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Women Infertility- An Ayurvedic Perspective

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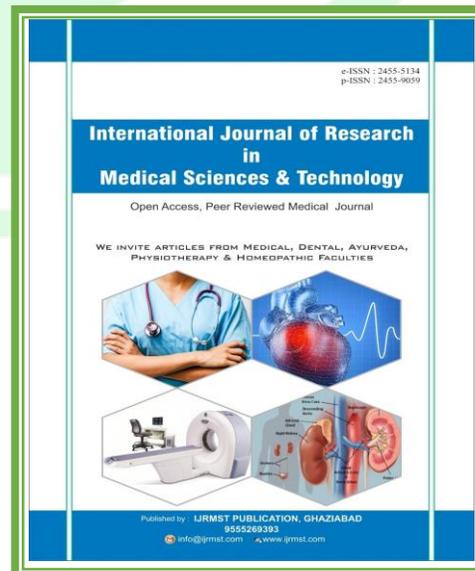
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ABSTRACT

Infertility primarily refers to the biological inability of a person to contribute to conception. In women, it may also refer to the state when she is not able to carry a pregnancy to its full term. Female infertility is caused due to structural problems like blocked Fallopian tubes, defect in cervical canal, uterine fibroid or polyps, hormonal imbalance; Leading ovulation problems too can cause infertility. From Ayurvedic perspective, *shukradhatu* (reproductive material) can get affected by various physical, mental causes and even by serious diseases. Poor quality *shukradhatu* can cause infertility in males & females.

Keywords: Female *Vandhyatwa*(Infertility), *Shukradhatu*(reproductive material), *Garbhasaya*(Uterus), *Artava*(Ovum), *Ojas*(essence of vitality), Hormonal Imbalance.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda and Infertility

According to Ayurveda, infertility exists when a healthy couple is unable to achieve pregnancy after two or more years or fails to conceive for several years after the first delivery. Ayurveda enhances infertile women or couples ability through treatment to become fertile and conceive naturally without the use of western modalities.

Ayurvedic interpretation of the female reproductive system

'*Shroni*' means the pelvis. Female pelvis is 24 *Angulas* (16.66 inches) and is heavier than the pelvis of the male. '*Ashaya*' means any recipient viscus. '*Garbhasaya*' means uterine cavity and is situated behind the '*Bhagasthi*' (symphysis pubis) and a little above the bladder. It is surrounded by coils of intestines and is placed between small intestine ('*Pittashaya*') and large intestine ('*Pakwashaya*'). '*Yoni*'(Vagina) includes all the female genital organs. The word '*Atulyagotriya*' refers to the study of embryology.

निरुक्ति

गर्भोपहन्ति | वन्ध्या वेहदगर्भोपधातिनी | विहन्ति गर्भम | (अमरकोश)

Ayurvedic medicine that deals with issues of infertility is called '*Vajikarana*'. The word "*Vaji*" means "horse," *Vajikarana* means "to make one potent like a horse." The Ayurvedic term for the diseases of the female reproductive system is *Guhyarogas*¹. *Garbharoga* is the term for the diseases of the *Yoni* (Vagina)² & called *Yonivyapat*. According to Ayurveda, conception takes place by 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 *Shukradhatu* produces the ovum as part of the monthly cycle, and in men the semen is formed due to sexual stimulation³.

Charaka Samhita has summarized the description of conception as follows: "When normal semen is introduced into the healthy vagina during a well-developed proliferative phase which is accompanied with ovulation, then the coitus becomes a fruitful one and conception results." In *Harita's* opinion, when sperm is encircled by ovum in a proper type of intercourse, conception takes place. *Kasyapa* also expressed the same opinion – "As soon as the *Beeja* (ovum and sperm) enters, it is surrounded by *Rakta* (Endometrium)" This verse explains that the fertilized ovum gets encircled by blood as soon as it enters uterus.

