

## RASA DHATU AS THE GUIDING ELEMENT IN MAINTAINING WOMAN'S HEALTH AND ITS ROLE IN PRASUTI TANTRA AND STREE ROGA- A CONCEPTUAL STUDY

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### ABSTRACT

**Background and Justification:** Rasa dhatu refers to the essential fluid or plasma which is formed as a result of digestion of food and maintains various bodily functions. It is considered as the first dhatu to be formed after digestion and is responsible for nourishing all the other dhatus.<sup>[1]</sup> Rasa dhatu maintains hydration, supports the immune system, maintains body temperature, and facilitates transportation of nutrients and oxygen to cells. **Aims and Objectives:** Artava is the updhatu derived from rasa and the regulation of the female menstrual cycle completely depends upon the normal formation and function of rasa dhatu. The aim is to identify the pathogenesis of diseases in women that depends upon state of Rasa dhatu. **Method:** The women can develop health issues in her different phases of life for example in puberty, in her reproductive age, in her pregnancy, in her puerperium or after menopause and most of which arises out of rasa dushti. The influence of Agni and role of various causative factors, state of dosha vitiation, identify the rasa dhatu dushti symptoms in the women with various pathology is included in this study.<sup>[2]</sup> **Result:** There is a

necessity to address the women's health issues and provide judicious Ayurvedic management which improve the quality of women's life.

**KEYWORDS:** Rasa dhatu, artava, agni, role in prasuti tantra, stree roga, Ayurvedic management.

## INTRODUCTION

Rasa dhatu in prakruta awastha having jeevana and poshaka qualities maintain the Arogya of an individual. Acharya Sushruta explains sama awastha of agni, dhatu, dosha, and mala maintains the health of the body. Hence agni and rasa dhatu of an individual becomes the essential factor to guide the cellular and tissue functions. Artava being the upadhatu of rasa dhatu has its role in maintaining the function of artavavaha srotas. The very basis of human life is sustained and initiated by the first dhatu rasa that contributes to the growth and development of the fetus during pregnancy as explained in the rasaja bhava of garbha. The rasa dhatu in sutikaavastha plays an important role in production of sthanya that is considered as the upadhatu of rasa.<sup>[3]</sup> The vikriti of rasa dhatu in pregnancy can lead to the conditions like garbhasosha, Garbhakshaya; in sutikaavastha, the vitiated rasa dhatu can cause ashtadushti Stanya dosha & astanya or alpastanya; the vikrit rasa dhatu can disturb the artava chakra too and leading to artavadushti, astavakshaya, udavartini, and other yonivyapadas.<sup>[4]</sup> An appropriate treatment modality can ensure health benefits in a woman having ailments related to prasuti tantra and stree roga.

## Rasa Dhatu

**Definition-**Rasa Dhatu is the first and most fundamental of the seven primary tissues (dhatus) in the Ayurvedic system of medicine. It is considered the essence of food that nourishes all other tissues in the body. अन्नरसाद् रसधातुः प्रवर्तते । रसधातुः सर्वधातुनां प्रधानम् ॥<sup>[5]</sup> From the essence of food (Anna Rasa), Rasa Dhatu is formed. Rasa Dhatu is the chief of all the tissues.

## Functions of rasa dhatu

- ❖ तर्पयति वर्धयति धारयति यापय-ति वाट्ष्टहेतुकेन कर्मणा॥(सु. सू. 14 /3)<sup>[6]</sup>
- ❖ रसात् स्तन्यं ततो रक्तमसृजः कण्डराः सिराः॥(च. चि. 15 / 17 )
- Tarpana: nourishment of body at any age.
- Vardhana: growth and development (especially in kids)
- Dharana / jeevana: stabilizing and maintaining the dhatu (during middle age)
- Yapana: preventing the total deterioration of dhatu (during old age)

### Role of rasa dhatu in embryogenesis

During embryonic life, rasa dhatu is the only source of nutrition. The heart of the fetus is connected with the mother through the placenta and umbilical cord. The fetus gets nutrient fluid (rasa dhatu) through this placental circulation. Growth and development depend upon nutrition provided by rasa dhatu. This promotes strength and complexion of the fetus as it is composed of materials having all six tastes. This rasa also nourishes the mother's body and carries out lactation.[Cha. Sa. Sharira Sthana 6/23]<sup>[7]</sup>

गर्भस्य खलु रसनिमित्ता मारुताध्माननिमित्ता च परिवृद्धिर्भवति ॥५७॥ (Su. Sa – 4/57)<sup>[8]</sup>

Once the embryo is formed the growth is via nourishment by ahara rasa and adhmaana of vayu.

