

Ajinomoto (Monosodium Glutamate) in the Light of Ayurveda: A Conceptual Review

Dr. Ravindra P. Kulkarni

Serving as Associate Professor in the Department of *Agadtantra* at C. S. M. S. S. Ayurveda College, located in Kanchanwadi, Chhatrapati Sambhajanagar, Maharashtra, India

Abstract: *Ajinomoto, chemically known as monosodium glutamate (MSG), is extensively used as a flavour enhancer in modern diets. While it increases palatability, its frequent consumption has raised concerns regarding digestive and systemic health. Ayurveda, the ancient science of life, emphasizes natural, wholesome, and compatible food for the maintenance of health. This article evaluates Ajinomoto through fundamental Ayurvedic principles such as Ahara (Diet / Food intake), Agni (Digestive and metabolic fire), Dosha (Functional biological energies regulating the body), Ama (Toxic, undigested metabolic waste) and Viruddha Ahara (Incompatible or antagonistic food) supported by classical references. The analysis suggests that Ajinomoto is incompatible with Ayurvedic dietary concepts and may contribute to digestive impairment and metabolic imbalance.*

Keywords: Ajinomoto, Monosodium Glutamate, Ayurveda, Agni, Ama, Viruddha Ahara

1. Introduction

Ayurveda considers *Ahara* (diet) as one of the three pillars of life (*Trayopastambha*). The importance of food in both health and disease is clearly emphasized in classical texts.

Charaka Samhita states:

आहारसंभवं वस्तु रोगाश्चाहारसंभवाः। (Charaka Samhita, Sutrasthana 25/31)

This indicates that the body as well as diseases originate from food. In the present era, artificial food additives like Ajinomoto have become common, yet such substances were unknown in classical times. Therefore, their evaluation must be done using Ayurvedic fundamentals rather than direct textual mention.

Nature of Ajinomoto as per Ayurveda

Ajinomoto is a chemically synthesized substance and can be categorized as *Kritrima Ahara* (artificial food). Ayurveda discourages the intake of artificial and excessively processed food items, as they are considered *Asatmya* (unsuitable to the body).

Ajinomoto does not possess a natural or balanced *Rasa*. Ayurveda recognizes six natural tastes (*Shad Rasa*), which are essential for sustaining health.

As described in *Ashtanga Hridaya*:

षड्रसाः शरीरं धारयन्ति। (Ashtanga Hridaya, Sutrasthana 9/1)

Since Ajinomoto does not belong to these natural tastes, it disrupts dietary harmony and encourages abnormal taste dependency.

Effect of Ajinomoto on Agni

Agni (digestive fire) is considered the root of health in Ayurveda. Any factor disturbing *Agni* ultimately leads to disease.

Charaka clearly mentions:

रोगाः सर्वेऽपि मन्देऽग्नौ। (Charaka Samhita, Chikitsasthana 15/3)

Ajinomoto, due to its artificial and irritant nature, is believed to impair *Jatharagni* (Primary metabolic fire governing gastrointestinal digestion), leading to indigestion (*Ajirna*), hyperacidity (*Amlapitta*), and heaviness after meals. Continuous impairment of *Agni* creates a foundation for chronic disorders.

Ama (Toxic, incompletely digested metabolic waste)
Formation and Metabolic Disturbance

Improper digestion results in the formation of *Ama*, a toxic metabolic by product responsible for obstructing body channels (*Srotorodha*).

Charaka Samhita explains:

अजीर्णे जायते आमः। (Charaka Samhita, Sutrasthana 28/8)

Ajinomoto, being heavy and unnatural, promotes incomplete digestion, thereby increasing *Ama* formation. Accumulated *Ama* plays a crucial role in lifestyle disorders such as obesity, metabolic syndrome, allergies, and reduced immunity.