तत्र स्त्री पुंसयोः संयोगे तेजः शरीराद् वायुरुदीरयति,
ततस्तेजो अनिलसन्निपाताच्छुक्रंच्युतं योनिमभिप्रतिपद्यते संसृज्यते चार्तवेन ।
त्यो अग्नीषोमसंयोगात् संसृज्यमानो गर्भाशयमनुप्रपद्यते । (सु. सं. शा. ३/४)

Sushruta Samhita has described the physiological changes occurring during intercourse, "*Teja* (Fire principle) is produced during contact and this stimulates *vata* principle which is known as

Vatodeerana & causes secretion of *Shukra* (reproductive tissue) which travels to *Yoni* and unites with *Artava* (Reproductive Principle representing *Shukra* in female). The resulting product of union of *Agni* (metabolic

factor) and *Soma* (water principle) then travels to *Garbhashaya* (Uterus).”

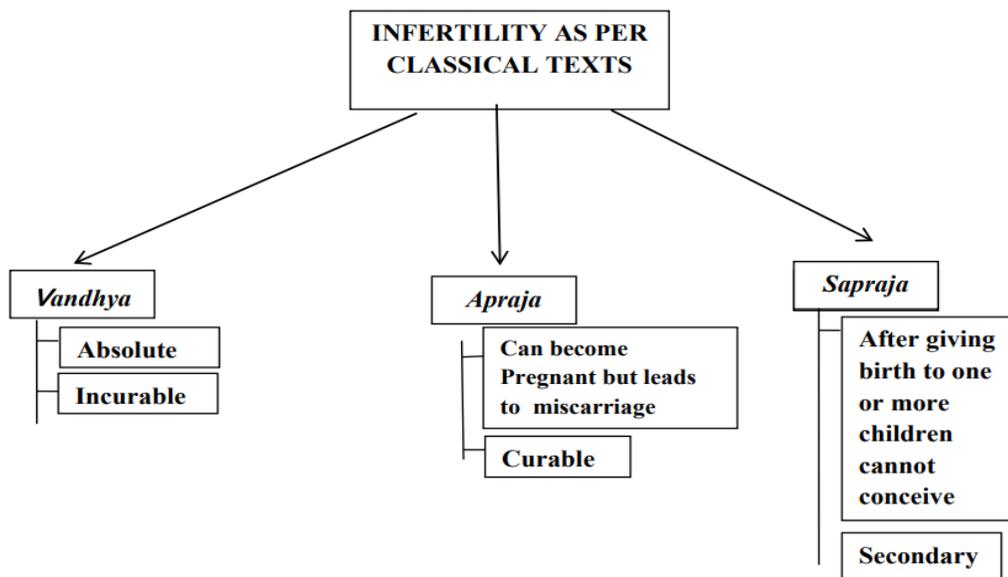
Bhava Mishra has explained that the physical contact of penis and vagina gives rise to increase in the bodily heat which along with *Vata* causes secretion of semen. The semen is dropped on vagina from penis. From vagina, it is taken to the uterus and meets the ovum.

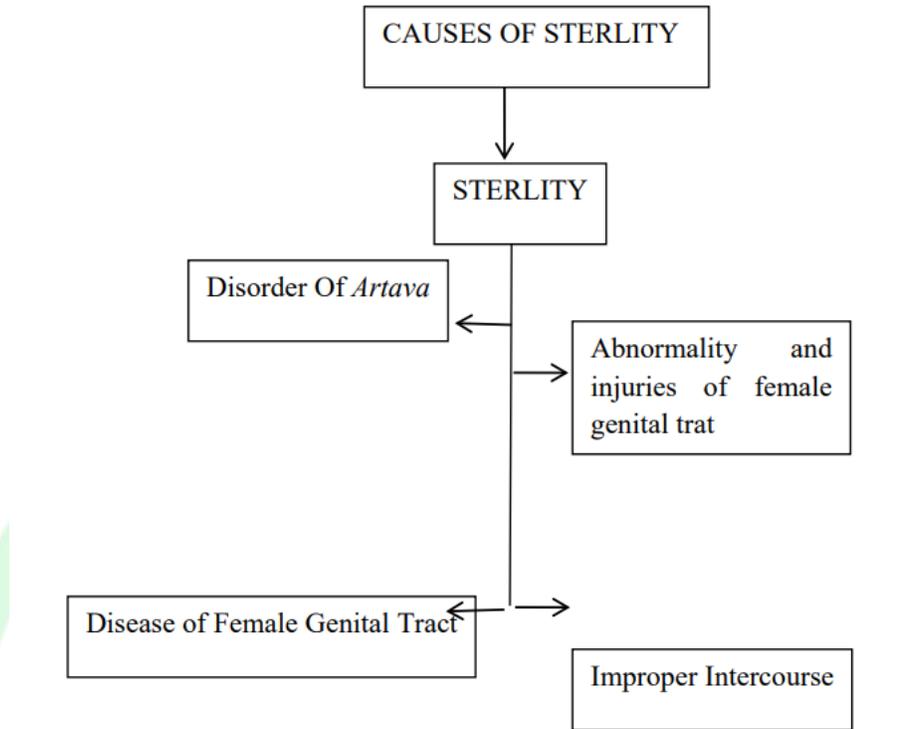
“Woman’s fertility depends on nature’s *Rasa* (end product of digestion) and when this *Rasa* is depleted, sterility, dryness, loneliness, and isolation are bound to set in. In order to conceive a healthy child, one should be “*swastha*” or fully healthy oneself. This optimum state of health provides the fertile ground for the embryo to implant and grow.”

