

## A CONCEPTUAL STUDY OF ASHTARTAVA DUSHTI (MENSTRUAL DISORDERS)

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Article Received on  
20 Nov. 2019,

Revised on 11 Dec. 2019,  
Accepted on 01 Jan. 2020

DOI: 10.20959/wjpr20201-16761

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### ABSTRACT

Menstruation is the visible manifestation of cyclic physiologic uterine bleeding due to shedding of endometrium following invisible interplay of hormones mainly through hypothalamo-pituitary ovarian axis. Menstrual disorders are related to menstrual flow as well as hormonal imbalance. Now a day menstrual disorders are increasing due to change in life style in working women like increased marital age, improper diet, day-night office work, inadequate rest, excessive stress, lack of exercise etc. In Ayurveda most of menstrual disorders have been described under the heading of 'Ashtartava dushti' and 'Asrugdara'. Very short descriptions of some disorders are available in *samhitas*. So needs proper correlation of various menstrual disorders with 'Artav vyapad' or 'Artava dushti'.

**KEYWORDS:** Menstruation, hormones, hypothalamo-pituitary ovarian axis, *Ashtartava dushti*, *Asrugdar*, *Artav vyapad*.

### INTRODUCTION

Menstruation is the visible manifestation of cyclic physiologic uterine bleeding due to shedding of endometrium following invisible interplay of hormones mainly through hypothalamo-pituitary ovarian axis. For the menstruation to occur, the axis must be actively coordinated, endometrium must be responsive to the ovarian hormones (oestrogen and

progesterone) and the outflow tract must be patent.<sup>[1]</sup> The first menstruation (menarch) occurs between 11-15 years with mean of 13 years. Once menstruation starts, it continues cyclically at intervals of 21-35 days with a mean of 28 days. Physiologically, it is kept in obedience due to pregnancy and lactation. Ultimately, it ceases between the ages 45-50 years when menopause sets in. The duration of menstruation is about 4-5 days and the amount of blood loss is estimated to 20-80 ml with an average of 35ml. The menstrual discharge consists of mainly of dark altered blood, mucus, vaginal epithelial cells, fragments of endometrium, prostaglandins, enzymes and bacteria.<sup>[2]</sup> Menstruation is unrelated with ovulation and anovular menstruation is quite common during adolescence, following child birth and in women approaching menopause.<sup>[3]</sup> Menstrual disorders are occurs due to cyclic disturbances and associated with some symptoms.

In Aurveda, *artava*, *shonit*, *asruk*, *raja*, *rakta*, *lohit* etc. words are used to denote menstrual blood or ovum at different places. While *rudhira* and *pushpa* denote only menstrual blood and *beeja* is used for ovum.<sup>[4]</sup> From *rasa dhatu* the *rakta* named *raja* formed. *Rakta* reaching uterus and coming out for three days in every month is called *artava*. The *raja* is formed from essence part of *rasa*.<sup>[5]</sup>

In *Sushruta samhita sharir sthan* (chapter-2), *Maharshi Sushruta* after describing eight disorders of *shukra*, has enumerated eight disorders of *artava* i.e. one from each *dosha*, one from *rakta*, three from combination of two *doshas* and one from combination of all the three *doshas*, thus vitiated *artava* does not posses *beeja* (ovum). The clinical features of *artava* like *dosha*, *varna*, *vedana* are indetical to these described for *shukra*.<sup>[6]</sup>

## CLASSIFICATION<sup>[7]</sup>

### According to Dosha

1. *Vataj* 2. *Pittaj* 3. *Shleshmaj* (*Kaphaj*) 4. *Raktaj* 5. *Vata-Pittaj* 6. *Pitta-Kaphaj* 7. *Vata-Kaphaj* 8. *Tridoshaj*.

### According to specific clinical features

1. *Vataj* 2. *Pittaj* 3. *Shleshmaj* 4. *Kunap gandhi* 5. *Granthibhoot* 6. *Putipuya* (or *Puya*) 7. *Kshin* 8. *Mutra-purish gandhi*.

**1. *Vataj artava dushti***

The *artava* vitiated by *vata* is red, black or dark violet in colour, is thin, dry, frothy and scattered. It is excreted slowly and with pain, specially perforating or piercing type of pain.

