

## Management of *Garbhini Shoola* (False Pain) through *Ayurveda*

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### Abstract

Attainment of motherhood is the cherished desire of every woman. Childbearing and delivery are physiological entities which are always ready to convert into pathological entities if uncared for. Hence, antenatal care is essential to maintain health in affluent societies, improve health in developing countries, and bring healthy offspring into society. Among the various ailments occurring during pregnancy, *Garbhini Shoola*—i.e., abdominal pain or discomfort—is one of the most common. No *Ayurvedic* texts have provided a formal definition regarding *Garbhini Shoola*. However, *Garbhini Shoola* or *vedana* may be defined as the pain and discomfort in the abdomen and groin felt by a woman at times during pregnancy. This type of pain or discomfort during pregnancy may be mild, causing occasional discomfort, or may be moderate to severe, causing disturbances in daily activities and thereby adversely affecting the health of the pregnant woman. Therefore, an effort has been put forth to understand the concept of *Garbhini Shoola* and explore the different management regimes as mentioned in our *Ayurvedic* classics.

**Keywords:** Pregnancy, *Garbhini Shoola*, Health, Pain, Discomfort

### Introduction

Pregnancy, though a physiological entity, is sometimes found to be associated with distress and complications. The pregnant woman, from the day of conception until delivery, may be afflicted by various sorts of ailments, which, if left untreated, may lead to some dreadful disorders. Hence, *Garbhini paricharya*—the diet and regimen to be adopted by a pregnant woman—plays a crucial role in this context. Because pregnancy is an important and delicate condition, any sort of *tikshna* medication or therapy may have the possibility of harming the *garbha*. Therefore, keeping this in mind, various *acharyas* have mentioned the principles of treatment for disorders faced by pregnant women during the gestational period.

*Garbhini Shoola* or *vedana* is a clinical phenomenon encountered by almost all pregnant women throughout their entire gestational period. Although *Garbhini Shoola* has not been mentioned by name by any *acharyas*, *Garbhini Shoola* or *vedana* may be defined as the pain and discomfort in the abdomen and groin felt by a pregnant woman at times during pregnancy. The causes of

*Garbhini Shoola* may include exaggerated fetal movements, tightening of the uterus, stretching of ligaments, constipation, and false labor pain.

### Aim and Objectives

1. To study and analyze the concept of *Garbhini Shoola* in relation to false pain.
2. To find an effective remedy to relieve the signs and symptoms of *Garbhini Shoola* as per *Ayurveda*.

### Methodology

This is an analytical study on *Garbhini Shoola* (false pain), which is encountered by almost all pregnant women.

### Discussion

**General Description and Ayurvedic Perspectives** Among the various disorders encountered by a pregnant woman, *Garbhini Shoola* is one of the most common conditions. While no *Ayurvedic* texts provide a formal definition of *Garbhini Shoola*, various references are found concerning its treatment procedures. Many *acharyas* have mentioned only the treatment of *Garbhini Shoola* or *vedana* in their texts. In the *Sushruta Samhita*, *Sharira Sthana*, 10th Chapter (*Garbhini vyakaranasharira*), various treatment procedures are described to pacify the pain or discomfort of the pregnant woman. In the *Bhaisajya Ratnavali*, 68th chapter (*Garbhinirogachikitsa*), several treatment measures are mentioned concerning various ailments occurring during the gestational period.

There are descriptions of month-wise treatment procedures to be adopted to alleviate sudden *Garbhasrava*, pain, or discomfort in the womb. These treatment procedures not only help to consolidate pain in the womb but also provide nourishment to the developing fetus. In *Ayurveda*, *Vata dosha* plays a vital role in keeping our body and mind healthy.

