

## A REVIEW ARTICLE ON RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS W.S.R VATARAKTA

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### ABSTRACT

Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) is one of the most common chronic inflammatory arthritis characterized by symmetric polyarthritis and it's having destructive nature of varying extent. It causes pain, swelling, redness, stiffness and limits the functions of the small and large synovial joints. RA is associated with extra-articular presentation of systemic disturbances. Even though science had advanced to such a great extent, there is no much effective management for RA. Allopathic treatment aimed at reduction of pain and swelling which mainly treated with corticosteroid, DMARD's and NSAID's etc are having negative impact on bone mass. There stands the relevance of Ayurveda. Ayurvedic understanding of Rheumatoid Arthritis, with its cause, pathogenesis, clinical features, with the *Nidana, Samprapti, Poorvarupa, Rupa* of Vatarakta; one of the diseases mentioned in Ayurveda. This article is a simple attempt to view the Rheumatoid Arthritis in the light of Ayurvedic wisdom, as it gives a great solution for the treatment of RA.

**Keywords:** Rheumatoid Arthritis, *Vatarakta*

### INTRODUCTION

RA is the most common form of chronic inflammatory arthritis and often results in joint damage and physical disability<sup>(1)</sup>. RA is the one of the main leading cause of year lived with disability (YLD)<sup>(2)</sup> diseases. In India it is predominantly with articular manifestation with lower frequency of extra-articular manifestation<sup>(1)</sup>. The cause of RA is still unknown. The factors which play in the causation of RA are genetic factor, auto immunity, infectious agent, environmental factors, metabolism, nutrition, hormonal factors, psychological factors etc. Pathological changes typically can be seen in the synovial joints. Initial symptoms confined only few joints with pain, swell-

ing, tenderness and often associated with early morning stiffness of joints, lasting more than 1 hour. Earliest involved joints are mainly small joints of hand and feet. Thinning of articular cartilage, focal bone erosion are leading to the reduction of joint spaces and progressive fibrosis, which results in fibrous ankylosing. Laboratory findings associated with acute cases of RA are low Hemoglobin level, raised ESR and CRP titre level. 80% of cases are associated with positive RF titre and most of them have positive ACCP. Medical management mainly focus on symptomatic relief of the condition by using NSAID'S, DMARD's system corticosteroids and immune suppressant drugs.<sup>(1)</sup>

In Ayurveda *Vatarakṭa* is the disease which have similarity with RA. *Vata* and *Rakta* with their own causative factors get vitiated and *dosa* get accumulated in the *sandi pradesa*. These vitiated *dosa* along with *sthanika dosa* and *dushyas* produce varying symptoms. *Uttana* and *Gambeera* stage of *Vatarakṭa* shows different kinds of symptoms such as *ruk*, *paka*, *daha*, *sopha*, *anguli vakrata* etc. can be observed in Rheumatoid Arthritis also. Based on the *dosa* predominance and stage of the disease, different modality of treatment mentioned in the *Vatarakṭa* can appropriately use in the management of RA.

### Rationale and Background

Epidemiological survey done by COPCORD shows a prevalence of 0.45% in urban and 0.7% in rural population<sup>(1)</sup>. Women's are affected more than men with female to male ratio 3:1<sup>(2)</sup>. Allopathic management

aimed for the symptomatic relief for pain and swelling. To understand the Rheumatoid Arthritis with Ayurvedic way of perceptive, it is having more similarity with the disease *Vata rakta*. Many formulations and *chikitsa* principles mentioned in different condition of the *Vatarakṭa* are found to be useful in the management Rheumatoid Arthritis too.

### Aim

To find out the similarity between the Rheumatoid arthritis and *Vatarakṭa* in its cause, pathogenesis, clinical features. In order to adopt the *Vatarakṭa* *chikitsa* mentioned in different condition in classics for the management of Rheumatoid Arthritis.

### Materials and Method

For this study, literary method which includes the reference of Rheumatoid Arthritis and *Vatarakṭa* have been collected from modern textbooks and ayurvedic classics.

