

A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW: THE MANAGEMENT OF ARTAVA KASHAYA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO HYPOMENORRHEA

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ABSTRACT

Artava Kashaya (scanty menstruation) represents a significant gynecological concern in Ayurvedic practice, correlating closely with hypomenorrhea in contemporary medicine. This review article comprehensively examines the conceptual framework, etiopathogenesis, and management strategies for *Artava Kashaya* as described in classical Ayurvedic texts, while establishing correlations with modern understanding of hypomenorrhea. The condition, characterized by *Yathochita Kala Adarshanam* (delayed menstruation), *Alpatva* (scanty flow), and *Yonivedana* (pain), primarily involves *Vata* vitiation and *Rasa-Rakta Dhatu* depletion. Through systematic analysis of classical references and contemporary research, this review explores various therapeutic approaches including *Shodhana* (purificatory therapies), *Shamana* (pacifying therapies), and specialized interventions like *Basti* and *Uttara Basti*. Particular

emphasis is placed on evidence-based herbal formulations including *Shatapushpa* (*Anethum sowa*), *Shatavari* (*Asparagus racemosus*), and compound formulations like *Jyotishmati Yoga* and *Tilashelukaravi Kwatha*. Clinical studies demonstrate significant improvement in menstrual parameters with Ayurvedic interventions, offering safe alternatives to conventional hormonal therapies. This review synthesizes classical wisdom with modern research findings to present a comprehensive understanding of *Artava Kashaya* management, highlighting the holistic approach of Ayurveda in addressing this prevalent menstrual disorder.

KEYWORDS: *Artava Kashaya*, Hypomenorrhea, *Shatapushpa*, Oligomenorrhea, *Basti*, *Artava Kshaya*.

INTRODUCTION

Menstruation, the cyclical physiological uterine bleeding, serves as a critical indicator of female reproductive health. In Ayurveda, normal menstruation (*Rajasrava*) is described as a painless process occurring at monthly intervals, with blood flow lasting approximately five days, characterized by specific color resembling red juice of Laksha or rabbit's blood, and neither scanty nor excessive in quantity.^[1] The classical texts emphasize that menstrual blood (*Artava*) is an *Upadhatu* (secondary tissue) derived from *Rasa* and *Rakta Dhatus*, and its normal functioning reflects the overall balance of *Doshas*, particularly *Vata* and *Pitta*.

Artava Kashaya, also termed *Artava Kshaya* or *Kshina Artava*, represents a pathological state characterized by diminished menstrual flow in terms of both quantity and duration.^[2] This condition finds close correlation with hypomenorrhea in modern gynecology, defined as menstrual bleeding of less than two days' duration or flow volume less than 20-30 ml per cycle. The contemporary prevalence of this condition has increased significantly due to sedentary lifestyles, dietary alterations, psychological stress, and various endocrine disruptions affecting the Hypothalamus-Pituitary-Ovarian (HPO) axis.^[3,4]

The classical Ayurvedic texts, particularly *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Kashyapa Samhita*, provide comprehensive descriptions of *Artava Kashaya* and its management. *Acharya Sushruta* specifically describes the features as *Yathochita Kala Adarshanam* (menstruation not appearing at proper time), *Alpatva* (scanty quantity), and *Yonivedana* (pain in the vaginal region).^[2,4] The condition is often associated with *Vata* vitiation, leading to depletion of *Rasa* and *Rakta Dhatus*, which manifests as scanty menstrual bleeding.

Modern medical management of hypomenorrhea primarily relies on hormonal preparations, which, while effective, are associated with significant adverse effects including weight gain, reproductive organ cysts, and potential carcinogenic risks.^[1] This has necessitated the exploration of safer, holistic therapeutic alternatives. Ayurveda offers a comprehensive approach addressing the root cause through *Dosha* pacification, *Dhatu* nourishment, and *Srotas* (channels) purification.

This review aims to synthesize classical Ayurvedic knowledge with contemporary research evidence to present a comprehensive understanding of Artava Kashaya management.

