Daniel, C, Tabor has studied Ripe and Unripe concepts (Ama- pakva concept) of health and sickness in Ayurvedic medicine (1981). He has related it with its basic concept of gastric fire (Jatharagni). Ama means undigested and spoiled food juice which is unable to be metabolized properly. This condition creates unhealthy state of physical, mental and social well-being. Tabor has observed that almost all the Ayurvedic physicians in South Gujarat strictly adhere to this principle in diagnosis and treatment.

I suggest that the patients’ behaviour in this regard can be understood in the light of classification of sickness career by Andrew, C. Twaddle (1981). He has used three terms to identify three stages of sickness career as illness, sickness and disease. Illness is subjective. Sickness is the social dimension of this phenomenon, and disease is a physical state, which is diagnosed by a physician. I understand that the illness and the sickness are the symptoms of Ama.

This notion can be compared with the findings of Merilyn, Bergner and Betty, S. Gilson in their study of “sickness impact profile – The relevance of social science to medicine” (1981). According to the data collected by them from the samples of patients, the answers received are as follows. Sitting during much time of the day, sleeping during the day, eating no food at all, nutrition is taken through tubes, not working at all, not doing the routine work, less entertainment, going away from home for a short period, not bathing, fewer social activities with group of people, getting isolated, having difficulty for reasoning and solving problems, laughing and crying suddenly, difficulty to speak clearly when under stress are some of them. These characteristics are directly related to the Ama concept in Ayurveda. It is understood that a number of diseases are caused by the concept of Ama (deficiency of digesting and metabolism). This unhealthy state can be observed mostly among female pre-adolescents and youths in the lower middle class in Sri Lanka and it is mostly diagnosed as “depression” where socio-cultural changes would have affected.

Key words: Ayurveda; Treatment behaviour; Socio-cultural changes