

## Astartavadushti - The eight menstrual disorders

**Pushpa Kumari, R.**

Department of Cikitsa,  
Gampaha Wickramarachchi  
Ayurveda Institute,  
University of Kelaniya,  
Yakkalamulla, Sri Lanka.

### Abstract

Abnormal uterine bleeding is quite a common complaint in women. It can be of various types considering the menstrual cycle. The abnormality can be one of the types: increase in amount, increase in duration, shortening of interval and irregular bleeding. In Ayurvedic texts, this type of abnormal hemorrhage is known as Artavavruddhi. This is a certain change in the body causing imbalance of doshas governing menstruation or imitation of *rajovaha* and *artavavaha strotas* unless disorders of *rakta* itself will produce abnormal bleeding. These four facts explain the general pathology of uterine bleeding. The main causative factors include increased level of *pitta*, disorders of *rakta* and influence of disordered *vata* on blood vessels supplying uterus. If *apana-vata* is encircled by *pitta*, menorrhagia results. There will be many more factors behind each of the four. Some of the various conditions are *raktajarajodushti*, *pittajarajodushti*, *pittajayonivyapat*, *paripitayonivyapat* and *raktapradara*. In Ayurvedic classics most of the menstrual disorders have been described under the heading of *astartavadushti* and *Asrigdara*. The descriptions on *nastartava*, *artavaksaya* and *kishnaartava* are also included.

**KEY WORDS:** Artavadushti, Menstrual disorders.

### Introduction

The word "Artava" is used in the classics to denote menstrual blood or ovum. Arunadatta has specifically indicated to consider menstrual blood with word *artava* (Su.Sa.2.21/3.6; AHS.Sa.2.6). Therefore, the term "artava" refers to menstruation or menstrual blood, ovum and ovarian hormones with reference to context.

Menstruation is a normal part of a woman's reproductive cycle. The *vata* getting aggravated, obstructs the *artava*; discharge of *artava* brings immediate relief; neither too less, nor too much, resembling *indragopa* in colour is pure *artava*. The word *artava* is used to connote ovum at number of places in relation to fertilization of zygote, embryo and fetus. *Vata* divides the combination of *sukra* and *artava*. *Sukra* after entering uterus through appropriate passage gets admitted with *artava* etc. (Su.Sa.Sa.3.6, Su.Sa.Sa.4.24) *sukra* is *artava* of female.

In Ayurvedic classics most of the menstrual disorders have been described under the *astartavadushti* and *Asrigdara*. A very short description of *Nastartava*, *Artavakshaya*, is also available. Non appearance of *artava* is call *Nastartava*. Menstruation occur with pain and deficiency or loss of *artava* is *artavakshaya*. *Bheha samhita* described absence of *raja* and *Bhavaprakasha* has mentioned *rajonasa*.

### Astartavadushti

*Susruta* just after describing eight disorders of *sukra*, has enumerated eight disorders of *artava*, three from each *dosa* (*vata*, *pitta* and *kapha*), three from combination of two *doshas*, one from combination of all *doshas* and *rakta*. *Dalhana* clarified that the clinical features of *artava* are identical to those described for *sukra*. The clinical features depend upon the predominance of particular *dosa*. (Su.Sa.2.5, dalhan). *Vagbata* has expressed similar views. Disorders of *artava* have been classified by *susruta* on the basis of predominance of *dosas* and disorders of *sukra* on the basis of main clinical feature. But there is no difference between them. Because one is causative factor and other, the clinical features (Su.Sa.2.5). Actually all the classics have mentioned that *artava* and similar to clinical features of *sukra*. Therefore, clinical features of disorders of *artava* are being given on the basis of description of disorders of *sukra*. *Harita* has not described the eight menstrual disorders. *Harita* has mentioned clinical features and treatment of *vataja*, *pittaja* and *kaphaja* menstrual disorders with *vandya* (infertility) (KS.Si.3.20) all the above description, these disorders of *artava* is menstrual disorders.

