

STREECHARYA – THE SALUTARY LIFESTYLE FOR A HEALTHY WOMAN

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ABSTRACT

Paricharya is guidance about certain do's and don'ts those are to be followed regarding specific food habits and lifestyle etc. for healthy living. Different *Paricharya* are specifically mentioned viz. *Garbhini*, *Sootika* etc. These are the guidelines pertaining to the specific stages in female life which are almost inevitable for every female. During entire life span, female body goes through extreme anatomical, physiological and psychological changes. Accordingly, different Epochs (age groups) are formed like *Bala*, *Rajaswala* and *Vridhdha*. These epochs are further subdivided. Furthermore, permanent damage to overall health (anatomical, physiological and/or psychological) of a female can be there if female body and mind is not handled properly in these stages. In Ayurveda, specific diet, drugs and exercises are planned as per specific changes and requirements in particular age group (Epoch). All these salutary measures are aimed at maintenance of complete health of a female throughout her life. Further exploration should be done and this *STREECHARYA* should be individualized as per constitution and status of every female.

KEY WORDS: *Streecharya*, Epoch, *Streepushpajanan*, *Garbhashayaposhan*, *Rajonivrutti*

INTRODUCTION

Charya or *Paricharya* means certain salutary measures regarding food habits and lifestyle etc. that are to be followed for healthy living. In Ayurveda, different *Paricharya* are specifically mentioned viz. *Garbhini*, *Sootika* especially pertaining to different specific stages of female body.^[1,2] In these phases; lot of anatomical, physiological, psychological changes are observed. Lot of importance is given to this period of female life though it has very short span. Then why not broaden our view and vision and think about female life in a totally holistic perspective i.e. '*Streecharya*'. If these salutary measures advocated in Ayurvedic classics are propagated, promoted and made

part of living, then goal of 'Healthy Woman, Healthy Mother- Healthy Baby, Healthy Nation' can be achieved in true sense.

Epochs of female life-

Age wise, female life is broadly divided into different epochs. Aim behind this is to point out the physiological state of the body during that epoch (age). It's an average age group in which certain changes regarding menstruation and maturation takes place.

As per *Manusmruti*, these Epochs are *Bala*, *Rajaswala*, *Vridhdha*.

1. **Bala** – (till menarche) it is divided into

Gouri – till 8yrs of age

Rohini – 8-10 yrs

Kanya – 10-12 yrs before menarche

Yogaratnakara extends this epoch as age group between menarche and sexual maturation i.e. 12- 16 yrs.^[3]

2. Rajaswala – it is divided into

Tarunee – Puberty and Adolescence – 16-32 yrs

Adhirudha – Climacteric- 33-50 yrs. (child bearing to pre menopausal age)

3. Vriddha - it is divided into

- Perimenopausal and post menopausal age groups
- Peri menopausal – Till menopause – Approximately, Till 50 yrs of age
- Post menopausal – After menopause

In these epochs, governing forces i.e. *Doshas* that influence normal anatomical changes and physiological functions are *Kapha*, *Pitta* and *Vata* respectively. Female body and mind goes through turmoil when she steps ahead from one epoch to next epoch. Lot many and extreme anatomical, physiological and psychological changes occur in this journey.

Again, 3 out of 4 things in *Garbhasambhav samagree* (*Ritu*, *Kshetra*, *Ambu*, *Beej*) are present only in females.^[4] So, female has major role in *Garbhanirmittee*, *Poshan*, *Dharan* and *Janan*. So, also it is mandatory to give special attention to blossoming and maturation of female body (*Stree Sharir*) since childhood. It includes special care in age group of 8yrs to 12 yrs.

Lifestyle modifications as per epochs-

In childhood, girl and boy both are to be brought up similarly till 8 yrs. of age. Earlier, age for menarche was 12-15 yrs. Now a day, girls have early menarche and precocious puberty at 10-12 yrs of age. So, special attention towards *Rasaprasadan*

should be given. It includes, dietary inclusion of *Kushmanda* (*Benincasa cerifera*), *Shringataka* (*Trapabispinosa*), Bottle gourd (*Lagenariasiceraria*), Snake gourd (*Trichosanthes cucumerina*), *Priyal* (*Buchanania latifolia*), soft dry fruits like dates (*Phoenix sylvestris*), black raisins, apricot (*Prunus armeniaca*), dry figs (*Ficus carica*) etc. ; especially if child is weak. Wherein, if childhood obesity is there; then *Kumari* (*Aloe vera*), *Musta* (*Cyperus rotundus*), *Hingu* (*Ferula narthex*), *Marich* (*Piper nigrum*) etc. should be given.^[5] In both cases, pacification of *Vata* (*Vatashaman*), nullification of digestive and metabolic toxin (*Aamanashan*), if any. Simultaneously, potencification of body ailments i.e. *Rasa-Rakta-Mamsaprasadan* is important. Exercise in form of all outdoor activities and games and physical aerobic exercises should be encouraged.

While menarche is achieved; sexual maturity may or may not be there. So, in age group of 12- 18 yrs; all the measures should aim at achieving regular ovulatory cycles with healthy anatomical changes (secondary sexual characters). In this stage, *Vatanulomana* and balancing of *Pitta* and *Kapha* is very important.

So, diet useful for *Streepushpajanan* (ovulation inducing drugs) and *Garbhashayaposhan* (uterine tonics) should be given. *Hingu* (*Ferula narthex*), *Marich* (*Piper nigrum*), *Methika* (*Trigonella foenumgraecum*), *Ajmoda* (*Trachyspermum ammani*), *Shatavari* (*Asparagus racemosus*), Gum acacia should be purposely included in diet. Other food items like *ragi-finger millet*, *bajree-pearl millet*, *tandulodaka*, cashew (*Anacardium occidentale*), sesame seeds (*Sesamum indicum*) with jaggery etc. are also important.

