



Review Article

RAJASWALA PARICHARYA- AN ESSENTIAL APPROACH TOWARDS FEMALE THROUGH THE LENS OF AYURVEDA SCIENCE

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda recognizes menstruation as a physiological and self-purifying process; it is also governed by the actions of the *Doshas*. Ayurveda has prescribed a mode of life to be adopted by menstruating women - a series of Do's and Don'ts - called as *Rajaswala Paricharya*, which aims to protect the health of the menstruating woman and prevent any health defects in the child, in case any conception happens. Menstrual Dysfunctions Risk Factors are conventionally divided into social and medico-biological. Unfortunately, it has been observed that the *Rajaswala Paricharya* is neither being publicized nor followed by the women in modern era. Also, the wrong information spread by media and manufacturers of sanitary napkins. WHO, UNICEF, NHM-GOI all are emphasizing on improving the reproductive health of adolescent girls and supports the accessible WASH facilities. But, they do not emphasize certain do's and don'ts during menstrual days. So, Ayurveda physician has to promote this *Paricharya* for enhancement of reproductive health of female. With little effort, women naturally increased observance of the restrictions as they practiced them and experienced the benefits. Aim of this is to avoid vitiation of *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*, prevent formation of *Ama* and restore the *Bala* and nurture the *Agni* of the female. Thus, developing a correct and a positive outlook towards menstruation i.e., *Rajaswala Paricharya* is as important as practicing them. Girls may be benefited from it by responding appropriately to physical and psychological changes that occur during menstruation as well as by experiencing fewer symptoms.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is a health and medicine system, which is prevalent across India for many thousand years. The ancient medical science, Ayurveda focuses on the study of maintaining health and life, as well as the treatment of disease when it manifests. A special importance is given to *Stree* and also has been said in our *Shastras* "*Yatra Naryaastu Pujoyante Ramante Tatra Devataha*". *Stree* is known as an embodiment of the Divine; Hence, *Stree Swaasthya* is given highest priority by the great Acharyas.

A word *Swasthya* (health) defines as equilibrium of *Dosha-Dhutu*, *Mala*, *Agni*, *Mana*, *Indriyas* with *Atma*.^[1] Ayurveda validates menstruation as a physiological process and like other physiological process in *Stree Sharira*; it is also governed by the actions of the *Doshas*. Menarche symbols the beginning of journey of a female from childhood to the adolescence which finally comes to end into womanhood. Thus, menstruation is usually the first indicator of the capacity of a female to reproduce.

Normal menstruation is defined as one which is not associated with pain or burning sensation, excreted blood is not unctuous, not very scanty or excessive in amount, and the colour of the blood resembles the red juice of lac, rabbit's blood.^[2] This normal menstruation occurs when the three *Doshas* exist in a proper balanced state and any imbalance in them will cause abnormal menstruation.

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Ayurveda, the irreplaceable system of medicine, helps women in journey towards better health throughout different phases of life and put value to her life. Guidelines of prevention and promotion of health are described in details at every stage of women life, which should be performed during the different phases like '*Rajaswala*' (menstruation), '*Ritumati*' (fertile period), '*Garbhini*' (pregnancy), '*Sutika*' (postpartum). Woman is more prone to various diseases, because of drastic physical and psychic changes during these periods. Also, if she does not follow these guidelines, her health status deteriorates fast particular to reproductive functions. Following these '*Paricharya*' (modes of life), women respond to the changes in her body healthily and also it will boost the immunity. The endmost goal of these '*Paricharyas*' is to conceive a healthy child easily, with a smooth antenatal and postnatal phase.

The female who is menstruating (आर्तववत्यां स्त्रीयां स्त्री) is termed as '*Rajaswala*'.^[3] The duration of menstruation has been told as ranging from 3 to 7 days in Ayurveda classics. The female should follow certain do's and don'ts regarding the *Ahara* (dietary), *Vihara* (lifestyle), *Mansika* (psychological) aspects for first 3 days of menstrual cycle, known as *Rajaswala Paricharya*.

Unfortunately, it has been observed that the *Rajaswala Paricharya* is neither being publicized nor followed by the women in modern era. Women have become career oriented and have stood up to the level of men in all the fields, due to which the life of women has turned hectic and stressful. There is a major importance given to the food habits during those days which has almost vanished. Conventional medical systems only thrust on sanitation and hygienic practices during menstruation. The other major reason for which the *Rajaswala Paricharya* is not being followed these days is the information spread by media and manufacturers of sanitary napkins. Some of them have their caption as "it's the time to change".

