

BASIC ETIOPATHOLOGY OF ARSHA (HEMORRHOIDS) IN AYURVEDA – A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Arsha (hemorrhoids) is one of the most common disorders of *Guda* (anorectal region) which troubles human's life like an enemy. Proper understanding of its etiopathogenesis is required seeing its increasing prevalence and recurrence even after advanced medicinal and or surgical management. For this Charaka Samhita and Sushruta Samhita along with its commentary were studied and a comprehensive view about the structural and functional importance of *Guda* along with the etiopathogenesis of *Arsha* is presented in this review work. *Arsha* is a disease having complex pathology which starts with indulging in the etiologies affecting our *Jatharagni* (digestion at the level of gastro intestinal tract) and *Dhatvagni* (tissue metabolism) which causes vitiation of *Pancha Vayu* (five subtypes of *Vata*), *Pitta* and *Shleshma Doshas*, *Shaithilyata* (flaccidity) of *Dhatu* (tissues) and *Khavaigunya* (initial weakness in the Srotas- channels). These *doshas* and etiologies affecting *Dhatvagni* further vitiates *Meda* (fat tissue), *Mamsa* (muscle tissue) and *Tvak* (skin) of *Guda* region. Which results in the appearance of fleshy mass of variable size and shape in the *Guda* region called *Arsha*. A deeper understanding of *Arsha Samprapti* (etiopathogenesis) is must for its prevention and successful management. Impaired *Jatharagni*, *Dhatvagni*, Vitiated *Vata Pradhana Tridosha* and *Tvak*, *Mamsa*, *Medas* are mainly involved in the *Samprapti* of *Arsha*.

Key Words: *Agni, Marma, Pranayatana, Mahagada, Siragranthi*

INTRODUCTION: *Arsha Vyadhi* of Ayurveda is generally translated as piles or hemorrhoids in modern medicine¹. This is described as *Adhimamasa Vikara* (fleshy swelling) and may occur at various places of the body such as *Nasa* (nose), *Karna* (ear), *Akshi* (eye), *Vartma* (eyelid) etc. but in this article only *Gudagata Arsha* (anorectal hemorrhoids) is considered for explanation². *Arsha* is a *Vyadhi* which troubles the life of the person like an enemy and categorized as one of the *Mahagada* (grave disease). Hemorrhoid or piles is an abnormal mass of dilated and engorged blood vessels in swollen tissue that occurs internally in the anal canal or externally around the anus³. The worldwide prevalence of hemorrhoids in the general population is estimated to be

4.4%⁴ and it has a high impact on quality of life of the individual⁵. Ayurveda is well-known for the successful management of *Arsha* and both medical and surgical approaches are used for this. Unwholesome diet and lifestyle are considered as important factors behind increasing prevalence of hemorrhoids⁶. Ayurveda has long ago described the etiopathogenesis of *Arsha* and there is a need to understand it in a greater depth. The present article is an effort to describe the etiopathogenesis of *Arsha* with the help of basic concepts of Ayurveda. *Arsha* is the diseases which mainly occurs due *Agni Mandya* (decreased digestive capacity) where *Prabuta Mala Sanchaya* (accumulation of pathogenic factors) at *Guda* (anal

region) which ultimately results in fleshy swelling at anal region.

MATERIALS AND METHODS: The matter was collected mainly from the Charaka Samhita with Chakrapani commentary and Sushruta Samhita along with its Dalhana commentary. Relevant references were also collected from the open access articles from PubMed and online dictionary. This information was further analyzed with the basic concepts of Ayurveda such as *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, *Agni*, *Mala*, *Srotas* (channels), *Marma* (vital points of the body), *Kha vaigunya*, *Rogamarga* (pathogenic pathways) etc. and etiopathogenesis of *Arsha* is presented here.

Structural and functional specification of Guda (~Rectum)

The *Kshetra* (place) of *Arsha* is *Guda*, so it becomes important to know its *Rachana* (structure) and *Kriya* (function) for better understanding of pathology takes place there. *Guda* also called as *Payu* is one of the *Karmendriya* (motor organ)⁷ which does the *Visarjana Karma* (elimination of feces and flatus)⁸. The elimination of feces is mainly the function of *Apana Vata* which is located there⁹. *Guda* is the end part of *Mahasrotas* where food is digested and remaining portion which is no more

required for the body is eliminated from this. It is having three *Valis* (generally correlated with anal sphincters) named *Pravahani*, *Visarjani* and *Samvarani*¹⁰. These *valis* helps in the propagation of feces towards anus and also to withhold it. *Guda* is one among the *Koshtangas* (part of alimentary canal) having two parts *Uttarguda* (upper part of rectum) and *Adhoguda* (lower part of rectum)¹¹. It is one of the *Paranayatana* (site of the *Prana*-vital life force)^{12,13}. *Guda* is one of the *BahirmukhaSrotas* (external orifice) present in the *Adhobhaga* of *Sharira* (lower part of the body)¹⁴. It is one of the *MamsaMarma* and