### Rasadhatu In Placenta Formation & nourishment of Nabhinadi

• तथाच भोजः- “गर्भो रुणद्धि स्रोतांसि रसरक्तवहानि वै रक्ताज्जरायुर्भवति नाडी चैव रसात्मिका(Su. Sa 3/31, dalhana tikka)<sup>[9]</sup> –Dalhana quotes the reference of Bhoja saying that garbha obstructs both rasa and raktavaha nadi and jarayu is born out of rakta.

• मातुस्तु खलु रसवहायां नाड्यां गर्भनाभिनाडीप्रति-बद्धा, साऽस्य मातुराहाररसवीर्यमभिवहति ।

तेनोपस्नेहेनास्याभिवृद्धिर्भवति . (Su. Sa 3/31) –The rasavaha nadi of mother is attached to garbha's nabhi nadi. Thus the umbilical cord carries the essence of mother's ahara rasa and foetus grows by this nourishment via upasneha.

### Role of Rasa dhatu in garbhini

• Sadhyogruhita garbha lakshana in garbhini

तत्र सद्योगृहीतगर्भाया लिङ्गानिश्रमो ग्लानिः पिपासा सक्थिसदनं शुक्रशोणितयोस्वबन्धः स्फुरणं च योनेः (su sha 3/ 13)<sup>[10]</sup>

The symptoms like glani, pipasa, sakthisadana indicate the increased demand on *Rasa Dhatu* to support the growing embryo, highlighting its role in the nourishment and sustenance of the developing fetus.

• Vyakta garbha lakshana in garbhini:

अकामतश्छर्दयति गन्धादुद्धिजते शुभात् । प्रसेकः सदनं चापि गर्भिण्या लिङ्गमुच्यते (su sha 3/ 13)

• This describes symptoms like chhardi, gandha, praseka in pregnant women. These are signs of the influence of *Rasa Dhatu* as it is responsible for nourishment and maintaining equilibrium in the body.

- **Garbhini Pandu**

Vitiated Pitta inturn vitiates dhatus causing sithilata and guruta then it Leads to depletion of Sneha, oja, rasa, rakta etc and cause deficient of rakta develops paller(panduta).

- **Garbhini Prameha**

It begins with improper diet and lifestyle (*Pramehakāra Āhāra and Vihara*), leading to the formation of *Ama* and the imbalance of the three doshas (*Tridosha prakopa*). This imbalance affects body tissues (*Rasa, Vasa, Rakta, Lasika, Mamsa, Meda, Kleda, Majja, Oja, Sukra*), leading to abnormalities in the urinary system (*Mutravahi Srotas* and *Vastimukha*), and eventually results in *Prameha*, marked by the excretion of excess tissue elements.

### Role of rasa dhatu in prasava

- सम्पूर्ण गान्धो भवति यदा स रसभाविः। तदा प्रसौत्यथाकाशं गर्भः स्त्रीकुक्षिविव्युतिः॥ (भे.सं.शा. 3/13)<sup>[11]</sup>

Bhela is of opinion that attainment of full maturity[rasa bhabita] of different body parts by foetus is the cause of labour onset.

### Rasa dhatu dushti causing pathogenesis in the garbha

- **Garbha shosha/Vatabhipanna garbha**

- यदा तून्मार्गो वातो गर्भस्य रसवाहीनि स्रोतांसि शोषयति तदा वातयेगी हीनो जायते। बहूनि वा वर्षाण्युरेतिष्ठति। (अ.सं.शा. 2/37)<sup>[12]</sup>

- The vayu moving upward dries up the rasavaha srotas as a consequence the garbha is vata rogi, hina, and stays intrauterine for long period.

