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### Management of sutika (Puerperal women) in Ayurveda: A review

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#### Abstract

During pregnancy various types of physiological and anatomical changes takes places in the body of pregnant women, after delivery, Body tries to revert back to its pre-pregnant state both anatomically and physiologically. In Ayurveda the management of women during puerperium is described very scientifically. According to Ayurveda, the word ‘Sutika’ represents to a woman who gives birth to a baby along with placenta, while in modern concept; it is termed as ‘puerperal women’. Ayurvedic literatures the term ‘Sutika’ as- a lady after the explosion of placenta in-between the time-period from termination of labor to complete involution of the uterus, while Acharya Charka has not given any precise time limit. All classics have given definite duration for specific dietetic etc. Management of puerperal women can be considered as normal duration of puerperium. Acharya Sushruta has adequately described the duration of ‘Sutika Kala’ as a period of 1.5 month i.e., in other words body movement till she gets regular menstrual cycle. The management of Sutika administered by massage, oral administration with medicated Ghrita decoctions for 3 to 7 days.

**Keywords:** puerperal women in Ayurveda, physiological and anatomical changes

#### Introduction

Delivery is a normal physiological phenomenon during the life of women. In order to cope with the incidence, lots of physiological changes occur during this period. Proper restoration of body physiology is the aim of sutika paricharya. Proper management of sutika has been described in various Ayurvedic texts are being reviewed here.

A women has just given birth to a baby along with placenta is called “Sutika” in Ayurveda & “Puerperal Women” in Modern science. Thus the word, puerperal means to give birth to a child and puerperium is the period from the termination of labour to complete involution of the uterus usually as 42 days or 6 weeks.

The postpartum period, or puerperium, starts about an hour after the delivery of the placenta and includes the following six weeks<sup>[1]</sup>. By six weeks after delivery, most of the changes of pregnancy, labour, and delivery have resolved and the body has reverted to the non-pregnant state<sup>[2, 1]</sup>. The postpartum period is a very special phase in the life of a woman. Her body needs to heal and recover from pregnancy and childbirth. A good postpartum care and well balanced diet during puerperal period is very important for the health of a woman.

#### Etymology of word sutika

The word Sutika is derived from the Sanskrit root “Su-presage” The lady, who has undergone the phenomena of prasava, is termed as sutika. There is one more Sanskrit root “Su-prerace” (Tudadigana of Panini) which refers to either instigation or expulsion, means a woman who expels out a child is termed as *sutika*.

In Ayurvedic classics *sutika* means a woman after delivery (expulsion of placenta), that means the woman who expels out placenta with an infant, is called *sutika*.

#### Definition of sutika

A woman is called *sutika* after the expulsion of placenta. Acharya Kashyapa has given an explicit description of *sutika* in kashyap samihita. Here Acharya clearly mentions that after delivery of an infant, till the placenta is not expelled, the woman cannot be called *sutika*. In Other words *sutika* term can be used only after expulsion of placenta<sup>[3]</sup>.

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### Etymology of the word Paricharya

The word 'Paricharya' is derived from the Sanskrit root "Char-gatau" by prefixing the *upasarga* "pari". The general meaning of the word may be taken as the movement in all the directions but in the field of medical science 'chara' or 'charya' refers to the service or attention in all respects. The ancient lexicographers have used the words "uariushya", *Sushrusha*, *parisarya*, *upasana* etc. as synonyms to *paricharya*. So as a whole, attention which is provided to the woman who has delivered an infant, should be called '*Sutika Paricharya*'.

### Sutika Paricharya

The term '*Sutika Paricharya*' is composed of two separate words, viz. '*Sutika & Paricharya*' according to general grammatical ideology. The nature of the term may be accepted as '*Yougika*' or '*Yoga-roodha*' and give a meaning of nursing or management of a lady, who has delivered an infant. The proper and scientific management of *sutika* is described by all of our Acharyas in the Ayurvedic science under the caption of '*Sutika Paricharya*'.

### Sutika Kala

Idyllic description regarding *Sutika kala* is available which is as follows

Acharya Charaka has not mentioned any exact time. However, all other classics have given definite duration for specific management of *Sutika*, which can be considered as normal duration of *Sutika*. Acharya Sushruta has very nicely described the duration of *sutika kala* i.e. for a period of 1½ month. In other words puerperal women should adopt restrictions regarding diet and body movements till she gets regular menstrual cycles<sup>[4]</sup>.

