

## A CONCEPTUAL REVIEW ON THE ROLE OF *PANCHAKARMA* IN THE MANAGEMENT OF *AGNIMANDYA* WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO PHARMACODYNAMIC PERSPECTIVE

<sup>1</sup>Dr. Rutuja Mohan Bodake, <sup>\*2</sup>Dr. Prashant Dilip Ganbote, <sup>3</sup>Dr. Vaishali Raghunath Chaudhari, <sup>4</sup>Dr. Meghana Daivat Liman

<sup>1,4</sup>PG Scholar, Department of Panchakarma, Dr. D. Y. Patil College of Ayurved and Research Centre, Dr. D. Y. Patil Vidyapeeth, Sant Tukaram Nagar, Pimpri, Pune 411018, Maharashtra, India.

<sup>\*2</sup>Associate Professor, Department of Panchakarma, Dr. D. Y. Patil College of Ayurved and Research Centre, Dr. D. Y. Patil Vidyapeeth, Sant Tukaram Nagar, Pimpri, Pune 411018, Maharashtra, India.

<sup>3</sup>Professor & HOD, Department of Panchakarma, Dr. D. Y. Patil College of Ayurved and Research Centre, Dr. D. Y. Patil Vidyapeeth, Sant Tukaram Nagar, Pimpri, Pune 411018, Maharashtra, India.

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### \*Corresponding Author

**Dr. Prashant Dilip Ganbote**

Associate Professor, Department of Panchakarma, Dr. D. Y. Patil College of Ayurved and Research Centre, Dr. D. Y. Patil Vidyapeeth, Sant Tukaram Nagar, Pimpri, Pune 411018, Maharashtra, India.



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### ABSTRACT

*Agni* is considered the basic principle responsible for digestion, metabolism and maintenance of health in Ayurveda. Impairment of *Agni* leads to *Agnimandya*, which causes improper digestion and formation of *Ama*. *Ama* is considered an important factor in the development of many diseases. *Panchakarma* plays an important factor in the development of many diseases. *Panchakarma* plays an important role in eliminating vitiated *Dosha*, removing *Ama* and restoring normal digestive function. The present conceptual review was prepared using references from classical Ayurvedic texts such as *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Ashtang Hridaya*, *Bhavaprakash*, *Sharangdhara Samhita* and *Madhava Nidana* along with relevant published articles and Ayurvedic reference books. *Agnimandya* causes impairment of digestive and metabolic processes, leading to *Ama* formation and obstruction of *Srotas*. *Panchakarma* procedures including *Vamana*,

*Virechana* and *Basti* play an important role in improving *Agni* and maintaining metabolic balance. From a pharmacodynamic perspective, these therapies may be understood in terms

of detoxification, improved gastrointestinal function, enhanced absorption and better regulation of metabolic activities. Thus, *Panchakarma* provides a holistic approach in the management of *Agnimandya* by correcting *Dosha* imbalance and improving digestive and metabolic functions. Further scientific studies with standardized assessment methods are needed to validate these therapeutic effects.

**KEYWORDS:** *Agni*, *Ama*, Ayurveda, *Panchakarma*, Pharmacodynamic Perspective.

## INTRODUCTION

In classical Ayurveda, *Agni* (digestive fire) is regarded as the fundamental force responsible for digestion, metabolism and maintenance of health. Among its various forms, *Jatharagni* is considered the most important because it initiates digestion in the gastrointestinal tract.<sup>[1]</sup> *Agni* functions at different physiological levels, from digestion in the gut to tissue metabolism and plays a major role in transforming *Annam* (food) into *Rasa* (nutritive essence).<sup>[2]</sup>

Proper functioning of *Agni* ensures nourishment of *Dhatu*, whereas impairment of *Agni* results in *Agnimandya* (diminished digestive fire), resulting in the formation of *Ama* (toxic metabolites). The accumulation of *Ama* obstructs and contributes to the development of various systemic disorders.<sup>[3]</sup>

In the body, *Agni* mainly functions through *Pachaka Pitta*, located in the *Grahani* (between the *Amashaya* and *Pakvashaya*), where digestion of food takes place. *Panchakarma*, the principal bio-purificatory therapy of Ayurveda, helps eliminate vitiated *Dosha* and restore normal physiological functions.<sup>[4]</sup>

*Panchakarma* can also be understood from a pharmacodynamic perspective, which helps relate Ayurvedic principles to modern science. Procedures like *Dosha Shodhana*, *Ama Pachana* and *Agni Deepana* may be correlated with detoxification, improved metabolism, and enhanced physiological responsiveness. Therefore, the present review aims to analyze the role of *Panchakarma* in the management of *Agnimandya* with special reference to its pharmacodynamic perspective.

