WORLD JOURNAL OF PHARMACEUTICAL RESEARCH
Coden USA: WJPRAP Impact Factor 8.63
Volume 15, Issue 18, 141-151. Review Article ISSN 2277–7105

AMAVATA (RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS): AN AYURVEDIC AND CONTEMPORARY REVIEW

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Article Received on 19 August 2026,
Article Revised on 08 September 2026,
Article Published on 16 Sept. 2026,

https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22767155

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How to cite this Article: Dr. Monika1*, Dr. Ashwini Kumar Sharma2 (2026). Amavata (Rheumatoid Arthritis): An Ayurvedic and Contemporary Review. World Journal of Pharmaceutical Research, 15(18), 141–151.

ABSTRACT

Amavata is an important Ayurvedic disease entity characterized by the interaction of Ama and aggravated Vata, with impaired Agni regarded as a major initiating factor. Clinically, Amavata is described by joint pain, stiffness, swelling, tenderness, heaviness and functional impairment, together with systemic manifestations such as anorexia, fatigue, fever and weakness. These features show substantial clinical overlap with rheumatoid arthritis (RA), a chronic systemic autoimmune inflammatory disease characterized by persistent synovitis and progressive structural joint damage. This review synthesizes the Ayurvedic concepts of Ama, Nidana, Samprapti, clinical manifestations, classification, diagnosis and management of Amavata with contemporary concepts of RA pathogenesis, diagnosis and treatment. A narrative literature-review methodology was used. The primary source was the uploaded 50-page disease-review PDF on RA/Amavata; selected contemporary literature was additionally consulted to verify modern epidemiology, classification and therapeutic principles. The reviewed material indicates that Ayurvedic management emphasizes Nidana Parivarjana, Langhana, Deepana-Pachana, Swedana, Virechana and Basti according to disease stage, strength and Ama status. Contemporary RA management emphasizes early recognition and disease-modifying antirheumatic drugs (DMARDs), with biologic and targeted therapies used when indicated. The comparison is best understood as a conceptual

and clinical correlation rather than a claim that Ama is identical to a specific modern biochemical entity or that Amavata and RA are pathologically synonymous. Future research should use standardized Ayurvedic phenotyping together with validated inflammatory biomarkers, imaging, functional outcomes and safety monitoring.

KEYWORDS: Amavata; Ama; Vata; Agni; rheumatoid arthritis; Ayurveda; inflammation; autoimmune disease; Samprapti; DMARDs.

1. INTRODUCTION

Amavata occupies an important position in Ayurvedic descriptions of inflammatory musculoskeletal disease. The disease concept centers on the interaction of incompletely processed metabolic material, described as Ama, with aggravated Vata. The uploaded source describes impairment of Jatharagni, Bhutagni or Dhatvagni as conditions under which Ama may arise and subsequently participate in disease development. It further describes Amavata as a state in which Ama and Vata become associated and localize in susceptible tissues, particularly the joints.[1]

The clinical picture recorded in the source includes Sandhi Shoola (joint pain), Sandhi Shotha (joint swelling), Sparshasahatva (tenderness), Gatra Stabdhata (stiffness), Gaurava (heaviness), Angamarda (body ache), Aruchi (anorexia), Agnisada (impaired digestive function), fever and weakness. The source also notes a close clinical relationship between these manifestations and rheumatoid arthritis.[1]

Rheumatoid arthritis is a chronic inflammatory autoimmune disorder affecting synovial joints and potentially multiple extra-articular organs. Contemporary understanding recognizes interactions among genetic susceptibility, environmental factors, autoantibodies, T and B lymphocytes, macrophages, fibroblast-like synoviocytes and inflammatory cytokine networks.[2,3] A global systematic review and meta-analysis estimated RA prevalence at approximately 0.46%, while also demonstrating substantial geographical and methodological heterogeneity.[4]

Early diagnosis is important because persistent inflammatory synovitis can lead to cartilage damage, bone erosion, deformity and disability. The 2010 ACR/EULAR classification framework was designed to improve identification of patients with early inflammatory

arthritis who are at risk of persistent or erosive disease.[5] Current treatment guidelines emphasize disease-modifying therapy rather than symptomatic treatment alone.[6]

Against this background, a structured review of Amavata and its relationship with RA is useful for Ayurvedic education, research planning and clinically cautious integrative discussion.

2. AIM AND OBJECTIVES

Aim: To review the Ayurvedic concept of Amavata and critically discuss its clinical correlation with rheumatoid arthritis.

