AYUSHDHARA
ISSN: 2393-9583 (P)/ 2393-9591 (O)
An International Journal of Research in AYUSH and Allied Systems

Review Article

A REVIEW ON *ARSHA* AND ITS MANAGEMENT WITH *PATHYA APATHYA* IN AYURVEDA

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Article info
Article History:
Received: 15-05-2025
Accepted: 19-06-2025
Published: 25-07-2025

KEYWORDS:
Durnama, Gudankura, Diet, *Pathya,* Lifestyle, Haemorrhoids, *Yogasana.*

ABSTRACT

Arsha, commonly referred to as hemorrhoids, is a prevalent anorectal disorder characterized by swelling and inflammation of the anal vasculature. Nevertheless, many people are still willing to undergo Ayurvedic treatment despite all the modern medicine achievements because of its comprehensive character and focus on prevention. Ayurveda identifies *Arsha* as one of the *Ashta Mahagadas*, highlighting its chronicity and potential severity. This review explores the classical Ayurvedic understanding of *Arsha*, focusing on its etiopathogenesis, classification, and comprehensive management. Particular emphasis is given on the role of *Pathya* (wholesome dietary and lifestyle practices) and *Apathya* (unwholesome habits) in both prevention and therapeutic intervention. A thorough literature search was conducted using classical Ayurvedic texts and scientific databases, including PubMed, Google Scholar, and e-Samhita portals. Findings indicate that in the treatment of *Arsha*, in addition to the medicinal and surgical treatment, such as *Bheshaja, Kshara karma, Agnikarma*, and *Shastra karma*, the dietary taboo, as well as discipline and daily routine, should be adhered to. Changes in lifestyle like eating high fibre diets, drinking more water, and adopting the right bowel habits, certain yogic routines are part and parcel of reducing the possibility of recurrent attacks. Conversely, indulgence in spicy food, sedentary habits, suppression of natural urges, and irregular dietary patterns contribute significantly to disease progression. The review highlights that the application of the specific concept of *Pathya-Apathya* in clinical practice can indeed provide better results in treating patients with *Arsha* as well as helping them to lead pleasant lives.

INTRODUCTION

Acharya Vagbhata describes *Arshas* (hemorrhoids) as fleshy nail like projections that obstruct the anal canal and destroys the person just like an enemy does[1]. *Arshas* is a very common disease reported for thousands of years, with the highest prevalence rate among all anorectal disorders in the practice of proctology. Acharya Sushruta mentioned *Arshas* under the heading of *'Ashta Mahagadas.[2]' Arshas* is a lifestyle disorder which is increasing at an alarming rate in our society because of a sedentary lifestyle, intake of fast food, lack of physical exercise & careless attitude towards responding to natural urges, i.e., suppression and forceful creation of defecation and flatus urges, etc. Worldwide, the overall prevalence rate of hemorrhoids in the general population is estimated to be 4.4%. Recent studies project that around 1 out of 20 people in Bharat and up to 1/3rd of the 10 million people with hemorrhoids seek medical treatment in US [3]. As per Acharya Sushrut, there are four folds of treatment of *Arshas*, i.e., *Bhesaja, Shastra, Kshara,* and *Agnikarma.* But as a part of lifestyle disease, *Pathya* (Wholesome diet and activities) and *Apathya* (unwholesome diet and activities) play an important role in the prevention and management of *Arshas* along with classical Treatment.

Methodology: A systematic review was conducted using modern scientific databases such as PubMed, Google Scholar, as well as classical Ayurvedic texts like Charaka Samhita and Sushruta Samhita, Astanga Hridaya, and Bhaisajya Ratnavali. Studies and articles

Access this article online
Quick Response Code
https://doi.org/10.47070/ayushdhara.v12i3.2089
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were selected based on their relevance to the topic, including both clinical trials and theoretical discussions. Data extraction focused on identifying key themes related to the etiology, classification, and management of *Arsha*, with particular attention to dietary and lifestyle recommendations.

