



OPTIMIZING REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH: A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF RAJASWALA PARICHARYA AND YOGA IN PRIMARY DYSMENORRHEA

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Abstract:

The reproductive age of women marks a critical phase in the pursuit of healthy progeny. Menstruation, a natural event integral to the reproductive life of females, often becomes a nexus for various menstrual disorders, with dysmenorrhea emerging as a significant concern. This comprehensive review delves into the efficacy of two holistic approaches, Rajaswala Paricharya and Yoga, in preventing primary dysmenorrhea, a prevalent and often under-addressed health issue.

Rajaswala Paricharya, a regimen specifically designed for menstruating women, aims to enhance reproductive health and curb menstrual disorders. However, despite its potential benefits, its contemporary adoption remains inadequate, overshadowed by misinformation perpetuated by media and sanitary product manufacturers. The article emphasizes the pivotal role of Ayurvedic physicians in promoting Rajaswala Paricharya to safeguard female reproductive health.

The review extensively explores the impact of Yoga, encompassing various yogasanas, pranayama, and meditation, on primary dysmenorrhea through an exhaustive examination of literature from diverse sources. The synthesis of evidence suggests a positive correlation between yogic practices and a reduction in menstrual pain, ultimately fostering increased productivity and heightened self-confidence among adolescent girls.

The article underscores the need for widespread dissemination of Rajaswala Paricharya guidelines, as outlined in Ayurveda, to empower women in embracing these practices for the betterment of reproductive health. Additionally, it highlights the role of Yoga as a non-pharmacological intervention, providing a holistic approach to alleviate primary dysmenorrhea and enhance overall well-being. The synthesis of these two approaches, rooted in traditional wisdom and contemporary scientific understanding, offers a promising avenue for comprehensive menstrual health management.

Index Terms:- Primary Dysmenorrhea, Rajaswala paricharya, Yoga.

I. INTRODUCTION:

The reproductive age of women is a crucial phase marked by the delicate balance between personal well-being and the prospect of nurturing the health of future generations. Menstruation, an inherent and cyclical aspect of the female reproductive life, often serves as a gateway to various menstrual disorders, with primary dysmenorrhea emerging as a prevalent and impactful concern. In the contemporary landscape, where the demands on women's lives have grown multifariously, incorporating both professional and domestic responsibilities, the prevalence of menstrual disorders such as dysmenorrhea, menorrhagia, PCOD, and others has become a poignant reality.

Menstruation is an inherent aspect of the regular reproductive cycle in females. Dysmenorrhea, on the other hand, is a genital system condition impacting females and can be attributed to factors like endometriosis, adenomyosis, ovarian cysts, or may have an idiopathic origin. It manifests as cyclic pelvic pain occurring before or during menstruation, disrupting daily activities. The pain is typically felt in the lower, umbilical, or suprapubic abdominal regions and is characterized by sensations such as sharp, throbbing, burning, or shooting pains, which may extend to the thighs and lower back¹.

Study reveals that women experiencing mild pain were absent for an average of one and a half days per month, while those with moderate and severe dysmenorrhea were absent for approximately 2.1 ± 1.2 and 2.5 ± 1.3 days, respectively. The research indicates that a small proportion of girls opted for pharmacological management (25.5%), with the majority (83.2%) relying on non-pharmacological methods. Notably, only 14.2% sought medical advice.²

In the Indian context, a range of 50% to 87.8% of adolescents reported experiencing primary dysmenorrhea³. Despite its high prevalence, it is frequently undertreated or even disregarded by healthcare professionals, researchers, and the women themselves, often resigned to accepting it as a normal part of the menstrual cycle. However, the repercussions of primary dysmenorrhea extend beyond the physical realm, affecting health-related quality of life (HRQoL), social dynamics, work productivity, and the psychological well-being of women during their formative reproductive years⁴.

In response to this health challenge, two holistic approaches have garnered attention for their potential in preventing and managing primary dysmenorrhea: Rajaswala Paricharya and Yoga. Rajaswala Paricharya, an ancient Ayurvedic regimen, provides a structured set of guidelines specifically tailored for menstruating women. Unfortunately, the awareness and adherence to this regimen have waned in the modern era, overshadowed by the pervasive influence of misinformation disseminated by media and commercial interests.

Yoga, an age-old practice rooted in physical postures (asanas), breath control (pranayama), and meditation, has gained widespread recognition for its holistic benefits. Numerous studies have explored the potential of yoga in alleviating various health issues, including primary dysmenorrhea. The integration of traditional wisdom and contemporary scientific understanding positions Yoga as a non-pharmacological, cost-effective, and accessible intervention that holds promise in menstrual health management.

