

**“Concept of *Agni* and its role in the pathogenesis of
Amlapitta Vyadhi: a review ”**

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ABSTRACT :

The ancient system of Indian medical science *Ayurveda* describes various concepts related to the physiological functioning and biological response; *Agni* is one of such concept. *Agni* considered responsible for digestive & metabolic functioning of the body. It is the digestive and metabolic fire of the body. The digestion and assimilation of ingested food performed by the *Agni* which is very essential process for the growth and development of human body. *Ayurveda* emphasises that all the diseases are the result of weak state of *Agni* i.e. *Mandagni*. Improper functioning of *Agni* leads to various gastrointestinal disorders as well as various metabolic disturbances. *Jatharagni*, *Bhutagni* and *Dhatvagni* contributes towards the digestive and

metabolic activities of absorbed food. *Agni* offer *Arogya*, *Ayu*, *Bala*, *Swasthyam*, *Varnam*, *Utsaha*, *Ojha*, *Prabha* and *Teja* to the body which all resembles healthy physical and mental state. *Agni Dusthi* is one of the causative factors for the many diseases therefore *Agni* play important role towards understanding of disease pathogenesis, disease diagnosis and setting of treatment protocol. *Amlapitta* is a disease which is commonly found in almost all parts of the world. Peculiarities of this disease are, increased prevalence, vast field of manifestation of symptoms, requires prolonged dietetic control, if not treated in proper time, it may create major problems. *Amlapitta* (Hyperacidity) is one of the commonest *Vyadhi* (disease) of *Annavaha Strotas*, caused by vitiated *Agni*. *Amlapitta* (Hyperacidity) is a

condition where *Amla Guna* of *Pachak Pitta* increases due to *Samata*. *Amlapitta* has been considered as *Pitta Kapha Pradhana Tridoshaja Vyadhi*. The main principle of treatment of all diseases as per *Ayurveda* is to restore and to strengthen the *Agni*. This article emphasized conceptual understanding of *Agni* and its role in the pathogenesis of *Amlapitta Vyadhi*.

Keywords: *Agni, Amlapitta, Bhutagni, Dhatvagni, Jatharagni, Samata*

INTRODUCTION:

Ayurveda is the science of healthy living emphasized biological integrity with relation to various concepts. *Ayurveda* believe that the disease may occur due to the improper functioning of *Dosha, Dhātu, Strotasa and Agni*, etc. *Agni* one of the important concepts which affect physiological functioning of human body and considered responsible for healthy well-being. *Agni* correlates with digestive fire as per modern science and it is associated with activities of hormones, enzyme and co-enzymes which involve in digestive & metabolic functioning of body. *Ahara Paka* (metabolic transformations) contributes greatly towards the healthy status and this process mainly affects by potency of *Agni*, therefore proper functioning of

Agni is very essential for healthy living. *Ayurvedic Samhitas* have described healthy routine under *Dinacharya & Rutucharya* but in present scenario due to busy life style people are unable to follow the norms of *Dinacharya and Rutucharya* resulting in *Agnimandya* which ultimately lead to diseases like *Amlapitta*. In *Ayurveda*, all the diseases are due to hypofunctioning of *Agni*. *Amlapitta* is commonly encountered disease of *Annavahasrotas (GIT)*. *Agni* plays a very important role in the pathogenesis of *Amlapitta Vyadhi*. The improper functioning of *Agni* leads impaired transformation of *Ahara, Dhatus and Malas* which resulted abnormal physiological functioning of body. There are three basic types of *Agni* viz. *Jatharagni, Dhatwagni and Bhutagni*. So conceptual understanding of *Agni* and its role in the Pathogenesis of *Amlapitta Vyadhi* will be analysed in this article.

AIM :

To study the *Ayurveda* perspective of *Agni* and its role in the pathogenesis of *Amlapitta Vyadhi*.

