



“CLINICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF AMA IN CHRONIC DISEASES: AN AYURVEDIC AND MODERN SCIENTIFIC REVIEW”

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Ayurveda describes *Ama* as an intermediate toxic substance produced due to impaired digestion and metabolism. It is considered the root cause of chronic disorders by obstructing *Srotas* (channels), deranging *Doshas*, and weakening immunity. Chronic diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis, diabetes, cardiovascular disorders, and inflammatory bowel disease show striking resemblance to *Ama*-mediated pathology. **Methods:** A systematic review of classical Ayurvedic texts (*Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Ashtanga Hridaya*) and commentaries was performed. In addition, a literature search was conducted in PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, and AYUSH Research Portal (2000–2024) using keywords “*Ama* Ayurveda,” “chronic disease Ayurveda,” “inflammation *Ama*,” and “Ayurvedic metabolism.” Studies included conceptual analyses, clinical trials, reviews, and experimental research. **Results:** *Ama* is classically described as heavy, sticky, foul-smelling, and obstructive. Its formation (*Ama Utpatti*) is attributed to *Agnimandya* (digestive impairment) and *Srotorodha* (obstruction of channels). In modern parallels, *Ama* correlates with endotoxins, advanced glycation end-products, oxidized lipids, and pro-inflammatory cytokines. Clinical studies report associations of *Ama* with metabolic syndrome, rheumatoid arthritis, and cardiovascular risk. Experimental evidence supports *Ama*-reducing therapies (*Ama Pachana*) such as *Trikatu*, *Guduchi*, and Panchakarma, which improve inflammation, oxidative stress, and metabolic biomarkers. **Discussion:** The Ayurvedic understanding of *Ama* overlaps with biomedical models of chronic low-grade inflammation and metabolic endotoxemia. However, limitations exist in objective *Ama* assessment and lack of standardized biomarkers. Future research should integrate *Ama* assessment with microbiome studies, metabolomics, and inflammatory marker profiling to strengthen translational relevance. **Conclusion:** *Ama* serves as a valuable conceptual and clinical framework to understand chronic diseases. Validating *Ama* with modern biomarkers may open new avenues in preventive and personalized healthcare.

KEYWORDS: *Ama*, Ayurveda, Chronic disease, Inflammation, Metabolism

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda emphasizes that health is maintained through balanced *Agni*, *Doshas*, and proper elimination of wastes.^[1-2] When *Agni* is impaired, incomplete digestion occurs, leading to the formation of *Ama*. Described as undigested, toxic, sticky material, *Ama* is considered the seed of many diseases. The classics state that *Ama* obstructs *Srotas*, deranges *Doshas*, and weakens *Ojas*, resulting in chronic illness.^[3-4]

In modern biomedical terms, chronic diseases are increasingly understood as conditions of persistent low-grade inflammation, metabolic dysfunction, and immune dysregulation. Endotoxins, reactive oxygen species, and pro-inflammatory cytokines play central roles. These pathophysiological processes closely resemble the Ayurvedic description of *Ama*.^[5-7] Hence, the concept of *Ama* provides an integrative bridge between Ayurveda and modern medicine.^[8]

This review aims to critically analyze the Ayurvedic concept of *Ama* and evaluate its clinical significance in chronic diseases. The objectives are: (1) to summarize *Ama* as described in Ayurvedic texts, (2) to correlate *Ama* with modern pathophysiology, (3) to review clinical and experimental studies on *Ama* in chronic diseases, and (4) to identify research gaps and future directions.^[9-10]

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A systematic review was conducted between April–August 2025. The following sources were searched: *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Ashtanga Hridaya*, and their authoritative commentaries.^[11]

Databases searched: PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, IndMED, and AYUSH Research Portal.

Search strategy: Keywords included “*Ama* AND Ayurveda,” “*Ama* AND inflammation,” “Ayurveda AND chronic disease,” “*Ama* AND rheumatoid arthritis,” “*Ama* AND metabolism.” Boolean operators (AND, OR) and MeSH terms were applied.^[12]

Inclusion criteria:^[13]

- Classical references with commentaries.
- Original research (2000–2024).
- Clinical trials, experimental studies, and reviews discussing *Ama* in relation to chronic disease.
- Publications in English.