The comprehensive review of Rajaswala Paricharya and Yoga in preventing primary dysmenorrhea underscores the significance of integrating traditional wisdom with contemporary evidence-based approaches for menstrual health management. The convergence of Ayurvedic principles, the practical guidelines of Rajaswala Paricharya, and the holistic practices of Yoga offers a promising avenue for promoting overall well-being in women during their reproductive years. By recognizing the interconnectedness of physical, psychological, and lifestyle factors, this synthesis seeks to pave the way for personalized and effective strategies in primary dysmenorrhea prevention.

As we navigate the delicate intersection of ancient traditions and modern insights, there arises an opportunity to empower women with knowledge and practices that resonate with both historical wisdom and current scientific understanding. The cultivation of a holistic approach to menstrual health, encompassing dietary considerations, lifestyle choices, and mind-body interventions, may contribute not only to the alleviation of primary dysmenorrhea but also to the enhancement of overall quality of life for women across diverse demographics.

In fostering a dialogue that transcends disciplinary boundaries, this review aims to inspire further research, awareness, and collaboration among healthcare practitioners, researchers, and individuals seeking to optimize menstrual health. Ultimately, the integration of Rajaswala Paricharya and Yoga holds the potential to redefine and enhance the narrative surrounding women's reproductive well-being, fostering a harmonious balance between tradition and progress in the pursuit of holistic healthcare.

II. MENSTRUAL WELL-BEING WITH RAJASWALA PARICHARYA:

"Rajaswala Paricharya" refers to a set of guidelines and practices mentioned in Ayurveda, the ancient Indian system of medicine, specifically tailored for women during menstruation. The term "Rajaswala" refers to a woman who is menstruating. This regimen, also known as "Ritucharya" or "Menstrual Health Protocol," outlines a series of do's and don'ts aimed at maintaining physical, mental, and reproductive well-being during the menstrual cycle.

The primary objectives of Rajaswala Paricharya are to prevent the vitiation of doshas (biological energies), enhance digestive fire (agni), and promote overall health during menstruation. The practices outlined in Rajaswala Paricharya are rooted in Ayurvedic principles and aim to balance the physiological changes that occur in a woman's body during this natural and cyclical process.

Some common aspects of Rajaswala Paricharya include dietary recommendations, specific behaviors to adopt or avoid, and guidelines for maintaining hygiene. For example, during menstruation, women are advised to observe celibacy, practice light exercises, avoid exposure to wind, and follow a specific diet that includes easily digestible and nourishing foods.

The holistic nature of Rajaswala Paricharya emphasizes the interconnectedness of physical, mental, and spiritual aspects of health. While these guidelines have been part of Ayurvedic wisdom for centuries, their relevance is still acknowledged in contemporary discussions on women's health and well-being⁵.

Do's:

1. Observing Celibacy: Abstain from intimate relations during the first 3 days of menstruation.
2. Sleep on Darbha Mattress: Use a mattress made of Darbha grass for sleeping during menstruation.
3. Dietary Recommendations: Consume meals made with Ghee (clarified butter), Shali Rice, and Milk. Alternatively, a meal made with Barley is also suggested.
4. Eating Practices: Consume food directly using your palm, in clay utensils, or on leaves.
5. Moderation in Food Intake: Take food in smaller quantities during this period.
6. Concentration on Auspicious Thoughts: Focus on positive and auspicious thoughts to maintain mental well-being.

Don'ts

1. Daytime Sleeping (Diwaswap): Avoid sleeping during daytime to maintain an active and balanced routine.
2. Use of Collyrium (Anjana): Refrain from applying collyrium to the eyes during menstruation.
3. Bathing & Anointment (Lepana): Avoid bathing and anointment during this period.
4. Nail Pairing (Nakha kartana): Do not trim or pair your nails during menstruation.
5. Avoid Chasing, Running, Exercise (Dhawan): Refrain from engaging in vigorous physical activities like chasing, running, or exercise.
6. Limit Laughing: Minimize laughter during these days.
7. Avoid Long Conversations: Refrain from indulging in extended or lengthy conversations.
8. Avoid Combing: Do not comb your hair during the specified days.
9. Nasal Instillation of Medicine (Nasya): Avoid the nasal instillation of any medicinal substances.
10. Exposure to Wind: Minimize exposure to strong winds during menstruation.
11. Dietary Restrictions: Refrain from consuming Tikshna (sharp), Ushna (hot), Lavana (salty), and Amla (sour) substances in your diet.

Rajaswala Paricharya, as outlined in Ayurveda, draws from ancient wisdom and, though it may find it difficult to align seamlessly with contemporary scientific language, some of its principles can indeed be examined through a modern scientific lens⁶.

