



## Studies on medicinal plants in Post-partum healing - A traditional approach”

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### Abstract

Postpartum care is an essential stage in maternal healthcare that promotes recovery and well-being after childbirth. For centuries, medicinal plants have been widely used in traditional healing systems to support postpartum recovery, enhance lactation, improve immunity, relieve pain, and restore hormonal balance. The present study focuses on documenting plant-based postpartum care practices, understanding their therapeutic and cultural importance, and examining their relevance in comparison with modern maternal healthcare approaches. Particular attention is given to the traditional postpartum practices followed in Kerala, where herbal preparations, medicated oils, therapeutic baths, fumigation, and herbal diets are integral components of maternal care rooted in Ayurveda and local traditions. The study discusses the medicinal value of commonly used postpartum plants such as *Asparagus racemosus* (Shatavari), *Curcuma longa* (Turmeric), *Trigonella foenum-graecum* (Fenugreek), *Psidium guajava* (Guava), and *Plectranthus amboinicus* (Indian Borage). These plants are known for their antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, galactagogue, digestive, and wound-healing properties, which contribute significantly to maternal recovery and overall health. Ethnomedicinal evidence from different regions of the world indicates that plant-based postpartum care practices are deeply embedded in diverse cultural traditions, including Ayurveda, Traditional Chinese Medicine, African indigenous medicine, Latin American healing practices, and Southeast Asian herbal therapies. Scientific investigations have validated many of the medicinal properties attributed to these plants, supporting their therapeutic potential in maternal healthcare. However, the study also highlights the need for scientific standardization, safety evaluation, and professional medical guidance to ensure their safe and effective use. Overall, traditional postpartum plant-based practices represent an important source of holistic maternal healthcare and cultural heritage. The integration of scientifically validated traditional knowledge with modern healthcare systems may help develop safe, affordable, and sustainable approaches to postpartum care while preserving valuable indigenous medicinal practices.

**Keywords:** Postpartum care, medicinal plants, maternal healthcare, traditional healing systems, postpartum recovery

### Introduction

Plants have played significant roles as medicine during pregnancy, birth, and postpartum care in many rural areas of the world. In addition to this, plants have been used for centuries to treat infertility and related reproduction problems. The plant species used in maternal healthcare, including infertility, in terms of scientific evaluation for efficacy and safety. Eighty-four plant species were found to be used to treat infertility and related problems. Twenty plant species are used during pregnancy, while 26 plant species are used to ease childbirth. For postpartum healing and any problems after childbirth, nine plant species were recorded. Unhealthy pregnancy and birth complications are among the factors that contribute to the loss of cognitive potential in the developing world's children, condemning them to impoverished lives. In this respect, medicinal plants play a significant role in reducing maternal mortality and ensuring the birth of healthy children.

In traditional postpartum care in Kerala, various medicinal plants are used to aid recovery and promote overall health. Herbal decoctions (kashayams) made from ingredients like dashamoolam, cumin, and dry ginger are prepared by boiling the herbs to reduce inflammation and support digestion. Daily oil massages using medicated oils such as Dhanwantharam thailam or Murivenna help relieve pain and improve circulation. Herbal baths are prepared with leaves like neem, guava, and nalpamaram bark for skin healing and hygiene. Internally, herbs like shatavari, fenugreek, and turmeric are consumed to boost lactation, balance hormones,

and rejuvenate the body. The diet includes herbal porridges and spiced water for nourishment, while fumigation using turmeric, neem, and frankincense supports healing and sanitation. These practices form an integrated system of care rooted in Ayurveda and local traditions.

Various studies have explored the role of traditional medicinal plants in postpartum care, especially within the Ayurvedic practices of Kerala. *Asparagus racemosus* (Shatavari) is well-documented for enhancing lactation and hormonal regulation (Goyal *et al.*, 2003). *Curcuma longa* (Turmeric) is widely recognized for its anti-inflammatory and wound-healing properties (Chainani-Wu, 2003). *Trigonella foenum-graecum* (Fenugreek) has shown effectiveness in stimulating milk production and aiding digestion (Turkylmaz *et al.*, 2011). The use of Dashamoolam (a ten-root formulation) in decoctions is noted for aiding postpartum recovery and reducing internal inflammation (Patwardhan *et al.*, 2005). Herbal baths with Nalpamara and neem leaves are traditionally used for their antimicrobial and skin-soothing effects, supported by studies on their antiseptic properties (Kumar *et al.*, 2007). These findings highlight the scientific basis of Kerala's traditional postpartum plant-based practices. Chainani-Wu, N. (2003). Safety and antiinflammatory activity of curcumin, a component of *Curcuma longa*.

