

REFERENCES CONCERNING BIRTH CONTROL METHODS IN ANCIENT INDIAN CLASSICS - AN EXPOSITION

N.SRIKANTH*

ABSTRACT

Reproduction is the basic phenomenon of Biological activity. Like other living beings man has a desire to reproduce. Unlike others he can has control reproductions at his will. From early vedic periods belonging to several centuries prior to Christian era, we find references concerning methods controlling the population over growth. Views of vedic sages, sexologists of ancient and medieval India regarding the birth control methods are expressed in this presentation.

Introduction :

Reproduction is the basic phenomenon of Biological activity. Like other living beings man has a desire to reproduce. Unlike others he can has control reproduction at his will. In vedic, purana and samhita periods population growth was not a problem and the demand of social disciplines of those day was to multiply the race. Ancient Indian Classics on medicine, sexology and religion show many evidences in favour of birth control methods. But they were kept dormant due to the domination of certain social and religious disciplines. According to charaka, it was social obligation to have many children. (Charaka Samhita Chikitsa Sthana 1: 12-19). Men without many children we treated as senseless and compared with tree without flowers and fruits. It indicates a lacuna in his life (Charaka Samhita Chikitsa Sthana Ch.2) According to Dr. Majumdar in early Aryan period families being partilinel and people prayed for many children (An

advanced history of India Part - 1) However some indirect references concerning contraception are available in some of the ancient texts. Such references are found in Rigveda. Rigveda has an advanced view about the problem of uncontrolled population - "A man with many children succumbs to miseries" (Rigveda : 1:64:32)

History of later Vedic age shows pointed references supporting birth control methods. Ashrama dharmas were the characteristic institution of later vedic period, regulates sexual life, indirectly limit the population over growth. They are Brahmacharya, Grihastashrama, Vanaprastha and Sanyashrama. Description about Ashramas (Religious Disciplines) are available in many of Hindu Puranas and Dharma Sastras.

Brahmacharya : This is the stage of professional education. This stage runs from the period after upanayana up to grihastashrama. In this stage man has to follow many restrictions which are against

* Asst. Research Officer (Ay.), Central Research Institute (Ay.), Bhubaneswar.

kama, e.g. Smarana, Keerthana etc. (Astangamidhunasa). Sexual life is strictly prohibited and any action stimulating the sexual perversion are also restricted. So they are required to lead non-conjugal life.

Grihasthrama: According to Jathavallabha Purushotam, "Man has to enjoy his sexual life from 25 years of age after the completion of professional education, up to 50 years". This is only the conjugal period or period of fertility in human life.

Vanaprastha & Sanyasashrama: People who have crossed the above periods of Ashrama are required to avoid sexual life. The above disciplines had an indirect effect on the control of population growth by regulating the conjugal life.

Support of Historical Evidences :

Vedic period: Use of local contraceptives and surgical procedures were adapted as methods to prevent conception in ancient India. It will be seen from descriptions in Atharva Veda 2000 B.C. (Atharva Veda : 6 : 138 1-5) and also in Brihat Aranya Kopanishat 1500 B.C. (Brihat Aranyakopanishad : 10.66). Surgical procedures like crushing of testicles, medicinal applications preventing conception are discussed in Kausika Sutra. During Purana Yuga (Period of epics) 1000 B.C., there is a mention of contraceptive methods in Garuda Purana.

Samhita period: Direct references concerning birth control methods are not available in Samhita Granthas. However some indirect evidences explaining about the method of spacing of children and limiting the conjugal life are mentioned in different contexts. For instance, statement given by Sushruta in his classic supports the above matter - "A child

born before 6th year of previous child is considered to have short life span". This indirectly highlights the concept of proper spacing between children (Sushruta Samhita Shareera Sthana : 10:66).

Medival period: Works compiled and original works done between 13 and 18th centuries show many advancements in this field. Many evidences to local and oral contraceptive methods are available. Such references are found in texts like, Anangranga (1600AD) Bhava Prakash - (1600AD) Brihat Yoga Tarangini (800AD), Paneasavaka (1400A.D.), Rasaratna Samuchchaya (1300 A.D.), Yogaratnakara (1600 A.D.) etc.

