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Review Article

A CRITICAL REVIEW OF *GARBHOPAGHATAKARA BHAVA* IN PREVENTION OF *GARBHASRAVA*

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ABSTRACT

Motherhood is a significant milestone in a woman's life, and pregnancy is a sensitive physiological state influenced by diet, lifestyle, mental health, and environmental factors. According to Ayurveda, the foetus is completely dependent on the mother for nourishment and development during the intra-uterine period. Therefore, maintaining maternal health and stability is essential for normal foetal growth. While describing *Garbhini Paricharya* (antenatal care), Ayurvedic classics also mention *Garbhopaghatakara Bhavas*-harmful factors, habits, or exposures that may adversely affect foetal development and pregnancy. These factors can interfere with normal foetal growth and may result in congenital abnormalities or pregnancy complications. One of the major consequences described is *Garbhasrava* (miscarriage). *Ayurveda* emphasizes avoiding *Garbhopaghatakara Bhavas* as an important preventive measure for *Garbhasrava* and for achieving favourable pregnancy outcomes. In the present era, many women unknowingly adopt lifestyle practices that *Ayurveda* considers harmful during pregnancy because of lack of awareness, occupational stress, or unhealthy habits. These practices may increase the risk of miscarriage and other obstetrical complications, thereby affecting both maternal and foetal well-being. This article aims to analyse *Garbhopaghatakara Bhavas* and their role in the causation of *Garbhasrava*, highlighting the importance of their avoidance in promoting healthy foetal development and favourable pregnancy outcomes.

INTRODUCTION

Pregnancy is a critical and delicate phase in a woman's life, requiring proper care to ensure the health of both mother and child. In Ayurveda, the study of *Sharir* (human body) begins with the understanding of *Garbha* (foetus), emphasizing the importance of knowledge about foetal development for maintaining a healthy pregnancy. Ancient Ayurvedic texts provide detailed insights into factors affecting foetal growth, including congenital anomalies, developmental defects, and other pregnancy complications.[2]

Among these, *Garbhopaghatakara Bhavas* are described as specific conditions, habits, or influences that may cause *Upaghata* (harm) to the developing foetal. These factors are considered harmful to pregnancy and, if present, may result in miscarriage (*Garbhāsrava*), abortion, or abnormalities in the foetal's appearance, structure, or overall development. Modern studies also highlight the significance of these issues: birth defects account for approximately 25% of infant deaths, and major structural anomalies occur in around 3% of liveborn infants. While 40–45% of birth defects have unknown causes, genetic, environmental, and multifactorial factors also contribute significantly to foetal anomalies.[1]

Ayurveda emphasizes preventive care during pregnancy, including proper diet, rest, avoidance of harmful substances, and adherence to lifestyle guidelines described under *Garbhini Paricharya*. Avoiding *Garbhopaghatakara Bhavas* is considered essential for reducing the risk of miscarriage and ensuring safe foetal development. In today's fast-paced lifestyle, many women unknowingly engage in

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practices contraindicated during pregnancy, often due to lack of awareness or negligence. Therefore, understanding and following the principles related to *Garbhopaghatakara Bhavas* is crucial for promoting maternal and foetal well-being and preventing complications such as *Garbhasrava.*

Different Ayurvedic classics describe certain factors that should be avoided during pregnancy. To understand the depth of this concept as explained by various Acharyas, the *Garbhopaghatakara Bhavas* are described as follows.

Charak Samhita: Acharya Charaka has mentioned that a pregnant woman should avoid the use of *Tikshna Aushadha* (pungent or strong medicines), *Vyavaya* (excessive sexual activity), and *Vyayama* (excessive physical exertion). In the Sharir Sthana, Acharya Charaka further explains that certain factors are harmful for the foetus, such as the consumption of excessive *Ushna* and *Tikshna*, indulging in *Daruna Cheshta* (activities beyond one's physical capacity), and other practices prohibited by the Acharyas. She should not wear *Raktavarna Vastra* (red garments), traditionally believed to protect from the influence of gods, demons, and their followers. The pregnant woman should avoid intoxicating substances and *Madya* a(alcohol), refrain from traveling on uneven roads (*Yana Avrohana*), avoid excessive consumption of meat, and give up things unpleasant to the senses or considered harmful. She should also avoid all other activities that family elders advise against.[3,11]

