



Review Article

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A REVIEW ON ROLE OF PATHYA-APATHYA IN ANO-RECTAL DISEASES: AN AYURVEDIC PERSPECTIVE ON ARSHA, PARIKARTIKA, AND BHAGANDARA

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ABSTRACT

Anorectal disorders, including Arsha (hemorrhoids), Parikartika (anal fissure), and Bhagandara (fistula-in-ano), are among the most frequently encountered conditions affecting the recto-anal region. Ayurveda attributes their origin primarily to improper dietary practices and lifestyle habits that disturb the equilibrium of Doshas and weaken Agni (digestive power). This paper explores the concept of Pathya and Apathya - the wholesome and unwholesome regimens - outlined in the classical texts Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, and Ashtanga Hridaya, and correlates them with present-day nutritional science. The review emphasizes that a balanced diet comprising light, easily digestible, and fibre-rich foods such as Mudga, Takra, Yava, Ghr̥ta, and Rakta Shali improves digestion, prevents constipation, and accelerates healing of anorectal lesions. In contrast, the intake of heavy, oily, spicy, or fermented food items and sedentary routines aggravate pathological changes and delay recovery. Appropriate Pathya-Ahara (diet) combined with Vihara (healthy lifestyle practices) and yoga helps regulate bowel movements and supports the healing process. Integrating Ayurvedic dietary principles with modern health perspectives offers a preventive and restorative framework for managing anorectal diseases and enhancing overall digestive health.

Keywords: Pathya-Apathya, Arsha, Parikartika, Bhagandara, Ayurveda, Diet, Lifestyle

INTRODUCTION

Diseases that occur in the rectum and anal canal are collectively defined as anorectal diseases. Anorectal disorders encompass structural, neuromuscular, and functional disorders. In Ayurveda, Arsha (hemorrhoids), Bhagandar (fistula), Parikartika (fissure-in-ano), Gudabhramsha (rectal prolapse), and Gudagata Vidradhi (perianal abscess) are mentioned as commonly occurring anorectal disorders because of faulty dietary and behavioral lifestyles. The classical Ayurveda literature, like the Sushruta Samhita and Charaka Samhita, has described a comprehensive approach for the prevention and management of anorectal disorders. The high prevalence rate of commonly found disorders, i.e., piles, fissures, and fistulas, is 50%, 17.81%, and 2.2%, indicating the requirement of a comprehensive approach to management, which is possible by Ayurveda. ^{1,2}

The etiological factors of anorectal diseases, which are common in practices, are untimely and improper consumption of food, fast foods, oil and spicy foods, low-fibre diets, less water intake, lack of exercise, sitting for long durations, day sleep, late-night awakenings, etc., and are responsible for Mandagni (decreased digestive fire). This can cause Sanga, Vimarga-gamana, and Atipravrutti types of Sroto Dushti. This article emphasizes the dietary articles, which help in prevention as well as faster recovery from the anorectal diseases (piles, fissure, and fistula),

to reduce the prevalence rate and recurrence rate and improve prognosis.

Review of Literature

A thorough review of literature was done by combining insights from ayurvedic classical texts, viz., Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, and Ashtanga Hridaya, with research papers from databases such as PubMed, PubMed Central, Scopus, Science Direct, and Google Scholar, textbooks, and journals in contemporary science reviewed for the parallel findings regarding the view of Pathyapathya for Arsha, Parikartika, and Bhagandara to get relevant research papers related to the manuscript. The keywords like "Pathyapathya," "Arsha," "Parikartika," "Bhagandara", etc. were searched, and relevant discussion and results were reviewed. All the review articles were excluded, except for systemic reviews/meta-analyses. A total of 42 papers were screened, out of which 21 articles were included. Then, the data was compiled, organized, and summarized as per conceptual understanding.

Pathya and Apathya Ahara

The comprehensive view of Acharya Sushruta, Charaka, and Vagbhatta is mentioned below in table 1. Here, in Table 2 Rasa and Guna of Apathya Ahara contribute as etiological factors are mentioned.

