



CONCEPT OF RAJASWALA PARICHARYA (CARE FOR WOMAN DURING MENSTRUATION) IN AYURVEDA: TOOL TO ENHANCE FERTILITY

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ABSTRACT

Menstruation is considered to be the mirror of reproductive health. In Ayurveda, acharyas mention different charyas for maintaining the health like garbhini charya, soothika charya, rajaswala charya, etc. The charyas or code of conduct mentioned for a rajaswala stree is termed as rajaswala charya and is the most neglected part in the society. The Rajaswala Paricharya helps women to cope up with her physiological changes taking place in the body during the rajaswala period. Acharyas mentioned aharas and acharas which are indicated and contraindicated for maintaining the health. Rajaswala paricharya help women respond healthily to the drastic physical and cyclic changes during the menstrual cycle.

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INTRODUCTION

Menstruation is a natural unique phenomenon in women's lives and the female is called as rajaswala during that period. It is considered to be the mirror of reproductive health. The time period from the menarche to the menopause is called the menstrual period. The definition of stree "Styayati yasmat garbha iti stree". Acharyas mention the quotations like 'swarthabudhi paratheshu' and 'streetuloke pratishtita' which shows the importance of stree in Ayurveda. Women passes through three stages in life – Bala (childhood), Rajaswala (Menstrual period), and Vridha (Old age). Among them, rajaswala period is the largest and the most important period. It belongs to the middle stage of life as it is pitta predominant time and also the hormone regulating period. Acharya Charaka said that the woman is the origin of progeny and also considered as the best vajikarana dravya. The reproductive stage of the woman and her health determine the health of the progeny. The female who is menstruating is termed as 'Rajaswala'. The nirukthi is 'raja asti asya iti' means she who possesses the rajas. It is divided into Tarunee (Puberty and adolescence – 16-32 yrs) and Adhirudha (Climacteric – 33-50 yrs). The synonyms of rajaswala are atreyee, malini, pushpavati, ritumati etc.

Charya or Paricharya means certain measures to be followed regarding food habits and lifestyle for healthy life.

In Ayurveda, acharyas mention different charyas for maintaining the health like garbhini charya, soothika charya, rajaswala charya, etc. The charyas or code of conduct mentioned for a rajaswala stree is termed as rajaswala charya and is the most neglected part in the society. Acharya has mentioned that, following this rajaswala paricharya from the moment of appearance of menstrual flow, for a period of three days. The charya should include both mental and physical rest. During the period female should maintain good thought and follow the rituals with a pleasant mind.

The Rajaswala Paricharya helps women to cope up with her physiological changes taking place in the body during the rajaswala period. It will help women to become healthy both physically and mentally during the menstrual cycle. The rajaswala paricharya acts as an important tool to enhance fertility and is told in Ayurvedic classic decades before. Fertility is the capacity to reproduce or the state of being fertile. A healthy woman is needed for a healthy baby. It helps to prevent gynecological diseases and safeguards reproductive health. The hygiene during this period of menstruation avoids the chances of occurrence of infertility. Acharyas mentioned aharas and acharas which are indicated and contraindicated for maintaining the health. Along with acharas, aharas are also very much essential because the menstrual bleeding is a type of natural shodana process.

Diet Indicated: Due to increased pressure in the body at the time of menstruation, reduces the bile secretion and thus leading to further complications. So, to increase the agni (digestive fire) proper diet should be used during the rajaswala

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kala. Acharyas mentioned that havisya or yavaka are a good agnivaradhaka ahara, keeping the same directly over palm or in a utensil made of clay or leaves or unbroken utensil hand in hand. Yava is guru, seetha, madhura and sara and these gunas will increase faeces and vata. The vataprakopa can be diminished by adding milk. The havisya is the meals made up of ghee, sali rice, and milk. This should be given to the rajaswala stree. Thus, the diet has its own effect on the health. The banana leaves are natural antioxidants that fight against free radicals and therefore, help in preventing diseases. The utensils made of clay has alkaline properties. It neutralizes the pH balance of the food by interacting with acids in food. This also enhances the digestion along with the diet.

Diet Contraindicated: She should avoid tikshna (pungent), katu (spicy) and lavana (salty) foods because it increases the menstrual flow and thus results in vataprakopa. Brimhana ahara also should be avoided because it causes stambhana.

Acharas Contraindicated and Indicated

- Darbhasamstharashayini – Acharyas mention that during the time of menstruation, she should sleep on the bed made or darbha spread over the ground. From the Vedic time, onwards darbha is having its importance in rituals. The kusha grass protects the body from the negative energies and from toxic radiations. Even though it is difficult to practice, in present days the usage of darbha grass by a rajaswala help to protect herself from the mobile phone radiations.
- Divaswapna – She should avoid sleeping in the daytime. Sleeping in daytime leads to the production of kapha dosha which further produces Ama.
- Anjanam - She should avoid the application of Anjana.
- Ashrupata – Avoid shedding of tears during the time of rajaswala.
- Snana – Acharyas mentioned that ‘snanam dukhasahatvena’. If she does it, then the stambhana occurs and menstrual bleeding decreases. So, she should avoid snana.
- Anulepa and Abhyanga – Avoid oil massaging and smearing with sandal paste in the body.
- Hasana and Kadana – Laughing and talking too much is contraindicated.
- Nakhachedana – She should avoid plucking of nails. During the time of menstruation, the body became weak. After the ritucharya shodana, the circulation of blood i.e. the nutritional supply occurs fastly by accepting more nutrients.
- Pradhavana and Vyayama – Running and too much of exercise should be avoided. During the time, the body became weak due to the raktha srava and there will be hormonal changes. Excess exertion leads to vata prakopa and rasa dusti. If it is repeated continuously, this leads to infertility. Athivyayama eradicates the body like the lion destroys the elephant which is of bigger size.
- Use of Swedana karma, Vamana, Nasya karma are contraindicated because it causes dosha prakopa.
- Coitus is contraindicated during the menstruation. Intercourse during this time only going to worsen the condition for the well-being of the women and infections also may occur.

