



## Review Article

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### IMPORTANCE OF RAJASWALA PARICHARYA IN MAINTAINING MENSTRUAL HEALTH: A NARRATIVE REVIEW

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#### ABSTRACT

Menstruation is a normal physiological process essential for female reproductive health. Menstrual disorders such as dysmenorrhea, menorrhagia, irregular menstruation, polycystic ovarian disease, and endometriosis are highly prevalent among women of reproductive age and significantly impair quality of life and fertility outcomes. Ayurveda emphasizes preventive healthcare through specific regimens, among which Rajaswala Paricharya is a set of dietary, lifestyle, and behavioural guidelines prescribed during menstruation remains underexplored in contemporary scientific literature. To critically review the concept of Rajaswala Paricharya described in classical Ayurvedic texts, and to explore its relevance and importance in maintaining menstrual health. To review classical Ayurvedic references related to Rajaswala Paricharya and to correlate Ayurvedic concepts of Rajaswala Paricharya in maintaining menstrual health. A narrative review was conducted using classical Ayurvedic texts, including Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Ashtanga Hridaya, and their commentaries. Relevant contemporary scientific literature was reviewed to establish possible correlations between Ayurvedic concepts and modern biomedical perspectives. Ayurvedic literature consistently emphasizes rest, regulated diet, avoidance of physical and mental strain, and specific behavioural restrictions during menstruation to maintain Dosha balance and support Agni. Modern scientific evidence suggests that physical exertion, psychological stress, dietary irregularities and inflammation influence hormonal regulation, uterine contractility, and the severity of menstrual symptoms. These findings provide a plausible physiological basis for the preventive and therapeutic relevance of Rajaswala Paricharya. It represents a holistic, preventive approach to menstrual health that aligns with contemporary understanding of menstrual physiology. Integrating these traditional guidelines into modern lifestyle practices may contribute to the prevention and management of menstrual disorders.

**Keywords:** Rajaswala Paricharya, Lifestyle, Menstrual Health, Menstrual Cycle.

#### INTRODUCTION

Women are the only ones who experience menstruation. Rajaswala (menstruating woman) is the term used for women during menstruation. It is regarded as a reflection of reproductive health. Throughout her life, a woman experiences a variety of physical, psychological, and emotional changes. By adhering to "Paricharyas," or behaviours that should be followed, such as Garbhini Paricharya (antenatal regimen), Sootika Paricharya (postnatal regimen), Rajaswala Paricharya (menstrual regimen), etc. Ayurveda aids women in improving their health throughout all stages of life and enhances their quality of life.

One of the most overlooked aspects of society is Rajaswala Paricharya, which is the code of conduct for a Rajaswala Stree. Today's women are more focused on their careers. They are the only ones who handle household duties in addition to their employment. They find it extremely challenging to practice Rajaswala Paricharya and take care of their own health because of this strenuous lifestyle.

Ayurveda conceptualizes menstruation (Artava/ Raja-menstrual blood) not merely as blood shedding but as a complex interplay of doshas (bodily humors), dhatus (body tissues), and agni (digestive fire) that reflects systemic balance. Rajaswala Paricharya is a code of conduct outlined in classical Ayurvedic texts to support menstrual physiology and prevent complications

such as dysmenorrhea (Kashtartava-painful menstruation), irregular cycles, and infertility. These practices include dietary adjustments, rest, avoidance of strenuous activity and psychosocial stressors and are believed to maintain Vata-Pitta-Kapha equilibrium during menstruation.<sup>1</sup>

#### AYURVEDIC PRINCIPLES - RAJASWALA PARICHARYA

##### Rutuchakra (Menstrual Cycle)

The duration of Rutuchakra or menstrual cycle is mentioned as one month and this entire period is divided into three phases, as follows:

- Rajahsrava (menstrual phase): 3 to 5 days
- Rutukala (proliferative phase including ovulation): 12 or 16 days
- Ruta Vyatitkala (post ovulatory or secretory phase): 9 or 13 days

Ayurvedic classics describe Artava as the upadhatu (secondary tissue) of Rasa Dhatu, vital for conception and reproductive function. The menstrual cycle (Rutuchakra) is detailed as a monthly physiological rhythm requiring dietary moderation (Mithyaahara), regulated Agni, and balanced doshas for optimal health.<sup>2</sup>

The female in Rajahsrava Kala is called as Rajaswala Stree and the mode of life to be followed in this period as mentioned by different Acharyas is termed as Rajaswala Paricharya.

