



## Review Article

### AN INTRODUCTORY APPROACH TO PAIN MANAGEMENT THROUGH AYURVEDA WITH BRIEF HOLISTIC REVIEW

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#### ABSTRACT

The whole world is fighting with pain whatever may be its source or origin. Pain is a protective body mechanism, which alerts the person about the harmful condition or experience that occurs in the body. In Ayurveda, *Vata Dosh* is the root cause of all types of pain (*Shoola*) - "*Vatat rute Nasti Ruja*" as mentioned by *Acharya Sushruta*. The concept of pain in Ayurveda is based on the fundamental theories of *Tridoshas*, *Triguna*, *Srotas* and *Ojas*, but it has also certain relations with the *Karma* of previous birth as depicted by Maharishi Charaka as "*Karmaja Roga*". The Ayurvedic texts describes a wide range of pain; *Shoola* (piercing pain), being most prominent form, *Dank* (bursting), *Vedana* (unbearable sensation), *Dagdha* (burning pain), *Chosa* (sucking pain), *Nirmathan* (churning like), *Shastravidh* (cutting like), *Spandana* (vibration) are some of other expressions. Associated *Doshas* with the *Vata* can alter the type and intensity of the pain as dull aching and from sharp neuralgic pain to burning pain in *Kapha* and *Pitta* associated *Vata Dosh* respectively. The hindrance in *Vata Dosh* flow leads to the pain. In modern medicine, Pain is the most common symptoms of inflammatory process, like wise use of NSAIDs is associated with risk of fatal gastrointestinal bleeding, increase in stomach acid, reduce the stomach normal protective mucus layer, cause damage to the kidneys in people over 60 ; those with high blood pressure, heart disease, or pre-existing kidney diseases. All Ayurvedic treatments and therapies involve bio purification of body channels as well as immune stabilization and management of psyche, strengthen and enhance the body own healing process and donot have adverse effects, if given in proper dose according to the fundamental principles of Ayurveda.

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#### INTRODUCTION

Good health is the supreme foundation for the achievements of life. The aim of Ayurveda is to maintain condition of health i.e. "*Swasthasya Swasthya Rakshanam*". According to WHO - "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well being and not merely the absence of diseases or infirmity". According to International Association for study of Pain proposed the following definition (1979)- "Pain is an unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage or described in terms of damage". It is a subjective experience. Pain motivates the individual to withdraw from

damaging situations, to protect a damaged body part while it heals and to avoid similar experiences in future. Sometimes pain arises in the absence of any detectable stimulus, damage or disease. Pain is the most common reason for physician consultation in most developed countries and major symptom in many medical conditions and can interfere with a person's quality of life and general function. Psychological factors such as social support, hypnotic suggestions, excitement, or distraction can significantly affects pain intensity or unpleasantness. In Ayurveda, it is known as "*Shoola Roga*" The word "*Shoola*" refers to any type of pain like *Karna*

*Shoola, Shira shoola, Netra Shoola. Shoola* can appear as a symptom or complication of a disease. *Shoola* and *Roga* both have same meaning i.e. pain giving. “*Shoola*” is classified as *Swatantra Shoola* as *Vyadi* itself and *Paratantra Shoola* as a complication of a disease. *Sushruta* has explained *Shoola* as abdominal pain in his *Uttar Tantra* (chapter 42). He has also explained *Shoola* as the main complication (*Updrava*) of *Gulma* in the same chapter. According to *Vruddha Sushruta and Yog Ratnakar Shoola Nidanam* 4, pain in the abdomen resembling “*Shanku Sphotanavat*” i.e., pricking pain due to iron hook piercing in abdomen is called as *Shoola*.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Ayurvedic texts *Charaka, Sushruta* and *Vagbhatta Samhita* with commentaries were consulted as references. Literature available regarding changes in body from various journals and books is collected. These references from both the streams of knowledge were compared and analysed critically.

**Pain (Modern Review) [1]**

**Definition:** Highly unpleasant physical/psychological sensation caused by illness or injury.

**Synonyms:** Physical-suffering, agony, affliction, torture, torment, discomfort, soreness, ache, aching,

soreness, hurt, throb, throbbing, smarting, pricking, sting, stinging, twinge, shooting pain, stab, pang, spasm, stitch, cramp, discomfort, irritation, stiffness, tenderness etc.

