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Dysmenorrhoea (*Kashtartava*): An Ayurvedic Perspective

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Abstract

In present day life women are effectively facing challenges encountered by stressful life resulting in *Mithya Ahar, vihar*, over exertion & malnutrition this may direct to *vikruti* in "*Rutuchakra*" leading to various *vyadhi* allied to menstruation. Ayurveda recommends *rutucharya* and *dinacharya*, diet modulation and yoga in the form of asanas, pranayam and meditation on a regular basis so as to alleviate dysmenorrhoea effectively. Similarly, *Uttarbasti, Garbhashaya balyaashadhi, anuvasan* or *matrabasti* can also be administered if necessary.

Keywords: Ayurveda, *Kashtartava*, Menstruation, Dysmenorrhoea

1. Introduction

Today stress is becoming an inescapable part of modern life. In the incessant quest for material comforts, a woman has been losing her health. The basic reason why women are reeling under myriad problems is because she has not been following the codes of healthy living. She has disregarded the codes for the bodily health as well as healthy mind also.

Menstruation is a natural event as a part of the normal process of reproductive life in females. Due to today's sedentary lifestyle and lack of exercise, dysmenorrhoea is becoming today's burning problem throughout the world which causes discomfort for women's daily ensuing day to day activities and may result in missing work or school, inability to participate in sports or other activities. A systematic review of studies in developing countries performed by Harlow and Campbell (2002) has revealed that about 25-50% of adult women and about 75% of adolescents experience pain during menstruation, with 05-20% reporting severe dysmenorrhoea or pain^[1].

In the treatment of dysmenorrhea, no addictive, analgesic, antispasmodics are prescribed which are not good for health for longer use. During menstruation, many women experience gastrointestinal upsets which are increased by analgesics and anti-inflammatory drugs, which also produce headache, dizziness, drowsiness and blurred vision.

In Ayurvedic classics *Kashtartava* (dysmenorrhoea) is not described as a separate disease because women were not suffering much from this problem in that era because of pin pointed *Ritucharya & Rajasvalacharya*. According to Ayurvedic text there are many other diseases in which *Kashtartava* is considered and is described as a symptom. Hence, this study is particular about the description regarding *Kashtartava* on the basis of scattered classical references.

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 *Apaty amarga* without pain, burning and sliminess is known as *Artava*^[3]. *Apana Vayu* and *Vyana Vayuis* mainly responsible for *Artava Utpatti*^[4].

3. Kashtartava

Kashtartava (dysmenorrhea) 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 reasons, period of time, menstruation.
Kashtena - with great difficulty^[5].

Thus the word *Kashtartava* can be expressed as- "*Kashthenamuchyatiiti 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 AnubandhitaDosa
Dhatu	Rasa, Rakta, Artava
Upadhatu	Artava
Agni	Jatharagni, Rasagni, Raktagni
Srotasa	Rasa, Rakta and ArtavavahaSrotasa
Srotodushti	Sanga and Vimargagamana
Udbhavasthana	Amapakvashaya
Rogamarga	Abyantara
SthanaSamshraya	Garbhashaya
VyaktiSthana	Garbhashaya

5. Ayurvedic concept of pain related to *Kashtartava*

Acharya Charaka [6] has mentioned none of the gynecological disease can be arise without affliction of aggravated *Vata*. *Vata* is the main responsible factor, though other *doshas* only be present as *Anubandhi* to it. So pain is produced due to vitiation of only *vata* or in combination with other *Doshas*.

Modern Review

6. Definitions of Menstruation

Menstruation is a function peculiar to women and the higher apes. It may be define as a "periodic and cyclic shedding of progesterational endometrium accompanied by loss of blood". It takes place at approximately 28-days interval between the menarche and menopause [11]. Menstruation is the visible manifestation of cyclic physiologic uterine bleeding due to shedding of the endometrium following invisible interplay of hormones mainly through hypothalamo-pituitary-ovarian-endometrial axis [12].

7. Dysmenorrhoea

7.1 Definition

The term dysmenorrhea refers to painful menstruation. Dysmenorrhea is a cramp labor-like pain in the lower abdomen that radiates to upper abdomen, waist and thighs and is sometimes accompanied by systemic symptoms like nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, headache and dizziness [17, 18].

7.2. Etymology

The word „dysmenorrhoea“ has a Greek origin. Dis-men-ore“ah

Dis: Prefix meaning difficult, bad, painfulmen: Monthrein: To flow

Thus, Dysmenorrhoea-means painful or difficult menses [13].

