

REVIEW ARTICLE

Effect of *Amalaki* in *Shweta Pradara* W. S. R. to Female Reproductive Health

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ABSTRACT

Health and happiness of a society can only be achieved if the women of the society are healthy and happy. Vaginal discharge also known as leucorrhoea is one of the most common complaints of the females of all age groups who are attending the outpatient department. There are several factors affecting the vaginal discharges, which could be; according to age (pre-pubertal, pubertal, and perimenopausal), according to physiological condition (pre-menstrual, ovulation, postmenstrual, and postpartum), pathological condition (pelvic inflammatory disease, fungal infections, cervicitis, anemia, diabetes, etc.), and personal hygiene. *Shweta Pradara* is a symptom and not a disease; hence, etiopathogenesis of the principal disease would be the etiopathogenesis of *Shweta Pradar* also, considering the clinical feature of *Shweta Pradar*; it can be said that it is a *kaphaj* disorder in the region of *apana vayu*. *Shweta Pradara* causes mental stress, problems of sexual anxiety, and even failure to conceive. Apart from this, it also causes local inconvenience, discomfort, general debility, lower backache-like symptoms, and thereby causing a decline in the quality of the life of the affected person.

1. INTRODUCTION

As the times have changed and with advancement in technology, lifestyle has changed to a great extent which has resulted into more of sedentary lifestyle and less of physical activity.

Shweta Pradara, otherwise known as leucorrhoea and in very common terms as vaginal discharge, is a very common condition that has been experienced by most of the women of all ages at some point of their lives. *Shweta Pradara* is a symptom and not an independent disease. It is a *tridoshaj vikaar* which has *kapha* and *vata dosha* predominance. *Shwet varna*, *kandu*, *shophha*, and *picchila guna* are due to vitiate *kapha dosha* (*kandu* is also due to vitiated *pitta*), *gandha* is a typical feature of vitiated *pitta dosha*. *Adhobhaga* is the seat of *vata dosha*; hence, no *yoni roga* can occur without vitiation of *vata dosha*.

In India, women of reproductive age group constitute 19% of the population according to the 2001 census.^[1]

Vaginal discharge is one of the most common complaints of all females of all age groups who are attending the outpatient department.

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In clinical practice, all types of excessive discharges, white or yellowish but not containing blood, are termed as leucorrhoea.

There can be various reasons for this imbalance of doshas. Particularly, in females, some major causes which identify as reason for *dosha dhatu* imbalance are formation of *aama*, hampered poshan of *uttar-ottara dhatu* due to any obstruction caused by *aama* (due to improper conversion of *ahaar rasa* into *rasa dhatu*) and vitiated doshas. Today, women are struggling with their work, family, and social life with most of them feeling constantly worn out, most of them unable to look after themselves due to lack of time or resources.

2. METHODS

This article is based on a review of Ayurvedic texts related to *Shweta Pradara* and *amalaki* and other relevant topics have been collected. The main Ayurvedic texts used in this study are Charaka Samhita, sushruta Samhita, Astanga Hridaya, and available commentaries on these texts. I have also referred to various websites and scientific journals to collect information regarding current researches on the relevant topics.

3. RESULTS

Stress has become an unwanted part of civilization; it is well known that stress plays an important role in the manifestation of many diseases.

Stress is described as *sahasa* by Charak.^[2] It causes *oja-kshaya*, that is, weak immunity which makes body susceptible to various diseases, as a result the status of *agni* is disturbed in such an individual. Agni as described in ayurveda, is of 13 types (one *jathar-agni*, five *bhuta-agni*, and seven *dhatva-agni*).^[3] It is responsible for digestion and metabolism. When *agni* is in its neutral state, it causes proper digestion of *ahaar* and formation of *rasa dhatu* and *mala* but when the *agni* is disturbed (it can be *visham*^[4] or *atyagni*), *ahaar rasa* is not properly formed which results in improperly formed *rasa dhatu* and its *mala* as *kapha*. This imbalance when present at the level of *dhatvagni* will cause improper conversion of the *uttar-o-ttar dhatu*, nutrition of *updhatu* will be hampered, presence of *mala* of each *dhatu* will be manifested eventually. This will ultimately cause an accumulation of *aama* in body.