Kumari (Aloe vera) is the best drug for this age group. Others are *Musta (Cyperus rotundus)*, *Triphala (Amalaki- Emblica officinale Bibhitaka- Terminalia belerica, Haritaki- Terminalia chebula)*, *Trikatu (Shunthee-Zinziber officinale, Marich-Piper Nigrum, Pippali-Piper longum)*, *Chaturbeej, Hingwashtaka choorna, Raktabol, Dashmool, Shatavari (Asparagus racemosus)*, *Gokshur (Tribulus terestis)*, *Soubhagyashunthee paka* etc. Aphrodisiacs like *Ashwagandha (Withania somnifera)* and others are to be avoided till at least 18 yrs. of age. Long term use of such drugs is definitely contraindicated.

Exercises especially useful for muscle stretching and toning like *Yogasanas* (postural exercises) are to be done daily. In *Asanas, Vajrasan, Nourkasana, Dhanurasana, Ardhamatsyendrasana, Bhujangasana, Pashchimottanasana, Katichakrasana*, Sun salutations are of help. 'AUM' chanting gives best results.

If there is any menstrual or menstruation related abnormality like dysmenorrhoea, oligomenorrhoea, delayed or irregular menstrual cycles then; *Vatanulomana* is essential. For that, *Anulomana, Virechan* and *Basti* is to be given. Majority of the cases respond to *Matra basti* of *Sahachar* and *Mahanarayan tail*. After 16 yrs. Of age; *Yoga basti* is also given. In *Yoga basti, Niruha basti* with *Dashmool, Rasna (Pluchea lanceolata)*, *Eranda (Ricinus communis)*, *Pippalimool, Triphala* is given and *Anuvasan basti* of *Sahachar* and *Mahanarayan tail* is given. Any girl; with the age below 20 yrs of age shouldn't be given *Lekhan basti*; though has obesity.

In next epoch, menstrual regulation and sexual maturation is to be achieved in age group of 18-25 yrs. Along with that;

control of emotions (sexual desires) and *Beejarakshan* are also equally important. Maintenance of normal, regular, ovulatory menstrual cycle with good endometrial thickness is required for easy and natural conception in child bearing age group i.e. 25-35 yrs of age.

For this, drugs like *Kumari (Aloe vera)*, *Krishnabol, Raktabol, Ashoka (Saraca indica)*, *Musta (Cyperus rotundus)*, *Shilajeet, Shigru (Moringa oleifera)*, *Palash (Butea frondosa)*, *Dashmool, Chandraprabha, Aartav shuddhikar kwath, Phala ghrita* are used as and when required. When female is eager to conceive, she should be given drugs like *Kumari (Aloe vera)* till 10th day of menstrual cycle, drugs like *Hingu (Ferula narthex)- Marich (Piper nigrum)* till 14th day and drugs like *Phala ghrita* after that.

After conception, *Garbhini paricharya*⁴ and after Delivery, *Sootika paricharya* is to be followed for maintenance of physical and psychological health of mother and baby. Both of these are well elaborated by ancient *Acharyas*.

Next phase of female life is the period of Climacteric which is approximately from 35-50 yrs of age. This is a crucial period; where health is neglected due to increasing family and social responsibilities. Obesity and other lifestyle disorders, hormonal imbalance, pre and peri menopausal syndrome are common in this age group.

To combat with this, diet should be low in calorie and high in nutrition especially rich in Iron and Calcium. *Nachni (Ragi)*, *Bajri, jaggery, Dates*, milk and milk products are useful. *Chaturbeej choorna* (dry roasted powder of *Methi, Chandrashu {Lepidium sativum}*, *krishnajeeraka, Yavani*) is to be taken in form of *Mukhwasa*

after lunch followed by sips of warm water. *Betel leaf* with lime should be taken twice a week that maintains Calcium deposits as well as modifies digestion and metabolism. Ingredients like *dry coconut*, *dill seeds* (*Anethum sowa*), *sonf*, white sesame seeds, black salt can be added as per individual requirement. Drugs like *Soubhagyashuntheepaka*, *Dashmularishta*, *Lohasav*, *Loharishta* are useful.

Exercises and *Yoga* therapies that strengthen muscles of back and abdomen are useful. Some of postures are –*Marjarasan*, *Dhanurasan*, *Sarvangasan*, *Halasan*, *AUM* chanting and Meditation are useful. Being at peace with oneself and combating stress and depression in perimenopausal period is also equally important.

In menopausal age, every regime should aim at *Vatashaman*, *Asthiposhan*. *Basti chikitsa* is main and should be done frequently, periodically. *Shirodhara* and *Nasya* are other equally useful therapies for prevention of consequences of ageing.

Almost same diet as age group 35-50 yrs of age should be followed. Modification is to prefer baked, roasted and popped food. *Ashwagandharishta*, *dashmularishta*, *suvarna kalpa*, *Makshika bhasma*, *Kukkutandatwak bhasma*, *Trivang bhasma*, *Mandur bhasma* are useful. Group of exercises those strengthen and tone up muscles; are beneficial.

These are very brief guidelines about diet, drugs and exercises that are most beneficial in these age groups. All these salutary measures are aimed at maintenance of complete health of a female throughout her life. Further exploration should be done and this *STREECHARYA* should be

individualized as per constitution and status of every female.

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