- **Upavishtaka garbha:(Cha.sha.8/26)**

- Consuming *Ushna Tikshna Ahara* (hot and sharp food) aggravates *Vata*, which, due to bleeding, withholds *Pitta* and *Kapha*. This results in compression of the *Rasavaha Nadi*, which carries the *Rasa Dhatu* for the fetus, leading to an improper flow of *Rasa*, causing defective fetal development and resulting in the condition of *Upavishtaka* (fetal arrest or stillbirth).

- **Garbhodaka kshaya**

- Garbhodaka is the contribution from both mother and foetus circulation, so poor nutrition affecting the rasavaha srotas leads to garbhodaka kshaya.

- **Garbhodaka vriddhi**

- The rasavaha srotas is not regulated appropriately in certain condition during pregnancy affecting both mother and the fetus that influences the production of amniotic fluid and thereby resulting in polyhydramnios.

- **Miscarriage (Garbhasrava):** Garbhasrava can occur due to various causes and one among them is Vitiated Rasa Dhatu that can cause instability in the body, leading to the risk of miscarriage or premature labor.

### **Rasa dhatu dushti in sutika vyadhi**

मिथ्याचारात् सूतिकाया यो व्याधिरुपजायते (भा.प्र.वि. 70, सु.सं.शा. 10/19)<sup>[13]</sup>

The body of puerperal woman becomes languid due to overexertion caused by continuous strong labor pains, vitiation of doshas, exhaustion of indriyas, decrease in sara of dhatus particularly rasa and rakta dhatu kshaya is considered. If proper care is not taken during delivery and post natal period, slight vitiation of doshas lead to disorders and complications.

### **Rasa dhatu in stanya dusti**

Stanya is said to be the upadhatu of rasa dhatu. Improper diet and lifestyle (Ahitkara Ahara Vihar) followed by a new mother (Sutika) leads to an imbalance in doshas (Dosha Dushti). This imbalance affects the Rasa Dhatu, eventually resulting in the formation of impure breast milk (Stanya Dushti).

### **Rasadhatu in rajo utpatti**

- रसादेव रजः स्त्रीणां मासि मासि त्र्यहं स्रवेत् (भा.प्र.पू. 3 /204)<sup>[14]</sup>
- Artava is the upadhatu of rasa dhatu hence raja is considered to be originated from rasa which flows every month in a cyclical rhythm for 3 days.

### **Rasa Dhatu Dushti (Causes of Vitiation)**

*Mithya Ahara, Vihara* and *cinta* (stress and anxiety) leads to an imbalance in the *Dosha and Agni Dushti* occurs which affects the *Rasa vaha srotas*, eventually causing imbalances *Upadhatu Artava* and leading to various types of women's health disorders (*Stree Rogas*). [Cha. Sa. Vimana Sthana 5/13]<sup>[15]</sup>

### Abnormal state of rasa dhatu and its dushti lakshanas in stree roga

According to Ayurveda, Rasa Dhatu Dushti can occur due to the vitiation of any of the three Doshas or combination of doshas in tara tama bhava.

1. **Vataja Rasa Dushti lakshana:** This is characterized by symptoms like dryness, emaciation, and coldness in the body. It can lead to issues such as oligomenorrhea (scanty menstruation), delayed menstruation, and general debility in women.
2. **Pittaja Rasa Dushti lakshana:** Symptoms include burning sensations, excessive thirst, and heat in the body. It often presents with conditions like menorrhagia (excessive menstrual bleeding), inflammation of reproductive organs, and irritability.
3. **Kaphaja Rasa Dushti lakshana:** It manifests as heaviness, lethargy, and excessive secretion. This type is linked with conditions like leucorrhea (excess vaginal discharge), obesity, and sluggish reproductive function.

### Ashta artava dushti

आर्तवमपि त्रिभिर्दोषैः शोणितचतुर्थैः पृथग्द्वन्द्वैः समस्तैश्चोपसृष्टमबीजं भवति; तदपि दोषवर्णविदनादिभिर्विज्ञेयम्।

तेषु कुणपन्नान्तिपूतिपूयक्षीणमूत्रपुष्यप्रकाशमसाध्य, साध्यमन्यत्वेति ||Su.sha.2/5||<sup>[16]</sup>

The normal function of Artava Vaha Srotas maintains the menstrual cycle however there may be abnormality in the artava cakra due to various causes where rasa dhatu vitiation is one of the prime cause that leads to blockages, depletion, or vitiation in Artavavaha srotas leading to conditions like Amenorrhea, Dysmenorrhea, or Menorrhagia.

