



## Review Article

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### A REVIEW ON AMLAPITTA: A LIFESTYLE DISORDER AND ITS MANAGEMENT WITHOUT MEDICINE

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#### ABSTRACT

Amlapitta (Hyperacidity or Acid dyspepsia) is a common disorder affecting almost 45% people in our country. Amlapitta (Hyperacidity or Acid dyspepsia) is now a common disease due to changing lifestyle. It is a psycho-somatic disorder caused due to dietetic indiscriminability and mental stress and strain. It is a Pitta Pradhana disease of the Annavaha and Purishavaha Srotas (channels carrying food and faeces) caused due to Mandagni (reduced digestive ability) and Ama (undigested toxic material). It is a functional disorder rather than due to any organic lesion. Although, the awareness about the food items, their quality, quantity and nutritional values etc. is increasing in the society. But, at the same time popularity of fast food and packed food is also increasing due to changing life style. According to Ayurved also, faulty food habits are main cause of Amlapitta. Ayurved states that alleviation of cause is the first line of treatment for every disease. So, emphasis is given to dietary habits.

**Keywords:** Amlapitta, diet, Agni, Aam

#### INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is a life science. Two main objectives of Ayurveda are to maintain the health of a healthy person and to cure the diseases of patients<sup>1</sup>. To fulfill the first and foremost aim of Ayurveda, the most important one is food. Food is considered as one of the basic pillar for life<sup>2</sup>. Food is the root cause of life as well as of diseases<sup>3</sup>.

In today's fast forward life, demand for fast food is increasing day by day. Consuming food against code of dietetics i.e. Ahara Vidhi Vidhana and Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana (methods of Consuming food) leads to a number of diseases. Amlapitta (hyperacidity) is one of them. It is characterized by acid regurgitation, nausea, heart-burning indicating the Vikriti (vitiation) of Pachaka Pitta along with the Kledaka Kapha and Samana Vayu<sup>4</sup>. Peculiarities of Amlapitta (hyperacidity) are increased prevalence, vast field of manifestation of symptoms, requires prolonged dietary control and relapse is quite common.

The hypo activity of Agni produces majority of disorders like Jvara (fever), Atisara (diarrhea), Amlapitta (hyperacidity) and Grahani (~sprue). So, the essence of all the therapeutic interventions is to reestablish, maintain and preserve the integrity of Agni. According to Ayurveda, food is the best medicine<sup>5</sup>. In hyperacidity, Ayurveda administers dietary changes like consumption of barley, wheat, old rice, gruel made of green gram (Mudga Yusha), bitter gourd, etc<sup>6</sup>. If a patient of chronic Amlapitta (hyperacidity) follows proper diet regime, then that condition is also easily curable<sup>7</sup>. It can be inferred that right food habits as well as right food articles can cure Amlapitta (hyperacidity).

#### Review of amlapitta (Hyperacidity)

In Ayurvedic terminology, Agni (digestive fire) is considered as the protector of the human body while Aama (toxic) is the cause

of the disease<sup>8</sup>. Faulty food habits and faulty life style leads to interruption in the function of Agni (digestive fire) and thus leads to production of Aama (toxic).

According to Acharya Carak, Amla (Sour) and Katu (Pungent) are the natural Rasa (taste) of Pitta Dosha<sup>9</sup>. Acharya Sushrut has quoted Katu (pungent) Rasa (taste) as the natural taste of Pitta Dosha while Amla (sour) Rasa (taste) is present in Pitta Dosha only in Vidagdhawastha (fermentation)<sup>10</sup>. Shrikanthadutta while commenting on Amlapitta in Madhav Nidan has cleared that it is a condition where excessive formation of Amla(sour) Rasa (taste) of Pitta takes place causing Vidahyadi conditions. Amlapitta (hyperacidity) occurs mainly due to vitiation of Pitta (Pachaka-Pitta) but Kapha & Vata Dosha are also mentioned by Shrikanthadutta<sup>11</sup>.

