

CONCEPT OF AGNI IN AYURVED**Dr. Asmita B. Bhalerao***

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ABSTRACT

Agni is the most important aspect of *Ayurved* as all the states diseased or health revolves around the status of *agni*. *Ayurved* has described an important factor of digestion and metabolism in our body as *Agni*. Ingested food is to be digested, absorbed and assimilated. According to the functions and sites of action, *Agni* has been divided into 13 types, i.e. 1 *Jatharagni*, 5 *Bhutagni* and 7 *Dhatvagni*. *Aacharya Charaka* has described after stoppage of working of *Agni* individual dies. If the *Agni* of a person is vitiated, the whole metabolism in his body would be disturbed, resulting in ill health and disease. *Agni* digests the *Ahara* (food) on which the strength of body (*Bala*), *Varna*, *Oja*, etc depends. Hypo functioning of *Agni* leads to indigestion and formation of *Ama* which in the turn is the root cause of various ailments meanwhile hyper functioning leads to several other digestive as well as generalised metabolic anomalies. This article revolves around the details of *Agni* described in various texts of *Ayurveda*.

KEYWORDS: *Agni*, *Bhutagni*, *Dhatvagni*, *Jatharagni*, Digestion, Absorption.

INTRODUCTION

Agni is one of the basic concepts of *Ayurvedic Science*. In *Ayurved*, the term “*Agni*” is used in the sense of digestion of food and metabolic products. *Agni* converts food in the form of energy, which is responsible for all the vital functions of our body. *Agni* is in the form of *pitta*, which is liquid in form. *Jatharagni* is the main principal substance responsible for disease and health. *Agni's* *bhutagni* and *dhatvagni* and other vital functions all are dependent on *jathargni*.

Agni maintains the strength of the body, *Swasthyam* (health) it maintain the health i.e., physical, mental status of the human being, *Utsaha* (enthusiasm) it maintain the interest of the human being in the life, *Upachaya* (body metabolism) it maintain the digestive system and metabolism of the body, *Prabha* (luster) it maintain the gentle soft glow of the body, *Ojas* (tissue essence) it maintains the immunity of the body, *Agnayah* (bio fires) it maintains the digestive fires of the body, *Prana* (life) it maintains the stable life of human being. When *Agni* of the body get extinguished then the body (*Sharir*) is considered as dead. As far as *Agni* inside the body remains in *Sam Avastha* (in proper amount), person live long without any ailment or disease. *Agni* in Ayurved is reflected in the concept of *Pitta* of the system. The term of *Pitta* is derived from root to heat or to burn. *Agni* is having both *Subha Asubha Karma*. As *Subha Karma* is *Pakati, Darshanam, Prakriti, Varan, Moha, Harsha* and *Asubha Karma* are *Apakti, Adarshnam, Bhaya, Vikrta Varan* etc.

As *Agni* is correlated with *Pitta* and the type of *Pitta* which is basically correlated with *Agni* is *Panchakpitta*. It is explained from the way in which it performs the *Pakadi Karmas* i.e., it digests food, separates *Sara* from *Kitta* of the food, because of this, it is known as *Pachakpitta*.

The seat of *Agni* is *Grahani*. *Grahani* is named as it receives the food. It is situated in between *Amashya* and *Pakwashaya*. That is also the place of *Pitta* there are five types of *Pitta* that also are considered in *Agni Raag* (*Ranjak Pitta*) that has *Rasa Ranjan Karma*, *Pakti* (*Pachak pitta*) that has *Ahaar Paachan karma*, *Tejo* (*Alochak Pitta*) that has *Darshan karma*, *Medho* (*Sadhak pitta*) that has properties to maintain as *Budhi, Medh. Ushma* (*Bhrajak pitta*) has properties to maintain skin complexion. *Agni* is the energy in our body which activates metabolism function in the body which converts the food into the substance which gives strength to the body.

Importance of Agni

Bala (strength), *varna* (colour), *swasthya* (health), *utsaha* (enthusiasm), *upacaya* (development of the body), *prabha* (complexion), *ojas* (strength), *tejas* (valour), *vaya* (age), and even *ayu* (life) - all depend on *Agni* and its function.

