



Review Article

CONCEPTUAL STUDY OF AMA AND ITS MANIFESTATION IN VARIOUS DISEASES

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Article info

Article History:

Received: 29-07-2022

Revised: 14-08-2022

Accepted: 31-08-2022

KEYWORDS:

Ama, Sama dosha, Sama dhatu, Sama mala, Agnisapeksha ama, Agni nirapeksha ama.

ABSTRACT

Like the theories of *Tridosha*, *Sapta Dhatu*, and *Trimalas*, the concept of *Agni* and *Ama* are very unique conceived in Ayurvedic texts. The concept of *Ama* encompasses an almost whole spectrum of diseases mentioned in Ayurveda. In the Ayurvedic view, nearly all diseases have their origin in *Ama dosha*. In Ayurveda, the word *Ama* and *Pakva* are very important to understand the theories of pathology and treatment according to Ayurveda. The success or failure of the Ayurvedic Physician in treatment depends upon the understanding of two conditions, *Sama* and *Nirama*- immature and mature. In *Ama dosha langhan* or fasting is the general form of treatment. Even medicine is forbidden in acute conditions. As the *Jathragni* is already weak and struggling to digest *Ama*, it can't digest the medicine, another newcomer. The interaction of *Doshas*, food, and medicine may cause even fatal results.

INTRODUCTION

As all Ayurveda learners know that the purpose of Ayurveda is to maintain the health of a healthy person and to treat the illness of diseased persons. In both contexts, if we think deeply then we can conclude that there is the prime importance of *Ama*. Because *Ama* is the root cause of all the diseases<sup>[1]</sup>. That's why the disease is given the synonym '*Amaya*<sup>[2]</sup>'. In the case of a healthy person we have to prevent the formation of *Ama* and in a diseased person, we have to eliminate the produced *Ama*. There are various views of different Aacharyas about the concept of *Ama*. *Ama dosha* and *Ama visha* are conditions that are stated to occur due to the impairment of *Agni*. *Ama* is called *Ama dosha* because like the *Doshas* it vitiates the *Rasa dhatu* and through it the other *Dhatus* and *Malas*, and sometimes designated as *Amavisha*<sup>[3]</sup> because *Ama* spreads very quickly like a *Visha* (poison) and vitiates the *Dhatus* and affect the senses also like a *Visha*.

So here is an effort to clarify the concept of *Ama* from an Ayurvedic point of view along with its relationship with various diseases.

**Definition of *Ama*:** There are various definitions of *Ama* given in Ayurvedic texts:

- According to *Amarkosh* *Ama* is something that is not digested properly and needs further digestion.
- Aacharya Vagbhatta stated that *Ama* is that *Apachita* or undigested/ inadequately digested *Anna rasa* which has got vitiated within the *Amashya* due to hypo functioning of *Ushma/Agni*<sup>[4]</sup>.
- Aacharya Bhavmishra in the 16<sup>th</sup> century also gave a similar account of *Ama*. The essence of food taken, which is not properly digested due to the hypo functioning of *Agni* is called *Ama*, which is the basic cause of many diseases<sup>[5]</sup>.
- Vijay Rakshit also has a similar opinion on *Ama* and its complications. He considered *Ama* as undigested *Aahar rasa* due to *Agnimandya*. He specified that *Ama* is the root cause of all diseases<sup>[6]</sup>.
- Vijay Rakshit has also given various views about *Ama*. These are as follows:
  1. It is unripe / partially digested *Aahar rasa*.
  2. It is the accumulation of *Malas*.
  3. It is the initial stage of vitiation of *Doshas*.

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<https://doi.org/10.47070/ijapr.v10iSuppl1.2496>

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Hence it is clear that there are various views about the origin and definition of *Ama* but all Acharyas unanimously were of the view that this *Ama* is a partially metabolized substance that is very harmful/toxic to the body and surely the cause of all diseases.