#### Causative factors of Amlapitta<sup>12,13</sup> (hyperacidity)

Causative factors for Amlapitta (hyperacidity) can be divided into four broad headings

1. Dietary factors (Aharaj Hetu)
2. Habit factors (Viharaj Hetu)
3. Psychological factors (Mansika Hetu)
4. Miscellaneous factors (Agantuj Hetu)

#### Dietary Factors

Improper diet is the main cause for the manifestation of Amlapitta (hyperacidity). Dietary factors can further be divided into following categories:

**Type of Aahar (food) consumed-** Kullatha (Dolichos biflora), Pulaka (husky food) etc. act as causative factors for Amlapitta (hyperacidity).

**Quality of food-** Ati-Ruksha (too coarse), Ati- Snigdha (unctuous), Abhishyandi (causing obstruction in channels due to increased mucus secretion), Guru Bhojan (heavy to digest), Vidahi Ann-Paan (food materials that cause burning sensation

with poor digestion) act as causative factors for Amlapitta (hyperacidity).

#### Infected and rotten food articles

**Food materials having Pitta provoking tendency-** uncooked diet, fried paddy, sugarcane products, intake of very hot, irritant, acidic food materials provoke Pitta.

Alcohol

#### Habit Factors

- Taking excessive bath and swimming
- Sleeping in day time after having meal.
- Suppression of natural urges
- Improper sleeping pattern
- Improper eating schedule
- Eating even when the previous diet is still in undigested form.

#### Psychological Factors

- Worry
- Anxiety
- Fear
- Anger
- Over excitement etc.

Manasika Hetu (psychological factors) produces a spectrum on which all other Hetus (causative factors) can easily act and then influence Sharira (body) ultimately producing Agni Dusti (weak digestion). There would be either less secretion of digestive juice or excessive secretion or untimely secretion of digestive juices leading to indigestion and thus, ultimately Amlapitta (hyperacidity).

#### Miscellaneous Factors

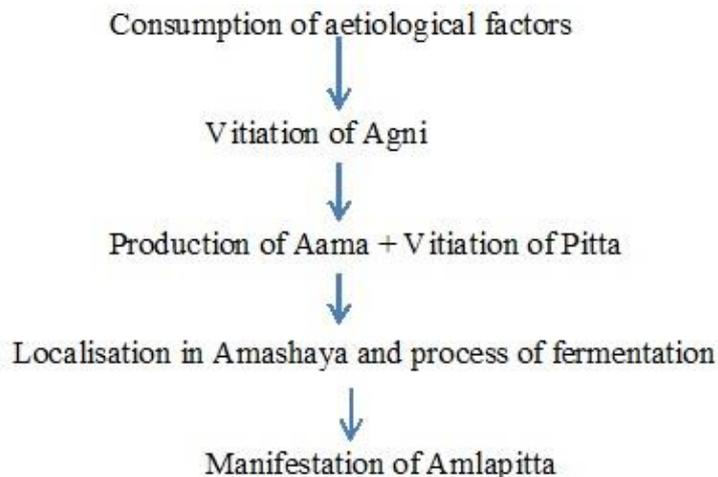
Iatrogenic factors can be included in this category. Amlapitta (hyperacidity) can be due to side effect of certain drugs or due to lack in taking proper precautions as prescribed by physician. Excessive use of over the counter anti-inflammatory drugs is one of such example. In perspective of Ayurveda, e.g. use of Ushna-Tikshna medicine irrespective of the Prakriti of patient, time of administration, Anupan (vehicle of drug) and dietetic restrictions when not followed by patient can result in Amlapitta (hyperacidity) in long run.

Thus, all the causative factors are associated with faulty lifestyle. Improper food materials, improper time and method of eating, fast and competitive life causing anxiety etc. and indiscriminate use of drugs and alcohol are the main culprit.

