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Review of *Arsha* as per *Sushruta Samhita* - Classification and principles of management

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ABSTRACT

Haemorrhoid is one of the most common diseases which has significant impact on the quality of the life. There are varieties of the treatment options available from conservative management, para surgical to surgical treatment. General notion of the common public is that the treatment for haemorrhoids is not complete. With the great development in the field of surgery, still the outcomes of the treatment are not satisfactory. People prefer ayurved in such conditions. They strongly believe that ayurveda can give better solutions for haemorrhoids. Hence it seems necessary to go through the details of Ayurvedic view about haemorrhoids. In this article Ayurvedic view of the haemorrhoid disease in terms of etiological factors, classification and the principles of management is discussed.

Key words: Haemorrhoids, Ayurveda, Arsha.

INTRODUCTION

The disease which troubles a person like enemy is termed as *Arsha*^[1] in Ayurvedic classics. This simple term explains how painful the situation is. This is also true in term of difficulties in term of its management. The classification of the diseases explained in depth by Sushrut. The details of which makes us to understand that the term *Arsha* is not only the haemorrhoids but it includes few other ano rectal conditions too.

Prevalence

Despite of its prevalence, the disease has high

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impact on the quality of the life and can be managed with different types of para surgical and surgical methods. But still surgical excision is known to be the best option available with better out come. In this review we will discuss about the different classification of haemorrhoids, causes and the principles of management with different types of indications available in ayurvedic literature specially Sushrut Samhita.

Aetiology^[1]

A person having poor digestive capacity and then too indulges in consuming the *Ahita Aahar* (Improper diet) will in long run, ends up with disease called *Arsha*. The *Doshas* which gets vitiated with such activities will move in downward direction and vitiate the *Guda* (rectum and anal canal) there in producing a mass or growth. These *Mamsa Ankura* (growths) are called as *Arsha*.^[2]

Important and first point mentioned by Sushrut is, this is commonly seen in a person who observes no control in his food habits. People now a day are more aware of the hazards of irregular food habits, yet they won't take care of it. This is what is referred as "*Anatmavata*" (person having no control over his desires) as reason behind this disease.

Classification

The disease *Arsha* is classified into six types^[3] by *Sushrut* based on the predominance of *Dosha's*.

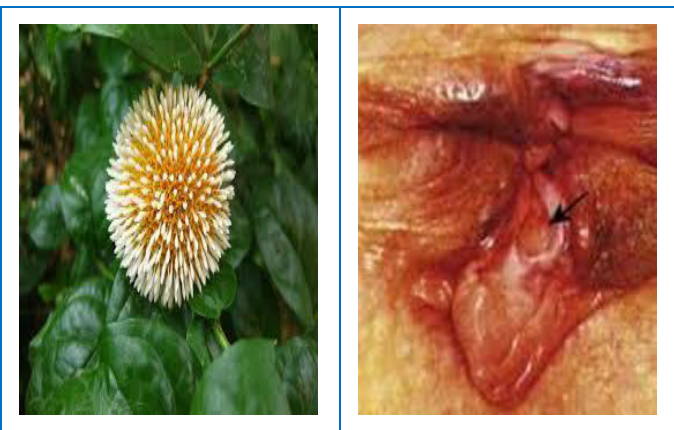
1. *Vataja*^[4]
2. *Pittaja*^[5]
3. *Kaphaja*^[6]
4. *Rakthaja*^[7]
5. *Sahaja*^[8]
6. *Sannipataja*^[9]

When we go through these different types of *Arshas* and their symptoms we understand that these are not mere haemorrhoids but also include some other Ano rectal disorders.

