



World Journal of Current Medical and Pharmaceutical Research

Content available at www.wjcmpr.com ISSN: 2582-0222



AYURVEDIC PARADIGM OF ARSHA: AN ANALYTICAL REVIEW OF ETIOLOGY, DIAGNOSIS, AND TREATMENT



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Article History	Abstract
Received on: 26-05-2024 Revised on: 11-06-2024 Accepted on: 22-06-2024	Haemorrhoid, known as <i>Arsha</i> in Ayurveda, are a prevalent condition with multifactorial etiology and diverse clinical manifestations. This literature review aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the Ayurvedic paradigm of <i>Arsha</i> , focusing on its etiology, diagnosis, and treatment modalities. Drawing from classical Ayurvedic texts and contemporary research, this review synthesizes existing knowledge to elucidate the pathogenesis of <i>Arsha</i> and its impact on patient health. Through a systematic examination of historical and contemporary sources, key findings emerge regarding the dietary, lifestyle, and <i>Dosha</i> factors contributing to <i>Arsha</i> . Diagnostic methods in Ayurveda, such as <i>Sadhvidha Pariksha</i> , are explored in conjunction with modern medical approaches, highlighting the importance of comprehensive clinical assessment for accurate diagnosis. Treatment options, including preventive measures and therapeutic interventions, are discussed in detail, emphasizing the holistic nature of Ayurvedic management. Implications for clinical practice and areas for future research are outlined, underscoring the need for further exploration into the efficacy of Ayurvedic interventions and their integration into modern healthcare systems. This review provides valuable insights for healthcare practitioners and researchers seeking to enhance the management of Haemorrhoid through an integrative approach. Keywords: Ayurveda, <i>Arsha</i> , Haemorrhoid, literature review.
	
	

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37022/wjcmpr.v6i2.329>

Introduction

Arsha, commonly referred to as Haemorrhoid, stands as a significant focus within Ayurvedic literature, where its severity is depicted by the term's etymology, meaning "as violent as an enemy".^[1] Ayurvedic texts, notably those authored by Sushruta, offer extensive insights into the etiology, symptomatology, and management of *Arsha*, attributing its prevalence to modern sedentary lifestyles, dietary irregularities, and psychological stressors. These factors lead to distressing symptoms including impaired digestion, constipation, itching, pain, and bleeding in the anorectal region (*Guda*). Ayurvedic interventions emphasize a holistic approach, incorporating both preventive measures and therapeutic interventions tailored to the *Dosha* involvement and disease

stage. This review aims to consolidate Ayurvedic perspectives on *Arsha*, providing a comprehensive overview of its causative factors, clinical manifestations, and treatment modalities. By bridging traditional Ayurvedic knowledge with contemporary clinical understanding, this synthesis seeks to enhance the management of haemorrhoids, ultimately improving patient well-being and quality of life.

Etiology and Risk Factors of *Arsha*

Samanya Nidan (General Etiology)

Arsha, or haemorrhoids, manifests due to various factors outlined in Ayurvedic literature. Dietary habits play a crucial role, with consumption of heavy, sweet, cold, and incompatible foods being notable culprits. Additionally, improper eating practices such as intake before digestion (*Ajirna-Pramitashana*) exacerbate the condition. Sedentary lifestyle choices, lack of exercise, and mental stress also contribute significantly to the development of *Arsha*. Moreover, factors like irregular sleeping patterns, usage of rugged seats, and improper application of *Basti* (medicated enema) further compound the risk.^[2] In addition to these factors, *Acharya*

Sushruta identified several etiological contributors to *Arsha* (haemorrhoids), including residing in uneven terrains, prolonged squatting, excessive driving and riding, frequent sexual activity, and suppression of natural urges. These behaviours are associated with the vitiation of *Doshas*, which subsequently lead to the development of *Arsha*. A particularly significant causative factor is *Mandagni* (diminished digestive fire). Moreover, *Acharya Sushruta* noted that certain activities exacerbate the symptoms of *Arsha*, such as exposure to cold water, wet clothes, and contact with *Trina* (Grass) and *Kastha* (small pieces of wood).^[3]

