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Critical Understanding of Agni and Artavakshaya in Women's Health from Ayurveda Perspective

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Abstract

Introduction:

Artavakshaya, a menstrual disorder associated with oligomenorrhea and hypomenorrhea, affects 13.5% and 3.5% of the population, respectively. In Ayurveda, it is primarily caused by dysfunction in *Agni* (metabolic fire), which governs the metabolism of *Rasadhatu*, the precursor of *Artava* (menstrual blood). Disturbances in *Agni* lead to imbalances in the *dosha*—*Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*—resulting in improper formation of *Artava*.

Materials and Methods:

Information related to *Artavakshaya* was gathered through a critical analysis of major Ayurveda texts, including the *Carakasamhita*, *Sushrutasamhita*, and *Ashtangahridayam*. These classical texts provide detailed insights into the pathogenesis, classification of *Agni*, and treatment protocols for menstrual

disorders. A comprehensive review was conducted on the role of Agni dysfunction, focusing on *marga avarodha* (channel obstruction) and *dhatukshaya* (depletion of *dhatu*). The analysis also emphasized therapeutic interventions for restoring Agni and purifying the channels to restore normal menstrual flow.

Results:

Ayurveda treatments for *Artavakshaya* emphasize restoring Agni through therapies such as *Vamana* (emesis), designed to balance *soumyabhava* and enhance *agnyabhava*. Additional treatments include the use of *Agneyadravya* and *srotoshodhana*, which help clear obstructions and regulate *doshic* imbalances, promoting proper menstrual flow.

Discussion:

The dysfunction of Agni is central to the pathogenesis of *Artavakshaya*, leading to impaired Rasadhātu metabolism and subsequent menstrual irregularities. Ayurveda approaches, focusing on the restoration of *Agni* and *doshic* balance, offer a holistic and effective treatment for managing *Artavakshaya* and supporting menstrual health.

Keywords: *Agni, Artavakshaya, Rasadhātu, Oligomenorrhea, Hypomenorrhea*

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Introduction

The term *Artava Kshaya* is derived from the combination of two words: *Artava* and *Kshaya*. *Artava* refers to *Ritodbhavam Artavam*, where *Ritu* signifies a specific time or period, and *Bhavam* refers to occurrence. The term thus refers to a bodily substance that flows at a specific time or period, which is termed *Artava*. On the other hand, *Kshaya* is derived from the *Kshi Dhatu*, meaning to cease or get reduced. The reduced quantity of *Artava* from its normal *Pramana* (4 Anjali) is called *Artava Kshaya* or *Kshinartava*. [1]

The prevalence of oligomenorrhea in 2023 is 13.5% in the general population [2], while hypomenorrhea was found in 3.5% of women [3].

Aarthavakshaya is described as *Yathochitha Kala Adarshana*, signifying a prolonged intermenstrual interval, which is analogous to oligomenorrhea—characterized by irregular menstruation with cycles exceeding 35 days. Additionally, *Alpata*, which indicates a menstrual blood flow of less than four Anjali *Pramana*, represents the clinical manifestation of hypomenorrhea. *Agni*, the primary metabolic fire in the body, plays a crucial role in the manifestation of various diseases, including *Artava*

Kshaya [4]. Acarya Sushruta states, '*Aartavashonitamvaagneyam*', meaning that *Artava* is *Agneya* (related to *Agni*) and shares characteristics with *Shonitha* (blood) [5]. *Artava*, present in women, has characteristics of *Pitta*. Any dysfunction in the *Pachaka Pitta* will lead to improper function of *Rasa Dhatu*, and consequently, the improper formation of *Artava*.

Conceptual Framework of Agni

There are mainly thirteen types of *Agni*, namely *Jatharagni*, *Bhutagni*, and *Dhaatvagni*, out of which *Jatharagni* determines the strength of *Bhutagni* and *Dhaatvagni* [6]. *Bhutagni* digests the food materials composed of the five basic elements and transforms them for utilization by the respective *Dhatu*s (tissues). It is also responsible for the separation of food into the essence portion (*Prasad*) and the waste products (*Kitta*) in our body [7].

