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Role of Diet in *Amlapitta*

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ABSTRACT

Amlapitta, also known as acid dyspepsia or hyperacidity, is a common digestive disorder in Ayurvedic medicine. The term "*Amlapitta*" comes from the Sanskrit words "*Amla*" (meaning sour or acidic) and "*Pitta*" (one of the three *Doshas* or energies in *Ayurveda* that governs metabolism and transformation). This condition is characterized by an imbalance of *Pitta Dosh*a, particularly an excess of acidity in the stomach. Symptoms of *Amlapitta* include heartburn, sour taste in the mouth, nausea, indigestion, and abdominal discomfort, often triggered by certain foods, stress, or irregular eating habits. *Ayurvedic* treatment for *Amlapitta* focuses on restoring the balance of *Pitta* through dietary modifications, herbal remedies, and lifestyle adjustments aimed at promoting digestion and reducing acidity. This article aims at providing how a holistic approach in our dietary regimen can be incorporated in the effective management of *Amlapitta*.

Key words: Hyperacidity, Acid Reflux, Gastritis, Annavahasrotas, Digestive Disorders, Ayurveda, Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD), Peptic Ulcer Disease

INTRODUCTION

There is this saying that "we are what we eat". More often than not, the seriousness of a statement usually percolates when it is used so commonly that people only say it for the sake of saying it rather than absorbing or at least observing the truth of it. It needn't take volumes of books or lectures for one to understand the influence of diet on their body and

mind and its association with sickness and health. There have been numerous studies in various fields of disease that show that healthy eating habits reduce the risk of major diet-related chronic diseases like diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and some cancers.^[1] Modern world's ever evolving and changing food cultures and life styles, in some extend took its toll on our health and physiologic digestive functions along with other systems too. So that, the diseases that could be prevented or managed by adopting a better diet pattern or a specific diet regulation are rampant and cause consequences. *Amlapitta* is one such disease, which is described in *Ayurveda* and can be in a way related to "acid peptic disease", a term with which modern science is more familiar. The *Roga Amlapitta* has been described in *Samhithas* like *Kasyapa Samhitha*, *Madhava Nidana*, *Yogaratanakara*, *Bhava Pprakasha*, *Chakradutta* and *Rasaratnasamuchaya*. Though the *Brithat Trayees* haven't specifically explained it, various clinical entities and conditions are described in various chapters in them that is similar to

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the pathology and hence will help in its understanding and treatment.

Definition

As the term consists of the words *Amla* (sour taste) & *Pitta* (*Dosha* that is basically related to all the functional and physical realms of digestion), it is clear that the disease pathology involves prominently *Annava* *Srotas*.

Amlapitta according to classics, is basically a condition characterised by symptoms such as burning sensations in the chest and upper abdomen, nausea, vomiting, and indigestion. But, if we want to go deeper and more classically, we should start with *Pitta Dosha*. "*Amlapithe Pitham Pradhanam*".^[2] According to *Vachaspathyam*, *Amlapitta* means *Pitta* leading to sour taste. *Cakrapani* states that *Amlapitta* is "*Amlagunodriktam Pitham*", where *Udrikta* refers to quantitative increase in *Pitta* which leads to *Amla Guna*. There happens a *Guna Hani* to *Pitta* as it changes from *Laghu Guna* to *Guru* and *Amla*, more precisely *Vidhagda* or *Shuktha*. Even though *Acharya Charaka* considers *Amla* along with *Katu Rasa* as the *Prakrutha Rasa* of *Pitta*, *Sushruta* on the other hand states *Katu* as the actual *Rasa* of *Pitta*, and *Amla* is the *Vaikrutha Rasa*, and which was attained when the *Dosha* becomes *Vidagda*. Taking this into consideration, with reference with *Amlapitta* as a disease, one has to consider that pathologically here, there must be a discrepancy in its functions too, which generally involve digestion, transformation, and transmutation. The classic definition literally includes indigestion, *Klama* (exhaustion without exertion), nausea, *Amlodhgara*, *Gourava*, *Hrit Kanta Daaha*, and *Aruchi*.^[3]