Other causes include *Krimi-sansarga* and *Yonivyapad*.^[5] As seen in classical reference of *acharna* and *Vipluta Yonivyapada*, it mentioned in *Yonivyapada Chikitsa* in charak chikitsa sthan 30 and ashtanga sangraha Uttara sthana, which are manifestations of unhygienic conditions and presence of *jantu* (microbes) and *kandu* (a typical feature of infection). *Shweta Pradara* is a symptom and not an independent disease. It has been mentioned as a symptom in many *yonivyapadas*, primary reason for which is *vata* vitiation. Due to the nature of the *srava* and presence of *kandu* along, it is safe to say that *kapha* is also in disturbed condition. *Mithya ahaar vihara*, *mansik hetu*, *pradushta aartava*, *bija dosha*, and *daiva* can be *viprakrishta nidana* and *ayonidhavanata*, *ativyavaya*, *abhighata*, and *dhatu kshaya*, physiological factors are the *sannikrishta niadana*.

Rasa circulates through the whole body through *Rasavaha Srotas*. *Artava* is *Upadhatu of Rasa*. When the main *Dhatu* is vitiated, then the byproduct of the *Dhatu*, that is, *Aartava* gets vitiated causing *Artavaha Srotodusti*. Furthermore, *Kapha* aggravated due to its own vitiating factors vitiates *Rasadhatu* which is already vitiated by the factors, excessive coitus, improper lifestyle, and diet during *ritukala* along with improper maintenance of hygiene produces white and painless vaginal discharges.

3.1. Samprapti Ghatak

Dosha – *Kapha* and *Vata* *pradhana Tridoshaja*

Dushya – *Rasa*, *Rakta*

Srotas – *Rasavaha*, *Raktavaha*, *Artavavaha*

Srotodusti prakara – *Atipravritti*

Agni – *Jatharagnimandya* and *Rasadhatvagnimandya*

Adhithana – *Yoni*, *Garbhasaya*

Sihana Samsraya – *Yonimarga*

The fruit of *amalaki* contains *rasa amla*, *Madhur*, *tikta*, *Kashaya*, and *katu*. It has laxative property and is beneficial to the eyes. It is *sarvadoshahara* in nature. It also has aphrodisiac properties. It pacifies *vata dosha* due to *amla rasa* and pacifies *pitta dosha* because of its *Madhur rasa* and *sheeta virya*. The *Kashaya* *rasa* and *ruksha guna* help to pacify the *kapha dosha*.^[6]

Sushruta considers *Amalaki* to be the *Shrestha phala* among all fruits. Here are some synonyms of *amalaki* based on its qualities and features:-

Amala – purifying;

Amrita, *amritaphala* – *Rasayana*; *Vayahstha* – maintains youth;

Dhatri – sustains and promotes the *dhatu*;

Vayasya – prolongs life;

Vrisya – promotes virility;

Shivam – beneficial to all mankind;

Vrittaphala – the fruit is round; *Kolam* – weighs 1 kola;

Sitaphala – has *sheeta virya*; *Jatiphalarasa* – the juice is extremely useful.

Rasapanchaka^[7] (Ayurvedic pharmacodynamics) of *Amalaki*:-

Rasa: *Amla*, *Kashaya*, *Tikta*, *Katu*, *Madhur*. *Amla* and *Kashaya* are the predominant *Rasa*, but the fruit has five *rasas*.

Guna: *Guru*, *Ruksha*, and *Sheeta*

Veerya: *Sheeta*

Vipaka: *Madhur*

*Doshas*⁸: *Tridoshashamak*: *Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha*, and is especially effective for *Pitta Dosha* and *Amalaki* has been considered the best of the Ayurvedic rejuvenating herb and used as *Rasayana* which brings a state of equilibrium in *dhatu*s and *doshas*.

Due to its *Amla Rasa*, it alleviates *Vata*, due to *Madhur Vipaka*, it alleviates *Pitta*, due to *Kashaya Rasa* and *Ruksha Guna*, it alleviates *Kapha*.

3.2. Mode of Action^[9,10]

Several studies have been conducted to assess the anti-microbial potential of different extracts of plants in the past decades. Most of the plant extracts were found to display significant microbial action mostly due to several active constituents present in them.

1. Anti-microbial activity – gallic and tannic acid possess strong antimicrobial potential. It is mainly attributed to alkaloid, glycosides, saponins, tannins, terpenoids, phenol, and flavonoids. Hence, they can destroy cell wall and cytoplasmic membrane of bacteria resulting in cytoplasmic leakage and coagulation, damaged protein, and adversely affecting the RNA and DNA synthesis.
2. Hepatoprotective effect – flavonoid named quercetin was found to be hepatoprotective.
3. Hypocholesterolemic effect – it contains high amount of Vitamin C in natural form as well as cytokine-like substances identified as zeatin, z-riboside, z-nucleotide, flavonoid, pectin, and 30% tannins.

