



**Review Article**

**AN AYURVEDIC APPROACH OF PCOS**

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**ABSTRACT**

The polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) is an endocrine, metabolic, reproductive and dermatological disturbance affecting women and is the foremost cause anovulatory infertility. The poorly understood etiopathogenesis contributes adversely to this burning health problem of women. Maximum cardinal features of PCOS like menstrual irregularities, obesity, hirsutism, infertility, polycystic ovaries are found in *Vata-Kaphaja Artava Dushti/Granthibhoot Aartav dusthi* where in other systemic involvement may be justified based on the *Dosha Lakshanas* of *Vata* and *Kapha*. Though the disease PCOS is not mentioned directly in any of the classics of Ayurveda, it may be understood on the basis of *Dosha Dushti*, involvement of *Dushya, Srotas, Ama, Agni, Adhistana* and *Vyadhi Lakshana*. *Granthibhuta Artava Dushti* is characterized by *Dushti Lakshana* of both *Vata* and *Kapha*, scanty menstrual bleeding with or without association of pain and anovulation.

**INTRODUCTION**

In Ayurvedic literature, there is no direct reference regarding the PCOS, but on the basis of Ayurvedic concept of *Dosha, Dushya, Ama, Agni, Srotas, Satkriya-Kala, Adhishtana*, etc. the same may be understood and therapeutically managed. But some conditions can correlate with PCOS like;

1. The concept of *Ashtaartava Dushti* due to *Vata-Kaphaja* dominance known as *Granthibhuta Artava Dushti*<sup>[1]</sup> is one such clinical entity bearing close resemblance to the clinical features of PCOS.
2. *Pushpaghni Jataharini*<sup>[2]</sup> has a few clinical features of PCOS like *Sthoulya* (obesity), *Lomashaganda* (hirsutism), or hairy and corpulent cheeks and *Vrithapushpa* (unfruitful ovulation/anovulation) with menstrual irregularities.
3. *Vandhya Yoni Vyapada* characterized with *Nashta Artava* is another pathological condition possessing the clinical feature of pathological secondary amenorrhoea as in PCOS. *Nastartava* is said to be due to either *Vata Dushti* or *Kapha Dushti* in the form of *Avarana* to the functions of *Vata*. *Sthoulya Samprapti*<sup>[3]</sup>, *Prameha Samprapti*<sup>[4]</sup>

possesses some clinical features similar to PCOS. In the present study *Artava Dushti* is equated to PCOS based on *Nidana, Lakshana* and *Chikitsa Sidhanta* of *Granthibhuta Artava Dushti*.

4. *Vata-Kaphaja Artava Dushti*<sup>[5]</sup> resulting in *Abeejata* of *Artava*.
5. *Artava Kshaya*<sup>[6]</sup>: Dominant *Doshas* are *Vata* and *Pitta*, where as in *Granthibhuta Artava* it is *Vata* and *Kapha*. In addition irregular menstruation, scanty menstruation and pain in *Yoni* are not the only clinical features of PCOS.
6. *Nashtartava*<sup>[7]</sup>: *Avarana* to the functions of *Apana Vata* (to expel the *Artava*); either due to *Vata*, or *Kapha* or both; with less involvement of *Pitta* is the clinical feature. In PCOS, in addition to these; *Granthi* (cystic) formation in ovaries and *Kaphaja Lakshanas* like obesity, hirsutism, acne, and excessive bleeding may also be associated.

***Nidana Panchaka* of *Artava Dushti* (PCOS)**

*Artava Dushti* in Ayurveda, any disease can be approached by using the five factors: *Nidana, Poorvarooopa, Rooopa, Samprapti* and *Upashaya*. These all together are termed the *Nidanapanchaka*.

