

## AMA AND TOXINS: AYURVEDIC DIAGNOSTICS IN THE LIGHT OF MODERN PATHOPHYSIOLOGY

Dr. Narendra Subhash Hon<sup>1\*</sup> and Dr. Rajendra Rohidasrao Lokhande<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, Rognidan Avum Vikriti Vignyan, Shivajirao Pawar Ayurvedic Medical College and Research Centre, Pachegaon, Maharashtra.

<sup>2</sup>Professor & HOD, Rognidan Avum Vikriti Vignyan, Shivajirao Pawar Ayurvedic Medical College and Research Centre, Pachegaon, Maharashtra.

Article Received on  
02 April 2025,

Revised on 23 April 2025,  
Accepted on 13 May 2025

DOI: 10.20959/wjpr202510-36853



\*Corresponding Author

Dr. Narendra Subhash

Hon

Assistant Professor,  
Rognidan Avum Vikriti  
Vignyan, Shivajirao Pawar  
Ayurvedic Medical College  
and Research Centre.  
Pachegaon, Maharashtra.

### ABSTRACT

The term Ama is derived from the Sanskrit root 'Am' with the suffix 'Nich', meaning that which is unripe, uncooked, immature, or undigested. It refers to a substance that remains incompletely processed and requires further digestion and transformation. Āma is the result of impaired digestion, primarily caused by Agnimandya (weak digestive fire). It represents a state of metabolic dysfunction that leads to the accumulation of toxic substances in the body—substances that cannot be easily neutralized or eliminated. Ama vitiates the Doṣas and disturbs Dhatu Samya (tissue equilibrium), leading to the pathological interaction of Doṣa and Mala, which initiates the process of disease. This plays a key role in the pathogenesis of various disorders such as Amavata, Grahaṇi Doṣha, Kaṭigata Vata, and Tamak Shvasa. Hence, Ama marks the critical shift from a physiological to a pathological state, serving as a precursor to many inflammatory, infectious, and degenerative diseases.

**KEYWORDS:** Ama, Toxins, Agnimandya.

Ama is a fundamental concept in Ayurveda that plays a crucial role in understanding human physiology, pathology, and treatment. It does not refer to a single substance, but rather to the disrupted or incomplete process of digestion and metabolism. This disturbance results in the

accumulation of toxic by-products within the body, which the system is unable to properly detoxify or eliminate.

Ama is often loosely interpreted as undigested food confined to gastrointestinal dysfunction. However, a deeper analysis of classical Ayurvedic texts reveals that the formation of Āma is a systemic phenomenon, involving not just digestion but also broader metabolic and physiological processes throughout the body.<sup>[1]</sup>

In Ayurvedic tradition, Āma is conceptualized from three distinct yet interconnected perspectives. A closer examination reveals that these viewpoints together offer a comprehensive understanding of Ama in its entirety.

The three positions can be summarized as follows.<sup>[2]</sup>

- *Ama* is the by-product of impaired digestion
- *Ama* is the accumulation of unexpelled wastes in the body
- *Ama* is the first expression of aberrations in the physiological processes of the body.

Āma also represents the transition from physiology to pathology. Therefore, it is the precursor of inflammatory, degenerative and infective processes that eventually manifest as full-fledged diseases.

The possibility that Ama may also involve infectious processes is suggested in certain classical Ayurvedic descriptions. For instance, the Aṣṭanga Hṛdaya mentions that Ama is formed through a process of fermentation, similar to the one that makes the Kodrava (*Paspalum scrobiculatum* L.) grain toxic.<sup>[1]</sup>

This, however, does not imply that Āma is unrelated to the gastrointestinal system. In fact, classical texts primarily describe Āma as the improperly digested essence of food residing in the Amashaya (stomach). Interestingly, uncooked or unprocessed food itself is referred to as Ama, which is why the Sanskrit term 'Amashaya' literally means the receptacle or container of Ama.

A core principle in Āyurveda is that early intervention to eliminate Āma can halt or prevent the progression of disease. Āma, if left unchecked, gradually transforms and contributes to the development of fully manifested diseases. This progression can be visualized through a series of stages as follows.

1. The formative phase: This is the phase in which *Āma* forms and accumulates in the body. In this stage, clinical symptoms hardly manifest themselves. All indigestion does not lead to *Āma*, but it does only when *Kapha* is involved. Only when *Kapha* is involved, indigestion leads to *Ama*. In the case of other *doṣas*, indigestion leads to different outcomes. When *Vāta* is involved, indigestion is known as *Viṣṭabdha* and results in drying up and degeneration. When *Pitta* is involved, indigestion is known as *Vidagdha* and leads to inflammation.<sup>[3]</sup>
2. The interactive phase: In this phase, *Āma* interacts with the three *doṣas* and becomes more complex and active. *Āma* interacting with *Vāta* creates a condition known as *Sāma Vāta*. *Āma* interacting with *Pitta* and *Kapha* creates conditions known as *Sāma Pitta* and *Sāma Kapha* respectively. Similarly, *Āma* can also interact with the *Dhātus*.<sup>[1]</sup>
3. The phase of disease manifestation: In this phase, degenerative, inflammatory or infective disease manifests. This is technically known as the *sāma* stage of the disease, which is an acute condition.
4. The phase of complications: This is the phase of development of *Āmaviṣa*.<sup>4</sup> It is a stage of crisis that can even lead to death.
5. The phase of resolution: This is the stage in which the active interactions between *Āma* and *doṣas* and *dhātus* have resolved and the body may recover with mild, moderate, severe or no damage. The disease may also persist in a chronic phase. This is known as *nirāma* stage of the disease.<sup>[5]</sup>

The concept in *Ayurveda* is that if treated in early stages, it is possible to interfere with the degenerative, inflammatory and other progressive pathologies for early prevention of disease.

