

Rajaswala Paricharya: Effect on Menstrual Cycle and Its Associated Symptoms

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Abstract: Ayurveda helps women gain better health and add quality to her life by following “paricharyas”- conduct to be followed during different phases of life like Rajaswala, Garbhini, and Sootika. The most neglected paricharya is the rajaswala paricharya. This topic was selected because it was observed that while Ayurveda has not mentioned any symptoms, modern sciences has described fatigue, lower abdominal pain etc as associated symptoms of menstrual cycle. This study is helpful to find out whether the Rajaswala paricharya has an effect on the menstrual cycle and its associated symptoms. The study was done on 30 healthy unmarried females in the age group of 18 to 24 years having regular menstrual cycle. Subjects were asked to follow the rajaswala paricharya for first three days of their menstrual cycle for a period of six cycles. Menstrual history was taken before and after following the paricharya. Observations were made on the follow-up of each regime every month, number of symptoms of each subject and number of subjects showing presence of each symptom. Chi square test showed significant decrease in the number of subjects showing presence of symptoms. Rajaswala paricharya helps women respond healthily to the drastic physical and psychic changes during the menstrual cycle and in relieving most of the associated symptoms of menstrual cycle.

Keywords: Rajaswala, Paricharya, Menstrual cycle, Associated symptoms.

I. Introduction

Ayurveda helps women in the journey through different phases of her life with the help of paricharyas- code of conduct to be followed during these phases like Rajaswala-Menstruation, Garbhini-Pregnancy and Sootika-Postpartum. Out of the three main epochs of a female life – Bala, Rajaswala and Vriddha, the Rajaswala is the largest and the most important period in the lifetime of a woman as it is the fertile period necessary for reproduction. The rajaswala paricharya helps women adapt well to the physiological changes taking place in the body during the menstruation and thus prevent occurrence of diseases. It also helps in conceiving a healthy offspring. However it is seen that the rajaswala paricharya is not being commonly followed now-a-days.

Current generation women are now working hand in hand with the men of the society. Along with their careers, they alone manage the household responsibilities. The nuclear family system has added to her woes. This has made the life of women busier and hectic than it was before. Such demanding lifestyle has made it very difficult for the present day women to follow the rajaswala paricharya.

In the past, knowledge about such methods to be adopted during certain phases of the life like rajaswala, garbhini, sootika were passed down from one generation women to the other. Due to formation of nuclear families, aversion towards ancient rules and traditions and adoption of western ways of living, this knowledge has lost its way somewhere.

The other major reason for the rajaswala paricharya not being followed these days is the information spread by media and manufacturers of sanitary napkins. In order to demonstrate the soaking capacity and the durability of the sanitary napkin, the girls in the advertisements are shown to be running and dancing around. Some of them have their caption as “it’s the time to change”. Some even ask the females to shun the “old-fashioned” way of behaving during the menstrual cycle. This so called “old-fashioned” way of behaviour is the rajaswala paricharya which has almost lost its importance in today’s world.

The 20th century has observed a drastic rise in the number of menstrual problems and in the cases of infertility which had little or no existence in the past. Menstrual problems like PMS, lower back ache, lower abdominal pain, nausea etc have become so common now-a-days that they are termed as associated symptoms of menstruation. Ayurveda the eternal system of medicine has nowhere mentioned these symptoms as normal associated symptoms of menstruation. Infact it mentions that the menstrual cycle should be devoid of unctuousness, burning sensation and pain. [1]. It is a known fact that rajaswala paricharya was being followed by our ancestors as a routine practice. This study is to find out the effect of the rajaswala paricharya on the physiology of menstrual and its associated symptoms.

II. Aim And Objectives

2.1 Aim

To study the effect of Rajaswalaparicharya on physiology of menstrual cycle and its associated symptoms.

2.2 Objectives

1. To compile and study all references about RajaswalaParicharya and Menstrual cycle from Ayurvedic texts and Modern Literature.
2. To analyse the effectof Rajaswalaparicharya on physiology of menstrual cycle.
3. To analyse the effect of Rajaswalaparicharya on associated symptoms of menstrual cycle.
4. To study the principles behind Rajaswalaparicharya and its application in today's lifestyle.

