



## 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 habits<sup>1</sup>.

The chief complaints are *Kandu* (Itching), *Daha* (Burning sensation), *Ruka* (Pain), *Toda* (Pricking pain), *Sphurana* (Throbbing sensation), *Aankuchana* (Contraction), *Syavarakta* (Brownish black, red coloration) and *Tamra Varna* (Coppery coloration) of skin etc.<sup>2</sup> 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).<sup>3-6</sup> The characteristics of *Vatarakta* mostly resembles to Gout.

#### *Nidana* Of *Vatarakta* (Causative Factors)<sup>7-16</sup>

The various *Niadana* mentioned in *Ayurvedic* Literature



can be grouped into following categories:

1. **Aharaja Nidana (Causative factors related to diet):** Lavana, Amla, Katu, Madhura, Kshara Rasa; Snigdha, Ushna and Tikshna Guna; Vidahi Annapana like Pinyaka, Mulaka, Kulathika, Masha, Shaka, Nishpava, Klinna Mamsa, Shushka Mamsa, Anooopa Mamsa, Jaliya Mamsa, Ikshu, Vidahi Anna, Dadhi, Arnala, Sauviraka, 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):** Divaswapna, Ratri Jagarana, Achankramana, Ambu Kreedha, Plavana, Ativyayama, Mala, Mutra Vega Nigraha, Avyavaya, Ativyavaya, Excessive riding on Hasti, Ashwa, Ushtra, Sneha Vibhrama, Ashodhana, Vata Prakopaka Nidana, Sheeta Nidana, Rakta Prakopaka Nidana.
3. **Manasika Nidana (Causative factors related with psychology):** Shoka, Atikrodha
4. **Agantuja Nidana (Exogenous factors):** Abhighata
5. **Prakeerna Nidana (Miscellaneous factors):** Sihaulya, Sukumara, Stree

#### Samprapti<sup>17-18</sup>

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 Vamana or Virechana, vitiates Rakta Dhatu. Likewise, factors such as, excess consumption of Kashaya (astringent), Katu (pungent), Tikta (bitter), Alpa (scanty), Ruksha (dry) food items, Abhojana (avoiding food), riding on horses, camel, carts, Ambukreedha (playing water sports), Plavana (swimming), Langhana (fasting), excessive walking during hot season, Ativyavaya (excessive indulgence in sexual activities) and Veganigraha (suppression of natural urges) leads to vitiation of Vata. The vitiated Rakta 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 Prakupita Vata leads to Rakta Dushti and circulates through the body, and does Sthanasamshraya at Padangushta Sandhi (1<sup>st</sup> 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 Raktadosha 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)<sup>17</sup>.

#### Samprapti Ghataka

<b>Dosha -</b>	Vata
<b>Dushya –</b>	Rakta
<b>Srotasa –</b>	Rasavaha, Raktavaha, Asthivaha
<b>Agni –</b>	Vishmagni
<b>Udhhavasthana –</b>	Pakwashaya
<b>Vyaktasthana –</b>	Twaka, Snayu, Sandhi
<b>Srotodushti –</b>	Sanga, Vimargagamana
<b>Roga Marga-</b>	Madhyama

#### 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<sup>18</sup>.

#### Purvarupa Of Vatarakta (Prodromal Symptoms)<sup>19-27:</sup>

Atisweda/Swedabhava, Karshnya, Sparsha Agyanata, Kshate Atiruka, Sandhi Shaithilya, Alasya, Sadana, Pidikodgama, Sandhigata Toda, Sphurana, Bheda, Gurutva, Supti, Kandu, Sandhi Ruka, Vaivarnya, Mandala Utapatti, Sheeta, Osha, Daha, Shopha, Twaka Parushya, Siradhmana, Sakthi Dourbalya, Atishlakshana Kharasparsha, Shrama, Vranadhika Shula, Chirasthiti, Romaharsha and Asrija Kshaya.

