Conceptual Study of *Aartava* in View of Modern Science

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**ABSTRACT**

Ayurveda is the science of healthy life. In Ayurveda texts, there is brief description of body and its anatomical structures. Proper understanding of terminology is vital for gaining systematic knowledge of any structure especially in context of *Sharira Rachana*. The aim of the present article is to compile, analyse the terminology related to *Aartava* and elaborate the fundamental concepts behind those terminologies in various classics of Ayurveda. Different synonyms of *Aartava* have been stated in classical texts such as *Stribija*, *Shonita*, *Raja*, *Asruka*, *Antapushpa* and *Bahipushpa*. These synonyms have been used in different context in the texts. Some synonyms of *Aartava* are stated in the context of conception and some synonyms are stated in the context of menstruation. In modern science separate terminologies are stated for different phases in a women’s life such as menstrual phase and reproductive phase. This article can be helpful to understand the various terminologies related to the term *Aartava* and the concept of *Aartava* in view of modern science.

**KEYWORDS**

*Aartava*, Conception, Menstruation Terminology
INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda speaks of every elements and facts of human life offering guidance that have been tested and refined over many centuries to all those who speak greater harmony, peace and longevity. The proper understanding of terminology is vital for systematic knowledge of any structure especially in context of Sharira Rachana. Whole Sphere of Sharira Rachana can be obtained only after getting in view of bird’s eye and this requires study in definitive manner. Most of the concepts of Sharira Rachana are built upon Panchabautika and Tridosha siddhant (principles). These concepts of Sharira Rachana have been described in very minute form, so it is not always possible to analyse it. It is only perceived by its clinical aspect. Out of triad of Samhita, most of concepts of Shaarira are found in the Sushruta Samhita. The eight goals of United Nations Millenium Development Goals are to empower women, to reduce child mortality, to improve maternal health The MDGs are interdependent, all the MDG influence health and health influences all the MDGs. As per Millennium Development Goals importance has been given to women’s health. According to WHO women’s health agenda motto, shows the importance to women’s reproductive health. Women’s Reproductive Health is achieved with the balance in structural, functional and hormonal levels of the reproductive system. Menarche and Menopause are the indicators denoting the healthy reproductive life in a woman. In Ayurveda Garbhanirmiti is the term used for Reproduction which means the union of Shukra and Aartava. Both the components Aartava and Shukra should be Prakrutik. Aartava component is developed and carried through the Aartavaha strotas. Different synonyms have been used for Aartava in various ayurvedic texts. The word Aartava denotes two meanings, one of them is Antah Pushpa and another one is Bahir Pushpa. Both Antah and Bahir Pushpa are interrelated. Bahir Pushpa is the outward manifestation of appropriate work of Antah Pushpa which is necessary for conception. The aim of this article is to understand the various terminologies related to the word Aartava.

DISCUSSION

The Shukra and Aartava are described as two causative factors for the creation of Garbha. The components are present in both male and female individuals but only one is specifically described in each. This criteria of description is depending upon their
comparatively relevance. This comparative relevance is only due to ‘Agnisomeeyatvat’ nature of Garbha. It means only one Tattva is carried forward to the Garbha by one individual. So for this purpose the Shukra is having Saumya nature while Aartava bear Agneya property. As stated above, different synonyms have been stated for the term Aartava which are used in different contexts.

Aartava synonyms which are used in the context of menstruation are Raja, Bahipushpa and Asruka. In Sushruta Samhita, detail description is given regarding menstrual blood. It is stated as the menstrual blood collected for a month at appropriate time is slightly black in colour and discolouration is brought by vayu through two channels to the vaginal opening, here in this shlok the term Aartava is stated in the context of menstruation\(^2\).

Synonyms for Aartava which are used in the context of reproduction are Antapushpa, Bija and Shonita. In Charaka Samhita, detail description is given regarding conception. It is stated as, if appropriate conditions are available Shukra and Aartva components fuse to form the embryo\(^3\). According to Acharya Sushruta, when Agni Tatva comes in contact with the Ghee, it melts similarly when Shukra comes in contact with the Aartava, the Aartava melts and fuses with Shukra to form the embryo\(^4\). In Bhavaprakash Samhita, it clearly says that Aartava component is responsible for conception. From above references we can say that the term Aartava is stated in the context of reproduction.

In Ashtang Hridaya Samhita, the description of Aartava is the one which flows out from the vagina, which is slightly blackish in colour and it has no specific odour. Acharya Charaka in Sharira Sthana gave synonym for Aartava has Raja which has been used in the context of menstrual blood by describing it as the one which flows out through the vagina after the accumulation of blood every month\(^5\). Vatsayana has given the description of Antahapushpa as the one which resembles ripe fig, the synonym for Aartava in the context of reproduction.