**Causes of Production of *Ama*:** Taking food in excess or foods that are *Viroodha*, *Guru* (heavy) i.e., beyond *Matra* (beyond proper measure) is the chief cause of the production of *Ama*. The excess of food may depend upon *Amatra guru*, *Samskaara guru*, *Samyoga guru*, *Swabhava guru* etc. This is to be settled by the person himself. *Amaatra* is the chief cause of *Ama dosha*. Acharya Charak says the capacity of *Amashya* is to be divided into 3 parts- 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of it should be filled by solids, 1/3<sup>rd</sup> by liquids and 1/3<sup>rd</sup> is to be kept empty. And Acharya Vagbhatta says that 1/2 should be filled with solids, 1/4<sup>th</sup> by liquids and 1/4<sup>th</sup> kept vacant to enable the *Doshas* to move freely and do their functions properly. Acharya Charak says that not only the *Amatra* i.e., excessive foods but also foods which are *Guru* (heavy), *Ruksha* (dry), *Sheeta* (cold), etc. are *Ama* generating. These are designated as *Apathya aaharas*. Even when proper food is taken according to proper measure, the digestion may be absent by emotions such as *Chinta* (brooding), *Sokam* (sorrow), *Bhaya* (fear), *Krodha* (anger), *Dukha* (worry), *Sayya* (excessive sleeping) and *Prajagrana* (waking up in nights). This explains the psychosomatic relation in the causation of diseases which are now greatly prevalent on account of certain conditions depending on hurry, worry, and selfishness due to modern civilization.

**Types of *Ama*:** *Ama* can be of many types according to its formation and action. Basically, it is divided into two categories one is *Agni sapeksha ama* which directly depends upon the improper function of *Agni* and another one is *Agni Nirpeksha Ama* in which the role of *Agni* is secondary. *Agni sapeksha Ama* is produced due to *Agnimandya*. And as we know *Agni* is of 3 main types i.e., *Jathragni*, *Dhatwagni* and *Bhutagnies*, same is *Agni sapeksha ama*.

***Agni Sapeksha Ama*- Types:**

1. Produced by the impaired function of *Jathragni*.
2. Due to the impaired function of *Dhatwagni*.
3. Due to impaired functions of *Bhutagnis*.

These three main categories are further divided into states as follows:

1. ***Jatharagni Mandya*:** One type.
2. ***Dhatwagni Mandya*:** *Rasa*, *Rakta*, *Mamsa*, *Meda*, *Asthi*, *Majja*, *Shukra*
3. ***Bhutagni Mandya*:** *Parthiva Bhutagni*, *Aapya Bhutagni*, *Taijaseeya Bhutagni*, *Vayavya Bhutagni*, *Akasheeya Bhutagni*

***Agni Nirapeksha Ama*:** Here the formation of *Ama* is not directly due to the impaired function of *Agni*. But *Agni dusti* occurs as a result of primary *Doshik* pathology. This *Ama* is produced due to vitiation of *Doshas*, ingestion of *Viroodha aahar*, *Atimatra aahar*, or any other *Aguntaja drvyas*. In *Matrasheetiya Adhyaya* Acharya Vagbhatta stated the *Guru* and *Atimatra anna sewan* does the *Prakopa* of *Doshas*. Excess food intake will lead to obstruction in the pathway of food digestion. And food that remains stagnated in *Amashya*, will compress the *Doshas* and agitates all of them simultaneously. This form of *Ama* can produce its poisonous effect in any limited region of the body (local) or over the whole system (systemic).

**Different States of *Agni Sapeksha Ama*:** Before understanding the concept of *Ama* it is essential to know about the various states of *Ama*. *Ama* can be seen in 4 levels according to the localization of deranging *Agni* and respective stage of *Paka*, where it is formed.

1. ***Apakwa Anna Rupa Ama*:** The vitiated *Agni* due to its natural cause is unable to digest even the *Laghu aahar*<sup>[7]</sup>. So ingested *Laghu aahara* also remained indigested called *Ama*.
2. ***Anna Rasa Rupa Ama*:** If *Jathragni* is functioning properly there will be proper digestion of food which leads to the formation of *Anna Rasa* which in turn undergoes proper metabolism (*Pripaka*). If *Jathragni* is defected i.e., *Jathragni Dorbalya* will lead to improper metabolism of *Annarasa* and this partially metabolized *Annarasa* cannot undergo the normal *Dhatwagni* metabolism for further *Parinama*. This *Apakwa Annarasa* is retained in *Amashya* and produces *Ama*, which is interpreted as *Anna rasa rupa ama*.
3. ***Mala Sanchaya Rupa Ama*:** In the whole process of digestion, some *Malas* are also produced which in fixed quantity bears the body but if accumulated in excess turn toxic causing serious illness. This accumulated *Mala rupa ama* is responsible for the production of all diseases and is termed as *Mala Sanchaya Rupa Ama*.
4. ***Rasa Shesha Rupa Ama*:** In process of digestion sometimes due to *Agnimandya*, some *Aahar* is partially digested while some parts are left totally undigested and this leftover *Aahara rasa* is termed as *Rasa Shesha Rupa Ama*.