Sushruta Samhita: Acharya Sushruta states that from the very day of conception, a woman should completely avoid *Vyavaya* (coitus), *Vyayama* (strenuous exercise), *Ati Tarpana* (excessive nourishment), *Ati Karshana* (excessive fasting or emaciation), *Diwaswapna* (daytime sleeping), *Ratrijagarana* (staying awake at night), *Shoka* (grief), *Yanavrohana* (traveling in vehicles), *Bhaya* (fear), and *Utkatukasana* (deep squatting). She should also refrain from the untimely administration of *Snehana* (oleation therapy), *Raktamokshana* (bloodletting), and *Vega Dharana* (suppression of natural urges). The pregnant woman should not come into contact with *Malina, Hina,* and *Vikrita Gatra* (individuals who are dirty, deformed, or physically impaired). She should avoid *Durgandha* (foul-smelling substances), *Durdrishya* (unpleasant-looking objects), and *Udvega Katha* (disturbing or alarming stories). She must not consume *Shushka* (dry), *Paryushita* (stale), *Kuthita* (putrefied), or *Klinna* (excessively moist) food. She should avoid *Bahiniskramana* (unnecessary outings), *Shunyagara* (lonely places), *Chaitya* (haunted or sacred trees), *Shmashana* (cremation grounds), and *Vriksha Ashraya* (resting under large trees). She must also refrain from *Krodha* (anger), *Asatya* (falsehood or inappropriate speech), and *Uccha Bhashana* (speaking loudly), as well as any activity that may harm the foetal. Repeated and excessive *Taila Abhyanga* (oil massage) or application of unguents should be avoided, and she should not exert herself to the point of fatigue.[4,5,12]

Ashtang Sangraha: Acharya Vagbhata repeats the views of Charaka but, like Sushruta, also provides a list of activities and conditions that should be avoided during pregnancy. These include *Vyavaya* (sexual intercourse), *Vyayama* (strenuous exercise), *Karshana* (excessive emaciation or weakness), *Abhighata* (injury or trauma), and *Atisankshobha Yana* (travel in vehicles or on animals causing excessive jerks). A pregnant woman should also avoid *Ratrijagarana* (staying awake at night), *Diwaswapna* (sleeping during the day), *Vega Dharana* (suppression of natural urges), *Ajirna* (indigestion), *Atapa Sevana* (prolonged exposure to sunlight), *Agni Sevana* (prolonged exposure to fire or excessive heat), and negative emotions such as *Krodha* (anger), *Shoka* (grief), *Bhaya* (fear), and *Sambhrama* (mental shock or anxiety). *Upavasa* (fasting), *Utkatasana* and *Vishama Asana* (deep squatting or uncomfortable postures), *Kupa Prapata* (falling into pits or accidental falls), and exposure to unpleasant sights and sounds should also be avoided. Parents, particularly women desiring a healthy and well-developed child, should maintain good conduct and wholesome habits. During the first month of pregnancy, *Taila Abhyanga* (oil massage) should be avoided, and until the fifth month, substances that aggravate the *Doshas* should not be used.[6]

Ashtang Hridaya: Acharya Laghu Vagbhata advises that a pregnant woman should avoid *Ativyavaya* (excessive sexual intercourse) and *Ati Ayasa* (overexertion). She should not carry *Bhara* (heavy loads), wear *Guru Pravaranam* (heavy clothing), or practice *Akala Swapna* (sleeping at improper tvbhimes). *Utkatasana* and *Vishama Asana* (deep squatting or awkward sitting postures), along with emotions such as *Shoka* (grief), *Krodha* (anger), *Bhaya* (fear), and *Harsha* (excessive excitement), should be avoided. *Vega Dharana* (suppression of natural urges), *Upavasa* (fasting), excessive walking, and consumption of *Tikshna* (pungent), *Ushna* (hot), *Guru* (heavy), and *Vistambhi* (gas-forming or constipating) foods are also contraindicated. Wearing *Raktavastra* (red clothes), looking into pits or wells, consuming *Madya* (alcohol) or *Mansa* (meat), and practicing *Uttanshayan* (sleeping in the supine position) should be avoided. Procedures such as *Raktamokshana* (bloodletting) and *Basti* (medicated enema therapy) should not be performed up to the eighth month of pregnancy.[7]