Google Scholar

- Search term *'Pathya Apathya* in *Arshas'* yielded 734 matches.
- Search term 'Review of *Arsha* in Ayurveda' yielded 2450 matches.
- Search term 'Dietary and lifestyle recommendations of Haemorrhoids' yielded 8700 matches.

Pub-Med

- Search term 'Dietary and lifestyle recommendations of Haemorrhoids' yielded 8 matches.

Scopus

- Search term 'Dietary and lifestyle recommendations of Haemorrhoids' yielded 2 matches.

Inclusion criteria

Types of Studies

- Original research articles, clinical trials, case studies, and review articles.
- Studies published in peer-reviewed journals.
- Classical Ayurvedic texts and modern interpretations.

Time Frame

- Articles and studies published in the last 20 years (2003-2023) to ensure the inclusion of recent advancements and findings.
- Classical Ayurvedic texts, irrespective of the publication date.

Language

- Articles published in English and Sanskrit (with available translations).

Relevance

- Studies focused on the etiology, pathophysiology, classification, and management of *Arsha* as per Ayurvedic principles.
- Studies discussing *Pathya* (recommended practices) and *Apathya* (practices to be avoided) in the context of *Arsha*.

Exclusion Criteria

Types of Studies

- Non-peer-reviewed articles and editorials.
- Studies without clear methodology or those with significant methodological flaws.

Language:

- Articles not available in English or Sanskrit and without translations.

Relevance

- Studies focusing solely on modern medical treatments of hemorrhoids without reference to Ayurvedic principles.
- Articles that do not specifically address *Pathya* and *Apathya* in the context of *Arsha*.

Nirukti* of *Arshas

अरिवत्प्राणिनो मांसकीलका विशसन्ति यत्|

अर्शांसि तस्मादुच्यन्ते गुदमार्गनिरोधतः||[4]

The word *Arshas* is derived from the root *"Ru-asun-Shuth.* According to *Amarakosha, "Ru-asun"* indicates that life is difficult. The word '*Arshas*' is derived from *Rush + Ach Dhatu,* a disease having fleshy sprouts or shoots in the *Guda pradesha*. In *Arshas*, there is accumulation of mass in the anus, which blocks the passage of the anal canal and causes the patients to suffer a lot.

Synonyms of *Arshas*: *Durnama, Hatanama, Gudankura, Gudakilaka, Payu Roga, Arsha*.

Etio-Pathology of *Arshas*

तत्रानात्मवतां यथोक्तैः

प्रकोपणैर्विरुद्धाध्यशनस्त्रीप्रसङ्गोत्कटुकासनपृष्ठयानवेगविधारणादिभिर्विशे

षैः प्रकुपिता दोषा एकशो द्विशः समस्ताः शोणितसहिता वा यथोक्तं

प्रसृताः प्रधानधमनीरनुप्रपद्याधो गत्वा गुदमागम्य प्रदूष्य

गुदवलीर्मांसप्ररोहाञ्जनयन्ति विशेषतो मन्दाग्नेः, तथा

तृणकाष्ठोपललोष्टवस्त्रादिभिः शीतोदकसंस्पर्शनाद्वा कन्दाः

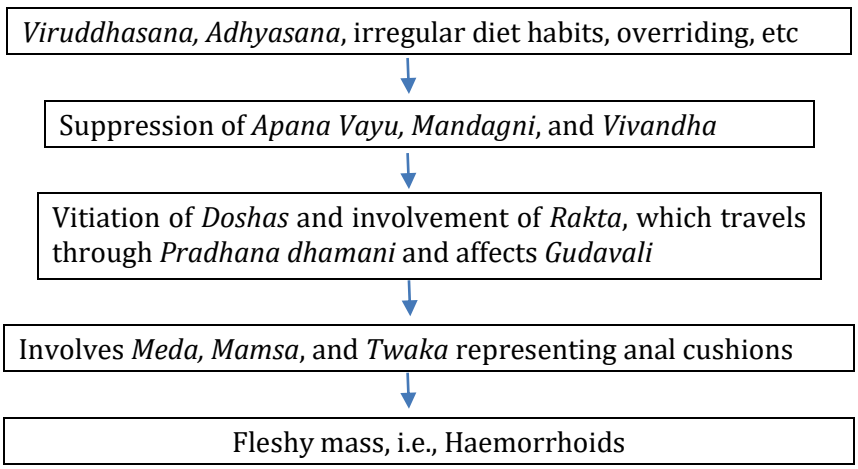
परिवृद्धिमासादयन्ति, तान्यर्शांसीत्याचक्षते || [5]

