

Vajikaran: The Science of Healthy Procreation

Chetali Samanth

B.A.M.S., M.D. (Ayurveda) – Specialization in Kaumarabhritya (Pediatrics)

The sole aim of procreation in every living being is survival of its race. And this holds true for humans as well. The unsaid rule is that it is the responsibility of each individual to try to pass on the best of its qualities to its offspring. The sperm in the male and the ovum in the female transmit the genetic material of the parents to the next generation, and the quality of these two gametes reflects directly on the health of the progeny.

Various research studies have brought to light a rise in adverse trends in male reproductive health, such as increased incidence of testicular cancer, decline in semen qualities, and an increase in abnormal sperm.¹ Sperm damage results from a broad spectrum of causative factors, like chronic disease conditions, exposure to chemicals, pesticides, etc. Weak or defective sperm have been linked to an increased risk for problems with pregnancy and the offspring.² It is the need of the times that we find a preventive as well as a curative solution to this growing problem. *Ayurveda* -- the science of life -- has an answer to this, and it is called *Vajikaran*.

Ayurveda is divided into eight branches, which are carefully chiseled out to meet specific needs in the process of maintaining health and preventing diseases. *Vajikaran* is one of the eight branches that deal with improving male sexual potency and thereby ensuring a *supraja*, or better progeny. The main aim of *Vajikaran* is always successful copulation for healthy reproduction, with sexual pleasure being just an additional benefit. Through healthy offspring, it is supposed to impart the benefit of *dharma* (religious merit), *artha* (wealth), *yasha* (success) and *preeti* (delight), which are the fourfold achievements of life. But *Vajikaran* in today's world is seldom used for healthy reproduction, sexual pleasure being the main focus. The main aim of this branch is thus being sidelined.

The concept of *supraja* also indicates towards the category exactly opposite to this, that of *kupraja*, or defective progeny. These may include children with various genetic disorders, or congenital anomalies. Scattered references of defects in *pumbeeja* or *shukra*, which means semen or sperm, leading to defects in the progeny, are found in Ayurveda texts. *Charaka Samhita*, one of the famous texts of Ayurveda, gives reference of *shukra dosha* (defect in shukra) as '*Shukram hi dushtam sapatyam sadaaram badhate naram*'.^{3a} The meaning of this is a defect in shukra affects both the wife of the person with the defect, as well as his progeny. The commentator Chakrapanidatta has elaborated that the defects in progeny are as diseased or impotent progeny.

The importance of healthy shukra for conception is also repeatedly emphasized. Shukra has been mentioned as the foremost requirement for a fetus, which will grow normally within a gestational period of nine months, without any trouble, and will grow to have a healthy body and mind^{3b}.

A defect in *Beeja* (literally, a seed -- or shukra) as *purusha beeja* (sperm) or *artava* as *stree beeja* (ovum) is responsible for congenital defects in the fetus^{3c}. While describing conception, *Acharya Atreya* has specifically mentioned that the *Purusha retas*, i.e. shukra, should be '*anupahata*' (without any defects or damage); only then will it lead to a healthy fetus^{3d}.

Shukra dushti has been cited as a prime reason for the failure of conception, as well as for *ajanma* (failure to give successful birth) of the fetus^{3e}

While describing *garbha upaghatakar bhav* -- factors which can cause either abnormalities or destruction of the fetus, *Acharya Chakrapani* has elaborated *Pitridosha* (defect in the father) as *apathya sevana* (intake of unwholesome diet and regimen) by father and Shukradosh in the father.^{3f} All these references clearly indicate the importance of healthy purusha beeja. The science of Vajikaran was developed over ages to ensure a healthy shukra, which would ensure *Subahupraja* – a progeny that will have a healthy body as well as a healthy mind.

Vajikaran chikitsa requires living in strict compliance to the directions mentioned in Ayurvedic classics. It also involves various methods of *shodhan* (body cleansing) through *vaman* (emesis) or *virechan* (purgation) to prepare the body for the shodhan. After the Shodhan therapy, based on the *prakriti* (doshic body constitution) and the nature of the individual's imbalance, certain herbal and herbo-mineral combinations are administered. Some of the most important herbs used in vajikaran are *Aswagandha* (*Withania somnifera*), *Kapikacchu* (*Mucuna pruriens*), *Shilajatu* (black bitumen), etc. Other modalities included under vajikaran that aim at improving mental health are: massaging with herbalized oils, herbal baths, wearing fragrant garlands, anointing the body with fragrant herbal pastes, listening to music, etc.

Vajikaran therapy revitalizes all the seven *dhatu*s (body elements), thereby restoring equilibrium and health. Keeping in mind the concept of vajikaran as described in the texts of Ayurveda, it definitely offers a solution to minimize shukra defects and to ensure healthy progeny.

References:

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 - c. Charaka Samhita Sharirasthana 2/29
 - d. Charaka Samhita Sharirasthana 3/3
 - e. Charaka Samhita Sharirasthana 4/28
 - f. Charaka Samhita Sharirasthana 8/21