

MENSTRUAL HEALTH AND AYURVEDA

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ABSTRACT

Artava in females is considered equivalent to Sukra in males. There lies the importance of maintaining menstrual health for a healthy progeny. Menstruation can be considered as an additional opportunity of the body for cleansing or removal of toxins. It is believed that some amount of Ojas is also lost during menstruation. When the menstrual cycle itself is considered, the menstrual phase is dominated by Pitta Dosha, later the influence of Kapha persists a few days before ovulation. During the time of ovulation the Vata Dosha becomes powerful enough to propel the ovum out of the follicle. In the absence of fertilization Vata gives way for Pitta during the premenstrual days and during menstruation. Most of the discomforts during menstruation are because of the imbalance of Doshas. So within the inherent constitutional frame work of Doshas timely and purposeful administration of Aushadha, Aahara and Vihara will restore the doshic balance. Thus menstrual health can be maintained from the onset till the period of menopause. Various drugs like Amalaki, Satavari, Nagakesar, Asoka etc have proved very effective in case of menstrual abnormalities.

Key words: - Artava, menstruation, Doshas, drugs

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is the science which deals with maintenance of health and cure of disease. It stands on the frame work of *Tridoshas*, *Saptha Dhathus* and *Trimalas*. Ayurveda examine the menstrual cycle as a window into the human body. *Artava* is considered as the *Upadhathu* of the first and foremost dhathu ie the *Rasa dhathu*. *Rajapravrithi* is a normal physiological process in women as sleep, bowel activity etc. As the nature and pattern of all the physiological and psychological processes are dependent on the inherent constitution of doshas ie the *Prakruthi*, the pattern and nature of *Rajapravrithi* should

also show some relation to the *Prakruthi* of the individual. So by understanding the nature of menstrual pattern in women the menstrual health can be maintained by administering according diet and regiments.

Aims and Objectives: An attempt has been done to analyze the characteristics of *Rajapravrithi* according to the *Prakruthi* or Doshic constitution of a women.

Artava and Prakruthi: *Artava* is defined as the periodical expulsion of blood through the vagina of an adult female¹. It is one of the most important physiological process which enables the formation of *Garbha*. So the regular and uninterrupted occurrence of

Artava is necessary for a healthy progeny. *Artava* is considered as the *Upadhatu* of *Rasa*². It is produced cyclically and being directed by *Vata* and is expelled through the vagina³. As far as modern science is considered, menstruation is the process where there is flow of blood from the uterus through the vagina occurring primarily in humans, determined by a complex interaction of hormones⁴. *Prakruthi* is the innate constitution of an individual based on the predominance of *Dosha* determined at the time of conception which cannot be changed till death⁵. Qualities of *Dosha* are expressed on body due to its predominance and it is called *Deha Prakruthi*. It is the enumeration or consideration of body features internal as well as external. Depending on the *Dosha* that is predominant in the *Sukra* and *Shonita* at the time of union, the food and activities of the pregnant women, uterus and season *Prakruthi* is determined⁶. Human body is made up of *Doshas* and all physiological functions are depending on *Doshas*. *Prakruthi* of each individual is determined from the time of consumption itself. So each individual is specific in his/her own constitution of *Prakruthi*. If every physiological function depend on *Doshas*, then there will be a relation between the characteristics of all physiological functions with individual *Prakruthi* and so with menstruation also. Ayurvedic understanding of the cycle of *Doshas* during the whole lifespan is important particularly in the case of menstrual health in women. During the earlier stages of life ie. from the life in vitro through young adulthood it is the *Kapha Dosha* which predominates. *Pitta* increases dramatically during adolescence and tends to dominate the body processes until early thirties. Later stages the *Vata Dosha* dominates mainly during sixties and seventies. So the period of time where *Pitta* is dominant is more prone to get disorders such as high blood pressure, non-

congestive heart disease, hyperthyroidism etc. It is also a high risk of time for many female disorders.

Present generation females are facing many problems related to their menstruation like painful menstruation, irregular cycles, irregularity in bleeding patterns etc in their adolescent age without any specific pathology in their reproductive system. As long as the *Doshas* function in their normal state and are not affected or overshadowed by another *Dosha*, the menstrual cycle happens optimally. In a specific *Prakruthi* person there will be predominance of that particular *Dosha* which may interfere with the normal or optimal functions of the other *Doshas*. So according to the *Prakruthi* there are chances that there will be variations in the characteristics of *Rajapravruthi*. For example, pain is a feature where *Vata* is responsible, so in *Vata Prakruthi* individuals there is an increased chance for painful menstruation, *Pitta Prakruthi* individuals may get subjected more to mood variations, *Kapha Prakruthi* individuals may have more clots in their menstrual blood etc. During the period of menopause also, different symptoms can be seen in women with different intensities, that may be due to the variations in bodily constitution. Mostly premenopausal symptoms are due to increased *Pitta* which will get exhibited as hot flushes, rashes over skin, intolerance to heat etc.