4. DISCUSSION

Shweta Pradara is one of the common problems met in gynecological practice which may be due to increased physiological secretions of genital tract or due to some pathology. The word *Shweta Pradara* is generally found in different context of *Yonirogas* in the form of *Shweta Srava*. The word *Shweta Pradara* consists of two words, the word *Shweta* means white color and *Pradara* means excessive discharge. The word *Shweta* is also used to describe the color which cannot be distinguished to a particular one or which cannot be brought under a specific color. It is also used to denote the color of *sphatika*. In *Amarkosha*,^[11] the following synonyms are used for the word *shweta* — *Shubra*, *Sukla*, *Suri*, *pandura*, *Gaura*, *Balasa*, *Dhavala*, *Arjuna*, etc. In *Shabdarnava*, the word *shweta* denotes, nearest color to white and from this meaning, the whitish or yellowish-white color can be considered under the *Shweta Pradara*. *Shweta Pradara* can be explained as a female disorder which produces vaginal discharge in excessive amount, that is, more than the normal, which becomes a cause of fear for impending adverse effect of the genital organ or to the body as a whole. It leads to a state of loss of confidence in a woman in her daily activities.

As in Ayurveda, *Shweta Pradara* is not a separate entity; it is probably the symptom of so many diseases; hence, the disease producing this

symptom and its *Nidana* and *samprati* will be same for the symptom *Sweta pradara*.

4.1. General Cause

Acharya Charaka in *Yonivyapada chikitsa Adhyaya*^[13] has told that all type of gynecological disorders is due to *mithya-acharana* (improper conduct), *pradushten artava* (menstrual disorder), *beej dosha* (genetic morbidity), and *daive* (divine factors).

Mithya aacharan can be subdivided into *mithya ahara* and *mithya vihaar*. The diets and mode of living which are *Kapha vardhaka* are the main etiological factors for *Shweta Pradara* as described in *Slesmala Yonivyapad*. Due to excessive indulgence in *Shlesma Vardhaka ahara*, *Kapha* gets vitiated increasing *Guruta*, *picchilta*, *snigdhta*, *sitata*, and *sthirata* of *sthanik kapha*. Similarly, due to excessive use of *Vata Vardhaka Ahara*, the *sthanik Apana vata* gets vitiated increasing the *chala*, *Suksma*, and *sita guna* of *vata* and with this vitiated *vata-kapha*, the white discharge from *yonis* is likely to occur. Among the six rasas – *Madhura*, *Amla*, and *Lavana Rasas* are *slesma vardhaka*, when the *Parthiva* and *Jala* substances are taken in excessive quantity or more than requirement, then they increase *Kapha* in the body and that vitiated *Kapha* after getting placed in *yonis* produces *Shweta Pradara*. Excessive intake of these type of *Ahara dravyas* is *Agnimandyakara* (weakness of digestive fire), produces *Ama* (toxic substance) which is being identical to *kapha*, and produces the symptoms of *Sweta Pradara*.

Mithaya vihaar – Vega vidharana, that is, suppression of urges like micturition and defecation or creating urges artificially, both hinder the natural force and direction of *vata* resulting in aggravation of it.

According to Charaka, *Vega vidharana* is one of the causative factors for *Yonirogas*. *Vegavidharana* is a prime factor for *Vata vriddhi* (vitiating) and any kind of *Yonivyapada* does not occur without vitiating of *Vata*. That is why Charaka says that first of all *vata* should be normalized in any type of gynecological disorders¹³. *Divaswapa* (day sleep), laziness, sedentary habits, and avoiding physical exertion, these viharas are *Kapha dosha vardhaka* which comes under the causative factor of *Shweta Pradara*.

4.2. Unhygienic Conditions

The lack of health education and illiteracy are also some predisposing factors of *Yonirogas*. Regular baths and washing of private parts are important factor to maintain healthy condition of vulva and vagina. Therefore, to prevent recurrence of the disease, women are advised to keep clean and dry genital organs.

The symptoms of *Shweta Pradara*, *pratyatma lakshana* is - *pandu and srava*, (whitish discharge through vagina in excess). *Sthanika lakshana* is- *yonis kandu*, *yonis toda*, *yonis shithilta* and *yonis daha*. General Symptoms is- *Sharirik rukhsata*, *kati shoola*, *Jangha vedana* and *guruta*, *ajirna* and *aruchi*, frequent micturition, *raktalpada*, *hastapada daha*, *sirah shoola*, *utsah-hani*, *durbalta*.

