



Review Article

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GARBHASHAYASRIJI VIREKAH: A CRITICAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE MODE OF ACTION OF VIRECHANA IN ASRIKDARA

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ABSTRACT

Abnormal uterine bleeding (AUB) may be acute or chronic and is defined as bleeding from the uterine corpus that is abnormal in regularity, volume, frequency, or duration and occurs in the absence of pregnancy. The category of AUB, characterized by an increase in the volume and frequency of menstrual bleeding (Artava), is correlated to the condition of Asrikdara. The present study aims to correlate the spectrum of diseases considered under the broad concept of “Asrikdara” and substantiate the mode of action of virechana at various pathological levels in treating Asrikdara. Artava, which attributes its feature similar to rakta dhatu, is agneya in nature and dosha associated is pitta. Thus, indicating virechana to be the line of treatment advocated for the diseases of artava. Further, concerning the definition of Asrikdara, the following spectrum of pathologies/disease conditions can be attributed to the broad concept of Asrikdara: asrija/apraja, lohitaakshara, raktayoni, kunapa gandhi artava, vandhya, pittavrutha apana, rakta dushti, raktapitta and raktavrudhi. Virechana helps the samprapti vighatana in each condition mainly due to its pittahara, rakta shodhaka, sroto shodhana and avarana hara action.

Keywords: AUB, Asrikdara, Raktavrudhi, Artava, Virechana

INTRODUCTION

The menstrual cycle in a female is an indicator of physiological hormonal balance and homeostasis in the system, wherein any derangement in the balance would cause altered manifestations in the rhythm and amount of menstrual bleeding. The concept of excessive bleeding during menstruation is dealt with in detail by our Acharyas under the heading of “Asrikdara”. There are various treatment approaches to the different types of Asrikdara. Acharya Kashyapa advocates virechana as the specific treatment of Asrikdara. ‘Garbhashayasriji virekah’¹.

This clinical entity can be correlated to Abnormal uterine bleeding (AUB). Abnormal uterine bleeding (AUB) may be acute or chronic and is defined as bleeding from the uterine corpus that is abnormal in regularity, volume, frequency, or duration and occurs in the absence of pregnancy. The category of AUB characterized by an increase in the volume and frequency of menstrual bleeding (Artava) is correlated to the condition of Asrikdara.²

Asrikdara

According to its classical Definition, Asrikdara is characterized by heavy flow during the bleeding phase of the menstrual cycle, explained by the term ‘Rajah Pradiryate’. The term ‘pravruttam anrutaavapi’ in the definition of Asrikdara suggests Irregular menstrual bleeding.³

Asrikdara is a clinical condition characterized by an increase in the amount of (Artava) menstrual bleeding irregular bleeding, which can be categorized as follows:

- Heavy bleeding during menses (Menorrhagia)
- Irregular menses (Metrorrhagia)
- Irregular and heavy menses (Menometrorrhagia).

Virechana

One among the panchakarma chikitsa and panchashodhana chikitsa involves the elimination of dosha through the anal orifice. Virechana is shreshta chikitsa for the treatment of pittajavyadhi⁴.

Table 1: Karmukata of virechana Karma According to different Acharyas

	Action on Agni and Srotas	Indriyaprasadanam	Action on Doshas	Target action
Charaka ⁵	Srothosodhana, Agnideepti	+	Malapaha, pittaharam	
Sushruta ⁶	Agnideepti	+	Pitta haranam	Dhatu sthiratva
Kashyapa ⁷	-	+	-	Dhatu sodhana, Bija karmukata

Mode of action of virechana in Asrikdara with reference to the basic properties of Artava

Table 2: Rationality behind advocating virechana for artava vikara

Artavaswaroopa	Effect of Virechana
Rakta lakshana agneya Pitta doshaashrayi	Virechanam Pitta haranam

Artava, the upadhatu of rasa dhatu has features similar to rakta dhatu, has agneya guna, and is associated with pitta dosha. Hence, virechana is the treatment of choice for the various forms of manifestation of Asrikdara.⁴

Mode of action of virechana in Asrikdara with reference to Asrikdara samanya samprapti

Table 3: Action of virechana at different levels of Asrikdara samprapti

Asrikdara Samprapti	Effect of Virechana
Increased pramana of rakta enters the Apana sthana (Garbhashaya Sira)	Vata niyantrana along with pitta
Increased dravaguna of pitta dhatu	Malapaha
Atoanyad rakta lakshana	Prakrutisthapanam, Dhatu sthiratva Dhatu sodhana
Raktavahasroto vikara	Rakta pitta hara kriya

According to the samprapti of Asrikdara, the increased pramana of rakta enters the Apana sthana (Garbhashaya Sira), virechana, which also brings about vatahnyantrana combats both vata and pitta dosha, malapaha action of virechana alleviates the increased dravaguna of pitta dosha and ultimately the altered guna of rakta in Asrikdara (Atoanyad rakta lakshana) is corrected by ‘yathadosha samshodhana’ (virechana in rakta – pitta vikara),

which combats the dosha – dushyasammurchana and brings about the homeostasis of dhatus (dhatu shodhana and dhatu sthiratva) and achieves the Sampraptivighatana of Asrikdara in general.

