

**RELEVANCE OF GARBHINI PARICHARYA TO THE 'FOETAL PSYCHOLOGY': A  
BRIEF REVIEW**

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**INTRODUCTION**

Foetal Psychology is a newly emerging branch of modern medical science that is gaining rapid importance in today's world. It focuses on understanding the psychological development of the fetus and the profound influence it has on the child after birth and throughout life. This field examines how maternal nutrition and the mother's psychological and emotional states affect fetal growth and development. Ayurvedic *Garbhini Paricharya* provides a detailed description of antenatal care from conception until childbirth, with the primary aim of ensuring the birth of a healthy baby. It encompasses guidance on *Aahar* (dietary practices), *Vihara* (lifestyle and code of conduct), and appropriate modifications in psychological behavior. The practice of *Garbhini Paricharya* is intended to promote *Paripurnatva* (proper fetal development), *Anupaghata* (an uncomplicated pregnancy), and *Sukhaprasava* (normal delivery).

**A Healthy Foetus**

A "healthy" foetus is not merely one that is physically normal; rather, from the perspective of Ayurvedic *Garbhini Paricharya*, health also includes mental, intellectual, and spiritual well-being of the individual. In this sense, *Garbhini Paricharya* offers a systematic approach and guidance for the birth of *Supraja*—an ideal progeny—an aspiration that humanity has always sought. According to Ayurveda, a healthy individual or *Swastha* is defined as one in whom the *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, and *Mala* are in a balanced state, along with sound psychological and spiritual well-being.

**Benefits of Practicing Garbhini Paricharya**

The practice of *Garbhini Paricharya*, as described in classical Ayurvedic texts, is believed to confer several benefits on the child when followed properly by the expectant mother. *Charakacharya* emphasizes the attainment of *Samparipurna Deha*, signifying a normally grown and well-developed infant. *Vagbhata* describes the outcome as a *Veeryavan* child endowed with strength and longevity. *Kashyapa* further highlights attributes such as *Ojasvitva* (vitality), *Shuchi* (purity of conduct and character), and *Ayushmant* (long life). These descriptions clearly indicate that ancient Ayurvedic scholars regarded foetal psychology as being as

significant as physical development during intrauterine life.

**AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

This research article examines recent advances in foetal psychology and reviews significant references from classical Ayurvedic and historical compendia that reflect an early understanding of the principles of *Garbhini Paricharya*. The primary aim of the study is to analyze *Garbhini Paricharya* as described in Ayurvedic texts and to compare its concepts with those of modern foetal psychology. The central objective of this review is to document and acknowledge the valuable contributions of Ayurveda in this field.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This article is based on a comprehensive review of classical Ayurvedic texts related to *Garbhini Paricharya* along with contemporary concepts of foetal psychology. Relevant material on antenatal care and allied topics was collected and analyzed. The principal Ayurvedic sources consulted for this study include *Kashyapa Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Charaka Samhita*, and *Ashtanga Sangraha*. Additional references were drawn from texts such as *Yogaratanakara* and *Harita Samhita*. Modern medical literature was also reviewed, and information on

foetal psychology and antenatal care was gathered from various scholarly websites and contemporary sources.

### Literature Review

According to *Acharya Sushruta*, physical health and mental well-being are integral components of a healthy body, each influencing and depending upon the other.

### Foetal Brain and Foetal Psychology

Foetal psychology is largely influenced by maternal nutrition and the psychological state of the mother. Nutrition is a primary non-genetic factor affecting brain development, and the consequences of undernutrition during this critical period are long-lasting, often resulting in permanent impairments in learning and behavior. Both nutrition and the environment play a vital role in shaping the structure and function of the central nervous system. Adequate and balanced nutrition throughout pregnancy is essential to support maternal health and optimal foetal development. Proper nutrition creates a favorable intrauterine environment, enabling comprehensive physical, mental, and neurological growth of the foetus.

The dietary and medicinal guidelines described in Ayurvedic *Garbhini Paricharya* fulfill nutritional requirements by providing essential proteins, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins, minerals, and micronutrients. Additionally, Ayurveda incorporates unique concepts such as *Triguna*, *Tridosha*, *Panchamahabhuta*, *Veerya*, *Prabhava*, and *Ojas*—principles that may not be fully explained through modern scientific terminology—yet collectively contribute to creating and maintaining a balanced and supportive environment for both the mother and the developing foetus.

### Preconception

The practice of *Garbhini Paricharya*, now widely known as *Garbh Sanskar*, begins even before conception by emphasizing the health of both parents at the time of fertilization. Ayurveda advocates the attainment of optimal physical and mental health in both the prospective mother and father prior to conception. Classical Ayurvedic texts consider multiple factors, including the age of the parents, nutritional status, timing of conception, *Gotra* and *Kula* (concepts closely related to hereditary or genetic factors), personal hygiene, and overall lifestyle.

