

THE BATHING AND SMOKING RITUALS AND PROCEDURES AFTER THE BIRTH OF A CHILD.

We at Dipika humbly prostrate to procure the sacred blessings of our Divine Supreme Mother Sarasvati in compiling this ground-breaking topic "The Bathing and Smoking Procedures for a mother and her child after the birth of her child". The reason behind compiling this article is that many Hindus have become very confused about the proper procedures to do with this subject and its significance. We pray that this humble rendition will shed more light as opposed to confusion on this pertinent topic.

So much confusion, over the years, has arisen when a mother delivers her baby - about the bathing procedures with different leaves and in what position she should sit while having that very necessary and important bath. There are three bathing days viz. The 3rd, 6th and 12th days following the birth of a child. Do note the day of birth (regardless of the time) is always counted as the first day. The bathing times are generally given to you by your family priest – but we have given a time indicator or guide for the various days of the week below. The direction to face on all three days is East. Some priests give different directions but that just complicates things hence I simply recommend facing East.

I mentioned above that this is such a significant, vital and necessary bath. Some may consider it "old fashioned" but I greatly disagree.

What follows is a Postnatal Synopsis 101:- Postnatal is the period beginning immediately after the birth of a child and extending to about six weeks. It is the time after birth, a time in which the mother's body, including hormone levels and uterus size, returns to a non-pregnant state. Another term would be postpartum period, as it refers to the mother (whereas postnatal refers to the infant). A woman in the Western world delivering in a hospital may leave the hospital as soon as she is medically stable and chooses to leave, which can be as early as a few hours postpartum, though the average for spontaneous vaginal delivery (SVD) is 1–2 days, and the average Caesarean section postnatal stay is 3–4 days. During this time, the mother is monitored for bleeding, bowel & bladder function, and baby care. The infant's health is also monitored. The mother may suffer from constipation or haemorrhoids, both of which would be managed. The bladder is also assessed for infection, retention, and any problems in the muscles. Some medical conditions may occur in the postpartum period, such as Sheehan's syndrome (decreased functioning of the pituitary gland), and peripartum cardiomyopathy (PPCM) is a form of dilated cardiomyopathy that is defined as deterioration in cardiac function). In some cases, this adjustment is not made easily, and some women may suffer from postpartum depression, post-traumatic stress disorder or even puerperal psychosis (mental illnesses with the sudden onset of psychotic symptoms following childbirth). Approximately 25% - 85% of postpartum women will experience the "blues" for a few days. In India most traditional Indians follow a confinement and recuperation period of between 10-40 days. A special diet to facilitate milk production and increase haemoglobin levels is followed. Sexual intercourse is not allowed during this time for

obvious reasons. In the Hindu culture, the puerperium (the state of a woman during childbirth or immediately thereafter) is traditionally considered a period of relative impurity (asaucham) due to the processes of childbirth, and a period of confinement of 10-40 days was recommended for the mother. During this period, she was exempted from usual household chores and religious rites. **Source:- WIKIPEDIA.**

The process of boiling the bathing leaves is as follows: One uses 3, 5 or 7 types of leaves (depending of its availability) the kinds of which can be used are shown below are advised below. Procure a 10 litre metal bucket/pot. Add 9 litres of water. Then add the selected leaves below (approximately 2-3 handfuls of each of the kind of leaves and, if one desires, the barks of that plant/tree as well). Boil the leaves until the leaf colour turns dark khaki / brown which should be after approximately 1 hour of boiling. You can either use your stove or an outside fire to boil the water. Once the leaves have been adequately boiled, remove the leaves so it's just the water in which the leaves were boiled in the bucket/pot. Now the baby should be bathed first, then the mother. Under the mother's feet and her buttocks (gluteus maximus) place some of the boiled bathing leaves. A woman, like her mother or an elder lady, now bathes her. When the bathing is completed, keep a little of the water in a bowl - the elder lady or mother (mother of the birth-mother) now turns this bowl with the water 7 or 9 times (clockwise) around her (around the birth-mother) and then drops the water down in front of her. The mother then wipes herself and dresses up.

Then, in a lobhaan/samarani container (kund), add one charcoal (make sure the charcoal is quite hot), add half a teaspoon of Lobhaan (or the desired amount) on that charcoal and finally add half a teaspoon of Ajwain (a.k.a. Ajowan, carom seeds, bishop's weed, ajowan caraway, or thymol seeds, Trachyspermum ammi, or vaamu – Telugu, omam - Tamil). This container is placed on the floor and the mother now stands over it so that the smoke (permeates between her thighs so as to reach her intimate parts thus healing her womb, etc) (do exercise caution and keep a safe distance so as to not burn oneself). In India Ajwain is commonly used after pregnancy to help clear the uterus of anything that's left. Ajwain seeds also has an antiseptic effect on the intestinal canal and stomach aches, cures problems caused by overeating, strengthens the liver/spleen, and cures dysentery. To help cleanse the uterus and benefit digestion during pregnancy it is prescribed and is also beneficial for post-delivery fever. This process of smoking can be done daily for a few days.

