



# An Ayurvedic View of Dysmenorrhea (Kashtartava)

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## Abstract

Kashtartava (painful menstruation/dysmenorrhea) is one of the most commonly seen gynecological symptom seen among women before the menopause. It has been explained as a symptom of various diseases such as Vatalayoni, Udavartini Yonivyapada etc. in Ayurvedic texts. It is a condition in which Artava (menstrual fluid) comes out from the vagina with difficulty and pain. None of the gynecological problems may emerge without the presence of vitiated Vata dosha, a sort of bodily humor, according to Acharya Charaka. The factors involved in producing pain in dysmenorrhea is due to vitiation of Vata dosha only or in combination with other Doshas like Kapha Dosha, this is the outcome of margavarodha (channel obstruction owing to Kapha Dosha), vata vridhhi (rise in the Vata level) due to Apana vayu (kind of Vata), etc. Prevalence of Dysmenorrhea in India is 70% and according to worldwide it is 50-90% in which 90% of adolescent females and above 50% of menstruating women are suffering from it. In order to gather information on the subject, old Ayurvedic books have been examined, and a literature search has been conducted using the keywords "Kashtartava, Dysmenorrhea, Menstrual pain, Menstruation, Yonivyapada (vaginal disorder)" in a number of internet databases. According to research, the three main variables that contribute to the vitiation of the Vata dosha, which results in dysmenorrhea, are Dhatukshaya (tissue depletion), Kopa (dosha aggravation), and Vata dosha, and Margavarodha (obstruction of channel). It can be managed with various Ayurvedic preparations such as Dashmool sidh anuvasan basti, Trivartit anuvasana basti, Jeerakadi modak, Maharasnadi kwath, etc. Panchkarma (five therapeutic bio detoxification procedures) such as Shatavaryadi anuvasana basti and Baladi anuvasana basti along with Pathyaahara and Vihara (whole some regulated diet and lifestyle).

## Keywords

Dysmenorrhea, Gynecological disorder, Menstrual pain, *Kashtartava*, *Yonivyapada*.

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## Nirukti

The Kashtaratva word is made of two words *Kashta* (painful, difficult) and *Artava* (menstruation)

The term Dysmenorrhoea is derived from the Greek words Dys (difficult, painful, or abnormal), Men (monthly) and Orrhoea (flow or Discharge).

## INTRODUCTION

Normally Kashtartava or painful menstruation, is not addressed as a disease in the early Ayurvedic texts, there are many other conditions where this menstrual pain is mentioned. Kashtartava, Kukshishoola (abdominal discomfort), Vatala yoni, Udavartini Yonivyapad (a type of vaginal disease), etc. have all been used as synonyms for

dysmenorrhea, in traditional Ayurvedic literature: The terms "Kashta" (painful) and "Artava" (menstrual flow) make up the phrase "Kashtartava". As a result, the phrase "Kashtartava" can be expressed as "*Kashthena Muchyati Iti Kashtartava*" where Kashthena denotes a condition of great difficulty and Muchyati denotes shedding. As a result, the condition in which menstrual flow is released with great difficulty and pain is known as "Kashtartava". Similar etymologies have been cited in traditional medicine, where "dys" stands for difficult or unpleasant, "men" for month, and "rein" for flow. Thus, the term "dysmenorrhea" refers to painful or uncomfortable menstruation. No gynaecological problem may occur without the involvement of a vitiated vata dosha, according to Acharya Charaka, which causes dysmenorrhea when vata dosha is vitiated due to poor lifestyle choices and the repression of instinctive drive. According to him, the Apana Vayu (a subtype of Vata) becomes intensified as a result of Vegavarodha (the repression of natural desires), flows in the opposite direction, and fills the entire Yoni (vaginal canal). This apana vayu forces the rasa (menstrual blood) upward and leads to pain and discomfort in menstruation. Unfortunately, school and college girls do not attend school and colleges regularly. Most of the women experience monthly menstrual pain severe enough to affect normal daily function at school, work, or home. It affects the physical, psychological, and social status of female adolescents. Clinically, dysmenorrhea is of two types, i.e., primary and secondary. Menstrual pain without pelvic disease is referred to as primary dysmenorrhea. Once ovulatory cycles have been established, this often appears between one and two years after menarche. The disorder affects younger women but may persist into 40s. The pain of primary dysmenorrhea usually begins a few hours before or just after the onset of the menstrual period and lasts 48–72 hr. The pain is in lower abdominal like suprapubic cramping and may be accompanied by lumbosacral backache, pain radiating down the anterior or medial aspect of thigh, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and rarely syncopal episodes. The pain of dysmenorrhea is colicky in nature. Secondary dysmenorrhea is cyclic menstrual pain associated with underlying pelvic pathology. Secondary dysmenorrhea pain frequently starts one to two weeks before menstruation and lasts for a few days after the bleeding stops. The most common cause of