**Rajaswala Paricharya<sup>3</sup>**

Ayurveda specifically describes Ahara and Vihara that should be followed by Rajaswala (menstruating) women. These practices are intended to promote their health and well-being.

**Pathya**

**Ahara:** Many women who are menstruating report feeling less hungry during this time. An individual's agni (digestive fire) is diminished during menstruation or following any of the Shodhan Upakramas (purificatory therapies), such as Vamana (therapeutic emesis) and Virechan (therapeutic purgation). Menstruation is a physiological reduction in digestive capacity (Agnimandya) because it is a naturally occurring Shodhan process.

As a result, women should consume light, easily digestible foods that support Agni Deepan (enhancement of digestive fire), such as Laghu Ahar (light diet), Yawaka (meal composed of barley and milk), and Havishya (meal made of ghrita, Shali rice and milk).

**Diet During Rajaswala Paricharya (Menstrual Regimen)**

In Ayurveda, Rajaswala Paricharya is a specific regimen advised during menstruation to maintain Agni (digestive fire), balance Doshas-especially Vata, and ensure proper elimination of Raja (menstrual blood). Diet (Ahara) plays a crucial role during this period.

**Table 1: Grains and Cereals**

Food	Ayurvedic Action
Shali rice (old rice)	Laghu (light), easy to digest
Yavagu (thin rice gruel)	Deepana (enhances digestion), supports Agni
Laja (puffed rice)	Light, Vata-pacifying
Wheat (in small quantity)	Brihana, (nourishing) Stabilizing

**Table 2: Liquids**

Food	Benefit
Warm water	Vata-shamana (pacifies Vata)
Rice gruel (Peya / Manda)	Prevents weakness
Thin vegetable soups	Nourishing yet light

**Table 3: Pulses**

Food	Reason
Green gram (Mudga)	Best during menstruation
Green gram soup (Mudga Yusha)	Light and nourishing

**Table 4: Rajaswala Paricharya According to Different Acharyas**

Acharya / Text	Dietary Recommendations (Ahara)	Lifestyle and Behavioral Guidelines (Vihara / Achara)	Ayurvedic Rationale / Purpose
Charaka Samhita (Sharira Sthana 8)	Havishyanna (light, easily digestible food) Shali rice, Yava (barley), Ghrita (clarified butter), and milk in moderate quantity	Avoid physical exertion (Vyayama) Avoid day sleep (Divasvapna) Avoid coitus (Maithuna) Avoid emotional stress	Pacification of Apana Vata, Maintenance of Agni (digestive fire) Prevention of Dosha prakopa (aggravation of doshas) and Ama (metabolic toxins) formation
Sushruta Samhita (Sharira Sthana 2)	Light, warm, unctuous food Ghrita-based preparations Milk and rice gruel (Peya-thin rice gruel)	Rest and mental calmness Avoid loud speech, excessive movement Maintain bodily cleanliness	Ensures proper Artava pravrutti (menstrual flow) Protects reproductive organs (Garbhashaya) Prevents Artava dushti (menstrual disorders)
Ashtanga Hridaya (Sharira Sthana 1)	Havishya (rice prepared with ghrita and milk) Laghu (light) and snigdha (unctuous) food	Avoid heavy work and travel Avoid anger, grief, fear Observe restraint in sensory activities	Stabilization of Vata and Pitta Preservation of Rasa and Artava dhatu (reproductive tissue)

**Vihara: (Lifestyle)**

- She should sleep over bed made up of Darbha (specific sacred leafy plant) spread over ground.
- Follow Brahmacharya for first 3 days.
- Always concentrate on thinking good or auspicious things.