Ayurvedic Version of Etiology of Infertility

योनि प्रदोषान्मनसो अभितापच्छुक्रासृगाहार विहारदोषात्। अकाल योगद् बलसंक्षयाच्च गर्भं चिराद्विन्दति सप्रजा अपि ॥ (च. सं. शा. 2/5)

Types of infertility as found in classical texts

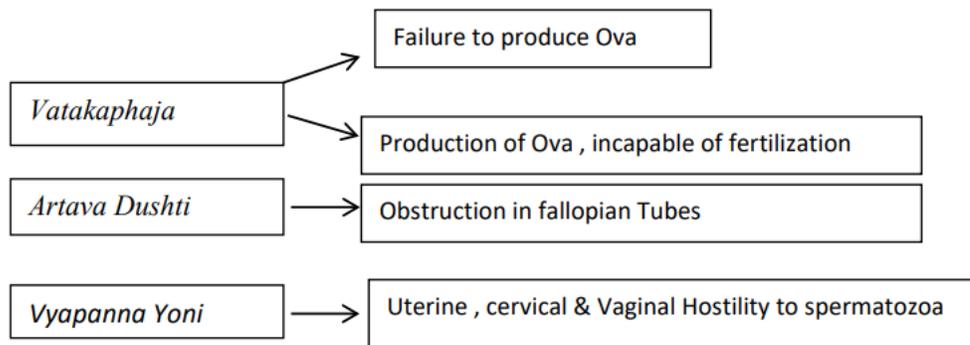




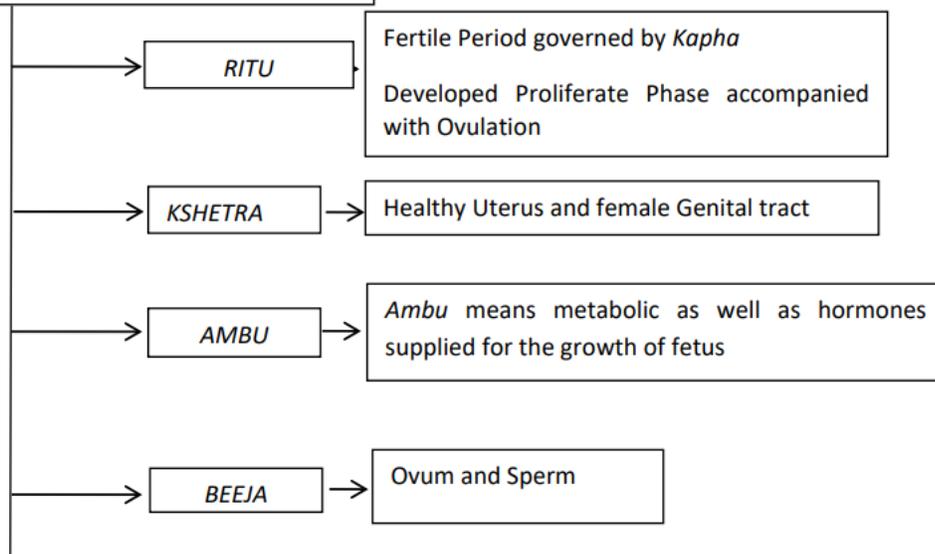
Menstrual cycle is a state of health in female and can be affected by many factors, such as excessive stress & strain, imbalance life style, diet & emotional instability. Imbalance in any of these factors lead to vitiation of *Ojas* (essence of vitality), *Dhatu* (Bodily elements) & *Doshas* (*Tridoshas*). Vitiation of *Doshas* leads to following symptoms.