**Prakrit Karma of Vata Dosha** This refers to the actions of normal *Vata dosha* or *vayu*, which helps in the proper functioning of physiological activities in our body. *Apana vayu* is mainly responsible for maintaining the physiological functions of the female reproductive system. It resides in the *pakwadhana* (large intestines) and eliminates *samirana* (flatus), *sakrit* (faeces), *mutra* (urine), *shukra* (semen), *garbha* (fetus), and *artava* (menstrual blood). When this is aggravated, it gives rise to dreadful diseases of the urinary bladder and rectum.<sup>1</sup>

**Vikrit Karma of Vata Dosha** These are the actions of vitiated *vayu* which are responsible for producing various dreaded diseases in the body. *Charaka*, while mentioning the role of vitiated *vayu* in relation to the female reproductive system, stated that vitiated *vayu* destroys the *garbha*, produces abnormalities in the fetus, and retains the *garbha* in the *garbhashaya* for a prolonged period by drying it.<sup>2</sup> *Garbhini Shoola* has not been mentioned by any *acharyas* as a *Garbhini Vyadhi* or *Vyapad*; however, this clinical entity is actually a *lakshana* in which the pregnant woman feels discomfort.

**Nidan and Samprapti of Garbhini Shoola** The *Nidan* and *samprapti* (etiology and pathogenesis) of *Garbhini Shoola* may be considered as follows:

**a) Abhighata (trauma):** It produces pain in the abdomen.

**b) Ativyayama (strenuous activities):** This is a direct cause of *Vatavyadhi*, which causes *Vata* vitiation leading to *Garbhini Shoola*.

**c) Stretching of the round ligament:** This is a normal phenomenon during pregnancy (*Prakrit Karma* of *vayu*). However, when there is *vayu* vitiation or aggravation, the *vikrita karma* of *vayu* comes into play, leading to increased stretching of the round ligament (having *Vyasa* or *Vistara* features), causing pain in the womb (*Garbhini Shoola*).

**d) Vibhandha (constipation) and vegasandharana (suppression of natural urges):**

*Vibhandha* causes *sanga* (obstruction) in the intestines



Increased intra-abdominal pressure



Causes gaseous distension



*Adhamana* and *atopa*

↓ Produces counter pressure over pelvic organs



Aggravates *Pakwashayagata Vata*



Produces pain in *Trikapradesha*<sup>3</sup>

*Vega sandharana* (suppression of natural urges) is mentioned as a *nidan* of *Vatavyadhi*, hence causing pain in the womb (*Garbhini Shoola*).

**e) Intake of *ruksha, shitala, alpa, and laghu anna*<sup>4</sup>:** A pregnant woman should consume foodstuffs that are *brimghaniya* in nature to pacify *Vata* and provide nourishment. The intake of *Vata*-aggravating *ahara* affects the health of the pregnant woman, leading to malnourishment (*krisha*) and vulnerability to various other diseases, thereby causing *Garbhini Shoola*.

**f) *Maithuna* (excessive coitus):** Coitus is contraindicated during pregnancy by various *acharyas*. *Atimaithuna* is also a cause of *Vatavyadhi* as mentioned by *Charaka*. Therefore, coitus produces *Vata* aggravation, producing pain in the uterus and leading to *Garbhini Shoola*.

**g) Carrying heavy weights and jerky rides:** These are also contraindicated during pregnancy. These factors lead to the stretching of ligaments, causing *Vata* aggravation as previously mentioned and leading to *Garbhini Shoola*.

**Modern Clinical Correlation** Abdominal pain, with or without backache, is one of the most common symptoms in pregnancy. Almost all pregnant women experience some pain at various stages before labor begins. This varies from a benign symptom that may settle spontaneously to an acute abdomen. The physiological and anatomical changes of various organs result in major diagnostic challenges. Reproductive organs share the same visceral innervations as the lower *ileum*, *sigmoid colon*, and *rectum*. It is therefore often difficult to differentiate between pain of gynecological and GI origin. Diagnosis should be made by exclusion, ensuring conditions such as urinary tract infections, kidney stones, appendicitis, or placental abruption are ruled out.