- To summarize the Ayurvedic concept of Ama, Agni, Vata and Amavata.
- To review the Nidana, Purvarupa, Rupa and Samprapti described in the source material.
- To summarize classical classification and therapeutic principles.
- To describe contemporary concepts of RA epidemiology, pathogenesis, diagnosis and management.
- To compare Amavata and RA while clearly distinguishing conceptual correlation from pathological equivalence.
- To identify research gaps relevant to Ayurvedic management of inflammatory arthritis.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

3.1 Review design

This was a narrative review. The primary source was the uploaded document titled "8. Disease Review RA.pdf," a 50-page disease-review document containing Ayurvedic material on Ama and Amavata together with contemporary discussion of rheumatoid arthritis, its clinical manifestations, investigations, complications and treatment. The document was used as the principal basis for the Ayurvedic terminology, organization and source-derived clinical content.[1]

3.2 Literature search and selection

To supplement and verify the modern component, targeted searches were performed in PubMed for rheumatoid arthritis epidemiology, the 2010 ACR/EULAR classification criteria, RA immunopathogenesis and contemporary treatment guidance. Priority was given to systematic reviews, classification criteria and professional clinical guidelines. Literature was selected when it directly addressed the modern concepts discussed in this review. No attempt was made to conduct a formal systematic review or quantitative meta-analysis.

3.3 Data extraction

Information was organized under the following domains: (i) definition and concept of Ama; (ii) Nidana and Samprapti of Amavata; (iii) clinical features and classification; (iv) modern RA pathogenesis and clinical manifestations; (v) diagnostic principles; (vi) Ayurvedic management; (vii) modern management; and (viii) areas for future research.

3.4 Methodological limitation

Because the primary uploaded source is a compiled review document and not a systematic evidence synthesis, statements within it are not treated as independently verified clinical evidence. Where contemporary medical recommendations are presented, they are supported by identified PubMed-indexed literature. Classical Ayurvedic claims are presented as descriptions of the source material rather than as experimentally established biomedical mechanisms.

4. RESULTS OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1 Concept of Ama

The reviewed source presents Ama as a product of impaired digestion or metabolism. It describes the development of Ama when Agni is insufficient to complete normal processing and links Ama with accumulation, obstruction of channels and subsequent disease. [1] The source also records the classical importance of determining whether Ama is present because therapeutic strategy differs between Samavastha (Ama present) and Niramavastha (Ama absent).

From a contemporary research perspective, the source discusses possible analogies between Ama and incompletely processed metabolic material, oxidative stress and other inflammatory or toxic processes. These are hypotheses or conceptual comparisons and should not be presented as proof that Ama corresponds to one specific molecule or pathway.

4.2 Nidana of Amavata

No.	Nidana described in source	Functional interpretation used in the review
1	Viruddha Ahara	Incompatible/inappropriate dietary combinations
2	Viruddha Chesta	Improper lifestyle or activity
3	Mandagni	Impaired digestive/metabolic function
4	Nishchalatva	Sedentary lifestyle / reduced

No.	Nidana described in source	Functional interpretation used in the review
		physical activity
5	Improper meal/activity sequence	Eating or exertion patterns considered unfavorable
6	Other behavioral factors	Day sleep, night awakening, suppression of urges and related factors described in the source

4.3 Samprapti

The overall Ayurvedic sequence described by the source can be summarized as follows:

Nidana → Agnimandya → Ama formation → Ama accumulation/Prasara → Vata Prakopa → Ama–Vata association → Sthanasamshraya → Sandhi involvement → Pain, stiffness and swelling

The source specifically identifies impairment of Jatharagni, Bhutagni or Dhatvagni as contributing to Ama formation and describes the role of Samana Vata and Vyana Vata in the disease process.[1]

4.4 Clinical features and classification

Domain	Features reported in the source
Local/joint	Sandhi Shoola, Sandhi Shotha, tenderness, stiffness, crepitus, restricted movement
General	Angamarda, Aruchi, Trishna, Gaurava, Alasya, Daurbalya, Jwara
Digestive/metabolic	Agnisada, Apaka, Aruchi, symptoms associated with Ama
Vata association	More severe pain/stiffness
Pitta association	Redness and burning
Kapha association	Heaviness and stiffness
Chronicity	Naveena (<1 year) and Purana/Jirna (>1 year), as described in the source
Dosha types	Vataja, Pittaja, Kaphaja, Dvidoshaja variants and Sannipataja

