

CONCEPT OF *KASHTARTAVA*: PERSPECTIVES OF AYURVEDA AND MODERN SCIENCE

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Article Received on
24 Jan. 2019,

Revised on 14 Feb. 2019,
Accepted on 07 March 2019

DOI: 10.20959/wjpr20194-14527

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ABSTRACT

Most common and often enfeebling, gynecological condition that affects 45 to 95% of menstruating women specially in their growing phase of life is primary dysmenorrhoea. Primary dysmenorrhoea is defined as painful menstruation of sufficient magnitude so as to incapacitate day to day activities in the absence of any identifiable pelvic pathology. Despite the high prevalence, dysmenorrhea is most of the time poorly treated, and even disregarded, by health professionals, pain researchers, and the women themselves, who may accept it as a normal part of the menstrual cycle. Dysmenorrhea is an important public health problem which may have a negative effect on HRQoL, social environment, work, and psychological status of precious growth life span of female. While going through the ancient

Ayurvedic text though it is not mentioned as a term but the clinical picture of this disease gives the idea of difficult menstruation i.e. *Kashtartava* Relation of these conditions to primary dysmenorrhoea can be ruled out by close analysis of given classical references only.

KEYWORDS: Kashtartava, Primary dysmenorrhea.

INTRODUCTION

Improving women's health matters not only to her but also the health of her family, community and society at large. Despite considerable progress in the past decades, our health care system is not giving proper attention to some gynaecological conditions, particularly in their adolescent years, primary dysmenorrhoea is one of them. The prevalence of primary dysmenorrhoea estimates range from 25 to 90% among women and adolescents.^[1] Studies

from India reported the prevalence range between 50 to 87.8%.^[2] Widely prevalent and common complaint among young women, primary dysmenorrhea is estimated to be present in 40–50% of them, with severe forms giving rise to work or school absenteeism in 15% and the mild forms requiring no medication or occasional over-the-counter (OTC) analgesics in about 30%.^[3]

Dysmenorrhea literally means painful menstruation. But a more realistic and practical definition includes cases of painful menstruation of sufficient magnitude so as to incapacitate day-to-day activity.^[4]

Ayurveda review

Kashtartava as a disease is not mentioned anywhere in *Brihatrayi* & *Laghutrayi* hence; *Acharya Charak* has made it very clear that it is not necessary that all diseases are written by name in classics a wise physician should understand diseases according to involvement of *Doshas*, *Dushya*, etc.^[5] According to *Acharya Charaka*^[6], symptom of a disease itself can constitute a disease but some time because of their subordinate nature, they are only a symptom and not a disease. While commenting on this *Acharya Chakrapani*^[7] has said that any symptom may manifest as a separate disease.

Keeping this panorama in mind and looking at high prevalence of the ailment, an attempt has been made to study the disease *Kashtartava* as a separate disease entity. Though the term *Kashtartava* is not used in texts as a disease but the term is self-explanatory one and requires little depiction. There are several diseases in Ayurveda classics which are having similar features with dysmenorrhoea; pain full menstruation. From *Yoni Vyapada*, these are *Vatala*, *Pittala*, *Sannipatiki*, *Paripluta*, *Udavarta*, *Mahayoni* & *Suchimukhi*, while *Vataja Artavadushti* and *Kshina Artavadushti* are the conditions other than *Yoni Vyapada*. Moreover, *Asrigdara* & *Artavakshaya* are also the conditions, which include the painful menstruation.

In *Prakrit avastha apana Vata* is responsible for normal menstrual regulation. When due to any type of *Nidana Sevana*, *Vata* gets vitiated than it creates all the troubles.

CONCEPT OF KASHTARTAVA

Nirukti

Kashtartava can be expressed as – “*Kashtena muchyati iti kashtartava*” i.e. the condition where *Artava* is shaded with great difficulty and pain is termed as “*Kashtartava*”.^[8]

References on word '*Kashtartava*' in *Samhitas*

Kashtartava i.e. difficult or painful menstruation has been described as a symptom in many different terminologies in *Ayurveda* classics but the references are scattered in description of different disease entities. A trial to collect all such references is where *Kashtartava* told as a symptom is given as follows.