Kashyap Samhita: Acharya Kashyapa provides a distinct set of guidelines for pregnant women. He advises that a pregnant woman should avoid looking at the waning moon, the setting sun, or *Rahu* (the ascending lunar node associated with eclipses). During a solar or lunar eclipse, she should remain indoors, perform prayers, and offer *Homa* (oblations into the sacred fire). She should not be disrespectful to guests, should give *Dana* (charitable offerings) to beggars, and should offer *Ghrita* (clarified butter) into the sacred fire for peace and well-being. She should not reject *Purna Kumbha* (full pots of water), garlands, or vessels filled with *Ghrita* (clarified butter) or *Dadhi* (curd). She should avoid tying objects with thin ropes or threads and instead wear loose-fitting clothes. Prolonged standing or bending, carrying heavy loads, *Kampana* (trembling), *Ati Hasya* (excessive laughter), *Abhighata* (injury or trauma), the use of cold water, and consumption of *Lashuna* (garlic) should also be avoided during pregnancy.[8]

Harit Samhita: Acharya Harita advises that a pregnant woman should avoid consuming *Vidala Anna* (certain pulses), *Vidahi Anna* (foods causing a burning sensation), and foods that are *Guru* (heavy to digest) or *Amla* (sour) in nature. *Ushna Kshira* (hot milk), *Mratika* (clay), *Surana* (elephant foot yam), *Rasona* (garlic), and *Palandu* (onion) are also considered unsuitable during pregnancy. *Surana* and other foods that may cause constipation should be consumed only along with their fresh juices to minimize their adverse effects. A pregnant woman should also avoid *Vyavaya* (sexual intercourse), *Vyayama* (strenuous physical exercise), *Krodha* (anger), *Rosha* (sadness or emotional distress), and *Chakramana* (excessive walking). By avoiding these harmful dietary substances and activities, the pregnant woman is believed to maintain good health and ensure the well-being of the developing foetal.[9]

Garbhopaghatakara Bhava	**Mechanism / Pathophysiology**	**Potential Effect on Mother and Foetal**	**Preventive Significance of Avoidance**
Vyavaya (sexual intercourse)	Mechanical stimulation of uterus may disrupt implantation or early gestation.	Uterine contractions, risk of spontaneous abortion.	Avoiding sexual activity reduces mechanical stress and protects embryo/foetal.
Vyayama (excessive physical exercise)	Increased intra-abdominal pressure and maternal stress.	Foetal trauma, preterm contractions, miscarriage.	Limiting strenuous activity prevents physical stress on the uterus.
Karshana (emaciation / severe maternal weight loss)	Nutritional deficiency weakens maternal physiological support.	Poor foetal growth, increased risk of pregnancy loss.	Adequate maternal nutrition supports foetal development and reduces miscarriage risk.
Abhighata (physical trauma or injury)	Direct trauma to abdomen may affect uteroplacental integrity.	Foetal injury, placental abruption, miscarriage.	Avoidance of trauma protects uterine and placental structures.
Atisankshobha Yana (travel in vehicles causing jerks)	Mechanical jolts transmit force to uterus.	Placental abruption, miscarriage.	Avoiding rough travel reduces mechanical uterine stress.
Ratrijagarana (nocturnal awakening / sleep disruption)	Circadian rhythm disruption affecting maternal endocrine function.	Hormonal imbalance, increased risk of miscarriage.	Maintaining regular sleep supports maternal-foetal hormonal stability.
Diwaswapna (excessive daytime sleep)	Disruption of circadian rhythm and maternal metabolism.	Impaired maternal energy balance, suboptimal foetal growth.	Normal sleep-wake cycles optimize maternal-foetal health.
Vega Dharana (suppression of natural urges)	Retention of urine, feces, or other urges increases abdominal and psychological stress.	Urinary/bowel complications, uterine stress.	Timely relief of urges prevents intra-abdominal stress and reduces miscarriage risk.
Ajirna (indigestion / poor digestion)	Impaired nutrient absorption.	Maternal discomfort, inadequate foetal nutrition.	Proper digestion ensures sufficient nutrient supply to foetal.

