



## SHADBHAVA IN GARBHA SHARIR: A CONCEPTUAL AND COMPARATIVE STUDY WITH MODERN EMBRYOLOGICAL DETERMINANTS

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<p><b>Article Info</b></p> <p><b>Article Received:</b> 07 March 2026, <b>Article Revised:</b> 27 March 2026, <b>Article Accepted:</b> 17 April 2026.</p> <p><b>DOI:</b> <a href="https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19923955">https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19923955</a></p>	<p><b>ABSTRACT</b></p> <p>The science of <i>Garbha Sharir</i> (embryology) in <i>Ayurveda</i> presents a unique and holistic view of human development. Among its foundational concepts is <i>Shadbhava Samanvaya</i> — the coordinated interaction of six essential factors that contribute to the formation, growth, and health of the fetus. These six factors are: <i>Matrija Bhava</i> (maternal contribution), <i>Pitiraja Bhava</i> (paternal contribution), <i>Atmaja Bhava</i> (soul or consciousness), <i>Satmyaja Bhava</i> (suitability or adaptability to environment), <i>Rasaja Bhava</i> (nutritional essence from maternal nourishment), and <i>Sattvaja Bhava</i> (psychological and mental attributes). This concept highlights that embryogenesis is not merely a biological process but a confluence of physical, psychological, nutritional, and spiritual dimensions. Each factor plays a distinct and indispensable role: while <i>Matrija</i> and <i>Pitiraja Bhava</i> contribute the genetic and structural elements, <i>Atmaja Bhava</i> signifies the presence of consciousness (<i>Chetana</i>), essential for life. <i>Rasaja</i> ensures the sustenance of the foetus through maternal nutrition, <i>Satmyaja</i> relates to the adaptability of the foetus to its internal and external environment, and <i>Sattvaja</i> shapes the mental faculties and emotional framework of the individual. This paper aims to explore these six components in detail, examining their individual significance, mutual interdependence, and relevance in modern prenatal understanding. By integrating classical <i>Ayurvedic</i> knowledge with contemporary insights from embryology and reproductive health, the study proposes a more comprehensive and holistic approach to prenatal care. The <i>Shadbhava Samanvaya</i> model offers valuable perspectives for enhancing maternal health, foetal development, and the future well-being of the child.</p> <p><b>KEYWORDS:</b> Garbha Sharir, <i>Shadbhava Samanvaya</i>, <i>Ayurvedic Embryology</i>, Prenatal Care, Foetal Development.</p>
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### INTRODUCTION

Embryology is the foundation of understanding human development. In Ayurveda, this discipline is called *Garbha Sharir*, found in detail within *sharir sthana* of *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Kashyapa Samhita*,

*Ashtang Sanhira* and *Ashtang Hridaya*. They describe embryology not only as a biological phenomenon but also as a **combination of body, mind, and spirit**. A unique concept within *Garbha Sharir* is *Shadbhava*

*Samanvaya*, meaning the harmonious coordination of six determinants responsible for the embryogenesis.

According to *Charaka Samhita (Sharira Sthana 3/14)*:  
“गर्भकराणां भावानां समुदायादभिनिर्वर्तते गर्भः ।”

The embryo is formed by six contributory factors.

This worldview emphasizes that the fetus is not merely a passive outcome of genetic union, but a living entity influenced by consciousness (Atma), maternal nutrition, adaptability, and mental impressions.

The present study seeks to examine the Ayurvedic origins of *Shadbhava Samanvaya*, analyze each determinant, and correlate them with modern medical sciences to acknowledge the importance of maternal health, intrauterine nutrition, stress, and environment in shaping long-term fetal outcomes.

