



Review Article

A REVIEW ON AYURVEDIC PERSPECTIVE OF PCOS

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ABSTRACT

Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS) is one of the most common metabolic and reproductive disorders among women of reproductive age. It is characterized clinically as a combination of ovulatory dysfunction, hyper androgenic state and abnormal ovarian morphology. Women with PCOS are at increased risk of presenting with menstrual irregularities, hirsutism, obesity, insulin resistance, impaired glucose tolerance, Type 2 Diabetes mellitus, dyslipidemia and cardiovascular problems. PCOS being a syndrome cannot be correlated with any particular disease in Ayurveda. Hence for the better comprehension of this disease in terms with Ayurveda, the diseases mentioned in Ayurveda classics manifesting with signs and symptoms of PCOS have been studied in detail in relation with *Nidana*, *Dosha*, *Srotas* involved and their management. Diseases like *Vandhya*, *Arajaska*, *Nashtarthava*, *Arthavakshaya* and *Pushpagni jathaharini* shows resemblance in signs and symptoms and to some extent these can be related with PCOS.

INTRODUCTION

Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS) is one of the most common metabolic and reproductive disorders among women of reproductive age characterized clinically by ovulatory dysfunction, hyper androgenism and abnormal ovarian morphology. PCOS presents with an increased risk of menstrual irregularities, hirsutism, obesity, insulin resistance, impaired glucose tolerance, Type 2 Diabetes mellitus, dyslipidemia and cardiovascular problems. The increased rate in the current incidence of PCOS is due to sedentary lifestyle, lack of physical exercise, changes in diet especially high caloric diet and excess mental stress.^[1]

PCOS manifesting with varied signs and symptoms is not explicit by a single disease condition in Ayurveda. Ayurveda describes different gynecological disorders under the heading of

Yonivyapada, *Arthava vyapada*, *Beeja dosha*, *Granthi*, *Arbuda*, and *Sthanarogas*. But these disease entities singly cannot comprehend PCOS. Hence for the better understanding of Ayurveda perspective on PCOS, the different disease conditions mentioned in Ayurveda classics having manifestations of PCOS is studied in detail with respect to *Nidana*, *Dosha* and *Srotas* involved and different treatment methodology adopted.

METHODOLOGY

Literary review on PCOS from modern literature and Ayurvedic perspective- from Brihatrayees, Laghutrayees and other available classical texts, authorised articles and journals.

Diseases Showing Resemblance with PCOS in Ayurveda

Nashtarthava [2]

Nashtarthava is a condition which is described by Acharya Susruta. According to Dalhana commentary, either *Kapha* or *Vata* alone or *Kapha vata* together may cause *Aavarana* (obstruction) to *Arthavavaha srotas* leading to *Nashtarthava* (amenorrhoea).

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Arthava kshaya [3]

Signs and symptoms of *Arthava kshaya* are as follows,

- *Yadhochitakala adarshana*– Delayed menstruation. Here menstruation fails to occur monthly. There is irregularity in the cycle and increased inter menstrual period.
- *Alpata*– Scanty menstrual flow. This may be related with oligomenorrhea.
- *Yoni vedana*– Pain in the vaginal region. Vitiating of *Vata dosha (Apana vayu)* causes *Yoni vedana*. Chakrapani opines that the pain is due to aggravation of *Vata* caused by loss of *Arthava* which fills this region.

Bhavaprakasha also mentions the same, and in addition to this he describes that women will have specific desires for *Katu, Amla, Lavana, Ushna, Vidahi, Guru annapana* and *Phalasaka*.

Arajaska [4]

When *Pitta* situated in yoni and uterus vitiates *Rakta* women becomes extremely emaciated and discoloured, and this condition is termed as *Arajaska*. Chakrapani has described amenorrhoea as a symptom.