Acharya Kashyapa has narrated *Sutika Kala* in two ways. He is not mentioning any exact time limit, but at the end of the description of *paricharya* he has advised to follow it up to one month and afterwards he mentions that within 6 months after the delivery, *Sutika* regains all the *dhatu*s, *rakta* etc. and reaches up to her natural and normal form<sup>[5]</sup>.

In Ayurvedic texts physiological changes during puerperium has described very well then the anatomical changes. Acharya Vriddha Vagbhatta, Vagbhatta, Bhava Mishra, Hariharnath etc. have followed the description given by Acharya Sushruta. *Sutika kala* mentioned by various texts (Table 1)

**Table 1:** *Sutika kala* mentioned by various texts

Text	Duration
Charaka <sup>6</sup>	5 to 7 days
Sushruta <sup>7</sup>	1&1/2 months
Ashtanga Hrdaya <sup>8</sup>	1&1/2 months
Ashtanga Samgraha <sup>9</sup>	1&1/2 months
Bhavaprakash <sup>10</sup>	1&1/2 months
Yogaratnakar <sup>11</sup>	1&1/2 months
Bhavaprakash, Sushruta <sup>12 13</sup>	4 months
Kasayap <sup>14</sup>	6 months
Astanga Samgraha & Astanga Hrdaya <sup>15,16</sup>	Re-appearance of menstruation
Modern Science	6 - 8 weeks

### Paricharya Kala

Maharshi charaka has not given any specific time limit for *sutika paricharya*. Maharshi Kashyap and Acharya Bhavamishra have given the different time limits for *sutika paricharya* that is 6 months and 4 months respectively<sup>[17]</sup>.<sup>[18]</sup> According to Acharya Bhavamishra, *Sutika* should follow

the '*paricharya*' upto 4 months and after that she becomes free from troubles and becomes pure or healthy women<sup>[19]</sup>.

In all the classics of 'Ayurveda' *Sutika paricharya* has been described. Maharshi Kashyapa has given a very detailed description of *sutika paricharya* which differs from narration of others. He has mentioned some special management according to '*Desha*', '*jati*' etc<sup>[19]</sup>. Because '*Desha*' (specific geographical area) and '*jati*' (the specific genetic constitution) have specific property of their own and they impart a great influence on the health and disease condition of a person.

### Samanya Paricharya (General Care)

In general, all the classics have advised massage, oral administration of fats with medicines and use of medicines and decoctions for three to seven days after delivery. Medicated rice gruel is prescribed in diet from seventh or twelfth day of delivery. Medicated meat soup is also advised. However, there is slight difference of opinion in the list of drugs amongst various authors.

Acharya Charaka says that when *sutika* feels hungry she should be prescribed powdered Pippali (*Piper longum*), Pippalimula (*Piper longum*), Cavya (*Piper retrofractum vahl.*), Citraka (*Plumba gozeylanic*), and Srngabera (*Zingiber officinale*) with any one out of Ghrita, oil Vasa (animal fat) or Majja (marrow) considering her tolerability for these edibles and in the quantity which she can digest easily. Charak also recommends abdomen massage of *sutika*. After massage the abdomen should be wrapped properly with big clean cotton cloth. This wrapping produces compression of abdomen, thus prevents presence of hallow space, so the *vayu* does not get vitiated. Liquid gruel made with rice and medicated with Pippali (*Piper longum*), etc. mentioned above and mixed with ghrita should be given during both the times i.e. morning and evening. Irrigation bath with hot water should proceed.

Acharya Cakrapani says that the morning irrigation should be given before digestion of oleaginous substance afterward rice gruel should be given. After use of this regimen for five or seven days, gradual administration of *vrmdhana* substances (anabolic or likely to increase flesh and energy) should be done. This regimen is not suitable for the women of Anupadesa (marshy land), because in the residents of this area, the *kapha* is dominant. This regimen is suitable for the women of *jangala* (Wild ordry) area<sup>[20]</sup>.

Acharya Susruta says that after applying massage with *bala tail* the puerperal woman should be prescribed decoction of *bhadradaru* (*Cedrus deodara*) etc. (drugs capable of suppressing the *vata* for oral administration). If some blood is still left inside (Some blood clots are retained in uterus), powdered Pippali (*Piper longum*), pippalimula (*Piper longum*), *hastipippali* (*scindapsus officinalis*), *citraka* (*plumba gozeylanic*), and *srngabera* (*Zingiber officinale*) with warm jaggery-water should be given. This should be continued for two or three days till abnormal blood (*Lochia rubra*) is properly excreted. Afterwards rice gruel prepared with the drugs of *vidarigandhadi* group and mixed with ghrita or milk should be given for three days (From third or fourth day to sixth or seventh day after delivery) and then (from 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> day) cooked *Sali* rice with meat soup of wild animals prepared with *yavangu*, *kola* and *kulattha* should be prescribed considering her strength and digestive power. Normally the women should be given hot water fomentation. Acharya Dalhana says that fomentation should be done by pouring water in a stream, so that abnormal blood (accumulated in uterus) produced due to irritation by *garbha* (delivery) is excreted properly and *vata* is also suppressed.