#### Pathogenesis of Amlapitta (hyperacidity)

- **Predominant Dosha involved-** Pitta (Pachak, Ranjak, Sadhak), Vata (Prana, Samana, Apan) and Kledaka Kapha.
- **Srotas involved-** Annvaha and Purishvaha (channels carrying food and feaces).
- **Adhistan** – Amashya (stomach and duodenum)
- **Gati-** Urdhavagati and Aadhoggati
- **Swarup-** Chirkari (chronic)
- **Guna (properties)-** Drava(liquid), Sara(-), Ushna (hot), Tikshna (irritating)
- **Mahabhoot predominance-** Jala, Agni

Diagrammatically whole process of manifestation of Amlapitta (hyperacidity) can be shown as:



#### Clinical features of Amlapitta<sup>14</sup> (hyperacidity)

Clinical features of Amlapitta (hyperacidity) vary according to the gati of Amlapitta. Urdhavaga Amlapitta is associated with Annvaha Srotas while Adhoga Amlapitta is associated with Purishvaha Srotas. In terms of Doshic predominance, Pitta and Kapha are involved in Urdhavaga Amlapitta while Pitta and Vata are associated with Adhoga Amlapitta.

Clinical features of Urdhavaga Amlapitta:

- Yellowish, greenish, bluish, blackish, viscous and acidic vomitus
- Acid eructation
- Vomiting after or without meals
- Heart burn
- Burning in throat

- Headache
- Feeling of warmth and burning sensation in palms and feet.
- Anorexia
- Fever
- Itching
- Rashes
- Boils

Clinical features of Adhoga Amlapitta:

- Polydipsia
- Burning sensation
- Fainting
- Confusion
- Delusion

- Discharge of green, yellow, red color liquid substance from rectum.
- Nausea
- Boils
- Indigestion
- Horripilation
- Sweating
- Yellowish tinge of body.

### Importance of dietary habits in the management of Amlapitta (hyperacidity)

Ahara (food) plays an important role in maintenance of health. The way in which food is consumed also plays an important role in assimilation and digestion of food. In Ayurveda, Aharavidhivisheshayatanani (code of dietetics) has been described. It includes eight factors-

**Prakrti** (nature of substances)- it tells about properties of food material that whether it is easy to digest or not etc.

**Karana** (processing of substances)- processing of substances incorporates some qualities in the substance as well as deletes some other qualities. Thus, basic nature of the substance is altered.

**Samyoga** (combination of different substances)- combination of two or more substances alters the qualities of the substances. Result may be positive or negative.

**Rashi** (quantum of substances to be taken)- Rashi denotes both, the whole quantity of food and quantity of individual constituent of food.

**Desha** (habitat of substances)- origin place of food material. According to Ayurveda qualities of a substance differs according to place of its origin.

**Kala** (time as age, seasons and conditions)- time denotes both the diseased period (food to be taken according to disease) and seasonal time i.e. food beneficial in particular season should be consumed.

**Upayog Samstha** (dietetic rules) – general rules to be followed during meal. Its ultimate aim is proper digestion of food.

**Upayokta** (habit and state of individuals)- individual who consumes food<sup>15</sup>.

Classics of Ayurveda has further described about Upayogsamstha (dietetic rules). Upayogsamstha (dietetic rules) includes following basic rules that should be followed for proper digestion and assimilation of food. These are-

**Ushnamashniyat**- always eat that food which is just cooked and still hot. It increases the digestion, promotes vata anuloman (passing of flatus) and pacifies Shleshm.

**Snigdhamashniyat**- food cooked with oil or Ghee should be included in the diet. It improves the digestion and helps in passing flatus. It strengthens the body and mind.

**Matravadamashniyat**- quantity of food should be determined accurately according to the person's digestive capacity.

**Jirneashniyat**- everyone should take food only when previous meal is digested<sup>16</sup>.

**Viryaviruddhamashniyat**- everyone should take food having no contradictory potencies.

**Ishte deshe Ishta sarvopakarane ashniyat**- everyone should take food in proper place equipped with all the accessories.

**Natidrutamashniyatashniyat**- everyone should not take food too hurriedly i.e. persons should eat calmly and quietly.

**Nativilambitamashniyat**- one should not take food very slowly.

**Ajalpan – Ahasan – Tanmanabhunjit**- everyone should not talk or laugh or be unmindful while taking food.

**Atmanamabhisamikshyabhunjit**- one should take food in above prescribed manner with due regard to his likes and dislikes<sup>16</sup>.

