



Review Article

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AN OUTLOOK ON RAJASWALA PARICHARYA: MENSTRUAL REGIMEN AS PER AYURVEDA

Swati Bhandari ^{1*}, G.M. Kavya ², Ruby Rani Agarwal ³

¹ PG Scholar, Department of Rog Nidana Evum Vikriti Vigyan Rishikul Campus, Uttarakhand Ayurved University, Haridwar, Uttarakhand, India

² Associate Professor & HOD, Department of Stree Roga Evum Prasuti Tantra, Gurukul Campus, Uttarakhand Ayurved University, Haridwar, Uttarakhand, India

³ Professor & HOD, Department of Rog Nidana Evum Vikriti Vigyan Rishikul Campus, Uttarakhand Ayurved University, Haridwar, Uttarakhand, India

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*Corresponding author

E-mail: swati.bhandarisb92@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Menstruation is an important indicator of women's health. It is a natural event as a part of the normal process of reproductive life in females. Today's faulty lifestyle such as – having junk food, irregular sleep pattern and lack of exercise are the cause of increasing gynaecological disorders day by day. In Ayurveda, various Paricharyas (mode of living) are explained to maintain an optimum level of health. One such Paricharyas is Rajaswala Paricharya, which explains certain dos and don'ts to be followed during the menstruating phase. It is a lifestyle modification advised in Ayurveda for menstruating females. Following this Rajaswala Paricharya helps the women to adjust better to the physical and mental changes happening in the body and also helps in reducing the gynaecological complaints (dysmenorrhea, endometriosis, infertility, adenomyosis, fibroids etc). Thus, to maintain optimum gynaecological and obstetrical health of a woman, it is important to follow the regimen mentioned under Rajaswala Paricharya. This article discussed and analysed how to maintain menstrual hygiene and health with Rajaswala Paricharya along with its importance of application in today's time.

Keywords: Rajaswala Paricharya, menstrual health, menstrual hygiene, Paricharyas

INTRODUCTION

Women's health is the primary factor to be considered for the wellbeing of the family, society and culture. Any physical or mental disorders disturb her educational, social and family life. Women have three important phases in their life – Bala (childhood), Madhyama (Reproductive) and Vriddha (old age-menopause). The Madhyama is the most important period in women's life, necessary for reproduction. The female who is menstruating is termed Rajaswala Stree. From the Rasa Dhatu, the Rakta named Raja is formed. Rakta reaching the uterus and coming out for three days every month is called Artava¹. Artava is Agneya, has characteristics of Rakta, forms Garbha and is also essential for life². It is of four *anjali*³. The entire period of one month is called Rituchakra (menstrual cycle) and is divided into- Rajahsrava (menstruation)- 3 to 5 days, Ritukala- 12 or 16 days, Ritu Vyatitakala- 9 or 13 days. The menstruation phase is mentioned as of 3 days by Acharya Vagbhata⁴, 5 days by Acharya Charak⁵, and 7 days by Acharya Harita and Bhela⁶. Incidences of gynaecological complaints are also increasing with 15 percent of reproductive-aged couples being affected with infertility worldwide, with 3.9 to 16.8% prevalence of primary infertility in India⁷, endometriosis is found in 45% - 82% of women with chronic pelvic pain and in 2.1%-78% of infertile women⁸. The estimated prevalence of dysmenorrhea is high, although it varies widely ranging from 45 to 95% of women of reproductive age, with severe pain in 2% to 29% of women⁹.

