A Critical Review on the Understanding and Management of Vatarakta

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ABSTRACT:

Vata Dosha is considered as the prime Dosha as it is responsible for all the movements in the body. The disease Vatarakta holds a special place in the Ayurvedic literature due to its high prevalence in the society. The vitiated Rakta Dhatu obstructs the pathway of enraged Vayu which in turn vitiates the Rakta further giving rise to the disease Vatarakta. The disease can be correlated with Gouty Arthritis due to similarity in the clinical presentation. Vatarakta is a progressive disorder, where the disease is initially limited to the superficial Dhatu leading to Uttana Vatarakta but later on involves the deep Dhatu giving rise to Gambhira Vatarakta. The allopathic treatment give rise to many side effects and adverse reactions. Ayurveda can provide a a good holistic treatment option. The treatment described in Ayurveda not only focuses on drugs but also on the life style modification. Keeping all the points in mind, the disorder has been considered for the study to find an effective and safe cure for the disease. The present study gives a sight of critical review of the disease Vatarakra and the aim of the review is to review and highlight the effectiveness of different Ayurvedic treatment modalities in patients with Vatarakta.

Keywords: Vatarakta, Uttana Vatarakta, Gambhira Vatarakta

INTRODUCTION

The word Vatarakta is made of two words Vata and Rakta. The disease is characterized by the abnormality of Rakta Dhatu due to morbidity of Vata Dosha. In Vatarakta, Vata Dosha and Rakta Dushya gets vitiated simultaneously, making it difficult to treat. The vitiated Rakta Dhatu obstructs the pathway of enraged Vayu which in turn vitiates the Rakta further giving rise to Vatarakta. The incidence of Vatarakta has increased in last few decades due to factors like, increasing industrialization, urbanization, environmental pollution, sedentary lifestyle and faulty dietary habits1. The chief complaints are Kandu (Itching), Daha (Burning sensation), Ruka (Pain), Toda (Pricking pain), Sphurana (Throbbing sensation), Aankuchana (Contraction), Syavaraka (Brownish black, red coloration) and Tamra Varna (Coppery coloration) of skin etc.2 It is characterized by severe joint pain onset at Pada Hasta Moolgata Sandhi which then migrates towards other joints in a fashion similar to Akhuvisha (Rat bite).3-6 The characteristics of Vatarakta mostly resembles to Gout.

Nidana Of Vatarakta (Causative Factors):7-16

The various Nidana mentioned in Ayurvedic Literature...
can be grouped into following categories:

1. **Ahara Nidana (Causative factors related to diet):**
   - Lavana, Amla, Katu, Madhura, Kshara Rasa; Snigdha, Ushna and Tikshna Guna; Vidhi Annapani like Pinyaka, Mulaka, Kulathrika, Masha, Shaka, Nishpava, Klinna Mamsa, Shushka Mamsa, Anoopa Mamsa, Jaliya Mamsa, Ikshu, Vidhii Anna, Dadhi, Arnala, Sauviraaka, Shukta, Takra, Sura, Asava, Madya and Chukra and faulty dietary habits like Ajeerna Bhojana, Viruddha Bhojana, Adhyashana, Misthana Bhojana, Alpashana, Abhojana, Langhana and Mithya Ahara

2. **Viharaja Nidana (Causative factors related to activities and environment):**

3. **Manasika Nidana (Causative factors related with psychology):** Shoka, Atikrodha

4. **Agantuja Nidana (Exogenous factors):** Abhighata

5. **Prakeerna Nidana (Miscellaneous factors):** Sthaudya, Sukumara, Stree

**Samprapti**[^17]-[^18]

In Charaka Samhita, Acharya Charaka has described two types of Samprapti in context to Vatarakta:

1. **Samanya Samprapti (General Pathogenesis)**
2. **Vishistha Samprapti (Specific Pathogenesis)**

1. **Samanya Samprapti**

   Due to trauma and not opting for Shodhana Karma (internal purification process) like Yamana or Virechana, vitiates Raka Dhatu. Likewise, factors such as, excess consumption of Kashaya (astringent), Katu (pungent), Tikta (bitter), Alpa (scanty), Raksha (dry) food items, Abhojana (avoiding food), riding on horses, camel, carts, Ambukreeda (playing water sports), Plavana (swimming), Langhana (fasteing), excessive walking during hot season, Ativyayaya (excessive indulgence in sexual activities) and Veganigraha (suppression of natural urges) leads to vitiation of Vata. The vitiated Raka Dhatu obstructs the pathway of enraged Vayu which in turn vitiates the Rakta further giving rise to Vatarakta.

