

Management of Stress and Emotional well-being in Infertility Patients

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: According to the Indian Association of Assisted Reproduction, India is home to up to 27.5 million infertile persons, both men and women. The situation, growing concerns, and widespread ignorance, however, are the subject of little open discussion. Every fifteen Indian couples experience infertility problems. The problem is made worse by delayed marriages, demanding lifestyles, obesity, excessive fast-food intake, smoking, drinking, and drug addiction. Among these factors, stress, along with emotional status, has a major role in infertility. Everyone has their primary concern with medicinal treatment, but no one focuses on the psychological health of an infertility patient. In *Ayurveda*, equal importance has been given to both factors. In the present study, various methods for managing the stress of infertility patients have been compiled from both *Ayurvedic* texts and contemporary science.

Method: This study was conducted with the help of various *Ayurvedic* texts, research articles, and online resources.

Result: The *Mansika Bhava* (psychological factors) has a key role in the etiopathogenesis of infertility, and for the management of the same, a holistic approach should be adopted, which includes *Daivyapashraya* and *Saitvajaya Chikitsa* along with various *yoga asanas* that can be beneficial for the management of infertility.

Conclusion: *Ayurveda* treats the patient as a whole and balances all three *doshas* in the body. For the management of stress and emotional well-being in patients with infertility, *Satvajaya Chikitsa* and *Daivavyapashyra Chikitsa* have key benefits.

Key Words *Daivavyapashyra Chikitsa, Satvajaya, Mansika*

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INTRODUCTION

According to the Indian Association of Assisted Reproduction, India is home to up to 27.5 million infertile persons, both men and women. Despite the general ignorance and growing concerns about the situation, infertility is a topic of open discussion. Every fifteen Indian couples

experience infertility problems. The problem is made worse by delayed marriages, demanding lifestyles, obesity, excessive fast-food intake, smoking, drinking, and drug addiction. Among these factors, stress, along with emotional status, has a major role in infertility¹. Stress can be defined as a state of worry or mental tension

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caused by a difficult situation. Stress is a natural human response that motivates us to cope with the problems and threats in our lives. Everyone encounters phases of stress. However, how we handle stress has a significant impact on our general well-being. There are two main types of stress:

Acute stress - this is short-term stress that goes away quickly.

Chronic stress - this is stress that lasts for a longer period. A person with an unhappy marriage, having any kind of financial issue, obesity, etc., may suffer from chronic stress.

Oxidative stress is a bodily condition that happens when your antioxidant levels are low. This level can be measured by the blood plasma of a person. When there is a decline in free radicals in the body, antioxidants help a person avoid suffering from oxidative stress. This will cause DNA damage and cell tissue breakdown. The connection between oxidative stress and pregnancy problems has been studied in many publications. Reduced antioxidant status was associated with an increased incidence of spontaneous abortion. whereas in *Ayurvedic* literature, *Acharya Charaka* has mentioned several causes behind infertility, among them, psychological factors (*Mansika Karana*) have been given equal importance to other factors. Hence, we should go through it and give the benefits of it to the infertility patients.

❖ INFERTILITY ACCORDING TO AYURVEDA

In line with *Ayurveda*, Infertility primarily refers to a woman's inability to become pregnant due to her biological makeup, as well as her inability to bring a pregnancy to term. According to modern science, infertility is also defined as the inability to conceive after a year of normal sexual activity without the use of contraception. Infertility is a very prevalent issue today, so finding a remedy that is both simple and economical is necessary. The *Atharvaveda*, an ancient work of literature, extensively explores the history of *Ayurveda* and the significance of treating infertility.

• Effect of *Mana* on the body.

