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Critical Review on *Kashtartava* (Dysmenorrhea-Menstrual Pain) and its Ayurvedic Management

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ABSTRACT:

Dysmenorrhea is currently society's top health concern because of today's sedentary lifestyle and lack of exercise. Women today must deal with obstacles brought on by hectic lives that lead to *Mithyaahara and Vihara*, overexertion and malnutrition, which can result in *Vikruti in "Rituchakra"* and a variety of *Vyadhis* related to menstruation. To effectively treat dysmenorrhoea, Ayurveda suggests *Ritucharya* and *Dinacharya*, food modification, and frequent practise of yoga in the form of *asanas*, *pranayam*, and meditation. Likewise, if necessary, *Uttarbasti*, *Garbhashaya Balya Aushadhi*, *Anuvasana*, or *Matrabasti* can also be used. Stress is becoming a necessary component of modern life. A woman's health has been deteriorating as a result of her never-ending search for material comforts. The primary cause of women's various issues is that they have not been adhering to the rules of healthy life. She has ignored the rules for maintaining a healthy body and mind. Menstruation is a natural occurrence that occurs as part of a woman's regular reproductive cycle. According to Ayurveda texts, *Kashtartava* is regarded as and characterised as a symptom of numerous different ailments. As a result, this study focuses on review of *Kashtartava* and its treatment as in classical references.

Key words: *Artava*, *Baddhartava*, *Kashtartava*, Dysmenorrhoea.

INTRODUCTION

Dysmenorrhea (*Kashtartava*) is not mentioned as a distinct illness in the classical Ayurveda texts. Menstruation pain is referred to as dysmenorrhea. In the lower abdomen, dysmenorrhea causes cramping agony similar to labour. According to Ayurveda texts, *Kashtartava* is regarded as and characterised as a symptom of numerous different ailments.¹ Menstruation is a natural occurrence that occurs as part of a woman's regular reproductive cycle. Dysmenorrhea is currently the world's most pressing issue for women, making daily activities uncomfortable as a

result of today's sedentary lifestyle and lack of exercise. Most women experience minor psychological and somatic changes for a few days preceding menstruation and during the days. When she has painful menstruation in fully blown up and exaggerated manner then it becomes difficult for her. It is quite interesting to know that most of the accidental and suicidal deaths and other crimes occur among ladies during their premenstrual phase, which signifies the hormonal changes during that period.² In modern medicine dysmenorrhea is treated by oral



contraceptive pills, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, antispasmodic, analgesics etc. Long term use of these causes side effects like hepatotoxicity, nephrotoxicity, headache, dizziness, vertigo, depression, skin rashes etc. *Ayurvedic* therapies. Present study is aimed at finding out a method of treatment, which will impart a permanent cure without any side effect. Many methods are available in the classics both *Shodhana* and *Shamana*. Although most early periods are anovulatory and are not painful, nevertheless some girls experience dysmenorrhea apparently from very soon after the menarche.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Material related to *Kashtartava* is collected from classical *Ayurvedic* literatures textbooks and various scientific published journals. The available commentaries of the *ayurvedic Samhitas* has also referred to collect relevant matter.

Review of Literature

The concept that life styles are responsible for the genesis of diseases is very old and is well known in *Ayurvedic* conceptualization. Crowded urban living causes the shortening of life spans of the people has been recorded in *Charaka Samhita*, for which he has devised *Rasayana* therapy to counteract this premature ageing and improving the life spans.

In *Ayurvedic* classic *Kashtartava* is not considered as a separate entity. Though there are many other diseases in which *Kashtartava* is considered and described as a symptom. Also *Chakrapâni* says that any symptom may manifest as a separate disease. Keeping this panorama in mind and looking at the high prevalence of the ailment, an attempt has been made to study the disease *Kashtartava* as a separate disease entity.

