

IMPORTANCE OF AGNI AND ITS ROLE IN AMAVATA (RA) CHIKITSA- A BRIEF STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Agni is the Ayurvedic word for digestive fire and is a powerful transformative factor responsible for digesting and metabolizing food. It is also known as the biological fire and is a very important component for metabolic physiology and pathology. Essentially, agni determines our longevity, vitality, life force, strength, energy and clarity of mind. When agni or digestive fire is balanced we will have symptom-free digestion, circulation, strong immunity, healthy tissues and glowing skin. Agni is responsible for transforming all food, assimilating nutrients, and revitalizing the body. Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) is a chronic progressive and disabling autoimmune disease that causes inflammation (link is external) (swelling) and pain in the joints,

the tissue around the joints, joint deformity and other organs. The RA has been described as Amavata in Ayurveda, in which the vitiated Vata and Ama afflicts the lining of the joints, causing Shula (pain) & Shotha (swelling). The treatment module for Amavata includes Shamana (conservative) and Shodhana (biological purification of the body) Chikitsa. Depending upon the stages (acute / chronic) and Doshas involved, many measures are advised such as Langhana (a method of depletion of body tissues), Deepana (increase digestive fire), and Pachana (digestion of food) for accumulated Ama; Snehapana (oleation), Swedana (fomentation), Virechana (purgation) and Basti (enema therapy) for elimination of Doshas from body. Further the drugs used in management of Amavata should possess Katu (pungent) and Tikta (bitter) Rasa (taste); Ushna (hot in potency), Laghu (easily

digestible) and Tikshna (penetrating property through tissues) qualities which are Vata-Kapha Dosha Hara and Amapachaka.

KEYWORDS: Agni, Inflammation, Ayurveda, Ama, Shotha, Deepana, Basti, Tikshna.

INTRODUCTION

Almost all diseases are caused by agni that is malfunctioning. Food that is not properly digested and metabolized is known as **ama** or undigested food particles that act like toxins. Ama that is caused by eating the wrong type of food over a long period of time is responsible for many types of diseases. If agni or the digestive fire is weak then it leads to poor digestion, circulation, immunity, less energy, and poor complexion. Addressing the root cause of disease means correcting the persons agni or digestive fire.

The ancient Ayurvedic text, Caraka Samhita, explains there are 13 different types of agni.

- Jatharagni is 1 type and the place where all digestion begins.
- Bhutagni is 5 types and metabolizes the 5 elements of earth, water, fire, air, and space.
- Dhatuagni is 7 types and metabolizes each succeeding layer of body tissue, lymph, blood, muscle, fat, bone, nerve, and reproductive.

The most important agni is jatharagni

Jatharagni is the king of all the agni. It is located in the stomach and duodenum area. It plays a key role in digesting food by converting it into micro form which is assimilated by the body tissues and cells. Jatharagni separates the digestible material from the waste material.

Jatharagni is classified into four categories according to how well it digests and assimilates nutrients and is always influenced by tridosha (vata-pitta-kapha).

1. **Sama agni** (Balanced metabolism): This agni is balanced and the transformative and life-giving fire of our body in a natural balanced state. This agni will produce good health, better metabolism, calm state of mind, clarity of thought, and positive effusive personality. This Agni is influenced by all three doshas.
2. **Vishama agni** (Erratic metabolic state): This agni is imbalanced and irregular and is influenced by excess vata dosha. This is an unstable or variable agni which can be both too strong and too weak at the same time. Vishamaagni will produce erratic appetite and may cause indigestion, bloating, constipation, or diarrhea.

3. **Tikshana agni** (Hyper metabolic state): This agni is overactive intense and has fiery qualities. It is influenced by excess pitta dosha and can become inflamed and triggers hyper metabolism resulting in fast digestion.
4. **Manda agni** (Hypo metabolic state): This agni is underactive and is influenced by kapha dosha. It affects metabolism, digestion, and prana or life force in general and leads to the production of ama because everything is digested slowly.

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA), an auto-immune inflammatory disease is one of the challenging conditions for the physicians to handle due to its chronicity, incurability, complications, morbidity, etc.^[1] It has worldwide distribution and involves all ethnic groups. Depending on the specific definition, the prevalence of RA is estimated to be between 0.3% and 1.5% in North America and its prevalence in India has been estimated to be similar to that in the West. It causes a great deal of pain and suffering and patients with this disease are unable to work within 5 years of its onset and patients with severe forms of the disease die 10–15 years earlier than expected. Thus, RA represents a significant societal problem justifying large efforts to improve its treatment.

