



***Ritucharya*- to have healthy reproductive life and in turn to get healthy progeny- a scientific analysis**

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Abstract: Getting a healthy progeny and having a healthy reproductive life is an essential thing in every female's life. Ayurvedic science of life preaches its own rules and regulations at every step of life. *Ritukala* – the active reproductive stage of life starts from the age of 12 and may end up till 45 to 50 years. *Ritucharya* in the menstrual period are five days in a month where every woman faces few physical and mental difficulties. Our *Acharyas* have explained a set of dietetics, what to do, what to eat, how to sleep, where to sleep etc. In relation to the present-day pathological problems like infertility, PCOD, menorrhagia etc all these have been elaborated in detail in this paper.

Keywords: (*Ritu kala*, infertility, *Ayurveda*)

Introduction

A woman is said to be reborn when she gives birth and is said to bring completeness

to her life. When she gives birth to a healthy progeny, she is not only praised in the family but also the society since he/she becomes a capable human resource to the country. The progeny with any congenital or such physical, psychological and intellectual defects is undesired since it affects their quality of life and day-to-day activities. The foundation of a healthy progeny is laid even before the conception. Simultaneously, having a healthy reproductive life forms an important part of a female's life. Our ancient scientists realised this fact and proposed diets and regimens for pre-conceptual care in form of "*Rajaswalacharya*" along with the "*Ritumaticharya*". It helps to improve the physical and mental health of the mother as well as the child in the short run. In the long run, the fertile phase of female life from menarche to menopause will feel like a beautiful journey by facing the avoidable hurdles.

Chaturvida Garbha-sambhava Samagri

“ध्रुवं चतुर्णां सान्निध्याद्गर्भः स्याद्विधिपूर्वकम् ।

ऋतुक्षेत्राम्बुबीजानां सामग्र्यादङ्कुरो यथा
॥३३॥ ”

[सु. शारीरस्थानम्/ शुक्रशोणितशुद्धिशारीर
2/33]

1. *Acharya Sushruta* describes the four-fold factors necessary for the conception i.e, *Ritu*, *Kshetra*, *Beeja* and *Ambu*.^[1] In a female they can be correlated as-
2. *Ritu* or *Ritukala* is the phase of ovulation. The reproductive phase from Menarche to Menopause also can be considered the *ritu* in a female.
3. *Kshetra* refers to the *Garbhashaya* or specifically the healthy endometrium of an unvitiated uterus which is free from any dosha or disease.
4. *Beeja* which should be free from any form of *beeja dosha*. It can be correlated as the ovum which is free from any chromosomal defects, mutations, faulty genes or such abnormalities.
5. *Ambu* refers to the *ahara rasa* as well as the subsequently formed *rasa dhatu* which are the nourishing factors.

“अतः सर्वदोषवर्जितौ स्त्रीपुरुषौ संसृज्येयाता
”

[च.शारीरस्थानम्.जातिसूत्रीयशारीरम् 8/6]

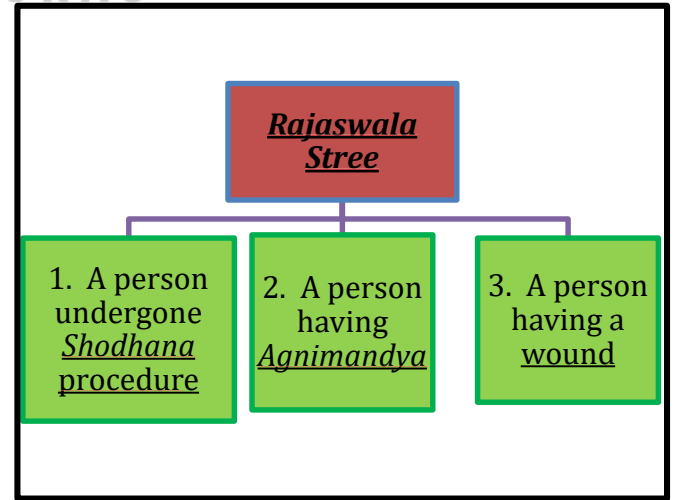
When all the above are in their *prashastha awastha* they help in achieving a ‘*Supraja*’ or a ‘*Shreyasi praja*’.^[2] This can be

achieved by following proper diet, lifestyle and the required *shodhana karma* which helps in eliminating the defects and when the *Rajaswalaniyama* is followed from the menarche itself will help in avoiding formation of such defects. They help in preparing the *Stree* for better motherhood as well as *prashasta Apathya*.