<i>Vata</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dryness in the mouth of the cervix • Vaginal dryness. • Dryness renders sperm not to stick to conceive • Hormonal imbalance
<i>Pitta</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excessive bleeding , inflammation and pain • Hot Flow, burning pain in the uterus • Small blisters, fibroids, ulcers • Sperm can not survive to conceive
<i>Kapha</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cool, sticky cysts • Thickening of uterus lining • White discharge, irregular bleeding and irregular cycle

Anatomical co-relation of causes of infertility by *Doshas*



FACTORS OF CONCEPTION



Factors affecting fertility in woman

Ritukala (Menstrual cycle) is a period of *Kapha-Pitta* predominance and when affected by *Vata* or *Pitta* causes infertility. Disorders of *Ambu*(hormones) can cause issues in amniotic fluid and nutritional insufficiency after conception. Disorders of *Beeja*(Ovum and semen) can also cause subfertility. Disorders in *Kshetra*(Uterus) can cause *margavarodha* (obstruction in fallopian tubes), *Vyapanna yoni* or *Garbhasaya* (uterine, cervical or vaginal pathology causing hostility to spermatozoa).

According to *Charaka*, abnormalities of *yonis*(Vagina), *Shukra*(semen), *Artava*(Ovum), psychology, diet and mode of life, coitus at improper time and loss of *bala* (strength) cause delay in achieving

conception in an otherwise fertile woman. According to *Charaka Samhita*, “vitiation of *satwa* or influence of misdeeds done by the couple in their previous life can cause infertility.

The Ayurvedic approach

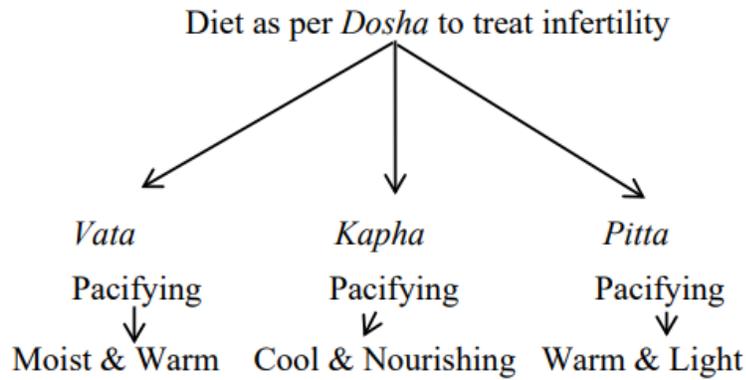
According to *Charaka Samhita*, “All diseases occur due to imbalance in *Agni* (metabolic factors) and *Agni* is the single most important factor in the build-up of *Ama*(Undigested material). Healthy *Agni* will also contribute to healthy *Ojas*(essence of vitality). The most refined and subtle essence of the physical body. When fully activated, *Ojas* is the “bliss factor” that goes beyond good health to keep you fully immune against all diseases. Optimum *Ojas* is the key to perfect health, as well as to balanced emotions and to spiritual development.

स्नेह स्वेद वमन विरेचनास्थापनानुवासनैः क्रमशः उपचरेन्मधुरौषधसिद्धाभ्यां क्षीरघृतपुष्टं पुरुषं, स्त्रियं तु तैलमांसा भ्यामित्येके; सात्म्यैरेवेति प्रजापतिः। (का. सं. शा. ५/३)

1. Dietary management ^{4,5}

Diet plays a vital role in the maintenance of good health and in the prevention and cure of diseases. As per Ayurveda, food affects the mind also by causing either an increase or decrease in the three qualities of mind, i.e., *Satva guna*, *Rajo guna* and *Tamo guna*.

