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The Concept of Infertility in Ayurveda:A Review

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ABSTRACT:

Ayurveda has a holistic approach to most diseases. It is the same in the case of fertility treatments too. Many factors affect both men's and women's fertility these days, including stress, pollution, poor diet, and a sedentary lifestyle, to name a few. To ensure that the mind and body are in the best possible condition to procreate, it's critical to cleanse the body of toxins and nourish it with the right nutrients. Despite years of trying, one out of every seven couples have problems conceiving. This is due to a variety of social, emotional, and physiological variables. Around 25% of instances may be unexplained infertility, in which both men and women have no recognized aetiology. Fertility rates and population growth rates are steadily declining over the world, particularly in developed countries. Present paper aims to throw some light on the concept of infertility as per the concepts of Ayurveda.

Keywords: *Rasayana chikitsa, Ojas, Dosha*

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda has been divided in to eight branches. The different aspects of the life are well addressed by these branches. The wholistic approach of the ancient wisdom is well appreciated in this division. *Kayachikitsa, Shalya Tantra, Shalakya Tantra, Kaumara-Bhritya, Bhuta-vidya, Agada – tantra, Rasayana-tantra and Vajikarana* are the eight divisions. *Ayurveda* recognises the importance of a full and active life which facilitates the fulfilment of one's duties. Therefore they sought refuge in the Himalayas where *Indra* gave them the secret of rejuvenation therapy. Rejuvenation therapy is known in *Ayurveda* as *Rasayana chikitsa*. It seeks to ward off decay and debilitation through a mix of massages, medicines and right conduct. The treatment is indicated for two types of patients: those who have become debilitated prematurely through dissipation and bad

habits; and those who are ageing naturally but would like to ward off the physical manifestations of old age.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

All the relevant texts of Ayurveda were explored, analyzed and the matter was presented in organized manner.

RESULT

A condition in which couple has problems in conceiving, or getting pregnant, after one year of regular sexual intercourse without using any birth control methods. Infertility can be caused by a problem with the man or the woman, or both. Factors responsible for conception have been named as *Ritu, Kshetra, Ambu, Beeja.Ritu* – phase of kapha denoting proliferative phase in the uterus followed



by ovulation. *Kshetra* – denotes healthy female genital tract which will facilitate the entry of sperm. *Ambu* – nutritional elements and hormones. *Bija* – Ovum and sperm. Disorders of conception factors. Disorders of *Ritukala*. *Ritukala* is a period of kapha pitta predominance. If it is affected by *vata* or *pitta*, abnormality in fertility may be a result. Disorders of *kshetra* (female genital tract) *Margavarodha* (Obstruction in fallopian tubes), *Vyapannayoni / garbhasaya* (Uterine, cervical or vaginal pathology causing hostility to spermatozoa). Disorders of *Ambu* (nutritional fluids) *Garbhasravi* or amniotic fluid problems, nutritional insufficiency. Disorders of *Bija*. *Artavadosa* or *sukradosa* can cause sub fertility. Disorders of *maithuna* (Intercourse) *Maithuna asahatva* (Dyspareunia – painful intercourse), *Maithuna aniccha* (Psychological disturbances causing frigidity), *Asamyakamaithuna* (Improper intercourse). Management of Female infertility can be achieved by *Shodhana Karma*, *Shamana Karma* and utilization of specific medicines.

Ayurveda highlights that infertility occurs when the 'Shukra Dhatu' does not get the needed nutrition. It happens due to the imbalanced lifestyle, poor digestion, or the toxins in the body which disturbs the reproductive system.

The Ayurvedic medicine for infertility will support health by strengthening the body balancing. It focuses the treatment of infertility will improve the overall health and quality of the person's life.

The infertility reasons according to Ayurveda are:

Overindulgence in sex– Not only in Ayurveda all the studies show this will decrease the 'Shukrakshya' and this will lead to impotence. **Improper quantity of 'Artava dhatu'**– It's the name of female reproductive tissues. If this quantity and quality are insufficient then it will affect the fertility chances.

Mental disturbances- In Ayurveda says that the depression, insomnia, and anxiety can influence in conceiving.

Food consumption- Some studies show the person who consumes more spicy food will increase *Pitta* and reduces the production of *Shukra dhatu*.

Genetic factors- The genetic factors may be a relevant factor in infertility.

Controlling sexual urges– Controlling your sexual urges for a long period may lead to *veerya-avrodha* or difficulty of semen when causes a reduction in libido.