This so called "old-fashioned" way of behaviour is the *Rajaswala Paricharya* which has almost lost its importance in today's world.

Thus, it is very difficult to follow the regimen as mentioned. In past few years there has been a drastic rise in the menstrual problems and infertility which is producing as a major threat to the present-day population. In present era, symptoms like lower abdominal pain, back pain, mood swings, nausea etc are considered as associated symptoms of menstrual cycle and as normal. But our texts have mentioned that a normal menstruation should be devoid of pain burning sensation. So, this study aims to find out the effect of *Rajaswala Paricharya* on the menstrual health.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Aim: To validate the effect of *Rajaswala Paricharya* on the menstrual health of woman.

Objectives

1. To compile all the references regarding *Rajaswala Paricharya* from classical texts.
2. To recognize the scientific concept behind *Rajaswala Paricharya* and its effect on the physiology of menstrual cycle when not followed.
3. To compile the references regarding the research study on *Rajaswala Paricharya*.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research approach is qualitative in nature. Here authors are interested in interpretation rather than quantification. The study was carried out with the help of all the references in Ayurvedic texts and modern science. Review of *Bruhatrayee*, i.e., Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Ashtanga Sangraha and Ashtanga Hridaya have been studied for the applicable references of *Rajaswala Paricharya*. Literature review of modern have been studied on regimen during menstruation and its effects on reproductive health. Also, from various medical research databases like Google Scholar, PubMed, internet-based journals, websites and textbooks data have been compiled here.

Table 1: *Rajaswala Paricharya* according to different Acharyas ^[4,5,6]

No.	Acharyas	<i>Rajaswala Paricharya</i>
1	Aa. Charaka	From the onset of menstruation till 3 days and night, she must follow: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceive abstinence • Eat in unbroken vessel placed in hand • Should not wash or take bath or clean her body.
2	Aa. Sushruta	From 1 st day of onset of menstruation a woman should do: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow chastity • She must sleep on bed made up of <i>Darbha</i> • Avoid <i>Anjana</i>, <i>Lepana</i>, <i>Abhyanga</i>, <i>Diwaswapa</i>, cutting nails, laughing, talking too much, racing, combing, wind, exercise • Eat <i>Havishya Anna</i> i.e., meal prepared with ghee, <i>Sali</i> and <i>Godugdha</i> served in hand or palm or vessels made of clay, leaves etc.

3	Aa. Vagbhata	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid food which is sour, spicy, salty, hot in nature • Take food in less quantity. • Always concentrate on thinking good and auspicious things • Avoid jewellery or make up
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Rajaswala Paricharya and Their Scientific Validation

A. Bhrahmacharini (Observe chastity): Vaginal sexual intercourse without precaution (e.g., use of condom) during or shortly after menstruation is a risk factor for the heterosexual transmission of HIV or other sexually transmitted pathogens and the subsequent development of STDs affecting, inter alia, the health of the reproductive tract.^[7] Infection from Chlamydia and gonorrhoea are important preventable causes of pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) and infertility.^[8] Vaginal sexual intercourse with a menstruating woman could lead to an increase in the flow of menstrual blood.^[9] Filer and Wu found that infertility patients who frequently or occasionally engaged in coitus during menstruation were almost twice more likely to have endometriosis than those who did not report coital behaviour during menses, while such coital activity was unrelated to PID.^[10]

B. Havishyam Bhojini (Eat Havishya- Shali, Ghrita, Takra, Yawaka etc): Functional Ingredients in barley grains is having efficacy for preventive chronic diseases. Barley grains can improve bowel health and metabolic syndrome; prevent heart disease; and accelerate wound healing activities.^[11] Barley β -glucans can not only regulate immune responses and connect innate and adaptive immunity.^[12] Antioxidants are compounds that remove reactive oxygen species from cells, which play a dual role in aggravating and preventing diseases.^[13] *Shashtika shali* contains some amount of nitric oxide which increases the blood flow to the uterus.^[14]

Many studies have confirmed that dairy food (ghee, milk, yogurt, buttermilk etc) consumption plays a role in influencing women's reproductive health, especially in conditions that involve hormonal deregulation.^[15] Some studies have identified associations between intakes of total dairy foods and a decreased risk of endometriosis.^[16] In addition, a reduced risk of uterine leiomyomata was associated with increasing dairy food intake.^[17]

C. Darbhasansatarshayini (Sleep on mat made up of Darbha): *Darbha* grass has been shown to block X-ray radiation in recent medical studies.^[18] It is also believed that wearing or sitting on *Dharbha* will prevent the energy generated during meditation from being released into the ground.^[19] *Darbha* grass had stunning nano-patterns and

hierarchical nano or micro structures that were absent from other grasses when electron microscopy was used to examine them. CeNTAB (Centre for Nanotechnology and Advanced Bio Materials) and CARISM (Centre for Advanced Research in Indian System of Medicine) collaborated on an intriguing study. At various levels of antibiotic properties and hydrophobicity (the property of a molecule that repels water), *Darbha* is found to be more effective than grass^[20].