Postpartum care is a critical period that supports a mother's recovery after childbirth. Across many cultures and traditions, medicinal plants have played a vital role in this healing process, offering natural remedies to address

common postpartum challenges such as pain, inflammation, infection, fatigue, and emotional well-being. These plants are often used in the form of teas, baths, poultices, or dietary supplements. With growing interest in holistic and traditional medicine, exploring the use of postpartum plants provides valuable insight into safe, accessible, and culturally significant methods of maternal care. Throughout history, medicinal plants have been widely used in postpartum care to support physical recovery and emotional well-being. Herbs like *Rubus idaeus* (red raspberry leaf) help tone the uterus and reduce postpartum bleeding. Plants such as *Calendula officinalis* (calendula) and *Aloe vera* are applied topically to soothe perineal tears or cesarean wounds. *Trigonella foenum-graecum*, *Foeniculum vulgare*, and *Moringa oleifera* are used to enhance breast milk production. *Curcuma longa* and *Zingiber officinale* are valued for their anti-inflammatory properties, helping with postpartum pain and swelling. *Withania somnifera* and *Melissa officinalis* are used to ease stress, anxiety, and postpartum depression. These remedies vary across cultures and are often rooted in traditional practices such as Ayurveda, Traditional Chinese Medicine, and indigenous healing systems. While many of these herbs are effective, their use should be guided by healthcare professionals to ensure safety for both mother and baby.

Traditional plant-based practices in postpartum care have been integral to maternal health across many cultures, offering physical recovery, emotional balance, and support for breastfeeding. In Ayurveda (India), herbs such as *Asparagus racemosus* are used to enhance lactation, while *Withania somnifera* and *Curcuma longa* help in rebuilding strength and reducing inflammation (Sharma, 2005). Traditional Chinese Medicine prescribes herbs like dang gui *Angelica sinensis* and ginseng to replenish lost blood and vital energy, supporting both the uterus and overall vitality (Bensky *et al.*, 2004). In sub-Saharan Africa, women use herbal baths and teas made from plants like *Moringa oleifera* and *Vernonia amygdalina* for wound healing, milk production, and internal cleansing (Abubakar & Haque, 2020) [3]. In Latin American countries, especially Mexico, postpartum women observe a 40-day rest period called *la cuarentena*, during which herbs like *Ruta graveolens*, and chamomile are used to soothe the muscles, calm nerves, and aid uterine recovery (Alonso-Castro *et al.*, 2012). In Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia and Malaysia, *jamu* tonics made from turmeric, ginger, and tamarind are taken to warm the body, tighten tissues, and restore hormonal balance (Manderson, 1981). While these traditions offer culturally grounded care with reported benefits, scientific evaluation is necessary to ensure safety and standardized use in modern maternal healthcare.

*Psidium guajava* has been traditionally used in postpartum care due to its medicinal properties. Its leaves possess strong antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory effects that help prevent infections common during the postpartum period (Raghavendra *et al.*, 2006). The plant is also known for its uterotonic and hemostatic properties, which may aid in uterine contraction and reduce postpartum bleeding (Ojewole, 2006). Additionally, guava helps manage digestive discomfort such as diarrhea and supports wound healing due to its antioxidant and antibacterial compounds (Lutterodt, 1992; Arima & Danno, 2002). Its rich content of vitamin C and flavonoids further promotes recovery by reducing oxidative stress (Thaipong *et al.*, 2006).

