

ARTAVA: REFLECTION OF WOMEN HEALTH**Dr. Pooja Sahu^{1*}, Dr. Deepika Gupta², Dr. Anjana Saxena³, Dr. Sarika Srivastava⁴**

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ABSTRACT

Women are the foundation of the family, and their health is essential for the well-being of the family. "Healthy women, healthy world" highlights the significance role of women's health plays in the well-being and development of society. Women's health is interconnected with the overall health, stability, and progress of society and the world. In Ayurveda, the human body is controlled by three energies called Tridoshas—Vata, Pitta, and Kapha—which are classified under seven Dhatus. These Dhatus also have Upadhatus, and Artava is one of the Upadhatus of Rasa Dhatu. Artava is associated with two specific phases: Ritukala (ovulation period) and Rajakala (menstruation period) in women. The specific characteristics of menstrual blood, along with its physiological and pathological variations, are described in Ayurvedic classics as Shuddha Artava and Artava Dushti. Shuddha Artava plays a crucial role in maintaining a woman's healthy

reproductive life. When Artava differs from the characteristics of Shuddha Artava as described in classical texts, it may indicate Artava Dushti or menstrual abnormalities such as dysmenorrhea, menorrhagia, amenorrhea, and uterine disorders, which could lead to infertility. Ayurvedic classics explain the color, texture, specific smell, amount, and other associated features, such as the type of pain, in various types of Artava Dushti. Therefore, by

observing variations in menstrual blood, we can identify the diseases associated with it. Thus, the study of Artava and Artava Dushti plays a significant role in diagnosing pathological disorders related to the female reproductive system.

KEYWORDS: Ayurveda, Artava, Raja, Dhatu, Updhatu, Menstruation etc.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

To study Shuddha Artava and understand its clinical importance in Streeroga.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

All the information regarding Artava and are collected from ancient Ayurvedic(Brihatrayee) and modern literature , related journals, research and review articles.

INTRODUCTION

Artava is formed from Rasa (Dhatu), also known as Raja. The blood that reaches the uterus and is discharged over three days each month is called Artava. It is carried through Rasa (the plasma), where it accumulates in the endometrium and is then discharged during menstruation. The process of formation and discharge of Artava has been beautifully explained by Acharya Chakrapani with the words Avirbhava and Tirobhava. Initially, besides nourishing the endocrine glands, uterus, and endometrium through Rasa, the transportation of hormones to target organs via Rasa (plasma) is essential. The blood that accumulates in the hair-like thin branches of the Artavavimocini Dhamani (uterine artery) is then discharged during menstruation.

According to various Acharyas, the color of Shuddha Artava is described in different ways, but it is understood to have specific qualities. The texture of pure menstrual blood is described as Nishpichchha, meaning it should be free from clots and foam. The smell is described as Vigandha, indicating the absence of any unpleasant or strong odor. Additionally, Shuddha Artava should not be accompanied by Arti (pain) or Daha (burning sensations).

When Artava becomes vitiated, it leads to a range of menstrual disorders (Artava Dushti), which are characterized by abnormalities in the properties of the blood. These disorders manifest in various forms, as detailed in classical Ayurvedic texts. Artava represents the physiological processes that follow a rhythmic and cyclic pattern within the female reproductive system.

Thus we can consider three interdependent elements under artava.

- Dhatu/upadhatu rupa artava (hypothalamus-pituitary-ovarian hormones)
- Beeja rupa artava (ovum)
- Rajahsrava rupa artava (menstrual flow)

Artava As Dhatu (Hypothalamus-Pituitary-Ovarian Hormones)

As per acharya Kashyap (Sha.Jati. 4) - As the fruit that is going to be formed due to transformation is not visible in present flower and the fire that is going to be aroused in future can not be felt in wood without efforts, similarly the shukra (male hormones, spermatozoa and semen) in male and artava (ovum, female hormones and menstrual blood) in female are visualized after attaining proper time and growth effected by previous deeds.

