IJARSCT
International Journal of Advanced Research in Science, Communication and Technology
International Open-Access, Double-Blind, Peer-Reviewed, Refereed, Multidisciplinary Online Journal
ISSN: 2581-9429
Volume 6, Issue 9, April 2026
Impact Factor: 8.2

Ayurvedic Principles for Women's Health (Stri Roga): A Review of Rajaswala Paricharya (Menstrual Regimen)

Dr Avdhut P Gaikwad[1], Dr. Milind M. Godbole[2], Dr. Kalpana K. Jadhav[3]
M.D. Scholar, Swasthavritta & Yoga Yashwant Ayurvedic College, P.G.T. & R. C. Kodoli, Kolhapur[1]
DEAN, MD (Ayurved) Swathavritta, Professor, Department of Swasthavritta, Yashwant Ayurvedic College
Post Graduate Training & Research Centre, Kodoli, Tal. Panhala, Dist. Kolhapur, Maharashtra[2]
H.O.D, Ph.D. Scholar, H.O.D. & Associate Professor, Dept of SwasthavrittaYashwantAyurvedic College
P.G.T. & R.C. Kodoli, Kolhapur[3]

Abstract: *Ayurveda provides a dedicated branch, Stri Roga, for managing women's health, placing significant emphasis on the menstrual cycle (Artava Chakra) as a key indicator of overall well-being. A growing number of modern gynecological disorders, such as PCOS, dysmenorrhea (Kashtartava), and endometriosis, are linked to lifestyle factors. Ayurveda identifies the primary cause of such disorders as non-adherence to the prescribed regimen during menstruation, known as Rajaswala Paricharya. This regimen is a specific set of dietary and lifestyle guidelines designed to support the natural cleansing process of menstruation, pacify the naturally aggravated Vata Dosha (especially Apana Vata), and protect the digestive fire (Agni). This review article collates and analyzes the classical principles of Rajaswala Paricharya as described in foundational Ayurvedic texts. It examines the rationale behind the prescribed "do's" (Pathya) and "don'ts" (Apathya) and discusses their profound implications for preventing modern gynecological disorders.*

Keywords: Ayurveda, Stri Roga, Rajaswala Paricharya, Menstruation, Vata Dosha, Women's Health, Prevention

I. INTRODUCTION

Ayurvedic View of Women's Health: Begin by defining the scope of Stri Roga (gynecological disorders) and Prasuti Tantra (obstetrics). Emphasize that in Ayurveda, a woman's health is foundational to the health of the family and society.

Menstruation: A Cleansing Process: Define menstruation (Artava) not as a sickness, but as a monthly, natural purification process (Shodhana). Explain that this period is seen as a time when the body is open, vulnerable, and in a state of cleansing.

The Modern Problem: Highlight the increasing prevalence of lifestyle-related gynecological issues (PCOS, infertility, dysmenorrhea). Frame the problem: modern lifestyles often encourage women to ignore their monthly cycle, leading to long-term health consequences.

Introducing Rajaswala Paricharya: Introduce Rajaswala Paricharya as the classical Ayurvedic regimen (comprising Ahara, Vihara, and Manasika guidelines) specifically for the menstruating woman.

Article Objective: The objective of this review is to systematically analyze the principles of Rajaswala Paricharya from classical texts, explore the Ayurvedic rationale behind its guidelines, and discuss its relevance as a primary preventive strategy for gynecological health in the modern era.

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www.ijarsct.co.in
DOI: 10.48175/IJARSCT-33212

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II. PHYSIOLOGICAL BASIS OF MENSTRUATION IN AYURVEDA

Role of the Doshas:

Vata Dosha: The prime force. Specifically, Apana Vata (a sub-type of Vata) governs all downward-moving actions, including the expulsion of menstrual blood (Artava). Menstruation is a period of natural Vata aggravation.

Pitta Dosha: Responsible for the hormonal and metabolic processes of menstruation and the qualities of the blood itself.

Kapha Dosha: Responsible for building the uterine lining (endometrium) during the cycle.

The State of Agni: Explain that during menstruation, the digestive/metabolic fire (Agni) is typically Manda (weak). The body's energy is diverted to the cleansing process in the pelvis.

The State of Srotas: The Artava Vaha Srotas (channels carrying the menstrual fluid) are open, making the reproductive system more susceptible to imbalance and pathogens.

III. PRINCIPLES OF RAJASWALA PARICHARYA (THE MENSTRUAL REGIMEN)

This section is the core of your article.

