

A CONCEPTUAL STUDY OF AMA DESCRIBED IN AYURVEDA

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is an ancient science of life. It has its own basic concepts like *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, *Mala*, *Agni* etc. *Ama* is also one of them. It plays a major role in *Dhatu* (*Dosha*, *Dhatu*, *Mala*) *Vaishmya* (vitiation) and production of various diseases in the body. According to *Ayurveda* *Mandagni* (hypofunctioning of digestive fire) is the basic cause of all diseases. *Ama* is considered as *Apakwa Ahara Rasa* (unripe, undigested or partially digested food) which is produced due to *Mandagni*. Further it circulates all over the body through *Srotas* (channel of circulation) causes *Sroto-vaigunya* (vitiation in channel of circulation) and plays a major role in manifestation of various diseases. *Dosha*, *Dhatu* and *mala* vitiated by *Ama* are known as *Sama Dosha*, *Sama Dushya* and *Sama Mala*. If the treatment principle of disease is planned by understanding the concept of *Sama* and *Niram*, it would give a better result. In this review article the concept of *Ama* is described from different *Ayurvedic Smahitas* and texts.

Keywords: Concept of *Ama*, *Sama*, *Niram*, *Agni*.

INTRODUCTION

'*Ama*' is one of the most important basic concepts described in *Ayurveda*. It is helpful to understand the disease pathology and determining its line of treatment. According to *Ayurveda* the root cause of all disease is *Mandagni* (hypofunction of *Agni*).¹ Due to hypo

functioning of *Agni* proper digestion of food doesn't takes place leading to formation of *Ama*, which is responsible for the manifestation of almost all diseases.² In all diseases there is the stages of *Dosha* and *Dushya Vaishmya* (vitiation). For better treatment it is

important to understand that the *Dushit* (vitiated) *Dosha* or *Dushya* is either *Sama* or *Niram*. So, in this article the concept of *Ama*, its production at different levels and its detailed overview in all *Samhitas* has been described.

Aim and Objectives:

To study the concept of *Ama* and its importance to decide the line of treatment.

Materials and methods:

Ayurvedic Samhitas and textual materials have been used for this study various references have been collected. Modern texts, related websites and related articles have also been searched.

Conceptual study:

Definition of *Ama*:

- Due to the hypo-functioning of the *Ushma* (*Agni*), the first *Dhatu* i.e. the *Rasa* is not properly formed. Instead the *Annarasa* (taken food) undergoes *Dustatva* (fermentation or putrefaction) being retained in the *Amashaya* (small intestine). It is the state of *Rasa* which is called *Ama*.³
- If *Kayagni* (digestive fire of the body) fails to perform normal functions leads to accumulation of undigested food material inside *Amashaya*, which is the initial *Rasadhatu* is called *Ama*.⁴
- Food, which is improperly digested having foul smell, excess unctuousness and develops lethargy in all body organs is called *Ama*.⁴
- Due to hypo-functioning of *Agni* proper digestion of food doesn't takes place leading to formation of *Ama*, which is responsible for the manifestation of almost all diseases.⁴
- Some people accept *Ama* as improperly digested food.⁴
- Some others consider accumulated *Mala* (excretory products) as *Ama*.⁴
- Due to *Nidan Sevan* (having etiological factors) *Agni* is vitiated and is unable to digest even less amount of food and this undigested food after getting fermented turns to poisonous substance.⁵

Analysis of above definitions yields that *Ama* is a stage of premature *Paka* (digestion) before attaining its final *Paka* and this *Ama* can be formed at any level of *Agni* i.e. *Jatharagni*, *Bhutagni* and *Dhatvagni*.

Ama *Nidana* (Etiological factors of *Ama*):

Mandagni is the main cause of *Ama*. The *Nidanas* (etiological factors) which cause *Agnimandya* (hypofunction of *Agni*) may produce *Ama*. In *Ayurvedic* texts the causative factors of *Ama* are described in various places which can be classified in following manner.

