

WOMEN'S HEALTH AND REPRODUCTIVE CARE IN AYURVEDA: A HOLISTIC PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Women's reproductive health has become a major global concern due to the rising prevalence of conditions such as infertility, polycystic ovarian syndrome, and menstrual irregularities. While modern biomedical approaches provide advanced diagnostics and treatments, they often focus on symptom management rather than addressing underlying systemic imbalances. Ayurveda, in contrast, offers a holistic framework that integrates physical, mental, and lifestyle dimensions of health. **Aim:** This paper aims to examine the principles of women's health and reproductive care in Ayurveda, with a focus on rejuvenation therapies, preventive strategies, and herbal interventions. **Methodology:** The study adopts a qualitative research approach based on the analysis of classical Ayurvedic texts and a review of contemporary

scholarly literature on reproductive health and traditional medicine. **Key Findings:** The findings indicate that Ayurvedic concepts such as the balance of *doshas*, nourishment of reproductive tissues, and individualized treatment approaches are central to maintaining female reproductive health. Therapies including *Rasayana*, *Panchakarma*, dietary regulation, *Yoga* and *Pranayam* show potential in managing reproductive disorders effectively with minimal side effects. **Conclusion:** The study suggests that integrating Ayurvedic principles with modern biomedical practices can lead to a more comprehensive and sustainable model of reproductive healthcare. Ayurveda not only offers therapeutic solutions but also emphasizes preventive strategies relevant to contemporary health challenges.

KEYWORDS: Ayurveda, women's health, reproductive care, *Rasayana*, *Panchakarma*,

fertility

INTRODUCTION

Women's health, particularly reproductive health, has emerged as a critical area of concern in both developed and developing societies. The increasing incidence of reproductive disorders such as infertility, hormonal imbalance, and menstrual irregularities reflects changing lifestyles, environmental stress, and dietary habits. Modern medicine has made significant advances in diagnosing and treating such conditions; however, it often addresses symptoms rather than underlying systemic imbalances.

Ayurveda, the traditional system of medicine originating in India, offers a fundamentally different perspective. It conceptualizes health as a dynamic equilibrium between bodily *doshas*, *dhatu*s, and mental states. Women's reproductive health is closely linked with the proper functioning of *Artava* (menstrual and reproductive tissue), which is considered a vital indicator of overall health.

Classical Ayurvedic texts such as the *Charaka Samhita* and *Sushruta Samhita* provide detailed descriptions of women's physiology, reproductive cycles, and disorders. They emphasize preventive care, dietary regulation, and rejuvenation therapies. Contemporary research has begun to explore the relevance of these principles in addressing modern reproductive health issues.

This paper seeks to examine the role of Ayurveda in women's health and reproductive care, highlighting its holistic approach and potential for integration with modern healthcare systems.

OBJECTIVE

- To analyze reproductive processes (menstruation, fertility, pregnancy, menopause) through the concepts of dosha, dhatu, and agni.
- To assess the role of *Rasayana* (rejuvenation therapies) in enhancing reproductive health and overall well-being.
- To evaluate Ayurvedic preventive approaches, including *Ahara*, *Dinacharya*, and *Ritucharya*.
- To investigate the effectiveness of herbal interventions in managing reproductive health issues.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research methodology based on secondary data. Primary sources include classical Ayurvedic texts, while secondary sources consist of contemporary research articles. A thematic analysis approach is used to identify key concepts related to reproductive health, treatment modalities, and preventive strategies.

RESULTS

Ayurvedic Perspective on Women's Reproductive Health

Women's reproductive health is governed by the balance of the *Doshas* (*Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*), efficient *Agni* (digestive fire), and the proper functioning of *Dhatu*s (body tissues).

Imbalances in these factors contribute to disorders such as PCOS, infertility, and menstrual irregularities.