**Table 1:** Features of RA and *Vatarakṭa*

Features	Rheumatoid Arthritis	<i>Vatarakṭa</i>
1. Gender factor	Female to male ratio 3:1 <sup>(1)</sup>	<i>Prayena sukumara prakriti</i> <sup>(3)</sup>
2. Onset	Onset acute and chronic <sup>(5)</sup>	<i>Chirakari</i> , <sup>(4)</sup> <i>Kalantharena</i> <sup>(3)</sup>
3. Prolonged / Episodic	Episodic exacerbation and remission <sup>(5)</sup>	<i>Bhuktva bhuktva pranasati</i> <sup>(3)</sup>

**Table 2:** Causes of RA and *Vatarakṭa*

Features	Rheumatoid Arthritis <sup>(5)(6)</sup>	<i>Vatarakṭa</i> <sup>(3)(4)</sup>
1. <i>Nidanam/ causes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incompatible food,</li> <li>• Urbanization, use of pesticides, spicy, junk, masala food,</li> <li>• Adoption of western lifestyle.</li> <li>• Malnutrition, lack of exercise, mental stress</li> <li>• Cellular injury</li> <li>• Uses of beverages</li> <li>• High caloric diet with low nutritional value</li> <li>• Disturbance in sleep pattern</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Virudha, Vidhai anna</i></li> <li>• <i>Ishtanna sugha bhojanam</i></li> <li>• <i>Achakramanaseela</i></li> <li>• <i>Krodha</i></li> <li>• <i>Abhigata</i></li> <li>• <i>Madhya, Sukta seveana</i></li> <li>• <i>Adhyasanam</i></li> <li>• <i>Pinyaka, moolaka</i></li> <li>• <i>Nisa jagaranam</i></li> <li>• <i>Divaswapnam</i></li> </ul>

### *Samprapti* – Pathogenesis <sup>(7,8)</sup> (3,4)

During early phase of RA there will be the congestion of synovial membrane. Inflammation of venules and capillary tube which dilates leading to infiltration of plasma cells, macrophages, lymphocytes etc. Later this congestion may lead to synovial effusion. The

synovial cell hyperplasia, proliferation and synovial effusion all causes formation of hyperemic edematous thickened structures and multilayering of synovocytes. When the process continuous the production

of pannus occurs. These pannus progressively destroys underlying cartilage and subchondral bone. As inflammation persists, this will cause weakening and even rupture of tendons. This may lead to different type of deformities. When person restoring *vata* and *rakta prakopa nidana*, they individually get vitiated. The vitiated *rakta* obstructs the path of vitiated *vata*, producing *avarana*. Due to this *avarana*; *vata* further aggravated tend to vitiate the entire *rakta* in the body. *Dravatwa* and *saratwa* property of *rakta* and *sukshmatva* and *saratva* property of *vata* helps to

spreads entire body. Due to the *vakratha* of sandhi these get settles in sandhi and produce *sopha*, *kandu*, *daha*, *sphurana*, *ruja* etc. symptoms. It is nothing but the inflammatory signs and symptoms. When it affects the deeper *dhathu* there will be the symptoms related with *asthi* and, *majja dhathu*. In subsequent stages of *samprapti dhathu parinama* gets disturbs and results in *dhathu kshaya*. This produces *upadrava* like *sandhi vakrata*, *khanjata*, *panguta*, *anguli-vakratha* etc.

**Table 3:** Premonitory symptoms of RA and *Vatarakṭa*

	Rheumatoid Arthritis	Vatarakṭa
<b>Pro dormal Symptoms/ poorvarupa</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weakness malaise</li> <li>• Weight loss</li> <li>• synovial effusion</li> <li>• Carpel tunnel Syndrome</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Alasyam, gurutva</i></li> <li>• <i>Sandhi saithilya</i></li> <li>• <i>Supti in Amsa, hasta</i> etc.</li> </ul>

**Rupa (Signs & Symptoms)** (3,4,7)

\* Pain: Aching or pricking type of pain in the multiple joints mainly symmetrical. Different types pain like *soola*, *thoda*, *Bheda*, *ruk*, *atiruk parvaruk* etc. are also mentioned in *Vatarakṭa*.

\* Mostly the joints of hand wrist, knee and feet are affected which gradually gets affected into large joints. “*krutvaadou hastapadesu moolam deha vidhavati*” (Smaller joints of hands and feet are the first site of manifestation.)

\* Tenderness of different degree in different joints. Affected joint shows “*sparsa akshamatwam/ asahatvam*”.

\* Swelling of affected joints with movement restriction “*Gambeera svayadhu sthabdha*”.

\*Morning Stiffness: These symptoms acharya mentioned as *Anga graha* and *sthamba*.

\* Localized warmth of affected joint: *daha*, *oosha*, *Bhrisoshmata*, *vidaha* etc. mentioned in classic.