While going through the ancient *Ayurveda* text we may find out several disease entities, which come with *Kashtartava* as direct or as indirect reference. In several diseases also where, though it is not mentioned as a term but all the clinical picture of that disease gives the idea of difficult menstruation i.e. *Kashtartava* Relation of those conditions to primary or secondary dysmenorrhoea can be ruled out by close analysis of given references only.

With the help of etiological factors and the clinical features given for most diseases here an attempt has been made to correlate *Kashtartava* strictly with primary dysmenorrhoea.

1. *Vatala Yonivyapad*

Specialy according to *Acharya Charaka*.^[9] *Vatala* is a condition only related with *Kashtartava* along with other *Vataja Lakshana*. But nowhere it has mention dyspareunia or other symptoms which can correlate this with stage of infection.

2. *Udavartini Yoni Vyapad*

On the basis of the symptom of great difficulty at the beginning of menstruation and immediate relief of pain following discharge of menstrual blood given by *Acharya Charaka*, is the identical symptom of primary / spasmodic dysmenorrhea.^[10] In *Maddukosha commentary*^[11], it has mentioned this pain is of *Arthi* (colicky) type. But according to the explanation given by *Acharya Charaka*, *Sushruta* and *Vagbhata* it is more reasonable to correlate with primary dysmenorrhoea.

3. *Suchimukhi Yonivyapad*

Acharya Charaka^[12] described it as a congenital disease while *Acharya Sushruta*^[13] explains the same condition by the term of *Suchivaktra*. Even though it has not clearly mentioned as pain in menstruation, but according to the facts it can be understood as a stage of primary dysmenorrhoea due to any type of stenosis of the cervix.

4. *Vataja Artavadushti*

In case of *Vataja Aartavadushti*^[14] all the text have mentioned only the clinical findings of menstrual flow related to *Vata dosha* along with pain. All the features of condition resemble typical *Vata Kopa* condition which is more nearer to Primary dysmenorrhoea.

5. *Artavakshaya*

Artavakshaya is a condition with several features of *Vata* vitiation i.e. *Yathochit Kala Adarshana, Alpartava, Yoni Vedana* etc.^[15] It can be correlated with a stage of primary dysmenorrhoea due to nutritional deficiency.

NIDANA

Samanya Nidana (General etiological factors)

General etiological factors of all the *Yonivyapad* and *Vata Prakopaka Hetu* can be taken as a *Samanya Nidana*.

CHARAKA	Mithyachara, Pradustartava, Beeja dosha, Daiva
SUSHRUTA	Mithyachara, Pradustartava, Beeja dosha, Daiva Pravruddha linga purusha atisevana by ruksha durbhala stree/bala
VAGBHATA	Dusta bhojana, Vishamanga shayana, Bhrisha maithuna sevana, Dustartava, Apadravya Sevan aintoyoni, Bheeja dosha, Darivatah

Madhavakara, Bhavaprakasha, and Yogaratnakara have followed *Acharya Charaka* in this aspect.

Mithya Achara- Hence *Kashtartava* is a *Vata* predominant *Vyadhi*, food and life style which aggravates the particular *Dosha* should be considered.

Abnormal diet- excessive intake of food which are vitiating specially *Vata dosha* like *Katu rasa, Ruksha, Sheeta, Khara Guna ahara*, inadequate intake of food (*Anashana*), improper meal times (*Vishamashana*) comes under abnormal diet (*Mithya ahara*).

Abnormal mode of life- improper life style including either excessive exercises or sedentary life, addictions like smoking, alcohol etc, which increase *chala, ruksha, Khara guna* of the body. Consumption of *Vata Vardhaka Nidana*, including *Vegadharana* (control of natural urges), *Ati Vyayama*.