When *tridoshas* and physiological elements are in balance and harmony, when digestion is normal, when waste materials are excreted normally, and when a person is endowed with serenity and clarity of spirit, intellect, and senses, the person is said to be healthy². The *Ayurveda* literature provides clear explanations to show how, even when they are functioning normally, the three *doshas*, the seven physiological elements, digestive processes, excretory processes, and the *indriyas*, a person is susceptible to *manas* interference. This illustrates how important *manas bhavas* are when we describe someone as *swastha* or healthy. Also, *Acharya Dalhana* explained the relation between mind and body by means of disease manifestation in his commentary. He states that disorders like anger, greed, etc., are psychic, while fever, jaundice, etc., are somatic. while epilepsy, OCDs, etc., are psychosomatic. Though psychic illness also inflicts body pain and vice versa, the term is

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based on priority; thus, psychic disorders affect the mind first and then the body, while somatic disorders affect the body, then the mind³. *Charaka* has also mentioned the mind and body as substrates of disease. As infertility is a somatic disorder, it may hamper the mental condition of patients with infertility and vice versa. Many references in the *Samhita* prove that mental health has prime importance in infertility.

According to *Ayurveda* experts, the six procreative elements (*Shadgarbhkarabhavas*) *Matrija*, *Pitrija*, *Aatmaja*, *Rasaja*, *Satmyaja*, and *Sattvaja*, are crucial for achieving the goal of producing healthy offspring⁴. For healthy offspring, a combination of these procreative elements is necessary. A healthy person's physical, mental, social, and spiritual well-being, along with the mother's correct nutrition during pregnancy and the adoption of a wholesome lifestyle, are major factors in delivering healthy progeny and, in turn, creating healthy families, societies, and countries. Any of these elements that are neglected can result in an unhealthy and faulty pregnancy and birth.

❖ ***Ayurvedic* Approach in dealing with stress and Emotional Well-being.**

With new medical advancements and approaches over the years, treatment choices for stress and infertility have expanded globally. The improved outcomes for infertile couples often remain unsuccessful even with the most advanced procedure. To increase the patient's chances of conceiving, the *Ayurvedic* infertility treatment first works to enhance the patient's health.

Numerous natural and complementary therapies can be used to treat stress and infertility. The best alternative to deal with infertility issues, nevertheless, is *Ayurvedic* treatment because it focuses on your total well-being, including your mind, soul, and body. *Ayurvedic* treatment can be divided into three categories. *Satvavajaya chikitsa*, *Daivavyapashrya chikitsa*, and *Yukti vyapashrya chikitsa*⁵.

These can be expanded as:

- ***satvavajaya chikitsa***

Satva denotes the mind, while *Avajaya* denotes victory or conquest. Therefore, the goal of *Satvavajaya* treatment is to assist the patients in achieving control over their thoughts and keep their minds and senses away from unhealthy issues (such as tension, worry, etc.).

According to *Acharya Charaka*, *Satvavajaya* is the act of distancing oneself from unwholesome objects⁶. It includes *Mano Nigraha*: regulating the mind/subjugating the mind from unwholesome interactions.

Dhee-Dhairyaatmadi Vijnanam: It provides a deeper level of understanding, which helps ultimately in better control of the mind by avoiding *Pragyapradha*. It can be achieved by following good conduct and *chintya*, *vicharya*, *uhya*, *dhyeya*, and *sankalpa*. Being a Physician, it is one's duty to develop a cordial relationship with the patient to enable them to tackle stressful conditions mindfully. This is comparable to contemporary psychiatry or mental health care. Patient counselling is part of this as well.

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There are a huge number of studies that have been done in contemporary science regarding counselling in infertile patients. According to K.R. Daniels in personal communication, counselling is "an interpersonal process, based on a theoretical framework, used to bring about change in a skilled and systematic way." However, support and the explanation of life goals are also frequently discussed in counselling for infertile people. As a result, counselling definitions that emphasise counselling as a context for support, advice, and guidance rather than as a means of bringing about change (Applegarth, 1999, p. 89) or as a setting where people can be given the "opportunity to explore, discover and clarify ways of living more satisfyingly and resourcefully" (British Association of Infertility Counsellors, 1999). The goals of counselling are to define the best approaches to the issue and to investigate, comprehend, and resolve concerns related to infertility and its treatment. The requirements of the patient and anyone else who might be impacted by the course of treatment and any decisions that need to be made should be considered during the consultation process.

• *Daivavyapashrya chikitsa*

Daiva-vyapashrya Chikitsa refers to medical care based on a belief in divine power and supernatural cures. Mantra (enchanted hymns), *Aushadha* (medicines), *Mani* (wearing gems), *Mangala* (auspicious items), *Bali* (animal sacrifices, etc.), *Homa* (fire sacrifices), *niyama*

(strict living), *Prayaschita* (confession), *Upavasa* (fasting), and other practices are included in this.

