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Ayurvedic approach to managing Joint Disorders: Case Studies

Kriti Joshi¹, L.C. Harjpal², Shweta Singh³

¹Post Graduate Scholar, Department of Samhita evum Siddhant, SNPA Govt. Ayurvedic College, Raipur, Chhattisgarh, India.

²HOD, Professor, Department of Samhita evum Siddhant, SNPA Govt. Ayurvedic College, Raipur, Chhattisgarh, India.

³Lecturer, Department of Samhita and Siddhant, SNPA Govt. Ayurvedic College, Raipur, Chhattisgarh, India.

ABSTRACT

Around the world, Bone and Joint-related disorders are common and can be extremely painful and impairing. Due to long-term disability and the high expense of surgical procedures, these conditions not only harm people's quality of life but also place a significant financial burden on them. Commonly Joint diseases like *Sandhivata*, *Aamvata* and *Vatarakta* have been mentioned in most classic *Ayurvedic* texts from ancient times. Another group of disorders known as *Vatavyadhi* assembles neuro-musculoskeletal conditions with varying etiopathogenesis. An *Ayurvedic* approach to disease classification involves arranging the various clinical conditions into a particular place, mainly based on their defining characteristics. Ayurvedic treatment offers a comprehensive and successful approach to managing joint disorders by reducing inflammation, improving range of motion, and promoting overall joint health and by integrating conventional knowledge with contemporary research, giving patients sustainable and natural relief and recovery. This article case report has been presented for every bone and joint-related disorder with their treatment protocol given in Ayurvedic Classics.

Key words: Joint disorders, *Sandhivata*, *Aamvata*, *Vatarakta*, *Vatavyadhi*, Management

INTRODUCTION

When it comes to joint disorder, *Ayurveda*, an ancient Indian system of medicine offers a holistic perspective on how to comprehend and manage it. The healing philosophy that is more than 3,000 years old puts much emphasis on balancing body, mind and soul in order to keep healthy and heal diseases. Joint disorders in *Ayurveda* are majorly related with imbalances in the body's *Doshas*; *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*.

Address for correspondence:

Dr. Kriti Joshi

Post Graduate Scholar, Department of Samhita evum Siddhant, SNPA Govt. Ayurvedic College, Raipur, Chhattisgarh, India.

E-mail: drkriti14@gmail.com

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Vata Dasha: Movement is governed by *Vata Dasha* and it also helps in lubricating and making joints elastic. Too much dryness, cracking, joint stiffness are the signs of *Vata* imbalance and this often leads to such conditions as degenerative arthritis.

Pitta Dasha: It controls the mechanisms of metabolism that includes digestion and inflammation. Out of balance *Pitta* can bring about inflammation in the joints resulting into rheumatoid arthritis diseases.

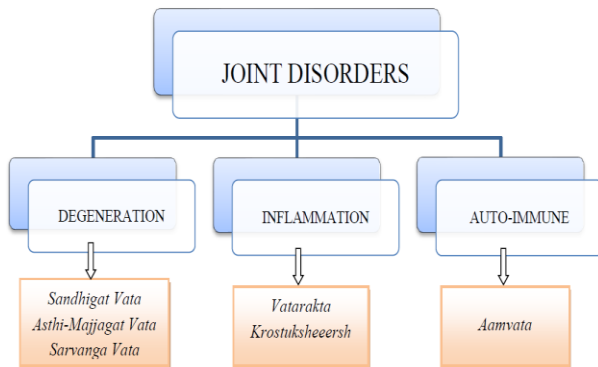
Kapha Dasha: This is responsible for structure and lubrication. Inadequate *Kapha* causes excessive fluid retention in the joints which results in swelling; heaviness thus leading to conditions like joint disorders.

Classification of Joint Disorders

It can be classified as -

- 1) Degenerative disorders
- 2) Inflammatory disorders
- 3) Auto-immune disorders

4) Idiopathic/ Traumatic

Principles of Treatment^[1]

Hetu – Hetu Vipreet Chikitsa^[2]

Linga – Vyadhi Vipreet Chikitsa

Aushadh – Kasthoushadhis (Herbal) and Rasoushadhis (Mineral)

Disease can be diagnosed on the basis of Clinical, Hematological, and Radiological investigations. Treatment should be followed thereafter. Treatment modalities include *Pathya Ahara*, *Pathya Vihara*, *Aushadh* (Externally / Internally).

