

CONCEPT OF AMA AND AGNI IN DISEASE PRODUCTION - A CRITICAL REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Ama is the substance, which is not digested properly and need further digestion. Many factor play important role in the production of *Ama*. It is produced from the impaired function of *Kayagni*. It is toxic substance of gastro enteric origin. According to *Ayurveda* the root cause of all disease is *Mandagni* (hypofunction of *Agni*). 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. General characteristic of *Ama* are, *Srotorodha* (obstruction of channels), *Balabhransha* (loss of strength), *Gaurava* (felling of heaviness), *Anilmudhata* (obstruction of *vayu*), *Alasya*

(laziness), *Apakti* (indigestion), *Nisthiva* (excessive salivation), *Malasanga* (constipation), *Aruchi* (anorexia), and *Klama* (fatigueness). According to *Ayurvedic* point of view, all disease are originated from *Amadosha*, vitiation of *Agni* i.e., malfunction of *Agni* produce *Ama*, it mean indigested food particle. The main cause of most of *Vhyadhi* is *Ama utpatti* and *Agnidushtti* so understanding concept of *Ama* is important.

KEYWORDS: *Ama*, *Agni*, *Vhyadh*, *Agnidushtti*, *Amadosha*.

INTRODUCTION

The term *Ama* ordinarily means unripe, uncooked, undigested substance. It is produced from the impaired function of *Kayagni*. It is toxic substance of gastro enteric origin. All types of diseases in *Ayurvedic* view, for their origin from *Ama Dosha*. Vitiation of *Agni* and this malfunction of *Agni* produce *Ama*. As per *Ayurveda*, disease state is due to disturbance or deviation in the equilibrium of *Dosha-Dhatu-Mala*. *Ama* is an important factor in pathology of any disease.

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]

According to *Ayurvedic* point of view, all disease are originated from *Amadosha*, vitiation of Agni i.e., malfunction of Agni produce *Ama*, it mean indigested food particle. The main cause of most of *Vhyadhi* is *Ama utpatti* and *Agnidushti* so understanding concept of *Ama* is important.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

To review the concept of *Ama* and *Agni* in disease production as per *Ayurvedic* classics.

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.

Etymology

The word '*Ama*' is, the combination of '*Am*' *dhatu* with '*Nich*' *pratyaya* forms the word *Ama*, which is subjected to digestion i.e. undigested or unprocessed matter.^[3]

The word *Ama* is derived from *Ama Dhatu* with the suffix 'A'. It means improper or partially digested matter. The word *Ama* found in *Ayurvedic* literature is incompletely fermented and unripened substances.^[4]

Definition of *ama*

According to different *Acharyas* various definition of *Ama* available in different classics. Some of them are given below

1. Due to hypo functioning of *Agni* the first *Dhatu*- "*rasa*" or chyle is not properly digested, instead the *Anna rasa* undergoes fermentation or putrefaction being retained in the *Amashaya*. This *Rasa* is called as *Ama*.^[5]
2. Due to *Nidana Sevana* when *Agni* is vitiated it becomes incapable of digesting even less amount of the digestible food and this undigested food after getting fermented turns into poisonous substance.^[6]

3. The matter which has not undergone *Vipaka*, leading to *Durgandha* (bad smelling), which is large in quantity, which is *picchil* (sticky) and which leads to *Gathrasadana* is called *Ama*.^[7]

So the improperly digested *Rasa* is *Ama* (as per different classics) can be understood as-

*Unprocessed food

*Partially digested

*Matter which requires further *Parinama*.^[8]

- The food residue which is not digested due to impairment of *Agni* is known as *Ama* and it is said to be the root cause of all the diseases.
- Other meanings of the word *Ama* found in *Ayurvedic* literature are- incompletely, fermented and unripened substance, unbaked and incompletely developed substance, and unprocessed substance. From the above definitions it is clear that *Agni* (*jatharagni*) plays an important role in the production of *ama*.

