

## AN OVERVIEW OF RAJASRAVA KALA AND THE ROLE OF RAJASWALA PARICHARYA

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## ABSTRACT

*Rajasrava Kala* is a period where the women undergo tremendous social, physiological and psychological changes in her body. Variations in hormones play an important role in the process of menstruation. *Shareera* is bound by *Doshas* and in particular menstruating women have imbalance of various *Doshas* which manifest in several symptoms of both physiological and psychological conditions like low back pain, abdominal cramps, bloating etc. These symptoms can be mitigated to a large extent by following the ancient tradition of *Rajaswala Paricharya* as propounded by various *Acharyas* irrespective of their *Prakriti* and *Vaya*. It is of paramount importance that the modern woman undergoes tremendous discomfort in balancing her work and family to meet the demands of present lifestyle.

**Keywords:** *Rajasrava Kala; Rajaswala Paricharya; Rutuchakra; Prakriti.*

## INTRODUCTION

*Ayurveda* is an ancient system of medicine which originated during the Vedic period. Great emphasis is given to prevention of diseases rather than cure by maintaining a balanced life. *Ayu* means life *Veda* means knowledge/information. Therefore, *Ayurveda* means 'The Science of Life'. In *Ayurveda* special importance is given to *Stree* and as has been said in our *Shastras* "Yatra Naryaastu Pujyante Ramante Tatra Devataha". *Stree* is known as an embodiment of the Divine; Hence, *Stree Swaasthya* is given highest priority by the great *Acharyas*.

With the onset of menarche, *Stree* enters the 'reproductive' age of her life. Menstruation or *Rajasrava* heralds the progression of *Kumari* to *Rajomathi*. *Rutuchakra* means menstrual cycle and the meaning of *Chakra* means wheel, which revolves continuously. In *Stree Shareera* it can be seen in form of bleeding through vagina termed as menstruation which occurs every month for the purpose of reproduction. Entire period of 1 month (*Chandramaasa* – 28 days) is divided in to three phases i.e.

- *Rajahsrava* (Menstruation) – 3-5 days
- *Rutukala* (Proliferative phase including ovulation) – 12 or 16 days
- *RutuVyateetakala* (Post-ovulatory phase including Secretary phase) - 9 or 13 days

*Rajasrava Kala* is a period when there is expulsion of *Rajas* from the *Garbhashaya*. The duration of bleeding lasts 3-5 days. During this period the effect of *VataDosh* is predominant.

*Ayurveda* describes *Rajasrava* as a physiological process like many other naturally occurring processes governed by *Doshas*. Each individual has different *Prakriti* and each *Prakriti* is governed by *Doshas*. *Ayurveda* describes normal menstruation as one when the *Tridoshas* are balanced and that which is not associated with any pain and the quantity of blood expelled is not scanty or excessive. The blood should not be unctuous or greasy and the colour should resemble the colour of *Rakta Kamala*, *Lakshya Rasa* or Rabbits blood. Different terminology is used to describe the 'menstrual blood' like *Artava*, *Raja*, *Shonita*, *Lohita*, *Pushpa*, *Rudira* and *Beeja* under different contexts.

The most widely used term for blood is *Artava* and *Rajas*.

### ***Rajahsrava kala***

***Maasimaasi rajah streenaamrasajamstravatitreham***  
|| (A.H.Sha.1/7)

All *Acharyas* have described *Rajasravakala* as bleeding phase. There is however a difference of opinion as to the duration of *Rajasrava Kala/Artavasrava Kala*.

- Vagbhata - 3 days (A.S. Sha.1/10 and A.H. Sha. 1/7)
- *Bhavamishra* - 3days (B.P. Pu. Kha.Garbha.2/204)
- *Charaka* – 5 days (Cha.Chi.30/225)
- *Harita* – 7 days (Ha.Sam.Sha.1/19)
- *Bhela*- 5 to 6 days

During this period, the *Rajas/Rakta* which is formed in the *Shareera* gets accumulated in the *Garbhashaya* and if there is no conception then the same is also known as *Artava* and is discharged as *PuranaRajas*. This precede the period known as *Rutukala*.<sup>1</sup>

