Concept of Ama in Ayurvedic Medicine

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ABSTRACT

Ama is derived from the ‘Am’ Dhatu + ‘Nich’ Pratyaya. Ama is the substance which remains unripe, uncooked, immature and undigested. It means the substance which is still unripe and undergoes further digestion and associated changes. It is the outcome of improper digestion, the main cause of which is Agnimandya. It denotes the impaired metabolism that leads to build up the toxins, which cannot be neutralized or eliminated easily by the body. Ama vitiates Doshas and disturbs the Dhatu Samya, which lead to combination of Dosha and Mala by which the pathogenesis is initiated to develop certain diseases like Amavata, Grahani Dosha, Katigat Vata, Tamak Swasa etc. Thus, Ama denotes the transition from physiology to pathological conditions as it is the precursor of many inflammatory, infective and degenerative changes that ultimately causes the fully fledged diseases.

Key words: Ama, Agnimandya, Amavata, Grahani Dosha, Katigat Vata, Tamak Swasa.

INTRODUCTION

In the context of Ayurvedic medicine, Ama refers to the events or factors which arises as a consequence of the impaired functioning of Kayagni. If there is a poor strength of Jatharagni, a residue of Ahara Rasa is still left behind undigested towards the end of the digestion, then it is called as Ama and it is the root cause of all the diseases.[3] Acharyas had also stated that due to Alpa Bala of Agni, Adhya Dhatu i.e., Rasa Dhatu is not formed properly which is retained in the Amashaya. It is the state of rasa which is spoken as Ama.[5]

According to Acharya Vagbhatta, due to hypo functioning of Ushma (Agni), the first Dhatu i.e., the Rasa is not properly formed. Instead, the Annarasa undergoes fermentation or putrefaction (Dushta) being retained in the Amashaya. It is the state of rasa which is spoken as Ama.

Properties of Ama are that it is incompletely digested food, sticky in nature, foul smelling, and produces lethargy in the body. All three types of Agni (Teekshagni, Mandangi and Vishamagni) that are responsible for any pathological conditions that occurs in the body. If there is an impairment of Agni as per quality and quantity of ingested food, it leads to the improper digestion that causes fermentation or putrefaction of that food particle by releasing toxic metabolites. Thus, causing the condition known as Ama.

Ama formation in the body takes place in various stages i.e., 1. Ama Rasa is formed at Jatharagni digestion level, 2. Ama Dhatu is formed at Dhathavagni metabolism stage, 3. Ama Dosha is formed at Bhootagni Paak, and 4. Ama Vish is formed on the basis of Matra Adhikya and Viruddha Ahara etc.[2]

Formation of Ama in the body may be present in different forms or stage of metabolism or digestion i.e.,
Apakwa Anna/Rasa Roopa Ama, Mala Sanchaya Janya Ama, Pratham Doshay Dushti Janya Ama, Doshay Murchanjanya Ama, Amavish.[2]

According to Acharya Charak, description of Ama can be amplified as, by the impairment of Agni, indigestion, over eating, irregular diet habits, indulgence in incompatible articles of food, the consumption of cold substances, mal effects of Vamana, Virechana and Snehana, the wasting of tissues which follows in the wake of diseases, allergic states caused by changes in places, climate, season, and the suppression of natural urges, fails to digest even the most easily digestible light food. Thus, the undigested food attains Shuktatwa (fermentation), leading to the onset of toxic states.[4]

Acharyas had described some Ama Pradoshaj conditions such as Visuchika, Alasaka and Vilambika which is represented where there is a combination of Ama with Vata, Pitta and Kapha.

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.[4]

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.

Sama Dosha

The condition in which Tridoshas, Sapta Dhatus and Malas became permeated with the Ama produced in the Amashaya is known as Sama and the diseases which arises in consequences are known as Sama type of diseases. Sama Doshas spread to all the Roga Marg. Ama along with the Rasa Dhatu circulates in the body and the place where it gets obstructed, it blocked the Srotasa and the pathogenesis of certain diseases takes place and pathology occurs.[3]

Sama Dosha causes obstruction in Srotas, diminution of strength, heaviness, disturbance in the normal movements of Vata, drowsiness, indigestion, excess salivation, obstruction of urine and stool, lack of desire towards food and exhaustion.

Pathological Factors of Ama are:[1]

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

Aetiological factors responsible for Ama production


Viharaja: Vega Dharana, Diva Swapna, Dukhashayya.

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

Other: Atidushta Dosha-Samimilana, Improper management of Vamana, Virechan and Snehana, Desh-Kala-Ritu Vaishamya.[4]

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.
Ama undergoes various changes in the body in the manifestation of diseases. For example, in case of Ajeerna, the Ama is formed and gets accumulated in the Koshtha and when there is an excessive Kapha in the body, it causes condition known as Ama Ajeerna. When Vata is involved, condition is known as Vishtabdha Ajeerna and when Pitta is involved it is known as Vidagdha Ajeerna.