According to Acharya Sushrut, *Anatmyavana vyaktis* (अनात्मवताम् अजितेन्द्रियाणाम्), who do not follow proper health practices, the *Doshas* get aggravated by factors such as *Viruddhasana* (consumption of incompatible foods), *Ati-streeprasanga* (excessive indulgence in sexual activity), consuming very spicy and pungent foods, *Utkatukasana* (prolonged sitting on hard surfaces), *Pristayana* (riding on hard or bumpy surfaces), and *Vegadharana* (holding the natural urges). These aggravated *Doshas*, either individually, in pairs, collectively, or along with the blood, spread and enter the main arteries. Moving downwards, they reach the anal region, causing inflammation and producing growths in the anal folds and muscle tissues, particularly in individuals with weak digestive fire *(Mandagni).* Additionally, these growths *(Kanda)* can increase in size due to contact with rough substances like grass, wood, stones, clods of earth, or cold water. These growths are referred to as *Arshas* (hemorrhoids).

Stages	Causative Factor *(Nidanas)*	Pathological Events	Effect on the Body	Outcome
Behavioural/ Dietary Causes	*Viruddhasana* (incompatible foods) *Ati-streeprasanga* (excessive sexual activity) *Ati-katubhojana* (very spicy food) *Utkatukasana* (prolonged hard sitting) *Pristayana* (riding over bumpy surfaces) *Vegadharana* (suppression of natural urges)	*Tridoshas*, especially *Vata*, are getting vitiated.	Causes *Mandagni*	Internal predisposition to disease.
Dosha-Vitiation	Aggravated *Doshas* act alone/ in pairs/ with *Rakta*.	*Doshas* enter *Pradhan Dhamani* (main blood vessels)	Travel downward towards *Guda* (anal region)	Inflammation of anal vessels and tissues.
Local Manifestation	Accumulated vitiated *Doshas* affect *Guda-Vali* (anal folds).	Inflammation + muscle infiltration → Formation of *Kanda* (masses)	Weak tissue strength and local injury responses	Initial formation of *Arshas* (prolapsed growths)
Growth Aggravation	Mechanical irritation by: - Cold water - Grass, stones, hard materials	*Kanda* enlarges due to friction and cold exposure.	Aggravation of mass → pain, swelling, bleeding.	Fully manifested *Arsha* (hemorrhoids)

दोषप्रकोपहेतुस्तु प्रागुक्तस्तेन सादिते| अग्नौ, मलेऽतिनिचिते, पुनश्चातिव्यवायतः||१०||
यानसङ्क्षोभविषमकठिनोत्कटकासनात्| बस्तिनेत्राश्मलोष्ठोर्वीतलचैलादिघट्टनात्||११||
भृशं शीताम्बुसंस्पर्शात्प्रततातिप्रवाहणात्| वातमूत्रशकृद्वेगधारणात्तदुदीरणात्||१२||
ज्वरगुल्मातिसारामग्रहणीशोफपाण्डुभिः| कर्शनाद्विषमाभ्यश्च चेष्टाभ्यो, योषितां पुनः||१३||
आमगर्भप्रपतनाद्गर्भवृद्धिप्रपीडनात्| ईदृशैश्चापरैर्वायुरपानः कुपितो मलम्||१४||
पायोर्वलीषु तं धत्ते तास्वभिष्यण्णमूर्तिषु| जायन्तेऽर्शांसि [6]