In the postpartum period, *Plectranthus amboinicus* is highly valued for its respiratory, digestive, and immune-boosting properties. After childbirth, women are more vulnerable to infections, fatigue, and digestive issues. Indian Borage is commonly used to prepare herbal decoctions or teas that help alleviate cough, nasal congestion, and throat irritation, which are common during postnatal immunity decline. The plant's antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory constituents such as carvacrol, thymol, and eugenol help protect the mother from infections and support faster recovery. Additionally, the herb is known to aid digestion and relieve bloating, making it beneficial for easing postpartum gastric discomfort and colic. In traditional South Indian practices, the leaves are boiled in water and consumed, or the infused water is used for bathing the mother and infant, as it is believed to cleanse and protect the skin, reduce inflammation, and enhance relaxation. Given its multi-functional properties including antioxidant, antipyretic, and expectorant actions *Plectranthus amboinicus* is considered a gentle yet effective supportive remedy during the vulnerable postpartum phase. Its accessibility and safety profile have contributed to its sustained use in home-based postpartum care across generations. The main objectives of the study is to document various plant-based practices used during the postpartum period and also to understand the health benefits and cultural significance of these practices. This study focus to compare traditional knowledge with modern postpartum care approaches.

## Review of Literature

Medicinal plants play a significant role in traditional postpartum care, with various species used to aid recovery and address postpartum health concerns. These plants are often consumed as part of the postpartum diet or used in traditional practices like steam baths to improve circulation and promote healing. Some examples include plants used for uterine cleansing, postnatal bleeding, and to enhance breast milk production. Warriar *et al.*, 1995 [29] and Subramaniam *et al.*, 2011 [27] studied that the decoctions made from its leaves or roots *Aerva lanata* are given to postpartum women to help cleanse the urinary tract, prevent infections, reduce water retention, and support uterine recovery. Its lithotriptic property also helps maintain renal health, which is considered important during the postpartum phase. Scientific studies support its uroprotective and antimicrobial roles, aligning with its use in traditional postpartum regimens

Sharma, P. C., Yelne, M. B., & Dennis, T. J. (2001) [25] reported that *Saraca indica* is traditionally used in Ayurveda for female reproductive health, including postpartum care. It is valued for its uterotonic, astringent, and anti-inflammatory properties. Literature supports its use in managing postpartum bleeding, toning the uterus, and promoting recovery. Studies indicate that the bark extract contains compounds like flavonoids and tannins, which contribute to its hemostatic and uterine-contracting effects. While preclinical studies support these actions, there is limited clinical research specifically focused on postpartum women, warranting further investigation. Nonetheless, its use remains prominent in traditional postpartum formulations. Mukherjee *et al.*, 2008 [21] reported that *Clitoria ternatea*, a traditional medicinal plant used in postpartum care for its anti-inflammatory, analgesic, and hormonemodulating properties. In Ayurvedic and Southeast

Asian practices, it is administered to aid uterine recovery, relieve pain, and reduce postpartum swelling. The plant is rich in flavonoids and anthocyanins, which contribute to its antioxidant and antimicrobial effects, potentially supporting healing and protecting against infections after childbirth.