OBJECTIVE :

1. To evaluate the *Ayurveda* perspective of *Agni*.

2. Attempt to represent the role of *Agni* in the pathogenesis of *Amlapitta*.

MATERIALS AND METHODS:

The main objective of this review article is to discuss the *Ayurveda* perspective of *Agni* and its role in the pathogenesis of *Amlapitta Vyadhi*.

Materials related to *Agni* and its role in the pathogenesis of *Amlapitta Vyadhi* in *Ayurveda* and other related topics have been collected from various Ayurvedic classical texts, online journals, research articles. The references were compiled, analysed and discussed for a thorough and in-depth understanding of the concept of *Agni* and pathogenesis of *Amlapitta Vyadhi* in *Ayurveda*.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

1. Review of *Agni* in *Ayurveda*¹⁻⁵ –

Agni converts food in the form of energy, which is responsible for all the vital functions of our body. Therefore, *Ayurveda* considers that *Dehagni* is the cause of life, complexion, strength, health, nourishment, lusture, *Oja*, *Teja* (energy) and *Prana* (life energy). About the importance of *Agni*, *Acharya Charaka* has mentioned that various types of dietetic materials are digested by their own *Agni* (*Bhutagni*), encouraged and enhanced by *Jatharagni*, which is further digested and metabolized by

Dhatvagni to associate the body with the nutritional strength, complexion and happy life along with providing energy to the seven *Dhatu*s. *Agni* provides *Bala*, *Arogya*, *Ayu*, *Prana*, *Swasthyam*, *Varnam*, *Utsaha*, *Prabha*, *Ojha* and *Teja* to the body. The *Tridosas*, *Dhatu*s and *Malas* are maintained normal and healthy by the *Agni* itself, present in each of them. So *Agni* plays an important role in maintains of healthy life of an individual. After stoppage of the function of *Agni*, the individual dies, and when the *Agni* of an individual is *Sama*, then that person would be absolutely healthy and would lead a long, happy, healthy life. But, if the *Agni* of a person is vitiated, the whole metabolism in his body would be disturbed, resulting in ill health and disease. Hence, *Agni* is said to be the base (*Mool*) of life. *Agni* means it is a substance responsible for digestion and metabolism.

• Types and role of *Agni*¹⁻⁵

There are three basic types of *Agni* i.e. *Jatharagni*, *Dhatvagni* and *Bhutagni*.

1. *Jatharagni* –

It is considered as primary digestive fire present in *Koshtha* and performs *Pakadi Karmas*. *Jatharagni* may be different at various level such as; *Samagni*, *Vishmagni*, *Tikshmagni* and *Mandagni*.

i) **Samagni** - It is the state of *Tridoshic* equilibrium in which *Jatharagni* functions normally due to which complete digestion of food takes place. The *Samagni* help to digest and assimilate food material in a proper way therefore boost *Dhatu*s and maintain good health status.

ii) **Tiksnagni** - The *Agni* excited by *pitta* and help to digest large quantity of food quickly, basically it is the state when potency of *Agni* increased.

iii) **Mandagni** - This is the state of *Agni* with low potency, poor appetite and decrease metabolism.

2. **Dhatwagni** –

Dhatwagni resembles *Pittas* concerned with the *Dhatu*s. There are different types of *Dhatwagni* which are as follows: *Rasagni*, *Raktagni*, *Mamsagni*, *Medagni*, *Majjagni*, *Asthyagni* and *Shukragni*. *Dhatwagni* help in digestion as to acquire nutrient for the nourishment of *Dhatu*. *Dhatwagni* mainly perform functioning for the maintenance of *dhatu*s.

3. **Bhutagni** –

Bhutagni resembles process of normal digestive functioning and activate composite element of the body. *Bhutagni* help to digest food element in their own

component and after the digestion *Bhutas* nourish specific *Bhautika* elements.

• **Causes of vitiation of Agni** ⁶-

Excessive (fast), indigestion, over eating and irregular eating, inappropriate food materials: These all kind of improper dietary habits causes vitiation of *Agni* as per vitiation of involvement of *Doshas*. Other factors that leads to vitiation of *Agni* are: improper use of *Panchakarma*, emaciation as a result of diseases, seasonal perversion, and suppressions of natural urges. *Agni Dusti* is the causative factor for most of the diseases. This undigested food becomes sour in taste and it works like poison and it gives rise to several diseases.