According to Acharya Vagbhata, the causes of *Dosha* aggravation in *Arshas* include impaired digestive fire *(Mandagni),* excessive accumulation of waste *(Mala),* and overexertion. Other factors include riding on rough and uneven surfaces, sitting on hard and uneven seats, and contact with rough substances like bladders, stones, clods of earth, or rough clothes. Furthermore, excessive exposure to cold water, excessive irrigation, and suppression of natural urges for *Vata, Mutra*, and *Purisha* also contribute to dosha aggravation. *Jwara, Gulma, Atisara, Grahani, Shotha, Pandu,* excess emaciation, strenuous activities, can also lead to *Dosha* aggravation. Additionally, particularly in women miscarriage, foetal growth causing pressure, aggravate *Apana Vata*, causing it to carry the accumulated waste to the folds of the anal region. In these folds, the waste becomes impacted and manifests as *Arsha* (hemorrhoids).



***Samprapti-Ghatakas* in *Arshas*[7]**

- *Dosha- Tridoshaja* pre-dominantly *Vata*.
- *Dushya- Rakta, Mamsa, Medas* and *Twaka*
- *Shrotas- Raktavaha, Mamsavaha* and *Purishvaha*.
- *Srotodushti- Sanga, Siragranthi*.
- *Avayava Vikriti – Gudavalitraya*.
- *Rogamarga- Bahya and Abhyantara*.
- *Agni- Jataragnimandya*.

Purva Rupa* of *Arshas

तेषां तु भविष्यतां पूर्वरूपाणि- अन्नेऽश्रद्धा कृच्छ्रात् पक्तिरम्लीका परिदाहो विष्टम्भः पिपासा सक्थिसदनमाटोपः कार्श्यमुद्गारबाहुल्यमक्ष्णोः श्वयथुरन्त्रकूजनं गुदपरिकर्तनमाशङ्का पाण्डुरोगग्रहणीदोषशोषाणांकासश्वासौ बलहानिर्भ्रमस्तन्द्रा निद्रेन्द्रियदौर्बल्यं च || [8]

As per Acharya Sushruta, prodromal symptoms of *Arshas* are –

Annasraddha (Lack of interest in food or appetite)	*Akshnah Shvayathu* (Swelling around the eyes/peri-orbital oedema)
Kruchrat Pakti (Difficult and delayed digestion)	*Gudaparikartanam* (Cutting pain in the anal region)
Amlika (Sour belching)	*Panduroga* (Anaemia or paleness)
Paridaha (Burning sensation in the body)	*Kasa* (Cough)
Vishtambha (Constipation or obstruction)	*Swasa* (Dyspnoea)
Pipasa (Excessive thirst)	*Balahani* (Loss of bodily strength)
Sakthisadanam (Weakness in the thighs)	*Bhrama* (Dizziness)
Atopa (Bloating or fullness in the abdomen)	*Tandra* (Drowsiness/Lethargy)
Karshyam (Emaciation or weight loss)	*Indriya daurvalya* (Weakness of senses)
Udgarabahulyam (Frequent burping/belching)	

Classification of *Arshas*

1. Based on Origin[9]: 2 types. A. *Sahaja Arsha* (congenital) B. *Kalaja Arsha* (developed after birth)
2. Based on Nature of Bleeding[10]: 2 types. A. *Sravi Arsha* (bleeding piles as a result of *Pitta* and *Rakta Dosha* vitiation) B. *Sushka Arsha* (non-bleeding piles due to vitiation of *Vata* and *Kapha Dosha*)
3. Based on Location[11]: 2 types. A. *Bahya Arsha* B. *Abhyantara Arsha*
4. Based on *Doshik* Dominance[12]: 6 types. A. *Vataja B. Pittaja C. Kaphaja D. Raktaja E. Sannipataja F. Sahaja*

5. Based on Prognosis[13]: 3 types

a. *Sadhya* (curable when *Arsha* is not extremely chronic and has only one *Doshika* involvement)
b. *Yapya* (When *Arsha* is caused by the simultaneous vitiation of any two *Doshas* and the location of *Arsha* in the second *Gudavali*, the chronicity of the disease is not more than one year.)
c. *Asadhya* (*Sahaja Arsha*; when it is caused by the vitiation of three *Doshas* and if the *Arsha* is situated in the *Pravahini gudavali* and if the patient develops oedema in hands, legs, face, umbilical region, anal region, testicles or he suffers from pain in the cardiac region, it is also considered as incurable or *Asadhya*.)

