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Concept of *Aam* in *Ayurveda* and its Importance in Treating Diseases

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ABSTRACT:

Aam is the *Apakva Ahara Rasa* formed due to the action of *Mandagni* on ingested food. It is the root cause of many diseases. Due to its distinct qualities it can obstruct the *Srotas*. Hence the *Doshas* start accumulating at the site of obstruction and cause diseases. Depending upon its association, diseases can be divided into two groups - *Sama* and *Nirama*. In *Ayurveda* various *Acharyas* have described about qualities, features and treatment modalities of *Aam*. It is very important to distinguish between *Sama* and *Nirama Avastha* of the body before treating any disease. Because, in the presence of *Aam* and its causative factor *Mandagni*, it is not possible to digest *Dosha*, *Ahara* and even *Ousadh*. This leads to formation of more *Aam* and further increases the severity of the disease. Therefore in *Sama* diseases, *Aam* pacifying treatment, such as *Apatarpan*, has to be applied first and only after attaining *Nirama Avastha*, other disease specific treatment should be applied.

Key words: *Aam*, *Mandagni*, *Sama*, *Nirama*, *Apatarpan*

INTRODUCTION

The human body needs continuous energy supply to sustain life. The source of energy is food. As said in *Ayurveda*, food is the principal factor which materially contributes to the strength, complexion and vitality (*Ojas*) of human beings¹. But after ingestion the food has to be digested, absorbed and assimilated by *Agni* (Digestive and metabolic Fire) for the maintenance of life. Therefore the food that nourishes *Dhatus*, *Ojas*, strength, complexion etc. depends on *Agni*, because undigested food cannot nourish the body². In any instance if the *Agni* is in suboptimal level (*Mandagni*) it cannot process the food properly and leads to the accumulation of undigested food material inside *Aamashya*, called *Aam*³. This *Aam* cannot be utilized by the body and hence is the waste product that acts as poison for

the body. *Aam* is the root cause of many diseases after association with *Dosha*, *Dhatu* and *Mala* or by itself⁴. And it is impossible to treat any disease without treating *Aam* *Dosha* associated with that disease. Thus it is important to consider the status of *Aam* in body before treating any disease.

Importance of *Jatharagni*

In *Ayurveda* there are thirteen types of *Agni* mentioned which can be categorized into three groups, as *Jatharagni* (1), *Dhatwagni* (7), *Bhutagni* (5)⁵. Among them *Jatharagni* is the prime as all other types of *Agni* depend on the quality and quantity of *Jatharagni*⁶. *Jatharagni* stands for the digestive fire in the body that is responsible for the digestion and metabolism of food. The



Panchabhautik Ahara ingested first comes in contact with *Jatharagni* and gets digested to form *Aahar Rasa* which is then eventually metabolised by *Dhatwagni* and *Bhutagni* to maintain an equilibrium state of *Dhatu*s and *Pancha Bhautik* elements in the body⁷. As said by *Acharya Charak* that the food one consumes becomes capable of nourishing the body tissues and of promoting *Ojas*, strength, complexion etc., only in the presence of a normally functioning *Jatharagni*. Once the *Agni* halts working a person dies and if the *Agni* works in a normal way the specific or a person can lead a well and extensive life⁸.

Depending upon the performance of *Jatharagni*, it is categorised into 4 classes; *Vishamagni* (variable performance of digestive fire), *Teekshnagni* (high digestive power), *Mandagni* (sub optimal digestive power), *Samagni* (optimal digestive fire)⁹.

Concept of *Aam*:

Among the 4 categories of *Jatharagni*, *Mandagni* is supposed to be the root cause of all diseases¹⁰. Because this functionally weak *Agni* cannot digest the food properly to form *Aahara Rasa* (the essence of food). Thus this undigested or partially digested food particle gets accumulated in stomach and is called *Aam*, which acts as toxin to the body. It does not nourish the body and is the leading factor for many diseases.

***Nirukti* of *Aam*:**¹¹

“*Ishat Amyate Pachyate Iti Aamah*” – which is not cooked/digested/ripened completely is called *Aam*.

“*Amyate Pidyate Srotasa Samuho Anena Iti Aamah*” – by which the body channels (*Srotas*) are stressed/obstructed is called *Aam*.

Factors leading to *Aam* Formation:¹²

- *Atimatra Ashan* (eating in heavy amount)
- *Adhyashan* (eating even the previous meal is not digested yet)
- *Ajeerna Ashan* (eating during indigestion state)
- *Viruddhashan* (Incompatible diet)
- *Guru, Ruksha, Sheet, Shushk, Dusht, Vishtambhi, Vidahi* food
- Food taken when the psyche is affected by *Kama, Krodha, Lobha, Moha, Irshya, Lajja, Shoka, Bhaya, Chinta* etc.
- *Diva Swapna, Ratri Jagran, Vega Vidharan, Dukha Shyaya*

All these unhealthy diet and lifestyle leads to vitiation of *Agni* and *Aam* formation.

Characteristics of *Aam*:¹³

- *Drava* (Liquid in nature)
- *Guru* (Heavy in nature)

- *Aneka Varna* (Attain different colours)
- *Hetu Sarva Roganam* (Etiological factors for all diseases)
- *Snigdha* (Slimy in nature)
- *Pichhila* (Viscid in nature)
- *Tantummat* (Thread like)
- *Baddha* (Sticky in nature)
- *Shoola* (Causes pain)
- *Durgandhi* (Foul smelling)

Due to these qualities it can easily enters the *Srotas* and obstruct them. The vitiated *doshas* circulating in these *srotas* get lodged at the site of obstruction and causes various diseases.

