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Role of *Panchakarma* intervention in *Amlapitta* (Gastritis): A Critical Review

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ABSTRACT

Amlapitta is a very common disease of present era and a disease of *Annavaha Strotas*, and is commonly observed in these days of modernization and industrialization. 30% of the general population is suffering from gastro-oesophageal reflux and gastritis resulting in heartburn. It is very troublesome disease and can give rise to many serious problems if not treated in time. Signs and symptoms of *Amlapitta* are very similar to gastritis or hyperacidity. According to conventional medical science the most common causes of gastritis are *H. pylori* infections and prolonged use of Non-Steroidal Anti Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDS). Gastritis is believed to affect about half of people worldwide. In 2015 there were approximately 90 million new cases of this condition. As people get older the disease becomes more common. It, along with a similar condition in the first part of the intestines known as duodenitis, resulted in 50,000 deaths in 2017. The five procedure of *Panchakarma* done through several procedures purify the body system by removing morbid *Doshas* from the body. These purification methods are essential components of the curative management of these diseases that are not controlled by palliative management.

Key words: *Amlapitta, Gastritis, Panchakarma.*

INTRODUCTION

Hyperacidity (*Amlapitta*) is one of the most common diseases seen in the society. It is seen in all ages, all classes and all community. Hyperacidity refers to a set of symptoms caused by an imbalance between the acid secreting mechanism of the stomach and proximal intestine and the protective mechanisms that ensure their safety. The stomach normally secretes acid that is essential in the digestive process. When there is excess production of acid in the

stomach, it results in the condition known as acidity.^[1] *Amlapitta* is probably a commonest digestive disorder. A drastic change in mankind has taken place mostly due to urbanization and industrialization. To cope up with the speed of the modern era, one has to adopt junk food preparations, over-work and stressful duty schedule. The sedentary lifestyle especially in the field of BPO and KPO lead to lack of exercises.^[2] 30% of the general population suffers from gastro-oesophageal reflux and gastritis.^[3] The excessive use of Analgesics especially NSAID's, smoking, alcoholism, frequent consumption of food, hot drinks, spicy food, tobacco, lead to the gastric complaints like heartburn, nausea and vomiting.^[4] These gastric complaints mimic the symptoms of *Amlapitta*. The *Amlapitta Vyadhi* is caused due to *Viruddhashana* and *Pittaprakopaka Bhojana* and *Pana*.^[5] The symptoms of the *Amlapitta* vary from *Avipaka, Klama, Utklehsana, Amlodgara, Angagaurava, Hridaya / Kantha Pradesha Daha* and *Aruchi*.^[6] In *Ayurveda, Shodhana* and *Shamana* both treatments are mentioned for *Amlapitta*. *Shodhana* can rule out excessive vitiated *Doshas*.^[7]

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Etymology

Literally *Amlapitta* means the *Pitta* is of sour taste. Etymologically the word *Amlapitta* comprises of two components i.e. *Amla* and *Pitta*.

Definition

Charaka Samhita defines '*Amlapittam Cheti Aamlagunoundriktam Pittam*' the augmented or increased *Amla Guna* of *Pitta* is known as *Amlapitta*.^[8] i.e. the *Pitta* becomes augmented or *Vidagdha* because of excessive increase of *Amla Guna* of *Pitta*. Acidity is related to heartburn and gas formation in stomach. In acidity, acid reflux or Gastro oesophageal reflux disease (GERD), or more commonly known as '*Urdhvaga Amlapitta*' in *Ayurveda*, there is a movement of gastric juices (acid in nature) from the stomach into the lower part of oesophagus. *Ayurveda* considers it to be caused by the aggravation of *Pitta Dosh*.