The impact of modern living habits on the rise in the prevalence of *Arshas*: The rise in the prevalence of *Arshas* can be attributed to a variety of modern living habits, like sedentary lifestyles, poor dietary choices, high-stress levels, obesity, abnormal prolonged monotonous postures, etc.

Sedentary lifestyles: It often involves sitting for prolonged periods due to desk jobs, long commutes, and recreational screen time. A lack of movement leads to poor blood circulation, particularly in the lower body, and can increase pressure on the veins in the rectal and anal canal. Eventually, sedentary habits weaken the muscles of the pelvic region, making it harder for the body to maintain proper posture and regulate the normal function of the rectum, potentially contributing to the development of hemorrhoids[14].

Poor diet & dehydration: Today's diets are low in fibre due to the high consumption of processed, fast foods, and refined carbohydrates. Fiber is essential for softening stools and preventing constipation. Constipation can lead to straining during bowel

movements, which increases the pressure on the veins in the rectum, making haemorrhoids more likely. Excessive consumption of spicy and fatty foods can irritate the digestive system and contribute to gastrointestinal distress. Dehydration is an important contributing factor. Inadequate water intake makes stools more difficult to pass, further increasing the risk of straining and aggravating hemorrhoids.

High Stress levels: Work pressures, high-paced lifestyles, and constant digital connectivity contribute to chronic stress. Stress can lead to gastrointestinal problems, including constipation or diarrhoea and even IBS, all of which are risk factors for hemorrhoids. With increased pressure to maintain regularity of bowel habit and to avoid the discomfort of constipation, many individuals resort to laxatives. Overuse of laxatives can weaken the abdominal and pelvic muscles over time and may cause dependency. This may exacerbate the problem, leading to irregular bowel movements, straining.

Obesity: One of the most direct ways in which obesity contributes to the development of hemorrhoids is through increased intra-abdominal pressure. Obesity is typically associated with excess fat accumulation around the abdomen and pelvis, which puts extra pressure on the veins in the lower rectum and anal canal. This pressure can impair blood flow, leading to the swelling and engorgement of veins, which is characteristic of hemorrhoids. The excess weight forces these veins to dilate and become more susceptible to injury, irritation, and swelling. Given the various contemporary contributing factors, little adjustments to lifestyle can have a significant impact on the prevalence and symptoms of *Arshas*.

Management of *Arshas* w.s.r to *Pathya-Apathya*

Sushruta has mentioned four broad principles of treatment of *Arshas* as: 1. *Bheshaja-chikitsa* 2. *Kshara-karma* 3. *Agnikarma* 4. *Shastra karma*. Generally, *Shalya karma* is used for Grade III and IV hemorrhoids, whereas *Bheshaja, Kshara-karma,* and *Agnikarma* are beneficial for Grade I and II haemorrhoids[15]. *Bhesaja Chikitsa* (medical management) is considered as very first line of treatment of *Arsha*. The ingredients having *Ushna Veerya, Katu Vipaka, Deepana, Pachana, Vatanulomaka, Srotosodhaka, Sronitsanghata Bhinnakara Guna* are capable of *Samprapti Vighatana* and cure the disease[16]. The concept of *Pathya* and *Apathya* is central to the Ayurvedic management of *Arsha. Pathya* and *Apathya* play an important role in the prevention of *Arshas. Bhesaja chikitsa*, along with *Pathya-Apathya*, can cure *Arshas* completely. Otherwise, if a patient is unable to follow the dietary and lifestyle restrictions, then recurrence of the disease will occur.

