



## Clinical and Therapeutic Approaches to *Amavata*: An Integrative Review with Special Reference to Rheumatoid Arthritis

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### ABSTRACT:

*Amavata* is a multifactorial disorder primarily rooted in the formation of *Ama* (toxins) due to impaired digestive fire (*Agnimandya*). The interaction of *Ama* with vitiated *vata* and *kapha doshas* leads to a pathological process known as *dosha-dushya samurchana*, resulting in the clinical manifestation of *Amavata*. The primary therapeutic objective in managing *Amavata* is to metabolize *ama* through *pachana* (digestive therapy) and to restore the balance of the disturbed *vata* and *kapha doshas*, thereby normalizing *Agni* and *Doshic* equilibrium. Treatment modalities encompass both *Shodhana* (purificatory procedures) and *Shamana* (palliative care) therapies.

In *Amavata*, the accumulation of *Ama* and deranged *vata dosha* predominantly affects the joints, bearing a close resemblance to Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) in modern medical science. RA is a chronic, non-suppurative, autoimmune inflammatory condition of the synovial joints, characterized by pain, swelling, stiffness, deformity, and potential systemic involvement. While Ayurveda prescribes both *Shamana* (conservative management) and *Shodhana* (bio-purification) treatments, the modern approach includes anti-inflammatory agents, analgesics, corticosteroids, DMARDs, and biologics—many of which are associated with adverse effects.

Ayurveda offers a holistic and sustainable approach to RA through principles like *sadvritta* (ethical and seasonal regimen), appropriate dietary planning, lifestyle modification, detoxification (*Samshodhana Karma*), and rejuvenation therapies. Emphasizing prevention over symptomatic relief, Ayurveda seeks to address the root cause of disease rather than merely its manifestations.

This review aims to bridge traditional Ayurvedic knowledge and contemporary biomedical understanding by analyzing both classical Ayurvedic literature and modern scientific evidence. It underscores the promising role of integrative therapeutics in improving long-term patient outcomes and highlights the necessity for evidence-based validation of Ayurvedic treatment protocols in managing chronic autoimmune conditions such as Rheumatoid Arthritis.

**KEYWORDS:** *Ayurveda*, *Ama*, *Agni*, *Amavata*, RA, Inflammation, *Samshodhana*, *Shamana*, *Basti*

### INTRODUCTION -

*Amavata* represents a multifaceted pathological condition in *Ayurveda*, rooted in the accumulation of *Ama*—a toxic substance produced due to impaired digestive function (*Agnimandya*). The disease process

begins when *Ama* interacts with aggravated *Vata* and *Kapha doshas*, initiating a pathological mechanism known as *Dosha-Dushya Samurchana*. This leads to systemic involvement, predominantly manifesting as pain, stiffness, swelling, and tenderness in the joints. The undigested, biologically incompatible nature of *Ama* disrupts normal physiological function, especially when it accumulates in the joints and connective tissues.

The clinical presentation of *Amavata* bears a close resemblance to Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA)—a chronic, progressive, autoimmune disorder characterized by synovial inflammation, joint deformities, and systemic manifestations. While modern medicine manages RA primarily through immunosuppressants and anti-inflammatory drugs, *Ayurveda* offers a more comprehensive and sustainable model of care.

*Ayurvedic* management encompasses preventive and curative strategies such as *Sadvritta* (ethical and seasonal conduct), dietary regulations tailored to individual constitution, lifestyle modification, detoxification therapies (*Shodhana*), and rejuvenative interventions (*Rasayana*). This holistic approach focuses on correcting the root cause—*Agnimandya* and *Ama* formation—rather than solely addressing the symptoms.

This review aims to synthesize insights from classical *Ayurvedic* texts and contemporary biomedical literature to promote an integrative framework for managing chronic autoimmune conditions like RA. By highlighting the efficacy and rationale behind traditional treatments such as *Shamana* and *Shodhana* therapy (*Vaitarana Basti*), it also underscores the necessity for empirical validation and evidence-based research to bridge traditional knowledge with modern clinical practice.