Take note of the day you are performing the bathing and smoking times. Do note **not** to perform the bathing and smoking in these universal inauspicious times of Rahu Kalam and Yamagadam which are:-

Sunday:- 12h00 – 13h30
Monday:- 07h30 – 09h00 and 10h30 - 12h00
Tuesdays:- 09h00 – 10h30 and 13h30 – 15h00
Wednesday:- 07h30 – 10h30
Thursday:- 06h00 – 07h30 and 15h00 – 16h30
Friday:- 10h30 – 12h00 and 15h00 – 16h30.
Saturday:- 06h00 – 07h30 and 16h30 – 18h00

* **Do Note** if the Mother and child are still at the Hospital on the 3rd day then of course the 3rd day bathing and smoking rituals falls away.

On the 6th day after the bathing and smoking, the mother takes her baby and shows her to Sun Deity (Suryadeva) and thanks the Lord for the successful outcome of the pregnancy and birth of her child and then she brings her baby back in the house. This is more traditional and thus optional.

The different types of Bathing leaves to use

Five leaves are generally used but one can also use other leaves in your vicinity. If you can't procure the leaves below, try to ask a family or friend to post you some leaves - that's if you are in South Africa. Do remember that USA, UK and Australian airports would confiscate these leaves as it may be alien to their country.

*** **DO NOTE YOU CAN USE THE ROOT BARKS OF THE NOCHI, NEEM AND GUAVA AS WELL AS FOR BOILING.**

1) Nochi (Leaves) - Nirgandi (Leaves)



Name: Tamil – Nochi, Hindi – Nirgandi/Nirgundi, Sanskrit- Nirgundi, English – Five leaved chaste tree, Botanical Name – Vitex negundo, Telugu – Nalla-vavili.

Useful parts: Leaves, seeds and root bark.

This is the best herb for pain relief. Nochi/Nirgundi is planted near the house so that wind flows from the plant into the house which reduces all problems related with Vata (Vata derives from the elements of Space and Air and translates as “wind” or “that which moves things.” It's the energy of movement and the force governing all biological activities). This herb has anti-inflammatory, antibacterial and analgesic properties. Nochi is also very good for rheumatic swellings, beneficial for skin infection & oozing wound and inflammations. It's also good for relieving menopausal symptoms.

Postpartum treatments - Nochi leaves are boiled in water and this water is used, once cooled, to splash on to the body specifically for women after delivery. This reduces the water retention in their body and the increased vata.

2) Eucalyptus (Leaves) / Blue Gum Tree (Leaves)



Blue Gum, Latin Name - *Eucalyptus globulus*

The blue gum is the most commonly planted species of eucalyptus around the world. Gum tree is a term used for the eucalyptus trees. Almost all of the gum trees come from Australia. Eucalyptus Leaves have long been recognized for its antiseptic and therapeutic values. In traditional Aboriginal medicine the Blue Gum Tree was used in poultices for treatment of wounds, different types of inflammations, back conditions and rheumatism. With proven antibacterial, anti-inflammatory, anti-spasmodic and expectorant capabilities, the leaves contain a powerhouse of medicinal properties hence when the mother bathes in this water - infused with the properties of this leaf - her wounds heals very rapidly.

3a) Neem (Leaves)



Azadirachta Indica (Scientific name), Neem (Hindi) or Vembu (Tamil), is a tree in the mahogany family Meliaceae. It's one of two species in the genus *Azadirachta*. Its fruits and seeds are the source of Neem oil. The amazing Neem tree is said to treat forty different diseases. All the parts of the tree is used for treating illness, the leaves, fruit, seeds and even the bark all contain medicinal properties. The use of Neem as a medicinal herb in India dates back over 5,000 years. Today its benefits has been verified by scientific research and clinical trials (I wonder what took them so long, hmmm). The Neem can be purchased in the form of oil, powder and pills. To give you an idea of the healing powers of the Neem tree, here are a few names that the citizens of India have given it: "Divine Tree", "Village Pharmacy", "Heal All" and "Nature's Drug store". With the almost endless list of uses for Neem, it could be called, "The Tree of Life"! Neem cleanses the blood, stimulates antibody production and strengthens the immune system which improves the body's