General *Pathya-Apathya*

1. Intake an adequate quantity of water.
2. Take food up to 3/4th of one's capacity.
3. Take light food in smaller quantities at night.
4. Take food on time.
5. Do exercise every day.

***Pathya-Apathya* of *Arshas* according to different Food groups & lifestyles** [17,18,19]

Food Group/Lifestyles	***Pathya* (wholesome)**	***Apathya* (Unwholesome)**
Cereals and millets	*Yava* (barley), *Raktashali* (red rice), Godhuma (wheat)	*Bajra* (pearl millet), *Mahakaya* (maize),
Pulses	*Mudga* (Mung bean), *Masura* (Red lentils), *Kulattha* (Horse gram)	*Chanaka* (Chickpea lentils), *Nishpaba* (Indian butter bean), *Satina* (Pea), *Shimbi* (Double Bean), *Raj-shimbi* (soyabean)
Fats and oils	*Ghrita, Suryakanti taila* (sunflower oil), *Mungfali taila* (ground nut oil)	*Sarsap taila* (mustard oil)
Eggs and meat	*Kukkut mamsa* (chicken), *Aja mamsa* (mutton)	*Gomamsa* (beef), *Matsya* (fishes)
Vegetables	*Surana* (yam), *Gaurikam* (ridge gourd), *Palaka* (spinach), *Mulaka* (radish), *Karvellaka* (bitter gourd), *Patola* (pointed gourd), *Vrintaka* (Brinjal), *Alabu* (bottle gourd), *Gaajar* (carrot), *Ervaru* (cucumber), *Raktavrintaka* (tomato), *Kaddu* (pumpkin), *Palandu* (onion), *Bhindi* (ladies finger)	*Kadali* (plantain green), *Pushpasakam* (cauliflower), *Bimbi* (Kovai/Lvy gourd), *Aluk* (potato), *Patragobhi* (Cabbage)

Fruits	*Dhatri* (Indian gooseberry), *Erandakarkati* (papaya), *Amrud* (guava), *Draksha* (grape), *Dadima* (pomegranate), Sevam (apple), *Kalinda* (watermelon)	*Panasa* (jackfruit), *Lakucha* (monkey jack), *Bilwa* (Wood apple), Lichi, *Pakva amra* (ripe mango)
Milk and Milk products	*Godugdha* (cow milk), *Ajadugdha* (goat's milk), *Navanita* (butter), *Takra* (buttermilk)	*Mahishdugdha* (buffalo milk), *Dadhi* (curd), yogurt, *Dadhika* (cheese)
Spices and Condiments	*Jeerak* (cumin), *Haldi* (turmeric), *Hingu* (asafoetida), *Adrak* (ginger), *Misreya* (fennel), *Shunthi* (dry ginger), *Rasona* (garlic), *Dhanyaka* (coriander), *Marich* (black pepper), *Ela* (cardamom)	*Marichika* (Chili)
Sugars	*Sita* (sugar candy)	*Guda* (jaggery)
Lifestyles	*Vyayamabhyasa* (regular exercise), Proper bowel habit, practicing Fruit fasting, maintaining good anal hygiene, practicing of various Yogic asanas like- *Pavanamuktasana, Vajrasana, Malasana, Viparitkarani, Ardhahalasana*, etc.	*Ajeerna-adhyasana* (intake of food before digestion of the previous meal) Ati-*streeprasanga* (excessive indulgence in sexual coitus) *Pristayana* (riding for a long duration on the back of animals) *Utkatukasana* (sitting in the squatting position for a prolonged duration) *Vegadharana* (suppression of natural urges)

Some specific diets are beneficial in *Arshas* as they cleanse the intestines and thus prevent chronic constipation, e.g.

