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CLINICAL ASPECT STUDY OF AMAVATA AND THE ROLE OF DIET – A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Amavata is a disease in which vitiation of *Vata Dosha* and accumulation of *Ama* take place in joint(s), and it simulates rheumatoid arthritis (RA) at modern parlance. *Shamana* (conservative) and *Shodhana* (biological purification of the body) treatments are advised in Ayurveda whereas anti-inflammatory, analgesics, steroids, and disease-modifying antirheumatic drugs are required for its management as per modern medicine, which are not free from side effects. In the present paper we are studying regarding the clinical aspect of diet to prevent *amavata*.

Keywords: Amavata, Anti Inflammatory, Anti rheumatic drugs

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INTRODUCTION

Rheumatoid arthritis in Ayurveda is described as amavata. Modern system of medicine is not sure, why this disease appears in the body all of a sudden. There are many hypotheses to describe the aetiology of this disease, but none of these is affirmative. Now it is believed that this is an auto-immune disorder. Ayurveda has different opinion regarding pathology of the disease. Ayurveda believes that the reasons which cause loss in the potency of digestive & metabolic fire inside the body to digest and assimilate the available foods are responsible for this disease. This disturbance in digestion & assimilation of foods leads to ama formation. Hence amavata is a condition of ama and aggravated vata (air-one of the 3 body humours viz. vata, pitta & kapha).

Formation of Ama: The word ama, in ordinary parlance means unripe, uncooked, immature, undigested or unprocessed substance. In context of medicine, it is the consequence of impaired functioning of digestive fire. According to Vagbhata 7, due to hypo-functioning of digestive fire, first dhatu (tissue) viz. the rasa is not properly formed. As a result the taken food material undergoes fermentation which is retained in stomach. This state of rasa is called ama. Vijayrakshita in the chapter on amavata stated that due to poor strength of digestive fire, a residue of taken food material is left behind undigested at the end of digestion and it is known as ama which is the root cause of all diseases. Further he adds, that some describe ama as improperly digested food while some say it is accumulation of malas (waste product) 8.

Aetiological Factors of Ama :

Unwholesome foods & life style sedentary work habit leads to impairment of digestive function and hence formation of ama. Charaka has very elaborated view regarding causative factors of ama. He says that not only food taken in excess quantity cause production of ama but heavy, cold, dry, impure diets may also cause ama. Abstinence from food, frequent fasting, irregular diet habits, indulgence in incompatible food items, wasting of tissues due to disease, unfavourable changes in place, climate, season & suppression of natural urges cause impairment of digestive fire which fails to digest even the most easily digestible light food. This disease also has a relation with mind. According to Ayurveda mind is one of the three realms of life (mind, body & soul). It is commonly seen that RA attacks women mostly. It shows that there is some emotional reason also, whether these are responsible for causing it or for aggravation of this disease. Charaka indicates mental factors causing ama like anger, greed, jealousy, grief, fear etc. When individual afflicted with these mental states takes even wholesome food in proper quantity, becomes unable to digest.

Pathogenesis of Amavata: The toxin ama is carried by imbalance air (vata) & reaches kapha (phlegm) predominant sites like joints, stomach etc. The toxin being sticky in nature blocks micro-channels (srotasa) which nourish the body. When this ama accumulates in the joints, it produces the disease amavata. Simultaneously it spreads all over the body. The channels (like arteries, intercellular spaces, pores in the cells) which allow nutrients to flow

through and nourish the body tissues, get partially blocked this leads to decreased supply of nutrients to body tissues and cells. As a result immunity of the body gets lowered, appetite reduces & body becomes weak.

The ama which gets harboured in the joints acts like a foreign substance & triggers the immune system. This leads to inflammation of linings of joints.

