



## Research Article

## Dysmenorrhoea (*Kashtartava*): An Ayurvedic Perspective

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### Abstract

*Krichhartava*, or painful menstruation (*dysmenorrhea*), is a common gynaecological problem seen in women. In Ayurveda, it is not described as a separate disease but as a symptom seen in conditions like Kukshishoola, Vatala Yoni, and Udavartini Yonivyapada. It is characterised by difficulty and pain during the flow of Artava (menstrual blood). According to Acharya Charaka, vitiation of Vata Dosha plays a major role in all gynaecological disorders. In dysmenorrhea, the pain mainly occurs due to aggravation of Vata Dosha, either alone or along with other Doshas. This aggravation of Vata is mainly caused by:

#Increase in Apana Vayu

#Obstruction in body channels (Margavarodha)

Ayurveda explains the causative factors, pathogenesis, symptoms, and treatment of this condition. Overall, increased Vata Dosha in the body is considered the main factor responsible for the development of this disease.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the present era, stress has become an unavoidable component of modern life. In the continuous pursuit of material comforts, women are increasingly compromising their health. One of the primary reasons for the growing burden of health-related problems among women is the neglect of fundamental principles of healthy living. There is a marked disregard for codes essential to maintaining both physical well-being and mental health.

Menstruation is a natural physiological phenomenon and an integral part of the normal reproductive life of females. However, due to a sedentary lifestyle, lack of physical activity, and increased stress, dysmenorrhoea has emerged as a major health concern worldwide. It significantly interferes with daily activities, often leading to absenteeism from work or school and limiting participation in sports and other routine activities.

A systematic review conducted in developing countries by Harlow and Campbell (2002) reported that approximately 25–50% of adult women and nearly 75% of adolescent girls experience menstrual pain, with 5–20% suffering from severe dysmenorrhoea. Conventional management of dysmenorrhoea commonly involves the use of analgesics, antispasmodics, and anti-inflammatory drugs, which may not be suitable for long-term use due to their potential adverse effects. During menstruation, many women experience gastrointestinal disturbances that may be aggravated by these medications. Additionally, such drugs can cause side effects including headache, dizziness, drowsiness, and blurred vision.

In Ayurvedic literature, *Kashtartava* (dysmenorrhoea) is not described as a separate disease entity. This may be because, in ancient times, women strictly followed Ritucharya and Rajasvalacharya, which helped in preventing such menstrual disorders. However, *Kashtartava* has been mentioned as a symptom in various gynecological conditions described in classical Ayurvedic texts. Therefore, the present study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of *Kashtartava* based on the scattered references available in these classical texts.

## 2. Artava

A substance of the body which flows out at the specific period of time is called as Artava [2].

A substance which flows out from Apatya marga without pain, burning and sliminess is known as Artava [3]

Apana Vayu and Vyana Vayu is mainly responsible for Artava Utpatti [4]

## 3. Kashtartava

*Kashtartava* (dysmenorrhoea) is not separately described as a disease. But there are many diseases in which *Kashtartava* is considered and described as a symptom.

### 3.1. Nirukti

The term *Kashtartava* is made of two words- Kashta and Artava  
**Kashta:** Painful, Difficult, troublesome, ill, forced, wrong, unnatural, a bad state of Thing. Artava: Belonging to seasons, period of time, menstruation.

**Kashtena** - with great difficulty [5]

Thus, the word *Kashtartava* can be expressed as- “*Kashtenamuchyatiiti Kashtartava*” i.e. the condition where Artava is shaded with great difficulty and pain is termed as “*Kashtartava*”.

## 4. SAMPRAPTIGHATAKA

**Dosha** -Vata Pradhana Tridosha

**Vata** -Vyana

**Apana Pitta** -Ranjaka, Pachaka, Kapha as Anubandhita Dosa

**Dhatu** -Rasa, Rakta, Artava

**Upadhatu**- Artava

**Agni** -Jatharagni, Rasagni, Raktagni

**Srotasa** -Rasa, Rakta and Artavavaha

**Srotasa Srotodushhti**- Sanga and Vimargagamana

**Udbhavasthana** -Amapakvashaya

**Rogamarga**- Abyantara

**Sthana Samshraya**- Garbhashaya

**VyaktiSthana**- Garbhashaya

## 5. AYURVEDIC CONCEPT OF PAIN RELATED TO KASHTARTAVA

According to Acharya Charaka, the involvement of aggravated Vāta doṣa is essential in the manifestation of all gynecological disorders. Vāta acts as the primary causative factor, while the other doṣas may be involved only as associated or secondary factors (anubandhī). Therefore, in the case of *Kashtartava* (dysmenorrhoea), the pain is primarily attributed to the vitiation of Vāta doṣa.

## 6. DEFINITIONS OF MENSTRUATION

Menstruation is a natural physiological process observed in women and higher primates. It is defined as the periodic and cyclical shedding of the endometrial lining, accompanied by blood loss. This process typically occurs at an average interval of about 28 days, beginning at menarche and continuing until menopause.

It represents the external manifestation of cyclic uterine bleeding caused by the shedding of the endometrium. This process is regulated by a complex and well-coordinated hormonal interplay involving the hypothalamic–pituitary–ovarian–endometrial axis.

## 7. DYSMENHORRHOEA

### 7.1 Definition

The term dysmenorrhoea denotes the occurrence of painful menstruation. It is characterized by cramp-like, labor-type pain in the lower abdomen, which may radiate to the upper abdomen, lower back, and thighs. The pain is often associated with systemic symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, headache, and dizziness [17,18].

### 7.2 Types of dysmenorrhea

There are two types of Dysmenorrhoea.