Vishesh Nidan (Specific Etiology)

Arsha manifests distinctively based on the predominant *Doshas* involved. For **VatajaArsha**, aggravating factors include the consumption of astringent, pungent, and light foods, irregular food intake, *Teekshana Madhya* (strong alcoholic beverages), excessive sexual activity, fasting (*Langhan*), excessive exercise (*Vyayama*), cold environments, and emotional stress (*Shoka*). **PittajaArsha** is exacerbated by hot, spicy, and alkaline foods, intense exercise, anger (*Krodha*), and hot climates. In contrast, **Kaphaja Arsha** is triggered by sweet, oily, and heavy foods, a sedentary lifestyle, lack of active mental activity (*Achintanam*), and exposure to easterly winds (easterly *Vata*). Understanding these specific etiological factors aids in tailoring effective treatment strategies for *Arsha*.^[3-4]

Samprapti of Arsha

Components of Samprapti

Arsha, or haemorrhoids, originates from the disturbance of Three *Doshas*, *Dhatu*s, and *Shrotas*. The vitiation primarily involves *Apana Vata*, *Pachaka Pitta*, and *KledakaKapha*. The affected *Dhatu* (*Dushyas*) include *Twak* (skin), *Mamsa* (muscle), *Meda* (fat), and *Rakta* (blood). The *Shrotas* (channels) primarily affected are *Raktavaha* (blood-carrying channels) and *Mamsavaha* (muscle-carrying channels). *Shrotodushti* (channel blockage) manifests as *Sanga* (obstruction) and *Shiragranthi* (blockage of vessels).^[5-6] These pathological processes occur at the *Gudavali* (anal region), where the vitiated *Doshas* travel via the *Dhamani* and initiate the *Samprapti* (pathogenesis) of *Arsha* (haemorrhoids).

Stages of Manifestation

Arsha arises from an initial disturbance in *Amapakwashaya* (digestive system), with the manifestation prominently observed in the region of *GudaValithraya* (anus). The disease progresses along both external (*Barhya*) and internal (*Abhyantara*) pathways, affecting the digestive fire (*Agni*) predominantly *Jatharagni*. Its chronic nature is characterized by a persistent course (*Swabhava*) leading to prolonged affliction.

Contributing Factors

The pathogenesis of *Arsha* is influenced by various factors including *Agnimandhya* (digestive weakness), vitiation of *Vata* and other *Doshas*, and obstruction in the primary channels. These factors ultimately lead to *Vibandha* (constipation) or *Malabaddhata* (difficulty in defecation), affecting the functioning of the three vital bodily *Gudavalis* and resulting in the manifestation of both external and internal haemorrhoids (*Barhya* and *AbhyantaraArshas*). Understanding these underlying mechanisms is crucial for devising effective therapeutic interventions for *Arsha*.

Clinical Manifestations of Arsha

Prodromal Symptoms (Poorva Roopa)

The premonitory symptoms (*Poorva Roopa*) preceding the onset of *Arsha* hold significant clinical relevance as they facilitate early detection. Detailed in various Ayurvedic texts, these symptoms include *Agnimandhya* (digestive weakness), *Anna Ashardha* (loss of appetite), *KrichataPakti* (delayed digestion), *Amlika* (acid regurgitation), *Vishtambha* (constipation), *Alasya* (lethargy), *Alpa Pureesha* (scanty stools), and *Atopa* (abdominal heaviness). These symptoms, observed during the *StanasanashrayaKriyakala* (pre-manifestation stage), serve as crucial indicators of impending pathology. During this stage, patients may also experience symptoms resembling other conditions such as *Pandu* (anemia), *Udara* (abdominal disorders), *Grahani* (malabsorption syndrome), and *Guda Parikartan* (Anal discomfort).^[7-8]

Manifestation of Symptoms (Roopa)