**Psychological**

Sorrow, grief, heartache, heartbreak, sadness, unhappiness, distress, desolation, misery, wretchedness, despair, desperation, mental suffering, emotional suffering, trauma, bitterness, anguish, affliction, tribulation, vexation, woe, agony, torment, torture etc.

**Classified according to:** a) Aetiology and Mechanism b)Duration.

**1) Aetiology and Mechanisms**

a) Physiological - Acute response to an injury  
 b) Inflammation/ Nociceptive - Pain generated and maintained by inflammation mediators secreted to an ongoing disease process such as cancer. Nociceptive pain is caused by stimulation of sensory nerve fibres that respond to stimuli approaching or exceeding harmful intensity and classified according to mode of noxious stimulation. Most common categories are thermal, mechanical, and chemical.

**Nociceptive Pain:** a). Visceral pain b). Deep somatic pain c). Superficial somatic pain

**Table 1: types of Nociceptive Pain [2]**

Visceral Pain	Deep Somatic Pain	Superficial Somatic Pain
Sensitive to stretch, ischemia & inflammation	Initiated by stimulation of nociceptors in ligaments, tendons, bones, blood vessels, fascia, muscles	Initiated by activation of nociceptors in skin or other superficial tissue
Diffuse, difficult to locate, referred to a distant, usually superficial structure	Characterised by dull, aching, poorly localised pain.	Characterised by sharp, well defined and clearly located pain
Accompanied by nausea, vomiting	Examples are: Sprain and broken bones	Examples are: Minor wounds and First degree Burns
Characterised by sickening, deep, squeezing, dull nature		

c) Neuropathic -Pain arising from injury to or disfunctioning of central or peripheral nervous system. Peripheral neuropathic pain is often described as burning, tingling, electrical, stabbing or pins and needles.

**Table 2: Difference between Nociceptive and Neuropathic Pain [3]**

	Nociceptive Pain	Neuropathic Pain
Description of pain	Aching, localised, toothache like, sharp, squeezing	Shooting, radiating, stabbing, burning, electric shock like
Movement impact	Associated with movement	Independent
Physical examination	Normal response	Allodynia, hyperalgesia, vasomotor changes
Examples	Injury, post operative	Peripheral neuropathies, shingles, cancer pain
Treatment strategies	More classical approach, conventional analgesics	Biopsychosocial approach, conventional analgesics (with or without antidepressants, anticonvulsants etc.)

d) Psychosomatic- Chronic pain almost invariably has an emotional and behavioural component.

## 2) Duration

**a) Acute-** Most commonly a physiological response to an injury. It resolves with the disappearance of a noxious stimulus or within time frame of a normal healing process.

**b) Chronic** - It can either be associated with an ongoing pathological process, such as RA or malignancy or be present for longer than is consistent with a normal healing time. Pain is arbitrarily describes as chronic if it persists for longer than 3 months. It is often associated with disability and a significant behaviour response. It is sometimes divided into pain associated with cancer and pain associated with non malignant condition.

Some other terms related to pain are as under:

**a) Phantom Pain:** Pain felt in a part of the body that has been amputated, or from which the brain no longer receives signals. It is a type of neuropathic pain.

**b) Psychogenic Pain:** also called as "Psychalgia" or "Somatoform Pain"; caused, increased, or prolonged by mental, emotional, or behavioural factors. Headache, back pain, and stomach pain are sometimes diagnosed as Psychogenic.

**c) Breakthrough Pain:** transitory acute pain that comes on suddenly and is not alleviated by the patient's regular pain management, commonly seen in cancer patients.

**d) Pain Insensitivity:** seen in an inborn abnormality of the nervous system known as "Congenital insensitivity to Pain" (CIP). Children incur carelessly repeated damage to their tongue, eyes, joints, skin and muscles. Some die before adulthood and others have reduced life expectancy.

**Assessment of Pain-** Pain should be assessed by

- Duration
- Severity, e.g. does the patient wake up because of the pain
- Site
- Character, e.g. stabbing, throbbing, crushing, cramp like
- Persistent or intermittent
- Relieving or aggravating factors
- Accompanying symptoms
- Distribution of pain
- In children pain can be assessed by child's crying voice, posture, movement and colour.

