



Ijapc 2018

Volume 8 Issue 2

www.ijapc.com

10/3/2018

Greentree Group



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



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Received 01/02/18 Accepted 23/02/18 Published 10/03/18



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 a 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 *Shhaarira* 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*¹. 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 menstruation².

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 embryo³. 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 embryo⁴. 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 month⁵. *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 breast⁶.

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 senility⁷. 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 amenorrhoea⁸. 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 odour⁹.

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 curable¹⁰.

According to modern, fertilization and menstruation are two different concepts. Fertilization is the process of fusion of the spermatozoon with the secondary oocyte¹¹. The visible manifestation of cyclic physiologic uterine bleeding due to shedding of the endometrium following invisible interplay of hormones mainly through hypothalamic-pituitary-ovarian axis¹². 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 infertility¹.

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

Mix of Gray and Red	Infection such as STD
	Low progesterone and high estrogen
	Infection in cervix
	Low estrogen level
	Infrequent periods
Thick Jam coloured red with large clots	
Bright orange	
Pinkish in colour	
Brown/Black	

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.



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