• **Significance of Agni** ⁶:

A) **Physiological Significance** –

Majority of the diseases are outcome of malfunctioning of the *Agni* which rightly has been called as central root to health. *Agni* not only plays vital role in absorption of macro as well as micronutrients, but is destructive to pathogens also. The Food that is not properly digested is referred as *Ama* in *Ayurveda* and it is nothing but a Toxin or pathogen responsible for array of diseases. Proper functioning of digestive fire is Evident from normal tone of the

digestive-system, circulatory system, strong immunity or Resistance against diseases, proper tissue growth and body complexion.

B) Pathological Significance –

If digestive fire is not functioning properly, one has poor Digestion, languid blood-circulation, poor complexion, low energy levels, flatulence and poor immunity against diseases. Thus promoting proper functioning of the digestive fire is treating the root cause of the diseases, according to *Ayurvedic* principles.

- **Review of *Amlapitta* and its Pathogenesis⁷:**

The word “*Amlapitta*” has two words- ‘*Amla*’ (sour) and ‘*Pitta*’ (juice). In *Amlapitta* the quantity of *Pachaka Pitta* (Gastric juice) is increased, its quality of normal bitter taste (alkaline) is changed to more sour taste (acidic) as a result of fermentation. Because of increased sour quality it is call as *Amlapitta*.

- **References of *Amlapitta* –**

In *Ayurvedic Samhitas* *Amlapitta* is mentioned in *Kashyap Samhita*, *Madhavnidana*, *Bhavprakash*, *Yogaratanakara*, *Chakradatta* and *Rasaratna Samuchaya*. *Acharya Charaka*, *Sushruta* and *Vagbhata* have not described disease *Amlapitta* in a

separate chapter though it has been referred at certain places in their *Samhita*.

1. *Acharya Kashyap* has first of all mentioned the disease *Amlapitta* in a separate chapter and he has also mentioned *Manasika Bhava* (psychological factors) as a chief cause of this disease. Analysis of *Amlapitta* on the basis of *Dosha* has also been done by *Acharya Kashyap*, whereas *Kashyap* believed that *Amlapitta* is caused the vitiation of *Tridosha* causing *Mandagni* leading to *Vidagdhajirna* ultimately manifesting as *Amlapitta*.

2. *Acharya Madhavakar* has given detailed description about *Amlapitta* including classification of the same according to *Gati* i.e, *Urdhavaga Amlapitta* and *Adhoga Amlapitta*.

3. *Bhavmishra* described the *Chikitsa* of *Amlapitta*.

4. *Charakacharya* in *Charak Samhita*, *Amlapitta* has not been described as disease. He has mentioned that when *Amavisha* is directly mixed with *Pitta*, *Amlapitta* will develop.

- **Causes of *Amlapitta* :**

1) *Aharaj* (Dietary Cause):

This includes various kinds of faulty dietary habits which are against the normal habits as mentioned in *Ayurveda*.

According to *Kashyap*, *Virudha Ahara* (incompatible diet), *Adhyasana* (food after meal), *Ama Bhojana* (to consume food although previous food is not digested), *Ajeerna Bhojana* (constant indigestion), *Guru* (heavy meal), *Snigdha Bhojana* (oily food), *Ati Rukshanna* (excessive dry food), etc. causes *Agnimandya* (loss of appetite) that leads *Amlapitta* (hyperacidity). *Acharya Madhavakara* says that increased *Pitta* (Gastric Juice) is aggravating factor responsible for *Amlapitta* (Hyperacidity) Disease. *Acharya Madhavakara* says that increased *Pitta* (Gastric Juice) is aggravating factor responsible for *Amlapitta* (hyperacidity) disease.

