

Concept of Ama in Ayurveda

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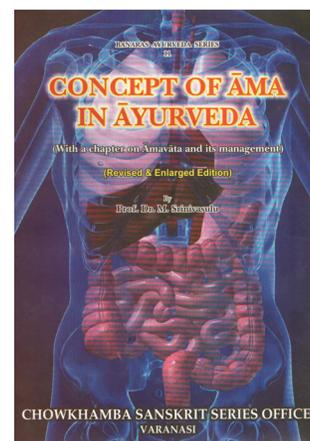
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'Exploring issues in the development of Ayurvedic research methodology' Dr. RH Singh has brought forward that, the contemporary drug centric research on Ayurveda is meant mainly for usage of Ayurveda to extend modern bioscience. Because this approach has not revealed any promising breakthrough, he advocates the need to revisit Ayurveda as-it-is and propose two-research enterprises 1) Research in the science of Ayurveda and 2) Research on therapeutics of Ayurveda.^[1] The prologue written by Dr. Singh and the book authored by Dr. M Srinivasulu, are both an extension of this advocacy.

Prof. Dr. M Srinivasulu of Government Ayurvedic College, Hyderabad, (Andhra Pradesh), has been working in field of Ayurveda for more than 30 years. His interest in Ayurvedic Rheumatology was ignited long back in 1981, when he was doing his masters in Ayurveda. The book is an outcome of his long experience and deep interest in application of modern medical parameters in Ayurvedic practice.

Ayurveda propounds thorough knowledge of disease within its own framework before it devises an individualized,

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holistic treatment approach for the disease. After introduction, the book deals with the concept of *agni* that goes hand in hand with the concept of *ama*. Author describes *agni* as a factor responsible for transformation and elaborates on the similarities and dissimilarities between *agni* and *pitta*. In an attempt to integrate, free energy of food oxidation is correlated with *agni* and relation between hormones and *agni* is explored. The concept of *jatharagni*, importance of organ *grahani*, *pittadharaka* along with their role in physiopathology is depicted in a lucid manner. Author opines gastrointestinal tract (GIT) secretions as constituents of *jatharagni*. After explaining *bhutagni*, *dhatvagni* and influence of *vata* and *kapha doshas* on *agni*; author tries to explain generation of *ama* at cellular level.

Extensive literary search by the author is evident throughout the book, especially from the chapter devoted for *ama*. Etiological factors responsible for impairment of *agni* (*mandagni*) and in turn formation of *ama* are graded as primary and secondary. Constitution of *ama*, its *gunas* (properties) and its reflection on body is explained using elaborative flowcharts for easy understanding of the readers. Association between *ama* and allergic, autoimmune and infectious diseases is exemplified with a trust for detection of presence of *ama* in laboratories. Formation of *ama* at different levels and its' pathogenicity in GIT, at *dhatu* and *dhatvagni* levels to precipitate various pathological conditions is simply logical.

Distinction between *sama* (with *ama*) and *nirama* (without *ama*) disease is of prime importance to define treatment strategies. *Ama* pathogenesis portrayed in light of *nidana panchaka* (five disease illuminating factors) and *shatkriya kala* (six stages of disease progression) along with clinical manifestation of *sama* condition are worth appreciation from clinicians. 'Causative factors that are explained in classics are altered to a great extent and subjective criteria are an obstacle for concrete diagnosis' - these arguments

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by the author are quite acceptable. With an urge for tangible diagnosis, author recognizes the need for adjuvant laboratory tests for *ama* and endeavor to advocate urine, stool and blood tests.

With chapter seven, treatment of *sama* diseases begins. General treatment approach follows the specific treatment according to stages/states of *Ama*. It includes both *shodhana* and *shamana* treatments. *Shodhana* includes *panchakarma* interventions facilitating elimination of noxious elements from the body. *Shamana* includes non-pharmacological interventions like *upavasa* (restricting food intake), exercise and other pharmacological interventions. Selection of accurate drug for treatment is an art and science of Ayurvedic treatment. '*Samanaya visesh siddhanta*' is the principle of treatment based on similarities and differences between properties of disease elements and drugs. *Deepana* and *Pachana* drugs are the best choice for treatment of *Ama* having opposite properties to that of *ama*. After explaining the concepts of *deepana* and *pachana*; author enlists *deepana-pachana* herbs that act at *jatharagni* and *butagni* levels. A countable number of pages are spent to highlight the classical references for a particular *deepana-pachana* herb and its action at particular *dhatvagni* level. Dr. Srinivasulu, through his expertise and long term experience reveals involvement of particular *sama dhatu*s in a disease and effective formulations for the same. He also puts forward number of formulations (including *asava-arishtha*, *ghruta-taila*, tablets, and herbo-mineral formulations) and their probable site of action at *jatharagni* and *dhatvagni* level.

Chapter number nine, the last chapter, explains the disease '*amavata*' in detail. The disease is always correlated with rheumatological disorders (RD) like rheumatoid arthritis, rheumatic arthritis and many more. Through his vast experience in the field of 'Ayurvedic clinical rheumatology' author has his own opinions on this topic. He emphasizes that *amavata* has a wide spectrum of pathogenesis with varied symptoms. Specific and nonspecific causative factors for *amavata*, importance of *vata*, *pitta*, and *kapha doshas* and *rakta* in the treatment, differentiation between acute and chronic symptoms along with *nidana panchaka* of *amavata* are conveyed in an articulated way. Author points out fairly ignored pathologies similar with *amavata* like fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue syndrome and many others. He has shared his clinical experiences to the fullest and advocates single

drug therapy as compared to multidrug formulations (MDFs) in acute *ama* conditions. For *sama* conditions with *dosha dhatu* and *mala* involved; suitable MDFs need to be chosen based on the factors involved in the pathogenesis.

Author has presented a core Ayurvedic concept in a comprehensive manner before scientific community through this book useful for students, academicians and researchers for better understanding of the concept. The book '*Concept of Ama*' may provide new insights towards understanding of diseases and will streamline novel, safer treatment approaches. Author needs to take care of spelling errors and should try to make the book more legible for those with non-Ayurvedic background. Ayurveda has its own epistemology and ontology developed mainly in Sanskrit and every language possesses its own special words, expressions and characteristics. This book is an excellent attempt to address epistemological and ontological challenges^[2] for integration of Ayurveda and modern biomedicine. We learn modern biomedicine in English, in the language it has evolved and hence, can manage to understand it. However, expression of concepts and principles of Ayurveda in English, exactly as they mean is really a critical task. Author has tried his best, but the process will take its time. Ayurveda experts may criticise interpretation of one or other attempt of integration depicted in this book. However, author has conveyed his openness through the quote that 'knowledge advances through criticism and debate rather than by uncritical adherence to received wisdom'. All Ayurveda enthusiasts and critics are requested to convey their opinions, discussions and suggestions to the author. *J-AIM* possesses a separate section 'Discussion kernel' and can be an excellent platform for any debate. This will facilitate the author to come up with a better edition of this book in future. After all, excellence is nothing but the gradual result of always striving to do better.

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