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**Nidana****(a) Samanya Nidana**

1. *Nidana* of *Vimshati Yonivyapad* are also *Nidana* for *Artava Dushti*.
2. *Vridhhi* and *Kshaya* of *Uttara Dhatu* depend on *Vridhhi* and *Kshaya* of *Poorva Dhatu*. As *Artava* is the *Upadhatu* of *Rasa Dhatu*, *Rasa Kshaya* will result in *Artava Kshaya*<sup>[8]</sup>.
3. *Samanya Kshaya Hetu* like *Vyayama*, *Anashana*, *Chinta*, *Rooksha*, *Alpa Pramitashana*, exposure to *Vata*, *Atapa*, *Bhaya*, *Shoka*, *Rooksha Pana*, *Prajagarana*, excessive expulsion of *Kapha*, *Shonita*, *Shukra* and *Mala*, *Kala* and *Bhutopaghata (Agantuja)* are also

causes for *Artava Kshaya*<sup>[9]</sup>.

**(b) Vishishta Nidana**

1. As *Artava* is *Agneya* and related with *Pitta* which is in *Ashraya-Ashrayi* relation with *Rakta Dhatu*, disorders of *Rakta* and vitiation of *Pitta* may also lead to *Artava Kshaya/Vridhi*.
2. *Vata* and *Pitta* dominance in *Shareera* in general and in *Artavavaha Srotas* in specific results in *Artava Kshaya*<sup>[10]</sup>.
3. *Margaavarana* to the *Artava Pravritti* (production and expulsion) either due to *Vata Dosha*, *Kapha Dosha* or both together may lead to *Nashtartava*<sup>[11]</sup>. It can be summarized as follows:

**Table 1: Vataadi Dosha Prakopaka Vishishta Nidana**

Aharaja	Vataja	Pittaja	Sleshmaja
Rasa predominance (excess use)	Katu, Tikta, Kashaya	Katu, Amla, Lavana	Madhura, Lavana, Amla
Guna predominance (excess use)	Sheeta, Laghu, Ruksha	Ushna, Vidahi	Abhishyandi, Guru, Picchila
Pramana	Anashana	Viruddhashana	Atibhojana
Ahara (Excess)	Laghubhojana, Vishamashana		Adhyashana
Dravya (excess use)	Koddalaka, Shyamaka, Shushka Shaka, Jangala Mamsa	Kshara, Dadhi, Takra, Kanji	Pishtanna, Ikshu Vikara, Mastu, Anupa Mamsa
Viharaja	Atiprajagarana, Vegadharana Ativyavaya, Ativyayama	Atapasevana Agni and Dhuma sevana	Diwaswapna
Manasika	Shoka, Chinta, Bhaya	Irshya, Krodha	Harsha, Achintana
Anya	Dhatu Kshaya, Vyadhikarshana, Sodhana Atiyoga	Atiraktasrava	Atisantarpana, Vamana-Virechanaayoga

**(A) Mithyachara****(a) Mithya Ahara**

*Vata* and *Kaphakara Ahara* are the basic causative factors for PCOS (*Artava Dushti*). *Ahara* also has influence on *Jatharaagni* which may manifest as *Amotpatti Hetu*. As it is attributed to *Rasa Dhatu*; *Rasa* is said to be *Hetu* for both *Sthoulya* and *Karshya*<sup>[12]</sup>. The role of mind in the digestive processes of food is well established in Ayurveda. The present day food habits and their influence in the etiology of PCOS is also significant. As PCOS is also a metabolic disorder, the faulty diet plays a prime role in the manifestation of the disease. In PCOS, the dietary factors seem to lead to *Dushti* of *Rasa*, *Rakta*, and *Meda* in the initial stages. The disturbances in the status of the bodily humors resulting from the dietary variations alter the normal metabolism leading to the formation of abnormal *Ahara Rasa*. Subsequently, the *Dhatu*s formed out of this *Sama Ahara Rasa* will be morbid. The *Dhatu*s and *Srotas* to be affected depend on the *Beejabhaga Dushti*. Such a derangement ultimately affects the *Shukra Dhatu* and *Artava*-the *Upadhatu* of *Rasa*, affecting the

reproductive endocrinology and menstrual cycle resulting in anovulatory infertility.

**Virrudh Ahara:** The role of *Viruddhahara* is very much appreciable in PCOS because *Viruddhahara* lead to a long term and cumulative effect on manifestation of diseases and has a bad prognosis on prolonged indulgence. It is also said to be one of the causative factor for '*Santana Dosha*' (capacity of procreation) which may be genetically inherited<sup>[13]</sup>.