The relationship of *Agni* and *Ama*

Jatharagni or *Koshagni*, *Panchbhutagni*, and *Dhatvagni* are the main three *Agni* present inside the body. *Jatharagni* is the digestive fire that controls the various digestive processes within the body. When there is hypofunctioning of *Agni* proper digestion is hampered resulting in the formation of *Ama*. Then *Bhutagni* have been enumerated, *Bhuta* means the physico-material classification of food and body elements. Thereafter *Dhatvagni* have been expounded, *Dhatu* here means the basic elements of the body. The functions of *Dhatvagni* refer to tissue (*Dhatu*) metabolism. In sum, *Jatharagni* (gastro-intestinal metabolism secretion, enzyme), *Bhutagni* (five intermediary metabolism factors) and *Dhatvagni* (tissue metabolism) constitute the thirteen types of *Agni* or Metabolic factors of *Ayurveda*. By the *Ayurvedic* literature, the food material is first digested and absorbed by the *Jatharagni* in *Amashaya* and *Grahani*. Then it is transported to the liver for *Bhutagni Paka* and from there, the product of nutrition is processed in the tissues by the *Dhatvagni*. Normally digestion at all levels proper functioning of these *Agni* is absolute necessary. But, whenever *Agnivyapara* took the shape of *Mandagni*, the resultant material will be unripened, undigested formation of what in *Ayurvedic* terms is known as *Ama*. In terms of metabolism, it is defective metabolism.^[9]

Ama Nidana (Etiological factors of Ama)

It has been accepted by all *Acharyas* that etiological factors, which cause *Mandagni* are responsible for the production of *Ama* and *Agnimandya* are interdependent to each other. Following are the chief causative factors of *Ama* mentioned by *Acharya Charka*¹⁰

1. Ahara

- *Abhojna*
- *Atibhojana*
- *Ajir nabhojana*
- *Asatmyabhojana*
- *Guru, Ruksha, Sushka, Vistambhi and Vidahibhojna etc.*
- *Vismasana*
- *Viruddhabhojna*

2. Vihara

- *Vegaavidharana*
- *Diwashavapan*
- *Aalasya*
- *Ratrijagarana*
- *Viruddha cheshta*
- *Nishchaltava*
- *Ativyayama*
- *Ativyawaya*

3. Manasika

Food consumption while afflicted with mental instability due to *Kama*, *Krodha*, *Lobha*, *Moha*, *Shoka*, *Irshya*, *Bhaya Chinta*, etc.

4. Iatrogenic Causes

Erroneous administration of *Virechana*, *Vamana*, *Sneha Karma*

5. Miscellaneous

Adverse *Desha*, *Kala*, *Ritu*(*Vaismya*)

Ama Samprapti (Pathogenesis of Ama)

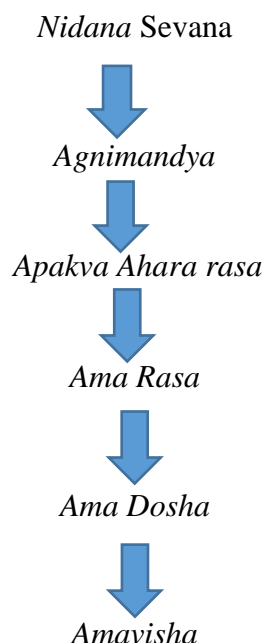
The food which is not digested properly in *Amashaya* exhibits four stages as follows.

- 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*.^[11]

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* (vitiated) *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*.^[12] Thus, *Doshas* which are vitiated by this *Ama* and *Dushya* (*Dhatus*) which are further vitiated 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*.^[13]