1. *Aharaja Nidana* (Dietetic factors):

Agni is deranged by *Abhojana* (fasting), *Ajirna Bhojana* (eating during indigestion), *Atibhojana* (overeating), *Vishambhojana* (irregular eating), *Asatmya Bhojana* (intake of unsuitable), *Guru* (heavy), *Sheet* (cold), *Atiruksha* (too rough), *Sandushta Bhojana* (contaminated food).⁶

Ahara Parinamkara Bhava plays active role on the food digestion process, Like *Ushna* digests, *Vayu* absorbs, *Kleda* produces looseness, *Sneha* generate softness, *Kala* brings it to complete transformation and *Samayoga* means the use and need of the *Ashta Ahara-vidhi*, *Ritu* (season), *Desha* (place) etc. *Samayoga* is interpreted as balance use of 8 factors regarding diet. Imbalance state of *Ahara Parinamkar Bahva* causes *Agni Vikruti* (vitiating of *Agni*) which is the main cause of *Amotpatti* (production of *Ama*).^{7,8}

2. *Viharaja Nidana* (Behavioral factors):

Mithya Vihara means lifestyle, which is unfavorable, unwanted and inconvenient to the body resulting into imbalance of *Doshas*.

- *Atyambupan* (more intake of water)
- *Vishamashana* (irregular dietary habits)
- *Vegadharana* (suppression of vomiting and other natural *Vegas*)
- *Swapnaviparyaya* (day sleep after lunch and late-night sleep or night awakening)

3. *Manasika Nidanas* (Psychological factors):

Mental condition also plays big role in the production of *Ama*. Such factors have been mentioned by *Acharya Charaka* in *Vimanasthana*.

Even the wholesome food also taken in proper quantity, does not get digested due to *Chinta* (anxiety), *Shoka* (grief), *Bhaya* (fear), *Krodh* (anger), *Dukhashayyaprajagarana* (uncomfortable bed).

4. Others:

- Improper administration of *Vamana*, *Virechana* and *Snehana*.

- *Vyadhi Karshana* – wasting of the tissue which results due to prolonged illness.
- *Desha-Kala-Ritu Vaishmya* – allergic states or change in place climate.
- *Vegadharana* means suppression of natural *Vegas* like bowel habit, micturition, tears, sleep etc. resulting into the vitiation of *Vata Dosha* which can further cause vitiation of *Agni* and *Tridosha prakopa*.

<i>Aharaja Nidana</i>	<i>Viharaja Nidana</i>	<i>Manasik Nidana</i>	<i>Anya</i>
<i>Abhojana</i>	<i>Viruddha cheshta</i>	<i>Kama</i>	Emaciation due to chronic disease
<i>Atibhojana</i>	<i>Nishchaltava</i>	<i>Krodha</i>	Adverse season habitat and time
<i>Adhyashana</i>	<i>Diwaswapna</i>	<i>Lobha</i>	
<i>Vishamashana</i>	<i>Ratrijagarana</i>	<i>Moha</i>	
<i>Viruddhashana</i>	<i>Vega-Vidharana</i>	<i>Irshya</i>	
	<i>Ativyayama</i>	<i>Bhaya</i>	
	<i>Ativyawaya</i>	<i>Shoka</i>	
	<i>Snigdha Bhojanottara Vyayama</i>	<i>Chinta</i>	
	<i>Vishamashayya Shayan</i>	<i>Deenata</i>	

Pathogenesis of *Ama*:

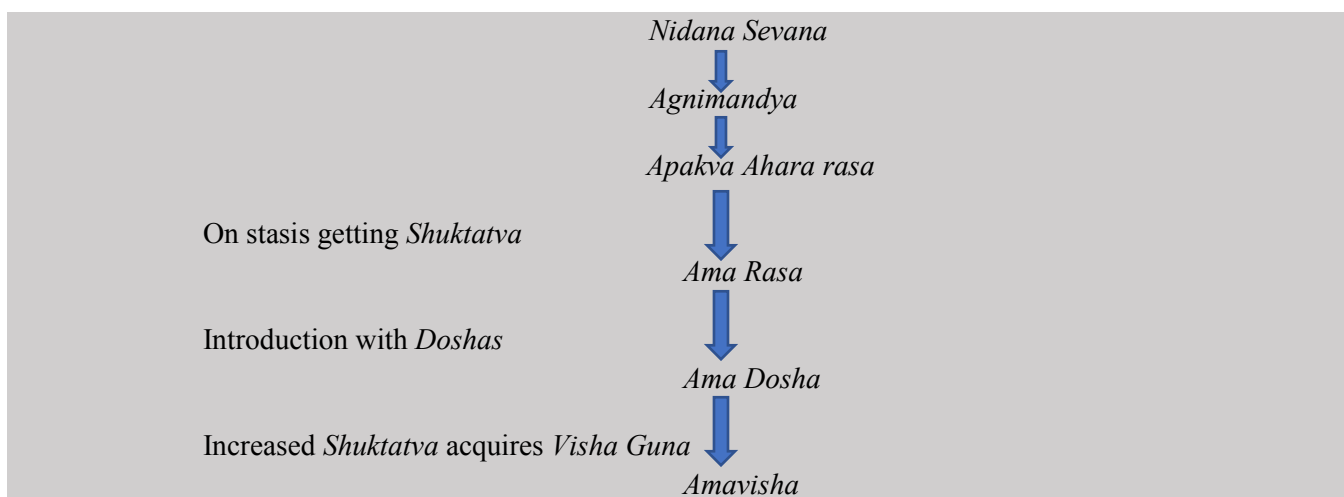
The food which is not digested properly in *Amashaya* exhibits four stages as follows.