Kumar, A., & Kumar, S. (2010)<sup>[18]</sup> reported that *Asparagus racemosus*, Ayurvedic medicine particularly for postpartum care. It is traditionally used to support lactation, promote uterine health, and restore hormonal balance after childbirth. Studies suggest that its galactagogue properties enhance breast milk production, while its adaptogenic and anti-inflammatory effects may help manage postpartum stress, fatigue, and mood disorders. Clinical evidence on its specific postpartum benefits is promising, but further research is needed to fully validate its safety and efficacy in breastfeeding mothers. Kumar, A., & Yadav, S. (2011)<sup>[20]</sup> studies that *Allium cepa* has been used traditionally for its anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial, and antioxidant properties, which could be beneficial during the postpartum period. It is commonly utilized in postpartum care for its potential to promote healing, reduce swelling, and support overall recovery. Some studies suggest that onion's flavonoids and sulfur compounds may help in managing postpartum edema, promote uterine involution, and even assist with lactation by enhancing milk flow. However, scientific literature specifically examining its postpartum use is limited, and further studies are needed to establish its clinical effectiveness. DebMandal & Mandal, in 2011<sup>[11]</sup> studies that *Cocos nucifera*, has been traditionally used in various cultures for postpartum care due to its nutritional and medicinal properties. Coconut water and oil are rich in essential fatty acids, electrolytes, and antioxidants that support hydration, wound healing, and skin regeneration. Studies have highlighted its antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory effects, making it useful in preventing infections and promoting recovery after childbirth. Singh, N., & Sharma, P. (2013) describes that *Rubia cordifolia*, traditionally used in Ayurvedic and other Asian medicinal systems. Renowned for its bloodpurifying, anti-inflammatory, and uterine-toning properties, *Rubia cordifolia* has been employed in postpartum care to support recovery and balance the female reproductive system. Its active compounds, such as purpurin and munjistin, are known to promote circulation, reduce uterine inflammation, and assist in the expulsion of lochia the postpartum vaginal discharge. In traditional postpartum regimens, it is often included in herbal decoctions aimed at cleansing the body, restoring hormonal balance, and accelerating tissue healing. Arumugam *et al.*, 2013<sup>[4]</sup> reported that *Plectranthus amboinicus*, is traditionally used in postpartum care for its antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory, and respiratory-supporting properties. It is often administered as herbal tea, steam inhalation, or incorporated into medicated baths to help new mothers relieve cold, cough, respiratory congestion, and promote general wellness. The essential oils present in the plant, particularly carvacrol and thymol, contribute to its role in boosting immunity, aiding digestion, and preventing infections during the vulnerable postpartum phase. Balasubramaniam, V., Kavimani, S., & Gunasekaran, G. in (2014) studied that *Aegle marmelos* is traditionally used to support digestive health, strengthen the uterus, and help restore hormonal balance. The fruit pulp is known to aid in controlling postpartum diarrhea and improving appetite, while decoctions made from its parts may be used to boost

overall recovery and immunity in new mothers. Its anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial, and rejuvenating effects make it a beneficial component of postpartum herbal care. Fong *et al.* (2014)<sup>[13]</sup> reported that *A. paniculata* exhibited potent antimicrobial activity, which could help prevent infections in postpartum women

Widyarini, S., *et al.* (2017)<sup>[30]</sup> studies that *Centella asiatica*, has been traditionally used in various cultures for wound healing and tissue repair. In the postpartum period, it is particularly valued for its role in promoting perineal wound healing, reducing inflammation, and improving skin elasticity. Sibeko, L., Johns, T., & Cordeiro, L. S. in 2021<sup>[24]</sup> reported that the phytochemical roles in infant development and maternal recovery offers insights into beneficial functions of traditional plant use during lactation and the postpartum period. Ethnopharmacological research has relevance to global priorities on maternal and child health, to understanding origins and determinants of human selfmedication, and for reconciling traditional postpartum practices and mainstream healthcare. Khalili S, *et al.*, in 2023 reported that Poor breast milk production is the most frequent cause of breastfeeding failure in preterm babies. In this studies states that the effect of herbal tea mixture containing stinging nettle (Natal, Hipp) on breast milk production and serum prolactin levels of mothers, and weight gain of preterm babies.

## Materials and Methods

This study employed a qualitative ethnobotanical research design to document and analyze traditional plant-based practices used in postpartum care. The approach combined semi-structured interviews, field observations, and literature review to gather comprehensive data on plant species, preparation methods, and therapeutic applications. The research was conducted in Kollam, a region known for its rich ethnomedicinal knowledge and longstanding traditions in maternal care. The area was selected due to its diverse flora and the continued use of traditional practices among local communities. Participants included traditional birth attendants (TBAs), postpartum women (within one year of childbirth), herbalists, and elderly women reputed for their knowledge of medicinal plants. A purposive sampling method was used to select 20–30 informants with relevant experience and knowledge. Verbal or written informed consent was obtained from all participants.