Though the word "*Kashtartava*" is not the term used in *Brihatrayee* or in *Laghutrayee* but the term is self-explanatory one and requires little depiction. *Nirukti Kashtartava* is formed of two words - '*Kashta*' and '*Artava*'. '*Kashta*' means -Painful, difficult, troublesome, ill, forced, wrong, unnatural, a bad state of thing. '*Artava*' means - Belonging to reasons, periods of time, menstruation. '*Kashtena*' means - With great difficulty Thus the word *Kashtartava* can be implied or expressed as - "*Kashtena Muchyati Iti Kashtartava*" i.e. the condition wherein *Artava* is shedded with great difficulty and pain is termed as *Kashtartava*. *Paryäya* of *Kashta* (Pain) *Ruka* - Pain *Ruja* -To break *Vyathä* ,Uneasiness, pain. In *Ashtanga Sangraha* and *Ashtanga Hridaya* Symptoms

The word *Nidana* is used in two meanings in *Ayurveda*.³ One means final diagnosis of a disease process and other means of causative factor of a disease. Here it indicates the second one. As every *Kärya* must have its *Kärana*. Likewise the disease is the *Karya*, so there must be a *Karana* (causative factor) for it.⁴ The *Nidana* of *Kashtartava* as such is not adduced separately in *Ayurvedic* classics, though *Kashtartava* is found as a symptom in following *Yonivyapadas* (*Vätala*, *Sannipatika*, *Paripluta*, *Udävarta* and *Mahayoni*), *Artava Dushti* and *Asrigdara*. But here, in this present study only *Vätala*, *Sannipatika* and *Udavarta Yoniyâpada* is considered.

Most important causes of disease according to *Ayurveda* are *Asatmendriyârtha Samyoga*, *Pragyaparadha* and *Parinama*.

Asatmendriyârtha Samyoga - is hypo, hyper and perverse interactions of the objects of the environment and the organs of senses. Over stimulation of all the senses is very common in the present day urban living style. Over indulgence in eating junk foods, lack of proper exercise, sedentary occupations and sex are the causes of many diseases. Failure of the intellect. This happens due to the excitement of *Doshäs* causing inequilibrium in the mind or *Manas*. These results in anger, greed, infatuation, envy, arrogance, anxiety, fear etc. These upheavals of the psyche cause the errors in judgment with resultant psychosomatic diseases. Another most important cause is withholding of natural urges.⁴

Parinama: *Ayurveda* describes the imbalance of the *Dosha* due to changes in seasons. *Kashtartava* is among the few diseases which can be attributed to changed life styles. Of the three *Doshäs* the *Vayu* is most important in genesis of genital tract disease specially *Kashtartava*. If we go through the *Prakriti* wise distribution of menstruation, the *Vata Prakriti* women will have irregular, scanty flow and associated dysmenorrhea as classical features. In *Ayurvedic* classics all gynecological problems are described under the umbrella of *Yonivyapada*.

The disease '*Kashtartava*' is not described in classics as well as in *Vedas* as an individual disease entity. Though it is a symptom of various *Yonivyapadas* specially *Udavarta*, *Vatala*, *Sanipatika* etc. It is one of the commonest gynecological complains. It is a *Tridoshaja Vyädhi* with *Vata* predominance. In this especially there is derangement of *Apana* and *Vyana Vayu*. The next consideration is the vitiation of *Rasa Dhatu*.⁵

In this present study, primary dysmenorrhea is considered as a classical feature and a part of disease *Kashtartava*.

including The vaginal passage and uterus may also be purified and mollified after menstruation by *Uttarbasti* with special oils, helps to revitalize the hormonal system, giving youthfulness and stamina to the body. Uttarbasti has the added benefit of increasing Ojas, replenishing the hormonal system and promoting fertility. This treatment also gives vibrant energy to the female organs and excellent in *Vatashamaka*. Now-a-days, in modern medicine NSAIDs, antispasmodic and analgesic are used regularly in every cycle for dysmenorrhea. It also causes various side effects due to regular use. Further it is not a permanent solution to the ailment.

