

An Understanding of Different Terms Used to Denote Artava (Menstrual Blood) And Streebeeja (OVUM)

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Abstract

After studying the embryological and heredity part of Sharirsthana of Different Samhitas, one can draw a conclusion that two things in females are of great importance during her childbearing age i.e. ovum and menstrual blood. Ayurveda gives emphasis up on ovulation and considers ovum as one of the essential factor of conception. The definition of Stree as given by Raja Nighantu is "Stree cha artavabhavatisravatistree". That means, stree is one who discharges Artava or menstrual blood. Artava is one of the causative factors for maintenance of generations. So, it is very important to develop proper understanding of different terms like Artava, Shonita, Asrik, Raja, Rakta, Lohita, Rudhir, Pushpa etc. representing Artava and Streebeeja in Ayurvedic Samhitas.

Keywords :Artava, Shonita, Asrik, Raja, Rakta, Lohita, Rudhir, Pushpa, Beeja.

Introduction

In Samhitas, many concepts have been described in very minute and concise form so it is not always possible to analyze and to understand them on the basis of ancient knowledge of Ayurveda. Various terms have been used in Samhitas regarding Artava and Streebeeja at different places related to the concerned topic but little work has been conducted to develop proper understanding of the fundamental concepts behind those terminologies representing Artava and Streebeeja. This Article is an approach is to compile the references regarding the terminologies related to Artava and Streebeeja like Shonita, Ashrik, Raja, Rakta, lohita, Rudhir, Pushpa. Artava-

A) Contexts justifying Artava as Streebeeja-

In Sharirsthana of Charaka Samhita, under the description of formation of twins, Acharya has clearly stated that Sukra after entering garbhashaya through the appropriate passage gets admixed with Artava where Vayu divides the combination of Sukra and Artava in order to produce twins justifies the use of word Artava in the meaning of Streebeeja i.e. ovum. In Sushruta Shahir 9/7, Artava can be correlated with ovum & its Abhivahana can be taken as transport of ovum after ovulation. This reference can be indirectly related to ovulation.

While Acharya Dalhana clarifies that Artava is not meant for menstrual blood, but it is the thing which has capacity to produce "Garbha".

B) Justification of Artava as menstrual blood-

Acharya Charaka has mentioned about the color and of pure Artava in Chikitsa Sthana by saying that neither too less, nor too much, Indragopanibham is pure

Artava and further in Nidana Sthana, he has given the reference of aggravation of vata where it is indicated that there is obstruction of Artava flow by aggravation of Vayu and discharge of Artava brings immediate relief (C.Chi. 30/26) so here the term Artava clearly indicates that Acharya Charaka has used this term in the meaning of menstrual blood.

Shonita-

A) Contexts in favour of Shonita as streebeeja-

Acharya Charaka described that when male and female partners performs coitus the unvitiated sukra, passing through healthy yoni, enters inside healthy uterus and gets admixed with disease free Shonita, then conception is definite.

B) Shonita as Menstrual blood-

For proving the term shonita in the meaning of menstrual blood we have found certain references like-cessation of Shonita after conception, appearance of Sukra and Shonita at appropriate age in male and female respectively etc(Shu.sha 3/13).

Asrik

A) As Streebeeja

Acharya Charaka in Sharir sthana has used the term Asrik in relation to fetus i.e. normalcy of fetus for normal fetus, abnormality of asrik.

B) As Menstrual blood

The term Asrik used in Asrigdara and similar conditions refers to menstrual blood, which have been described in Sharir and Chikitsa Sthana of Charaka Samhita.

Raja-

A) As Streebeeja

The word raja is also used for ovum by Acharya Charaka in Sharirsthana has quoted mother, father,

raja, and Sukra as a source of Mahabhutas in fertilization.

B) As Menstrual blood-

Acharya Dalhana has described the definition of raja as the specific fraction of Rakta which takes place in Yoni of a healthy female in specific time i.e. in Ritukala should be considered as Raja. Its appearance and characteristics are similar to rakta.

The substance which stains the Yoni (i.e. Vagina) is termed as Raja, its purity and impurity can be tested by means of stained cloth (Amarkosh pp. 210), since it stains the cloth that's why, it is termed as Raja.

Rakta-

As Streebeeja and as Menstrual blood

References found in Charaka Samhita like vitiation of Rakta, obstruction of Rakta, enveloping of Sukra by Rakta i.e. when sperm enters into female genital tract then uterus Rakta surrounds it. Etc pertaining to fertilization or zygote indicates towards ovum or Streebeeja. While in Sushruta Samhita appearance/discharge of Rakta and with holding of Rakta by Vayu refers it to be menstrual blood.

Lohita

As Streebeeja and Menstrual blood

Association of lohita and retas with chetna indicates the word lohita is used for ovum(Su.Sha.1/21). Vagbhata in Sharirsthana quoted that the situation of Lohita in women indicates it to be menstrual blood.

Rudhira & Pushpa –

These terms are used for menstrual blood only. Here, Acharya Kashyapa has mentioned pushpa (Antahpushpa) for ovum.

Beeja (Streebeeja) –

The word Beeja used in relation to female physiology refers to ovum. There are various references like references in Sharirsthana (Ch. Sha. 2/12, 2/18, 2/29) where Beeja word is directly meant for Streebeeja In commentary of Indu, Streebhuta Beeja is specially mentioned which directly gives the idea of ovum in this context.

Discussion

The Artava or Shonita or Raja does not appears in childhood and after the menopausal age i.e. 45-50years, as in young or aged plants flowers and fruits do not come up, as in bud decaying flower or fruit the fragrance does not explicit similarly in females Raja before twelve years and after fifty years of age are not visible. As fire located within the wood cannot be noticed without specific effort for the gross appearance. Similarly Artava or Shonita or

Raja requires appropriate time and specific effort for their visibility. Here, Commentators like Dalhana and Chakrapani quoted the view for the presence of Artava since from the embryonic period. In this context Artava should be considered in both the meanings i.e. ovum as well as menstrual blood. Ovum can be accepted due to its presence from embryonic life and at the age of twelve years it should be considered as menstrual blood because ovum is a microscopic structure. The word sonita is used to represent ovum at a number of places in relation to fertilization, zygote, embryo and fetus i.e. the women possessing healthy yoni, shonita and garbhashaya; union of shukra and shonita inside the uterus; shukra, shonita are the seed; union of Sukra, Shonita inside uterus etc. (cha.Sha.3/3,4/5,4/30).

According to Acharya Bhavaprakasha, Malarupa Rudhira which makes its appearance through vagina every month i.e. menstrual blood is called as "Raja". The presence of regular menstruation indicates the starting of reproductive life of women which is indicated as "Stridharma".

Artava is said to be of Agneya nature and possess the characteristics of Rakta, forms Garbha and is also essential for life. Similarly the word lohita used in both the meanings i.e. ovum as well as menstrual blood, But after going through the references related to Rudhir and Pushpa it appears that they represents only menstrual blood.

Conclusion

After going through various references given in our Samhitas now we can conclude that Ayurveda has mentioned various words in which Artava, Shonita, Rajah, Lohita are used to denote menstrual blood or ovum at different places, While Rudhira and Pushpa denotes only menstrual blood. Beeja is used for ovum only.

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