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Review Article

GARBHADANA SAMSKARA - A JOURNEY TOWARDS ATTAINING A SHREYASI PRAJA Rajani Kagga^{1*}, Yogeshwar Chippa²

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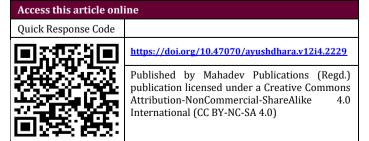
Garbhadana Samskara, Shreyasi Praja, Preconceptional care.

ABSTRACT

Grihastha Ashrama is given utmost importance for continuation of human race. It is said that the family that has more progeny is always respected. In current era couple are facing difficulty to conceive naturally, this is due to the result of a combination of environmental. social, psychological, and nutritional factors. Methods: Infertility is not only a physical condition but also an emotional and a social condition, which carries very intense feelings of frustration, anger sadness, depression etc. in both the partners. The society and its culture have a major psychosocial impact on infertile couple. Incidence of infertility is increasing and artificial methods of conception like Assisted Reproductive Techniques (ART) are more on demand which are having various complications in the long run in terms of physical, mental, emotional, social wellbeing of the couple. World Health Organization (WHO) says interventions before pregnancy can increase the health and well-being of adolescents, adult women and men, and improve subsequent pregnancy and child health outcomes, highlighting the importance of pre-conceptional care. Pre-conceptional care is not a new concept, it is mentioned in Ayurveda as Garbhadana Samskara. Results & Discussion: Garbhadana Samskara is the unique technique mentioned in ancient literature which helps the couple to conceive naturally. By following the regimens told in *Garbhadana samskara* helps the couple to achieve a healthy progeny by healing them in physical, psychological, social and spiritual planes and ultimately attaining Shreyasi Praja. Conclusion: This article is aimed at understanding the concept of Garbhadana Samskara and its utility in current era in achieving healthy pregnancy and improved maternal and child health outcomes.

INTRODUCTION

It is believed that every aspect of life is sacred. That is why each significant stage, from conception to cremation is celebrated as a reminder that life is a gift from God which should be duly respected and lived accordingly. From ancient times, the *Samsara's* have been considered necessary as the physical representation of a symbolic change in the life of an individual. These are rites performed to help the human being to purify their body in seen and unseen ways.



Reproduction is one of the primary characters of a living organism. The concept of elevating the reproductive function from mere biological process to socio-spiritual benefits by adding psychic and spiritual elements is the contribution of Ayurveda that is nothing but *Garbhadana samskara*. Health is a state of Physical, mental, emotional, social, spiritual well-being by following *Garbhadana Samskara* all aspects of health are addressed and maintained.

Need of the Study

1. According to WHO 1 in 6 people globally affected by infertility that is around 17.5% of the adult population^[1]. Infertility is defined as the inability of a couple to achieve conception after one year of unprotected coitus^[2]. In infertility, mind and psyche involved along with body^[3]. By following the principles mentioned in *Garbhadana Samskara* not only relieves the couple from stress of

- infertility but also helps them in getting a healthy progeny.
- 2. According to WHO, 4 out of 10 women report that their pregnancies are unplanned leading to unfavorable maternal and child health outcomes. Reduction of maternal and childhood mortality and morbidity requires the provision of a continuum of care that spans pregnancy, childbirth, infancy, childhood, adolescence and adulthood. Interventions before pregnancy can increase the health and well-being of adolescents, adult women and men, and improve subsequent pregnancy and child health outcomes^[4] highlighting the preconceptional care.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- To critically understand the concept of *Garbhadana Samskara* mentioned in Ayurveda.
- To understand its utility in current era in achieving healthy pregnancy and improved maternal and child health outcomes.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Garbhadana Samskara- Pre-conceptional care-Planned Pregnancy

Garbhadana Samskara is a pre-conceptional care or advice to a couple planning a pregnancy well before the actual conception. This Samskara indicates that in ancient period, persons were much aware of Planned Parenthood to achieve healthy progeny. Garbhadana is the rite by performance of which a woman receives semen (Bheeja). It is also known as Kshetra Samskara and is only done in a ritual manner in the first act of consummation after marriage.

Benefits of planned pregnancy

- 1. To elevate the physical, mental, emotional, social, spiritual well-being of both mother and fetus.
- 2. To ensure the women to enter the pregnancy with optimal state of health which would be safe to herself and fetus.
- 3. To prevent or avoid hereditary diseases and congenital malformations and genetic problems.
- 4. To train the future citizen in the intrauterine life.
- 5. To create a better society with adequate human values.

