

VANDYATVA: AN AYURVEDIC PERSPECTIVE ON INFERTILITY

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ABSTRACT

Vandyatva, a Sanskrit term denoting infertility or sterility, is a complex condition affecting millions worldwide. Ayurveda, a traditional Indian system of medicine, offers a unique understanding and approach to managing *Vandyatva*. As per Ayurveda, important factors for conception are considered as *Rutu*, *Kshetra*, *Ambu* and *Bija* (*Shukra-Shonita*) and also normalcy of *Hridaya*. Abnormality of properly functioning *Vayu* and *Satbhavas* (*matrja*, *pitruja*, *atmaja*, *Satvaja*, *satmyaja* and *Rasaja*), causes infertility (*Vandhyatva*). Infertility was prevalent throughout the world and this may persist till the human race exists. Every human being has inherent, intense desire to continue his own race to become a mother is one of the most cherished desires of every woman. Failure to achieve conception by a couple of mature age having normal coitus during appropriate period of menstrual cycle regularly at least for one year of their conjugal is

termed as infertility. This article delves into the Ayurvedic perspective on infertility, exploring its causes, and symptoms compiled from various *Granthas*.

KEYWORDS: *Vandhyatva*, *Nidana*, *Chikitsa*.

INTRODUCTION

Infertility is defined as inability to conceive even after one year under normal marital relation without contraception. In Ayurveda, this condition is considered as *Vandhyatva*. It is a Universal phenomenon occurring in both developing and under developing countries.

The incidence of primary infertility is about 50% among females, while it is 25% among males, male and female factors together account for another 25%. Besides genetic factors, changed life style, increased stress, strain and environmental pollution are identified as factors contributing to the rising rate of infertility.

In society, the female partner is generally blamed, she becomes the victim of social gossip for her barrenness. This in turn leads to unhappiness, psychosomatic ill health, results in marital disharmony.

Historical review on *vandyatva* by various *grathas*

Vedas

In Rigveda, there is a clear description about the *Krimis* like *Durnama*, which destroys *Garbhasaya* (Uterus) (10/162/2) leading to infertility in woman. *Yejurveda* also makes a reference of *Garbhashaya Vidhi* (Yajur 8/29), in *Atharvaveda*, a more detailed description is available (*Atharvaveda* 5/25/1 0-13) i.e. *Yoni*, *Bija*, *Virya*, *Garbha* and such other elements together with their role in conception are being thoroughly discussed while discussing the structure of female reproductive organs, it also describes the method of fertilization in *Gavani*, which can be considered as fallopian tube (*Atharvaveda* 5/25/10-13). It also mentions the implantation and growth of the foetus in uterus (*Atharvaveda* 5/25/9), it is important to note that *Atharvaveda* mentioned about several *Krimis* like *Vatsapa* (*Atharvaveda* 8/6/1) *Durnama* (*Atharvaveda* 2/52/2) and *Kranava* (*Atharvaveda* 2/25/3), which destroy the foetus and cause infertility in the female. It also suggests the herbs like *Prushnaperni* (*Atharvaveda* 2/25/2-3) and *Shweta Sarshapa* (*Atharvaveda* 8/6/6) to control the *Krimis* and treating *Mritavasta* (repeated still births) and *vandhyatva* effectively. Herbs like *Uragandha* and two types of *Sarshapa* are mentioned for the protection of foetus.

Charaka

Acharya Charaka has described the effect of infertility. He says that the man with progeny was praised, while man without progeny was disregarded by the society. He further describes that *Vandhyatva* is caused by the *Pradusta Garbhashaya Bija Bhaga* of *Shonita* and is one of the complications of untreated *Yoni Vyapadas*^[1] (Ca.Ci.30/31).

In *Mahati Garbhavakranti Sharira* 4th chapter *Vandhya* has been described as failure to achieve conception is infertility. While describing *Nidana* for *Vandhyatva*, the important factors are constituents of *Garbha* included *ritu*, *Kshetra*, *Ambu*, *Bija*, normalcy of *Hridaya*

or Psychology, properly functioning *Vayu* and *Sadbhavas*; abnormality in one of these can cause infertility. Abnormality of *Yoni*, psychology, *shukra*, *Asrik*, diet and mode of life, coitus at improper time and loss of *Bala* have been included, in the causes of delay in achieving conception by fertile or *Sapraja* woman by *Charaka*. The woman suffering from diseases of *Vata* if copulates with husband, then she does not conceive. Normally of psychology has given highest importance for achieving conception.

1. Abnormalities of *ritu* (Season or fertile period)
2. Abnormalities of *Kshetra* (*Yoni* and *Garbhasaya*),
3. Abnormalities of *Ambu* (*Bala Kshaya*) and
4. Abnormalities of *bija* are described under the cause of infertility.