**Different States of *Agni Nirpeksha Ama***

1. **First Stage of *Doshik* Vitiation:** *Dosha* vitiating *Nidanas* responsible for *Sanchya* and *Prakopa* of *Doshas* in the body and thus cause intense vitiation of *Doshas*. When one *Dosha* gets vitiating it further vitiates other *Doshas* and produces a highly toxic product i.e., *Ama* by intermixing of these deranged *Doshas*. In the modern idiom, the concept of Autoimmunity has a similar concept. The major histocompatibility complex determined by Human

leukocyte antigens marks the surface proteins of all the cells of the body. This is responsible for the identification of self and non-self by the T- cells (cell-mediated immunity). When the T-cells fail in this recognition then the immune system starts secreting antibodies against the body's self-proteins producing many fatal diseases termed as Auto-immune diseases.

**2. Agantuja Ama:** *Ama* which is specially produced due to external factors is termed as *Agantuja Ama*. Even the endotoxins produced by some parasitic bacteria etc., also comes under this category.

**Properties of Ama:** For the clinical manifestation of *Ama* first, we must have to know the exact properties of *Ama*. Properties of *Ama* are: *Guruta, Avipakvata, Durgandha, Dravata, Pichillta, Snighata, Anekavarn yuktata, Tantumatwa*.

**Manifestation of Ama:** All Acharyas have obviously stated that the basic cause of all diseases is *Ama*. It can be well understood by its various stages and how it is produced in the body. *Dosha, Dhātu, and Malas* within the body are the media through which various diseases are produced in the body. Acharya Vagbhata in *Matrasheetiyam aadhayaya* has used the words 'Ashu' and 'Yugpat' for *Ama* which shows its highly destructive nature.

**Relation of Ama with Tridoshas:** When *Ama* produced in the body gets associated with any of the *Tridosha*, the condition is termed as *Sama dosha awastha*<sup>[8]</sup> i.e., *Samavata, Samapitta, and Samakapha*. On the other hand, when there is no *Sansarga* of *Ama* with *Tridosha* and the *Dosha* itself acts as *Ama* the condition is termed as *Ama dosha awastha*. Acharya Sushrut explained the nature of *Vikaras* produced by *Ama*, with respect to site of formation and related *Doshik* involvement<sup>[9]</sup>.

**Relation of Ama with Vata Dosha:** Association of *Ama* with *vata* produces clinical symptoms like *Agnimandya, Vibandh, Tandra, Angatoda, Adhamana, Angagraha, Shaityata, Arti, Katuruksha Abhilasha, Balanasha, Varna Nasha*, etc. When *Vata* itself is produced as *Ama*, the condition is difficult to differentiate clinically but when understood minutely it becomes clear like in congenital deformity- *Vata* is not produced properly and its functions are not performed properly. For example- Spina Bifida. Here spinal cord is defected and the functions of nerves are impaired due to improper functioning of *Vata dosha*.

**Relation of Ama with Pitta Dosha:** Association of *Ama* with *Pitta dosha* produces symptoms like *Kanthadaha, Hridadaha, Mukhpaka, Ishatkrishan varna, Amlarasa, Amlodgara, Durgandha*, etc. Such conditions can be correlated with the conditions of the GI tract when the function of digestive juice is impaired and they are unable to digest the food. *Pitta* itself produced as *Ama* can be clinically seen in Pancreatitis where

normal intestinal juice is not produced and symptoms of indigestion appear. Here both the conditions are quite clear to understand. In the first one *Pitta* is produced normally but due to its *Sansarga* with *Ama*, it becomes *Samapitta* and becomes unable to digest food. Whereas in the other condition the *Pitta* produced by the pancreas is not normal and is termed as *Ama pitta* which in turn impairs digestion.

