



## PARVAHIKA: UNDERSTANDING DYSENTERY IN AYURVEDA

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### ABSTRACT

*Parvahika* is a clinical condition described in *Āyurveda* under *Annavaha* and *Purishvaha* Srotas presently which resemblance to gastrointestinal problem called dysentery in modern medicine. It is characterized by frequent passage of stools mixed with *śoṇita* (blood), *mūtra sadṛśa mala pravṛtti* (mucus-like stools), it indicates an disturb in *doṣas* and *dūṣya*. Predominantly involving *Vata* and *Kapha doṣas*, the condition arises from causative factors such as improper dietary habits (*mithyā āhāra vihāra*), exposure to contaminated food and water, and suppression of natural urges (*vegadharana*). The *Āyurvedic* understanding of *Parvahika* provides a holistic perspective, emphasizing *nidāna parivarjana* (elimination of causative factors), *śodhana* (bio-purification) and *śamana cikitsā* (palliative management). This review aims to explore the concept of *Parvahika* from classical texts and contemporary interpretations, correlating it with modern understanding of dysentery, and highlighting the role of *Āyurvedic* formulations and dietary recommendations in its management.

**KEYWORDS:** *Āyurveda*, *Parvahika*, Dysentery, *Vata*, *Kapha*, *Śodhana*.

### INTRODUCTION

The term *Pravāhika* is derived from *pravāhana*, meaning forceful defecation. *Pravāhika* is a GIT disorder described in our classical *Āyurvedic* texts like *Caraka Saṃhitā*, *Suśruta Saṃhitā*, and *Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya*, which presents with symptoms like repeated defecation, loose stools mixed with *śleṣma* (mucus) and *rakta* (blood), *udaraśūla* (abdominal pain), and *tenesmus* (forceful urge to pass stools). It is primarily caused by the vitiation of *doṣas*, especially *vāta* and *kapha*, and is often associated with impaired digestion (*agnimāndya*) and obstruction of bodily channels (*strotorodha*). The causative factors (*hetus*) include excessive consumption of *katu* (pungent), *amla* (sour), *lavaṇa* (salty), *guru* (heavy), *snigdha* (unctuous), *rukṣa* (dry), *uṣṇa* (hot), and *śīta* (cold) foods. Faulty eating habits like *viruddhāśana* (incompatible foods), *adhyāśana* (eating before the previous meal is digested), and mental factors such as fear, anger, and stress further contribute to disease onset. In modern science, dysentery refers to inflammation of the intestine, particularly the colon, resulting in severe diarrhea with blood. The main types of dysentery are bacillary and amoebic. Bacillary dysentery is caused by *Shigella* bacteria, while amoebic dysentery is caused by a parasite called *Entamoeba histolytica*. While antibiotics are the

mainstream treatment in modern medicine, *Āyurveda* offers an integrative approach including detoxification and herbal remedies which not only eliminate the cause but also restore *agni* and prevent recurrence.

### AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- To understand the *Āyurvedic* concept and classification of *Parvahika*.
- To explore its *samprāpti* (pathogenesis), *lakṣaṇa* (clinical features), and *bheda* (types).
- To correlate *Parvahika* with modern understanding of dysentery.
- To review evidence-based *Āyurvedic* interventions in the management of *Parvahika*.

### METHODOLOGY

The literature was reviewed from classical *Āyurvedic* texts such as *Caraka Saṃhitā*, *Suśruta Saṃhitā*, *Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya*, and *Bhāva Prakāśa*. A systematic search of databases like AYUSH Research Portal, PubMed, Google Scholar, and DHARA was conducted using keywords such as *Parvahika*, dysentery, *Pitta*, *Kapha*, *rakta śuddhi*, and *guda vikāra*. Studies published up to March 2025 were included.

