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IMPORTANCE OF AMA IN AYURVEDA

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda mainly focuses in maintaining health status by improving the immunity of body and control the diseases. It is a holistic approach through which the prevention and treatment of diseases is only possible. When physician knows the pathogenesis and the causative factor of the disease, it is easier to treat and control the disease prevalence. Among many causative factors Ama is one such pathological factor which causes many diseases. Acharyas of Ayurveda described Ama as biological body factor whose presence disrupts the balance of the three doshas resulting in many pathological and physiological disturbances in our body. It is considered as a toxin product, due to the improper functioning of Agni inside the body. So, Ama is a toxin responsible for formation of all diseases. Ayurvedic practitioners employ various methods, including dietary regulations, herbal remedies, and detoxification techniques, to remove Ama and restore health. Understanding Ama's role provides insight into preventive healthcare and holistic well-being, emphasizing the importance of digestion and metabolism in maintaining overall health.

KEYWORDS: Ayurveda, Agni, Ama

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda described different concepts related to disease pathogenesis and *Ama* is one of them described as toxic product which can trigger diseases pathogenesis. It is believed less-functioning of *Agni* leads to Agnimandya followed by production of *Ama* which can combine with our body's entities and induces various Patho-physiological condition. Ama begins its journey after accumulation in the gastrointestinal tract. Our diet like food intake and unhealthy foods, improper digestion vitiates *Tridoshas, Dhatus and Malas* by combining with them and causes diseases. It blocks nutrient and energy supply to channels leading to depletion and eventually the damage and destruction of healthy tissues. After Utpatti of *Ama*, it hampers in origin the originating factor. *Ama* is the unripe and un-metabolized toxin product of impaired digestion of our body. *Ama* also represents the transition from physiology to pathology. Therefore, it is the precursor of inflammatory, degenerative and infective processes that eventually manifest as full-fledged diseases similarly to those poisons, for this it is also called as *Amavisha.*

Derivation of the term *Ama*

The word *Ama* is derived from the root ¨Am" *Roga Dhatu* +Dhang *Ptatyaya*. According to Hemachandra "*Am" Dhatu* + "*Nich" Pratyaya*." *A*" means towards and "*ma*" means poison.

"आममन्नरसं केचित्, केचित्तु मलसञ्चयम्|

Madhukosh Commentry on M.N 25/1-5

Ama forms: - Ajeerna Ahara or Ajeerna Ahara rasa -> Apakwa Ahara -> Agni Dusti -> Amavisha -> Mala Sanchaya -> Prathama Dushya Dushti -> Avipakwa Dravya -> Amaya

Defination Of *Ama*

ऊष्मणोऽल्पबलत्वेन धातुमाद्यमपाचितम्|
दुष्टमामाशयगतं रसमामं प्रचक्षते|| (A.H.SU-13/25)
अन्ये दोषेभ्य एवाति दुष्टेभ्योऽन्योन्यमूर्छनात्|
कोद्रवेभ्यो विषस्येव वदन्त्यामस्य सम्भवम्||(A.S-21/19)
दुष्यत्यग्निः स दुष्टोऽन्नं न तत् पचति लघ्वपि|
अपच्यमानं शुक्तत्वं यात्यन्नं विषरूपताम् ||(CH-CHI-15/44)

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- The word *Ama* refers to the undigested food material found in *Amasaya* i.e., due to the improper function of *Jatharagni*, proper digestion of ingested food will not happen and undigested food gets stored in *Amasaya*, which results in the formation of poor *Rasa Dhatu* (the first *dhatu* from the *Anna Rasa*) and this impoperly formed *Rasa Dhatu* is termed as *Ama*. [1]
- The imbalanced and weak *Agni* leads to incomplete or inefficient breakdown of nutrients. Instead of being properly absorbed and assimilated into the body, these partially digested nutrients accumulate and transform into *Ama*.[2][3]
  This substance is characterized by its heaviness, stickiness, and foul smell, and it can obstruct the channels in the body, disrupt normal physiological functions, and contribute to various diseases and imbalances.

Ama in Relation to Agni

In *Charaka Sutra* it says "*Aharamatra punar agnibalaaprkshini*" [4]. Thus, digestion of food depends upon our *Agni Bala*.
The three primary Agnis found within the body are *Jatharagni*, *Panchbhutagni*, and *Dhatvagni*. The digestive fire, or *jatharagni*, governs all of the body's digestive functions. Proper digestion is hindered when *Agni* is hypofunctional, which leads to the development of *Ama*. Next, the *Bhutagni* were mentioned. *Bhuta* refers to the physical material sequence of food and body components. After that, *Dhatvagni* was addressed; in this context, *Dhatu* refers to the fundamental components of the body. The metabolism of tissue is included in *Dhatvagni's* functions.

