



“HOLISTIC APPROACH OF YOGA THERAPY ON KASHTARTAVA”

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Abstract:

The uterus and ovary naturally undergo a process called the menstrual cycle that is vital to enable sexual reproduction. *Ārtavaduṣṭi* results from modernization and an unhealthy lifestyle (menstrual disorder). *Kaṣṭārtava* is a term used to describe painful menstruation (dysmenorrhoea), which is a sign of various gynaecological illnesses. *Kasta* means painful and *artava* means menstrual flow. As a result, the term "*kashtartava*" might be rendered as "*kashtena muchyati iti kashtartave*," where "*kashtena*" denotes the situation of extreme difficulty, much like in conventional medicine, "*Dys*" stands for painful or difficult, "*men*" for month, and "*rein*" for to flow. Dysmenorrhea, is a term for painful menstruation. Gynaecological disease may not develop without an intensified *vata dosha*, according to Acharya Caraka. In *Kashtartava*, the *vata dosha* becomes vitiated as a result of faulty lifestyle and suppression of natural urges. The *Raja* (menstrual blood) is forced upward by the *apāna vāyu* when it is inflamed and goes in the opposite direction, occupying the entire *yoni*, which causes pain and discomfort during menstruation. Yoga is a time-tested factor whose theories on health and disease have never changed. Asana practice aids in the purification of blood and the removal of toxic/impurities from various parts of the body. It activates the organs associated with the reproductive systems and expands the pelvic region, that relieves congestion and painful bleeding by enhancing pelvic circulation. Women, as an essential part of society, face a variety of psychological and physiological issues, one of which is menstrual irregularities, which can contribute to infertility, which is a type of *dukhah*. The only way to overcome this *dukhah* is by implementation of yoga therapy components like Lifestyle modifications, various *asanas*, *pranayamas*, *bandha*, *mudra* and *Dhyana* methodically. It enhances their quality of life by eliminating menstrual disorders.

Keywords: *Ārtavaduṣṭi*, *Kaṣṭārtava*, *apāna vāyu*, *Raja*, Yoga therapy.

INTRODUCTION

Kastartava can be defined as painful menstruation (dysmenorrhoea) which is a symptom associated with many gynecological disorders. *Kasta* means painful and *artava* means menstrual flow. Thus, the word *kashtartava* can be expressed as *kashtena muchyati iti kashtartave*, where *kashtena* refers to the condition of great difficulty similarly in conventional medicine, the “Dys” symbolizes difficult or painful, “men” means

month and rein means to flow. Thus, dysmenorrhoea refers to painful menstruation. The word *kashtartava* is not separately described as a disease. There are many other menstrual disorders in which dysmenorrhoea is considered and described as a symptom in *Artava dushti*(menstrual disorders).

Modern concept of Kashtartava:

Kashtartava or Dysmenorrhoea is caused by contraction of uterine lining due to the hormone prostaglandin. When the endometrium begins to break down prostaglandins are released. They trigger the contractions of uterine muscles. If the prostaglandin secretion is more, then the uterine contractions will be severe. Severe contractions may constrict the blood vessels of the endometrium. This constriction blocks the delivery of oxygen to the tissue of the endometrium. Thus, one experience cramp in the lower abdominal area. Other causes may include endometriosis, presence of fibroids, pelvic inflammatory disease, ovarian cysts etc.

Indian concept of Kashtartava:

Acharya Caraka says that some of the gynecological disease can arise with aggravated *vata dosha*. Thus, leading to *kashtartava* where *vata dosha* gets vitiated due to faulty lifestyle and suppression of natural urges. When the *apana vayu* gets aggravated and moves in the reverse direction and occupies the entire yoni (vaginal canal), this *vayu* forces the *Raja* (menstrual blood) upward and leads to pain and discomfort in menstruation. 10-15% of women experience monthly menstrual pain severe enough to prevent normal daily function at school, work or home.

Depletion of body tissues/ Dhatukshaya: *Vata* aggravating diet and lifestyle causes aggravation of *vata* which leads to depletion of body tissues starting from the *rasa* and *rakta*. As the menstrual blood is considered as *upadhatu*, there will be *alpatha* or decrease in the quantity of production. This will further vitiate *vata dosha*, which create constriction in the uterus i.e decreased circulation to the muscles of uterus resulting in pain. Due to the depletion of body tissues, woman become weak and her pain threshold gets lowered and pain is felt severe.

Aggravation: When a woman consumes diet that increases *vata* and follows lifestyle vitiating the *vata*, becomes susceptible to various disorders. Due to the vitiation of *vyana* and *apana vayu*, contraction and relaxation process of uterus do not take place properly, that will hinder the proper flow of menstrual blood leading to dysmenorrhoea.

Obstruction of passage: The vitiated *kapha* due to its *snigdha*, *guru*, *pichchhila* and other *gunas* will cause cessation of digestive enzymes activity. It produces the condition similar to *Ama* (partially digested food). This layer covers the fallopian or uterine tubes which lead to obstruction or painful menstrual flow.

Psychological factors such as fear(*bhaya*), grief(*shoka*), excessive thinking(*chinta*), anger(*krodha*) and stress also aggravate the *vata* resulting in *kashtartava* or dysmenorrhoea.

