

**ANARTAVA – AN AYURVEDA PERSPECTIVE REVIEW ARTICLE**

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**ABSTRACT**

Literary meaning of absence of *Artava* is known as *Anartava*. The description of *Anartava* is found under different headings like *Anartava*, *Nashtartava* or *Artavakshaya* in our classics by different Acharyas. Absence of *artava* itself is not a disease but a symptom of an underlying disorder of female reproductive system. Ayurveda refers to menstruation as *Artava* or *Rajah*. Modern science & Ayurveda both offer treatment for the *Anartava*. In the most cases, modern science encourages the return of menses through the use of artificial hormonal therapy. Ayurveda offers more options and avenues for treatment that allow women to bring awareness to their own cycle. The literary review of all conditions with *anartava* in Ayurveda is reviewed with review of research on management of amenorrhoea.

**Keywords** Menstruation, *Anartava*, *Nashtartava*, *Artavakshaya*, *Artava*, *Rajah*.

**INTRODUCTION:** *Anartava* can be defined as absence or abnormal cessation of menstruation, which is a common clinical presentation for abnormalities of HPO axis. Amenorrhoea causes much physical and psychological problems to affected women. It has become a leading cause of infertility today which leads to an unhealthy family life. Due to changes in lifestyle, dietary habits, lack of exercise and various environmental factors the prevalence of amenorrhoea is higher now days<sup>1,2</sup> The prevalence of amenorrhoea not due to pregnancy, lactation or menopause is approximately 3 – 4 %.<sup>{3,4}</sup> It may be primary or secondary. Primary amenorrhoea is the term used when a girl has failed to menstruate by the age of 16 years in presence of normal secondary sexual characteristics or by 14 years if absence of signs of puberty such as breast development and growth of pubic and axillary hair. Secondary amenorrhoea is when there is absence of menstruation for three normal cycles or six months in a woman who has previous regular menstrual cycles. Amenorrhoea is again classified into physiological and pathological according to its etiological factors.

**Primary Physiological amenorrhoea:-** Before puberty i.e. 12 years, because of inadequate gonadotropin releasing factors.

**Secondary Physiological amenorrhoea:-** During pregnancy as a result of production of large quantities of estrogen and progesterone by placenta and during lactation as menstruation is suppressed after labour or abortion because of production of prolactin hormone from anterior pituitary and partial suppression of Luteinizing hormone. This results in anovulation and amenorrhoea. Menopause is complete cessation of menstruation (mean age 51 years) due to exhaustion of supply of ovarian follicles.

**Pathological amenorrhoea:-** Again this can be sub classified as-

- (a) Amenorrhoea without secondary sexual characteristics
- (b) Amenorrhoea with secondary sexual characteristics
- (c) With secondary sexual characteristics and non anatomic causes.

In our classics *Anartava* is described as the symptom but not as the disorder. *Raja*, *Masikastrava*, *Rutustrava*, *Asruka*, *Shonita* are the synonyms of *Artava*.

**Definition of *Anartava* (*Nidana and Lakshanas*)-** Aggravated *Vata* and *Kapha* obstruct the passage of *artava vaha srotas* or orifices of channels carrying *artava*, thus *artava* is not evident leading to *Anartava*. Though *Artava* is not finished completely yet it is not discharged monthly due to obstruction of *Artavavaha Strotasa* by

*doshas*. The roots of *Artavavaha Strotasa* are uterus & uterine arteries, thus the endometrium is not supplied by uterine arteries so there is absence of menstruation. The condition is termed as *Nashtartava* by Sushruta & *Anartava* by Vagbhata. Acharya Bhela opines that, though blood circulates (in whole body) for 7 nights (day & night) yet being scanty and abnormal does not circulate (in reproductive system) leading to desiccation of *Artava* & body of a woman resulting in absence of menstruation. Acharya Bhavamishra has included *Rajonash* among 80 specific disorders of *Vata*.

