

AYURVEDIC WAY OF CARE TO THE FETUS

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ABSTRACT

Intake of right quantity and quality of food and drink, fulfilment of specific desire of the enceinte, and avoidance of such conduct on her part, as is prohibited, are considered essential contributions to the Ayurvedic way of care to the fetus.

Introduction

Obviously, the growing fetus depend entirely on the enceinte, that is, the pregnant mother, in all respects of its nutrition and development. So bestowal of adequate and proper care to her was considered by the ancient Indian scholars of *Ayurveda* to be the bedrock, upon which the baby care was founded.

They considered carefully about the food and drink their quantum and quality, required for proper nutrition and development of the growing fetus. Also they laid due emphasis on the **desire** or the wish of the enceinte, for specific articles of food and other things. Specific **prohibitions** as to conduct on the part of the enceinte, were also imposed in the interest of the growing fetus.

Intake of Food and Drink

The past masters of *Ayurveda* held that the essential portion of food and drink, on digestion in the enceinte, goes to be utilized in three ways, one, for nutrition of the enceinte, the second, for growth and nutrition of the fetus, and the third, for conversion and reserve as breast milk for use by the baby in due course.

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This, according to them, presents a rough and ready method of estimating the requirement of the quantum of food and drink needed for the enceinte; and, it is therefore, advisable that she should take at least thrice the quantum of her normal intake of food and drink.

Susruta opined that the essence of what she takes through food and drink, enters into the fetus, and sustains its growth and vitality. So, only those food and drinks, which are nourishing and nutritious by nature, should be taken by her.

Dauhridarya (State of 'Heart - Couple')

Charaka was of opinion that all the bodily organs or structures and senses simultaneously emerge in the fetus in the third month; as soon as the senses come into play, the fetus starts feeling the pangs of pain and pleasure. And, owing to such condition, it starts 'quickening' or moving around, from then onwards - It also longs for things, the want of which was felt by it in its previous births. This is a belief firmly held by many Hindus even today.

Susruta, however, held that the bodily organs emerge with sharp definition. Its heart comes into operation, and its consciousness comes into force from the fourth month.

Vagbhata was of the view that only in the seventh month all the bodily organs of the fetus are fully developed in their clearly recognizable forms with their respective components, and the fetus begins to gather its nourishment all by its own will or desire.

Soon after full-fledged organization of the heart in the fetus, it establishes a special link with that of the enceinte. Because of such linking up, a variety of desires arise in her, and she is described as '*Dwihridaya*' or '*Dauhridini*'; the terms '*Dwi*' and '*Hridaya*' mean 'two' and "heart" respectively, and '*Dwihridaya*', and '*Dauhridini*' are words derived from these two terms. that mean 'a woman with two hearts' in her and so she may be called a heart - couple'. such a state of existence of two hearts is indicated by the term '*Dauhridarya*', that is, state of having heart - couple. in *Ayurveda*, signs of identifying

the state of '*Dwihridaya*' have been described, and these start appearing from the third month. These, for illustration, include disappearance of casual uterine streaks of blood, reluctance for taking meals, nausea, loss of appetite or aversion to food, longing for acidic food stuff, heaviness of body, appearance of blackish stain over eyelids and around nipples of breast, gradual appearance of breast milk, vaginal expansion, feeling of a sense of weight in the thighs, weariness, excessive swollenness of the feet.

Desire of 'Heart-Couple'

Moreover, the enceinte feels the urges that find expression in desires of a varied nature and some of such desires are not even normally liked by her. This is because of the fact that the heart of her is specially linked up with that of the fetus, and it is the desire of the fetus that find expression in her.

It is the advice of the scholars of *Ayurveda* that such desires should be regarded as the ones of the enceinte, and these should be fulfilled and satisfied as much as possible for proper nourishment and development of fetus. They also hold that non-fulfillment and neglect of such desires may hurt and harm the fetus. It is sometimes observed that a pregnant mother wants to take some food or article, which does not apparently form an article of food even. In such a case also, such food or article, mixed up with some nutritious diet, should be given to her, though in small quantity. If the desire is not fulfilled or satisfied, the fetus gets a sudden shock or hurt, that may often lead to its distortion or deformity or even its miscarriage sometimes.

If the enceinte does not have her desires, that arise out of or veer around her sense organs, fulfilled, she falls sick, and her sickness leads to sickness of the fetus too. Its organs get stressed and senses oppressed according as her sense organs remain unfulfilled or unsatisfied. If her desires are, however, fulfilled and satisfied, the fetus grows vigorously and becomes long-lived in due course.