Atapa Sevana / Agni Sevana (prolonged heat exposure)	Hyperthermia and dehydration	Heat stress, maternal hypotension, foetal compromise.	Avoidance prevents maternal hyperthermia and foetal hypoxia.
Krodha (anger)	Psychological stress elevates maternal catecholamines and cortisol.	Uterine vasoconstriction, increased miscarriage risk.	Emotional regulation reduces stress-mediated foetal compromise.
Shoka (grief / prolonged sorrow)	Chronic stress alters maternal hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis.	Hormonal imbalance, increased uterine contractions.	Maintaining emotional stability supports pregnancy maintenance.
Bhaya (fear / anxiety)	Acute stress triggers sympathetic nervous system.	Uterine hyperactivity, miscarriage.	Minimizing fear reduces sympathetic overactivation.
Trasa (sudden fright / trauma)	Acute adrenergic response	Preterm uterine contractions, foetal stress.	Avoidance of sudden fright protects foetal from stress-induced complications.
Upvasa (fasting / inadequate caloric intake)	Energy deficiency reduces maternal support for pregnancy.	Maternal weakness, poor foetal growth, miscarriage.	Adequate caloric and nutrient intake supports foetal development.
Utakatasana / Vishama Asana (squatting or abnormal postures)	Mechanical strain on gravid uterus.	Abdominal stress, risk of miscarriage	Maintaining safe postures reduces uterine mechanical stress.
Kupa Prapata (falling into pits/wells)	Direct abdominal trauma	Severe foetal injury, miscarriage, maternal injury.	Avoidance of hazardous environments prevents traumatic miscarriage.
Apriya Lokan and *Shravana* (exposure to unpleasant sights or disturbing sounds)	Psychological stress response	Maternal hormonal imbalance, uterine hyperactivity.	Avoiding stress-inducing stimuli supports uterine stability.

Modern Scientific View

Modern science agrees that certain activities should be avoided during pregnancy and even after delivery. Although sexual intercourse is usually allowed during pregnancy, it can trigger prostaglandins and oxytocin, which may lead to uterine contractions. Therefore, women who are at risk of miscarriage or preterm labour should avoid intercourse if they notice increased uterine tightening. [13,14,15,16]

Heavy alcohol intake (about 3 ounces or more) poses a major risk to the foetal (around 6%). Foetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) is diagnosed when at least one sign is present in each of the following areas:

1. Poor growth before or after birth.
2. Typical facial features such as small eye openings, smooth philtrum, thin upper lip, flat nasal bridge, short nose, or low-set ears.
3. Brain and behavioural issues, including small head size, intellectual disability, or hyperactive/attention-related problems.

Because smoking harms overall health, it is strongly recommended to stop smoking during pregnancy and even afterward. Heavy smoking increases the chance of miscarriage and often results in low-birth-weight babies. Similarly, alcohol consumption should be reduced or avoided to protect the baby from growth problems and developmental defects.

Travel in vehicles that cause excessive jerking should be avoided, especially during the first trimester and the last six weeks. Long-distance travel is safest during the second trimester. Train travel is generally better than bus travel. Flying in a pressurized aircraft is safe up to 36 weeks, but is not advised for women with placenta previa, preeclampsia, severe anaemia, or sickle cell disease. Long periods of sitting in a car or

plane should be avoided to reduce the risk of blood clots. The seat belt should be placed below the abdomen.

Prevention of *Garbha Vikriti*

Garbha Vikriti, or foetal abnormalities arising from maternal exposure to harmful external factors during pregnancy, can largely be prevented when these agents are identified early and avoided. Classical Ayurvedic texts highlight specific guidelines aimed at safeguarding foetal development. Acharyas have elaborated a comprehensive framework of *Ritumati Paricharya, Garbhaṇi Paricharya*, and *Sutika Paricharya* to ensure the well-being of the mother and the foetal at different stages.