secondary dysmenorrhea is endometriosis, followed by adenomyosis and intrauterine devices. Younger age, low body mass index, smoking, early menarche, prolonged or abnormal menstrual flow, premenstrual syndromes, pelvic infections, psychological disturbance, genetic influence, and a history of sexual abuse increase the prevalence and severity of dysmenorrhea.

#### **Kashtartava-Related Ayurvedic Concept of Pain**

None of the gynaecological illnesses may manifest themselves without the presence of exacerbated Vata, according to Acharya Charaka. Although other doshas are just present as Anubandhi to it, vata is the main culprit. In other words, pain is caused by the vitiation of the vata dosha alone or in conjunction with other doshas. The Ayurvedic texts do not specifically mention Kashtartava as a sickness. Dysmenorrhea is regarded as, and is a symptom of, a wide range of different disorders. It is a sign of a number of illnesses, including Udavartini, Vataja Artava Dushti (a sort of menstruation ailment), and others. None of the gynaecological illnesses may manifest themselves without the presence of exacerbated Vata, according to Acharya Charaka. Although other doshas (biological-humorous energies) are only present as Anubandh, or as linked variables with it, it is the primary cause at fault. Therefore, using ayurvedic nomenclature, pain is caused by the vitiation of solely the Vata Dosha in conjunction with other biologically damaging energies. The pain is brought on by the Vata becoming more aggravated as a result of Apanavayu, Margavarodha (blocking of bodily channels), or Dhatukshaya (tissue depletion). Dysmenorrhea is the word used for this. Although the descriptions are dispersed, it can be found as symptoms of numerous diseases in several classical literatures. The references listed in Table 1 are numerous.

**Samprapti Ghataka In Kashtartava Dosa:** *Vata Pradhana Tridosha*

**Dusya:** *Rasa, Rakta, Artava, Mamsa*

**Agni:** *Jatharagni, Dhatwaagni Mandya*

**Srotas:** *Rasa, Rakta and Artava vaha*

**Srotodushṭi:** *Saṅga and Vimargagamana*

**Udbhavasthana:** *Amapakvashaya*

**Sthanasamsraya:** *Garbhasaya*

**VyaktaSthana:** *Tryavartayoni*

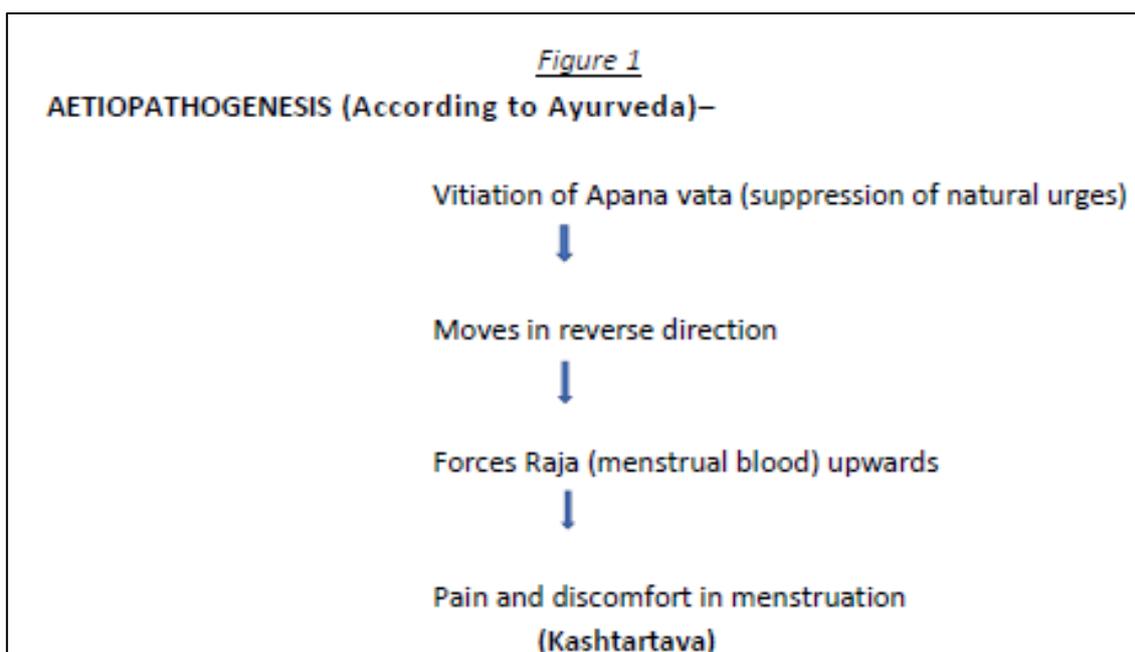
Aethipathogenesis is explained in Figure 1 and its differential diagnosis is mentioned in Table 2.