“विष्णुर्योनिं दशमे मासि सूतवे”

May *Prajapati* scatter the seed, May *Vishnu* create the womb, May *Twashtri* create the member, and May *Dhatri* cherish thy embryo; We invoke the embryo that the *Aswins* have churned with the golden bits of *Agani* (firewood), so that thou mayest bring it forth in the ninth month. Sustain the embryo *Sinivali*, sustain the embryo *Saraswati*, may the divine *Aswins*, garlanded with lotuses, sustain thy embryo. These *Rig Vedic Sanskrit mantras*, which are frequently linked to fertility, were later mentioned in the *Mahabharata*. They are frequently utilised by women who want to become pregnant or by expectant mothers to ensure a pain-free delivery; they are also associated with the conception and delivery of our deepest desires. There are numerous similarities between the conception and growth of a foetus and the beginning and growth of a creative idea. Both must first be conceived, grow, and be fed before being released into the world when they are ready.

The ideal method of listening to this phrase, particularly for newcomers, would be to get it recited by a *Vedic pandit*. Moreover, it is recommended not to recite the *mantra* yourself if you are a beginner. Likewise, a huge number of *mantras* have been mentioned in classical texts that show remarkable benefit in patients with infertility. Although it is a less explored branch,

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we should go through it and give its benefits to the infertility patients.

Daivavyapashrya Chkitsa also includes *Mani Dharana*, for balance and peace of mind. One can wear a particular stone or *Ratna*, like the cat's eye, which is known to have been worn by ancient legends for centuries to bestow mental peace. This sacred gemstone is thought to have countless health benefits. Cats Eye is linked with the malefic planet *Ketu*. Indian *Vedic* Astrology states that Cat's Eye is beneficial in easing emotional strain and domestic conflicts. Astrologers believe that the cat's eye gemstone not only helps in retaining mental stability but also safeguards the wearer from physical weaknesses⁷.

Acharya Kashyapa has mentioned the procedure of tying *Varnabandha* to the pregnant woman at the end of the *Revati kalpadhyaya* chapter of the *kalpa sthana*⁸. For the prevention of recurrent abortion. It is a form of *Mantra chikitsa*-treatment by reciting sacred hymns. Thus, it is a type of *Daivvyapashraya chikitsa* (non-medicinal treatment), as it is not in today's practice, so the utility of this treatment is difficult.

• *Yukti vyapashraya chikitsa*

Yukti is a *Sanskrit* word that implies intellect or skill. *Yukti Vyapashraya Chikitsa* is a type of treatment where the medications, way of life, and nutrition are all carefully designed and implemented. This is carried out by following a complete diagnosis, examining the person's constitution, and learning the specifics of their illness.

Moreover, *Yukti Vyapashraya chikitsa* can be divided into two types, namely *Shodhana* and *Shamana chikitsa*. *Uttarbasti*, *Anuvasana basti*, *Niruha basti*, *Virechana*. *Yapana basti* comes under *Shodhana chikitsa*, whereas *Shamana chikitsa* includes the use of various formulations based on *Vaidya's Yukti* (intellect). In patients who have mental stress and a disturbed emotional status, they can be treated with multiple treatment modalities such as Nootropic medicines. In *Charaka Samhita Chikitsa Sthana*, *Aachrya Charaka* has also mentioned some nootropic medicine for the treatment of mental illness under *Atatvaabhinivesh* mentioned in *Apasmara Adhyaya*⁹.

The *Medhya Rasayanas* are a class of medicinal herbs that have been used for many purposes in *Ayurveda*, particularly to enhance cognition and memory through distinct actions. *Rasayana* is a therapeutic technique or preparation that, when regularly used, will improve nutrition, health, memory, intellect, immunity, and hence lifespan. *Medha* is the *Sanskrit* word for intellect and/or retention. *Medhya Rasayana* is a collection of four medicinal plants that can be used singly or in combination. They are *Shankhapushpi* (*Convolvulus pleuricaulis* Chois), *Mandukaparni* (*Centella asiatica* Linn.), *Yastimadhu* (*Glycirrhis glabra* Linn.) and *Guduchi* (*Tinospora cordifolia* (Wild) Miers). All of them have different pharmacokinetics in various organ systems¹⁰.

