

A LITERARY REVIEW OF AMVATA W.S.R. TO RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS

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ABSTRACT

Amavata is a severely disabling joint disease that affects people globally, regardless of climate or ethnicity. In modern science, *Amavata* is likened to Rheumatoid Arthritis, an autoimmune disorder. It is particularly common among the elderly. The term "*Amavata*" is derived from two words, *Ama* and *Vata*, indicating a condition caused by their accumulation. *Ama* results from the impaired functioning of *Agni* (digestive fire) and signifies something unripe, immature, or undigested. This *Ama* is transported by *Vata* throughout the body and collects in the joints and weaker areas (*Khavaigunya*), leading to *Amavata*. Ayurvedic treatment recommends *Shamana* and *Shodhana* therapies, whereas modern medicine employs anti-inflammatory drugs, analgesics, steroids, and DMARDs, which have their own side effects. *Amavata* is classified as a *Vata-Kaphaja* disorder in *Ayurveda* since the time of *Madhavakara* and is considered one of the most challenging diseases due to its chronicity, incurability, complications, and high

morbidity.

KEYWORDS: *Amavata*, *Ama*, Rheumatoid Arthritis, *Agni*, *Vata*.

INTRODUCTION

Amavata, as described in *Madhav Nidana*, is a highly painful condition, often likened to the pain of a scorpion sting ("*Vrischika Damshavata Vedana*").^[1] The term "*Ama*" signifies something unripe, immature, and undigested, resulting from impaired functioning of the *Agni* (Digestive fire) at various levels: *Jatharagni*, *Bhutagni*, and *Dhatvagni*.

In modern science, *Amavata* is compared to Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA), a chronic immuno-inflammatory systemic disease that primarily affects synovial joints and can have extra-articular manifestations. RA typically involves bilateral peripheral symmetrical joint involvement and is characterized by early morning stiffness, with a positive Rheumatoid Factor (R.A Factor) in about 75% of patients.

Comparison between *Amavata* and Rheumatoid arthritis

Most of the symptoms of *Amavata* are directly co-related with Rheumatoid Arthritis which are as follows:^[2,3]

<i>Sandhishoola</i>	-	Joint pain.
<i>Sandhishotha</i>	-	Swelling of joints.
<i>Sparshasahyata</i>	-	Tenderness at the joints.
<i>Gatra Stabdhata</i> body.-	-	Stiffness of joints and whole
<i>Raga</i>	-	Erythema of the joints.
<i>Jwara</i>	-	Low grade fever.

Classification of *amavata*

1. Based on *dosha* involvement

Ek doshaja: Involving a single *dosha*:

- 1) *Vataja*
- 2) *Vata-Pittaja*
- 3) *Kaphaja*

Dvi doshaja: Involving two *doshas*:

- 1) *Vata-Kaphaja*
- 2) *Pittaja*
- 3) *Pitta-Kaphaja*

Tri doshaja: Involving all three *doshas*:

- 1) *Sannipataja*

2. Based on disease severity

- *Samanya Amavata*
- *Pravridha Amavata*

3. Based on clinical manifestation

Acharya Harita classified *Amavata* according to its clinical presentation:^[4]

- 1) **Vistambhi amavata:** Characterized by bloating (*Adhmaan*) and urinary bladder pain (*Vasti Shula*).
- 2) **Gulmi amavata:** Involves pain in the *Vata* regions, including stiffness in the lower back (*Kati Pradesh Jadyata*).
- 3) **Snehi amavata:** Features oily appearance (*Snigdhata*), stiffness (*Jadyata*), weak digestion (*Mandagni*), and the excretion of fatty stool without water.
- 4) **Sarvangi amavata:** Involves swelling in the lower back (*Kati* and *Pristhapradesh Shotha*), bladder pain (*Vasti Shula*), intestinal cramping (*Antrakunjana*), headache (*Shirogaurava*), and presence of undigested matter in the stool (*Ama Mal*).
- 5) **Pakva amavata:** Characterized by the absence of undigested matter in stool (*Niraam Mala Pravritti*), no bladder pain (absence of *Vasti Shula*), and no fatigue (absence of *Klama*).