While allopathic treatment of RA is improving, remission remains rare, and treatment remains unsatisfactory. In spite of potent anti-inflammatory agents and powerful immunosuppressive agents, its prognosis is not good, as these drugs have certain limitations including dependency and other side effects restricting the quality of life. Considering these inconveniences, alternatives are being searched from traditional systems. Drugs such as Simhanada guggulu,^[2] Rasnasaptaka kwatha, Vata gajankusha rasa, Bruhat vata chintamani, and Amavatari rasa are said to be efficacious in this condition. Cakrapaniduta has described the principles and line of treatment for Amavata.^[3] Langhana (fasting), Swedana (sudation), use of drug of Tikta (bitter) and Katu (pungent) Rasa, Deepana drugs (stimulating hunger), Virechana (purgation therapy), Anuvāsana basti (enema) are beneficial in the management of Amavata. Despite the administration of best available modern drugs, the disease has a tendency to progress and cripple the patients. Conventional medicines - NSAID's (Non-steroidal antiinflammatory drugs) have adverse effects on GIT (gastrointestinal tract) and DMARD's (Disease modifying anti-rheumatoid drugs) cause hepatic, renal and bone marrow suppression. Thus, Ayurveda provides a safe, economic and effective treatment of RA.

Some important drugs for amavata with ingredients

Drug	Formulation composition
Agnitundi Vati	Kajjali (Black sulfide of mercury), Ajwain (<i>Trachyspermum ammi</i>), Sudh vatsanabha (<i>Aconitum ferox</i>), Harad (<i>Terminalia chebula</i>), Bahera (<i>Terminalia bellerica</i>), Amla (<i>Emblica officinalis</i>), Sajjikshar, Yavakshar, Chitrakmool (<i>Plumbago zeylanicum</i>), Saindhav lavan (Rock salt), Survarchal lavan (Black salt), Samudra lavan (Sea salt), Shavet jiraka (<i>Cuminum cyminum</i>), Vidanga (<i>Emblica ribes</i>), Shunthi (<i>Zingiber officinalis</i>), Pippali (<i>Piper longum</i>), Marich (<i>Piper nigrum</i>), Sudh kuchla (<i>Strychnos nuxvomica</i>)
Dashamoolarasnadi Kashayam	Dashamoola, Bilwa (<i>Aegle marmelos</i>), Agnimantha (<i>Premna obtusifolia</i>), Gambhari (<i>Gmelina arborea</i>), Shyonaka (<i>Oroxylum Indicum</i>) Pathala (<i>Stereospermum suaveolens</i>), Shalaparni (<i>Desmodium gangeticum</i>), Prushnaparni (<i>Uraria picta</i>), Bruhati (<i>Solanum Indicum</i>), Kantakari (<i>Solanum xanthocarpous</i>), Gokshura (<i>Tribulus Terrestris</i>), Amruta (<i>Tinospora cordifolia</i>), Eranda (<i>Ricinus communis</i>), Rasna (<i>Pluchea lanceolata</i>), Nagara (<i>Zingiber officinalis</i>), Daru/Devadaru (<i>Cedrus deodara</i>)
Simhanad Guggul	Chitraka (<i>Plumbago zeylanica</i>), Pippalimoola (<i>Piperlongum</i>), Yavani (<i>Trachyspermum ammi</i>) Karavi (<i>Piper chaba</i>) Ajamoda (<i>Trachyspermum roxburghianum</i>) Jeeraka (Cumin seed) Suradaru (<i>Cedrus deodara</i>) Chavya (<i>Piper cubeba</i>) Ela (Cardamom) Saindhava Lavana (Rock salt) Kushta (<i>Saussurea lappa</i>) Rasna (<i>Pluchea lanceolata</i>) Gokshura (<i>Tribulus terrestris</i>) Dhanyaka (Coriander) Triphala – Haritaki (<i>Terminalia chebula</i>), Vibhitaki (<i>Terminalia bellirica</i>), Amalaki (<i>Emblica officinalis</i>) Musta (<i>Cyperus rotundus</i>) Trikatu (Pepper, long pepper and ginger) Twak (Cinnamon) Usheera (<i>Vetiveria zizanioides</i>) Yavagraja (<i>Hordeum vulgare</i>) Barley Taleesapatra (<i>Abies webbiana</i>) Patra (<i>Cinnamomum zeylanicum</i>) Guggulu (Purified <i>Commiphora mukul</i>) Sarpi (ghee).

