# WORLD JOURNAL OF PHARMACEUTICAL RESEARCH

SJIF Impact Factor 8.453

Volume 13, Issue 19, 1192-1204.

Review Article

ISSN 2277-7105

# **ARTAVA: A CONCEPTUAL REVIEW**

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Article Received on 19 August 2024,

Revised on 09 Sept. 2024, Accepted on 29 Sept. 2024

DOI: 10.20959/wjpr202419-34085



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of this question.

#### **ABSTRACT**

Ayurveda serving the ailing humanity since the creation of life is not behind in recognizing the most pragmatic feature of a woman viz. women are the root of progeny. Woman is considered as one of the most essential factors of the continuity of human race on earth. Since God has given this liberal gift only to the women. In women live the important physiological manifestation is menstrual cycle which gives her identity of motherhood. In Ayurveda menstrual bleeding is considered as *Updhatu* of *Rasa Dhatu* which is known as *Artava*. It is a cyclic bleeding occurring every month for three to five days. Normally it starts at the age of twelve and end at the age of fifty. As we know Artava is the Updhatu of Rasa Dhatu. Some Acharya has different opinion about it they said Artava is the Updhatu of Rakta Dhatu and Bhava Prakash mention that Artava is the eighth Dhatu in female. Now the question is that we will put the Artava in which category, Dhatu or Updhatu? In this article an attempt has been made to answer

**KEYWORDS:** Artava, Dhatu, Updhatu.

#### INTRODUCTION

God has gifted woman with rare and unique phenomenon of giving rise to offspring. To effectively fulfil the above aim, nature has conferred special anatomical and physiological characteristics in the woman which are collectively referred to as 'Strikara Bhava'.

In women live the important physiological manifestation is menstrual cycle which gives her identity of motherhood. The menstrual cycle is the hormonal play inside female body which goes through each month to prepare the uterus for a possible pregnancy. Normal menstrual cycle is the sign which indicate that the reproductive physiology is working soundly.

The menstrual cycle which involves the shedding of endometrium which was prepared in the anticipation of providing a bed for the fertilized gamete.

In the contextual references of *Ayurveda* menstrual cycle considered as *artava chakra*. The *Artava* has two meanings *Bahirpuspa* (menstrual blood) and *Antahpuspa* (ovum) both are equally important to *Ayurveda*.

### **Etymological derivation**

#### 'Rutu Bhavam'

Here above word indicates the particular time. That is monthly menstrual blood flow.<sup>[1]</sup>

Commentator *Arundutta* gives detail composition of menstrual blood with above mentioned definition.

The word 'Menstruation' has its origin from the Greek word 'men' meaning month. Its literally meaning is the periodic discharge of a bloody fluid from the uterus. Thus, both words 'Artava' and 'Menstruation' convey same meaning i.e. belonging or confirming to seasons or periods of time.

#### **Defination** of artava

Artava means monthly vaginal bleeding.

**According to** *acharya sushruta*: The menstrual blood in female is also produced verily by *Rasa* which continues from the age of twelve to fifty.<sup>[2]</sup>

**According to** *ashtanga samgraha*: In every month *Rakta* is collected in uterus of female and an appropriate time its flow out from the uterus it is called as *Artava*.<sup>[3]</sup>

According to *kashyapa*: Acharya Kashyapa said that *Rajovahi Shiraye* which are situated in uterus, excrete the *Artava* or *Rajah*. That *Rajah* immersed every month in young women. Till the age of childhood that *Rajah* present in entire body, but due to the undeveloped vagina it does not secrete out of the body. *Rajah* remains in the body until the consummate of all *Dhatus* and accumulate in uterus. And at appropriate time that *Rajah* secrete through the vagina.<sup>[4]</sup>

**Synonyms of** *artava***:** Our ancient literature *Acharyas* has described certain words which has same meaning as *Artava*. But there is little difference and that is some synonyms of *Artava* are used for ovum and some for menstrual blood. That are – *Artava*, *Shonita*, *Asrik*, *Raja*, *Rakta*, *Lohita*, *Rudhir* and *Pushpa*.

#### 1. Artava

**For menstrual blood:** The *Vayu* getting aggravated, obstructed the *Artava*; discharge of *Artava* brings immediate relief. Neither too less, nor too much, does resemble *Indragopa* in colour of pure *Artava*. In similar number of place the word *Artava* is used to denote menstrual blood.

**For ovum:** The word *Artava* is used to denote ovum in some places in relations with fertilization or zygote or fetus. *Vayu* divided the combination of *Shukra* and *Artava*, *Shukra* after entering uterus through appropriate passage gets admixed with *Artava*.

