

Reviving Sukhaprasava - Classical Approaches to Promote Natural Vaginal Birth

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Background: Sukhaprasava (normal labour) is considered a physiological process that should occur spontaneously without any complications. In Ayurveda, this concept encompasses a holistic approach to childbirth, ensuring not only the physical wellbeing of the mother and child but also addressing mental and spiritual health.[1]


Objectives: The primary objective of this review is to explore classical Ayurvedic references regarding Sukhaprasava and understand their applicability in the context of modern obstetric care. It seeks to highlight traditional practices that promote uncomplicated delivery and compare them with current lifestyle factors and medical trends affecting normal labour.[2]

Methods: A thorough literature review was conducted using classical Ayurvedic texts like Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Astanga Hridaya, and Kashyapa Samhita. Contemporary scholarly articles were sourced from PubMed and Google Scholar to correlate traditional practices with modern findings. [3,4]

Results: Ancient Ayurvedic regimens such as Garbhini Paricharya (antenatal care), use of Anuvasana Basti and Yoni Pichu from the 8th to 9th month of pregnancy, and the design of the Sutikagara (labour room) contribute to facilitating smooth and safe delivery.[5,6] Advance maternal age, Lack of physical activity, increasing mental stress, improper dietary habits, and avoidance of squatting positions in contemporary lifestyles are significant factors contributing to the rise in unnatural deliveries.[7]

Conclusion: Emphasizing Ayurvedic principles in prenatal care and childbirth. Preparation has significant potential in supporting Sukhaprasava. These practices should be integrated into modern maternal health protocols to reduce the increasing dependency on surgical and pharmacological interventions during delivery.[8]

Keywords: Sukhaprasava, Garbhini Paricharya, Anuvasana Basti, Maternal wellbeing, Antenatal Care

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Introduction

Sukhaprasava, also known as easy or comfortable childbirth, is an *Ayurvedic* concept that aims to promote a smooth and natural childbirth. *Sukhaprasava* offers a holistic approach to childbirth addressing physical, emotional and spiritual needs.

Sukha Prasava promotes a natural and safe approach to childbirth, minimizing the need for medical intervention and promoting a healthier outcome for mother and baby. Acc. To *Acharya Kashyap*, a woman's one foot during labor is in *Yama Loka*, and her other foot is facing the living world. Now a days due to lack of proper diet, modern lifestyle, busy schedule, elderly gravida, the incidence of normal labour (*Prakrit Prasava*) decreases and the rate of *Aprakrit Prasava* increases.

So, in order to support expectant mother during this process and encourage a normal vaginal birth, it is necessary to gain classical knowledge about *Sukhprasava*.

Aim and Objective

To study *Sukhaprasava* in ancient literature and to understand prenatal care and antenatal regimen.

Methodology

Literature references are collected from *Ayurveda* classics, commentaries, journal, articles and online sources like Pubmed, Google Scholar.

Probable Reasons behind decreased incidence of normal delivery as compared to ancient time.

In ancient times, pregnant women used to follow certain activities and lifestyle for normal delivery, which are less followed in today's era.

According to ancient literature, in prenatal period there were preparation of body & reproductive tract well for conception with proper *Sharira Shuddhi* (*Panchkarma*), diet, *Yoga*, & then When woman got conceived *Garbhini Paricharya* was followed by her from very first month till ninth month of pregnancy. Because of lack of mental stress, more physical activity, household works, regular practice of squatting position, having good & balance diet, all these were factors which helped women for uncomplicated normal vaginal delivery (*Sukhaprasava*).

In contrast of mentioned above in today's era, women's are elderly gravida, they are doing less physical work, living more luxurious lifestyle and also having more mental stress, use of western toilets are one of the most important factor which didn't facilitate normal delivery, because practicing squatting positions as in Indian toilets helping females in widen up the pelvis, stretching and strengthening of perineal muscle, these are the contributing factors for normal labour.

So, because of all the above-mentioned factors the rate of normal vaginal delivery (*Sukhaprasava*) decreases.

Definition of *Sukhprasava*

The word *sukh* means with ease or happily and the word *Prasava*, which means to get rid of or to become free, is derived from the *Amarkosh*. So, the whole word *Sukhprasava* means delivery of baby happily and without any trouble. Acc. to *Acharya Charaka* the exact definition of *Sukhprasava* is "At the ideal time for birth, the head of the fetus gained and deported through the vaginal canal under the influence of *Prasuti Maruta* and the newborn is capable of self-survival.

Sukhaprasava In Vedic Kala

There are four *Vedas*, of the four *Vedas*, in *Rigveda* and *Yajurveda*, there are references on anatomical and physiological changes of genitals, the knowledge about conception and delivery are given.

Rigaveda

It explains more about antenatal care and mechanism of labor. Information regarding the development of *Garbha* in the maternal womb is characterised and mentioned that, calling upon *Vishnu*, *Prajapati*, *Sinivali*, *Saraswati* and the *Ashwinis* helps in the formation and maintenance of embryo (*Garbha*). According to *Rigaveda* the *Sukhprasava* of *Vaghrimati* has done by *Ashwini Kumara*.

Yajurveda

It explains more about fetal development. According to *Yajurveda* the fetal development stages are *Kalala*, *Budbuda*, *Pesi*, *Vita*. *Kalala* is initial stage where the embryo is like a small bubble. *Budbuda* is described as next stage in which the embryo is like small round mass.