Dysmenorrhoea is broadly classified into two types:

### 7.2.1 Primary Dysmenorrhoea (Spasmodic Type)

Primary *dysmenorrhoea* refers to menstrual pain that occurs during ovulatory cycles in the absence of any identifiable pelvic pathology involving the reproductive organs. It is mainly associated with increased myometrial contractions caused by the release of prostaglandins from the secretory endometrium. These excessive contractions lead to reduced uterine blood flow (uterine ischemia), which ultimately results in pain.

In addition to these physiological mechanisms, psychological factors have also been implicated. Various theories suggest that individual personality traits and attitudes toward menstruation may influence both the perception and severity of menstrual pain.

### 7.2.2 Secondary Dysmenorrhoea/congestive

Secondary *dysmenorrhoea* is defined as menstrual pain associated with ovulatory cycles that arises due to an underlying, demonstrable pelvic pathology.

## 8. DIFFERENTIAL DIAGNOSIS

### A. Primary Consideration

The most important differential diagnosis of primary *dysmenorrhoea* is secondary *dysmenorrhoea*. Secondary *dysmenorrhoea* may be associated with the following conditions:

- Endometriosis
- Adenomyosis
- Uterine myoma
- Endometrial polyps
- Obstructive congenital malformations of the genital tract

### B. Other Causes of Pelvic Pain

- Chronic pelvic inflammatory disease
- Pelvic adhesions
- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Inflammatory bowel disease Interstitial cystitis

### C. Conditions Associated with Sudden Onset of Dysmenorrhoea

Acute pelvic inflammatory disease Undiagnosed ectopic pregnancy Spontaneous abortion

## 9. TREATMENT ACCORDING TO AYURVEDIC CLASSICS

According to Ayurvedic principles, the vitiation of Vāta doṣa is fundamental to the development of gynecological disorders. Therefore, the primary objective of treatment is to normalize Vāta, followed by the management of other involved doṣas as required.

In the management of gynecological conditions, appropriate preparatory measures such as *snehana* (oleation) and *svedana* (sudation) are initially employed. These are followed by *śodhana* therapies, including *vamana* and other *pañcakarma* procedures, to eliminate vitiated doṣas from the body. Once adequate purification through both upper and lower channels is achieved, *śamana* (palliative) therapy is initiated. These purification procedures are considered equally effective in gynecological disorders as in diseases of other systems.

In menstrual disorders predominantly caused by Vāta doṣa, treatment should be specifically directed toward Vāta pacification. Formulations indicated for *yoni rogas*, along with procedures such as *uttar basti*, may be administered after careful evaluation of the involved doṣas.

Dietary and therapeutic measures should be selected according to the predominance of doṣas. In Vāta-dominant conditions, the use of unctuous, warm, sour, and salty substances is recommended. For Pitta pacification, sweet, cooling, and astringent substances are beneficial, while in Kapha disorders, hot, dry, and astringent substances are advised.

In conditions involving *āvṛta apāna vāyu*, treatment should focus on *agnidīpana* (enhancing digestive fire), *grāhī* (improving absorption), *vāta anulomana* (correcting the direction of Vāta), and *pakvāśaya śuddhikara*.

### Lifestyle Modifications

- Engage in regular physical exercise at least three times per week.
- Ensure adequate sleep of 6–8 hours daily Avoid smoking and alcohol consumption. Limit caffeine intake.

### Dietary Recommendations

- Consume wholesome, warm, and freshly prepared foods Take small, frequent meals (5–6 times daily)
- Include fresh fruits such as plums, dark grapes, apples and pomegranates. Eat more leafy vegetables.
- Regularly use ginger in food preparations Avoid high fat and sugar.
- Take supplements like calcium, magnesium, vitamin E, B6, B12.

### Yoga

Yoga practices play a significant role in reducing and preventing the severity of various disorders related to women's health by enhancing strength, stability, and flexibility. *Yogāsanas* are regarded as a convenient, non-pharmacological, and cost-effective therapeutic approach. Regular practice of yoga has been shown to increase pain threshold and improve pain tolerance in individuals. Among the various *āsanas* described in yogic literature, *Uṣṭrāsana*, *Bhadrāsana*, *Gomukhāsana*, and *Vajrāsana* are particularly beneficial in alleviating menstrual pain.

### Ayurvedic Treatment

According to Ayurveda, the process of menstruation is primarily governed by Vāta doṣa. Derangement or aggravation of Vāta leads to the manifestation of painful menstruation. Therefore, therapeutic measures aimed at pacifying Vāta doṣa yield effective results in the management of this condition.

*Pañcakarma* procedures such as *uttar basti*, *anuvāsana basti*, and *mātrā basti* specifically address Vāta imbalance in menstrual disorders. In addition, the administration of *garbhāśaya balya auśadhi* helps in strengthening the uterus and reducing associated symptoms.

## 10. DISCUSSION

Primary dysmenorrhoea is widely recognized across cultures as a condition associated with menstrual pain and discomfort. The term is commonly used in both clinical and non-clinical contexts, often with a broader interpretation than its strict medical definition. Despite its high prevalence and significant impact on quality of life, the condition often remains inadequately managed. Ayurveda offers a holistic and effective approach to address the underlying causes and provide sustained relief.

## 11. CONCLUSION

Ayurveda conceptualizes primary dysmenorrhoea as a manifestation of doṣic imbalance, predominantly involving Vāta doṣa. This imbalance can be effectively managed through a holistic lifestyle approach that includes a doṣa-appropriate diet, herbal formulations, regular physical activity, adherence to daily routines, yoga, meditation, and nourishment of the body and mind through balanced sensory inputs.

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