Acharyas have mentioned that, from the Moment of appearing of menstrual flow for three days, certain specific dos and don'ts should be followed which are mentioned under Rajaswala Paricharya. Ayurveda has explained different Paricharyas (code

of conduct) like- Dinacharya, Ritucharya, etc. to be followed to attain good health. Ayurveda also explains certain specific Paricharyas like Sutikacharya, Garbhinicharya and Rajaswala Paricharya especially about different specific stages of the female body. In these phases- a lot of physiological, psychological and anatomical changes occurs. Rajaswala Paricharya is the least implemented part of Ayurveda. In today's time, with the increasing menstrual disorders and complaints, it is important to understand and follow the concept of Rajaswala Paricharya. Following specific dos and don'ts mentioned under Rajaswala Paricharya will help women to lower the incidence rate of such gynaecological complaints. And will also help women to cope up better with the changes taking place in the body during the period. It is a lifestyle modification advocated in Ayurveda for maintaining optimum gynaecological and obstetrical health. Due to today's modern lifestyle and aversion towards ancient knowledge, the knowledge of menstrual regimen according to Ayurveda is lost. Acharyas like Charaka, Sushruta, Vagbhata, Kashyap have explained in detail the concept of menstrual hygiene under the heading Rajaswala Paricharya¹⁰.

For this conceptual study various Samhitas- Charka Samhita¹¹, Sushruta Samhita¹², Ashtanga Hridaya¹³, Ashtanga Sangraha¹⁴, Kashyap Samhita¹⁵ as well as various other literature and articles have been reviewed.

Rajaswala Paricharya (Mode of living during menstruation) as mentioned in the classics¹⁶

Diet and activities advised

- Always have good and positive thoughts.
- Follow Brahmacharya.

- Should sleepover bed made of Darbha spread over the ground.
- Include meals made up of Ghee, Shali rice and milk (Havishya) and barley.
- Should eat in utensils made up of clay and the utensils should not be broken.

Activities not to be followed

- Sleeping during daytime
- Application of Anjana (collyrium)
- Crying, laughing, talking too much, running, cutting of nails, massaging, exercising, bathing (head bath).
- Swedana (hot fomentation), Vamana (emesis), Nasya karma (inhalations).
- Indulging in sexual activities.
- Wearing heavy ornaments.

Diet not to be taken- Pungent (Tikshna), spicy (Katu) and salty (Lavana) foods.

- The menstruating woman has to follow the Paricharya during the first 3 days of menstruation and on the 4th day, the female should take bath, wear white garments, ornaments and worship god.
- During the menstruation phase stimulated by a gradual increase of estrogen, recruitment of the follicles in the ovaries starts to occur, from where the selection of the dominant follicle and its maturation will happen¹⁷. Therefore, the physical and mental status of women during menstruation will affect the quality of the follicles which were functioning during the period. Thus, a particular type of lifestyle is required to be followed during menstruation. Even woman does not follow the Paricharya properly and indulges in the contraindicated activities, then the Dosha vitiation will occur, causing the abnormalities in the foetus.

Adverse effect on the new-born if the woman does not follow Rajaswalaparicharya and conceive in the same cycle¹⁸

Action of mother	Abnormalities in foetus
Divaswapna (Day sleeping)	Swapansheela (Oversleeping)
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
Combing the hair	Baldness
Exposure to the breeze and too much exertion	Mentally trouble
Use of nasya	Menstrual abnormalities

DISCUSSION

Aversion towards these traditional practices is there due to the lack of knowledge of the science behind them. Here we will try to understand the science behind these practices.

The science behind the indication and contraindication of activities stated in the Rajaswalaparicharya

Have good and positive thoughts - A Rajaswala Stree needs to stay away from stress and anxiety to maintain Sattvik Awastha of mind as these affect the hormonal levels thereby disturbing the menstrual cycle and causing problems.

Diet- Laghu, Sheetal, Balaya, Brihanan, Vatanuloman Ahara is indicated. Spicy, sour, fried foods such as samosa, poori, parantha are avoided as they cause an imbalance in the Doshas leading to problems like- bloating, stomach-ache etc. Foods like Havishya (Shali rice in milk), Yavaka are indicated as they are easier to digest and also provides nourishment to the body.

Using utensils made up of clay for eating and cooking- Clay has alkaline properties, it enhances digestion and avoids problems like hyperacidity. Clay pots retain the nutritive value of food and also requires less oil for cooking¹⁹.