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES -

- To gather and organize accessible references from both classical and modern *Ayurvedic* literature to enhance understanding of the *Ama and Amavata*.
- To explore the fundamental *Ayurvedic* concepts of *Ama and Amavata*, emphasizing their significance in sustaining health and improving quality of life.
- To study the practical application of *Ayurvedic* approaches in the effective management and treatment of *Amavata* (Rheumatoid Arthritis).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS -

Collection and Review of *Ayurvedic* classical texts with commentaries and modern literature and Research articles.

### *Ama and Amavata*

In *Ayurveda* classics, there are thirteen types of *Agni* which have four kinds of *bala* (*Samagni, Tikshnagni, Vishamagni and Mandagani*). Out of which *Mandagni* is very important as its play role in formation of *ama* via means of *Rasaj and Annaj ajirna. Apakwa or ama rasa* results in the formation of *ama*. Then this *ama* gets accumulated in the body and behave as autoantigen and hence results in autoimmune disorders and allergic reactions; like *Amavata* (RA). *Acharya Charak* told *apachita anna* as '*ama visha*', when it's get accumulated in *srotas with dosha, dhatu, mala*; its gives *lakshana* of that one.

मन्दाग्नौ सम्भवं दोषैरामं सन्न्यस्य सन्धिषु।

कुरुते शूलशोफार्तिस्तम्भगौरवजृम्भिकाः॥ (मा. नि. 25/ 2)

Due to low digestive fire (*Mandagni*), *Ama* is produced and circulates along with *doshas*, especially *Vata*, and

gets deposited in the joints (*sandhi*). This causes pain (*shoola*), swelling (*shopha*), stiffness (*stambha*), heaviness (*gourava*), and frequent yawning (*jymbhika*) — the classical signs of *Amavata*.

*Saamdosha* includes *lakshana* like *srotorodha* (obstruction in channels), heaviness in body (*goravta*), *alasya*, *malasanga*, *klama* (tiredness), *aruchi* (loss of appetite) and so on.

*Ama* along with vitiated *Vata* and *Kapha dosha* results in *Dosha-dushya samurchana*, thus results in symptoms of *Amavata*. *Amavata* there is *tridosha* but *ama* and *vata* are *pradhana dosha*. It is a *krichyasadhya vyadhi*. In classical text *Acharya Sharangdhar*, described four types of *Amavata* (*Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha*, *Sanipataj*) whereas *Madhavakar* described two types (*Tivraavasta Janya* and *Jirnaavastha Janya*).

पाणिपादोच्च शूलं च सन्धिषु स्फुटनं तथा।

अङ्गमर्दः प्रसेकश्च अरुचिं गुरुतां तथा.....॥ (मा. नि. 25/3)

The symptoms (*Samanya lakshana*) of *amavata* includes bodyache (*angamarda*), anorexia (*aruchi*), excessive thirst (*trishna*), lassitude (*alasya*), heaviness in body (*goravta*), fever (*jwara*), indigestion and odema (*shotha*), lower backache (*trik sandi shoola*).

As per *avastha of amavata* its represents various sign and symptoms like in '*Tivraavasta janya amavata*' (*acute condition*) there are pain and inflammation in joints of hands, legs, ankles, sacrum, knees, thigh region; poor appetite, excessive salivation, anorexia, burning sensation, polyuria, pain and heaviness in body, changing in sleep pattern, vomiting, vertigo, stiffness in cardiac region and all over the body, constipation whereas in '*Jirnaavasta janya amavata*' (*chronic condition*) there are deformity in bony joints, dryness and stiffness in muscle and tendons, deformities in fingers etc. One should know the symptoms for accessing precisely clinically the disease.

**Table no. 1 - Samprapti Chakra (Pathogenesis Cycle) of Amavata**

Stage	Event	Explanation
I.	<i>Agnimandya</i>	Weak digestive fire due to improper diet/lifestyle.
II.	<i>Ama formation</i>	Formation of toxic material ( <i>Ama</i> ) due to indigestion.
III.	<i>Srotorodha</i>	Blockage of body channels by <i>Ama</i> .
IV.	<i>Vata prakopa</i>	Aggravation of <i>Vata</i> due to obstruction.
V.	<i>Vat-Ama Samyoga</i>	<i>Vata</i> carries <i>Ama</i> to joints.
VI.	<i>Sandhi sthapana</i>	Localization of <i>Ama and Vata</i> in joints.
VII.	<i>Sheeta, Shoola, Stambha</i>	Symptoms like stiffness, pain, and coldness appear.
VIII.	<i>Updravatva / Chronicity</i>	Involvement of other <i>doshas</i> and tissues leading to complications.