### Classification of *Anartava* according to Ayurveda

As the *Anartava* (amenorrhoea) is classified according to its origin i.e. primary or secondary and as per its etiology, we will classify the references available according to origin and etiology. The references of physiological amenorrhoea described in Ayurveda classics.

#### (a) *Swabhvik Anartava* (Physiological Amenorrhoea)

##### 1. Primary

##### (i) *Balyavastha-janya Anartava* (Before puberty)

Here, the age for menarche, i.e. the age for initiation of menstruation is given as 12 years. Before puberty because of function of *dhatu paripurnata* and developing genital organs there is absence of menstrual function<sup>5,6</sup>.

##### (ii) *Garbhavastha -janya Anartava* (During pregnancy)

During pregnancy, there is *avarodha* in *artava vaha srotas* and hence there is absence of menstruation. Also *Artava adarshan* – amenorrhoea is said to be a symptom of *Garbhini*. (*Vyakta Garbha Lakshana*).<sup>7,8</sup>

##### 2. Secondary

##### (ii) *Sutika-kalina Anartava* & *Dugdhavastha-janya Anartava* (Puerperium)

While mentioning the period of *Sutika Kala* or puerperium, some Acharyas have opined that, the woman should be called *Sutika* till reappearance of menstruation. The cause of amenorrhoea during this period is mentioned by Acharya *Kashyap*. According to him, soon after labour *Rasa Dhatu* goes for formation of *Stanya* and replenishment of *Yoni* and after *Dhatu Paripurnata*, again it reappears in the form of *Artava* periodically.<sup>9</sup>

##### (ii) *Vridhnavastha-janya Anartava* (Menopause)

The age of menopause i.e. permanent cessation of menstruation is given as 50 years and the cause is *Dhatu Kshaya*. As *Artava* is considered as *Updhatu* of *Rasa Dhatu*, in *Jaravastha* there is *Kshaya* of all *Dhatu*s physiologically. *Rasa Kshaya* in turn leads to *Kshaya* of its *Updhatu* i.e. *Artava* which is clinically seen as menopause<sup>10</sup>.

##### (b) *Vaikarika Anartava* (Pathological Amenorrhoea)

Anatomical, functional and all other disorders of female reproductive system are described under *Yoni vyapad* in ayurveda classics

##### 1. Primary

##### (i) *Shandhi Yonivyapad*

A female child born from mother afflicted with *Vata*, suffers from *Shandhi Yonivyapad*. According to Acharya charak, such female child born will have under developed breast and will dislike coitus<sup>11</sup>; Whereas Sushrut had clearly mentioned *Anartava* and *Astana* i.e. no breast development as symptoms of *Shandhi Yonivyapad*<sup>12</sup>. This seems to be genetic abnormality as in Turner's syndrome (45 XO).

##### (ii) *Vandhya Yonivyapad*

In *Vandya Yoni*, the *Artava* is destroyed<sup>13</sup>. Commentator *Dalhana* mentions here that the only difference between *Vandhya* and *Shandhi* is presence and absence of breast development respectively.

In *Charaka samhita*, *Vandhya* is mentioned under *bija*, *bijabhaga* disorders<sup>14</sup>.

In this verse, Acharya Charaka explains that if the *Bija bhaga* (Chromosome) responsible for the development of uterus is defective, then female child born will be *Vandhya*. Commentator Chakrapani further clarifies that as the *Bija* responsible for *Garbhashaya* and *Artava* are same, so here is absence of *Garbhashaya* and *Artava* both.

*Shandhi* and *Vandhya yonivyapad* and Charaka's description of *Vandhya* signifies Primary pathological amenorrhoea because of congenital abnormalities of female reproductive system.

## 2. Secondary

### (i) *Arajaska Yonivyapad*

Elevated *Pitta* when reaches *Yoni* and *Garbhashaya* vititates *Asrika*, the woman becomes emaciated and creates symptoms like pallor.<sup>15</sup> Chakrapani further adds *Anartava* as symptom.