Purva rupa* [Prodromal symptoms] of *amavata

In Ayurvedic classics the *Purva Rupa* of *Amavata* has not been mentioned distinctly. But the *Avyakata Lakshana* prior to manifestation of disease can be taken as *Purva Rupa*. Hence following can be considered as *Purva Rupa* of *Amavata*-

- i. **Agni mandya-** due to consumption of *Nidana* normal functioning of the *Agni* is hampered resulting in *Agni Mandya*
- ii. **Apaka-** due to *Agni Mandya* proper digestion and metabolism does not take place.
- iii. **Daurbalya-** in case of improper digestion *Dhatus* are deprived of sufficient nourishment which leads to feeling of *Daurbalya*.
- iv. **Angamarda-** in adequate nourishment of *Dhatus* and presence of *Ama* lead to subjective feeling of aching in the body.
- v. **Aruchi-** vitiation of *Rasa Dhatu* and *Bodhaka Kapha* impair the function of *Rasanendriya*.
- vi. **Gaurava-** the presence of *Ama* and vitiated *Kapha* cause feeling of heaviness in the body.
- vii. **Gatrastabdhama-** when the *Ama* circulates in the body with the help of vitiated *Vyana Vayu* in the earlier stage of *Samprapti*, it gives rise to *Gatrastabdhata* or stiffness of the body by its *Picchila, Guru* and *Sheeta Guna*.

Rupa (Clinical features) of amavata***According to Madhava Nidana*****A. *Pratyatma Rupa (Cardinal Signs and Symptoms)***

In Ayurveda, specific *pratyatma lakshana* (Cardinal symptoms) for *Amavata* are not explicitly described. However, since joints (*Sandhis*) are primarily affected, joint-related symptoms are considered *pratyatma lakshana* for *Amavata*. In severe stages, joint pain is likened to the pain from a scorpion sting.

B. *Samanya Rupa (General Signs and Symptoms)*^[5]

According to *Acharya Madhav*, the general signs and symptoms include:

- *Angamarda* (Body ache)
- *Aruchi* (Loss of appetite)
- *Trishna* (Thirst)
- *Alasya* (Laziness)
- *Gaurava* (Heaviness)
- *Jwara* (Fever)
- *Apaka* (Indigestion)
- *Angashunnata* (Swelling of body parts)

C. *Vishesha Lakshana (Specific symptoms)*^[6]

According to *Acharya Madhav*, the dominance of *Doshas* manifests as:

- *Vata-anubandha*: Pain is the primary symptom.
- *Pitta-anubandha*: Redness and burning around the joints.
- *Kapha-anubandha*: Stiffness, heaviness, and itching.

D. *Pravridha amavata lakshana*

In the advanced stage, *Amavata* becomes very difficult for both patients and physicians. It is the worst stage of the disease according to *Kriya Kala* and stage-wise development. Symptoms include:

- *Agnimandya* (Weak digestion)
- *Praseka* (Excessive salivation)
- *Aruchi* (Loss of appetite)
- *Gauravam* (Heaviness)
- *Utsaha-hani* (Loss of enthusiasm)
- *Vairasya* (Loss of taste)

- *Daha* (Burning sensation)
- *Bahumutrata* (Frequent urination)
- *Kukshikathinya* (Abdominal hardness)
- *Kukshi shula* (Abdominal pain)
- *Nidra Viaryaya* (Sleep disturbances)
- *Trishna* (thirst)
- *Chardi* (Vomiting)
- *Bhrama* (Dizziness)
- *Murcha* (Fainting)
- *Vibandha* (Constipation)
- *Jadyata* (Stiffness)
- *Antrakujan* (Intestinal cramping)
- *Anaha* (Bloating)

Samprapti (Pathogenesis) of Amavata

When an individual with a weak digestive system consumes an incompatible diet and follows improper lifestyle habits (*Viruddhaahara Vihar*), or indulges in fatty foods, it leads to the formation of *Vayan Vayu*. This *Vayan Vayu* propels *Ama* (undigested or toxic metabolic byproducts) towards the location of *Sleshma (Kapha)*.

Here, the vitiated *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha* further aggravate the *Amarasa* (improperly digested nutrients), which then spreads throughout the body via the vessels (*Dhamini*). The *Ama* accumulates in the joint spaces and small channels (*Srotas*), causing heaviness and stiffness in the entire body, weakening the patient.