The third concept of Aartava is given in the context of Placental formation by Acharya Sushruta in Sharira Sthana. In women having conceived, passages of channels carrying menstrual blood are obstructed by foetus and as such menstruation is not observed in them; thus being obstructed below it reaches upwards and further developed forms Apara(placenta); the remaining portion goes higher up to breasts that is why the pregnant ladies have
corpulent and protruded breasts which means there occur nourishment of breast\textsuperscript{6}. There are two concepts of $Aartava$, the one which is visible can be considered as menstruation and the one which is invisible can be considered as ovum. In $Samhitas$, the age at which the menstruation starts and the age at which menstruation ceases has been mentioned. At the age of twelve menstruation starts and continuing in appropriate period stops at the age of fifty when the body is fully in grip of senility\textsuperscript{7}. In $Samhitas$, $Aartavastrotas$ has been described for the carrier of $Aartava$ component. These $strotas$ channels are two in number and their root being uterus and $dhamanis$ carrying menstrual blood; if injured it causes sterility, intolerance to sexual intercourse and amenorrhea\textsuperscript{8}. The menstrual blood is normal and commendable which is like rabbit’s blood or lac-juice and does not colour cloth. The characteristics of menstrual blood according to Ayurveda are as follows the quantity is four Anjali and there is no specific odour\textsuperscript{9}. Menstrual blood also possesses impurity if vitiated by three $doshas$ and blood separately or jointly with two or three $doshas$. That also should be known by colour, pain etc of $doshas$. Out of them, that having characteristics such as cadaveric smell, knotty like putrid pus, deficient and with smell of urine and faeces is incurable, others are curable\textsuperscript{10}.

According to modern, fertilization and menstruation are two different concepts. Fertilization is the process of fusion of the spermatozoon with the secondary oocyte\textsuperscript{11}. The visible manifestation of cyclic physiologic uterine bleeding due to shedding of the endometrium following invisible interplay of hormones mainly through hypothalamic-pituitary-ovarian axis\textsuperscript{12}. Properties of menstrual blood are as follows volume- 10-80ml, odour – no odour, consistency- as blood, colour – bright red or light red.

The percentage of overall menstrual abnormalities is 36.08\% and the percentage of ovulatory abnormalities is 20\%. The abnormalities of menstruation are dysmenorrhoea, amenorrhoea, polymenorrhoea, hypomenorrhoea, oligomenorrhoea and the abnormalities of ovulation are anovulation, oligoovulation, luteal phase defect and luteinised unruptured follicle which can lead to infertility\textsuperscript{1}.

As mentioned above there are references for $Aartava$ in the context of menstruation and there are references for $Aartava$ in the context of fertilization. There are similarities in the characteristics of $Aartava$ according to
modern and Ayurveda as mentioned above. According to modern texts and Ayurveda samhitas, vitiation in the Aartava component lead to infertility.

MENSTRUAL BLOOD COLOUR SIGNIFICANCE¹

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mix of Gray and Red</th>
<th>Infection such as STD</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low progesterone and high estrogen</td>
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<tr>
<th>Thick Jam coloured red with large clots</th>
<th>Infection in cervix</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bright orange</td>
<td>Low estrogen level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinkish in colour</td>
<td>Infrequent periods</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brown/Black</td>
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CONCLUSION

Three different concepts related to Aartava are described in modern medicine. The term used for Aartava in modern is secondary oocyte. If secondary oocyte gets fertilized it results into the formation of placenta but if it does not get fertilized it results into menstruation. From above all discussed points and literature obtained from Samhitas we can say that, few references have been given in the context of Garbhadhana for the word Aartava. Maximum references have been used in the context of menstrual blood for Aartava word. But according to the Acharya Sushruta during coitus of man and woman vayu excites heat from the body and under the combined influence of heat and vayu semen discharged in the vaginal track combines with ovum and thus created by combination of Agni and Soma reaches uterus, here the word Aartava is used in the context of fertilization i.e. ovum¹³. Chakrapani commentary on Sushruta samhita also emphasizes on the word Aartava in the context of conception. Aartava strotas are described only by Acharya Sushruta. We know that Sushruta samhita is the main Samhita for anatomical
descriptions, so description provided by Sushruta are more reliable. On the basis of above four points we can conclude that Acharya Sushruta considered Aartava as ovum. This Aartava is responsible for conception.
REFERENCES