



Review Article

ARTAVAKSHAYA: A LITERARY REVIEW OF AYURVEDIC CONCEPTS AND MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

The menstrual cycle is a complex physiological process regulated by the coordinated interaction of the hypothalamus, anterior pituitary gland, ovaries, and endometrium. Normal and rhythmic menstruation is essential for maintaining reproductive health. However, various internal and external factors can disturb this intricate mechanism, leading to menstrual disorders such as oligomenorrhea and hypomenorrhea, which have reported prevalences of 13.5% and 12.95%, respectively. In Ayurveda, these conditions can be correlated with *Artava Kshaya* based on their clinical manifestations, including reduced menstrual flow, prolonged menstrual intervals, and associated lower abdominal pain. *Artava Kshaya* is considered an *Agnimandhyajanya Vikara* characterized by a predominance of *Kapha* and *Vata Dosha* vitiation. Impaired digestive and metabolic activity (*Agnimandya*) leads to the accumulation of *Kapha*, which obstructs the normal movement of *Vata* and causes blockage of the *Artavavaha Srotas*, ultimately resulting in diminished menstrual flow. Menstruation reflects the hormonal and gynecological health of women and plays a crucial role in fertility. Ayurvedic classics emphasize the importance of *Shuddha Artava* for successful reproduction and identify *Artava Dushti* as a significant factor contributing to infertility. The management of *Artava Kshaya* focuses on correcting the underlying pathophysiology through *Deepana* and *Pachana* therapies, followed by *Shodhana* and *Shamana Chikitsa*. These therapeutic approaches enhance *Agni*, alleviate *Kapha-Vata* imbalance, and restore normal menstrual function. Thus, Ayurveda offers a holistic approach to the management of oligomenorrhea and hypomenorrhea by addressing both the root cause and clinical manifestations of the disorder.

INTRODUCTION

Women's health is a fundamental determinant of the well-being of the family, society, and culture. Various physical, physiological, and psychological disturbances can significantly affect a woman's overall health and quality of life. Physiological changes in the female body begin from birth and become more prominent during puberty, a critical phase marked by maturation of the reproductive system.

In the modern lifestyle, increased physical and emotional stress can disrupt the normal functioning of the hypothalamic-pituitary-ovarian-uterine axis, leading to various gynecological disorders. Among these, menstrual irregularities are commonly observed, with *Artava Kshaya* being one of the frequently encountered conditions described in Ayurvedic literature.^[1]

Although *Artava Kshaya* is not described as a separate disease entity in classical texts, it is recognized as a symptom associated with several gynecological disorders. Acharya Sushruta has described its features, which include delayed menstruation, reduced menstrual flow, and pain during menstruation. It is also considered under *Ashta Artava Dushti* as *Ksheena Artava*.^[2]

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In Ayurveda, deviations from normal menstrual physiology, such as *Yathochitakala Adarshanam* (delayed menstruation), *Alpata* (scanty menstrual flow), and *Yonivedana* (dysmenorrhea), are associated with this condition. These clinical features closely correlate with modern medical conditions such as oligomenorrhea and hypomenorrhea.

Oligomenorrhea^[3] is characterized by menstrual cycles occurring at intervals greater than 35 days, consistently maintaining this pattern, whereas hypomenorrhea^[4] refers to abnormally scanty menstrual bleeding lasting less than two days. The prevalence of oligomenorrhea in the general population is reported to be approximately 13.5%.^[5]

Various etiological factors have been identified in modern medicine for these conditions, including hormonal imbalances, poor nutritional status, systemic ill health, constitutional factors, and uterine or endometrial causes. Management approaches in contemporary practice include reassurance, improvement of general health, hormonal therapy, and other targeted treatments based on the underlying cause.

Thus, a comparative understanding of *Artava Kshaya* with oligomenorrhea and hypomenorrhea provides a comprehensive perspective for better diagnosis and management of menstrual disorders.

Nirukti (Definition) of Artavakshaya

Artavakshaya refers to a decrease in the quantity of *Artava* (menstrual blood). It is described as "*Raktasya Pramanahani*" or "*Rakta-rajya Artava Pramanahani*", meaning a reduction in the normal amount of menstrual blood.^[6] The normal quantity of *Artava* is considered 4 *Anjali* in a healthy woman.