As the condition worsens, the aggravated *Ama* particularly affects the pelvic and shoulder girdles, along with other joints, resulting in stiffness and discomfort. This condition is termed *Amavata*.^[7]

Samprapti ghataka

<i>Dosha</i>	-	<i>Vata pradhan tridosha</i>
<i>Dooshya</i>	-	<i>Rasadi dhatu; Asthigata snayu; Sira</i>
<i>Agni</i>	-	<i>Jatharagni; Rasadhatwagni</i>
<i>Ama</i>	-	<i>Jatharagnijanya & Rasadhatwagnijanya</i>
<i>Srotas</i>	-	<i>Rasavaha, Asthivaha</i>

<i>Udbhava Sthana</i>	-	<i>Amashaya</i>
<i>Adhishthan</i>	-	<i>Asthisandhi</i>
<i>Rogamarga</i>	-	<i>Madhyama</i>

Chikitsa (Management) of amavata

Vagbhata, in his text *Astang Hridaya*, describes the treatment for *Samavata*, which is similar to the treatment for *Amavata*. According to Acharya, the therapies for managing *Samavata* include *Swedana* (Sudation), *Langhana* (Fasting), *Pachana* (Digestive treatments), *Ruksha Seka* (Dry fomentation), and *Aalepa* (Applications). Since the symptoms of *Samavata* closely resemble those of *Amavata*, the same treatments can be applied to *Amavata*.

Chakradatta is recognized for outlining the treatment principles for this disease. The recommended treatments include *Langhana* (Fasting), *Swedana* (Sudation), administration of drugs with *Tikta* (Bitter), *Katu* (Pungent) *Rasa*, and *Deepana* (Digestive enhancement) action, *Virechana* (Purgation), *Snehapana* (Oleation therapy), *Anuvasana* (Oil enema), and *Kshara Vasti* (Alkaline enema).^[8]

Upakrama [Procedure] of amavata

Various *upakrama* has been prescribed by different acharyas in *amavata*^[9,10]

<i>UpakrAma</i>	C.D	Y.R	B.R	H.S
<i>Langhana</i>	+	+	+	-
<i>Svedana</i>	+	+	+	-
<i>Tikta</i>	+	+	+	-
<i>Katu</i>	+	+	+	-
<i>Deepana dravyas</i>	+	+	+	-
<i>Virechana</i>	+	+	+	+
<i>Snehapana</i>	+	+	+	-
<i>Basti</i>	+	+	+	-
<i>Anuvasana with Saindhavadi Tail</i>	+		+	-
<i>Kshara Basti</i>	+		+	-
<i>Rukshasveda (Valuka)</i>	+	+	-	-
<i>Pachana</i>	-	-	+	+

Pathya-apathya

Pathya

<i>Annavarga</i>	Yava, Kulatha, Raktashali, Shyamaka, Kodrava, Purana Shashtishali
<i>Shaka Varga</i>	Vastuka, Shigru, Karvelaka, Patola
<i>Dugdhavarga</i>	AdraKa Ksheer Paka
<i>Mamsa Varga</i>	Jangala Mamsa
<i>Drava</i>	Ushna Jala, Purana Madya, Gomutra, Takra & Kanji with Shunthi

	Churna
Drugs	Katu-Tikta Dravya, Shunthi, Bhallataka, Vridhadaruka, Varuna,
Pathya Vihara	Rukshasveda with Baluka Potali

Apathya

Apathay ahara	Dadhi, Ksheera, Matsya, Guda, Mansapishtaka, Viruddhahara,
APathya vihara	Sheeta Jala are Apathya in Amavata

CONCLUSION

Acharya Madhava was the first to provide a detailed description of *Amavata*, covering aspects such as *Nidana* (Causes), *Samprapti* (Pathogenesis), and *Pratyatma Lakshanas* (Cardinal symptoms). *Amavata*, where pain is likened to a scorpion sting (*Vrischika Danshavata Vedana*), is a particularly challenging disease for physicians. *Ama* is a key pathogenic factor in *Amavata*. It is generated at different levels in the body, including *Jatharagni* (Digestive fire), *Bhutagni* (Metabolic fire), and *Dhatwagni* (Tissue fire). The main pathogenic event in Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) or *Amavata* is the formation and deposition of *Ama* at all levels of body physiology, including the gastrointestinal system and the body's internal transport channels. The pathogenesis of *Amavata* begins with the formation of *Ama*. Autoimmune diseases occur when the immune system erroneously attacks body tissues in response to antigens, toxins, or *Ama*, triggering an inflammatory response. At the cellular level, antigens or *Ama* disrupt normal signaling, leading to an autoimmune response that damages tissues.

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