

## AMA - A FATAL COMPONENT IN AYURVEDA

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### ABSTRACT

In 'Rigveda' the first Rik starts with "Agni meelee purohitam." meaning agni is purohita, the conductor of rituals to protect the 'pura' or this body. In the pathogenesis of any disease ama is the inevitable factor and it is a consequence of the deranged agni. According to chakrapani, the first stage of any disease is called ama. Grossly, the substance which is unable to attain its finality termed as ama. Formation of this ama may be at the jatharagni level i.e. macro level or at the bhootagni or dhatvagni level i.e. micro level. Ama which is produced at the jatharagni level leads to the formation of the diseases like alasaka, visuchika etc. Where as if it is produced at the bhootagni or dhatvagni

level triggers the morbidity of the srotas there by produces diseases of the respective srotas. Out of 4 variety of srotodoshti, srotosang is the commonest factor in the manifestation of saamarogas. Saamaavastha and saamavyadhi both are different entity. Saamavastha has its own specific or distinguishable clinical features which are either present in saamavyadhi or sometime it diminishes without formation of saamavyadhi. Therefore, it is essential to see the presence or absence of Ama in a patient before starting the treatment, since the line of treatment is totally different in case of Saamavastha (presence of ama) and Niraamavastha (Absence of ama.). On whole, ama is a fatal and inevitable component of the pathogenesis of most of the diseases.

**KEYWORDS:** ama, agni, srotas, saamavastha, saamvyadhi.

### INTRODUCTION

*Amaya* is the specific term given as synonym of disease in *Ayurveda* that means resulting because of *ama*.<sup>[1]</sup> In modern era, due to *pragyaparadha* (Intellectual error),

*asatmendriyarthasamyoga* (Unsuitable conjunction of sense organs with their objects) and *parinama* (Consequence) ignorance of the people towards their healthy status, ingestion of fast food, non-observance of dietetic rules, skipping meals, late night dinners etc. have been increased.<sup>[2]</sup> This tendency leads to the formation of *ama* which is favorable to various kind of diseases. Present day, people are vulnerable to various diseases like allergic skin disorders, hormonal disorders, psychosomatic disorders etc which are ultimate result of *ama*. The concept of *ama* explained in *Ayurveda* is really important for the diagnosis as well as for the treatment of disease. Stages of *ama* determine the severity of disease. After identifying *ama* stage it becomes easy for the treatment i.e. where to intercept or where to combat. Therefore, *Ama* is an inevitable cause for the production of disease.

### **Ama – the unripe**

*Ama* is formed due to the improper digestion of food. In short, the substance which is unable to attain its finality termed as *ama*. For the formation of *ama*, derangement in functioning of *agni* (digestive power) is the leading factor. This derangement may be at the level of *jathargni*, *bhootagni* or *dhatvagni*. According to different *acharyas*, *ama* is the undigested food or improperly formed *annarasa* or improperly formed *aadya rasadhātu*.<sup>[3]</sup> *Acharya charaka* has explored *sthoolaama* formed at the level of *jathargni* that related to *annavahsrotas*.<sup>[4]</sup> *Ama* is not a particular substance but it is combination of different abnormal constituents produced due to impairment of *agni* at any level, anywhere in the body. Thus *ama* is like a *vijatiya dravya* (unwholesome substance) for body and has a prime role in pathogenesis of a disease.

### **Stages of ama**

*Ama* is the abnormal content produced in the body neither useful to yield energy nor for synthesis of *dhatu*s (tissues). With the course of time it goes through three pathological stages i.e. *ama*, *amadasha* and *amavisha*. According to *charaka*, the undigested or improperly formed substance gets *shuktatva* after stagnation into the body for long time called as *ama*.<sup>[5]</sup> *Acharya vagbhata* states that “the first *dhatu* i.e. *rasa* which is not formed due to hypofunctioning of *agni*, being retained in *amashaya* called as *ama*.”<sup>[6]</sup> This *ama* when interacts with *doshas* (humors) acquires ability to vitiate body elements termed as *amadasha*.<sup>[7]</sup> On further stasis it attains toxic characters and become *amavisha*. Since *ama* and *visha* contain opposite qualities, at the stage of *amavisha* it is hard to treat *ama* i.e.

