



ISSN 2456-3110

Vol 7 · Issue 6

July 2022

Journal of
**Ayurveda and Integrated
Medical Sciences**

www.jaims.in

JAIMS

An International Journal for Researches in Ayurveda and Allied Sciences



Maharshi Charaka
Ayurveda

Indexed

Cervical factors as a cause of *Vandhyatwa*

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ABSTRACT

Vandhyatwa is the condition where a female is unable to conceive which could be due to various causes and one of the causes can be due to abnormality in the cervix either anatomical or physiological abnormality. Cervical factor can contribute to infertility to a large extent. It could be a cervicitis, cervical stenosis, cervical erosion, cervical mucus hostile to sperm, anatomical defects like or pin hole os of the cervix, even sometimes existing cervical carcinoma. In case of a cervical pathology, we can benefit the patient with specific line of management based on Ayurvedic references. *Sodhana* procedures prior to any treatment will be helpful in making the *Yoni Shudha* and *Shodhana* helps in controlling the excessive *Dosha* vitiation and further treats *Vandhya*. Ayurvedic formulations and *Sthanika Chikitsas* are well explained in the Ayurvedic classical texts to improve the cervical mucus quality.

Key words: *Vandhya*, *Vandhyatwa*, *Cervical factor*.

INTRODUCTION

Vandhyatwa is a condition where the female fails to conceive due to *Mithya Ahara* and *Vihara*. *Vagbhata* mentions that due to *Pradushta Beeja* and also due to maldevelopment of the female reproductive tract, *Vandhyatwa* can result.^[1] *Shabdakosha* mentions that a lady without progeny is termed as *Vandhya*.

Infertility is defined as the failure to conceive within one or more years of regular unprotected coitus.^[2] There are various causes which can be lead of infertility including male and female factors. Based on WHO one

in every four couples in developing countries are effected by infertility of 60 to 80 million couples suffering from infertility every year worldwide, probably between 15 and 20 million (25%) are in India alone. The uterine cervix plays an important role in conception and cervix is the part that connects the uterus to the vagina. Thus, any defect in the cervix anatomically and physiologically can cause infertility and incidence in infertility due to cervical factor is about 6% in infertile couples.

Causes of cervical factor in Ayurveda

Based on the Ayurvedic classical references the role of cervix as a part of female reproductive system in causing female infertility are following:

The two possible causes of infertility are congenital and acquired.

- 1. *Ashudha Yoni*:** Acharya Bhela has mentioned that a women will remain infertile due to *Vata* vitiation and also due to *Yoni Dosha*. Thus, considering *Yoni* as part of the reproductive system i.e., cervix, if found unhealthy or defected can lead to *Vandhyatwa*. Ayurvedic management can be adopted to make the *Yoni Shudha* and as *Shudha Yoni* is considered to be ideal for conception. Thus,

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Submission Date: 09/05/2022 Accepted Date: 18/06/2022

Access this article online

Quick Response Code



Website: www.jaims.in

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the treatment includes *Shodhana*, *Shamana Chikitsa* and *Sthanika Chikitsa* and there are various formulations too which can benefit the patients in correcting the cervical pathology.

2. **Garbhashaya Beeja Bhaga Pradosha:** Acharya Charaka has explained in *Sharirasthana* that a lady will be *Vandhya* when she has *Shonita* and *Garbhashaya Beeja Bhaga Pradosha*.^[3]
3. **Suchimukhi Yonivyapad:** There are various references which denotes that due to congenital abnormality of reproductive system, the woman may be remain *Vandhya* and one such condition is *Suchimukhi* or *Suchivaktra Yonivyapad*. Here, Acharya Charaka mentions that pregnant lady who consumes *Ruksha Ahara* will have vata dushti that affects the yoni of female fetus leading to *Suchimukhi Yoni Vyapad*.^[4] Pin hole OS of the cervix can be taken as *Suchimukhi*. Treatment adopted here is use of *Vatahara Chikitsa*. The patient is advised to undergo *Vivarana* of the *Yoni Dwara* that is dilation of the cervix.
4. **Antarmukhi** is the condition that has been explained by Acharya Charaka as bending of the *Yonimukha* i.e., *Vakrayati Anana Yoni*.^[5] This condition is yet another form of anatomical defect where due to retroverted and retroflexed uterus, the cervical position may not be usually normal and thus hampering the ascent of sperm leading to *Vandhyatwa*. As this is the condition that is caused due to *Vata Prakopa*. *Vatahara* line of treatment can be adopted.
5. **Karnini** is a condition where there are *Karnikas* in the *Yoni* which resembles *Mamsaankur*. These growths obstructs of the *Rakta Marga (Rakta Marga Avarodhniya)* and thus this could be the cause of *Vandhyatwa* due to *Sanga*. Here the *Doshas* vitiated are *Kapha* and *Rakta* and there is vitiation of *Vayu* also. Thus, the management should be based on correction of *Kapha*, *Rakta* and *Vayu*.
6. **Yoni Arshas** is a condition where there are development of muscular sprouts which are

umbrella shaped (*Chatra Kara*) and are caused due to vitiation of *Doshas* that causes destruction of *Yoni* and *Artava (Te Tu Yonim Upagnanti Artavam)*.^[6] This is one of the cause for infertility. This treatment is based on the type of *Yoni Arsha* and explained that it is *Sadhya* by use of *Bhisaja*, *Kshara*, *Agni* and *Shastra*.