SadyopranaharaMarma, injury to which can kill the person within seven days¹⁵. *Guda* is *Mula* (root) of *PurishavahaSrotas* (channels carrying feces)^{16,17}.

Etiological factors of Arsha

The exact cause of haemorrhoids is not very clear, its manifestation is found to be associated with increased pressure in the blood vessels in and around the anus¹⁸. Unhealthy diet and lifestyle related factors are mainly thought to be the cause of increasing prevalence of *Arsh*^{19,20}. The etiological factors described in Ayurveda are mentioned here below in table no. 1.^{21,22}

Table No.1: Etiological factors of Arsha (hemorrhoids)

ArshaNidana (etiological factors of piles/ haemorrhoids)	
AharajaNidana (dietary factors)	Excess intake of <i>Guru</i> (heavy), <i>Madhura</i> (sweet), and <i>Sheeta</i> (cold), <i>AharaDravya</i> (food items) <i>AbishyandiAhara</i> (which causes obstruction in the <i>Srotas</i>), intake of the <i>Krishamamsa</i> (meat of emaciated animals), <i>Sushkamamsa</i> (dried meat) and <i>Putimamsa</i> (putrefied meat). Excess intake of <i>PishtaAhara</i> (intake of pastries) and <i>Paramanna</i> (preparation of milk, rice and sugar), <i>Dadhimanda</i> (whey). Taking <i>TilagudaVikriti</i> (preparations of sesame seed and jaggery products). Excess intake of <i>Masha</i> (black gram), <i>Ikshu Rasa</i> (sugarcane juice), <i>Pinyaka</i> (oil cake), <i>SushkaShaka</i> (dry vegetables), <i>Shukta</i> (vinegar), <i>Lasuna</i> (garlic), <i>Kilata</i> (cream of milk) <i>Takrapinyaka</i> (cream of curd), <i>Bisha</i> (thick lotus stalk), <i>Mrinala</i> (thin lotus stalk), <i>Virudha</i> (germinated corns and

	pulses); Nava <i>Dhanya</i> (freshly harvested corns and cereals) and <i>AamaMoolaka</i> (tender radish), intake of <i>Guru Phala</i> (heavy fruits), <i>Shaka</i> (vegetables), <i>Raga</i> (pickles), <i>Haritaka</i> (Uncooked vegetables), <i>Vasa</i> (muscle fat), <i>Shira</i> and <i>Pada Mamsa</i> (meat of head and legs of animals), <i>ParyushitaPutiSankeerna Anna</i> (stale, putrid and food prepared by the mixture of different items, like rice and meat) etc., <i>MandakaDadhi</i> (intake of immature curds) and <i>AtikrantaMadya</i> (wrongly fermented alcoholic drinks), <i>VyapannaGuru SalilaPanad</i> (drinking polluted and heavy water), <i>Ati Sneha Paanad</i> (intake of unctuous substances in excess), <i>ViruddhaAhara</i> (incompatible food items), <i>Pramitashana</i> (eating too little), <i>Ajeernasana</i> (eating before previous food is digested)
ViharajaNidana (lifestyle related factors)	<i>Ativyayama</i> (excessive exercise) or <i>Avyayama</i> (physical inactivity), <i>Avyavaya</i> (lack of sexual act) or <i>Ativyavaya</i> (excessive indulgence in sexual act), <i>Vata Mutra Purisha Vega VegaUdeeranaat</i> , (forceful elimination of natural urge of defecation, flatus and micturition, too much straining during passing the stool, <i>Samudeerna Vega Vinigraha</i> (forceful suppression of natural urge of defecation, flatus and micturition), <i>Amagarbhabhramsha</i> (miscarriage), <i>Garbhotpeedanaat</i> (pressure of the pregnant uterus), <i>VishamaPrasuti</i> (abnormal delivery), <i>AbhikshanaSheetambuSamsharpaat</i> (frequent application of cold water), <i>PrataAtiNirvahanaat</i> (continued excessive strain, squatting position), <i>Divasvapna</i> (sleep during day time)
ManasikaNidana (psychological factors)	<i>Krodha</i> (anger), <i>Asuya</i> (envy) , <i>Shoka</i> (grief), <i>Achinta</i> (mental inactivity)
Agantuja and ChikitsaJanyaNidana (external and treatment related factors)	<i>Basti Netra AsamyakaPranidhaanaat</i> (abnormal insertion of enema nozzle), <i>GudakshanaatAbhikshanam</i> (frequent injury to anal region), <i>ChelLoshtaTrinaadiGharshanaat</i> (rubbing anus by using grass, rags, clods etc), <i>VishamaKathina Asana</i> (use of rough, irregular and hard seats), <i>Udbhranta Yana</i> (travelling in uncomfortable vehicle), <i>Atiyaana</i> (excessive riding) rubbing of anal region