The next phase is the Interactive and Disease manifesting phase when Ama combines with the Doshas and manifested various diseases. When Ama mixes with Kapha then it gets accumulated in the chest and stomach that causes symptoms like salty taste, low appetite, congestion, and tenderness.

When Ama mixes with Vata and accumulated in the lower abdominal part gets may develops diseases of colon and joints. Symptoms are constipation, dry mouth, bitter taste, dry skin, pain and arthritis.

When Ama mixes with the Pitta then it affects the mid abdominal region like small intestine and liver. This causes symptoms like heartburn, diarrhea, nausea and indigestion.

The next phase is the phase of Complications of Ama in the form of Amavisha that can even lead to death.

Sometimes there is a phase called as Resolution phase in which the interaction between the Ama, Doshas and Dhatus get resolved. This condition is known as Nirama condition.

**Symptoms of Ama**

1. **Srotorodha** - Obstruction or clogging of (Srotasas) micro channels i.e. intestines, capillaries and blood vessels in the body.
2. **Balabhransha** - Weakness or loss of strength.
3. **Gaurava** - Heaviness in the body.
4. **Alasya** - Fatigue.
5. **Anila Mudhata** - Obstruction in the flow of Vayu i.e., excrete gas.
6. **Apaki** - Indigestion.
7. **Nishtivana** - Excessive salivation.

8. **Mala Sanga** - Obstruction of Malas i.e., stool, urine, excrete gas, etc.
10. **Klama** - Lethargy.\[^{[3]}\]

**Sama-Nirama Dosa Lakshan\[^{[1]}\]**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dosa</th>
<th>Sama</th>
<th>Nirama</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vata</td>
<td>Vibandha, Agnisada, Tandra, Antrakujana, Vedana, Shatha, increase in symptoms when Snehana is used.</td>
<td>Vishudha, Ruksha, Nirvibandha, Alpa vedana, Snehana decreases the symptoms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kapha</td>
<td>Avila, Tantu, Styana, Kanthaupulepa, Durgandha, Kshudhanash, Udgarannash.</td>
<td>Fenil, Pindita, Pandu, Chedaka, Mukhshodhaka, Gandharahit, Madhur Rasa etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Sama - Nirama Dhatu Lakshan**

When Dhatus mixes with the Ama Dosha, then they are known as Sama Dhatu or Dushya and the symptoms produced by these are same as that of the Dhatu Pradoshaja Vikaras. It can be simply treated by Ama Pachana.

**Sama - Nirama Mala Lakshan**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mala</th>
<th>Sama</th>
<th>Nirama</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purisha</td>
<td>Guru, Plavate Jale (Immerse in water), Durgandhita, Pichhila (Sticky), Bhrransa (Lack of form)</td>
<td>Absence of Sama Dosa symptoms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutra</td>
<td>Mutra Roga (eg. Turbid urine high density) Kukshi Roga etc.</td>
<td>Absence of symptoms of Sama Mutra i.e., urine is clean, odourless etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Amavisha**

Being the excessive Ama condition when there is no avoidance of aetiological factors, Ama Dosha is now characterized as a poison i.e., Amavisha. Amavisha is a serious toxic condition comparable to acute states of
poisoning. Acharya Vagbhata states that, in a person who consumes mutually incompatible food substances or ingests heavy or indigestible food articles arises a condition called as Amadosha which exhibits a symptomatology comparable to that of Visha and hence, is harmful. Amavisha which is intensely toxic in nature, may endanger life and as the line of treatment of Amadosha and Visha are of opposite kind, the former has to be treated as one of the fatal prognosis. [Ch.V.2/12]

Ayurvedic management of Ama Dosha

Depending upon the type and severity of the Ama, main three approaches has been advised to treat Ama Dosha i.e.

1. Langhana
2. Langhan Pachana
3. Shodhana

Langhana means the restriction of diet or nutritious intake or fasting to rest the digestive and metabolic apparatuses of our body. Langhana Pachana means prescribing active medications along with the fasting. It is helpful in digesting the Ama. Shodhana means purification process or detoxification. It helps in removing the Ama dosha from the body altogether.

Other Acharyas had also described the measures to tackle with the Ama Dosha that are as follows:
- Nidana Parivarjanam
- Langhana
- Swedana
- Ama Pachana
- Agni Dipana
- Panchakarma i.e. Vaman, Virechan, Nasya etc.
- Yoga
- Pranayama
- Sour fruits and vegetables, ginger, fennel, mustard oil etc. are beneficial.
- Processed and starchy food items, dairy products, salty stuffs are not beneficial and are Apathya.[7][8]

CONCLUSION

Ama concept is an important part of Ayurvedic medicine. It is formed at the level of Jatharagni and Dhatvagni and initiate many pathological conditions. Distinction between Sama and Nirama diseases is prime to define the treatment and avoid Vyapada while treatment. In Sama Avastha, Apatarpana is the key treatment whereas in Nirama Avastha, Samtarpana is the key. Avoidance of Virudha Ahara, fear, anxiety, restoring daily regimen, detoxification measures should be used to avoid prevalence of diseases associated with the production of Ama.

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