

Study of *Amashaya* (Stomach) With Special Reference to Prevention of GI Disorders: A Review Article

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Abstract

Today's era deals with lot of stresses and fast life style having great impact on health. One of the important systems affected by stress and eating habits is digestive system. This has lead to increase in GI (gastro-intestinal) disorders. GI disorders worsens the quality of life. Ayurveda mentions GI tract in terms of "*Annavaha srotas*" and stomach i.e., *Aamashaya* as its "*moolasthan*". Ayurveda assume that study of *moolsthana* of any *srotasa* (system) is quiet important as it is basic organ of that system. According to Ayurveda *pachaka pitta* which can be compared as digestive juice is one of the important constituent in stomach. Undigested food in the stomach is nomenclated as '*aam*'. If food does not get digested in entire GI tract and remains in the form of '*aam*', it is most predominant etiological factors for any disease according to *Acharya Charaka*. Vitiation of *doshas* in *aamashaya* causes various disorders like *Amlapitta*, *Alasak* etc.

Keywords

Aamashaya, Aam, Annavaha srotas, Digestive health, Pachak pitta



Greentree Group

Received 05/08/16 Accepted 30/08/16 Published 10/09/16

INTRODUCTION

Life style is an important factor related to health and attracts more interest by researchers. According to WHO, life style is responsible for various diseases. Diet is greatest factor in life style and has direct and positive relationship with health. One of the major systems affected by this unhealthy diet is digestive system. Worldwide prevalence of gastro-intestinal disorders is 15-45 % and it is increasing everyday. Most of the gastro intestinal disorders related to stress and life style have been included in 'non-communicable' category .

According to Ayurveda, health and wellbeing depends upon our ability to digest everything and convert it into energy. 'Agni' is an important factor that provides digestive ability to us¹. *Pachaka pitta* is equivalent to 'Agni' located in *Aamashaya* (stomach)². Not only GI disorders but most of the diseases are caused by single dominant factor, 'Aam'³. Unhealthy life style and diet responsible for vitiation of 'Agni' leads to digestive health disturbances.

'*Aamashaya*' (stomach) is seat of *Pachaka-pitta*, *Kledak kapha* and *Saman vayu*⁴. Though *Pachaka pitta* (digestive fire) plays chief role in digestion⁵, *Kledak kapha* and *Samana vayu* are having supporting role to

stimulate 'Agni'^{6,7}. According to modern science, all organs of GI tract work in harmony to make sure that body receives the nutrients it needs. Ayurveda give extreme importance to "*Aamashaya*" as *moolasthan* (basic organ) of *Annavaha srotasa*⁸ (digestive system). Vitiation of contents in *Aamashaya* gives rise to diseases. An attempt is made to study the '*Aamashaya*' with its structural and physiological component in detail so as to prevent GI disorders.

AIM

To study the content and structure of '*Aamashaya*' is prime aim of this study. By maintaining normalcy of contents by preventive measures, one can prevent GI disorders to greater extent and stay with proper digestive health.

DISCUSSION

A persons health is not only based on the food we eat but also its metabolism occurs by the action of various digestive juices. For this purpose digestion is important for breaking down food into nutrients which the body uses for energy, growth and cell repair. Factors such as lack of sleep, antibiotic, illness, ageing and poor diet can

often lead to digestive disorders. Problems with proper digestion not only lead to GI disorders but also allergies and illness in body and impairment in the immune system. According to Ayurveda, strong digestion is foundation of strong and healthy physiology. Digestion provides 'Aahar-rasa' which later gets converted in to seven *Dhatus* (body tissues). According to Ayurveda, *rasa-rakta-mansa-meda-asthi-majja-shukra* are important tissues get synthesized properly if food is metabolized in proper manner. Modern science has described number of organs right from mouth up to anal canal as a part of digestive system⁹. Each and every organ takes part in chemical and mechanical digestion by various ways. Ayurveda nomenclated it as 'Mahasrotas' where digestion occur. While mentioning 'Annavaha srotas' 'Aamashaya' is described as *moolasthan*¹⁰. *Moolasthan* (chief organ) is special concept of Ayurveda relation with every *srotasa*. It is having importance in prognostic view and in treatmental aspect.

As per modern science, stomach is storage organ of food where initial phase of digestion also occur. Structurally the wall is made up of mucosa, sub-mucosa, muscularis and serosa. Mucosa comprises gastric pits

and gastric glands containing secretory cell such as chief cell, parietal cell, mucus cell and G cell. These cells secrete pepsinogen, lipase, HCL, intrinsic factors mucus etc. forming gastric juice. Digestive juice plays an important role in digestion whereas muscular layer does mechanical digestion⁹.