**2. *Pittaj artava dushti***

The *artava* is vitiated by *pitta* is yellowish or bluish in colour, has putrid smell, the excreted blood is hot, associated with severe burning and feeling of heat at the time of its excretion.

**3. *Shleshmaj (Kaphaj) artava dushti***

The *artava* vitiated by *kapha* is whitish or slightly yellowish in colour, mixed with bone marrow, is too much thick, slippery or lubricous, settles down if put in the water.

**4. *Kunap gandhi artava dushti***

This *Kunap gandhi* (smell of dead body) *artava dushti* is caused by *rakta*. In this condition the amount of blood discharged during menstruation is more and red like fresh blood. It is also associated with heat and burning sensation etc. features of *pitta*.

**5. *Granthibhoot artava dushti***

This *Granthibhoot* (clotted appearance) *artava dushti* is caused by vitiation of *vata* and *shleshma* both together and has association of other features of both the *doshas* (pain due to *vata* and unctuousness due to *kapha* etc.)

**6. *Putipuya (or Puya) artava dushti***

*Putipuya* (putrid and purulent) *artava dushti* is caused by *pitta* and *kapha* both the *doshas* is the opinion of *Sushruta*. (But according to *Vagbhata* second, it is *Puya* (purulent) *artava dushti* caused by *rakta* and *pitta*.) This menstrual disorder is characterized with other features of *pitta* and *kapha* (burning, fever, heat due to *pitta* and heaviness etc. due to *kapha*).

**7. *Kshin artava dushti***

*Kshin* (scanty) *artava dushti* is caused by *pitta* and *vata*. In this condition menstruation is delayed, menstrual blood is scanty and associated with pain in vagina. It also has the features of *vata* and *pitta* both the *doshas*.

**8. *Mutra-purish gandhi artava dushti***

*Mutra-purish gandhi* (smell of urine and feces) *artava dushti* is caused due to vitiation of all the three *doshas*.

## DISCUSSION

The description of all these menstrual disorders has variation in colour and smell of discharged blood. There may be individual variations in colour and smell of menstrual discharge such as two women suffering from identical disorder may describe entirely different colour and smell of menstrual blood. Same women may feel difference in colour and smell in two cycles. Other clinical features associated with menstrual abnormalities also show great individual variation. It is also possible that two different disorders of other symptoms may influence menstruation in identical manner or show similar menstrual symptoms. Probably due to above mentioned possibilities the *acharyas* have mentioned one disease with two or three names.

Gynaecological disorders simulating these *artava dushti* or eight menstrual disorders are being given in tabular form.<sup>[8]</sup>

|    | <i>Artava dushti</i>                     | <b>Parallel Gynaecological Disorders</b>  |
|----|--|---|
| 1. | <i>Vataj Artava Dushti</i>               | Oligomenorrhoea with dysmenorrhoea caused by nutritional deficiency.  |
| 2. | <i>Pittaj Artava Dushti</i>              | Inflammatory condition of reproductive organs due to infection specially chronic pelvic cellulitis associated with oligomenorrhoea. |
| 3. | <i>Shleshmaj (Kaphaj) Artava Dushti</i>  | Chronic endometritis, endocervicitis or cervicitis associated with oligomenorrhoea.   |
| 4. | <i>Kunap gandhi Artava Dushti</i>        | Early stage of endometrial carcinoma.   |
| 5. | <i>Granthibhoot Artava Dushti</i>        | Malignant disorders of reproductive system specially cervical carcinoma.  |
| 6. | <i>Putipaya Artava Dushti</i>            | Acute infection of reproductive system specially acute endometritis leading to pyometra.  |
| 7. | <i>Kshin Artava Dushti</i>               | Hypo-estrogenic oligomenorrhoea caused by nutritional deficiency.   |
| 8. | <i>Mutra-purish gandhi Artava dushti</i> | Cervical carcinoma specially 3 <sup>rd</sup> or 4 <sup>th</sup> stage.  |

## CONCLUSION

*Acharyas* have described prognosis of these *artava dushti* in to *sadhya* (curable), *kruchha sadhya* (difficult to cure), *asadhya* (incurable) etc. in the *samhitas*. We can use this criteria for the treatment of the present menstrual disorders and its associated gynaecological disorders correlated with *ashta artava dushti*.

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