Acharya Vagbhata has mentioned that massage with *bala tail* should be given to the puerperal women. After feeling of hunger she should be given congenial oleaginous substance mixed with either powdered *panchakola* or powder of *yawani*, *upakuncika*, *cavya*, *citrika*, *vyosa* and rock salt, in the quantity which she can digest in whole day. The women unfit for use of oily substance should be given decoction of either *laghu pancamula* or drugs capable of suppressing *vata*. After this oral administration of oily substance or decoction, her abdomen should be massaged with ghrta and oil and then wrapped with cloth to prevent vitiation of *vayu* likely to occur due to availability of hallow space. After digestion of oleaginous substance, liquid rice- gruel properly prepared with either above mentioned drugs or *vidaryadi* group of drugs or milk should be given in the quantity which she can digest properly. During this entire period, morning and evening fomentation with hot water should precede the use of ghrta etc. or rice gruel. This regimen use for three, five or seven nights should be followed by use of light diet with soup of *yava*, *kola* and *kulattha*. Agreeable diet or drinks should also be given.

Acharya Vagbhata II has also given almost similar description as Vagbhata I. However he has advised massage of even yoni along with body and use of hot jiggery- water just like Susruta. Arunadatta has explained that if meat preparations are used before twelve days, it invites the danger of infection. Kasyapa says that the puerperal women should use specifically *Raksoghna* (antiseptic) and other suitable things. Detailed management should be done giving due consideration to place of living (*desa & videsa*) and tradition of the family. The women, immediately after delivery, should be encouraged by sweet- spoken, and made to lie down in hunch- back position. Now she should rub her back, press her abdomen/ flanks and then compress her abdomen having been moved by *vayu* (entire musculature of abdomen acts with force due to effect of *apana vayu* to expel the fetus) in order to expel the *dosas* left over after delivery. After this, abdomen and flanks should be wrapped with clean big cotton cloth. It helps the uterus to revert back to its normal pre- pregnant position. The puerperal women should always sit in a small chair covered with leather bag filled with hot *bala tail*. By this practice her genital organs becomes healthy. Fumigation of genital area by using dry powder of *priyangu* drug should be given. After proper fumigation; hot water bath followed by rest should be given. After overcoming the tiredness, fumigation with *kustha* (*Sausarialappa*), *guggula* and *agaru* mixed with ghrta should be done. Now, considering her strength and digestive power scum of boiled rice should be given for three or five days, then the women using beneficial diet should take orally oleaginous articles (oil, ghrta etc) after digestion of this oil etc. salt free rice gruel mixed with little quantity of oleaginous substance and powdered *Pippali* and *Nagara* should be given. This should follow (after 6 to 7 days) the use of rice gruel mixed with sufficient quantity of salt and oleaginous substance, then meat soup of wild animals and soup of *kulattha* mixed with oleaginous substance, salt and sour articles and *kusmanda* (a kind of pumpkin- gourd), *radish*, *cucumber* etc. vegetables fried in ghrta should be given to *sutika*. After delivery the women should use oleation, sudation and hot water with full alertness for one month. The management of puerperal women should not be considered in isolation, due consideration has to be paid to the traditions as well as beneficial things or diet to the family and also place of living<sup>[21]</sup>.

Acharya Harita has advised that after delivery, the decoction

of available drugs out of the *Lodhra*, *Arjuna*, *Kadamba*, *Devadaru*, *Bijaka* and *karkandhu* should be given for purifying the blood and also yoni. Vaginal filling with oil and massage followed by sudation with hot water should be done. After fasting for the first day, in the morning of the second day *Nagara* and *Haritiki* with jiggery, should be given to *sutika* and then in the afternoon warm soup of *kulattha* should be given. Rice gruel mixed with *pancakola* or *caturjataka* should be given on the third day and fourth day respectively. On the fifth day, cooked *sali* or *sastika* rice is prescribed in diet. This regimen should continue for ten or fifteen days. The wise physician should permit the puerperal women to see or meet other women on twelfth day<sup>[22]</sup>.