*Maasenopachitam kale dhamaneebyamtaadhaartavam* | *Ishathkrishnamvivarnam cha vaayuryonimukhamnayeth* || (su.sa.soo.3/10) As said by *Acharya Sushruta* the blood accumulated in the *Garbhashaya* for the whole month is expelled through the *Yoni* by *Apana Vayu*. The blood is carried by both the *Dhamanis* (uterine vessels and their endometrial capillaries) to the uterus and colour becomes slightly brackish and possesses unique odour/*Gandha*. *Acharya Vishwamitra* has observed that hairy thin vessels fill the uterus for the whole month to receive *Beeja/Shukra* (both *Stree* and *Pumbija*).<sup>2</sup>

Above description clearly indicates that menstruation is a result of changes going on in the *Stree Shareera* and concurrently in the *Garbhashaya* due to the changes in the internal vasculature. It means the endometrium undergoes physical change eventually resulting in its destruction. Menstruation is the visible manifestation of cyclic physiologic uterine bleeding due to shedding of the endometrium following invisible interplay of hormones mainly through hypothalamus-pituitary-ovarian axis. For the menstruation to occur, the axis must be actively coordinated, endome-

trium must be responsive to the ovarian hormones (estrogen and progesterone) and the outflow tract must be patent. Once the menstruation starts, it continues cyclically at intervals of 21–35 days with a mean of 28 days.<sup>3</sup>

#### **Sangatana (constitution)**

*Artava* is made up of *Panchamahabhuta* in which: - *Prithvi- Gandhata, Jala* maintains *Dravata, Teja* maintains *Ragata., Vayu – Spandana* (Which helps in circulation, discharge of regular and proper flow), *Akasha Mahabhuta* provides necessary passage and flow of *Artava* due to its inherent *LaghutaGuna*<sup>4</sup>

#### **Origin and Formation of Artava**

- **Rasaathsthanyamaartavamcha**  
(*su.sa.soo.14/10.teeka*)

*Artava* is formed from *Rasa Dhatu* in the *Shareera, Rakta* named *Rajah* is formed in the uterus. The *Rajah* is thus formed from the *Sara* or essence part of *Rasa Dhatu* and same is expelled from the *Garbhashaya* for 3 days of every month. According to *Charaka* and *Sushruta*, *Artava* is formed from *Rasa* and the same maintains consistency throughout the formation and up to the eventual expulsion from the uterus. *Acharya Vagabhata* says *Rajas* is formed from *Rasa* and gets accumulated in the uterus and gets expelled as *Artava*. *Acharyas* use the word *Artava* under different contexts. It is also to be noted that the meaning is used inter-changeably.

- **Artava as Rajasrava/ Menstrual blood** – It is *Shonita, Asrug, Rajah, Rakta, Rudhira, Pushpa, Lohita (Acharya Charaka, Sushruta, Vagbhata and Kashyapa)*.
- **Artava as Streebeeja/ Ovum** -It is *Shonita, Asrug, Rajah, Rakta (Acharya Charaka, Sushruta, Vagbhata)*

#### **Artava Lakshanas**

**Artavamshonithamtuaagneyam**|| (*su.sa.soo.14/7*)

The nature of *Artava* is not *Soumya* like *Rasa* (formed from *Rasa Dhatu*), According to *Acharya Sushruta - Artava* is of *Tejo Mahabhuta Pradhana* i.e. *Agneya Swaroopa*. In *Sushruta Samhita, Dalhana* commented on the *Samyoga* of *Shukra* and *Artava* concept with description about the *Swaroopa* of *Artava* as *Alpa, Styanibhuta, Sukshma* and *Asanchari*.

#### **Varna [Colour]:**

Colour of *Artava* is described as *Prakruta Varnaas* follows:

*Gunjaphala* – Resembles the juice of lac.

*Padma /Rakta Kamal/ Alaktaka* - Resembles the juice of red lotus flower.

*Indragopa*–Resembles crimson red like cochineal insect (*cha.sa.chi.30/226*)

*Sashaasrik* – Resembles Rabbit blood (*su.sa.sha.2/17, A.san.sha.1/20*)

*LakshaRasa*- Resembles the red fruit of jequirity. (*su.sa.soo.3/10*)

*Ishat Krishna* – Resembles brackish colour. (*A.san.sha.1/22, Ha.sa.sha.1/24*)

[*Acharyas* also says that the colour of *Artava* depends on the *Prakriti* of a person by *Bhavprakasha*.

*Yogaratanakara, Bhavamishra* have followed *Charaka* and *Sushruta* in this regard.]