## AIM AND OBJECTIVES

- To review the concept of *Agnimandya* in Ayurveda
- To analyze the role of *Panchakarma* in its management
- To explore the pharmacodynamic interpretation of *Panchakarma*

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Information on *Agni* was gathered from classical Ayurvedic texts, including the *Brihatrayi* (*Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita* and *Ashtanga Hridaya*) and *Laghutrayi* (*Bhavaprakasha*, *Sharangadhara Samhita* and *Madhava Nidana*), along with relevant articles and standard reference books.

### Concept of Agni

*Agni* is the key force responsible for digestion, metabolism, and transformation in the body. It not only helps in digestion but also in the absorption and proper utilization of nutrients. By maintaining the balance of *Dosha*, *Dhatu* and *Mala*, it supports overall health, strength, complexion and vitality. Acharyas have described different types of *Agni* based on its function, location, and physiological role and any disturbance in *Agni* can lead to disease.<sup>[5]</sup> The different types of *Agni* described in Ayurveda along with their functions are shown in Table no. 1.

**Table no. 1: Types of *Agni* and their functions.**

Sr. No.	Type of <i>Agni</i>	Subtypes	Location	Function	Associated <i>Dosha</i> /Condition
1.	<i>Jatharagni</i> <sup>[6]</sup>	<i>Samagni</i> , <i>Mandagni</i> , <i>Tikshnagni</i> , <i>Vishmagni</i>	<i>Jathara</i> / <i>Koshtha</i>	Primary digestion of food	<i>Samagni</i> – Healthy, <i>Mandagni</i> – <i>Kapha</i> , <i>Tikshnagni</i> – <i>Pitta</i> , <i>Vishmagni</i> – <i>Vata</i>
2.	<i>Bhutagni</i>	<i>Akashagni</i> , <i>Vayvagni</i> , <i>Tejagni</i> , <i>Jalagni</i> , <i>Prithvyagni</i>	Elemental level	Converts food into body-compatible form	Maintains elemental balance
3.	<i>Dhatvagni</i>	<i>Rasagni</i> , <i>Raktagni</i> , <i>Mamsagni</i> , <i>Medagni</i> , <i>Asthyagni</i> , <i>Majjagni</i> , <i>Shukragni</i>	Present in each <i>Dhatu</i>	Tissue metabolism and nourishment	Responsible for formation of respective <i>Dhatu</i>

Impairment of *Jatharagni*, *Bhutagni* and *Dhatvagni* leads to *Agnimandya*, resulting in defective digestion and metabolism, which ultimately contributes to disease formation.

### Concept of *Agnimandya*

*Agnimandya* refers to a reduced efficiency of *Agni*, which leads to poor digestion and metabolism. As a result, food is not properly digested, causing problems like *Ajeerna* (indigestion), heaviness, loss of appetite and tiredness.

The classical statement “रोगाः सर्वेऽपि मन्दाग्नौ” indicates that most diseases originate from weakened *Agni*.<sup>[7]</sup> When *Agni* becomes weak, the normal process of digestion and transformation is disturbed, leading to the formation of *Ama* (toxic, undigested material).<sup>[8]</sup> *Ama* is heavy and sticky in nature and blocks the *Srotas* body's channels, disturbing normal body functions and initiating disease.

*Agnimandya* can develop due to unhealthy dietary habits such as eating *Viruddha Ahara* (incompatible foods), irregular meal timings, overeating or long gaps between meals. Poor lifestyle practices, disturbed daily routine and stress further weaken digestion. Emotional factors like anger, anxiety, grief and depression also negatively affect *Agni*. In addition, contaminated food and existing illnesses can impair digestive function.