References to *Artavakshaya* in Ayurvedic Texts

Yonivyapadas Related to Artavakshaya

- Lohitakshaya:** According to Acharya Vagbhata, vitiation of *Vata* and *Pitta* leads to a decrease in *Raja* (*Artava*). Associated symptoms include burning sensation, emaciation, and discoloration of the body. This condition is termed *Lohitakshaya*.^[7]
- Arajaska:** Acharya Charaka states that vitiated *Pitta* affects the uterus and blood, resulting in absence of menstruation, emaciation, and altered complexion. Chakrapani interpreted this condition as amenorrhea.^[8]
- Vatala Yonivyapada:** Excessive intake of *Vata*-aggravating diet and activities causes aggravated *Vata* to affect the reproductive organs. Symptoms include pain, stiffness, numbness, fatigue, and scanty menstruation that is frothy, thin, dry, and painful.^[9]

Artava Dushti Related to Artavakshaya

Ksheena Artava Dushti refers to a reduction in the quantity of menstrual blood due to *Doshic* vitiation.^[10] It is comparable to scanty menstruation (hypomenorrhea) and closely correlates with *Artavakshaya*.

Jataharini^[11] Conditions Related to Artavakshaya

Kashyapa described certain menstrual disorders associated with *Jataharini Graha* that resemble amenorrhea and oligomenorrhea:

- Shushka Revati:** Absence of menstruation even after 16 years of age, with emaciation of the gluteal region; comparable to primary amenorrhea.
- Katambhara:** Delayed or absent menstruation accompanied by emaciation, weakness, irritability, and progressive deterioration; also resembles primary amenorrhea.
- Vikuta:** Menstruation irregular in timing, color, and quantity from the beginning, associated with weakness and fatigue; comparable to oligomenorrhea.

Nidana (Etiological Factors) of Artavakshaya

The *Artavavaha Srotas* have their roots in the *Garbhashaya* and *Artavavahi Dhamanis*. Damage to these structures may cause infertility, dyspareunia, and amenorrhea.^[12]

According to *Kashyapa*, excessive medication after *Snehana* and *Swedana*, intake of very hot food and drinks, and excessive blood loss aggravate *Vata*, leading to *Artava Dushti* and menstrual disorders.^[13]

"*Dalhana*" described the following causes of *Artavakshaya*:

- Atisamshodhana**– Excessive purification therapies
- Atisamshamana**– Excessive palliative treatment
- Vega Dharana**– Suppression of natural urges
- Asatmya Ahara** – Incompatible diet
- Manastapa** – Mental stress
- Vyayama**– Excessive exercise
- Anashana** – Fasting or inadequate nutrition

These factors predominantly aggravate "*Vata*" and contribute to *Artavakshaya*.

Purva Rupa^[14]

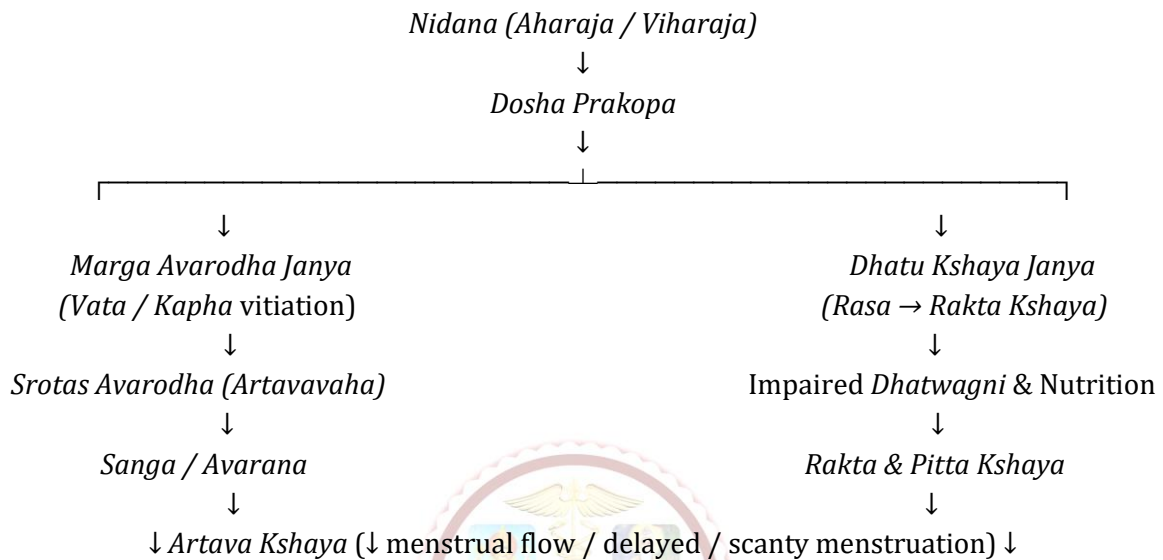
The classical texts do not describe the *Purva Rupa* of *Artava Kshaya*. However, *Bhavaprakasha* mentions cravings for *Katu*, *Amla*, *Lavana*, *Ushna*, *Vidahi*, and *Guru* foods, along with fruits, vegetables, and beverages in affected women. As these substances are believed to increase *Artava*, such cravings may indicate *Artava* deficiency and can be considered the probable *Purva Rupa* of *Artava Kshaya*.