## Literature Review

### Ayurvedic References

- **Charaka Samhita (Sharira Sthana 3/5-14,4/4):** Describes *Shadbhava* as essential for Garbha formation. *Matrija* and *Pitraja* determine body parts (attributes skin, blood, and soft organs to the maternal source and bones, teeth, and hair to the paternal source). *Atmaja* confers consciousness, *Rasaja* sustains, *Satmyaja* ensures adaptability, and *Sattvaja* shapes mental attributes.
- **Sushruta Samhita (Sharira Sthana 3/10-14):** Describes role of paternal and maternal factors in determining fetal resemblance, deformities, and constitutional traits.
- **Ashtang Hriday (Sharir Sthana 3/ 4-7):** Acharya explains every *bhava* with its reason to form specific organ or *bhava* in the foetus.
- **Kashyapa Samhita (Sharira Sthana 2/4,4):** Also describes the importance of six factors in the embryogenesis. He also emphasized on maternal nutrition and psychology during pregnancy.

### Modern Insights

- **Genetics & Epigenetics:** Maternal and paternal gametes equally contribute nuclear DNA; mitochondria are maternally inherited. While Maternal diet, environment, and stress alter gene expression (Gluckman & Hanson, 2006).
- **Prenatal Psychology:** Maternal anxiety and stress influence fetal neurodevelopment (Van den Bergh et al., 2005).
- **Developmental Origins of Health and Disease (DOHaD):** Suggests maternal nutrition and environment during pregnancy influence long-term health of the child (Barker, 2004).
- **Consciousness Studies:** Though debated, the “beginning of life” and “personhood” discussions mirror *Atmaja Bhava* of Ayurveda.

This comparative literature study demonstrates that this **concept of *Shadbhava*** reveal holistic foresight of Ayurveda.

## The Six Determinants of *Shadbhava Samanvaya*

### 1. *Matrija Bhava* (Maternal Contribution)

- च.शा.3-  
त्वक्च लोहितं च मांसं च मेदश्च नाभिश्च हृदयं च क्लोम च य  
कृच्च प्लीहा च वृक्कौ च बस्तिश्च पुरीषाधानं चामाशय-  
श्च पक्काशयश्चोत्तरगुदं चाधरगुदं च क्षुद्रान्तं च स्थूलान्तं च वा  
पा च वपावहनं चेति (मातृजानि)॥६॥
- **Ayurveda Perspective:** Provides ovum, uterus, menstrual blood, and nurturing environment. Responsible for soft tissues like skin, blood, and liver etc.
- **Modern Correlation:** Ovum, uterine milieu, mitochondria, maternal epigenetics, placental health.

### 2. *Pitraja Bhava* (Paternal Contribution)

- च.शा.3-  
केशश्मश्रुनखलोमदन्तास्थिसिरास्नायुधमन्यः शुक्रं चेति (पि  
तृजानि)॥७॥
- **Ayurveda Perspective:** Contributes sperm and determines structural traits—bones, teeth, muscles, hair.
- **Modern Correlation:** Chromosomal inheritance, paternal genetic influence, Y chromosome.

### 3. *Atmaja Bhava* (Consciousness/Soul)

- च.शा.3-  
तासु तासु योनिषूत्पत्तिरायुरात्मज्ञानं मन इन्द्रियाणि प्राणापा  
नौ प्रेरणं धारणमाकृतिस्वरवर्णविशेषाः सुखदुःखे इच्छाद्वेषौ  
चेतना धृतिर्बुद्धिः स्मृतिरहङ्कारः प्रयत्नश्चेति (आत्मजानि)॥१०॥
- **Ayurveda Perspective:** Atma imparts consciousness, individuality, memory, and life-force. Without Atma, matter remains inert.
- **Modern Parallel:** While Atma has no biomedical equivalent, consciousness studies and debates on the “beginning of life” echo this dimension.

### 4. *Satmyaja Bhava* (Adaptability)

- च.शा.3-  
आरोग्यमनालस्यमलोलुपत्वमिन्द्रियप्रसादः स्वरवर्णबीजस  
म्पत् प्रहर्षभूयस्त्वं चेति (सात्म्यजानि)॥११॥
- **Ayurveda Perspective:** Refers to fetus’ adaptability to maternal environment and later to external conditions.
- **Modern Correlation:** Immunological tolerance, developmental plasticity, foetal programming, microbiome adaptation.