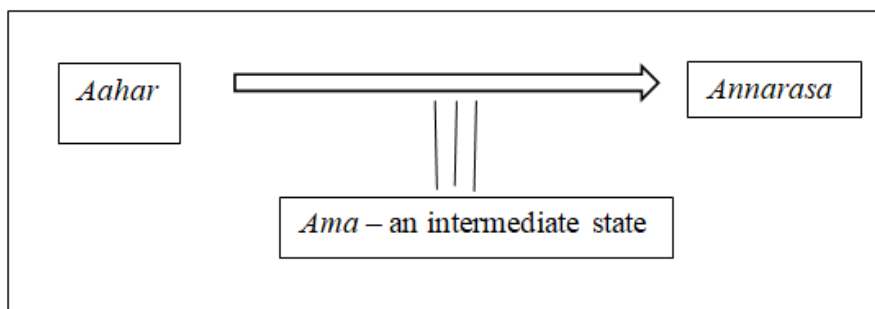
Based on the predominance of *Dosha*, *Agnimandya* presents in different forms. *Vata* imbalance leads to *Vishamagni* (irregular digestion), *Pitta* causes *Tikshnagni* (excess digestion) and *Kapha* results in *Mandagni* (slow digestion). Among these, *Mandagni* is considered most important in disease development because it leads to the accumulation of *Ama*.<sup>[9]</sup>

Thus, weakened *Agni* results in improper digestion, formation of *Ama*, blockage of body channels and eventually various metabolic and systemic disorders. If not managed in time, it can progress into chronic diseases depending on the severity of *Agni* disturbance and *Dosha* involvement.

### Concept of *Ama*

ऊष्मणोऽल्पबलत्वेन धातुमाद्यमपाचितम् | दुष्टमामाशयगतं रसमामं प्रचक्षते||<sup>[10]</sup>

The process of *Ama* formation due to impaired *Agni* is illustrated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: Formation of Ama due to Agnimandya.**

When *Agni* (digestive fire) becomes weak, the initial *Dhatu, Rasa* is not properly formed or digested. This incompletely processed and vitiated material present in the *Amashaya* is referred to as *Ama Rasa*.

तस्य लिङ्गमजीर्णस्य विष्टम्भः सदनं तथा। शिरसो रुक् च मूर्च्छा च भ्रमः पृष्ठकटिग्रहः॥

जृम्भाऽङ्गमर्दस्तृष्णा च ज्वरश्छर्दिः प्रवाहणम्। अरोचकोऽविपाकश्च, घोरमन्नविषं च तत्॥<sup>[11]</sup>

When food is not properly digested, it causes bloating, weakness, headache and dizziness. A person may also feel body ache, thirst, fever, vomiting and loss of appetite. Digestion becomes disturbed and bowel movements may be irregular. In severe cases, the undigested food acts like a toxin in the body.

The formation of *Ama* initiates the pathological process by interacting with *Dosha* and *Dhatu*, resulting in various disorders. It also reduces tissue nourishment and weakens the body's defense mechanism.

Thus, *Ama* plays a central role in the pathogenesis of diseases, especially those associated with *Agnimandya*, where impaired digestion is the primary factor.

#### Assessment of *Ama*

स्रोतोरोधबलभ्रंशगौरवानिलमूढताः॥

आलस्यापक्तिनिष्ठीवमलसङ्गारुचिक्लमाः।

लिङ्गं मलानां सामानां, निरामाणां विपर्ययः॥<sup>[12]</sup>

The clinical features of *Sama* and *Nirama* state are summarized in Table no. 2.

