



Review Article

AYURVEDIC MANAGEMENT OF LABOUR (*PRASAVA*) WITH *STHANIKA CHIKITSA*

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda Acharyas have dedicated a branch called *Prasuti* and *Stree roga* which is branch among the *Astangas* of Ayurveda that is dedicated for the health and well-being of the women. *Acharyas* have described in detail about the monthly regimen or the *Masanumasika Garbhini Paricharya* that needs to be followed by the pregnant women for the healthy baby and also for her optimum health. *Prasava* or the labour is also described in detail with stepwise management of each stage of labour. *Sthanika Chikitsa* are the unique local therapies mentioned in Ayurvedic science indicated for the management of *Yonivyapadas* or the genital disorders, *Yonirogas* and also in *Sukhaprasava*. These include *Yonipichu, Yonikalka, Yonilepa Yonidhawan, Yoniparisheka, Ksharakarma, Yonipinda, Yonivarti, Yonidhoopan, Uttarakasti* etc procedures. For this *Sukha Prasava*, many treatments and the interventions have been described by the Ayurveda Acharyas among which the *Sthanika chikitsa* has a pivotal role. *Sthanika Chikitsa* is also important as *Sarvdehika Chikitsa*. In these local therapies, if the drugs are administered with proper method and indications, it acts on the target organ and provides the better and significant results compared to the internal medications. Present study details of these therapies and its application in the management of labour or the *Sukha Prasava* as described according to Ayurveda.

INTRODUCTION

The terms *Garbha* and the *Garbhini* are related to Pregnancy and *Prasava* means labour in Ayurvedic science. These are the most important stages of life for every woman on this earth. Labour pain that includes the passage of the fetus through the birth canal associated with excruciating pain and discomfort faced by a woman will transcend her imagination. In addition, this pain and agony gets doubled if labour is prolonged and the mother faces totally a new birth. In order to minimize this agony and to get a healthy child, correct knowledge of process of *Prasava* or the labour is essential. Ayurveda *Acharyas* have dedicated a branch called *Prasuti* and *Stree* that is dedicated for the health and well-being of the women.

Acharyas have described in detail about the monthly regimen or the *Masanumasika Garbhini Paricharya* that needs to be followed by the pregnant women for the healthy baby and also for her optimum health. Acharya Kashyapa [1] has described *Prasava* that "when a woman is nearing labour, every moment she feels the fear of death as though keeping one leg in the earth and the other in the Yamaloka."

Prasava

Conventional medicine defines 'Labour' as the one to suffer and is derived from the Latin word 'toil'. In Ayurveda labour is said as *Prasava* and the term '*Prasava*' is derived from the term '*Shuyan Prani Prasave*' with the prefix "Pra" and applying *Panini Sutra "Ridrop"*. [2] *Prasava* is also defined as *Svabhavika, Upasthitha kala, Avaksira, prolongation and Upadravarahita*. The term "*Prakrita Prasava*" or the normal labour is expressed by Acharya Sushruta [3] and Acharya Dalhana has also clarified that the *Poorvajanmakrita Karma* (past life deeds) are also responsible for the natural labour or the *Svabhavika* or the *Svabhavika Prasava*. [4] *Prasava* is also understood

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as *Garbha Mukti*, *Garbha mochana*, *Garbha tyagam* or the *Prasavam*.

Samanya Prasava Kala

Acharya Charaka specifies the normal period of labour or the *Prasava* from first day of ninth month to tenth month and retention of the foetus beyond this period in the *Garbha* is considered as abnormal as it is associated with complications for both mother and the foetus. [5]

Prasava Karana

Acharya Sushruta has laid down the *Kalaprakarsha*, *Nadivibandha mukti*, *Svabhava*, *Garbha sampurnta* and *Garbhavasa* as the *Prasava karanas* or the causes for the onset of labour. [6] He also elucidates it with an example of a ripened fruit that detaches from the tree, once it completes its term, likewise the foetus gets detached from the mother when the *Nadi* gets detached. This is known as *Nadi vibandamukti*. Sage Harita [7] describes *Prasava karana* as "*Garbhavasa vairagya* which means the inability of the foetus to stay in the *Garbha* and according to Acharya Bhela [8] "*Garbha sampurnata*" maturity of the foetus is the *Karana* for *Prasava* and thus the *Garbha* detaches from the mother.