### Vandhyatwa

- बीजदोषाद्यथा सस्यं न सम्यग्विव प्ररोहणी। माता पित्रोस्तु दोषेण तथा गर्भः प्रयच्छति॥ तस्मात् सम्यग्रसाहायदत्तुकात्तेऽथ दम्पती। रहस्ययोगमेयातां स्मरन्तौ मनसा विभुम्॥
- विकृताः स्युर्गर्भा वै रसापथ्यनिषेवणैः। सन्ध्यायणाद्वा वेगानां योनिदोषेण वा पुनः॥ (भे.सं.शा. 3/2-4)<sup>[17]</sup>

Acharya Bhela explains that a woman remains vandhya due to defects in beeja (sperm and ovum) or when the woman is not adequately nourished and this generally occurs due to malnourishment due to *Rasa Dhatu dushti (kshaya)*. In case the woman conceives the vitiated rasa dhatu can lead to complications in pregnancy.

**Shweta Pradara:** Excessive and abnormal vaginal discharge, often caused by Kapha vitiation in Rasa Dhatu, is a common complaint in women.

**PCOS (Polycystic Ovary Syndrome):** Imbalance in Rasa Dhatu due to Kapha and Vata Dushti can contribute to the pathogenesis of PCOS, characterized by irregular periods, obesity, and hormonal imbalances. Metabolic dysfunction is also observed in such cases where after rasa dhatu dushti uttarotara dhatu dushti occurs leading to menstrual irregularities, overweight, hyperandrogenism and insulin resistance.

**Endometriosis:** Rasa Dushti, especially involving Pitta, can lead to inflammatory conditions like endometriosis, which affects the reproductive organs and can cause severe pain and infertility.

### Management of Rasa Dhatu Dushti

Ayurvedic management of women's diseases utilizes two primary approaches: **Shodhana** (cleansing or detoxification) and **Shamana** (pacification).<sup>[18]</sup> These approaches are tailored to balance doshas (Vata, Pitta, and Kapha), improve reproductive health, and support overall wellness. Here's an overview of how Shodhana and Shamana are applied in the management of common women's health issues.

#### 1. Shodhana (Purification or Cleansing)

Shodhana is the process of detoxifying the body by removing accumulated toxins, known as **Ama**, which can disrupt doshic balance and lead to health problems. Shodhana therapies are typically recommended for deep-rooted imbalances or chronic conditions.

Key Shodhana therapies for women's health include.

- **Vamana (Emesis Therapy):** Primarily used to treat Kapha-related conditions, including polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), menstrual irregularities, and infertility related to Kapha aggravation. By removing excess Kapha from the upper digestive tract, Vamana helps restore hormonal balance.
- **Virechana (Purgation Therapy):** Beneficial for conditions related to Pitta aggravation, such as heavy or painful menstruation, endometriosis, or inflammation in the reproductive organs. Virechana cleanses the liver and gastrointestinal tract, helping to alleviate symptoms of these disorders.
- **Basti (Enema Therapy):** Effective for Vata disorders like dysmenorrhea, irregular menstruation, and menopausal symptoms. Basti introduces medicated oils or herbal decoctions through the rectum to pacify aggravated Vata in the lower abdomen, supporting reproductive and digestive health.



- **Nasya (Nasal Administration):** Useful in conditions where hormonal imbalance affects mental health, such as anxiety, mood swings, or insomnia often seen during menopause. Nasya involves instilling medicated oils or herbs through the nostrils to balance hormonal channels and improve mental clarity.

## 2. Shamana (Pacification)

Shamana involves pacifying the aggravated doshas using dietary adjustments, herbal remedies, lifestyle changes, and supportive therapies. Shamana is particularly suitable for managing acute symptoms or in cases where Shodhana is not feasible.

Key Shamana therapies for women's health include.