2. **Vishistha Samprapti**

   Due to the Sukshmatva (subtleness) and Sarvasaratva (prevasiveness) of Vata; and Dravatva (liquidity) and Saratva (fluidity) of Rakta, they travel all over the body through Siramarga (circulatory channels). While moving through the joint, both ‘the Vata’ and ‘the Rakta’ face obstruction due to the complex anatomical structure of the Parva (joint) due to which they get lodged at the joints. Thereafter, the vitiated Vata and Rakta along with Pitta etc produces different types of Vedana (pain) in the related joint.

According to Acharya Chakrapani Dutta, Vatarakta is caused due to different Vata and Rakta Prakopaka Hetu. The Prakopita Vata leads to Rakta Dushti and circulates through the body, and does Sthanasamshraya at Padangushtha Sandhi (1st metatarsophalangeal joint) due to the Vyadhiprabhava. This is called Anyoanya Avarana. Therefore, Vatarakta is considered as an Avaranjanya Vataja disorder. Vatadosha; owing to its properties of Sukshmatva and Saratva; and Raktdosha due to its qualities of Dravatva and Saratva, spreads all through the body. This spreading is facilitated by Vyana Vayu. The Doshas get lodged in joints. The first site being Pada Mula and then Hasta and Pada from where it progresses upwards. The manifestation of disease and the kind of pain involved is compared with that of rat poison (Akhuvisha) [^17].

**Samprapti Ghataka**

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<th>Doshas</th>
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**Site Of Vatarakta**

The site of Vatarakta is Kara (hands), Pada (feet), Anguli (fingers) and Sarva Sandhi (all joints). Initially it starts at Hasta-Pada Moolgata Sandhi (roots of hand and feet joints) and then spreads all over the body [^18].

**Purvarupa Of Vatarakta (Prodromal Symptoms)**[^19]-[^27];


**Rupa Of Vatarakta (Sign And Symptoms)**[^28]-[^33];

1. **Vata Pradhana Vatarakta**: Sirayama, Shoola, Sphurana, Toda, Shotha, Ksharnyaa, Ruksha, Shayvata, Shothasya, etc.

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Mrunala, Ksheera 41 Basti, Sekha dh, Payasa, Chandana, Katphala,
36 5. 4. 2.


Acharya Sushruta has considered Uttana and Gambhira Tarakata as the stages of Tarakata.


A total of 24 Updravas (complications) have been mentioned in Charaka Samhita, Yogaratnakara, Bhava Prakash and Vanga-sena Samhita while Acharya Sushruta has mentioned 12 Updravas. Acharya Vagabhadra has not mentioned them.

Sadhyayasaadhyatatarakata (Prognosis): Ek Dosha And Naveena - Sadhya (Curable) Dwidhoshas - Yapya (palliable) Trisodhaja and Updravayukta - Asadhyya (incurable) Acharya Charaka has further elaborated the criteria for Asadhyata by mentioning the following features: Samprasa (profuse discharge from the ulcer), Vivarna (discoloration), Stabhdha (stiffness), Arbudakriti (tumour like lesion), Sankochha (constriction) and Indriyatapa (damage to the senses). Even if there is Moha (mental confusion) alone, then also the disease is incurable.

Management Of Tarakata

(A) Samanya Chikitsa (General Line Of Treatment)

Raktamokshana: Acharya Charaka has mentioned Raktamokshana (blood letting) with Shringa (horn), Jalauka (leech), Suchi (needle), Alabu (hollow bitter gourd), Pracchana (scratching) or Siravyadha (venesection), depending upon the mobid Doshas and the strength of the patient.

Virechana: After proper Snehan (oleation), Mridu Virechana (mild therapeutic purgation) with Sneha Dravyas (unctuous substances) or with Ruksha Dravyas (dry substances) should be given to the patient. After purgation, repeated use of Anuvavasana Basti and Niruha Basti should be given.

(B)Vishishta Chikitsa (Specific Treatment)

According To The Site Of Origin

Uttana Tarakata: Alepana (paste), Abhyanga (massage), Pariksheka (sprinkling) and Upnaha (poultice).