#### 2. Shonita

**For menstrual blood:** The word *Shonita* is used to denote menstrual blood also at certain places that is cessation of *Shonita* after conception, appearance of *Shukra* and *Shonita* at appropriate age in male and female respectively.

**For ovum:** The word *Shonita* is used to denote ovum at number of places in relation to fertilization that is the woman possessing healthy *Yoni*, *Shonita* and *Garbhasaya*; union of *Shukra* and *Shonita* inside the uterus; *Shukra* and *Shonita* are the seed; union of *Shukra*, *Shonita* and *Jiva* etc.

# 3. Asrika

**For menstrual blood:** The term *Asrika* used in *Asrigdara* and similar condition refer to menstrual blood.

**For ovum:** The word *Asrika* is used to denote ovum in relation with fetus; normalcy of *Asrika* for normal fetus, abnormality of *Asrik* a cause of teratologic abnormality etc. refer to ovum.

# 4. Raja

**For menstrual blood:** Excess discharge of *Raja* etc. references denoted it to be menstrual blood.

**For ovum:** The word *Raja* for ovum is used in certain references that are mother, father, *Raja* and *Shukra* as a source of *Mahabhutas* in fertilization etc.

#### 5. Rakta

**For menstrual blood** Appearance/discharge of *Rakta*, with holding of *Rakta* by *Vayu* etc. refers it to be menstrual blood.

**For ovum:** Vitiation of *Rakta*, obstruction/compression of *Rakta*, enveloping of *Shukra* by *Rakta* etc. references pertaining to fertilization or zygote refer to the use of *Rakta* for ovum.

#### 6. Lohita

**For menstrual blood:** References of situation of *Lohita* in women indicate it to be menstrual blood.

**For ovum:** Association of *Lohita* and *Retas* with *Chetana* indicate that word *Lohita* is used for ovum.

#### 7. Rudhira

The word *Rudhira* is used for menstrual blood only.

## 8. Pushpa

Word *pushpa* is used to denote only bleeding through vaginal passage.

#### 9. Beeja

Word *Beeja* used to denote only ovum. These all are used to indicate menstrual blood as well as ovum.

### Properties of artava

Physiology of *Artava* is described in *Ayurvedic* classics under the Heading of '*Shuddha Artava Swarupa*'.

Shuddha Artava is a very essential for fertilization. Any disease which is related with gynecological disturbance, abnormality of Artava is mainly seen there. In ancient literature Acharyas described some important characters of Shuddha Artava, which are mainly depending upon Varna, Matra, Gandha etc. It is, therefore very important to consider Varna, Matra etc. to know 'Shuddha Artava Swarupa'.

**1.** *Varna* (Colour): *Acharya Charak* mentioned that normal colour of *Artava* is like *Gunjaphala, Lal Kamal* (red lotus flower), and *Indragopa* (an insect).

Acharya Sushruta explained that the colour of Shuddh Artava should resemble with the Shashak Asrika (Rabbit blood), and Laksha Rasa. Acharya Sushruta has mentioned the practical characteristics that it should not stain the cloth after washing.<sup>[5]</sup>

2. Gandha (Odour): Artava has specific odour.

In Madhukosha Vyakhya it is mentioned that Artava is Madhu Gandhi.

Acharya Sushruta said 'Rakta' has Vistrata (Amagandhitva) due to Prithvi Mahabhuta, same can be considering for Artava. [6] Acharya Dalhana explains that foul smelling of Artava is due to Pitta. [7]

**3.** *Matra* (Quantity): *Artava* being a liquid and it is measured by *Anjali Pramana*. In *Ayurveda Anjali Pramana* measured by individuals own *Anjali Pramana* because every women have different size of *Anjali* and so amount of *Artava Srava* in her own *Anjali Pramana* is a better indicator to her health.

In *Ashtanga Samgraha Acharya Vagbhatta* explain that *Pramana* of *Artava* is four *Anjali*.<sup>[8]</sup> According to *Deha Nirnaya Utpatti* quantity of *Shonita* is 1 *Kudava*.<sup>[9]</sup>

Acharya Charak mentioned the normal quantity of Artava and quoted that, neither excessive and nor less quantity of Artava called as Sudhha Artava.