D. Kalyanadhyayini (Thinking about positive things): To regulate the menstrual cycle, the estrogen and progesterone are pillar hormones. An abundance of estrogens receptors (ERs) at several locations related to cognition in the CNS.^[21] Optimism is commonly believed to be a protective factor with regard to well-being and physical and psychological health.^[22] One study have concluded that on day of the menstrual cycle, elevated stress was associated with suppressed estradiol across broad regions of the cycle. These findings provide direct evidence for an inhibitory effect of psychological stress on ovarian hormone production and associated fecundity in women.^[23]

E. Tikshna-Ushna-Amla-Lavanani Varjayet (Avoid Spicy, Hot, Sour, Salty food): Concerning dietary factors, several studies have analyzed the possible influence between the consumption of certain foods and menstrual pain, highlighting the potentially protective role of increased consumption of fruits, vegetables, fish and dairy products against menstrual pain.^[24] One clinical study has concluded that positive correlation between the number of times fast food (hamburger, pizza, potato chips, etc.) was consumed by girl and the total score of menstrual distress in the bleeding phase, in such a way that an increase in their consumption increased menstrual distress signs. Menstrual distress includes physical, psychological, and behavioural signs whose associated factors have been categorized based on a bio-psychological and social model.^[25] Regarding the consumption of pulses more than once a week, which was identified as a potential risk factor for menstrual pain, this contrasts with traditional advice provided in Chinese cultures which recommend red bean soup for menstrual pain. In one interventional study, they have advised the less

intake of spicy, acidic and carbonated foods and they concluded that frequency of pain severity in dysmenorrhea was significantly lower in the group treated with it.^[26]

F. Avoid Bathing (Head Bath): Bathing changes the temperature of the body. It is predictable that there is mutual interaction between the neural circuits that regulate energy balance, body temperature and reproduction. The hormonal changes across the menstrual cycle not only directly control reproductive events in women but also exert effects on other physiological systems, including thermoregulation. These effects may represent a systematic approach to creating an environment conducive to implantation, survival, and development of an embryo. The POA of the hypothalamus is centrally important for the regulation of both temperature and reproductive function, and there is a linkage between these two systems.^[27] Control of core body temperature (T_c) is a hypothalamic homeostatic function that is directly regulated by the sex steroids, 17β-estradiol (E2) and progesterone.^[28]

Superficial hydrotherapy application may cause physiologic reactions such as decrease in local metabolic function, local oedema, nerve conduction velocity (NCV), muscle spasm, and increase in local aesthetic effects.^[29] Also, during menstruation internal os is open; this can cause ascending infections into the uterine cavity due to altered pH of vagina. So, water treatments should be limited during this period. Hence, to avoid these all effects on reproductive organs during menstrual, Acharyas may have denied to bath.

G. Eat in Unbroken Clay Vessel: Considering that Mother Nature has a cure for everything, the assessment of natural elements such as this clay should be considered for health. Clay has alkaline properties so utensils made of clay neutralises the pH balance of the food by interacting with acids in food, thus enhances the digestion. When the clay was mixed with water (2–4 parts water to 1 part clay) and incubated for 24 hours with live bacteria at body temperature (37°C), a broad spectrum of bacteria was killed.^[30] These antibacterial effects might result from physical interaction and/or chemical interaction of the clay with bacteria.^[31] Bentonite clay is shown to decrease the bleeding and clotting time and therefore is suggested as a haemostatic agent.^[32]

H. Over Exertion: One study suggested that intense exercise has been reported to cause luteal phase defects (oligomenorrhea and other menstrual dysfunctions) and amenorrhea. Numerous studies have demonstrated that athletes who engage in

intense exercise suffer from oligomenorrhea and amenorrhea, and those who engage in moderate exercise are slightly more likely to have longer periods.