#### **Gandha [Odour]:**

The odour of *Artava* is described by *Acharyas* in the following *Shlokas*:

**Visrataaaaamagandhataa** || (*su.sa.soo.14/9.dalhana*)

*Acharya Sushruta* mentions *Rakta* as of *Visra Gandha* due to predominant of *Prithvi Mahabhuta, Dalhana* commented it as *Ama Gandha*. *Artava* is of *Madhu Gandha* which is like the smell of honey (*Ma.ni.61/7.madhukosha vyakya*)

#### **Artava Pramana**

**chathvaarorajasahstreeyaa** || (*A.H.sha.3/81*)

*Acharya Charaka* says that the quantity of *Rakta/Artava* expelled is neither scanty nor excessive and which does not cause any pathological disorder.<sup>6</sup>

*Acharya Vagbhata* and *Sushruta* say that the *Matra* of *Artava* is of four *Anjali*.

It is generally observed that one cycle of menstruation expels 80-90 ml of blood and any excess amount is considered as *Atipravaha* or *Menorrhagia*.

*Maasaannishpicchadaaaha tipancharaatraanubandhicha* | *Naivaatibahunaathyalpamaartavamshud-dhamaadisheth* || (*Cha.sa.chi. 30/225*)

*Rajasrava kala* is enunciated in the *Shastras* as a bleeding phase. *Artava/Rajas* flow lasting 5 days and not associated with any burning sensation or associated pain in the *Shareera* is defined as normal *Ra-*

jasrava. Further, it has also been said that the *Artava/Rajas* should not be too scanty or excessive, is not unctuous in nature, foul smelling and is not discolored and then *Rajasrava* is considered to be normal.

*Artava/Rajas* is said to be *Shuddha* when it has *Prakruta Varna, Gandha, Matra/Pramana* and *Swaroopa* as defined in the *Shastras*. Apart from this the *Artava* should not stain clothes when washed and is discharged at proper *Masaanumasika Kala* then also the *Artava* is said to be *Shuddha*<sup>7</sup>. If *Artava* does not exhibit these *Lakshana's*, it is indicative of *Vikruta Avastha* as it can manifest in many problems related to *Stree Swaasthya* like common gynecological disorders.

### **Rajaswala Charya**

Acharyas explain how a *Stree* should live during *Rajasrava kala* as under,

- From the first day on the onset of *Rajasrava* it is advised that the *Stree* should follow celibacy.
- She should abstain from all sorts of physical activities including household activities other than those that are absolutely necessary for her day to day life.
- *Stree* should not sleep during daytime, not apply *Kajal*, and avoid combing her hair. Not shed tears, not bathe nor anoint self with decorative ornaments and also desist from paring of nails.
- She should avoid talking and laughing loudly.
- She should not fast during these days and should consume foods like *Havishya* i.e., meal made of ghee, *Shali* rice and milk, *Yavaka* i.e., meal made of barley & milk and the same should be cooked in a clean unbroken vessel made of clay.
- She should sleep on a mattress made of *Darbha* (holy grass used in sacred ritualistic practices in Hinduism) and the mattress should be laid on the floor.
- She should avoid *Panchakarma* therapies like *Nasya, Swedana* and *Vamana*<sup>8</sup>.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Role of Dosha in Rajasrava**

*Ayurveda* describes that each individual has different *Prakriti* as defined by *Doshas*.

- *Pittaja Prakriti* individuals display more *Pittaja* quality *Lakshanas*.
- *Vataja Prakriti* individuals display more *Vataja* quality *Lakshanas*.
- *KaphajaPrakriti* individuals have more *Kaphaja* quality *Lakshanas*.

It is very important to note that the '*Vata Dosha*' is predominant during *Rajasrava Kala* irrespective of the *Prakriti* of the individual. Due to the heightened presence of *Chala Guna* of *Vata* there is corresponding increase in the movement of *Vayu* which further enhances the movement of *Dravyas* in the *Garbhashaya*. One of the types of *Vata* i.e., *Apana Vayu* is responsible for the elimination of *Mala, Mutra* and *Rajas*. During menstruation each individual of different *Prakriti* is governed by different *Doshas*. In general, it is observed that during *Rajasrava* there is *Kapha Dosha Sanchaya* and corresponding *Vata Prakopa* and *Pitta Prashamana Avastha*.