Dosha Imbalance Caused by Ajinomoto

- Vata Dosha**-Artificial stimulation of taste may aggravate *Vata*, resulting in headache, restlessness, anxiety, and sleep disturbances.
- Pitta Dosha**-Due to its *Vidahi* (burning) effect, Ajinomoto can provoke *Pitta Dosha*, leading to acidity, burning sensations, excessive thirst, and irritability.
- Kapha Dosha**-Regular intake may increase *Kapha Dosha*, causing heaviness, lethargy, sluggish digestion, and mucus-related conditions.

Thus, Ajinomoto has the potential to disturb all three *Doshas* when consumed habitually.

Ajinomoto as Viruddha Ahara

Ayurveda describes *Viruddha Ahara* as food incompatible by nature, processing, or combination.

Charaka Samhita states:

संस्कारवीर्यविपाकानां विरुद्धं यन्निषेव्यते। (Charaka Samhita, Sutrasthana 26/81)

Ajinomoto can be considered *Sanskara Viruddha Ahara* due to chemical processing and its frequent combination with incompatible food items, increasing disease susceptibility over time.

Impact on Mind and Mental Health

Ayurveda emphasizes *Sativika Ahara* for mental clarity and emotional stability.

Charaka Samhita mentions:

आहारः शुद्धौ सत्त्वशुद्धिः। (Charaka Samhita, Sutrasthana 8/16)

Ajinomoto, being *Rajasika* (Quality characterized by stimulation, activity, restlessness, and excitability) and *Tamasika* (Quality characterized by inertia, dullness, heaviness, and mental lethargy) in nature, overstimulates taste perception and promotes food addiction, which may negatively affect concentration, emotional balance, and mindful eating habits.

Ayurvedic Dietary Alternatives

Ajinomoto may appear on food labels under various names such as E621, flavour enhancer, hydrolyzed vegetable protein, autolyzed yeast extract, or natural flavours. Conscious label reading and dietary awareness are therefore essential.

Instead of artificial flavour enhancers, Ayurveda recommends natural substances that enhance taste while supporting digestion, such as:

- *Saindhava Lavana* (rock salt)
- *Sunthi* (dry ginger)
- *Jeeraka* (cumin)
- *Dhanyaka* (coriander)
- *Lashuna* (garlic)

These substances stimulate *Agni*, prevent *Ama* formation, and maintain *Dosha* balance.

2. Conclusion

True nourishment enhances taste while preserving health, never sacrificing one for the other. From an *Ayurvedic* perspective, Ajinomoto is an artificial, *Agni*-impairing, and *Ama*-producing substance that does not align with classical dietary principles. Though it enhances taste temporarily, its long-term use may lead to digestive disturbances, *Dosha* imbalance, and systemic toxicity. *Ayurveda* strongly advocates natural, freshly prepared, and compatible food for sustaining physical and mental health. Therefore, minimizing or avoiding Ajinomoto is consistent with *Ayurvedic* preventive and promotive healthcare principles.

References

- [1] **Agnivesha.** *Charaka Samhita*, revised by Charaka and Dridhabala, with Ayurveda Deepika commentary of Chakrapani Datta. Sutrasthana 25/31.
- [2] **Agnivesha.** *Charaka Samhita*, Chikitsasthana 15/3, with Ayurveda Deepika commentary of Chakrapani Datta. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Orientalia.
- [3] **Agnivesha.** *Charaka Samhita*, Sutrasthana 28/8. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Orientalia.
- [4] **Agnivesha.** *Charaka Samhita*, Sutrasthana 26/81. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Orientalia.
- [5] **Agnivesha.** *Charaka Samhita*, Sutrasthana 8/16. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Orientalia.
- [6] **Vagbhata.** *Ashtanga Hridaya*, Sutrasthana 9/1, with commentaries of Arunadatta and Hemadri. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Surbharati Prakashan.
- [7] **World Health Organization/ FAO.** Evaluation of certain food additives: Monosodium glutamate.
- [8] **Walker R.** The safety evaluation of monosodium glutamate. *Journal of Nutrition*.2000; 130 (4): 1049S–1052S.