7.3. Types of dysmenorrhea

There are two types of Dysmenorrhoea.

7.3.1. Primary dysmenorrhoea-

Primary dysmenorrhoea is the pain associated to ovulation cycles, without demonstrable lesions that affect the reproductive organs. Primary dysmenorrhea is related to myometrial contractions induced by prostaglandins (Pgs) originating in secretory endometrium, which result in uterine ischemia and pain [14,15] In addition to the physiologic

perspective, various psychologic theories have also been proposed, emphasizing the role of personality factors and attitudes about menstruation [16].

7.3.2. Secondary dysmenorrhoea-

Secondary dysmenorrhoea is the pain associated with ovulatory cycles caused by a demonstrable pathology.

8. Differential diagnosis

A. The most important differential diagnosis of primary dysmenorrhoea is secondary dysmenorrhoea.

Secondary dysmenorrhoea

1. Endometriosis
2. Adenomyosis
3. Uterine myoma
4. Endometrial polyps
5. Obstructive malformations of the genital tract

B. Other causes of pain

Chronic pelvic inflammatory disease

Pelvic adhesions

Irritable bowel syndrome

Inflammatory bowel disease

Interstitial cystitis

C. Sudden onset of dysmenorrhoea

Pelvic inflammatory disease

Unrecognized ectopic pregnancy

Spontaneous abortion

9. Treatment as Per Ayurvedic Classics

1. These disorders (gynecological disorders) do not occur without vitiation of *Vata*, thus first of all *Vata* should be normalized, and only then treatment for other *doshas* should be done [7].
2. In all these gynecologic disorders, after proper oleation and sudation, emesis etc. all five purifying measures should be used. Only after proper cleansing of *doshas* though upper and lower passages, other medicines should be given. These emesis etc. cleansing measures cure gynecologic disorders in the same way as they cure the diseases of other systems [8].
3. In menstrual disorders caused by *Vata Doshā*, the specific treatment prescribed for suppressing that particular *Dosha* should be used. Recipes prescribed for *Yoni Rogas* and *Uttarbasti* etc. should also be used after giving due consideration to the vitiated *Doshā*. [9].
4. Unctuous, hot, sour and salty articles should be used for the relief from menstrual disorders due to *Vata*. Sweet, cold and astringent substances for the purification of *Pitta* and hot, dry and astringent for *Kapha* [9].
5. For *Avrita Apana Vayu*, treatment should be *Agnideepaka*, *Grahi*, *Vāta*, *Anulomana* and *Pakvashaya Shuddhikara* [10].

9.1 Treatment

Life-style changes

Exercise regularly-minimum thrice a week

Ensure sound sleep of at least 6-8 hours

Avoid smoking and alcohol

Reduce caffeine

Diet

Eat healthy, warm and fresh foods

Eat 5-6 small meals

Have fresh fruits like plums, dark grapes, apples,

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 activities can help to reduce and prevent the severity of many ailments that specifically women's health and give strength, stability, and suppleness. Yogasanas are considered as the most convenient, drugless, and inexpensive method. Yoga is also found to have encouraging effect on increasing the pain threshold capacity in individuals. In Yoga, various types of Asanas have been mentioned. Among them *Ushtrasana*, *Bhadrasana*, *Gomukhasana*, and *Vajrasana* have a pain relieving effect.

Ayurvedic Treatment: According to Ayurveda menstruation is guarded by *vata dosha*. Derangement or aggravation of *vata dosha* gives rise to this symptom. The treatment, which alleviates *vata*, gives excellent results in this disease. *Panchakarma* treatments like *Uttarbasti*, *anuvasa* or *matrabasti* are the treatments which will specifically target derangement of *vata* in menstrual problems. *Garbhashaya balya aushadhi* will also reduce associated symptoms.

10. Discussion

Culturally, the abbreviation Primary Dysmenorrhea is widely understood in the world to refer to difficulties associated with menses, and the abbreviation is used frequently even in casual and conversational settings, without regard to medical rigor. In these contexts, the syndrome is rarely referred to without abbreviation, and the intensions of the reference are frequently broader than the clinical definition. The misery is going on endlessly. Thanks we have the solution.

11. Conclusion

Ayurveda views Primary Dysmenorrhea as a *doshic* imbalance that can potentially be impacted through balanced living that is characterized by *dosha* appropriate diet, herbal supplements, exercise, routine, yoga, meditation, as well as nourishing inputs through all five senses.

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