Rupa^[15]

Rupa refers to the manifested stage of a disease. According to Sushruta, the clinical features of *Artava Kshaya* include:

1. **Yathochita Kala Adarshanam** – Absence or delay of menstruation at the appropriate time, which may manifest as delayed menarche (15 years or later), prolonged intermenstrual intervals, or menstruation lasting less than the normal duration (less than 3 days).

Samprapti^[16]



Samprapti Ghataka

1. Dosha: Vata, Kapha
2. Dushya: Rasa, Rakta
3. Srotas: Rasavaha, Raktavaha, Artavavaha
4. Srotodusti: Sanga
5. Agni: Jatharagni, Dhatuvagni Mandhya
6. Adhithana: Garbhasaya

Sadhya-Asadhyata

"There appears to be a difference of opinion regarding the prognosis of *Ksheenartava*. According to Acharya Sushruta, *Ksheenartava* is considered *Asadhyata* (incurable), whereas Acharya Vagbhata describes *Ksheenartava Dushti* as *Sadhya* (curable). Furthermore, Acharya Sushruta has detailed the management of *Artavakshaya* in *Sutra Sthana*, which suggests the possibility of therapeutic intervention. Therefore, *Artavakshaya* may be interpreted as either *Sadhya* or *Kashtasadhya* (difficult to cure) rather than absolutely incurable."

Chikitsa

Nidana Parivarjana^[17]: *Nidana Parivarjana* is considered the primary line of treatment for all diseases. As stated in the classics, "*Sanksheptatah Kriyayogo Nidana Parivarjanam*", meaning that

2. **Alpartavam**– Reduced menstrual flow. As per *Shabdakalpadruma*, *Alpa* denotes a small quantity; therefore, menstrual blood loss less than the normal amount (approximately less than 35ml) is considered *Artava Kshaya*.
3. **Yoni Vedana**– Pain in the genital region caused by vitiation of *Apana* and *Vyana Vata* due to *Artava Kshaya*. It may present as spasmodic, radiating, or intermittent pain during menstruation.

elimination of the causative factors is the fundamental therapeutic approach.

Samshodhana and Use of Agneya Dravyas^[18]: According to Ayurvedic principles, *Artava Kshaya* should be managed through *Samshodhana* and the administration of *Agneya Dravyas*.

a) Samshodhana

- According to *Dalhana Tika*, only *Vamana Karma* should be employed, while *Virechana Karma* should be avoided because it reduces *Pitta Dosha*. Since *Pitta* possesses *Agneya* qualities, its reduction may further diminish *Artava*.
- According to *Chakrapani Tika*, both *Vamana* and *Virechana* can be utilized, as they help cleanse the upward and downward bodily channels (*Srotas*), thereby facilitating the normal functioning of physiological processes.

b) Agneya Dravyas

- Drugs with *Ushna Veerya* (hot potency) are beneficial in *Artava Kshaya* because *Artava* is considered *Agneya* in nature. These drugs help enhance the quantity and quality of *Artava* and also alleviate *Kapha Dosha*, which may obstruct *Apana Vayu* through *Avarana*, thereby restoring its normal function.