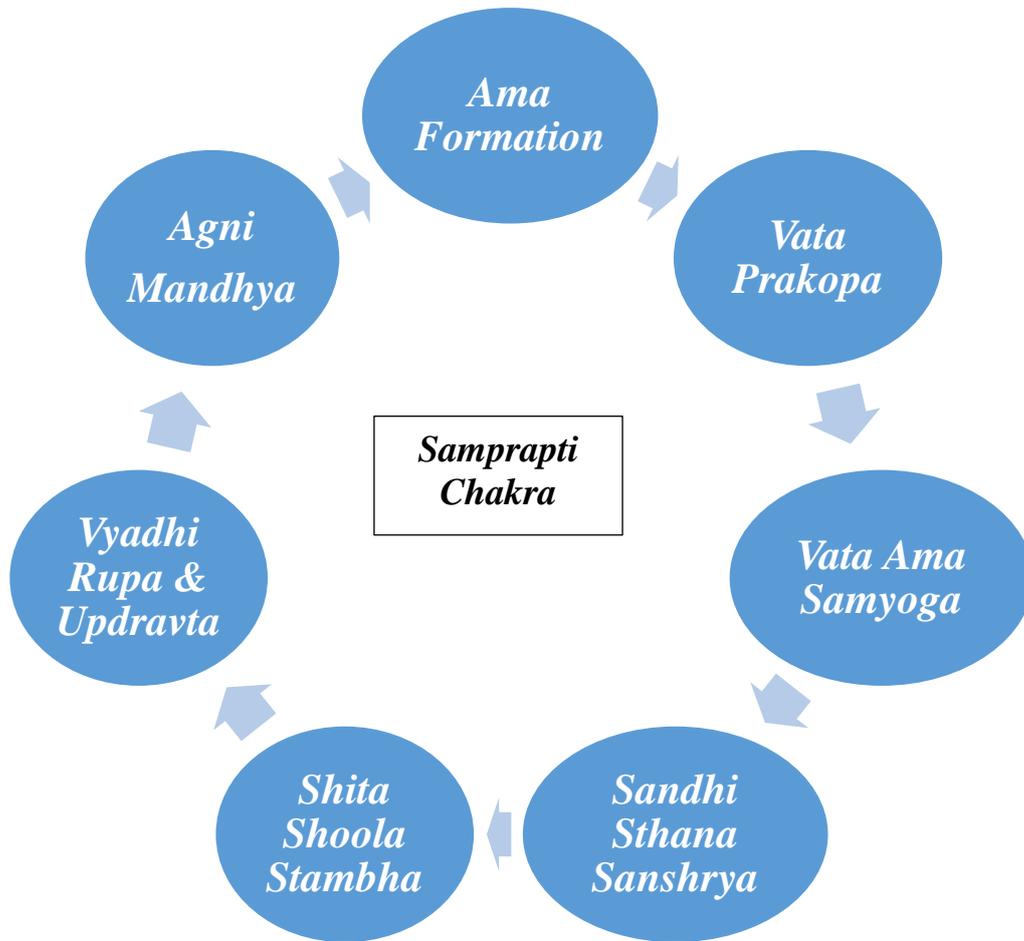


Figure 1 – Samprapti Chakra

The flow chart can be understood as, **Agnimandya** (Due to faulty diet and lifestyle, digestive fire (Agni) becomes weak); **Ama Formation** (Weak digestion leads to the formation of *Ama* (toxic metabolic waste)); **Srotorodha and Vata Prakopa** (*Ama* blocks body channels (*srotas*), causing *Vata dosha* to get aggravated.); **Vata-Ama Samyoga** (*Vata* carries *Ama* to *sandhis* (joints), where both get lodged); **Sandhi Sthana Sthapana** (*Vata* and *Ama* localize in joints results in pain, swelling, stiffness); **Shita, Shoola, Stambha** (Clinical features arise: coldness, pain, stiffness); **Updravatva or Chronicity** (If untreated, other doshas and tissues (*Kapha, Asthi, Majja*) get involved further leads to deformities)

#### Line of Management for Amavata-

In *Ayurveda*, *Nidana Parivarjana* (avoidance of causative factors) is considered as the first and foremost line of management for any disease.