**(b) Mithya Vihara (Vyayama, Vyavaya, Nidra, Vegadharana)**

Many diseases of now-a-days are directly influenced by faulty lifestyle and dietary habits of the society. Stress as well as other psychological factors also contributes to such type of ailments. E.g. *Atichinta* (excess anxiety or thinking) results in *Rasavaha Srotodushti*<sup>[14]</sup>. *Bhuktwa Divaswapna* may vitiate *Mamsavaha Srotas*<sup>[15]</sup>. The sedentary lifestyle along with malnourishment (under and over nourishment) may lead to IHD, diabetes mellitus etc lack of *Vyayama* and

excessive fatty food may vitiate *Medovaha Srotas*. *Manasika Vega Adharana*, *Shoka*, *Krodha*, *Matsarya*, *Kama* etc lead to improper *Ahara Parinama*, *Amotpatti*, *Rasadi Dhatu Dushti* and *Vatadi Dosha Prakopa* which results in *Artavavaha Srotodushti* and *Anapatyata*. Thus the faulty dietary habits, lifestyle and psychological factors are described as the reason for many metabolic disorders and PCOS is of no exemption.

### (c) *Pradushtartava*

*Artava* is *Agneya*, has characteristics of *Rakta* and leads to formation of *Garbha*. The predominant *Mahabhuta* is *Tejas*. The *Artava* may be ovum as well as the menstrual blood; when *Beeja Dushti* will result in *Abeejatwa* (loss of reproductive function) and may also manifest as *Putraghani Yonivyapad*, *Asrija*, etc. characterized by recurrent pregnancy loss as seen in PCOS also.

### (d) *Beeja Dosha*

The genetic or familial predisposition of PCOS though not well defined, but the studies suggest the same which may be attributed to *Sahaja Dosha* mentioned in Ayurveda. *Sahaja Vyadhi* may get manifested later in life when *Dosha*, *Dushya*, *Kala*, *Vaya*, etc. are favourable. The *Sahaja Hetu* of *Beejadushti* if considered as *Utpadaka Hetu*; then the faulty diet and behavioral factors may be considered as triggering factor for PCOS. Every individual is represented in a subtle form in the embryo (*Garbha*). The *Beeja*, a part of *Beeja* and subtle part of *Beeja* which develops into

### (e) *Daiva- Unknown or idiopathic cause*<sup>[16]</sup>

In Ayurveda, *Vyadhi* is classified as *Doshaja*, *Karmaja* and *Dosha Karmaja*<sup>[17]</sup> in origin. In PCOS the etiological factors are not sufficient to explain such a wide range of syndrome manifestation and the disease has to be classified as *Doshakarmaja* in origin. If the etiological factors cannot substantiate the manifestation or non-manifestation of diseases, they are categorized under the term '*Doshakarmaja Vyadhi*'. *Daiva* as a causative factor for *Yonivyapad* suggests that there was some difficulty in tracing the etiological factors for the condition as enumerated for other diseases. From the point of view of success of treatment modalities also, *Doshaja Vyadhi* subside by particular *Dosha Chikitsa* like *Shodhana* or *Shamana*; *Karmaja* by *Karma Kshaya*

but in *Doshakarmaja Vyadhi* both *Yuktivyapashraya* and *Daivavyapashraya* along with *Satwavajaya Chikitsa* are essential. The *Poorvarupa* and *Upashaya* are also vividly understood for *Yonivyapads*.

### **Purvarupa (Prodromal Symptoms)**

*Purvarupa* are the caution lights to warn the patient and doctor about the pathogenesis occurring in the body and makes them run towards exact diagnosis of the disease. But prodromal features of PCOS are not mentioned in texts.

