



AJEERNA (INDIGESTION) - A DISEASE OF SERIOUS CONCERN

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ABSTRACT

Healthy food habits and proper digestion are crucial for our health. Digestive abnormalities are the most commonly occurring problem which may lead to serious health issues and even fatal for the life if not taken care properly. Almost all the important texts of Ayurveda have discussed about the *Ajeerna* with all its detail. It is told as *Ghor Vyadhi*, *Ghor* means which is difficult to cure and may cause untimely death also. The present article is an effort to discuss in detail about the Ayurveda perspective of *Ajeerna* and its serious nature. Proper diagnosis and treatment of *Ajeerna* may protect its further complication. Lifestyle modification, wholesome dietary pattern and use of drugs are important in management of *Ajeerna*. The article throws light on etiopathogenesis of *Ajeerna*, its types, symptomatology, complications and principles of management.

Key words: *Agni, Ama, Aparipakva, Indigestion*

INTRODUCTION: Food and drinks when taken judiciously are contributing to our health else they will become cause for serious health issues and *Ajeerna* is one among them. *Ajeerna* is generally translated as indigestion which involves several aspects starting from intake of food and its digestion, assimilation and excretion. Any disturbances in this normal process may lead to *Ajeerna*. It may independently become a problem or may create platform for manifestation of several diseases which may be fatal for the life. In Charak Samhita *Ajeerna* is explained under the *Grahani Dosha* Chikitsa Adhyaya after explaining the *Agni* and normal digestion process¹. Here the specific term *Grahani Dosha* is used and not the *Grahani Roga*, *Dosha* is having the capabilities to create innumerable kinds of diseases and explaining *Ajeerna* in this context is very relevant as this creates the basis for several health issues. In Charak Samhita and

Ashtanga Hridaya the word *Ghor* is used while describing the *Ajeerna*². This indicates the serious nature of disease, difficulties in its management and also the possibilities of damage at deeper level. Because of this it becomes very important to understand this disease and know its management. The article is providing detail of *Ajeerna*, its etiopathogenesis, types, symptomatology, complications and management strategies.

Etiopathogenesis of *Ajeerna*:

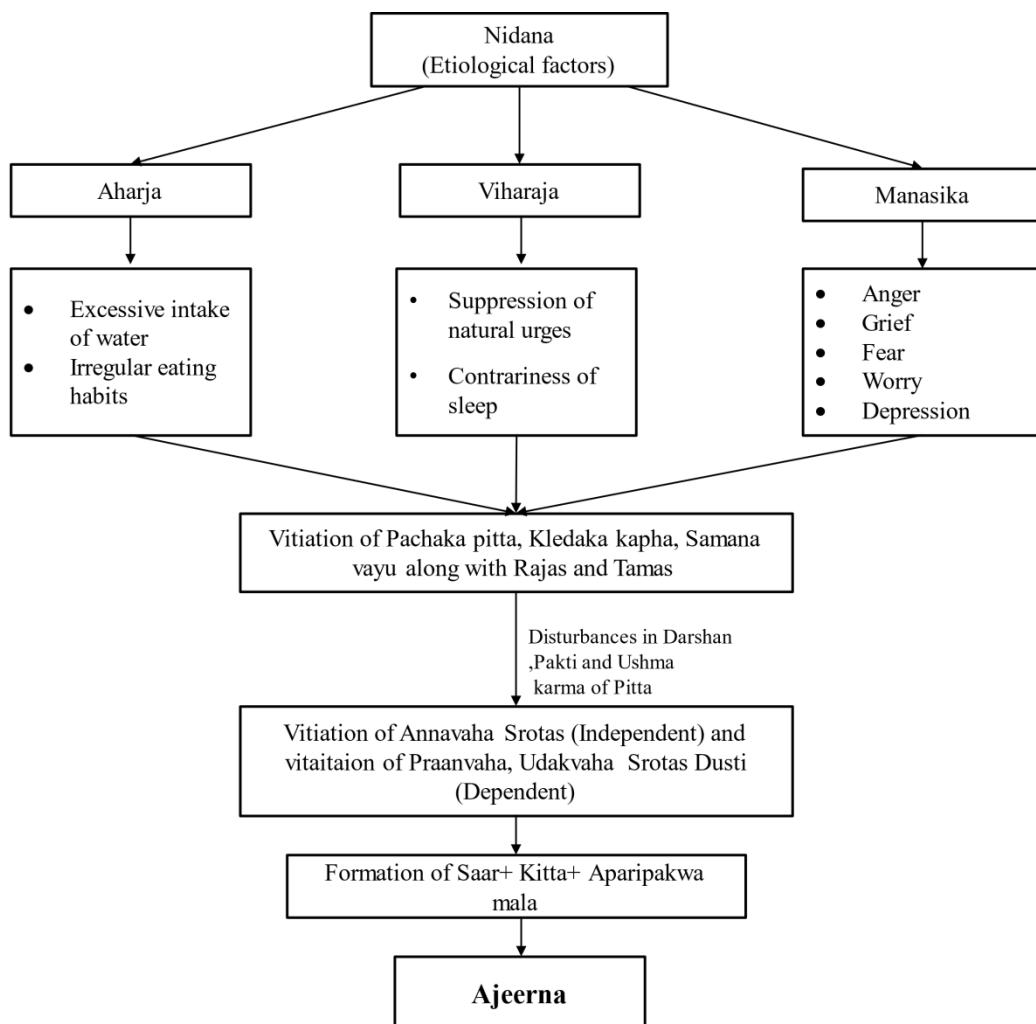
The word *Ajeerna* primarily indicates the improperly digested or undigested food. In the process of normal digestion mainly *Pachaka Pitta*, *Samana Vayu*, *Kledaka Kpaha* takes the lead role. The function of *Pitta* viz. *Darshan* (seeing what to be consumed) *Pakti* (digesting the ingested food and formation of *Saar* and *Kitta*), *Ushma* (heat which is required for transformation and assimilation). When these factors are disturbed mainly *Pakti* and *Ushma* then it will cause improper