**Nidāna (Etiology)**

It occurs due to disturbance of *vāta* and *kapha doṣas*, along with weakened digestive fire (*agnimāndya*) and leads to blockage of bodily channels (*strotorodha*). **Āhāraja hetus (Dietary causes):** Excessive intake of *katu* (pungent), *amla* (sour), *lavana* (salty), *guru* (heavy to digest), *snigdha* (unctuous), *rukṣa* (dry), *uṣṇa* (hot), *śīta* (cold), *drava* (liquid), and *tīkṣṇa* (sharp/potent) food items. **Āhāra vidhi viruddha (Improper food habits):** Consumption of *viruddhāsana* (incompatible foods), *adhyāsana* (eating too soon after a previous meal), *viṣamāsana* (irregular eating), *alpāsana* (eating too little), and *pramitāsana* (eating insufficiently for the body's needs). **Mānasika hetus (Psychological causes):** Mental factors like fear (*bhaya*), anger (*krodha*), and jealousy (*īrṣyā*) disturb the *manovaha srotas*, influencing gut health and aggravating *doṣas*.

**Anubandha vyādhis (Associated disorders):** Diseases like *arśa*, *grahaṇī*, *krimi*, and *atisāra* can create a favorable environment for the development of *Pravāhika* by weakening the function of the *pakvāsaya* (large intestine).

**Samprāpti (Pathogenesis)**

The pathogenesis begins with the intake of *nidānasevana*—improper diet and lifestyle—that disturbs the balance of *doṣas* and weakens *jāṭharāgni*.

Initially, *kapha doṣa* becomes aggravated and adheres to the internal walls of the *pakvāsaya*. This causes obstruction in the normal movement of *vāta*. In response to the blockage caused by *kapha*, *vāta* becomes more active and tries to push it out. This leads to *pravāhana*, which means frequent and forceful bowel movements along with a feeling of incomplete evacuation (*tenesmus*).

In cases where *pitta* and *rakta* are also involved, inflammation and ulceration may occur, leading to the presence of *rakta* (blood) in the stool. Along with this, *strotorodha* (blockage of channels), *āpanavāyu*, *vikṛti* (disruption) of *samanavāyu* and *kapha sañcaya* collectively disturb the normal function of the colon.

The disease progresses with symptoms like frequent stools, presence of *śleṣma* (mucus), *udaraśūla* (abdominal pain), *raktayukta purīṣa* (blood-mixed stool), and *tenesmus*. This entire process culminates in the manifestation of *Pravāhika*, as described in the classical texts of *Āyurveda*.

**Lakṣaṇa (Symptoms)**

The classical signs and symptoms of *Pravāhika* are predominantly related to the gastrointestinal tract, indicating disturbance in the function of *pakvāsaya* (large intestine). The main symptom is *atipravāhana of purīṣa*—frequent passage of stools with force and urgency, often accompanied by **tenesmus** (straining with incomplete evacuation).

Stools are typically *atidrava* (**excessively liquid**) and contain *śleṣma* (**mucus**) in considerable quantity. When *pitta doṣa* and *rakta dhātu* are involved, the stools may also contain *rakta* (**blood**). Other symptoms include:

- **Udarāśūla** – abdominal pain or cramps
- **Picchila purīṣa** – sticky stools
- **Sāphena purīṣa** – frothy or bubbly stools
- **Gaurava** – heaviness in the abdomen
- **Agnimāndya** – impaired digestion
- **Tṛṣṇā** – excessive thirst
- **Daurbalya** – generalized weakness

It indicates the involvement of *vāta*, *kapha*, and *pitta doṣas*, along with *agnivikṛti* and *strotorodha*. The chronicity and severity of these symptoms may vary depending on *doṣic predominance* and *hetu sevana* (cause exposure).

**Cikitsā Sthāna (Management)**

The management of *Pravāhika* in *Āyurveda* focuses on restoring balance to the *doṣas*, strengthening *agni* (digestive fire), and stopping the excessive passage of loose, mucus or blood-mixed stools. The treatment involves *Deepana* (appetite stimulants), *Pācana* (digestives), *Sangrahi* (astringents), *Stambhana* (binding agents), and *Krimighna* (antihistamines) herbs and formulations.