become *dushchikitsya*. *Amavisha* produces acute disease condition due to its fast spreading tendency and contrary treatment of *ama* and *visha* to each other.<sup>[8]</sup>

### **Sthoola ama and Sookshma ama**

*Ama* is again classified into *sthoola ama* and *sookshma ama* on the basis of its site (*sthana*) and feature (*swarooopa*). The conditions of *ama* like undigested food (*apakwa ahara*), improperly formed *annarasa* and *apakwa mala* which are produced at the level of *jathargni* and related to *annavahasrotas* considered as *sthoola amarasa*.<sup>[9]</sup> The diseases like *Alasaka*, *visuchika* etc are produced due to the *sthoola amarasa*. The *amarasa* which crosses *annavahasrotas* and enters into the circulation or produced at the level of *bhootagni* and *dhatvagni* are considered as *sookshma amarasa*.<sup>[10]</sup> The *sookshma amarasa* during its circulation into the body manifests the disease wherever the *srotovayagunya* exist. Different allergic diseases, skin diseases, or those which related to *dhatu*s are because of circulating *sookshma amarasa*.

### **Etiopathogenesis**

The etiological factors of *ama* are grossly classified into two types i.e. direct and indirect.<sup>[11]</sup> The factors which directly influences *agni* considered as direct etiological factors e.g. *adhyashana* (overeating), *virudhhashana* (eating incompatible diet) etc directly influence *agni* and hamper its activities and those first influences *doshas* and then *agni* considered as indirect etiological factors e.g. *divaswapa* (day sleep), *ratrijagarana* (late night sleep) etc firstly disturbs equilibrium of *doshas* and then acts on *agni*. *Ama* has different clinical features and produces various diseases according to the site where it is manifested. According to *Arunadatta*, *ama* possesses inherent qualities or *gunas* like *drava*, *guru*, *snigdha*, *pischila*, *tantumaya*, *dourgandhya* etc.<sup>[12]</sup> These *gunas* indicate the severity of *ama* condition. If *ama* possess all the qualities simultaneously then condition becomes worst. Human body consists of infinite number of *srotas* (channels) for the secretion and transmission of nutrients all over the body as well as to eliminate waste products from the body.<sup>[13]</sup> In the process of pathogenesis, the circulating vitiated *saamadasha* produces disease where integrity of the *srotas* is disturbed. Among the four types of *srotodushti*, *srotosang* (obstruction in channels) is mainly present in *saamavyadhi*. This *srotosang* may be due to the increased production of *ama* or increased production of *kitta bhaga* (waste material) more than the *saarabhaga*. Thus, the *srotodushti* plays important role in manifestation of *samadasha* and to make them capable to generate disease condition.

### Samavastha and Samavyadhi

The interaction between *ama* and *dosha* or *dushya* produces *saama avastha*. *Saamavastha* and *saamavyadhi* both are different entities. *Saama avastha* has its own distinguishable clinical features which are either present in *saama vyadhi* or sometime it vanishes without formation of *saama vyadhi*. *Acharya vagbhata* has mentioned clinical features of *saama avastha* like *srotorodha*, *balabhramsa*, *gaurav*, *anilmoodata*, *alasya* etc.<sup>[14]</sup> Also commentator *Arundatta* has mentioned features like *aanaha*, *kanthdaha*, *aantrakoojana*, *amlika* etc.<sup>[15]</sup> On the basis of these clinical features it becomes easy to rule out *saama avastha* from *saama vyadhi*.