A very short description has been given in Bhavaprakasa. According to it, the puerperal women should use congenial diet and mode of life; she should give up exercise, coltus, anger and cold air. She should use unctuous, light and congenial diet and daily sudation and massage for one month with full alertness.

Yoga Ratnakara has added that immediately after delivery her vaginal canal should be pressed to avoid entry of air<sup>[23]</sup>.

Use of *Asthapanabasti* (evacuative enema) venesection, sternutatory drugs, purgatives and sudation is contraindicated. However, Sarnagadhara has advised sudation after delivery. Use of *manda* is also useful<sup>[24]</sup>.

### Benefits of This Management

The woman becomes weak or emaciated due to development of fetus and also empty bodied due to unsteadiness or languor of all the dhatus, labour pains and excretion of *kleda* (moisture) and blood. With this regimen, she attains all the lost things and reaches her pre- pregnancy stage<sup>[25]</sup>.

### Pathya & Apathya for Sutika

In *Sutika kala*, vitiation of *vata* is very much possible due to less activity of *sutika*. Even less consumption of *vatala* diet in a small quantity may create many problems. So pathya and apathya of the *sutika* should be understood.

### Pathya

Pathya (wholesome) is that which is not harmful to pathya (of the body) and is according to liking. *Sutika* should be advised to follow the following *pathyas*<sup>26</sup>

1. *Sutika* should have the bath with much quantity of warm water.
2. Boiled water should be taken for drinking purpose.
3. *Parisheka*, *Avagahana* is always beneficial for *sutika*.
4. She should be done *udaravestana*.
5. Diet and drinking items should be prepared with *jeevaniya* and *Brimhaniya* drugs.
6. She should always take *snigdha* (unctuous) diet.
7. Whatever the diet *sutika* takes must be in lesser quantity than her routine diet.
8. *Snehana* and *swedana* must be done every day as per *desha*, *kala*, etc.

### Apathya

Apathya is that which is harmful to pathya (of the body) and is not according to liking (which is certainly not at all desirable). The puerperal women should be advised to avoid the following:

1. The sexual intercourse.
2. Physical stress, anger and indulgence in irresistible emotion.
3. Heat and its preparation at least up to 12 days.

4. Cold water, cold wind, cold things etc. (*sheeta- seva*).
5. *Panchakarma* is contraindicated for *sutika*.
- (A) Due to administration of the *Asthanabasti* the 'ama' dosha of *sutika* would be increased.
- (B) Due to *Nasya karma* emaciation, anorexia and body ache would be created in *sutika*.

In Vrinda Madhava, exercise, sexual intercourse, liquor, salty and spicy diet, suppression of the natural urges, anger and pulses have been mentioned as *Apathyas* for the patients of *shoola*.

It can be concluded that the woman who is weak due to Development of fetus and also empty bodied due to languor of all the *dhatu*s, labour pains, excretion of *Kleda* and blood, regains her pre-pregnancy stage by following the instructions of above mentioned *pathyas* and *apthyas*.

### Conclusion

The post-delivery period is a very crucial phase in a woman's life. Ignorance about proper care, excessive concern about the child, and an inability to cope with motherhood may lead to post natal disorders and even depression. The Ayurvedic system of medicine describes *Sutika Paricharya* - a complete health regimen for the post natal woman. The management of puerperium consists of providing the means whereby the woman can recuperate physically and emotionally and gain supervised experience in the care of her infant. This consists of the following principles:

1. To restore the health status of mother.
2. To prevent infection.
3. To take care of breasts including promotion of breast feeding.
4. To provide for care of the baby.
5. To motivate and guide for family planning.
6. To give need based health education.

All these methods help the body to combat the stress felt during pregnancy and labour and to regain and restore its physiological and anatomical state. There are so many things could happen in puerperium period that influence mother's mortality rate. So, the early and correct puerperium care is important. Choosing contraception method should be considered about a patient condition, which are age, children, and complication that could make her pregnancy worse, or the pregnancy makes the complication worse. By using Ayurvedic and herbal medicines you ensure physical and mental health without side effects. The natural ingredients of herbs help bring "arogya" to human body and mind. ("Arogya" means free from diseases). According to the original texts, the goal of Ayurveda is prevention as well as promotion of the body's own capacity for maintenance and balance.

Ayurvedic treatment is non-invasive and non-toxic, so it can be used safely as an alternative therapy or alongside conventional therapies. Now Ayurveda needs Standardization for Herbal Formulations and more works need on the *sutika* management in Ayurveda.

God has specially gifted proud of mother hood to a women, importance of *sutika* and *sutika paricharya* is more than other diseases of women

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