1. Bhrahmacharini (Observe chastity): Sexual intercourse without precautions during or shortly after menstruation is indeed associated with an increased risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and the development of reproductive tract issues. This aligns with modern knowledge on the transmission of pathogens during menstruation.
2. Havishyam Bhojini (Eat Havishya - Shali, Ghrita, Takra, Yawaka, etc): The functional ingredients in barley grains have been scientifically proven to have efficacy in preventing chronic diseases, improving bowel health, and accelerating wound healing. Barley β -glucans, found in Shashtika Shali, are known for their immune-regulating properties.
3. Dairy Consumption: Studies have indicated that dairy consumption, including ghee, milk, yogurt, and buttermilk, plays a role in influencing women's reproductive health and may be associated with a decreased risk of endometriosis and uterine leiomyomata.
4. Darbhasansatarshayini (Sleep on mat made up of Darbha): Darbha grass has been shown to block X-ray radiation, and its unique nano-patterns and properties have been studied for potential applications in various fields. The collaboration between nanotechnology and traditional knowledge showcases the potential benefits of Darbha grass.

5. Kalyanadhyayini (Thinking about positive things): Positive thinking and optimism are recognized as protective factors for overall well-being and health. Psychological stress can have inhibitory effects on ovarian hormone production, impacting reproductive health.
 6. Tikshna-Ushna-Amla-Lavanani Varjayet (Avoid Spicy, Hot, Sour, Salty food): Dietary factors, including the consumption of certain foods, have been linked to menstrual pain. Increased consumption of fruits, vegetables, fish, and dairy products may have a protective role against menstrual pain.
 7. Avoid Bathing (Head Bath): Changes in body temperature, including bathing, can influence neural circuits regulating energy balance, body temperature, and reproduction. The connection between hormonal changes across the menstrual cycle and thermoregulation is recognized.
 8. Eat in Unbroken Clay Vessel: Clay utensils are known to have alkaline properties that neutralize the pH balance of food, potentially enhancing digestion. Antibacterial effects of clay have been observed, and certain clays, like bentonite, have shown haemostatic properties
 9. Over Exertion: Intense exercise has been associated with menstrual dysfunctions, including luteal phase defects and amenorrhea. Moderate exercise may have a more favorable impact on menstrual cycles.
 10. Avoid Day Sleeping: Menstruating women may experience increased disturbance during the luteal phase, with those having severe premenstrual symptoms showing higher daytime sleepiness.
- The principles of Rajaswala Paricharya align with contemporary scientific understanding in various aspects related to reproductive health, hygiene, and well-being. Further research is needed to explore and validate these principles comprehensively.

III. SIGNIFICANCE OF HAVISHYANNA

Havishyanna, a dietary recommendation during the first three days of menstruation as per Ayurveda, holds significant importance in promoting women's reproductive health and overall well-being. The term "Havishya" refers to a meal prepared with cooked rice and cow milk, often supplemented with cow ghee. The importance of Havishyanna can be highlighted in several aspects.

Havishyanna includes essential nutrients from rice, milk, and ghee, providing a well-balanced and easily digestible source of energy. This nutritional support is crucial during menstruation when the body may experience increased metabolic demands. Ayurveda emphasizes the role of Havishyanna in kindling the digestive fire (Agni). The combination of rice, milk, and ghee is believed to support proper digestion and assimilation of nutrients, contributing to overall digestive health.

The selection of specific foods in Havishyanna aligns with Ayurvedic principles to balance the doshas, particularly Vata and Pitta. This balance is essential for maintaining overall well-being and preventing menstrual disorders. Ayurveda suggests that Havishyanna helps normalize the functioning of Vata dosha, which is particularly relevant during menstruation when Vata imbalance may contribute to discomfort and pain.

The ingredients in Havishyanna also have properties that aid in expelling morbid doshas (imbalances) from the body. This cleansing effect supports reproductive health and prevents the accumulation of toxins.

Havishyanna is considered conducive for life, indicating its role in sustaining vitality and supporting the body's natural processes, especially during the menstrual phase. The meal is designed to bring lightness to the body, promoting a sense of comfort and ease. This is particularly relevant during menstruation when some individuals may experience bloating or discomfort.

Havishyanna is often recommended as part of Rajaswala Paricharya, the regimen to be followed during menstruation. Adhering to this dietary practice is believed to contribute to the prevention of menstrual disorders and the enhancement of reproductive health. The emphasis on a balanced and nourishing diet during menstruation aligns with general principles of nutrition and well-being⁷.

