RAJASWALA PARICHARYA THROUGH AYURVEDIC PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Menstruation is a natural unique phenomenon in woman’s lives and female is called as rajaswala during that period. It is also surrounded by many beliefs and myths. Menstruation is an indication of healthy reproductive system. Menstruation related tradition varies from certain activities during menstruation or rituals at the end of menstruation. Ayurveda, the ages old science of life mentions such restrictions under Rajaswala Paricharya. The outcomes of nonobservance of such Paricharyas are described on offspring. 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 garbhincharya, soothikacharya, rajaswalacharya, etc. The charyas or code of conduct mentioned for a rajaswalastree is termed as rajaswalacharya, and sadly is the most neglected part of the health concerns in the society today. The Rajaswala Paricharya helps a woman 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. Following article throws light on ayurvedic perspective of rajaswalacharya and helps for moderation of modern lifestyle.

KEYWORDS: Rajaswala, Rajaswala paricharya, Woman Lifestyle.

INTRODUCTION

Menstruation is a natural unique phenomenon in women’s lives and the female is called as rajaswala during that period. Healthy menstruation directly reflects on reproductive life of a woman. The time period from the menarche to the menopause is called the menstrual period. The definition of stree is “Stayati yasmat garbha iti stree”. Our Acharyas have spoken of...
things such ‘streetu loke pratishtita’ – which show the importance of the health of woman in Ayurveda.

Women pass 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 has said that the woman is the origin of progeny[1] and also considered as the best vajikaranadravya.[2] The health of a woman during the reproductive stage of her life determines the health of the progeny.[3]

The female who is menstruating is termed as ‘Rajaswala’. The nirukti is ‘raja astiasyaiti’ which means she who possesses the rajas. This stage is divided into: Tarunee (puberty and adolescence – 16-32 years) and Adhirudha (climacteric – 33-50 years). 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 garbhincharya, soothikacharya, rajaswalacharya, etc. The charyas or code of conduct mentioned for a rajaswala stree is termed as rajaswalacharya, and sadly is the most neglected part of the health concerns in the society today. Ayurveda mentions about 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 thoughts and follow the rituals with a pleasant mind.

The rajaswala paricharya helps a woman 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 amply discussed in classic Ayurvedic texts. Fertility is the capacity to reproduce or the state of being fertile. A healthy woman is needed for a healthy baby. Rajaswala paricharya helps to prevent gynecological diseases and safeguards reproductive health. The maintenance of hygiene during this period of menstruation avoids the chances of occurrence of infertility. Acharyas have 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.
In today’s era, lifestyle has changed from ancient time. Fast and competitive lifestyle have lots of impact on today’s generation. Mainly women lifestyle has lots of struggles as they have to maintain balance in career and family. Some sort of modification of lifestyle according to Rajaswalacharya can help us for maintaining health of woman.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Only textual materials are consulted for present study and from which the relevant references have been collected. The principal ayurvedic texts referred in this study are Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Ashtanga Hridaya and Ashtanga Samgraha.

**Review of literature**

In Ayurveda, good progeny developing *shukra* dhatu of woman is known as *aartava*.\(^4\) While monthly menstruating bleeding is Raja. But in many contexts, both are considered as synonyms. As raja produces monthly it got name as ‘*Aartva*’ (*rutubhavamaartavam*). Menstruating span in woman’s life is from 12 years to 50 years of age.\(^5\) Acharya Sushruta explained properties of *aartva* as *agnimahabuta* dominance\(^6\) and same as *rakta dhatu* with potency for conceiving fetus.\(^7\)

*Rajakala* (menstruating period) is mainly *vaata* dominance. Menstruating bleeding is like excreta from body and it necessarily excreta from body. Natural menstruating flow is from 3 days to 5 days.\(^8\),\(^9\)

**Raja:**

- **Sthana:** Garbhashaya (uterus)
- **Pramana:** 4 Anjali\(^10\)
- **Color:** *Ethat Krishna* (darks reddish)\(^11\)
- **Gantha (smell):** *Vigandha*\(^12\)
- **Karya (function):** *Sharirashodhan*\(^13\)
- **Guna:** Aagneya\(^6\)

In *bhavaperakash Nighantu rajaswala* is also known as *vyadhimati* (prone to diseases) specifically *yoniragin I* (red coloured secretions from vagina).\(^14\) Menstruating bleeding is *rasaja* (produced from rasa dhatu), as *Raja* and *stranya* are *upadhatus of rasa dhatu*.\(^15\)

The *nirukti* of *Rajaswala* is ‘*raja astiasyaiti*’ which means she who possesses the *rajas*. This stage is divided into:
• **Tarunee** (Puberty and adolescence – 16-32 years)
• **Adhirudha** (Climacteric – 33-50 years).