#### Classification of *artavadusti* on the basis of causative *dosas*

*Vata*, *pitta*, *ślesma*, *rakta* and combination of *vata*, *pitta* with *kapha*, *vata* with *kapha* and all the three *dosas* are disorders of *Astavadushti*.

#### Classification on the basis of specific clinical features

*Vataja*, *pittaja*, *kaphaja*, *kunapagandhi*, *granthibhuta*, *putipuya*, *kshina* and *mutrapuritulya* these abnormalities are incapable of producing *pogeneces*

#### Clinical Features of eight *artavadusti*

##### *Vataja Artavadushti*

Menstruation is accompanied with dull aching or excruciating pain flow is frequent but small in amount consistency is liquid. Colour is blackish *vataja artavadusti* is due to vitiation of *vayu* (Su.Sa.2). While various causes responsible to aggravate: *vayu*, excessive exercise, use of dry and hot articles etc. are important and these factors produce some physical weakness or slight decrease in the amount of *dhatu*s mainly *rasa* and *rakta dhatu*s. *Rasa* is plasma and *rakta* is blood. However, *artava* is formed from *rasa* or *rakta*, generally, its amount is also slightly decreased. When the amount of menstrual blood is decreased its colour is altered. (Su.Sa.1.4, As.ha.45/13)

##### *Pittaja Artavadusti*

In this conditions *raja* derives abnormality from its source bleeding is in excess. It is foul smelling and is accompanied with signs and symptoms of *pitta - dushti*, eg: burning sensation, yellowish colour and liquid consistency no clotting. It is difficult to explain the presence of yellowish colour in menstrual blood. These colours are not seen in practice. Sometime it may be that if the menstruation is very scanty and associated with dry pieces of mucous membranes. (Su.Sa.2.4 *daihana*),

##### *Kunapagandhi artavadusti*

It is caused by *rakta*. *Kunapagandhi artavadusti* and *raktaja artavadusti* is same. The amount of blood discharged during menstruation is more and red like fresh blood. It is also associated with heat and burning sensation etc. Features of *pitta*: (Su.Sa.2.4 *daihana*) *kunapagandhi* is found in necrosis of tissues

##### *Putipuya Artavadusti*

*Puti* is putrid, *Puya* means purulent, this is caused by *pitta* with *kapha dosas* is the opinion of *Susruta* and *Vagbhata* says it to be due to *rakta* with *pitta*. These disorders are characterized with other features of *pitta* and *kapha*. Some characteristics are due to *pitta* such as burning sensation, fever and heat. Heaviness is due to *kapha*. In acute infective condition of reproductive system, the menstrual flow has an offensive odour like pus. This disorder is said to be incurable. If incurability is considered for the disease, not for the longevity. Then this may be considered as very severe infections. (Su.Sa.2.14, AS.Sa.1.24), AHS.Sa.1.11),

##### *Kshina Artavadusti*

*Kshina* is scanty, *kshina artavadusti* is caused by *pitta* with *vata*. Then menstruation is delayed in this condition and menstrual blood is scanty and associated with pain in vagina. It also has the features of both *vata* and *pitta dosas*. *Kshina artavadusti* appears to be description of hypofunction of ovary. It may be hypoestrogenic condition it caused by nutritional deficiencies. Therefore these signs are due to *artavaksaya* (Su.Sa.2.4, AS.Sa.1.28, AHS.1.11)

##### *Kaphaja Artavadusti*

The *artava* vitiated by *kapha* is whitish or slightly yellowish in colour is too much thick slippery or lubricous, unctuous. *Harita* has added retention of urine. Stiffness or idleness lethargy, drowsiness and sleepiness etc. In menstrual blood, unctuousness, laboriousness and yellowishness etc features are noted. When amount of excreted blood is relatively less and it is mixed with good quantity of mucus. Some inflammatory of uterus are often characterized with excessive mucoid discharges. These discharges, when mixed with menstruation, can give appearance described above. (Su.Sa.2.4, AS.Sa.1.24, AHS.Sa.1.10),