Vandhya [5]

According to Susruta it is one among the 5 types of *Vataja yonivyapat*. In *Vandhya yonivyapat*, *Arthava* is destroyed. Here we can interpret *Arthava* as ovum and it can be considered as secondary amenorrhoea or anovulatory menstrual cycles which may result in *Anapatyatha* or infertility.

Charaka while describing *Beejamsadushti* states that if a part of *Beeja* responsible for the development of *Garbhasaya* or *Arthava* is defective, then the born child would be *Vandhya*.^[6]

Pushpagni jathaharini [7]

Clinical symptoms of PCOS shows similarity with *Pushpagni jathaharini* described by Kashyapa Samhita Revathi kalpadhyaya.

Pushpagni, Revathi, although have regular cycles it is fruitless. She has corpulent cheeks with excessive hair growth. This may be considered as the clinical manifestation of hyperandrogenism and anovulation. This satisfies two features among 3 Rotterdam's Criteria.^[8] a) Clinical and/or biochemical hyperandrogenism b) Oligo-ovulation or anovulation

Sthoulya

Sthoulya is one among the *Santarpanjanya vyadhi*. Consuming *Guru* (heavy), *Snigdha* (unctuous), *Seetha* (cold), *Madhura* (sweet) and *Kaphavardhaka ahara* along with no regular exercise and sedentary life style leads to *Sthoulya* where *Medo dhatu* only gets over nourished while other *Dhatu pushti* gets hindered. *Dhatwagni mandya* leads to *Mamsa medo vridhhi* which gets deposited on *Stana, Udara* and *Sphik pradesha*. It can be correlated with central obesity among PCOS

patients and it may gradually lead to insulin resistance among them.

Prameha

Insulin resistance and compensatory hyperinsulinemia is one of the major pathophysiological factors in PCOS. Hyperandrogenism and other associated symptoms in PCOS develop due to insulin resistance. It can be considered as a pre diabetic stage. *Prameha poorva roopas* like *Anganam sithilatwam* (flabbiness of body), *Ghanangata* (obesity), *Keshavridhhi* (hirsutism), *Asye madhuryam* ^[9] (sweet taste in mouth) are seen among PCOS patients. This insulin resistance on long term leads to health hazards like Type 2 diabetes, dyslipidemia, cardiovascular diseases etc.

Nidana - Etiology

The general etiology of *Yonirogas* includes *Mithyachara* (*Mithyaahara* and *Mithyavihara*), *Pradushta arthava, Beejadasha* and *Daiva*.^[10]

Mithyaahara

Modern dietary factors play an important role in manifestation of PCOS. Foods with *Madhura, Amla, Lavana rasa* and *Seetha, Snigdha, guru abhishyandi gunas* will causes *Kapha dosha kopa* and *Tiktha, Katu, Kashaya rasas* and *Ruksha* (fried and dried items) *Guna* leads to *Vatakopa*. Excess intake of *Madhura, Snigdha, Guru, Picchila, Nava anna, Nava madya, Anupa mamsa*, and food prepared with *Gorasa* and *Guda* are the *Nidanas* of *Santharpanjanya vikara*. *Virudha ahara* (incompatible food) intake will cause *Tridosha kopa* and it will not get expelled from our body. According to Acharya Charaka this *Virudha ahara* causes *Shandatha* (impotency) or may affect next generation. Many of the fast food contains incompatible combinations.

Mithya vihara

Sedentary lifestyle along with excessive food intake and psychological factors like stress, depression, anxiety predispose pathology of PCOS. *Vegadharana, Vegodheerana, Ratrijagarana, Bhaya, Chinta, Soka* etc causes *Vatakopa*. *Asyasukha, Swapnasukha, Divaswapnam* etc causes *Kapha kopa*. *Atichinta* (over thinking) causes *Rasavahasroto dushti*, and *Avyayama, Divaswapnam* etc causes *Mamsavaha* and *Medovaha Sroto dushti*. All these contribute to *Agnimandya* at both *Jataragni* and *Dhatu agni* level and normal *Dhatu parinama* is affected which is seen in PCOS patients. Lifestyle modification can help in effective management of PCOS.