This description seems to be of amenorrhoea because of systemic disorders or due to anorexia and athlete's amenorrhoea, where absence of menstruation is because of decreased body fat which is necessary for normal menstrual function.

### (ii) *Yonishosha/Sushka*

Suppression of natural urges during coitus and menstruation will lead to *Nastartava*<sup>16</sup>.

### (iii) *Lohita-Kshaya*

Vitiated *Vata* and *Pitta* causes deprivation of *rakta* featuring *karsya* and *vaivarnya* leading into *Anartava*<sup>17</sup>.

Apart from this, *Artava kshaya*, *Nashtartava* are other disorders mentioned separately because of different etiology *Dalhana*<sup>18</sup> had mentioned further causes of *Kshaya* such as *Ati Samshodhana* (e.g. *Virechana – Pitta kshaya – Artava kshaya*, Vigorous curettage – Asherman's syndrome- secondary amenorrhoea), *Ati samshamana* (excessive use of *pitta shamaka dravya – artava kshaya*), *Ati vyayama* (excessive exercise – less BMI-athletic amenorrhoea), *Anashana* (nutritional amenorrhoea – *dhatu kshaya – artava kshaya*) *Manastapajanya* ( Psycho

– neurogenic cause – affect hypothalamus – decreased gonadotropins – amenorrhoea).

### (i) *Nashtartava*

Absence of *Artava* in female is because of *Avarana* of *Dosha*. Here also Commentator *Dalhana* clarifies that *Avarak Doshas* are *Vata* and *Kapha*; as the treatment of *Nashtartava* mentioned here is *Vata Kapha Hara*. He also states that increased *pitta* will lead to excessive menstruation, so here *Vata* and *Kapha* should be considered as responsible *Doshas*<sup>19</sup>. Further he says that here '*Nashta*' means which is forming but not seen.

This condition is seen in cases of obesity where excess of fat leads to disruption in hormones especially estrogen and in turn suppression of pituitary and hence amenorrhoea.

### (ii) *Artavavaha srotas vedha*

Acharya Sushruta has mentioned a pair of *Artava Vaha Srotas* in *Sharirsthana*.

Here *Artavanasha* is a complication of *Vedha*(trauma) in *Artava Vaha Srotas*<sup>20</sup>.

This can be the description of Amenorrhoea due to Asherman's syndrome (Vigorous curetting of Endometrium).

### (iii) *Artava kshaya*

Sushruta describes absence of menstruation, scanty menstruation and pain as symptoms of *Artavakshaya*<sup>21</sup>.

### (iv) *Anartava as a nanatamaja vyadhi of Vata*

Bhavprakash included *rajonasha* among the *nanatmaja vyadhis of vata*<sup>22</sup>.

### (v) *Anartava as a complication of medo-vidhi*

Due to *vata avarodha anartava* occurs in *medovridhi*<sup>23</sup>

### (vi) *Anartava due to artava dosha*

According to Sushruta *ksheena artava dushti* causes vitiation of *pitta* with *vayu* and leads to *artava kshaya*<sup>24</sup>

### *Yonirogas Causing Anartava*

#### (i) *Yoni-arsha*

*Artava nasha* is one of the symptoms in *Yoni arshas*.<sup>25</sup>

#### (ii) *Raktaj gulma*

Kasyapa gives description of *Rakta samsthirata* ( amenorrhoea) in *Raktaj gulma*<sup>26</sup>.

**(iii) Rakta Arbuda leading to Anartava**

According to Harita, *Rakta samsthirata* is also seen in *rakta arbuda* due to *margaavarodha of artava*<sup>27</sup>.