Modern medicine has also established that these factors significantly influence the outcome of conception in various ways. The detailed descriptions of *Garbhadhana Vidhi* (the method of impregnation) in Ayurvedic literature clearly demonstrate that ancient *Acharyas* possessed a profound understanding of the importance of both physical and psychological well-being of the parents. This emphasis continues consistently throughout pregnancy, childbirth, and even the lactation period, as described in the principles of *Garbhini Paricharya*.

Here's a clear, polished rephrasing that keeps the academic tone but improves flow and readability.

### Dietetics and Brain Development

Foetal psychology—including the functioning of the foetal psyche and behaviour—depends largely on the health and proper development of brain tissue. All human activities are governed by the brain, and the efficiency and competence of an individual are directly related to the quality of brain development. The brain regulates essential functions such as action, cognition, memory, thought processes, language, and reasoning. Modern medical science recommends a low-fat, high-carbohydrate diet for pregnant women to support optimal foetal brain development. The process of brain development begins as early as the second or third week of gestation. Although highly complex, the developing brain is extremely vulnerable to damage.

Ayurvedic literature demonstrates an early understanding of these principles. *Acharyas Charaka*, *Sushruta*, and *Vagbhata* unanimously advocate the intake of sweet, liquid or semi-solid foods, along with milk, butter, and ghee during pregnancy. These foods provide essential nutrients required for brain development, such as omega-3 fatty acids, beta-carotene, and vitamins E, B-complex, C, and D. In addition, drugs from the *Madhura Gana*, known for their anabolic and antioxidant properties, are recommended. Pregnant women are also advised to avoid non-congenial (*Ahitkara*) foods and activities. Scientific evidence supports this guidance, indicating that non-congenial diets and exposure to toxic substances can adversely affect foetal intelligence.

### Alcohol, Tobacco, and Toxic Substances

The consumption of intoxicating substances such as alcohol, tobacco, heroin, ganja, cannabis, and charas during pregnancy can result in learning disabilities and behavioral problems in the child later in life. Nicotine adversely affects the development of foetal brain cells that are essential for normal cognitive functions. Alcohol intake during pregnancy is associated with reduced intelligence quotient (IQ), impulsive behaviour, attention deficits, and impaired memory.

Ayurvedic literature strictly prohibits the use of alcohol and other addictive substances during pregnancy, emphasizing their harmful effects on foetal development.

### Maternal Environment

The environment in which a pregnant woman resides has a significant influence on foetal intelligence. Exposure to a polluted atmosphere may increase the risk of neurodevelopmental disorders, including autism. Inhalation of pesticides and other environmental toxins during pregnancy can result in reduced intelligence in the foetus. Additionally, maternal infections caused by viruses such as rubella, toxoplasma, and cytomegalovirus may lead to conditions such as mental retardation or epilepsy in the child.

*Kashyapa Samhita* addresses this concern by recommending that the pregnant woman's living environment be kept clean, free from insects, and regularly fumigated using *Dhūpana dravyas* to ensure a healthy and protective atmosphere.

### Lifestyle, Mental Health of the Mother, and Foetal Environment

Genes determine the type, location, and function of brain cells, as well as the neurotransmitters to which they will respond. However, whether a particular neuron develops to its full potential or remains underutilized depends on external stimulation, such as sights, sounds, and stress. Therefore, the lifestyle and mental health of the pregnant woman play a critical role in foetal psychological development.

A mother's behavior and lifestyle directly influence the intrauterine environment, while her mental state affects the formation of the child's personality. The unborn child is shaped by the mother's thoughts, emotions, and attitudes—love, rejection, joy, or distress contribute to the foetus's emotional development. Maternal hormones and neurotransmitters help regulate her mood, whether happy or sad, and these biochemical signals pass through the placenta into the foetal circulation, directly affecting the developing brain. For example, a happy maternal mood is associated with higher serotonin levels, which influence the foetal brain positively.

To promote optimal intelligence and psychological development in the foetus, it is essential to maintain the mother's mental well-being, keeping her calm, happy, and composed throughout pregnancy.

Sushruta wisely advises that from the very first day of pregnancy, a woman should maintain a joyful and virtuous disposition, adorn herself with ornaments, engage in auspicious deeds, and worship deities. Daily practices such as bathing, anointing the body with cooling agents, musk, sandal, and camphor, wearing garlands, enjoying moonlight baths, receiving massages, resting on a soft bed, and living in a cool and pleasant environment, along with consuming appropriate food, are all intended to ensure that the pregnant woman remains in a happy and serene state. This guidance in *Garbhini Paricharya* emphasizes the importance of sustaining the mother's positive mood throughout pregnancy.

### Effects of Maternal Stress

A stressful pregnancy can have serious consequences for both the physical and psychological health of the foetus. Maternal stress and anxiety during pregnancy are associated with a range of developmental and behavioral problems, depending on the intensity and duration of the stress. These may include low birth weight, reduced cognitive abilities, impaired motor functions, schizophrenia, ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder), autism, poor emotional adjustment, depression,

anxiety disorders, mood disturbances, and other behavioral issues.