Acarya Caraka mentions that the seven *Dhatu*s supporting the body each contain their own *Agni*, which digests and transforms the materials supplied to them, thereby making the substances suitable for assimilation and nourishment. The *Dhatvagnis* are responsible for the development of *Dhatu* (tissue formation)

through *Utpati Kram* (the process of development)[8].

The *Sara* or essence of the food, which is in ultra-fine or minute form, is called *Rasa*. This, with the help of *Rasa Dhatva Agni*, forms the *Rasa Dhatu*, which is directly formed from the essence of the food we consume. Since *Artava* is an *Updhatu* (secondary tissue) of *Rasa Dhatu*, any derangement in *Jatharagni* will directly

affect the formation and quality of *Artava*[9]. From *Rasa Dhatu*, *Rakta* (blood) is formed, and from *Rakta*, *Raja* (menstrual blood) is formed. *Raja* reaches the uterus and is expelled over three days each month, and this is called *Artava*. *Raja* is formed from the essence portion of *Rasa*[10]. Based on the above discussion, it can be inferred that *Agni* plays a crucial role in the formation and regulation of *Artava*.

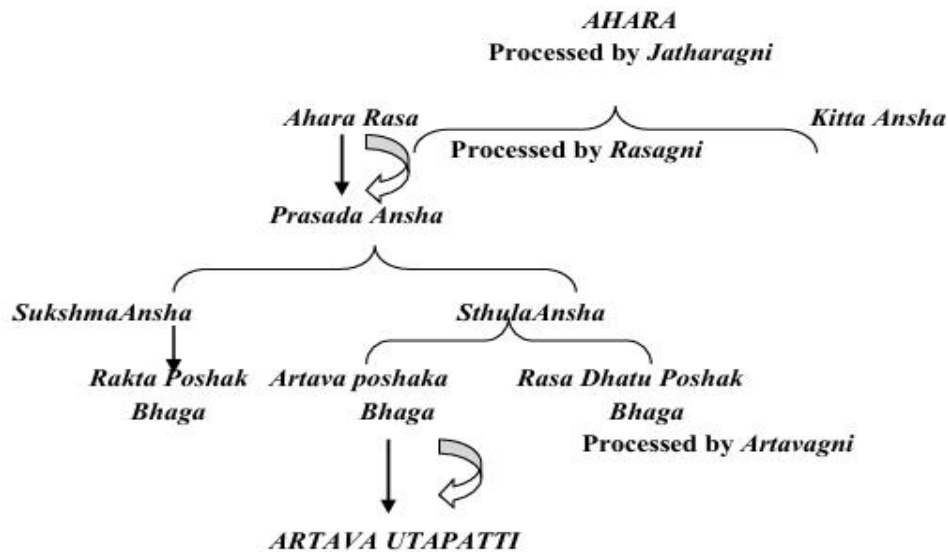


Figure 1: Physiology of *Artava Utpatti*[11]

Artavashaya in Ayurveda Texts –

Yonivyapat related to Artavakshaya:

1. **Lohitakshaya:**

Acarya Vagbhata opines that due to the vitiation of *Vata* and *Pitta*, *Raja* (menstrual blood) decreases, and the woman suffers from burning

sensations, emaciation, and changes in complexion. This condition is known as *Lohitakshaya*[12].

2. **Arajaska:**

Acarya Caraka states that when *Pitta* located in the *yoni* and uterus vitiates *Rakta* (blood), the woman

becomes extremely emaciated, and her complexion changes. This condition is known as *Arajaska*. Acarya Chakrapani, in his *Teeka*, described amenorrhea as a symptom of this condition[13].

3. *Vatala Yonivyapada*:

Acarya Caraka writes that a woman of *Vata Prakriti* who consumes a *Vatapradhan* diet and engages in activities aggravating *Vayu* will experience symptoms such as pricking pain, stiffness, sensations as if ants are creeping on the body, roughness, numbness, etc. Local symptoms include fatigue or lethargy, among other *Vata* disorders. Due to the vitiation of *Vata*, menstruation starts with sound and pain, and the menses are frothy, thin, and dry[14].

All the above-mentioned *Yonivyapadas* have a direct correlation with *Artava Kshaya*, resulting from different derangements of *Agni*.