DISCUSSION

Vatika menstrual flow

As *Vata* dominates the uterus, its *Sheeta* and *Khara* qualities causes the blood vessels to constrict. *Ruksha guna* depletes the

bodily tissues and finally causes early cessation of menstrual flow. Due to decrease in plasma and blood tissues, decreased nourishment to the endometrial lining of uterus the overall flow and menstrual discharge will be less. Where ever there is a blockage for the free flow of *Vata*, there will be pain. So most of the *Vata* dominating cycles will be painful.

Paittika menstrual flow

Pitta is hot and sharp. So it brings more fluidity to the blood so that it flows easily. *Pitta* resides in blood and in excess I may cause heavy bleeding. As it causes tendency for swelling, it leads to tender, swollen breasts, acne etc that women experience during their premenstrual period.

Kaphaja menstrual flow: *Kapha* is dull, heavy and sticky. Stronger the influence of *Kapha Dosh*, the more likely to get a prominent growth of the endometrial tissue. As more blood vessels grow to supply this growth, the *Kapha* cycle is more likely to experience a heavier flow than *Vata* cycle.

General Menstrual Care: Menstrual cycle is an effective monthly cleanse. So it is essential to support the process of cleansing. All cleansing actions are giving importance to rejuvenation, rest and kindling of *Agni*.

Guidelines for healthy menstrual cycle

1. Consume simple, freshly prepared and hot food items. Try adding spices such as Ginger, Cardamom, Cumin, Coriander and Cinnamon
2. Cleansing involves the downward movement of wastes out of the body. So the direction of flow should not be interrupted by any upward movements like excessive talking, thinking, sexual

intercourse and even Pranayama and Yoga. All these activities need energy and our body needs to use all its reserve energy towards cleansing

3. Suppression of urges like urination, defecation and sneezing should be avoided. All these will cause the upward flow of *Vata* which will *disturb* the free flow of cleansing action.
4. Meditation will bring peace of mind which again assists the action of *Vata*
5. Hydrate the body with warm teas such as ginger tea, lemon tea with honey, cumin, coriander and fennel teas.
6. Maintaining the balance of *Doshas* even at the time without menstruation is also important. The better way to maintain *Doshas* in equilibrium is to do yearly cleanse. Seasonal cleansing is highly effective way to balance and rejuvenate all bodily tissues so that they function optimally.
7. Practicing *Pranayama* for balancing the mind as it helps to equalize the right and left sides of the brain and *Yoga* as per constitution will keep your body strong and energetic.

Herbal care for healthy menstruation

Herbs can be used in accordance to the *Doshas* involved. In a *Vatik* cycle mainly *Dasamoola* can do its work of pacifying *Vata dosha*. Ginger is another drug which helps in a *Vatik* flow with discomfort. Herbs can really help in *Pitta* flow mainly. *Asoka* tones the uterus and thus eases a heavy flow. *Satavari*, *Amalaki*, *Gudoochi*, *Kumari*, *Brahmi* etc are useful drugs in a *Paittik* flow as they are very famous for their *Pitta* pacifying action. Spices such as cinnamon, cardamom,

black pepper etc are useful in case of a *Kaphaja* cycle due to their *Agni* stimulating action. Castor oil pack due to its warm and penetrating quality can break up the stagnation latent in the pelvis.

Paying an eye on the characteristics of menstruation will bring into light the *Dosha* which is predominant in that cycle. That may also be depending on the *Prakruthi* of the individual. Application of theories related to *Doshas* and practical application of drugs mentioned for particular *Doshas* will help to cure the discomforts or ailments during menstruation.

CONCLUSION

Being the natural cleansing process of the body menstruation needs an assistance from the individual. The unobstructed flow of menstrual blood will be possible only by the optimal assistance of the *Tridoshas*. Any disturbance in the equilibrium of *Doshas* will create problems in menstrual cycle. In a particular *Prakruthi* there is a physiological increase in the level of that particular dosha, which may show its effect on the characteristics of menstruation. Such effects due to the *Prakruthi* of the individual may cause some ailments which can be considered physiological. So understanding the *Doshic* play and adequate application of medication, control of diet and regiments is needed to restore the optimal action of menstrual cycle which is very crucial to maintain the health of a women.

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