FIBROMYALGIA W.S.R TO AMAVATA -- AN AYURVEDIC PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

'Fibromyalgia' is one of the most common rheumatic syndromes affecting 3-10% of the general population and shows an increased frequency among women aged 20 - 50 years. Its main causes are painful stimuli, sleep disorders, depression and viral infections. The features of fibromyalgia simulate 'Chronic Fatigue Syndrome' but the former shows a dominance of musculoskeletal pain whereas lassitude dominates the latter.

According to Ayurved, this clinical condition shows angamarda (body ache) as a primary symptom which is secondary to many diseases especially showing a congruence to Amavata, Vata-rakta, Mansagata vata, Rasagata samata etc. This paper proposes the line of treatment for fibromyalgia in accordance with the principles of treatment for Amavata viz. Langhana, Swedana, Pachan with drugs having Tikta-Katu Rasatmak properties and Deepana action, Snehapana and Virechana as also Anuvasa basti along with Ksharabasti.

Keywords: Ama, Amavata, Fibromyalgia, Mandagni.

INTRODUCTION

Fibromyalgia is the most common rheumatic cause of chronic diffuse pain. Its main symptoms are- diffuse aching, stiffness and fatigue. While doing physical examination multiple tenderness points are found in specific areas.¹ Fibromyalgia is having predominance in females (>75%) with a peak incidence at ages 20-60 years.¹ Fibromyalgia shows a close relation with ‘Amavata’ as its main symptom like Angamarda (Bodyache) has been given in the condition of Samavata.¹ The allopathic management of fibromyalgia includes drugs having ill-effects like dryness in mouth, blurred vision etc. and hence its management by Ayurved may prove to beneficial thereby playing a relevant role.

REVIEW

Fibromyalgia is a common disorder characterized by chronic musculo-skeletal pain, stiffness, paraesthesia and fatigue with multiple painful tender points. It affects predominantly women in the ratio of 9:1 compared to men.² Fibromyalgia also occurs in children though it is not very common.² In this condition, pain is often accompanied with stiffness which is often worse in morning and hence
mimics RA (Rheumatoid Arthritis). Its symptoms can be exacerbated by exercise inactivity, poor sleep, emotional stress and humid weather.

There is no single test that can fully diagnose fibromyalgia. In most of the cases, patients with symptoms of fibromyalgia may also show normal lab test results. Besides, many of the symptoms may mimic those of other arthritis. Hence the differential diagnosis must be done taking into consideration all the possible factors like gender, age, geographic location, medical history. According to American College of Rheumatology the diagnosis of fibromyalgia cannot be done objectively by machine and requires a physician’s subjective estimate.

CRITERIA FOR DIAGNOSIS:

1. History of widespread pain greater than 3 minutes. i.e. Pain in the left side of the body, right side of body, pain above the waist and below the waist with axial pain
2. Pain in 11 to 18 tender point sites on digital palpation.
   (Occiput, Low cervical, Trapezius, Supraspinatus second rib, lateral epicondyle, Gluteal, Knee, Greater Trochanter)

CONTEMPORARY AND TRADITIONAL CORRELATION:

A Fibromyalgic patient complains of chronic aching pain and stiffness frequently involving the entire body but with the predominance around shoulders, low back and hips. Fatigue, sleep disorders, chronic headache, anorexia, lassitude, depression and irritable bowel syndrome are the other common complaints.

According to Ayurved, this clinical condition can be compared with the symptom angamarda (body ache) which is secondary to many diseases and is specific to Amavata, Vatarakta, Mansagata vata, Rasagata samata etc. A careful analysis of the above conditions shows one factor to be very common in all clinical syndromes viz. Ama. Ayurved believes that Mandagni (low digestive fire) plays an important role in the manifestation of most of the diseases and its sluggishness results in the production of Ama. Among the three types of Agni, Jatharagni is considered to be the most important and therefore its power needs to be maintained as it augments the functions of Bhutagni and Dhatavagni and any breach therein leads to Dhatvagnimandya as well as Bhutagnimandya resulting in the non-production of Aahar rasa. Due to Dhatvagnimandya, proper nutrition is not provided to Rasadhatus resulting in Dhatukshaya which further vitiates Vata thus leading to Ama (toxic material remaining after undigested food) that gets a gati (direction) towards other tissues of the body. In case of fibromyalgia this Sama vata gets lodged in the Rasa, Rakta, Mansa and Asthi dhatu but due to weakened mansa dhatu (kha-vai gunya), the muscle and related tissues are seen to produce more symptoms.

