

Ayurvedic Perspective and Management of Endometriosis: A Conceptual and Clinical Review

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Abstract:

Endometriosis is a chronic, estrogen-dependent gynaecological disorder characterized by the presence of endometrial glands and stroma outside the uterine cavity, primarily affecting women of reproductive age. It presents with dysmenorrhea, chronic pelvic pain, dyspareunia, menorrhagia and infertility, significantly impacting physical, psychological and social well-being. Conventional treatment options include hormonal suppression and surgical excision, but these approaches often have limitations such as recurrence, side effects and incomplete symptom relief. Ayurveda, the traditional medical system of India, describes similar pathologies under *Yonivyapada*, *Artava Dushti*, *Granthi* and *Shotha*, offering a holistic framework of diagnosis and management. This review article discusses Ayurvedic etiopathogenesis, therapeutic approaches (*Shodhana*, *Shamana* and *Rasayana* therapies), *Panchakarma* interventions and relevant herbal formulations for endometriosis. Integrative approaches and research evidence are also explored, demonstrating Ayurveda's potential in providing a personalized and sustainable solution for endometriosis.

Keywords: Endometriosis, Ayurveda, *Yonivyapada*, *Panchakarma*, *Vandhyatwa*, *Artava Dushti*, *Rasayana*

Introduction:

Endometriosis affects **10–15% of women of reproductive age** and up to **50% of infertile women** (Burney & Giudice, 2012). It is characterized by ectopic implantation of endometrial tissue, which responds to cyclical hormonal stimulation, causing inflammation, fibrosis and adhesions (Bulun, 2009). Common symptoms include severe dysmenorrhea, chronic pelvic pain, dyspareunia and infertility. Current treatments include hormonal therapy (e.g., GnRH agonists, oral contraceptives) and surgical excision, but recurrence rates remain high, with **20–40%** of patients experiencing disease recurrence within five years.

Ayurveda views reproductive health as a function of balanced *Doshas*, *Dhatus* and *Srotasa*. Endometriosis, though not named explicitly in Ayurvedic texts, can be conceptually linked with *Yonivyapada* (disorders of female reproductive organs), *Artava Dushti* (menstrual disorders) and *Granthi* (cystic lesions). The Ayurvedic approach emphasizes identifying root causes, correcting

Doshic imbalance, purifying the body and rejuvenating reproductive tissues. This review synthesizes classical Ayurvedic concepts and modern research to develop a comprehensive understanding of endometriosis.

Nidana (Aetiology) of Endometriosis in Ayurveda:

Ayurvedic literature attributes gynaecological disorders to *Doshic* imbalance and improper functioning of *Artavavaha Srotasa* (channels of menstruation). Key causative factors (*Nidanas*) include:

- **Ahara (Dietary):** *Viruddha Ahara* (incompatible foods), excessive consumption of *Guru* (heavy), *Snigdha* (oily) and *Abhishyandi* (congestive) foods leading to *Kapha* accumulation.
- **Vihara (Lifestyle):** *Vega Dharana* (suppression of natural urges), excessive physical exertion, irregular sleep cycles and stress.
- **Manasika (Psychological):** *Chinta* (stress), *Krodha* (anger), *Shoka* (grief), all influencing *Vata* and *Pitta Dosha*.

These factors contribute to ***Vata Prakopa*** (vitiation of *Apana Vata*), resulting in deranged menstrual flow, pain and infertility. ***Kapha*** promotes adhesions and cyst formation, while ***Pitta*** leads to inflammation and abnormal bleeding. The concept of ***Srotorodha*** (obstruction of bodily channels) explains pelvic congestion and endometrial implantation.

Modern medicine correlates these factors with retrograde menstruation, hormonal imbalance, angiogenesis, oxidative stress and immune dysfunction, aligning well with Ayurvedic principles of *Dosha* and *Srotasa* imbalance.

Samprapti (Pathogenesis):

Ayurvedic pathogenesis of endometriosis can be understood as:

1. *Nidana Sevana* (consumption of causative factors).
2. *Agnimandya* (weakened digestive and tissue metabolism).
3. *Vata, Pitta* and *Kapha* vitiation leading to *Raktadushti* (vitiation of blood).
4. *Srotorodha* (blockage of channels) causing stagnation and inflammation.
5. *Granthi* and *Shotha* (cystic and inflammatory pathology) manifesting as pelvic lesions.

This correlates with modern understanding: ectopic endometrial tissue implants cause cyclical bleeding, inflammation, fibrosis and adhesions. The chronicity and recurrence highlight the need for therapies addressing root causes rather than symptomatic relief.