In *Ayurvedic* context as far as the ailment '*Kashtärtava*' is concerned, it is not coded as an individual disease. But there are many diseases, in which it is described as a symptom. Though,

(1) *Chakrapāni* quoted that any symptom may manifest as an individual disease

(2). Acharya *Kāshyapa* says after replenishment of *Dhatu* and steadiness of body, the blood accumulated (in uterus) again leaves the *Yoni* (reproductive organ) in appropriate time i.e. the menstruation restarts

(3) *Bhela* also believes the *Dhātu* Paripoornata as one of the causative factor of *Ārtava Utpatti*. (B. S. Sa. Pu. 6) It means that the *Kala* has its own importance in the production of *Artava* but the maturity of the genital organ or body as a whole is also essential for the same. Age of Menarche and Menopause Modern text depicts menarche to occur between 11 - 15 years with a mean of 13 years. It is more closely related to bone age than to chronological age. In past few decades, the age of menarche is gradually declining with improvement of nutrition and environmental condition.⁶

Menstrual blood can be taken here with *Raja* and *Artava*. Though, *Panchabhautika* in its constituent but have predominance of *Agni Mahabhuta*. In the process of *Artava Utpatti* *Apana* and *Vyana Vayu* are mainly responsible along with *Kapha* and *Pitta*.

Artava is also considered to be formed as *Upadhatu* of *Rasa* and *Rakta*, with the help of *Rasagnipaka*. After its formation it is transported through *Artavavaha* Srotasa to the *Garbhashaya*. As the normal female physiology, it starts at the age of puberty and bleeds without pain at an interval of 28 - 30 days for duration of 5 to 7 days by the effect of *Apana Vayu*.

2) Irrespectively all *Acharyas* have described the presence of *Artava* from the very beginning of her childhood. As the fruit is already situated within the flower, as the fragrance

is present in the flower buds. All these are present in *Avyakta* state. It is explicit on its exact time. It means *Artava* is seen at a particular age of 12 years approximately due to completion of *Dhatu Paripoornata*, its own *Svabhava* or due to *Karma* of *Vayu*.

3) According to modern science also before the onset of puberty, the anterior pituitary produces growth and other tropic hormones in required amount. But Gonadostat (hypothalamic pituitary system controlling gonadotropins) remains repressed due to negative feedback of low level oestrogen. CNS also exerts intrinsic inhibition on GnRH. This description is very similar to *Kashyapa Samhita* At puberty depression of CNS and Gonadostat occurs. Increased activity of anterior pituitary and production of gonadotropins starts, which acts on ovaries and causes maturation of primordial follicles. The ovarian hormones acts on endometrium. Thus the endometrium becomes thick and is shed cyclically on withdrawal of these hormones. Menstruation is a result of changes going on in vascular apparatus of uterus for whole month, or in other words this refers to cyclical changes of endometrium.

4) *Ritu Kala* seems to the description of proliferative phase, however considering its specific importance for conception it may denotes proliferative phase including ovulation.

5) Importance of *Shuddhartava* - Acharya *Charaka* has described that for the production of *Garbha*, *Shuddhartava*, *Garbhashaya* and *Yoni* are essential factor. and as *Kashtartava* is a vitiated *Artava* it not only produces pain but also is responsible for *Vandhyatva* in some cases.⁷

6) *Ritu Chakra* - On concluding after going through the *Ritu Chakra* and menstrual cycle in *Ayurveda* and modern text respectively, there is no basic difference. *Ritu Chakra* is stated to be under the influence of *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha Doshas*. *Rajastrava Kala* or menstruating phase is under the *Vata Doshas* predominantly. So menses comes out through vaginal orifice by *Apana Vayu*. During this phase the *Vāta Doshā* works through its *Chala Guna* and *Kshepana Karma* while *Pitta* also works through its *Drava* and *Sara Guna*. During *Ritu Kala* or proliferative phase, *Kapha Doshā* is predominant. *Kapha Doshā* works by its fusing nature and *Shleshakara Karma*; it repairs the superficial and intermediate layers of endometrium. As a constructive work, *Upachaya* is done mainly by *Kapha Doshā*. *Ritu Kala* also includes ovulation where *Pitta Doshā* is predominant. The *Pitta Doshā* by its *Ushna Guna* and *Pakti Karma* comes into play thus changes *Rasa* into *Rakta*. And may help in maturing the graffian follicles and thereafter ovulation occurs.