Types of Agni

Agni is innumerable because of its presence in each and every *dhatu paramanu* (cell) of the body. But, enumeration of the number of *Agnis* varies in various classical Ayurvedic texts,

as shown below Charaka has mentioned about 13 Agnis. Jatharagni –1, Bhutagni –5, Dhatvagni –7. According to Sushruta, five types of Agnis are illustrated, viz. Pachakagni, Ranjakagni, Alochakagni, Sadhakagni and Bhrajakagni. Vagbhata has described different types of Agni, viz. – Aaudaryagni-1, Bhutagnis-5, Dhatvagnis –7, Dhoshagni –3 and Malagni-3. Pitta-5. Sharangadhara has recognized five pittas only (Pachak, Bhrajak, Ranjak, Alochaka and Sadhak) Bhavamishra has followed Acharya Charaka and Vagbhata.

Agni has been divided into 13 types according to the function and site of action.

These are

1. Jatharagni – One Agni present in the stomach and duodenum.
2. Bhutagni – Five Agni from five basic elements.
3. Dhatwagni – Seven Agni present, one in each of the seven dhatus.

1. Jatharagni

This *Agni* is considered to be the *Pradhyantam* (principal fire) of all the *Agni*. This *Agni* is situated in *Amashya*, because it contains food in it which stimulates the functions of digestion. Agni controls all the functions and balance of the other twelve Agni in the body which are equally important for the body. This Agni is explained by *Chakarpani* that *Jatharagni* treatment is considered as treatment of body. Its main function is digestion of food. This Agni converts *Ahaar* into *Ahaar Rasa*. These *Ahara rasa* will form the other *Dhatu*.

each and every nutrient that one ingests first comes to the stomach and duodenum and is subjected to the action of *Jatharagni*. *Jatharagni* plays a key role in digestion of food-stuffs composed of the five basic elements and transforms it for utilization by the respective tissues. *Jatharagni* separates food material into the *sara* (essence portion) and *kitta* (waste products) in the human body. *Jatharagni* is also classified into four categories according to its performance of digestion in the human being namely *Vishamagni*, *tikshanagni*, *Mandagni* and *Samagni*.

A. *Samagni*- (sama – non vitiated agni) Normal digestive fire is characterised by strong and appealing appetite that is easily satisfied with normal food. Digestive functions are proper; there are no episodes of gas, colic and constipation. It digests and assimilates food properly at

the proper time. *Samagni* is largely responsible for human body nutrition and building strong foundation of seven tissues.

Causes of Vitiation of Agni Excessive fast, indigestion, over eating and irregular eating, inappropriate food materials, improper use of *Panchakarma*, Emaciation as a result of diseases, seasonal perversion, suppressions of natural urges. Being thus vitiated does not digest even light food. This undigested food becomes sour in taste and it works like poison and it gives rise to several diseases. These diseases will not be cured if the vitiation or *Dushti* of Agni is cured. There are many herbs, compositions, remedies, *Yoga* in *Ayurveda* to cure these diseases which are caused due to *Agni*. Due to vitiation of *Agni* it is sub divided into three types as-

B. Vishamagni Here the digestive fire is disturbed by *Vata*. Because of variability in *Vata*, there are episodes of alternating cycles of strong appetite with loss of appetite.

C. Tikshanagni Here the digestive fire is disturbed by *Pitta*. This type of *Agni* can easily digest even high amount of ingested food. Sometimes in the absence of fuel it start consuming body's own tissues (*Dhatu*).

D. Mandagni Here the digestive fire is disturbed by *Kapha*. Because of variability in *Kapha*, there are episodes of poor appetite, sluggish metabolism and tendency to weight gain despite optimal food consumption. Due to sluggish metabolism food becomes *Vidagadh*.