Vataj Arshas^[10]

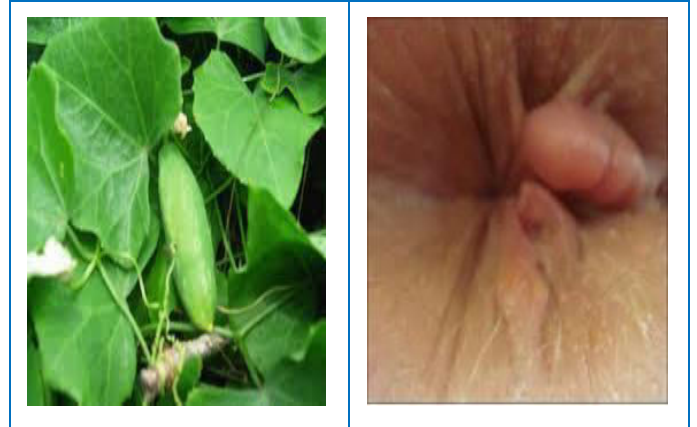
While describing different symptoms of a disease ayurveda *Acharyas* made use of different types of similes which are commonly seen in the nature. It true here also.

Vataja varieties of the *Arshas* means a *Mamsa Ankura* i.e, projecting mass in the anal canal which resembles the shape of *Kadamba Pushpa* and are either tubular like *Tundikeri*, or sharp as pointed needle.



These two pictures explains a mass like conditions which is having a sharp tip (*Suchi muka*) having *Arun Varna*, mass being *Sushka* (dry or non-exudating) etc. are the characteristics of *Vataja Arshas*.

It also looks like *Tundikeri*

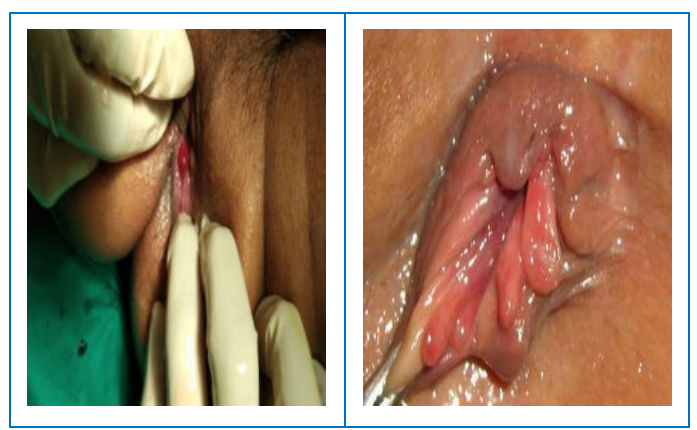


The person who is affected with this *Vataja Arshas* will be having severe pain and no bleeding.

These two points of mass being dry having this sharp pointed tip (*Kadamba Pushpa*) and mass having slightly width in the middle (*tundikeri*) suggest that *Sushruta* was explaining about the Fissure in Ano with sentinel pile masses as *Vataja Arsha*.

Pittaja Arshas^[11]

In *Pittaja Arsha*, due to aggravated *Pitta* the masses will be having the colour of *Yakrit* (bright red colour of liver) slightly bluish colour mass (engorged rectal veins) those masses will be *Praklinna* (moist) i.e. always having tendency of bleeding, are shifting in nature (protruding and reducible). The condition of internal haemorrhoids can be best co related with *Pittaja* variety of the *Arshas*.



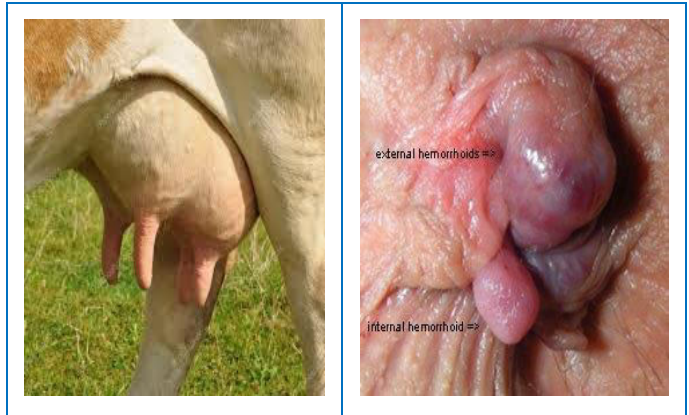
The Internal haemorrhoids will be always moist and there will be no pain they always tend to bleed. Painless bleeding is the main symptom in case of internal haemorrhoids. The size and shape of the internal pile masses will be most of the times tiny. *Sushrut* mention *Yava Madyani* (rice), *Praklinnata*

(moist). Profuse Bleeding, Burning sensation fainting due to excessive bleeding, fever are mentioned as the symptoms of *Pittaja Arsha*. Hence *Pittaja* variety of *Arsha* can be compared with internal haemorrhoids.

