



Role of Rajaswala Paricharya in Balancing Vata Dosha during Menstrual Cycle: A Critical Review

KANCHAN NARHARI KENDRE, HEMLATA KONGI

PG SCHOLAR, HOD and Professor

L.R.P. Ayurvedic Medical College, P.G. Institute and Research Centre, Islampur, Tal.-Walwa,
Dist-Sangali, Maharashtra

Abstract

Menstruation (Rajaswala Avastha) is a unique physiological process governed by Apana Vata, as per Ayurvedic texts. Disturbance in Vata during this phase can lead to menstrual disorders such as dysmenorrhea and amenorrhea. The regimen of Rajaswala Paricharya, described in classical Ayurvedic literature, provides dietary and lifestyle guidelines aimed at maintaining the equilibrium of Doshas—particularly Vata—during menstruation. This review explores the role of Rajaswala Paricharya in regulating Apana Vata, correlates Ayurvedic concepts with modern physiology, and evaluates its relevance in preventing menstrual disorders.

Keywords: Rajaswala Paricharya, Vata Dosha, Apana Vata, Menstrual Cycle, Dysmenorrhea

Introduction

Ayurveda, the ancient science of life, emphasizes that Rajaswala Avastha (the state of menstruation) requires a specific set of do's and don'ts to maintain health and prevent disease. Menstruation is considered a Shodhana kriya (physiological cleansing process), where the body eliminates Apakwa Rasa (impure rasa dhatu) in the form of Artava (menstrual blood). The classics describe menstruation as being governed predominantly by Apana Vata, a subtype of Vata Dosha responsible for downward movements and elimination.

Classical texts also warn that improper conduct during this period can lead to Vata Prakopa (aggravation), resulting in menstrual and reproductive disorders. Hence, Rajaswala Paricharya was prescribed to protect the physiology of menstruation and promote reproductive health.

This review aims to critically analyze the role of Rajaswala Paricharya in balancing Apana Vata during the menstrual cycle and correlates it with modern biomedical understanding.

Classical Understanding of Rajaswala Paricharya

Importance of Apana Vata - Apana Vata, one of the five subdivisions of Vata, governs functions such as:

- **Artava Nishkramana** (expulsion of menstrual blood)
- Defecation, micturition, and parturition
- Downward flow of energy (**Adho Gati**)

Disturbance of Apana Vata leads to menstrual disorders like:

- **Kashtartava** (dysmenorrhea)
- **Artavakshaya** (scanty or absent flow)
- Irregular cycles

Diet (Ahara) – Indicated

During menstruation (Rajaswala Kala), the body experiences physiological changes, including decreased bile secretion and sluggish digestion due to increased intra-abdominal pressure. This leads to a decline in Agni (digestive fire), potentially resulting in Agnimandya (impaired digestion) and subsequent Ama formation. Therefore, Acharyas emphasize the consumption of Agnivardhaka Ahara (diet that stimulates digestive fire) to support metabolism and promote health.

Recommendations

Rationale (Vata Pacification)

Warm, light, and easily digestible foods	Counteract Vata's cold and dry qualities
Snigdha (unctuous) food with ghee and oils	Lubricate tissues and support Apana Vata
Avoid excessive spicy, sour, fried foods	Prevent Pitta and Vata aggravation
Herbal decoctions like Dashamoola Kwatha	Supports Apana Vata and relieves discomfort
Use of milk with Shatavari or Ashwagandha	Nourishes reproductive tissues and stabilizes Vata

