्टोऽभिजायते ॥⁷

A particular *jīva* is situated in a particular womb based on best compatibility. Furthermore, the quality of the seed is impacted by adopting the methods prescribed in the Charak Samhita for pre-pregnancy routines in preparation for *garbhadhāna*.

Firstly, the couple is advised to follow brahmacharya for a certain amount of time along with following a diet plan to ensure maximum capacity for conception. After conception, the *atmaja bhāva* influences the child's knowledge and intellect. The *deshaj bhāva* creates a nature vs. nurture situation where the child combines his/her conditioning with what they gather from observing their physical environment. The *matruj bhāva* influences the child's perception of the world and its workings. The *garbhadhāna* requires that a Ganesh Poojan be performed

⁶ Ashtaangahridayam, Sharirsthaanam, 8/8

⁷ Shrimad Bhagavada Gita, 6/41

to ask for a brilliant and *tejasvi* progeny.⁸ The couple prays that the Lord Vishnu make their child capable, *Vishvakarma* make the womb strong, *Prajapati* infuse it with many qualities and the *devas* make the womb fruitful. Just like a farmer prepares his field for proper farming, so do the future parents prepare the womb for a fruitful pregnancy. The *Santāna Gopāla Strotram* is a well-established strotram for a successful conception, pregnancy and delivery. The reason for including *garbhadhāna* in the *shodasha sanskaras* was to uplift the process of conception to *upasana* rather than see it merely as a means of bodily pleasure.

The *pumsavana sanskara* is used for three main reasons: acquiring a healthy child, maintaining health through ingestion of appropriate herbs, and ensuring a stable pregnancy. This *sanskara* is part of a process that makes sure that the baby is born to be full of character and strength.⁹ The mantra for this *sanskara* shows that *Hiranyagarbha* was the first and foremost, the bearer of life and the one that took care of the Earth.

The *seemantonnayanam* is a rite performed to promote nutrition and positive vibrations in the mother that indirectly affects the foetus. This is performed at the seventh month of pregnancy when Ganesh Poojan and a *yajna* are also done.¹⁰ The husband prays that her wife become the mother of a powerful, brilliant and pious child that can bring joy and pride to the family. From this point onwards, the pregnant mother is to be kept happy at all costs through various means such as listening to music.

The *jātakarma sanskara* is essential to promoting the physical well-being of the child after birth through the systematic and ritual act of cutting the cord of the baby. The child is then given a mixture of ghee and honey prepared in a golden bowl while chanting the appropriate mantra for this event.¹¹ The parents pray that the child become like the ghee and honey being ingested, full of health and nourishment, and that the deities all take care of him through the different stages of his life.

The *nāmakaranam* is well known as a rite that influences the child throughout its development. The influence of a name is very strong as the qualities that it represents is what tend to be ingrained in the child over

⁸ ॐ विष्णुः योनिं कल्पयतु तवष्टा रूपाणि पिन्शतु ।

आ सिन्चतु प्रजापतिः धाता गर्भं दधातु ते ॥

⁹ ॐ हिरण्यगर्भः समववर्तागे भूतस्य जातः पतिः एक आसीत् ।

स दाधार पृथ्वीं धा उत इमा कस्मै देवाय हविषा विधेम ॥

¹⁰ Along with chanting the *beeja mantra* the husband also chants the following line:

ॐ अयम उर्जावतोवृक्ष उर्जीव फलिनि भव ।

¹¹ ॐ प्र ते ददामि मधुनो धृतस्य वेदं सवित्रा मधोनाम ।

आयुष्मान गुप्तो देवतामिः शतं जीव शरदो लोके अस्मिन् ॥

time. Such is the feeling that the mantra below reflects the expectations of generations of mothers regarding how their child should turn out.

ॐ देवकीसुतगोविंद वासुदेवजगत्पते ।

देहि मे तनयं कृष्ण त्वामहं शरणं गतः ।।¹²

In conclusion, *Garbha Sanskara* is an integral part of the child conception and development that has the capacity for a lasting impact upon the world. Through the process of conditioning the future generation from the womb itself, we can ensure a lasting peace in the world. Spirituality is an integral part of the Vedic way of life. The *shodasha sanskaras* start the child on this path from the very beginning of life.

In the Indian tradition, desire and worldly pleasures are not considered impure or scandalous, but rather, they are diverted toward a higher goal of empowering mankind to change the world by becoming a better individual and by growing in the soul. The *sanskaras* reflect this spirit perfectly and explain how a person may become the best that he or she can be by performing the rituals in the right spirit and with the right attitude.

While the Western world is still exploring the ramifications of nature vs. nurture, the Indian tradition has followed a foolproof way to creating an ideal society through the conditioning of young minds from the moment they are conceived. There are various groups of people around the country, such as followers of the Arya Samaj and families of the Swadhyaya Parivar founded by Pandurang Shastri Athavale, who follow similar processes in order to ensure that their children are born according to the dictates of the *sanskaras*. While these are more traditional methods of *garbha sanskara* implemented without any institutional incentives or influences, on a more organized level, the Auro Navjeevan Sanskar Shikshan Kendra follows this method to educate young pregnant mothers in these processes. While the program at Auro University is still young, we have a group of young mothers who have been following the regimen elsewhere and have been blessed with bright and healthy children due to the prenatal education that they received.

¹² Santanagopaala Stotram

REFERENCES

Sri Aurobindo. *Savitri*. Chennai: Helios Books, 2012.

Dutt, Manmatha Nath. *Markandeya Puranam*. London: Elysium Press, 1896.

Hartzell, James. *Chanting Sanskrit Increases Brain Cognitive Areas - "Sanskrit Effect"*. 2 Aug 2018. 14 Mar 2019. <https://www.sanskritimagazine.com/vedic_science/chanting-sanskrit-increases-brain-cognitive-areas-sanskrit-effect/>.

"*Prenatal Education*." All India Magazine, A monthly Magazine of Sri Aurobindo Society (September 2018). English.

Relajo, Dennis. *What is Spiritual Quotient?* Ed. Dennis Relajo. 12 Nov 2016. 9 Mar 2019. <<https://www.psychreg.org/spiritual-quotient/>>.

Shree Gulab Kunverba Ayurvedic Society. *The Charak Samhita*. 6. Vol. 3. Jamnagar: Shree Digvijay Ayurved Prakashan, 1949. 3 vols.

Thakar, Mukund Chandra Shantilal. *Devi Santan*. Mumbai, n.d.

Timsit, Anabelle. *A leading genetic expert tackles the nature vs. nurture debate*. Ed. Xana Antunes. 31 October 2018. 13 March 2019. <<https://qz.com/1443795/a-genetic-expert-tackles-the-nature-vs-nurture-debate/>>.

Inspiration

Indeed, if we want this education to have its maximum result, it should begin even before birth; in this case it is the mother herself who proceeds with this education by means of a twofold action: first, upon herself for her own improvement, and secondly, upon the child whom she is forming physically. For it is certain that the nature of the child to be born depends very much upon the mother who forms it, upon her aspiration and will as well as upon the material surroundings in which she lives. To see that her thoughts are always beautiful and pure, her feelings always noble and fine, her material surroundings as harmonious as possible and full of a great simplicity—this is the part of education which should apply to the mother herself. And if she has in addition a conscious and definite will to form the child according to the highest ideal she can conceive, then the very best conditions will be realised so that the child can come into the world with his utmost potentialities. How many difficult efforts and useless complications would be avoided in this way!

(The Mother, CWM 12:9)

Mother's Glow



Radiating the light within.....

Visit our website: mothersglow.in