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# Women's Infertility - A Ayurvedic thought

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## ABSTRACT

Infertility primarily refers to the biological inability of a person to contribute to conception. In women, it may also refer to the state when she is not able to carry a pregnancy to its full term. Female infertility is caused due to structural problems like blocked Fallopian tubes, defect in cervical canal, uterine fibroid or polyps. Hormonal imbalance leading .ovulation problems too can cause infertility. From Ayurvedic perspectives, *Shukra Dhatu* can get affected by various physical, mental causes and even by serious diseases. Poor quality *Shukra Dhatu* can cause infertility in males and females.

**Key words:** Female Infertility, *Shukra Dhatu*, Hormonal Imbalance.

## INTRODUCTION

According to *Ayurveda*, infertility exists when a healthy couple is unable to achieve pregnancy after two or more years or fail to conceive for several years after the first delivery.<sup>[1]</sup> Ayurveda gives infertile women or couples the ability through treatment to become fertile and conceive naturally without the use of Western modalities. Ayurvedic interpretation of the female reproductive system '*Shroni*' means the pelvis. Female pelvis is 24 *Angulas* and is heavier than the pelvis of the male. '*Ashaya*' means any recipient viscus. '*Garbhasaya*' means uterine cavity and is situated behind the '*Bhagasthi*' (symphysis pubis) and a little above the bladder. It is surrounded by coils of intestines and is placed between small intestine (*Pittashaya*) and large intestine (*Pittashaya*).<sup>[2]</sup> *Yoni* includes all the female genital organs. Embryology is

known as *Atulyagotriya*.<sup>[3]</sup>

Ayurvedic medicine that deals with issues of infertility is called *Vajikarana*. The word "*Vaji*" means horse, so *Vajikarana* means "to make one potent like a horse".<sup>[4]</sup> The Ayurvedic term for the diseases of the female reproductive system is *Guhyaroga*.<sup>[5]</sup> *Garbharoga* is the term for the diseases of the Vagina.<sup>[6]</sup> Diseases of the vagina (*Yoni in Sanskrit*) are called *Yoni Vyapat*. According to *Ayurveda*, conception takes place due to healthy sperm, healthy ovum, and a healthy uterus. For both men and women, reproductive health depends on the health of the *Shukra Dhatu*, or reproductive tissue. In women the *Shukra* tissue produces the ovum as part of the monthly cycle and in men the semen is formed due to sexual stimulation.<sup>[3]</sup>

*Charaka Samhita* summarized the description of conception as follows: "When normal semen is introduced into the healthy vagina during a well-developed proliferative phase which is accompanied with ovulation, then the coitus becomes a fruitful one and conception results." In *Harita's* opinion, when sperm is encircled by ovum in a proper type of intercourse, conception takes place. *Kasyapa* also expressed the same opinion - "As soon as the *Beeja* (ovum and sperm) enters, it is surrounded by *Rakta*." This *Sutra* explains that the fertilized ovum gets encircled by blood as soon as it enters uterus.<sup>[7]</sup>

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*Sushruta Samhita* described the physiological changes occurring during intercourse, "Teja is produced during contact and this stimulates *Vatodeerana*. Teja along with *Vata* causes secretion of *Shukra*. *Shukra* travels to *Yoni* and unites with *Artava*. The resulting product of union of *Agni* and *Soma* then travels to *Garbhashaya*."<sup>[8]</sup>

*Bhava Mishra* explained that the physical contact of penis and vagina gives rise to increase in the bodily heat which along with *Vata* causes secretion of semen. The semen is dropped in vagina from penis. From vagina, it is taken to the uterus and meets the ovum.<sup>[9]</sup>

### Ayurvedic etiology of infertility

Women's fertility depends on nature's *Rasa* and when these *Rasas* are depleted, sterility, dryness, loneliness, and isolation are bound to set in. In order to conceive a healthy child, one should be *Swastha* or fully healthy oneself. This optimum state of health provides the fertile ground for the embryo to implant and grow.<sup>[10]</sup>

### Types of infertility as written in classical texts

Following are the details about infertility as per classical texts,

Mainly Infertility is classified based on the following criteria

- Primary and Secondary,
- Curable and Incurable,
- Chance of getting Fertile

### Causes for Sterility

Disorder of *Artava*, abnormality and injuries of female genital tract, disease of female genital tract, Improper Intercourse.

Menstrual cycle is a state of health in female and can be affected by many factors, Such as excessive stress and strain, imbalance life style, diet and emotional instability. Imbalance in any of these factors lead to vitiation of *Ojas*, *Dhatu* and *Doshas*. Vitiating of *Doshas* leads to following symptoms.