The treatment for *Amavata* includes *Shamana* (conservative) and *Shodhana* (biological purification of the body) *Chikitsa*.

*Chikitsa sutra* for *Amavata* is described below as-

लघनम् स्वेदनं तिक्तं दीपनानि कटुनि च ।

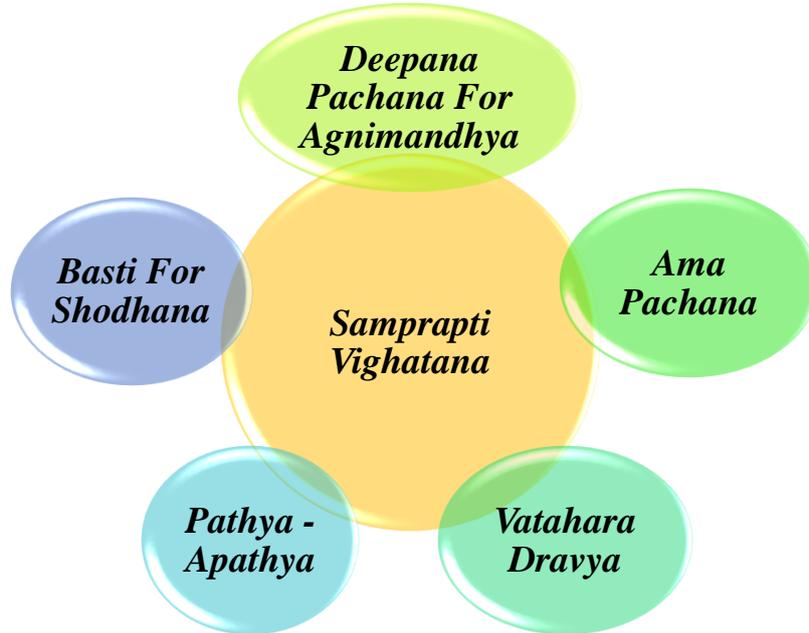
विरेचनं स्नेहपानं बस्तिः च आममारुते । (भैषज्य रत्नावली, आमवात चि. 29/1)

As per classics, for *Amavata*, use of bitter, pungent, drying, and digestive herbs is advised; *basti* is considered the best treatment.

Depending upon the stages (acute / chronic) and *Doshas* involved, many measures are advised such as *Langhana* (a method of depletion of body tissues), *Deepana* (increase digestive fire), and *Pachana* (digestion of food) for accumulated *Ama* (digestion of undigested food material); *Snehapana* (oleation), *Swedana* (fomentation), *Virechana* (purgation) and *Basti* (enema therapy) for elimination of *Doshas* from body. *Basti* like *kshara basti* or *vaitrana basti* found to be very useful in patient of *Amavata* as they get relief from *Basti* in their symptoms.

**Table no. 2 - Samprapti Vighataka (Breaking the Cycle)**

Target	Treatment Principle	Examples
<i>Agnimandya</i>	<i>Deepana, Pachana</i>	<i>Trikatu, Shunthi, Ajamodadi churna</i>
<i>Ama</i>	<i>Ama-pachana</i>	<i>Simhanada Guggulu, Guduchi</i>
<i>Srotorodha</i>	<i>Srotoshodhana</i>	<i>Vaitarana Basti, Dashamoola kwatha</i>
<i>Vata prakopa</i>	<i>Vata-hara</i>	<i>Yogaraja Guggulu, Eranda taila</i>
<i>Vata-Ama sañyoga</i>	<i>Rukshana, Svedana</i>	<i>Ruksha udvartana, Pottali sweda</i>
<i>Basti as shodhana</i>	<i>Niruha and Anuvasana Basti</i>	<i>Tikta-kwatha basti, Eranda Taila</i>
<i>Pathya</i>	<i>Ahara-vihara</i>	Light, dry, warm, <i>tikta/katu</i> foods