Concepts in *Garbhadana Samskara* Pre – Requisites for *Garbhadana Samskara* [5,6,7] Table 1: Pre - Requisites

	Pre- Requi		The Frequences
S.No Criteria Explanation			Utility
1	Age criteria -Yogya Vaya	Acharya's considered and mentioned specific age for both the partners	Samana Paripurna Veerya which helps them enter into safe parenthood. The born child will also possess good qualities and will be a Veeryavanta Putra. At this age optimum physiological functioning of organs and hormonal balance is attained
		Atibala Ati Vruddha marriage should not be done.	In <i>Atibala</i> the reproductive system wouldn't be completely established functionally and if conception happens in such couple there are chances of neural tube defects in fetus. In cases of <i>Ativriddha</i> increased age in both male and female leads to depletion in the number and function of sperms and ovum and there is increase in rate of fresh mutations and these are major factors contributing to infertility ^[8] . As the age advances the quantity and quality of oocytes and sperms reduces, making it difficult for conception ^[9] . A relatively high birth rate of infants with chromosomal disorders related to advanced maternal age such as Down syndrome and other trisomies ^[10] . A relatively high birth rate of infants with malformations due to new dominant mutations related to advanced paternal age ^[10] .
2	Yogya stree and Purusha	Atulya Gotra - different Gotra Abhijana Gotra - not a	Consanguineous marriages have a risk. All these are told so as to reduce the risk of hereditary diseases so that abnormal traits wouldn't be carried to further generation

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		blood relation, Asanchari roga Kula Prasuta- no hereditary disease,	and also to avoid congenital anomalies. The high rate of traditional consanguineous marriages, which increases the frequency of autosomal recessive disorders ^[10] . Thalassemia's, sickle-cell anemia and glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase (G6PD) deficiency are the commonest single gene disorders encountered as hereditary disorders ^[10] .	
3	Conduct	Acharya's have also emphasized regarding the good conduct of couple.	afflictions, and optimal state of health can be maintained.	
4	Conditions associated with Physical & Emotional Stress	Acharya's have also mentioned Ati Ashita Ati Kshudita Pipaasita Bheeta etc. should be avoided.	Because in such cases equilibrium of <i>Doshas</i> wouldn't be there and further hampers the process of conception. Altered HPA axis functioning during pregnancy is a potential mechanism through which maternal stress before conception and during pregnancy influences maternal-fetal health ^[11] .	
		The couple shouldn't suffer from <i>Deergharoga</i> or <i>Anya Vikara</i>	As the chronic illness causes loss of <i>Dhatu</i> and <i>Ojas</i> which makes them unable to achieve conception.	
		Vimana and Bheeta avoided	The people are under constant stress which elevates the cortisol level and may hamper the normal process of conception.	

B. Garbha Sambhava Samagri [12,13]- factors responsible for conception

Table 2: Garbha Sambhava Samagri

S.No	Factor	Importance	
1	Rutu	Indicates the fertile period, ovulatory period 12-16 days of cycle.	
2	Kshetra	healthy and intact reproductive organs both structurally and functionally.	
3	Ambu	Refers to <i>Matura Ahara Rasa</i> , which means well-nourished, proper nutrition.	
4	Bheeja	Refers to healthy male and female gametes (Shukra and Shonita).	
5	Anila	Proper functioning of <i>Vata</i> , as it is the prime factor which is responsible for formation of <i>Garbha</i> and proper functioning of various systems in the body. For <i>Shukra Artava</i> and <i>Garbha Nishkramana Kriya</i> .	
6	Hridi/ Hridaya/ Manasika Sthithi	States psychological well-being. It is said that for <i>Garbha Dharana, Soumanasya</i> is vermuch essential. A stress-free mind only can produce a healthy progeny. It is also said that mental status of the couple decides the <i>Manasika Prakruti</i> of the child, a those mental traits are imprinted on the child. Hence <i>Manasika Sthithi</i> plays an importation.	
7	Ahara- Vihara	Proper diet and exercise is very much necessary so that the <i>Dhatu</i> are very well formed. Along with <i>Achara Rasayana</i> one can have stress free and disease-free life which in turn helps in achieving good progeny.	
8	Daiva	It is said that in order to attain <i>Moksha</i> one should have a child and getting a progeny depends on ones <i>Purva Janma Kruta Papa</i> and <i>Punya Karma</i> .	

C. *Garbhadana Vidhi/Putriya vidhi:* This can be understood under 3 headings *Purvakarma Pradhana Karma* and *Paschat Karma*.