Kaphaj Arshas^[12]

The colour of the *Kaphaja* variety of the *Arshas* is mentioned as *Shweta* i.e. Whitish colour. (when there is sloughing in thrombosed pile mass). The masses will be hard and they have wide bases, they are firmly adherent, not free as internal haemorrhoidal masses move in and out. The shape is round and looks like *Panasa* seed or cows nipple and these too also will be moist but there will be no profuse bleeding in this variety.

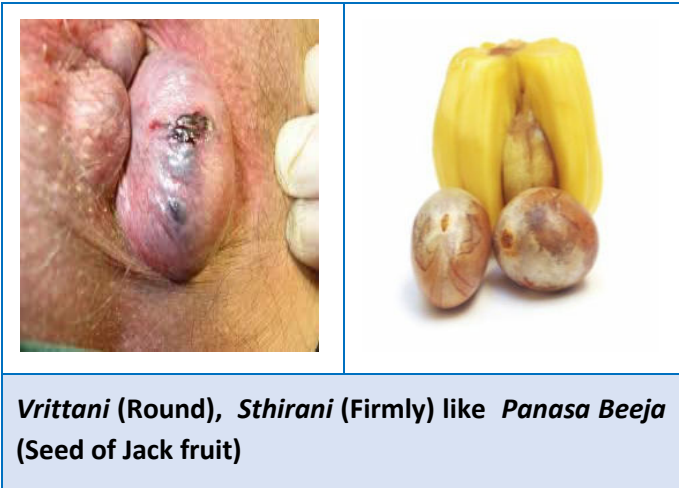
slightly wide in the middle, some External and externo internal pile masses will be presenting to us with these similar features of *Kaphaja Arsha*.



These are in relation to the external appearance of the *kaphaja* variety of the *Arsha*, *Susuhrut* mentions that slightly mucus like watery discharge may be seen in this variety. These all are very clearly observed in, *Thrombosed* and *Externo internal* variety of haemorrhoids.

Raktaja Arshas^[13]

External features of the masses. Looks similar to red coral, *Nyagroda Pushpa* and *Kakanantika Pushpa*.



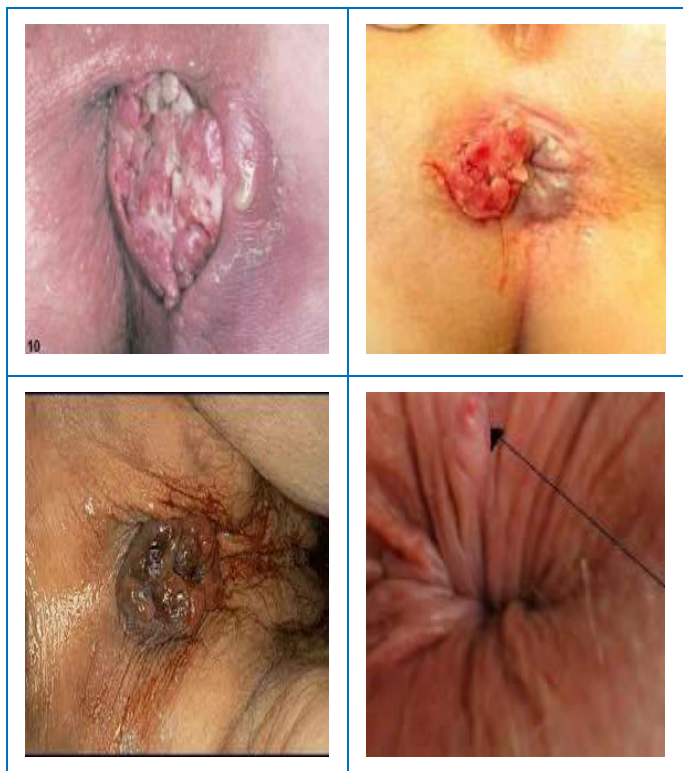
This thrombosed pile mass looks like seed of Jack fruit
Slimy surface, Firm, Round, similar to cows nipple