III. Materials And Methodology

3.1Materials

The literary study was done with the help of ayurvedic texts, modern literature as well as the internet in connection with menstrual cycle and rajaswalaparicharya. A Rajaswala paricharya protocol was prepared as per references from Charak Samhita [2], Sushrut Samhita [3], Ashtang Hrudaya [4] and Ashtang Sangraha [5]. Case paper for taking menstrual history included questionnaire for associated symptoms.

3.1.1 Type of Study

Interventional study.

3.1.2 Inclusion Criteria

A sample of 30 unmarried females in the age group of 18 to 24 years having regular menstrual cycle was selected for this study.

3.1.3 Exclusion Criteria

Females taking any hormonal treatment or any other medication for menstrual cycle.

3.2Methodology

The females were instructed to follow the rajaswala paricharya during the 3 days of their menstrual cycle for 6 consecutive cycles.Complete menstrual history of the candidates was taken before and at the end of 6 cycles.Generated data was subjected to appropriate statistical tests and conclusions were drawn using statistics as well as observations found in this study.

IV. Observations

4.1 Number of subjects following each regime in every month

4.1.1 Most of the protocol namely not adorn oneself, good and virtuous thoughts, not wear ornaments/should not apply make up, no crying, no cutting nails, no applying kajal, no applying creams/lotions/facepack, no applying oil to the body, no outing, no sleeping during day time, following the said diet and no running/jogging/exercise were followed with an average of 24 or more females following it per month which implies that it is pretty easy to follow these during the three days of the menstrual cycle.

4.1.2 The protocol namely no excessive talking and no laughing loudly were followed by 17 and 14 females respectively in the first month. There was a steady increase in the number of females following it. There were 17 females following ‘no excessive talking’ in the 1st month which increased to 27 in the 6th month. There were 14 females following the ‘no laughing loudly’ in the 1st month which increased to 27 in the 6th month.The reason behind this may be, since talking and laughing are the functions of Udanvayu which is responsible for maintaining the bala of the body, it may have proved beneficial in restoring the energy of the females. So with consecutive follow ups the compliance of these two protocols showed steady rise in number of females following it.

4.1.3 The other less followed protocol was no having bath and no listening to music/tv which were followed with an average of 16 and 15 females per month respectively.The reason for not being able to follow the ‘no having bath’ protocol is for hygeinic purpose. Listening to music/tv being a major part and parcel of today's lifestyle, it may be difficult to resist it for even three days.But the fact that nearly 50% of the females were able to follow this protocol itself implies that with a little effort and slight modification in the protocol like cleaning hands,legs, face and genitalia rather than taking a complete bath just for the sake of three days, it may be possible to follow it.Advising the females not to listen music/tv at loud volumes may be a solution to avoid them from ‘atishravan’.

4.1.2 The least followed protocol by the females is sleeping on the mat with an average of 7 females following it per month. It indicates that may be practically it is not possible to follow this protocol in day to day life. It may be due to discomfort, inconvenience or due to cold.

4.2 Average protocol followed every month

Table: Average protocol followed every month

Subject	1 st month	2 nd month	3 rd month	4 th month	5 th month	6 th month
Monthly average	76.10	77.21	79.44	82.58	84.25	86.66
Standard deviation	13.77	14.24	14.08	10.28	7.86	9.29
P value						0.00104

1. The compliance is seen to increase every month.
2. The p value is <0.01.
3. It implies that there is significant increase in the compliance.
4. The reason behind this may be that the Rajaswala paricharya might have proved beneficial to the females.