3.1 Apathya (Contraindicated Actions & Diet)

This details what to avoid and why.

Vihara (Lifestyle):

Divaswapna (Day Sleep): Forbidden. It increases Kapha Dosha and Ama (toxins), which can block channels and lead to Sroto Dushti (channel blockage), potentially causing clots or heavy bleeding.

Vyayama (Heavy Exercise): Forbidden. Heavy physical exertion, running, or jumping severely aggravates Vata Dosha, which can disrupt the flow, cause pain (Kashtartava), or even push the flow upwards (a concept related to Udvartini Yoni Vyapad).

Abhyanga & Panchakarma: Massage, oil application, and other cleansing therapies are avoided, as the body is already undergoing its own natural cleansing.

Excessive Travel/Movement: (e.g., riding horses, modern two-wheelers). These actions aggravate Vata due to excessive motion and vibration.

Ahara (Diet):

Guru (Heavy) & Abhisyandi (Channel-blocking) Foods: Avoid heavy-to-digest foods (like cheese, curd, excess non-veg). These weaken the already low Agni and create Ama.

Katu (Pungent), Amla (Sour), Lavana (Salty): Avoid foods that are excessively spicy, sour, or salty. These aggravate Pitta Dosha, which can lead to excessive bleeding, inflammation, or anger.

Manasika (Mental):

Krodha (Anger), Bhaya (Fear), Chinta (Worry): Avoid emotional extremes. These states directly aggravate Vata and Pitta, disrupting the hormonal balance (modern HPO axis) and Apana Vata.

3.2 Pathya (Prescribed Actions & Diet)

This details what to do.

Ahara (Diet):

Laghu & Ushna: Consume light, warm, and easily digestible foods.

Havi (Ghee) & Yava (Barley): Classically prescribed. A small amount of ghee supports Agni and pacifies Vata. Barley is light and nourishing.

Mudga Yusha (Mung Bean Soup): A classic food to support digestion and provide simple nutrition without overburdening Agni.

Vihara (Lifestyle):

Rest: The primary prescription. Taking physical rest allows Apana Vata to perform its function without obstruction.

Hygiene (Shoucha): Maintain personal cleanliness.

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Brahmacharya (Abstinence): Sexual intercourse is strictly contraindicated as it disturbs Vata, introduces the risk of infection, and interferes with the downward flow.

Manasika (Mental):

Calm & Restful Mind: Engage in light, pleasant activities. Listen to calm music. Practice gentle awareness or meditation. This keeps Vata in balance.

IV. DISCUSSION: RATIONALE & MODERN RELEVANCE

The Core Logic: Vata Pacification: The entire regimen can be summarized as a protocol to pacify Vata Dosha. Explain how Vata aggravation is the root of most gynecological pain and irregularity (e.g., dysmenorrhea, erratic cycles).

Protection of Agni: Discuss how the dietary rules are designed to protect the weak Agni. Explain that impaired Agni during this time leads to Ama formation, which is the root cause of systemic inflammation and growths (e.g., Granthi or cysts).

Preventing Sroto Dushti (Channel Blockage): Relate Apathya (like day sleep, heavy food) to the formation of Ama, which clogs the Artava Vaha Srotas and leads to conditions like endometriosis, fibroids, and PCOS.

Modern Parallels:

Rest vs. Exercise: Connect the avoidance of heavy exercise to modern concerns about over-exertion, cortisol spikes (stress), and the "female athlete triad."

Diet & Inflammation: Link the avoidance of Pitta-aggravating foods to the modern understanding of pro-inflammatory foods (spicy, salty, processed) worsening cramps (prostaglandins).

Stress & HPO Axis: Connect the avoidance of mental stress (Manasika Vata) to the sensitive nature of the Hypothalamic-Pituitary-Ovarian (HPO) axis, which governs the menstrual cycle and is easily disrupted by stress.

V. CONCLUSION

Reiterate that Rajaswala Paricharya is not a collection of superstitious restrictions but a precise, time-tested bio-regimen designed to support a key physiological process.

Conclude that its primary goals—pacifying Vata, protecting Agni, and ensuring complete cleansing—are directly relevant to preventing the rise of modern, lifestyle-induced gynecological disorders.

End with a strong statement: By re-integrating the wisdom of Rajaswala Paricharya, women can use their monthly cycle as a tool for rejuvenation and prevention, rather than experiencing it as a source of disease.

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