##### *Granthibhuta Artavadusti*

*Granthibhuta* is appearance of clotted. It is caused by vitiation of *vata* with *ślesma* has association of other features of both the *dosas* specially pain due to *vata* and unctuousness due to *kapha* etc. clotting is a main feature of severe menstrual bleeding. Here clotted appearance probably refers to thick mucoid or mucopurulent. (Su.sa.2.4, AS.sa.1.24, AHS.sa.1.11)



**Muthrapurishagandhi Artavadusti**

*Mutrapurisagandhi* mean is smell of urine and feces. It is caused due to vitiation of all the three dosas. The smell of urine and feces in menstrual blood can usually be noticed when these substances are mixed with it. This mixture of urine and feces with menstrual blood. It is possible in the cases of fustula. (Su.sa.2.4, AS.sa.1.24, AHS.sa.1.12).

**Complication of Astartavadusti**

The *artava* vitiated by *dosas* has absence of *beja* and become infertile.

**Prognosis of Astartavadusti**

*Susruta* says that *kunupagandhi*, *granthibhuta*, *puthrupuya*, *ksina* and *mutrapurisa gandhi* disorders are incurable. Others caused by one particular *dosa* are curable. *Vagbhata* says *kshina artavadusti* as curable he says only *muthrapurasagandi* disorder is incurable others are cured with great difficulty. When an ovary releases an egg, it also releases the hormone estrogen, which stimulates the lining of the uterus to grow and engorged with blood. If the egg is not fertilized, the ovary releases progesterone, in a normal menstrual cycle, there is a balance between estrogen and progesterone, two hormones in the body. The hormones regulate the build up of the endometrium (uterine lining of blood and tissue) which is shed each month during menstruation. The three main categories of menstrual irregularities are lack of period (amenorrhoea) painful periods (dysmenorrhoea) and heavy periods (menorrhagia).

Ayurvedic texts have described this conditions under the following as

1. Amenorrhoea-*Nastartava*
2. Dysmenorrhoea-*Kishnartava*, *Artavaksaya*
3. Menorrhagia - *Astartavadusti*, *Asrgdara*

**Amenorrhoea - Nastartava**

In the opinion of *Susruta* the imbalance of *vata* and *Kapha* influences the amenorrhoea. He says if the passage is encircled by *vata* and *kapha*, amenorrhoea will be produced. We know the robe of *vata* and *kapha* in menstruation considering this description their influence. *Susruta* says that injury to *Artavawaha srotasa* cause amenorrhoea. If ovary or ovarian vessels are injured, it will result in amenorrhoea. (Su.Su.15.12).

According to Ayurveda, Amenorrhoea is a symptom. A symptom can arise as a syndrome of temporary imbalance of the *doshas*. It is *dosha lakshana* as a *vata pitta rajo dushti* or as a symptom of a disease. It is *vyadhi - lakshana* as a *arajaska yoni* or as a symptom of complication. *Upadrava lakshana* as a *pandu* or as a fatal symptom. It is *arishita - lakshana* as a *artavawaha srotasa vedha marmaghata*.

*Dosha - Lakshana*

(*Vata - pitta Rajo dushti*)

*Vyadhi - Lakshan*

(*Arajaska yoni*)

*Upadrava - Lankshana*

(*Pandu*)

*Arishita - Lakshan*

(*Artavawaha srotasa vedha marmaghata*)

**Dysmenorrhoea – Ksinartava, Artavakshaya**

1. *Margavarodha* (Obstruction either physiology or anatomical): *Apan vata* is said to be the governing force of the menstrual flow. If there is any sort of obstruction to this *Apan vata*, pain is produced. A *prana vata* can be obstructed from a block in the passage itself (anatomical).
2. *Dhatukshaya Artavaksaya* appears to be arising due to deficiency of *dhatus*. It appears to be the description of deficiency of *artava* which is an *upadhatu*. The *dhatukshaya* may cause *vatavrudhi* especially of its *ruksha* and *khara* characteristics. This *ruksha* and *khara* is responsible for producing pain.