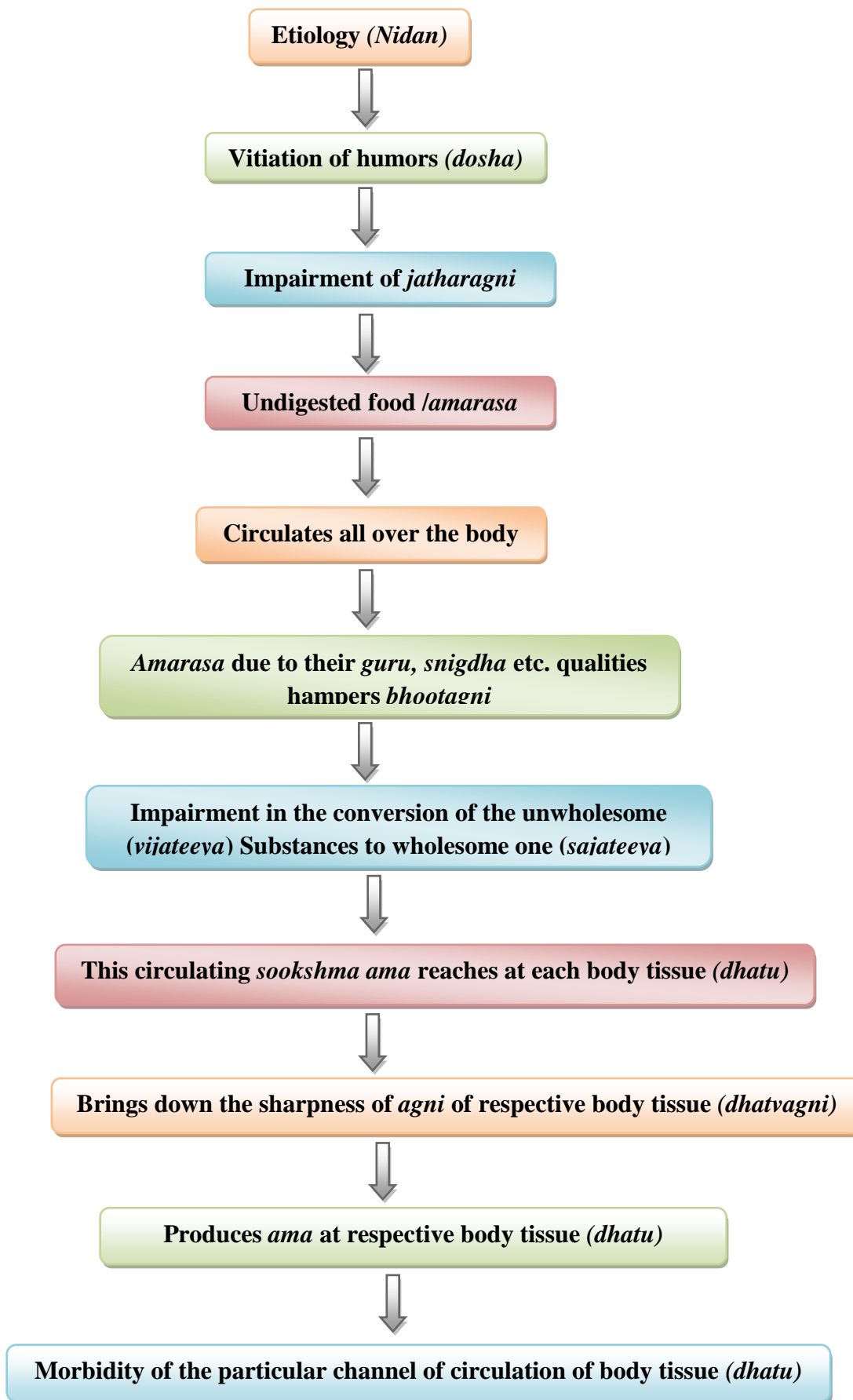
### Role of ama in vitiation of srotas

*Srotas* are the channels of circulation; carry the *dhatu*s (tissue element or their constituents) which undergoing transformation to their end product.<sup>[16]</sup> This normalcy of transformation is disturbed after vitiation of channels. The predisposing factors responsible for the vitiation of channels and their prime clinical features are as follows.<sup>[17]</sup>

**Table no. 1: Etiology and clinical features of the vitiated Srotas.**

Vitiating factors of channels of circulation ( <i>Khavayagunya</i> )		
	Etiology	Prime clinical features
1.	All food that are promotive to the morbid tendencies of the humors	Increased flow of their content ( <i>Atipravritti</i> )
2.	All activity that are promotive to the morbid tendencies of the humors	Decreased flow or obstruction to the flow of their content ( <i>Samga</i> )
3.	All food and activity that are deleterious to the body elements	Appearance of nodules in the channels ( <i>Granthi</i> )
4.		flow of their content in abnormal channels ( <i>Vimargamana</i> )