Table 1: *Sthanika chikitsa*

Anuvasana-Basti	<i>Shatavaryadi</i> ^[19]
Uttar-Basti	<i>Taila of Jivaniygana dravyas shatapushta taila</i> . ^[20]
Varti	<i>Ikswaku-beeja, Danti, Chapala, Madanphala, Guda, Surabeeja, Yavashuka</i> titrated with latex of <i>Snuhi</i> , should be placed in <i>Yoni</i> . ^[21]

Table 2: *Abhyantara Chikitsa*

Kwatha	• <i>Tila, Sheluka, Varinam</i> and in the form of decoction.^[22] • <i>Krishna Tila Kwath</i> with <i>Guda</i>.^[23]
Vati	• <i>Rajah Pravartini Vati</i>^[24] • <i>Kuberaksha Vati</i>^[25] • <i>Nashtapushpantak Ras</i>^[26] • <i>Pushpadhanva Rasa</i>^[27]
Ghrita	• <i>Phala Ghrita</i>^[28] • <i>Kalyanaka Ghrita</i>^[29]
Kashaya	• <i>Sukumar kashayam</i>^[30]
Churna	• <i>Satpushpa-Satavari Kalpa</i>^[31] • <i>Artava-Pravartaka Yoga</i>^[32]

Pathya

- Foods and drinks that help increase *Pitta*, such as certain types of *Madya* (alcoholic preparations) and *Mamsa* (meat), are considered beneficial.^[33]
- Fish, *Kulattha* (horse gram), *Kanji* (fermented sour gruel), *Takra* (buttermilk), and *Sura* (fermented alcoholic beverage) may be included in the diet.^[34]
- *Lasuna* (garlic) is regarded as beneficial.^[35]
- *Tila* (sesame seeds), *Masha* (black gram), *Sura*, and *Sukta* (fermented sour preparation) are recommended.^[36]
- Fish, *Kanji*, *Tila*, *Udashvit*/*Udashvit* (as mentioned in the classical text), and curd are considered wholesome.^[37]

Apathya

- Foods and dietary habits that aggravate the causative factors (*Nidanas*) of the disease should be avoided.
- Unhealthy lifestyle practices such as daytime sleeping (*Diwasvapna*) and night awakening (*Ratri Jagarana*) are contraindicated.^[38]

DISCUSSION

Artavakshaya is characterized by delayed menstruation, scanty menstrual flow, and pain during menstruation. Although not described as an independent disease in Ayurvedic classics, it is considered a manifestation of various *Yonivyapadas* and *Artava Dushtis*. The clinical features of *Artavakshaya* closely resemble oligomenorrhea and hypomenorrhea described in modern medicine.

The condition primarily results from vitiation of *Vata* and *Kapha Doshas*, leading to *Artavavaha*

Srotodushti through either *Srotorodha* (obstruction) or *Dhatu Kshaya*, particularly of *Rasa* and *Rakta Dhatus*. Factors such as stress, inadequate nutrition, excessive exercise, and improper dietary habits contribute to its development. These factors are comparable to the hormonal, nutritional, and systemic causes responsible for menstrual irregularities in modern gynecology.

Ayurvedic management focuses on *Nidana Parivarjana*, *Samshodhana*, *Agneya Dravyas*, and appropriate dietary and lifestyle modifications to restore normal menstrual function and improve reproductive health.

CONCLUSION

Artavakshaya is an important menstrual disorder characterized by delayed and scanty menstruation with associated pain. It shows a close correlation with oligomenorrhea and hypomenorrhea. Vitiation of *Vata* and *Kapha Doshas*, impairment of *Agni*, and depletion of *Rasa* and *Rakta Dhatus* are the main factors involved in its pathogenesis. Ayurvedic treatment aims at correcting the underlying pathology through *Nidana Parivarjana*, *Samshodhana*, *Agneya Dravyas*, and *Pathya-Apathya*. A holistic Ayurvedic approach may be beneficial in the effective management of menstrual disorders and maintenance of reproductive health.

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