Table 1: Pathya Aahara mentioned in Brihatrayi for Asrsha, Parikartika, and Bhagandara

Diseases	Charaka Samhita	Sushruta Samhita	Ashtanga Hridaya
Arsha	Anna and Peya which does the Anulomana of Vata and increases strength of Agni. ³	Mudga (green gram), Yava (barley), Godhuma (wheat), Kulattha (horse gram), and Masa (black gram), Draksha, Amalaki, Kusumanda, Peya ⁴	Mudga, Yava, Kulattha, Masa, Sarshapa, Tamra Curma ⁵
Parikartika	Laghu Bhojana, Langhana, Ruksha – Ushna Guna Anna, Uspa-Kasi (vitriolic/asafoetida-type agents), Kshara or Lavana ⁶	Kshira, Dadhi, Ghrita, Laghu-anna, Draksha, Dadima ⁷	Kshira, Dadhi, Sarpi, Draksha ⁸
Bhagandara	Not mentioned	Laghu, Ushna, Snigdha, Kulattha, Masa, Mudga, Yava, Godhuma, Sarshapa, Yavani, Souvarchala ⁹	Kulattha, Masa, Mudga, Yava, Amalaka ¹⁰

Table 2: Apathya Aahara mentioned in Brihatrayi for Asrsha, Parikartika, and Bhagandara

Diseases	Charaka Samhita	Sushruta Samhita	Ashtanga Hridaya
Arsha	Mamsa, Matsya, Mutra, Taila, Ati Sheeta, Guru, Vatavardhaka Ahara ¹¹	Ruksha, Sheeta, Viruddha-ahara, Mamasa, Matsya, Tikshana Ahara ¹²	Ruksha, Ushna, Tiksha, Katu Ahara, Viruddhara ¹³
Parikarita	Mamasa, Matsya, Madhura, Ati-tikta Ahara, Tikshana Ahara, Apaka ¹⁴	Ruksha, Ushna, Amla, Vidahi Ahara ¹⁵	Kulattha, Pishta-anna, Dadhi, Navanna, Anupa māmsa, Matsya, Tila Taila ¹⁶
Bhagandara	Not mentioned	Ruksha, Katu, Vatavardhaka Ahara ¹⁷	Guru, Snigdha, Lavana, Katu-Tikta Ahara ¹⁸

Table 3: Dietary articles and their specific qualities¹⁹

Dietary articles/food items	Qualities
Kshira (milk), Dadhimanda (whey), Takrapinda (cream of curd), Kilat (cream of milk), Mandaka (immature curd)	Guru (heavy) and Abhishyandi (obstructing Srotas (body channels))
Atikranta Madhya (improper fermentation of alcohol)	Accumulation of Mala in Udara, and Tridosha-Prakopa
Atisnehapana and Gurupaka	Causes Agnimandhya (decreased digestive fire)
Pakwa Bilva, Pakwa Amra	Guru and Vishtambhi (causes constipation)
Gudavikruti (jiggery preparations), Tila Vikruti (sesame preparation), Naktamala, and Bisa (lotus stalk)	All are Gurupaki (heavy to digest)
Masha Yusa (black gram soup), Viruda Dhanya (sprouts), Nava-shami Dhanya (newly harvested foods)	Guru and causes Agnimandhya.
Sushka Saka (dried vegetables), Tumbi (bottle guard)	Guru
Meats – Gavya (cow), Mahisha (buffalo), Varaha (boar), Matsya (fish)	Gurupaki
Krishna Prani Masa (meat of emaciated animals) and Sushka Masa (dried meat), Puti Masa (consumption of putrefied meat)	Causes Vishama Agni and Vata-Pitta Prakopa (aggravation of Vata and Pitta Dosa)

Table 4. Faulty behavioural practices and their consequences

Faulty behavioural practices	Negative impact
Viruddha-asana (incompatible food), Asatmaya-asana (unsuitable food), Paryusitana (stale food), Sheeta (cold food items)	Causes accumulation of Mala (feces) in Udara (abdomen)
Ajirmashana (Eating before previously taken food gets digested), Pramitashana (taking food in less quantity)	Causes Agnimandhya (decreased digestive fire)

The faulty behavioural practices also contribute as Nidana for the anorectal diseases. Commonly followed practices and their negative impact are mentioned here in Table 3.