## Shoola (Ayurvedic Review)

There is no special chapter for pain or it's related synonyms in the *Brihatrayee* of *Ayurveda* but it is discrete in several chapters during the

description of disease, either it's *Purvaroop* (prodromal symptoms), *Roopa* (signs and symptoms) or *Upadrava* (complications). From the very beginning in the *Bheshaja Chatushka* of *Charaka*, there is different medicinal preparation for the management of pain in different parts of the body. Likewise in the *Charaka Sutra sthana* 4<sup>th</sup> Chapter there are two *Mahakashaya* directly mentioned for the management of pain i.e. *Shoola prashamana* and the *Vedanasthapana*, also there is another one which directly relates to pain management as *Angamarda prashamana*. In *Madhava Nidana*, first time a special chapter is mentioned for *Shoola*. In Ayurveda all types of pain are considered under *Vata* aggravation. Pain can only occur due to the *Vata* involvement and it cannot occur if *Vata* is not involved in it. There are different synonyms related with Pain in *Ayurveda* i.e.-*Shoola*, *Rooja*, *Rook*, *Vedana*, *Arati* etc. As *Vata Dosh* is responsible for every movement and action in the body, the hindrance in *Vata* flow leads to the pain. As *Vata* also allows the other *Pitta* and *Kapha* humors to function in the body, therefore *Vata* should flow easily in the body without any obstruction. The obstruction in *Vata* flow causes pain. Diet having similar properties causes aggravation of *Vata Dosh* due to which *Vata* gets situated in one suitable part of the body and attains growth and leads to the manifestation of symptoms caused by aggravated *Vata Dosh*. Some of the physical activities (*Charaka Chikitsa Sthan* 28<sup>th</sup> chapter) causing aggravation of *Vata Dosh* are *Ativyavaya* (excessive sexual indulgence), *Prajagara* (remaining awake at night in excess), *Vishamat Upachara* (inappropriate *Panchkarama*/ other therapies), *Ati Dosh* *Sravana* (excess of panchkarma therapies), *Ati Asruk Sravana* (excess *Raktmokshan* or excess bleeding), *Ati Plavana* (excessive swimming), *Ati Langhana* (excessive fasting), *Atyadhva* (walking for long distance), *Ativyayama* (physical activities or exercise in excess), *Dhatu Samkshayaat* (depletion of body tissues, loss of *Dhatu*), *Chinta Shoka Karshana* (weakening due to excess stress, grief and worries), *Roga Ati Karshana* (Excessive emaciation because of affliction of disease), *Dukhshaya* (sleeping over uncomfortable beds and sitting), *Vega Vidharana* (suppression of natural urges), *Ama* (product of improper digestion and metabolism), *Marmaghata* (injuries to *Marmas*), riding over an elephant, camel, horses, or fast moving vehicles. These all aggravated factors give rise to following symptoms.

[4]

- *Sankoch*- contraction
- *Parvanam stambha bheda*- stiffness of joints and pain
- *Loma harsha*- horripilation
- *Pralapa*- irrelevant talk
- *Pani prushta shiro graha*- stiffness of hands, back, and head
- *Khanjya Pangulya Kubjatva*- Lameness of hands, and feet, and hunch back, shortness
- *Anganam Sosha*- atrophy, emaciation of limbs
- *Anidra*- insomnia
- *Garbha shukra rajo nasha*- destruction of foetus, semen and periods
- *Spandanam gatra suptata*- twitching sensation and numbness in the body
- *Shiro nasa akshi jatrnam griva hundanam*-shrinkage of the head, nose, eyes, clavicular region and neck
- *Bheda*- splitting pain
- *Toda* –pricking pain
- *Arti*- excruciating pain
- *Aakshepa*- convulsions
- *Moha*- unconsciousness
- *Aayasa*- excess tiredness and similar other signs and symptoms.