- 1) *Apakva Ahara Rasa* – food which is not digested properly and gives rise to *Ajeernadi* diseases.
- 2) *Ama/Ama rasa* – *Apakva Ahara Rasa* in *Amashaya* undergoes *Shuktatva* (fermentation) after some time that is called as *Ama* or *Ama Rasa*.
- 3) *Ama Dosha* – this *Ama* later on becomes pathogenic due to interaction with *Doshas* and is called as *Ama Dosha*.¹²

Ama Visha - on further stasis, this *Ama Dosha* becomes more and more toxic that attains the qualities of *Visha* (poison) is called as *Amavisha*.

The *Dushita* (vitiating) *Vatadi Doshas*, being mixed up with one another, lead to the formation of *Ama Dosha*, very much like the yielding of *Visha* (toxic or poisonous substance) by the spoiled *Kodrava*.¹³

Thus, *Doshas* which are vitiating by this *Ama* and *Dushya* (*Dhatus*) which are further vitiating by these *Doshas* are known as *Sama* (*Sama Dosha* or *Sama Dhātu*). Diseases caused by the involvement of these *Samas* are known as *Sama Vyadhi*.¹⁴



General symptoms of Ama:¹⁵

1. *Srotorodha* (obstruction in *Srotas*); 2. *Balabhransa* (diminution of strength); 3. *Gaurava* (feeling of heaviness); 4. *Anil Mudhata* (disturbance in the normal movement of *Vata*); 5. *Alasya* (laziness); 6. *Apaka* (indigestion); 7. *Nisthivana* (excessive secretion from oral cavity); 8. *Malasanga* (obstruction for urine and stool); 9. *Aruchi* (lack of desire towards food); 10. *Klama* (exhaustion)

Symptoms of Sama and Nirama Dosha: The *Doshas* mixed with *Ama* are referred as 'Sama Doshas' which in turn vitiates the *Dushyas* like *Rasa*, *Rakta*, *Mamsa*, *Meda* etc.

Sama Vata Dosha Lakshana :^{16,17}

1. *Vibandha* (constipation); 2. *Agni Sada* (decreased appetite); 3. *Tandra* (Drowsiness); 4. *Antrakujan* (gurgling in intestine); 5. *Vedana* (pain); 6. *Shotha* (edema); 7. *Toda* (pricking in organs); 8. *Snehadai Vruddhim Aayati Meghe Suryodaye Nishi* (features increase on oleation, during clouds in the sky, during morning, during evening)

2. *Vatjan Gadan* (gives rise to other *Vataj* disorders)

Nirama Vata Dosha Lakshana :¹⁸

1. *Vishado* (clear); 2. *Ruksho* (dry); 3. *Nirgandho* (non-smelling); 4. *Alpa Vedana* (produces little pain); 5. *Snigdhaihi Shanti* (alleviates on application of oil); 6. *Viparit Gunaihi Shanti* (alleviates on administration of opposite properties)

Sama Pitta Dosha Lakshana:^{19,20}

1. *Amla* (sour/ acidic); 2. *Durgandham* (bad smelling); 3. *Haritam* (greenish); 4. *Shyavam* (Blackish); 5. *Guru* (heavy); 6. *Sthiram* (Stable); 7. *Amlapittakar* (gives rise to GERD); 8. *Kantha Hrit Dahakar* (gives rise to burning in chest); 9. *Trishnakar* (increases thirst); 10. *Mukhamayan* (may give rise to other oral diseases); 11. May give rise to other *Pitta Rogas*.

