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## Physiological perspectives on garbh sanskar: A kriya sharir approach to maternal and fetal well-being from garbhadhana to sutika kaal

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### Abstract

Garbha Sanskar literally means “education or conditioning of the fetus in the womb.” Derived from Ayurveda and Vedic traditions, it emphasizes that the mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional environment surrounding a pregnant woman influences the unborn child. Modern science also recognizes the impact of maternal health, emotions, hormones, nutrition, and environment on fetal development. Hence, Garbha Sanskar is seen as a holistic antenatal care system aimed at nurturing a healthy, virtuous, and intelligent progeny.

Garbh Sanskar, an integral concept in Ayurveda, emphasizes the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual nurturing of both the mother and fetus during pregnancy. Rooted in the principles of Kriya Sharir (physiology), it provides a holistic framework to ensure healthy conception, fetal development, and maternal well-being. This article explores Garbh Sanskar from the physiological perspective, starting from Garbhadhana Samskara (conception ritual) through pregnancy (Garbhavastha) up to Sutika Kaal (postnatal period). The integration of Ayurvedic principles with modern physiology highlights the importance of maternal lifestyle, diet, emotions, and environment in shaping the future health of the child.

**Keywords:** Garbh sanskar, garbhadhana, sutika kaal, postnatal period, pregnancy

### Introductions

Pregnancy is a dynamic physiological state where the health of the mother directly influences fetal growth and development. Ayurveda conceptualizes pregnancy as a sacred journey where physical nourishment and mental impressions profoundly impact the fetus. The philosophy of Garbh Sanskar—literally “education or conditioning of the fetus”—encourages practices that promote holistic well-being. By aligning with Kriya Sharir, which studies normal body functions, Garbh Sanskar can be interpreted through modern scientific understanding of endocrinology, embryology, neurophysiology, and maternal-fetal interaction.

### Philosophical and Ayurvedic Basis

#### 1. Ayurvedic Scriptures

- Charaka Samhita and Sushruta Samhita describe Garbha Sanskar as the combination of maternal health, dietary regimen (Ahara), lifestyle practices (Vihara), and spiritual disciplines (Achara).
- The Garbhopanishad emphasizes that the fetus is conscious and capable of responding to external stimuli.
- It is believed that thoughts, emotions, diet, and actions of the mother influence the Sharirik (physical), Manasik (mental), and Atmik (spiritual) development of the child.

#### 2. Concept of “Satvavadana”

Mental purity and balanced emotions are encouraged in the mother to ensure that the child inherits virtues like calmness, intelligence, and compassion.

### Garbhadhana: Physiology of Conception

Garbhadhana, the first of the sixteen samskaras, emphasizes conscious conception at an auspicious time. Ayurveda states that healthy shukra (sperm), artava (ovum), and kshetra (uterine environment) must combine for conception.

### From a physiological standpoint

- Fertilization requires healthy gametes, a receptive endometrium, and proper hormonal regulation (estrogen, progesterone, LH, FSH).
- Ayurveda parallels this with the concept of balanced doshas and dhatus ensuring a fertile environment.
- Maternal mental state and spiritual practices during conception are said to influence genetic expression, which aligns with modern epigenetic research.

Ayurvedic Concept	Modern Physiological Correlate
Shukra (sperm) and Artava (ovum) purity	Healthy gametes (spermatogenesis, ovulation)
Kshetra shuddhi (healthy uterine environment)	Endometrial receptivity, hormonal balance (progesterone, estrogen)
Ritu kala (fertile period)	Ovulatory phase of menstrual cycle
Satva shuddhi (mental purity during conception)	Epigenetic influence of parental stress/emotions on embryo

### Garbhavastha: Physiological Adaptations during Pregnancy

#### Maternal Physiology (Kriya Sharir view)

- **Endocrine adaptations:** Increased progesterone and estrogen maintain pregnancy and prepare mammary glands.
- **Cardiovascular changes:** Increased blood volume supports uteroplacental circulation. Ayurveda describes this as enhanced ojas and nourishment of rasadhātu.
- **Metabolic shifts:** Maternal body adapts to provide glucose and nutrients to the fetus, reflected in aharapaka (digestion and assimilation).
- **Psychological well-being:** Positive emotions, music, and mantra recitation during pregnancy are said to nourish manas (mind), which parallels the modern concept of maternal stress influencing fetal neurodevelopment via cortisol.