Discussion

Any woman in her menstruating phase is termed as *Rajaswala*. A stage of being a *rajaswala stree* can be understood by three dimensions:

1. A person undergone *shodhana* procedure
2. A person having *Agnimandya*
3. A person having a wound



1) A person undergone *shodhana* procedure: In *Ayurveda*, *Shodhana* refers to *vamana*, *virechana* or both. During the menstrual phase, the endometrial lining is shed along with the connective blood vessels are torn eventually due to detection of no

blastocyst for the implantation. Since there is a physiological release of the blood per vagina, we can consider it to be *shodhana* of the *garbhashaya* to give a chance for the implantation of the fertilized ovum in next cycle. According to *Bhela Samhita*, the *purana rakta* is discharged before the *ritukala*.^[3]

With reference to a *shodhita vyakti*, Acharyas have described the avoidable factors in form of the ‘*Ashtau-Mahadoshakara Bhavas*’. Among these *bhavas*, we find that *Maithuna*, *Ajirna Bhojana* and *Ahita Bhojana* are those *bhavas* which are also mentioned in *Rajaswala paricharya*.

Ashta Maha Doshakara Bhava	Regimen in Rajaswala Paricharya
<i>Uchha Bhashya</i> (Loud Speech)	Avoid <i>Ati Kathana</i> (Excessive/ Loud talking)
<i>Ratha Kshobha</i> (Exertion by travelling in a vehicle)	Avoid <i>Anilasevana</i> (Exposure to outside environment)
<i>Ati Chankramana</i> (Excessive walking)	Avoid <i>Pradhavana</i> (Exertion due to running)
<i>Ati Asana</i> (Sedentary lifestyle)	---
<i>Ajir nabhojana</i> (Eating during indigestion of previous meal)	<i>Stoka anna</i> (Eating in less quantity)
<i>Ahita bhojana</i> (Intake of faulty food)	<i>Hitaahara</i> (Eating prescribed diet), <i>Havishya sevana</i>
<i>Divaswapna</i> (Day-sleep)	Avoid <i>Divaswapna</i> (Day-sleep)
<i>Maithuna</i> (Coitus)	Avoid <i>Maithuna</i> (Coitus)

2) A person having *Agnimandya*:

Agnimandya is the obvious consequence after any *shodhana karma* be it *vamana* or *virechana*. Here, *Samsarjana karma* is advised so that *Jatharagni* is increased up to the level where it can digest the food properly.

Considering the previous view of *rajonivrutti* as *shodhana*, there is a considerable *agnimandya* in the *rajaswala*. Hence, she is advised to consume food consisting of *ksheera yukta yavanna*, *saghrata shali*. *Dalhana* comments *havishyanna* is to be eaten. Just like *havishya* is added as oblations to the holy

fire in *yajna* and steadily stokes it, similar is the action of this diet on the *jatharagni* of the *Rajaswala Stree*.

The diet for *Rajaswala* causes *karshana* and *koshta shodhana* since it is *stoka* (less in quantity) and hence easy to digest. This also prevents any chance of formation of *Ama*. If the couple is planning for conception, the lady should have diet consisting of *masha* and *tila taila* on the 4th day after *shuddh-snata*.

3) A person having a wound

The discharge of menstrual blood per vagina indicates an active wound in the body that is the shedding of endometrium of the uterus.

Based on this understanding, the *Rajaswala* can be considered as a *Vranita Vyakti*.

Moreover, *Pathya - Apathya* told for *Rajaswala* is almost the same as that prescribed for a wounded person or a person who has undergone surgery. It includes eating *Yava, Laghu - Aahara, stoka anna* (in less quantity) which is easily digestible.

Effects of Ahara on the Rajaswala stree:

The *ahara* mentioned by *acharyas* includes *ghrita, ksheera, yava, shali, masha* and *tila taila*.^[4] The *rasapanchaka* and constituents of these mentioned drugs along with their probable effect on the *Rajaswala stree* are tabulated in Table 1.

Table 1. Showing *rasapanchaka* and constituents of above-mentioned drugs along with their probable effect on the *Rajaswala stree*.

