

## ROLE OF *PATHYAPATHYA* IN INFERTILITY W.S.R. TO *BEEJOPAGHATAJA KLAIBYA* AND *VANDHYATWA*

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### ABSTRACT

According to W.H.O. one in every four couples in developing countries has been found to be affected by infertility<sup>1</sup>. It is believed that 10% of the general population suffers from some form of infertility. The drop in fertility started about 10 years ago in India, with a steady 17% decline from the year 2000. Thousands of women are declared perfectly healthy, but still fertility rate is poor. As per I.S.A.R. reports, 41% of male infertility accounts to poor sperm count and 40% of female infertility is due to P.C.O.D. The prime cause of infertility is anovulation, which can be remedied by modifying diet and lifestyle. *Acharya Charaka* clearly mentioned defective diet and lifestyle practices have significant role in causing *beejadushti* which results in male infertility, female infertility or both. Genetic morbidity can be prevented by following healthy food habits. The diet mentioned in Ayurvedic texts contains antioxidants which help to protect the ovum and sperm from free radicals. Harvard research showed that 80% decrease in infertility with lifestyle changes are made by switching to a fertility diet. Present paper highlights the role of healthy diet and lifestyle in the prevention of infertility due to *beejopaghata*.

**Keywords:** Infertility, Diet and lifestyle, *Beejopaghata*

### INTRODUCTION

Reproduction represents the continuation of a family and the survival of a community. When we look into different cultures around the world, the concept 'infertility' carries a very strong social stigma, especially in its relation to women. Ayurveda being an ancient medi-

nal science gives a great importance to fertility. An infertile person is compared to a tree devoid of shade & fruit, which has an unpleasant odour; he is equivalent to a lamp drawn on paper which cannot give light; similar to a dry pond which cannot quench the thirst; just like

an artificial statue which appears as if it is made up of gold & silver. Such a person is devoid of any usefulness to the society and thus will have no respect<sup>2</sup>. Infertility has negative impact on self, on relationships, on psychological status and on emotional status of a person. In the present scenario, thousands of women are declared perfectly healthy, but still fertility rate is poor. According to W.H.O. one in every four couples in developing countries has been found to be affected by infertility. It is believed that 10% of the general population suffers from some form of infertility. According to 2013 World Bank Estimate, the drop in fertility started about 10 years ago in India, with a steady 17% decline from the year 2000. W.H.O. definition of health says 'Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely an absence of disease or infirmity'<sup>3</sup>. Dimensions of health include physical, mental, social, spiritual and emotional aspects of a person. Ayurveda explains *Sharira* and *Manas* are the two *Ashrayas* for the *Vyadhi*<sup>4</sup>. Both *Sharirika* as well as *Manasikadoshas* must be considered while treating a disease.

### **Infertility and its causes:**

Infertility is a disease of the reproductive system defined by the failure to achieve a clinical pregnancy after 12 months or more of regular unprotected sexual intercourse<sup>5</sup>. As per I.S.A.R. reports, 41% of male infertility accounts to poor sperm count and 40% of female infertility is due to P.C.O.D. The prime cause of infertility is anovulation, which can be remedied by modifying diet and lifestyle. Harvard research showed that 80% decrease in

infertility with lifestyle changes are made by switching to a fertility diet.

In Ayurveda, it is clearly stated that defective diet and lifestyle practices cause *beejadushti* which results in male infertility, female infertility or both. *Beejopaghata* is caused due to *sheeta-rooksha-alpa-sanklishta-viruddha-ajir nabhojana, shoka, chinta, bhaya, trasa, ativyavaya, abhichara* and by *panchakarmapachara*; which in turn cause *vatadi doshadushti*. This leads to *shukrakshaya* or *anutpatti*<sup>6</sup> in males. In females, when the *beejabhaga* is afflicted by *vatadidosha* in *garbhashaya*, it causes *vandhyatwa*<sup>7</sup>. *Shandhya (napumsakata)* is one of the *Vyapat* caused by *Viruddhahara Sevana*<sup>8</sup>.