**Table no. 2: Features of *Sama* and *Nirama* state.**

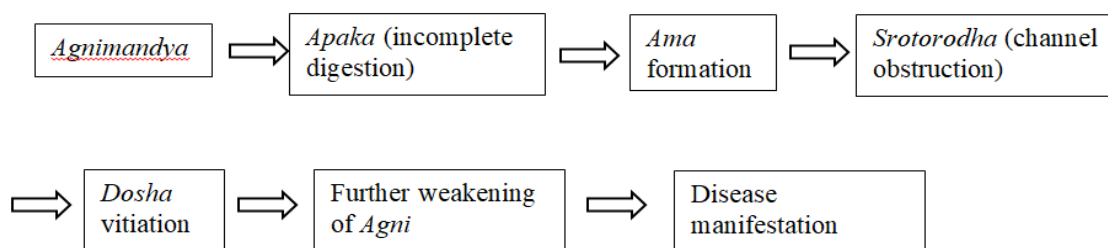
Sr. No.	Feature	<i>Sama</i> State (Presence of <i>Ama</i> )	<i>Nirama</i> State (Absence of <i>Ama</i> )
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1.	<i>Srotas</i>	<i>Srotorodha</i> (Obstruction)	Clear channels
2.	Strength	<i>Balabhramsha</i> (Reduced strength)	Normal strength
3.	Body Feeling	<i>Gaurava</i> (Heaviness)	Lightness
4.	<i>Vata</i> Function	<i>Anila Mudhata</i> (Disturbed)	Normal movement
5.	Activity	<i>Alasya</i> (Laziness)	Active
6.	Digestion	<i>Apakti</i> (Improper digestion)	Proper digestion
7.	Salivation	<i>Nishthiva</i> (Excess salivation)	Normal
8.	Bowel	<i>Malasanga</i> (Constipation)	Normal bowel movement
9.	Appetite	<i>Aruchi</i> (Loss of appetite)	Normal appetite
10.	Energy	<i>Klama</i> (Fatigue)	Good energy

The above features indicate the pathological state of *Ama* (*Sama*) and its absence (*Nirama*), highlighting the importance of proper digestion and metabolism.

### Concept of Agnimandya and Ama Relation

The interrelationship between Agnimandya and Ama in disease development is illustrated in Figure 2.



**Figure 2: Relationship between Agnimandya and Ama.**

### Role of Panchakarma in Agnimandya

*Agnimandya* is primarily caused by vitiation of *Dosha* and accumulation of *Ama*, leading to impaired digestion and metabolism. *Panchakarma*, being the principal bio-purificatory therapy in Ayurveda, plays a vital role in eliminating vitiated *Dosha* and restoring the functional capacity of *Agni*.<sup>[13]</sup> By removing accumulated *Ama* and clearing *Srotas*, *Panchakarma* helps in improving digestion, absorption and overall metabolic activity. The role of different *Panchakarma* procedures in management of *Agnimandya* is summarized in Table no. 3.

**Table no. 3: Role of Panchakarma in Agnimandya.**

Sr. No.	Procedure	Target <i>Dosha</i>	Action	Effect on <i>Agni</i>
1.	<i>Vamana</i>	<i>Kapha</i>	Eliminates accumulated <i>Kapha</i> and <i>Ama</i> from upper GI tract	Improves digestion and reduces heaviness
2.	<i>Virechana</i>	<i>Pitta</i>	Expels vitiated <i>Pitta</i> and	Enhances metabolic

			toxins	activity and digestion
3.	<i>Basti</i>	<i>Vata</i>	Regulates <i>Vata</i> and cleanses colon	Improves absorption and regulates <i>Agni</i>
4.	<i>Nasya</i>	<i>Urdhvajatrugata Dosha</i>	Clears channels in head region	Supports systemic balance
5.	<i>Raktamokshana</i>	<i>Rakta Dushti</i>	Removes vitiated blood	Improves circulation and reduces toxins

Among all procedures, *Vamana*, *Virechana* and *Basti* play a major role in the management of *Agnimandya*. *Vamana* helps in removing excess *Kapha*, which is responsible for *Mandagni*. *Virechana* eliminates vitiated *Pitta* and improves digestive metabolism. *Basti*, being the best therapy for *Vata*, regulates gut motility and enhances absorption.

These therapies help in *Ama Pachana* (removal of toxins), *Srotoshodhana* (cleansing of channels) and *Agni Deepana* (enhancement of digestive fire). Thus, *Panchakarma* not only removes the root cause but also restores normal physiological functioning.

#### **Pharmacodynamic perspective of *Panchakarma* in *Agnimandya***

The therapeutic effects of *Panchakarma* in *Agnimandya* can be understood through a pharmacodynamic perspective, which explains how these procedures influence physiological and metabolic functions.

*Panchakarma* therapies help in the elimination of vitiated *Dosha* and accumulated *Ama*, thereby correcting the underlying pathology of impaired digestion. The process of *Srotoshodhana* improves circulation and facilitates proper transport of nutrients and metabolites.