Sl. No.	Drug	Rasa	Guna	Virya	Vipaka	Karma	Constituents	Effect
1.	<i>Shali</i>	<i>Madhura, Kashaya</i>	<i>Snigdha Laghu</i>	<i>Sheeta</i>	<i>Madhura</i>	<i>Brimhana Vrishya</i>	Carbohydrate, Vitamin B Complex	Easily digestible
2.	<i>Yava</i>	<i>Kashaya, Madhura</i>	<i>Lekhana Mridu, Guru, Pichhila</i>	<i>Sheeta</i>	<i>Katu</i>	<i>Balya, Varna sthairyakara</i>	Carbohydrate, Proteins, Calcium, Iron, Vitamin C	Easily digestible, Udavartahara
3.	<i>Ghrita</i>	<i>Madhura</i>	<i>Guru</i>	<i>Sheeta</i>	<i>Madhura</i>	<i>Balya, Rasayana Vrishya</i>	Vitamins A & E, Conjugated linoleic acids, Medium chain fatty acids	Improving tonicity Nourishing the body. Antioxidant & Antiviral Butyric acid supports production of killer T cells in the gut
4.	<i>Ksheera</i>	<i>Madhura</i>	<i>Snigdha, Guru, Shlakshana Pichhila</i>	<i>Sheeta</i>	<i>Madhura</i>	<i>Balya, Brimhana, Jeevaniya, Rasayana</i>	Proteins, fats, calcium, phosphorus, Vitamins A, B, C, Nicotinic acid, Riboflavin	Nourishment & strength, Compared to <i>Ojas</i>
5.	<i>Masha</i>	<i>Madhura</i>	<i>Snigdha Guru</i>	<i>Ushna</i>	<i>Madhura</i>	<i>Balya, Vatahara</i>	Proteins, Carbohydrate, Vitamin B, Magnesium, Calcium, Iron, Folic Acid	Ca & Mg regulates estrogen level. Folic acid prevents neural tube defects
6.	<i>Tila-taila</i>	<i>Madhura, Kashaya</i>	<i>Guru, Sara, Sukshma, Vyavayi, Vikasi</i>	<i>Ushna</i>	<i>Madhura</i>	<i>Garbhashaya-Vishodhaka, Artavajanaka, Agnivardhaka</i>	Thiamine, Niacin, Riboflavin, Nicotinic acid,	Calcium and magnesium regulates estrogen level.

							Pantothenic acid, Folic acid, Biotin, Pyridoxine, Inositol, Choline, p-aminobenzoic acid, Vitamin C, Vitamin A, Vitamin E	Iron acts as haematinic
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In a research conducted by Chavarro et.al, to evaluate the relation of a dietary pattern and other lifestyle to risk of ovulatory disorder infertility, 17544 women were followed without history of infertility for 8 years it was found that the those who followed a diet fertility pattern may favorably influence infertility than others.^[5] In another study, it was determined that the odds of infertility were 2-3 times higher in women who consumed fast food than in those who did not consume fast food.^[6]

Effects of Vihara on the *Rajaswala stree*:

1) Effects of exercise on menstrual cycles:

Excessive exercising during menstrual cycle results in the loss of body fat. This results in estrogen deficit since all the sex hormones are formed from cholesterol.

Also, overall weight loss occurs which is undesired during an already intensive state of the body. Avoiding exercise can help the woman to restore the energy which further prevents vata aggravation in turn leading to *yonivyapat rogas*.

2) Sleeping on *Darbha (Desmostachys bipinnata)* grass : The radiation-protective

effects were researched where it was found to provide protection from radiation and anti-microbial. It is also desirable to sleep on the mat made of *Darbha* on floor since it will address the common complaint of backache during this period.

3) Staying away from family during menstruation: It is advised to stay away from the family since if the lady is married it will help avoid conception during menstrual phase. This will also avoid any sort of infections in both the partners since the pH during this period is altered. According to *Sushruta Samhita*, the ascent of *bija* is disturbed from reaching its destination (*Garbhashaya*) which is compared to when a light object is thrown against the water current in flowing river cannot reach upwards due to the flow.

Acharya Bhavamishra mentions that sexual intercourse observed during the menstrual period especially the first day will reduce the *ayushya* of the husband associated with deterioration of *Drishti* and *tejas*.^[7]

Acharyas have mentioned the effects of coitus in this period which is tabulated in **table 2**.