2) *Viharaja* (Life Style Causative Factor) :

This includes the factors which are against the rules of normal hygienic behaviour. It is of two types a) Excessive physical work. b) No or less physical work. Excessive physical work includes more exercise than the normal, *Ratri-jagarana*, *Dhatukshaya*, *Upavasa* etc, which causes *Vata Pitta Prakopa*. *Kashyapa* mentions that the causative factor may be *Vegadharana*, *Divaswapa* after intake of *Bhojana*, more *Snana*. So, the above factor causes

Jatharagnimandya that leads to the disease *Amlapitta*.

3) *Agantuj Hetu* (Eccentric Causative Factor) :

In this group factors like constant and excessive consumption of alcohol, smoking, tobacco, beverages and other irritant and toxic substances are included. These substances cause local irritation in the stomach which eventually secretes more gastric juice and cause *Amlapitta*.

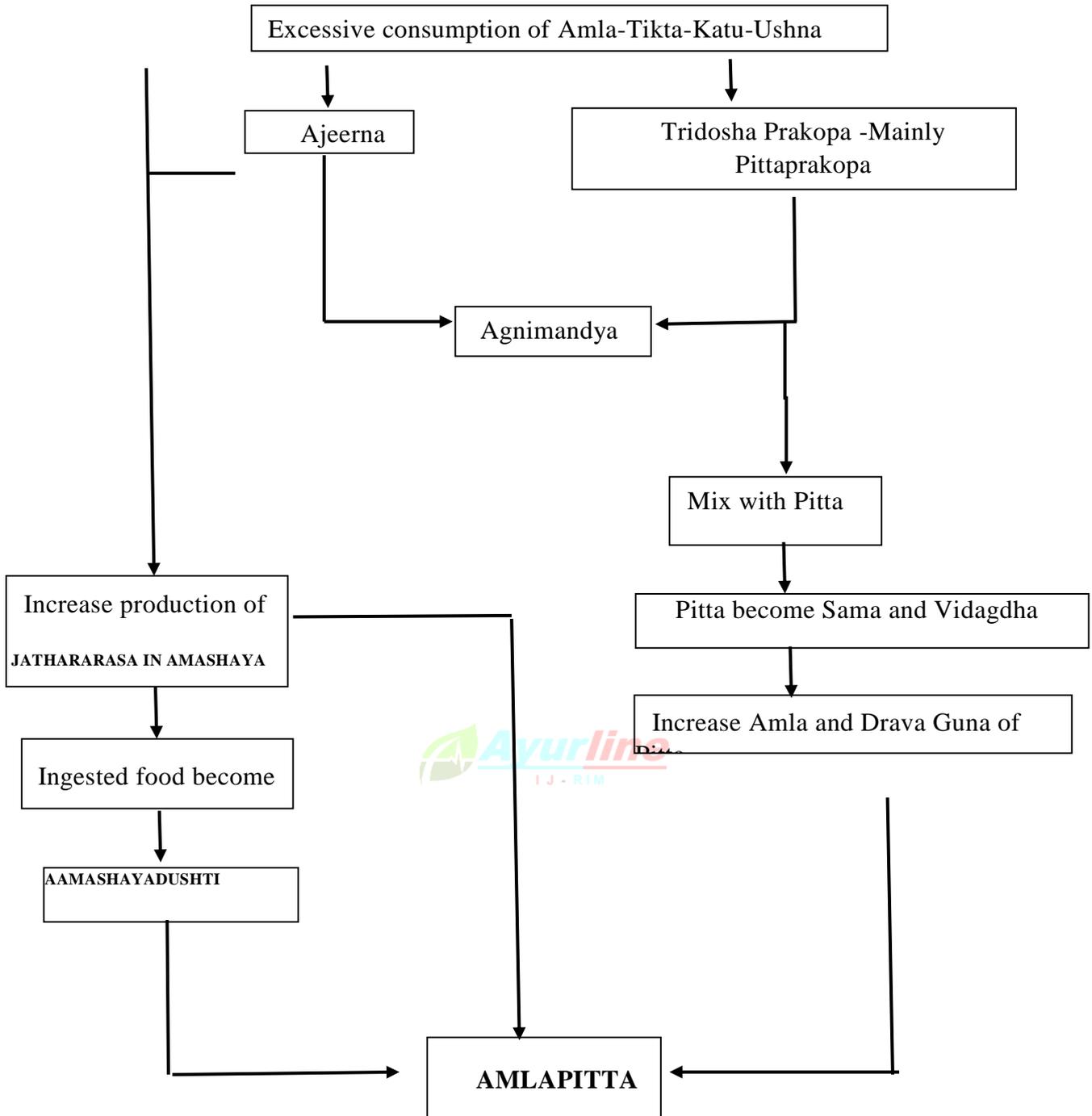
4) *Manasika Hetu* (Psychological Causes) :