### Food articles beneficial in Amlapitta (hyperacidity)

By reviewing classics of Ayurveda, it is evident that food articles of every group i.e. fruits, milk, pulses etc. are described separately. All the food articles that are Tikta(bitter) in Rasa(taste) can be used in dietary regime for Amlapitta (hyperacidity), similarly, food articles that pacifies Piita and Kapha Dosha can be used in treatment of Amlapitta<sup>17</sup> (hyperacidity). Food articles will be discussed according to the group:

#### Fruits

Following fruits are described as useful in Amlapitta (hyperacidity).

##### **Dadima (*Punica granatum* Linn.)**

Three types of Dadima (Pomegranate) fruit are described in Ayurveda i.e. Madhur (sweet), Madhur-Amla (sweet and sour) and Amla (sour). Dadima is Pitta shamak (pacifies Pitta Dosha). It is Agnideepak<sup>18</sup> (improves the digestion). Dadima fruit pacifies the causative Dosha as well as improves the digestion, thus, it breaks the chain of pathology of Amlapitta.

##### **Parushaka (*Grewia asiatica* Linn.)**

Ripened fruit of Parushaka is used as food article. Ripened fruits of Parushaka are Madhur (sweet) in Rasa (taste) and Vipaka i.e. it possess the qualities of Madhur Rasa (sweet taste) even after bio transformation. Due to its Madhur Rasa and Madhur Vipaka, it pacifies the Pitta Dosha<sup>19</sup>.

##### **Amalaki (*Emblica officinalis* Gaertn.)**

Amlaki is Rochan (increases interest in food), Deepan (improves digestion), Anuloman (helps in excretion of feces and flatus) and Amlatanashak<sup>20</sup> (decreases the sourness caused in hyperacidity). Due to these properties, it is beneficial in Amlapitta (hyperacidity) as it breaks the chain of pathology of hyperacidity as well as provides symptomatic relief.

##### **Ananasa (*Ananas comosus* (Linn.) Merr.)**

Ripened fruit of Ananasa is Madhur Rasa (sweet in taste), Madhur Vipaka (after bio-transformation, it retains the qualities of sweetness) and Sheeta Virya (cold in potency). It is Rochan (increases interest in food), Deepan (improves digestion), Anuloman<sup>21</sup> (helps in excretion of feces and flatus). Due to its all these properties it pacifies the Pitta Dosha and also provides symptomatic relief.

##### **Badar (*Zizyphus jujuba* Lam.)**

Ripened fruits of *Zizyphus jujuba* Lam. are Madhur (sweet) in Rasa (taste) and cold in potency (Sheeta Virya). On drying, ripened fruits of *Zizyphus jujuba* Lam. pacifies Kapha- Vaat Dosha and does not vitiate Pitta Dosha and it is Sarak (helps in excretion of feces and other wastes from body) in properties. Old and dried ripened fruits of *Zizyphus jujuba* Lam. are Agnideepak<sup>22</sup> (improves digestion). Thus, ripened fruit of *Zizyphus jujuba* Lam. can be used either fresh or in dried form.

These are some of the examples of fruits that are useful in Amlapitta (hyperacidity). Other fruits having similar properties can also be used on the basis of rationality.

#### Vegetables

##### **Patola (*Trichosanthes dioica* Roxb.)**

Fruits of Patola are Tikta (bitter) in Rasa (taste). It has Rochana (increases interest in food), Deepan (improves digestion), Pachana (aids in digestion), Pittasarak (helps in excretion of

Pitta) and Anuloman (helps in excretion of faeces and flatus) actions<sup>23</sup>.

**Karvellaka (*Momordia charantia* Linn.)**

Karvellaka is Tikta (bitter) and Katu (pungent) in Rasa (taste). It is Ushna Veerya (hot in potency). Due to these properties, it is useful in Agnimandya<sup>24</sup> (weak digestion). Thus, it uproots the basic cause of Amlapitta (hyperacidity).

