



**TRADITIONAL MEDICAL PRACTICES AND RITUALS DURING MENARCHE,  
ANTEPARTUM, AND POSTPARTUM PERIODS IN MANMANGALAM TALUK, KARUR  
DISTRICT, TAMIL NADU: A QUALITATIVE ETHNOMEDICAL STUDY**

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20523636>

**How to cite this Article:** Varunapriya M.<sup>1\*</sup>, Seethaladevi A.<sup>2</sup>, Sundararajan S.<sup>3</sup> (2026). Traditional Medical Practices And Rituals During Menarche, Antepartum, And Postpartum Periods In Manmangalam Taluk, Karur District, Tamil Nadu: A Qualitative Ethnomedical Study. European Journal of Biomedical and Pharmaceutical Sciences, 13(6), 292–295.

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Article Received on 05/05/2026

Article Revised on 25/05/2026

Article Published on 03/06/2026

### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Traditional medical practices related to female reproductive health continue to play a significant role in rural communities of Tamil Nadu. Indigenous dietary practices, herbal remedies, and cultural rituals associated with menarche, pregnancy, and postpartum care are transmitted across generations and remain an important component of women's healthcare. **Aim:** To document and analyze the traditional medical practices and rituals followed during menarche, antepartum, and postpartum periods among women in Manmangalam Taluk, Karur District, Tamil Nadu. **Methods:** A community-based qualitative ethnomedical study was conducted among women aged above 25 years in Manmangalam Taluk, Karur District, Tamil Nadu. Data were collected using non-random purposive sampling through interviews with 30 key informants. Information regarding dietary practices, herbal remedies, rituals, and traditional health management methods during puberty, pregnancy, and postpartum periods was documented and analyzed descriptively. **Results:** The study documented multiple traditional formulations and rituals practiced during the reproductive phases of women. Common dietary practices during puberty included Ulunthu Kali, Kelvaragu Puttu, Pori Maavu, and Ulunthu Kanji. Antepartum remedies mainly focused on management of anemia, morning sickness, pseudopain, and facilitation of normal delivery. Postpartum care emphasized body strengthening, lactation enhancement, uterine cleansing, and fatigue reduction through preparations such as Kayam Karupatti, Selavu Rasam, Pathiya Kuzhambu, and Chukku Kali. Ritual practices such as puberty ceremonies and Seemantham were found to provide psychological and social support. Most practices were concentrated during the postpartum period. **Conclusion:** Traditional reproductive healthcare practices in Manmangalam Taluk represent a rich repository of ethnomedical knowledge. Documentation and scientific validation of these practices may contribute to integrative approaches for women's reproductive healthcare.

**KEYWORDS:** Traditional medicine; Ethnomedicine; Menarche; Postpartum care; Pregnancy; Siddha medicine; Reproductive health; Tamil Nadu.

### INTRODUCTION

Traditional medicine remains an integral component of healthcare systems across many developing countries. According to the World Health Organization, traditional medicine includes the sum total of knowledge, skills, and practices based on indigenous theories, beliefs, and

experiences used in maintaining health and treating illness.

Women's reproductive health is closely associated with sociocultural practices and traditional healthcare systems. In Tamil Nadu, several indigenous medical practices are followed during key reproductive stages

such as Muthal Poopu (menarche), Karpakaalam (antepartum period), and Sool Poopu (postpartum period). These practices include dietary modifications, herbal remedies, and rituals intended to improve physical, mental, and social wellbeing.

Menarche represents a major developmental milestone in adolescent girls and is traditionally associated with nutritional support and ceremonial rituals aimed at preparing the individual for reproductive life. Similarly, antenatal care practices emphasize maternal nutrition, prevention of complications, and promotion of fetal wellbeing. Postpartum practices are primarily directed toward maternal recovery, lactation enhancement, uterine cleansing, and restoration of physical strength.

Despite rapid modernization, many rural communities continue to preserve these indigenous healthcare traditions. However, systematic documentation of such practices remains limited. Therefore, the present study was undertaken to document traditional medical practices and rituals related to female reproductive health in Manmangalam Taluk, Karur District, Tamil Nadu.

#### AIM

To document the traditional medical practices and rituals followed during menarche, antepartum, and postpartum periods in Manmangalam Taluk, Karur District, Tamil Nadu.

#### OBJECTIVES

1. To document dietary practices followed during puberty, pregnancy, and postpartum periods.
2. To record traditional herbal remedies used for reproductive health-related ailments.
3. To identify cultural rituals associated with female reproductive stages.
4. To analyze the significance of traditional healthcare practices in maternal and reproductive wellbeing.

#### MATERIALS AND METHODS

##### Study Design

Community-based qualitative ethnomedical study.

##### Study Area

Manmangalam Taluk, Karur District, Tamil Nadu, India.

##### Study Population

Women aged above 25 years residing in the study area.

##### Inclusion Criteria

- Women aged above 25 years.
- Women who had experienced childbirth.
- Participants willing to provide informed consent.

##### Sampling Method

Non-random purposive sampling.

##### Sample Size

Thirty key informants participated in the study.