### **Rupa (Symptoms)**

*Rupa* is a manifested stage of disease. It, on one hand, provides clue for the confirmed diagnosis and simultaneously, on the other hand, tells about severity and chronicity of the diseased condition. *Rupa* always appear after *Dosha-Dushya- Sammurcchna*. As this disease is not described in Ayurvedic texts directly but we can correlate the symptoms according to Ayurveda as follows:

**1. *Artava Dushti*:** Menses can be scanty, irregular, delayed in a PCOS patient or there may be amenorrhea. This may be due to vitiated *Kapha* and *Vata*. As there is *Ras Dhatu Dushti* so there is *Bhavamishra* and *Sarangdhara Artava* is *Updhatu* of *Rakta*. In PCOS patients there is vitiation of *Rakta* also so *Artava* also got affected. Amenorrhea may be due to *Srotoavrana*.

**2. *Sthoulya*:** It occurs due to imbalance between calorie intake and energy expenditure and there is disturbed metabolism. This can be considered as *Dhatwagni Mandya* (hypofunctioning) which causes *Dhatuvridhi* i.e., *Medo vridhi*. As *Kapha* is found vitiated so due to its *Prithvi*, *Apa Mahabhuta* predominance there is heaviness in the body and weight gain. But there is *Karsya* also found in some patients. This is present due to *Ras Dhatu Dushti*.

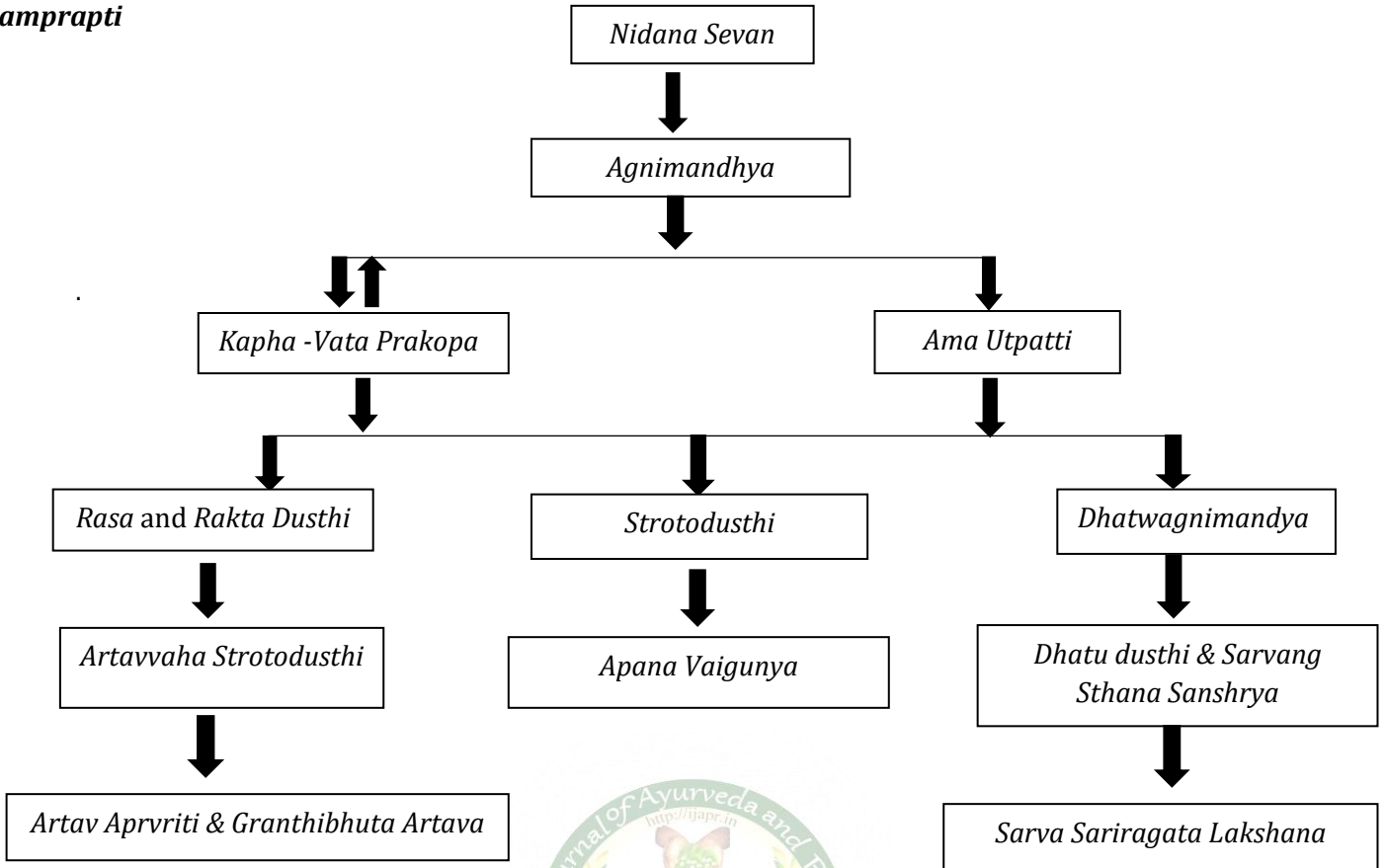
**3. *Yuvanpidika*:** Due to *Nidana Sevena* there is *Rakta Dhatu Dushti*. *Dushita Rakta Dhatu* causes *Yuvanpidika*.