Charaka also describes the causes separately for *Ajanma* of *Garbha* (not achieving conception), *Vinasha* (death of foetus or delayed birth of foetus), *Vikruta Garbha* (birth of abnormal child) and *Sapraja* (not achieving conception even after a successful pregnancy).

Due to the vitiation of *Doshas* in mother when the *Arthava* and *Garbhashaya* are slightly vitiated, there is a chance of conception, but the child will be born with congenital anomalies. Due to *Yoni Pradosha*, *Manobhigata*, *shukra-arthava*, *Ahara - Vihara dosha*, *Akala Samyoga* and *Balakshaya*; the conception may be delayed in a woman with a successful pregnancy.

Vandhyatva can be classified 3 types *Vandhya*, *Apraja* and *Sapraja*.

1. *Vandhya*: It is due to congenital absence of uterus or *Artava*. *Chakrapani* explains "*Vandhya* refers to incurable congenital or acquired abnormalities, resulting into absolute sterility".
2. *Apraja*: Infertility in which woman conceived after treatment or primary infertility.
3. *Sapraja*: It is a condition in which a woman in her active reproductive age does not conceive after giving birth to one or more children or it refers to secondary infertility.

Sushruta Samhita

Sushruta has quoted *Vandhya* in *Vimshati Yoni Vyapadas*. Infertility has been included in the clinical features of injury to *Artava vaha Srots*. *Sushruta* while describing *Bija* (*Shukra* and *Arthava*), mentioned vitiated *shukra* and *Arthava* by *Vatadi doshas*, causes infertility. He also included *vandhyatva* under *Vataja Yoni Vyapads* of which the characteristic feature is "*vandhvam Nashtartavam Vidyat*", The word *Arthava* means *Stri Bija* (ovum) or *Rajasrava* (Menstrual Blood). So the word *Nashtarthava* may represent the absence of either ovum or

menstrual Blood. The consider *Artava* as an ovum as it becomes the prime factor in achieving conception.

Ashtanga Sangraha

Vagbhata has referred *Vandhyatva*. It occurs due to abnormality of *Bija*^[2] (A. S. sha 2/48), and also mentioned that, abnormalities of *Kshetra*, woman suffering from *Yoni Vyapads*, never conceive and untreated *Yoni Vyapadas* ultimately results in *Vandhyatva*^[3] (A. S. Ut. (38/53). *Putraghni & Jatagni Yoni Vyapadas* cause *Vandhyatwa*.

Astanga Hridaya

Vagbhata considers healthy *Garbhasaya Marga* (Vaginal canal) *Artava* (Ovum) and *shukra* (Sperm), properly functioning *Vayu* and normal psychological status (happy mood) as essential factors for conception^[4] (A.H. Sha. 1/89).

Madhava Nidana

Madhavakara included the *Vandhya* in *Vimshati Yoni Vyapadas* (M. Ni. 63/3). “*Vandhyam Nashtarthavam*” loss of *Artava* without pregnancy is known as *Vandhya*.

Bhavaprakasha

Bhavamishra followed *Madhavakara*, he also included *vandhya* among *Vimshati Yoni Vyapadas* (Bh. P. Chi. 70/6), *Bhsavamisrha* describes *vandhya* under *Vataja Yonivyapadas* of which characteristic feature is “*vandhayam Nashtartavam vidyat*”, *Bhavamishra* denotes the cause of *vandhyatva* is Semen falling on the *Samirana nadi* and for other causes he followed *Charaka & Vagbhata* etc.

Kashyapa Samhita

Kashyapa mentions *vandhyatva* as one of the eighty disorders. He says that, the couple having number of children with proper growth and development due to effect of nature or their own deeds are fortunate, otherwise (having failed to achieve pregnancy) should be treated. The causes of infertility, are mentioned like *Charaka*; especially mentions abnormality in *Shadbhavas* will cause the infertility (Ka. Sam. Sa.5/5). Excessive Medication for *Vamana- virechana* to a person of *Mrdu Koshta*, even after proper *Snehana* and *Svedana* causes bleeding, resulting in the vitiation of *Vayu*, this aggravated *Vayu* causes destruction of *Bija* and *Pushpa*, in such conditions infertility always develops (Ka.Sa.Si.3). The available portion of *Kashyapa Samhita* presents a unique chapter in its *Kalpa Sthana* named *Revati*

Kalpadyaya. In this chapter, thirty different types of Revatis (Jata harini) producing various abnormalities by affecting the woman during her various stages i.e. menstruation, pregnancy etc. are described. These are considered as causative factors (Ka. Sam. Ka, Revati Kalpa 33,34). Pushpagni, Andagni, Durdara, Kalaratri and jataharini are curable.