Causes of Amlapitta

The *Amlapitta Vyadhi* is caused due to *Viruddhashana* and *Pittaprakopaka Bhojana* and *Pana*. Individuals with a *Pitta* imbalance are susceptible to hyperacidity, peptic ulcers and some types of inflammatory disorders. The pathogenesis of *Amlapitta* involves three important factors i.e. *Agnimandya*, *Ama* and *Annavaha Srotodushti*. Along with this, the vitiation of *Pitta* leading to quantitative and qualitative increase of *Pachaka Pitta* especially in its *Ama* and *Drava Guna* gives rise to *Amlapitta*.^[9] The gastric glands produce acids, which help break down food during digestion. Excess production of acids in stomach is termed as the hyperacidity. There are varieties of reasons which cause excess acid production. The most important among these are;^[10]

- Excessive use of the oily and spicy foods
- Excessive intake of alcohol, smoking, keeping stomach empty for long time,
- Skipping breakfast causes acidity.
- Excessive use of Analgesics esp. NSAIDs
- Anxiety, depression and anger

- Irregular eating habits.
- Consumption of Maida products in large quantity.
- Sleeping just after taking meal.
- Drinking excessive water
- Excessive intake of the caffeine and nicotine products.
- Constipation
- Carbonated drinks
- Foods which are rich in fats, such as chocolates cause acidity or acid reflux diseases.
- Other causes of acidity or heartburn are pregnancy, aging, obesity and bad eating habits, like eating junk foods.

Symptoms of Amlapitta

Signs and symptoms of *Amlapitta* mentioned in the Ayurvedic texts are very similar to gastritis or hyperacidity. The most important presenting sign of *Amlapitta* is burning sensation of the stomach, heart and throat. This sign is most prominent and is in the middle stage of the disease. This is due to increasing *Drava Guna* and *Vidagdhatva* of the *Pitta*. The symptoms of the *Amlapitta* varies from *Avipaka*, *Klama*, *Utklesha*, *Amlodgara*, *Angagaurava*, *Hridaya / Kantha Pradesha Daha* and *Aruchi*.^[11]

Role of Panchakarma in Amlapitta

Ayurveda classics mentioned the utility of *Panchakarma* in *Amlapitta*. The utility of *Panchakarma* can be understood if analysed under the role of the *Purvakarma* and *Pradhanakarma*. Some *Acharya's* have mentioned externally and internally purification therapy for management of *Amlapitta*.

Poorvakarma - *Pachana*, *Deepana*, *Snehana*, *Swedana*

Pradhanakarma - *Vamanadi karma*

Poorvakarma

▪ **Deepana-Pachana**

Deepana drugs are those which are capable of performing stimulation of *Jatharagni*, according to

Sharangadhara drugs having *Deepana Karma* does not digest the *Ama* but increase *Agni*, *Deepana-Pachana* drugs *Mishi* (*foeniculum vulgare*), *Chitraka* (*plumbago zeylanica*). *Deepana* drugs helps in separation of *Dosha* from *Dhatu*.^[12]

Mode of action

Before expulsion of *Dosha* from the body. It is mandatory for the *Dosha* to be in a *Pakva* state. This process of transformation of morbid doshas from their unripened state to ripened state is achieved by *Deepana Pachana Chikitsa*.^[13]

▪ *Snehana*

Snehana means oleation therapy, the therapy which produces *Snigdha* or oiliness in the body. *Snehana* is the major preparatory procedure to be performed before *Shodhana*. The entire *Shodhana* procedure depends upon the proper mobilization of *Dosha* from the *Sakha*, which is achieved with the help of *Snehana* and *Swedana*.

Mode of action of *Snehana*

Snehana helps in the proper *Gati* of *Vata*, brings *Gatra Mardavata* and removes the *Srothorodha*. *Sneha* overcomes *Rukshatha* by its *Snigdha* property and the *Sanga* is corrected.^[14]

- In *Paittika* disorders, *Kevala Ghrita* should be given.
- In *Vatika* disorders, it should be mixed with *Lavana*.
- In *Kaphaja* disorders, it should be combined with *Trikatu* and *Yavakshara*.

The *Veerya* of drugs present in *Sneha* are absorbed into the skin which is the site for *Brajaka Pitta*. According to *Dalhana*, The oil used in *Abhyanga* reaches upto the different *Dhatu* if applied for the sufficient time. When *Snehana* drug reaches to the particular *Dhatu*, it subsides or cures the diseases of that particular *Dhatu*.