**Figure 2 – Samprapti Vighatana**

Further the drugs used in management of *Amavata* should possess *Katu* (pungent) and *Tikta* (bitter) *Rasa* (taste); *Ushna virya* (hot in potency), *Laghu* (easily digestible) and *Tikshna* (penetrating property through tissues) qualities which are *Vata-Kapha Dosh Hara* and *Amapachaka* in nature. Drugs like *Amavatori Rasa*, *Sunthi Churna*, *Panchakola Churna*, *Trikatu Churna*, *Vaishvanara Churna*, *Agnitundi Vati*, *Erandaadi Kwatha*, *Simhanada Gugglu*, *Pipali Vardhamana Rasayana* etc.

*Ahara* provides Strength, Immunity and Vitality to the living beings. It has the ability to promote health as well as to control the disease pathology. The benefits of *pathya* food are numerous which can be enumerated in terms of health, strength, longevity and energy, are achieved only when the food is consumed by the person according to its *Swabhava*, *Samyoga*, *Samskara*, *Matra*, *Desha*, *Kala*, *Upayokta* and *Upayoga Samstha*. Otherwise, it will end up in manifestation of diseases.

The *Snehas* used for *Snehapana* is *Eranda Taila*, said to be the best because it is having both *Amapachan* and *virechena* property. Other *snehas* indicated as *pana* (oral intake) are *Sunti Ghritam*, *Kanjika Shatphala Ghritam*, *Prasarini Tailam*, *Saindavadi Tailam* etc. Among *Sweda Karmas* mainly *Ruksha Sweda* like *Valuka Sweda*, *Potali Sweda* etc are indicated. *Virechan yogas* mentioned for *Amavata* (RA) like *Trivritadi Churnam*, *Hareetaki Prayog*, *Aragvada Palavaprayog*, *Eranda Kwatha Prayog*, *Eranda Taila Prayog* Etc.

*Basti* treatment of *Amavata/ R.A.* can be overcome by *Anuvasana basti* with *vatanasaka tailas* like *Saindavadi tailas* etc. & *Niruha vasti* formulations with *Vaitarana Basti*, *Kshar Basti*, *Dashmula Kwath*, *Rasna Erandamula Kwath* etc. are indicated.

### **Role of Vaitarana Basti in Amavata (R.A.) - (Ayurvedic Enema for Toxin Elimination and Ama-Vata Disorder)**

*Vaitarana Basti* is a specialized form of medicated enema employed, specifically designed to eliminate accumulated toxins (*Ama*) and correct imbalances in the *Vata dosha*. The term “*Vaitarana*” is derived from *Sanskrit*, where “*Vai*” means “truly” and “*Tarana*” means “liberation” or “relief,” symbolizing its effectiveness in addressing deep-seated pathological conditions. *Vaitarana Basti* is a powerful therapeutic intervention within the *Panchakarma* framework, offering a comprehensive approach to disorders arising from *Ama* accumulation and *doshic* imbalance. Its detoxifying and restorative effects not only alleviate disease symptoms but also contribute to overall systemic harmony and improved quality of life.

### **Composition and Method of Preparation -**

The formulation of *Vaitarana Basti* is unique due to its potent blend of ingredients, each contributing to its detoxifying and *dosha*-balancing effects:

#### **Contents -**

Tamarind pulp (*Emlī*) – ~48 grams

Jaggery (*Guda*) – ~24 grams

Rock Salt (*Saindhava Lavana*) – ~12 grams

Cow’s Urine (*Go Mutra*) – ~192 milliliters

Sesame Oil (*Tila Taila*) – Quantity sufficient to achieve desired consistency

#### **Preparation-**

It involves soaking tamarind to extract its pulp, which is then filtered and combined with the other ingredients to form a homogenous mixture. This concoction is gently warmed before administration to optimize its absorption and therapeutic action.