Psychological factor also plays an important role in the maintaining of health.

- *Samprapti* (Pathogenesis)^{8,9,10,11} -

Samprapti Ghataka –

- Dosha – Pitta vishesa*
 - Dushya – Rasa*
 - Adhithana – Amashaya, Grahani*
 - Srotasa – Annavaha* (upper GIT & middle GIT)
- ***Samprapti of Amlapitta: (chart 1: Flow chart Samprapti of Amlapitta)***



• **Symptoms of Amlapitta According to Sthana Dushti-** ^{8,9,10}

1) **Urdhwaga Amlapitta- Vamana**

Harita, Pitta, Neela, Krushna, Rakta, Raktabha, Mansodakabha Varna, Atiamla, Atipichhila, Achha, Shleshmanujata, Vividha Rasa,

Amlodgara , Tiktodgara ,KanthaHrid-Kukshi Daha, ShirahShoola, Kapha-Pittaja Jwara, Kandua, Mandala, Pidaka

2) **Adhoga Amlapitta** –Trushna, Daha, Murchha, Moha, Hrillasa, Kotha, Agnimandya, Harsha, Sveda, Anga Pittata.

DISCUSSION :

Amlapitta (hyperacidity) is a disease that prevalent all over the world. The prevalence of Gastro esophageal reflux disease (GERD) in India ranges from 8-20%.¹² The increasing prevalence rate is a constant challenge to the research workers.

The disease *amlapitta* is a Common functional disease of *annavaha strotas*. *Amla + Pitta = Amlapitta* the term *Amla* (Sour) refers to a particular type of taste equated with the sour taste which causes excessive salivary secretion. *Pitta* is a bodily chemical substance which is mainly responsible for the maintenance of the process of digestion, transformation and transmutation. The above classical description of *Amlapitta* emphasizes that *Amlapitta* is a pathophysiological condition in which the *Pitta* gets vitiated in terms of *Vruddhi* (excessiveness) and sourness of *Pitta* is increased. Change in function of *Agni* (appetite) leads to various diseases. It is clear that *Amlapitta* is mainly due to aggravation of *Pitta*.

CONCLUSION :

Ayurveda describe *Agni* as vital component which help in digestion of food and responsible for metabolic activities. *Agni* transformed food in

nutritional energy which responsible for physiological functioning of body. *Agni* not only performs functioning of digestion but also contributes to the strength, luster, *Oja*, *Teja* and *Prana* (life energy). *Samagni* resembles healthy physical and mental status while vitiated *Agni* (*Mandagni*) resulted diseased condition. *Ajirana*, *Aamdosa*, *Alasak*, *Aamvisha*, *Shokajatisar*, *Visuchika*, *Urustambh* and *Ghrahnirog* etc. are diseases related to *Agni*. The good conduction of *Aahar* and *Vihara* along with *Ayurveda* remedies help to manage diseases of *Agni*.

According to *Aacharya Vagabhat*, *Pachak Pitta* acts as *Agni*. When its liquid form is lost, this *Agni* is important in *Annapachan Prakriya* (Digestion). *Amalapitta* is condition where *Pachak Pitta* (Gastric juice) is increased in quantity. So that's why we can clearly said that the *Agni* plays an important role in the pathogenesis of *Amlapitta Vyadhi*.

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