

CONCEPT OF AAM AND ITS CLINICAL SIGNIFICANCE WITH REFERENCE TO CHRONIC INFLAMMATION: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

The concept of *Aam* represents a pathological state arising from impaired digestion and metabolism. Classical Ayurvedic literature describes *Aam* as a toxic, undigested metabolic by-product that obstructs bodily channels and initiates disease. Chronic inflammation, recognized in modern medicine as a key factor of metabolic, autoimmune, and degenerative disorders, shares striking parallels with the Ayurvedic description of *Aam*-mediated pathology. This review explores the classical understanding of *Aam*, its pathogenesis, symptomatology, and clinical relevance in chronic inflammatory diseases. Furthermore, it proposes an integrative framework correlating Ayurvedic principles with modern inflammatory mechanisms, highlighting the therapeutic implications for preventive and personalized medicine.

KEYWORDS: Aam, Chronic inflammation, Ayurveda, Autoimmune disorders.

INTRODUCTION

Chronic inflammation is a persistent, low-grade inflammatory response that plays a crucial role in the pathogenesis of numerous disorders, including rheumatoid arthritis, inflammatory bowel disease, diabetes mellitus, cardiovascular diseases, and neurodegenerative conditions. Unlike acute inflammation, which is protective and self-limiting, chronic inflammation is prolonged and contributes to progressive tissue damage and systemic dysfunction.^[1] Long

before the emergence of molecular immunology, Ayurveda described a similar pathological phenomenon under the concept of *Aam*. The foundational Ayurvedic texts elaborate on *Aam* as a primary etiological factor in systemic diseases, particularly those with inflammatory manifestations.^[2] The integrative exploration of *Aam* provides a valuable bridge between traditional medical wisdom and modern biomedical science.

In Ayurveda, health depends upon the proper functioning of *Agni* (digestive and metabolic fire). *Agni* governs digestion, absorption, assimilation, and cellular metabolism.^[3] When *Agni* becomes impaired (*Mandagni*), food is not completely digested, resulting in the formation of a toxic, heavy, sticky substance called *Aam*.^[2] Due to the diminution of *Agni*, the proper transformation of *Ras Dhatu* does not occur, because of vitiation by *vata* and other doshas in the *Amashaya*, this improperly processed *Rasa* is called *Aam*.

Aam is described as^[5]

- *Avipakva* (incompletely digested)
- *Guru* (heavy),
- *Picchila* (sticky)
- *Snigdha*
- *Durgandha* (foul-smelling)

Aam is not merely undigested food but a pathological metabolic intermediate that disrupts systemic homeostasis. It circulates through *Rasa dhatu* (primary nutrient plasma) and accumulates in vulnerable tissues, initiating inflammatory and degenerative processes.

Pathogenesis of Aam Formation (*Samprapti*)

The formation of *Aam* follows a systematic pathological sequence:

1. Impairment of *Agni* (*Mandagni*)
2. Improper digestion of ingested food
3. Formation of *Aam* in the gastrointestinal tract
4. Absorption into systemic circulation
5. Obstruction of microchannels (*Srotas*)
6. Interaction with Doshas (*Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha*)
7. Manifestation of disease.

When *Aam* combines with aggravated Doshas, it produces complex clinical entities such as *Aamavata*, often correlated with inflammatory arthritis.

Aam and Chronic Inflammation

Chronic inflammation involves sustained activation of immune pathways, including cytokines such as tumor necrosis factor-alpha (TNF- α), interleukin-6 (IL-6).^[6]

Morden research identifies the gut immune axis as central to inflammation, leaky gut syndrome refers to increased intestinal permeability, where tight junction in the gut lining is disrupted, allowing microbial endotoxins to enter bloodstream and trigger systemic inflammation. This mechanism is conceptually like *Aam* formation in *Ayurved*, where undigested morbid material (*Aam*) formed due to *Agnimandhya* circulates in the body and cause disease.^[7]

Accumulation of reactive oxygen species (ROS) damages tissues and perpetuates inflammation. The obstructive and toxic properties of *Aam* parallel oxidative tissue injury.^[8]

Chronic Inflammation may produce systemic features such as Fever Anaemia, leucocytosis, Raised ESR amyloidosis.^[9]

Clinical Features of Aam

General Symptoms ^[10]	Systemic Manifestations ^[11] Depending on tissue involvement, <i>Aam</i> may present as
Srotorodh	Joint pain and stiffness (<i>Aamavata</i>)
Balabhransha	Jwar
Gaurava	Shoth
Alasya	
Anil Mudhata	
Apako	
Nishthivana	

These features closely resemble early inflammatory markers observed in chronic systemic diseases.

Aam and Specific Chronic Inflammatory Disorders

Rheumatoid Arthritis	<i>Aamavata</i> described in <i>Ayurveda</i> exhibits symptoms comparable to rheumatoid arthritis: joint swelling, stiffness, pain, and systemic features such as fatigue and anorexia. The pathological basis involves the combination of <i>Aam</i> and aggravated Vata. ^[10]
Metabolic Syndrome	Impaired metabolism and chronic low-grade inflammation in obesity and diabetes parallel the concept of <i>Mandagni</i> leading to systemic <i>Aam</i>

	accumulation. ^[3]
Inflammatory Bowel Disease	Disturbed digestion and toxin formation in the gastrointestinal tract strongly correlate with the primary origin of <i>Aam</i> described in Ayurvedic texts. ^[12]

Diagnostic Perspective

Ayurvedic Assessment^[13]

Diagnosis of *Aam* includes

- Tongue examination (thick coating)
- Assessment of digestive capacity
- Evaluation of bowel habits
- Clinical features of heaviness and lethargy.