Roopa, occurring in the fifth *Kriyakal* (manifestation manifestation stage)^[9], signifies the complete development of *Arsha*. General symptoms observed include incomplete evacuation of *ApanVayu*, *Mala* (stool), and *Mutra* (urine) due to *Adhomarganirodhata* (obstruction of the anal canal). *Mandagni* (diminished digestive fire) also leads to symptoms such as *Krishna* (emaciation), *Hatutsaha* (loss of enthusiasm), *Kshama* (pallor), and *Nishprabha* (loss of luster due to *OjaKshaya*). *Arsha's* clinical presentation is categorized into *SamanyaRupa* (general symptoms) and *VisheshRupa* (specific symptoms based on *Doshas* involvement). *AcharyaVagbhata* describes *GudaShrava* (secretion) in *SamanyaRupa* of *ShushkaArsha* as *Pichila* (slimy) and *Pulakodaka* (mucous-like), while in *ArdraArsha*, symptoms include *Pandu* (pale), *Peet,Harita* (yellow-green), and *RaktaShrava* (bloody discharge).^[10]

Specific Symptoms Based on Dosha Involvement

Vataja Arsha presents with symptoms such as *Vibandha* (constipation and urinary retention), various types of pain (*Shoola*, *Romaharsha*, and *Chimchimayan*), and pain in the lower back, genital organs, and thighs. Discoloration such as *Syava* (Brown) and *Aruna* (reddish) in the eyes, stool, urine, and nails is observed. Other symptoms include *Angamardha* (body ache) and *Arochaka* (loss of appetite).^[11]

PittajaArsha is characterized by soft, smooth, and hypersensitive areas, with secretion (*Kleda*) appearing in *PittajVarna* (yellow and blue hues), low viscosity, and malodorous blood discharge. There is also discoloration of waste products and organs, along with symptoms of excessive thirst, fever, and food aversion.^[12]

KaphajaArsha manifests as smooth, touchable, and white-coloured with shiny skin, marked by heaviness (*Mahamoola*) and stability (*Sthira*). There is also white discoloration of waste products and organs, itching, and excessive secretion, with chronicity and *AamajVikara* (conditions associated with undigested food).^[13]

RaktajaArsha is typified by *Ati Rakta Srava* (excessive bleeding), and *Sahaja Arsha* exhibits symptoms such as congenital disease, *Durdarshanam* (difficulty in defecation), and *Parusha* (hard stools). Understanding these distinctive clinical features aids in accurate diagnosis and targeted management of *Arsha*.^[14]

Upadrava(Complications)

Complications associated with *Arsha* include *Baddhagudodara* (obstruction in the anus) and *Udavarta* (reverse movement of *ApanaVata*). These complications, highlighted by ancient Ayurvedic *Acharya* like *Charaka* and *Vagbhata*, underscore the importance of timely intervention to prevent further morbidity. Through a comprehensive understanding of the clinical manifestations and associated complications, healthcare practitioners can effectively manage *Arsha*, ensuring optimal patient outcomes and quality of life.^[15-16]

Diagnostic Methods for Haemorrhoids

In Ayurveda, diagnostic procedures encompass *SadhvidhaPariksha*, which involves examination through sensory organs (*PanchaGyanendriya*) and patient *Prashan*(questioning), facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the disease.^[17] In contemporary medical practice, the diagnosis and confirmation of haemorrhoids typically involve several steps.

Complete Clinical History

A thorough clinical history is obtained, including details of symptoms, duration, severity, and exacerbating factors. This aids in understanding the patient's medical background and identifying potential risk factors.

Digital Rectal Examination (DRE)

DRE involves the manual examination of the rectal area using a gloved, lubricated finger. This allows for the assessment of anal tone, detection of masses or abnormalities, and evaluation of rectal wall integrity.^[18]

Proctoscopy Examination

DRE involves the manual examination of the rectal area using a gloved, lubricated finger. This allows for the assessment of anal tone, detection of masses or abnormalities, and evaluation of rectal wall integrity.^[19-20]

Endoscopic Examination

Endoscopic procedures such as colonoscopy or sigmoidoscopy may be performed to evaluate the entire colon and rectum for haemorrhoids and other gastrointestinal conditions. These procedures provide a more comprehensive assessment of the rectal and colonic mucosa, allowing for accurate diagnosis and management planning.^[21]

By employing these diagnostic methods, healthcare professionals can effectively identify and confirm the presence of haemorrhoids, determine their characteristics, and tailor appropriate treatment strategies to address the patient's needs.