It has been classified into three groups based on *Dosha* predominance, and two based on *Gathi Bedha*: *Urdaga* and *Adhoga*. This allows us to understand what clinical entities are covered by this term. In *Urdwaga Amlapitta*, this includes multicoloured vomitus, vomitus resembling meat washings, excessively slimy vomitus, *Daha* over the throat, precordial region, epigastrium, palms, soles, anorexia, itching, circular eruptions, and popular rashes all over the body. In *Adhoga Amlapitta*, there is thirst, *Daha*, syncope,

giddiness, delirium, elimination of various types of stools, nausea, wheal like skin eruptions, decreased digestive power, horripilation, perspiration, and yellowish discoloration of the body. If so, the clinical picture of *Amlapitta* has similarities with that of hyperacidity, acid peptic disease, and gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD).

Nidana

As per the *Karya Karana Siddhanta*, *Roga* is a *Karya* and there is a *Karana* to it. It is only after the *Karana* is destroyed, that the *Roga* will also come to an end.

If we look into the *Karana* for *Amlapitta*, it turns out, most of it is related to the diet pattern one follows. Moreover *Acharya Charaka* has mentioned *Amlapitta* as one of the diseases caused by *Ahitha Ahara* & *Amavisha*.^[4]

Virudha Dushtaamlavidhaahi Pitta Prakoppi Ppanaannabhujo Vidhagdam

Pitham Swahethu Pachitham Pura Yadhamlapitham Pravadhanthi Santha.^[5]

Aharaja Hethu

This includes all of the angles of the improper food regimen and nature of the food

- Intake of food against *Aharavidhi Visheshayatana*
- Intake of certain specific types of *Ahara* that leads to *Amlapitta*, viz, *Kulatha*, *Pruthuka*, *Pulaka*.^[7]
- Intake of certain specific *Ahara* which are *Abhishyandi*, *Atisnigdha*, *Atiruksha*, *Guru*, *Vidahi*.
- Intake of certain *Ahara* that leads to *Pitta Kopa*

Type	Guna of Ahara	Samskara	Dushithanna	Pitta Prakopi	Faulty dietary habits
Kulatha	Abhishyandhi	Appakwanna Sevana	Dushta Anna Sevana	Adhyasana	Akala Bhojana
Pruthuka	Athi Snigdha	Brishta Dhania Sevana	Paryushitha Anna Sevana	Ajeernas hana	Antharodaka Pana (drinking of excess water)

					during meals)
Pulaka	Ati Rooksha	Ikshu Vikara		Athyushna	Kala Anashana (avoiding the diet in proper time)
Madhya	Guru Bhojya			Athyaml	Vishamaashana
	Vidhahi Anna			Athi Drava	Anna Hina Madhya
	Vidhahi Pana			Athi Theekshna	
				Athi Pana	
				Katu Anna Pana	
				Virudhasana	

Apart from these other *Aharaja Nidana* includes

- *Lavana Rasa Atiyoga (Ca.Su.26/43)*
- *Abhishyandi, Gurubhoana*
- *Ati Rooksha Ahara*
- *Apakva Anna Sevana*
- *Bhrishta Dhanya Sevana*
- *Iksuvikara Sevana, Gorasa Sevana*
- *Pishtanna Sevana*
- *Dushta Anna Sevana / Paryushitha Anna Sevana*
- *Akala Bhojana, Kala Anasana, Vishamasana*
- *Antarodaka Pana*
- *Annahina Madya*

Viharaja Nidana

- *Atisnat* (taking excessive bath)
- *Ati Avagaha* (excessive swimming)

- *Bhuktva Divasvapnaat* (day time sleep after meals)
- *Vega Dharana*
- *Shayya Prajagarana*(improper sleeping patterns)

Manasika Nidana

Manasika Bhavas like mental stress, anger, anxiety, greed are listed as one group of many *Nidanas* of *Amlapitta*.

Acharya Kashyapa points out a peculiar geographical relation in the aetiology. It is said that *Amlapitta* is found more in *Anupa Desa* as compared to others.

Modern aetiology?

As we know that, according to modern science, GI tract is a hollow tube consisting of oesophagus, stomach, small intestine, colon, rectum and anus and all of these carries out their own unique, complimentary and integrated functions for digestion and its transformation process.