Therapeutic Approach

Management of *Aam* emphasizes correcting the root cause—impaired *Agni*—rather than suppressing inflammation alone.

Ayurvedic Interventions^[14]

1. **Deepana** – Enhancing digestive fire
2. **Pachana** – Digesting existing *Aam*
3. **Shodhana** – Detoxification procedures such as Panchakarma
4. Dietary modifications aligned with digestive capacity

Combining these approaches with may offer improved long-term outcomes compared to symptomatic management alone.

DISCUSSION

Aam is a fundamental pathological concept in Ayurved, primarily arising due to *Agnimandhya*. when *Jatharagni* and *Dhatvagni* fail to properly digest and transform ingested food, the resulting improperly processed, immature metabolic by product is termed *Aam*, it is described as *Guru Pichila*, *Slimy*, foul smelling, unctuous, and capable of obstructing bodily channels. Properly digested food becomes nourishing and life supportive whereas improperly digested material undergoes fermentation i.e *Shukta-bhava* leading to systemic pathology^[12] Clinically *Aam* is regarded as the root cause of numerous diseases due to its ability to combine with doshas, impair tissue metabolism and produce inflammatory like manifestation. In contemporary interpretation *Aam* may be correlated with metabolic toxins, inflammatory mediators, or endotoxin-like substance that contribute to chronic inflammatory states. *Aam* is

considered the primary pathological entity in many diseases. In the *Saama Avastha*, the disease is in its early and acute stage, whereas the *Niraama Avastha* represents the resolution or chronic stage after Aam is eliminated or digested. Diseases such as Amavata (Rheumatoid arthritis), *Grahani* (IBS), *Jwara* (fever), *Amlapitta* (gastritis/acid reflux), and *Vatarakta* (gout) are classic examples of conditions initiated or aggravated by Aam. The presence of Aam alters the disease prognosis, intensity, and treatment protocol. Failure to manage Aam at its initial stage can lead to *Saama-Udara Roga*, *Saama-Kushtha*, and chronic metabolic disorders.^[15]

From an integrative viewpoint, Aam can be correlated with

Ayurvedic Concept	Modern Correlation
<i>Mandagni</i>	Impaired metabolism
Aam formation	Toxic metabolites / endotoxins
<i>Srotorodha</i>	Microvascular dysfunction
<i>Amavata</i>	Autoimmune inflammatory arthritis

The Ayurvedic concept of Aam provides a systemic and functional understanding of chronic inflammation. Rather than focusing solely on molecular pathways, Ayurveda emphasizes digestive integrity and metabolic balance as foundational to health.^[16]

The Ayurvedic concept of *Srotorodha* can be correlated with microvascular dysfunction and impaired cellular signalling seen in chronic inflammatory states. Aam is a particular malformation of ingested food, which is not mixed up and not assimilated completely in the physiology. The ultimate product of ingested food, afflicted by all the three doshas (Vata, pitta and kapha), which produces sticky substance in the body, coats internally the veins arteries and organs in the body is said Aam. It must be noted here; it spreads and gets deposited in the body only. If Aam *Ahar-ras* liners over and is retained for a long time and if it is not properly and timely treated; it disturbs physiology.^[17] When Aam combines with vitiated *doshas* and localizes in tissues, it produces clinical manifestations such as pain, swelling, stiffness, and systemic fatigue, resembling autoimmune and inflammatory disorders like rheumatoid arthritis and metabolic syndrome.

Furthermore, the toxin-like behavior of Aam described in classical texts parallels the concept of circulating immune complexes and pro-inflammatory metabolites in modern immunopathology. Persistent low-grade inflammation contributes to tissue degeneration and

chronic disease progression, supporting the interpretation of Aam as a metabolic-inflammatory complex.

Clinical Significance in Chronic Disorders

The concept of *Aam* holds significant relevance in the prevention and management of chronic inflammatory diseases

1. **Early Diagnosis** – Identification of *Aam* symptoms may help detect subclinical inflammation.
2. **Preventive Strategy** – Correction of *Agni* prevents toxin accumulation.
3. **Therapeutic Approach** – Management focuses on
 - *Deepana* (enhancing digestive fire)
 - *Pachana* (digesting *Aam*)
 - *Shodhana* (detoxification procedures like Panchakarma)

Unlike symptomatic anti-inflammatory drugs, this approach aims to remove the root cause.

Therapeutically, Ayurvedic interventions such as *Deepana* (enhancing digestive fire), *Pachana* (metabolic correction), and *Shodhana* (detoxification procedures) aim to eliminate *Aam* and restore metabolic balance. These approaches may reduce inflammatory load, improve gut integrity, and modulate immune responses, providing a plausible integrative model for managing chronic inflammatory disorders. Thus, the classical concept of *Aam* provides a comprehensive metabolic-inflammatory framework that aligns with modern understanding of chronic inflammation and offers a translational bridge between Ayurveda and contemporary science.

CONCLUSION

Aam represents a comprehensive pathological concept in Ayurveda that closely parallels modern understandings of chronic inflammation, metabolic endotoxemia, and immune dysregulation. Its emphasis on digestive health, toxin elimination, and systemic balance provides a valuable preventive and therapeutic framework. An integrative approach combining Ayurvedic principles with contemporary biomedical insights may enhance the management of chronic inflammatory disorders and support holistic patient care.

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