What a combination? We have studied in human physiology that a woman starts monthly bleeding from the time of menarche only to stop when she attains menopause. Where does the moon in the sky come into this picture? Naturally, by now you have concluded that I am about to write scientific fiction! Far from it – very, very far. You are in for a rude shock if you choose to read on. Most of us are like men inside a cave, enjoying the shadows inside and studying them, trying to give our own explanations and argue about it and be satisfied to agree to disagree. But, said Plato, in his celebrated book The Republic, classed among the best writings in the history of western literature, even though, in a manner of speaking, Plato was a European pagan, that there is another class of me. The latter he calls the philosophers:

“And is not the love of learning, the love of wisdom, that is philosophy.”

– from book One of Plato's The Republic.

This book – The Republic – is now classed a shade higher than such great classics like Cicero’s De Republica, St. Augustine’s City of God, and Sir Thomas More’s Utopia (1516). None of our intellectuals would then question the statements in that book. Plato says that progress comes from those daring people who go out of the cave to study things in the real sunlight. When they have done that study, it is their duty to go back inside the cave to tell their peers about their experience.

One such great philosopher was Varahamihira, also be classed as an Indian pagan from the western point of view, who was in the court of King Vikramaditya (lived around 100 BC). He was considered to be one of the nine gems of Vikramaditya’s court, the other’s included such great scholars like the peerless poet Kalidasa. Varahamihira was only Mihira when he joined the court. When the king had his first son, the court astrologers sat to decide on the future of the heir only to come up with the good omen that the child would live long to get name and fame for the kingdom. Mihira, who also was in the gathering, was perplexed, as his own calculations showed that the boy would die very young and would never become king at all. In addition, he also knew how the boy would die – to be killed by a wild boar! Mihira had the courage to oppose the great astrologers of the court in an open assembly. Everyone was shocked to hear this.

The King, visibly perturbed, gave Mihira one more chance to calculate. He came up with the same conclusions. King then ordered that if this does not come true Mihira’s head should be cut off. He also made sure that all precautions were taken to protect the child. The inevitable happened and the child died as predicted soon afterwards, despite all human efforts by the great King. The King Vikramaditya decorated Mihira with many honours and then on he was called Varahmihira (Varaha - wild boar).

“Kujenduhetu pratimaasaarthatavam.”

– Varahamihira.

(Because of the Moon’s control on the woman’s body, she bleeds regularly once in twenty-eight days). This is from one of the two great works of Varahamihira on astrology.

I am sure, by now, you will have started to laugh within yourselves thinking that I am getting into the realm of superstition and mysticism. Be that as it may, let us look at the latest 2001 edition of Cecil’s Textbook of Medicine. In the present environment in our medical schools this American book would be valued more than The Republic (if ever the students have heard of Plato ! – they would have heard of Pluto, though !) with the Damocles sword of examinations hanging precariously above their necks! As a student I had not read Plato myself. In fact, all that I learnt as a student helped me only to pass examinations, an important pre-requisite though. After passing I had to “un-learn” to “re-learn” again the real life medicine. Cecil’s book would also be admitted as evidence in an American
court of law. Now read on the extract from that book (page 1202) on the physiology of menstruation:

“The pituitary has an intrinsic rhythm of small amplitude with a frequency of every two to ten minutes. Superimposed on this intrinsic rhythm is a rhythm caused by the pulsatile release of hypophysiotropic releasing factors, with or without the withdrawal of a corresponding inhibitory factor. Rhythms that are shorter than a day are referred to as ultradian rhythms. The next layer of rhythmicity is the circadian rhythm, i.e., rhythms with approximately 24-hour periodicity. These rhythms are usually synchronised with the 24-hour period by a periodic environmental cue such as dark-light cycle. The supra-chiasmatic nucleus functions as a circadian pace maker and receives light-induced electrical impulses from the retina via the retino-ophthalmic tract, finally transmitting those impulses to the pineal gland, where they are converted to hormonal signals. **Signals, for a rhythm with a periodicity longer than 24 hours, i.e., an infradian rhythm, include the gravitational influence of the moon, which gives rise to the menstrual cycle.**

There are a lot of things that we do not get to know when we rely only on our five senses. To say that man’s life on this planet is not at all influenced by celestial bodies is nothing short of arrogance of the first order that is unbecoming of a good scientist. One can say that astrology, as a science, is not accurate in predicting the future. No other science is accurate either. Do we not know the “butterfly effect” of Edward Lorenz? Science has been predicting the unpredictable anyway all along. If one becomes humble – the sign of good education – one quickly realises the importance of wisdom in contradistinction to knowledge. I am not an astrologer, but I strongly feel that astrology plays a vital role in psychotherapy. There is a whole lot of literature on “Ayurvedic Astrology” that has been studied extensively even by Westerners. Now that I have verbatim quoted from Cecil’s *Textbook of Medicine* above to give credibility to the ancient wisdom of India, I am sure even our hard-to-please scientists would agree that moon does affect the monthly menstrual cycle of a woman.

A recent book by Stephen Phillip of the Cambridge University physics department *ESP of Quarks and Superstrings* deals with the scientific validity of *Yogic Siddhis* vis-à-vis human capabilities. *Yogic Siddhis* could give one an insight into many things in addition to the five senses. Experiments in this area are being conducted at the Princeton University with very good results, says the above book.

It is not just the monthly menstrual cycle that is under the control of the moon’s gravitational force! There are many other actions inside the human body that the gravitational force of the moon could control. If billions of tons of water could shift from one part of the ocean to another due the gravitational pull of the moon – high and low tides – what about the human body, which is predominantly water? Many newer details about this are being unravelled everyday by scientific methods. I am grateful to my dear friend, Dr. T.I. Radhakrishnan, FRCP (Edinb.) a Queen’s Square trained neurologist who drew my attention to the latest edition of Cecil’s textbook. He had mounted a new study under his guidance to find out a scientific method to know one’s exact time of birth so that the astrological charts could be more accurate in future. I am awaiting the results with bated breath.

Our astrologers too should wake up from their slumber to admit that all that they have learnt so far need not be the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Science is change and we should strive to apply the latest scientific methods to verify our ancient claims and prove to the world their good qualities, if any. Let the scientific community rise to the occasion. Those of us who are in search of the truth could go on and try to unravel the mystery that is the human body and its marvels. Science is curiosity organised, and with a pinch of logical skepticism added. Results could be positive or negative. Ours shall only be the effort and the result is not in our hands. Long live true scientific temper for the good of humanity.
Woman, Moon, and Menstruation

BM Hegde*

What a combination? We have studied in human physiology that a woman starts monthly bleeding from the time of menarche only to stop when she attains menopause. Where does the moon in the sky come into this picture? ĀēœKujenduhetu pratimaasaarthavam.â€ â€“ Varahamihira. (Because of the Moonâ€™s control on the womanâ€™s body, she bleeds regularly once in twenty-eight days). This is from one of the two great works of Varahamihira on astrology. I am sure, by now, you will have started to laugh within yourselves thinking that I am getting into the realm of superstition and mysticism. Signals for a rhythm with a periodicity longer than 24 hours, i.e., an infradian rhythm, include the gravitational influence of the moon, which gives rise to the menstrual cycle.â€Â Woman, moon and menstruation. @article{Hegde2003WomanMA, title={Woman, moon and menstruation}, author={Belle M Hegde}, journal={The Journal of the Association of Physicians of India}, year={2003}, volume={51}, pages={811-2} }. Belle M Hegde.