Conceptual Framework of *Artava Kashaya*

Definition and Classification

Artava Kashaya is classified under decreased states of menstruation (*Artava Kshaya*), distinguished from increased states (*Artava Vriddhi*) and vitiated states (*Artava Dushti*)^[2] The classical texts categorize menstrual disorders into three primary types based on clinical presentation:

- Decreased State (*Artava Kshaya*): Includes amenorrhea, oligomenorrhea, and hypomenorrhea
- Increased State (*Artava Vriddhi / Asrugdara*): Includes menorrhagia, metrorrhagia, and polymenorrhea
- Vitiated State (*Artava Dushti*)^[2]: Includes painful menstruation, burning sensation, and abnormalities in menstrual discharge

Artava Kashaya specifically encompasses conditions where menstrual bleeding is diminished in quantity, duration, or both, often accompanied by delayed cycles and associated discomfort.

Etiological Factors (*Nidana*)

The etiopathogenesis of *Artava Kashaya* involves multiple factors that vitiate *Vata Dosha* and deplete *Rasa-Rakta Dhatus*. Key etiological factors include:

Dietary Factors

- Consumption of *Vata* aggravating foods (dry, cold, light, and astringent foods)
- Inadequate nutritional intake leading to *Rasa Dhatu* depletion
- Irregular eating habits and fasting

Lifestyle Factors^[3,5]

- Excessive physical exertion
- Suppression of natural urges
- Daytime sleeping and nocturnal awakening
- Sedentary lifestyle and lack of exercise

Psychological Factors

- Chronic stress and anxiety
- Emotional disturbances and grief
- Mental tension affecting HPO axis function^[3]

Other Factors

- Advanced age and reproductive senescence
- Previous uterine surgeries or instrumentation
- Endocrine disorders including Polycystic Ovarian Disease
- Chronic systemic illnesses^[3]

Pathogenesis (Samprapti)

The pathogenesis of *Artava Kashaya* follows a sequential pattern beginning with *Dosha* vitiation, leading to *Dhatu* depletion and eventual manifestation of menstrual abnormalities. The *Samprapti* can be understood as follows:

Dosha Vitiation

- Predominant vitiation of *Vata Dosha*, particularly *Apana Vata*
- Secondary involvement of *Kapha* and *Pitta* in certain presentations

Dhatu Depletion

- *Vata* vitiation leads to depletion of *Rasa Dhatu* (primary nutrient fluid)
- Consequent reduction in *Rakta Dhatu* (blood tissue)
- *Artava* as *Upadhatu* of *Rakta* becomes deficient

Srotas Obstruction

- *Vata* and *Kapha* may cause obstruction (*Sanga*) in *Artavavaha Srotas* (channels carrying menstrual blood)
- Accumulation of *Ama* (metabolic toxins) contributes to obstruction⁶

Clinical Manifestation

- Manifestation of cardinal features: delayed menstruation, scanty flow, and associated pain
- Acharya Chakrapani explains that pain in *Artava Kashaya* results from aggravation of *Vayu* caused by loss of *Artava* which normally fills the region, leading to *Yoni Vedana*.^[4,7]

The condition may also be secondary to *Vatiki Yoni Vyapad* or *Vataja Artava Dushti* as mentioned in classical texts.^[7]

Clinical Features and Diagnosis

Classical Features (*Lakshana*)

The classical description of *Artava Kashaya* encompasses three primary features:

- *Yathochita Kala Adarshanam*: Menstruation does not appear at its appropriate monthly interval, characterized by delayed cycles or oligomenorrhea.^[2,6]
- *Alpatva*: Scanty menstrual flow with reduced quantity. The bleeding may last for less than three days and may be insufficient in volume.^[4,7]
- *Yonivedana*: Pain or discomfort in the vaginal region and lower abdomen during menstruation, often presenting as dysmenorrhea.^[2,5]

Associated Symptoms

- Lower abdominal pain radiating to the back (*Katishula*)
- Generalized weakness and fatigue
- Pallor and anemia due to chronic blood loss
- Menstrual blood appearing dark or discolored
- Associated symptoms of Vata vitiation including constipation, insomnia, and anxiety