Artava As Rajahsrava (Menstrual Blood) Acharya vagbhatt said (A. Hr. Sha. 1/7)

- Rakta reaches the Garbhashaya and is expelled for three days every month.
- Every month the aggregated rakta formed from rasa attaining slight discoloration will be expelled by the action of vata.
- It is produced cyclically and being directed by vata is expelled vaginally. (Bhav pu 3/1)

Artava As Beej (Ovum) The Raja naturally appears at every month in the form of Pushpabhuta Artava(Ovum).

NIRUKTI - The word Ritu means Particular or specific time and Bhavam means Occurrence. Thus, the whole term denotes a substance of the body, which flows out at a specific time, or period is called as "Artava". One of the synonyms for Artava is Rajah, the etymology of the Rajah is as follows That substance which stains the vagina, or the yoni is termed as Rajah.

DEFINITION OF ARTAVA - Artava or Bahipushp is the blood that flows out of Garbhashaya through Yoni. Prakruta. Shudha Artava, is required for proper embryo development. Rakta reaching the uterus and coming out from Yoni for 3 days in every month is called Rajah. The substance which is formed only in female from Rasa and is having colour of Rakta, flowing through the female genital tract, commencing at the age of 12 years and ceasing at the age of 50 years (except during Garbhavastha, Sutikavastha, Stanyakalavastha) and which flows for a duration of 3 to 7 days is called Artava.

SYNONYMS OF ARTAVA - Artava, Shonita, Asrik, Raja, Rakt, Lohita, Rudhira, Pushpa etc.

QUALITIES OF SHUDDHA ARTAVA

Normal Artava flows without Piccha (sliminess), Daha (burning sensation), Arti (pain) i.e. normal Artava having equilibrium of tridosha. It flows out 3 to 5 days.

Varna: According to Acharya Sushruta, normal Artava is the colour of "Laksha rasa or Sashak asruka," which is rabbit blood, Yadvasonaviranjayet (not stains to cloth) and according to Acharya Charaka normal Artava contains "Gunjafalasadrushya varna, Padma Sannibha (colour of the lotus petals), colour of insect Indragopa".

Gandha: According to Acharya Charaka, shudhaartava is - "Nirgandha." Shudhaartava has no gandha type.

Commentator Acharya Dalhan explained that foul smelling of menstrual blood is due to pitta. (Su. Su. 15/16 - Dal.)

Sparsha: According to Acharya Charaka, Sparsha of Artava is "Pichhil."

Matra : In Ashtanga Samgraha Acharya Vagbhatta explain that Pramana of Artava is four Anjali Acharya Charak mentioned the normal quantity of Artava and quoted that, neither excessive and nor less quantity of Artava called as Sudhha Artava.

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 opinions that twelve years and fifty years are the age of

Artavadarshana and Artava Nivrutti respectively.

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

In Ashtanga Samgraha Acharya Vagabhatta said that particular age is necessary for Artava Utpatti. Acharya Sushruta gave the same opinion like Vagbhata regarding menarche. Sushruta mentioned that during the growing age of children, Shukra and Artava appears, and along with them, hair emerged in intimate areas. Here, Acharya Sushruta provided a direct reference that menarche was closely related to a specific age. According to Kashyapa, the Kala (appropriate time) was the most important factor for Artava Darshana.

2. Dhatu paripurnata: According to Acharya Kashyapa, Artava is present in the body from childhood but becomes visible in the Yoni once the body's organs are fully developed. Raja remains in the body until all Dhatus are fully nourished and then accumulates in the uterus. At a particular time, it is discharged through the vagina.

Acharya Bhela also believes that Dhatu paripurnata is one causative Factor of 'Artava Pravrutti'.

3. Karma: According to Acharya Kashyapa as the fire located within the wood can't be noticed without specific efforts, similarly Artava requires specific efforts for their gross appearance.

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. According to Acharya Kashyapa Swabhava is responsible for the phenomenon, which has been accounted with 'Dhatuparipurnata'.

5. Vayu: Acharya Sushruta described Apana and Vyana Vayu responsible for Artava Utpatti. According to Acharya Dalhana that expulsion of Artava at proper time is basic function of Apana Vayu.

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 (breast development) during pregnancy, it is called Dhaturupa Artava. While explaining the formation of Dhatus, Acharya Bhavamishra considers Artava as the seventh Dhātu in women due to the presence of an additional Ashaya (Garbhashaya - uterus). However, according to Acharya Dalhana, in his Tika, without counting Artava among the Sapta Dhatus, only six Dhatus remain in females, which is why it is referred to as Dhaturupa Artava.