**Apathya (Unwholesome Regimen)**

**Ahara: (Diet)**

She should avoid Tikshna (pungent), Katu (spicy), Lavana (salty), oily, spicy, bakery and junk foods.

**Vihara**

- She should avoid sleeping during day time.
- Avoid application of collyrium (Anjana), as well as excessive crying, laughing, talking too much and physical exertion.
- Application of Anjana, use of Swedana (sudation), Nasya (nasal medication) and Vamana (therapeutic emesis) are contraindicated during this period.
- Coitus (sexual intercourse) is contraindicated.
- She should not adorn herself with ornaments.

**Rajaswala Paricharya (Menstrual Regimen) Serves to<sup>4</sup>**

Prevent dosha vitiation (especially Apana Vata, which governs downward movement of menstrual flow).

Maintain Agni (digestive fire) to prevent formation of Ama (metabolic toxins).

Promote strength (Bala) and psychological balance, minimizing stress and physical strain during menstruation.

Classical recommendations include foods considered Havishyaanna (suitable for the sacred fire), such as ghrita (clarified butter), Shali rice, Yava (barley) and milk, which are described as Vata-pitta Shamaka (vata-Pitta pacifying), nourishing and easy to digest.

Ayurveda attributes menstrual discomfort and irregularities to vitiated Apana Vata leading to impaired downward flow, tissue stagnation, and pain. Dietary guidance in Rajaswala Paricharya - focusing on light and nourishing foods — aims to stabilize Apana Vata, support Rasa Dhatu, and improve endometrial shedding. In classical commentaries, Havishyanna diets consisting of ghrita (clarified butter), rice, milk and barley are recommended to enhance digestion, pacify Vata, and facilitate smooth menstrual flow (Artavapravartana-normal menstruation).<sup>5</sup>

A recent mixed-methods study conducted in Anand District of Gujarat reported significant associations between menstrual practices (such as dietary restrictions, rest and seclusion) and reproductive health outcomes (p<0.05). Qualitative data highlighted perceived benefits of rest and traditional practices on overall menstrual well-being.<sup>6</sup>

<b>Ashtanga Sangraha</b>	Similar to Ashtanga Hridaya Emphasis on nourishing yet easily digestible food	Physical and mental rest Avoid indulgence and exertion	Maintenance of Dhatu samya (tissue equilibrium) Promotion of fertility (Supraja-healthy progeny)
<b>Kashyapa Samhita</b> (contextual references)	Milk-dominant diet Strength-promoting but light foods	Emphasis on emotional stability Gentle routine	Long-term reproductive health Healthy progeny (Suputra janana)

### Importance of Rajaswala Paricharya in the Prevention of Menstrual Disorders

Menstrual disorders such as dysmenorrhea, menorrhagia, oligomenorrhea, irregular cycles, and premenstrual symptoms are increasingly prevalent in modern women, often attributed to stress, dietary irregularities, sedentary lifestyle, and hormonal imbalance. Ayurveda identifies vitiation of Apana Vata (subtype of vata governing downward movement) impairment of Agni (digestive fire), and formation of Ama (metabolic toxins) as key pathological factors in the genesis of menstrual disorders (Artava Dushti). Rajaswala Paricharya plays a crucial preventive role by addressing these fundamental mechanisms at a physiological level.<sup>1</sup>

### Regulation of Apana Vata

According to Ayurvedic classics, menstruation is governed by Apana Vata, which controls the downward movement of Artava. Excessive physical activity, stress, suppression of natural urges, and intake of heavy or incompatible food during menstruation aggravate Vata, leading to painful or irregular menstruation (Kashtartava-painful menstruation, Anartava-absence of menstruation). Rajaswala Paricharya emphasizes rest, avoidance of exertion, and consumption of Vata-shamaka foods such as ghrita (clarified butter), rice, milk and Yava (barley) hereby ensuring smooth menstrual flow and prevention of dysmenorrhea.<sup>3, 7</sup>