## Data Collection Methods

- 1. Semi-Structured Interviews:** In-depth interviews were conducted using a prepared interview guide focused on:
  - Types of plants used in postpartum care
  - Parts of the plants utilized (e.g., leaves, roots, bark)
  - Preparation and administration methods (e.g., teas, poultices, baths)
  - Beliefs and perceived efficacy
  - Duration and timing of treatments
- 2. Participant Observation:** We observed preparation and application of remedies during postpartum care, with permission from participants. Photographs and detailed field notes were recorded.
- 3. Plant Sample Collection and Identification:** Specimens of all reported plants were collected during field visits. Plants were collected from local forests,

home gardens, and markets. Preliminary identification was done in the field with the help of local guides and later confirmed using botanical keys and consultation with a taxonomist. Voucher specimens were prepared, labeled, and authenticated by a botanist using standard taxonomic methods.

4. **Plant Identification and Documentation:** Plants were identified based on regional floras and compared with herbarium specimens. Botanical names, vernacular names, families, and habit (herb/shrub/tree) were recorded.
5. **Literature Review:** Secondary data from ethnobotanical databases, academic journals, and traditional medicine texts were reviewed to compare and validate the information obtained from fieldwork.

### Data Analysis

Interview transcripts and field notes were transcribed, coded, and thematically analyzed using qualitative data analysis software (e.g., NVivo or ATLAS.ti). The use-frequency of each plant was calculated and categorized according to therapeutic purpose (e.g., uterine cleansing, lactation, wound healing). Plants were also crossreferenced with existing pharmacological data where available.

### Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from institution. Cultural sensitivity and community respect were prioritized throughout the study. Intellectual property rights of traditional knowledge holders were acknowledged, and findings were shared with the local community in an accessible format.

**Table 1:** plants used for the study.

<i>Centella asiatica</i>	<i>Ficus racemosa</i>	<i>Ocimum tenuiflorum</i>
<i>Clitoria ternatea</i>	<i>Morinda umbellata</i>	<i>Leucas aspera</i>
<i>Ixora coccinea</i>	<i>Chrysopogon zizanioides</i>	<i>Caesalpinia Sappan</i>
<i>Asparagus racemosus</i>	<i>Psidium guajava</i>	<i>Andrographis paniculata</i>
<i>Azadirachta indica</i>	<i>Cissampelos pareira</i>	<i>Cocos nucifera</i>
<i>Vitex negundo</i>	<i>Curcuma longa</i>	<i>Saraca indica</i>
<i>Withania somnifera</i>	<i>Bacopa monnieri</i>	<i>Trigonella foenum-graecum</i>
<i>Phyllanthus emblica</i>	<i>Plectranthus amboinicus</i>	<i>Aerva lanata</i>
<i>Allium Cepa</i>		

### Results

The postpartum period is a critical phase in a woman's life, involving physical recovery, hormonal readjustment, and emotional adaptation. Traditional systems of medicine, such as Ayurveda, Siddha, and folk remedies, have long utilized medicinal plants to support maternal health during this time. Several herbs are commonly used across cultures to aid recovery, enhance immunity, and restore bodily functions.

#### ▪ *Clitoria ternatea*

In the postpartum period, *Clitoria ternatea* is traditionally used to promote mental relaxation, reduce stress and anxiety, and enhance cognitive function challenges often faced by new mothers. Its neuroprotective action helps combat postpartum mood imbalances. Additionally, the plant is known for supporting uterine health and aiding in the body's overall recovery. These constituents may help in reducing oxidative stress, promoting wound healing, and regulating hormonal balance post-delivery.

#### ▪ *Centella asiatica*

In the context of postpartum care, it is valued for its wound-healing, anti-inflammatory, and skin-rejuvenating properties. Often used to support recovery after childbirth, especially in healing perineal tears or cesarean wounds, *Centella asiatica* promotes collagen production and tissue repair.

#### ▪ *Ixora coccinea*

In the context of postpartum care, *Ixora coccinea* has been traditionally valued for its therapeutic properties. The roots, flowers, and leaves of the plant are used in various herbal preparations.

#### ▪ *Asparagus racemosus*

Traditionally used as a galactagogue, Shatavari supports milk production and nourishes the reproductive system. It also helps in managing postpartum hormonal changes and strengthening the uterus.