4.5 Contemporary RA epidemiology and disease burden

A systematic review and meta-analysis of population-based studies estimated the global prevalence of RA at 0.46% (95% CI 0.39–0.54), equivalent to about 460 per 100,000 population, while emphasizing major geographical and methodological variation.[4] The uploaded source also emphasizes morbidity, disability and the multisystem nature of RA.[1]

4.6 Contemporary pathogenesis

Modern literature describes RA as a disease produced by interacting immune pathways rather than a single mechanism. Autoantibodies, T cells, B cells, macrophages, fibroblast-like

synoviocytes and cytokine networks contribute to persistent synovial inflammation and joint destruction.[2,3] Pro-inflammatory cytokines including TNF-α, IL-1 and IL-17 have been implicated in inflammation and degradation of cartilage and bone.[3]

Genetic/environmental susceptibility → immune activation → autoantibodies and cellular responses → synovitis → pannus → cartilage/bone damage → deformity and disability

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Ayurvedic interpretation

The central Ayurvedic explanatory model places Agni at the beginning of the disease sequence. When digestion and metabolism are considered impaired, Ama is described as developing and subsequently interacting with Vata. The resulting clinical manifestations are not limited to the joints; systemic symptoms such as anorexia, heaviness, fatigue and fever are also described.[1]

An important clinical implication within the Ayurvedic framework is stage-dependent treatment. The source repeatedly distinguishes the presence of Ama from its absence, suggesting that interventions intended to improve digestion, reduce Ama and address Vata should be selected according to disease state rather than applied uniformly.

5.2 Correlation with rheumatoid arthritis

The strongest basis for correlating Amavata with RA is clinical. Both may present with inflammatory joint pain, stiffness, swelling, tenderness and functional limitation. The source explicitly states that many Amavata manifestations are closely correlated with RA.[1] However, the two constructs arise from different explanatory systems. RA is defined and diagnosed using clinical, serological and imaging criteria, whereas Amavata is characterized using Ayurvedic concepts such as Ama, Dosha, Agni, Srotas and Samprapti.

Aspect	Amavata	Rheumatoid arthritis
Disease model	Ayurvedic pathophysiological construct	Autoimmune inflammatory disease
Core mechanism	Ama with aggravated Vata; impaired Agni	Immune dysregulation, autoantibodies, cytokines and synovitis
Primary tissue concept	Sandhi / musculoskeletal tissues	Synovium, cartilage, bone and extra-articular tissues
Key clinical features	Pain, stiffness, swelling, heaviness, systemic	Inflammatory arthritis, stiffness, swelling, fatigue and possible systemic

Aspect	Amavata	Rheumatoid arthritis
	symptoms	disease
Assessment	Ayurvedic examination and Ama/Dosha assessment	Clinical exam, RF/ACPA, ESR/CRP and imaging
Treatment framework	Nidana Parivarjana, Langhana, Deepana-Pachana, Swedana, Virechana, Basti as appropriate	DMARDs, biologics/targeted agents, selected glucocorticoids and rehabilitation
Evidence status	Classical framework; requires modern clinical validation	Established diagnostic and therapeutic evidence base

5.3 Diagnosis and early recognition

The 2010 ACR/EULAR classification criteria define definite RA on the basis of confirmed synovitis in at least one joint, absence of a better alternative diagnosis and a score of at least 6/10 across joint involvement, serology, acute-phase response and symptom duration.[5] A systematic review found pooled sensitivity of approximately 0.82 and specificity of approximately 0.61 across studies, with performance varying by reference standard.[7]

Diagnostic domain	Contemporary RA assessment
Joint involvement	Number and anatomical distribution of involved joints
Serology	RF and/or ACPA/anti-CCP
Inflammation	CRP and/or ESR
Duration	<6 weeks vs ≥6 weeks in classification scoring
Imaging	Radiography; ultrasound or MRI when clinically indicated
Clinical exclusion	Alternative diagnoses should be considered

5.4 Ayurvedic management principles

Intervention	Role described in source	Important qualification
Nidana Parivarjana	Removal/avoidance of causative factors	Foundational and individualized
Langhana	Used particularly when Ama is prominent	Patient strength and disease state matter
Deepana-Pachana	Address impaired digestion and Ama	Should be individualized
Ruksha Swedana	Classically described for selected Amavata states	Not universally appropriate
Virechana	Included among classical Upakrama	Requires appropriate assessment
Basti	Important Vata-oriented therapy in selected patients	Procedure should be performed by trained clinicians
Pathya-Apathya	Diet and lifestyle modification	Should be practical and individualized

The uploaded source lists Langhana, Swedana, Deepana, Pachana, Virechana and Basti among the therapeutic measures described by different classical authorities.[1] It also describes dietary and lifestyle recommendations, including avoidance of certain heavy, incompatible or cold foods and emphasis on selected light, warm and digestible foods.