4.3 Number of subjects showing presence of symptoms

Table: Number of subjects showing presence of symptoms

Symptoms	BEFORE	AFTER	p value
Pain in lower abdomen	28	3	p<0.001
Lower back ache	24	2	p<0.001
Pimples	20	5	p<0.001
Breast tender-ness	1	0	p<0.001
Cramps in calf muscles	13	1	p<0.001
Loss of appetite	17	6	p<0.01
Hot flushes	12	5	p=0.08
Nausea/Vomiting	7	1	p<0.001
Constipation/Increased bowel movements	8	2	p=0.07
Increased frequency of micturition	6	1	p<0.001
Weakness	25	8	p<0.001
Headache/ migraine	11	1	p<0.001
Excitability/Irritability/Depression	21	2	p<0.001

1. Chi square test of significance was applied to find out whether there was a significant decrease in the number of subjects showing presence of symptoms.
2. All the symptoms except two, showed p value less than 0.01 which implies that there was a significant decrease in the number of subjects showing these symptoms which are pain in lower abdomen, lower back ache, pimples, breast tenderness, pain in calf muscles, loss of appetite, nausea/vomiting, increased frequency of micturition, weakness, headache and excitability/irritability/depression.
3. In case of the symptom 'hot flushes', p value was found to be equal to 0.08 and in case of constipation or increased frequency of motions the p value was equal to 0.07. It means there was no significant decrease in these symptoms. The reason behind this may be that these two symptoms may have a more deep rooted etiopathology which may be depended on the other factors affecting the menstrual cycle and its associated symptoms as mentioned earlier.

4.4 Subject wise symptom relief

Table: Subject wise symptom relief

Subject	Symptoms		Percentage Symptoms	
	Before	After	Before	After
1	6	1	46.15385	7.692308
2	8	0	61.53846	0
3	5	0	38.46154	0
4	6	1	46.15385	7.692308
5	6	0	46.15385	0
6	6	0	46.15385	0
7	9	3	69.23077	23.07692
8	4	1	30.76923	7.692308
9	4	1	30.76923	7.692308
10	9	0	69.23077	0
11	2	0	15.38462	0
12	8	3	61.53846	23.07692
13	6	2	46.15385	15.38462
14	7	0	53.84615	0

15	4	1	30.76923	7.692308
16	8	2	61.53846	15.38462
17	7	3	53.84615	23.07692
18	8	4	61.53846	30.76923
19	9	3	69.23077	23.07692
20	5	0	38.46154	0
21	6	0	46.15385	0
22	8	2	61.53846	15.38462
23	9	1	69.23077	7.692308
24	8	4	61.53846	30.76923
25	7	1	53.84615	7.692308
26	4	1	30.76923	7.692308
27	3	0	23.07692	0
28	4	0	30.76923	0
29	8	2	61.53846	15.38462
30	9	1	69.23077	7.692308

All subjects showed significant reduction in symptoms.

V. Discussion

5.1 Role of Rajaswala paricharya on physiology of menstrual cycle. (Role of Rajaswala paricharya in woman health)

After studying the Rajaswala paricharya from various texts, it can be observed that the Rajaswala essentially falls into one of the three categories given below:

1. A person who has undergone shodhan procedure
2. A person having decreased digestive capacity(agnimandya)
3. A person having a wound (vranit vyakti)

5.1.1 A person who has undergone shodhan procedure

According to ayurved, menstruation is a naturally occurring shodhan process occurring every month in the life of a woman during the fertile period of her life. It is also evident from the fact that most of the do's and don'ts are exactly the same as that for a person who has undergone shodhan procedure as mentioned in Ashta-Mahadoshkar bhav [6].

Ashta-Mahadoshkar bhav	Rajaswala Paricharya
Talking in loud voices(uchhai-bhashya)	No excessive talking/Talking in loud voices (ati-kathan)
Travelling in vehicles(Ratha-kshobha)	No running(pradhavan), outing and exertion (anilayaas sevan)
Excessive walking (ati-chankraman)	---
Sitting in one place for a long time(ati-aasane)	
Having food in ajeerna awastha(ajeerna bojan)	Eat food in less quantity (stoka-anna), follow prescribed diet (hitkar ahar), havishya anna.
Having non-prescribed food(Ahit-bhojan)	
Sleeping during the day(diwaswap)	No sleeping during the day(diwaswap)
Sexual intercourse (maithun)	No sexual intercourse (maithun)