Ayurvedic texts place strong emphasis on minimizing stress during pregnancy. They advise that a pregnant woman should avoid grief, fear, agitation, and any source of anxiety or mental disturbance. She should refrain from physical or verbal conflicts, distress, malevolent thoughts, constant worry, intolerance, and even visiting cremation grounds, as these factors are believed to negatively impact both her mental state and the foetal development.

### Foetal Behavior and Personality

The guidelines provided in *Garbhini Paricharya* for pregnant women align closely with modern scientific findings on foetal behavior and personality. According to Dipietro, a leading researcher in foetal psychology, "behavior does not begin at birth; it begins before birth and develops in predictable ways." One of the most significant factors influencing this development is the foetal environment. The foetus responds to certain stimuli in specific ways, but excessive sensory stimulation may result in abnormal patterns of adaptation later in life.

In line with this, Ayurveda recommends that a pregnant woman maintain maximum physical and psychological comfort and avoid over-stimulating the foetus in utero, thereby supporting healthy behavioural and personality development.

### Foetal Senses

#### Foetal Hearing

The foetus's auditory system is active and functional while still in the womb. Pregnant women may notice foetal movements or sudden kicks in response to sounds. In utero, the foetus is exposed to various sounds, including the whooshing of maternal blood flow, the gurgling and rumbling of the mother's intestines, the mother's voice filtered through tissues, bones, and amniotic fluid, as well as voices of other people transmitted through the abdominal wall. The foetus not only hears and recognizes these sounds but can also be soothed by the mother's voice.

*Garbhini Paricharya* recognizes the importance of regulating auditory stimulation and advises activities to prevent undue exposure. Pregnant women are recommended to avoid coitus, strenuous exercise, excessive fullness or extreme thinness, riding in vehicles, and speaking in a high-pitched voice. At the same time, listening to Vedic hymns, songs, and music is encouraged. While the exact effects of hymns and mantras remain a topic of study, modern research has confirmed the positive impact of music on the physical and psychological well-being of the foetus.

### Foetal Taste

By 13 to 15 weeks of gestation, the foetus's taste buds resemble those of a mature adult. The amniotic fluid can carry aromas and flavors from the mother's diet, including curry, cumin, garlic, onion, and other spices. During the third trimester, the foetus swallows up to a liter of amniotic fluid daily, which is thought to act as a "flavor bridge," transmitting dietary flavors from the mother to the foetus.

Ayurvedic guidance to consume sweet foods while avoiding pungent, spicy, bitter, heavy, or malodorous substances aligns with these observations. Foods that are difficult to digest, sour, or cause a burning sensation—such as garlic, onion, and certain strongly flavored items—are discouraged, while pleasant-tasting, easily digestible foods are recommended to support healthy foetal taste development.

### Foetal Vision

Vision is the last sense to develop during foetal growth. Very premature infants can perceive light and shapes, and researchers believe that fetuses may have a similar ability. The womb is not completely dark; some light passes through the mother's tissues, allowing the foetus to respond to bright light outside the womb. In line with this, Acharya Vagbhata includes prolonged exposure to hot sunlight or fire as a contraindication during pregnancy, highlighting the need to protect the foetus from excessive visual and thermal stimulation.

### Foetal Alertness

By 32 weeks of gestation, the foetus spends approximately 90–95% of the day in a drowsy state. Periods of REM-type sleep are observed, which many researchers suggest may indicate that the foetus is dreaming. Dipietro speculates that these dreams reflect the sensations in the foetus's sleep-wake patterns in the womb. Disturbances in the foetus's sleep-wake patterns can negatively impact brain development. Since the foetus is "hormonally bathed" via the mother, its circadian rhythms are influenced by the mother's sleep and wake cycles. Ayurvedic texts caution against excessive sleeping or waking, as well as sleeping during the day and being awake at night, emphasizing the importance of adequate, regular, and sound sleep for healthy foetal development.

### CONCLUSION

Prospective parents who wish to optimize their unborn child's mental development should ensure that the antenatal environment is both well-nourished and low in stress. When compared with modern antenatal care, *Garbhini Paricharya* demonstrates remarkable relevance to foetal psychology. Failure to follow these guidelines can adversely affect the foetus's psychological development and overall health.

Ayurvedic *Garbhini Paricharya* offers not only comprehensive antenatal care but also profound insights

into foetal development—physical, psychological, and intellectual. To support the birth of a healthy and well-rounded child, pregnant women are encouraged to adhere to the recommendations of the great Acharyas. The intuitive knowledge and practical guidance presented in these ancient texts hold immense potential for further research and understanding. In light of this, following *Garbhini Paricharya* is strongly recommended to promote both the physical well-being and healthy psychological development of the foetus.

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