Ritumati Paricharya outlines the regimen to be followed prior to conception, emphasizing preparation of the woman's body and mind to create an optimal environment for healthy conception. During pregnancy, *Garbhini Paricharya* prescribes detailed measures related to diet, lifestyle, behaviour, and environmental exposure to support proper foetal growth and prevent developmental anomalies. After childbirth, the woman is referred to as *Sutika*, and *Sutika Paricharya* provides specific guidelines aimed at protecting both mother and newborn from infections and complications during the postpartum period.

Collectively, these protocols offer a scientifically sound approach toward ensuring the development of a healthy foetal, free from congenital abnormalities. They play a crucial role in maintaining the stability of the *Garbha* (foetal) while fulfilling the nutritional and energy requirements essential throughout pregnancy.

DISCUSSION

Ayurvedic literature contains extensive descriptions that demonstrate the profound understanding ancient *Acharyas* possessed regarding embryogenesis, teratogenic influences, and the spectrum of congenital anomalies, along with maternal–foetal complications. Under the concept of *Garbhopaghatakara Bhavas*, they systematically classified causative factors into *Aharaja* (dietary), *Viharaja* (lifestyle), and *Manasika* (psychological) categories, highlighting their potential to adversely affect pregnancy outcomes.

Mental and emotional stressors such as *Shoka* (grief), *Bhaya* (fear), and *Krodha* (anger), as well as excessive physical exertion, are described as capable of precipitating miscarriage. Activities involving heavy lifting or sudden abdominal strain may similarly provoke abortion by abruptly increasing intra-abdominal pressure. Moreover, prolonged maintenance of improper postures can compromise uteroplacental blood flow, thereby increasing the risk of miscarriage, intrauterine foetal demise, or impaired foetal growth.

Most of these detrimental factors disrupt the normal functioning of *Doṣha* and *Agni*, which in turn impedes proper foetal development. Increases in the incidence of intrauterine growth restriction (IUGR), recurrent abortion, miscarriages, abnormal foetal presentations, foetal distress, and cord-related complications may be interpreted as effects of exposure to one or more *Garbhopaghatakara Bhavas*, particularly when the prescribed *Garbhini Paricharya* is neglected.

Acharya Charaka vividly conveys the sensitivity of pregnancy by comparing a pregnant woman to a *Tailapurṇa Patra*-a vessel filled to the brim with oil-where even the slightest disturbance can cause spillage. This analogy underscores the delicate nature of gestation and the necessity of unwavering care to protect the developing foetal from any form of *Upaghata* (injury or harm).

Therefore, it becomes imperative for Ayurvedic practitioners to carefully evaluate potential harmful factors in the lifestyle, environment, and psychological state of pregnant women. They should provide clear guidance to avoid such influences, thereby ensuring the safety, stability, and optimal development of the foetal.

CONCLUSION

Congenital anomalies may result from a combination of genetic, environmental, nutritional, and psychological factors. Many of these conditions arise due to insufficient maternal care, lack of awareness, improper dietary habits, unhealthy lifestyle practices, and unmanaged emotional stress during pregnancy. For this reason, comprehensive counselling and preventive strategies-such as public health education, population screening, genetic counselling, and timely use of prenatal diagnostic tools- are essential components of maternal-foetal care.

Ayurveda offers a well-structured preventive approach through *Garbhini Paricharya,* which includes specific dietary guidelines, lifestyle regulations, and mental health practices designed to support healthy foetal development. A central component of this approach is the strict avoidance of *Garbhopaghatakara Bhava*-factors that can harm the foetal. These include improper diet, excessive physical strain, emotional disturbances, harmful environmental exposures, and all activities that disturb the balance of the *Tridoshas*. Avoiding these detrimental influences is critical, as they can disrupt foetal growth, alter uterine stability, and increase the risk of miscarriage, intrauterine growth restriction, and congenital malformations.

Therefore, prioritizing maternal well-being, fulfilling the reasonable needs of the expectant mother, and adhering to classical Ayurvedic guidelines can significantly enhance foetal health. By consciously avoiding *Garbhopaghatakara Bhavas* and following a supportive prenatal regimen, the likelihood of delivering a strong, healthy, and long-lived baby is greatly increased.

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