Vitiating Of *Vata Dasha* produced dryness in cervix, fallopian tubes, vitiation of *Pitta* causes bleeding,

inflammation and pain, dryness in uterus, small blister and fibroid and vitiation of *Kapha* causes stickiness, thickening of uterus, white discharge, irregular bleeding and irregular cycle.

### Factors of Conception

- *Rutu* - Fertile period governed by *Kapha*, developed proliferate phase accompanied with ovulation.
- *Kshetra* - Healthy uterus and female genital tract.
- *Ambu* - *Ambu* means metabolic as well as hormones supplied for the growth of fetus.
- *Beeja* - Ovum and Sperm

### Factors affecting fertility in woman

*Rutukala* is a period of *Kapha-Pitta* predominance and when affected by *Vata* or *Pitta* causes infertility. Disorders of *Ambu* can cause issues in amniotic fluid and nutritional insufficiency after conception. Disorders of *Beeja* can also cause subfertility. Disorders in *Kshetra* can cause *Margavarodha* (obstruction in fallopian tubes), *Vyapanna Yoni* or *Garbhasaya* (uterine, cervical or vaginal pathology causing hostility to spermatozoa).

According to Charaka, abnormalities of *Yoni*, psychology, *Shukra*, *Artava*, diet and mode of life, coitus at improper time and loss of *Bala* (strength) cause delay in achieving conception in an otherwise fertile woman. According to the Charaka Samhita, Abnormalities of *Atman* and *Sattwa* or influence of misdeeds done by the couple in their previous life can cause infertility.

### The Ayurvedic approach

According to the Charaka Samhita, "All disease occurs due to imbalance in *Agni* (the power of digestion) and *Agni* is the single most important factor in the build up of *Ama*. Healthy *Agni* will also contribute to healthy *Ojas*. The most refined and subtle essence of the physical body. When fully activated, *Ojas* is the "bliss factor" that goes beyond good health to keep you fully immune against all disease." Optimum *Ojas* is the key to perfect health, as well as to balanced emotions and to spiritual development.

**Dietary management**<sup>[11,12]</sup>

Diet plays a vital role in the maintenance of good health and in the prevention and cure of diseases. As per Ayurveda, food affects the mind also by causing either an increase or decrease in the three qualities of mind, i.e., *Satva Guna*, *Rajo Guna* and *Tamo Guna*. Dietary management involves strict compliance and adherence to *Ojas* building foods and to avoid the substances which diminish the *Ojas*. This is critical as it regulates ovulation and enhances fertilization. Moist and warm food pacify *Vata*, cool and nourishing food pacify *Kapha* and where as warm and light food pacify *Pitta*.

**Ayurvedic herbs**<sup>[13,14]</sup>

As infertility is not a disease but a manifestation of some disease, the herbs used in the treatment is directed to eradicate the underlying cause.

**Herbs as per Doshha**

- **Vata** - *Shilajit* purifies the reproductive System. Ex: *Shatavari*, *Vidari Kanda* prepared in warm milk with ghee acts as reproductive tonic.
- **Pitta** - *Brahmi* to cool the mind, *Bala* douche to normalize pH of the vaginal mucous.
- **Kapha** - *Guuggulu*, Turmeric and *Manjista* aid supportive actions.
- **Tridoshaja** - *Phala Ghrita* 2tsp TID, *Vanga Bhasma* 10 mg/day.

**Sexual Dharmas**

For health, wealth, virility, and vitality, sexual cohabitation should occur during harmonically auspicious time. The opposite results hold true when sexual activities are performed during the poorly aspected times of year.<sup>[15]</sup>

**Auspicious time and conditions for cohabitation**

Early and Late Winters, Springs, Rainy, Autumn, Auspicious days; 8th, 14th, 15th days of both light and dark phase of the moon, After a purifactory bath in a cool, sheltered place, After observation prayer and declaring honourable intentions, Early Evening, The best posture for women is to lie comfortably on her

back and prone position for a man during sexual activity.<sup>[16]</sup> The key is to get the sperm as close as possible to the cervix and to remain there for as long as possible.<sup>[17]</sup>

**CONCLUSION**

Female infertility is widely explained by Ayurveda Acharyas, but Charaka's concept is appropriate for diagnosis, classification and treatment. Daagnosis based according to curable, Incurable, primarily, secondary and based on *Rutu*, *Kshetra*, *Ambu* and *Beeja* is beneficial for treating Infertility. Different *Acharya's* have explained that by following diet, sexual dharma (*Gramya Dharma*), herbs which cure and prevent infertility, it can prevent by getting further progress and getting uncured. Acharya with ideology for a better progeny and life style have explained the above concept.

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