After viewing all the references in classics regarding *Anartava*, to get “*Samanya rajo-pravrutti*” following elements should be intact:

- *Apradushta beeja bhaga*
- *Apradushta garbhashaya, yoni, apatya patha*
- *Samanya dhatu bala-especially rasa, rakta*
- *Samanya pitta karya-(dhatu pachana)*

- *Samanya vata karya* (conducting system of uterine)

- *Apradushta artava vaha srotas*

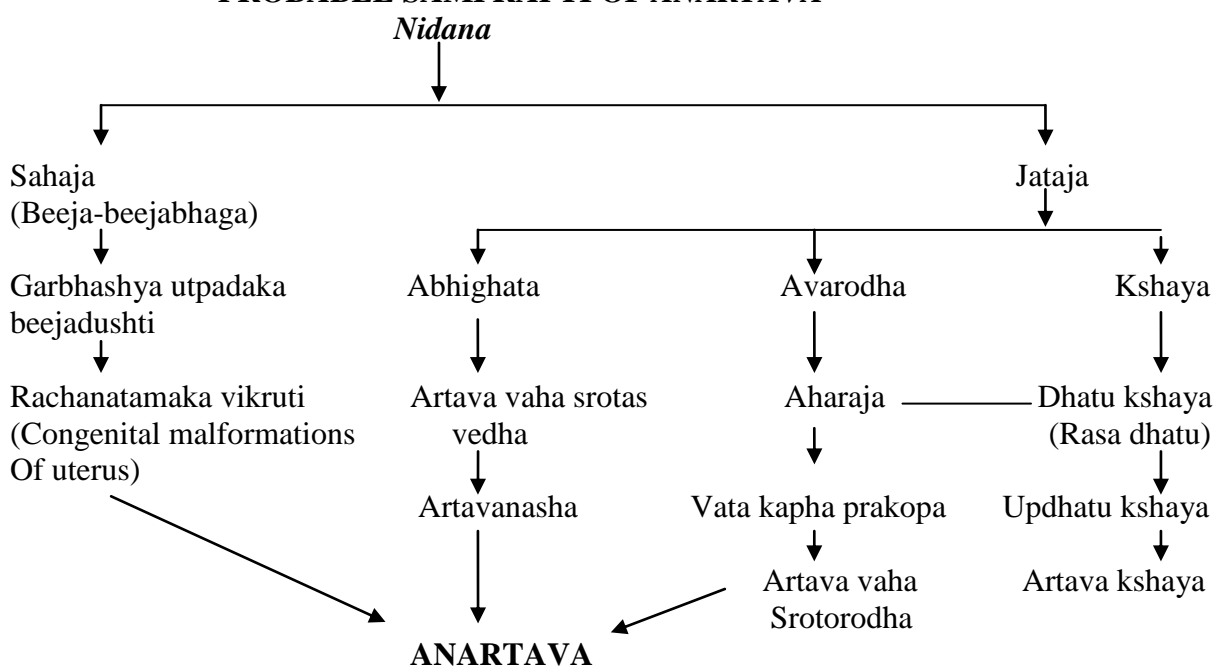
Following is the probable *nidana and samprapti of Anartava*.

**Nidana**

**(a) Sahaja** – *Beeja, Beejabhaga, Beejabhagavaya dushti* – Abnormal or absent *Beejabhaga* related to formation of *Garbhashaya* will lead to congenital structural abnormalities of uterus or absence of uterus causing *Anartava*.

**(b) Jataja**:- *Vata kaphaja ahara vihara* in *kapha* dominant *prakriti* woman may lead to *Nashtartava* because of *avarana*. *Ahara* and *vihara* leading to vitiation of *doshas* and *kshaya* of all *dhatu*s can become a factor for *anartava*. *Abhighata, Vyayama* and *ativyavaya* can be taken as *viharaja nidana*.

**PROBABLE SAMPRAPTI OF ANARTAVA**



**Chikitsa sutra**

(i) *Nidana- parivarjana*<sup>28</sup>- *Nidana* should be avoided and the disease conditions leading to *anartava* should be treated with their own treatment methods.

(ii) *Swayoni-varhdhana dravyas*<sup>29</sup> - Drugs of same origin should be given which can promote the growth of uterus or *artava*.