Apart from the influence of *Tridoshic* factors, there are other factors that may alter the nature of pain. The main ones are:

- Tissues or *Dhatu*s involved
- Organ or *Kostha* and site involved

- Specific functions of the tissue or organ involved
- The mental state of the victim
- Environmental factors, both endogenous and exogenous

In Ayurveda, all pathologies are brought about through the phenomenon of *Dosha Dushya Samorchana* and this interaction of vitiated *Dosha* with vitiated *Dushya* is governed by two factors; *Srotamsi* and *Ojas*. Increase degree of *Srotodushti* and *Oja Disorder* makes the disease gradually chronic, as chronic pain condition in *Amavata*, where as in acute pain conditions such increase degree of *Srotodushti* and *Ojodushti* is not seen and can be treated by pacifying *Vata Dosha* only.

**Classification**

Type of Pain /*Shoola* according to *Ayurveda*:

**1) Sushruta (11 types of shoola):**

*Vataja, Pittaja, Kaphaja, Sannipataja (Gulma upadrava Shoola-Su.Ut.42/68-69) Parsva Shoola, Kukshi Shoola, Hrit Shoola, Vasti Shoola, Mootra Shoola, Vit Shoola, Avipaka/Anna Dosaja Shoola.*

**2) Madhavakara (8 types of Shoola):**

*Vataja, Pittaja, Kaphaja, Vata-pittaja, Vata-kaphaja, Pitta-kaphaja, Sannipataja, Amaja Parinama Shoola and Annadrava Shoola* are special types of *Shoola* closely resemble with peptic ulcers and have strong relationships with the food intake.

In all types, *Vata* is the predominant causative factor.

**Table 3: Characteristics of Shoola according to Different Doshas [5]**

Type of Shoola	Nature of Shoola	Aggravating Factor
<i>Vataja</i>	Pricking or tearing	During cold weather, in the evening, during or after digestion of food
<i>Pittaja</i>	Burning sensation	During mid day, mid night, digestion, in rainy season
<i>Kaphaja</i>	Dull aching pain	Severe in mornings at sunrise, in <i>Sishira</i> and <i>Vasanta</i> , and after taking food
<i>Sannipataja</i>	Severe pain	Severe form during all the times

Site of pain due to aggravated *Vata Dosha* seated at different location in our body:

**Table 4: Site of pain due to aggravated Vata dosha [6]**

Site of aggravated Vata dosha	Region of Pain
<i>Kostha</i>	<i>Parshva shoola</i> (pain in flanks)
<i>Sarvanga kupita</i>	<i>Gatra sphurana bhanjana</i> (twitching sensation and breaking pain in the body), <i>Vedana, Paritascha sphutana</i> (feel as joints are getting cracked)
<i>Gudagata</i>	<i>Gudagata shoola</i> (colic pain)
<i>Amashayagata</i>	<i>Hrut nabhi parshva udara ruk</i> (pain in cardiac region, umbilicus, sides of the chest and abdomen)
<i>Pakvashayagata</i>	<i>Pakvashaya gata shoola</i> (colic pain), <i>Trika vedanam</i> (Lumber region pain)

<i>Tvak gata</i>	<i>Tudyate</i> (pricking pain in skin), <i>Parva ruk</i> (pain in joints)
<i>Raktagata</i>	<i>Teevra ruja</i> (acute pain),
<i>Mamsagata &amp; Medogata</i>	<i>Dandmushtihatma</i> (pain as being beaten by stick or someone) <i>Shramitatyartha</i> (exertional pain)
<i>Asthimajjagata</i>	<i>Asthi bheda</i> (cracking of bones and joints), <i>Parvanama sandhi shoola</i> (piercing pain), <i>Satata ruk</i> (constant pain)
<i>Siragata</i>	<i>Manda ruk</i> (Mild pain), <i>Shushyate spandayate</i> (emaciation and throbbing pain)
<i>Snayugata</i>	<i>Khalli</i> (neuralgic pain in feet, shoulder, etc.)
<i>Sandhigata</i>	<i>Prasarana aakunchana pravriti vedana</i> (pain during extension and contractions of the joints)

Because of the subtle nature, *Vata Dosha* provokes and pulls *Pitta* and *Kapha Dosha*. The aggravated *Vata* spreads *Pitta* and *Kapha* into different places of the body and obstructs the channels of circulation leading to the manifestation of various diseases, and drying up of tissue elements like *Rasa Dhatu*, *Rakta Dhatu* etc.