***Artavadushti* related to *Artavakshaya*:**

"*Ksheena Artava Dushti*" refers to the reduced quantity of *Artava* from its normal measurement due to the vitiation of *Doshas*. This condition is directly correlated

with *Artava Kshaya* (scanty menstruation)[15].

Jataharini related to Artavakshaya:

Acarya Kashyapa has mentioned certain menstrual disorders, such as *Shushka Revati*, *Katambhara*, and *Vikuta Jataharini*, which result from *Jataharini Graha Baddha*. These can be considered as primary amenorrhea. The following symptoms are found in these conditions:

1. *Shushkarevati*:

When a woman is 16 years old and still does not experience menstruation, with emaciation of the *Sphikapradesha* (hip region), she is considered to be suffering from *Shushka Revati*.

2. *Katambhara*:

A woman who does not menstruate at the appropriate time, becomes emaciated, weak, and ultimately dies, is known as *Katambhara*.

3. *Vikuta*:

When the menstrual discharge is irregular in time, color, and quantity from the very beginning, accompanied by *Balahani* (weakness) and *Glani* (fatigue), the

woman is considered to be suffering from *Vikuta Jataharini*.

From the above descriptions, the first two conditions can be considered as primary amenorrhea, and the last one as *Oligomenorrhea*.

Agni and Dosha Interaction:

The irregular digestive fire (*Agni*) causes improper digestion, leading to disequilibrium of the *Dhatu*s (tissues). In cases of insufficient fuel (food), the strong *Agni* desiccates the *Dhatu*s as described in the verse: '*Vishamo Dhātuvaishamya Karoti Vishamam Pachan*'.

Vishamaagni and Vatadosha:

Vishama Agni is the state where digestion and metabolism are irregular, i.e., sometimes normal and sometimes abnormal. When *Vishama Agni* is affected by *Vata Dosha*, it causes irregularities in the formation of *Rasa Dhātu* (the precursor to *Artava*), leading to *Artava Kshaya*[18].

Vyanavata:

The *Vyana Vayu*, which has the function of dispersing, distributes *Rasa Dhātu* throughout the body. When the *Rasa Dhātu* is scattered due to the vitiation of *Vyana Vayu*, it localizes in the areas where there is morbidity in the channels carrying *Rasa*, leading to disease at those specific

locations, just like clouds that rain at obstructed places[19].

Samanavata:

The main location of *Samana Vata* is near the *Agni* in the *Grahani* (stomach), and it is responsible for food intake, digestion, separation of *Sara* (essence) and *Kitta* (waste), absorption of the essence, and expulsion of waste. Any vitiation of *Samana Vata* leads to improper formation of *Sara*, affecting the formation of *Artava* as its precursor is *Rasa Dhātu*.

Apanavata:

Apana Vata moves downward and is responsible for the expulsion of *Artava* (menstruation).

Pittadosha and Tikshnagni:

Tikshnagni refers to very sharp or fast digestive fire. A person with *Ksheena Kapha*, aggravated *Pitta*, and *Vayu* will have very rapid digestion, even consuming the *Dhatu*s (tissue elements). This can lead to tissue depletion, including *Artava Kshaya*[20].

Kaphadosha and Mandagni:

Mandagni refers to slow digestion. People with *Mandagni* consume little food and struggle to digest even small amounts. *Mandagni* leads to *Kaphaja Vikara*, which can cause *Marga Avarodha* (obstruction of

channels), ultimately leading to *Artava Kshaya*[21].

Samprapti (Pathophysiology):

The pathophysiology of *Artava Kshaya* involves two primary mechanisms:

1. **Margaavarodhajanya:**

This type of *Artava Kshaya* involves the vitiation of *Vata* and *Kapha* causing obstruction in the *Artava Vaha Srotas* (channels of menstrual blood). According to Acarya Caraka, the obstruction occurs due to *Sanga* (blockage), which can be caused by either *Kapha* or *Vata*, or both. *Pitta* does not cause obstruction but contributes to *Artava Vriddhi* (excessive menstruation). According to Sushruta, trauma or injury to the *Artava Vaha Srotas* results in conditions like *Vandhyatwa* (infertility), *Maithuna Asahishnuta* (dyspareunia), and *Artava Nasha* (loss of menstruation)[22].