Moreover, Asrikdara is among the raktavahasroto vikara, for which virechana is the prime line of treatment⁴⁻⁷.

Mode of action of virechana in Asrikdara with reference to the various disease spectrum of Asrikdara

Table 4: Mode of Action of virechana specific to each disease spectrum of Asrikdara

Disease Spectrum of Asrikdara	Samprapti of the particular disease	Chikitsa Siddhanta of the particular disease	Virechana Karmukata
Asrija/Apraj Lohitakshara Raktayoni	Pittaja yoni vyapat	Pittaghna kriya	Shreshta chikitsa for pitta harana
Kunapa gandhi artava dushti	Dushita artava	Virechana	Virechanam Amrutopamam
Pittavrutha apana	Avarana	Virechana	Srotoshodhana
Vandhya	Udavarta	Samshodhanam	Malapaham, Vataharam
Adhoga raktapitta	Rakta pradoshaja vikara	Virechana	Rakta pittahari kriya
Artava vrudhhi	Raktavrudhhi (Pittasra)	Yathasvam Samshodhanam (Virechanam)	Dhatu sthiratva Dhatu sodhana

A spectrum of diseases and pathological conditions is characterized by menorrhagia, metrorrhagia, and menometrorrhagia, which can be considered under Asrikdara. They are Asrija/Apraja, Lohitakshara, Raktayoni, Kunapa Gandhi Artava, Vandhya, Pittavrutha Apana, Raktadushti, Raktapitta and Raktavrudhi.

In all the vyadhi mentioned above and samprapti, virechana is the pradhanachikitsa.

In Asrija/Apraja, Lohitakshara Raktayoni, which are types of pittaja yoni vyapat, Acharya says pittaghna kriya as the treatment and virechana is shreshta chikitsa for pittaharana.

Kunapa gandhi artavadushti is due to dushta rakta and Kashyapa Acharya advocates virechana to be amrutopamam⁸.

Pittavrutha apana has the ‘Rajasah ca atipravartanam’ feature, and it is the pitta dosha (Avarana) which should be treated initially and Acharya advice virechana⁹.

Describing Vandhya, Acharya Kashyapa mentions that the milk-carrying channels of vandhya are filled with vata dosha, thus resulting in heavy bleeding during menstruation. This can be inferred from udavarta being the pathology, and it is the shodhana which, in turn, causes vatanulomana that combats the udavarta.¹⁰

Rakta pitta, one of the rakta pradoshaja vikara, responds with the chikitsa sutra of rakta pittahari kriya achieved by virechana¹¹.

One of the lakshanas of rakta dhatu vrudhhi is pittasram, meaning various bleeding disorders. As artava is the upadhatu of raktadhatu, rakta vrudhhi causes artava vrudhhi. Chikitsa sutra for dhatu vrudhhi is yathasvam samshodhanam (shodhana according to dosha vaishamya). Thus, indicating virechana for rakta vrudhhi / artava vrudhhi¹¹.

DISCUSSION

At the biophysical level, pitta in physiological aspects refers to the energy state of the body and is concerned with biochemical processes which generate heat and energy,

- Pitta is a source of thermal energy in the body 'tapati iti pittam'. It is also attributed to the functions of the bile enzyme, which is a critical aspect of its functions with reference to digestion and metabolism.
- Pitta as a dosha in its pathological state refers to the altered state of thermodynamics in its ashrayi dhatu (Rakta).¹²
- One of the parameters to assess the altered thermodynamics is 'Entropy'; thus, Entropy can be considered the pathological marker for assessing pathogenesis in the blood tissue relating to pitta dosha. This, in turn, refers to the toxins/ free radicals in the blood, which are responsible for increasing the entropy of the tissue.

Toxins / free radicals, wherever present in the body, in extracellular, intracellular, or in plasma, can be brought into the intestine to maintain the homogeneity from where it can be eliminated from the body by the action of the intestine, which is induced by virechana¹³. Thus, it can be said that virechana is the shreshta chikitsa for pittaja vyadhis and Asrikdara.