**Vastuka (*Chenopodium album* Linn.)**

*Chenopodium album* Linn. is a green leafy vegetable commonly used in households. It is Katu Vipaki (Katu in biotransformation). It is Laghu (easy to digest), Agnideepak (improves digestion), Sarak (helps in excretion of faeces and other wastes from body), Tri Doshashamak<sup>25</sup> (pacifies all the three Doshas). Due to these properties it helps in treatment of Amlapitta (hyperacidity).

**Tanduliya (*Amaranthus spinosus* Linn.)**

Green leaves of *Amaranthus spinosus* Linn. are used as vegetable. It is Laghu (easy to digest), Agnideepak (improves digestion), Pitta- Kapha Shamak (pacifies Pitta and Kapha Dosha) and Vishaghna<sup>26</sup> (detoxifies the body). Due to these properties, it works on the root cause of Amlapitta (hyperacidity).

**Karkotaki (*Momordica dioica* Roxb.)**

Karkotaki is Katu in Vipaka and Deepan<sup>27</sup> (appetizer). It is Kapha and Pitta Shamak<sup>28</sup> (pacifies Kapha and Pitta Dosha).

**Hilmochika (*Enhydra fluctuans* Lour.)**

Hilmochika commonly known as Harkuch or Hilanch Shaak is Kaaph-Pitta nashak and Bhedan<sup>29</sup> (breaks fecal mass).

**Pulses**

**Mudga (*Phaseolus radiates* Linn, non Roxb & auct.)**

Green gram is Kashay (astringent) and Madhur (sweet) in Rasa (taste), Laghu (easy to digest) and Kapha-Pitta Shamak (pacifies Kapha and Pitta Dosha). It is Sheeta (cold) in Virya<sup>30</sup> (potency).

**Masoor (*Lens culinaris* Medic.)**

Lentil is Madhur (sweet) in Rasa (taste) and Vipaka (bio-transformation), it is Sheeta (cold) and Kapha-Pitta Shamak<sup>31</sup> (pacifies Kapha and Pitta Dosha).

**Chanaka (*Cicer arietinum* Linn.)**

Gram or chick pea is Kashaya (astringent) in Rasa (taste). It is Ruksha (dry) in property, Sheeta (cold) in Virya (potency) and it is Kapha-Pitta Shamak (pacifies Kapha and Pitta Dosha) in action<sup>32</sup>.

**Meats**

Ayurveda advices that meat of Jangal animals (those animals that have strong legs due to adaptation to fast running) is Pitta Nashaka (alleviates Pitta) and Kashay (astringent) and Madhur (sweet) in Rasa (taste) and is Laghu<sup>33</sup> (easy to digest).

**DISCUSSION**

Predominant Rasa (taste) in these food articles are Madhur (sweet) and Tikta (bitter). Madhur Rasa is Sheeta (cold) in property. Due to this it pacifies the Pitta Dosha which is the mainly responsible for Amlapitta (hyperacidity). Along with this, Madhur Rasa (sweet taste) has healing action. Due to it these food articles also heal the damaged mucosa of gastrointestinal tract.

Tikta Rasa (bitter taste) is also Sheeta (cold) in property. Tikta Rasa (bitter taste) is Agnideepak (promotes digestion). Tikta Rasa is Agnideepak as it removes cough and thus, prohibiting factor for proper digestion is removed. Due to this action, it breaks the chain of pathology of Amlapitta (hyperacidity). As in

Ayurveda, vitiation of Agni is the first step in the pathogenesis of Amlapitta (hyperacidity).

Many of these food articles have Sarak and Anuloman property. These properties help in elimination of Doshas out of the body. Thus, act as Sanshodhan.

**CONCLUSION**

Amlapitta is one of the major problems due to changing life style. In the ancient text books of Ayurveda it is described that irregular food and life style habits are the main causative factor for the disease. While describing the total management for this disease, it is very much emphasized that treatment will be only successful if the causative factors are corrected. Food plays a very important role in the management of a disease. In the management of Amlapitta (hyperacidity), following the dietary do's and don'ts help to produce soothing effect on the inner layer of the G.I.T., reverses inflammatory changes and controls the digestive secretions by which hyperacidity can be tackled.

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