According to *Aacharya Sushruta* and *Charaka*, *Aamashaya*(stomach) is included in 'Aashaya'. *Aashaya* means the organ having hollow space or cavity to retain substance for its further transformation¹¹. Here mixing, digestion, propulsion etc. events are occur in digestion. The word 'Aamashaya' is derived from 'Aam' and 'Aashaya'. *Aam* is undigested food stored in stomach³. *Aamashaya* is located in epigastric region, more toward *vam-parswa*(left hypochondrium)¹². Transformation of food occurs in cavity by 'Agni' i.e., digestive power or fire.

Physio-anatomical contents of 'Aamashaya':-

- *Pittadhara Kala* (membrane)
- *Mansapeshi* (muscular layer)
- *Agni- Jatharagni* (digestive power)
- *Pachak pitta* (digestive power)
- *Kledak Kapha* (mucus like substance)
- *Saman vayu*

- *Ranjak pitta*

Pittadhara kala (membrane) is important structure located in wall of *Aamashaya*¹³. It is assumed as the membrane possessing ability to secrete *pitta* i.e., digestive juice. *Mansapeshi*. (Muscles) also located in the wall for mixing and propagation action. The factor responsible for metabolism (catabolism and anabolism) is '*Agni*' having *tikshna-ushna gunas*. *Jatharagni* is most important type of *agni* located in *Aamashaya*¹⁴. *Pachak pitta* is form of *agni* found in stomach. *Kledak kapha*⁶ is the factor which is essential for lubrication and moistening of food for proper digestion. Modern science also believes that healthy digestion does not exist without water. Adequate hydration provides digestive system with appropriate amount of moisture needed for proper functioning. Action of *agni* is stimulated by *saman vayu* located in *aamashay*⁷. *Vayu* is responsible for movement of food. One can correlate entire mucosa with *pittadhara kala*, mucus with *kledak kapha*, juices with *pachak pitta* and muscular action with function of function of *vayu*.

Acharya Ckaraka quoted that *Annavaha srotas* when get vitiated causes *aruchi*(anorexia), *agnimandya*(loss of

appetite), *avipak* (indigestion), *hrullas*(nausea) and *chhardi*(vomiting)⁹. *Amplapitta* is so much common GI disorders occur due to vitiated *pitta*¹⁵. According to modern science above mentioned abnormalities are common signs and symptoms of upper GI diseases such as APD, Gastritis, PUD, GERD etc. which are stomach related.

By knowing physiological anatomy of *Aamashaya* (stomach) one can prevent GI diseases to great extent with adaptation of following measures.

- Dietetic regimen by Ayurveda.
- Seasonal regimen by Ayurveda.
- *Panchakarma* therapy according to Ayurveda.

Acharya quoted that all our basic tissues (*saptadhatu*) derived from '*Aahara-rasa*'. Proper synthesis of *Ahara-rasa* is depending on digestion of diet i.e., on action of *agni or pitta*. So maintenance of these constituents of *aamashaya* is essential for digestive health.

Diet is major contributing factor in digestive disturbances. Excessive diet, diet taken in improper duration, contraindicated diet(to *prakruti*) are the common causes of vitiation of *aanavaha srotas*¹⁶. Dietetic regimen is one of life style factor. As *pitta* or *agni* is

important content of *Aamashaya*, it should be maintained in proper position by applying *virechana karma* in suggested duration¹⁷. Seasonal purification of vitiated *pitta* rejuvenates digestive function. Normalcy of *pitta* can be kept by adapting rules of dietetic regimen i.e., *Ahar-visheshayatan*¹⁸. Minute things such as *prakruti*, *karan*, *sanyoga*, *rashi* (individuals physical status, requirement of food, quantity of food, duration of intake, methods of preparation of food) etc. taken into consideration so that intake and digestive power coincides with each other. Avoidance of *vataprapak* and *kapha-prapak ahar* prevent imbalance between *doshas*.

CONCLUSION

According to Ayurveda, *Aamashaya* resembles one of the *aashaya* having retaining and digestive ability. Structurally it has *pittadhara kala* having major role in digestion. *Pachak pitta-Kledak kapha-Saman vayu* are physiological content of *aamashya*. By knowing this fact, one should do all the measures quoted by Ayurveda such as *Ahar –Vihar, panchakarma-virechan, rutucharya* to prevent vitiation of content of *aamashaya*, particularly *pachak—pitta*. As *aamashaya* is chief

organ (*moolasthan*), by keeping it normal, one can prevent much of GI disorder in today's era.

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