The above-mentioned dietary article must be avoided to prevent anorectal disorders and hasten the recovery from the diseases. The Viahra (behavioral practices) also have an equal contribution in etiopathology.²⁰ The Viruddha Vihara, like intake of unwholesome food, taking food before previous food gets digested, sitting on irregular and hard surfaces, suppression of natural urges like stool, urine, and flatus, excessive straining during defecation, insertion of hard items into the anus, lack or excessive physical exercise, and indulgence in sexual intercourse, also in pregnant women by the gravid uterus, can all cause the vitiation of Apana Vata, which has the function of elimination of bodily waste products, and it affects the anal sphincter and results in various anorectal disorders.²¹

Pathya Ahara for anorectal diseases in their significance as per Ayurveda and contemporary science

As discussed before, Agni plays a major role in the maintenance of health as well as the manifestation of various diseases. The Agni is the unique concept of Ayurveda, which causes the imbalance in digestion and metabolism. It results in the improper formation of Rasa Dhatu, which accumulates in Aamashaya and is termed as Ama. This Sama Dosh results in various disorders.²² For the maintenance of the Agni, Guna, and Rasa of the Ahara Dravya, they play a major role. As per Ayurveda, one should have to consume the Shada-rasatmaka Ahara to maintain health; one should practice all Rasas in specific ratios as per season. During Heman, Sishira, and Varsha Ritu, one should have to consume more Madhura, Amla, and Lavana Rasa; in Vasanta Ritu, Katu, Tikta, and Kashaya Rasa; and in Grishma, Madhura Rasa Pradhan Dravyas should be consumed.²³ The dietary articles, which are mentioned as Pathya in Ayurveda classics, are discussed below.

Table 5: Pathya Ahara and their significance as per Ayurveda and contemporary science

Dietary articles/food items	Significance as per Ayurveda	Significance as per contemporary sciences
Changeri, Kakamachi, Upodika, Vastuka, Shatavari, Jivanti	Agnideepana, Vata Shamaka, Bhedana (relieves constipation), and Laghu (easy to digest)	Promotes gut health, laxatives, and anti-inflammatory properties ²⁴
Palandu, Patola, Punarnava, Rasona	Agnideepana and Malarechaka ²⁵	Promotes bowel movement, antioxidant, improves digestive capacity, and laxative. ^{26,27}
Ushtra Kshira	Laghu and Vata-Kapha Shamaka ²⁸	Promoting gut bacteria reduces harmful bacteria, supports intestinal function. ²⁹
Takra, Tushodaka, Nagara Dhanyaka	Vata-Kapha Shamana, Deepana – Pachana, Mala Anulomana ³⁰	Provides probiotics and lactic acids, a healthy gut microbiome, enhances metabolism, and regulates bowel movements ³¹
Dadhisara Mathita (curd cream obtained after churning), Navnita Tila (black sesame seed with butter)	Rakta Stambhaka, and Deepana-Pachana ³²	Mild laxative and promotes the butyric acid production ³³
Maricha (black peeper) and Ruchaka (black salt)	Agnideepana, Laghu, Ananashaka, Vata Shamaka ³⁴	Increases intestinal motility and promotes transit ³⁵ , laxative property ³⁶
Yava and Godhuma	Laghu, Vata-Kapha Shamaka	Anti-inflammatory, rich in dietary fibre, promotes regular bowel movement, easily digestible, relieves constipation, and alleviates symptoms. ³⁸
Rakta Shali	Mala Rechaka, Laghu	Alleviates inflammation, minimizes straining during defecation, contains antioxidants, rich dietary fibres, promotes bowel movement, and increases stool bulk ³⁹
Surana Kanda	Laghu, Mala rechaka	Promotes digestion and metabolism, relieves constipation, rich high high-fibre food articles, rich in glucomannan and betulinic acid, increases fecal parameters and intestinal transit ⁴⁰
Takra	Laghu, Deepana – Pachana, Arshoghna	Rich in probiotics, promotes healthy gut flora, is anti-inflammatory, and regulates bowel movements. ⁴¹
Navnita and Ghrita (butte and ghee)	Agni Deepana (promotes digestive fire), Vata-Pitta Shamana	Reduces dryness and friction of the anal region, has cooling effects and mitigates the inflammation, has lubricating properties, and stimulates bowel movements
Amalaki	Virechaka, Vata-Kapha Shamana	Laxative, promotes bowel movements, high fibre content, anti-inflammatory
Kanji	Vata-Kapha Shamaka, Agni Deepana	Easy to digest, anti-inflammatory, minimizes strain during defecation, softens stool, promotes bowel movement.