Table 3: Benefits of Purvakarma Pradhana Karma and Paschat Karma

	Purvakarma	Pradhan akarma	Paschatkarma
Benefit	Helps in maintaining the equilibrium at physical, psychological, social, spiritual well-being of the couple.		

Purvakarma [6,14]

- **A)** Assuring Physical well-being of the Couple: it maintains the state of equilibrium in *Dosha Dhatu* hence necessary in promoting physical traits like *Prakruti, Sara, Samhanana, Pramana* etc. To maintain all these conditions *Shodhana* is very much helpful.
 - a) Role of *Shodhana*: *Acharya's* have mentioned *Shodhana*, under that *Panchakarmas* like *Snehana*, *Swedana*, *Vamana*, *Virechana*, *Basti*, *Nasya* etc. are subjected to the couple.
 - 1. *Snehana* and *Swedana* helps in bringing the imbalanced *Doshas* from *Shaaka* to *Koshta* also helps in improving the peripheral circulation in turn acts on calming the body and mind.
 - 2. *Vamana* helps to remove *Dosha* from *Urdhva Bhaga* mainly helpful in *Kapha* related disorders.
 - 3. Virechana is helpful in Pitta and Rakta related conditions. It acts on two levels one is it does Indriya Shuddhi and second is Dhatu Shuddhi by which the Karmukata of Bheeja is enhanced.
 - 4. Basti when given in the form of Yapana Basti it is said as Shrestha because of its cleansing and nourishing effect. As Prajanana Avayava are situated in Apana Pradesha and Vata is the main governing factor, Basti modality is very much beneficial. Niruha Basti does Yoni Prasadana and helps even a Vandhya to get a progeny, also beneficial for those who have repeated abortions or IUGR babies. Anuvasana Basti helps in correcting Alpa Bheeja (less reserve), Nashta Bheeja (absence of ovum) or anovulation, Akarmaraya Bheeja (functionally defective in producing a child).
 - 5. *Nasya* Acts directly on the *Shiras*, maintaining the Hypothalamo- Pituitary ovarian axis and balancing the normal function of Hormones related to menstruation, Ovulation.
 - 6. Pumsavana for Garbha Grahanartha^[15]
 Panchakarma not only helps in removing the accumulated toxins, purifying the bodily tissues but also helps in maintaining normalcy of hormones required for the maintenance as well as formation of Garbha. After Shodhana one-month Brahmacharya has been advised and along with Nitya Sevana Dravya.
 - **b)** Role of specific diet for Male and Female Diet specification has been mentioned for both the couple.
- 1. Purusha, Madhura Aushadhi Samskruta Dravya, Ghrita and Ksheera, Shali Odana has been mentioned. Madhura Aushadhi Dravyas are having

- Madhura Rasa Sheeta Veerya Snigdha Guna and they are Balya Brihmana and Shukrala etc. Ghrita is having properties like Rasa, Shukra Ojo Vardhana, has more LDL and helps in absorption of fat-soluble vitamins like ADEK, decreases the expression of genes responsible for cancerous cell proliferation and raises regulated genes responsible for cell apotosis. Ksheera is having properties like Jeevaneeya, Rasayana, Balya, Vrishya, and Shukra Dosha Hara. It is good source of protein, fats, sugars, Vitamins, minerals and all essential amino acids. As Shukra is Somatmakam the above drugs also possess similar qualities thus enhancing the Shukra.
- 2. Stree, Taila, Masha, Phala Ghrita, Kalyanaka Ghrita have been told. Taila is having properties like Balyam, Tvachyam, Medha, Agni Vardhanam, Vata Vyadhi, Yoni Dosha and Rajo Dosha Hara, also contain phytosterols, lower cholesterol level and improve bone health as they contain copper, calcium, Magnesium, Phosphorous, iron, zinc, vit B12 etc. Masha is having properties like Balya, Vatahara, and Pitta Kapha Vardhaka with vitamin B, folic acid, magnesium, calcium, iron etc. As Artava is Agneya, the above drugs increase the Agneya Guna which in turn enhances the Artava.

By the practice of *Shodhana* and *Pathya Ahara*, at this level *Rutu*, *Kshetra*, *Ambu*, *Bheeja*, *Vata* attain *Shuddhata* in turn normalcy is maintained.