#### Fetal Physiology

- **Ayurveda:** The fetus receives nutrition through upasneha (direct absorption) and upasweda (diffusion-like mechanism) from the mother's body.
- **Modern physiology:** This correlates with placental transfer of nutrients, gases, and antibodies.

Fetal sensory development is influenced by maternal stimuli; Garbh Sanskar practices like music therapy, meditation, and diet directly impact fetal brain wiring, supported by recent neurodevelopmental studies.

### Key Components of Garbha Sanskar

#### 1. Ahara (Dietary Regimen)

Ayurveda recommends a month-wise diet (Masa-anusarini Ahara Vidhi) for pregnant women:

- **First Trimester:** Light, easily digestible food, milk with herbs like Shatavari for implantation and early growth.
- **Second Trimester:** More protein-rich diet, ghee, rice, and milk to support fetal tissue development.
- **Third Trimester:** Foods enhancing strength, bone development (e.g., sesame, milk, dates), and easy digestion to avoid complications.

### General Diet Guidelines

- Fresh, warm, Satvik food (vegetables, fruits, whole grains).
- Avoid excessively spicy, sour, stale, or processed food.
- Herbal support like Phalaghrita, Shatavari, Ashwagandha, under guidance.

### 2. Vihara (Lifestyle and Activities)

- Adequate rest and sleep.
- Gentle physical activity like prenatal yoga and walking.
- Avoiding excessive exertion, lifting heavy weights, or stressful activities.
- Clean, positive, and natural surroundings.

### 3. Manasika Sanskar (Mental & Emotional Conditioning)

- **Positive Thinking:** Mothers are advised to stay cheerful, stress-free, and surrounded by supportive people.
- **Reading Scriptures & Literature:** Texts like Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagavad Gita, or spiritual literature are suggested to instill virtues in the child.
- **Creative Pursuits:** Singing, painting, or listening to soothing music to foster emotional stability.

Avoidance of Negative Influences: Arguments, fear, anger, or exposure to disturbing content are discouraged.

### 4. Shravana (Music & Sound Therapy)

- Classical music, raga therapy, Vedic mantras, and chanting (e.g., Gayatri mantra, Garbh Samvardhan mantra) are considered beneficial.
- Scientific studies also show that the fetus responds to sound and rhythm, influencing neurological development.

### 5. Dhyana and Yoga (Meditation and Yogic Practices)

- **Meditation:** Helps balance hormonal secretions, reduces stress, and ensures emotional stability.
- **Prenatal Yoga:** Poses like Baddha Konasana, Vrikshasana, Marjariasana, and breathing techniques like Anulom Vilom improve blood circulation, oxygen supply, and relaxation.

### 6. Samskaras (Rituals & Practices)

- **Pumsavana Sanskara (3rd month):** Done for ensuring the healthy growth of fetus and intellectual development.
- **Seemantonnayana Sanskara (7th month):** A ritual to keep the mother happy, release her from mental stress, and promote positive environment for fetus.

These samskaras serve both spiritual and psychological reassurance.

### Physiological Perspectives on Garbh Sanskar

- **Fetal Learning:** Research shows that fetuses recognize mother's voice and respond to sounds from 20th week onwards.
- **Maternal Stress & Hormones:** Stress hormones like cortisol can cross placenta, affecting fetal brain development.

- **Epigenetics:** Nutrition and environment in pregnancy influence gene expression, validating Garbha Sanskar's emphasis on maternal lifestyle.
- **Music Therapy:** Studies show positive impact on fetal heart rate and neural responses when exposed to calming music.