Here, Pathya Ahara recipes are mentioned, which are suitable for dietary management of Arsha, Parikartika, and Bhagandara.

Takra (Buttermilk): Mix diluted curd with cumin, pepper, salt, and churn into buttermilk.

Kanji: The probiotic drink can be made by fermenting black carrots or boiled rice in salted water for 3–5 days.

Yavagu: Light gruel that is prepared by cooking rice in excessive water till soupy.

Palandu-Patola Sabji: Boil onion and pointed gourd with cumin, turmeric, little oil until tender.

Surana Kanda Curry: Boil and mash the elephant yam along with turmeric, ginger, and cumin.

Rakta Shali Rice: steam red rice with 4 cups of water per cup of rice

Khichdi: Cook rice and split moong dal together with turmeric and cumin, adding extra water until the mixture turns soft and comforting.

Amalaki Juice: Blend fresh amla with water, strain it, and enjoy the refreshing juice.

Navnita: Churn curd to separate the fresh butter (navnita) and use it right away for the best taste.

Tila Chutney: Grind roasted black sesame seeds with jaggery and a touch of salt to make a rich, flavorful chutney.

Green Gram Soup: Boil green gram with a hint of cumin and finish with a splash of buttermilk.

Rice with Buttermilk: Combine soft, well-cooked rice with fresh buttermilk and a touch of salt.

Moong Dal Khichdi: Cook rice and split green gram with turmeric, using very little oil for a light dish.

Steamed Bottle Gourd: Steam diced bottle gourd until tender and season it lightly with salt.

Roasted Pumpkin Mash: Roast pumpkin, then mash it with cumin and a little ghee for flavour.

Cooked Apple: Gently steam apple pieces until soft and serve plain.

Porridge with Oats or Barley: Boil oats or barley in water until soft, then serve warm with a pinch of rock salt.

Ghee with Warm Milk: Stir a teaspoon of ghee into a cup of warm milk and enjoy it before bedtime.

Boiled Carrot: Boil carrot pieces until tender, then season gently with salt and cumin.

Plain Curd Rice: Mix soft rice with fresh homemade curd and serve at room temperature.

Pathya Vihara for anorectal diseases

In classics, no specific discussion on Pathya Vihara is found, but Dinacharya, Ritucharya, and Sadvritta are important for the prevention of anorectal diseases. One should not suppress the natural urges. All these behavioral factors must be considered while dealing with the anorectal diseases.

Table 6: Asanas and Yoga for anorectal diseases

Diseases	Yoga/Asana
Arsha	Supta Vajrasana, Pavanmuktasana, Matsayasana ⁴²
Parikartika	Mualabhasana, Vajrasana, Pavanamuktasana, Bhujangasana ⁴³
Bhagandara	Vajrasana, Savasana, Mula-bandhasana ⁴⁴

CONCLUSION

The article highlights that a proper understanding and application of Pathya-Apathya (wholesome and unwholesome diet and lifestyle) form the cornerstone of managing anorectal diseases such as Arsha (hemorrhoids), Parikartika (anal fissure), and Bhagandara (fistula-in-ano). Classical Ayurvedic texts by Acharya Charaka, Sushruta and Vagbhatta emphasize that faulty

dietary habits and lifestyle—such as intake of heavy, spicy, or fermented foods and suppression of natural urges—aggravate Doshas and impair Agni, leading to disease manifestation. In contrast, a diet rich in fiber, easily digestible foods like Mudga, Shāli dhānya, Takra, and Ghr̥ta, along with appropriate behavioral practices, supports digestive strength, promotes wound healing, and prevents recurrence. Integrating these classical dietary principles with modern nutritional awareness provides a holistic, preventive, and curative framework for anorectal disorders, reinforcing Ayurveda's timeless relevance in promoting gastrointestinal health.

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