In case of *Amlapitta* one has to consider the conditions like oesophagitis, GERD as these is related with the reflux of gastric contents. The stratified squamous epithelium of oesophagus is resistant to abrasion from foods but is sensitive to acid.^[8] There are several defensive mechanisms to protect the mucosa from the acidic reflux from stomach such as the submucosal glands of proximal and distal oesophagus that secretes mucin & bicarbonate, high lower oesophageal tone that protects against the reflux of gastric contents, which are under positive pressure.

- How the food effects the dynamics of acid secretion?

If we look into this issue rationally, one can find the *Nidanas* described here are very much pertinent in the pathology.

According to modern science, certain food components and eating patterns can significantly impact acid secretion and mucosal integrity

- High fat foods:

Fatty meals delay gastric emptying, leading to prolonged acid exposure in stomach which increases the frequency of reflux. It is stated that fat is calorically

dense and digestion often requires secretion of potential oesophageal irritants.

In the *Samprapti* of *Amlapitta* it states that *Anna* attains *Sukthatha* due to the *Agnimandya* or *Pithadushti*.

- Spicy foods

In every *Paithika* disease, the most common *Rasa* related is *Katu*, *Amla* and *Ushna Gunas*. As we know that *Dravya* is dependent on *Guna and Karma*, those *Dravya* which is inherently possessing the above said *Rasa* and *Gunas* will definitely have increase the *Pitta* inside our body. For example, capsaicin in chilli, peppers stimulate gastric acid production and irritate the mucosa.

- Caffeinated beverages and alcohol

Coffee, tea, energy drinks and alcohol which usually contributes to *Tikshna*, *Rooksha*, *Ushna Gunas* and having *Vidahi* properties not only stimulates gastrin production, but also detrimental to gastric mucosa increasing the vulnerability to gastritis and ulcers.

- High sugar diets

Nidanas like *Ikshuvikara Sevana*, *Pishtanna Sevana* also links the intake of foods with high sugar content. Sugary foods particularly processed ones can disrupt the stomach's acid balance and promote bacterial overgrowth, weakening mucosal defences

- Irregular eating patterns
 - Disrupts the gastric acid secretion rhythms
 - Higher basal acid levels
 - Consequences like binge eating & over eating
 - Delayed gastric emptying by affecting gut motility
 - Disturbing the gut-brain axis
- How stress leads to hyperacidity?

Mental states and stress levels play a critical role in regulating gastric acid secretion and mucosal health

- Stimulates the hypothalamic pituitary adrenal axis leading to increased cortisol levels which increase

gastric acid secretion and reduce mucosal blood flow, making the lining more prone to injury

- Increase vagal nerve activity stimulating acid production
- Insomnia as the result of anxiety, stress impacts gastric acid regulation as melatonin (produced during sleep) helps protect the mucosa and regulated acid secretion

How mucosal defences are compromised? How *Bala* is reduced?

The stomach's mucosa is designed to protect itself from the corrosive effects of gastric acids. But various factors can compromise it,

- Prostaglandins: Medications like NSAIDS, stress reduce the synthesis, weakening the mucosal barrier
- Oxidative stress: damages mucosal cells, reduce their capacity to repair. Contributed by mental stress & poor diet
- Helicobacter pylori infection: Thrives in acidic environment
- Disrupted microbiota: By increased consumption of processed food or stress induced changes

Also, in many studies improper eating habits like eating snacks at night, frequently skipping breakfast, quick eating, eating of hot foods excessively and over eating are positively correlated with GERD.^[9]

Looking into recent researches in dietary composition and metabolism, various evidences can be seen regarding this.

It is said that dietary therapy is more commonly prescribed for acid peptic disorders. Dietary patterns including macronutrient composition and eating behaviour have been assessed.

- Eliminating specific beverage categories- Acidic beverages, coffee, certain beer and wines are often hypothesised to worsen GERD
- Spicy food as it is a direct irritant to oesophageal mucosa

- Chocolates
- High fat diets especially those which include fried or greasy foods -
- High carbohydrate diets - Ingestion of disaccharide and starches are only partially absorbed in the small bowel, later undergoing fermentation by colonic bacteria which induce neurohormonal release and LES relaxation leading heart burn.
- Eating patterns - late night eating and untimely eating.
- Ingestion of substances high in alcohol, heat, osmolality or smoke derived chemicals (*Pitta Prakopakara*) reduces the threshold of defence mechanisms or impairs mucosal resistance.