**Menorrhagia - Asrgdara**

Menorrhagia is defined as heavy or prolonged uterine bleeding, which may be caused by medical problems or hormone imbalances, in Ayurvedic texts four *sutras* explain the general pathology of uterine bleeding.

1. Imbalance of *Doshas*
2. Irritation of *Rajowaha* and *Artavawaha srotas*
3. Disorders of *rakta* (itself produce abnormal bleeding)

These causative factors give increased level of *pitta* and influence of disordered *vata* on blood vessels supplying uterus. If *apan vayu* is encircled by *pitta* menorrhagia results with *yoni santapa*. Ayurveda has a special branch of gynecological medicine for the treatment of diseases of the female reproductive system. These diseases are primarily reflected in menstrual disorders. Other, more severe conditions can develop from the hormonal imbalances that derange the menstrual cycle. The menstrual cycle is a good key to the health of a female. It can also be used to determine physical constitution. Regular menstruation, preferably starting with the full moon:

The basis of description of all these disorders of *artava* is variation in colour and smell of discharged blood. The colour and smell of menstrual discharge is influenced greatly by individual variations. Such as two women suffering from identical disorder may describe entirely different colour and smell of menstrual blood. Some women may feel different in colour and smell in two cycles. Other clinical features associated with menstrual abnormalities also show great individual variation. It is also possible that two different disorders of other system may influence menstruation in identical manner similar menstrual symptoms. Above mentioned has identified as one disease with two or three names.

### Conclusion

On the basis of above facts *Astartavadushti* appears to be description of menstrual disorders *vataja artavadusti* slight decrease in the amount of *rasa and rakta dhatu*. When it is decreased, the amount of menstrual blood is decreased, on the basis of these facts *vataja artavadushti* appears to be description of oligomenorrhoea associated with dysmenorrhoea caused by nutritional deficiency. Features of *pitta* like heat putrid smell etc. are found in infective disorders of reproductive system. So *pittaja artavadushti* seems to be description of oligomenorrhoea associated with infective conditions of genital organs specially chronic pelvic cellulite. Main features of *Kapaja artavadusti* is menstrual blood mixed with good quantity of mucus in chronic endometritis, oligomenorrhoea is also seen. Thus it appears that *kaphaja artava dusti* is description of oligomenorrhoea associated with chronic inflammation of genital organs specially chronic endometriosis and endometritis.

Appearance of *kunapagandhi artavadusti* is clotted with menstrual blood thick mucoid or mucopurulent discharges associated with slough often seen in malignant disorders of genital organs specially cervix this *artavadusti* is said to be incurable thus this is seems to be description of malignant disorders of reproductive organs, specially cervical malignancy. Menstrual discharge of *pittaja artavadushti* resembling with putrid smell is seen in acute infective condition of reproductive system. This disorder is said to be incurable. Then this may be considered as very severe endometriosis leading to pyometra in this conditions endometrial membrane is destroyed. Then it is incurable. Thus it may be permanent amenorrhoea. *kshinaarta- vadusti* is due to hypofunction of ovary. It is mild hypoestrogen conditions caused by nutritional deficiencies. *Mutrapurisagandhi artavadusti* is smell of urine and faeces in menstrual blood. These substance mixed with menstrual blood is possible in the cause of vesico vaginal fistula. These symptom have been seen advanced cervical malignant stage.

### References :

1. Burkman, R. Schlesseiman, S. Mecaffrey, L. Gupta, P.K. and spence, M. 1996 the relationship of genital tract actinomycetes and the development of pelvic inflammatory disease, American Journal of obstetrics and gynecology 143, 585 - 9.
2. Burkman, R.T. and the women's Health Group (1996) Association between intrauterine contraceptive devices and inflammatory disease. Obstetrics and Gynecology 59, 269-76.
3. Waugh, M.A. (1991) Sexually Transmitted diseases an Overview international Journal of STD and Aids 2, 246 - 7.
4. Westrom, L. (1989) incidence, Prevalence, and trends of acute pelvic inflammatory disease and its consequences in industrialized countries, American journal of obstetrics and Gynecology 138, 880 - 92