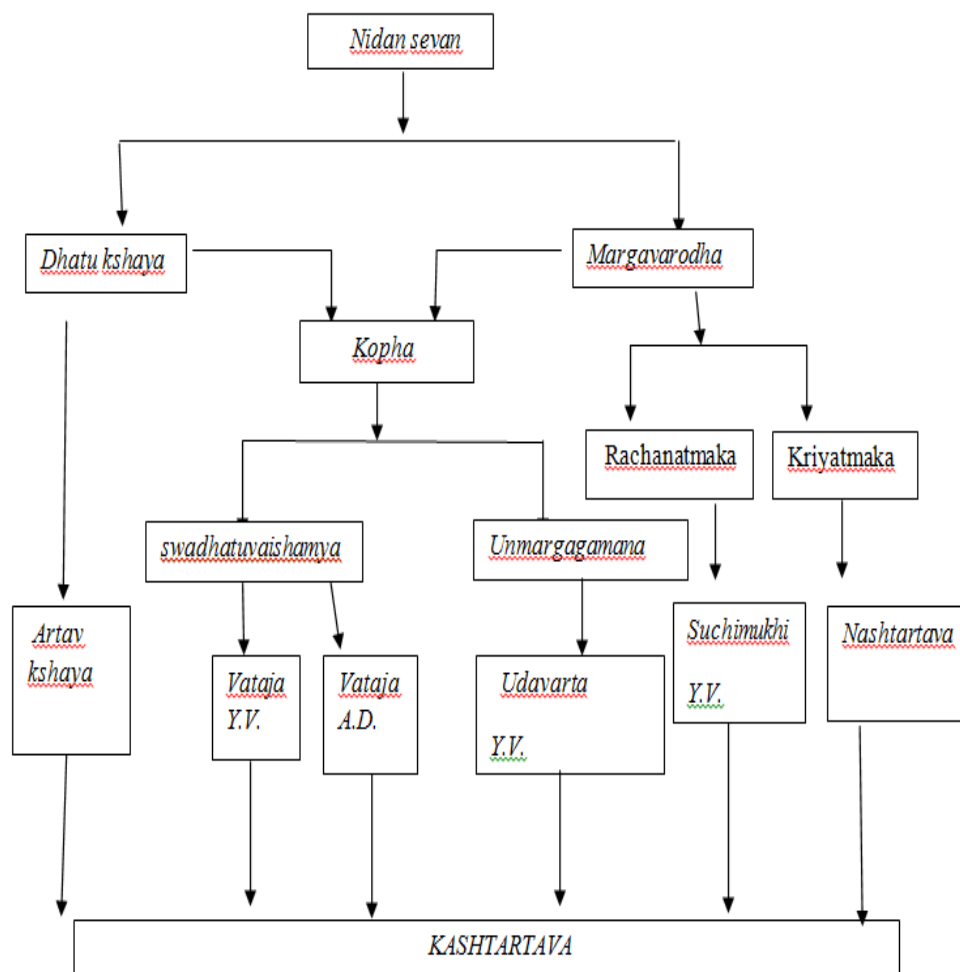
Pradushta Artava- here the word *artava* can be understood as reproductive hormones or ovum. Because ovum is described separately under *Bija Dosha*, this should be understood as vitiation of reproductive hormones.

Bija Dosha- Abnormalities at the level of genetic factors which can cause functional abnormalities of reproductive tract, specially uterus and *Kulaja Hetu* can also correlated.

Daiwa or God (Idiopathic) - Diseases due to *Purva janmika Karma* or where etiological factors are not known.

Manasika Hetu- *Vata* vitiating – *Chinta, Shoka, Bhaya*, etc, and *Pitta* vitiating– *Kroda, Irshya* etc, and all the psychological condition including stress.

Samprapti



Samprapti ghatak

Dosha	Vata Pradhana Tridosha <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vata -Vyana, Apana • Pitta -Ranjaka, Pachaka • Kapha -Present as Anubandhita Dosa
Dushya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dhātu - Rasa, Rakta, Artava • Upadhātu – Artava
Agni	Jatharagni, Rasagni, Raktagni
Srotasa	Rasa, Rakta and Artavavaha Srotasa
Srotodushti	Sanga and Vimargagamana
Udbhavasthana	Amapakvashaya
Roga marga:	Abyantara
Sthana Samshraya	Garbhashaya
Vyakti Sthana	Garbhashaya

MODREN REVIEW**Definition**

Dysmenorrhea literally means painful menstruation. But a more realistic and practical definition includes cases of painful menstruation of sufficient magnitude so as to incapacitate day to-day activity.^[16]

Types

Dysmenorrhea is mainly divided into two: -

- **Primary dysmenorrhea:** Occurrence of painful menstrual cramps of uterine origin during menstruation in the absence of organic pelvic pathology or an identifiable pathologic lesion.
 - **Secondary dysmenorrhea:** Painful menstruation due to some pelvic pathology
- Some other types are also there; ovarian dysmenorrhea, membranous dysmenorrhea etc.