2. Upadhaturupa Artava: During the process of Dhatupaka (metabolism), when Rasa Dhātu transforms into Rakta Dhātu, Artava is generated as its Upadhātu (by-product). It plays a crucial role in the function of the female genital organs and is therefore known as Upadhaturupa Artava.

3. Malarupa Artava: The monthly blood discharge from the vaginal tract carries some toxic substances, helping to purify the female body. Due to this function, it is considered a Mala (waste product) and is referred to as Malarupa Artava.

FORMATION OF ARTAVA FROM RASA

Difference of opinion regarding formation of raja or menstrual blood-

Artav is generated from Rasa, according to Acharya Charaka, Sushruta, Vriddha Vagbhata, Dalhana, and Chakrapani. According to Acharya Vagbhata, menstrual blood accumulates in the uterus before being released. The essence of Rasa is used to make Artava.

“Na-atibahula Na-atialpa Matra” stated Acharya Charaka regarding Artavamatra. According to Acharya Vagbhata It contains four anjali pramanas.

Panchbhautikatwa: According to the panchabhautik siddhanta, everything includes all five Mahabhuta, however according to Acharya Sushruta Artava, Agni mahabhuta adhikya.

Aartavapravriti: According to Acharya Sushruta, this time lasts between 12 and 50 years.

Thoughts of Acharyas for Aartva

According to Acharya Charaka - Acharya Charaka and others have not given other names for

menstrual blood, such as raja and artava. They simply state that raja is produced from rasa. It's important to understand that throughout a woman's monthly cycle, raja is generated from rasa and excreted from the uterus.

This raja reaches the uterus and accumulates there and discharge for three days per month in females

Explanation by Acharya Chakrapani- The Charaka commentator Chakrapani emphasizes that during the formation of Artava, it predominantly exhibits a Soumya nature due to the influence of Rasa. However, at the time of its expulsion from the uterus, Artava undergoes specific modifications, acquiring an Agneya character. These transformations are attributed to the impact of the Doshas.

Explanation by Acharya Arundatta- Raja is produced from ahararasa, or food fluids, rather than rasa dhatu.

According to Harita, Raja is produced spontaneously, without any clear intent or effort.

Explanation by Acharya Sharangdhara- raja is a byproduct of blood. Its development, i.e., menarche, and cessation, i.e., menopause, are completely dependent on the passage of time.

Explanation by Acharya Bhavmishra - same as Acharya Sharangadhar.

MOOLSTHAN OF ARTAVAVAHA SROTAS - In females, additional Srotas is explained named as Artavavaha Srotas. Ayurveda mentions the Garbhasaya and Artavavahi Dhamani as a Moolsthan of Artavavaha Srotas. Garbhashaya is mainly responsible for conception, production and expulsion Artava, from origin point of view. It shows same structural and functional characteristics of uterus along with ovaries and both have same pathological and clinical conditions after injury. Artavavahi Dhamani can be taken as ovarian and uterine vessels, and fallopian tube (which conducts ovum (Artava) towards uterus).

ARTAVAVAHA SROTO VIDDHA LAKSHANA

If any injury to Aartavavaha Srotas that leads to Bandhyatwa, Maitunaasahishnuta, Aartava Nasha. Bandhayatva (Infertility) is the primary clinical manifestation of injury to the Artavavaha Srotas. Infertility is not an independent condition but rather a symptom of several underlying diseases. According to modern medical science, infertility is defined as the

inability of a couple of mature age to conceive despite regular, normal intercourse during the appropriate time of the menstrual cycle for at least one year or more. In Ayurveda, Bandhayatva is synonymous with infertility. Ayurveda highlights the specific roles of Ritu (timing of fertilization), Kshetra (reproductive organs), Ambu (nourishment), and Beeja (ovum and sperm) in ensuring healthy progeny. Any defect in these four factors can lead to infertility. Modern medicine also identifies various causes of infertility, including menstrual disturbances, hormonal imbalances, PCOS, tubal blockages, genital tissue injuries, and genetic factors. The uterus consists of two tissue types: the Endometrium, which sheds during the menstrual cycle, and the Myometrium. Both tissues are sensitive and can develop tumors. Polyps form when the lining tissue expands, while fibroids result from the proliferation of muscle tissue. Fibroids often lead to abnormal uterine bleeding and infertility.

