

THE CONCEPT OF AVARANA IN AYURVEDA – A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Every genre of science acts by standing within their methodologies. Being an independent health science, Ayurveda also has its methodology in understanding and managing health and disease. The ideas and principles evolved from Indian schools of philosophy form the base of Ayurvedic principles. *Avarana* is one among them, which has been often mentioned in the texts but has very less unanimity and clarity among the readers. In this article, the mentioning's regarding *Avarana* have been scrutinised, systematically presented, and conclusions have been drawn from them that *Avarana* is a concept that has its influence in diagnosis as well as treatment, and it is not confined to just *Vata* disorders.

Keywords: Ayurveda, *Avarana*, *Vata*

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda's basic principles have their origin from the cornerstones of Indian philosophy. The relation between *Panchabhuta Siddhanta* and *Tridosha Siddhanta* is an example of the same. Ayurveda understands the human body as a conglomeration of various physiological processes. *Doshas* are terms which denote these processes, denoting life. When they complement each other in maintaining normalcy, it results in health and when not, in disease. *Doshas* often undergo vitiation independently and in association with other factors. A group of imperceptible pathological processes wherein the qualities responsible for the functioning of these *Doshas* undergo deviation from normalcy is called *Avarana*. It comprises of two components: the vitiator or *Avaraka*, and the vitiated, or *Avrutha*. It is one of the grey areas among the Ayurvedic concepts. The knowledge regarding *Avarana* is inevitable to an Ayurveda Vaidya, as it significantly influences diagnosis, prognosis, line of management, time of medications, etc.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The Ayurvedic texts including *Brihatrayis*, *Laghutrayis*, and their commentaries were explored for the words '*Avarana*', '*Avruta*', '*Ruddha*', '*Abhibhava*', '*Abhibhuta*', and their synonyms. The Sanskrit lexicons including *Sabdakalpadruma*, *Shabdastomamahanidhi*, *Ayurveda Sabdakosha*, Monier William's Sanskrit Dictionary and Apte Practical Sanskrit English dictionary were examined for the literary meanings of these words. The existing literature database from Ayurvedic research was also searched. The keywords '*Avarana*', '*Vatakopa*', '*Samprapti*' were searched for in the journals indexed under PubMed and Scopus. The articles under the timeline 2000 to 2019 were searched for.

AVARANA – A GRAMMATICAL EXPLANATION

Etymology: ¹

The word *Avarana* is derived from 'Aa' + 'Vr' + 'Lyut' means to cover, to conceal, or to obstruct.

Synonyms:²

Abhibhava: Overpowering/Predominance

Ruddha: Obstruct/Impede

Aacchadana: Cover

Veshtana: Encompass/Encircle

AVARANA IN AYURVEDIC TERMS

Beyond the *lakshanas* or symptoms of *Avarana*, no accurate mentions regarding the concept of *Avarana* are available in any of the classical texts or their commentaries. One of the very few practically feasible definitions of *Avarana* is seen in Ayurveda Sabdakosa.

Abhisarpata balavata doshena abhibhuto durbalo dosah pratyavruttah sat avrutah ityuchyate //

Here, the stronger *dosha* impedes (in terms of *Guna* and *Karma*) the weaker one, resulting in the stronger one more conspicuously exhibiting its *lakshanas* and that of the weaker one getting suppressed or altered. This process is called *Avarana*.³

Here, the stronger *Dosha* means that the *Dosha* that has been vitiated by its causes independently (*Svatantra dosha kopa*). Due to the influence of this independent *Dosha kopa*, certain functions and properties of other *Doshas* are also altered. This is called dependent or *Paratantra dosha kopa*. Here, the independent, strong one is called *Avaraka* and the weak impeded one is called the *Avruta*. *Avaraka* is to be estimated from the diet and regimen of the patient that are potential risk factors, and also the factors that have aggravated or relieved the presentations of the disease (*Upashaya* and *Anupashaya*).