Treatment Options for Arsha (Haemorrhoids)

In accordance with the Ayurvedic principle of "Prevention is better than Cure," the management of *Arsha* emphasizes preventive measures such as (digestive fire), and modifying dietary habits to mitigate the risk of haemorrhoids. Moving to the treatment aspect, *Acharya Charaka* underscore the significance of medicinal intervention, given the condition's association with *Mandagni* (weak digestive fire). *Acharya Sushruta* also mentioned following four type treatment modalities in *Arsha Chikitsa*. localized (*Sthanika*) and systemic (*Sarvadaihika*) treatments are recommended.

BheshajChikitsa

KsharaChikitsa

Agnikarma Chikitsa

Shastra Chikitsa

Bheshaja Chikitsa

Bheshaj (therapeutic intervention) is the first line of treatment following the failure of preventive measures. This approach is indicated for conditions such as *Achirkaljata* (the initial stage of the disease), characterized by minimal *Dosha* imbalance and mild signs and symptoms (*Alpa Dosha, Linga, and Updrava*).^[22] In Ayurvedic practice, the initial treatment strategy includes enhancing digestive fire (*Agnivradhi*), promoting the downward movement of Vata (*Vatanuloman*), and employing haemostatic agents (*Raktastambhan*).^[23]

SthanikaChikitsa:

Localized treatments aim to alleviate pain and congestion through various methods including *Abhyanga* (medicated oil massage), *Swedana* (fomentation)^[24], *Avagahan* (sitz bath)^[25], *Pariksheka* (cleansing), *Pralepa* (application of paste)^[26-27], and *Dhoopan* (fumigation).^[28]

SarvadaihikaChikitsa

Systemic treatments involve medications to regulate *Agni* (digestive fire) and bowel habits, manage symptoms, and prepare patients for surgical interventions.

Classical Medicinal Preparations

Several classical medicinal formulations are prescribed for haemorrhoids, including milk decoctions, herbal concoctions, and specific dietary recommendations tailored to the individual's *Dosha* imbalance.

Kshara Karma

Kshara Karma involves the application of caustic substances either internally (*PaneeyaKshara*)^[29] or externally (*PratisaraneeyaKshara*) to treat haemorrhoids but in condition of external use, it is particularly beneficial for soft, extensive, or deeply situated haemorrhoids. It involves the application of *ApamargaPratisaraneeyaTeekshnaKshara* through the anal route with the aid of a slit proctoscope. Approximately 2-5 grams of *Kshara* is applied to each pile mass using a spatula, and the application is maintained for 100 *Matrakaal* (approximately 100 seconds). The colour of the haemorrhoid is then assessed; if the colour changes from red to *Pakva Jambu Phala Varna* (blue and black), the *Kshara* is cleaned using *NimbuSwaras* (lemon juice) followed by normal saline. The same procedure is then repeated for the other haemorrhoids.^[30]

In post-operative period indicated of *MadhuyastiGhritaMatrabasti* along with internal medication.

Kshara Sutra

Kshara Sutra, a medicated thread, is utilized for excising unhealthy tissue through mechanical pressure and chemical action, providing an effective treatment option for various conditions including haemorrhoids. In which therapy haemorrhoid is ligate and transfixed with the help of *Kshara Sutray* the help of Sims speculum and Babcock. It is mainly act as ligation followed by Tran fixation of pile mass.^[31]

Agnikarma

Agnikarma, a para-surgical procedure, employs direct or indirect application of fire for therapeutic purposes. Indicated primarily for *Vataja* and *KaphajaArsha*, *Agnikarma* is particularly beneficial for rough, flat, and hard haemorrhoids according.^[32]

Present time ample of modification seen in *Agnikarma* therapy, in which include of thermal, electric cautery and LASSER energy. These in all technique use electric as well as fire and burned to local site of pile mass.^[33]

