



AYURVEDIC CONCEPT OF PUBERTY- A CONCEPTUAL STUDY

Deepa M. Nelaguddad^{1*} and Anupama V.²

¹Final year PG Scholar Department of Streeroga Evam Prasootitantra Sri Kalabyaraveshwara swamy Ayurvedic Medical College and Research centre, Bangalore, Karnataka.

²Professor & HOD Department of PG Studies Streeroga Evam Prasootitantra Sri Kalabyaraveshwara swamy Ayurvedic Medical College and Research centre, Bangalore, Karnataka.

*Corresponding Author: Dr. Deepa M. Nelaguddad

Final year PG Scholar Department of Streeroga Evam Prasootitantra Sri Kalabyaraveshwara swamy Ayurvedic Medical College and Research centre, Bangalore, Karnataka.

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ABSTRACT

Puberty- is the metamorphosis from childhood to adulthood. For the safe and healthy reproductive life. Puberty is an important milestone in woman's life. The future maternal health lies in the hands of initial care taken during puberty. The pubertal changes starts from the age of 8 years in a girl where the gradual development of secondary sexual characteristics takes place along with physical and psychological changes. Nowadays because of faulty lifestyle and food habits, puberty related complications like precocious puberty, delayed puberty and menstrual abnormalities are commonly seen. Ayurvedic classics has given importance to the onset of menstruation (menarche). The changes during puberty are explained as *romaraji utpatti*, *artava pravritti* at the age of 12 years by all the *Acharyas* which is considered under *balyavastha*. They have also talked about the regimen to be followed. The lifestyle followed before and during puberty will have a lifelong impact. Negligence to the health during this stage may result in various gynaecological problems including infertility. Proper Ayurvedic care will help the transition from childhood to adulthood easier and comfortable.

KEYWORDS: Precocious puberty, *Romaraji*, Menarche, *Artava pravritti*.

INTRODUCTION

Puberty in girls is the period, which links childhood to adulthood. It is a period of gradual development of secondary sexual characteristics.^[1] It occurs between 8 to 13 years of age^[2] and includes complex development of growth spurt, thelarche, pubarche, and menarche. Ayurvedic classics have a direct reference of *utpatti* of *raja* and *prathama rajodarshana* in various *samhitas*. In *parashara samhita* he explains that the age of menarche while explaining the synonyms of stree in different age as- *stree* is called *gouri* at 8 years of age, *rohini* at 9 years, *kanya* at 10 years and *rajaswala* after 11 years.^[3] According to *Acharya* sushruta, vagbhata and Kashyapa, the age of menarche is 12 years.^[4] If the changes occurs before or after this age, it is taken as precocious or delayed puberty respectively.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In Ayurveda, acharyas have explained that the *rajopravritti* and *romaraji utpatti* occurs at the age of 12. *Artava* can be seen in the form of *Shonita* i.e menstruation in females at this age and *shukra* at 16 years for males. *Acharya* Kashyapa explains that the onset of the menarche is due to *kala* and *karma* and it

can be influenced by *ahara* and *arogyas*^[5] i.e the nutritional status and the general health. Though they have mentioned the *kala* of *raja pravritti*, *Acharyas* have explained the presence of *artava* in *garbha kala*^[6] which can be considered as primordial follicles in the intra uterine life which is *beeja roopi artava* and at puberty, in the form of *dhatu/ rajasravi roopi artava* as the fruit hidden in the flower cannot be seen being very small and fire within the wood cannot be seen without specific efforts^[7] [*ajata vyanjana*], similarly the *artava* and *shukra* is not seen in *balyavastha* because of the *aparipakwata* of *dhatu*, *asampoorna bala*.^[8] The causes of attainment of puberty is also similar i.e because of the negative feedback of estrogen to the gonadotropins and gradually the negative feedback is lost, causing puberty.

All the pubertal changes are due to hormones like GnRH, FHS LH estrogen progesterone which acts through HPO axis. Any defect in these will result in abnormal puberty, one among which is precocious puberty. Causes being constitutional, exposure to exogenous hormones, endocrinal problems, brain injuries, tumours and lesions of brain.^[9] Nutrition and lifestyle play an important role in attainment of puberty. As per recent studies shows some of the triggering factors are obesity, lack of

physical work and exposure to hormones in any form of food and environmental factors. The treatment includes hormone therapy which is again causing adverse effects like PCOD, infertility, obesity, cardio-vascular problems etc.^[10]

DISCUSSION

Balyavastha is a stage having predominance of *kapha dosh*^[11] where there is transformation of *kapha* to *pitta* i.e *madhyamavastha*, but due to *kapha-medo vardhaka ahara, avyayama, apathya sevana* there is *dushti* of *rasadhātu* leading to improper *dhatu poshana* and conditions like *sthoulya* as childhood obesity is one of the risk factor for precocious puberty it also leads to various health conditions. *Artava* being the *upadhatu* of *rasa dhatu* is hampered and thus causing various *artava vyapat\dushti* like *artava kshaya, anartava* and also *yonivyapat*. These conditions can be prevented by following proper *dinacharya, rutucharya, Pathya ahara*.

CONCLUSION

Hence as told by *Acharya Kashyapa, ahara and arogya* i.e nutrition and general health are important in attainment of puberty. Prevention becomes the foremost step to be taken in dealing with precocious puberty where *dinacharya rutucharya Pathyapathya, ahara-vihara* play a role in reducing obesity being a risk factor for precocious puberty. Considering the future complications of early menarche, it's a time to adopt a healthy lifestyle and proper treatment protocol as told in Ayurvedic classics.

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