



AMA AND CHRONIC INFLAMMATION: AN AYURVEDIC – MODERN CORRELATION

Dr. Ragini R. Patil

Guide, Principal, HOD & professor, Department of Rognidan Evum vikriti vigan, PDEA's College of Ayurved and Research Centre, Nigdi, Pune, Maharashtra, India

Dr. Satyendrakumr Singh

Asso.Professor, of Rognidan Evum vikriti vigan, PDEA's College of Ayurved and Research Centre, Nigdi, Pune, Maharashtra, India

Dr. Rajashri Mane

PG Scholar, Department of Rognidan Evum Vikriti vigan, PDEA's College of Ayurveda and Research Centre, sector no. 25, Nigdi, Pune, Maharashtra, India, Pin cod – 411044

ABSTRACT

In Ayurveda, Ama is explained as a harmful residue produced due to weak digestion (Mandagni) and faulty metabolism, arising from the improper breakdown of food. It is regarded as a primary causative factor in the development of many chronic illnesses. Ama is identified by qualities such as heaviness, stickiness, unpleasant odour, and its tendency to block the body's channels (srotas), thereby disturbing normal physiological functions. Modern science describes chronic inflammation as a prolonged, low-grade inflammatory state that contributes to several non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular disorders, type 2 diabetes mellitus, and autoimmune conditions. This review aims to establish a conceptual and functional correlation between Ama and chronic inflammation, exploring common mechanisms, etiological factors, and possible integrative approaches for prevention and management.

KEYWORDS : Ama, Mandagni, Srotas, Ayurveda, Chronic inflammation, Lifestyle disorders, Srotorodha

INTRODUCTION:

In Ayurveda, **Ama** is recognized as a fundamental concept, described as a harmful by-product that arises when digestion and metabolism are weakened. The Sanskrit word Ama is formed from “Am” means imperfectly proceed or undigested. When the digestive fire (Agni) is weak, food does not get broken down completely, and this leftover part turns into Ama. Once formed, Ama enters the blood and spreads throughout the body, reaching different tissues and organs. Over the time it causes problems and leads to many chronic diseases like digestive issues, autoimmune problems, and metabolic disorders. Because Ama is heavy and sticky, it blocks the body's channels (Srotas), disturbing the natural flow of nutrients and waste. This blockage (srotorodha) is considered the main reason behind many illnesses in Ayurveda¹.

Chronic inflammation, in the biomedical context, is a sustained activation of the immune system, often without an immediate pathogen threat, resulting in tissue damage and altered organ function. Both the concepts share similarities: they are insidious in onset, systemic in nature, and linked to lifestyle, dietary errors, and metabolic dysfunction.

Ayurvedic Concept Of Ama:

In Ayurveda some definitions are mentioned in Samhitas

1) The portion of food that remains unprocessed without undergoing proper **Vipaka**, producing a **foul odor**, present in **excess amount**, having a **sticky (picchila) nature**, and causing **weakness or fatigue of the body (Gatrasadana)** is termed as **Ama**².

2) Because of **Nidāna Sevana (causative factors)**, the **Agni (digestive fire)** gets disturbed, leading to **improper digestion of food**. Because of this, food is not digested properly, and the undigested part gets fermented and turns into a **toxin (Ama)**³.

3) When **Agni (digestive fire)** does not function properly, the first tissue formed **Rasa Dhatu (chyle)** is not digested correctly. Due to this the food essence (**Anna Rasa**) stays in the Amashya (stomach), gets spoiled, and this spoiled form is called **Ama**⁴.

Causes Of Ama Formation:

1. Mandagni (low digestive fire) is the main cause

2. **Nidana sevana** (improper habits):

- Ati-bhojana (overeating)
- Ajirna bhojana (eating on indigestion)
- Viruddhahara (incompatible foods)
- Alpa vyayama (very minimum exercise)

- Divasvapa (day sleep)

3. Psychological causes – Anger, greediness, fear, stress, depression⁵

Characteristics of Ama: Dense (guru), slimy or adhesive (picchila), cold in nature (sheeta), and unpleasant in odor (durgandha).

Pathogenesis:

Hetu sevana (causative factors) → Mandagni (low digestive fire) → Apakva Ahara Rasa (improperly digested food) → Rasa dushti → Aam formation → Srotorodha (blockages of channels) → Dosha prakopa (vitiation of dosha) → Dhatu dushti (tissue damage) → Vyadhi utapatti (disease manifestation) due to Dosha Dushya sammurchhana

Chronic Inflammation In Modern Science:

Definition: It is prolonged process in which tissue destruction and inflammation occur at the same time⁶.