Menstrual flow can be classified according to their *Prakriti* as

#### **• Vataja Menstrual Flow:**

When there is *Prakopa* of *Vata* in *Garbhashaya* the *Srotas* or *Dhamani* gets constricted thereby reducing the flow of blood and nutrients to the endometrium. This is also due to the inherent characteristics of *Vata* as defined by its *Sheeta* and *KharaGuna* that disrupts the normal flow of blood through the arteries in the *Garbhashaya*. When this depletion of blood occurs, there is tremendous pain like low back ache, muscle cramps and body ache. This condition which afflicts people of *Vataja Prakriti* the intensity of pain is severe resulting in more discomfort. Also, if during this period if they consume *Vatakara Ahara* like *Lavana Katurasa Yukta Aharas* and indulge in *Viharas* like strenuous physical work then the intensity of pain increases substantially.

#### **• Pittaja Menstrual Flow:**

When there is *Pitta Prakopa* in the *Garbhashaya* there is smooth flow of menstrual blood due to its inherent *Ushna* and *Teekshna Guna* of *Pitta*. They generally have 'less' severity of low back pain, abdominal cramps etc., instead they have skin eruptions like acne/pimples and burning sensation. Slight increase in

body temperature is also seen. These characteristics can be seen in *Pittaja Prakriti* individuals and if they consume less *Pittakara Aharas* like *Katu*, *Kshara*, *Teekhna*, *Lavana Yukta Aharas* then they can reduce the aforesaid symptoms.

• **Kaphaja Menstrual Flow:**

When there is *Kapha Prakopa* in the *Garbhashaya* there is heavy expulsion of blood and its constituents. The exudates are unguent, unctuous, thick and mucous in nature because of *Guru*, *Manda*, *Sheeta*, *Slakshana* and *Mritsna Guna* of the *Kapha*. Individuals suffering from this condition become lethargic and lazy. The flow of blood too is inconsistent and of longer duration. These characteristics increase in individuals of *Kaphaja Prakriti* and if they avoid *Madhura*, *Snigdha*, *Guru Aharas* they can overcome the aforesaid symptoms to a large extent. First and foremost, it is said that during menstruation there is a process of *Shodhana* in the *Stree*. It means the *Stree* is undergoing a natural process of purification and thereby removing impurities from the *Shareera*. The *Rajaswala Paricharya* is as *Shodhana* procedure which is similar to the *Ashta Mahadoshakara Bhavas* as described in *Ayurveda*. Since there is heightened dominance of *Vata* during this period there is less dominance of *Pitta* and *Kapha* i.e., *Pitta* in *Prashamana Avastha* and *Kapha* in *Sanchaya Avastha*. As said above in *Rajaswala Paricharya* that a menstruating woman should practice 'Celibacy' or 'Brahmacharya' because when she is undergoing austerity and purification process any sexual intercourse may lead to impairment of the future child thus born, It is mentioned in *Sushruta Samhita* that the conception, if it occurs, the ensuing offspring will either have congenital deformity or short life span. Also, it is to be noted that if the menstruating women engages in coitus then this causes imbalance in energy levels which is detrimental to her health. Further it is also mentioned that if there is copulation the lifespan of husband shortens, and he tends to lose virtuousness and glory.

As mentioned in the *Sushruta Samhita* and *Angirasa Smriti* any physical exertion is to be avoided due to the heightened presence of *Rajas* in her body. If there is any physical exertion (including talking and laugh-

ing loudly) over a long period of time then she will not be able to be in a healthy condition due to imbalance of *Doshas*, and any future child may face severe health problems. It is also said that she should avoid cooking because when she is in a state of *Rajasika* there will be a conflict of energy since it is believed that food are the carriers of positive energy.

As mentioned by *Acharya Sushruta*, the women during *Rajasrava kala* must not bathe nor sleep during the daytime, apply *Kajal* and adorn ornaments etc. due to the imbalance of *Doshas*. For e.g. there is already *Agnimandhya* in *Rajasrava Kala*, sleeping during the daytime increases the *Kapha* thereby increasing the intensity of *Agnimandhyathva*. Segregation is also advised as part of austerity and purification process or *Shodhana*. This is for obvious reasons that segregation is necessary for the management of blood loss hygienically. In modern times the use of sanitary pads has reduced this segregation but it is advisable that she being in the heightened state of *Rajasika* does not transfer negative energy to others through touch and the same principle holds true if she is also allowed to cook. As per *Sushruta Samhita* consumption of food should be moderate because during this period there is *Jataragni Mandyatva* and therefore should abstain from consuming *Katu*, *Teekshna*, *Amla*, *Lavana Yukta Ahara* for better digestion. It is better that *Rajasika* food made of meat or meat products is avoided for inhibiting the *Prakopa* of *Doshas*. In summation it is advised that the menstruating woman eats only *Satwika* foods for maintenance of her physiological health.