**Table.1 Classical references of Kashtartava (dysmenorrhea)**

Classical texts	Symptoms	Diseases
Charaka Samhita	Pain and difficulty in menstruation	Vatala Yonivyapada, Sannipatika Yonivyapada, Paripluta and Mahayoni Vyapada, Udavarta Yonivyapada, Vataja Asrigdara, and Kaphaja Asrigdara, respectively
Sushruta Samhita	Pain and difficulty in menstruation	Udavarta Yonivyapada and Artava Dushti, respectively
Asthanga Sangraha	Pain and difficulty in menstruation	Udavarta Yonivyapada and Vataja Artava Dushti, respectively
Asthanga Hridaya	Pain and difficulty in menstruation	Udavarta Yonivyapada and Vataja Artava Dushti, respectively
Madhava Nidana	Pain and difficulty in menstruation	Udavarta Yonivyapada
Bhava prakasha	Pain and difficulty in menstruation	Udavarta Yonivyapada

**Table .2 Ayurvedic Aspect of Differential Diagnosis Of Symptoms Of Kashtartava (Dysmenorrhea)**

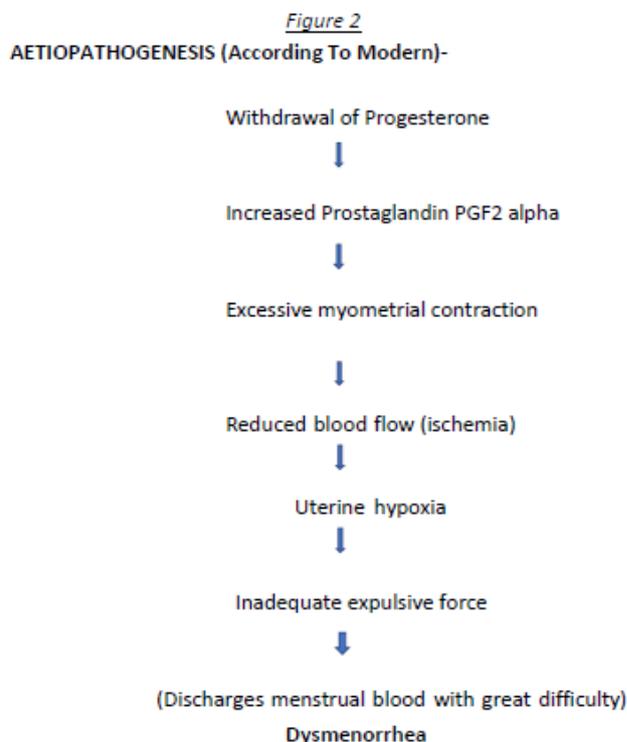
Diseases with Kashtartava (Dysmenorrhea)	Other associated symptoms
Artavakshaya	Irregular menses, scanty menses, pain in vagina
Vatika Artavadushti Vataj Yonivyapad	Oligomenorrhoea, painful menses, general weakness Stiffness, sensation as if creeping of ants, roughness, numbness
Udavartini	Painful and frothy menstruation, bodyache, malaise
Suchimukhi Paripluta	Dryness and pricking pain due to vata Vagina inflamed, painful menstruation with bluish and yellowish coloured, backache, fever
Mahayoni vyapad Asridara	Dry, frothy and painful menstruation Burning sensation in lower portion of groin, pelvic, back, flanks



### CONCEPT OF PAIN

Since pain is such a wide concept, it is difficult to pinpoint the precise agony a patient is experiencing. The way that pain feels not only indicates how intense it is but also hints at the pathology that gave

rise to it. The following varieties of Vataja Vedana (pain) related to dysmenorrhea have been documented: Even the words used to describe the traits have significance. Its aetiopathogenesis is explained in Figure no. 2.



