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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 Svasa*.

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* and thus the formation of *Ama* takes place. It then further leads to the blockage of *Srotasas* which vitiates *Dhatu*s and *Doshas* and causes various diseases.

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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*.^[5]

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 *Dhatavagni* 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 Dosh Dushti Janya Ama, Dosh Murchanajanya 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 Dosh

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*, *Vridhhi*, 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 Dosh

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.^[5]

Sama Dosh 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*
- *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 Dosh-Sammilana*, Improper management of *Vamana, Virechan* and *Snehana, Desh-Kala-Ritu Vaishamy*.^[4]

Acharya Vagbhata had stated that, it is not necessary that the ingestion of an excess food or over eating should cause *Ama Dosh* 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 Dosh*. 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 *Dhatu*s 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. *Nishthivana* - Excessive salivation.

8. *Mala Sanga* - Obstruction of *Malas* i.e., stool, urine, excrete gas, etc.
9. *Aruchi* - Anorexia.
10. *Klama* - Lethargy.^[5]

Sama-Nirama Dosha Lakshan^[1]

Dosha	Sama	Nirama
Vata	<i>Vibandha, Agnisada, Tandra, Antrakujana, Vedana, Shotha</i> , increase in symptoms when <i>Snehana</i> is used.	<i>Vishudha, Ruksha, Nirvibandha, Alpa vedana, Snehana</i> decreases the symptoms.
Pitta	<i>Durgandha, Harita, Shyava, Amla, Ghana, Guru, Amlika, Kantha-Hrida Daha</i> .	<i>Tamra or Peeta Pitta, Ati Ushna, Katu Rasa, Asthir, Pakva, Rodhana, Pachana, Balya</i> .
Kapha	<i>Avila, Tantu, Styana, Kanthauplepa, Durgandha, Kshudhanash, Udgarnash</i> .	<i>Fenil, Pindita, Pandu, Chedaka, Mukshhodhaka, Gandharahit, Madhur Rasa</i> etc.

Sama - Nirama Dhatu Lakshan

When *Dhatu*s 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

Mala	Sama	Nirama
Purisha	<i>Guru, Plavate Jale</i> (Immerse in water), <i>Durgandhita, Pichhila</i> (Sticky), <i>Bhransha</i> (Lack of form)	Absence of <i>Sama Dosha</i> symptoms.
Mutra	<i>Mutra Roga</i> (eg. Turbid urine high density) <i>Kukshi Roga</i> etc.	Absence of symptoms of <i>Sama Mutra</i> i.e., urine is clean, odourless etc.

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*, *Samtarapana* 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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