#### ▪ *Azadirachta indica*

*Azadirachta indica*, commonly known as neem, is a highly valued medicinal plant in traditional systems of medicine, especially in South Asia. In postpartum care, neem has been traditionally used for its antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory, and healing properties. The leaves, oil, and bark are utilized in various forms such as baths, topical applications, or fumigation to support hygiene, prevent infections, and promote wound healing after childbirth.

#### ▪ *Vitex negundo*

In the postpartum period, *Vitex negundo* has been traditionally employed to support recovery due to its anti-inflammatory, analgesic, and antimicrobial properties. *Vitex negundo* leaves or preparations are used to help reduce postpartum pain, promote uterine contraction, and prevent infections. The plant may be applied externally as a warm compress or decoction to relieve muscular pain and swelling, or used in baths to aid in perineal healing.

#### ▪ *Withania somnifera*

Ashwagandha is a well-known adaptogen used to combat fatigue, promote physical strength, and reduce anxiety. In the postpartum phase, it is valued for its rejuvenating properties, helping to restore energy and hormonal balance.

#### ▪ *Phyllanthus emblica*

Nellikka, also known as Amla or Indian Gooseberry, is a nutrient-dense fruit rich in antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals. It has been traditionally used in Ayurvedic medicine to support overall health, boost immunity, and promote vitality.

Its potential benefits make it a valuable addition to a healthy lifestyle.

- ***Allium cepa***

In the context of postpartum care, it provide various benefits, including supporting lactation, boosting immunity, and promoting overall health. Rich in antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals, small onions may play a valuable role in supporting new mothers' health and recovery after childbirth.

- ***Ficus racemosa***

Nalpamaram includes the bark, *Ficus racemosa*. Used mainly in decoctions for external bathing, it promotes wound healing, reduces inflammation, and maintains hygiene.

- ***Morinda umbellata***

In traditional medicine, the roots and leaves of *Morinda umbellata* are used to aid in postpartum recovery. The plant is valued for its reported anti-inflammatory, analgesic, and uterine tonic properties. It may be used to relieve body aches, n traditional medicine, the roots and leaves of *Morinda umbellata* are used to aid in postpartum recovery. The plant is valued for its reported anti-inflammatory, analgesic, and uterine tonic properties. It may be used to relieve body aches, promote uterine involution (the return of the uterus to its pre-pregnancy size), and assist in eliminating lochia (post-birth discharge). Some traditional applications include decoctions made from the root or leaf, consumed under supervision to restore vitality and manage postpartum discomfort.

- ***Chrysopogon zizanioides***

Also known as Ramacham, is a medicinal grass native to India and widely used in Ayurveda. In Kerala and other parts of South India, Ramacham is traditionally incorporated into postpartum care due to its calming, cooling, and detoxifying properties. After childbirth, a woman's body undergoes significant physical and emotional changes. Ayurvedic postpartum care emphasizes restoring balance, rejuvenating the body, and promoting healing.

- ***Psidium guajava***

In postpartum care, guava leaves are commonly used to support uterine recovery, manage infections, and aid digestion. Decoctions or infusions made from guava leaves are traditionally given to new mothers to help reduce abdominal inflammation, promote healing of internal tissues, and regulate bowel movements. Additionally, the leaves may help in controlling postpartum bleeding and boosting overall immunity, making them a valuable herbal remedy during the recovery period after childbirth.

- ***Cissampelos pareira***

In traditional medicine, particularly in Ayurvedic practices, *Cissampelos pareira*, also known as "Abuta" or "Laghu Patha," is used in postpartum treatment, notably for managing uterine hemorrhages and other complications. It is believed to help with uterine contraction and blood flow regulation, aiding in recovery after childbirth

- ***Curcuma longa***

Turmeric has anti-inflammatory, antibacterial, and antioxidant properties. It is used both internally (in milk or herbal tonics) and externally (in bath powders or oils) to promote healing and prevent infections.