Rakta dhatu and pitta dosha, both of these biological components, are drava swaroopa. According to the Asrikdara samprapti, the dravaguna of the components increases in the apana kshetra and manifests as Artava ati pravartana in the case of Asrikdara.

By virechana, cellular fluid is drained into the interstitial fluid, which is drained into the vascular compartment; from here, it is drained into the gastrointestinal tract for elimination. Thus, virechana is targeted to create a biochemical alteration as it modulates the body's fluid compartments. During the process of virechana, body fluid is drained out⁵, virechana which drains the pathological and excess body fluid, combats pathology of Asrikdara in general and also in the case of raktavridhi leading to artavavruddhi.¹³

Ato anyad rakta lakshana told in samanaya samprapti of Asrikdara, refers to variations in the clotting mechanism, which is also true in the case of adhoga raktapitta which might present clinically as Asrikdara. This involves liver pathology in the defective production of clotting factors.

It is proved that the virechana dravya and virechanopaga dravya stimulates liver function and requires bile for hydrolysis. Bile serves as means for the excretion of toxins which otherwise vitiate the whole blood.

Thus, virechana enhances liver physiology and corrects liver pathologies and coagulopathies, which form a potential aetiology for bleeding diseases (Adhogarakta pitta /Asrikdara).

At the biochemical/cellular level, pitta in physiological aspects can be associated with actions of enzymes, growth factors, hormones, and the reactions required for energy homeostasis and maintenance of basal metabolism.

Menorrhagia caused due to hormonal imbalance can be correlated to Asrikdara caused by avarana and vandhya (According to Kashyapa Acharya relating to hyper prolantinaemia) pathologies.

Virechana, which balances the pitta, maintains hormonal homeostasis and regularises HPO Axis required for regular menstrual cycles.

Further, we relate inflammatory diseases to be associated with the vitiation of pitta dosha. Thus Asrija/Apraja, Lohitakshara and Raktayoni (considered under the category of pittaja yoni vyapats) can be correlated to the inflammatory pathologies of endometrium causing the pratyatma lakshana of Asrikdara; this also includes the benign leiomyomas of the uterus which are consequence and complication of chronic inflammation.

It is known that virechana relieves pelvic congestion and inflammation, thus causing the samprapti vighatana of pittaja Yoni vyapat causing Asrikdara lakshana. Further, kunapa gandhi artavadushti, which involves raktadushti, can be correlated to malignancy of endometrium, wherein the treatment is limited to lakshanika chikitsa and to prevent further progress of pathology. In this aspect, virechana brings about the epigenetic programming of cellular mitosis and helps to combat the pathology.

Hence, with the above contemplation, it can be said that virechana causes pitta harana and relieves rakta dushti, resulting in the samptapti vighatana of Asrikdara.

In support of this theory, Acharya says the treatment of artava kshaya, on the contrary, is vamana and never virechana, whereas Dalhana explains that virechana further causes pitta kshaya leads to artava kshaya, further worsening the pathology of Artava kshaya.

Table 5: Virechana Karmukata explained in Contemporary Modern Science, specific to each disease spectrum of Asrikdara

Clinical Spectrum of Asrikdara	Pathological Entity of Asrikdara	Correlation of the Pathological Entity	Effect of Virechana in modern Science
Rakta pradoshaja vikara	Dushita pitta	Increase in Entropy at the level of the rasa-rakta complex	Reduction in Entropy
Rakta vrudhi causing artava vrudhi Samanya Asrikdara samprapti	Increased drava guna of pitta and rakta	Increase in the intracellular, interstitial and intravascular fluids	Drains the excess pathological body fluids
Adhoga rakta pitta	Ato Anyad Rakta Lakshana	Liver pathology/ coagulopathies	Enhances liver physiology
Pittavruta apana	Avarana	Hormonal imbalance	Balances HPO axis
Vandhya, according to Kashyapa			
Asrija/Apraja Lohitakshara Raktayoni	Pittaja yoni vyapat	Endometrial congestion/ Inflammation/ Leiomyoma	Relieves pelvic congestion / Inflammation
Kunapa gandhi artava	Artava dushti	Endometrial malignancy	Epigenetic programming of cellular mitosis

CONCLUSION

The first line of treatment in Asrikdara is rakta stambhana. Then lat virechana can be administered in virechana yogya rogi, presenting excessive bleeding per vagina. Thus with the critical analysis and interpretation of pitta (physiological entity for maintenance of homeostasis), pitta dosha (pathological entity responsible for the manifestation of diseases), rakta dhatu, raktadushti, artava and Asrikdara samprapti, it can be substantiated that virechana karma is the best treatment modality for wide the spectrum of diseases categorized under Asrikdara.

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