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Some of the formulations which act on infertility as well as improve the mental health of patients are listed in the table below¹¹-

Table 1 Formulations for improving infertility as well as mental health.

S.NO	FORMULATION NAME	REFERENCE
1.	<i>Narayana Tail</i>	B.R. Vatyavdhi Adhikar 141-162
2.	<i>Shatpushpa taila</i>	<i>Kashyapa Samhita</i> 5/23-25
3.	<i>Shatavari Taila</i>	<i>Sharangdhara Samhita Madhyama khand</i> 9/133-135
4.	<i>Lashuna Ghrita</i>	<i>Kashyapa Samhita kalpa sthana</i> 2/93-97
5.	<i>Kasmaryadi Ghrita</i>	<i>Charaka Chikitsa Sthana</i> 30/52-54
6.	<i>Shatavari Ghrita</i>	<i>Charaka Chikitsa Sthana</i> 30/64-66
7.	<i>Sheetakalyana Ghrita</i>	<i>Yoga Ratnakar pradara roga chikitsa</i>
8.	<i>Pipalyadi churna mixed with ghrita</i>	<i>Chakradatta yonivyapad chikitsa</i> 27
9.	<i>Phala ghrita</i>	<i>Sharangdhara Samhita Madhyama Khanda</i> 9/80-87
10.	<i>Pugapaka</i>	<i>Yog Ratnakar Pramesh Chikitsa Sthana</i>
11.	<i>Pancham Sarpiguda</i>	<i>Charaka siddhisthana</i>
12.	<i>Ashwagandha Churna</i>	<i>Bhavaprakasha Nighantu</i>

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Stress makes it difficult for us to relax and can lead to a range of negative emotions, including worry and annoyance. Also, it makes it difficult for us to concentrate. We could have stomach discomfort, headaches, or other types of physical pain. We can discover that we have less or more food than usual. Persistent stress may make pre-existing health issues worse and may lead to more frequent use of alcohol, nicotine, and other drugs. Stressful situations can also cause or exacerbate mental health conditions, most commonly anxiety and depression, which

necessitate medical attention. When we experience mental health problems, it could be because our symptoms of stress have gotten worse and are now interfering with our day-to-day functioning, particularly at work or school.

In metropolises, people are dealing with anxiety and depression; among these, infertility issues are a kind of disorder that has an impact on the mind and body, as mentioned in the *Samhita*, "*somnasya jannanam*". To attain the goal of a healthy progeny, infertile couples, along with their physical health, should also ensure healthy mental and emotional well-being. The *Mansika Bhava* (psychological factors) has a key role in the etiopathogenesis of infertility, and for the management of the same, a holistic approach can be adopted, which includes *Daivyapashraya* and *Saitvajaya chikitsa*, along with various yoga *asanas* that are beneficial for the management of infertility. For patients, receiving an infertility treatment diagnosis can be extremely stressful. Patients need to be guided and encouraged. Psychological treatments for infertile women may greatly increase the likelihood of pregnancy as well as reduce anxiety and sadness.

Several studies have been done that show highly significant results in the management of stress-related infertility by *Ayurveda*. A case study shows potential benefit in stress-related male infertility management by *W.somnifera*. *W.somnifera* has the capability of combating stress-induced infertility. The effect was given a significant number (14%) of pregnancy outcomes (15%) in Normozoospermic men, 15% in men

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under psychological stress, and 10% in cigarette smokers upon treatment¹². Treatment with *W. somnifera* significantly reduced apoptosis and ROS concentration and improved metal ion concentration in infertile subjects, because of which it also improves the semen quality by reducing oxidative stress and cell death¹³. In females, *Ayurvedic* management of infertility involved various *Ayurvedic* medications and *Shodhana* therapies, especially *Basti* and *Uttarbasti* with medicated oils, which showed positive outcomes. The result shows improvement in menstrual cycle, hormonal imbalance, ovulation, successful natural conceptions, and the birth of healthy babies¹⁴.

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