



Clinical Assessment Criteria for *Ama* Diagnosis

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Abstract

The term *Ama* refers to raw, unripe, unprocessed or improperly digested condition of food substances probably. *Acharyas* has said that *mandagni* (low digestive power) is the root cause of all diseases & *Ama* is also produced by *mandagni*, which produces almost diseases. *Ama* is described by all *Acharyas* but the greatest clinical detail about this entity (*Ama*) has been described for the first time by *Acharya Vagbhata*. Identification of presence of *Ama* in body is very crucial need in today's era for healthy living and to manage and prevent the diseases. There are some basic characters are described by *Acharyas* in various *samhitas* which may be helpful for the diagnosis of *Ama* condition. *Ama* may produce due to exogenous and endogenous sources, substances which are unwholesome to the body and can be termed as an antigen which is very much capable for inducing immunological reactions in *Amavata* (Arthropathies).

Keywords: *Ama*; *Mandagni*; Antigen; *Srotorodha*

Introduction

Human body has three basic physical components *dosha*, *dhatu* and *mala*, which are responsible for the stability of the body in their natural state while disequilibrium state causes diseases. *Ama* is also an entity which causes vitiation in *dosha*, *dhatu* and *mala*. *Ama* is a pathological entity and causes abnormality in srotas, *dhatu* etc resulting into development of various diseases. *Ama* is responsible for the initiation of many diseases in body hence during the description of synonyms of *vyadhi*, *Amaya* [1] (disease produced due to *Ama*) synonym is also given. *Ama* has a great significant place in some diseases as *Amavata*, Obesity, *Visuchika*, *Atisara*, *Pandu* etc. Elimination of *Ama* is one of the most important steps during the management of these diseases. *Ama* is always unwanted substance to body and immunologically powerful in activating strong immune response resulting into genesis of certain set of diseases because it acts as a foreign body to human body [2]. *Ama* is a condition that occurs when the immune system mistakenly attacks its own constituent parts as self and destroys its own cells and tissues. The *Ama* and antibodies then interact with each other to form an immune complex's and damages the joints and other body parts leading to acute pain and swelling. According to new researches also, it has been stated one of the most attractive explanations for the autoimmune phenomenon has centered on the exposure to various environmental factors such as infections that are capable of initiating disease in genetically predisposed individuals. Synovial fluid of patients with RA shows the presence of bacterial DNA and their products arising from naturally occurring commensals in the gut and other mucosal surfaces. One explanation for the presence of gut commensals in the joints of RA patients could be a leaky gut or loss of intestinal integrity that facilitates the migration of gut commensals or their products to the peripheral organs. The bacterial products released in the joints may result in local and systemic immune stimulation [3]. This explanation probably proves the theory in context of *Amavata* i.e. *Ama* reaches to *leshmika sthana* and act as an antigen. Always a process or a chain reaction starts and ends up to attaining certain form either in synthetic process (Anabolic) or in decaying process (Catabolic), which is capable of carrying a function. If this process of transformation gets deranged due to *trividha hetus* (*pragyapradha*, *asatmyendriyarthasanyoga* and *parinama*) leads to formation of *Ama*. It forms in the process of *paka* or transformation or *Gunantaradhana* but not attained complete *paka* or finality". When the process of *paka* is not completed, the ultimate function of the *srotas* or tissues hampers resulting in a disease. *Ama* resulting from incomplete digestion of food accumulates slowly in genetically weak individuals and causes manifestation of diseases in

favorable condition. Incomplete or partial digestion of food, due to decrease in digestive power leads to *Ama* formation [4]. Some says that *apakva anna* rasa is *Ama*, while some other quote that accumulation of *mala* is *Ama*. According to some, the first stage of vitiation of *dosha* is *Ama* [5]. When the amount of food taken is beyond one's digestive power, leads to formation of *Ama*. Thus, a person with good digestive power never suffers from *ama* condition. *Ama* is also formed when *doshas* affect each other [6]. Certain essential factors responsible for the production of *Ama* i.e., substances which provokes and vitiates *dosha*, *dhatu*, *mala*, *srotas*, *agni* and *manas*.

All these produce *Ama* at two levels-

1. At *jatharagni* level (*amashaya*) it is produced as *apakva anna* rasa. The molecules of *apakva anna* rasa are got absorbed inside the body and produce various gastrointestinal problems such as *visuchika*, *pravahika*, *atisara*, etc.
2. At *dhatvagni* level, *sama dhatu* develops and it is absorbed and spread to other tissues and causes various type of diseases as *medoroga* (obesity), *madhumeha* (diabetes mellitus), *sopha* (inflammation), *amavata*, *pakshaghata*, *ardita vata* etc.

Method

Clinical assessment criteria of *Ama*

Acharya Vagbhata has described in detail about the general characteristic feature of *Ama* and *Charaka* also has described some clinical characters i.e. improper digestion of food, excessive salivations, constipation, pain, burning sensation, anorexia and heaviness. *Sama mala* and *Nirama mala* characteristic features are also described in *Charaka samhita*. *Ama* may produce generalized symptoms and systemic clinical features [7,8].