Exclusion criteria:^[14]

- Non-peer-reviewed sources.
- Case reports without standardized methods.
- Articles lacking relevance to *Ama* or chronic disease.

Data synthesis: Data were extracted and grouped into four thematic areas: (1) classical concept of *Ama*, (2) correlation with modern pathology, (3) clinical evidence, and (4) therapeutic interventions.^[15]

OBSERVATION AND RESULTS

1. Classical Description of *Ama*

Ayurvedic texts describe *Ama* as the byproduct of impaired *Agni* (digestive/metabolic fire). *Charaka Samhita* defines *Ama* as half-digested food material with sticky, heavy, cold, and foul-smelling qualities (Ch. Chikitsa 15/44). *Sushruta Samhita* emphasizes its obstructive nature, blocking *Srotas* and deranging *Doshas*. Vagbhatta categorizes *Ama* into three types:

- ***Jatharagni Janya Ama*** – arising from impaired primary digestion.
- ***Dhatvagni Janya Ama*** – at the tissue metabolism level.
- ***Mala Janya Ama*** – improper waste elimination.

These descriptions reflect a spectrum of dysfunction from gut digestion to systemic metabolism.

2. *Ama* and Disease Pathogenesis

The presence of *Ama* is linked to chronic disorders such as *Amavata* (rheumatoid arthritis), *Prameha* (diabetes), *Raktavaha Srotas Vikara* (atherosclerosis), and autoimmune diseases. Clinical features include heaviness, fatigue, body stiffness, indigestion, coated tongue, joint pain, and foul-smelling discharges. In *Amavata*, *Ama* combines with aggravated *Vata*, producing inflammatory arthritis. Similarly, in *Prameha*, *Ama* obstructs metabolic channels, leading to insulin resistance-like pathology.

3. Modern Correlates of *Ama*

Scholars equate *Ama* with several biomedical entities:

- **Endotoxins and lipopolysaccharides (LPS):** Generated by gut dysbiosis, causing systemic inflammation.
- **Advanced glycation end products (AGEs):** Incomplete metabolism leading to tissue damage.
- **Oxidized LDL and lipid peroxides:** Contributing to atherosclerosis.

- **Cytokine storm and chronic low-grade inflammation:** Similar to systemic *Ama* circulation.

Thus, *Ama* represents a broad spectrum of pathological intermediates driving chronic disease.

4. Clinical Studies on *Ama* in Chronic Disease

Several clinical studies provide evidence:

- **Rheumatoid arthritis (*Amavata*):** A trial at Banaras Hindu University (2018) showed that *Ama Pachana* therapy (using *Trikatu* and *Guduchi*) reduced joint pain, ESR, and CRP levels.
- **Diabetes mellitus (*Prameha*):** Studies report correlations between *Ama* symptoms and poor glycemic control. Herbal formulations aimed at reducing *Ama* improved HbA1c and lipid profiles.
- **Cardiovascular disorders:** *Ama*-like metabolic intermediates (oxidized lipids, homocysteine) are strongly implicated in atherosclerosis. Ayurvedic therapies targeting *Ama* improved lipid metabolism.
- **Irritable bowel syndrome and IBD:** Clinical reports indicate that *Ama Pachana* with *Hingvastaka Churna* improves symptoms and reduces bloating.

5. Experimental and Preclinical Evidence

- **Herbal studies:** Piperine from *Trikatu* enhances digestive enzyme activity, mimicking *Ama Pachana*. *Tinospora cordifolia* (*Guduchi*) reduces oxidative stress and inflammatory cytokines in animal models.
- **Biochemical parallels:** Rat studies indicate that ginger extracts improve gut motility and reduce inflammatory mediators, paralleling *Ama* clearance.
- **Microbiome studies:** Dysbiosis is increasingly linked to metabolic syndrome and autoimmunity, resonating with *Ama* pathogenesis.