**4.** *Artava srava kala* (**Duration**): *Artava Srava Kala* means duration of menstrual bleeding. It varies with individuals. In *Ayurvedic* literatures many *Acharyas* described about *Artava* 

*Srava Kala* and they have different opinion regarding duration of menstruation. They mentioned its duration is three to five day and rarely up to seven day. Different opinions regarding *Artava Srava Kala* are as follows:

**According to** *acharya charak*: Menstrual discharge should be taken as normal which comes fourth monthly without sliminess, burning sensation, pain and stay for five days.<sup>[10]</sup>

**According to** *ashtanga hridayam: Vagbhatta* mention that in every month *Rajah* expelled out from the vagina till three days.<sup>[11]</sup>

**According to** *bhava prakasha: Bhavamishra* quoted that duration of *Rajah Srava Kala* is three days. [12]

**According to** *harita*: *Acharya Harita* mention the duration of *Artava Srava Kala* is 7 days. [13]

**According to** *bhela*: As like *Acharya Harita*, *Acharya Bhela* also mention that duration of *Rajah Srava Kala* is 7 days. [14] According to above references minimum duration of *Artava Srava Kala* is 3days and maximum is 7 days.

**5.** *Artava chakra kala*: *Artava Chakra Kala* means interval between two menstrual cycles. According to our ancient science interval between menstrual cycles is one month. Following quotation conclude that –

According to Acharya Charak, Artava comes every month and stays for five days.

In Ashtanga Samgraha Acharya Vagbhatta mention that every month Artava collect in Garbhashaya and flow out of the body for three days.<sup>[15]</sup>

In Ashtanga Hridayam Acharya Vagbhatta mention same opinion as Ashtanga Samgraha. [16]

Bhava Prakasha mentions that in every month Artava comes out from vaginal passage. [17]

Harita described that interval of Artava Srava Kala is one month. [18]

In appropriate time, the menstrual blood collected for a month. [19]

**6.** Panchbhautika samgathana: In Ayurvedic classics it was mention that our body is combination of Panchabhautika components. Not only our body but all the substances of

our body are also Panchabhautika having increased level of any one Mahabhuta. Acharya Sushruta mentions that the presence of Agni Tatva is mainly seen in Artava. [20]

# Artava utpatti hetu

According to 'Karya Karana Vada' every 'Karya' has its 'Karana'. On other words we can say every action in this Universe has its reason. If we aggregate the different opinion of our Acharyas then we can reveal following 'Hetu' i.e. Factors for 'Artava Utpatti'.

- (1) *Kala*
- (2) Dhatu Paripurnata
- (3) *Karma*
- (4) Swabhava
- (5) *Vayu*

#### 1. Kala

In Ayurvedic classics, there is a description of Artavadarshana and Artava Nivrutti Kala. Acharya Sushruta opines that twelve years and fifty years are the age of Artavadarshana and Artava Nivrutti.[21]

Kashyapa cited Sixteen years for Artavadarshana like 'Shukra Utpatti' in male. But in this quotation he further quoted that the age may influence by specific 'Ahara' and 'Vihara'. [22]

In Ashtanga Samgraha Acharya Vagabhatta said that particular age is necessary for 'Artava *Utpatti*'.<sup>[23]</sup> *Acharya Sushruta* gives same opinion as *Vagabhatta* gives regarding Menarche. Sushruta mention that, growing age of children's Shukra and Artava appears and along with them hairs appearing in intimate area. [24] Here, Acharya Sushruta gives direct reference that Menarche is closely related to specific age. According to Kashyapa appropriate time means Kala is most important Factor for Artava Darshana. [25]

# 2. Dhatu paripurnata

According to acharya kashyapa: According to Kashyapa, Artava is present in body since childhood but when body organs developed properly then it becomes visible in Yoni. Rajah remains in the body until the consummate of all *Dhatus* and accumulate in uterus. And the particular time that *Rajah* secrete through the vagina. [26]

**According to acharya bhela:** Acharya Bhela also believes that Dhatu paripurnata is one causative Factor of 'Artava Pravrutti'. [27]

- **3.** *Karma*: According to *Kashyapa* as the fire located within the wood can't be noticed without specific efforts, similarly *Artava* requires specific efforts for their gross appearance. [28]
- **4.** *Swabhava*: *Acharya Bhavaprakash* says monthly blood flow is instinctive phenomena but *Swabhava* do have effects on it due to which interval of menstruation is being maintained. [29] According to *Acharya Kashyapa Swabhava* is responsible for the phenomenon, which has been accounted with '*Dhatuparipurnata*'. [30]
- **5.** Vayu: Acharya Sushruta described Apana and Vyana Vayu responsible for Artava Utpatti. Dalhana opines that expulsion of Artava at proper time is basic function of Apana Vayu.