Cause

- 1) Chronic inflammation following acute inflammation-When a lot of tissue gets damaged, or when a few bacteria remain in the body after an infection like pneumonia or bone infection (osteomyelitis), the problem can continue and causes chronic inflammation.
- 2) Recurrent attack of acute inflammation- When acute inflammation keeps happening again and again, it can turn into a long-lasting (chronic) condition for example, repeated urinary infections can cause kidney infection (pyelonephritis), or repeated gallbladder infections can lead to chronic cholecystitis
- 3) Chronic inflammation starting de novo- Some infections start as long-lasting (chronic) right from the beginning, especially with germs that are weak but slow-growing, like tuberculosis (caused by Mycobacterium tuberculosis) can causes chronic inflammation.⁶

Pathophysiology

Persistent trigger (infection/ autoimmune / irritant) → Immune activation (macrophages and lymphocytes) → Mediator release (cytokines, ROS, proteases) → Outcome (tissue damage+ fibrosis+ systemic effects)

Table No 1: Ayurvedic – Modern Correlation:

Ama	Chronic Inflammation
Originates from Mandagni	Originates from metabolic stress/dysfunction
Sticky, obstructive, antigenic nature	Persistent immune activation by inflammatory mediators
Spreads via Srotas (channels)	Systemic inflammatory burden

Lodges in weak tissues (Khavaigunya)	Targets vulnerable organs/tissues
Managed by Langhana, Pachana	Managed by anti-inflammatory diet, detox, lifestyle

Table No 2: Correlation Ama Samprapti And Chronic Inflammation Pathway:

Ama Samprapti	Chronic Inflammation pathway
Agnimandya (weak digestion/metabolism)	Poor diet, obesity, stress, sedentary lifestyle, mitochondrial dysfunction
Apakva Ahara Rasa (improperly digested food)	Accumulation of metabolic by-products (oxidized lipids, AGEs, toxins)
Ama formation (toxic, sticky, heavy substance)	Persistent activation of innate immunity; pro-inflammatory mediators (IL-6, TNF- α , CRP)
Srotorodha (channel obstruction)	Endothelial dysfunction, vascular inflammation, adipose tissue infiltration
Dosha Prakopa (vitiation of Doshas)	Immune dysregulation, oxidative stress, hormonal imbalance
Dhatu Dushti (tissue damage)	Organ-specific inflammation: arthritis, atherosclerosis, diabetes, Inflammatory Bowel Disease, neurodegeneration
Vyadhi Utpatti (disease manifestation)	Chronic diseases: Rheumatoid Arthritis, Coronary Artery Disease, Type 2 Diabetes mellitus, Alzheimer's, autoimmune disorders

Clinical Examples:

1.Amavata ↔ Rheumatoid arthritis: It is condition in which Ama mix with vata dosha and block the srotasa (channels) specially in joints. It causes persistent pain, swelling and structural changes in the joints. It is similar to synovial inflammation and pannus formation in RA.

2.Medoroga ↔ Atherosclerosis: Medoroga linked with Ama Meda – improperly metabolized fat that accumulates and blocks srotasa (channels). In atherosclerosis cholesterol deposits + chronic vascular inflammation, leading to heart attack/stroke.

3.Prameha ↔ Diabetes mellitus: Prameha often begins with Ama accumulation due to faulty diet and weak Agni. Type 2 diabetes is associated with chronic low -grade inflammation in adipose tissue, insulin resistance, and elevated cytokines. Ama blocks micro-channels of Medo dhatu and causes impaired glucose metabolism. It is similar to adipose inflammation causes insulin resistance.

4. Ama in Annava Srotas ↔ Inflammatory Bowel Disease: Weak Agni leads to formation of Ama in Annava srotas (GI tract), causing diarrhoea, bloating, abdominal pain. Similarly, inflammation causes overactive immune response in gut and leads to diarrhea, mucus in stools, abdominal cramps, elevated fecal calprotectin. In Ayurveda it is called Ama janya Grahani.

Clinical Implication:

- Early screening of Ama in individuals can serve as an Ayurvedic model for detecting risk factors of chronic inflammatory disorders.
- Ama pachana (digestive correction) and Agni deepana therapies can be correlated with modern dietary modifications, probiotics, and antioxidants.
- Shodhana (detoxification therapies like Panchakarma) may help reduce inflammatory burden by clearing accumulated metabolic waste.
- Integrative approaches combining Ayurveda with modern anti-inflammatory strategies may provide a more holistic framework for preventing chronic diseases.

DISCUSSION:

The concept of Ama in Ayurveda and chronic inflammation in modern medicine appear to describe the same underlying pathophysiological state, albeit in different terminologies. Ama is considered a toxic, undigested material that disrupts metabolic and immune balance, while chronic inflammation represents a sustained immune response causing tissue damage and disease progression.

Clinical correlations, such as Ama Vata with rheumatoid arthritis,

Prameha with type 2 diabetes, and Medo Roga with atherosclerosis, highlight strong parallels. Both perspectives agree that faulty digestion, unhealthy diet, sedentary lifestyle, and stress are key triggers.

Ayurveda emphasizes Agni deepana, Ama pachana, Shodhana (detox), and Rasayana as preventive and therapeutic strategies, which align with modern approaches like anti-inflammatory diets, exercise, antioxidants, and immunomodulation. Thus, Ama can be viewed as an Ayurvedic marker of systemic inflammation, offering valuable tools for early detection and prevention.

Integrating Ayurvedic wisdom with modern biomedical understanding may provide a more holistic and sustainable approach to combating the global burden of chronic inflammatory diseases⁷.

CONCLUSION:

Ama in Ayurveda and chronic inflammation in modern medicine represent two perspectives of the same pathological process – a state of metabolic dysfunction, immune imbalance, and systemic toxicity. Both are linked with the development of lifestyle and chronic diseases such as arthritis, diabetes, cardiovascular disorders, and neurodegeneration. Ayurveda emphasizes prevention through strengthening Agni, eliminating Ama, and maintaining balance, while modern science focuses on controlling inflammation through drugs, diet, and lifestyle changes. Recognizing this correlation provides a strong foundation for integrative approaches in prevention, early diagnosis, and management of chronic diseases.

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