Once established, the pain may be caused by:

- 1. Stretching of ligaments/Round ligament pain:** Up to a third of all pregnancies may be affected by ligament stretching. It is more common in the late first and second trimesters as the gravid uterus enlarges.
- 2. Braxton Hicks contractions:** These are irregular, infrequent, spasmodic, and painless contractions without effect on cervical dilatation. Although usually pain-free, painful *Braxton Hicks* contractions have been reported. The pain is distributed along the cutaneous nerve distribution of T10 to L1.
- 3. Backache:** Physiological changes contributing to backache include joint ligament *laxity* (*relaxin, oestrogen*), weight gain, *hyperlordosis*, and anterior tilt of the pelvis.

4. **Constipation:** Caused by decreased bowel mobility secondary to elevated progesterone, which relaxes the "smooth muscle" along the intestinal walls.
5. **Pyrosis:** *Pyrosis* (Heartburn) is extremely common due to the relaxation of the esophageal sphincter caused by high progesterone, resulting in gastro-esophageal reflux.

All these factors cause false labor pain, which is dull in nature and confined to the lower abdomen and groin.

**Ayurvedic Management** Various *acharyas* have mentioned treatment measures beneficial for *Garbhini Shoola* or *vedana*:

- a. Intake of milk medicated with *mahasaha*, *khudrasaha*, *madhuka*, *shwadamstra*, and *kantakari* mixed with *sharkara* and *kshaudra* relieves *vedana* in *garbhini*.<sup>5</sup>
- b. In case of *vedana* without bleeding, oral intake of milk medicated with *madhuka*, *devadaru*, *manjishtha*, and *payasya*; or *ashmantak*, *shatavari*, and *payasya*; or *vidarigandhagana*; or *brihati*, two varieties of *utpala*, *shatavari*, *sariva*, *payasya*, and *madhuka*. These measures alleviate pain and increase the growth of *garbha*.<sup>5</sup>
- c. Milk medicated with *sunthi*, *madhuka*, and *devadaru* helps consolidate and nourish the *garbha* and removes pain of the womb.<sup>6</sup>
- d. Milk boiled with *Kusha*, *kasha*, *eranda* root, and *gokshura* mixed with *sita* provides relief.<sup>7</sup>
- e. *Bhaisajya Ratnavali* contains detailed month-wise treatment measures for *Garbhini Shoola*, *ruka*, or *vedana*.<sup>8</sup>
- f. Adoption of *Garbhini paricharya* (diet and regimen) for a distress-free pregnancy.
- g. Avoidance of *Garbhopaghatakarabhavas* like *tikshna* drugs, excessive exercise, coitus, heavy

lifting, alcohol, riding on vehicles, anger, fear, and grief<sup>9,10</sup>.

h. Performing *bhadrasana*, *vajrasana*, *tadasana*, and *shavasana*.<sup>11</sup>

i. Practicing *dhyana* (meditation) and *anuloma-viloma* to improve mental health.<sup>12</sup>

## Conclusion

*Garbhini Shoola* is a *lakshana* (symptom) or a complaint rather than a *vyadhi* (disease) or *vyapad*, as there is an absence of *sat kriyakala*. It occurs due to factors like exaggerated fetal movements, stretching of round ligaments, tightening of the uterus, constipation, and false labor pain. *Vata dosha* governs the process of *shoola* (pain) in the *garbhashaya* (uterus) and *sroni* (pelvis). Therefore, *Garbhini Shoola* may be understood as false pain in the field of obstetrics. *Ayurveda* plays an effective role in alleviating this suffering through measures such as *Garbhini paricharya*, *yoga* (*asanas* and *pranayam*), avoidance of *Garbhopaghatakarabhavas*, and oral medications with *Vatashamak* herbs medicated with milk. These prove to be safe and healthy remedies that may be implemented in standard health care.

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