The Ama mixed with dosha, dhatu, mala produces samadosha, samadhatu and saamamala respectively. In the present context of fibromyalgia it will be relevant to mention the symptoms of Samavata available in the classics viz. Agnivaishamya (Irregular digestion), Anaha (Retention of stool and gases), Shoola (Colic pain), Angamarda (Body ache), Bhrama (Giddiness), Murchha (Fainting), Parshva - prishtha - kati graha (Stiffness of flanks, back and waist), Sira akunchana (Constriction of vessels) and Stambha (Stiffness).
Vagbhatacharya added Tandra (Drowsiness), Staimitya (Feeling of wetness), Gaurava (Heaviness), Snigdha (Unctuousness), Aruchi (Anorexia), Aalasya (Laziness), Shaitya (Coolness), Shopha (Oedema), Agnimandya (Hypofunctioning of digestive power), Srotorodha (Obstruction in channels), Balabransha (Loss of strength), Moodhata (Inactivity of Vata dosha), Apakti (Indigestion), Nishthiva (Excessive Salivation), Malasanga (Constipation) to the list.

These symptoms bear a resemblance to fibromyalgia and hence the pathophysiology of fibromyalgia can be stated as follows-

**PATHOPHYSIOLOGY:**

**Sanchaya:** When a person is exposed to the aetiological factors such as Viruddha Aahar, Vyayama after intake of Snigdha Aahar, Chinta, Shoka, Bhaya etc. then the vitiation of Agni, Dosha prakopa (Vata) and Dushya Daurbalya (Rasa, Rakta, Mansa, Asthi, Snayu, Kandara etc.) occurs.

**Prakopa:** Due to the vitiation of Agni, Mandagni occurs causing Ama formation. The fermentation of this Ama brings about shuktatva (Vidagdhatva) and it converts in Ama-visha. With the help of vitiated Vayu it attains Prasaravastha and is termed Samavata.

**Prasaravastha:** Samavata reaches the Dhamani (Rasavaha Srotasa) along with the vitiation of Amavisha by the Tridosha. It thus becomes Nanavarna (various coloured) and Atipichhila (viscid, unctuous and heavy) and is named Atidaruna.

**Sthana Sanshraya:** Yugpat Kupita Vata and Ama with the help of Dushya Daurbalya takes Sthana Sanshraya in Rasa, Rakta, Mansa dhatu and related upadhatu like Kandara and Snayu.

**Vyakti:** As it reaches Vyakti stage, most of the symptoms of fibromyalgia are manifested like Angamarda (bodyache), Daurbalya (weakness), Hridgaurava (heavyness in the chest), Katrastabdha (stiffness), Sandhishula (painful joints), Sandhigraha (stiffness in joints), etc.

**DISCUSSION**

**Management of fibromyalgia:**

The principles of treatment for fibromyalgia, considering its correlation with Ama dosha are Langhana, Swedana, Pachan with drugs having Tikta-Katu Rasa and Deepana action, Virechana, Snehapana and Anuvasana as well as Ksharabasti. Therapies like Abhyangam, Upanaham etc. are also helpful.

Langhana: It is the first measure that has been advised for the management of Amavata, which is considered to be an Amashayottha Vyadhi and also a Rasaja Vikara. Langhana is the first line of treatment in such conditions. Further Charaka has advised Langhana in Saamavata condition. In Yogratnakara, Langhana has been mentioned to be the best measure for the treatment of Ama. It has been described that Sama Dosha cannot be eliminated from the body unless and until Ama attains the Pakva form and for this purpose Langhana is the best therapy. Langhana is contraindicated in Vata Vriddhi but is indicated in Sama vata condition. Hence care should be taken to stop Langhana as soon as Nirama Vata state is achieved.