### Physiological benefits of Practicing Garbha Sanskar

1. Promotes normal, safe pregnancy and delivery.
2. Enhances fetal brain development, memory, and intelligence.
3. Reduces maternal stress, anxiety, and depression.
4. Encourages emotional bonding between mother and child.
5. Builds foundation for a healthy, virtuous, and emotionally balanced individual.

Ayurvedic View (Kriya Sharir)	Modern Physiology
Increase in Rasadhātu for nourishing fetus	Plasma volume expansion, increased cardiac output
Ojas strengthens fetus and mother	Enhanced immunity and placental antibody transfer
Aharapaka supports garbha poshana	Maternal digestion and nutrient absorption for fetal supply
Influence of maternal manas (mind) on fetus	Maternal stress hormones (cortisol) affecting fetal neurodevelopment

Practice	Ayurvedic Perspective	Physiological Benefit
Ahara (Sattvik diet)	Balances doshas and nourishes dhatus	Prevents anemia, supports neural tube development
Vihara (yoga, pranayama)	Maintains dosha balance, relieves stress	Improves placental circulation, reduces hypertension
Achara (positive conduct)	Enhances sattva guna	Stabilizes neuroendocrine responses
Mantra & music	Promotes calmness, positive vibrations	Lowers maternal HR, BP, cortisol; stimulates fetal auditory system

Balanced Doshas → Proper Dhātu Nourishment → Healthy Garbha
↓ ↓ ↓
Sattvik Ahara Maternal Adaptations Optimal Fetal Growth

### Sutika Kaal: Postnatal Physiology and Care

Sutika Kaal refers to the postpartum period, traditionally defined in Ayurveda as lasting six weeks (approximately 45 days) after delivery. This is considered a critical phase in a woman's life, as her body undergoes major physiological, anatomical, and psychological transformations while returning to a non-pregnant state. Ayurveda emphasizes that appropriate care during this period is essential for restoring maternal health, preventing long-term complications, and ensuring the well-being of both mother and child.

**Ayurvedic Concept of Sutika Kaal:** According to Charaka Samhita and Kashyapa Samhita, a woman in the postpartum period is called Sutika. Just as the earth becomes fragile after yielding crops, the mother's body is considered vulnerable after childbirth due to depletion of Dhatus (body

tissues), imbalance of Doshas, and the stress of labor. This stage is marked by:

- Agni Mandya (weakened digestion)
- Vata Prakopa (aggravated Vata due to uterine contractions, loss of blood, and energy depletion)
- Dhātu Kshaya (tissue loss from delivery process)

To address these imbalances, Ayurveda prescribes a structured regimen of diet (Ahara), lifestyle (Vihara), medications (Aushadha), and therapies (Chikitsa) for proper recovery.

### Physiological Correlation

Modern medicine recognizes the postpartum period as a time of significant changes:

1. **Uterine Involution:** The uterus gradually returns to its pre-pregnant size, shrinking from nearly 1 kg immediately after birth to about 60-80 g by six weeks. Ayurveda correlates this process with Apana Vata functions and emphasizes therapies to pacify Vata for smooth involution.
2. **Lochia Discharge:** Vaginal discharge (lochia) occurs due to shedding of the endometrial lining. Ayurveda describes this as expulsion of Shonita Mala (impure blood and uterine debris) that must be supported by proper cleansing practices.
3. **Hormonal Readjustments:** After delivery, estrogen and progesterone levels fall sharply, while prolactin rises to support lactation. Ayurveda correlates this with rebalancing of Rasa Dhātu and promotion of Stanya Utpadan (breast milk production).
4. **Metabolic Reset:** The basal metabolic rate and blood volume decline gradually. Ayurveda's emphasis on light, easily digestible food during early Sutika Kaal aligns with modern recommendations for supporting metabolism and preventing digestive disturbances.
5. **Psychological Adjustment:** Postpartum blues or depression may occur due to hormonal shifts, fatigue, and emotional stress. Ayurveda addresses this through nurturing care, supportive environment, meditation, and Rasayana therapies to promote mental stability (Sattvavritti).