Symptoms of *Aam*:

When *Aam* alone is responsible for any disease it is called *Aam Dosha*. *Acharya Charak* has mentioned two types of *Aam Dosha/Pradoshaja Vikara*, viz. *Alasaka* and *Visuchika*.

Association of *Aam Dosha* with *Doshas, Dhatus* and *Malas* is called *Sama*¹⁵. On the contrary, dissociation of *Aam Dosha* from *Dosha, Dhātu* and *Mala* is called *Nirama*. *Acharya Vagbhata* has specifically mentioned the features of *Sama* as following¹⁶-

- *Srotorodh* (Obstruction of channels)
- *Balbhransh* (Loss of strength)
- *Gaurava* (Heaviness of the body)
- *Alasya* (Lethargy)
- *Anil mudhta* (Disturbance of *Vatika* function)
- *Apakti* (Indigestion)
- *Nishtivana* (Excessive Salivation)
- *Mala sanga* (Obstruction of waste products)
- *Aruchi* (Anorexia)
- *Klam* (Weakness)

These above mentioned features are the key indicators of *Amavastha* of any disease.

Importance of *Aam* in treating diseases:

Aam combining with *Dosha, Dhātu* and *Mala* creates *Sama Vyadhi*¹⁵. It is very important to know the *Aam* status in patient body before giving *Vyadhi* specific treatment. According to *Acharya Charak*, *Mandagni* is never able to digest *Dosha*, medicine and food. If *Aushadh* is given at *Aam Avastha* it can lead to death of patient¹⁷. That's why *Aam* status must be considered while treating the patient. At first *Apatarpan* should be done to pacify the *Aam*¹⁷. It can be done in three ways according to the severity of the disease¹⁸-

1. *Langhan*- indicated in disorders of mild morbidity

2. *Langhana Pachana*- in disorders of moderate morbidity
3. *Dosha Avasechana*- in severe conditions

If the illness proceeds further even after *Apatarpan*, *Vyadhi Viparit Chikitsa* should be administered¹⁷. When the patient is reassured from undue illness of *Aam* and his digestive power has been restored, administration of *Abhyanga*, *Sneha Pana*, *Niruha Vasti*, *Anuvasana Vasti* etc. should be managed accordingly¹⁷. The individual should endorse his comfort by properly following the *Ashta Aahara Vidhi Visheshayatan* and other measures which are for the healthiness and happiness of oneself¹⁹.

Table 1 shows that the primary treatment principle of *Aam Samoththa Vyadhi* or diseases which are associated with it is to cure *Aam Dosha* first.

DISCUSSION

Aam is the *Apakva Ahara Rasa* (unprocessed/undigested food particles) due to *Mandagni*³⁰. This *Apakva Ahara Rasa* is neither utilized by the *Dhatus* nor contributes in the enhancement of *Pancha Bhautik* qualities of the body. Furthermore due to its *Apakva* nature it is not excreted from the body by normal physiological process. Thus it accumulates in the body and due to its typical qualities obstructs the *Srotas*¹⁶. Due to this the aggravated *Doshas* lodged at the site of obstruction and cause diseases³¹. Such diseases which are associated with *Aam* is called *Sama Roga*, on the other hand diseases which are not associated with *Aam* is called *Nirama Roga*. One should know the *Sama* and *Nirama* nature of disease before treatment as both these conditions require different treatment modalities. In *Sama Roga* the treatment to pacify *Aam Dosha* should be applied first and after obtaining *Nirama* state, disease specific treatment should be applied. Because *Aam Dosha* along with its root cause *Mandagni* is not capable of digesting *Dosha*, *Ahara* and even the medicine. Thus forming more *Aam* and increases the severity of the disease¹⁷.

CONCLUSION

Aam, which is formed by the action of *Mandagni* during digestion of food, is responsible for many diseases in the body. Treatment of such diseases first requires the knowledge of *Aam* and *Nirama* state of the body and only then it is possible to cure the disease from its root by implementing appropriate treatment regimes.

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Table 1: Diseases associated with *Aam* and their treatment

Diseases associated with <i>Aam</i>	Treatment
<i>Alasaka</i> ¹⁷	<i>Vaman, Swedan, Guda Varti, Upavasa</i>
<i>Visuchika</i> ¹⁷	<i>Langhan, Virechan</i>
<i>Aam Jwara</i> ^{20,21}	<i>Langhan</i>
<i>Aamatisara</i> ²²	<i>Lnaghan, Pachan</i>
<i>Aam Shotha</i> ²³	<i>Langhan ,Pachan, then Shodhana according to Dosha dominance</i>
<i>Saam Grahni</i> ²⁴	<i>Vaman</i>
<i>Aamaja Trishna</i> ^{25,26}	<i>Deepan,Vaman</i>
<i>Sama Vata</i> ²⁷	<i>Swedan, Langhan, Pachan, Rukshan, Aalep, Ruksha Seka</i>
<i>Urustambha</i> ²⁸	<i>Sanshaman, Kshapan, Shoshan</i>
<i>Kukshi Shool</i> ²⁹	<i>Vaman /Langhan , Deepan, Pachan</i>