Yogic Concept of Kashtartava:

The *tridoshas* in human body according to *tridosha* theory are *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha*. Health is a state where there is balanced condition of these *doshas* and its imbalance is considered as diseased or being ill. They unitedly sustain the body. Discrepancy of *vata* in the body leads to menstrual disorders. In the lower part of the body i.e below the pelvic region, resides the *apana vayu* and its malfunction causes *vata* to become vitiated. The *Apana vayu* is responsible for the proper functioning of the reproductive system. The aggravated *vata* in women's body effects on her reproductive organs to produce some symptoms such as *stambha* (stiffness or numbness), *pipilika* (a sensation as if ants are crawling), *supti* (numbness in reproductive organs), untimely menstrual bleeding which is *phena* (frothy), *tanu* (thin), *ruksha* (dry) and associated with sound and pain. Due to the *khara*(rough) and *sheeta* (cold & dry) qualities of *vata*, makes the blood vessels to constrict. Due to its *ruksha*(dry) *guna*, body fluids and menstrual flow stop early. This causes a drop in body fluids, resulting in less nourishment for the uterus' endometrial lining, resulting in a smaller endometrium and less menstrual discharge with severe pain in the lower abdomen.

Whenever the *cittavikshepas* increase, the balance between the *citta*, *jnanendriya*, *karmendriya* and *mahabhutas* is broken, as they are all interconnected. When the *prthvi tattva* is out of control, the function of the corresponding *karmendriya* i.e the *upastha/* reproductive organs are affected. *Kashtartava* can be caused by the disturbance in *prthvi tattva*. It causes problem with the nose at the *jnanendriya* level & genital organ at the *karmendriya* level. Abdominal pain, muscle spasms, weakness, exhaustion, reduced libido etc can be seen at the *karmendriya* level.

Approach of Yoga Therapy:

Menstrual problems can be managed in large part by changing one's lifestyle. Most of the factors affecting individual health and quality of life are linked to one's lifestyle. Life style comprises each and every activity that one does including the intake of food and sleep. Yoga emphasizes a proper and safe lifestyle, which includes *achar* (healthy activities), *vichar* (healthy thoughts). The practice of asana brings, steadiness, health and lightness of the body. It is capable to achieve free from dualities. Asana practice aids in the purification of blood and the removal of toxic/impurities from various parts of the body, allowing for adequate blood circulation. This ensures adequate cellular nutrition and balances the nervous system and ensures proper secretion of hormones. Some practices like *pavanamuktasana*, *bhujangasana*, *salabhasana* and *dhaurasana* from *pavanamuktasana* series. All these asanas help efficiently in removing problems related to respiratory and digestive systems. As the name suggests pavana means air or *vayu* is regulated by this practice by improving peristaltic movement facilitating healthy bowel movement. Indigestion, flatulence, constipation and disorders related to menstruation can be relieved by these series. *Bhujangasana* helps to improve lung capacity by expansion of chest area. *Dhanurasana* gives massaging effect to abdominal organs and digestion capacity is improved by this practice. In the case of *kashtartava*, *Dhanurasana* strengthens the uterus while also increasing blood flow and relieving the congestion in the uterus and thus removes the pain during menstruation. It even stretches the muscles in the back of the trunk and the groin. *Janusirsana* has similar benefits to *pascimottanasana*. Here the heel pushes against the perineum, activating the organs associated with the urinary and reproductive systems. This procedure extends the pelvic region and relieves painful bleeding by enhancing pelvic circulation. By lifting the uterus upward, *Baddhakonasana* relieves uterine congestion. Menstrual flow becomes more normal as a result of this. *Upavistakonasana* is a great way to alleviate dysmenorrhoea. *Bharadwajasana* practice gives sufficient twist to sides of abdominal regions. The pelvic area is extended or enlarged, resulting in proper massage of internal organs or the pancreas, as well as increased blood flow to the uterine region. It assists in the treatment of diabetes by encouraging the pancreas to secrete more insulin. The relief of congestion in the pelvic area also helps to alleviate pain during

menses. *Pranayamas* like *Ujjayi* practice purifies the *nadis* and aid in the alleviation of symptoms associated with nervousness and chronic stress that helps in regulation of hormones such as prostaglandin and provides proper circulation to the uterus. This result in proper functioning of *apana vayu* and thus relieve from *kashtartava*. Any kind of menstrual disorder or symptom related to it necessitates both physical and emotional relaxation. Since mental stimulation is needed to relieve physical pain and body disturbances during menstruation, only by proper practice of *dhyana* and relaxation will ensure the pituitary secretions of the HPO axis be balanced, resulting in healthy menstruation. *Yoganidra* and *savasana* are effective relaxation techniques. *Yoganidra* practice reduces anxiety and depression in patients with menstrual irregularities.

Conclusion:

Yoga as therapy helps to prevents cures various diseases and disorders. The yogic practices concentrate on the purification of body and mind and through this integrated holistic approach one can overcome several kinds of afflictions in life. The pain which women suffer every month is kind of *dukhah*. To overcome this kind of *dukhah*, the practice of yoga is the only solution. Because yoga therapy is the only science which is drugless and has no side effects. The practice of yoga improves the overall quality of life relieving the *kashtartava* where every month women has to suffer with pain.

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