▪ *Swedana*

Swedana is the prime modality of treatment for vitiated *Vata* and *Kapha* dominant disease.^[15] *Swedana* is done to liquefy the vitiated *Dosha* which

are spread throughout the body. As a result of application of *Swedana* the vitiated *Dosha* are easily expelled out with the help of *Pradhana Karma* such as *Vamana*, *Virechana*, *Basti*.^[16]

Mode of action of *Swedana*

Ushna Guna of *Swedana* does *Srotoshuddhi* and *Ama Pachana*, so it relieves stiffness. Due to elimination of *Kleda*, lightness is achieved. *Klama*, *Gourava*, *Angagaurava* are the symptoms of *Amlapitta*. To relieve these symptoms *Swedana* is helpful.^[17]

Pradhana Karma

Panchakarma is the management protocol for the *Prabhoota Dosha* in any condition.

▪ *Vamana*

In *Amlapitta*, even though it is a *Pitta* dominant disorder, the *Sthanasamsraya* is in the *Amashaya*, which is the *Kaphasthanagata*. The primary route of *Shodhana* mentioned in *Vyadhi* affecting the *Amashaya* is the *Urdwa Shodhana*, *Vamana*. The *Shodhana* which eliminates the *Doshas* through the easiest route is always considered as the ideal one. *Vamana* as the first line of treatment, followed by *Langhana* and *Laghu Bhojana*.^[18] Even though the *Amlapitta* is a *Paittika* disease, the most effective *Shodhana* is *Vamana*. *Kashyapa* opines that just like a tree with its trunk and branches are destroyed by striking the blow at its root. He says that, peculiarly for the chronic conditions; *Vamana* is to be done definitely. He also gives another example for the relevancy of *Shodhana*. If we are pouring pure milk in a vessel in which we have already kept *Takra* (butter milk) and not properly cleaned, the milk even though fresh, is having a chance to get fermented. In fact, the *Shamana* drugs applied after doing *Vamana* will have the expected effect. The *Amashaya* with the *Doshas* associated with the *Ama* is defective in absorbing the drugs even though *Shamana* drugs are being advised, without proper *Shodhana*. Such significance is there for *Shodhana*, in the context.

Mode of action

In the *Samprapti* of *Amlapitta* main involvement of *Kapha* and *Vata* is found. *Vamana Dravyas* by their

Sukshma Guna reaches *Anu Srothas* by *Teekshna* and *Ushna Guna* does *Chedana* and *Lekhana* of *Kapha* and *Medas* and also removes *Dusta Anna Rasa*. Thus *Vamana Karma* directly acts over *Kapha*, *Medas* and *Dushta Annarasa*, thereby checks the *Samprapti*.^[19]

▪ *Virechana*

Kashyapa states that after *Vamana Karma* when the patient regains the *Deha Bala*. The *Pakwashayagatha Dosh Nirharana* should be done through *Virechana Karma*. According to Bhavaprakasha, the decoction of *Patola*, *Nimba* and *Madanaphala* with *Saindhava Lavana* should be used for *Vamana* in *Amlapitta*. *Nishotha Churna* and *Amalaki* are prescribed for the *Virechana*.^[20] *Avipattikara Choorna* is one of the most commonly used *Yogas* for *Virechana*, which is mentioned by *Bhaisjyarnavali*.^[21] In *Kaphadhika* condition of *Amlapitta*, *Patola Patra*, *Nimba Patra*, *Madanaphala Kwatha*, *Madhu* and *Saindhava Lavana* should be mixed. With this preparation *Vamana* should be done.^[22]

Mode of action

Virechana is important among *Shodhana*; because it not only act over *Pitta* but also on *Kapha*, *Vata* and *Meda*. Removes *Avarana* of *Vayu* in *Kostha* and corrects *Agni Vaigunyata*. By *Virechana* drugs there will be increased bile secretion and increased peristaltic movements. During relaxation phase of peristalsis; sphincter of oddi being relaxed, as bile come to the G.I.T. Thus this bile can be compared to *Pitta*, which will be eliminated during *Virechana* with other toxins. Hence *Virechana* reduces *Pitta Dushti* and normalizes *Agni*.