Due to the physiological changes taking place in a menstruating woman, she has affinity towards various diseases. A menstruating female should be taken care of just as a person undergone shodhan procedure would be taken care of. Whether it is a person undergone shodhan or a rajaswala, these prescribed ahaar-vihhaar mainly aim at avoiding vitiation of vata and kapha dosha, prevention of aamaj vikaar, restoring the bala and nurturing the agni of the person. This is derived from the study of the effects of the ashta-mahadoshkar bhav [6]. Thus, following the rajaswala paricharya women respond healthily to the physiological changes by keeping the doshas, bala and the agni of the rajaswala in a balanced state.

5.1.2 A person having agnimandya

Decrease in appetite is experienced by many menstruating females. The agni of an individual is reduced during or after any of the shodhanupakram like vamana and virechan. As menstruation is a naturally occurring shodhan process, physiological decrease in digestive capacity (agnimandya) is observed during menstruation.

The diet mentioned for the Rajaswala is the havishyaanna, which literally means the food suitable for offering in the holy fire. The food substances offered in the holy fire slowly and steadily flare up the fire. The holy fire in the body corresponds to the jatharagni. The sansarjankrama to be followed by a shodhityyakti also aims at increasing the agni slowly and steadily upto a point where it is able to digest any type of foodstuffs easily. Havishyaanna plays the same role in a Rajaswala.

The other diet for Rajaswala includes Karshan (laghu, ruksha) aahar, stokaanna(less quantity) which is very easy to digest. The substances like hing, saindhav, sunth, ela are deepan, pachan which ignites the agni. Due to agnimandya, Rajaswala should religiously observe the prescribed diet, should not sleep during the day time, should not apply oil or any lepa to the body, should not have a bath and should not do any form of exercise.

5.1.3 A person having a wound

The menstrual blood indicates an active wound in the body that is the shedding uterus. Based on this, the Rajaswala can be considered as a vranityyakti. Moreover, the pathya-apathyya prescribed for Rajaswala is almost the same as that prescribed for a wounded person or a person who has undergone surgery [7]. The pathya-apathyya found common for both are as follows:

Pathyakar

1. Food like yava, godhum (wheat), shashtik rice, masoor, moong, brinjal, saindhav, ghee.
2. Laghuaahar, agnisandeepanaahar, in proper quantity, easily digestable.

Aphyakar

1. Sleeping during the day time
2. Maithun karma (intercourse)- thinking about a female, touching her, seeing her, or whatever stimulates the shukradhatu, is prohibited
3. Aayas (exertion of any form)
4. Tikshna, ushna (hot), katu (spicy), amla (sour), lavan (salty), atisnigdha (too oily), atiguru (heavy to digest), vidahi, vishtambhi foods should be avoided.

This pathya-apathyya for a wounded person is prescribed so that the wound of a person heals up quickly without any complications such as swelling, induration, suppuration, necrosis, itching, pain or fever. This applies to the wound present in the menstruating female also. Thus, not following the Rajaswalaparicharya may be one of the causes of yonivypat or rajodushti like kunapraja (foul smelling menstrual blood), pooya raj (pyogenic menstrual blood) and granthiraja (clotted menstrual blood) which indicates necrosis or pyogenesis. It may also give rise to less severe symptoms like those mentioned in “associated symptoms of menstruation”. It can also be postulated that, in the long run it may be the causative factor of some of the major problems faced by several women these days like polycystic ovarian disease and infertility. The above relation between a Rajaswala and a vranit vyakti indicates that utmost care should be taken of a menstruating female just as a wounded person would be taken care of, to avoid dire consequences.

5.2 Effect of Rajaswalaparicharya on associated symptoms of menstrual cycle.

Table: Effect of rajaswala paricharya on associated symptoms of menstrual cycle.