#### Data Collection

Data were collected through direct interviews using a semi-structured questionnaire. Information regarding traditional dietary practices, herbal remedies, ritual practices, and health management strategies during menarche, antepartum, and postpartum periods was documented.

#### Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection.

#### RESULTS

##### Sociodemographic Characteristics

Among the 30 key informants, the majority belonged to the age group of 50–60 years (30%), followed by 60–70 years (20%). Homemakers constituted the largest occupational group (40%).

##### Traditional Practices During Menarche

###### Dietary Practices

Several nutritious preparations were administered during puberty to strengthen bones, improve blood levels, regulate menstruation, and reduce menstrual discomfort.

###### Commonly Used Preparations

- Raw rice puttu
- Ulunthu Kali
- Pori Maavu
- Ulunthu Kanji
- Vendaya Kali
- Kelvaragu Puttu
- Sprouted cereals and pulses

##### Traditional Remedies for Menstrual Disorders

###### Menorrhagia

- Paste of *Syzygium cumini* bark with curd
- Powder prepared from *Cassia auriculata* flowers, *Hibiscus rosa-sinensis* leaves, and *Aegle marmelos*

###### Menstrual Cramps

- Decoction of *Nigella sativa* seeds
- Decoction of *Foeniculum vulgare* seeds

###### Oligomenorrhoea

- Sesame seed powder with palm jaggery
- Tamarind pulp with palm jaggery

##### Puberty Rituals

Puberty ceremonies were culturally significant and involved turmeric baths, isolation rituals, neem leaves, ceremonial bathing, and social celebrations. These rituals were believed to provide psychological support and social acceptance during adolescence.

##### Traditional Practices During Antepartum Period

###### Preconception Practices

###### Traditional fertility-enhancing practices included:

- Neem bark infused water

- Paste of neem, peepal, and bael leaves with goat milk
- Administration of Malaiveppilai leaf extract after menstruation

### Management of Pregnancy-Related Ailments Anemia

- Curry leaf powder with rice or hot water
- Moringa leaf stew with cumin and onion
- Amla juice with palm jaggery

### Morning Sickness

- Ginger decoction
- Soaked cumin or fennel seed water
- Mint leaf syrup

### Pseudopain

- Roasted cumin with butter
- Decoction of moringa leaves and cumin
- Fennel seed decoction

### Facilitation of Vaginal Delivery

- Pepper with castor oil
- Rice starch water with dry ginger
- External application of castor oil over abdomen
- Hot water sitz bath during ninth month

### Rituals During Pregnancy

The Seemantham ceremony was observed during the fifth, seventh, or ninth month of pregnancy. Rituals included tying bangles (Valaikappu), application of kumkum, ceremonial food preparation, and family blessings for safe delivery and fetal wellbeing.

### Traditional Practices During Postpartum Period

Postpartum care constituted the major component of traditional healthcare practices documented in the study. Common Traditional Preparations.

### Kayam Karupatti

A polyherbal leghiyam prepared using ginger, pepper, cumin, garlic, palm jaggery, and related ingredients for strengthening the body and reducing fatigue.

### Selavu Rasam

A herbal rasam prepared using multiple medicinal ingredients to reduce fatigue, respiratory illness, and promote uterine involution.

### Lamb Leg Soup

Consumed to improve strength and support bone health.

### Vellai Poondu Kali

Garlic-based preparation used to enhance breast milk secretion and reduce inflammation.

### Bottle Gourd Curry

Used to improve hydration and lactation.

### Pathiya Kuzhambu

Traditionally administered to reduce abdominal bloating and promote uterine cleansing.

### Oma Kali

Ajwain-based preparation used for improving sleep.

### Chukku Kali

Dry ginger preparation used for reducing inflammation and indigestion.

### Moringa Flower Curry

Administered for improving lactation and reducing fatigue.

### Management of Postpartum Conditions Retained Placenta

- Dill seed decoction
- Erythrina variegata flower syrup
- Mustard seed powder with palm jaggery
- Turmeric and asafoetida paste

### Galactogogues

- Garlic boiled with milk
- Groundnut consumption
- Milk shark intake

### Postpartum Peptic Ulcer

- Solanum nigrum leaf soup
- Decoction of Digeria muricata and moringa leaves

### General Health Measures

- Solanum xanthocarpum leaf extract with millet porridge
- Bamboo leaf extract with country chicken stew
- Abdominal binding using cotton cloth for uterine support

### DISCUSSION

The present study highlights the persistence of traditional reproductive healthcare practices among rural communities in Tamil Nadu. Dietary practices documented during puberty emphasized nutrient-rich foods containing iron, calcium, proteins, and phytoactive compounds. These preparations may contribute to improved menstrual health and nutritional status.

Traditional antepartum remedies mainly targeted common pregnancy-related ailments such as anemia, nausea, and false labor pains. Many plant ingredients used in these formulations possess scientifically documented antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, digestive, and hematinic properties.

Postpartum practices formed the largest component of the documented ethnomedical knowledge. This reflects the cultural importance attributed to maternal recovery after childbirth. Most postpartum formulations aimed at promoting lactation, reducing inflammation, improving