**Relation of Ama with Kapha Dosha:** When *Kapha* got *sansarga* with *Ama* the symptoms produced are *Avilata, Sandrata, Durgandha, Kanthliptata, Tantumatva, Pichillata*, etc. Clinically it can be well understood in conditions like RA where produced *Ama* goes to the site of *Sleshaka Kapha* i.e., *Sandhies* (Joints) and adheres with *Shleshaka kapha* and impair that particular joint function. When *Kapha* itself is produced as *Ama* it causes structural deformity. Clinically this condition can be well understood in conditions like Hydrocephalous where the production of *Tarpaka Kapha* is improper which leads to this condition.

**Relation of Ama with Dhatus:** Due to *Dosha* vitiating *Nidanas*, the vitiating *Dosha* and *Agni* lead to vitiating of *Dhatus*. So *Ama* and *Sama* state of every *Dhatu* are now described in short.

**Relation of Ama with Rasa Dhātu:** When healthy *Rasa dhātu* gets associated with *Ama* produced due to improper *Agni* then the functions of *Rasa dhātu* get impaired; the condition is termed as *Sama rasadhātu*. It produces symptoms like *Aruchi, Angmarda, Srotorodh, Agni Nasha, Mukh vairasya, Hrilasa, Tandra, Gaurav, Khalitya, Palitya*, etc. This condition can be well understood clinically in the case of lymphadenitis where any infection produces exo and endotoxins in the lymph which are filtered by lymph nodes and produces lymphadenitis. Due to this swelling and excessive filtration in lymph glands, the obstruction in the further flow of lymph occurs which in turn produces symptoms like fever, anorexia, malaise, etc. When *Rasa dhātu* is not produced properly then it acts as *Ama* and the condition is termed as *Ama rasa dhātu*. This can be easily understood in conditions like DM, where the action of insulin is impaired which in turn produces excess glucose, and instead of being beneficial, it produces various pathologies in the body.

**Relation of Ama with Rakta Dhātu:** *Sama rakta dhātu* produces symptoms like *Kustha, Visarpa, Arsh, Arbud, Gulma, Gudapaka, Mukhpaka, Raktpitta, Asrigdara, Vatarakta, Switra, Koth, Kamla* etc. The conditions where unwanted substances like endotoxins are introduced into the blood are considered as *Samarakta dhātu awastha*. In this condition, the additional substances present in the blood disturb the normal action of blood. On the other hand, the 2<sup>nd</sup> condition i.e., *Ama awastha* of *Rakta dhātu* can be well understood in conditions where the blood cell



production is not normal like in Sickle Cell Anemia. In this condition, structural deformity occurs in red blood cells which impair their normal function.

**Relation of Ama with Mamsa Dhatu:** The symptoms produced due to *Sama mamsa dhatu* and *Ama mamsa dhatu* are *Galgand, Gandmala, Mamsarbuda, Granthi, Adhimamsa, Adhijihwa, Galashundika, Kantha roga*, etc. *Mamsa dhatu* produced as *Ama* can be better understood in conditions of pseudomuscular hypertrophy. In this condition, the muscles are produced much bigger than normal size and are unable to perform even normal functions. In this condition, the improper action of *Agni* on *Rakta dhatu* leads to the formation of improper *Mamsa dhatu*. Hence the structural defect is observed. *Sama mamsa dhatu* condition can be better understood in the case of excess accumulation of lactic acid in *Mamsa dhatu* which in turn produces severe pain and loss of function without any deformity.

**Relation of Ama with Medo Dhatu:** In *Sama* and *Aam medo dhatu* condition the symptoms/ diseases produced are prodromal signs of *Sthaulya, Prameha, Atisweda, Arbuda, Gaurav*, etc., when *Dhatwagni Mandya* occurs it leads to more *Dhatu* production but that produced *Dhatu* is not healthy *Dhatu* but it is *Ama Dhatu*. It can be better understood in conditions like hyperlipidemias, hypercholesteromias, or conditions in which excess fat deposition occurs. These all are termed as *Ama awastha* of *Medo dhatu*. Whereas *Sama medo dhatu awastha* is a condition of cholesterol, and stones in the gall bladder. Here the cholesterol metabolism is not much disturbed. In this condition, the stone is formed due to the addition of other substances which act as *Ama*. Hence the normal *Medo dhatu sansarga* with *Ama* leads to the formation of stone.