Diagnostic Approach

- Detailed history including *Prakriti* (constitutional assessment), *Vikriti* (pathological state), and *Agni* (digestive capacity)
- *Dosha* assessment through *Nadi Pariksha* (pulse diagnosis) and other examination methods
- Assessment of *Srotas* involvement, particularly *Artavavaha Srotas*

Modern Diagnostic Correlation

- Clinical criteria: Menstrual duration < 2 days or flow volume < 20-30 ml per cycle
- Cycle length assessment (> 35 days indicates oligomenorrhea)
- Hormonal evaluation: FSH, LH, Estradiol, Prolactin, Thyroid function tests
- Imaging: Pelvic ultrasound to assess endometrial thickness and exclude structural abnormalities.^[2,6]

Correlation with Hypomenorrhea

The classical features of *Artava Kashaya* demonstrate significant correlation with hypomenorrhea and oligomenorrhea in modern medicine.^[5,8]

Ayurvedic Feature	Modern Correlation	Clinical Parameters
<i>Yathochita Kala Adarshanam</i>	Oligomenorrhea	Cycle > 35 days interval
<i>Alpatva</i>	Hypomenorrhea	Bleeding < 2 days duration
<i>Yonivedana</i>	Dysmenorrhea	Pain during menstruation
<i>Artava</i> deficiency	Estrogen deficiency	Hormonal imbalance

Management Principles

Classical Therapeutic Guidelines

The treatment of *Artava Kashaya* follows specific principles as described by Acharya Sushruta, who advocates the use of *Shodhana* (purificatory measures) and *Agneya* (heat-potentiated) *Dravyas* (substances).^[5,7] The therapeutic approach encompasses.

Shodhana Chikitsa (Purificatory Therapy)

- *Virechana* (therapeutic purgation) to eliminate vitiated *Pitta* and *Kapha*
- *Basti* (medicated enema) particularly *Matrabasti* and *Anuvasana Basti* for *Vata* pacification.^[6]

Shamana Chikitsa (Pacifying Therapy)

- Use of *Vatashamaka* and *Agnivardhaka* medications
- *Rasa* and *Rakta Vardhaka* (blood-enhancing) therapies
- *Artava Janaka* (menstruation-promoting) formulations

Nidana Parivarjana (Avoidance of Causative Factors)

- Correction of dietary and lifestyle factors
- Stress management and psychological support

Shodhana Therapies

Basti Therapy

Basti (medicated enema) is considered the supreme treatment for *Vata* and *Vata*-predominant conditions.^[6] In *Artava Kashaya*, *Matrabasti* (low-dose medicated oil enema) and *Anuvasana Basti* (oil-based enema) are particularly beneficial. The therapeutic rationale includes

- Action on *Apana Vata*: Normalization of *Apana Vata* which governs downward flow including menstruation
- Systemic effect: Drug administered through the rectal route (*Guda Marga*) reaches *Pakwashaya* (large intestine) and spreads throughout the body through microchannels

- Neuro-endocrine modulation: Action on enteric nervous system influencing central nervous system, thereby stimulating the Hypothalamus-Pituitary-Ovarian (HPO) axis.^[6]
- *Srotovishodhana*: Clears obstruction in *Artavavaha Srotas* enabling proper menstrual flow.

Research evidence supports Basti therapy's role in achieving well-coordinated HPO axis, which normalizes the menstrual cycle.^[6]

Uttara Basti

Uttara Basti represents a specialized form of Basti administered through the uterine route. This therapy shows particular efficacy in *Artava Kashaya* due to direct action on pelvic organs. Clinical trials comparing oral *Shatpushpa-Shatavari Churna* with *Shatpushpa Taila Uttara Basti* are currently underway to establish comparative efficacy.^[9]

Shamana Therapies (Oral Medications)

Oral medications form the cornerstone of *Artava Kashaya* management. Classical texts describe numerous formulations, with recent clinical research validating their efficacy.