The *Shukra* that is afflicted by vitiated *Vata, Pitta, Shleshma, Shonita*; one which has *Kunapagandha, Pooti-Pooya-Ksheena Reta* is inefficient to produce an offspring<sup>9</sup>. *Dvireta, Samskaravahi Shandha, Nara-Nari Shandha, Vatika Shandha* are the conditions in which persons remain infertile. The cause of infertility in such conditions is *Beeja Dourbalya* or *Upatapta Beeja Janaka Beejabhaga*<sup>10</sup>. An individual born out of *Pradushta Beeja & Beejabhagavayava (Shonita/ Shukra)*, will become *Vandhya (female)* or *Kleeba (male)*<sup>11</sup>. Causes of infertility include *Veeryakshaya, Bhaya, Shoka, Streedoshadarshana, Narinamarasajnata, Abhichara & Asevana*<sup>12</sup>. *Ativyavaya, Ativyayama, Ahita Ahara-Viharasevana, Akala & Ayoni Maithuna, Asevana, Ruksha-tikta-kashaya-tila-lavana-amlu-ushnasevana, Chinta-shoka-bhaya-krodha, Avisrambha* (without mutual understanding), *Vardhakyaa, Mala-mutra-*

*shukraVega vidharana* cause *Shukradushti*<sup>13</sup>. Such vitiated *Shukra* cannot produce *Apatya*. As per Modern Science, one of the several causes of male infertility is defective spermatogenesis. Spermatogenesis and sperm maturation require optimum scrotal temperature (1-2<sup>0</sup> F less than the body temperature) and a high androgenic environment. Raised scrotal temperature, malnutrition, heavy smoking, alcohol consumption, anxiety, exposure to radiation, cytotoxic drugs, antidepressant drugs reduce spermatogenesis<sup>14</sup>. Chronic anovulation is the most common cause of female infertility, may be due to hormonal or chemical imbalance, functional problems in ovaries and PCOS. Poor diet and lifestyle practice and stress can cause anovulation. Intake of fried foods & trans-fats, sugary foods, soft drinks, gluten, lack of exercise can result in infertility. In women with PCOS, the damaged fats found in these foods have been shown to decrease fertility by up to 73%, also it does impact all women suffering from anovulation. Sugary foods negatively impact hormonal balance. Weight loss or anorexia can also cause hormonal imbalance, leading to irregular ovulation. On the other hand, excess weight can also create ovarian dysfunctions. Apart from physical factors, even mental factor has its own impact on fertility rate. Recent research tells that stress boosts level of stress hormones, such as adrenaline, catecholamines & cortisol, which can inhibit the release of GnRH, which is responsible for the release of sex hormones. Subsequently this may suppress ovulation in women, reduce sperm count in men and lower libido in both women & men.

### **Role of Pathya:**

*Pathya* is considered as a *paryaya* to '*Bheshaja*' by Acharya Charaka<sup>15</sup> and as '*Mahabheshaja*' (supreme medicine) by Acharya Kashyapa<sup>16</sup>. It is rightly quoted in '*Vaidyajeevana*' that "No amount of medication can do any good to patient who does not observe *Pathya*, likewise no amount of medication is needed to a patient if he follows *Pathya*". *Pathya* is the one which does not harm the body and do not obstruct the '*Patha*' ( *Srotas*/ channels). *Manah-shariraAnupaghata* is the *Pathya*. It does not cause any negative effect on body and also it doesn't produce any *manasika vikara*<sup>17</sup>. In '*Yogaratnakara*', the metaphor of '*Ankura*' (seedling) is used for progressive form of disease. This *Ankura* will dry and perish away if it is not nourished by water; similarly if a patient avoids *Apathya Sevana* his disease can be cured even without taking any medication<sup>18</sup>.

*Dosha Prakopa* in the body will be greater either due to *Sanchayaroopaprakopa* or *Acharyaroopaprakopa*. When *Pathya Ahara-Vihara* is followed, there will be *Mridu* and *Alpa Doshaprakopa* which is *Alpavikara-karaka*. If disease occurs even after following *Pathya*, its *Matra* should be increased after studying the nature of the disease and *Pathyasevana* should be continued for a longer duration<sup>19</sup>.

Under '*Agryaprakarana*' Acharya explains different types of *Agryadravya* based on its *Karmapradhanata*. Some of them that can be quoted in this context are- *Aahaaratah-Nakraretovrishyanam*' (semen of crocodile-aphrodisiac) , '*Ksharahpumstovopaghatinam*' (alkali- damaging virility), '*Vidarigandhavrishyasarvadoshaharanam*', '*Kalabhajanamarogyakaranam*' (timely eating- main-

taining health); *Vihaaratah- 'Shukraveganigrahahshandhyakaranam'* (suppression of urge of semen- causing impotency), *'Prashamahpathyanam'* (serenity of mind-wholesome ones), *'Mithyayogovyadhikaranam'* (perverted use- pathogenic factors), *'Sankalpovrishyanam'* (determination); *Manasika- 'Dourmanasyamavrishyanam'* (mental worry- non aphrodisiac), *'Harshahpreenananam'* (pleasant mood- saturating ones), *'Soumanasyamgarbhadharananam'* (cheerfulness-foetus supporting ones)<sup>20</sup>.