According to Acharya Vagbhāṭa, when *Ushma* (Agni) becomes hypoactive, the formation of the first *Dhatu*—*Rasa*—is impaired. Instead of proper *Rasotpatti*, the ingested food (*Annarasa*) remains undigested and undergoes fermentation or putrefaction (*Duṣṭa*) within the *Āmāśaya* (stomach). This improperly processed *Rasa* is referred to as *Ama*. *Ama*<sup>[7]</sup> is characterized by properties such as being incompletely digested, sticky in nature, foul-smelling, and producing heaviness and lethargy in the body. All three pathological states of *Agni*—*Tikṣṇagni*, *Mandagni*, and *Viṣamagni*—can contribute to the formation of *Ama*. When there is an imbalance in *Agni* relative to the quality and quantity of the ingested food, it leads to impaired digestion. This results in fermentation or decomposition of food particles, releasing toxic metabolic by-products, thereby initiating the formation of *Ama*.

**Role of Agni in Ama**

Dosha As, the ingested food undergoes conversion at different levels, till they ultimately utilized by the cells or tissues of the body, which is brought by the Agni. If Agni is diminished or not properly work then there will be no tissue nourishment and ultimately there will be no possibility of life. Acharya Charak had also described about the importance of Agni that all the body entities such as Bala, Varna, Swasthya, Utsaha, Upachaya, Prabha, Ojas, Shareera Ushma (Teja), Deha Pushti, Vriddhi, are all the functions of Agni<sup>8</sup> Acharya Charak has also stated that proper functioning of Agni results in sustenance of good health and life. While impaired Agni causes ill health or even death.

**Pathological Factors of Ama are<sup>[9]</sup>**

- Hetu: Agnidushti, Agnimandhkarak
- Dosha: Tridosha
- Dushya: Anna, Rasa
- Srotasa: Annavaha, Purishvaha
- Adhistan: Mahasrotasa, Grahani

**Aetiological factors responsible for Ama production**

**Aharaja:** Guru, Shita, Vishtambhi, Shushka, Vidahi, Ruksha, Pichhila Guna cause formation of Ama.

Ajeerna Bhojana, Adhayshana, Vishmasana etc. produces Amavikar, Grahani Vikara.

**Viharaja:** Vega Dharana, Diva Swapna, Dukhashayya.

**Mansika:** Chinta, Shoka, Bhaya, Krodha, Irshya, Lobha, Udvega, Hri, Kama.

**Other:** Atidushta Dosha-Sammilana, Improper management of Vamana, Virechan and Snehana, Desh-Kala-Ritu Vaishamya.<sup>[8]</sup> Acharya Vagbhata had stated that, it is not necessary that the ingestion of an excess food or over eating should cause Ama Dosha in every case because Ahara Shakti (food intake power) depends on Agni Bala (digestive fire). Proper digestion also depends upon the use of food for which one has aversion or dislike, or food which may cause distension of the abdomen, or foods which are raw (uncooked), heavy (difficult to digest), dry, too cold, contaminated and capable of causing Vidaha i.e., inflammation of stomach, dehydrated foods or food substances soaked in too much of water (for perhaps long duration of time) can also cause Ama Dosha. Even so mental or emotional stresses such as rage, grief, hunger, worry etc. may also give rise to Amadosha.

**REFERENCES**

1. Harisastri PV, editor. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Orientalia; 2007. Ashtanga Hridayam; p. 216. [Google Scholar]
2. Yadavji TA, editor. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Orientalia; 1986. Madhava Nidana; p. 186. [Google Scholar]
3. Sharma S, editor. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Orientalia; 2012. Ashtanga Sangraha; p. 114. [Google Scholar]
4. Sharma S, editor. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Orientalia; 2012. Ashtanga Sangraha; p. 110. [Google Scholar]
5. Yadavji TA, editor. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Surabharati Prakashan; 2008. Caraka Samhita; p. 408. [Google Scholar]
6. Sharma S, editor. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Orientalia; 2012. Ashanga Sangraha; p. 113. [Google Scholar]
7. Ashtang Hridayam, Sutrasthan Evam Maulik Siddhanta by Dr. Shailja Srivastava, Chaukhambha Orientalia, Varanasi, Chapter 13.
8. Caraka Samhita of Agnivesa, Revised by Caraka and Drdhabala, Elaborated Vidyotini Hindi Commentary by Kasinath Sastri and Gorakha Natha Chaturvedi, Vol 2nd, Chaukhambha Prakashan, Varanasi, Reprint Edition 2018, Chapter no.15, Page no.453.
9. Roga Nidan Evam Vikriti Vigyan by Prof. Ajay Kumar Sharma and Amit Kumar Sharma and Dr. Shivali Arora, Vol 1st, Chaukhambha Prakashan, Varanasi, Reprint Edition 2016, Chapter no.5, Page no. 192-203.