Nirama Pitta Dosha Lakshana:²¹

1. *Tamram* (copper coloured); 2. *Ati Ushnam* (hot); 3. *Katukam* (bitter); 4. *Saram* (spready); 5. *Uragandhi* (foul smelling); 6. *Ruchi Krit* (arouses test); 7. *Vanhi Bala Vardhan* (increases appetite)

Sama Kapha Dosha Lakshana:^{22,23}

1. *Avil* (increased cloudiness); 2. *Tantul* (with fibrils); 3. *Styan* (increased stickiness); 4. *Durgandha* (bad

smelling); 5. *Trit Upaghatakrit* (suppresses thirst); 6. *Kshudha Upaghatalrit* (suppresses appetite); 7. *Yakshma kar* (may give rise to disease *Rajyakshma*); 8. *Mehakar* (may give rise to disease *Prameha*); 9. *Pinas kar* (may give rise to disease rhinitis); 10. May give rise to other *Pitta Rogas*.

Nirama Kapha Dosha Lakshana:²⁴

1. *Nirgandha* (odourless); 2. *Fenwan* (bubbling); 3. *Chhedwan* (can be separated in lumps); 4. *Pindita* (from a lump when spitted); 5. *Pandu* (whitish yellowish); 6. *Aasyavairasya Nashkrit* (arouses test in mouth)

Sama Dushya: The *Dhatus* mixed with *Ama* are referred as 'Sama Dushya'. When *Annavisha* is mixed with *Rasadi Dhatus* it produces various diseases of those *Dhatus*.²⁵

Sama Mala: The *Malas* mixed with *Ama* are referred as 'Sama Mala'. When *Annavisha* enters the urinary bladder and is combined with urine, it causes disorders of the urine and when it is mixed with *Mala* (faeces), it causes many disorders of the abdomen.²⁶

The *Sama Vit* (undigested stool) sinks in water due to heaviness whereas the properly digested stool floats on water.²⁷

DISCUSSION

Ama is one of the most important fundamental concepts of *Ayurveda* to understand the pathophysiology of diseases. According to all *Acharyas* *Ama* is the root cause of many diseases, which forms due to the hypo functioning of *Agni*. Due to *Jatharagnimandya*, *Ahara Rasa* is not digested properly which forms *Apakva Ahara Rasa* i.e. *Ama*. *Apakva Ahara Rasa* in *Amashaya* undergoes *Shuktatva* after some time and that is called as *Ama* or *Ama Rasa*. This *Ama* later on becomes pathogenic due to interaction with *Doshas* it is called as *Ama Dosha*. Further this *Ama Dosha* become more and more toxic that attains the quality of *Visha* is called as *Ama Visha*.

After analyzing the following facts become clear about *Ama*.

1) *Mandagni* is the root cause of production of *Ama* but the *Agni* is not specified by most of the *Acharyas*. So, it is quite clear that anywhere in the body

if *Agni* is not working properly the *Ama* will be produced.

- 2) *Ama* is produced from *Ahara rasa* when it is not properly digested in case of *Jathargnimandya* but in case of other *Agnis* undigested or partially digested metabolites may be *Ama*.
- 3) Place of origin of *Ama* is given as *Amashaya*. But considering the *Agni* at different levels *Ama* can be produced at different levels at different sites in the body.
- 4) All *Acharyas* were having same opinion that *Ama* is the root causes of many diseases.

In various diseases the main cause is imbalance of *Doshas*. The general symptoms of *Ama* are helpful to determine that the vitiated *Doshas* are *Sama* or *Nirama*.

CONCLUSION

The formation of *Ama* occurs due to vitiated function of *Agni*. In normal state the *Agni* is responsible for *Bala* (strength), *Arogya* (health), *Ayu* (longevity) and *Prana* (vitality). But in the other side when its function disturbs it produces *Ama* and become the cause of various disorders because “*Roga Sarve Api Mandagni.*” So, *Agni* should be protected by proper dietary habits and other lifestyles described in *Ayurveda*. In this article the causative factors i.e. *Nidana* are described which are responsible for *Amotpatti*. Avoidance of these *Nidanas* is the primary step to stop the production of *Ama* by *Nidan Pariwarjana*. Ultimately this will be in the greater interest of the society which is also called social welfare.

In *Ayurveda* the cause of any disease is imbalance one or more than one *Doshas*. To decide the right line of treatment it is necessary to determine, weather the imbalanced *Dosha* is *Saam* or *Niram*. By understanding this stage and deciding the line of treatment and drug as per *Dosha Avastha* the treatment will be more successful. So, it will be helpful for the *Vaidyas* to give more fruitful results.

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