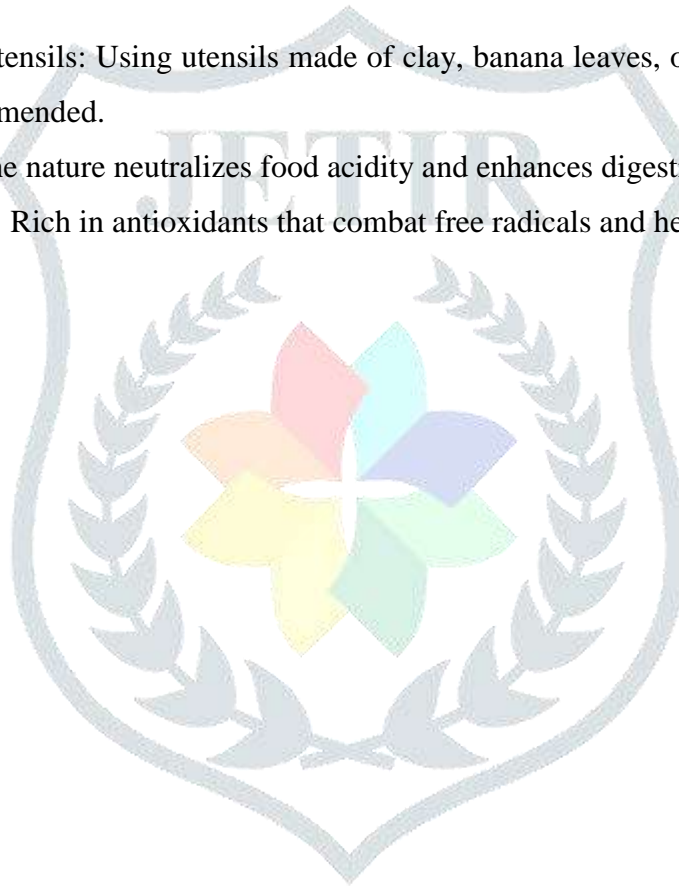
Recommended Diet –

The classics advocate the use of Havisya and Yavaka as ideal foods:

- Havisya: A simple meal prepared from Shali rice, ghee, and milk. It is nourishing, easy to digest, and pacifies aggravated Vata.
- Yavaka (Barley): Although guru (heavy), sheeta (cooling), madhura (sweet), and sara (laxative) in properties, which can increase Vata and bowel movements, its effects are balanced when combined with milk, reducing its potential to aggravate Vata.

Significance of Serving Utensils

- Clay or Leaf Utensils: Using utensils made of clay, banana leaves, or unbroken (akhand) vessels is traditionally recommended.
- Clay: Its alkaline nature neutralizes food acidity and enhances digestion.
- Banana Leaves: Rich in antioxidants that combat free radicals and help prevent diseases.



Diet (Ahara) – Contraindicated

The following foods are contraindicated during Rajaswala Kala as they can disturb the Dosha balance, particularly aggravating Vata and Pitta:

1. Tikshna (pungent), Katu (spicy), Lavana (salty)	Increases heat and menstrual flow, leading to Vata aggravation
2. Brimhana Ahara (nourishing, heavy food)	Causes obstruction (Stambhana) of Artava flow

Vihaar (Conduct) – Indicated

Darbhasamstharashayini - Acharyas advise sleeping on a bed made of Darbha (Kusha grass) spread on the ground. Darbha is believed to protect from negative energies and toxic radiations, aligning with modern claims of its shielding properties against electromagnetic waves.

Vihaar – Contraindicated

1. Divaswapna (Daytime Sleep) - Avoid sleeping during the day, as it aggravates Kapha and produces Ama, leading to heaviness and impaired metabolism.

2. Anjana (Collyrium Application) - Application of Anjana (kajal/eye collyrium) is contraindicated during this period.

3. Ashrupata (Shedding Tears) - Emotional instability and crying increase Vata and can lead to menstrual irregularities.

4. Snana (Bathing) - स्नानं दुःखसहत्वेन त्यजेत्। - Bathing, especially with cold water, can cause Stambhana (obstruction) of menstrual flow and hence should be avoided.

5. Anulepana and Abhyanga - Avoid oil massage and applying sandal paste, as these practices may block channels and disturb the natural flow of Apana Vata.
6. Hasana and Kadana (Excessive Laughing & Talking) - Overstimulation of mind and speech can cause Vata vitiation.
7. Nakhachedana (Nail Cutting) - Avoid cutting nails, as the body is in a vulnerable state due to Rakta Srava (blood loss) and weakened immunity.
8. Pradhavana and Vyayama (Running & Exercise) - Excess physical exertion exacerbates Vata and may lead to Rasa Dhatu Dusti (impairment of nutrient plasma). Prolonged neglect may result in Artava Kshaya (scanty menses) and even infertility. (अतिव्यायामो वायुप्रकोपकः।)
9. Panchakarma - Procedures like Swedana (sudation), Vamana (emesis), Nasya (nasal therapy) are contraindicated as they disturb Dosha balance during Rajaswala Kala.
10. Maithuna (Coitus) - Sexual intercourse is strictly contraindicated during menstruation. It can cause infections, Vata vitiation, and long-term reproductive health issues.

Modern Correlation of Apana Vata with Menstruation

In modern physiology, menstruation involves:

- **Shedding of endometrial lining** due to decreased progesterone and estrogen.
- **Release of prostaglandins** causing uterine contractions.
- Hormonal fluctuations leading to mood changes, fatigue, and cramps.