**Table 5: Nature of Pain in Occluded *Vata Dosha* [7]**

Occluded <i>Vata dosha</i>	Nature of Pain
<i>Pitta and Kapha vruta vata</i>	<i>Shoola</i> (colic pain)
<i>Raktavrita vata</i>	<i>Daha Arti Tvak Mamsa Antarajo</i> (excessive pain and burning sensation in area between skin and muscle tissue)
<i>Asthi avrita vata</i>	<i>Soochibhiriva Tudyate</i> (feeling as if pricked with needles)
<i>Majjavrita vata</i>	<i>Pariveshtanam</i> (twisting pain), <i>Shoola</i> (colic pain)
<i>Annavrita vata</i>	<i>Kuksha ruk jeerne</i> (pain in pelvic region after intake of food and alleviation after digestion of food)
<i>Pureesha avrita vata</i>	<i>Parikartana</i> (gripping pain), <i>Shroni Vankshana Prstha Ruk</i> (pain in hips, groin, back)

### Principle of Management of Pain

In modern science use of pain killers have adverse effect on our body system as:

- Gastro intestinal - erosions, peptic ulcerations, esophagitis, gastric bleeding, gastric irritations.
- Renal - CRF, papillary necrosis, nephritis, sodium and water retention.
- Hepatic - Raised transaminases, Hepatic failure
- CNS- Headache, mental confusion, behavioural changes, seizure, confusion.
- Haematological- Bleeding, thrombocytosis, anaemia, agranulocytosis.
- Others- Asthma, Nasal polyps, skin rashes, pruritis, angioedema.

According to Ayurveda, *Vata* is the main *Dosha* involved in pain. It is responsible for generating and spreading the pain. However a specific fraction of *Vayu* is responsible for pain in a specific region such as; generalised pain is caused by *Vyana Vayu*, headache- *Prana Vayu* and *Vyana Vayu*, abdominal pain- *Samana* and *Apana Vayu* and chest pain- *Vyana* and *Prana Vayu*. So to avoid above adverse effects of pain killers, *Ayurvedic* pain

management therapies should be adopted that are safe and natural ways effective in both acute and chronic pain.

*Ayurvedic* management is mainly based on:

**a) *Dosha Tartamaya Diagnosis***- Main *Dosha* for causing pain should be eliminated first and that diagnosis is made on the basis of symptoms produced.

**b) *Avarana Concept***<sup>[8]</sup>- In case of *Avruta Vata Dosha*, the *Dosha* which covers the *Vata Dosha* or *Avarana* is treated first. *Vyatyasa Chikitsa* is indicated in case of *Avruta Vata Dosha* treatment i.e. alternative cold and hot therapy is given to the patient.

**c) *Shodhana chikitsa (Purification methods)***- It includes *Panchkarma* therapies as *Snehana*, *Swedana*, *Kashaya Dhara*, *Abhyanga*, *Basti*, *Agnikarma*, *Lepa*, *Raktamokshana*, *Nasya*, altogether eliminate the burden of inflammatory signalling molecules, promote cellular cleansing, and induce healing from the root of disease.

**d) Shamana chikitsa (Pacification methods)**

**1.Ahara (Diet):** Ayurveda considers that incompletely digested food produces toxins and impurities which are absorbed and travel throughout the body to localize in tissues to disrupt their function leading to chronic pain. Consumption of food that are nutritious and easy to digest like green vegetables, fruits, juices. Avoid oily, fried and spicy food.

**2.Vihara (Sleep, Exercise and Yoga):** Yoga approaches to relax, energize, remodel and strengthen body and psyche. The *Asanas* and *Pranayama* harmonize the physiological system and initiate a “relaxation response” in the neuro-endocrinal system. This consists of decreased metabolism, quieter breathing, stable blood pressure, reduced muscle tension, lower heart rate and slow brain wave pattern. As neural discharge pattern gets modulated, hyper arousal of the

nervous system and static load on postural muscle come down. The function of viscera improves with the sense of relaxation and sleep gets deeper and sustained; fatigue diminishes. Sleep and Meditation also helps individual deal with emotional aspects of chronic pain, reduce anxiety and depression effectively and improve the quality of life perceived.