Day of MC	Effect
1 st day	Foetus dies during delivery
2 nd day	Foetus will die in immediately/ few

	days of post-natal period
3 rd day	The child will have incompletely formed body parts or a short lived
4 th day	Normal baby with fully developed body parts and long-life

4) To avoid menstrual synchronisation: It is usually seen in many females of reproductive phase live together or spend a lot of time together begin menstruating on almost same day every month. This phenomenon is called menstrual synchronisation when the other female members recipient's menstrual cycle is shortened due to effect of pheromones released by the menstruating women.

5) Avoidance of day sleep & over-exertion: Helps in conserving energy and avoiding tiredness.

6) Good mental health: Acharya Charaka describes "Soumansyam Garbhadharnanam" which means

harbouring good thoughts and maintaining mental faculty balance helps in conception. Anger, stress, depression etc disturbs the phenomenon leading to reduced sexual vigour. Hence it is very important to maintain a good and happy relationship between the couple to remain stress free during this phase. Violence against girls and women results in adverse physical, psychological and reproductive consequences, as well as increased risk for premature delivery and low birth weight infants.

- Whatever a woman (*shuddha snata*) perceives will deliver (a child) of similar behaviour and physique usually, so it is necessary to providing education and psychosocial counseling before and during pregnancy.

Acharya Sushruta & Bhavamishra have described the effect of certain factors practised during Menstrual cycle on the foetus.^[8]

Activities of the mother	Abnormalities in foetus
<i>Diwaswapna</i> (Day-Sleep)	<i>Swapnasheela</i> (Excessive sleep)
<i>Anjana</i> use (Collyrium)	<i>Andhatva</i> (Blindness)
<i>Rodana</i> (Crying)	<i>Vikrita Drishti</i> (Abnormalities of vision)
<i>Snaana-Anulepana</i> (Bathing & Anointments)	<i>Dukhasheelata</i> (Depression)
<i>Taila abhyanga</i> (Oil-massage)	<i>Kushtha</i> (Skin Diseases)
<i>Nakha-apakartana</i> (Cutting nails)	<i>Kunakhi</i> (Deformity of nail)
<i>Pradhavana</i> (Running)	<i>Chanchala</i> (Fickle-mindedness)
<i>Hasana</i> (Laughing)	<i>Shyama danta, Osthā, Talu, Jihva</i> (Blackish discolouration of Teeth, lips, palate & tongue)
<i>Atikathana</i> (Excessive talk)	<i>Pralapa</i> (Talkativeness)
<i>Ati-Shabda Shravana</i> (Excessive hearing)	<i>Badhira</i> (Deafness)
<i>Avalekhana</i> (Combing)	<i>Khalitya</i> (Baldness)
<i>Marutasya sevana</i> (Exposure to air & exertion)	<i>Unmattata</i> (Insanity)
<i>Bhumi-khanana</i> (Digging Ground)	<i>Skhalana</i> (Falling while walking)

In a study by Selander et.al, Full-time exposure to occupational noise during pregnancy was associated with reduced birth weight in a nationwide cohort study of Swedish women. [9]

Conclusion:

During early embryo genetic periods any insult may end up in vital organs anomalies i.e., again a burden to the nation as well as psychosocial impact on the parents. Hence there is a need of taking action during pre-conceptional period for healthy pregnancy and safe delivery. Nowadays, the incidence of disorders like PCOS, infertility, etc are increasing due to modern diet & lifestyle, stress, environmental toxicity etc. Also, the time during *rajaswala* is a time to give rest to the body. Many countries like Japan, Taiwan, China, etc offer a period leave ranging from 2-3 days per month. Recently, a Public Interest Litigation was filed in the Supreme Court of India to seek a direction to all the states to frame rules for students and working women for menstrual pain leave at their respective workplaces. [10] Such measures will definitely bring a positive change in carrying out the traditional *Rajaswalacharya* by the woman of modern age and maintaining her health.

The concept of “*Supraja Jananam*” i.e healthy progeny begins at the very early level of *Rajaswala paricharya* continued up to the *ritukala*. Following these *paricharyas* with a sincere & faithful attitude will guide today’s woman to not only lead a joyous life throughout her reproductive phase but also

to perform the duty bestowed on her by nature - “Procreation”.

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Conflict of Interest: Non

Source of funding: Nil

Cite this article:

Ritucharya- to have healthy reproductive life and in turn to get healthy progeny- a scientific analysis

Kumbhar Supriya N., Mallya Suma V.

Ayurlog: National Journal of Research in Ayurved Science- 2023; (11) (03): 01-08