### Maintenance of Agni and Prevention of Ama

Impaired digestive fire (Mandagni-reduced digestive capacity) during menstruation predisposes to Ama formation (metabolic toxins) which obstructs Artavavaha Srotas (channels carrying menstrual flow) and contributes to menstrual irregularities and excessive bleeding. The prescribed light and easily digestible Havishyanna (simple, sacrificial diet) diet during menstruation supports Agni, prevents metabolic toxins, and helps maintain cyclical regularity.<sup>4</sup>

### Prevention of Artava Dushti

Classical texts describe that non-adherence to Rajaswala Paricharya may result in Artava Dushti (menstrual disorders), manifesting as abnormalities in colour, quantity, duration, or pain during menstruation. By maintaining dosha balance and nourishing Rasa Dhatu—the precursor of Artava (menstrual blood) Rajaswala Paricharya acts as a preventive strategy against menorrhagia, hypomenorrhea, and irregular cycles.<sup>8</sup>

### Reduction of Psychosomatic Stress

Ayurveda recognizes the close relationship between the mind (Manas) and menstrual health. Emotional disturbances such as anger, fear, and anxiety are known to aggravate Vata and Pitta, leading to menstrual discomfort and premenstrual symptoms. Behavioral guidelines in Rajaswala Paricharya—such as mental calmness, avoidance of stress, and sensory restraint, help stabilize the neuroendocrine axis, thereby preventing psychosomatic menstrual disorders.<sup>9</sup>

### Rajaswala Paricharya Vyapada (Complications of Non-adherence)

Rajaswala Paricharya (menstrual regimen) is the specific regimen advised during menstruation to protect Agni (digestive fire),

maintain Dosha balance, and ensure proper formation of Artava (menstrual blood). Non-adherence (Aparicharya / Mithya-paricharya) to these guidelines may lead to various menstrual and gynaecological disorders which may be termed as Rajaswala Paricharya Vyapada.

Failure to follow Rajaswala Paricharya such as:

- Ati-vyayama (excessive exercise)
- Divasvapna (daytime sleep)
- Abhyanga (oil massage), Udvartana (powder massage), Swedana (sudation therapy)
- Maithuna (sexual intercourse)
- Ati-Sheeta / atiushna ahara (excessively cold or excessively hot foods)
- Guru, snigdha, vidahi, lavana ahara (heavy, unctuous, burning/spicy and salty foods)
- Vega-dharana (suppression of natural urges)
- Manasika bhavas (psychological factors) – shoka (grief), bhaya (fear), krodha (anger)

Leads to various disorders / vyapadas like:

- Kashtartava (painful menstruation)
- Artavkshaya / Alpartava (scanty menstruation)
- Artavvridhi / Asrugdar (excessive menstrual bleeding)
- Yonivedana / Yonishoola (vaginal pain)
- Yonivyapada (gynaecological disorders)
- Vandhyatva (infertility)
- Manasik Vikara (psychological disorders)

### CONCLUSION

Rajakala (menstrual phase) and Rajaswala Paricharya (menstrual regimen), constitute a natural Shodhan (cleansing) process leading to Agnimandya (reduced digestive capacity). So, it is necessary to follow Pathya and Apathya as mentioned by different Acharyas. The major restrictions are directed towards isolation, less physical exertion, and Brahmacharya (celibacy). Main aim of these paricharya is to avoid vitiation of Vata and Kapha, prevent formation of Ama (metabolic toxins), and restore energy and to get a healthy progeny from a healthy mother. Therefore, by following Rajaswala Paricharya, the woman can respond more effectively to the physiological and psychological changes by keeping Doshas, Agni and Bala in balanced condition.

Rajaswala Paricharya, rooted in classical Ayurvedic principles, provides a holistic framework for menstrual care encompassing diet, lifestyle, and behavioural modifications. Emerging observational data and mechanistic interpretations support its relevance in maintaining menstrual health. Integrating traditional practices with modern scientific understanding may enhance preventive strategies for menstrual disorders.

Rajaswala Paricharya serves as a non-pharmacological, preventive Ayurvedic approach to menstrual health by maintaining dosha (bodily humors) equilibrium, supporting digestive and metabolic functions, and minimizing physical and psychological stress during menstruation. Regular adherence to these principles can play a significant role in preventing common

menstrual disorders and promoting long-term reproductive health.

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