6. Therapeutic Strategies for *Ama*

Ayurveda prescribes:

- ***Ama Pachana* (detoxification):** *Trikatu*, *Chitraka*, *Hingu*, *Guduchi*.
- ***Shodhana* (Panchakarma):** *Vamana* and *Virechana* for systemic clearance.

- ***Rasayana* (rejuvenation):** Herbs like *Amalaki* and *Shatavari* improve tissue metabolism, preventing *Ama*.
- ***Pathya-Apathya* (diet and lifestyle):** Warm, light food, avoidance of incompatible diet (*Viruddhahara*), and proper daily regimens prevent *Ama* accumulation.

7. Thematic Integration

The review demonstrates that *Ama* is not just a classical notion but correlates well with chronic inflammation, metabolic dysregulation, and immune dysfunction. Its management aligns with anti-inflammatory, detoxifying, and metabolism-optimizing strategies in modern medicine.

DISCUSSION

The concept of *Ama* represents a sophisticated Ayurvedic explanation of chronic disease pathogenesis. Ayurveda perceives *Ama* as the product of incomplete digestion and metabolism, which then circulates, obstructs channels, and induces systemic dysfunction. When analyzed through the biomedical lens, striking parallels emerge.^[16]

First, *Ama* correlates with biochemical toxins and intermediates like endotoxins, AGEs, oxidized LDL, and inflammatory cytokines. These agents are central to the pathogenesis of chronic diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis, diabetes, cardiovascular disorders, and inflammatory bowel disease. This validates *Ama* as a plausible integrative concept bridging Ayurveda and modern immunometabolism.^[17]

Second, the therapeutic emphasis on *Ama Pachana* mirrors biomedical approaches targeting inflammation and detoxification. For example, *Trikatu* improves enzymatic digestion, *Guduchi* reduces oxidative stress, and Panchakarma promotes systemic clearance. Evidence suggests that these interventions reduce inflammatory markers, improve metabolism, and enhance quality of life.^[18]

However, limitations exist. Current methods to assess *Ama* are largely subjective—based on clinical signs like coated tongue, heaviness, or fatigue. Standardized tools or biomarkers are lacking. There is also limited large-scale, randomized clinical trial evidence. Most studies are small, non-randomized, or confined to single centers.^[19]

Future research should focus on developing validated *Ama* assessment scales, correlating them with

objective biomarkers such as CRP, IL-6, endotoxin levels, or gut microbiota signatures. Advanced tools like metabolomics and systems biology can unravel the molecular correlates of *Ama*. Integrative clinical trials combining Ayurvedic interventions with modern biomarker assessments will be critical in establishing translational credibility.^[19]

In conclusion, *Ama* offers a unique, holistic model of chronic disease etiology and management. While modern science validates many aspects, robust interdisciplinary research is needed to fully realize its clinical potential.^[20]

CONCLUSION

Ama, as described in Ayurveda, is the byproduct of impaired digestion and metabolism and is central to the pathogenesis of chronic diseases. It manifests as heaviness, fatigue, stiffness, indigestion, and systemic obstruction. Classical texts link *Ama* to conditions like *Amavata*, *Prameha*, and cardiovascular disorders. Modern research parallels *Ama* with endotoxins, AGEs, oxidized lipids, and chronic inflammatory mediators.

Clinical and experimental studies demonstrate that therapies targeting *Ama*—such as *Deepana-Pachana*, Panchakarma, and Rasayana—improve metabolic, inflammatory, and oxidative parameters. This indicates that Ayurveda's framework remains relevant in modern healthcare, especially in addressing lifestyle and chronic diseases.

Nevertheless, the absence of standardized biomarkers and large-scale clinical evidence limits broader acceptance. By integrating Ayurveda with modern omics technologies, microbiome research, and biomarker analysis, *Ama* can be scientifically validated as a diagnostic and therapeutic construct.

In summary, *Ama* is a profound Ayurvedic contribution to understanding chronic diseases, offering preventive and personalized strategies for global health challenges.

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