Darbhashyan - Sleeping over Darbha mattress is Shramhar, Nidrajanak, Jwarhara and it also facilitates the easy flow of Aartva. Walking barefoot over Darbha grass and walking over mud should also be practised. Darbha juice extract can also be consumed.

Avoid Diwaswapana - Sleeping during the daytime will lead to the production of Kapha Dosha which will cause the production of Aama in the body.

Avoid excess physical exertion (running, jumping etc.) - These activities increase the Vata Dosha in the body which is already predominant during the bleeding phase. So adequate rest is advised.

Do not wear any heavy ornaments - As ornaments are made up of metals and metals absorbs radiations and during this time body needs rest, it does not need any high energy radiations.

Not having a bath - Do not have hot water head bath but body bath with lukewarm water should be done and also maintain the cleanliness of private body parts.

Complete abstinence - As indulging in intercourse will worsen the condition of menstruating the female body by causing Vata Prakopa. Menstruating female has to rest during this period to regain the lost strength of the body as blood is already lost during this period. The body can't afford any physical exertion.

Avoid application of Anjana, massaging, cutting of nails, laughing loudly, over talking etc. - Avoid such unnecessary activities as only rest should be done during the period of three to five days to restore the energy of the body.

All these above indications and contraindications if not followed will lead to increased chances of retrograde menstruation, damage to pelvic infrastructure and uterine musculature, manipulation and misplacement of this musculature will lead to spillage of the blood in the uterine cavity causing problems like adenomyosis,

endometriosis etc which will cause increased morbidity among women. Thus, lifestyle modification according to Ayurveda should be followed during menstruation.

Not visiting temples- The construction of the temple takes place according to the Vastu. The vastu-purusha-mandala represents the manifest form of the Cosmic Being; upon which the temple is built and in whom the temple rests. The science of Vastu is believed as part of Indian architecture. The walls are built as such the sound vibrations move across the body. The temple structure also corresponds to the Shatchakra in the human body. When one visits the temple then the radiations stimulate the Shatchakaras of the body which stimulates the glands, also the genital glands which have a positive effect on the body. But during the menstruation phase, the stimulation upon these glands will harm the gynaecological health. Thus, women should refrain from visiting the temple during this phase²⁰.

Also, the structure of the temple is built after the idol has been placed in a high positive wave centric place. And from the floor of the temple vibrations pass through our feet to our body. Hence it was necessary to enter the temple barefooted. And during menstruation the body does not need any high energy vibrations, it needs rest. Thus, it was not advised to visit the temple during the menstruation phase²¹.

CONCLUSION

Most of these Do's and Don'ts for a Rajaswala were designed so that there is no hindrance to the outflow of the menstrual blood i.e. preventing retrograde menstruation and also maintaining the strength of the body. About 50 - 80 ml of blood is lost during those 3 days. It takes up some physical strength of the body away. Thus, Rajaswala Paricharya was designed to help females regain the lost strength of the body. And by following these practices the quality of the ovum is also increased which enhances the chances of fertility.

Career-oriented women and many other sections of society may think that such a small amount of energy loss is not significant and continue doing their daily routine. However, it's not about the loss of strength in one menstrual cycle. It's about the strength of the body and particularly of the reproductive system that is lost throughout many monthly cycles that affects the body in the long run. And, these are the sections of the society that are the most affected by dysmenorrhoea, infertility etc.

Thus, practising a menstrual regimen is very important. And a large part of the population is unaware of the dos and don'ts mentioned in the classics. And with such an increasing rate of gynaecological complaints in the present era, it is important to accept and follow the Rajaswala Paricharya to maintain menstrual health. Rajaswala Paricharya is the best example of Nidana Parivarjana Chikitsa. It prevents conditions like Atyartava, Udavartini, Bandhya etc and also prevents complications of Vata and Pitta Dosha vitiation. Thus, maintaining the equilibrium of the three Doshas in the body. Overall maintaining the healthy state of the body. Therefore, Rajaswala Paricharya needs not to be seen as 'oppressive restrictions' being imposed on females, but rather as therapeutic prescriptions.

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