1) Degenerative Joint Disorders

Causes^[3] - Diseases can be caused by dryness, cold, inadequate and light food, excessive sexual activity, insomnia, irregular treatments or activities, and excessive secretion of doshas and blood. Fasting, excessive swimming, excessive travelling, over-exercising, excessive physical activities, depletion of body tissues, worry, grief, diseases, and excessive emaciation. Additionally, diseases can arise from painful beds or seats, anger, daytime sleep, fear, suppression of natural urges, undigested food or toxins, trauma, and not eating.

Case Study - 1

Patient Profile:

- Age: 58 years
- Gender: Female
- Occupation: Office Worker
- History: For the past five (5) years, joint pain which has now increased gradually. The joints ache most

in the mornings when she wakes up and when performing daily activities. There is a history of osteoarthritis in the family.

Chief Complaints:

- Joint Pain and Stiffness: Severe knee, hip and finger pain especially in the morning and after long periods of rest.
- Swelling: Visible swelling around affected joints.
- Difficulty in Movement: Pain while bending or straightening joints.

Ayurvedic Diagnosis: *Sandhivata*

Sandhivata is that condition brought about by *Vata dosha* getting disturbed leading to its effect on the joints *Sandhi*. This is marked by deterioration of tissues within the joint that leads to pain as well as limited mobility.

Symptoms Analysis^[4]

- वातपूर्णदृतिस्पर्शः - Air or gas gets into these joints (crepitus) when they are touched.
- शोथः - Swelling in the joints.
- सन्धिगतेऽनिले - *Vata dosha* being localized at the joints.
- प्रसारणाकुञ्चनयोः प्रवृत्तिश्च सवेदनाः - Pain during extension (*Prasāraṇa*) and flexion (*Akuñcana*) of the joints.

Case Study - 2

Patient Profile:

- Age: 62 years old
- Sex: Male
- Job: Retired engineer
- Medical History: This patient has had awful chronic joint pains and weakness during the past eight years, progressively deteriorating to affect his day-to-day activities and general quality of life, without any close relatives suffering from any joint disorders.

Chief Complaints:

1. Severe Joint Pain: Pains that do not stop in the hip and knees.
2. Weakness and Muscle Wasting: Mass and strength seem considerably reduced.
3. Insomnia: He can't sleep because of pain
4. Continuous Pain: The body has been aching all through.

Ayurvedic Diagnosis: Asthi-Majjagat Vata

Asthimajjagat Vata, is a condition characterized by above described degenerative changes in bones (*Asthi*) and bone marrow (*Majja*) due to increased *Vata Dosha* leading to chronic joint pains.

Symptoms Analysis^[5]

- भेदः - Breaking pain in the bones.
- अस्थिपर्वणां सन्धिशूलः- Joint ache within bone joints.
- मांसबलक्षयः - Muscular atrophy and weakness.
- अस्वप्नः- The condition of not sleeping; insomnia.
- सन्तता रुक्ः- Perpetual pain.
- मज्जास्थिकुपितेऽनिलेः- Aggravation of *Vata* in the bone marrow and bones.

Case Study - 3**Patient Profile:**

- Age: 50 years
- Gender: Female
- Occupation: Office Worker
- History: The patient has been suffering from osteoarthritis and general muscle and bone discomfort passed over the last 3 years. For instance, symptoms have gradually escalated and they have impacted on work and performance of most activities. The family has a history of anxiety and stress as some of the common conditions.

Chief Complaints:

1. Generalized Body Pain: Chronic pain affecting the different parts of the body.

2. Muscle Twitching and Cramps: Tremors or muscle twitches and twitch and involuntary spasms or jerking movements.
3. Joint Pain: Stabbing and sudden episodes of pain that established in a number of joints, especially during the physical activities.
4. Continuous Discomfort: Continuous nagging soreness and a feeling of pain right down to the bones and joints.

Ayurvedic Diagnosis: Sarvangagat Vata.

In *Sarvanga Gat Vata* the pathologies are found all over the body due to the predominance of *Vata* and have influence in various systems and organs.

Symptoms Analysis:^[6]

- सर्वाङ्गकुपिते वातेः- *Vata* is increased throughout the whole body.
- गात्रस्फुरणभङ्गनेः- Cramp and soreness, Twitchiness and cracking.
- वेदनाभिः परीतश्च :- Surrounded by pain.
- स्फुटन्तीवास्य सन्धयः - Feels that joints are bending and breaking as if they are split or crackling.

Chikitsa Siddhant^[7,8] for Degenerative Diseases**Sandhigat Vata****1. Snehana (Oleation Therapy)**

- Internal Oleation: Administration of *Mahayogaraj Guggulu*.
- External Oleation: Application of *Mahanarayan Taila* for daily massage.

