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# Role of Ayurveda in the management of Vandhyatva w.s.r. to Infertility

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## ABSTRACT

*Vandhyatva* (infertility) is a condition of one year of intercourse without conception involving a male and a female partner. This health problem is present since ancient period and is increasing with the changing lifestyle. Stress and working pattern with multiple other factors affects the health and motility of spermatozoa leading to abnormalities in the factors which are essential for the conception. It is hard to accurately pinpoint male infertility prevalence across the globe since many cases do not get reported in many countries. Some studies concludes infertility cases close to 48 million couples worldwide, 50% infertility cases are women related, 30% are caused due to male infertility, and rest due to other factors. There is increasing public awareness for the implications of this problem and about the advancement available in the field of infertility. Many concepts and medicine are introduced by modern practitioner but they are not free from side effects. In *Ayurveda*, *Vandhyatva* (infertility) is a condition where, due to factors like *Sukra Dosh* (unhealthy semen), *Ativyayama* (over exercise), loss of *Bala* (low strength) and improper *Ahara* (food) and *Vihara* (lifestyle) etc., the *Beejamsha* (spermatozoa and ova) gets defected and finally leads to reduced fertility of *Sukradhatu* (sperm). In *Ayurveda*, this condition is managed with multiple concepts of correcting the states of *Dhatu* and *Doshas*. *Balya* (which increases strength of body), *Vrishya* (which increase fertility), *Brumhana* (which nourishes body), *Rasayana* (nourishing tissues) and *Vajeekarana Dravya* (increasing sexual potency) are used effectively in improving sexual wellness. Therefore here an attempt is made, to understand *Vandhyatva* (infertility) from all aspects of reduced fertility and management of the condition from *Ayurveda* point of view has been elaborated.

**Key words:** *Vandhyatva*, *Sukra*, *Ativyayama*, *Bala*, *Ahara*, *Vihara*, *Bejamsha*, *Sukradhatu*, *Dhatu*, *Doshas*, *Balya*, *Vrishya*, *Brumhana*, *Rasayana*, *Vajeekarana*, *Infertility*.

## INTRODUCTION

Infertility is the condition when a female is unable to conceive within one year of regular unprotected intercourse. There are two types of *Infertility*, Primary infertility refers to couples who have not become

pregnant after at least 1 year having sex without using birth control methods and Secondary infertility as couples who have been able to get pregnant at least once, but are now unable.<sup>[2]</sup>

*Vandhyatwa* (infertility) is the failure to achieve a successful pregnancy after a years or failure to conceive for several years after the first delivery.<sup>[1]</sup>

Infertility is a common problem now a days and becoming a distressful condition. In *Ayurveda* *Vandhyatwa* has been explained equivalent to infertility. The principle cause of *Vandhyatwa* is imbalance in *Artavahasrotas*.<sup>[3]</sup>

### Concepts of Infertility in Ayurveda

#### *Vandhyatva*

There are three *Srotas* (micro channels) in women's body that are *Rajovahasrotas* - includes uterus,

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cervix and vagina along with their blood supply, *Artavahasrotas* - includes ovary and fallopian tube along with their blood supply and *Stanyavahasrotas* - includes breast tissue along with its blood supply.<sup>[4]</sup> *Vajikarana* is the Ayurvedic medicine that deals with issues of infertility. In women, the ovum is produced by *Shukra Dhatu* as a part of monthly cycle, in men sexual stimulation is responsible for semen formation.<sup>[5]</sup> In *Ayurveda* four factors responsible for a healthy conception mentioned are *Ritu* (fertile period), *Kshetra* (female genital tract), *Ambu* (nutritive fluid) and *Beeja* (ovum and sperm) which unites together in their normal state to produce an offspring. Abnormality in any of the *Shada Bhavas* (six factors), that are mother, father, *Atma*, *Satva*, *Satmya* and *Rasa* causes infertility.

#### Causes of Vandhyatva (Infertility)

The reason for the growing infertility among today's men and women is primarily due to changing lifestyle, dietary habits, lack of exercise, obesity and increased anxiety and stress. Infertility can be due to male or female factors. Infertility in female can be due to abnormalities in reproductive organs like ovary, or fallopian tube, uterine problems etc. Male infertility can be due to defected sperm or its abnormal motility. Hormonal imbalance, age and stress also have an impact in reducing fertility. Some of the physical causes that reduce fertility are obesity, anemia, drug abuse like cocaine, low testosterone level etc.<sup>[6]</sup> Pathological causes like chromosomal disorder, ductus occlusion, infections like mumps etc. also causes infertility.