- **Vata** governs movement and menstruation; its imbalance leads to irregular cycles, weak ovulation, dry reproductive tissues and pain
- **Pitta** regulates metabolism and hormones; imbalance results in inflammation and hormonal disturbances
- **Kapha** provides stability; imbalance may cause obesity, PCOS and delayed ovulation

Menstruation in Ayurveda (*Artava* and *Rajah* Pravritti)

In Ayurveda, menstruation is referred to as *Artava* or *Rajah*, and it is considered a natural and essential physiological process reflecting a woman's reproductive health. Classical Ayurvedic texts describe menstruation as the cyclical elimination of *Artava*, which is closely associated with the proper functioning of *Rasa* and *Rakta dhatu* (nutritive and blood tissues) (Pandey Kasinatha & Chaturvedi Gorakhanatha, 2009). According to the *Charaka Samhita*, *Artava* is regarded as an *Upadhatu* (secondary tissue) of *Rakta dhatu*, and its normal formation depends on proper digestion (*agni*), tissue nourishment, and balanced *doshas* (Pandey Kasinatha & Chaturvedi Gorakhanatha, 2009). A healthy menstrual cycle indicates the equilibrium of bodily systems, while disturbances in menstruation are seen as manifestations of *dosha* imbalance.

Characteristics of Normal Menstruation

Ayurvedic texts provide detailed descriptions of normal menstruation. The *Sushruta Samhita* states that healthy menstrual blood should resemble the color of fresh blood or the juice of lac (*laksha rasa*), should not have a foul odor, and should flow without pain or discomfort (Bhishagratna, 2012). The duration is generally described as three to five days, occurring at

regular intervals of approximately one month.

Menstruation is primarily governed by *Apana Vata*, a subtype of *Vata dosha*, which is responsible for the downward movement of bodily substances, including menstrual flow. Any disturbance in *Apana Vata* can lead to menstrual disorders such as dysmenorrhea, amenorrhea, or irregular cycles (Murthy, 2000).

- Vata imbalance may cause scanty, painful, or irregular menstruation.
- Pitta imbalance may lead to heavy bleeding, burning sensation, or inflammation.
- Kapha imbalance may result in delayed cycles, excessive mucus, or lethargy.

Thus, the proper functioning of menstruation depends on the balanced interaction of all three *doshas*, with *Vata* playing a dominant regulatory role. The concept of *Rajaswala Paricharya* emphasizes rest, light diet, and emotional stability during menstruation

Fertility in Ayurveda

As per Ayurveda, there are four important factors for conception are: Ritu-the right time, Kshetra-a healthy uterus as well as a healthy woman, Ambu-nutrients for the growth of the foetus, and Beeja-healthy ova and healthy sperm.

Ritu: For a couple to nurture a healthy baby, the menstrual cycle should be normal. Physically, the couple should be ready for conception. They must care for each other and must generally be stress-free.

Kshetra: A healthy uterus that gives birth to a healthy child should be toxin (ama) free, and Dosha balanced. Dosha balanced means the uterus should be regular cavity shape, without large masses (fibroids) or malformed uterus, unobstructed fallopian tubes.

Ambu: Both mother and baby must be well fed. The foetus is fed by *Graba Nabhi Nadi* from the mother in utero with proper healthy nutrition.

Beeja: Both male and female seeds must be healthy for proper offspring. One is considered of childbearing age between the ages of 16-35. Couples planning to become pregnant are advised to undergo cleansing with proper Panchakarma procedures, focusing on intake of *Satvik Aahar* such as milk, ghee, rice and a *Tridosha* balanced diet.

PREGNANCY

आर्तवादर्शनमास्यसंस्त्रवणमनत्राभिलाषश्छर्दिरोचकोऽम्लकामता च विशेषेण श्रद्धाप्रणयनमुच्चावचेषु भावेषु गुरुगात्रत्वं चक्षुषोगर्लानिः स्तनयोः स्तन्यमोष्ठयोः स्तनमण्डलयोश्च काष्ण्यमत्यर्थं श्वयथुः पादयोरीषल्लोमराज्युद्गमो योन्याश्चाटालत्वमिति गर्भे पर्यागते रूपाणि भवन्ति॥१६॥ (C.Sh.4/16)

It explains that when conception has successfully occurred, a woman may experience cessation of menstruation, nausea and vomiting, loss of appetite, and altered taste preferences, particularly a craving for sour substances. There may also be heightened emotional sensitivity, unusual desires, a feeling of heaviness in the body, and fatigue in the eyes. Physical changes include darkening of the lips, breasts, and areola, mild swelling in the feet, the appearance of fine body hair, and increased vaginal secretions. These features are considered characteristic indicators of early pregnancy in Ayurveda.