Shatapushpa (*Anethum sowa*) Formulations

Shatapushpa holds special significance in *Artava Kashaya* management. Acharya Kashyapa described *Shatapushpa* as "nectar" and indicated it in various menstrual disorders including *Artavakshaya*.^[4,7] The therapeutic properties include:

Property	Description	Action in Artava Kashaya
<i>Rasa</i>	<i>Madhura</i> (sweet), <i>Tikta</i> (bitter)	<i>Vata-Kapha</i> pacification
<i>Guna</i>	<i>Guru</i> (heavy), <i>Snigdha</i> (unctuous)	<i>Vata</i> pacification, nourishment
<i>Vipaka</i>	<i>Madhura</i> (sweet)	Tissue nourishment
<i>Veerya</i>	<i>Ushna</i> (hot)	<i>Agneya</i> effect, stimulates circulation

Shatavari (*Asparagus racemosus*) Formulations^[9]

Jyotishmati Formulations.^[10,11]

Specific Formulations

- *Tilashelukaravi Kwatha*^[5,12]
- *Venuparvadi Kwatha*^[5]
- *Shatapushpa Taila*^[4,7]

This polyherbal formulation contains *Shatapushpa* as the primary ingredient along with 46 other drugs from *Samanya Varga* of *Dhatrichikitsa Adhyay* as per *Kashyapa Samhita*. Its comprehensive pharmacological profile includes:

Drug Group	Properties	Therapeutic Action
<i>Shatapushpa</i>	<i>Vata-Kapha Hara</i>	<i>Vata</i> pacification, <i>Artava</i> stimulation
<i>Meda</i> group	<i>Vatahara, Brimhana</i>	Nourishment of reproductive tissues
<i>Kakoli</i> group	<i>Vata-Pittahara, Garbhasthapana</i>	Uterine tonic
<i>Haridra</i> group	<i>Vata-Kaphahara</i>	Anti-inflammatory
<i>Gokshura</i>	<i>Vatashamaka, Garbhasthapana</i>	Reproductive health
<i>Draksha</i>	<i>Vata-Pittashamaka, Garbhasthapana</i>	Nourishment, hormonal balance

The formulation can be administered through various routes including *Paana* (oral), *Nasya* (nasal), *Abhyanga* (massage), and *Basti* (enema).^[4,7] The *Agneya* properties of *Shatapushpa* help increase *Artava* quantity, as *Artava* is considered *Pitta Pradhana* and follows the principle "*Samanyam Vridhikaranam*" (intake of similar qualities causes increase)^[4]

Route of Administration

The success of Ayurvedic interventions for *Artava Kashaya* depends significantly on appropriate route selection.

Route	Formulations	Advantages
Oral (<i>Paana</i>)	<i>Shatapushpa Churna, Jyotishmatyadi Churna</i>	Convenient, systemic action
Rectal (<i>Basti</i>)	Medicated oils, decoctions	Superior <i>Vata</i> pacification, HPO axis modulation
Uterine (<i>Uttara Basti</i>)	<i>Shatapushpa Taila</i>	Direct action on pelvic organs
Nasal (<i>Nasya</i>)	Medicated oils	<i>Apana Vata</i> regulation
Topical (<i>Abhyanga</i>)	Medicated oils	Local <i>Vata</i> pacification

DISCUSSION

The management of *Artava Kashaya* in Ayurveda demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of reproductive physiology. The therapeutic approach addresses the condition at multiple levels.