▪ *Basti*

The next regimen consists of administration of *Anuvasana* followed by *Asthapana*, in the chronically afflicted patients. The drugs such as *Tiktaka Gritha*, *Indukanta Gritha*, *Aragwadhadi Gana Gritha* etc. are usually used for the purpose of *Anuvasana*. *Madhuyashtyadi Taila* and *Ksheerabala Taila* are also used in this regard. After *Anuvasana*, in chronic cases, *Niruha Basti* is mentioned. Usually *Ksheera Basti* is the ideal one to be administered here. Instead of plain

Ksheera, *Ksheera Kwathas* with *Guduchyadi Gana*, *Tiktaka Kwatha*, *Indukanta Kwatha*, *Aragwadhadi Gana* is usually used. Plain *Ghrita* is observed to cause *Utklesha* in these patients.^[23]

Action of Basti

Basti is the best therapy to control the *Vata* and thus it controls the *Pitta* and *Kapha* also. The given *Basti* when enters the *Pakvasaya* by its *Virya*, draws the vitiated *Doshas* lodged in the entered body from foot to the head, just as the sun situated in the sky sucks up the moisture from the earth. The *Tikshna Guna* of *Basti* helps in overcoming the *Sroto Dushti* resulting due to *Sanga*. Thus *Basti Dravya* after reaching to large and small intestine get absorbed, due to *Laghu*, *Ushna*, *Tikshna*, and *Ruksha Guna* of *Dravyas*, it breaks the obstruction and expel out the morbid material from all over the body. In the disease with *Kapha*, *Pitta* (*Kapha Pittanubandhaja*) and located in *Amashaya*, *Vamana* and *Virechana* are indicated and *Purana Ghrita Pana* is also used therein. In the disease with *Vata* and located in *Pakvashaya*, *Anuvasana Basti* preceded by *Asthapana* is prescribed.^[24]

▪ *Raktamokshana*

Yogaratanakara added *Raktamokshana* as a tool if *Amlapitta* is not cured by both of the *Shodhana* procedures, *Vamana* and *Virechana*.^[25] Even though, *Amlapitta* is not mentioned as such, the symptoms resembling the disease are mentioned as *Katu* and *Amla Udgara* may happen in one with the vitiation of *Rakta*. Moreover in some of the patients with *Amlapitta*, symptoms of *Rakta Dhatu Dushti* are also observed. So in such a condition, *Raktamokshana* is having significant role, the technique being decided by considering all the related factors.^[26]

DISCUSSION

Amlapitta is mentioned in *Ayurvedic* classics as a *Annavaha Srotas Vikara* produces due to *Sanga*. *Panchakarma* is a preventive, promotive and curative therapy. For the correction of abnormalities of *Tridosha* specific therapies are practiced like *Vamana* for *Kapha Dosh*, *Virechana* for *Pitta Dosh* and *Basti*

for *Vata Dosh* predominantly. Various diagnostic factors like *Dosha*, *Dushya*, *Bala*, *Kala*, *Prakriti*, *Agni*, *Vaya*, *Satva*, *Satmya* and *Roga Avastha* are carefully assessed. After proper diagnosis for the better result, *Panchakarma* modality should be selected in accordance to the condition. This paper is focused on preliminary guidelines for selection of *Panchakarma* procedures in management of *Amlapitta*.

CONCLUSION

Amlapitta a disease of *Annavaha Srotas* caused due to *Ama* and *Pitta*. In this condition *Pitta* gets *Vidagdha* and becomes *Amla*. *Panchakarma* removes the vitiated *Dosha* and balances the morbid humour of body. *Panchakarma* have a key role to play in the management of *Amlapitta*. One need to be careful in selection of appropriate procedure as it is based on *Rogi* and *Roga Bala*.

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