Sushrut mentions the symptoms of *Raktaja* variety of *Arsha* as same as *pittaja Arshas*. He also mentions that when person puts strain to pass the hard stools then the mass will protrude out and they will bleed. The bleeding may be of profuse quantity ending up with the complication of haemorrhage.

The symptoms match with the complaints and the observation found in the conditions like ano rectal polyps and papille.

Sannipataja Arshas^[14]

These types of *Arshas* present to us with the mixed symptoms of all the three types *Vataja*, *Pittaja* and *Kaphaja Arsha* together. Hard Mass, with all colours i.e. bright red colour sometimes bluish greyish colour masses when there is sloughing etc., Firmly fixed mass, Severe pain, Bleeding, Serous mucus discharge etc. These are clearly observed in the cases of malignancies of the anal canal and rectum.



Sahaja Arshas^[15]

The disease which is caused due to the defects on the *Shukra* and *Arthava* of the parents (genetically transmission) leads to such type of *Arsha*. The masses of this variety of *Arshas* can't be seen through the bare eyes which *Sushrut* mentions as *Durdarshanani*. We

need some instruments' to visualise this type of pathology. This clearly suggests that these are deep seated; the symptoms will be emaciation of the body where in veins will be prominently visible over the body. He mentions that this type arshes is difficult to treat. He may be referring to the conditions like congenital intestinal polyposis where there will be bleeding and person becomes lean day by day.

Based on the above description of *Sushruta* we can say that, *Pittaja Arshas*, *Kaphaja Arshas* are the pathologies which are similar to the internal haemorrhoids, externo internal haemorrhoids, and the prolapsed and thrombosed haemorrhoids. Remaining *Vataja*, *Raktaja*, *Sahaja* and *Sannipataja* are other ano rectal pathologies.

Prognosis^[16]

Sushruta before explaining the treatment of different types of the *Arshas*, he mentions about the prognosis. Prognosis explained based on different criteria,

- One is based on the location of the masses (*Arshas*) - The *Arshas* (masses) if present in the outer *Vali* (folds in the rectum) then such type of *Arshas* can be treated with better prognosis, If the *Arshas* are present in deeper part then it's difficult to treat with poor prognosis.
- Based on the *Doshas* involvement - If one *Dosha* is involved then good prognosis, if more *Doshas* involved then it will have poor prognosis.
- Based on the chronicity of the disease - If the disease is of recent origin then it will be having good prognosis, and if the disease is having history of more than a one year then it will poor prognosis.

Principles of treatment

Sushrut mention four types of treatment modalities in *Arsha*.

- 1) *Bheshaja Chikitsa^[17]*
- 2) *Kshara Chikitsa^[18]*
- 3) *Agnikarna Chikitsa^[19]*
- 4) *Shashtra Karma Chikitsa^[20]*

Indication explained for all these types of *Arshas* are so clear and still looks more relevant after 4000 yrs.

Bheshaja Chikitsa

The *Arshas* which are of recent origin, having only few symptoms, having no complications can be well managed with the medical management, which true till today.

Kshara Karma

Then haemorrhoids which have smooth surface, deeply situated but clearly visible and having wider base these better treated with *Kshara Karma*.

Agni Karma

Arsha which are not smooth, more of fixed and wider surface can be treated with *Agni Karma*.

Shastra Karma

Haemorrhoids having narrow base, which have tendency of bleeding, and are prominent can better dealt with *Shastra Karma*.

DISCUSSION

The description of *Arsha Roga* and the haemorrhoids looks similar with few differences. The difficulty that we are facing now days in the management of this disease can be addressed if we study the details of Ayurvedic literature and following those principles.

Those differences are as follows.