Diagnosis of Dysmenorrhea is given in Table 3.

**Table. 3. Diagnosis of Dysmenorrhea**

Salient features of Dysmenorrhea	Primary Dysmenorrhea	Secondary Dysmenorrhea
Age	Within 2 years of menarche with establishment of ovulatory cycle, peak at 15-19 Years.	In active reproductive period (30-35yrs)
Relation with Menstruation	First 12-48 hours of flow.	3-5 days or more days before menstruations
Nature	Spasmodic type of pain	Dull, dragging pain may also be cramps.
Pelvic Pathology	Nil	Endometriosis, adenomyosis, PID, Uterine myomata, polyps, cervical stenosis.

### MODERN VIEW:

Dysmenorrhea means painful menstruation.

Classification: 1) Primary Dysmenorrhea

2) Secondary Dysmenorrhea.

**Primary Dysmenorrhea:** This is ovulation-related discomfort that affects the reproductive organs but has no visible lesions. Prostaglandins produced by secretory endometrium cause myometrial

contractions that lead to uterine ischemia and pain in primary dysmenorrhea.

**Secondary Dysmenorrhea:** This is pain that is connected to ovulatory cycles and is brought on by a clear disease. Until shown otherwise, it should be assumed that older women without a history of dysmenorrhea have it.

### Differential Diagnosis for Dysmenorrhea

- **Primary dysmenorrhea:** Supra-pubic pain or cramps that last two to three days and happen just before or during menstruation; symptoms may include nausea, lethargy, bloating, and general malaise; pelvic examination results are normal. The pain may radiate into the lower back and legs.
- Endometriosis, Adnexal masses, fixed or retroverted uterus, limited uterine movement, and cyclic (or non-cyclic) pelvic pain with menstruation. These symptoms are also linked to deep dyspareunia, dysuria, and subfertility.
- Adenomyosis: This condition is frequently accompanied by menorrhagia and can result in intermenstrual hemorrhage. Physical examination findings include an enlarged, sensitive, and swampy uterus.
- Leiomyomata: Cyclic pelvic discomfort associated with menorrhagia, dyspareunia, and oftentimes anterior and fundal fibroids.
- Pelvic inflammatory disease: H/O lower abdomen pain in women who are sexually active, cervical motion tenderness, uterine tenderness, and/or adnexal tenderness. Other related clinical symptoms include oral temperature > 101 F and abnormal cervical or vaginal muco-purulent discharge.
- Ectopic pregnancy: Complications may include amenorrhea, unusual uterine hemorrhage, excruciating lower abdominal discomfort, and/or cramping on the affected side of the pelvis. (such as shock or hypotension).

### MANAGEMENT

Education is essential today; young girls should learn about menstruation since sex and health can lessen the severity of spasmodic dysmenorrhea.

#### Therapy According to Ayurvedic Classics

- Because vitiation of Vata is a prerequisite for the development of these disorders (gynaecological disorders), Vata must be balanced before treating other doshas.
- All five purifying measures should be employed in all of these gynecologic illnesses following correct correlation, sudation, emesis, etc. The best form of therapy is panchkarma. Following thorough dosha cleansing of the upper and lower channels, medications like Jeerakadi Modaka and Mahraasnadi Kwath should be administered.
- As stated by Acharya Sharangdhar, Chandraprabha Vati is effective in Kashtartava ("Streenaam Artavam Rujaam").  
Triphala guggulu is indicated in Kashtatava.

- The specific medication suggested for suppressing that particular Dosha should be administered in cases of vata dosha-related menstruation problems. You should also use the ayurvedic formulations recommended for Uttarbasti, in Yoni rogas such as Dashmool sidh uttarbasti and Trivrit sidh uttarbasti.
- Vata-related menstruation diseases should be treated with luscious, spicy, sour, and salty items. For the purification of Pitta, use sweet, icy, and astringent substances; for Kapha, use hot, dry, and astringent ones.
- The recommended therapies for Avrita Apana Vayu include Agnideepaka, Grahi, Vata Anulomana, and Pakvashaya Shuddhikara.
- **Yoga:** Yoga exercises can give strength and stability both emotionally and physically while also reducing and preventing the severity of many illnesses, particularly those that notably affect women's health. Yoga poses are regarded as the most practical, non-drug, and affordable approach. Additionally, yoga has been shown to positively affect a person's ability to tolerate discomfort. Different Asanas have been mentioned as part of yoga. They all have a pain-relieving effect, but Shavasan, Ushtrasana, Bhadrasana, Gomukhasana, and Vajrasana stand out.