resistance to many diseases. There are countless medicinal benefits of Neem. Neem leaves have a cooling effect on the body. It acts as an anti-bacterial, anti-parasitic, anti-fungal, anti-protozoal & anti-viral and thus helps in providing protection from all the micro-organisms, which are ever ready to invade in our body causing serious ailments. Taking bath with neem leaves water is a very common sight in Indian homes since it helps our body to counter mild infections - which our body might get in day-to-day activities. Its tropical application makes us relieved from acne, eczema and even ringworms. In skin-related diseases, neem works as blessing of God on mankind. It has an action on almost every kind of skin disease thus making its indication in eradicating every kind of itch, rash, infection and allergy. Neem water is extensively used in burn injuries, thus to protect them from any kind of infection and also promote healing. It's very helpful in curing urinary tract infection. It works as an anti inflammatory and pain relieving agent. It also helps in suppressing extra heat generated in body due to any reason thus helps in maintaining normal condition in hyperthermia. It is very useful in suppressing fever. It works as an immuno-boosting agent therefore making our immune system very strong and efficient - to fight against any foreign invasion making our body strong and disease free.

3b) Syringaberry (Leaves)



Melia Azedarach L (Scientific name) - Syringaberry tree, is a species of deciduous tree in the mahogany family. Refer to the above notes on Neem leaves for the same effects.

4) Guava (Leaves)



Name:- Hindi - Amrud, Tamil – Koyya/Goyya, Botanical Name - *Psidium guajava*

Useful parts: Leaves and root bark.

Since the 1950s, guava trees – particularly the leaves – have been the subject for diverse research on their constituents, pharmacological properties and history in folk medicine. The leaves or bark are implicated in therapeutic mechanisms against cancer, bacterial infections, inflammation and pain. Guava leaves are used in folk medicine as a remedy for diarrhoea and, as well as the bark, for their antimicrobial properties and as an astringent. Guava leaves and bark are used traditionally as a disinfectant and antiseptic for dressing wounds and sores. The fresh Guava leaf extract (decoction) is used to treat digestive disorders like diarrhoea and vomiting. Application of powdered leaves has a soothing effect in rheumatic pains. The guava leaf extract is also effective in treating gastrointestinal due to the presence of quercetin and other flavonoids.

5) Bay (Leaves)



Name:- Bay laurel, Hindi - Indian bay leaf - malabathrum, tejpatta, Tamil – Punnai ilai, Botanical Name - *Laurus nobilis*

Useful parts: Leaves

(Add crushed bay leaves right in the end as it doesn't need much boiling)

Helps relieve body aches from head to toe. Bay leaves contain an oil in it called *Oleum Lauri* which helps relieve pain and body aches caused by being cold, having an illness, or an injury. Bay leaves also contain parthenolides which are compounds that help relieve aches and pains. They even contain antioxidants in them called eugenol and this helps relieve and reduce inflammation in the body that could be causing the body aches and pain.

6) Lemon (Leaves)



Name:- Hindi - Nimbu, Tamil – Yelumicchai, Botanical Name - Citrus x limon

Useful parts: Leaves

Fresh lemon leaves are added in the end of boiling the water to revive the mind and body, thereby lightly scenting the skin. Lemon is called the tree of life because of its many medicinal properties. The leaf is rich in aromatic essence: limonene and linadol. There are many health benefits of lemons and the two biggest are lemons' strong antibacterial, antiviral, and immune-boosting powers and their use as a weight loss aid because lemon juice is a digestive aid and liver cleanser. Lemons contain many substances - notably citric acid, calcium, magnesium, vitamin C, bioflavonoids, pectin, and limonene - that promote immunity and fight infection. The Lemon leaf is sedative and antispasmodic for those who suffer from insomnia, nervousness, and palpitation.

7) Mango (Leaves)



Name:- Hindi - Aam, Tamil – Mampazham, Botanical Name - Mangifera indica L.

Useful parts: Leaves

Mango leaves consist of groups of tannins called anthocyanidins. Some European physicians used mango tea (watery extract from mango leaves) to treat not only diabetes but also blood vessel problems and eye complaints related to this disease. The Mango leaf turned out to have many benefits as antimikrobia (is an agent that kills micro-organisms or inhibits their growth) and antioxidants. 2-3 cups of mango leaf tea can be added to bath water and used as a herbal bath to refresh your spirit and cool. Mango leaf infused water helps with swollen feet after giving birth.

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Compiled for the upliftment of Sanathan Dharma

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