Duration of Prasava

In Ayurveda, the term *Vilambita Prasava*, means the delayed labour and its effects have been mentioned but the time of labour is not available, but it has been specified as 4-5 *Praharas* approximately 12-15 hours in *Vandhya Kalpadrima*. [9]

Intra Uterine Situation of Garbha (Foetus)

According to both Vagbhata and Charaka, during *Prasava*, normally, the foetus dwells in the uterus by keeping all its body parts fully bent and flexed with head upwards and facing back of the mother joining both palms together and keeping over its forehead. With the onset of labour, the head of foetus changes its position and gets expelled from the vaginal passage. Acharya Vagbhata-I has quoted that the *Apara* or the placenta gets detached from *Matru hridaya* after delivery of foetus. [10] Whereas, Acharya Bhela says that whichever part of the foetus is stationed at the pelvic brim comes out during the delivery. According to *Punarvasu Atreya*, that head comes first due to the heaviness. [11]

Mechanism of Prasava/ labour

The complete information and the stages regarding the *Prasava* are not available in Ayurveda but come of the concepts scattered with references provides an idea about this.

Stages of Labour

In Ayurveda, the different stages of labour are mentioned as follows;

Stage of Prajayini stage [12]

In this stage, the women feel the laxity of *Kukshi* or the Abdomen with the release of bondage of *Hridya* between the mother and the fetus with pain in thighs. This stage has been called as *Prasvotsuka* by *Bhavprakasha*. [13] These are laxity of *Kukshi* or the *Kukshi Sithilata*, release of bond of *Hridya*, pain in thighs etc. The same has been expressed by Bhavamishra under the stage of "*Prasavotsuka*" (eager to deliver).

Stage of Prajanana Kalabhimata [14]

Prajanana Kalabhimata is the stage where the female is ready to deliver and the *Lakshanas* include *Gatra Klamata*, *Mukha Glani*, *Akshi Sithilata*, *Vaksha Bandhana Mukti*, *Avasramsanam* in *Kukshi*, *Adhogurutvam*, *Vankshana Vasti Kati Kukshi Parsva* and *Prista Sula*, and *Anannabhilasha*. Acharya Vagbhata, under the name *Asanna Prasava* has introduced few more symptoms in addition such as *Nisthivika*, *Sula* and *Sphurana* of *Yoni*, *Atipravritti* of *Mootra* and *Pureesha*, *Toda* and *Bheda* etc. [15] Acharya Kashyapa has added the dilatation of *Yoni*. [16]

Stage of Upasthita Prasava [17]

At this stage, females present with severe pain in *Kati* and *Prishta*, with increase in the excretion of *Mootra* and *Pureesha* with the *Sleshma* discharge from the *Yonimukha*.

Stage of Garbha Parivartana [18]

In this stage, the foetus descends and gets expelled. Acharya Kashyapa adds tearing pain in vagina, languor and the feeling of severe compression. Discharges in vagina has been said by Acharya Bhela.

Aavi on Prasava [19]

Avi have been described as the normal uterine contractions that occurs during the labour such as contractions, relaxation and retractions etc. The woman who is ready to deliver will present with fetus situated normally, dilatation of *Aparamukha* and *Grahisula*. In case of delay in the *Avi*, the fetus goes into asphyxia. Acharya Kashyapa in *Jatisutriya adhyaya* has very well documented about the dilatation of *Aparamukhi*, presence of *Avi* and also *Grahisula*. In spite of existence of very severe *Grahisula* if the women do not get early delivery it can lead to *Avyavrate striya garbhe*, *Vivrate cha aparamukhe*, *Grahisuvartmanasu* and *Visikhantara Pravesanam*. Dalhana also explains about *Visikhantara* as *Apatyapatha*. [20]