- **Herbal Formulations:** Specific herbs are selected to balance the doshas. For example:
  - **Ashoka (Saraca asoca):** Used for menstrual irregularities and to regulate uterine function.
  - **Shatavari (Asparagus racemosus):** Known for its hormone-balancing and reproductive health-supporting properties. It is often used for infertility, menopause, and menstrual disorders.
  - **Lodhra (Symplocos racemosa):** Useful in managing excessive bleeding and maintaining hormonal balance.
  - **Guggulu and Triphala:** Support healthy metabolism and cleansing of excess Kapha, helpful for managing PCOS and obesity-related issues.
- **Dietary Management:** Emphasizes a balanced diet suited to the individual's dosha type and condition. Women with Pitta imbalances, for example, may benefit from cooling foods like cucumber, coconut, and bitter greens, while those with Vata imbalances might need warming, nourishing foods like ghee, almonds, and cooked vegetables.
- **Lifestyle Adjustments:** Incorporates daily routines (Dinacharya) and seasonal routines (Ritucharya) to promote harmony within the body and mind. Yoga, Pranayama (breathing exercises), and meditation are often recommended for mental clarity, stress relief, and overall balance.
- **Rejuvenative Therapies (Rasayana):** Used for revitalization and nourishment of the body, Rasayana therapies enhance immunity and slow down aging. Shatavari, Ashwagandha, and Guduchi are commonly used Rasayana herbs for women.

Overall it can be inferred that Samshodhana, Shamana and Rasayana Chikitsa mainly advised for managing common gynecological problems. These therapies help in Samprapti Vighatana



of Stree Rogas, removes aggravated Doshas and imparts Vata Shaman effects, therefore helps to regress pathogenesis of Stree Rogas.

## DISCUSSION

Acharaya Sushruta explain that the shareera/body is the “pancha maha bhuta vikaara samudayatmakam” –it means that the dosha, dhatus and malas contribute for the formation of different organs and tissue of the body. All these are made up of panchabhuta's and hence are known as “pancha maha bhuta vikara”.<sup>[19]</sup> Main bhuta of rasa dhatu is jala (ap) due to this predominance, rasa dhatu has tendency to circulate in whole body. Rasa dhatu influences the menstrual cycle in females and thus the reproductive health of the woman depends upon its state.

The health of the woman gets affected through various nidanas in the form of ahara, vihara and manasika factors. The samprapti of these diseases involves vitiation of tridosha based on the predominance of dosha. Another factor that gets affected in the pathogenesis of these diseases is jatharagni; subsequently rasa dhatu vitiation is noted. Artava being the upadhatu of rasa, we observe a close association of Artava vaha srotas dushti with rasa dushti. For example in case of artava kshaya, the doshas vitiated are apana vayu, kapha and dushya is rasa dhatu and its upadhatu artava.<sup>[20]</sup> In addition, the agni plays an important role in maintenance of all these dhatus. While we initiate Ayurvedic treatment, agni needs to be treated first. Then based on the predominance of doshas affecting the female reproductive system, we need to administer shodhana. After shodhana, the remaining of the dosha dushti needs to be treated by shamana aushadhis and this may vary based on the specific disease that the woman is suffering. Rasayana can be used to improve the dhatus and its function and to improve rasa dhatu guna and karma.<sup>[21]</sup> There are various forms of rasayana prescribed in Ayurvedic classics which can be advised to the woman to improve their immunity as well as to improve their general well being. Garbhini paricharya followed by the pregnant woman proves a successful outcome ensuring maintaining the physiology of the pregnancy and optimum nutrition thereby maintaining the quality of rasa dhatu. Thus there is a need to identify rasa dhatu dushti in each and every aspect of stree roga and prasuti tantra examination and the treatment adopted should aim at correction of the same.

## CONCLUSION

Rasa Dhatu, as the foundational nutrient tissue, is intricately connected to reproductive health, hormonal regulation, and the nourishment of all subsequent *dhatus*. The imbalances in

Rasa Dhatu manifest in a wide range of gynecological disorders, including menstrual irregularities, excessive bleeding (*Asrigdara*), and reproductive issues.<sup>[22]</sup> Maintaining the balance of Rasa Dhatu is critical for the health of the female reproductive system. Disruptions in Rasa Dhatu's quality or quantity directly affect the formation and function of *Artava* (menstrual blood), thereby influencing fertility, menstrual health, and overall well-being. Thus, a balanced Rasa Dhatu is crucial in managing and preventing disorders in *Prasuti Tantra* and *Stree Roga*.

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