Harita Samhita

As per *Harita Samhita* *Vandhya* is described as a Separate entity. *Harita* has defined *Vandhyatva* as, failure to achieve a child rather than pregnancy because; he has included *Garbhasravi* and *Mritavastha* under the classification of *Vandhya*. The causative factors of *Vandhyatva*, he followed *Charaka* and other authors. *Harita* while giving the classification, he included child hood under *Vandhya* (Ha. Sam. 3rd 48/ I). As the period of *ritukala* does not exist in child hood, the question of fertility does not arise.

In abnormalities of *Ritu*, coitus after end of *Ritukala* is a causative factor for *Vandhyatva*. Other than the *Ritukala*, the conception is not possible, because the acceptance of *Bija* does not occur. While discussing abnormalities of *Kshetra*, he says that, constriction of uterus and vulva due to the coitus done with the girl before menarche also causes infertility (Ha. Sam. 3rd, 5th-48/1, 2). In abnormalities of *Ambu*, *Harita* mentioned *Dhatu Kshaya* is one of the causes for infertility.

Classification of *Vandhya* as per *Harita Samhita*, *Kaka Vandhya*, *Anapatya*, *Garbha Srava*, *Mritavastha*, *Dhatuksaya* and *Garbha Kosha Bhanga* (Ha. Sam 3,1Sth- .48/ 1-6). Except *Kaka Vandhya* all are curable; and Infertility of woman who has coitus before her menarche gets cured with difficulty.

Bhela Samhita

Bhela says that, *Vandhyatva* occurs due to abnormalities of *Bija* of female and male, Suppression of natural urges and disorders of *Yoni* (Har. Sam. Sa.3/2-5). The woman either delivers abnormal child or become infertile is known as *Vandhya*. He further mentions that, causes of failure to become pregnant are only two i.e. affected with various diseases of *Vata* and abnormalities of *Yoni* (reproductive organs) (Bhe. Sam. Sa.2). Aggravated Vayu expels the *Shukra* (Sperm) from the uterus, destroys the *Rajah* (Ovum), thus the woman becomes infertile. No male or female is infertile by birth, due to coldness of *Ashaya* (*Garbhasaya* or uterus) and dryness of *Indriya*, the infertility occurs. (Bhe. Sam. Su.16). *Niruha basti* is like a nectar to infertile women (Bhe.Si.6/24). *Guducyadi Kashaya basti* is beneficial for the infertile

women (Bhe. Si.8/39).

Yogaratnakara

He has included *Vandhya* in *Vimshati Yoni Vyapad* - *Yogaratnakara* has followed *Sushruta* as "*Vandhya Nasttiartave Ghneya*", (*Yonirogadhikara* 1 7) i.e. a loss of *artava* or *Rakta* due to *Vayu* is known as *Vandhya*. The following treatment was mentioned for *Vandhya* in *YoniVyapad Chikitsa*.

BHEDA

ACCORDING TO CHARAKA

1. **VANDHYA** *Vandhya* due to *bija dushti* is *asadya*.^[5]
2. **APRAJA**-The patient conceives but it leads to miscarriage due to excessive bleeding.
3. **SAPRAJA**-The condition in which the patient is still in her reproductive age group after giving birth to one or more children cannot conceive.^[6]

ACCORDING TO HARITA

1. **BALYA, GARBHAKOSHA BHANGA, DHATUKSAYA** - Congenital disorders, chromosomal or genetic abnormalities, *dhatu kshaya* due to improper *ahara* or *panchakarma vaishamya* leads to infertility.
2. **KAKAVANDHYA**-One child sterility.
3. **ANAPATYA**-Primary infertility, a woman who have never conceived.
4. **GARBHA SRAVI**-Recurrent miscarriage
5. **MRTAVATSA**-Still birth/perinatal death.
6. **BALA KSHAYA** - Infertility due to *dhatuksahaya*.^[7]

ACCORDING TO RASARATNASUMUCHAYA

1. **ADIVANDYA**-Due to misdeeds of previous and present life.
2. **DOSHAJA** - *Vata, Pitta, Kapha, Sannipataja & Raktaja*.
3. **BHUTAJA**-Negative psych forces, infections, etc.
4. **DAIVAJA** Idiopathic.
5. **ABHICHARAJA** - Improper acts of couple.^[8]

NIDANA

ACCORDING TO SUSHRUTA- described four factors essential for conception.

❖ **RTU** means ovulation

- ❖ **KSHETRA** means *garbhashaya*
- ❖ **AMBU** means *rasa dhatu* obtained from *ahara rasa*.
- ❖ **BIJA** means *shukra* and *artava*.

When the four factors come together conception is bound to occur. If any one of these factor is not functioning properly then it leads to *vandyatva*.