Rituvyatita Kala is the secretory phase where *Pitta Doshā* will be predominant. During this stage the cervical mucous become more thick and viscid. Since whole endocrinology of hypothalamo-pituitary-ovarian-uterine axis is under the control of nervous reflex. So in all the phases of *Ritu Chakra Vayu* plays important role. Finally we can conclude that three stages of *Ritu Chakra* is *Rajasrava Kala*, *Ritu Kāla* and *Ritu Vyatita Kala* are the three stages of menstrual cycle i.e. menstrual phase, proliferative phase with ovulation and secretory phase with predominance of *Vata*, *Kapha* and *Pitta Doshā* respectively though *Vata Doshā* comes to play important role in all the three stages.⁸ *Vata Doshā* which is the leading *Doshā* is the disease may be vitiated or aggravated by three ways.

a) Due to indulgence of *Vata* vitiating *Ahāra - Vihāra*.

b) Due to *Dhatukshaya*

c) Due to *Marga Avarana*

Due to consumption of *Vata Prakopaka Ahara - Vihara*, the *Vata* gets aggravated leading to *Dhātu Kshaya* starting from *Rasa* and then *Rakta*. Thus there will be *Alpatā* in *Upadhatu Nirmana* i.e. *Artava* will be produced in less quantity than normal which will further vitiate *Vāta Doshā* which further will produce *Kshobha* in *Garbhāshaya*, the stage resembling to ischaemic condition of the uterus resulting in pain. This will lead to *Toda* and *Vedanā (Yoni - Stodanam Sa Vedanam Ārtava Pravritti)*.

This will continue as vicious cycle as *Vāta Vriddhi* causes *Dhatukshaya* and vice versa. *Achārya Charaka* says that by occupying different seats, *Vata* produces various disorders with respect to its various etiological factors. The vitiated *Vata* by *Ruksha*, *Sheeta*, *Sukshma* properties spread through *Rasavaha Srotasa* and leads to *Rasavaha*, *Raktavaha* and *Artavavaha Srotodushti*. *Doshā - Dushya Sammurchhana* takes place in *Garbhāshaya*. Here due to vitiation of *Vyana* and *Apāna Vāyu* the *Ākunchana* and *Prasarana Kriya* of *Garbhāshaya* does not take place properly, the state exactly that of dysrhythmia of uterine muscles, which will hinder in proper flow of menstrual blood leading to *Kashtārtava*. The *Sara*, *Drava*, *Ushna*, *Tikshna* properties of vitiated *Pitta* plays an important role in the *Sthanika Rakta Vriddhi* with the help of *Vyana* and *Apāna Vayu*. *Raja* contents like cellular debris etc. will be increased in uterus and discharged. As the functioning of *Vyana* and *Apāna Vāyu* impaired which result in *Kashtārtava*.

The concept of *Avarana* also seems to play role producing pain, especially when the condition of *Kaphavrita Vāta* is concerned. As in *Kaphavrita Vyana* pain as an additional

symptom has been stated by *Vangasena* and *Hansraja Nidana*. *Manasika* factors like *Bhaya*, *Shoka*, *Chinta*, *Krodha*, *Tanava* also aggravates the *Vata* resulting the same pathology of *Kashtārtava*.