Symptom	Cause	Paricharya relieving the symptom
Pain in lower abdomen and lower backache	Contraction of uterus to expel retained menstrual blood caused by Apan vayu avarodh	Koshtashoshan, karshan ahaar, stoka anna, havishya anna, deepan, paachan, vaatanulomak anna are easy to digest, clears the bowel easily relieving apan vayu avarodh.
Pain/Cramps in calf muscles	Shakrut sang [8], Vata prakop [9], Pandu [10]	Diet relieves shakrut sang. Prohibition of exertion, talking less, no laughing and diet prevents vata prakop.
Headache/Migrane	Dysmenorrhea,Shakrut sang	Above mentioned.
Nausea/Vomiting	Severe dysmenorrhea or severe menstrual migraine	Above mentioned.
Weakness	Blood loss, shodhan of the body, vata prakop by exertion etc	Prevention of vata prakop by following paricharya.
Excitability/Irritability/Depression	Vikrut rasa dhatus, mana-rasa-raja relationship.	Good and virtuous thoughts, no crying, diet.
Breast tenderness	Apan avarodh-Raja avarodh-raja urdhwagami-breast heaviness and tenderness	Relieving apan avarodh as above
Increased frequency of motions	Agnimandya-apathyakar ahar-atisaar	Avoid apathy ahaar, follow diet.
Increased frequency of micturition	Agnimandya-apathyakar ahar-aam ras-bahu mutrata	Avoid apathy ahaar, follow diet.
Pimples	Agnimandya-Apathyakar ahaar-vitiation of kapha,vata and rakt-pimples	Avoid apathy ahaar, follow diet.

5.3 Principles behind rajaswala paricharya and its application in today's lifestyle.

Table: Principles behind rajaswala paricharya and its application in today's lifestyle

Paricharya	Textual reason (effect on child)	Principle	Application in today's lifestyle
Diet	-	Deepan,Pachan, Agnipradipiti, vaatanuloman	Eating the prescribed things for 3 days of menstruation

No running	Unsteady	To avoid exertion and vitiation of vata dosha. Restore energy of rajaswala during the period	Avoid physical work and take rest as much as possible. Avoid strenuous work, travelling, and long working hours.
No laughing loudly	Blackish Teeth,lips,palate, tongue		
No excessive talking	Talkative child		
No outing	Insane child		
Good and virtuous thoughts	-	Avoid mental stress.	Keep mind as calm and relaxed as possible and avoid anxiety/stress.
No crying	Ophthalmic disorders		
No sleeping during the day time	Sleepy child	Prevent vitiation of kapha and pitta and formation of aam.	No sleeping during the day time
Not adorn oneself, not wear ornaments, not apply make-up	-	Instigate ascetic thoughts.	Not adorn oneself, not wear ornaments, not apply make-up
Sleep on a darbha mat	-		Sleep on a darbha mat if available or drink darbha decoction
No having bath	Unhappy child		Not have a complete bath (Follow basic hygiene like cleaning genetalia, hands legs and face)
Follow celibacy	-		Follow celibacy
No listening to music	Deaf child	Prevent vata prakop and rasa dushti	No listening to music/hearing at low voices
No applying any creams/oil to the body	Unhappy child/skin disorders	Lep and abhyang contraindicated in agnimandya	No applying any creams/oil to the body
No cutting nails	Bad nails	Cannot be understood exactly	No cutting nails
No applying corrylium	Blind child		No applying corrylium

VI. Conclusion

- 6.1 There was a significant increase in the compliance which shows that Rajaswalaparicharya definitely benefitted the subjects who participated in this study.
- 6.2 Most of the protocol showed an average follow up of 23 or more females (following it per month), hence it is concluded that following Rajaswalaparicharya is certainly feasible.
- 6.3 It is possible to follow protocol like no having bath and no listening to music/tv with a slight modification.
- 6.4 As a mat made of darbha plays a role in the paricharya, sleeping on a regular mat has no significance.
- 6.5 Effect on physiology of menstrual cycle: Rajaswalaparicharya help women respond healthily to the drastic physical and psychic changes during the menstrual cycle.
- 6.6 Effect on associated symptoms of menstrual cycle: Rajaswalaparicharya is helpful in relieving most of the associated symptoms of menstrual cycle.

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