### 5. *Rasaja Bhava* (Nutritional Essence)

- च.शा.3-  
शरीरस्याभिनिर्वृत्तिरभिवृद्धिः प्राणानुबन्धस्तृप्तिः पुष्टिरुत्साह  
श्चेति (रसजानि)॥१२॥

- **Ayurveda Perspective:** Maternal nutrition via Rasa Dhatu sustains the foetus.
- **Modern Correlation:** Placental nutrition, maternal diet, micronutrient supply (iron, folate, DHA).

#### 6. Sattvaja Bhava (Psychological Attributes)

- च.शा.3-  
भक्तिः शीलं शौचं द्वेषः स्मृतिर्मोहस्त्यागो मात्सर्यं शौर्यं भयं क्रोधस्तन्द्रोत्साहस्तैक्षण्यं मार्दवं गाम्भीर्यमनवस्थितत्वमित्येव मादयश्चान्ये, ते सत्त्वविकारा यानुत्तरकालं सत्त्वभेदमधिकृत्योपदेक्ष्यामः॥13॥
- **Ayurveda Perspective:** Maternal mental state influences foetal psychology, intellect, and temperament.
- **Modern Correlation:** Maternal stress and depression alter foetal brain development via cortisol; positive maternal states enhance resilience.

#### METHODOLOGY

This research is based on **conceptual & comparative textual analysis** method:

1. Review of Ayurvedic texts (*Charaka, Sushruta, Kashyapa*).
2. Review of commentaries and Ayurvedic research papers.
3. Review of Peer-reviewed journals in embryology, epigenetics, foetal nutrition and prenatal psychology.
4. Comparative analysis of *Shadbhava* factors with modern equivalents.

#### DISCUSSION

##### Interconnection of Factors

These six factors function in a collective manner. Maternal and paternal genes provide structure; nutrition gives development; adaptability ensures resilience; psychology shapes mind; and Atma grants consciousness. Absence or weakness of one factor disturbs the balance which leads to congenital or developmental anomaly.

##### Significance for Prenatal Care

1. **Nutritional Care (Rasaja):** Balanced maternal diet with micronutrients is essential which ensures healthy rasa for fetal nourishment.
2. **Psychological Well-being (Sattvaja):** Stress management, yoga, meditation, and family support are essential for expected mother for neurodevelopment of fetus.
3. **Environmental Suitability (Satmyaja):** Safe, toxin-free environments for pregnant women.
4. **Preconceptional Health (Matrija & Pitrija):** Genetic counseling, lifestyle modification.
5. **Spiritual-Ethical Care (Atmaja):** Respect for consciousness and ethical reflections on life.

#### Proposed Preventive & Holistic Model

*Shadbhava Samanvaya* can instil a **holistic prenatal healthcare framework**:

- Preconception counselling (*garbhadhana samskara*).
- Nutritional planning.
- Maternal mental health support.
- Epigenetic-friendly lifestyle (yoga, meditation, sattvic diet).
- Ethical guidance for spiritual counselling.

#### CONCLUSION

The Ayurvedic ideology of *Shadbhava Samanvaya* reflects a multidimensional understanding of embryology. It emphasizes that fetal development happens by the integration of genetic inheritance (Matrija & Pitrija), nutritional (Rasaja), psychological (Sattvaja), environmental (Satmyaja), and spiritual (Atmaja) factors.

Modern science also validates these insights through discoveries in genetics, epigenetics, and prenatal psychology. By adopting *Shadbhava Samanvaya* concept as a guiding framework modern obstetrics can enrich with a model of **Integrative prenatal and perinatal care** that promotes maternal well-being and ensures the holistic development of the child.

Thus, *Shadbhava Samanvaya* is not only an ancient theory but also a **timeless guide for integrative reproductive health**.

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