*Madhurarasa, Madhuravipakidravya* are *Shukravardhaka* and *Vrishya*. *Lavana, Katu* and *Tikta rasa Atisevana* causes *pumstva-hani*. *Pippali & Shunthi* is *Vrishya* apart from having *Katu rasa*, because of *Madhura Vipaka*<sup>21</sup>. Few examples quoted in text are: *Shukadhanya - Raktashali* is *Shukrjala*, *Godhuma* is *Vrishya*; *Shamidhanya- Masha* is *Vrishya* (*ShukraSruti-Vridhdhikara*); *Gorasavarga-Ksheera (Piyusha)*, *Ghrita* are *Vrishya & Shukra vardhaka*<sup>22</sup>. *Garbhashtapana Dravya* are mentioned in text such as- *Aindri, Brahmi, Doorvadvaya, Patala, Guduchi, Bala, Priyangu*; which should be used for *Dharana, Pana* (by processing with *Ksheera & Ghrita*), *Snana* (in *Pushyamasa*). *Jeevaniyaganadravya* should be used<sup>23</sup>. *Sarpi, Paya, Mamsarasa, ShashtikaShali, RaktaShali, Yava and Godhuma* are said to be *Pathya* that avoid *Shukradosha*<sup>24</sup>.

## DISCUSSION

*Prajnaparadha* is the *Moolakarana* for *Vikarotpatti*. Under the context of prevention of *Agantu* and *Manasavikara*, Acharya explained *Prajnaparadha Tyaga & Sadvrittaanuvartana*

is to be done to achieve *Vikara anutpatti*<sup>25</sup>. Under the context of *Yonivyapat*, Acharya explains that *Shandhi Yonivyapat* caused by *Beejadosha (Rajadosha & Shukradosha)* is an *Anupakramyavyadhi*<sup>26</sup>. It is an *AgantukaVyadhi* that can be prevented by following *HitaAhara* and *Vihara*.

The couple who desire for *'ShreyasiPrajaa'* should undergo *Snehana, Swedana, Samshodhana* and *Samsarjana karma*; *Asthapana* and *Anuvasana* prior conception. Then follow the *Pathya- Madhuroushadha siddha Ksheera & Ghrita* (male) and *Taila, Masha* (female)<sup>27</sup>.

Switch to healthy and positive diet, exercise regularly, maintain optimum weight and conceive at right age. Fertility diet includes- Protein rich food (beans, lean meats, low fat dairy products), vitamin (whole grains, fruits, vegetables), multivitamin supplements, omega-3 (salmon, tuna, egg), antioxidants (fruits- berries, vegetables, kidney beans), olive oil. One must avoid usage of drugs and tobacco, junk food & soft drinks, Trans fat, caffeine, smoking, alcohol consumption, frequent long journeys, exposure to high temperature, radiations, environmental or industrial toxins. Exercise is essential for optimal hormonal balance, nutrient circulation, cellular oxygenation, stress reduction, blood sugar regulation and weight management. Possibility of natural conception decreases with increasing age. Women with an age 35 years and above find difficulty in conceiving spontaneously. Hence decision to have a baby at right age increases the chances of conception.

## CONCLUSION

It is rightly said that "Prevention is Better Than Cure". Few infertility conditions are irreversible. Hence prevention of infertility gains greater importance. Diet and lifestyle modification, Regular exercise, Stress management, Weight management, trying for conception at right age and Proper understanding in relation are important in preventing infertility. While mentioning the *Chikitsakrama* for *Viruddhahara* *Janya Vyadhi*, Acharya quotes "Poorvam Vaa Hitasevanam", giving utmost importance to the prevention aspect<sup>28</sup>. As told in *Bhela Samhita*, *Pathya Ahara* nourishes all *Dhatu*s and *Srotas*' leading to *Poshana* of whole body. It detoxifies the body by eliminating the vitiated *Doshas*, contrary to which *Apathya* leads to *Dooshana* of *Vatadidoshas*. Similie given- *Akalavrishti* leads to destruction of the *Beeja* in *Bhoomi* and *Kala vrishti* enhances its healthy growth<sup>29</sup>.

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