

Women Support in Ayurveda

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Women have been celebrated as mothers in ancient Texts, Hindu Upanishadas and the Vedas, and given obeisance's and revered for thousands of years. The Yin or woman symbol is part of the Dao-yin/yang—where one without the other cannot exist. In Vedic tradition, all women and female mammals are part of Shakti (The universal Shakti—the Goddess—as opposed to the male Shaktiman aspect of God).

Two important Sanskrit names for women are synonymous with their roles and dharma—Stri comes from root word stayi—sound—one who nourishes that child who make sound. The other word is Dhatri. Dha refers to foundation. One who gives foundation to a child whether as a biological mother, nurse, caretaker or parent? The third more important synonym is Shakti. Even though Shakti is used for female goddesses—stri is given special ability by Divine Shakti to carry out her dharma.

In fact, from centuries, different ancient religions dating back to paleolithic times have worshipped Shakti or, goddesses, and, the sacred feminine. Neo pagans worshipped the Goddess as well as the Feminine as well.

Being a small part of the universal yin—the role of a woman is like that of Mother Nature. A woman is a miniscule embodiment of Jiva Shakti'. Stri is miniscule energy of Shakti just like Mother Nature is a planetary manifestation of Shakti energy on earth. The creative energy: The Mother Nature works in cycles—cycle of seasons, governed by a cycle of the moon and sun, the cycle of day and night, affecting the body, mind, Prakruti and creating a temporary vikara (Vikruti) at every junction for Stri.

Hence, a woman—being the miniscule version of this mother nature Shakti is deeply influenced in body, mind, spirit by circadian and circa lunar rhythms, as well as junction of seasons; as well as the time of mensuration, ovulation that coincide with waves of hormones in their bodies. Similarly, these natural rhythms affect her more differently at different stages of life—whether a bala, yuvati or vriddha (Teenager, youth, pre-menopausal or menopausal).

The concept is that fertilization and reproduction are elemental dharma of a stri, according to Ayurveda. Stri has the power to carry a life within her Yoni. 'Yoni' comes from the joining of the word NI to the root Yu, which means mix and separate. It is the organs in which the woman and child are united and then separated, namely the Uterus

Stri is an embodiment of Agni. Agni is Fire. This is a portrayal of the natural luster that women possess.

Although the woman is predominantly Kapha, the reproductive aspect is Pitta, since blood and menstrual fluid is Pitta.

Direct Cycles that affect the feminine energy are the macrocycles, moon cycle (mensuration), and the transitional cycles.

Macrocycle: First change/cycle occurs at puberty when a young girl starts her monthly cycle. This is not just governed by the gravity of the moon, which also controls tides and even volcano eruptions but also the young girl's horoscope placement of her Moon. Monthly up and

down of Candra, and, waves of hormones control Ovulation, Monthly cycle, Pre-Menstrual Syndrome that manifests differently in Vata, Pitta and Kapha women.

Moon cycle: As women we are deeply affected by the Moon. Moon controls our monthly cycles as well as our moods and minds. It does that in every person—however, for women the influence of moon changes with waxing and waning. I talk in detail about this below.

Transitional cycle-Childbirth, Menopause: A woman's second transition at childbirth(s). Ayurveda places importance on taking care of the woman at this transitional time as she reaches to fulfill her Dharma. The younger the woman, the easier this transition.

Secondary cycles: Seasonal Equinox, Spring and Fall (Comes four times a year): Ritusandhi, the junction of these seasons affect the mind and body of women. This is not a time for women to start a new project, journey, however may be good for restorative program, or, detoxification.

For this article, I want to focus on the connection of menstrual cycle and, its connexion to Candra, the Soma—the cycle of Moon.

This is the MOST important cycle for women. If I had to create a cycle for men, I would say the solar cycle probably affects them more than anything. However, for ladies it is the lunar cycle.

We are ruled by the Cycle of moon.

Why Moon? Candra is the giver of soma, and, rasa to all plants. If not for moon, the shada-rasa won't manifest in the plants.

In India, most of us tend to follow what we call a lunar calendar instead of the Gregorian calendar that is ruled by the sun and 365 days. The lunar calendar has two aspects—waxing and waning of the moon.

Mother Nature has given us 28-30 days during which we get our monthly cycle again. In fact, the buildup of estrogen and, ovulation happens exactly in 15 days, and in the next 15 days are the buildup of progesterone—and it ends up in the monthly bleeding. Moon has a similar cycle. 15 days there is build up and then full moon. Then 15 days there is build down and No moon. Build up corresponds with buildup of Estrogen in our body. In fact, moon affects our estrogen levels—in an energetic way. Menstruating with full moon is the best way to achieve balance.

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Moon or Chandra is not ordinary. It yields power over us. It manifests and balances our feminine energy that presides over water, medicinal herbs, gives us the feminine charms, balances and delights our hormone levels, and, is referred to as Soma. In scriptures, it is said that plants use light from sun to create their own food via photo synthesis--however, the taste or rasa- the juicy sweetness of mango that melts in your mouth manifests when it is exposed to the moon.

Why is rasa so important to woman? Moon is the controller of Rasa in plants. It also indirectly and directly affects the rasa in our body (Plasma). Rasa dhatu is the most important dhatu to keep balanced for women, as it controls mensuration and lactation. Moon influences Rasa dhatu, and, Rasa dhatu affects the monthly cycle.

Rasa dhatu is the waters of the body; it is represented as the plasma, bodily fluids, interstitial fluid and the lymph in the body. The secondary byproduct of rasa dhatu is menstrual blood (artava) and Lactation in nursing women. The top layer of skin is also a result of what is happening at the rasa dhatu.

When Rasa dhatu is imbalanced, it is natural that it's secondary byproducts—menstrual blood and lactation will be affected also.

Physically, to keep their rasa in balance means that women's menstrual bleeding will automatically be regular, PMS will be minimal

and menstrual issues may be prevented with good healthy elimination of artava. Physically eating food rich in phytoestrogens, following a daily routine suited to one's dosha, and eating Artava balancing herbs like fenugreek, ajawain, cumin, turmeric is suggested.

From an Ayurvedic Perspective, Rasa dhatu imbalance can be presented in 3 different ways:

- Increase of Rasa dhatu leading to salivation, nausea, moist skin, and heavy menstrual flow.
- Decrease of Rasa dhatu leading to dryness.
- Vitiation of Rasa dhatu (Dushti) by Vata, Pitta or Kapha.

Vata and Pitta Prakruti women are advised hydrating diet, use of ghee, warm water, teas, milk and dairy products, figs, raisins soaked in water and regular use of dates.

Kapha women should do favor Diuretic Vegetables that release excess water, astringent herbs like anardana (dried pomegranate seeds), Ashoka; Agni dipana herbs like dry ginger, heating pungent spices, and, strictly avoid gluten and dairy. Fruits should be avoided with exception of pomegranates and berries during transition times. Spiritually, Moon gazing, moon yoga, and offering reverence to a goddess or Shiva Parvati during Purnima (full moon) is suggested.