2. Swedana (Sudation Therapy)

- Localized Steam Therapy: Using *Dashamoola Kwatha* (decoction).

3. Panchakarma Procedures

- *Virechana* (Purgation): Administered using *Trivrit Lehya*.
- *Basti* (Enema Therapy): Administered *Anuvasana Basti* with *Ksheerabala Taila*

followed by *Niruha Basti* with *Dashamooladi Niruha*.

4. Herbal Remedies

- *Shallaki (Boswellia serrata)*
- *Ashwagandha Churna*: Mixed with warm milk.

5. Diet and Lifestyle

- *Vata*-pacifying diet with warm, cooked foods.
- Suggested gentle *Yoga* and exercises to maintain joint mobility.

Asthi-Majjagat Vata - (*Snehana*^[9] – Internal & External)

Sarvangagat Vata - (Massage , Enema)^[10]

2) Inflammatory Joint Disorders

Causes^[11] - Salty, sour, pungent, alkaline, oily, and hot foods are those that aggravate *Vata* and *Pitta doshas*. Fruits and vegetables that belong to the subgroups of damp as well as dry, and miscellaneous items that include foods found in water, trenches, or marshes, meats, oil cakes, and root vegetables, lead to *Dosha* vitiation. Moreover, eating incompatible foods (*Viruddha Ahara*), anger, day sleep, and night walking disturb the rhythm and thus aggravate *Vata* and *Pitta Doshas*. It more affects to the delicate or the individuals having sedentary lifestyle because of their unpreparedness to handle the stress the body goes through. Trauma, impurities in the blood, and fasting or inadequate eating can further aggravate the condition. The specific factors include exercises like horse or camel rid; excessive travel; the rigors of too many sports & exercises; retention of natural calls; being out in the sun, especially in the hot noon; and excess indulgence of sex. All these factors culminate in the aggravation of *Vata* and *Pitta Doshas* resulting in inflammatory condition.

Case Study - 1

Patient Profile:

- Age: 50
- Sex: Female
- Occupation: Teacher

- History: The patient has been experiencing symptoms of Joint pain and redness of joints within the past year. Her lifestyle includes work that involves extensive standing and walking, eating spicy food a lot, consuming plenty of processed food and being very stressed up because of her job.

Chief complaints:

1. Persistent knee, elbow or wrist pain and stiffness.
2. Itching, redness as well as occasional rashes especially over joints.
3. Digestive Issues may manifest as indigestion symptoms such as flatulence, bloating or abdominal gas.
4. Fatigue is associated with general tiredness and low energy levels.

Ayurvedic Diagnosis: *Vata Rakta*^[12] (Inflammatory Joint Disorder)

Vata Rakta is characterized by the simultaneous aggravation of *Vata dosha* and vitiation of *Rakta dhatu* (blood). This condition primarily affects the joints, leading to pain, swelling, and other symptoms indicative of inflammation.

कण्डू (Itching) दाह (Burning sensation), रुज (Pain), आयाम (Stretching pain), तोद (Pricking pain) स्फुरण (Throbbing), कुञ्चन (Contracture), श्यावरक्ता त्वग् (Dark red or purple discoloration of the skin), बाह्ये ताम्रा (Coppery red appearance on the external skin).

Gambhir Vata Rakta^[13] is characterized by deeper symptoms affecting the muscles, bones, and joints. The symptoms include swelling, stiffness, hardness, deep-seated intense pain, dark or bluish skin, and reddish discoloration. It also involves burning sensation, pricking sensation, twitching or pulsation, and suppuration or formation of pus. These symptoms indicate a more severe and deeper involvement of the tissues compared to *Uttana Vata Rakta*.

Aspect	<i>Uttana Vata Rakta</i>	<i>Gambhir Vata Rakta</i>
Depth of Involvement	Superficial (Skin and subcutaneous tissues)	Deep (Muscles, bones, and joints)

Main Symptoms	Itching, burning sensation, pain, stretching, pricking, twitching, contraction, dark red/bluish skin	Swelling, stiffness, hardness, deep-seated intense pain, dark/bluish skin, redness, suppuration
Skin Appearance	Dark red or bluish with external redness	Dark or bluish skin, reddish discoloration
Pain Intensity	Mild to moderate pain	Intense deep-seated pain
Additional Symptoms	Contraction, twitching	Swelling, stiffness, hardness, suppuration

Case Study - 2

Patient Profile:

- Age: 65 years
- Gender: Male
- Occupation: Retired Farmer
- History: The patient's symptoms include, joint pain and inflammation, which has been present for two years now. Following the onset of his symptoms, he has scooter-mobilized; his functional capacity is strikingly impaired, and he experiences great challenges in executing most basic requirements for independence.