#### **Clinical Administration-**

Typically, it is given post-meal for better tolerance and efficacy, especially in *Amavata* cases. The frequency and duration of treatment depend on the individual's constitution, disease severity, and response to therapy.

### Therapeutic Utility-

- *Vaitarana Basti* is notably effective in a variety of conditions linked to *Ama* and aggravated *Vata* and *Kapha* doshas.
- *Amavata* (Rheumatoid Arthritis): The *basti* promotes digestion of *Ama* and mitigates joint pain, inflammation, and stiffness—symptoms typically associated with RA.
- Sciatica (*Gridhrasi*) and Lumbar Pain (*Katisula*): Its *Vata*-pacifying action alleviates nerve pain, muscular tension, and stiffness in the lower back and legs.
- Other *Vata-Kapha* Disorders: It proves beneficial in disorders marked by *doshic* aggravation and systemic toxin buildup.

### Mechanism of Action -

The therapeutic efficacy of *Vaitarana Basti* lies in the synergistic action of its components:

- *Go Mutra* exhibits *Kapha*-reducing and detoxifying properties.
- Tamarind acts as a mild laxative, promoting elimination of metabolic waste.
- Jaggery and Rock Salt support digestion and facilitate the breakdown of *Ama*.
- These ingredients collectively cleanse the colon, stimulate *Agni* (digestive fire), and restore the balance of *Vata* and *Kapha*, thereby addressing the root cause of chronic inflammatory conditions.

Some of the important *Amavata-nashak guggulu, vati, kwatha* are *Simhanada Guggulu, Rasona Pinda, Vatari Guggulu, Yogaraja Guggulu, Rasnadi Kwath, Vyadhi Sardoola Guggulu, Rasna Saptaka Kwatha, Siva Guggulu* etc. External *lepas, tailas* for symptomatic relief; *Himsradi Lepa, Satapushpadi Lepa, Saindavadi Tailam. Rasa Aushadies* used in *Amavata* (R.A.); *Amavatari Ras, Amavatari Vatika, Amavateswara Ras, Vatagajendra Ras, Amapramathini Vatika, Amrita Manjari Ras* etc. For *Amapachan* and maintenance of *Agni* in *Amavata* (RA) *pathya & apathyas* are also mentioned in *Ayurvedic* classics.

### Rheumatoid Arthritis

The features of *Amavata* are much similar to Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) in modern science. Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) is a *chronic non-suppurative inflammatory autoimmune disease of synovial joints* that causes swelling, stiffness and pain in the joints, joint deformity and affects other organs like lungs etc. An *Autoimmune disorder* which causes chronic inflammatory and symmetrical polyarthritis. It has worldwide distribution and involves all ethnic groups. The specific cause of RA is not known but there are many factors which causes it like some Genetic factors (HLA and Non-HLA associated) and some Environmental factors (Smoking, Silica). Its pathogenesis included *citrullination of protein* which acts as foreign to body and results in *autogenicity* and hence results in auto-immunity.

Clinical manifestation includes morning stiffness (>45mins) and pain and swelling in joints, painful movements, symmetrical arthritis etc. For diagnosis **ACR-EULAR Classification** (includes joint involvement, serology, acute phase reactant, duration of symptoms), if its greater or equal to 7 out of 10 is positive and hence had definite RA. As chronicity of diseases progress, it involves some sites for deformity like nodular formations at joints(elbow), and some organs like lungs. Various deformity also found like zig zag deformity, piano key deformity, boutonniere deformity, swan neck deformity, ulnar deviation etc.

### Pathophysiology of RA-

#### 1. Immune System Attack:

In RA, the body's immune system mistakenly identifies the joint lining (*synovium*) as a threat and starts attacking it.

2. **Inflammation of Synovium:**

This immune attack causes inflammation in the synovium, leading to swelling, pain, warmth, and stiffness in the joints.

3. **Pannus Formation:**

The inflamed synovial membrane thickens and forms a tissue called *pannus*, which invades and damages cartilage, bone, and other joint structures.