**General** • Any faults in the patients' way of life, as well as unfavourable environmental circumstances, malnutrition, and general bad health, should be remedied.

- Outdoor sports, games, and gymnastic activities should be promoted.
- If necessary, mild laxatives or a lot of fluids should be administered to treat constipation.
- If you have anaemia, you should take iron supplements.
- General advice: It's important to prepare yourself mentally for discomfort and to receive reassurance.
- The patient's focus is taken away from her menstrual functions.

### Nutrition

To get the best effects, follow the supplement schedule below for at least three months.

- Vitamin E (300 iu daily). Alpha tocopherol (asd) with zinc citrate (15 mg/day)
- Bioflavonoids and vitamin C (1000 mg twice daily)
- B complex (100 mg per day of each B vitamin)

- Magnesium (300 mg daily).

#### Medical Measures-

- Analgesics-Paracetamol 500mg tid
- Antispasmodics- Hyoscine Bromide (Buscopan), Drotaverine (Drotin)
- Prostaglandin synthetase inhibitor Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs – Mefenamic acid 250-500mg, Ibuprofen 400mg 6-8 hrly etc.

#### The Need for a Healthy Lifestyle

Rajaswala charya, also known as the code of conduct, outlined for a rajaswala stree, is the most underappreciated aspect of society. According to Acharya, this rajaswala paricharya should be practiced for three days starting at the first sign of menstrual flow. Rest should be a part of the Acharya, both mentally and physically. Females should keep a positive attitude and perform the rituals with ease of mind while they are on their period. The Rajaswala Paricharya helps women adapt to their bodies' physiological changes that take place throughout the rajaswala phase. During the menstrual cycle, it will assist women in maintaining physical and mental health. The rajaswala paricharya, which is described in an ancient Ayurvedic classic, is a key strategy for boosting fertility. The ability to reproduce or the state of being fertile is referred to as fertility. For a healthy baby, a healthy mother is required. It safeguards reproductive health and assists in the prevention of gynecological problems. Maintaining good cleanliness at this time of menstruation reduces the likelihood of infertility. The acharas and aharas that are recommended and discouraged for sustaining health were mentioned by the acharyas. As a form of natural shodana technique, menstrual bleeding necessitates the usage of aharas, which are equally as important as acharas.

- **Divaswapna** - She should refrain from napping during the day. Sleeping during the day causes the kapha dosha, which then produces ama.
- **Anjanam** - She should stay away from applying Anjana.
- **Ashrupata** - Refrain from crying throughout the Rajaswala period.
- **Hasana and Kadana** - Talking and laughing are forbidden.
- **Pradhavana and Vyayama** - Avoid running and excessive exertion. The raktasrava causes the body to weaken at this time, and hormonal changes will take place. Rasa dushti and vata prakopa are the results of overexertion. Infertility results if it is regularly practised. The body is destroyed by Ativyayama in a similar

manner to how a larger elephant is slain by a lion.

- **Swedana karma, Vamana karma, and Nasya karma** should not be used since they can lead to dosha prakopa.
- Coitus is not advised while a woman is menstruating. Intercourse at this time will only make the situation worse for the women's health, and infections may also develop.

#### DISCUSSION

The herbs used in Kashtartav (Dysmenorrhea), act directly or indirectly. Primary Dysmenorrhea is widely understood in the world to refer to difficulties associated with menses. The herbal (Ayurvedic) remedies which are useful in dysmenorrhea have the nourishment property and Vatashamaka property i.e. acting against a Vata, so there is mainly role of Vata that causes cramps and remedy are Vatashamaka.

#### CONCLUSION

According to Ayurveda, dysmenorrhea is caused by an imbalance of the doshas and may be influenced by balanced living, which is defined by a dosha-appropriate diet, herbal supplements, regular exercise, yoga, and meditation, as well as nourishing input from all five senses. The benefits of ayurvedic treatments for dysmenorrhea are good. With the help of natural medications, painful menstruation can be treated.

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