The synonyms of *rajaswala* are: *atreyee, malini, pushpavati, ritumati* etc.

*Rajakala* (menstruating period) is varies from 3 to 7 days. Common symptoms observed during this *rajakala* are lower abdomen pain, lower abdomen heaviness, backpain, cramps in legs, slight pain in thighs, nausea, vomiting, rarely constipation. So, proper following ancient conducts during this period helps woman for *prakruta* (healthy) menstruation.

➢ **Paricharya**

Ayurveda, the invaluable system of medicine, helps women in journey towards better health throughout different phases of life and add quality to her life. This is accomplished with ‘*Paricharyas*’ modes of life to be performed during the different phases like ‘*Rajaswala*’ Menstruation, ‘*Ritumati*’ - Fertile period, ‘*Garbhini*’ Pregnancy, ‘*Sutika*’ Postpartum. Because of drastic physical and psychic changes during these periods, she has affinity towards various diseases. Following these modes of life or ‘*Paricharya*’, women respond to the changes in her body healthily. *Rajaswala, Ritumati, Garbhini* and *Sutika paricharya* mentioned in all the classics belong to the reproductive phase of her life. The ultimate aim of these *Paricharyas* is to conceive a healthy offspring without any difficulty and an uneventful antenatal and postnatal period.

Ayurveda describes disciplined life to be observed by her for the first three days of menstrual cycle. Along with the regimen to be followed by the *Rajaswala*. The ultimate aim of all Acharyas while mentioning all *Paricharyas* was attaining a healthy progeny with maintaining the health of female during antenatal and postnatal period. The list of do's and don'ts of this *Paricharya* are as follows:^[16,17,18]^

**DO’S**

1. To observe celibacy
2. Sleep on mattress made of Darbha spread over ground
3. Should eat *'Havisya'* (meal made of *ghee Salirice and milk*) or *'Yawaka'* (meal made of barley and milk)
4. Food should be eaten by directly taking over palm or in clay utensil, leaves or any other unbroken vessel.
5. Food should be taken less in quantity during these days.
6. Concentrate on auspicious things.

Don’ts
1. Sleeping in day time
2. Application of Anjana, bathing, Udvartana, massaging, combing, wearing ornaments, paring of nails.
3. Laughing, crying, and indulging more in conversation, running or chasing, exercise, listening to various topics.
4. Nasya, Snehana, Swedana, Vamana
5. Using Tikshna, Katu, Lavanasa substances in diet (Ch. Sha. 8/5, Su. Sha. 2/25, A. H. Sha. 1/24, A. S. Sha. 1/44, Ka, Sha. 5/7)

Diet indicated
Due to increased pressure in the body at the time of menstruation, the bile secretion reduces which can lead to further complications. So, to increase the agni (digestive fire), proper diet should be used during the rajaswala kala. Acharyas mentioned that havisya or yavaka are good agnivardhakaahara, keeping the same directly over palm or in a utensil made of clay or leaves. Yava is guru, seetha, madhura and sara, and these gunas will increase faeces and vata. The vataparakopa can be diminished by adding milk. The havisya is the meal 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 have 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
A woman during the rajaswala kala should avoid tikshna (pungent), katu (spicy) and lava na (salty) foods because these increase the menstrual flow and thus result in vataparakopa. Brimhanaahara also should be avoided because it causes stambhana.

Acharas contraindicated and indicated (Codes of conduct)[16,17,18]
- Darbhasamsththarashayini – Acharyas mention that during the time of menstruation, a woman should sleep on the bed made of darbha spread over the ground. From the Vedic time onwards darbha has its importance in various 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 helps to protect her from the mobile phone radiations.

- **Divaswapna** – She should avoid sleeping in the daytime. Sleeping in daytime leads to the production of kaphadosha which further produces Ama.

- **Anjanam** - She should avoid the application of Anjana.

- **Ashrupata** – She should avoid shedding of tears during the time of rajaswala.

- **Snana** – Acharyas mentioned ‘snanamdukasahatvena’. If she takes bath, the stambhana occurs and menstrual bleeding decreases. So, she should avoid snana.

- **Anulepa and Abhyanga** – Avoid oil massaging and smearing sandal paste on 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 becomes weak. After the ritucharyashodana, the circulation of blood, that is, the nutritional supply occurs fast by accepting more nutrients.