Chief Complaints:

- Severe Joint Pain: Severe erosive arthritis characterized by pain largely in the knees, hips and shoulders enough to limit the activities of the patient.
- Disability: Stiffness in movement, having problems in the most basic activities, and reduced in functional activity.
- Skin Symptoms: Joint pain and swelling with elevated temperature and dark red or purple bruise-like discoloration and rashes surrounding the joints noted.
- Systemic Symptoms: Gradually develops weakness of the body, fatigue and general physical emaciation of the body.

Ayurvedic Diagnosis: *Ubhaya Vata Rakta*^[14] (Very Severe *Vata Rakta*)

Case Study - 3

Patient Profile:

- Age: 58 years
- Gender: Female
- Occupation: Office Worker
- History: The patient has been experiencing severe joint pain and inflammation in the knees and elbows for the past year. Her condition has progressively worsened, affecting her ability to perform daily activities.

Chief Complaints:

- Severe Joint Pain: Intense pain in the knee joints, particularly in the region around the patella (kneecap).
- Swelling and Inflammation: Noticeable swelling and inflammation in the knees and elbows.
- Reduced Mobility: Difficulty in moving and performing routine tasks due to joint pain and stiffness.
- Skin Symptoms: Reddish discoloration and warmth around the affected joints.

Ayurvedic Diagnosis: *Krostukshirsha*^[15] (Severe Inflammatory Joint Disorder)

- वातशोणितजः: Caused by an imbalance of *Vata* and *Rakta* (blood).
- शोथः: Swelling.
- जानुमध्ये: Located in the knee region.
- महारुजः: Severe pain.
- स्थूलः: Thickened or swollen.
- क्रोष्टुकशीर्षवत्: Resembling a jackal head like knee joint condition.

Chikitsa Siddhant for Inflammatory Joint Diseases^[16]

1. External Therapies:

- External Application (*Bahyamaalepa*): The employment of medicated pastes and ointments for management of the pain and the level of inflammation experienced.

- Oil Massage (*Abhyanga*): This will involve going for massages with warm medicated oils that will help increase the blood flow to the affected areas as well as help in easing the rigidity and the pains.
- Therapeutic Bath (*Parisheka*): Inflammations of the limbs, warm medicated water or decoctions may be taken for bathing in.
- Poultices (*Upanaha*): Cupping, or applying poultices of herbs to specific regions of the body to decrease inflammation and help in un-moistening painful tumors.

2. Internal Therapies:

- Purgation (*Virechana*): Therapeutic purgation to clear toxins and the imbalances in the three *Doshas*.
- Medicated Enema (*Basti*): Employment of herbal enema which helps to kindle 'fat'/*Vata Dosh* and assist the body's natural processes of elimination.
- Oral Intake of Medicated Oils and Ghee (*Sneha Pana*): Taking medicines like *Sarpi*, which is ghee, *Taila* or oils, *Vasa* which is animal fat and *Majja* which is marrow to bring in lubrication inside the body and benefit the specific areas of joint and tissues.

3. Advanced Therapies:

- Combination Therapies: *Sarpi* (Ghee): Both inside and out to feed the body and astringent and become swollen. *Taila* (Oil): used and taken internally to soothe *Vata* and nourish the joints. *Vasa* (Animal Fat) and *Majja* (Bone Marrow): Eaten to extract their nutrient values that help in promoting healthy joints.
- Warm Poultices (*Upanaha*): As a remedy for inflammation of joints using warm poultices of herbs to treat inflammation.

4. Specific Treatments for *Vata* Dominance:

- Medicated Oils and Enemas: Including ghee, oils and medicated enemas which are prepared from the herbs.
- Warm Poultices and Fomentation: Warm therapies for the relief of pain and rigidity of the *Vata Dosh*.

5. Specific Treatments for *Rakta* Dominance:

- Purgation with Ghee and Milk: Thus, therapeutic purgation with ghee and milk was used to moderate the *Rakta* levels and inflammation.
- Cold Applications (*Seka* and *Nirvapana*): Basemaring with cold application for the reduction of symptoms arising from the inflammation of tissues and hyperactivity of *Rakta* and *Pitta Doshas*.
- Herbal Decoctions and Poultices: The results include application of herbal decoctions and poultice that are used to cool and heal inflammations of joints.