In sum, *Jatharagni* (gastrointestinal 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 *Bhutagnipaka* and from there, the product of nutrition is processed in the tissues by the Dhatvagni. Normally digestion at all levels and proper functioning of these *Agni* is absolutely necessary. But, whenever *Agnivyapara* took the shape of *Mandagni*, the resultant material will be unripened, undigested formation of food resides in *Amashaya*, term is known as *Ama*. In terms of metabolism, it is defective metabolism.

Causes of Formation of Ama

From the above discussion, it is clear that Jatharagni is the root cause of Ama. So, the factors responsible for malfunctioning of Agni are also responsible for Ama.

1. *Aharja- Abhojana* (fasting), *Atibhojana* (Overeating), *Ajirnabhojana* (in state of indigestion), *Vishamashana* (irregular dirt habits), *Asatmyabhojana, Virudhhabhojana* (indulgence in diet) not homologus to body, food qualities like *Guru* (heavy), *Sheeta* (cold), *Shuska* (dry), *Ruksha* (fat deficient food), *Vidahi* (acidic), *bhojana* (incompatible diet) leads to the failure of digestion of even easily digestible food.[5]

Other Causes like - Erroneous inadequate administration of *PanchakarmaVidhi*[6] i.e. *Vaman, Virechana, Basti Karma, Sneha Karma* can also produce *Ama*.
Desha Vaishamya, Kala Vaishamya, Ritu Vaishamya and *vegadharana* plays important role in the vitiation of the function of *Agni* and there will be digestive impairment in a person.

2. *Viharaja- Atyambupana* (drinking of water excessively), *Vishamashana*(irregular consumption of food), *Sandharnata* (suppression of natural urges), *Svapna viparyaya* (keeping awakening in night and sleeping in days) may give rise to *Amadosha*.[7]

3. *Mansika-* Consumption of food while afflicted with mental upset due to *Kama* (Lust), *Krodha* (anger), *Lobha* (greed), *Moha* (temptation), *Irshaya* (jealousy), *shoka* (Mental stresses, grief), *Bhaya* (fear), *Lajja* (shame), *Chinta* (worry) are responsible for *Agnimandyajanya Ama*.[8]

Symptoms of Ama

General characteristic of *Ama* is, *Srotorodha* (obstruction of channels), *Balabhransha* (loss of strength), *Gaurava* (felling of heaviness), *Anilamudhata* (obstruction of *vayu*), *Alasya* (laziness), *Apakti* (indigestion), *Nisthiva* (excessive salivation), *Malasanga* (constipation), *Aruchi* (anorexia), and *Klama* (fatigueness).[9]

Ama lakshana such as- [10]- ***Jwara* (Fever)**: *Ama* can cause low-grade, chronic fever.
- ***Aruchi* (Loss of appetite)**: A person with *Ama* may experience a lack of interest in food.
- ***Angamarda* (Body aches)**: Generalized body pain and stiffness are common.
- ***Alasya* (Lethargy)**: *Ama* leads to a feeling of heaviness and lack of enthusiasm.
- **Nausea and indigestion**: The person may feel queasy and have difficulty digesting food.
- **Malodorous breath and body odour**: *Ama* produces an unpleasant smell.
- **Coated tongue (*Jihva* Lepa)**: The tongue often appears thickly coated, typically white or yellow.
- **Heaviness in the body**: A sensation of weight and dullness in the body.
- ***Avipaka* (Indigestion)**: A feeling of incomplete digestion with a sense of bloating.

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- ***Praseka* (Excessive salivation)**: *Ama* can cause excessive salivation.
- **Stiffness and pain in the joints**: *Ama* often leads to stiffness and joint pain, especially in the morning.

Samprapti:

Nidana Sevana

(Excess consumption of liquid or irregular amount of food intake)

↓

Dosha Prakopa

↓

Reduced function of *Jatharagni* (due to reduced quality of *Ushna*)

↓

Improperly Formed *Ahara Rasa*

↓

Formation of poor *Rasa Dhatu* i.e., Sanchaya of *Ā*ma

↓

Prakopa of *Ā*ma i.e., *Ā*mavisha formed in *Kostha*

↓

Sthanasansraya of *Ā*ma in *Khavaigunya*

↓

Manifestation of disease

Samprapti Chakra
Hetu: Agnidusti, Agnimandhyakarak
Adhisthan: Mahasrotas (Grahani)
Dosa: Tridosha
Srotas: Annavaha, Purisavaha
Dusya: Anna, Rasa

Role of *Ama* in Disease Progression

- **Pathogenesis:** *Ama* is often considered the root cause of many diseases in Ayurveda. It acts as a trigger for disease progression by disturbing the normal function of the *Doshas* (*Vata, Pitta*, and *Kapha*). For instance:
  - ***Vata* Dosha** [11]: When combined with *Ama*, it can lead to conditions like joint pain, stiffness, and neurological disorders.
  - ***Pitta* Dosha** [12]**:** *Ama* mixed with *Pitta* can cause inflammatory conditions such as skin disorders, acidity, and fevers.
  - ***Kapha* Dosha** [13]**:** When *Ama* is associated with *Kapha*, it leads to conditions such as respiratory disorders, lethargy, and obesity.
- **Interference with Cellular Functions [14]:** *Ama* obstructs the micro-channels (*Srotas*) responsible for transporting nutrients and energy to the cells. This obstruction leads to cellular dysfunction, which can manifest as various chronic diseases.