Evidences from Astrology: According to Varaha Mihira, position of certain planets at the time of coitus will determine whether there will be conception or not.

Evidences from Indian Marriage System Popular marriage systems practised in ancient India are Monogamy, Polygamy and Polyandry. Polygamy method of marriage system of ancient India mainly followed in royal families. Kautilya, author of ancient Artha Shastra, advised polygamy type of marriage system in special conditions. "If first wife remains sterile for 8 years after marriage." He indirectly prohibited polygomy type of marriage systems and advised monogamy which is a favourable measure for controlled reproduction. Polygomy and polyandry were not popularly practised in ancient India.

Monogamy: This was popularly followed by ancient Indian families. Many authorities of Indian sociology advised monogamy type of marriage system which indirectly limits population growth. Merits of Monogamy -

limits population over growth and Economically favourable.

Sex taboos : In vedic period sexual act was a part of Dharma to be performed in prescribed procedures, given by physicians and law givers. According to Manuscript, sexual act is to be performed during particular days and conjugation is prohibited during certain period e.g., Ashtami, etc.

Sexual act is also prohibited in the presence of gurus and other respectable persons. (Astanga Sangraha Sutra Sthana Ch.9). Certain references were also put for the age limit of marriage. According to Manu, man has to marry after 25 years of age and sexual life is to be continued up to 50 years. (Manusmriti :4 : 1, 5: 169)

Some prescriptions from ancient medical science indirectly regulates sexual life which give the scope of contraception without disturbing normal life. For instance Vagbhata states about the frequency of sexual act in different seasons i.e. Vasanta rutu, 2 Times/day, Grishma rutu, fortnightly once and in Hemantha rutu : No Restrictions were put. (Astanga Sangraha Sutra Sthana Ch.9).

Direct and Indirect Birth Control Methods Advised by Ancient Indian Physicians and Law Givers :

Religious disciplines adapted by indian families : according to Ashrama Dharmas of later vedic period, one has to pass through four stages of Ashrama, out of which he has to enjoy sexual life in grihasthashrama period and has to lead non-conjugal life in other periods of Ashrama. This indirectly limits the period of conjugal life (Hindu-Social organisation).

Special Methods In Yoga Ratnakara and Rasa Ratna Samuchchaya certain special methods

have been described. For instance :

- a) Man at the time of sexual act, particularly during orgasm should press his force part of testicles. One should with hold breath during the orgasm. By practising the above method, Shukra should not enter into female genital tract. So there will be no conception. (Rati Rahasya, Sakala - Yoga Adhikara - 19),
- b) Root of Datura Plant collected during Krishnapaksha is advised to tie to the waist of female during sexual act. (Rasa Ratna Samuchchaya 25 :91),
- c) For the prevention of emission of semen during coitus, some special recipes are prescribed.

Root of Sharapunkha with mercury and paste made out of root of *Mimosa pudica* with cow milk applied over sole of feet will prevent emissions. (Rati Rahasya. Sakala Yoga Adhikara - 110).

Local Contraceptives :

- a) Genital tract of female should be fumigated with smoke of burning Margosa after stoppage of Rutusrava will prevent conception (Brihat Yoga Tarangini; 14:3:55),
- b) Palasha beejayoga (Seeds of *Butea monsoepma*) : Paste made out of Palasa beeja and honey kept in vagina during coitus will prevent conception. (Brihat Yoga Tarangini; 143-54),
- c) Root of Datura collected during Krishna Paksha should be kept in vagina during coitus (Rasaratna Samuchchaya 25:9),
- d) Mixture prepared out of Rock salt and Tilataila applied in female genital tract will prevent conception (Hara Mekhala 4:298).