Samprapti Ghataka:-

Dosha:- Vata Pradhana Tridosha

Dushya:- Rasa, Rakta, Artava

Agni:- Jatharagmi, Dhatvagni Mandya

Srotasa :- Rasa, Rakta and Ārtavavaha Srotasa

Srotodushti:- Sanga and Vimargagamana

Udbhavasthana :- Amapakvashaya

Sthāna Samshraya :- Garbhāshaya

Vyakti Sthāna :- Trivavarta Yoni

Concept of Kashta (Pain) In Ayurveda in Relation to Kashtārtava

Without *Vāta* there can not be any pain. *Vata* is the main responsible factor, though other *Doshās* only be present as *Anubandhi* to it. So, pain is produced due to vitiation of alone *Vata Dosha* or in combination with other *Doshās*. *Sushruta* has described symptoms as roughness, stiffness, acute pain and pricking pain.⁹ In this condition pain is more in comparison to other *Yoniyapada* (Gynaecological disorders) of *Vāta*. *Sannipatika Yoniyapada*. There is burning sensation and pain in vagina with yellowish and white unctuous vaginal discharges *Udavarta Yoniyapada*. *Charaka* says that the uterus is seized with pain, pushes the *Raja* (menstrual blood) upwards and then discharges with great difficulty and pain. The lady feels comfort after discharging the menstrual blood.^{10,11} *Sushruta* has described it to be characterized by painful frothy menstruation, associated with other *Vatika* pain.¹² *Indu* has added discharge of clotted blood.¹³ *Yogaratanakara* has added the discharge of frothy menstrual blood associated with *Kapha* with difficulty.¹⁴

Chikitsā:-

The procedure beneficial to extrminate the causative factors and help in reinstating the *Doshic* equilibrium is *Chikitsa*. The *Chikitsā* done should be such as to eradicate successfully the disease and do not cause a fresh one by way of sequel. *Kashtārtava* can be considered as a type of *Artava Dushti*. *Acharya Sushruta* while depicting the importance of *Shuddha Ārtava* has assigned one separate chapter in *Sharira Sthāna*. *Kashtārtava* is found as a symptom of various *Yonivyapadas* like *Vatala*, *Sannipatika* and *Udavarta* considered here.

Principles of Treatment:

1) As *Vata* is main causative factor of all *Yonivyapadas*, so it should be treated first.¹⁵

2) For *Ārtava Shuddhi*, after applying oleation and sudation, emesis and purgation, five *Shodhana* measures should be used, after this *Uttarbasti* should be given repeatedly. *Acharya Charaka* has explained the same but in mild form.¹⁶

3) Purgation is beneficial for *Yoni Rogas* and *Ārtava Rogas*.¹⁷

4) After proper purification, *Uttarbasti* should be given on the basis of vitiated *Doshās*.¹⁸

5) There is no medicine upon oil for the treatment of *Vata Doshā*.¹⁹

6) In menstrual disorders caused by *Vata Doshā*, the specific treatment prescribed for suppressing that particular *Doshā* should be used. Recipes prescribed for *Yoni Rogas* and *Uttarbasti* etc. should also be used after giving due consideration to the vitiated *Dosha*.²⁰

7) Unctuous, hot, sour and salty articles should be used for the relief from menstrual disorders due to *Vata*. Sweet, cold and astringent substances for the purification of *Pitta* and hot, dry and astringent for *Kapha*.²¹

8) For *Avrita Apāna Vāyu*, treatment should be *Agnideepaka*, *Grahi*, *Vata*, *Anulomana* and *Pakvashaya Shuddhikara*.²²

Acharya Charaka defines *Uttarbasti* as a procedure by which fluid or liquid or *Drava* is made to pass through *Medhra* or *Yoni* or through *Apatya Marga* into the *Garbhāshaya*. As given through *Uttarmarga* and gives *Shrestha Guna* so called *Uttarbasti*.

Acharya Vagbhatta has specified it as given after *Niruha Basti* and through urogenital organs so called *Uttarbasti*.

Word *Basti* also refers to urinary bladder of pig, goat or birds because in older days, the bladder of these animals were used for this purpose but now-a-days 5 cc dispovan syringe attached with a thin cannula is used for injecting *Uttarbasti* drug. *Uttarbasti* is a variety of *Basti* and is considered to give better result than the other two varieties of *Basti*.