Addressing *Āma* through *Ayurvedic* Interventions:*[15]***
Ayurveda emphasizes early intervention to neutralize and eliminate *Āma*. Depending on the severity, quantity, and type of *Āma*, Ayurvedic treatments aim to eliminate Ama from the body through detoxification methods such as:[16]

1.***Laṇghana***: Restricting nutritional intake, including fasting, to give the digestive and metabolic systems rest. Controlled fasting helps in burning Ama by stimulating Agni and allowing the body to cleanse itself.

2.***Langhana Pachana***: Prescribing specific medications to digest and metabolize *Āma*, rendering it inactive such as *Haritaki, Amalaki, Chitrak*, etc can be given.

3.***Dosha abasechan (Sodhana***-Detoxification Therapies*)*: A purification process to completely remove *Āma* from the body e.g., adequate administration of *Panchakarma* - a series of five therapies (*Vamana, Virechana, Basti, Nasya*, and *Raktamokshana*) that cleanse the body and expel toxins.

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Dietary Interventions

- **Light and Easily Digestible Foods:** Consuming foods that are easy to digest helps in preventing the formation of *Ama*. These include soups, broths, and cooked vegetables.
- **Avoidance of *Ama*-Forming Foods [17]:** Heavy, cold, and oily foods, as well as incompatible food combinations (*Viruddha Ahara*), are avoided as they contribute to the formation of *Ama*.

Lifestyle Modifications[18]

- **Regular Exercise [19]:** Physical activity helps stimulate *Agni* and prevents the accumulation of *Ama* by promoting healthy digestion and metabolism.
- **Proper Sleep Routine [20]:** Maintaining a regular sleep schedule and avoiding late-night eating can help in keeping *Agni* strong and preventing *Ama* formation.
- **Stress Management [21]:** Practices such as *yoga*, meditation, and *Pranayama* are recommended to balance the mind and reduce stress-induced *Agnimandya*.

Preventive Measures

- **Seasonal Cleansing [22]:** *Ayurveda* recommends undergoing seasonal detoxification practices to remove any *Ama* accumulated during the transition of seasons, especially during the spring (*Vasant*) season when *Ama* tends to accumulate more due to *Kapha* dominance.
- ***Dinacharya* (Daily Routine) [23]:** Following a consistent daily routine, including morning cleansing rituals, regular meal times, and appropriate sleep patterns, supports strong *Agni* and prevents *Ama* accumulation.

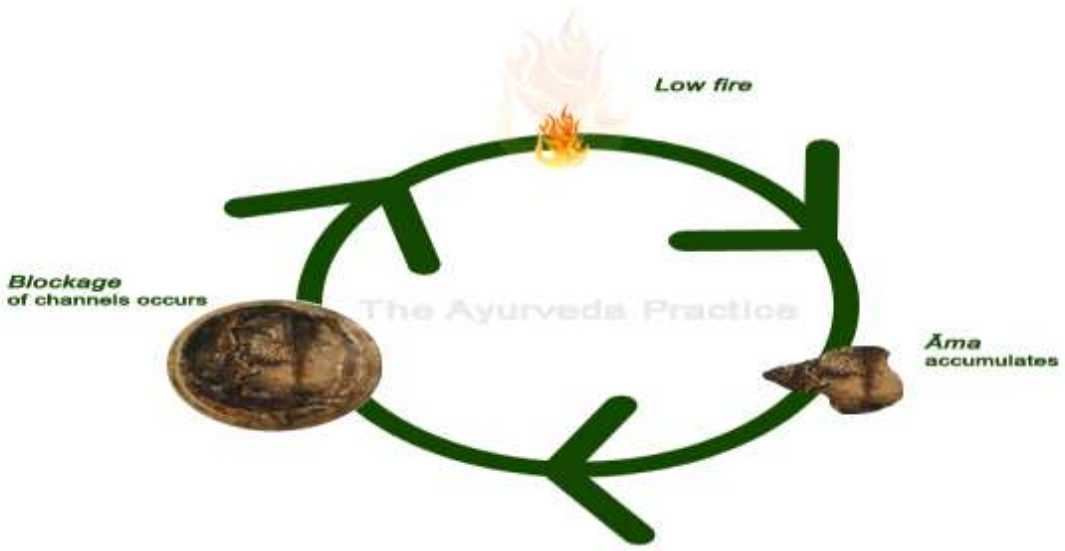
Āma in relation to Modern View:[24]

