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Role of *Ahara* and *Vihara* in Antenatal Care (ANC) According to Ayurveda

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Abstract:

The ability to procreate and to nurture the offspring is the boon rightly conferred to women by nature. This is the life changing phase of pregnancy for the women as well as the infant. In this it undergoes many changes owing to her physical, mental as well as emotional state. The infant is carried by mother in her womb for nine months and is dependent on her for all requirements. The Garbhaposhana is important aspect which is dependent on Ahara and Vihara of the mother. Here the Ayurvedic perspective of Ahara and Vihara in the light of Ayurvedic ANC (Antenatal care) is been studied.

Keywords: Garbhaposhana, Ayurvedic ANC, Ahara and Vihara.

Introduction:

Pregnancy is a vital phase in a woman's life, and Ayurveda offers a holistic and time-tested approach to antenatal care. In this traditional system, *Ahara* (diet) and *Vihara* (lifestyle) are considered the two foundational pillars of health and play a crucial role in ensuring the well-being of both the mother and the fetus. Ayurveda classic have mentioned it under the head of *Garbhini Pahicharya*. Here the medication and nourishing food along with optimum physical activities – *Vihara* are discussed.

Antenatal Care (ANC) in Ayurveda focuses not just on physical health, but also on the emotional and spiritual dimensions of the expectant mother, contributing to the development of a healthy and intelligent baby (*Supraja Janana*).

Ahara (Diet) in Antenatal Care

General Principles of *Ahara* -

- Should be nourishing, easily digestible, and wholesome.
- Emphasizes *Madhura Rasa* (sweet taste) for strength and fetal growth.
- *Vata* balancing, unprocessed, and *Sattvika* foods are recommended.
- Regular intake of milk, ghee, rice gruel, and herbal decoctions.
- Avoidance of spicy, oily, or junk food to protect the digestive fire (*Agni*).

Apart from general rules or indications regarding *Ahara* in ANC, *Acharya* had mentioned Month-wise *Ahara* which is prescribed to *Garbhini* in accordance with monthly development of fetus.

Month	<i>Charaka S.</i>	<i>Sushruta S.</i>	<i>Ashtanga S.</i>
1 st	<i>Dugdha Ahara</i>	<i>Madhura, Sheet Drava Ahara</i>	<i>Siddha Dugdha</i>
2 nd	<i>Madhur Rasa Siddha Dugdha</i>	<i>Same as 1st month</i>	<i>Madhura Rasa Siddha Dugdha</i>
3 rd	<i>Dugdha with Ghruta and Madhu</i>	<i>Same as 1st month</i>	<i>Dugdha with Madhu and Ghrut</i>
4 th	<i>Dugdha with Navneet</i>	<i>Shashtik Shalli rice with Dugdha, Ghrut and Dadhi</i>	<i>Dugdha with Navneet</i>
5 th	<i>Navneetkrut Ghrut</i>	<i>Shashtik Shalli rice with Jangal Mansa, Dugdha and Ghrut</i>	<i>Navneetkrut Ghrut</i>
6 th	<i>Madhur Rasa Siddha Dugdha Ghrut</i>	<i>Shashtik Shalli rice with Ghrut and Gokshur</i>	<i>Madhur Rasa Siddha Dugdha Ghrut</i>
7 th	<i>Same as 6th month</i>	<i>Prithakparnyadi Dravya Siddha Ghrut</i>	<i>Same as 6th month</i>
8 th	<i>Ghruta along with Dugdha and Yavagu</i>	<i>Ashtapana Basti followed by Anuvasan Basti with decoctions of prescribed drugs</i>	<i>Ksheer Yavagu with Ghrut along with Asthapana and Anuvasana Basti</i>
9 th	<i>Anuvasan Basti and Yoni Pichu with Madhur Rasa Siddha Ghrut</i>	<i>Jangal Mamasa Siddha Yavagu</i>	<i>Anuvasan Basti and Yoni Pichu with Madhur Rasa Siddha Ghrut</i>

Here the purpose of prescribed food regime in ANC can be understood as follows,

Month	Goal or expected outcome
1 st	Embryo stabilization – <i>Garbha Sthapana</i>
2 nd	Nourishment – <i>Garbha Poshana</i>
3 rd	Heart & mind development
4 th	Organ formation – <i>Anga pratyanga</i>
5 th	Muscular development
6 th	Intellect and immunity – <i>Bhuddhi Vikasit</i>
7 th	Stabilizing <i>Vata Dosha</i>
8 th	Lubrication for delivery and <i>Garbha Raksha</i>
9 th	Preparation for labor

- Milk & Dairy Products: Enhances fetal bone development.
- Ghee: Increases *Ojas* and promotes strength.
- Sweet Fruits: Grapes, pomegranate, banana.
- Whole Grains: Wheat, rice, barley.
- Vegetables: Drumstick leaves, spinach, pumpkin.
- Ayurvedic Formulations:
 - *Phalaghrita*
 - *Shatavari Kalpa*
 - *Sukha Prasava Ghrita*
 - *Garbhapala Rasa*

Foods to Avoid:

- Overly spicy, salty, sour, or fermented food.
- Heavy, stale, or processed food.
- Excessive caffeine, alcohol, or smoking.
- Overeating or fasting.

Vihara (Lifestyle) in Antenatal Care

General Principles:

- Promote mental calmness and physical ease.
- Avoid stress, overexertion, and negative emotions.
- Follow a consistent daily routine (*Dinacharya*) and seasonal regimen (*Ritucharya*).

We can prescribe the *Dinacharya* and *Rutucharya* with contemporary considerations as follows

Daily Routine:

- Wake during *Brahma Muhurta* (pre-dawn).

- Practice gentle *Abhyanga* (oil massage).
- Bathe with warm water and maintain hygiene.
- Engage in light physical activity (walking or prenatal yoga).
- Maintain regular meals and rest periods.
- Sleep early in a peaceful environment.

Physical Activity:

- Moderate walking and stretching.
- Avoid heavy lifting, jumping, and strenuous work.
- Prenatal yoga and Pranayama help maintain calm and improve endurance.

Mental & Emotional Health:

- Avoid anger, anxiety, fear, and sadness.
- Stay in pleasant environments and avoid stressful situations.
- Listen to calming music, chant mantras, and read spiritual texts.
- Cultivate positive thoughts, truthfulness, and gratitude.

Social & Behavioral Guidelines (*Acharya Rasayana*)

- Speak politely and avoid harsh speech.
- Show compassion, patience, and emotional maturity.
- Maintain moral conduct and personal cleanliness.

Impact on Fetal Development

According to Ayurveda, the fetus (*Garbha*) is influenced by:

- Mother's diet (*Ahara*) - Directly affects tissue development and immunity.
- Mother's emotions (*Manasika Bhava*) - Shapes mental attributes and temperament.
- Mother's behavior (*Acharya*) - Determines karmic and social inclinations of the child.

A balanced *Ahara* and *Vihara* during pregnancy supports:

- Normal fetal growth.
- Easy and natural delivery (*Sukha Prasava*).
- Development of intelligence, strength, and good immunity.
- Postnatal recovery of the mother.

Inference:

The role of *Ahara* and *Vihara* in Ayurvedic antenatal care is foundational. A well-regulated diet and disciplined lifestyle not only nourish the growing fetus but also shape the child's physical, mental, and spiritual attributes. Along with health of growing fetus the Ayurvedic ANC takes care of mother too. Ayurveda's holistic approach ensures safe pregnancy, healthy progeny, and empowered motherhood. Thus in present day also we can undertake the ANC or rightly called as *Garbha Samskara* for the healthy pregnancy.

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