The Ayurvedic approach to Infertility Ayurveda supports health by strengthening body's own self-healing and

balancing mechanisms and doesn't rely on intervention by any outside or foreign substance to replace or correct the hormones in the body. It focuses on the treatment of infertility holistically with an aim of improving the overall health and quality of life of the individual. According to the Charaka Samhita, "the single most important factor in the buildup of *Aama* (toxin created when undigested food forms in the stomach) is the *Agni* and all the disease occurs due to imbalance in *Agni* (the power of digestion). Therefore, the treatment of *Ama* must always include the treatment of *Agni*, including the use of digestive herbs and spices, eating meals timely following a proper schedule and elimination of cold foods and drinks. *Panchakarma* (Ayurvedic deep internal cleansing procedure), can also be utilized to eliminate *Ama*. Healthy *Agni* will also contribute to healthy *Ojas*. Evaluation of person's *Dosha* is very significant for prescribing the treatment and any blockages and weaknesses in body parts for which the treatment includes appropriate diet, body therapies, herbs, sensory therapies, and lifestyle and yoga therapies. Diet plays a crucial and vital role in the prevention and cure of diseases and in maintenance of good health. Food has been compared to God, in the ancient Indian scriptures, (*Annam Brahmam*) since it is the main factor for sustaining and nourishing life¹ As per Ayurveda, food affects the mind also by causing either an increase or decrease in the three qualities of mind, i.e., *Rajoguna*, *Satvaguna*, and *Tamoguna*.² It was believed in the ancient Indian literature that if dietetics is properly followed, medicine is not required but if dietetics is not observed, even medicines are not useful.³ Dietary management involves strict compliance and adherence to *Ojas*-building foods and to avoid the substances which diminish the *Ojas*. This is important to regulate ovulation and enhance fertilization⁴ Eating whole foods provides all nutrients for the health of the body in addition to fibre that influences hormonal levels provides. Foods such as processed carbohydrates, excess starch, antibiotic and hormone laden meat and milk and canned produce destroy fertility⁵. Fresh, organic fruits and vegetables, protein from plant sources like beans, and peas, sweet, whole grains, juicy fruits such as mangoes, peaches, plums, and pears, asparagus, broccoli, spices such as ajwain powder, turmeric (improves the interaction between hormones and targeted tissues), cumin (purifies the uterus in women and the genitourinary tract in men) and black cumin boost fertility. Foods such as grains, root vegetables, watercress, garlic, onions and chives improve circulation and nourish the blood.⁶ It is believed that urad

dhal which is cooked with equal parts turmeric, coriander, cumin and fennel or banana cooked in ghee, cinnamon and cardamom build Shukra Dhatu. Jaggery and Black sesame seeds are both rich in Iron and seeds are rich in vitamin E and the phyto-chemicals in the seeds modulate hormones causing changes in the female body.⁷ Diet should be free from Trans-fats as they block arteries, threaten fertility and harm the heart and blood vessels and therefore, must be avoided. Foods such as beans, Spinach, pumpkin, tomatoes, and beets, boost iron and promote fertility. It is of utmost importance to keep the body well-hydrated by drinking warm water and digestive teas. It is believed that cooking and eating vegetables such as Colocasia with old-garlic improve progesterone and fertility chances in women. The following foods increase and exacerbate female infertility, and must therefore be avoided- foods containing preservatives and other chemicals, like artificial sweeteners, Monosodium Glutamate (MSG), diet high in fat and other artificial flavoring and coloring (Nutra Sweet etc.), excess alcohol and caffeine, tobacco, soda, smoking, red meat, refined carbohydrates, such as pasta, white bread, and rice⁸. It is vital to include a wide range of foods in the diet to ensure the body is getting all the nutrients it needs to aid conception⁹. Eating small, regular and well-balanced meals builds overall health. Ayurveda recommends trying new vegetables and fruits as often as possible, breaking the monotony by not eating the same thing every day.

DISCUSSION

According to Ayurveda, conception takes place due to healthy sperm, healthy ovum and a healthy uterus. For both men and women, reproductive health depends on the health of the *shukradhatu*, or reproductive tissue. In women the *shukra* tissue creates the ovum as part of the monthly cycle, and in men the semen is formed due to sexual stimulation. The *shukra* tissue itself is created as part of a long chain of metabolic transformations, starting with the digestion of food and including the transformation of food to nutrient fluid, blood, muscle, fat, bone, bone marrow and finally, to *shukra* tissue. Healthy *shukra* tissue, then, according to ayurveda, depends on the health of all the other tissues in the body. The main causes for infertility according to Ayurveda are eating spicy, salty and hot food that increase *pitta* and destroys *shukra* (semen), overindulgence in sexual activities that leads to *shukrakshaya* (loss of semen) it may also cause *Klabhya* (impotency), controlling sexual

urges for longer duration that results in *veeryavarodha* (Obstruction of semen) and leads to decreased libido. In some cases impotency is acquired by birth also. Ayurveda addresses the internal balances and external influences contributing to the problem by building the *Ojas*, improving the overall health of the individual, stimulating the hypothalamus and pituitary glands thereby indirectly inducing the ovaries to ripen and release eggs. Ayurveda provides a non-invasive, low cost and non-iatrogenic alternative and complement to modern western medicine in the treatment of female infertility. Because Ayurveda focuses on rebalancing individuals rather than just treating diseases, its treatments are have low potential for side effects.

CONCLUSION

Infertility has increased tremendously in the past decade and this is due to the result of a combination of social, environmental, psychological, and nutritional factors. Today, the modern medicine has the ability to find out the causes of infertility in an individual through several diagnostic tests and examinations. Using these tests, the treatment focuses on correcting and treating the dysfunction. Infertility is managed by looking at the reproductive system components. Ayurveda pays attention to each individual body types, enhances the body systems participating in the process of fertilization and therefore serves as an excellent alternative for reaching fertilization.

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