- **B)** Assuring the mental and social well-being of the couple: Maintains the static equilibrium of *Mano Gunas* and promotes *Satva*, thus promoting the psychological qualities like *Dhee, Dhruti, Smriti* etc.
 - a) Role of *Rajaswala Charya* [16]: After following proper *Rajaswala Charya* the female is advised to take bath on 4th day of menstruation. Critically when we observe the practices mentioned under *Rajaswala Charya* it probably indicated during menstrual period so as to provide adequate rest to the lady and certain time for herself to rest. At this state the recruitment of follicles happens and primordial follicles will slowly start developing into Graafian follicles. These rules and regulations will help the female in keeping her away from the environmental xenoestrogens and mutagens which can cause mutations in ovum leading to fetal anomalies.
 - b) Role of Sadvritta & following proper conduct:

 Later female is advised to wear a Shweta Vastra
 and visit Deva Griha and offer prayers to Go,
 Brahmana, Ishwara, Vishnu, Skanda, Surya,
 Chandra, Vriddha and should not think about
 Preta, Pishacha. These help to sanctify the mind
 and lead to high spirits. After offering prayers she
 should see the husband.

c) Role of *Soumanasya*: Pleasant state of mind, *Soumanasyam* is given utmost importance for *Garbha Dharana*. According to *Sushruta*, the *Ahara* and *Chesta* followed by the couples during the course of conception, the born child will possess similar characters. Also if there is any kind of stress it will increase the cortisol levels and affects the hypothalamo-pituitary ovarian axis in turn hampering ovulation and conception.

Empirical research confirms that an experimentally induced happy or sad mood can impact subjective sexual arousal. Feeling of desire may be triggered by both internal (e.g. fantasies, memories, feelings of arousal) and external (e.g. an interested or interesting partner). Sexual cues are dependent on adequate neuro endocrine function. Substances that promote sexual response include nor-epinephrine, dopamine, oxytocin, melatonin, and serotonin acting on some receptors.

Brain imaging of healthy people during visual sexual stimulation identifies a model of sexual arousal involving complex brain circuitry including cortical, limbic and paralymbic areas^[17].

It's mentioned in classics that a cordial atmosphere is created by friends and relatives with the procreative and decorative environment with fragrant flowers. By doing these there is psychological intimacy with partners and there is spontaneous and intense sexual urge. Favorable external environment and sound interpersonal relationships prove well in dealing with sexual dysfunctions. Specially desire phase disorders due to absence of sexual fantasies with marked distress and interpersonal difficulty and due to psychological problems like feeling unloved, feelings of depression, anger with partner, performance anxiety, low self-esteem, guilt about pleasure and sex etc^[17]. Can be better dealt with friendly and cordial and decorative environment.

At this level Vata and Manasika Sthithi is taken care of.

C) Assuring the Spiritual well-being: the soul being the salient feature of *Ayurvedic* embryology, a series of sacrifices and oblations have been advised and advocated to invoke the soul of higher origin.

Putresti Yagna [6,14] has been mentioned along with chanting of various Mantras before the coitus. These Mantras basically activate the Muladhara and Swadhistana Chakra increasing the Prana in the Shareera along with that the local plexus gets activated and this further helps in better cohabitation as the sexual organs are located in that area. These spiritual exercises not only provide reassuring environment but also promote pure consciousness in the couple.

At the level Daiva and Manasika Bhavas are addressed.

Pradhana Karma

The act of coitus has been described^[6]. A specific *Mantra*¹⁸ should be chanted before coitus. Coitus should be done on comfortable bed during night in the indicated posture (*Utthana*) as the *Doshas* lie in equilibrium. There is reverse peristaltic movement of uterus and fallopian tubes during the act of coitus, this increases the velocity of sperm transport in female genital tract which may be hampered in other postures.

Also there are peculiar days advised for the act, as well as for the *Putra* and *Putri Prapti*. Even days are told for getting a male child (4,6,8,10,12) whereas odd days are told to get a female child (5,7,9,11) as there is *Shukra* and *Rajo Bahulyam* respectively.

Sexual responses reflect the fundamental interplay between the mind and body: psychological, interpersonal, cultural, environmental and biological (hormonal, vascular, muscular, neurological factors) interact and modulate sexual experience. Factors that can effect sexual response include mood, relationship duration and quality, age and stage in life. Physical, emotional, economic stressors of pregnancy may negatively affect emotional and sexual intimacy. Many of the sexual problems of couples encounter result from a deficit of knowledge or experience, sexual misconceptions or inability of the couple to communicate about their sexual preferences^[17].

Paschat Karma

- 1. *Sheetodaka Parishechana* is advised for *Sthambana* action of vaginal introitus and hygiene purposes.
- 2. *Brahmacharyam* till next cycle in order to avoid abortions and multiple pregnancy.
- 3. Maintain *Soumanasyam* (positive and calm state of mind) so that it aids *Garbhadharana*
- 4. Avoiding *Garbopaghatakara Bhavas*^[19] so that they won't hinder the process of conception.