According to *Hareet Samhita*, *Samagni* depends on whether the *Doshas* (*Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha*) are in normal stage. When the *Pitta* is higher than normal, the condition is known as *Tikshnagni*. When *Vata* and *Kapha* are higher than normal, the condition is known as *Mandgni*

2. Bhutagni

Bhutagni is the one that is present in a cellular level. *Butagni* is divided into five types of *Agni* which act on these *Panchmahabutas*. They are *Parthivagni*, *Aapyagni*, *Agneyagni*, *Vayavyagni*, *Nabhasagni*. Each body cell and tissues are formed of these *Agni*. They are the basic units for the formation of elements in the body. These *agnis* are responsible for the molecular metabolism and help in synthesis and break down of materials at molecular level. These represent the catabolic processes in our body.

3. Dhatvagni

Dhatvagni is used for the formation of *Dhatu Utpati Karama* (formation of the *Dhatus*). It is subdivided into seven types i.e. *Rasagni*, *Raktagni*, *Maansagni*, *Medo agni*, *Ashthyagni*, *Majjagni*, *Shukragni* which ultimately form the immunity of the body. These Agni maintains the functions of the organs of the body. These all Agni has different *Srotas* for their functioning. These *Srotas* will provide a pathway for supplying nutrients for metabolism. Each Agni presents a *Dhatu*. As *Rasagni* represents *Ras Dhatu*, *Rakhtagni* represents *Rakta dhatu*, *Maansagni* represents *Maans Dhatu*, *Medo agni* represents *Medho Dhatu*, *Ashthyagni* represents *Ashtha Dhatu*, *Majja Agni* represents *Majja Dhatu*, *Shukkaragni* represents *Sukhra dhatu*. *Dhalhan* has mentioned that at the end all the *Dhatus* Sara is *Oja* i.e., immunity in modern. It has given in Ayurveda that Agni is having *Oja* as its derivatives. These all Agni provide specific nutrients for the formation of the particular *Dhatu* and this action of these *Dhatvagni* is correlated as selective absorption criteria. As they absorb its specific nutrient from the food or nutrient to form its specified *Dhatu* and get there proper and same nutrient. Seven *dhatu agnis* are responsible for the formation of tissues (*dhatus*) and participate in the specific tissue metabolism. The *dhatvagni* represent the entire range of anabolic processes functioning in the respective tissues. *Acharya Charaka* has mentioned the fact that the seven *dhatus* that are a support system of the body contain their own *Agnis*, and by its Virtue they digest and transform the materials supplied to them to make the substances alike to them for nourishment.

DISCUSSION

Majority of the diseases are outcome of malfunctioning of the *Agni* which rightly has been called as central root to health. *Agni* not only plays vital role in absorption of macro as well as micronutrients, but is destructive to pathogens also. The food that is not properly digested is referred as "*Ama*" in Ayurveda and it is nothing but a toxin or pathogen responsible for diseases. Proper functioning of digestive fire is evident from normal tone of the digestive-system, circulatory-system, strong immunity or resistance against diseases, proper tissue growth and body complexion. It is also the source of intelligence, nutrition and awareness in the body. It coordinates many physiological processes of the body from the digestion, reabsorption, sensations and formation of energy. This affects both body and mind of the human being.

As it is explained in many *Samhitas* that *Agni* plays an important role in maintain health. As *Agni* is the main cause of many diseases. *Agni* in *Vedas* is said to be fire for light, heat, ability to cook food. But in *Ayurveda* *Agni* is taken on another level that is it constitutes of *Panchmahabutas* which form the elements of the body, these elements are the basic of the cellular and tissue level formation of the body. If this is not working properly the imbalance will cause many diseases.

CONCLUSION

In this article after a brief discussion on *Agni*, *Ama*, *Pitta* and there correlations it shows that *Agni* is important for digestion and metabolism on cellular level. *Agni* plays an important role in mainaining individuals health. Due to faulty *agni* status, a number of unripe, undigested or unmetabolised byproducts are formed and have tendency to block the microchannels of the body, thus resulting in accumulation of *doshas*(morbid matters) and finally precipitate in the form of disease.

All the minor to major ailments are the outcome of vitiated *Agni* that is why the main principle of treatment of all diseases in *Ayurveda* is to restore and strengthen the *Agni* (digestive and metabolic fire).

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