**3. Vedna Sthapan Mahakshaya (Anodynes)<sup>[9]</sup>-** it includes drugs as; *Shala, Kataphala, Kadamb, Padmaka, Tumba, Mocharasa, Shirisha, Vajjul, Elvaluk, Ashoka*. Other *Ganas* mentioned in *Sushruta Sutrasathan* 38<sup>th</sup> chapter for management of pain includes; *Vidarigandadi, Varunadi, Viratvadi, Pipplayadi, Eladi, Shyamadi, Brutyadi, Kakkolyadi, Ushakadi, Parushakadi, Lakshadi, Laghu and Mahat Panchmoola*.

Some pain dominant disease conditions and their treatment are enlisted in the following table:

**Table 6: Ayurvedic Formulations in Pain dominant conditions**

Pain Dominant Conditions	Compound Formulations
<i>Ajirna</i> (indigestion)	<i>Laghusutashekhar, Shankh bhasma, Vidanga Churna</i>
<i>Udavarta</i> (inverted <i>Vata</i> )	<i>Gokshuradi Guggul, Phalatrikadi Guggul, Dwirutar Hingwadichurna, Vachaadi Churna</i>
<i>Krumi</i> (worm infestation)	<i>Chaturthak Yoga, Argavdhakapila tablet, Vidanga Churna, Vidangaarishta</i>
<i>Gulma</i> (abdominal lump)	<i>Phalatrikadi Guggul, Arogyavardhini, Chaturthak Yoga, Panchasakar Churna, Talisadi Churna</i>
<i>Stree rog</i> (gyne disorder)	<i>Chandraprabha, Gokshuradi Guggul, Dashmoola Arishta, Kalingakadi Yoga, Varangak Kshar</i>
<i>Bala roga</i> (pediatric disorder)	<i>Chaturthak Yoga, Vidanga powder, Tamra Bhasma, Shankh Bhasma, Vidangarishta</i>
<i>Vatarakta</i> (gout)	<i>Patoladi yoga, Triphala guggul, Yograj Guggul, Ekangaveer, Vatavidhwansa, Chaturthak Yoga</i>
<i>Antrapuchha daha</i> (appendicitis)	<i>Shobhanjan, Triphala Guggul, Patoladi Yoga, Rajani Yoga, Gandhak Rasayan</i>
<i>Vidradhi</i> (abscess)	<i>Shobhanjan, Triphala Guggul, Patoladi Guggul, Gandhak Rasayan, Rajani Yoga</i>
<i>Sandhigat vata</i> (arthritis)	<i>Gokshuradi Guggul, Triphala Guggul, Panchakashya Yoga, Kusth powder, Shobhanjan, Vatagajankush, Chaturthak Yoga</i>
<i>Ashmari</i> (calculi)	<i>Pashanbedhadi Churna, Eladi Yoga, Gokshuradi Guggul, Varunadi Kwatha</i>
<i>Shiroroga</i> (headache)	<i>Pathyadi Yoga, Laxminarayan Rasa, Tribhuvankirti, Mahasudarshana powder, Sootashekhara, Panchakashay Yoga</i>
<i>Hritshoola</i> (chest pain -angina)	<i>Mrigashringa Bhasma, Gokshuradi Guggul, Arjunarishta, Prabhakar tablet</i>

**CONCLUSION**

According to the Ayurveda, facts about *Shoola* (i.e. pain) is discretely described in different places. *Shoola* occurs due to vitiation of *Vata Dosha*. *Vata Dosha* is vitiated by *Srotas Avarodha* (obstruction of channels) and *Dhatu Kshaya* (depletion of tissues/malnutrition). Use of modern

pain killers hampers the defence mechanism of our body. So pain therapies which effectively subsides pain, stiffness, swelling and tenderness of affected part, enhance circulation, promote strength, improve mobility and provide comfort enabling to carryout daily activities without hindrance. Main

aim of the treatment is to pacify vitiated *Vata Dosha*. *Ayurvedic* pain management therapies are safe and natural ways that help in the management of different kinds of pain. Increase in the pain threshold and reduction of the cause of pain is a whole new approach towards pain.

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