5.5 Contemporary management

Contemporary RA management is centered on disease modification. The 2021 American College of Rheumatology guideline addresses conventional synthetic DMARDs, biologic DMARDs, targeted synthetic DMARDs and glucocorticoids, with treatment decisions individualized through clinician–patient shared decision-making. [6] Early effective treatment is important because uncontrolled inflammation can cause irreversible structural damage.

Treatment category	Examples/role
csDMARDs	Methotrexate, hydroxychloroquine, sulfasalazine, leflunomide
Biologic DMARDs	TNF inhibitors and other biologic targets when indicated
Targeted synthetic DMARDs	Small-molecule targeted therapies in appropriate patients
Glucocorticoids	Selected situations, generally with attention to minimizing exposure
Symptomatic care	NSAIDs/analgesic approaches may reduce symptoms but do not replace DMARD therapy
Rehabilitation	Exercise, physiotherapy, occupational therapy and joint protection
Monitoring	Disease activity, adverse effects, comorbidities and structural progression

5.6 Safety and integrative care

An integrative approach should not delay diagnosis or proven disease-modifying therapy in a patient with suspected or confirmed RA. Ayurvedic interventions should be evaluated for herb–drug interactions, contamination, hepatotoxicity, nephrotoxicity and other adverse effects. In particular, therapies involving procedures or concentrated formulations should be delivered by appropriately trained practitioners and coordinated with the patient's medical treatment.

6. Research Gaps and Future Directions

- Develop reproducible clinical criteria for identifying Amavata and for distinguishing Samavastha from Niramavastha.
- Study Ayurvedic interventions using randomized controlled designs with adequate sample sizes and prespecified outcomes.

- Use validated RA outcomes such as DAS28, HAQ-DI, CRP/ESR, ACPA/RF and imaging endpoints where appropriate.
- Investigate whether Ayurvedic phenotypes predict response to particular interventions.
- Establish standardized quality-control and safety profiles for Ayurvedic formulations used in inflammatory arthritis.
- Evaluate long-term safety and herb–drug interactions in patients receiving DMARDs or biologic therapy.
- Explore the relationship among diet, gut function, metabolic health, inflammation and autoimmune disease without assuming equivalence between Ama and a single biomarker.
- Publish negative as well as positive findings to reduce publication bias.

7. LIMITATIONS OF THE REVIEW

This review is based primarily on one uploaded disease-review document and a limited set of contemporary PubMed-indexed sources selected for verification of major modern claims. It is therefore a narrative review rather than a systematic review or meta-analysis. Some classical references and Sanskrit passages in the uploaded PDF were incompletely rendered in the parsed text; consequently, this manuscript preserves the source's substantive descriptions without attempting to reconstruct unreadable quotations. The modern literature was used to verify general concepts of epidemiology, classification and treatment, not to retroactively rewrite the Ayurvedic framework.

8. CONCLUSION

Amavata provides a coherent Ayurvedic framework for understanding a syndrome dominated by inflammatory joint symptoms and systemic manifestations in the context of impaired Agni, Ama and Vata. Rheumatoid arthritis, while clinically overlapping with Amavata in several respects, is a distinct modern disease construct supported by immunological, serological and radiological evidence. The two frameworks can be productively compared at the level of clinical phenotype and hypotheses for pathophysiological research, but they should not be treated as interchangeable diagnoses. A future evidence-based integrative model should combine early modern diagnosis and disease-modifying treatment with carefully standardized and scientifically evaluated Ayurvedic interventions.

9. Summary Tables for Manuscript Use

Table	Suggested title	Purpose
Table 1	Nidana of Amavata	Summarizes etiological factors from the source
Table 2	Clinical manifestations of Amavata	Presents local and systemic manifestations
Table 3	Classification of Amavata	Shows Dosha, severity and chronicity categories
Table 4	Amavata versus Rheumatoid Arthritis	Clarifies clinical overlap and conceptual differences
Table 5	Diagnostic approach to Rheumatoid Arthritis	Summarizes contemporary assessment
Table 6	Ayurvedic management principles	Presents stage-dependent classical measures
Table 7	Modern management of Rheumatoid Arthritis	Summarizes DMARDs, supportive care and monitoring
Table 8	Research priorities	Provides a translational research agenda

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