Symptomatology of Amavata: Symptoms produced in this disease are local as well as systemic. Among local symptoms pain, swelling, and stiffness in joints are main. Pain is intense & like a scorpion sting. Joints involved are hand, foot, cervical/neck, sacrum, knee, hip & ankle joint. Systemic symptoms are body ache, loss of taste, malaise, thirst, lack of enthusiasm, heaviness in precordial region, constipation, fever, indigestion etc.

1. In Ayurveda, Amavata is treated by the following measures. a. Ahara or Diet:

- One should take old rice, butter milk, wet ginger, garlic, wheat, bitter gourd and horse gram in his diet.
- Avoid consumption of dairy products, sweets, oily foods, junk and fast foods, salty and sour foods, jaggery, black gram, fish, cold drinks and ice creams.

Any kind of grains such as aged rice, long-grain variety of rice, wild rice, red rice and so on are good if you are suffering from Rheumatoid Arthritis. Along with that other grains such as millets, especially fox millet and barley helps reduce inflammatory problems. Grains are easy and light on the stomach and digestive system. Otherwise,

kernels of barley also lower burning in the joints.

2. Pulses and legumes

In this regard, horse gram and chickpeas get the special and most important mention of all. Horse gram is easily available in any market and you can replace any other snack with a bowl of soaked horse gram. Also, hummus is a great idea to have chickpeas in a tasty form. Both of these foods have proteins and also great for the digestive system along with being helpful for Rheumatoid Arthritis.

3. Warm water

Keep drinking lukewarm water throughout the day, but not in excess quantities. It is better if you boil water with ginger and then drink it. It is an Ayurvedic remedy that removes toxins from the body and also improves the digestive system. If you are suffering from the chronic pain of Rheumatoid Arthritis, this remedy will make you more flexible. Also, you will experience less burning and heaviness in the joints.

4. Leafy green vegetables and fruits

There are several essential elements present in seasonal fruits and leafy green vegetables. For example, you will get polyphenols, Vitamin E, bioflavonoids, riboflavin, catechins, vitamin C, carotenoids and other low weight molecular elements. These elements also contain antioxidants, anti-inflammatory features, and other fibrinolytic substances.

Bitter vegetables such as neem, bitter gourd, bottle gourd, brinjal, pointed gourd, goosefoot, drumsticks, and other similar

vegetables. Arugula, kale, greens from dandelions and radicchio are some herbs that help reduce inflammatory symptoms of Rheumatoid Arthritis.

5. Spices

The most essential spices that restrict arthritic alterations in bone health are ginger, garlic, and turmeric. The best part is that incorporating spices in your daily diet is not at all difficult because they are the main flavouring elements of our food. Also, the spices contain all kinds of anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial and other analgesic properties. Besides, spices and herbs improve digestion.

6. Buttermilk

A great home remedy for Rheumatoid Arthritis is buttermilk. The best way to consume buttermilk is by adding 2-3 garlic cloves in it. If you have a problem consuming whole cloves of garlic, you can also make a paste of those and add to your drink. However, the second option may have a stronger smell.

7. Animal Meat

The meat of some wild animals such as quails is significantly helpful if you are suffering from Rheumatoid Arthritis. The bush and jungle quails are the best variants. Meats are good sources of vitamin A as well as Iron.

8. Wine

Consuming old wine is a good way to deal with Rheumatoid Arthritis. However, consuming old wine does not mean excessive drinking. Drink it in a moderate and measured amount.

9. Castor oil

First of all, milk is a good source of protein and Vitamin D. On the other hand, castor oil is a good purgative. Pour a few drops of castor oil in a glass full of milk. Stir it well and gulp down before going to bed. However, the side-effect of this remedy is that you may have a problem of loose bowel movement the very next day.

Generally speaking, vegetables or fruits should be cooked or stewed well, before you can eat them. The best idea is to go for sweeter vegetables and fruits such as squash, cooked apples, raisins, and potatoes. Also, stay away from food items that take time to digest such as raw apples, Brussel sprouts, and broccoli.

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