Stage of Apara Patanam

Apara patana or the placenta expulsion has been mentioned by all the Acharyas where, Acharya Charaka, Kashyapa and Vagbhata advises to check for the expulsion of the placenta after delivery of foetus. [21] Vagbhata-I expresses his views by saying that the

expulsion of placenta with vertex presentation is normal. [22] In addition Acharya Kashyapa quotes that the women cannot be called as a puerperal woman without the expulsion of placenta. [23]

In the conventional management, the woman in the *Prasava* or the labour is just assisted without any additional support, Whereas in Ayurvedic science, management of the *Garbha* the fetus, *Garbhini* the pregnant women and the *Prasava*, the labour and its management with the *Sutika* has been very clearly explained in depth. Present study focusses on the *Sthanika chikitsa* provided at the time of *Prasava* or the labour to aid in the labour process and to ease the labour pain by hastening the process. This *Sthanika chikitsa* includes various methods like *Yoni lepana*, *Yoni pichu*, *Yoni Dhoopana* and *Yoni Prakshalana* that has been studied under various researches.

Sthanika Chikitsa in Prasava

Sthanika Chikitsa are the unique local therapies mentioned in Ayurvedic science indicated for the management of *Yonivyapadas*[24] or the genital disorders, *Yonirogas* and also in *Sukhaprasava*. [25] These include *Yonipichu*, *Yonikalka*, *Yonilepa*, *Yonidhawan*, *Yoniparisheka*, *Ksharakarma*, *Yonipinda*, *Yonivarti*, *Yonidhoopana*, *Uttarabasti* etc procedures. [26] Few Acharyas also have added *Agnikarma* or the *Dahan-karma*. Research studies have observed that these *Sthanika chikitsa* possess both the *Shamana* and *Shodhana* properties based on its applications.[27] Among the many *Sthanika chikitsa* procedures mentioned in Ayurveda, *Yoni Dhoopana*, *Yoni Pichu* and *Yoni Lepana chikitsa* are commonly used procedures in the management of *Prasava* to hasten the labour process, hence these two procedures will be explained.

Yoni Dhoopana

Yonidhoopana or the *Dhoopana karma* is a distinct variety of *Sthanika chikitsa* indicated in different *Strirogas*, *Prasava* and *Sutika-avastha*. Many research studies have acknowledged its role in the management of *Yoniroga* and *Sutikaparicharya* by its antimicrobial properties. *Dhoopana* is a common mode of *Sthanika chikitsa* in which the drugs used comes directly in contact with the part or the structure of the body where an anticipated response is expected.

Indications of Dhoopana Karma

Throughout the Ayurvedic Compendium, various references of *Dhoopana Karma* are found that shows the *Dhoopana karma* acts as a curative, preventive and others too. While Acharya indicated *Dhoopana karma* in *Janapadodhvamsa*,[28] Acharya Sushruta has described elaborately it's application in *Shalya Tantra* for the *Nirjantukarana* or the sterilization or fumigation of labour rooms and operation theatres. Also, for the wound management to

prevent the secondary infection and to encourage the healing of the wound. The primary advantage of *Dhoopana* is said to prevent the growth of micro-organisms in the surroundings. [29] In case of *Prasava*, *Dhoopana karma* helps in dilatation of cervix and encourages to hasten the labour process with ease which helps the patient in labour pain to deliver the baby comfortably. There are various number of studies carried out to evaluate the role of *Dhoopana karma* in the management of *Prasava* and have shown significant results with same.