Etiology

The exact cause of primary dysmenorrhea is still not established clearly. The etiology of primary dysmenorrhea includes excessive or imbalanced amount of prostanooids secreted from the endometrium during menstruation. The prostanooids result in increased uterine contractions with a dysrhythmic pattern, increased basal tone and increased active pressure. Uterine hyper contractility, decreased uterine blood flow and increased peripheral nerve hypersensitivity contribute to pain.

Clinical features

- ✓ The pain of primary dysmenorrhea usually begins a few hours before or just after the onset of a menstrual period and may last 48 to 72 hours and usually is colicky in nature.
- ✓ The pain is most intense on the first or second day of the menstrual flow, or more precisely the first 24–36 hours, consistent with the time of maximal prostaglandin release in to the menstrual fluid.
- ✓ The pain is continuous or spasmodic and similar to labor, with suprapubic cramping, and may be accompanied by lumbosacral backache, pain radiating down the anterior thigh. The pain can range from mild to severe.
- ✓ Menstrual pain that begins more than four years after menarche usually is indicative of secondary dysmenorrhea, and a pelvic examination or laparoscopy often is required to confirm the diagnosis.

Associated symptoms

Primary dysmenorrhea may be accompanied by a constellation of symptoms such as fatigue, nausea and vomiting, diarrhea, headaches, fainting and irritability. These systemic symptoms are attributed to the release of prostaglandins which also affects smooth muscle elsewhere in the body.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Artava or Menstruation is a phenomenon, which is controlled and governed by *Vata* and specifically the *Apanavayu*. All *Acharyas* have considered *Vata* vitiation as a main causative factor for pain manifestation.

As Painful menstruation is the dominant feature in both Primary dysmenorrhea and *Kashtartava*, Primary dysmenorrhea maybe equated with *Kashtartava* in *Ayurveda* on the basis of symptomatology. All the disorders, which are mentioned for pain or discomfort as a prominent feature, are incorporated under primary Dysmenorrhea. And the disorders where other local features of any type of inflammation or systemic features like fever are described are taken as secondary one.

The cause of pain in primary dysmenorrhea is excessive or imbalanced number of prostaglandins secreted from the endometrium. This results in increased uterine contraction with a dysrhythmic pattern, increased basal tone and increased active pressure. Uterine hyper

contractility, decreased uterine blood flow and increased peripheral nerve hypersensitivity contribute to pain.^[17] There are some reports that indicate the levels of prostaglandin F_{2α} measured in menstrual fluid from tampons and found to be twice higher in the dysmenorrheic as against the non dysmenorrheic women.^[18]

All this Symptomatology indicates these conditions to be primary dysmenorrhea having no pelvic pathology and no symptom other than pain during menstruation.

There are several diseases mentioned in *Ayurveda* classics and having pain as cardinal feature so can be considered as dysmenorrhea. When all the diseases mentioned for any type of pain or discomfort are kept on one place and are classified as primary or secondary on the basis of their symptomatology, the diseases named as primary dysmenorrhea are those, which are having pain as a *Vata* vitiating feature in *Ayurveda* classics. On the other hand, in most of the diseases came under secondary dysmenorrhea due to involvement of other *Dosha* and symptoms of inflammation. Among all these, several conditions including *Vatala*, *Vataja Artavadushti*, *Udavarta*, *Suchimukhi* & *Artavakshaya* show the feature of pain associated with menstruation along with backache, pain in groins & stiffness etc. Besides this, there is no other abnormality of menstruation other than less amount or duration. All this Symptomatology indicates these conditions to be primary dysmenorrhea having no pelvic pathology and no symptom other than pain during menstruation. Other diseases, *Sannipataki*, *Paripluta*, *Asrigdara* and *Kshina Artava Dushti* show specific menstrual irregularities along with dysmenorrhea i.e. heavy bleeding, inter-menstrual bleeding, yellow, green discoloration, abnormal odours. Some conditions are also associated with fever. Thus, these conditions can be taken as secondary dysmenorrhea, where involvement of *Dosha* other than *Vata* is also there. So, we can conclude that *Vata* is the main aggravated *Dosha* in *Kashtartava* and it can be equated with primary dysmenorrhea on the basis of *Dosha* involvement and symptomology.

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