Samprapthi

The *Nidana Sevana* leads to *Pitta Prakopa* and *Jataragnimandya*, causing the food ingested to become *Shuktha*, which lies stagnant in the stomach. Any food consumed during this time induces *Vidhagdhaavastha*, which leads to *Ajeerna Avastha*, resulting in classic *Poorva Roopas* and *Roopas*. The increased *Amlatha* or *Vidhagdhattha* in *Amashaya* is one of the key factors in *Amlapitta* where the *Prakrutha Paithika Gunas* that is needed for normal *pachana* is compromised and continually carries on due to *Mandhagnithva*. This is evidenced by the *Samanya Lakshana* that we see in different clinical cases of *Amlapitta*

Lakshanas

- *Hrillasa, Chardhi, Asyasravana, Amlika, Amlasyatha, Amlodgara, Vedana, Vrana, Ura-Udara Kantadaha, Jwara, Sarvangadaha, Udara-Adhmana, Shiroruja, Vidbhadha, Utsahahani*
- All of these *Lakshana* indicates an increase in *Amla, Theekshna, Ushna, Visra, Sara, Drava Gunas* in varying degrees and in various clinical scenarios of the same *Roga*
- One can see both *Lakshana* of *Ama*, and *Pitta Dushti*

In modern science, there is a multifactorial connection to acid peptic disease. This includes transient lower oesophageal sphincter relaxations and pressure

abnormalities, reflux of acid, bile, pepsin, and pancreatic enzymes, oesophageal mucosal injuries, impaired oesophageal clearance, delayed gastric emptying, and impaired mucosal defensive factors.

Ahara - For Swasthya Samrakshana and Vikara Prasamana

Amlapitta is a disease that can be easily prevented if we bring about specific kinds of modifications in our diet and regimens, as in the majority of cases, these contribute to it. The concept of prevention is also closely related to the *Nidana Parivarjana*. Because, while antacids and acid suppressing medications are commonly used to treat symptoms for the sake of convenience and time savings, they can cause side effects such as hypersensitivity, alkalosis and constipation.^[10]

Avoiding the *Nidanas* and following the *Pathya* (dietary items, activities, and behavioural regimens that are beneficial for the body channels or systems with due respect to individual variations) is itself the *Hethuvipareetha Chikitsa in Amlapitta*. As the matter of concern here is *Ahara*, one should understand that it is not only the *Swabhava* and the regulation of it but also the *Agnideepthi* that should be considered here, as *Amlapitta* is a *Roga* that effects the quality of *Agni*. As *Avipaka* is the first *Lakshana* of *Amlapitta*, one should have a strict understanding of what to eat, when to eat, how much to eat, and how often to eat. To prevent and control hyperacidity, one should undertake all the measures to pacify *Pitta*. Along with the medicines, healthy dietary regimens should also be promoted.

From the *Nidanas* and *Samprapti* and all those branches where the pathological process of *Amlapitta* pervades its evident that diet plays an important role in it. So, in order to prevent or extinguish the brunt of the disease, regulations in the type of food that one is taking and not taking, regimens one is following and not following can bring about better prospective changes along with medicines.

Various *Aharas* as *Pathyas* are stated and explained in various Ayurvedic classics specifically for *Amlapitta* and also for pacifying *Pitta*. So, the physician has to

judiciously go through each verse, comprehend it and encompass these dietary wisdoms according to the condition of the patient with the help of both Ayurvedic and modern principles. Because exploring non-pharmacological options can lead to better treatment strategies for *Amlapitta* due to various potential side effects associated with long use of certain drugs and therapies.

Adopting a dietary regimen conducive to eliminating *Pitta Dushti* can be done in two ways. One, by promoting gut health and two by tailoring the type of diet specifically to decreasing the *Lakshanas* of *Amlapitta*.