Ayurveda emphasizes *Garbhadhana* (conscious conception) and *Garbha Sanskar* for the physical and mental development of the fetus. Proper diet, lifestyle, yoga, and *pranayama* are recommended during pregnancy. Classical teachings suggest that a child conceived and nurtured under balanced conditions develops strong *Sattva Guna*, contributing to better mental and emotional health.

Menopause in Ayurveda (Rajonivritti)

Menopause, or *Rajonivritti*, is described as the natural cessation of menstruation associated with ageing (*jara*) and tissue depletion (*dhatu kshaya*) (Pandey Kasinatha & Chaturvedi Gorakhanatha, 2009). It is primarily linked with *Vata* aggravation, leading to symptoms such as anxiety, dryness, insomnia, and joint pain. *Pitta* imbalances may also contribute to hot flashes, irritability, excessive sweating, a feeling of heat. *Kapha* imbalance may manifest as weight gain, depression and lethargy (Murthy, 2000). Management focuses on restoring *dosha* balance through *Rasayana* therapy, herbal medicines, and lifestyle modifications. Herbs such as *Shatavari*, *Ashwagandha*, and *Guduchi* are used to support hormonal balance, reduce stress, and enhance vitality (Pandey Kasinatha & Chaturvedi Gorakhanatha, 2009).

Role of Diet (Ahara)

Diet plays a central role in maintaining reproductive health:

Vata-Pacifying Diet (CHIKLANDE DM, RANDIVE DM, 2021)-

Include warm, cooked foods such as soups, whole grains, and dairy products; avoid dry, cold, and processed foods; consume ghee and sesame oil for lubrication and nourishment; favor root vegetables, nuts, and seeds, drink herbal teas like Ashwagandha and Brahmi for hormonal balance.

Pitta-Pacifying Diet (Rakhimova DZ, 2024)-

Favor cooling foods like cucumber, coconut, and leafy greens; limit spicy, fried, and fermented foods to prevent excessive heat in the body; consume sweet, bitter, and astringent foods like pomegranate, aloe vera, and fennel; drink cooling herbal infusions such as coriander water and rose water. Kapha-Pacifying Diet (Dashtdar M, Dashtdar MR, Dashtdar F, Dashtdar B, Mojab E, 2022)- Avoid heavy, oily, and sweet foods that increase congestion and sluggish metabolism; include light, warm foods like barley, lentils, and bitter vegetables; use spices like ginger, turmeric, and black pepper to improve digestion; prefer steamed and grilled foods over fried items.

Daily Routine (Dinacharya)

Practices such as *Abhyanga* (oil massage), regular exercise, proper hygiene, exercise, *Yoga*, walks or swimming are recommended (Nagarathna R et al., 2021). *Yoga* postures like *Baddha Konasana* (Butterfly Pose), *Bhujangasana* (Cobra Pose), and *Malasana* (Squat Pose) hold significant benefits for reproductive health. Additionally, pranayama like *Anulom Vilom* and *Bhramari*, can help reduce stress and promote hormonal balance. Regular physical activity is particularly important in preventing obesity and PCOS (Bijendar Singh JB, Laxmi V, 2021).

Mental and Emotional Well-being

Mental health is integral to reproductive wellness. Practices such as meditation and therapies like *Shirodhara* help reduce stress and promote emotional stability (Angiras A, Angiras S, 2025).