Maithuna Asahishnuta (Dyspareunia) is the second clinical manifestation of injury to the Artavavaha Srotas. Modern medical science defines dyspareunia as painful intercourse. The causes of dyspareunia can be classified based on the site of pain: superficial, vaginal, or deep. Superficial dyspareunia involves pain in the vulva, often due to factors such as a tough hymen, vulvitis, or a narrow introitus. Vaginal dyspareunia is characterized by burning pain along the vaginal canal, either during or after intercourse, caused by conditions like vaginal septum, vaginitis, secondary atresia, surgical scars, or tumors. Deep dyspareunia occurs when deep penetration during intercourse causes pain, often linked to pathologies such as endometriosis, chronic cervicitis, chronic PID, or a retroverted uterus.

Artavanasha (Amenorrhea) is the third clinical manifestation of injury to the Artavavaha Srotas. According to modern medical science, amenorrhea is defined as the absence of menstruation during a woman's reproductive years. It is not a disease but a symptom of an underlying disorder in the female reproductive system. The pathological causes of amenorrhea include uterine infections, tubercular endometriosis, ovarian issues, pituitary problems, hysterectomy, malignant growths, and tumors, among others.

The Artavavaha Srotas can be considered as the entire female reproductive system. Any injury to any part of the Artavavaha Srotas can result in conditions such as infertility, amenorrhea, and dyspareunia. These issues may arise due to injury to the uterus, fallopian tubes, vaginal wall, cervix, or their surrounding tissues.

The concept of Artavavaha Srotas can be understood through its functions, origin, and the

symptoms that arise from its injury, known as Viddha Lakshan. Both Ayurveda and modern medical science agree that fertilization, implantation, nutrition, and fetal development occur in the Garbhashaya (uterus). Any injury to the Artavavaha Srotas leads to symptoms like menstrual disturbances, dyspareunia, and infertility, which are also acknowledged and well-described by modern medical science.

ROLE OF ARTAVA IN CONCEPTION, PLACENTA FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF BREAST - At the middle of each menstrual cycle, a single ovum is released from a dominant follicle and is guided by the fimbriae into the fallopian tube, where it progresses toward the uterus. This ovum then travels through one of the fallopian tubes into the uterus, where, if fertilized by a sperm, it implants and develops into a fetus, placenta, and fetal membranes before eventually forming a baby.

When a fertilized ovum implants into the uterus, the Artavachakra (menstrual cycle) stops due to obstruction in the Artavavaha Srotas. As a result of this obstruction, one portion of Artava forms the Apra (placenta), while the remaining portion, consisting of estrogen, progesterone, oxytocin, and human chorionic gonadotropic hormone (hCG), moves upward to nourish the breasts and prepare them for milk production. This Artava is responsible for maintaining conception, placenta formation, and breast development.

DISCUSSION

The concept of artava, as described in Ayurvedic texts, offers a foundational understanding of the menstrual cycle. It can be interpreted as a coordinated response involving the hypothalamic-pituitary-ovarian (HPO) axis and hormones, alongside the cyclic changes occurring in the ovaries and endometrium. The physiology of menstruation, including aspects such as the age of onset and cessation, duration, volume of bleeding, as well as the color, smell, and unctuousness of menstrual blood in a normal state, has been well-documented in Ayurveda. Today, advancements in modern tools and techniques enable us to explain these phenomena in terms of hormonal interactions and other physiological processes.

CONCLUSION

The Ayurvedic concept of artava provides a holistic understanding of the menstrual cycle, reflecting both its biological and physiological aspects. By integrating ancient wisdom with modern scientific advancements, we can gain a more comprehensive perspective on the menstrual process, encompassing its hormonal regulation, cyclic changes, and overall impact

on women health. This fusion of traditional knowledge and contemporary science enhances our ability to address menstrual health more effectively.

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