\*Redness in affected joint: *Mandalothpati*, *syavarakta*, *Tamra twak*, *shyava lohitha varna* are mentioned

**Table 4:** Other common symptoms in RA and *Vatarakṭa*

Other Symptoms	Rheumatoid Arthritis (7,8)	Vatarakṭa (4)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fever</li> <li>• Anorexia</li> <li>• Subcutaneous manifestation</li> <li>• Cutaneous manifestation</li> <li>• Fatigue</li> <li>• Weakness and atrophy of muscle joint deformity</li> <li>• Contracture of joint</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sometime present</li> <li>• Present</li> <li>• Reddish discoloration</li> <li>• Commonly seen</li> <li>• Produces nodules in extensor surface</li> <li>• Weakness and atrophy of skeletal muscle</li> <li>• Different type of deformity like swan neck deformity, Boutonniere deformity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Jwara (complication)</i></li> <li>• <i>Aruchi</i></li> <li>• <i>Visarpa, mandalothpati</i></li> <li>• <i>Sada, Alashya, Sadanam</i></li> <li>• <i>Pidaka, mamsakoda</i> etc mentioned in complication</li> <li>• <i>Klama, sosha sankochati</i></li> <li>• <i>Anguli vakrata</i> “<i>chindanni iva charathyan-tar vakre kurvacha vegavan</i>”</li> </ul>

## DISCUSSION

Rheumatoid Arthritis in its cause, pathogenesis, signs & Symptoms having many similar features with *Vatarakṭa*. In *Vatarakṭa*, *Vata* and *Rakta* gets aggravated by its own cause. The vitiated *Vata* due to its *sukhsmatva* and *saratva* property and vitiated *Rakta* due to its *dravatva* and *saratva* property circulated through the channels produce symptoms like *daha*, *paka*, *sopha*, *ruja* etc. are nothing but the inflammatory signs. *Dosa*, which responsible for inflammation is none other than *pitta*. *Susrutha* says that all *sopha* are *tridosa* in origin and *pitta* dominates during the process. Without vitiation of *vata* there is no pain. Mainly the joints which are the *Sthana* of *Kapha* also get vitiated i.e. here *tridosa* derangement happens.

Early acute phase of RA the symptoms include pain, localized warmth, swelling and joint tenderness. All the symptoms during the early phase of RA is more related with *uttana avasta* of *vatarakṭa*. The pathogenesis is limited to *twak*, and *mamsa dathu*. On progressing RA into later phase, there is formation of pannus, which causes erosion of articular cartilage, subchondral bones, and tendons. This may lead to contractures and deformity of the joint. *Vatarakṭa* affected in deeper *dhathu* shows similar manifestation. *Angulivakrata*, *atiruk*, *stabdhata*, *katinyata*, *pidaka utpati*, *Mamsa-koda* etc. are produced during the *Gambeera* stage of *Vatarakṭa*.

Auto immune disease coming to the 3<sup>rd</sup> category of hypersensitivity reaction. It is the abnormal immune response of the body against substance and tissue. RA coming under the category of autoimmune diseases. In this inflammatory mechanism, *Pitta* dominates over other *dosa*. As *pitta* have affinity to the *Rakta*, also gets disturbed here. So that treatment like *abhyanga*, *seka*, *pariseka* like external treatment and *virechana*, *vasthy*, *Raktamosksha* like *Panchasodhana* procedure may have significant role.

As disease having progressing nature and its chronicity; *vasthy* like treatment have imminent role. *Vasthy* acting *purishadhara kala* certainly act *astikala* also helps to nourish the *asthi*, *majja*, *sandhi* etc. resulting the *vata samana* which is the second most *dosa* disturbed in *Vatarakṭa*. *Vata* is more aggravated in the *Gambeera*

stage of *Vatarakṭa* where “*vayu sandhi asthi majjasu charyati*” and produce different type of deformity. Different type of *vasthy*, *snehapandai karma* has significant role for controlling the vitiation of *Vata*.

## CONCLUSION

The concept of Rheumatoid Arthritis can be understood in the Ayurvedic way of *Nidana*, *Samprapti* and *Lakshanas*. Each phase of RA has different signs & symptoms and have similarity with the symptom manifests in *Vatarakṭa*. Carefully analyzing the basic parameters such as *dosa*, *dhathu*, *avastha* of *roga* and *rogi* etc. the treatment mentioned in classics in the context of *Vatarakṭa* can be judiciously adopt in the management of RA.

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