The treatment approach involves relieving the obstruction caused by *Kapha* or *Vata* through therapies such as *Snehana* (oleation) and *Swedana* (sudation). In cases of

Kapha vitiation, *Vamana* (emesis) is performed, while in *Vata* vitiation, *Niruha* and *Anuvasana Basti* (medicated enemas) are indicated. *Uttarabasti* (medicated vaginal administration) may be used when both *Kapha* and *Vata* are involved.

2. **Dhatukshayajanya:**

In this type of *Artava Kshaya*, the vitiation of *Doshas* occurs due to improper *Ahara* (diet) and *Vihara* (lifestyle). These vitiated *Doshas* affect *Rasa Dhatu* and its *Dhatvagni* (digestive fire). The *Rakta Dhatu* (blood) becomes depleted due to an anemic condition, and the *Rasa Dhatu* is diverted to the *Rakta Dhatu*. This leads to the depletion of other *Dhatu*s, causing reduced formation of *Artava* as its precursor, *Rasa*, is depleted. There is a relationship between *Rakta* and *Pitta*, and when *Rakta* is vitiated, it leads to *Pitta Kshaya*, ultimately resulting in *Artava Kshaya*. Sushruta has described *Rakta* as both a *Dosha* and a factor that vitiates *Artava* through improper *Ahara* and *Vihara*[23].

Nidana of Arthavakshaya

Table no :1 Aharaja hetu of Arthava kshaya[24]

S.N.	Vitiating hetu	Vata	Pitta	Kapha
1	Ahara rasa	Ati katu, Tikta, Kashaya rasa	Ati katu, Amla, Lavana rasa	Ati Madhura, Amla, Lavana rasa
2	Ahara guna	Ati Sheeta, Laghu, Rukhsa Ahara	Ati Ushna, Vidhahi Ahara	Ati Abhishyandi, Guru, Picchila Ahara
3	Ahara dravya	Excessive intake of Mudga, Shyamaka, Ati Sushka Shaka	Excessive intake of Kshara, Dadhi, Takra, Kanji sevana etc.	Excessive intake of Pista, Ikshu, Masha, Audaka mamsa, Anupa Mamsa.
4	Ahara Pramana	Abhojana, Atyalpa Bhojana		Atibhojana, Adhyashana

Table no:2 Viharaja & Manasika hetu of Arthava kshaya[25]

Vata vitiating hetu	Pitta vitiating hetu	Kapha vitiating hetu
Ati Vyayama Ati Vyavaya Ati Prajagarana Vega Dharana Chinta Shoka Bhaya	Atapasevana Dhumasevana Krodha Irshya	Divaswapna Alasya

Cikitsa (Treatment) –

In Ayurveda, the treatment (*Cikitsa*) approach revolves around breaking the pathogenesis (*Samprapti Vighatana*) and avoiding causative factors (*Nidana Parivarjana*). In the case of *Artava Kshaya*, there is an imbalance or increase in *Vata* and *Kapha*, along with a depletion of *Pitta*, *Rasa*, and *Rakta Dhatus*, primarily due to impaired digestion (*Agnimandya*). Therefore, all these pathological factors (*Samprapti Ghatakas*) must be addressed to ensure effective treatment.

The management of *Artava Kshaya* involves detoxification (*Samshodhana*) using substances with heating properties (*Agneya Aushadhi*). *Dalhana* emphasizes that detoxification should be carried out using *Vamana* (emesis) rather than *Virechana* (purgation). This is because *Virechana* reduces *Pitta*, which further depletes *Artava*. On the other hand, *Vamana* eliminates *Kapha*, a cooling and stabilizing factor, leading to a relative increase in the fiery (*Agneya*) elements within the body. This

ultimately helps in enhancing the production of *Artava*.

Role of *Srotoshodhana* (Purification)

Acarya Chakrapani, in his commentary, highlights that purification therapies clear bodily channels (*Srotas*). *Vamana Karma* (upward cleansing) and *Virechana Karma* (downward cleansing) are both effective in clearing blockages in their respective channels. Hence, both therapies may be considered in *Artava Kshaya*, depending on the patient's condition.