digestion which will further lead to *Aparipakva* (undigested) along with *Saar* and *Kitta* portion of ingested food.

The basic causes of *Ajeerna* described in Ayurvedic Samhitas i.e. *Sushruta Samhita*³, *Charaka*⁴ & *Astang Hrudayam*⁵ are *Atyambupaan* (excessive intake of water), *Vishamashan* (untimely intake of excess or less food), *Sandharan* (Supression of natural urges), *Swapna Viparyaya* (change in sleeping pattern) along with these the condition of mood i.e.

jealousy, fear, anger and sorrow are the leading causes of *Ajeerna*. Ayurveda has also deeply elaborated the type of food which may leads to *Ajeerna* i.e. *Dwista* (contaminated food), *Vishtambhi* (take more time to digest), *Dagdha* (overcooked), *Aam* (undercooked), *Guru* (heavy to digest), *Ruksha* (dry food), *Hima* (frozen food), *Asuchi* (Contaminated and stale food) in nature. The etiopathogenesis of *Ajeerna* is shown in flow Chart-No. 1.

Flow Chart: 1- Showing the etiopathogenesis of *Ajeerna*



General Clinical features of *Ajeerna*-

The diagnosis of *Ajeerna* is based on its clinical features Viz. *Vibandha* (partial or complete cessation of bowel habit), *Atipravritti* (enhancement in bowel habit),

Glani (lack of zeal), *Marut Mudhta* (complete pause in GI motility), *Alashya* (lack of enthusiasm), *Apakati* (unable to digest the ingested food and formation of

Saar and *Kitta*), *Nishthiv* (excessive spitting).

Types of Ajeerna and its specific symptomatology: Shown in table No.1

Table No.1: Shows the types and specific symptoms of Ajeerna

Specific Symptoms of Ajeerna (Su.Su.46/502-503 with Dalhana commentary) (Y.R. Ajeerna Roga/37-40)			
Sl.No.	Types	Dosha	Symptoms
1.	<i>Ama</i> <i>Ajeerna</i>	<i>Kapha</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food stains sweetness • <i>Guruta</i> (Heaviness of body) • <i>Utkleda</i> (Vomiting sensation) • <i>Ganda Akshikuta shopha</i> (Oedema over orbital and cheek region) • <i>Udgrascha yatha bhuktam</i> (Eruption of the ingested food) • <i>Avidagdha</i> (Indigestion)
2.	<i>Vidagdha</i> <i>Ajeerna</i>	<i>Pitta</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ingested food becomes sour and slightly digested • <i>Bhrama</i> (Giddiness) • <i>Trit</i> (Thirst) • <i>Murchha</i> (Fainting) • <i>Sadhumaamla udgara</i> (Sour eruption and feeling like of smoke coming out from mouth) • <i>Shukta tikta amla udgara</i> (sour-bitter eruptions) • <i>Sweda</i> (Sweating) • <i>Daha</i> (Burning sensation) • <i>Vividha Pittaja Ruja</i> (Various other pain of <i>Pittaj</i> origin)
3.	<i>Vishtabdha</i> <i>Ajeerna</i>	<i>Vata</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Bhrisha Toda</i> (severe pain abdomen) • <i>Shula</i> (Sharp/colic pain) • <i>Vishtabdhamandaandha</i> (hardness of bowel) • <i>Viruddha Vata</i> (opposite movement of <i>Vata dosha</i>) • <i>Adhmana</i> (Abdominal distension) • <i>Vividha Vata vedana</i> (Various pain of <i>vata</i> origin) • <i>Mala vata apraviiti</i> (obstruction in the evacuation of feces and <i>vata</i>) • <i>Moha</i> (Delusion) • <i>Stambha Anga Pidana</i> (Stiffness and pain all over the body parts) • <i>Jrimbha</i> (Yawning) • <i>Shiroruja</i> (Headache)
4.	<i>Rasashesha</i> <i>Ajeerna</i>	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Udgara shuddavapi bhaktaakansha na jayate</i> (Clear eruption but no desire for food intake.) • <i>Hridguruta</i> (heaviness in heart region) • <i>Anna vidvesha</i> (dislike towards food)

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Hridayaashudda</i> (discomfort in chest region) • <i>Arochaka</i> (anorexia)
5.	<i>Dinapaki Ajeerna</i>	<i>Nirdosha</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food get digested within a day
6.	<i>Prakrita Ajeerna</i>	<i>Prakrita</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural indigestion during the process of digestion which will complete with time each day.