Considering all these, the scholars of *Ayurveda* used to advise that the desires of the enceinte should be honoured and satisfied by all means, and as far as practicable, without causing any harm to the growing fetus.

Significance of the desire of the 'Heart-Couple'

One of the distinguished *Ayurvedic* physicians of Calcutta, Kaviraj Nalini Ranjan Das masf, since deceased, narrated a clinical history of one of his patients. She had an odd desire of taking the powder made from burnt earthen dolls. He advised her not to take the powder ; but, at the instance of one of my suggestions, prescribed powder of *Girimati*, a naturally occurring mineral, *red ochre* that contains Iron Oxide. He observed that not only her desire was duly fulfilled and satisfied, but also she showed signs of improvement in respect of her Iron deficiency anaemia. He sought to explain this position in this manner. Her desire for taking the powder of burnt earthen dolls implied the relative want of Iron in her system, and consequential demand for its satisfaction by any means. So, the beneficial effect of *Girimati* was observed in the instant case.

It, therefore, seems that proper investigation into peculiar or odd desire of the 'Heart-Couple' is likely to lead to proper understanding and appreciation of the intrinsic nutritional, or physiological or both types of deficiency prevailing in the fetus.

It is also interesting to note that one of the significant features of *Ayurvedic* treatment is to get an insight into the wishes or desires of patients, and consider them in real perspective for amelioration of disease or discomfort or ailment. *Ayurvedic* scholars also hold that the desires of the 'Heart-Couple' even forecast shape of events to come. If she desires to have a glimpse of the king, her offspring would be exceedingly fortunate and wealthy. If she longs for silken dresses or golden ornaments, her offspring is to become a handsome person fond of ornaments. If she desires to pay a visit to a hermitage or a shrine, the offspring would turn into a person with religious bent of mind. If she wishes to have the sight of animals like tigers or lions, the offspring would be of violent nature.

Sadh-bhakshan (Feast as per Desire)

Vagbhata held that in the seventh month the fetus is fully matured and developed in all respects of its organs and senses. As such, it is customary among many *Hindu* families in India, to arrange particularly in the seventh month,

a ceremonial feast of delicious dishes according to the desire of the 'Heart-Couple', while a bonny baby is placed in her lap during the course of taking her meals. Such dishes normally include, among others, a variety of preparations of fishes, milk and milk-products. She is also given gifts of desirable dresses and enchanting ornaments. The entire ceremony takes place in the company of beloved friends and relations, who offer best wishes for the coming baby. Such a ceremony is called '*Sadh-bhakshan*', that is, 'feast as per desire'. The central object of this ceremony is to delight her and make her pass the time in gay and jolly moods; and this measure helps ensure vigorous growth of the fetus with ease and comfort.

Prohibition as to Conduct

Apart from the foregoing positive measures, some prohibitions were enjoined in *Ayurveda* for strict adherence by the 'Heart-Couple'. Fasting, excessive work, insufficient or malnutritious diet, mourning, fear, riding cars or vehicles moving at great speed, blood-letting, disobedience of nature's call or arresting the urge for it, sexual-intercourse should be avoided by all means.

Such avoidance, in essence, helps contribute, in a large measure, to the normal growth and proper development of the fetus, frees from stress and strain, in order to be delivered smoothly in due course.

Concluding Note

Measures as to intake of food and drink, satisfaction and fulfillment of desires for specific food or material in respect of the enceinte, along with prohibitions as to conduct on her part, stated ante., are in a nutshell, considered as essential contributions to the *Ayurveda* way of care to the fetus. An in-depth study of these measures and prohibitions should be undertaken in the light of modern science, Physiology in particular. In the hope of getting some insight, it may be useful for taking adequate and proper care of the fetus and the pregnant mother.

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सारांश

गर्भस्थ शिशु का आयुर्वेदानुसार रक्षण

- माधवेंद्रनाथ पाल

उपयुक्त मात्रा तथा उत्तं गुणयुक्त अन्नपान सेवन और माता की विशिष्ट इच्छाओं की पूर्ती तथा जिन आचरणों का निषेध किया गया है उनका त्याग इत्यादी आयुर्वेदानुसार गर्भस्थ शिशु रक्षणार्थ अनिवार्य माना गया है ।