Pradushta arthava

Arthava here can be correlated with menstruation or with ovarian hormones. Hypothalamic pituitary– ovarian axis maintains the ovarian hormone which leads to the cyclic shedding of endometrium in normal menstruation. In PCOS patients this HPO axis is altered, which lead to high LH/FSH ratio, androgen

excess, and high estrogen levels due to peripheral conversion of androgens in adipose tissue.

Beejadushti

PCOS is a complex multigenic disorder that results from the interaction between multiple genetic and environmental factors. A high prevalence of PCOS among the first degree relatives suggestive of genetic predisposition. Acharya Charaka states that affliction to *Beeja* or a part of *Beeja* (*Beegabhagavayava*) results

in dysfunction in the respective part of individual in due course of development. When there is any *Vikruthi* of *Beejabhaga* in the ovum responsible for production of *Garbhasaya* and *Arthava*, then she gives birth to a *Vandhya* child.

Daiva

Idiopathic or unknown factors are included under this group. The exact cause of PCOD is still unclear.

Table 1: Srotas involved in PCOS

Srotases are the transporting channels of *Dhatu*s undergoing transformation

Srotas involved	Lakshans in PCOS
Rasavaha srotas	Akala khalitya (premature hairfall), Gouravam (heaviness), Tandra (stupor), Pandu (anaemia),
Raktha vaha srotas	Vyanga (acanthosis nigricans), Youvana, Pidaka (acne), Panduta (anaemia)
Mamsa vaha srotas	Adhimamsa (increased body mass)
Medovaha srotas	Prameha poorvaroopa (may be due to insulin resistance and compensatory hyperinsulinemia), Atisthoulya (obesity) and Granthi (ovarian cysts)
Asthivaha srotas	Kesha loma dosha (abnormality in hair and body hair can be correlated with hirsutism)
Arthavavaha srotas	Arthavanasa (defective menstruation), Vandhyatwam (infertility)

Role of Agni in PCOS

According to Acharya Vagbhata "*Roga sarve api mande agnou*" means *Agnimandhya* is the root cause of all diseases. Irregular dietary habits like *Adhyasana* (over eating), *Vishamasana* (diet at irregular time and quantity), and *Mithya viharas* results in *Jataragnimandhya*. Due to this *Sama annarasa* are formed and it causes *Rasa dhatwagni dushti*. *Arthava* being *Upadhatu* of *Rasadhatu*, gets vitiated due to *Rasa dushti*. *Sthoulya* occurs due to increase in *Medhodhatu*. In this condition there is increased *Jataragni* but reduced *Medodhatwagni*.

Table 2: Signs and Symptoms of PCOS, and its Equivalent Lakshanas in Ayurveda with its Dosha Predominance

Signs and symptoms	Equivalent Ayurveda symptom	Dosha involvement
Amenorrhea	Nashtarthava	Vata, Kapha
Oligomenorrhea	Arthavakshya Lohitakshaya	Vata Vata, Pitta
Infertility (anovulatory cycle causing)	Vandhya	
Hirsutism	Lomasha ganda in Pushpagni jathaharini	
Anovulatory cycle	Vridha pushpam in Pushpagni jathaharini	
Acne	Mukha dooshika	Kapha, Vata
Acanthosis nigricans	Karshnyam	Vata
Insulin resistance	Prameha poorvaroopa	Kaphavrutha vata
Obesity	Sthoulya	Kapha

Ayurvedic Management of PCOS

In Ayurveda management of a disease focuses mainly on *Nidana parivarjana* (avoiding the etiological factors) and *Samprapti vighatana* (breaking the pathophysiological process). *Samprati vighatana* can be done in two ways *Sodhana* and *Samana*. *Sodhana* is

done in *Bahu dosha avastha* (here elimination of *Doshas* using *Panchakarma* therapies are done). In *Samana*, the increased *Doshas* are pacified by administering *Oushada* or medicines.