In the study of Shreyes et al, *Krishna Sarpa Nirmoka Yoni Dhoopana* was administered on 15 patients in the second stage of labour which showed significant changes in the duration of uterine contractions, interval between uterine contractions and duration of second and third stage of labour, statistical analysis produced p value < 0.05 indicating the drug employed was really effective. [30]

Yoni Pichu

Pichu is understood as the *Sthanika chikitsa* or the local therapies carried out by using the cotton swabs or the gauze pieces. *Pichu Kalpana* was described by Charaka in *Atisaara chikitsa adhyaya*. *Pichu* is made up of sterile and medicated cotton swab and the gauze pieces and is shaped like a *Pottali*. Then this *Pichu* is immersed in medicated *Tailas* for certain duration of time before insertion in vaginal canal for various disorders and also in *Prasava* or the labour for the special effect. In most cases *Tailas* are preferred for *Pichu* due to its retention properties.[31]

Indications of Yoni Pichu

Yoni Pichu is indicated in various disorders such as *Vataja yoni vyapat*, *Udaavarta*, *Maha yoni*, *Vipluta yoni vyapat*, *Putragni yoni vyapat*, *Paripluta yoni vyapat*, *Raktapradara*, *Kaphaja yoni vyapath*, *Garbhini paricharya*, *Garbha sraava*, *Apara sanga*, *Santati*, *Prasava* and in *Sutika*. [31]

The *Yoni Pichu* is usually used during pregnancy and labour helps to soften the vaginal canal enabling easy delivery easy expulsion of placenta. pregnant women having distension of uterus which causes obstruction to pathway *Prasuti maruta (Apana vayu)* resulting in constipation etc. *Yoni pichu* destroys the bacteria present in vaginal flora and softens the passage. The stretching effect on cervix releases prostaglandin which helps in the dilatation of cervix and initiation of uterine contraction. [32]

Yoni Prakshalana

Yoni Prakshalana or *Yoni Dhawana* is also called as vaginal douching. It is a cleaning procedure of vaginal by medicated liquids, decoctions or water under aseptic precaution. This procedure also known as Vaginal Douching refers to the procedure of vaginal

irrigation or the rinsing the vagina with the *Kashayas*, water or any medicated solutions with a help of a rubber catheter.

Indications of Yoni Prakshalana

Yoni Kandu, Yoni Srava, Yoni Dourgandhya [33]

DISCUSSION

Prasava or labour is an important stage in the life of a woman that gives rebirth to the woman. Labour is described as *Prasava* in Ayurvedic science, 5000yrs ago and various treatments including both the *Sarvadahika* and *Sthanika chikitsa* are explained in detail. Amarasingh, defines *Prasava* as *Garbha Mochana*, where *Mochana* means *Moksha* and therefore the term *Prasava* means, *Garbhamoksha* which means *Moksha* or the freedom from the *Garbhavaasa* of the uterus. *Shabdhasaagara* has explained *Prasava* as the one that brings forth and the one that has the bearing production. As per Acharya Charaka, *Prasuti maruta* stimulates the *Janma kaala* so that the head of the fetus gets turned, comes forward, descends downwards and reaches *Yoni* and gets expelled out is known as *Prasava*. It is also called as the *Sukha Prasava* which indicates that the *Prasava* should always be safe and without complications. [34]

For this *Sukha Prasava*, many treatments and the interventions have been described by the Ayurveda Acharyas among which the *Sthanika chikitsa* has a pivotal role. *Sthanika Chikitsa* is also important as *Sarvadehika Chikitsa*. In these local therapies, if the drugs are administered with proper method and indications, it acts on the target organ and provides the better and significant results compared to the internal medications. *Sthanika Chikitsa* have also shown fast and efficient actions. In the present study, an attempt has been made to review the *Sthanika chikitsa* that are applied and studied in the management of *Prasava* or the labour.

CONCLUSION

Sthanika Chikitsa or the local treatments can be considered as the half of the treatment due to its efficacy in the management of disorders. These are very commonly indicated in the management of disorders related to female genital tract or the reproductive system. In Ayurveda these are understood as the *Yonivyapads* or the *Stree rogas* and *Sthanika chikitsa* is described as the first line of management for these disorders. Other than the *Stree rogas*, these local treatments have also shown its efficacy in *Prasava* or the labour, one of the most important stage of women's life. Present study provides a brief review of the *Prasava*, the Ayurvedic concept of labour the role of *Sthanika chikitsa* in the management of labour.

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