1. Fruit fasting: An extensive fruit diet for a minimum of 1 week is advocated to cleanse the intestines.
2. 2-3 figs *(Anjeer)* should be cleaned by properly washing in hot water and then soaked in an adequate amount of water for about 12 hours. The figs should be consumed along with the water on an empty stomach in the morning and evening. This should be continued for 2-3 weeks, as these are excellent stimulants of intestinal peristaltic movements.
3. In bleeding piles, mango kernels are useful. They can be given at a dose of 1.5-2 g.
4. 60-90ml of grated radish juice, along with honey, can also be administered twice daily.
5. Jambu fruits are also beneficial in bleeding piles.

DISCUSSION

Pathya and *Apathya* play an important role in the management of any disease. *Bhesaja chikitsa*, along with *Pathya-Apathya*, can cure *Arshas* completely. Otherwise, if a patient is unable to follow the dietary and lifestyle restrictions, then recurrence of the disease will occur. The above-mentioned *Pathyas* are beneficial for managing *Arshas* due to the following reasons: Whole grains (e.g., wheat, barley, brown rice): These grains are rich in fibre, promoting easy bowel movements and reducing constipation, which is essential in *Arshas* management. Millet: Easily digestible and generally less likely to aggravate *Vata* or *Pitta*, millet is a suitable grain for *Arsha* patients. Green leafy vegetables (e.g., spinach, fenugreek): These are rich in fibre, vitamins, and antioxidants, promoting smooth bowel movements and reducing inflammation. Water-rich fruits like Indian gooseberry, apple, pomegranate, watermelon, etc, aid in digestion and hydration, essential for preventing hemorrhoids. Some fruits like jackfruits, wood apple, etc, can be heavy and constipating. Light dairy options like buttermilk are easier to digest and beneficial for gut health. Heavy dairy products can cause constipation and digestive discomfort. Digestive spices like turmeric, cumin, ginger, etc., help to reduce inflammation and aid digestion. Irritating spices like chillies can aggravate the condition. Yogic practices: *Asanas* like *Vajrasana*, *Pavanamuktasana*, and *Malasana* stimulate digestive organs, enhance peristalsis, and promote regular bowel movements, which is crucial because constipation and straining during defecation are primary causes of hemorrhoids.[20,21] *Vajrasana*, in particular, increases arterial blood supply to the digestive system, improving its function and reducing the risk of constipation.[22] Inverted poses such as *Sarvangasana* (shoulder stand) and *Halasana* (Plow

Pose/*Ardhahalasana*) redirect blood flow from the lower body toward the heart, reducing congestion and pressure in the rectal veins, thereby alleviating swelling and inflammation associated with hemorrhoids.[23] *Gomukhasana*, and *Mula bandha* strengthen the pelvic floor and anal sphincter muscles, improving their tone and function.[24] *Pranayama* practices like *Nadishodhana, Sitkari pranayama*, and Omkar dhyana (chanting Om) activate the parasympathetic nervous system, reducing stress and muscle tension. Relaxation of the pelvic muscles and overall body reduces the likelihood of straining during bowel movements, a key factor in haemorrhoid prevention.

CONCLUSION

Arsha is a common but troubling condition that affects many people due to unhealthy lifestyle and food habits. Ayurveda provides a complete way to manage this disorder through herbal medicines, surgical techniques, and most importantly, by following proper diet and daily routines. This review highlights that without maintaining *Pathya* (wholesome practices) and avoiding *Apathya* (unwholesome habits), even the best treatments may fail to give long-term relief. Including high-fibre food, drinking enough water, regular physical activity, and avoiding constipation are key to preventing and managing *Arsha* effectively. Simple changes in daily habits, along with Ayurvedic guidance, can help reduce the risk of recurrence and improve overall well-being. Therefore, *Pathya-Apathya* should be considered as an essential part of treatment in every case of *Arsha*.

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Cite this article as:
Soumyadip Saha, Mangalagowri V Rao. A Review on Arsha and its Management with Pathya Apathya in Ayurveda. AYUSHDHARA, 2025;12(3):303-310.
https://doi.org/10.47070/ayushdhara.v12i3.2089
Source of support: Nil, Conflict of interest: None Declared

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