Upadrava (complications) of Ajeerna: Shown in table no.2

Table No.2: Shows the complications of Ajeerna

Upadrava (Complications) (Su.Su.46/504) (Y.R. Ajeerna Roga/41)	
• <i>Murchha</i>	Fainting
• <i>Pralapa</i>	Delirium
• <i>Vamathu</i>	Vomiting
• <i>Praseka</i>	Excessive salivation
• <i>Sadana</i>	Malaise
• <i>Bhrama</i>	Giddiness
• <i>Marana</i>	Even the Death may occur

Principles of Management of Ajeerna:

Nidana Parivarjana (avoidance of etiological factors) is the first principle of management in case of Ajeerna. Healthy lifestyle pattern and wholesome dietary habits are keys in the prevention and management of Ajeerna. In case of *Ama Ajeerna* which is *Kapha* dominant Acc. to *Sushrutacharya* -*Langhana* (lightening therapy) should be done. The patient whose body is light, should be treated with lightening measures till restored to Normalcy in terms of disorder and strength. *Vamana* is indicated in *Ama Ajeerna* by *Yoga Ratnakara*. Hot saline water which is prepared by using rock salt along with *Vacha* is used for *Vamana*. Water processed with *Dhanyaka* + *Shunti* can also be used for vomiting. This is told as *Ama Ajeerna Prashmana* (pacifying the *Ama Ajeerna*) *Shulaghna* (subsides the colic) and *Bastishodhaka* (cleans bladder). In case of *Vidagdha Ajeerna* which is *Pitta* dominant as per *Sushrutacharya*, *Vamana* is performed using hot saline water and the patient He should abstain from food till

normalcy restored. *Yoga Ratnakar* has indicated *Langhana* in case of *Vidagdha Ajeerna*. *Vishtabdha Ajeerna* Which is *Vata* dominant can be managed by *Swedana karma* (sudation therapy). Drinking warm saline water is advised in this condition. *Rasashesha Ajeerna* which is not of very serious nature can be easily managed by just sleeping or taking good rest and avoiding eating unless the condition is resolved. *Dinapaki Ajeerna* and *Prakrit Ajeerna* does not require any treatment as this is naturally occurring during the process of digestion.

DISCUSSION:

Ajeerna is one of the problems which is mainly due to our unhealthy lifestyle and unwholesome dietary pattern. It is often neglected or improperly managed condition unless it is severely disturbing the normal routine of the individual. In such condition correction of lifestyle becomes very important. According to WHO, 60% of related factors to individual health and quality of life are correlated to lifestyle⁶. Not only physical but

psychological factors such as sorrow, grief, anger etc. are also responsible for improper digestion of food even if the food is of wholesome to the person. So, it advised to avoid taking food in such mental situations or better to keep control on these factors. In general, the *Ajeerna* is *Amashaya udbhava* (originated from stomach) disease and for that *Langhana* is important for its management but if the *Kapha* is in *utklipta* (excessively aggravated) state *Vamana* can be done. This may be the reason of advising *Langhana* and *Vamana* by Acharya Sushruta and Yoga Ratnakara respectively. Similarly, when aggravated *Pitta* reaches to place of *Kapha*, *Vamana* is suitable measure for its management. *Vidagdha Ajeerna* which is *Pitta* dominant condition, *Vamana* may be indicated as per the situation. *Vishtabdha Ajeerna* which is *Vata* dominant situation where the digestion is delayed, to control the *Vata*, *Swedana* is helpful. Drinking of warm water will also be helpful if there is increase of *Sheeta* (cold) and *Ruksha Guna* (dry qualities) of *Vata*. The *Ajeerna* when not managed properly and if the individual is continuously exposed to etiological factors then it may cause severe complications such as fainting, giddiness even death also. This may be the reason Acharyas have told this as *Ghor Vyadhi*.

CONCLUSION: A large number of people are suffering with problems related to digestion and it is one of the commonly received complaints in the medical field. When neglected it may affect the work capacity and productivity of the individual. *Ajeerna* is also the initial stage of many severe problems. Specific management of *Ajeerna* based on its *Doshik* predominance and involved etiological factors can be

extremely helpful to control this problem from its root. Both physical and psychological issues need to be handled in the management of *Ajeerna* along with correction of lifestyle and dietary habits.

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