1. **Pūrvakarma (Initial Steps):** In mild cases, fasting (*langhana*) is recommended to help improve digestion and boost digestive strength. *Bilva kvātha* or *pāṭhā kaṣāya* may be used to digest *āmadoṣa* and reduce *kapha* accumulation in the colon.
2. **Pradhāna Cikitsā (Main Treatment):** *Deepana-Pācana Dravyas*: To improve digestion and eliminate *āma*, drugs like *Pippalī* (*Piper longum*), *Śuṅṭhī* (*Zingiber officinale*), and *Chitraka* (*Plumbago zeylanica*) are commonly used. *Sangrahi and Stambhana Dravyas*: These help in absorbing excess fluid and solidifying the stool. Key herbs include: *Bilva* (*Aegle marmelos*) – a powerful *grahi* and *stambhana* herb. *Kutaja* (*Holarrhena antidysenterica*) – acts as both *krimighna* and *sangrahi*. *Mustā*, *Indrayava*, *Nagaramūṣa* – help reduce inflammation and absorb toxins. **Classical Formulations:** *Kutajghan Vati* – for chronic *pravāhika* associated with *krimi*. *Bilvādi Cūrṇa*, *Pañcakola Kvātha* – help in controlling *vāta-kapha* and improving digestion. *Dādīmādi Ghṛta*: This medicated ghee is used when there is bleeding in the stools, especially in cases where *pitta doṣa* is involved. *Shankha Vati* – relieves associated *udaraśūla* (abdominal pain) and indigestion.
3. **Āhāra-Vihāra (Diet and Lifestyle):** Recommended foods: *Yavāgu* (Rice gruel), *māṇḍa* (Thin rice starch) with *bilva* (*Aegle marmelos* pulp), *dadima* (pomegranate), *mudga yūṣa* (Green gram soup). Foods to Avoid: Spicy (*katu*), sour (*amla*), salty (*lavana*), oily (*snigdha*), and heavy (*guru*) foods should be avoided. Also, avoid incompatible food combinations (*viruddhāhāra*), eating before the

previous meal is digested (adhyāsana), and unhealthy or unsuitable food pairings.

### DISCUSSION

The review highlights Pravāhika as a disease primarily caused by the disturb of Vāta, Pitta, and Kapha doṣas, with predominant involvement of Pakwāśaya (large intestine). The disease process is initiated by faulty dietary habits (Viruddhāhāra, Viṣamāśana) and aggravated by psychological factors such as Bhaya, Krodha, and Irṣyā. The resulting pathogenesis leads to Agnimāndya, Strotorodha, and abnormal function of Samāna and Apāna Vāyu, which manifest as frequent, forceful defecation with mucus and sometimes blood. The Ayurvedic treatment strategy—based on Deepana, Pācana, Saṅgrahi, and Krimighna principles—has shown favorable outcomes in symptomatic control. Classical formulations, including Bilvādi Cūrṇa, Mustādi Kvātha, and Dadimāstaka Cūrṇa, demonstrate consistent efficacy in clinical reports due to their astringent, digestive, and antimicrobial properties. Dietary interventions such as Yavāgu, Mudga Yūṣa, Māṇḍa prepared with Bilva and Dādimaphala, provide gut rest, support digestion, and aid in mucosal healing. These preparations correlate with modern therapeutic nutrition in IBD management, emphasizing bland, low-fiber, easily digestible diets.

While the evidence is primarily derived from classical texts and observational outcomes, the consistent improvement across various reported cases lends support to the traditional approach. However, robust clinical trials are needed to substantiate these results with statistical validation and modern scientific parameters.

### CONCLUSION

Pravāhika, a condition well-documented in Āyurvedic texts, is a disorder of the gastrointestinal tract characterized by frequent, forceful defecation with mucus and occasionally blood. It arises due to a combination of improper dietary habits, psychological disturbances, and Doṣa imbalance—primarily Vāta and Kapha, with the involvement of Pitta and Rakta. The pathogenesis involves derangement of Agni, obstruction of Srotas, and impaired functioning of Samāna and Apāna Vāyu.

The review emphasizes that Āyurvedic principles offer a comprehensive, individualized approach to managing Pravāhika, aligning with modern understanding of dysenteric disorders. Further clinical validation and integrative research are essential to establish the efficacy of traditional protocols in contemporary medical frameworks.

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