Procedures like *Vamana* and *Virechana* remove excessive *Kapha* and *Pitta*, which are responsible for suppression and disturbance of *Agni*. *Basti* regulates *Vata*, which plays a key role in controlling digestive and metabolic activities. Through these actions, *Panchakarma* helps in restoring normal function of *Agni*.

These effects may be correlated with improved enzymatic activity, better gastrointestinal motility, enhanced absorption and regulation of metabolic processes. The removal of toxic metabolites may reduce inflammatory load and improve tissue responsiveness.

The pharmacodynamic interpretation of *Panchakarma* procedures is shown in Table no. 4.

**Table no. 4: Pharmacodynamic interpretation of Panchakarma.**

Sr. No.	Ayurvedic Concept	Pharmacodynamic Interpretation
1.	<i>Ama Pachana</i>	Detoxification and removal of metabolites
2.	<i>Agni Deepana</i>	Enhancement of digestive enzymes
3.	<i>Srotoshodhana</i>	Improved circulation and transport
4.	<i>Dosha Shodhana</i>	Elimination of pathological factors
5.	<i>Basti Karma</i>	Regulation of gut motility and absorption

**Mechanisms include**

- Reduction of metabolic toxins
- Modulation of gut microbiota
- Enhancement of receptor sensitivity
- Improved drug bioavailability

**DISCUSSION**

The present review highlights the clinical relevance of *Agnimandya* as a central factor in impaired digestion and metabolic dysfunction. While classical texts emphasize *Agni* as the root of health, its disturbance reflects not only localized gastrointestinal impairment but also systemic metabolic derangement. This understanding aligns with the concept that defective transformation processes at different levels ultimately affect tissue nourishment and physiological balance.

The therapeutic role of *Panchakarma* extends beyond simple elimination therapy. *Panchakarma* may be understood as a therapeutic approach that restores physiological balance by correcting *Dosha* imbalance and removing metabolic obstructions. Unlike symptomatic approaches, it targets the underlying disturbance in functional dynamics, thereby supporting long-term correction rather than temporary relief.<sup>[14]</sup>

Previous studies have attempted to explore the effect of *Panchakarma* and related interventions in conditions associated with impaired digestion and metabolism. Conceptual analyses on *Agnimandya* and *Ajeerna* suggest that therapies aimed at *Agni Deepana* and *Ama Pachana* significantly improve digestive efficiency and reduce symptom severity.<sup>[15]</sup> Clinical observations in various metabolic and gastrointestinal disorders have also reported improvement following procedures like *Virechana* and *Basti*, indicating their potential role in enhancing metabolic activity and systemic regulation.<sup>[16]</sup>

Integrative research combining Ayurvedic principles with modern biomedical parameters may help in better understanding the therapeutic role of Panchakarma in metabolic disorders. Correlation of Agni and Ama with measurable biochemical and physiological markers could provide stronger scientific validation.

From a pharmacodynamic viewpoint, these therapeutic effects may be explained through multiple mechanisms such as improved gastrointestinal motility, enhanced enzymatic activity and better absorption of nutrients. *Srotoshodhana* may be correlated with improved microcirculation and transport of nutrients and metabolites, while elimination of accumulated metabolites may reduce internal toxic load and improve cellular responsiveness.<sup>[17]</sup>

Despite these promising interpretations, the available evidence remains limited. Most studies are conceptual, observational or based on small sample sizes. There is a need for well-designed clinical trials with standardized protocols to validate the efficacy of *Panchakarma* in *Agnimandya*. Additionally, objective parameters to assess *Agni*, *Ama* and metabolic changes are still not well established, which creates challenges in scientific validation.

Therefore, while Ayurvedic principles provide a strong theoretical and clinical basis, integration with modern research methodologies is essential to establish clearer pharmacodynamic correlations and wider acceptance in contemporary healthcare.

## CONCLUSION

*Agnimandya* plays an important role in impaired digestion and metabolic dysfunction leading to the formation of Ama and disease manifestation. Panchakarma helps restore the functional capacity of Agni through elimination of vitiated Dosha, removal of Ama and correction of metabolic imbalance. From a pharmacodynamic perspective, its actions may be correlated with improved digestion, enhanced metabolism and better physiological regulation. Further scientific studies with standardized assessment criteria are required to validate these therapeutic effects.

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## Conflict of Interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest regarding this investigation.

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