**4. *Atiloma*:** Acc. to *Acharya Susruta* and *Vagbhata* the *Mala* of *Asthi Dhatu* is *Nakha* and *Roma*. So due to *Dushti* of *Asthi Dhatu* there is excessive hair growth.

**5. *Neelika*:** Due to *Rakta Dhatu Dushti* there is *Vaivaryna* of *Twak* i.e., *Neelika*.

**6. *Anaptyata*:** As there is *Dushti* of *Artava* and *Artavavaha Srotas* so *Anaptyata* occurs.



**Samprapti****MATERIAL AND METHOD**

Review of literature regarding PCOS is collected from Brihatrayi and available commentaries on it and research articles are also searched from various websites.

**DISCUSSION**

The pathophysiological mechanisms indicate that the etiology is multifactorial. Since our classical text books failed to find a clinical condition that can be directly correlated with PCOS, the alternate left was to postulate the etiopathogenesis of PCOS by analyzing the symptoms, status of *Doshas*, *Dushyas*, *Agni*, *Srotas*, etc. It is probable that PCOS is occurring by *Kapha* vitiation, leading to *Artavavaha Srotorodha* and subsequently *Vatavaigunya*. The review of previous studies shows that PCOS is equated with *Granthibhuta Artava*, *Pradushtartava*, *Pushpaghni Jataharini* etc. Among this *Vata- Kaphaja Artava Dushti* is conceptualized based on the predominant *Doshas* involved in the manifestation of the *Artava Dushti*. Ayurveda considers all the diseases as imbalance of *Tridoshas* and *Ama* as prime factor for disease pathology. *Agnimandya* produced abnormal synthesis of *Dhatu*s and thus in turn diminish the *Rogibala* and enhance the *Vyadhibala*. Ayurveda has forced upon principles more than any other thing, and that is why anything not described in classics can be understood on the basis of principles.

**CONCLUSION**

PCOS is a *Vyadhi Sankara* in which the symptoms differ from woman to woman depending upon the level of severity and they have different symptoms at different times in their life. PCOS is not directly described in Ayurveda but it can be correlated with *Vata Kaphaja Artava Dushti (Granthibhuta Artava)*. It involves *Kapha- Vata Vaigunya* and *Pitta* is in suppressed status. Mainly *Rasadi Dhatudushti* is involved which results in improper formation of *Upadhatu* i.e., *Artava*. In this disease both *Pachkagnimandya* and *Dhatvagnimandya* are found. Both *Raja Rupa Artava* and *Stree Beeja Rupa Artava* are found being vitiated in the disease. PCOS is more prevalent in *Vata Kapha* predominant *Prakriti* persons who have sedentary lifestyle. Drugs of the clinical trial by virtue of *Ushna Veerya*, *Katu Rasa*, *Amapachana*, *Agni Deepana*, *Srotoshodhana*, *Vatanuloma*, *Artava Pravartana* properties were effective for PCOS (*Artava Dushti*).

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