As for the first part, the management should have a comprehensive approach involving optimising the quantity of meals, its timing and macronutrient consumption. Establishing regular eating patterns is crucial. Oesophageal acid exposure may be more severe after consuming a high calorie diet than a low one with the same fat content. Because calorie density plays an important role in determining the severity of oesophageal acid exposure after a meal. At the same time, the percentage of fat content in one's diet significantly impacts the frequency of reflux symptoms.^[11]

Pathya Aharas mentioned in Amlapitta by different classics^[12-15]

SN	Classes of Diet	Pathya	Explanation
1.	Cereals	Rice of old <i>Shali</i> variety	Less starchy, easier to digest, reduces the risk of fermentation
		Wheat	Provides steady energy release due to its complex carbohydrates avoiding sugar spikes & have high fibre content
2.	Pulses	<i>Mudga</i> (green gram)	Alkaline in nature, rich in fibre, improves gut motility
		Lentil	Rich in fibres, proteins, reduces acid reflux

3.	Vegetables	<i>Patola</i> , <i>Vasthuka</i> , <i>Karavelaka</i> , spinach, bitter gourd,	Alkaline, helps in neutralising stomach acid, antioxidant properties reduce inflammation in gastric mucosa. But should be consumed in moderation as it may stimulate acid secretion in sensitive individuals
		Carrot	Alkaline, rich in beta carotene and antioxidants that protect gastric lining
		Pumpkin	Low in acid, high fibre content, rich in beta carotene & antioxidants that supports mucosal healing
		<i>Amla</i>	Rich in Vit C which strengthen gastric mucosa, reduce oxidative stress, alkaline
4.	Milk products & drinks	<i>Gogri</i> (in moderation)	Rich in butyric acid which supports intestinal inflammation & reduces inflammation in gastric mucosa
		<i>Godugdha</i> (good for temporary relief but mixed effects long term)	Neutralises stomach acid temporarily due to its calcium content
5.	Sugarcane & its products	Sugar, honey	-
6.	Cooked food	Meat & meat soup of animals and birds (good in moderation)	Lean meats are low in fat making them easy to digest (<i>red meats are to be avoided</i>)

		but depends on preparation & type)	Broths are rich in glycine & gelatin which promote mucosal healing and reduce inflammation
7.	Adjuvant of food	All <i>Tiktarasa</i> and edibles	-
8.	Spices	Garlic	Even though it has antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory properties that support gut health, usually there are chances for it to irritate gastric mucosa
		Ginger	Natural anti-inflammatory & carminative reducing bloating, acid reflux, improve gastric motility & prevent delayed gastric emptying
		Clove	Alkaline but high amount irritate the mucosa
		Turmeric	Reduces oxidative stress and inflammation
		Saffron	Promotes healing of mucosa
9.	Roots & tubers	Beet root	Alkaline, rich in antioxidants like betalains that protects gastric mucosa from oxidative damage
		Sweet potato	Alkaline, high fibre content, rich in Vit A
10.	Nuts	Coconut (good in moderation)	Anti-inflammatory, protects mucosa
11.	Oils	Coconut oil, sunflower oil	-
12.	Fruits	<i>Dadima</i>	Natural antioxidant, high fibre content
		Apple	High pectin content that soothes digestive system, promotes gut motility
		Banana	Naturally alkaline, promote production of

			mucous in stomach which protects gastric mucosa
		Dates	High in fibre, high potassium content helps balance stomach acid and reduce bloating

High fibre content foods, root vegetables such as sweet potatoes, carrots, beets, green vegetables such as asparagus, green beans are beneficial in general.

There have been various diet patterns that includes various fruits, vegetables, grains advised for people suffering from *Amlapitta*. But one should be cautious of the fact that when it comes to food for a *Roga* in which there is predominant *Pitta Dushti*, a general diet chart won't do the purpose. Because individual alterations come to play in the pathology at different levels. These individualistic vulnerabilities should also be taken care of.

CONCLUSION

Amlapitta is a digestive disorder in which there is a major influence of diet and dietary patterns in its *Samprapti*. Dietary changes for *Amlapitta* include avoiding spicy, sour and fried foods as well as reducing consumption of alcohol and tobacco. Lifestyle modifications that can help manage *Amlapitta* include avoiding stress, getting sleep, regular exercise and maintaining a healthy weight. Diet plays a crucial role in managing *Amlapitta*, emphasising the importance of consuming foods that are easy to digest, seasonal and it is also recommended to eat smaller, more frequent meals rather than larger ones. It is also important to get medical advice before making significant change to the diet or lifestyle as there are individual needs and concerns of efficiency and safety.

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