ACCORDING TO CHARAKA

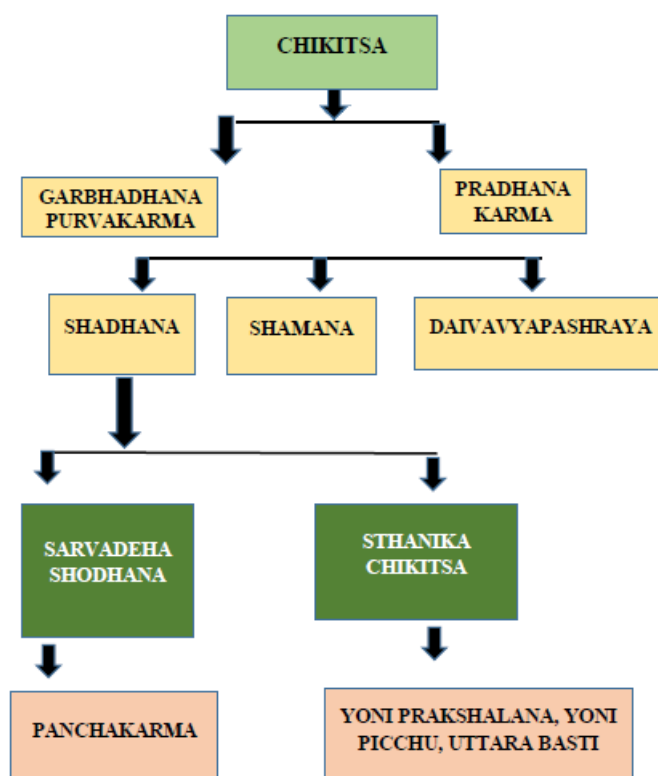
Yoni dosha, *Manasika dosha*, *Sukra dosha*, *Asrga dosha*, *Abara dosha*, *Vihara dosha*, *Akala yoga*, *Bala sankshaya* are factors which delays conception even in a *sapraja*. In other words, they can be considered as factors influencing fertility or causative factors influencing fertility."^[9]

If *yonis* is vitiated then *shukra* is not received by a disease *yonis*, thus fertilization is hampered."^[10]

A *Vata rogi stree* does not conceive in spite of all the other factors being favourable. So it is clear that without involvement of *vata*, infertility cannot occur."^[11]

The psychological state of couple plays a very important role."^[12]

CHIKITSA



- ❖ **ACHARYA CHARAKA**: says infertility is cured by *anuvasana basti* and conceive it

Shodhana regulates and restores the normal physiological function and relieves is only in a *shuddha* healthy *yoni* achieved after *shodana* treatment, conception occurs as a result of union of healthy gametes along with descent of *jiva*.^[13]

- ❖ **BHELA** says in *vandhyatva vamana*, *virechana*, *asthapana* should be done and by doing so the women conceive and delivers normally.^[14] In *stree roga*, *basti* is considered as best as they are due to *vata*, especially *niruha basti* is like a nectar to *vandhya* as it cures *vatadosha*, *rajadosha* leading to conception.^[15]
- ❖ **ACHARYA KASYAPA**, after *shodhana* (*snehana*, *swedana*, *vamana*, *virechana*, *asthapana*, *anuvasana* done consecutively), a man should be treated with milk processed with *Madhura* drugs and woman should be administered with *taila* and *masha* etc.^[16] *Vandhyatva* can be cured by *virechana*.^[17] The women with amenorrhoea, oligomenorrhoea, anovulation, useless ovum all leading to infertility should be treated with *anuvasana basti*.^[18]

PATHYA	APATHYA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Woman who consumes <i>lasuna</i> will never suffer from infertility." ❖ Milk helps in conception. ❖ <i>Mamsa</i> increases <i>shukra</i>(<i>artava</i>) helps in achieving pregnancy and nourishes the body, ❖ Root of <i>vandhyakarkataki</i>, <i>langali</i>, <i>katutumbi</i>, <i>devadali</i>, <i>dwibrhatis</i>, <i>suryavali</i> and <i>bhiruka</i>. ❖ Wearing clothes and garland left over by a woman owning a son, bath with water left over or flowing during the bath being taken by a woman having son and coitus during <i>rukala</i> are beneficial. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ <i>kaccara</i> ❖ <i>surana</i> ❖ <i>amlakanji</i> ❖ <i>vidahi</i>, and <i>tiksna dravyas</i>

CONCLUSION

Vandhyatva the female infertility is not merely a problem from the period of Vedas, but it is a struggle of early couple beyond Veda period also. This struggle is quite natural as every living being tries for its progeny. Though various scholars defined *Vandhyatva* in different ways, ultimately they defined it as an inability of female partner described as a separate entity, get a live healthy child. There were so many false beliefs, stories regarding the causes and treatments of *Vandhyatva* from Veda period to different Ayurveda classics period. Even then, there are so many truths and recipes to overcome the problem. Aim of this article is not just to provide the historical data of *Vandhyatva* but also to draw attention of the scholars to rediscover the

scientific supportive remedies for this age-old burning problem from ancient literature.

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