4. **Joint Damage:**

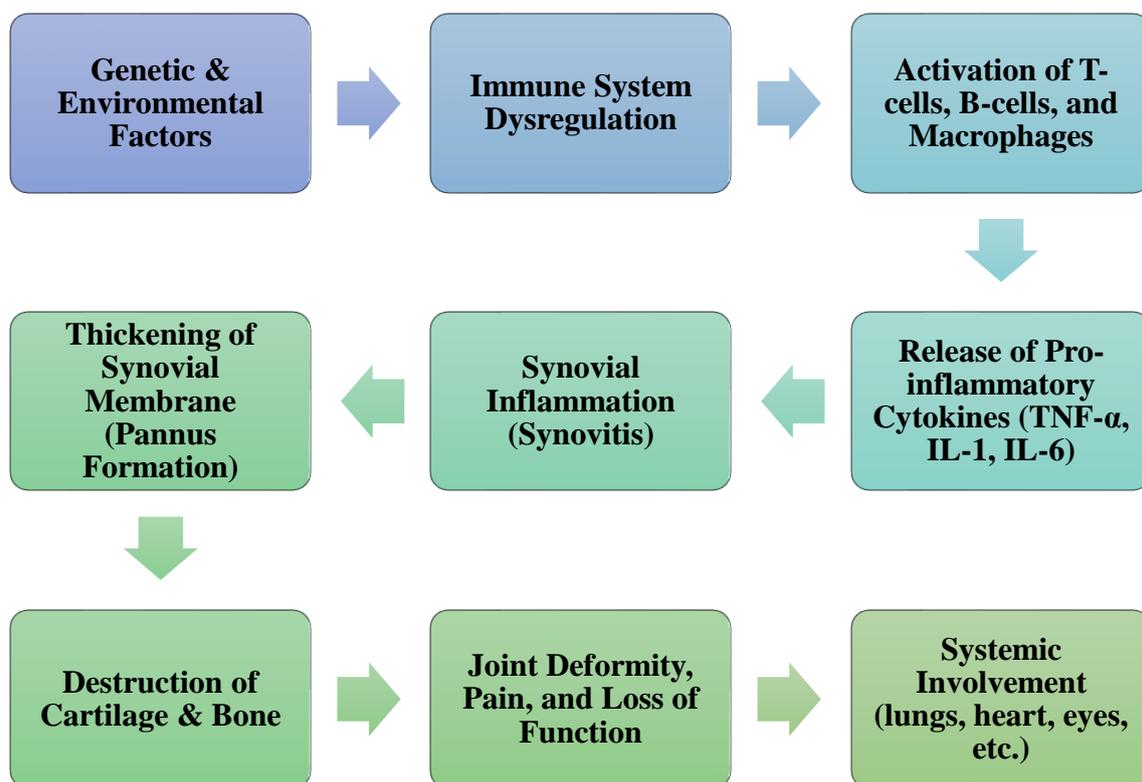
Over time, this ongoing inflammation can lead to:

- Destruction of cartilage and bone
- Joint deformities
- Loss of joint function

5. **Systemic Effects:**

RA is not limited to joints—it can also affect other organs like the lungs, heart, skin, and eyes, causing fatigue, anaemia, and general malaise.

For treatments purpose, anti-inflammatory, analgesics, steroids (like, wysolone), and Disease-modifying antirheumatic drugs (DMARDS) {Methotrexate, HCQ}, biological agents (rituximab, infliximab) are required for its management as per modern medicine, which may cause several adverse effects and sometimes resistance as well.