Funtion of *Vyana Vayu*: *Vyana Vayu* is responsible for all body function. Normal functioning of Reproductive organs are also maintained by *Vyana Vayu*. [32]

Artava utpatti: Some important information about Artava is found in ancient text books and Ayurvedic literature. There was mentioned that Artava is an Upadhatu of Rasa Dhatu and some Acharyas also consider it as Upadhatu of Rakta Dhatu. Upadhatu are those substances in the body which are the constituents of the body but having no qualities to generate other Dhatu. The following opinion has been said about this —

**According to** *acharya charak*: *Utpatti* of *Artava* the two main factors *Rasa Dhatu* and *Rakta Dhatu* directly effects on the process. *Acharya Charak* in '*Rasadi Dhatu Nirmana Karma*' denotes that *Rasa* is responsible for formation of *Artava*.<sup>[33]</sup>

**According to** *acharya sushruta*: *Acharya Sushruta* gives same opinion he also said that in women *Artava* is originated by *Rasa Dhatu*.<sup>[34]</sup> *Acharya Sushruta* mentions that in a month *Rasa* become semen in men and *Artava* in women.<sup>[35]</sup>

**According to** *ashtanga hridayam*: In *Ashtanga Hridaya Acharya Vagbhatta* said that, in women the *Rajah* which is the product of *Rasa*, flow out of the body for three days in every month.<sup>[36]</sup>

**According to** *ashtanga samgraha*: That means *Rakta* reaching uterus and coming out for three days in every month is called '*Artava*'. In short, blood accumulated in uterus, and then discharged as '*Artava*'. [37]

**According to bhela:** Acharya Bhela also mention that, Dhatuparipurnata is one causative Factor of 'Artava Utapatti'. [38]

According to bhava prakasha: In sequence of Dhatu formation, after the formation of Rasa Dhatu, Rajah is originated by Rasa Dhatu. [39]

According to sharangdhara: In our body by Ahara Rasa, Rasa, Rakta and all Dhatu originate in sequence by heat of *Pitta Dosha* and digested respectively. And at the end it's become Shukra and Rajah in women in entire month. [40]

**According to arundatta:** Commentator Arundatta gives very different opinion then the other Acharyas. He said Artava is Updhatu of 'Rasa' but formation of 'Aratava' does not depend upon Dhatu Nirmana Kram but it depends upon 'Ahara Rasa'. [41] To summarize the whole concept diagrammatically, it thought to be –

Forms of artava: There are three forms of Artava described in the text by which it serves its functions.

- Dhaturupa Artava
- Updhaturupa Artava
- Malrupa Artava
- 1. Dhaturupa artava: When Artava serves the function of placental formation and Stana Vridhi during pregnancy is called as Dhaturupa Artava.

While explaining the formation of *Dhatus*, *Bhavamishra* said, Women possess one extra Dhatu, because of the presence of one extra Ashaya (Garbhashaya) thus have Artava as seventh and Shukra as eighth Dhatu. This Dhaturupa Artava can be taken as ovum. It has property of reproduction. Dalhana opines in his Tika without counting Artava in Sapta *Dhatus*, in female only six *Dhatus* will remain so it is called *Dhaturupa Artava*.

- 2. Upadhaturupa artava: During the procedure of Dhatupaka (metabolism), when Rasa Dhatu terms to Rakta Dhatu, Artava is generated as it's by product (Upadhatu) and serves the function of the female genital organs is called as *Upadhaturupa Artava*.
- 3. *Malarupa artava*: The monthly blood discharge from the vaginal tract carries some toxic substances in it to purify the body of the female, so it is called as Mala on its forms of Artava as Malarupa Artava.

**Discussion on artava:** Now we will discuss about Artava which is originated from artava vaha srotasa. In Ayurveda almost all authors demonstrate Artava as one of the Updhatu of Rasa Dhatu except Acharya Sarangdhara, who considers Artava as the Updhatu of Rakta Dhatu while Acharya Bhava Prakash shows Artava as the seventh Dhatu in female body. Now the topic of discussion is that we will put the Artava in which category, Dhatu or Updhatu? On reviewing all the relevant references we may conclude that Artava may behaves like *Dhatu* or an *Updhatu* at different time since reproductive physiology in female is undergoing periodical changes regularly.

**Dhatu rupa artava:** Dhatu is defined as the body tissue which supports and nourishes the body. Artava follows this definition since it supports the body as well as serves as an essential factor for the formation and nourishment of some structures in the body E.g.

- During pregnancy Artava plays an important role in the formation of Apara (placenta).
- During pregnancy Artava is responsible for the growth and nourishment of the breast /mammary glands.
- At puberty accumulation of Artava in the uterus promotes growth and development of breasts and hair on pubic region. In the light of above discussion we may include Artava in the category of *Dhatu*.

Updhatu rupa artava: After the onset of puberty in non-pregnant women Artava gets accumulated in uterus at every month and eliminated out through vaginal orifice under the influence of Apana Vayu. This accumulated Artava does not play any physiological role in nourishment and maintenance of any other *Dhatu* or bodily substances. So in non-pregnant women it serves as a *Updhatu* providing only support to the body.

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