(iii) *Samshodhana*<sup>30,31</sup>-It ensures as a complete eradication of *doshas*, *Vata* is considered to be the main *Dosha* in all *Yoni Vyapada*. So the general principle of treatment for all disorders is *Vata shaman* followed by other procedures. treatment modalities in *samshodhana*-

- *Vamana*- In cases of *kapha prakopa* as in *Nashta artava*, where *anartava* is

because of obstruction due to aggravated *kapha* and *vayu*.

While mentioning the treatment of *Artava kshaya*, Sushrut has mentioned *Shodhana* and use of *Agneya dravya* as general principle of treatment. *Dalhana* while commentating on the above principle states that here *Vamana* should be applied for *shodhana* not *Virechana* because *virechana* causes *kshaya* of *pitta* which will further lead to *artava kshaya* as *artava* is considered to be *agneya*.

So, here *Vamana karma* which will decrease *Saumya dhatu* in body and increase *Agneya guna* – should be applied<sup>32</sup>

• **Virechana-** In *Pittaja* cases, where *anartava* is because of increased *pitta* & *vata*, *Virechana* helps to restore normal HPO axis. Commentator Acharya Chakrapani says that by use of purifying measures *Srotasas* are cleared. *Vamana* and *Virechana* clear upward and downward directed *Srotasas* respectively. Thus both should be used. Proper assessment of patient's *prakriti*, *agni* etc should be done before prescribing *Vamana* and *Virechana*.

• **Basti** – *Vata* is the main *dosha* involving any disorders of *yonis*, *basti* will be the best treatment for restoring normal menstrual function. As *Artava Pravritti* is the function of *Apana Vayu*, its dysfunction is considered as main factor in any *Artava Vyapada*. *Shatavaryadi Anuwasana Basti*<sup>33</sup>, *Baladi Yamaka Anuwasana Basti*<sup>33</sup>, *Palash Niruha Basti*<sup>34</sup> & *Dashamuladi Niruha Basti*<sup>35</sup> is beneficial.

• **Uttar Basti** - *Uttarbasti* of *Shatpushpa taila*<sup>36</sup> have shown encouraging results in *Anartava* or *Artava Kshaya* because of ovarian factor. *Uttarbasti* of *Phalaghrita*

improves endometrial thickness. Apart from these, *Uttarbasti* of *Dashmoola taila* can be given in *Vataja* conditions.

• **Varti-** *Apamargadi varti*, *Varti* prepared with *bhusa patra* pestled with *taila*, *Varti* made up of *Ikshvaku beeja*, *Dantimula*, *guda*, *madanaphala*, *kinva*, *yavashuka*.

• **Pichu-** *Pichu* made up of fine powder of *karpasa beeja taila*, *haridra*, *saindhav lavana*.

• **Nasya** – *Nasya* of *Shatpushpa taila* is indicated in *Anartava* in *Kashyap Samhita*.

### **Shamana**

#### **1. Use of Agneya dravyas**

*Tila*, *Masha*, *Sura*, *Shukta*, *Dadhi*, *Matsya*, *Kulattha*, *Amla kanji*, *Gomutra* are *agneya dravyas* used in *Anartava*. These *dravyas* should be used when there is *anartava* because of *Avarodha* (*Vata kapha janya*) and *Kshaya*.<sup>37</sup>

#### **2. Shatpushpa and Shatavari**

Orally, in *basti*, *nasya*, *abhyanga* as mentioned in *Shatpushpa Shatavari Kalpadhaya* of *Kashyap Samhita*.<sup>38</sup>

#### **3. Internal medications**

(A) *Krishna tila kwath* with *guda*.

(B) *Krishna tila*, *sheluka* and *Krishna jeeraka* with *guda*.

(C) *Japa kusum* with *kanji*.

(D) *Jyotishmati*, *swarjika*, *rajika*, *yavanika* and *asana*

(E) *Milk medicated with drugs of jivaniya varga*.