THE CONCEPT OF AVRUTA VATA

Avarana, in *Samhitas*, is often seen explained along with *Vata dosha*. When the *Sampraptis* of *Vatavyadhis* are mentioned, half of the total *Sampraptis* have itself been allotted to *Avarana*.⁴ the *Upastambha Vata* mentioned in treatment also points towards *Avarana*.⁵ If the etiological factors leading to *kevala Vata* vitiation are kept apart, in all other pathogeneses, *Avarana* plays a key role. There are broadly two types of *Avaranas* mentioned in the *Samhitas*. The first of them is when *Vata* gets *Avrita* by other *Doshas* and *Dushyas*. Next comes *Anyonyavarana*, wherein the *Avaraka* and *Avruta* are *Vata* itself. On examining them separately:

Dosha-dushyavruta Vata:

Other *Doshas* and *Dushyas* get vitiated by their etiological factors, causing hindrance to the normal functioning of *Vata*. Hence, a patient in whom this pathological process has taken place shows various symptoms denoting derangement of *Vata* too. Hence it can be summarized as a condition where *Vata* gets vitiated by a set of etiologies that are not *Vata*-vitiating but exhibits *Vata-vikruti*. For example, in *Kaphavruta Vata*, along with the classical *Vata* symptoms, the patient presents with a desire for *Langhana*, *Ayasa*, *Ruksha*, *Ushna*.⁶ This indicates an independent vitiation of *Kapha* and dependent vitiation of *Vata*. Similarly, if *Raktavruta*, *Medovruta Vatas* and similar conditions are examined, they all reveal etiological factors having the potential to vitiate respective *Dhatus*, leading to the symptoms of the *Dhatus*, and also an associated vitiation of *Vata*. The reason behind the presentation of the *Avaraka* besides the vitiation of *Vata* can also be attributed to the *Yogavahitva* of *Vata*⁷

Anyonyavarana:

In the process mentioned above, when the independently vitiated component is also a subtype of *Vata*, then it is called *Anyonyavarana*. In *Samhitas*, the causative factors leading to the vitiation of each subtype of *Vata* are mentioned elaborately.⁸ an independently vitiated *Vata* leads to the hampering of the functions and thereby presentation of symptoms of another *Vata*. For example, in *Pranavruta Vyana*, the *Avaraka* is *Prana*, and *Avruta* is *Vyana*. Here, *Prana* gets vitiated due to the etiological factors like *Raukshya*, *Vyayama*, etc. and influences the functioning of *Vyana*.⁹

IDENTIFICATION OF AVRUTA VATA

Charaka says that *Avarana* is to be clinically understood by two attributes: *Sthana*, *Karma*.¹⁰ *Sthana* here means the primary seats of these five subtypes of *Vata*.¹¹

Table.1 Subtype of *Vata* with its primary functional area

No.	Subtype of <i>Vata</i>	Seat
1	<i>Prana</i>	<i>Murdha</i> (Head)
2	<i>Udana</i>	<i>Uras</i> (Chest/Thorax)
3	<i>Samaana</i>	<i>Grahani</i> (Duodenum)
4	<i>Vyana</i>	<i>Sarvadeha</i> (Wholebody)
5	<i>Apana</i>	<i>Pakvasaya</i> (Large gut)

The occluded *Vata*, along with the symptoms of the vitiated *Doshas* or *Dushyas*, exhibits the excess (hyperfunctioning) or deficit (hypofunction) of their functions in these sites.¹² For example, *Kaphavruta Vyana*, when examined, shows heaviness of the whole body (*Sarvagatra gaurava*), which is a *Kapha* symptom, and along with that, it also presents with loss of movements at various sites (*cheshtahani*), which is a *Vyana*-oriented symptom. Example: Restricted joint movements (*Parvagraha*), Abnormal gait (*Skhalita Gati*), etc.¹³ Similarly, in *Pittavruta Apana Vata*, the change in the colour of faeces, the symptoms like burning sensation in the organs that lie in the *Pakvasaya* which are indicative of *Pitta*, whereas difficulties in defecation like pain are representative of *Apana Vayu kopa*.¹⁴

The same is the situation in *Anyonyavarana* too. Some interesting examples regarding the same would be the *Avarana* of different *Vatas* by *Apana*. Here, the vitiation happening at *Apana* gradually ascends to the sites of other *Vatas* and causes myriads of symptoms. The symptoms arising from the suppression of urges of *Apana* region justify the above observation.¹⁵

Gulma: *Apanavruta Samaana*, Hrdroga: *Apanavruta Vyana* and *Udana* , Siroroga, *Drshti vaikalyam*: *Apanavruta Prana* and similar symptoms are evidence of *Anyonya avaranas*.

AVARANA: DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT APPROACH

Diagnosis: Certainly, the diagnostic tools in *Avarana* are also the *Nidana panchaka*. Among them, *Upashaya* and *Anupashaya* have high importance. In a disease that is assumed to be *Avaranajanya*, the primary objective must be to identify the *Avaraka*. This is because even while presenting with many of the symptoms of the *Avruta dosha*, there need not be a supporting aetiology for the vitiation of this *dosha*. Rather, there would also be etiologies for the *Avaraka doshas* which might need detailed examination for identification.