I. Avoid Day Sleeping : One survey study revealed that although menstruating women are likely to show increased disturbance during the luteal phase, those with other, more severe PMS are more likely to experience luteal increase in daytime sleepiness.^[33]

3. Compilation of the references regarding the research study on *Rajaswala Paricharya*

Only one observational and one interventional study have examined the impact of *Rajaswala paricharya* observance on menstrual symptoms till date. After following *Rajaswala paricharya* in terms of diet and other activities for three days over six consecutive cycles, 30 unmarried girls between the ages of 18 and 24 were examined. Other menstrual symptoms included backache, cramps, leg pain, headache, pimples, breast tenderness, loss of appetite, diarrhoea, constipation, vomiting, weakness, and others.^[34] One case study on dysfunctional uterine bleeding on a 25-year-old female reported that observing *Rajaswala paricharya* for four consecutive cycles led to the return of her menstrual cycle to normal from heavy bleeding.^[35] Also, till now 4 research studies have been registered on Clinical trial of registry- India (CTRI), but not completed.

DISCUSSION

All the *Paricharya* have been mentioned for human being will helps to boost immunity. Same as *Rajaswala Paricharya* will also helps to maintain proper at most *Rajaswala* phase or the period of menstruation, is the phase when follicles are recruited for the next cycle and the dominant follicle is chosen by the 5th To 7th day. Following *Rajaswala Paricharya* not only helps the women to adapt to the physiological and psychological changes occurring in the body during menstruation but also helps in conceiving a healthy offspring.

Rajaswala Paricharya if is not followed properly may lead to *Ashta Artava Dushti* (menstrual disorders) or *Yoni Vyapada* which can be correlated with menstrual problems like dysmenorrhoea, menorrhagia, PCOD, Infertility etc. Hence it is necessary to follow *Rajaswala Paricharya* during *Rajaswala Kala*.

Rajaswala Stree can be marked by a person, a person who has undergone *Shodhana* procedure, who is having *Agnimandhya* and a person having a wound i.e., *Vranita Vyakti*. Menstruation can be stated as monthly *Shodhana* procedure. During this period, the mind and body undergo a period of purification and detoxification. After *Shodhana* procedure, *Agni* of an

individual gets decreased. So, during *Rajaswala Paricharya*, *Havishyanna* (food offering to Holy Fire) is advised to increase the *Agni*.^[36] Endometrial shedding during menstruation leads to temporary opening of blood vessels and considered as raw wound. So, similar *Pathya-Apathya* of should be prescribed for during *Rajaswala Paricharya*.

The present-day life style and stress may be the reason for causing all menstrual problems. As those female cannot follow proper *Rajaswala Paricharya*, where monthly *Sharira Shodhana* might not be achieved, in those cases there can be risk for occurrence of *Prameha*, gestational diabetes, PIH, various auto-immunological disorders etc in future.

Hence, lifestyle modification or correction is the primary and utmost intervention for prevention and treatment of such menstrual diseases. However, if in three to six months of efforts at remedying risk factors prove insufficient, and then drug treatment is frequently required.

One study concluded that lifestyle modifications like regular physical activity, decreasing the intake of junk food, and promoting healthy eating habits should be emphasized in school health education programs to improve menstrual health. Another Study has concluded that participants who were willing to follow the traditional *Rajaswala Paricharya* had exhibited great improvement in their physiological and psychological conditions. They reported less symptoms of pain associated with menstruation especially low back pain and abdominal cramps. Therefore, it can be said that following *Rajaswala Paricharya* is helpful in relieving many discomforts during menstruation even in these modern era.^[37]

CONCLUSION

Rajaswala Paricharya is perfect model of *Nidana Parivarjana Chikitsa* (prevention of diseases) so by following *Paricharya*, so if female follows *Paricharya*, female can avoid menstrual disorders and counteract the negative effects of our current way of life on reproduction. Aim of this is avoid vitiation of *Vata* and *Kapha*, prevent formation of *Ama* and restore energy. Most neglected *Paricharya*-*Rajaswala Paricharya* if followed during menstruation, it will help women to respond healthily to the drastic physical and mental changes during menstrual cycle and in relieving symptoms associated with it. Now a day's many platforms like Rashtriya Kishore Swasthya Karyakaram, Anganwadi centres, AYUSH centres, educational Institutions etc., which are adolescent health friendly. So, *Rajaswala Paricharya* should be promoted under the leadership program of above centres to prevent various menstrual problems. This

program will have a lot of impact in transforming the health status of girls who are the potential mothers.

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