Raktamokshana

Local bloodletting (*Raktamokshana*) may be considered in cases where stagnant or vitiated blood is retained, aiding in the management of haemorrhoids by facilitating the removal of impurities. *Acharya Charak* has mentioned *Raktamokshana* with the use of *Prachchhana* (scarification) and *Jalaukavacharana* (leech therapy) if the patient does not find relief through *Ushna* (heat) and *Sheetal* (cold) treatments.^[34-35]

Shastra Karma

For *Tanumoola* (Pedunculated), *Uchchhita* (Elevated) and *Kleda* (Mucous discharging) haemorrhoids, *Shastra Karma* involves surgical excision followed by *Agni Karma*, culminating in *Gophana Bandha* application to promote healing and prevent recurrence. In present time, on the basic fundamental of this procedure haemorrhoidectomy technique used in three and fourth grade haemorrhoid.^[36-37]

By integrating these diverse treatment modalities, Ayurveda offers a holistic approach to managing haemorrhoids, addressing not only the symptoms but also the underlying imbalances contributing to the condition, thus promoting long-term relief and well-being for patients.^[38]

Prognosis and Prevention of Arsha (Haemorrhoids)

The prognosis of *Arsha* (Haemorrhoids) varies based on the *Dosha* involvement and severity of symptoms. Ayurvedic texts categorize the condition into *Sadhya* (curable), *Kriccha* (difficult to cure), *Yapya* (manageable), and *Asadhya* (incurable) based on the *Dosha* imbalance, Duration of disease, involvement of *Gudavali* and clinical presentation.^[39]

In present scenario haemorrhoid is medicine and surgical curable disease but in such chronic case it is transformed into complication like infection, Fournier gangrene, excessive bleeding and portal pyaemia cause death of patient.^[40-41]

Prevention

Prevention strategies for *Arsha* focus on lifestyle modifications and dietary adjustments to address underlying imbalances and mitigate risk factors. Adopting a balanced diet, maintaining regular bowel habits, staying physically active, and managing stress are essential measures for preventing the onset or recurrence of haemorrhoids. Additionally, early detection and prompt treatment of predisposing factors can contribute to better prognosis and long-term management of the condition.

Pathya-Apathya of Arsha

Following a proper diet and lifestyle is crucial in managing *Arsha*. *Pathya* (beneficial) foods include varieties of grains like *Shali*, *Shastika*, and *Yava*, along with vegetables such as *Surana*, *Nimbu*, and *Patola*. Dairy products like *AjaKsheera* (Got Milk) and *Takra* (Buttermilk), as well as fruits like *Amalaki* and *Kapittha*, are recommended. On the other hand, *Apathya* (harmful) factors such as incompatible foods, heavy meals, and suppression of natural urges should be avoided. Engaging in excessive travel, strenuous activities, and consuming spicy or irritating substances can exacerbate the condition. Adhering to the dietary and lifestyle guidelines, along with following recommendations for managing *Raktapitta*, is essential for effective prevention and management of *Arsha*.^[42-44]

Conclusion

In conclusion, Ayurveda offers a comprehensive approach to managing haemorrhoids (*Arsha*), considering both preventive measures and therapeutic interventions tailored to individual *Dosha* imbalances. The etiology of haemorrhoids, influenced by dietary habits, sedentary lifestyles, and psychological stressors, underscores the importance of addressing lifestyle factors in prevention and treatment. Ayurvedic interventions, including medicinal preparations, para-surgical procedures, and dietary modifications, provide effective strategies for managing haemorrhoids at various stages. Integrating Ayurvedic principles into clinical practice can enhance patient care by offering personalized treatment plans aligned with the individual's *Dosha* constitution. Future research should focus on conducting clinical trials to evaluate the efficacy of Ayurvedic interventions, exploring the underlying mechanisms of haemorrhoids, and investigating the impact of lifestyle modifications on long-term outcomes. By addressing these research gaps, we can refine our understanding of haemorrhoids and optimize therapeutic approaches to improve patient well-being and quality of life.

Author contributions

All authors are contributed equally.

Financial support

None

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

Acknowledgements

None

Inform Consent and Ethical Statement

Not Applicable

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