*Ā*ma can only exist if key metabolic processes are not functioning properly. We refer to these processes in *Ayurveda* as types of fire. There are three main types of these fires;

1. The digestive tract, which simplifies food so that the body can absorb it.
2. The mechanisms in the liver and bloodstream that convert food particles into nutrients that can be used and trash which can be eliminated
3. The transformational processes that yield tissues and give them energy by using these nutrients.

Ama is created in the body if any of these functions aren't functioning properly.

Conversations pertaining to an unsuitable diet, unclean food, intense emotions, stress, and the suppression of impulses (such as bowel motions, flatulence, or urination) can reduce these fires and thereby facilitate the formation of *Āma*. Once created, *Āma* can further reduce metabolic fires by blocking the channels. decrease in flames caused by metabolism. Therefore, a vicious cycle could start.



If *Ama* is only the result of insufficient stomach acid production, it might just stay in the digestive tract and contaminate "food essence," which is the meal's fluids solidified by the digestive system and utilised to form the body's tissues. Constipation, loss of taste and appetite, and indigestion are among the digestive symptoms caused due to this. It can also result in mucus and thready saliva as well as a coating on the tongue that is challenging to get off. The fatigue, heaviness, and lethargic feeling that result from

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the "food essence" circulation are systemic symptoms. Chronic digestive problems can develop over time. It is possible to digest this and then expel it from the body by increasing the digestive fire.

CONCLUSION

In *Ayurvedic* medicine, the concept of *Ama* is integral to understanding disease causation and treatment. *Ama*, the toxic byproduct of improper digestion, is considered a root cause of many diseases. It arises when the digestive fire (*Agni*) is weakened, leading to incomplete digestion and the accumulation of toxins in the body. Recognizing and managing *Ama* is crucial in *Ayurveda*, as it disrupts the balance of the *Doshas* (*Vata, Pitta, Kapha*) and impairs the proper functioning of bodily tissues and channels (*Srotas*). *Ama* is characterized by qualities such as heaviness, stickiness, coldness, and a foul smell, reflecting its obstructive nature. These properties hinder digestion, block nutrient absorption, and prevent the effective elimination of waste, resulting in systemic toxicity. Different *Ayurvedic* texts emphasizes that *Ama* obstructs the body's channels, leading to stagnation and the development of diseases. This contrasts with modern biomedical models that often focus on pathogens or genetics, showcasing *Ayurveda's* holistic and preventive approach.

Diagnostically, the presence of *Ama* is identified through symptoms like a coated tongue, loss of appetite, body aches, and lethargy. These signs guide practitioners in deciding the need for detoxification therapies, such as *Panchakarma*. The early detection of *Ama* allows for timely intervention, preventing the progression to more severe health issues. *Ayurveda's* personalized approach, considering each individual's constitution (*Prakriti*) and current imbalance (*Vikriti*), ensures that treatments are tailored to effectively eliminate *Ama* and restore health.

Therapeutically, the focus is on eliminating *Ama* through dietary adjustments, lifestyle changes, and detoxification procedures. *Panchakarma*, including *Vamana* (emesis) and *Virechana* (purgation), is designed to cleanse the body of *Ama*, purify the channels, and rebalance the *Doshas*. Dietary strategies aim to enhance *Agni*, using warming spices and light foods while avoiding heavy, oily, and cold substances that contribute to *Ama's* formation.

In today's healthcare, the idea of *Ama* is becoming more and more important, particularly when it comes to treating chronic illnesses linked to metabolic disturbances and systemic inflammation. *Ayurvedic* concepts can be incorporated into modern techniques to provide a comprehensive approach to health that emphasises prevention and addresses the underlying causes of illness. With increasing interest in *Ayurvedic* treatment, the idea of *Ama* offers important insights for attaining the best possible health and well-being in the modern world.

Thus, *Ā*ma formed at the levels of *Jatharagni*, *Bhutaagni* & *Dhatvagni* and initiated many pathological events inside the body. *Ā*ma further deteriorates digestive and metabolic activities, blocks *Strotas*, vitiated *Dhatus* and *Rakta* therefore causes various diseases including auto-immune disorders. Avoidance of *Virrudha Aahara*, fear, anxiety, restoring disciplinary daily regimen, *Ayurveda drugs*, detoxification measures, *Yoga* and considerations of concept of *Pathya* and *Apathya* helps to avoid prevalence of diseases associated with excessive production of *Ama*.

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