Diagrammatic presentation



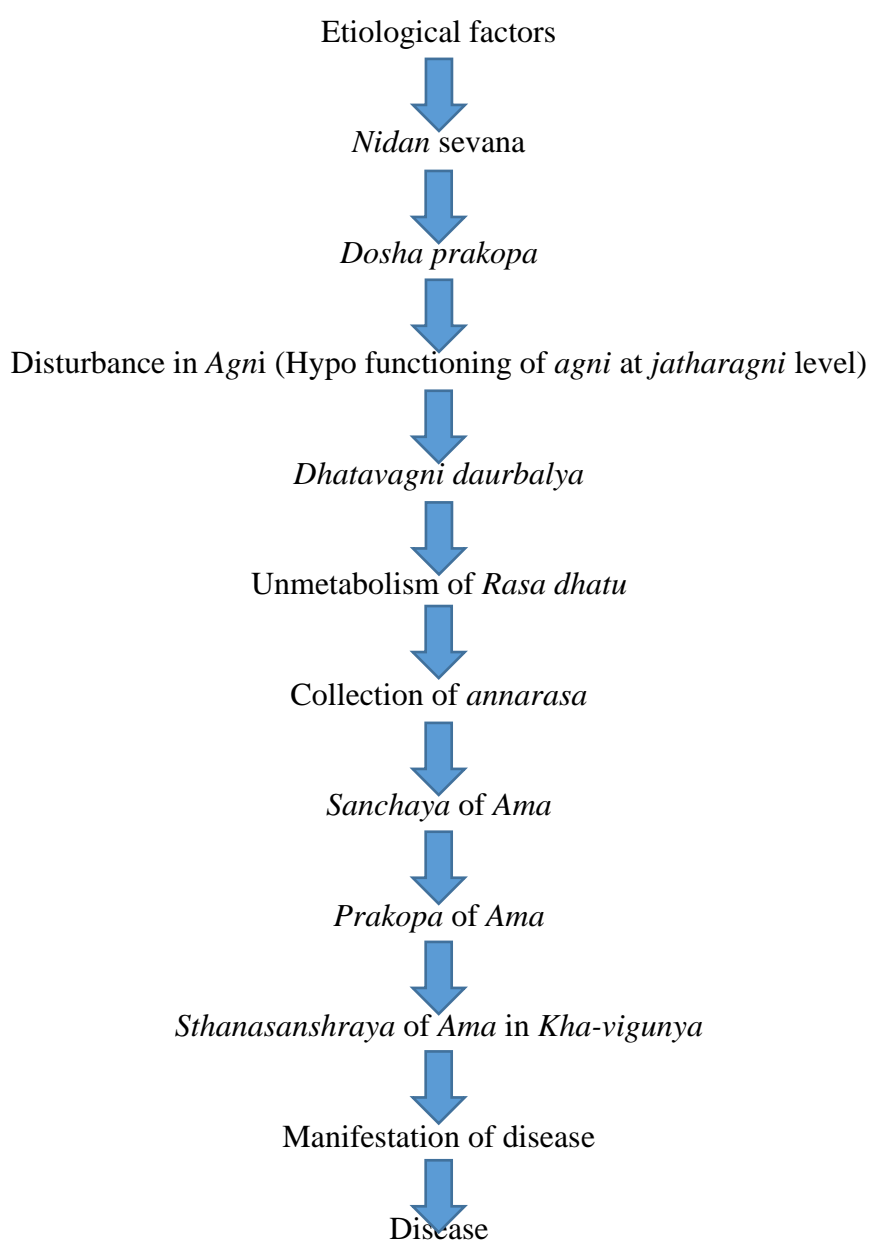
Symptoms of Ama

General characteristic of *Ama* are, *Srotorodha* (obstruction of channels), *Balabhransha* (loss of strength), *Gaurava* (feeling of heaviness), *Anilmudhata* (obstruction of *vayu*), *Alasya* (laziness), *Apakti* (indigestion), *Nisthiva* (excessive salivation), *Malasanga* (constipation), *Aruchi* (anorexia), and *Klama* (fatigueness).

The pathological events associated with *Ama* are as follows^[14]

- Blocks minute channels thus affect circulatory process.
- *Ama* aggravates *tridosha*.
- Disturbs nutritional supply to the tissue.
- Diminishes potency of *dhatu*s.
- Vitiates *agni* and imparts feeling of uneasiness.
- Causes lethargy, mental sickness and lack of enthusiasm.
- Gas, diarrhea, bloating, bad smelling mouth and loss of appetite.

Role of *Ama* and *Agni* in the production of diseases



DISCUSSION

After detailed discussion of *Agni* and *Ama*, it can be concluded that to understand *Ama* which is a pathological entity, in a better manner, knowledge of *Agni* is essential and inevitable. In *Ayurveda* the entire range of digestive and metabolic activity of the body takes place with the help of biological fire of the body known as *Agni*. Normal state of *Agni* should be maintained by consuming suitable diet and behaviour because longevity and strength depends on the healthy state of *Agni*. When the *Agni* get vitiated, unwanted unripe by products of digestion and metabolism i.e. *Ama* start forming and accumulating in the body at different levels from local (gastrointestinal) level to the systemic level. These pathological events ultimately lead to various gastrointestinal, allergic, auto-immune, and metabolic disorders. Hence, preservation and promotion of *Agni* and prevention from *Ama* is the first and foremost step to be taken in every therapeutic endeavour and management of a patient. So, it is important to understand the concept of *Agni* and *Ama* to manage the health of a healthy individual as well as to interpret the disease process and planning the line of management of a disease.

CONCLUSION

Ama is the major cause of *Mandagni*. In *Ayurveda* *Ama* is taken as a causative factor for varieties of disorders. *Ama* has been described in two states i.e. *Sama* and *Nirama avastha* which set a specific strategy for finding particular disease. By knowing these *Awastha* of *Ama* we can specify different stages of diseases.

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