The snehas used for Snehapana Eranda taila is said to be the best because it is having both Amapachan and virechen. Other snehas indicated as pana are Sunti Ghritam, Kanjika Shatphala ghritam, Prasarinitailam, Saindavaditailam etc.

Among Swedakarmas mainly ruksha sweda like valuka sweda, potalisweda etc are indicated. Virechan yogas mentioned for Amavata (RA) like Trivritadi churnam, Hareetaki prayog, Aragvada palavaprayog, Eranda Kwatha pryog, Eranda taila prayog Etc. are used.

Vasti:- treatment of R.A. can be overcome by Anuvasana vastis with vatanasaka tailas like Nirgundi, Saindavadi tailas etc. Niruhavasti formulations. with Dashmula Kwath, Maharasnadi Kwath, Rasna Erandamula kwath etc. are indicated.

Some of the important Amavata (R.A.) Nasak guggulu, vati, kwatha are as follows Simhanada guggulu drugs, Rasna panda, Vatari guggulu, Yogaraja guggulu, Rasnadi kwath, Vyadhi sardoola guggulu, Rasna saptaka kwatha, Siva guggulu etc.

External lepas, tailas for symptomatic relief; Himsradilepa, Satapushpadilepa, Vija yabhairava tailam, Sainda vadi tailam.

Rasa Aushadies used in Amavata (R.A.): Amavatariras, Amavatarivatika, Amavateswararas. Vatagajendraras, Amapramathini Vatika, Amavatadrivajraras, Amrita manjariras etc. For Amapachan and maintenance of Agni in Amavata (RA)-patient even pathya & apathyas are mentioned in Ayurvedic classics.

Pathya: Pathya is referred to the Ahara and Vihara, which causes pacification of the disease. Apathya is referred to the Ahara and Vihara, which causes complications and aggravate the disease.

Ahara is the base and cause for the Strength, Complexion and Vitality of the living beings. It has the ability to promote health as well as to control the disease Pathology. The benefits of food like health, strength, longevity and energy are achieved only when the food is consumed by the person according to its Swabhava, Samyoga, Samskara, Matra, Desha, Kala, Upayokta and Upayoga Samstha. Otherwise it will end up in manifestation of diseases.^[4]

There are various drugs mentioned in Ayurveda that plays important role at Jatharagni level, Bhootagni level and Dhatavagni level like Trikatu i.e. equal amount of three herbs namely Sunthi (*Zingiber officianalis*), Maricha (*Piper nigrum*) and Pippali (*Piper longum*) is supposed to work on Jathragni at the level of Madhuravasthapaka and Amalavasthapaka. They are believed to intensify salivary flow and gastric juice secretion, and help in digestion. Medicinal plants that are acts at bhootagni level are Bhringaraja (*Eclipta Alba*) Picrorhiza kurroa (Kutaki) *Cucurma longa* *Andrographis paniculata*. These are well known medicinal plant for its usefulness in liver diseases. Drug Acting on Dhatwagni are; Rasagni-Khajoora (*Phoenix dactylifera*), Nagarmotha (*Cyperus rotandus*), etc, Raktagni-Manjjistha (*Rubia Cordifolia*), Sariva (*Hemidesmus indicus*), Khadira (*Acacia catechu*), Mandoora (Incinerated iron oxide) etc., Mamsagni- Guggulu (*Commiphora Mukul*), Kshara, Eranda (*Ricinus communis*), etc. Medagni-Kanchanara (*Bauhinia variegata*), Guggulu (*Commiphora Mukul*), Triphala, Louhabhasma, Agnimantha (*Premna integrifolia*), etc. Asthyagni-Laksha (*Laccifer*

Lacca), Asthishrinkhala (*Cissus quadrangularis*), Nagabala (*Sida veronicaefolia* Lam), Godanti, Muktapisti, Shallaki (*Boswellia serrata*) etc. Majjagni-Guduchi (*Tinospora cordifolia*), Aswagandha (*Withania somnifera*), Rajatabharma, etc. ShukragniKapikacchu (*Mucuna pruriens*), Vidarikanda (*Ipomoea Digitata*) etc.^[5]

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Amavata is a complex of disease, pathogenesis of which lies in generation of Ama after Mandagni. This Ama along with vitiated Vata and Kapha dosha results in Dosha-dushya combination, thus generating the Nidus for symptoms of Amavata to occur. The aim of the treatment in Amavata is to reduce Ama by its metabolism (Amapachana) and to normalise the vitiated Vata and Kapha dosa only with Ayurveda treatment. The treatment protocol included combination of external localised and internal medication which worked in tandem to reduce the symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis.

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