Role of Agni in Pathogenesis of Arsha:

Without vitiation of Agni no Vikara is possible. In case of Arsha, the etiological cause *Jatharagni* (digestion at the level of gut), *Bhutagni*(Agni present in five basic constituents) and *DhatvagniDushti* (metabolism at tissue level). The factors such as *Guru*, *Madhura*, *Sheeta* and *AbhishyandiAhara*,*Ajeernashana*,*Pramitashana*etc. hampers *Jatharagni*. *Mamsa* and

VasaSevana, *Divasvapna*, *Avyayama*, *Atisnehapana* etc. cause vitiation of *Dhatvagni*. *Vega dharana* and *Udeerana*, *GarbhaPrapedana* etc, may cause vitiation of *Bhutagni*. Some factors are directly affecting the *Guda* region such as *Asmayaka Basti Pranidhana*, *GudakshanaatAbhikshanam* etc. they also hamper the functions of *Vayu* and *Agni* there. Once *Agni* is hampered, the for-

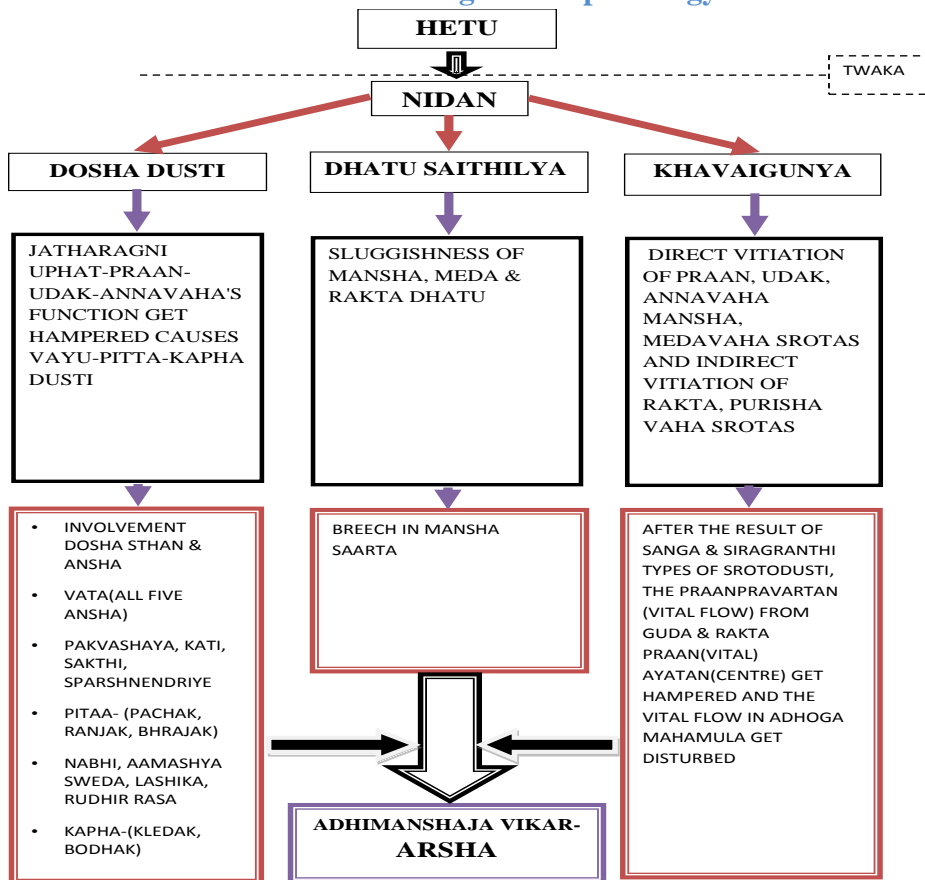
mation of *Dhatu* and *Mala* is also affected. This leads to *PrabhutaMala Sanchaya* in *Guda* region which prepare the ground for the manifestation of *Arsha*. When *Agni* is in good state the disease reduces and when *Agni* is weak it further cause aggravation of disease²³.