Gambhira Tarakata: Virechana (purgation), Asthapana Basti (enema with medicinal plants decoction) and Snehapana (internal oleation).

According To Doshika Variation

Vata Pradhanatarakata: Pana (oral intake), Abhyanja (massage) and Basti (enema) with medicated Ghrita, Taila, Vasa and Majja; and Sukhoshna Upnaha (warm poultice should be used). Purana Ghrita made of Aja Ksheer with Ardha Taila; Kakolyadi Gana Siddha Taila are used for Pana (oral intake) purpose. Shatapaka Bala Taila, Ghrita, Taila, Vasa and Majja are used for preparing Pancharapayasa for Upnaha.

Pitta and Rakta Pradhanatarakata: Virechana (purgation), Ghrita Pana (intake of medicated Ghee), Ksheer Pana (intake of milk), Seka (sprinkling of medicated decoction), Basti (enema) and Sheela Nirvapana should be done.

Draksha, Aragvadh, Payasa, Chandana, Katphala, Madhuka and Kashmarya Sadhita Kashaya; Shatavari, Triphala, Patola, Katusrohini Sadhita Kashaya Pana; Chandanadi Kashaya Pana; Madhura-Tikta Kashaya Siddha Ghrita; Guduchi Kashaya Pana; Pariseka with Kwatha of Bisa, Padmak, Mrunal, Ksheera and Shankara; Pariseka of Dugdha, Madhu, Ikshu Rasa, Shankara; Abhyanga with Jeevantyadi Ghrita, Shalyadi gana with Dhanyamala; Sheetala Dravya Siddha Pralopa.
iii. **Kapha Pradhanā Vatarakta:** It should be treated with:

- **Mridu Vamanā** (mild emesis), avoiding excessive *Snehana* (oleation), **Seka** (sprinkling of medicated decoction), **Langhana** (fasting), **Koshna Lepa** (lukewarm paste). Amlaka Haridra Kashaya with Madhu (honey); Triphla Kashaya Pana; Guda Haritaki; Madhuka, Shringvera Haritaki, Katukarohini Kalka with Madhu (honey); Tila, Gomutra, Shukta, Sara, Kaphaghna Aushadh Siddha Kwatha for Parisheka; Mastu, Mutra, Padmaka, Sariva Siddha Ghrita for Abhyanga; Sarshapa, Tila, Atasi, Yava Churna mixed with Kapittha, Shleshmataka, Madhu, Shigru, Ksharođaka, Gomutra for Pradeha; Shalaparni, Prishniparni, Brihati mixed with *Ksheera* for Lepa should be used.

- **Rakta Pradhanā Vatarakta:** *Virechana* (purgation), **Ghrita Pana** (intake of medicated Ghee), **Ksheer Pana** (intake of milk), **Seka** (sprinkling of medicated decoction), **Basti** (enema) and **Sheeta Nirvapana** should be done. Treatment for *Pittobhna Vatarakta, Raktamokshana* and **Sheeta Pradeha**.

**Samshodhana Chikitsa**

Shodhana Chikitsa is of utmost importance in the management of Vatarakta. The Samshodhana procedure for Vatarakta includes Raktamokshana, Virechana and Basti Karma.

### i. Raktamokshana (Blood letting):

Acharya Charaka, Sushruta, Vagbhatta and their successive classics have advised Raktamokshana in Vatarakta. The predominant pathology of Vatarakta is the Rakta Margavaranā which causes the accumulation of the morbidity *Rakta*. Therefore, Raktamokshana (blood letting) is considered as the main treatment of Vatarakta. It should be done with the help of *Shringa, Jalauka, Suchi, Alabu, Prachhana* and *Siravyadha*.

### ii. Virechana (Purgation):

After proper *Snehana, Mridu Virechana* (mild purgation) with Snigdha (unctuous) or *Ruksha* (dry) *Dravyas* (substances) according to the condition, should be advised to the patient. Acharya Charaka has mentioned the use of Eranda Taila (castor oil) with milk in Bahudoshavastha (excessive aggravation of *Doshas*); Abhaya Kashaya (decoction of Terminalia chebula) or Ghritatbhrīśa Trivrita Churna (powder of *Oxerculina terpenthum* fried with Ghee) with *Ksheera* (milk) or Draksha Rasa (grape juice); decoction of *Kashmarya, Trivrita, Draksha* and *Parushaka* with salt and honey for purgation.