- **Pradhavana and Vyayama** – Running and too much exercise should be avoided. During the time, the body becomes weak due to the rakthasrava and there will be hormonal changes. Excess exertion leads to vataprakopa 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 Swedanakarma, Vamana, Nasya karma** are contraindicated because these cause doshaprakopa.

- **Coitus** is contraindicated during the menstruation. Intercourse during this time only worsens the condition for the well-being of the woman and infections may occur too.

- **She should not adorn herself with ornaments thus avoiding sexual attraction.**

The menstruating woman has to follow the charya during the menstruation for the first 3 days. On the 4th day, she should take bath and wear white garments with flowers and worship God. Then she should indulge in sexual intercourse for achieving a good progeny.\(^{19}\) If the woman does not follow the charyas properly, the dosha vitiation occurs and it further affects the foetus. Contraindicated actions of the mother cause abnormalities in the child.
Following abnormalities may occur to the foetus\textsuperscript{[20]}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action of mother</th>
<th>Abnormalities of Foetus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Divaswapna (Day sleeping)</td>
<td>Swapasheela (Over sleeping)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Anjana (Collyrium)</td>
<td>Dagdha (Partial Blindness)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rodhana (Weeping)</td>
<td>Vikrita Drishti (Defective vision)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snanam (Bathing)</td>
<td>Dukhasheela (Sadish)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abhyanga (Oil Massage)</td>
<td>Kushta (Skin disorders)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nakhapakarata (Paring of the nail)</td>
<td>Kunakhi (Deformity of the nail)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pradhavana (Fast running)</td>
<td>Unsteady, both mentally and physically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hasana (Laughing)</td>
<td>The black colour of lip and thumb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pralapa (Over-talking)</td>
<td>Talkative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atishabdhasravana (Overhearing)</td>
<td>Deafness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Combing the hair</td>
<td>Baldness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exposure to the breeze and too much exertion</td>
<td>Mentally troubled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of nasya</td>
<td>Menstrual abnormalities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If the copulation occurs on the first day of menstruation, it affects the health, lusture and vision of the husband. During this 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, also it has negative impact on the well-being of the woman. Even though it is difficult to get pregnant during the time of menstruation, Acharya Kashyapa describes the effect on the child if pregnancy occurs.

Effect on the baby when the pregnancy occurs in menstruation\textsuperscript{[21]}

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**

The state of health of a society is closely linked with the state of health of its women. Menstrual hygiene and health are very essential, especially in today’s time, because a large population is unaware about the do’s and don’ts. This increases the chances of complications associated with fertility, pregnancy and childbirth.

After *ritukala*, when the *shodana* occurs completely, the raktha shows the colour of pure blood like that of gold, indragopa, padma, alaktaka, gunjaphala.\textsuperscript{[22]} If menstruation occurs for some more days than the normal time, the *vataprakopa* and *krodha*, *shoka* like emotional
characters appear. In modern science, these features are said to occur due to the hormonal changes. The removal of complete shedding of the endometrium is very much essential, otherwise it retains inside the uterus leading to PCOD. If the vataprapoka occur in the body due to nithyasevan of contraindications, it in turn slowly increases the pitta and kapha, and then vitiates malas and dhatus. This can be one of the causes for infertility.

If the part of beeja responsible for the development of a particular body part is defective, the abnormality will be manifested. This can be related with the chromosomal abnormalities or sex hormone deformity. For example, when the beejabaaga which gets transformed into the semi-lunar valve is defective, then it causes corresponding defects in the offspring.

From the time of Samhita Kala, acharyas have explained the necessary do’s and don’ts for the menstruating women, but nowadays we can’t follow all of these due to the hectic work schedules of the women. So, the charyas can be followed as per the convenience and time schedules during busy days. Proper menstrual hygiene and health may also be done by maintaining cleanliness of private parts, use of sanitary napkins, frequent changing of sanitary napkins and washing hands with soap. 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.

Along with rajaswala paricharya, following of dinacharya, rutucharya, saddvritta (codes of conducts) are best options for healthy life and betterment of woman lifestyle and ultimately for healthy progeny.

**CONCLUSION**

To achieve conception Acharya Susrutha 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 woman’s part in the formation of and offspring is much greater because all these four factors are related to her. Ayurveda gives prime importance to preventive aspects and elaborates “RajaswalaCharya” or the care during menstrual cycles and during menarche to prevent and cure gynecological disorders.

By following the *Rajaswala paricharya* with some modifications, women will be able to maintain equilibrium of health during the most sensitive period of their lives. *Rajaswala*
paricharya help women respond healthily to the drastic physical and cyclic changes during the menstrual cycle.

REFERENCES