Seasonal Regimen (Ritucharya)

Ritucharya emphasizes the importance of maintaining balance among the body's *Doshas*, the vital energies that influence our well-being. (Singh V, Sharma S, 2023). Detoxification therapies such as *Virechana* and *Basti* are recommended under expert supervision. Seasonal fruits and vegetables enhance immunity and overall reproductive health (RAJAN RV, 2022).

Role of *Rasayana* and Herbal Interventions

Rasayana therapies play a crucial role in rejuvenating reproductive tissues, improving fertility, and delaying ageing. These are some herbs mentioned below in table no. 1:

Herbs	Main Function
Shatavari (<i>Asparagus racemosus</i>)	Widely used as a female reproductive tonic; supports fertility, regulates menstrual cycles, and enhances lactation
Ashoka (<i>Saraca asoca</i>)	Effective in managing menorrhagia (excessive bleeding) and dysmenorrhea; helps in uterine strengthening
Lodhra (<i>Symplocos racemosa</i>)	Used in treating leucorrhoea and menstrual disorders due to its astringent and anti-inflammatory properties
Ashwagandha (<i>Withania somnifera</i>)	Acts as an adaptogen; helps in stress-related infertility and hormonal balance
Guduchi (<i>Tinospora cordifolia</i>)	Improves immunity and metabolic function, indirectly supporting reproductive health
Triphala (combination of <i>Emblica officinalis</i> , <i>Terminalia chebula</i> , <i>Terminalia bellirica</i>)	Aids in detoxification and improves overall reproductive system functioning
Menstrual Disorders	Shatavari, Ashoka, Lodhra
Infertility	Shatavari, Ashwagandha, Guduchi

Table No. 2: Herbal preparations and their therapeutic uses (Anonymous AFI, 2000)

Formulation	Major Plant Drug	Important therapeutic uses
Ashokghrit	Ashoka with 27 others	Pain in female genital tract, excessive vaginal discharge
Ashokarishta	Ashoka and 15 others	Dysmenorrhea, menorrhagia, vaginal pain
Bola Parpati	Hira bola with purified mercury and sulphur	Menorrhagia, menorrhagia
Chander Prabha Vati	Trivrit, danti, patraka, and 34 others	Menstrual pain, urine infection
Hinguvachaadi Churna	Hingu, Vacha and 22 others	Pain in genital tract
Kumaryaasav	Kumari with 45 others	Obstruction of menstrual Cycle due to upward movement of gases
Lodhraasav	Lodhra and 30 others	Disease of the Uterus
Phala Ghrita	Triphla with 14 others	Genital disease, infertility
Pradarantak Lauh	Triphla with 27 others	Leucohorrea
Pushyanug Churna	Patha, Jambu with 27 others	Leucorrhoea, menstrual disorders
Sahacharadi Taila	Sahachar and 32 others	Genital diseases
Satavari Ghrita	Satavari and 17 others	Galactagogue, menorrhagia, threatened abortion
Tikta Ghrita	Bhunimba and 15 others	Excessive vaginal discharge

DISCUSSION

The findings highlight that Ayurveda offers a comprehensive and integrative framework for understanding women's reproductive health. Its emphasis on dosha balance, particularly the role of Apana Vata, provides a functional explanation for menstrual and fertility disorders. This aligns with modern insights linking stress, diet, and lifestyle to reproductive dysfunction. Menstrual health is viewed as a reflection of systemic balance, with strong emphasis on nutrition, metabolism, and emotional well-being. Similarly, the fertility model of Ritu, Kshetra, Ambu, and Beeja demonstrates a multidimensional understanding of conception. Rasayana therapies and herbal medicines offer sustainable and minimally invasive treatment options. The Ayurvedic perspective on menopause as a natural transition further highlights its holistic approach. However, integration into modern healthcare requires scientific validation and interdisciplinary collaboration.

CONCLUSION

Ayurveda presents a comprehensive and holistic approach to women's reproductive health, integrating physiological, psychological, and lifestyle factors. Its emphasis on prevention, individualized care, and natural therapies makes it highly relevant in addressing contemporary reproductive health challenges.

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