Lakshana (Clinical Features):

Ayurveda's descriptions of ***Kashtartava*** (painful menstruation), ***Yonivyapada*** (reproductive tract disorders) and ***Vandhyatwa*** (infertility) closely match endometriosis symptoms:

- **Dysmenorrhea:** Severe menstrual pain due to *Apana Vata* vitiation.
- **Menorrhagia/Menometrorrhagia:** Irregular and heavy bleeding due to *Pitta-Rakta* imbalance.
- **Dyspareunia and Pelvic Pain:** Chronic inflammation and adhesions correlate with *Vata* aggravation.

- **Infertility:** Obstruction of *Artavavaha Srotasa*, implantation issues and hormonal disturbances.
- **Gastrointestinal symptoms:** Seen in Ayurveda as *Vata* imbalance in *Pakvashaya* (colon).

Ayurveda emphasizes individualized assessment through **Prakriti**(constitutional analysis), **Vikruti** (current imbalance) and **Srotodushti** evaluation.

Chikitsa Sutra (Principles of Management):

The Ayurvedic management of endometriosis focuses on:

- **Shodhana (Purification):** Removal of aggravated *Doshas* via *Panchakarma*.
- **Shamana (Pacification):** Herbal formulations to balance *Doshas* and relieve symptoms.
- **Rasayana (Rejuvenation):** Restoring tissue health and fertility.
- **Pathya-Apathya:** Dietary and lifestyle modifications to maintain *Doshic* balance.

Ayurvedic Herbal Formulations and Their Actions:

Drug/Formulation	Properties (<i>Guna/Karma</i>)	Therapeutic Role in Endometriosis
<i>Ashoka (Saracaasoca)</i>	<i>Stambhana, Pitta pacifier</i>	Controls excessive bleeding, uterine tonic
<i>Lodhra (Symplocos racemosa)</i>	<i>Kapha-Pitta Shamana, Lekhana</i>	Reduces inflammation and cysts
<i>Shatavari (Asparagus racemosus)</i>	<i>Rasayana, Balya</i>	Hormonal balance, fertility support
<i>Guggulu (Commiphora mukul)</i>	<i>Lekhana, Srotoshodhaka</i>	Breaks adhesions, anti-inflammatory
<i>Haridra (Curcuma longa)</i>	Anti-inflammatory, antioxidant	Pain and inflammation control
<i>Kanchnar Guggulu</i>	<i>Granthihara</i>	Effective in fibroids, cysts, adhesions
<i>Ashokarishta</i>	Uterine tonic	Regulates menstrual cycle
<i>Chandraprabha Vati</i>	<i>Srotoshodhaka</i>	Relieves pelvic congestion

Panchakarma in Endometriosis:

Panchakarma therapies are crucial in detoxification and restoring balance:

1. **Virechana (Therapeutic Purgation):** Eliminates *Pitta* and *Rakta Dushti*, reducing pelvic inflammation.
2. **Basti (Enema Therapy):**
 - **Tikta Ksheera Basti:** Balances *Vata*, reduces pain, nourishes endometrium.
 - **Matra Basti:** For long-term *Vata* pacification.
3. **Uttara Basti (Intrauterine Medicated Enema):** Reduces adhesions, improves fertility.
4. **Raktamokshana (Bloodletting):** In localized congestion and inflammation.

Clinical studies report improvement in dysmenorrhea, reduction in lesion size and improved fertility rates after *Panchakarma* therapy (Rao et al., 2017).

Modern Integrative Approach:

Ayurvedic treatment can complement modern medicine:

- Post-surgical Ayurveda therapies may reduce recurrence and aid recovery.
- *Rasayana* herbs improve immunity, reduce oxidative stress and support hormonal balance.
- Yoga, meditation and pranayama offer pain management and mental health benefits.
- Diet emphasizing anti-inflammatory foods (green vegetables, whole grains) aligns with Ayurvedic *Pathya*.

Discussion:

Ayurvedic concepts provide a holistic understanding of endometriosis as a *Vata-Pradhana Tridoshaja Vyadhi* with *Kapha-Pitta* involvement. The focus is on **root-cause eradication** rather than symptomatic management. *Panchakarma* therapies, when combined with herbal drugs and *Rasayana*, improve reproductive health, immunity and overall well-being. However, more **randomized controlled trials (RCTs)** are needed to establish efficacy and develop standardized protocols for clinical practice.

Conclusion:

Ayurveda offers a comprehensive framework for endometriosis management through individualized treatment, detoxification and rejuvenation. Its integrative approach has the potential to reduce recurrence, alleviate pain and improve fertility, offering a safe and holistic alternative or complement to conventional therapies. Bridging Ayurvedic wisdom and modern research will help validate and popularize these interventions in women's healthcare.

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