Swedana: The role of Swedana therapy in rheumatic diseases is well recognized. In the management of Amavata, Ruksha Sweda has been advocated in the form of Baluka Pottali, owing to the presence of Ama. In chronic stage of the disease when Rukshata is increased, Snigdha Sweda can be employed. Swedana have been specially indicated in the
presence of Stambha, Gaurava and Shoola and these manifest as the predominant features of fibromyalgia. In this disease Ushna Jalapana, a kind of internal Swedana is also indicated which is Deepana, Pachana, Jwararagha, Srotoshodhaka etc. Swedana also helps in liquefying doshas and aids in their transportation from Shakha to Koshtha so that they can be eliminated by shodhana therapy.

Katu - Tikta - Deepana Dravyas: Though Katu Tikta Rasa dravyas are supposed to increase Vata Dosha yet they have been indicated in Amavata because of their Deepana and Pachana properties eg. Rasna Erandadi kashayam (Sahastrayoga). These drugs due to their Laghu-Tikshna guna increase Agni, digest Ama, remove excessive Kledaka kapha and prevent further production of Ama.

Virechana: After Langhana, Swedana and Tikta, Katu, Deepana dravyas, doshas attain Niramavastha and may require elimination from the body by Shodhana. Generally Vamana precedes Virechana but in Fibromyalgia (Amavata), the patients should be subjected to Virechana therapy due to the involvement of Mansa and Rakta dhatu. Symptoms of Amavata like Anaha, Vibandha, Antrakujana, Kukshishoola (irritable bowel syndrome) etc. are all indicative of Pratiloma Gati of Vata. This is best conquered by Virechana, while Vamana is likely to aggravate these features.

Snehapana: After giving the above mentioned therapies the patient should be subjected to Shamana Snehapana which is justified on the basis of following points:

a) The therapeutic measures employed so far are likely to produce Rukshata in Dhatus which may provoke the Vata Dosha and further aggravate the disease process. This is best prevented by Snehapana.

b) Reduction in Bala of the patient is the result of the Shodhana therapeutic measures employed and the nature of the disease itself. This is also effectively controlled by the administration of Snehas it is described to be the best Balavardhaka regimen. Moreover, Shamana Sneha (Ghrita etc.) has been stated to augment the Agni. Since Snehapana pacifies the vitiated Vata due to its inherent Vatunulomana effect, it is strongly indicated in Amavata, when there is predominance of Vata Dosha in its Nirama stage. However, the patients of Amavata are prone to develop derangement of digestion. Hence, Sneha is best administered medicated with Deepana and Pachana Dravyas eg Indukantam ghru-tam(Sahastrayogam).

Basti: Among the Tridoshas Vata is the chief factor in the pathogenesis of Fibromyalgia (Amavata). Basti has been considered as the best treatment for Vatavyadhi as it promotes Agni and thus restore the causative factor for the disease process. In Amavata, both Anuvasana as well as Niruha basti can be given. Anuvasna basti removes the dryness of the body caused by the Amahara treatment and thereby alleviates Vata dosha, maintains the function of Agni and nourishes the body. Niruha basti eliminates doshas brought into the koshtha by Langhana and allied therapeutics. In addition to the generalized effects, Basti produces local beneficial effects too by removing Anaha, Antrakujan, Vibandha etc. eg. Saindhavadi Taila has been mentioned for Anuvasana and Kshara basti for Asthapanam in the treatment of Amavata and can be used in Fibromyalgia.

CONCLUSION
Fibromyalgia is a clinical condition comparable to the to Amavata, Vatarakta, Mansagata vata, Rasagata samata etc. A careful analysis of the above conditions have revealed involvement of Ama as a common factor in all clinical syndromes. Ayurved believes that Mandagni plays an important role in the manifestation of most of the diseases and its sluggishness results in the production of Ama. The proposed principles of treatment for fibromyalgia can be Langhana, Swedana, Pachan with drugs having Tikta-Katu Rasamak properties and Deepana action, Virechana, Snehapana and Anuvasana as well as Ksharabasti. Topical therapies like Abhyanga, Upanaham etc. can also prove to be helpful.

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