#### Rupa Of Vatarakta (Sign And Symptoms)<sup>28-33:</sup>

1. **Vata Pradhana Vatarakta:** Sirayama, Shoola, Sphurana, Toda, Shotha, Kasharnya, Rukshta, Shyavata, Shothasya

Vridhhi Hani, Dhamani- Anguli- Sandhi Sankocha, Angagraha, Atiruka, Ankunchana, Stambhana, Sheeta Pradvesha, Bheda, Prashosha, Swapa, Sheeta Anupshaya, Vepathu and Bhanjana.

2. **Pitta pradhana vatarakta:** Vidaha, Vedana, Murcha, Sweda, Trishna, Mada, Bhrama, Raga, Paka, Bheda, Shosha, Sammoha, Sparshasahatva, Ubhaya pada ugradaha, Atyaushnata, Ubhaya pada shopha, Rakta varna and Ubhaya pada mriduta.
3. **Kapha Pradhana Vatarakta:** Staimitya, Gaurava, Sneha, Supti, Manda Ruka, Kandu, Shweta, Sheeta, Shopha, Peenatva and Stabhdhata.
4. **Rakta Pradhana Vatarakta:** Shyavathu, Bhrisha Ruka, Toda, Tamra Varna, Chimchimayana, Snigdha Rukshe Shamamanaiti, Kandu and Kleda.
5. **Uttana Vatarakta:** Kandu, Daha, Ruka, Ayama, Toda, Sphurana, Ankunchana, Shyava Rakta Twaka, Tamra Twaka, Osha, Gaurava and Suptata.
6. **Gambhira Vatarakta:** Shwayathu, Stabhdhata, Kathino Antarbhrishartimana, Shyava or Tamra Varna Twaka, Daha, Toda, Sphurana, Paka, Chedanavata Peeda in Sandhi, Asthi and Majja, Khanja, Pangulya, Vakrata and Granthi.

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

**Updrava Of Vatarakta (Complications)<sup>34-39</sup>:** Aswapna, Arochaka, Shwasa, Mamsakothe, Shirograha, Murcha, Mada, Ruka, Trishna, Jwara, Moha, Pravepaka, Hikka, Pangulya, Visarpa, Paka, Toda, Bhrama, Klama, Anguli Vakrata, Sphota, Daha, Marmagraha, Arbuda, Prana Kshaya, Mamsa Kshaya, Kasa, Stambha, Avipaka, Visrana and Sankochana.

A total of 24 Updravas (complications) have been mentioned in Charaka Samhita, Yogaratnakara, Bhava Prakasha and Vangasena Samhita while Acharya Sushrutaii has mentioned 12 Updravas (complications). Acharya Vagabhatta has not mentioned them.

**Sadhya-Asadhyata Of Vatarakta (Prognosis)<sup>47-52</sup>**

Ek Dosh And Naveena - Sadhya (Curable)

Dwidhoshaja - Yapy (palliable)

Trisodhaja and Updravayukta - Asadhya (incurable)

Acharya Charaka has further elaborated the criteria for Asadhyata by mentioning the following features: Samprasavi (profuse discharge from the ulcer), Vivarna (discoloration), Stabhdha (stiffness), Arbudakrita (tumour like lesion), Sankocha (constriction) and Indriyatapa (damage to the senses). Even if there is Moha (mental confusion) alone, then also the disease is incurable.

## Management Of Vatarakta

### (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 morbid Doshas and the strength of the patient<sup>40</sup>.

**Virechana:** After proper Snehana (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 Anuvasana Basti and Niruha Basti should be given.

### (B) Vishishta Chikitsa (Specific Treatment)

#### According To The Site Of Origin

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

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

#### According To Doshika Variation

**Vata Pradhana Vatarakta:** Pana (oral intake), Abhyanjana (massage) and Basti (enema) with medicated Ghrita, Taila, Vasa and Majja; and Sukhoshna Upnaha (warm poultice) should be used<sup>41</sup>. Purana Ghrita made of Aja Ksheer with Ardra Taila; Kakolyadi Gana Siddha Taila are used for Pana (oral intake) purpose. Shatapaka Bala Taila, Ghrita, Taila, Vasa and Majja are used for preparing Panchapayasa for Upnaha<sup>42</sup>.