These correlate with Vata qualities:

- **Ruksha (dryness)** – due to blood loss and dehydration
- **Shita (coldness)** – chills and sensitivity to cold
- **Chala (mobility)** – uterine contractions and mood swings
- **Sukshma (subtlety)** – heightened mental and physical sensitivity

Thus, Vata-pacifying measures during menstruation are physiologically justified.

Preventive and Therapeutic Significance

- Prevents Vata-related menstrual disorders (dysmenorrhea, oligomenorrhea, amenorrhea).
- Promotes smooth Artava flow by supporting Apana Vata
- Counters fatigue and support post-menstrual recovery of **Rakta Dhatu**.
- Helps maintain hormonal balance and regular cycles

Modern Evidence Supporting Rajaswala Paricharya

Recent studies have observed that rest, warm environments, and nutritious food during menstruation help:

- Reduce menstrual pain and cramps (primary dysmenorrhea)
- Support mental health and emotional stability during menstruation
- Prevent menstrual irregularities associated with stress and poor lifestyle

- A study by Sakharkar et al. (2020) concluded that lifestyle modifications in menstruating women resulted in a significant reduction in menstrual discomfort.
- Warm compress and herbal teas (e.g., ginger, Dashamoola) were found to be effective in pain management (Srivastava et al., 2021).

Discussion

In Ayurveda, Rajaswala Paricharya refers to a specialized regimen that prescribes specific Ahara (dietary guidelines), Vihara (lifestyle modifications), and Mansika Bhava (psychological well-being) to be observed by women during menstruation. This holistic approach is rooted in the understanding that menstruation is a Shodhana Kriya (physiological cleansing process) mediated by Apana Vata, the sub-dosha responsible for the downward elimination of menstrual blood (Artava). The primary objective of Rajaswala Paricharya is to maintain the equilibrium of Doshas, particularly Vata, and ensure a smooth and pain-free menstrual cycle.

A menstruating woman is referred to as Rajaswala in classical Ayurvedic literature. The menstrual phase is traditionally described as lasting three to seven days, with the initial three days considered critical for adhering to Rajaswala Paricharya. During this period, women are advised to observe specific conduct:

- Ahara: consumption of light, warm, and unctuous foods to nourish and pacify Vata.
- Vihara: adequate rest, avoidance of physical exertion, exposure to cold, and sexual activity.
- Mansika Bhava: emotional stability and avoidance of stress, anger, and grief.

Despite its significance, adherence to Rajaswala Paricharya has declined considerably in modern times. Rapid urbanization, increased career demands, and sociocultural shifts have led to hectic and stressful lifestyles, often causing women to neglect these traditional practices.

In contrast to ancient times - when dietary habits were closely aligned with health and seasonal requirements - modern dietary patterns tend toward processed foods, irregular meal timings, and imbalanced nutrition. This change potentially contributes to the rising prevalence of Vata - predominant menstrual disorders such as dysmenorrhea, oligomenorrhea, and amenorrhea.

Hence, re-examining and re-integrating Rajaswala Paricharya in contemporary life could offer a preventive and therapeutic approach for maintaining menstrual and reproductive health.

Conclusion

Rajaswala Paricharya, though described thousands of years ago, remains highly relevant today. Its focus on Vata-pacifying diet, lifestyle, and conduct directly supports the physiological needs of a menstruating woman. By following these guidelines, women can experience smoother menstrual cycles, reduced discomfort, and improved reproductive health.

The integration of these Ayurvedic practices with modern understanding can provide a holistic approach to menstrual health, especially in managing Vata-dominant disorders.

References

1. Vagbhat. **Ashtanga Hridaya**. Sharira Sthana, Chapter 2, Verses 8-9.
2. Charak. **Charaka Samhita**. Sharira Sthana, Chapter 8, Verse 4.
3. Sushrut. **Sushruta Samhita**. Sharira Sthana, Chapter 3, Verse 10.
4. Sakharkar P, et al. Lifestyle modifications and menstrual health: A clinical study. *J Ayurveda Integr Med*. 2020;11(2):110–115.
5. Srivastava R, et al. Herbal interventions for primary dysmenorrhea: A review. *Ayurveda Journal*. 2021;15(1):45–52.
6. Sharma PV. **Dravyaguna Vijnana**. Chaukhambha Bharati Academy; 2002.
7. Lad V. **Textbook of Ayurveda: Fundamental Principles**. Ayurvedic Press; 2002.