Oral Contraceptives :

- a) Preparations with seeds of *Butea monsoepma*. Internal administration of

powder of Palasha seeds for 3 days during rutukala will prevent conception. Yoga Chintamani Misra Adikara),

b) Flowers of *Hibiscus rosasinensis*: Intake of Japa Pushpa will produce sterility in women, according to Bhava Mishra (Bhava Prakasha Madhyama Khanda, Yoni Roga Adikhara - 33),

c) Chitramoola Yoga (*Plumbago zeylanica*) : Intake of decoction made out of Chitramoola for 3 days, after Rutusrava will prevent conception. (Kuchi Mara Tantra Bandhyakarana : 19),

d) Oral Administration of Beeja dala of Gunja during fourth and fifth day of Rutukala will prevent conception.

Conclusion :

Modern commentaries of Ayurvedic texts attributed various actions to different preparations used for contraception during

ancient periods. According to modern pharmacology fertility control can be achieved by control of central mechanism, prevention of union of spermatozoa with ovum, by altering the natural mechanisms of conception like inhibition of ovulation, by altering the physiology of cervical mucus etc.,. Many methods, preparations advised and adapted by ancient Indian physicans and law givers may produce above effects. Some of them may possess, anti-zygotic, anti-ovulatory, spermatolytic, anti-spermatogenic actions. In ancient texts many contraceptives are advised to insert in Yoni (Genital tract). This will give a basic idea of IUCD.

Acknowledgment :

The author is thankful to Dr.K.K. Chopra, Director, Central Research Institute (Ay.), Bhubaneshwar for his encouragement and able guidance for this article.

REFERENCES

1. Agnivesa 1974 Charaka Samihita, Nirnaya Sagar press, Mumbai.
2. Bhavamishra 1961 Bhava Prakash, Chowkambha Sanskrit Series, Varanasi.
3. Bhagawan Dash 1975 Embroylogy and Maternity In Ayurveda, Delhi Diary Delhi.
4. Chaterjee 1988 Human Physiology, Medical Allied - Agency Bombay.
5. Manu 1938 Manusmriti, Kala Press Prayaga.
6. Pitirm Sokrow 1961 Sansex Order, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay.
7. Ramrao, A.V.S.S. 1993 A Text Book of Bio-Chemistry, Visha-kapatnam.
8. Samsivasatry 1931 Hara Mekala Oriental manuscripts, Trivandrum.
9. Sharma, K.V. 1987 Ayurveda Itihasa And Ayurveda Parichaya, A.P. Ayurvedic Literature Improvement Trust, Hyderabad.
10. Sharma, P.V. 1955 Dravya Guna Vignan Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, Varanasi.
11. Subbarao, V 1954 Kaumara Brithya Tantra, VOL.II Publisher V. Subbarao, Guntur.
12. Vagbhata 1979 Astanga Sangraha, Telugu Academy Hyderabad.
13. Vagbhata 1953 Rasa Ratna Samuchchaya V.R. Swamy & Sons, Madras.
14. Vidya Lakshmi Pati Shastri 1973 Yoga Ratnakara, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, Varanasi.
15. Vidyaratan 1986 Hand Book Of Social And Preventive Medicine, J.P.B. Publishers, Delhi.

सारांश

प्राचीन भारतीय शास्त्रों में संतति - निग्रह पद्धतियों से संबंधित संदर्भ - एक व्याख्या

- एन. श्रीकान्त

पुनरुत्पादन जैविक क्रिया-कलाप का मूलभूत तथ्य है। अन्य सजीवों की तरह मानव भी पुनरुत्पादन की इच्छा रखता है। दूसरों की अपेक्षा वह अपनी इच्छा के अनुसार पुनरुत्पादन को नियंत्रणाधीन रख सकता है। ईसवी सन् से कई शताब्दियों पूर्व प्रारम्भिक वैदिक काल से ही जनसंख्या की अधिवृद्धि के नियंत्रण हेतु संदर्भ हम को मिलते हैं। वैदिक ऋषियों, प्राचीन एवं मध्ययुगीन भारत के यौन-विज्ञान के आचार्यों के संतति-निग्रह पद्धतियों से संबंधित विचारों को यहां प्रस्तुत किया जा रहा है।