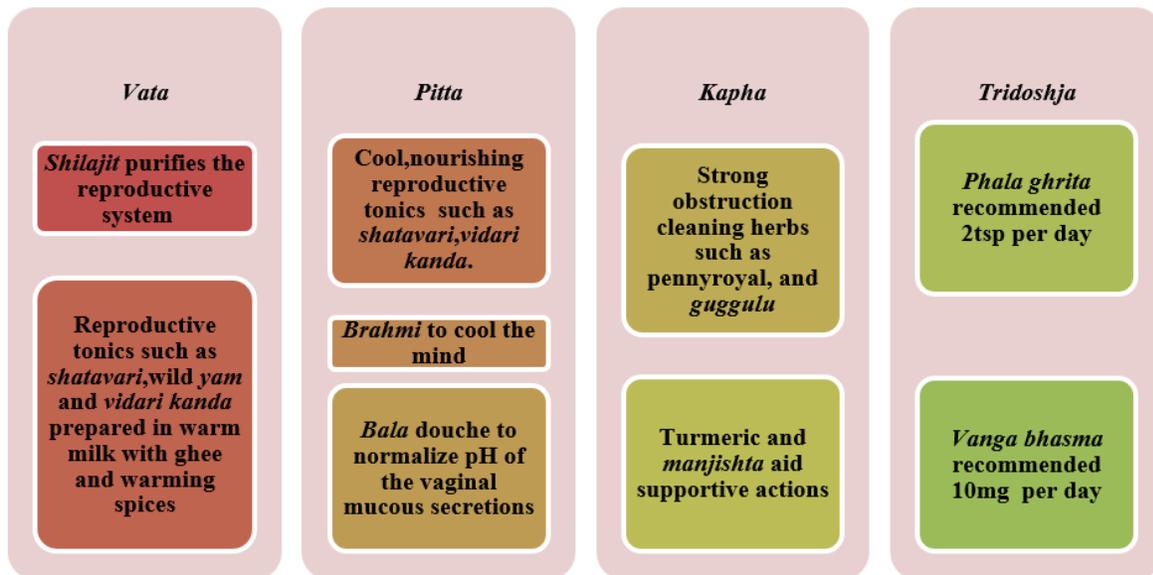
Dietary management involves strict compliance and adherence to enhance *Ojas* and to avoid the substances which diminish it. This is critical as it regulates ovulation and enhances fertilization.



2. Drugs ^{6,7}

As infertility is not a disease but a manifestation of some disease, the herbs used in the treatment is directed to eradicate the underlying cause.

Drugs as per *Dosha*



3. Sexual *dharmas*

“For health, wealth, virility, and vitality, sexual cohabitation should occur during harmonically auspicious time. The

opposite results hold true when sexual activities are performed during the poorly inspected times of year.”

4. Auspicious time and conditions for cohabitation

Early & Late Winter,
Springs, Rainy, Autumn
Auspicious days; 8th, 14th, 15th days of both light and dark phase of the moon
After a purificatory bath in a cool, sheltered place
After observation prayer and declaring honourable intentions
Early Evening
The best posture for women is to lie comfortably on her back and prone position for a man during sexual activity.
The key is to get the sperm as close as possible to the cervix, and to remain there for as long as possible.

CONCLUSION

Female infertility is widely explained by many ancient Ayurveda sages but Charaka's concept is appropriate for diagnosis, classification & treatment. Diagnosis based according to curable, Incurable, primary, secondary and based on *Ritu* (Menstrual cycle), *kshetra* (Healthy Uterus), *Ambu* (Hormones) & *Beeja* (semen & Ovum) is beneficial for treating Infertility. Most of the Ayurveda texts have explained that by following diet, *Sexual dharma* (*Gramya dharma*), drugs which cure & prevent infertility can go a long way in effectively dealing with infertility & achieving healthy pregnancy.

Conflict of interest: None

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