As each *dhatu* has its own structure and specificity because of its own *agni*, there is a possibility of *ama* formation at each *dhatu* level due to hypofunctioning of their respective *agni*. This *ama* causes pathogenicity at each *dhatu* level according to its impairment. Basic etiopathogenesis of the morbidity of the channels of circulation is as follows -



### Treatment protocol

In *ama* condition, *guru*, *snigdha*, *pischila* etc. qualities of *ama* which are contrary to *agni* hampers its functioning like absorption, metabolism and excretion. According to *acharyas*, *langhana* is a prime treatment of *ama* since it decreases load on *agni* thereby facilitates *agni* to regain their digestive power. So in any type of *samavyadhi langhana* should be done. But if there is a *doshoklesh* (extensively provoked *doshas*) first of all *shodhana* (elimination of vitiated *doshas*) is preferable and then *langhana*. *Acharya Vagbhata* mentioned three types of treatment as per severity i.e. *langhana*, *langhana-pachana* and *doshavsechan*.<sup>[18]</sup> The *langhana* treatment is done when the state of vitiated *dosha* is mild, *langhana-pachana* during moderate state whereas *doshavsechan* at the severe state. Treatment protocol of *ama* varies with the etiological factors, site of manifestation, severity of the disease, condition of the patient etc.

### DISCUSSION

Only in *Ayurveda*, the concept of *ama* has been explained and elaborated. Many diseases explained in *Ayurveda* named with prefix *ama* like *amavata*, *amaja trishna*, *amaajirna*, *amaatisar* etc. indicate its due importance in pathogenesis. For the Formation of *ama* physical as well as psychological factors are responsible. Over-eating, taking incompatible diet, taking food in indigestion etc are the factors which directly influences *agni* thereby produces *ama*. Also an individual with the state of anger, grief, anxiety etc. is vulnerable to different health hazards. These anger, grief, etc due to their *prabhava* (specific action) impairs the *agni* which provoke the stagnated *ama* to develop pathological condition.<sup>[19]</sup>

In *Ayurveda*, concepts like *agni*, *ama*, *dosha* etc. has been emphasized. These concepts are the pillars on which *Ayurveda* made a firm stand in the field of medicine. Of these, concept of *agni* is important one. *Agni* determines the health status of an individual. Deranged *agni* either produces disease or may lead to death of an individual. In the pathogenesis of every disease first of all derangement of *agni* takes place followed by formation of *ama* and vitiation of *doshas*. Thus basic line of treatment of every disease is to revert back *agni* from imbalanced state to balanced one. Hence with the priority to maintenance of *agni*, peculiar treatment should be given according to disease or according to the predominant clinical features.

Fatality of the disease rely on extent of *ama* has been formed and stagnated in the body. More the production of *ama* more will be the fatality. *Ama* provides favorable condition for the

manifestation of disease by acting as a nutrient medium. Some time *ama* remains in the dormant phase without producing any harm to the body. But once it comes in contact with the various triggering factors or any seasonal changes become dominant and produces disease. This is seen evidently in the episodic diseases like *shvasa*, where *ama* persists in a dormant phase (inactive) in otherwise healthy status but acts as an antigen in the body when present in sufficient amount. The patient while getting exposure to the triggering factors like dust, pollen grains, bacteria etc gets initiated by *ama*. This *ama* and allergens mutually enhance the potency of each other. Therefore such potentiated *ama* along with vitiated *doshas* aggravates the severity and frequency of asthmatic attacks and worsens the patient's condition. Same etiopathogenesis happens in case of other allergic diseases where *sookshma ama* circulating all over the body act as a foreign body or antigen and produces hypersensitivity reaction.

## CONCLUSION

Thus for preventive and curative purpose it is essential to understand every aspect of *ama*. Daily, there is formation and stagnation of *ama* in body in a small extent. Therefore in *Ayurveda*, seasonal and dietary regimen are emphasized to avoid such untoward formation of and to maintain healthy status of every individual. During treatment it is essential to rule out *amavastha* and *saamadoshavastha* since mode of action varied according to condition. On whole, *ama* is a fatal component produced in the body which disturbs homeostasis and make individual prone to disease.

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