The next stage is *Pesi*, where the embryo takes more definite state with the formation of limb and organs. *Vita* is the final stage, where the fetus is fully formed and is ready to deliver.

Sukhprasava in Samhita Kala

Charaka Samhita

Acharya Charaka mentioned *Sukhprasava* in eighth *Adhyaya* of *Sharira Sthana*, Acc to Acharya Charaka the exact definition of *Sukhprasava* is "At the ideal time for birth, the head of the fetus gained and deported through the vaginal canal under the influence of *Prasuti Maruta* and the newborn is capable of self-survival. For *Sukhprasava*, Acharya Charaka has mentioned *Anuvasana Basti* and *Yoni Pichu* with oil prepared by *Madhura Gana Dravyas* from the 9th month of pregnancy.

Sutikagara (Accouchement ward)

In ancient time a new house used to be constructed for pre labor waiting, conduction of delivery and post-delivery monitoring named *Sutikagara*. Acc to Acharya Charaka *Sutikagara* for expectant women should be constructed before ninth month of pregnancy. The house should face east or north and be constructed with wood. Acharya Charaka has mentioned many essential items to store in labor ward for example *Ghrita*, *Taila*, honey etc.

Prasava Kala - from ninth to tenth month of pregnancy.

Sushruit Samhita

In *Sharira Sthana* tenth *Adhyaya* Acharya Sushrut has mentioned *Sukhprasava*. He has mentioned that *Anuvasana Basti* of oil treated with *Madhura* group drug decoction were used in the eighth month of pregnancy. Due to these factors *Vayu* moves in the proper direction, and the women gives birth without any problems.

Prasava Kala - from first day of nine months till twelfth month.

Astanga Sangraha

Acharya Vagabhat 1 explained *Sukhprasava* in the second chapter of *Sharira Sthana*. He recommended the use of *Anuvasana Basti* and *Yoni Pichu* in the third chapter of *Sharira Sthana* during the eighth and ninth months, using oil made from *Madhura* group herbs.

Astanga Hridaya

Acharya Vagabhat II explained *Sukhaprasava* in *Sharira Sthana* first *Adhyaya*. He recommended the use of *Anuvasana Basti* and *Yoni Pichu* with the oil prepared with herbs of *Madhura* group in the ninth month.

Kashyap Samhita

Acharya Kashyap has mentioned *Prasava Kala*, *Prasava Avastha*, *Lakshan* and description of *Aavi* in first second and fifth *Adhyaya* of *Sharira Sthana*.

Harit Samhita

Acharya Harit has mentioned *Garbhini Paricharya*, and causes of onset of labour.

Bhela Samhita

In *Sharira Sthana* eight *Adhyaya*, Acharya Bhel has explained *Sukhprasava*, and mentioned that by the use of *Anuvasana Basti* with *Kadamba Masa* oil, delivery of child becomes normal.

Bhavprakash and Yogaratnakar

This text explores various forms of *Yogas* and *Mantras* for *Sukhaprasava*. Techniques that bring easy delivery: the root of *Hiranyapushpi* must be tied above limbs or extremities for *Sukhprasava*, roots of *Paribhadra* should be tied in waist, paste of *Potaki Moola* mixed with *Tila* oil kept inside vaginal canal brings *Sukhprasava* (easy delivery).

Discussion and Conclusion

The goal of all the pregnancies should be *Sukhprasava* (normal vaginal delivery). The integrated use of *Anuvasana Basti* and *Yoni Pichu* in the ninth month of pregnancy is a well-established *Ayurvedic* approach aimed at facilitating safe, smooth, and spontaneous labor.

By supporting *Apana Vata* and preparing the birth canal, these therapies help to reduce complications and enhance maternal comfort.

In *Ayurveda*, *Anuvasana Basti* (unctuous enema) and *Yoni Pichu* (vaginal tampon with medicated oil/ghee) are specialized *Snehana* (oleation) therapies advised during the ninth month of pregnancy to promote natural and uncomplicated labor. These interventions are deeply rooted in classical texts and *Ayurvedic* obstetric practice.

Anuvasana Basti (Oil Enema) Pacifies *Vata Dosha*, especially *Apana Vata* which governs downward bodily functions like urination, defecation, menstruation, and childbirth. Locally it lubricates and softens pelvic tissues, enhances elasticity of the *Garbhashaya Marga* (uterine passage). (*Charaka Samhita, Sharira Sthana* 8/32; *Ashtanga Hridaya, Sharira Sthana* 2/47)

Yoni Pichu (Vaginal Tampon with Medicated Oil/Ghee) Purpose: Local *Snehana* and *Shamana* therapy to nourish and soften the *Yoni Marga* (vaginal canal) and *Garbhashaya Mukha* (cervix). It Moisturizes and strengthens the vaginal canal, it may facilitate cervical ripening, reduces perineal injury and local discomfort. (*Ashtanga Hridaya, Sharira Sthana* 2/48; *Kashyapa Samhita, Khila Sthana*)

Precautions

Must be administered under the supervision of a qualified *Ayurvedic* Obstetrician. It should be avoided in high-risk pregnancies, threatened preterm labor, suspected genital tract infections. (*Charaka Samhita, Sharira Sthana*-8; *Bhavaprakash*).

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