A drug has been given second position in the *chikitsa chatushpada*^[14] reflecting on its importance in treating a disease. The selected drug *AMALAKI* has been described as “*vaya sthapanam*”^[15]. It has *amla*, *Madhur*, *tikta*, *Kashaya*, and *katu rasa*. It is *sarva-doshahara* and *rasayana*. Acharya sushruta considers *amalaki shreshtha phala*.^[16]

The drug is helpful in significantly reducing the symptoms such as *Srava*, *Kandu*, *Yonishoola*, and *Durgandha* due to properties of *rasa*

present in it. It pacifies *vata dosha* due to *amla rasa* and pacifies *pitta dosha* because of its *Madhur rasa and sheeta virya*. The *Kashaya rasa and ruksha guna* helps to pacify the *kapha dosha*. *Rasayana* effect of the *Amalaki* and its *tridosahara* property helps to improve the general immunity of the patient. Anti-inflammatory action helps to reduce the congestion of the vagina, anti-microbial effect helps to fight against the micro-organism and prevent their further growth. All these properties help to prevent foul odor from the vagina. *Amalaki* due to its *Tridosahara and Rasayana* property has immense value in the treatment of *shweta pradara* without any untoward effects. The *rasayana* property helps in maintaining the nutritional equilibrium in the *dhatu* giving a long-term health benefit.

“*Amalaki vaya sthapanam*” – *amalaki* is known to be an anti-ageing drug which specifies its *rasayanic* properties. It is believed to be *Vaya sthapanam*, *ayu-medha-balakaram*, and *roga aphanam*. In other words, *rasayana* is a way to achieve homeostasis, a balanced state of the *dosha-dhatu-mala-rajata-tama* of the body, so as to the body is capable of rejuvenation and preventing diseases. With the regular use of *amalaki* in any form, one can achieve improved *sharirik and mansik* status and lead a disease-free life.

Alteration in basic homeostatic balance of the body is the origin of disease. Imbalance between pro-oxidant and anti-oxidant homeostasis plays a major role in the majority of ailments. Pro-oxidant condition dominates either due to increased generation of free radicals and/or their poor quenching/scavenging by the anti-oxidants (which protects the body against the deleterious effects of free radicals). *Amla* is one of the richest sources of Vitamin-C and low molecular weight hydrolysable tannins which makes *Amla* a good antioxidant. According to researches, the tannins of *amla* like *emblicanin - A* (37%), *emblicanin - B* (33%), *punigluconin*, and *pedunculagin* are reported to provide protection against oxygen radical. *Amla* is one of the richest sources of Vitamin-C and low molecular weight hydrolysable tannins which makes it a good antioxidant. The tannins of *amla* like *emblicanin - A* (37%), *emblicanin - B* (33%), *punigluconin*, and *pedunculagin* are reported to provide protection against free oxygen radical. The powerful antioxidant *Ellagic acid*, present in *Amla*, can inhibit mutations in genes and repairs the chromosomal abnormalities. Other than this, *amalaki* exhibits properties like anti-bacterial, hepatoprotective, anti-inflammatory, anti-diabetic, and hypolipidemic.

5. CONCLUSION

In this era, due to the lifestyle where everyone is busy rat racing, our health has taken the back seat and this gap can manifest some unwanted illnesses. Therefore, to overcome this, gap little changes can be made. *Shweta Pradara* is one such problem. The *doshas* responsible are *kapha-vata* dominance and *pitta anugami*. All the causative factors together lead to a state of *agni vishamta* which in turn causes *rasa dhatu dhushti and ama* production. Due to *vata dushti*, the *sthanik Apana vata* gets vitiated increasing the *chala*, *Suksma* and *sita guna* of *vata* and with this vitiated *vata-kapha*, it results into *Shweta Pradara* and associated symptoms. *Amalaki* is an easily available fruit and can be consumed in various forms. It is *tridosh-hara* and it alleviates *vata dosha* due to *amla rasa*, and alleviates *pitta dosha* because of its *Madhur rasa and sheeta virya*. The *Kashaya rasa and ruksha guna* help to eliminate the *kapha dosha*. Its *rasayana* effect helps in building over all health of the individual as it brings all the *dhatu* in a nutritional equilibrium. *Amalaki* is easily available and people of all the *stratas* can be benefited by its properties as it is very economical.

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10. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Nil.

11. DATA AVAILABILITY

This is an original manuscript and all data are available for only review purposes from principal investigators.

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