Classification of *Basti*-

A. *Anuvasana Basti* Medicated *Sneha* prepared of the drugs on the basis of the diseases and *Doshās*, which is applied for oleation therapy, is called *Anuvasana*.²³

B. *Niruha Basti*: In *Niruha Basti* along with oil etc. decoctions and pastes of herbs are also used in the recipe.

Pathy-Apathya:-The concept of *Pathyapathya* is the backbone of the principles of *Ayurvedic* medication. It is followed both in normal day-to-day life as well as by the patients during illness. It has been stated that the person who always consumes *Pathyasevana*, doe not require any

medication. Also those who never follows *Pathyasevana*, there is no use of any medication to him (*Y. R. Chi.*)

Pathya:-*Ahāraja Shali* rice and barley etc. cereals (*Su. Su.2/16*) & Wine and meat preparation(*Su. Su.2/16*) Diet having abundance of milk.(*A. S. Utt.39/72*) B *Lohabhasma* with honey (*A. S. Utt. 39/72*) B *Lasuna Sevana* B Hot easily digested food. A Lot of fluids intake e.g. water, fruit juice etc. B Daily fruit *Deepana* and *Pachana* diet e.g. ginger, *Saindhava* etc. $\frac{3}{4}$ *Viharaja Yogashana - Bajrashana* etc. *Pranayama - Anuloma, Pratiloma* Daily brisk walking B Should be busy in work Hot water bath Hot water bag in low back, abdomen etc.

Apathya:- *Ahāraja* Spicy, oily, fried diet Artificially preserved or coloured food Fermented food $\frac{3}{4}$ *Viharaja* Cold water bath & Exposure to cold weather or air & Always lying on the bed The hormonal therapy is given with the aim of improving development and vascularity of myometrium. *Taila* when administered through *Uttarbasti* acts the same way and also the dilatation of cervix suggested is automatically done during the procedure of *Uttarbasti*.

Keeping all these above points in mind, in this present research work *Kashtartava* in accepted as primary dysmenorrhea Menstruation is considered as a landmark of homostasis in hypothalamo-pituitary-ovarina axis i.e. of the reproductive system.

The same menstruation can create hill situation if it is associated with unbearable pain as we see in the cases of *Kashtartava*. Under the umbrella of the ailment '*Kashtartava*' only "Primary dysmenorrhoea" is considered in the present study.

Classical medicines

(1) *Ashwagntha churn 500mg + Pushang churn 500mg + subhra bhasm 125mg + Swarn makshik 175mg + Rajpravratni vati 2tab - taken with honey* (2) *Kankyan vati*. (3) *Kumari asava*.(4) *Vidangarista*.(5) *Shankh vati*(6) *Bol prapati*(7) *Lodhra churna*.

Patent medicine

(1) *Zyfem syp* (2) *Amyron syp* (3) *Amycordial syp* (4) *Polypop tab* (5) *Luekosar tab* (6) *M2 Tone syp* (7) *Evecare syp* (8) *Remarks - Above these medicines observed on Dysmenorrhea patients is satisfactory response*

DISCUSSION

Historically, the shorthand Primary Dysmenorrhea is a term that is commonly used without respect for medical rigour to describe problems with menstruation. It is recognised to relate to these problems globally. Seldom is

the syndrome used in these situations without an abbreviation, and the reference's intentions are frequently broader than the clinical definition. *Vata* is in charge of all *Yoni Rogas*, but particularly that of *Udaavartini*. For the treatment of *Vata Rogas*, many Ayurvedic therapy approaches are described. *Vasti* is the most effective method for treating *Vata* among them.

CONCLUSION

According to Ayurveda, Primary Dysmenorrhea is caused by a doshic imbalance and may be influenced by balanced living, which is defined by a dosha-appropriate diet, herbal supplements, exercise, regularity, yoga, meditation. Ayurveda being a holistic medicine offers potential remedies which are proved beyond doubt in solving the problem in gynecological disorders successful

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