As per tradition, it is also advised that the woman should not perform any religious rituals or enter a temple because a consecrated temple is a place of spiritual enlightenment of the conscience. High positive energy emanates from a consecrated temple and when a menstruating woman who has heightened *Rajasika* enters then there is obvious imbalance of energy which leads to great physiological damage to her health. Therefore, *Dharma Shastras* say that a menstruating woman should abstain from entering a temple for her own spiritual and physiological well-being.



Finally, in summation, the *Stree* who is on menstruation should follow certain rituals on the fourth day of her menstrual cycle. *Acharyas* say that on the 4<sup>th</sup> day she should take a sacred ritualistic bath, use unguents and wear white garments. She should also adorn herself with ornaments, carry garlands made of flowers chanting with piousness sacred hymns and look at her husband. Further, it is also mentioned that she should with purity of thought and mind offer oblations and pay obeisance to *Agni Deva*, Lord *Vishnu*, *Skandas*, *Brahmanas*, *Gou Mata* etc., this helps her in increasing *Satvika Guna* which will eventually help her in producing a healthy offspring. *Rajahswala Paricharya* if is not followed properly may lead to *Ashta Artava Dushti* or *Yoni Vyapath* which is associated with present era menstrual problems like dysmenorrhea, menorrhagia etc., Hence it is necessary to follow *Rajaswala Paricharya* during *Rajahsrava kala*. In a Study conducted by researchers it was found that candidates who were chosen to follow the traditional *Rajaswala Paricharya* had exhibited great improvement in their physiological and psychological conditions. They reported less symptoms of pain associated with menstruation especially low back pain and abdominal cramps. Therefore, it can be said that following *Rajaswala Paricharya* is helpful in relieving many discomforts in menstruating women even during the modern times. (Ref: *Rajaswala Paricharya – Effect on Menstrual Cycle and Its Associated Symptoms* by Dr Pallavi Pai et al)

## CONCLUSION

Women play an important role in the socio-political structure of the society. Their role is more assertive than ever before in the present times. Therefore, their health and well-being is of prime importance for the progress of humankind. *Ayurveda* accords special importance to *Stree* and *Stree Swaasthya* and in particular utmost care is of prime importance during her reproductive years. *Rajasrava Kala*/Menstruation period is a period when the *Stree* undergoes social, physiological and psychological changes. Modern women have an added responsibility of family and work. Therefore, menstruating women undergo tremendous

difficulty in fulfilling their day to day chores along with additional health concern, Modern lifestyle has more or less reduced women to bundle of agonies and it is also difficult for her to withstand the pressure resorting her to find solace in modern medicine. During ancient times the concept of PMS i.e., pre-menstrual syndrome was totally absent. But, as has been observed and experienced by a whole lot of women PMS afflicts majority of the population cutting across all age groups. It is to be noted that physiological symptoms persist more during *Rajasrava Kala* than the *Rutukala* or *Ruruvyateeta Kala*. She will be at the lowest ebb of her physical fitness. Physically active woman suffers a lot during this phase. Additional symptoms may persist along with symptoms like shoulder pain, joint pain, hyper-acidity etc., Also, psychologically she may be prone to short temper and anger.

Most of the modern ailments afflicting women are a direct result of the modern lifestyle. For e.g. Obesity, Infertility, Menorrhagia, Dysmenorrhea etc., afflict more people than ever before. *Rajaswala Paricharya* as practiced during the ancient times may be the solution for treating these symptoms. Some of the ‘rituals’ practiced by ancient women may not too practical in the present day and age however, there is tremendous scope for mitigating the discomfort by practicing these regimens. *Paricharyas* as prescribed by the *Acharyas* can be followed by modern women to a large extent for minimizing the pain and associated symptoms adhering to *Ahara-Vihara Paricharyas*. Consuming of *Aharas* which are *Satmya* to individuals like *Snigdha*, *Laghu*, *Madhura Yukta Ahara* etc., and *Viharas* like *Yoga* and *Meditation* help the women in overcoming most of symptoms. This may also help her to mitigate any underlying gynecological disorders.

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