Treatment Principle

- *Samkshepata kriyayoga nidana parivarjanam*^[11]– Avoiding the etiological factors
- *Tatra samsodhanam agneyanam dravyanam vidhivat upayogya*^[12]– Evacuating therapies and usage of drugs having *Agneya gunas*
- *Vatakaphavrita marganam apravrithamanam pithalair upachareth tat pravrithamanam*¹³
 - Usage of *Pitta* producing therapies and drugs

Sodhana

Sodhana includes *Panchakarma* procedures which are administered to expel the extremely vitiated *Doshas* out through near orifices.

According to Chakrapani both *Vamana* (emesis) and *Virechana* (purgation) should be done according to the *Doshavastha* and strength of *Rogi*. But according to Dalhana, for *Sodhana vamana* should be opted. According to his opinion *Virechana* should reduce *Pitta* which in turn decreases *Arthava*. *Vamana* will reduce *Soumya dhatus* in the body, which in turn increases *Agneya guna* which induces *Arthava*.

As *Yoni rogas* will never occur without *Vata vridhi*, for *Vata samana vasthi* can be administered. It will help in normalizing *Apana vayu* and produce good results in gynecological disorders. *Uttara basti* are also beneficial.

Nasya therapy will help in correction of HPO axis.

Samana chikitsa

Samana chikitsa is done by administering various medicines to pacify vitiated *Doshas*. The medicines which are *Srotosodhana*, *ama pachana* and which induces normal menstrual cycle should be given.

Agneya dravyas - *Teekshna* and *Ushna gunas* of *Agneya dravya* is *Arthavajanana*, and also it clears the *Srotases* and will do *Amapachana*.

Nidana parivarjana

Avoiding the causative factors are important in all diseases especially for life style disorders. It will help in easy curing and avoid recurrence. Lifestyle changes are an important predisposing factor for PCOS especially irregular and unhealthy diet, lack of exercise, mental stress etc.

Pathya ahara

Dietic advice for *Arthavakshaya* includes usage of fish, horse gram, usage of sour foods, sesame, *Sura*, *Gomutra udaswith* (buttermilk added with water), *Dadhi* (curd), *Suktham* (vinegar).^[14]

Acharya Susrutha advices to take *Sali anna*, *Yava*, *Madya* and *Mamsa* which is *Pitta* producing and is recommended in *Arthava dushti*.

Pathya vihara

Regular exercise, healthy food habits and the regimen in *Dinacharya* and *Ritucharya* will be beneficial. Behavioural therapies aimed at weight

reduction, diet regulation and exercise are advised in PCOS. Ayurvedic management of *Sthoulya*, *Prameha* can be effectively adopted in PCOS.

CONCLUSION

There is no single disease entity in Ayurveda which could be exactly correlated to PCOS. *Pushpaghni jathaharini* in *Kashyapasamhita* shows resemblance, *Vrutha pushpam* may be correlated to anovulatory cycle and *Lomasa ganda* to hirsutism. Amenorrhoea in PCOS can be correlated as *Nashtarhava*, *Yadhochita kala adarsana* (delayed cycles) and *Alpata* (decreased quantity) as *Arthavakshaya* and increased bleeding as *Asrigdhara*. Anovulation resulting in amenorrhoea or irregular cycles is described under the *Vandhya yonivyapad*. *Sthoulya* and *prameha poorvaroopa lakshanas* are also seen in PCOS.

PCOS is found to be *Vata kapha* disease along with vitiation of *Agni* and *Srotases*. Involvement of *Rasa*, *Rakta*, *Mamsa*, *Meda*, *Asthi* and *Arthava vaha srotases* are seen with their *Dushti lakshanas*. Among *Dhatus mamsa* and *Medas* shows more vitiation among PCOS.

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