In *Ayurveda* the imbalance in the *Doshas* and *Agni* may cause infertility, abnormality in *Ritu*, *Kshetra*, *Ambu* and *Beeja* hinders the process of conception. Obstruction in the normal path of sperm such as obturated hymen, obstruction in cervical canal, absence or infected ovaries, or membranous dysmenorrhoea are some other factors responsible for infertility.

#### Types of Vandhyatva (Infertility)

In *Ayurveda*, nine types of *Vandhya* has been explained on the basis of *Dosha* or causes involved

that are *Aadivandhya*, *Raktavandhya*, *Vatavandhya*, *Pittavandhya*, *Kaphavandhya*, *Tridoshvandhya*, *Grahadosha Janya*, *Daeva Bala Janya*, *Guruaadi Apachara Janya*.<sup>[7]</sup>

#### Pathogenesis of Vandhyatva (Infertility)

*Ritukala* is a period of *Kapha Pitta* predominance and it is effected by *Vata* or *Pitta*, any disorder of *Ambu* (nutritional fluid), *Artava Dosha* and *Shukra Dosha* and abnormality in *Kshetra* (female genital tract) like *Margaavrodha* (obstruction of fallopian tube), *Vyapanna Yoni* (vaginal pathology) are the factors involved in failure of conception and thus causing *Vandhyatva*. Apart from this psychological factors also affect the normal course of conception and is responsible for infertility.

#### Treatment aspect in Ayurveda

Infertility treatment focus on treating the couple on the basis of frequency of intercourse during the fertile window, management of ovulatory dysfunction, treating the tubal, uterine or pelvic diseases. Management of male factor infertility by treating the erectile dysfunctioning if indicated. Therefore the treatment is planned according to the causative factor. Intrauterine insemination, clomiphene citrate therapy, and intrauterine insemination with either clomiphene citrate or gonadotropin therapy, IVF has not been proven in patients with unexplained infertility.<sup>[8],[9]</sup> *Ayurveda* supports health by strengthening body's own healing system and balancing mechanism.

The treatment principles of infertility in *Ayurveda* are, *Agni Deepana* (increasing the digestive fire) and *Ama Pachana* (removing the toxic metabolite), *Vatanulomana* (correcting the flow of *Vata Dosha*), *Shodhana* (cleaning) and releasing the impurities and tension from the body.

To improve spermatogenesis, general hygiene, maintaining body weight, quitting smoking or alcohol and proper exercise is helpful. *Panchakarma* (body cleaning procedures) followed by medication mentioned by *Acharyas* under *Shukra Shodhana Gana* (drugs that help in purifying sperm) and *Shukra*

*Janana Gana* (drugs that help in formation of sperm) are useful in managing the male infertility.

In female, *Shodhana* (purification therapy) and *Shamana* (pacification therapy) are adopted. Other medicines like medicated *Ghrita* such as *Kalyanaka Ghrita*, *Darimaadya Ghrita* and oil preparations like *Narayana Taila* and *Satapushpa Taila* can be given.

Some of the herbs like *Ashoka* (*Saraca asoka*), *Shatavari* (*Asparagus racemosus*), *Kumari* (*Aloe barbadensis*) and *Amruta* (*Tinospora cardifolia*) shows aphrodisiac effect.

### Role of Rasayana, Vajekarana drugs in Ayurveda

*Vajikarana* or *Vrishya Chikitsa* is a one of eight major specialty of the *Ashtanga Ayurveda* which has aphrodisiacs effect and improves virility and health of progeny. *Vajikarana* producing a horse's vigor, particularly the animal's great capacity for sexual activity in the individual. It revitalizes all seven *Dhatus*, restores equilibrium and health. *Rasayana* drugs modulates neuro-endocrino-immune system. *Vajikarana Rasayana* is the special category of *Rasayana*, which improve the reproductive system and enhance sexual function. *Vajikarana* also claims to have anti-stress, adaptogenic actions to alleviate anxiety associated with sexual desire and performance.<sup>[10]</sup> Some of the formulations are, *Vrihani Gutika*, *Vrishya Gutika*, *Vajikaranam Ghritam*, *Upatyakari Shashtikadi Gutika* etc.<sup>[11]</sup>

### CONCLUSION

Management of infertility can be done by correcting the components involved in affecting fertility and modifying the lifestyle and diet of the patient by following the *Pathya* (wholesome) and avoiding *Apathya* (unwholesome). Anxiety, stress and any other noticeable cause like drug abuse should be avoided. The right combination of herbs helps in regulating menstrual cycles. *Vajikarana* is an important treatment modality as per Ayurveda with benefits in increased sexual capacity, improving health of future progeny and treatment of many sexual disorders like

infertility, erectile dysfunction and premature ejaculation etc. Ayurvedic treatment modalities helps in keeping the state of normalcy and equilibrium, which results into proper condition for fertilization.

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