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Generalized symptoms

- Balabhransha* (Decrease strength or immunity)
- Gauravam* (Heaviness in body and head)
- Alasya* (Lethargy)
- Arti* (Restlessness)
- Klama* (Exhaustion)

Systemic clinical features

- Apakti* (Indigestion)
- Vistambha* (Constipation)
- Vidaha* (Burning sensation)
- Aruchi* (Lack of desire towards food)
- Nisthiva* (Excessive salivation).
- Srotorodha* (Obstruction in *Srotas*)
- Anila mudhata* (Disturbances in normal movements of *Vata*)
- Malasanga* (Obstruction of urine and stool and other waste product)

Detail description of clinical features of *Ama*

Srotorodha: It means obstruction in the channels. *Srotorodha* may involve whole body or a particular *srotas*. *Srotorodha* can be understood as blockage in the existing route of *dosha*, *dhatu*s and *malas* etc. As *Ama* is sticky in nature due to which it has tendency to stick in the *srotas* and produces symptoms accordingly. As in disease *Amavata* blockage of *vata* due to *Ama* causes stiffness in joints. *Vikrita kapha* (*Ama*) also causes the formation of *ashmari* (stones) [9] which causes obstruction of urine if stone produces at any level of urinary system. Due to stickiness nature it sticks in blood vessels and causes atherosclerosis due to which blood circulation inhibits and causes ischemia. Due to *Amalakshana* there will be no free flow or conduction or transport of particles in membranes and tissues resulting in inhibition of secretion of fluids, including enzymes also. Due to viscosity nature of *Ama*, the cell membrane permeability and transportation of nutrients and essential mineral exchanges becomes hampered.

Balabhransha: lack of energy or diminution of *bala* or *ojas*. *Ojas* is called *bala* [10]. *Bala* means *vyayamashakti* (capacity to do exercise). Now, it can be understood in two ways as first being is unable to do anything due to less power and another is the loss of *vyadhikshamatva* (decreased immunity against diseases). Due to obstruction in channels nutrition of *dhatu*s decreases as a result proper *dhatu*s do not form, due to this there is decrease in strength. On the other way as *ojas* is the essence of all *dhatu*s and is the cause of strength of body [11], does not form due to lack of nutrition of *dhatu*s. As a result body immunity also decreases.

Gauravam: It means heaviness in body or any part of body and patient may feel as whole body is covered with wet skin. It may due to excess storage of *Ama* and flow of *Ama rasadhatu* and *Ama raktadhatu* through *srotas* in those parts. Feeling of heaviness in the body is the result of *guru guna* present in *Ama*. When *Ama rasa* remains in circulation, causes less oxidation, less physical activity, less cerebral blood flow, which slows down the function of the organs, leading to feeling of heaviness in the body. It may be due to less BMR prevalent during *Ama* condition due to *mandagni*.

Anila mudhata: Loss of normal movements of *vata* inside the channels or it can interpreted as *jadatva* of *vata dosha* i.e., sluggishness of its functions. In *amavastha*, *samana vayu* inhibition results in decreased peristaltic movements due to which *adhmana*, *alaska*, *kostha stabdhatu*, etc. symptoms appear. Due to obstruction in normal movements of *vata*, it comes out through mouth as eructation. In the joints also when *vata* gets obstructed by *Ama* causes stiffness in the joints.

Alasya and klama: It means lack of desire to do anything or lack of enthusiasm to do work in spite of having energy. On the other hand *klama* may be understood as when there is no physical work but having excessive tiredness in body, having dyspnea and no interested in whatever happening in surroundings. *Ama* has the tendency to vitiate *kapha* quickly due to their similar nature; hence patient develops laziness due to abnormal *kapha*. When the cerebral blood comes down due to increased viscosity of blood [12] due to presence of *Ama* and may result in *alasya* and *klama*.

Apakti: It means indigestion. It may be due to lack of secretion of digestive enzymes, sluggish peristaltic movement and diminished functions of bio-digestive fire.

Nisthiva: Spitting of *dusta kapha* is known as *nistheevana*. When *Ama rasa dhatu* circulates it produces more *mala roopa kapha* due to *rasagnimandyata* (*Rasa dhatu mala is dusta kapha*). This increased *mala roopa kapha* accumulates in *kapha sthanas* due to its *tulyata*. Thus the secretions in the *uras* (*Kapha sthana* -lungs) get increased, causing reflex of spitting, resulting *kapha nistheevana*.

Malasanga: It means *Apravrittishca* i.e., there is obstruction in the passage of waste substances. Abnormal accumulation of waste in the body is a sign of *Ama* in that part. Examples are *nasolacrimal* duct obstruction, blocked tear ducts, wax blockage, ear congestion, eustachian tube blockage; nasal obstruction etc. *purisha* does not move properly because of stickiness in the membranes due to *tantumaya*, *abshiyandi gunas* of *Ama* [13].

Aruchi: It is the condition in which there is no interest towards food either tasty or not. It may due to less secretion of digestive enzymes due to obstruction in channels and glands.

Conclusion

Ama is a condition that occurs when the immune system mistakenly attacks its own constituent parts as self and destroys its own cells and tissues. The *Ama* and antibodies then interact with each other to form an immune complex's and damages the joints and other body parts leading to acute pain and swelling. *Ama* is the basic causative factor for the development of many diseases. *Ama*, because of its sticky and having stagnant property, produces obstruction (*srotoavarodha*) at the level of large and smallest channels of body i.e. *srotas* of any system. This initiates and triggers the process of *dosha -dushya sammurchana* i.e., interaction of *doshas* with *dushyas* which initiates the pathogenesis of any disease. Understanding of *Ama* is important to prevent and to manage the diseases successfully. Present article through light on concept of *Ama* from modern perspective. It is a review article hence grading of the criteria was not mentioned.

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