Pathogenesis of Arsha

These etiological factors mentioned above are nothing but the *Vikrit Prana* (vitiated life energy) which when taken inside the body become *Nidana* of *Arsha*. These *Nidanans* are potent enough to create *Dosha Dushti* (vitiating of *Dosha*), *Dhatu Shaithilya* (flaccidity of tissue) and *Kha Vaigunya* (initial weakness of the *Srotas*). This *Kha Vaigunya* creates *Adhishthana* (localization of vitiating factors), which hampers the *Prakrit Karma* (normal functions) of that organ, and ultimately manifests as a *Vyadhi* of that region. In case of *Arsha*, the *Adhishthana* is *Meda* (adipose

tissue), *Mamsa* (muscle tissue) and *Tvak* (skin) of the *GudaPrdesha* (anorectal region) where *Prabhuta mala Sanchaya* (excess accumulation of morbid factors) takes place due to disturbances of its structural and functional aspects. Any direct injury to *Guda* region and over straining or forceful suppression of urge of defecation cause vitiating of *Purishavaha* and *RaktavahaSrotas* there. This will create *Sanga* (obstruction) of *Apana Vata* functions which hampers the *Visarjana Karma* (elimination) of *Mala*. This *Sanga* when continues will further lead to manifestation of *Sira Granthi* (nodular formation). All the five types of *Vata* along with *Pitta* and *Kapha Dosha* get vitiating and the *Mamsankuras* (protrude fleshy swelling) is seen in the areas of *Guda Valis*²⁴. The *Samprapti* of *Arsha* is depicted in flow chart no.1.

Flow Chart no.1 – Showing the etiopathology of Arsha



DISCUSSION: Unhealthy diet and life-style are considered the main contributing

factors for manifestation and increasing prevalence of *Arsha*(hemorrhoids/piles).

Food items such as bakery products, Maida based preparations, meat etc. which are lacking dietary fiber creates constipation and hemorrhoids/piles is widely believed to be caused by chronic constipation²⁵. Habitual straining during the act of defecation in constipated person is an important cause of varicosity of rectal and anal veins. Status of Agni plays a key role in the initiation of the pathogenesis of Arsha. Exposure of etiological factors which can be considered as entry of Vikrita Prana in the body affects our Prana, Udaka and Annavaha Srotas. Prabhuta Mala Sanchaya which occurs in Arsha is due to the Agni Mandya (weak digestive capacity). Once the Jatharagni is affected the functions of the Bhutagni and Dhatvagni are also hampered. Vata Dosha which is given prime importance among the three Doshas is affected here with all its five subtypes (Prana, Udana, Samana, Vyan and Apana Vata) along with Pitta and Kapha Dosha. Nidana has the capacity to create Kha-Vagunya in the Srotas where the vitiated Doshas accumulate and create specific kind of Vikriti. The Kshetra (site) of Vikriti is Guda and Adhithana is Meda, Mamsa and Tvak. In Arsha initially Sanga occurs and when it continues it will further lead to Sira Granthi. At this stage the function of Guda which is Visarjana of Mala is severely affected and because elimination of feces is very essential part of human health, this condition troubles the person like an enemy (Arivat).

CONCLUSION:

Arsha (hemorrhoids /piles) is one of the commonest diseases of ano-rectal region which is included under the Asthamahagada (eight grave diseases). The increasing prevalence are mainly due to unwholesome diet and lifestyle related factors. Guda is Pranayatana, Mamsa Marma, Sadyopranahara Marma and part of Koshtangas. This shows the importance of the Guda and any disease

which affects this region becomes also important to be understood thoroughly. Arsha is one of the commonest conditions affecting the people. Though it is not life threatening but makes the person's life troublesome. Manifestation of Arsha involves a very complex pathology where Vata Pradhana Trioshas, three Guda Valis, Meda, Mamsa, Tvak are involved. Jatharagni, Bhutagni and Dhatvagni are affected and even Prana, Udakavaha, Annavala and Purishvaha Srotas are also take part in its pathogenesis. These factors make the disease difficult to manage and its recurrence is also high.

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