**Relation of Ama with Asthi:** The diseases produced due to *Sama* and *Ama awastha* of *Asthi dhatu* are *Adyasthi, Adhidanta, Asthishoola, Asthitoda*, etc. Due to *Asthi dhatwagni mandya* various structural defects are noticed. Osteoporosis and Osteophytes formation are the conditions where the *Ama* bone formation takes place. In conditions like osteomyelitis, and Paget's diseases the accumulation of *Ama* is seen in *Asthi dhatu* which impairs its normal function.

**Relation of Ama with Majja Dhatu:** Symptoms produced due to *Sama* and *Ama awastha* of *Majja dhatu* are *Murcha, Bhrama, Tamodarshana, Gaurav, Arunshika, Netra Abhishyanda, Parvaruka*, etc. *Ama awastha* of *Majja dhatu* can be better understood in conditions like Congenital bone marrow depression. In this condition, the normal function of bone marrow is hampered due to its structural defect. While the *Sama majja dhatu* condition is better understood in acquired bone marrow depression. Where any infection causes the deposition of toxins and leads to this condition.

**Relation of Ama with Sukra Dhatu:** The symptoms produced in *Sama* and *Ama awastha* of *Sukra dhatu* may be *Alpayushtvam, Garbhasrava, Klaihya, Garbhajanaktvam*. The condition of *Ama sukra dhatu* occurs in diseases where the formation of *Dhatu* is not proper like in Oligospermia or Azoospermia etc. *Sama sukra dhatu* occurs in conditions like Pyospermia.

**Relation of Ama with Malas:** *Dosha, Dhatu*, and *Malas* are the *Moola* (Base) of the body, which means normal functioning, and the amount of *Dosha, Dhatu*, and *Malas* is necessary for the proper functioning of the body. Each *Dhatu* has its own *Mala* but we will discuss the 3 main *Malas* i.e., *Mutra, Purish*, and *Sweda*.

**Relation of Ama with Purish:** When *Purish* gets associated with *Ama* it produces symptoms like *Atidurgandhita, Ajirna, Vistambha, Kukshishoola, Atopa, Gaurav*, and *Ama mala* (sinks in water), and other *Udara vikaras*. In *Sama purisha, Awastha purish* gets *Samsarga* with *Ama* and this can be clearly seen in cases of dysentery in which stool comes associated with mucus. *Ama purisha awastha* can be seen in steatorrhoea. In this condition, the stool is not associated with *Ama* but due to abnormal functioning of *agni* stool does not form properly and itself acts as *Ama*.

**Relation of Ama with Mutra:** *Sama* and *Ama awastha* of *Mutra* represent symptoms like *Basti peedan, Avilmutrata, Atyadhika mutra nirharan*. *Sama mutra awastha* can be seen in cases of Diabetes Mellitus where excessive sugar is excreted through urine and *Ama mutra awastha* can be seen in cases of renal failure where urea and creatinine amount is varied.

**Relation of Ama with Sweda:** *Sama* and *Ama awastha* of *Sweda* show symptoms like *Kandu, Twak rukshata, Durgandha* etc.

## CONCLUSION

Thus it can be concluded that *Ama* is something that obstructs the channels of the body and interrupts their normal functioning. When *Ama* combines with *Vatadi doshas* it immediately creates *Dusti* in a wide area involving all *Dosha, Dhatu*, and *Malas*. When *Dosha, Dhatu*, and *Malas* get vitiated they produce various complications. This *Ama* has the power to invade all the body elements and produce a chain of vitiation of *Dosha, Dhatu*, and *Mala* by vitiating them. It produces multiple blockages and nutritional deficiencies. Due to *Ama* the unwanted metabolites and excreta of the body are not expelled properly and remain stagnated in the body thus resulting in low immunity and many ailments.

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**Cite this article as:**

Gahalawat Manpreet, Gahalawat Preeti, Kumar Krishan. Conceptual Study of Ama and its Manifestation in Various Diseases. International Journal of Ayurveda and Pharma Research. 2022;10(Suppl 1):32-36.

<https://doi.org/10.47070/ijapr.v10iSuppl1.2496>

**Source of support: Nil, Conflict of interest: None Declared**

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