#### **4. Yogas**

*Rajapravartini vati*, *Kanyalohadi vati*, *Dashmoolarishta*, *Dashmoola kwath*, *Kumariasava*, *Nashtapushpanta rasa*, *Phala ghrita*, *Phala kalyanaka ghrita*, *Sheeta kalyanaka ghrita*, *Shatavari ghrita*.

**Pathya:** According to predominance of *Doshas Sura*, *Asava* & *Arishta* should be used. *Lashuna* should be included in diet,

diet made with barley, milk, *Mamsarasa*, *Sidhu*, powdered *Pippali* & *Bala Taila* are beneficial in *Yoniogas*.

**Apathya:** *Manda* is *Apathya* according to *Acharya Kashyapa*.

Life style modification & Yoga therapy: Articles capable of increasing *Pitta* are beneficial. Milk is beneficial in all types of *Artava Doshas*. Yogic management is very important for women experiencing *anartava*. Most importantly it includes relaxation and minimizes the amount of stress that is part of their everyday lives.

1. *Padmasana*
2. *Halasana*
3. *Dhanurasana*
4. *Saravangasana*
5. *Shalabhasana*
6. *Bhujangasana*
7. *Paschimottanasana*.

**DISCUSSION:** *Anartava* is an uncommon presentation in reproductive medicine. In treatment *Shaman* and *Shodhana Chikitsa* is described, *Vata* is the main *Dosha* for *Yoniogas* so *Basti* is the main treatment for the pacification of *Vata*. As *Adhobhaga* is the place of *Apana Vata*, by giving *Basti* it pacifies and its functions are regulated so there will be ultimately regulation of *Artava*. *Uttarbasti* with oral *Ushna dravya* or *Rajah pravartaka dravya* administration has shown better results in *Artava Kshaya*. Practically, in the patients of long term amenorrhoea, i.e. ranging from 2 months to 5 -6 months amenorrhoea responded immediately on *Yoga basti* with *Shatpushpa taila* and *Dashmoola* as main ingredients. Also the flow increased with administration of *Uttarbasti* of *Shatpushpa taila*. In cases with less endometrial thickness *Phalaghrita* should be used in *Uttarbasti*. Amenorrhoea because of loss of ovarian function also responds to *Yoga basti* and *Uttarbasti*. The mode of action

of *Yoga basti* can be thought as *Apana vayu anulomana* and hence leading to *Rajah pravartana* which is the *Karma* of *Apana vayu*. Also the *dravyas* used in *Uttarbasti* acts on receptors present in endometrium. Improving *Rasa dhatu* and *Rasa dhatvagni* has also given good results in improving *Rajah pravritti* as it is considered *updhatu* of *Rasa*. *Artava* is *Agneya Gunatmaka* in nature so the use of *Agneya Dravyas* increases the *Artava*. We have to use the *Artavajanana Dravyas* for the decreased quantity of *Artava*. Articles described in *Pathya* are *Vata Shamaka* & *Agnipradipaka* so they increases *Agni* by correction of *Agnimandya* and does the *Rasa Dhatu Poshana* which helps in *Artava Vriddhi*. Thus according to predominance of *Dosha* and condition of patient treatment should be given. Ayurveda is a holistic science it describes various modalities for the treatment of disease so the lifestyle modification & Yoga therapy also helps to overcome the disorder to certain extent.

**CONCLUSION:** Ayurvedic treatment modalities have shown promising results in all cases of *Anartava*. There are many options in *Ayurveda* while in modern medicine we have very few options like HRT which have certain limitations for its use and have side effects. In sum *Ayurveda* offers treatment for *Anartava* (amenorrhoea) that beyond what modern medicine allows. *Ayurved* can not only offer the nutritional counseling for treatment of amenorrhoea but it can offer much greater option for dealing with the root of the problem which lies in mind. *Pranayam, yoga, shirodhara* and more can thus leading to strength of *ojas* and balance of hormones. More research using different *panchakarma* and *shamana* treatment with objective analysis in cases

of *amenorrhoea* because of different pathological causes should be done.

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