**Figure 3 – Pathogenesis of RA**

Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA), is one of the challenging conditions for the physicians to handle due to its chronicity, incurability, complications, morbidity. While allopathic treatment of RA remains unsatisfactory; In spite of potential anti-inflammatory agents, DMARDs, certain biological agents and powerful immunosuppressive agents, its prognosis is not so good, as these drugs have certain limitations and have adverse effects as well; which affects the quality of life of the individuals. Considering these problem,

alternatives are being searched from *Traditional Systems of Medicine* i.e. *Ayurveda*. Drugs such as *Simhanada Guggulu*, *Rasnasaptaka Kwatha*, *Vata Gajankusha Rasa*, *Bruhat Vata Chintamani*, *And Amavatari Rasa* are said to be efficacious in this condition. *Cakrapani dutta* has described the principles and line of treatment for *Amavata*; *Langhana* (fasting), *Swedana* (sudation), use of drug of *Tikta* (bitter) and *Katu* (pungent) *Rasa*, *Deepana* drugs (stimulating hunger), *Virechana* (purgation therapy), *Basti* (enema) are beneficial in the management of *Amavata*. Despite the administration of best available modern drugs, the disease has a tendency to progress and irritant to the patients.

Conventional medicines - NSAID's have adverse effects on GIT (gastrointestinal tract) and DMARD's cause hepatic, renal, neural and bone marrow suppression. Therefore, *Ayurveda* may provide a safe and effective treatment of RA or integration of both may be more useful and efficacious.

## DISCUSSION

Ayurveda stresses over the principle of prevention rather than only relieving the pathological condition. General principle for management of any disease is of two kinds; **Preventive & Curative**. The main goal of treatment in *Amavata* is to reduce *Ama* by its *Pachana* (metabolism) and to normalise the vitiated *Vata* and *Kapha dosha* to obtain balanced state of *Agni* and *Dosha*. The treatment protocol includes, *Samshodhana* and *Samshamana karma* whereas for treatments purpose, Anti-Inflammatory, Analgesics, Steroids and Disease-Modifying Antirheumatic Drugs (DMARDS) {Methotrexate, HCQ}, Biological Agents (rituximab, infliximab) are mentioned in modern medicine, which may cause several adverse effects and sometimes resistance as well.

Ayurveda provides better management in the forms of *Sadavritta* (daily and seasonal regime), proper dietary management, lifestyle advises, *Samshodhana Karma* and Rejuvenation Therapies (Rasayana karma). For better management of *Amavata*, *Ama-pachana* (digestion of toxins) should begin with modalities like *Trikatu*, *Ajamodadi Churna*, and *Shunthi*. In the stage of *Snehana* and *Swedana*, therapies such as *Ruksha udvartana* (dry powder massage), *Dashamoola Kwatha* (herbal decoction), and *Pottali Swedana* (herbal bolus sudation) are recommended. *Basti* therapy is central to treatment, especially using *Vaitarana Basti*, *Tikta-Kwatha Basti*, and *Eranda Taila Anuvasana*. Among classical herbal compounds, *Simhanada Guggulu* and *Yogaraja Guggulu* are commonly used.

As *pathya* (wholesome diet), foods that are bitter (*tikta*), pungent (*katu*), light, and easy to digest should be encouraged. On the other hand, *apathya* (to be avoided) includes heavy (*guru*), unctuous (*snigdha*), cold and sweet food items.

*Vaitarana Basti* is a powerful therapeutic intervention within the *Panchakarma* framework, offering a comprehensive approach to disorders arising from *Ama* accumulation and *doshic* imbalance. Its detoxifying and restorative effects not only alleviate disease symptoms but also contribute to overall systemic harmony and improved quality of life. So, *Kshara Basti Or Vaitrana Basti* is very beneficial in reduction of symptoms like pain and stiffness in joints along with some herbomineral preparation as seen in many clinically. Modern drug like Methotraxte provide side effects on liver and nervous system but when it given with some hepato-protective drugs and neuro-protective drugs its least side effects were observed. Hence, we can say that both system of medicine can be efficacious with least side effects.

## CONCLUSION

Considering all Guidelines collected from Classical Ayurveda texts and Modern texts, it can be concluded that *Ayurveda* alone or may be with integration with modern medicine as adjuvant can be more efficacious with least side effects and it may also reduce the rate of prognosis of disease. By the use of *Yukti*, Ayurvedic Drugs, *Virechana Karma* and *Vaitarana Basti* are beneficial for management of *Amavata* or

Rheumatic disease with or without modern drugs, as there are many side effects caused by Modern Anti-Rheumatic drugs.

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## DISCLOSURE OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there was no conflict of interest regarding the publication of manuscript.

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