- ***Bacopa monnieri***

*Bacopa monnieri*, commonly known as Brahmi, is a revered herb in Ayurvedic medicine, traditionally used to enhance cognitive function and reduce stress. In the context of postpartum care, *Bacopa monnieri* is valued for its adaptogenic, neuroprotective, and calming properties. New mothers may experience mood swings, anxiety, or memory lapses due to hormonal changes, and Brahmi is often used to help manage these symptoms by supporting mental clarity, emotional balance, and restful sleep. Its gentle tonifying effect on the nervous system makes it a supportive herb for recovery and mental well-being during the postpartum period.

- ***Plectranthus amboinicus***

In the postpartum period, *Plectranthus amboinicus* is highly valued for its respiratory, digestive, and immune-boosting properties. After childbirth, women are more vulnerable to infections, fatigue, and digestive issues. Indian Borage is commonly used to prepare herbal decoctions or teas that help alleviate cough, nasal congestion, and throat irritation, which are common during postnatal immunity decline.

- ***Aerva lanata***

In the postpartum period, *Aerva lanata* is traditionally used as a cleansing and restorative herb, particularly valued for its urogenital system support. It is believed to help flush out residual toxins from the uterus and urinary tract after childbirth, thereby promoting internal cleansing and preventing postpartum infections such as urinary tract infections (UTIs)—which are common due to catheterization or lowered immunity.

- ***Ocimum tenuiflorum***

*Ocimum sanctum* commonly known as Tulsi or Holy Basil, is a revered medicinal plant in Ayurveda and traditional Indian systems of medicine. In the postpartum period, Tulsi holds a significant role in maternal care, particularly in South Indian and Ayurvedic practices.

- ***Lecuas aspera***

*Leucas aspera*, commonly known as "Thumbai" in South India, is a traditional medicinal herb widely used in Ayurvedic and folk medicine. This plant is known for its antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory, and analgesic properties, making it particularly beneficial in postpartum care. In many cultures, especially in rural India, it is incorporated into postpartum regimens to aid in wound healing, reduce uterine inflammation, and help the body recover after childbirth. It is often used as a herbal infusion, bath additive, or topical application to promote maternal health and hygiene during the critical postpartum period.

- ***Caesalpinia Sappan***

*Caesalpinia sappan* has been utilized for its anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial, and antioxidant effects. Its heartwood contains brazilin, a natural compound known to promote blood circulation, alleviate pain, and support uterine recovery after childbirth. In many cultures, decoctions made from the wood are consumed to cleanse the blood, reduce postpartum discomfort, and enhance overall maternal health.

- ***Andrographis Paniculata***

*Andrographis paniculata* has found applications in postpartum care to support maternal health and recovery. Traditionally, it is used to help reduce postpartum

infections, enhance uterine contraction, and promote the expulsion of residual blood and tissue. Its key bioactive compound, andrographolide, has shown therapeutic potential in regulating immune responses and accelerating healing processes, making it a valuable herbal aid in postnatal recovery.

▪ ***Cocos nucifera***

In traditional medicine, especially in Ayurvedic and Southeast Asian practices, coconut has long been valued for its nutritional, healing, and hydrating properties. For postpartum mothers, coconut products such as coconut water, coconut oil, and coconut milk are widely used to support recovery, enhance lactation, and promote overall well-being. Coconut oil is particularly popular for perineal massage, preventing stretch marks, and soothing dry or irritated skin in both mother and baby.

▪ ***Saraca indica***

*Saraca indica*, also known as *Saraca asoca*, is a revered medicinal plant in Ayurvedic medicine, particularly

recognized for its benefits in women's reproductive health. Traditionally, it has been used during the postpartum period to support uterine health, control bleeding, and promote overall recovery. The bark of *Saraca indica* is most commonly utilized in the form of decoctions or powders. In postpartum care, it is used to help restore uterine tone, manage excessive bleeding (postpartum hemorrhage), and reduce inflammation. Its astringent properties are believed to help in contracting the uterus back to its normal size and in healing internal tissues after childbirth. Ayurvedic formulations such as "Ashokarishta," which contains *Saraca indica* as a primary ingredient, are frequently recommended for postpartum women to balance hormones, regulate menstrual cycles, and support reproductive organ health.

▪ ***Trigonella foenum-graecum***

Fenugreek seeds are known for their lactation-promoting effects and are often included in herbal teas or porridge consumed by new mothers.