7. **Shlaishmiki Yonivyapad** is a condition where the woman complains of excessive vaginal discharge with *Yoni Kandu*. The symptoms are very similar to infections like candidiasis and trichomoniasis. These in turn effects the health of the cervical tissues. The excessive thick mucoid discharge in the vagina hampers the ascent of the sperm. Thus, in such cases infertility is evident. Here *Yoni Prakshalan* and *Yoni Pichu* with medicated drugs can cure the condition and help in conception.
8. **Garbhashayagreeva Mukhagata Vrana** is yet another condition where there is presence of *Vrana* over the *Mukha* of the *Garbhashaya Greeva* and the symptoms present here are similar to that of the cervical erosion. Though cervical erosion may not be directly responsible for causing *Vandhyatwa* but it is the condition where cervix remains unhealthy and the various discharges mixed with blood and mucus may not allow the sperm to ascend up. Ayurveda provides better cure in the form of *Sthanika Chikitsa* like *Yavakshara* application and also *Yoni Prakshalana*, *Yonipichu* with *Vrana Ropaka Dravyas*.

The cervical factors leading to infertility

As a part of reproductive system, cervix plays an important role to achieve conception, any functional or anatomical defect in cervix could be responsible for infertility. In about 6% of infertile couples, the infertility is caused by the cervical factor.

The cervical glands secrete mucus that is normally thick and impervious to sperm and ascending infections. High estrogen level at mid cycle induces mucus to become thin and stretchy and to have a higher sodium chloride concentration. Estrogen - primed cervical mucus filters out non sperm component of semen and

forms channels that help direct sperm into the uterus. Midcycle mucus also creates a reservoir for sperm. This allows ongoing release during the next 24 to 72 hours and extends the potential time for fertilization.

Abnormality in mucus production is most frequently observed in women who have undergone cryosurgery, cervical conization or a loop - electrosurgical excision procedure for treatment of cervical neoplasia. Cervical infection may also worsen mucus quality.

Laboratory Investigations

The post coital test, also known as the Sims - Huhner test, has been used historically to evaluate cervical mucus. A couple is requested to have intercourse on the day of ovulation and a sample of the cervical mucus is evaluated for elasticity (Spinnbarkeit) and for the number of motile sperm per high power field.

Ayurvedic management in treating cervical factors

To benefit the patients suffering from cervical pathology and to treat Vandhyatwa in turn, the following treatment protocol can be adopted –

स्नेह स्वेद वमन विरेचनास्थापनानुवासनैः क्रमशः
उपचरेन्मधुरीषधसिद्धाभ्यां क्षीरघृतपुष्टं पुरुषं स्त्रियं तु तैलमांसा
भ्यामित्येकेः सात्म्न्यैरेवेति प्रजापतिः॥ (का.सं.शा.5/3)

1. Shodhana^[7]

Based on the Doshas involved - Vamana, Virechana and Basti can be administered.

2. Shamana

Based on the Doshas involved the formulations can be selected to treat cervical pathology mentioned in Ayurvedic texts.

3. Sthanika Chikitsa: The following local procedures can be adopted to treat cervical pathologies.

Yoni Pichu with *Kasisadi Thaila*, *Yestimadhu Thaila*, *Jatyadi Thaila*

Yoni Prakshalana with *Triphala Kashya* and *Panchavalkala Kashaya*.

Yoni Dhoopana with *Haridra*, *Vacha*, and *Guggulu*

Yoni Lepana with *Phala Grita* and *Sukumar Ghrita*

Yoni Purana with *Jatyadi Ghrita*, *Phala Ghrita*, *Mahanarayana Thaila*.

Shastra Karma: The surgical procedures should be followed wherever necessary to correct the cervical pathology for example in cases of *Yoni Arshas*, *Acharya Susruta* has mentioned about *Shastra Karma* based on the characteristic of *Arshas*. Thus, correcting the growths around the cervix through *Shalya Karma* clears the obstructed *Artavavaha Srotas* and helps in conception.

DISCUSSION

Vandhya is the *Stree* who is infertile and it affects both the couples psychologically to a greater extent. *Vandhyatwa* caused due to cervical pathology are having varied reasons like cervical infection, cervical inflammation, growth over the cervix or any other anatomical abnormalities can be successfully treated. Ayurvedic management can prove beneficial in correcting cervical factor and improving the quality of cervical mucus allowing the easy ascend of sperms and finally leading to conception.

CONCLUSION

Ayurvedic management in treating cervical factor in *Vandhyatwa* proves effective when followed appropriately.

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How to cite this article: Pallavi Maheshwari, Papiya Jana. Cervical factors as a cause of Vandhyatwa. J Ayurveda Integr Med Sci 2022;6:141-144.

Source of Support: Nil, **Conflict of Interest:** None declared.

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