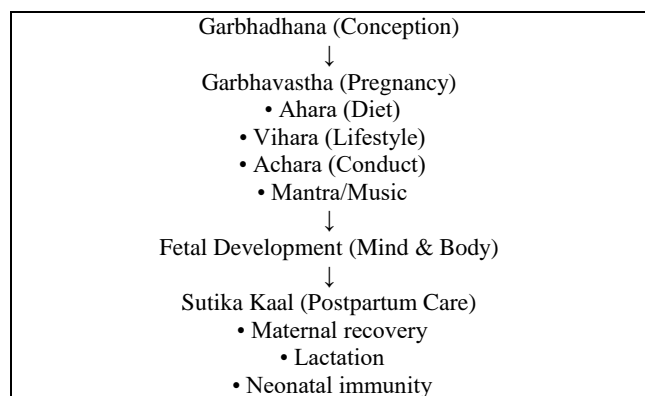
### Physiological Importance of Sutika Paricharya (Postnatal Care)

1. **Physical Restoration:** Proper diet (medicated ghee, milk, soups, herbal formulations) aids in tissue replenishment, strength, and lactation.
2. **Prevention of Disorders:** Neglecting Sutika Kaal can lead to chronic Vata disorders, weakness, infertility, or psychological imbalances later in life.
3. **Enhanced Lactation:** Special Rasayana herbs (e.g., Shatavari, Yashtimadhu) are prescribed for improving breast milk quality and quantity.
4. **Long-Term Women's Health:** Ayurveda emphasizes that improper care during Sutika Kaal predisposes women to diseases like prolapse, arthritis, or menstrual irregularities in future.
5. **Bonding and Emotional Well-being:** The emphasis on rest, nurturing care, and positive environment supports maternal-infant bonding and emotional stability.

Ayurveda	Modern Physiology
Yoni shuddhi and uterine cleansing	Uterine involution, lochia discharge
Balya (strength-promoting herbs/food)	Nutritional supplementation for recovery
Stanya janana (galactagogues)	Prolactin & oxytocin-driven lactation
Postnatal massages & rest	Musculoskeletal recovery, stress relief
Sutika paricharya (specific regimen)	Prevents postpartum depression, supports bonding

## Discussion

Garbh Sanskar demonstrates how maternal physiology, psychology, and environment shape fetal well-being. From an Ayurvedic viewpoint, balanced doshas, proper ahara-vihara, and positive mental states create a nourishing intrauterine environment. Modern physiology supports these concepts through evidence on maternal nutrition, stress, and epigenetic programming of the fetus. This integrative approach bridges traditional wisdom with contemporary science.



## Conclusion

Garbh Sanskar, when viewed through the lens of Kriya Sharir, is not merely a spiritual or cultural practice but a profound physiological process. From Garbhadhana to Sutika Kaal, maternal health and behavior directly influence fetal development and postnatal adaptation. It emphasizes that pregnancy is not just a biological process but a sacred journey where the mother's thoughts, diet, emotions, and lifestyle actively shape the life of the unborn child. Sutika Kaal is a delicate yet vital phase in a woman's reproductive life. Ayurveda provides a structured regimen for restoring physical strength, balancing doshas, supporting lactation, and stabilizing mental health. Modern physiology validates these recommendations through the concepts of uterine involution, hormonal adjustments, and psychological recovery. Recognizing the importance of this period ensures not only the immediate recovery of the mother but also her long-term health and vitality, highlighting Sutika Kaal as the foundation for lifelong wellness.

Incorporating Garbha Sanskar practices during pregnancy fosters physical health, emotional well-being, and spiritual harmony, benefitting both mother and child. By embracing Garbh Sanskar principles, both Ayurveda and modern science agree on the importance of nurturing a healthy generation, where maternal well-being translates into lifelong benefits for the child.

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