**Plate 1**



Centella asiatica



Clitoria ternatea



Ixora coccinea



Asparagus racemosus



*Azadirachta indica*



*Vitex negundo*



*Withania somnifera*



*Phyllanthus emblica*



*Plectranthus amboinicus*



*Caesalpinia Sappan*



*Aerva lanata*



*Rubia cordifolia*



*Andrographis paniculata*



*Leucas aspera*



*Chrysopogon zizanioides*



*Bacopa monnieri*



*Cocos nucifera*



*Psidium guajava*



*Cissampelos pareira*



*Saraca indica*

### Discussions

These plants are often used in combination, depending on the region and cultural practices. While traditional knowledge supports their use, modern pharmacological studies are increasingly validating their safety and efficacy. However, dosage, preparation methods, and potential interactions must be considered, especially when used alongside modern medicine.

*Leucas aspera* is widely used for its antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory effects, often applied in the form of infusions or topical washes to prevent infections and promote healing of wounds or vaginal tears. *Aegle marmelos*, known for its astringent and digestive properties, is administered to improve appetite, regulate bowel movements, and support uterine tone. *Psidium guajava* serve as a natural remedy for gastrointestinal disturbances and have strong antibacterial properties, helping to maintain hygiene and prevent postpartum infections. *Curcuma longa* is a cornerstone in postpartum care due to its potent anti-inflammatory and woundhealing abilities. It is consumed internally and used externally to reduce pain, support tissue repair, and purify the body. *Bacopa monnieri*, though more commonly

associated with cognitive health, plays a vital role in emotional and neurological support postpartum, helping mothers manage stress, anxiety, and sleep disturbances.

Together, these plants reflect a holistic approach to postpartum care, targeting not only physical recovery but also emotional and mental well-being. While traditional knowledge supports their use, integrating modern research and clinical evidence can enhance their safety and effectiveness in contemporary maternal healthcare. A few practices may require further scientific validation, especially for safety and dosage. The study of plants used during the postpartum period holds great importance due to its potential to improve maternal health and preserve traditional healthcare knowledge. Postpartum is a vulnerable phase in a woman's life, marked by physical, emotional, and hormonal changes. In many cultures, especially in traditional systems like Ayurveda, specific medicinal plants have been used to support recovery, promote lactation, enhance immunity, and stabilize mental health. Medicinal plants can aid in faster recovery, strengthen the body, and address common postpartum issues such as infections, weakness, and hormonal imbalances. This research helps preserve and

scientifically validate traditional postpartum practices, many of which are rooted in indigenous and Ayurvedic medicine. With growing interest in natural health solutions, these studies can lead to safer herbal formulations for postpartum care with fewer side effects than synthetic drugs. Understanding and utilizing plant-based postpartum care can provide cost-effective and accessible healthcare options, especially in rural or low-resource settings. Promoting the use of local medicinal plants supports biodiversity, sustainability, and self-reliance in healthcare.

## Conclusions

The study concluded that traditional plant-based postpartum care practices, though often region-specific, share common principles of warmth, nourishment, and healing. Integrating safe traditional knowledge with modern healthcare could enhance maternal well-being, especially in rural or resourcelimited settings. Traditional postpartum practices are rich in knowledge, especially regarding plant-based healing. These methods offer valuable complementary benefits alongside modern medicine. The use of medicinal plants during the postpartum period plays a vital role in supporting maternal health, especially in traditional and indigenous healthcare systems. This study highlights the rich ethnobotanical knowledge surrounding postpartum care, where plants are used to promote healing, enhance lactation, restore strength, and prevent infections. Commonly used herbs such as Ashwagandha, Shatavari, Nalpamara, Turmeric, and Fenugreek demonstrate a wide range of therapeutic benefits rooted in centuries of traditional use and increasingly supported by scientific research. The continued documentation and scientific validation of these plants are essential for integrating safe and effective traditional practices into modern maternal healthcare. Moreover, this knowledge can contribute to the development of affordable, natural, and culturally appropriate postpartum remedies. Preserving and promoting these practices not only supports maternal well-being but also sustains valuable cultural heritage and biodiversity.

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