**Pitta and Rakta Pradhana 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<sup>43</sup>.

Draksha, Aragvadha, Payasa, Chandana, Katphala, Madhuka and Kashmarya Sadhita Kashaya; Shatavari, Triphala, Patola, Katurohini Sadhita Kashaya Pana; Chandanadi Kashaya Pana; Madhura-Tikta Kashaya Siddha Ghrita; Guduchi Kashaya Pana; Parisheka with Kwatha of Bisa, Padmaka, Mrunala, Ksheera and Sharkara; Parisheka of Dugdha, Madhu, Ikshu Rasa, Sharkara; Abhyanga with Jeevanti Ghrita, Shalyadi gana with Dhanyamla; Sheetala Dravya Siddha Pralepa<sup>44</sup>.

**iii. Kapha Pradhana Vatarakta:** It should be treated with

*Mridu Vamana* (mild emesis), avoiding excessive *Snehana* (oleation), *Seka* (sprinkling of medicated decoction), *Langhana* (fasting), *Koshna Lepa* (lukewarm paste).<sup>45</sup> *Amlaka Haridra Kashaya* with *Madhu* (honey); *Triphla Kashaya Pana*; *Guda Haritaki*; *Madhuka*, *Shringvera*, *Haritaki*, *Katukarohini Kalka* with *Madhu* (honey); *Tila*, *Gomutra*, *Shukta*, *Sura*, *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*, *Ksharodaka*, *Gomutra* for *Pradeha*; *Shalaparni*, *Prishniparni*, *Brihati* mixed with *Ksheera* for *Lepa* should be used<sup>46</sup>.

**iv. Rakta Pradhana 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<sup>47</sup>. Treatment for *Pittolbana Vatarakta*, *Raktamokshana* and *Sheetala Pradeha*<sup>48</sup>.

**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 Margavarana* which causes the accumulation of the morbid *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*.<sup>49</sup>

**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.<sup>50</sup> *Acharya Charaka* has mentioned the use of *Eranda Taila* (castor oil) with milk in *Bahudosshavastha* (excessive aggravation of *Doshas*)<sup>51</sup>; *Abhaya Kashaya* (decoction of *Terminalia chebula*) or *Ghritabhrishta Trivrita Churna* (powder of *Operculina terpenanthum* fried with *Ghee*) with *Ksheera* (milk) or *Draksha Rasa* (grape juice)<sup>52</sup>; decoction of *Kashmarya*, *Trivrita*, *Draksha* and *Parushaka* with salt and honey for purgation.<sup>53</sup>

**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 administering *Ksheera Basti* mixed with *Ghrita*<sup>54</sup>.

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

**Margavarana By Meda Dhatu And Kapha Dosha**

According to *Acharya Charaka*, *Snehana* and *Brihana 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* (bio-purification), *Arishtapana* (fermented preparations), *Mutrapana* (cow's urine), *Virechana* (purgation), *Takrapana* (buttermilk) and *Abhaya*<sup>55</sup>.

**Updrava 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) or gets *Bhinna* (torn), thus discharging *Vidagdha Rakta* or *Puya* (pus). Such cases should be treated with *Bhedana* (incision), *Shodhana* (cleaning) and *Ropana* (healing)<sup>56</sup>.

**Pathya-Apathya**<sup>57</sup>

**PATHYA:** *Purana Yava* (old barley), *Godhuma* (wheat), *Nivara* (wild rice), *Shali Dhanya*, *Shastika Dhanya*, *Adhaka* (red gram), *Chanaka* (bengal gram), *Mudga* (green gram), *Makushtha* (motha), *Masura* (lentils), *Kulatha* (horse gram), *Sunishnaka* (*Marsilia 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 *Raktavaha Srothas* 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 life style 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 *Bahirparmarjana 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 Vyadhies* 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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