- She should not adorn herself with ornaments to avoid sexual attraction.

The menstruating woman has to follow the charya during the menstruation for the first 3 days and in the 4th day the female should take bath and wear white garments with flowers and ornaments and worship god. Then she should indulge in sexual intercourse for achieving a good progeny. If the woman does not follow the charyas properly, then the dosha vitiation occurs and it further affects the foetus. The abnormalities occur to the foetus are following:-

Table 1 Contraindicated actions of the mother cause abnormalities in the child.

Action of mother	Abnormalities of Foetus
Divaswapna (Day sleeping)	Swapasheela (Over sleeping)
Use of Anjana (Collyrium)	Dagdha (Partial Blindness)
Rodhana (Weeping)	Vikrita Drishti (Defective vision)
Snanam (Bathing)	Dukha sheela (Sadish)
Abhyanga (Oil Massage)	Kushta (Skin Disorders)
Nakhapakarata(Paring of the nail)	Kunakhi(Deformity of the nail)
Pradhavana(Fast running)	Unsteady both mentally and physically
Hasana(Laughing)	The black colour of lip and thumb
Pralapa(Over talking)	Talkative
Atishabdha sravana(Over hearing)	Deafness
Combing the hair	Baldness
Exposure to the breeze and too much exertion	Mentally trouble
Use of nasya	Menstrual abnormalities

If the copulation occurs the first day of menstruation, it affects the health, lusture and vision of the husband. During the time, the entry of sperm into the canal is not possible and does not result in pregnancy. So acharyas indicated brahmacharya at the time of menstruation otherwise it will worsen the condition of the well-being of the women. Even though it is difficult to get pregnant during the time of menstruation, Acharya Kashyapa describes the effect on the child if pregnancy occurs.

Table 2 Effect on the baby when the pregnancy occurs in menstruation

Menstruation	Effect on the Baby
First – Day	No pregnancy/intrauterine death
Second – Day	Abortion/ Stillbirth
Third – Day	Defective body part and short life
Fourth – Day	Normal and healthy life

DISCUSSION

In the present era, menstrual hygiene is very essential. The large population is unaware of the do’s and don’ts about menstruation. This increases the chances of complications associated with it. The state of health of a woman has tied up with the society also due to the restrictions and also regulations made by the mankind.

After ritukala, when the shodana occurs completely then the raktha show the colour of pure blood like that of gold, indragopa, padma, alaktaka, gunja phala. If menstruation occurs for some more days than the normal time, the vata prakopa and futher krotha, shoka like emotional characters appear. In modern science, these features are manifested due to the hormonal changes. The removal complete shedding of the endometrium is very much essential otherwise it retains inside the uterus leads to PCOD. If the vata prakopa occur in the body due to nithya seva of contraindications, it inturn increases pitta and kapha slowly then vitiates malas and dhatu. This will be one among the cause for infertility

The part of beeja responsible for the development of a particular body part is defective, the abnormality will be manifested otherwise it does not manifest. This can be related with the chromosomal abnormalities or sex hormone deformity. For example, when the beeja baaga which gets transformed into the semi-lunar valve is defective, then it causes corresponding defects in the offspring.

From the time of Samhita Kala, they have explained these things according to their living style but nowadays we can't follow all of these due to the working and hectic schedules of females. So, the charyas can be followed according to the convenience and time schedule of busy days. In the present scenario, it can also be done by maintaining cleanliness of private parts, use of sanitary napkins, changing of sanitary napkins and handwash with soap otherwise will lead to disorders. Menstrual hygiene management should be a part of an expanded definition and agenda for sexual and reproductive health services. Poor menstrual hygiene can negatively affect women's health.

CONCLUSION

To achieve conception Acharya Susruta has described four essential factors for fertility, Ritu – Normal menstrual cycle/proper fertile period, Kshetra – Physiologically adequate and healthy internal organs of reproduction, Ambu – Good nutritional status of mother and Beeja - Healthy ovum and spermatozoa. The females took part greater role in the formation of offspring because these four factors are related to them. Ayurveda gives prime importance to preventive aspects and elaborates “Rajaswala Charya” or the care during menstrual cycles and during menarche in a female to prevent and cure gynecological disorders.

By following the Rajaswala paricharya with some modifications will help to maintain an equilibrium of health during the most sensitive period of menstruation. Rajaswala paricharya help women respond healthily to the drastic physical and cyclic changes during the menstrual cycle.

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