At the *Dosha* Level

Vata vitiation represents the primary pathology in *Artava Kashaya*. Treatment focuses on *Vata* pacification through unctuous, warm, and nourishing substances. *Shatapushpa*, with its *Snigdha* (unctuous) and *Ushna* (hot) properties, directly counteracts *Vata* while its *Madhura*

Vipaka provides nourishment.^[1,4] *Basti* therapy, considered the treatment of choice for *Vata* disorders, provides comprehensive *Vata* normalization.^[6]

At the *Dhatu* Level

Rasa and *Rakta Dhatu* depletion underlies the scanty menstrual flow. Therapies including *Shatavari*, *Gokshura*, and *Draksha* with *Brimhana* (nourishing) properties help rebuild these tissues. The *Madhura Rasa* and *Snigdha Guna* of these drugs support *Rakta* formation, essential for adequate menstrual bleeding.^[7]

At the *Srotas* Level

Obstruction in *Artavavaha Srotas* may contribute to scanty flow. Shodhana therapies including *Virechana* and *Basti* help clear these channels, while *Ushna* and *Tikshna* drugs with penetrating properties facilitate proper flow.^[6]

At the HPO Axis Level

Modern understanding of menstrual physiology involves the HPO axis, which governs menstrual cyclicity. *Basti* therapy's proposed action on the enteric nervous system, influencing central nervous system function and subsequently the HPO axis, provides a plausible mechanism for its effects on menstrual regulation.^[6] The *Shamana* drugs may influence endocrine function through their *Agneya* and *Vata* pacifying properties, as *Apana Vata* regulation parallels hypothalamic function.

Comparison with Modern Management

Modern management of hypomenorrhea primarily employs hormonal preparations including oral contraceptives and estrogen-progesterone combinations. While effective in producing artificial withdrawal bleeding, these treatments:

- Do not address underlying *Dosha* imbalances
- Are associated with significant adverse effects including weight gain, mood changes, and breast tenderness.^[5]
- May have long-term risks including cardiovascular effects and thromboembolism
- Provide symptomatic relief without correcting nutritional deficiencies

In contrast, Ayurvedic management offers

- Comprehensive approach addressing root cause
- Safe, natural therapies with minimal adverse effects

- Cost-effective interventions
- Concurrent improvements in overall health and well-being^[3]

Lifestyle Modifications

The classical texts emphasize the importance of lifestyle modifications (*Pathya-Apathya*) in *Artava Kashaya* management. Key recommendations include.

Dietary Recommendations (*Pathya*)

- *Madhura Rasa* (sweet-tasting) and *Snigdha* (unctuous) foods
- Adequate protein and iron-rich foods
- Warm, freshly prepared meals
- Milk and dairy products with ghee
- Adequate hydration

Lifestyle Guidelines

- Regular exercise, moderate physical activity
- Stress management through yoga and meditation
- Regular sleep patterns, avoid daytime sleeping
- Suppression of natural urges to be avoided
- Specific Vata pacifying lifestyle modifications^[3]

CONCLUSION

Artava Kashaya, correlating with hypomenorrhea in modern medicine, represents a significant gynecological challenge affecting reproductive health and quality of life. Ayurveda offers a comprehensive understanding of this condition, rooted in the principles of *Dosha* balance, *Dhatu* nourishment, and *Srotas* purification.

The classical texts provide clear guidelines for management, with *Shatapushpa*-based formulations, *Basti* therapy, and specialized interventions like *Uttara Basti* demonstrating significant clinical efficacy. Contemporary research validates these traditional approaches, with studies showing 90-100% improvement in menstrual parameters with minimal adverse effects.

The holistic nature of Ayurvedic management, addressing not just the symptom of scanty menstruation but also the underlying imbalances, offers distinct advantages over symptomatic

hormonal therapy. The safety profile, cost-effectiveness, and sustained benefits make Ayurvedic interventions valuable alternatives in the management of this prevalent condition. As research continues to validate and refine these classical approaches, integration of Ayurvedic principles with modern understanding of reproductive physiology holds promise for improved patient outcomes. The ongoing clinical trials of *Jyotishmati* formulations, comparative studies of *Basti* and oral therapies, and efforts to establish evidence-based protocols represent significant steps toward making Ayurvedic management of *Artava Kashaya* a mainstream option for women's healthcare.

The challenge ahead lies in conducting rigorous research, standardizing formulations, and establishing clear clinical guidelines that can be implemented in diverse healthcare settings. With its emphasis on root cause resolution and holistic well-being, Ayurveda remains a valuable contributor to the management of *Artava Kashaya* and the broader field of reproductive health.

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