In short, it is important to discriminate if the effect or *Karya* in the patient is associated with the cause or *Karana*. When there is no certainty regarding the *Avaraka*, the tools *Upashaya* and *Anupashaya* are to be used. Moreover, the chances of error are very high when the *lakshanas* alone are targeted and treated in such conditions.

Treatment: Proper deciphering of the *Avaraka* and administering a precise intervention against it is the basic aim of treatment. When the influence of *Avaraka* is pacified, the *Avruta dosha* also gets pacified by itself. If the seat of *Avruta dosha* has undergone an insult or injury in the process of *Avarana*, then the treatment must address the *Avruta dosha* too. The *Kapha chikitsa* mentioned in *Kaphavaruta Vata*, *Pramehahara chikitsa* or *Medohara chikitsa* in *Medovruta Vata*, etc. are indicative of this line of management.¹⁶ Similarly, in *Vidavruta Vata*, the indication of *Malanulomana*, advising *Mutrala dravyas* in *Mutravruta Vata*, etc. reflects the importance of *Avaraka* in *chikitsa*.¹⁷ Hence the mainline treatment of each *Avaraka* is targeted towards the *Avaraka*. The use of *Shita-Ushna-Snigdha-Ruksha* alternately is adopted in *Pitta-Rakta* related *Avaranas* only. It is not a generalized principle.¹⁸ In short the knowledge regarding *Avarana* helps the physician have a better understanding of *Samprapti*, which makes the treatment precise, simple, and cost-effective

Oushadhakala and *Avarana*: one of the other advantages of knowing the *Avaraka* is that it facilitates the precise administration concerning *Oushadhakala*. *Avaraka* is the target here too.

Table.2 Oushdhakala w.r.t Avarana¹⁹

Sl No	Condition of Avarana	Time of administration of Medicine
1	<i>Kaphavruta Vata</i>	Empty stomach
2	<i>Pittavruta Vata</i>	Middle of the food
3	<i>Apanavruta</i>	Before food
4	<i>Samaanavruta</i>	Middle of the food
5	<i>Vyanavruta</i>	After breakfast
6	<i>Udanavruta</i>	After evening diet

IS AVARANA CONFINED TO VATA ALONE?

Avarana is often considered as a pathological process that comes to play in *Vatavyadhis* alone (probably due to its mention along with *Vatavyadhis* in *Samhitas*). But *Avarana* is mentioned in numerous other *Sampraptis* too. Some examples for the same are:

When the disease *Atatvabhinivesha* (a psychological problem) is explained, *Charaka* mentions the word '*Rajomohavrutatmana*'. Here, *Manas* is said to undergo *Avarana* by *Rajas* and *Tamas*, i.e. it must be understood that the *Gunas* and *Karmas* of *Manas* are influenced by *Rajas* and *Tamas*²⁰.

In the context of *Jvara*, it is explained that *Agni* undergoes *Avarana* by *Ama*, which means that the formation of *Ama* hampers the normal functioning of *Agni* or *Agnibala*.²¹

When *Charaka* explains *Vatadi prakritis*, he observes that depending on the *Doshas* that exert *Abhibhava* on the site of *Agni* (*Grahani*), the *Agni* of the person varies from *Vishama* to *Manda* or *Tikshna*. This indicates that depending on the *Doshas* that influence the *Grahani*, the *Agni*, which itself is dependent on *Grahani*, undergoes similar variation. In these conditions, the influence happening is *Abhibhava* or in other words, *Avarana*.²²

CONCLUSION

Among the *Brhatrayis*, *Charaka* and *Vagbhata* seem to describe regarding *Avarana* in detail. *Avarana* is a functional derangement in the body. It is not only seen in *Vatavyadhis* but also many other diseases. It also plays an important role in the manifestation of various symptoms (symptomatic complexes or *Lakshana samuccaya*) within a particular disease. Hence for the precise understanding of pathogenesis, disease diagnosis, and treatment strategy, this concept needs to be clarified. The utility of *Oushadhakala* is expected to be more in *Anyonya Avarana*. It helps *Vaidya* make his intervention more precise. As epochs are changing, newer and newer diseases have been occurring. The role of *Avarana* has to be examined and understood in them too.

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