3) Auto-Immune Joint Disorders

Causes^[17] - A sedentary lifestyle with little or no physical activity (*Nischalasya*) further exacerbates the condition; eating heavy, oily, rich, and difficult-to-digest foods (*Snigdha Bhuktavato Hyannam*) and exercising right after heavy meals (*Vyayama Kuruvatastatha*) are important factors in the formation and aggravation of *Ama*. The main causes are the consumption of incompatible foods and engaging in activities that contradict the body's natural rhythms (*Viruddha Ahara Chesta*), which results in a weak digestive fire (*Mandagni*) and improper digestion and accumulation of toxins (*Ama*).

Case Study - 1

Patient Profile:

- Age: 52 years
- Gender: Female
- Occupation: Office Job
- History: Eight months ago, the patient began experiencing joint pain, stiffness and swelling. The symptoms have become progressively worse and now cause significant discomfort and make it difficult to carry out normal daily tasks.

Chief Complaints:

- Joint Pain and Swelling: Continuing pain and swellings in many joints especially hands, wrists, and knees.

- Morning Stiffness: Severe joint stiffness upon waking up which lasts for some hours.
- Fatigue: Abnormally tired and heavy body feeling.
- Digestive Issues: Indigestion, lack of appetite, bloating after eating food.

Ayurvedic Diagnosis: *Aamvata*^[18]

- Angamarda* - feverishness
- Aruchi* - loss of taste
- Trishna* - thirstiness
- Alasya* - laziness or fatigue
- Gauravam* - heaviness of the body
- Jvara* - fever
- Apaka* - indigestion
- Shunata Anganam* - Body swelling

Chikitsa Siddhant for Auto-Immune Joint Diseases^[19]

1. Detoxification and Reduction of *Ama* (Toxins)

- लङ्घन (Langhana)*: Fasting or consuming a light diet helps reduce the *Ama* (toxins) from the body.
- स्वेदन (Swedana)*: Inducing sweating through steam or other methods to eliminate toxins.

2. Enhancement of Digestion and Metabolism

- तिक्त (Bitter)*: Use of bitter herbs like *Neem*, *Guduchi*, and *Kutki* for detoxification and purification.
- दीपन (Dipana)*: Digestive stimulants like Ginger, Black Pepper, and *Pippali* to enhance digestive fire.
- कटु (Pungent)*: Pungent herbs to aid digestion and elimination of *Ama*.

3. Therapeutic Cleansing Procedures

- विरेचन (Purgation Therapy)*: Detoxification through purgation to cleanse the gastrointestinal tract.

4. Lubrication and Nourishment

- स्नेहपान (Oleation Therapy)*: Internal administration of medicated ghee or oils for joint lubrication and *Vata* pacification.

5. Enema Therapies

- बस्ति (Enema)*: Medicated enema to cleanse and nourish the colon and balance *Vata*. Medicated Oil Enema with *Saindhava* (Rock Salt) Oil enema containing rock salt to soften stools and reduce pain and inflammation.
- क्षारवस्ति (Alkaline Enema)*: For detoxification and balancing *Doshas*.

Differential Diagnosis

Condition	<i>Vatarakta</i>	<i>Krostuka Sirsa</i>	<i>Amavata</i>	<i>Sandhigatavata</i>
<i>Sandhishula</i>	Present	Present (Maharuj)	Present	Present
<i>Sandhishotha</i>	Present	Present	Present	Present
<i>Arambha Sandhi</i>	<i>Parva Sandhi</i>	<i>Kevala Janu Sandhi</i>	<i>Bruhata Sandhi</i>	<i>Bruhata Sandhi</i>
<i>Jvara as Arambhi Lakshana</i>	May Be/May Be Not	Not Present	Present	Not Present
<i>Sparsh-Asahtvam</i>	Present	<i>Tivra</i>	Present	May Be/May Be Not
<i>Ushna Sparsha</i>	Present	Not Present	Present	May Be/May Be Not
<i>Itar Lakshana</i>	<i>Sandhi Pradesh Pidiko-Utapatii, Spread like Akhu Visha</i>	Knee Joint Look Like Jackal's Head	Pain like Scorpion Bite	<i>Vata Purna Dhruvi Sparsha-Prasaran, Akunchan Sah-Vedana</i>

CONCLUSION

According to *Ayurveda*, joint disorders can be effectively treated holistically since the treatment aims at the origin of the problem as well as at the manifestations of the disease, which may entail dietary, lifestyle changes and specific therapies. *Ayurveda* has a holistic approach to the disorders of joints, the main strategies being the restoration of *Dosha* balance and elimination of *Ama*.

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