**Basti (Enema):**

For the treatment of Vatarakta, Acharya Charaka has mentioned that there is no treatment available as efficient as *Basti*. The *Mala* (waste) of the patients should be eliminated by administrating *Ksheera Basti* mixed with *Ghrita*.

- Frequent use of *Niruha* (decoction enema) and *Anuvasa Basti* (unctuous enema) has been mentioned for the treatment of Vatarakta.

**Margavarana By Meda Dhatu And Kapha Dosha**

According to Acharya Charaka, *Snehana* and *Brihna Chikitsa* are contraindicated in *Sthula* (obese) patients in the beginning. This type of *Chikitsa* is likely to increase Meda Dhatu and Kapha Dosha; hence Acharya Charaka has advocated Vyayama (exercise), Shodhana (biopurification), Arishtapanā (fermented preparations), Mutrpapanā (cow’s urine), Virechana (purgation), Takrapana (buttermilk) and Abhaya.

**Updvra Chikitsa (Treatment Of The Complications)**

In case of Rakta and Pitta Ativridhi (excessive aggravation of Rakta and Pitta), the affected area soon undergoes Paka (suppuration) and gets Bhinnā (torn), thus discharging Vidagdha Rakta or Puya (pus). Such cases should be treated with Bhedana (incision), Shodhana (cleaning) and Ropana (healing).

**Pathya-Apathya**

- **PATHYA:** Purana Yava (old barley), Godhumā (wheat), Nīvara (wild rice), Shali Dhanyā, Shastikā Dhanyā, Adhakā (red gram), Chanakā (bengal gram), Mudgā (green gram), Makushthā (motha), Masura (lentils), Kulathā (horse gram), Sunishnaka (Marśili minula), Vetagra (new buddings of Salix caprea), Kakmachi (Solanaum nigrum), Shatavari (Asparagus racemosus), Vastuka (Chemopodium album), Godugdha (cow milk), Mahishi Dugdha (buffalo milk), Aja Dugdha (Goat milk), Ghrita (Clarified butter) etc.

- **APATHYA:** Katu, Amla, Lavana, Kshara, Abhishyandi (causing obstruction in channels), Ushna (hot), Guru (heavy) food; Diwaswapna (sleeping at day time), Santapa (exposure to heat), Vyayama (exercise), Maithuna (sexual intercourse) etc.

**DISCUSSION**

Vata Dosha and Rakta are the main cause of Vatarakta. The etiological factors causes the morbidity of *Vata Dosha* and Rakta Dhatu. The obstruction of Rakta Marga, or the Rakta vaha Srotas is the leading pathology of the disease Vatarakta. Acharya Charaka has mentioned its specific
Samprapti that Vata due to its Sukshmatva (subtleness) and Sara-Saratva (pervasiveness) and Rakta due to its Dravatva (liquidity) and Saratva (flowing nature) circulates in the body through the Raktvaha Shrotasa (blood vessels), and gets obstructed in the Sandhies (joints). Due to the torsion nature of its course in the joint, Vata and Rakta again gets agitated there. After Sthana Samshraya (localization) and Vata and Rakta along with Pitta etc produce different types of Vedana (pain) in the joints according to the predominance of the Doshas. The pain is so severe, that it is difficult to tolerate. The cardinal feature of Vatarakta is the sudden onset of joint pain, mostly in MTP joint along with the inflammation. Dietary habits and sedentary lifestyle plays a major role in developing the disease. The pathology of Margavarana by Kapha and Meda leads to the establishment of clinical signs and symptoms in Vatarakta. Also, Samshodhana, Shamana and Bahrirparmarjana Chikitsa, all are aimed to rectify the Margaavarana in the respective disease. The disease Vatarakta has been described in almost all Ayurvedic classics. Acharya Sushruta has described the disease along with other Vata Vyadhis but Acharya Charaka has described it in a separate chapter due to the specificity in its Nidana, Samprapti and Chikitsa.

CONCLUSION

In present era, due to faulty dietary habit, sedentary lifestyle and increasing urbanization, Vatarakta has become one of the common diseases in day to day clinical practice. Therefore, it is important to explore the role and application of Ayurvedic drugs and Panchkarma therapies in Vatarakta.

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