Use of *Agneya Dravya*

Artava Kshaya is characterized by a qualitative depletion of *Pitta* and a quantitative reduction in *Artava*. Therefore,

Discussion

In Ayurveda, the concept of *Agni* is central to maintaining overall health, including reproductive health. It governs digestion, absorption, and tissue formation, and any imbalance in *Agni* can lead to the improper formation of *Rasa* (plasma), which is essential for producing *Artava* (menstrual blood). *Artava Kshaya*, or reduced menstrual flow, is often seen in Ayurveda as a consequence of impaired *Agni*. This aligns with modern biomedical research that links metabolic disturbances and hormonal imbalances to menstrual irregularities.

remedies with heating and digestive-enhancing properties (*Agneya* and *Agnivardhaka Dravyas*) are beneficial. Such substances also have *Pittakara* properties, which help address the root cause by restoring digestive fire and balancing *Pitta*. As per classical texts, substances like *Tila* (sesame), *Masha* (black gram), *Sura* (fermented preparations), and *Shukta* (fermented sour preparations) are recommended for their *Pitta*-enhancing and *Artava*-increasing effects.

By combining these principles, *Artava Kshaya* can be effectively managed, restoring balance and promoting reproductive health.

Research in modern medicine has begun to highlight how metabolic disorders, gut dysbiosis, and hormonal imbalances contribute to menstrual irregularities. Conditions such as oligomenorrhea (infrequent menstruation) and hypomenorrhea (scanty menstruation) have been linked to disturbances in metabolic processes, including poor digestion, insulin resistance, and dysregulation of sex hormones like estrogen and progesterone. In this context, the Ayurveda concept of *Agni* can be seen as an ancient framework that predates modern understanding of metabolic

health. Specifically, *Agni* in Ayurveda refers not only to the digestive fire in the stomach but to a broader metabolic fire that influences all bodily functions. Disruption in this fire leads to the accumulation of *Ama* (toxins), which are believed to obstruct the normal flow of *Rasa Dhatu*, causing menstrual irregularities such as *Artava Kshaya*. Ayurveda's emphasis on *Agni* can thus be viewed as a holistic approach to these issues, where restoring digestive fire is believed to support the formation of *Rasa* and improve menstrual health.

Additionally, Ayurveda treatments often use dietary adjustments and herbs to strengthen *Agni*. For example, *Tila* (sesame) and *Masha* (black gram) are thought to enhance digestion and support the proper formation of *Rasa*. These traditional remedies align with modern nutrition principles, which focus on bioavailability of essential nutrients to support hormonal balance and metabolic health.

Conclusion

Ayurveda understanding of *Artavakshaya* highlights the vital role of *Agni* in maintaining menstrual and overall reproductive health. By emphasizing the balance of *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*, Ayurveda provides a holistic framework for

Furthermore, *Srotoshodhana* (cleansing of channels) is a key Ayurveda practice used to eliminate toxins (*Ama*) from the body, which could otherwise block the normal flow of menstrual blood. Scientific research has also shown that toxins, both metabolic and environmental, can affect reproductive function. Detoxification therapies, such as *Panchakarma*, could complement modern treatments like hormone therapy, offering a more integrated approach to managing menstrual disorders.

Finally, the Ayurveda framework recognizes the role of the three doshas—*Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*—in influencing reproductive health. *Vata* imbalances are linked to irregular or scanty menstruation, while *Pitta* and *Kapha* imbalances can also affect the flow and timing of menstruation. By addressing these imbalances, Ayurveda offers a personalized, holistic approach to treating conditions like *Artava Kshaya*.

addressing menstrual irregularities, focusing on the metabolic and tissue imbalances that lead to reduced menstrual flow. The treatment strategies, including dietary modifications, detoxification, and the use of *Agneya* (heating) therapies, aim to restore digestive health and balance the bodily

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humors, offering potential benefits in managing conditions like *Artava Kshaya*. This approach aligns with modern scientific concepts that recognize the interconnectedness of metabolic and hormonal balance in reproductive health.

Conflicts of interest: Nil

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