Aetiology

The aetiology of *Arsho Roga* mainly the poor digestive fire. When a person, especially who is having poor digestive power indulges in unhealthy food habits, then there will be vitiation of *Doshas* and these leads to the *Arshas*. It's not simply due to our postures (quadrupeds). And it's not simple varicosity of the haemorrhoidal flexes. Hence Ayurveda treatment principles mainly focus on the avoiding cause and treating it.

The *Arsho Roga* explained by *Sushrut* includes many of the diseases of the ano rectal region and not merely the haemorrhoids. As explained above *Vataja* variety of the *Arshas* resembles the clinical features of

Fissure in ano with sentinel pile masses. *Pittaja Arshas* resembles the internal bleeding haemorrhoids and *Kaphaja* varieties are those of thrombosed and externo internal variety of the haemorrhoids. *Sahaja* being the congenital pathologies hence not fit in these haemorrhoids and also the symptoms of the *Sannipataja Arshas* are more in resembles with the malignant pathologies.

Hence we can say *Pittaja* and *Kaphaja Arsha* are the haemorrhoidal pathologies explained by *Sushrut*. Remaining can be considered under other ano rectal pathology.

Management

Sushrut adopted different treatment modalities in this disease. Today also we come across of hundreds of treatment modalities available for the haemorrhoids. All these treatment have their specific indications and can help better only if used in those specific indications, otherwise they result in complications or recurrences.

Sushrut suggest medical management, when the disease is of recent origin and presenting with minimum symptoms. Now a day's also haemorrhoids with short history and of first degree verity can be better managed with medical management.

When person suffering with internal haemorrhoids with bleeding tendency *Sushrut* advised to advocate *Kshara Karma* which is a para surgical procedure.

Kshara Karma can be easily performed, over the haemorrhoidal mass which is deep seated, and have wide base and clear visibility. When medical management fails then to control the bleeding *Kshara Karma* shall be the best option. Surgery is difficult to perform in this condition, as the masses are deep seated and having the wide bases. Transfixing the base of the haemorrhoidal mass will be difficult when there is wide base and chance of bleeding are more. In present days of surgical practice sclerosant injection, cryosurgery is widely used in such conditions of 1st and 2nd degree haemorrhoids.^[21] Hence *Sushrut's* indication of *Kshara Karma* in such situation looks more relevant.

Agni Karma Chikitsa is advised in the conditions where the masses are rough and having the cutaneous covering,

And lastly *Shastra Karma* (haemorrhoidectomy) is advised by Sushrut when the haemorrhoidal masses are prominently seen and having more bleeding and their bases being narrow. This simple explanation clearly tells us the *Sushruta* wide experience in surgical field. After several trials of different treatment in different conditions Sushruta might have made these specific indications for different type of the treatments. For large 3rd degree and 4th degree haemorrhoids particularly associated with tags and an external haemorrhoidal flexes haemorrhoidectomy is the treatment of choice and is the only method to give lasting relief in such cases.^[22]

If haemorrhoidectomy is planned in the early stages of the diseases i.e. in 2nd degree haemorrhoids it will be difficult to put ligature also. And if we plan any para surgical procedure in the long standing cases of 3rd and 4th degree haemorrhoids then definitely there will be recurrences. Hence planning the treatment based on the specific inductions is very important to get better results.

CONCLUSION

Arsho roga explained in Ayurveda is not only haemorrhoidal pathology and includes all ano rectal pathologies. Aetiological factor of this disease is mainly the impaired dietetics and poor digestive fire. Hence mere concentrating our treatment plans on local changes in anal canal will not suffice. Correcting impaired digestive fire should be the prime motto of the treatment. *Pittaja* and *Kaphaja* variety of the *Arshas* can be co-related to the different haemorrhoidal conditions. Following the specific indication mentioned by *Sushrut* is important to get better results. These indications are relevant till now in deciding indications for medical, Para surgical or surgical treatment for the haemorrhoids. Ayurveda has major role to play in the treatment of this disease as we treat this disease as systemic illness and not the local illness.

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