IV. ROLE OF YOGA IN PRIMARY DYSMENORRHEA:

In addressing the challenge of Primary Dysmenorrhea, the ancient practice of yoga has emerged as a multifaceted and holistic approach with proven benefits in managing the discomfort associated with menstrual cramps.

Yogasanas, encompassing postures like Bhujangasana, Matsyasana, Vajrasana, Dhanurasana, Apanasana, and Shavasana, offer tangible physical benefits. These poses promote increased blood circulation, alleviate muscle tension, and enhance flexibility⁸. By targeting the pelvic region and lower abdomen, yogasanas contribute to the relief of menstrual pain and discomfort.

The practice of pranayama, or breath control, is integral to the yogic approach in managing primary dysmenorrhea. Techniques like deep abdominal breathing, Nadi Shodhana, and Kapalabhati play a pivotal role in regulating the autonomic nervous system. By inducing relaxation and reducing stress, pranayama contributes to a more harmonious physiological state during menstruation.

Meditation forms an essential component of yoga, fostering a strong mind-body connection. Mindfulness meditation and guided relaxation techniques empower individuals to manage pain perception and cultivate a positive mental outlook. The psychological benefits of meditation extend beyond pain relief, addressing emotional well-being during the menstrual cycle.⁹

Yoga provides a holistic approach by addressing both the physical and psychological dimensions of primary dysmenorrhea. The integrative nature of yogic practices aligns with the understanding that menstrual pain is not solely a physical phenomenon but is influenced by stress, anxiety, and overall mental well-being¹⁰.

Numerous studies have substantiated the efficacy of yoga in reducing the severity and duration of menstrual pain. Scientific research supports the positive impact of yogic practices on hormonal balance, pain tolerance, and overall quality of life in women experiencing primary dysmenorrhea.

Maintaining an appropriate weight is crucial to mitigate the risk of Dysmenorrhoea. Research, though varied, indicates that both being underweight and overweight contribute to an elevated risk of dysmenorrhea. A study involving 9,688 women found that those with a body mass index (BMI) < 18.5 had a 34% increased risk, while those with a BMI \geq 30 had a 22% increased risk compared to women with a BMI between 18.5 and 29.99. Notably, women with a BMI \geq 30 who underwent weight loss experienced a reduction in their dysmenorrhea risk. The connection between under- or overweight status and menstrual irregularities is posited as a factor escalating the likelihood of dysmenorrhea¹¹.

The role of yoga in managing primary dysmenorrhea extends beyond a mere physical exercise routine; it embraces a holistic philosophy that recognizes the interconnectedness of the body and mind. The integration of yogic practices into one's routine during menstruation offers a natural and empowering means to navigate the challenges of primary dysmenorrhea, fostering improved overall health and well-being.

V. CONCLUSION:

The comprehensive review of Rajaswala Paricharya and Yoga in preventing primary dysmenorrhea underscores the significance of integrating traditional wisdom with contemporary evidence-based approaches for menstrual health management. The convergence of Ayurvedic principles, the practical guidelines of Rajaswala Paricharya, and the holistic practices of Yoga offers a promising avenue for promoting overall well-being in women during their reproductive years. By recognizing the interconnectedness of physical, psychological, and lifestyle factors, this synthesis seeks to pave the way for personalized and effective strategies in primary dysmenorrhea prevention.

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Adopting Rajaswala Paricharya holds paramount importance as it serves as a preventive measure against the vitiation of doshas, namely Vata, Pitta, and Kapha, in menstruating women. The guidelines provided by Rajaswalachara aim to maintain doshic balance, safeguarding women from menstrual disorders. Furthermore, the adoption of Rajaswala Paricharya contributes to the enhancement of agni, the digestive fire, by adhering to specific dietary and lifestyle practices during menstruation. This regimen also plays a pivotal role in ensuring the quality of ovum and preventing matruj avayav disorders in future offspring, reducing the risk of conditions such as heart, kidney, and liver disorders. Proper implementation of Ritucharya, especially Rajaswala Paricharya, is crucial for preventing Ashta Artava Dushti or Yoni Vyapada, correlating with menstrual problems like dysmenorrhea, menorrhagia, PCOD, and infertility. It facilitates healthy conception by aiding women in adapting to physiological and psychological changes during menstruation. The failure to follow Rajaswala Paricharya may lead to menstrual disorders, emphasizing the necessity of adherence to these guidelines for the overall well-being of women. In conclusion, the adoption of Rajaswala Paricharya encompasses a range of benefits, and understanding and implementing Ritucharya correctly are pivotal for ensuring the health and vitality of women during menstruation and promoting the well-being of future generations.

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