Benefits of *Garbhadana Samskara*: After doing the procedure the born child will be blessed with all supreme qualities like *Rupavanta, Satvavanta, Chirayusha*, such progeny helps in *Runa Vimukti* and finally attaining the *Moksha*.

DISCUSSION

• Preconception care is a strategic intervention to improve neonatal and birth outcomes by addressing modifiable risk factors and optimizing maternal and fetal health before pregnancy^[20]. The preconception period, which refers to the time before conception occurs, is a crucial window of opportunity for improving maternal and fetal health outcomes. It recognizes that the health status of both parents at the time of conception can significantly influence

the development and well-being of the fetus. By addressing potential risk factors and optimizing health before pregnancy, preconception care aims to create a favorable environment for conception, implantation, and embryonic development. Various physiological processes are vital for the embryo's development during the preconception period. These include important stages of organ formation and fetal growth, which occur early in pregnancy, often before a woman even realizes she is pregnant. Some of these critical developmental periods have passed by the time prenatal care begins. Therefore, it becomes crucial to intervene during the preconception period to mitigate risks and promote healthy development from the earliest stages^[21].

- Ayurveda aims in *Swasthasya Swasthya Rakshanam* by maintaining the health of healthy individual, that is a couple who are healthy and desiring healthy progeny and *Aturasya Vikara Prashamanam* by treating the disease^[22], that is couple who are having difficulty and unable to conceive naturally. That is when planned pregnancy comes into picture and it is detailed under *Garbhadana Samskara*.
- Planned pregnancy with incorporating pre conceptional care methods makes the couple well prepared physically psychologically socially and emotionally for future events. Hence the concept of *Garbhadana Samskara* in the planned pregnancy has increasingly gained popularity.
- The core of *Garbhadana Samskara* revolves around implementing these three types of treatment modalities mentioned in Ayurveda that is *Daiva Vyapashraya*, *Satwavajaya* and Yukti *Vyapashraya Chikitsa*.
- **1.** *Daiva Vyapashraya Chikitsa*: Helps in spiritual awareness tackling the *Daiva* Factor. Ayurveda believes in the concepts of *Karma, Punarjanma, Graha* etc among them *Jataharini* specifically affects the female and hinders the natural process of conception practice of *Mantra, Homa, Japa* helps in clearing those afflictions.
- 2. Satwavajaya Chikitsa: Helps in Mano Shuddhi. Assurance and counselling[23] plays an important role while dealing with infertile couple as they are very anxious and under lot of constant stress and pressure. By uplifting their state of mind, boosting their self-confidence through various practices like Asana, Pranayama, Dhyana, Chanting Mantras, giving positive aphorisms will make them more mentally strong and free from stress ultimately helps them in conception and or taking necessary action. Creating decorative and cordial environment, interaction with friends and family elevates the mood and helps in improving

- interpersonal relationship with the couple and family members. By having proper awareness and knowledge about coital techniques and sexual responses
- **3. Yukti Vvapashrava Chikitsa**: Helps in Rutu. Kshetra, Ambu, and Bheeja Shuddhi. Recent updates on *Panchakarma* therapy shown significant evidences in the disorders as well as for the prophylactic purpose. Selection of partners and age for marriage are even holds good even today, late marriages and late pregnancies are the one major contributory cause for congenital anomalies. During early embryo genetic periods most important and vital organs will be produced and any insult during this time may end up in anomalies that is again burden to nation as well as for the parents too. Diet explained like black gram is rich source of folic acid which is required to prevent the neural tube defects, it acts as potent anti-oxidant so it helps to reduce the oxidative stress, and it also contains protein and fibers. Rice contains more of carbohydrates and rice bran contains vit B complex which is easily digestible. Milk will provide calcium. Ghee contains omega 3 fatty acids which is required for the brain development. Modern life style leading to increase in the stress which is major cause for infertility. Along with lifestyle habits like consumption and the environmental toxicity affecting the sperm count, quantity, motility. It also depletes the zinc level in the body where as in females it affects the ovulation and menstruation leading to HPO dysfunction.

CONCLUSION

Preconceptional care is not a new concept *Garbhadana vidhi* ensure *Bheeja Shuddhi* (improve the quality of sperm and ovum), *Kshetra Shuddhi* (to raise the status of endometrial bed) and *Mano Shuddhi* (to develop the pure consciousness) in turn uplifting the human race by getting a *Shreyasi Praja*

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