

AGNI – An Ayurvedic Review**Dr. Tambe Geeta Shridhar¹, Dr. Raghavendra Nadargi²**

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Abstract -

In Ayurveda, Agni is correlated with the digestive fire and has very significant role in maintaining the whole internal environment of the body. Agni word is also used in the sense of digestion of food and metabolic products. The concept of fire or Agni has very serious correlation to our overall health. Actually Agni is the force of intelligence within each cell, each tissue, and every system within the body. Different theories regarding Agni and Pitta are there in Ayurveda. In fact Agni has a very vast range of functions directly responsible for maintaining health and when it is impaired then it become the root cause for all imbalances and diseases. Ingested food is to be digested, absorbed and assimilated for the maintenance of life. Ingested food is converted in energy by Agni which is responsible for all the vital functions of our body. Therefore, Ayurveda considers that Dehagni is the cause of life, complexion, strength, health, nourishment, lusture, oja, teja (energy) and prana (life energy). So we can say that Agni plays very important role in growth, development & maintenance of the body.

KEYWORDS: Agni, bhutagni, dhatvagni, jatharagni, Pitta Dosha, prakriti, urja.

Introduction –

Ayurveda has described the set of important factors responsible for digestion & metabolism in our body as Agni.

- Ingested food is digested, absorbed and assimilated which is an unavoidable mechanism for the maintenance of life and is performed by Agni.
- Agni converts food in the form of energy which is responsible for all the vital functions of our body.
- Agni is key factor in transformation of consumed ahara viharadi dravyas of vijatiya origin to sajatiya nature.
- Agni is derivative of tejas (fire) mahabhuta, it carries metabolic transformations in which the inherent feature is change.
- The substance which is present universally is called agni.
- Ayurveda accepts that Agni is present in every paramanu or cell of the body. It is not only

involved in the process of digestion and metabolism, but all the transformation occurring in the body takes place essentially with the help of Agni.

Aim -

- To study an Ayurvedic aspect of Agni and its role in sharira.

Objectives -

- To understand the Agni with Ayurvedic perspective.
- To evaluate the importance of Agni in relation with diseases.

Material And Methods

Textual references are taken from Ayurvedic classical literature. Related modern texts, journals are referred.

Etymological Derivation –

The word 'agni' is made of three words. Agni = A + G + Ni. The word "A" denotes root "I,"

meaning “to go”; “G” denotes the root “Ajna,” meaning “to glitter” or root “daha,” meaning “to burn” and “Ni” means “to carry.” It denotes agni moves everywhere and metamorphoses substances, burns, assimilates, glitters, and grows.

Synonyms of Agni –

Vaishvanar, Vahani, Pavaka, Anala, Shikhavaan, Tanunpaat, Shuchi, Vrataha, Sarvapaka, Ameevachatan, Damunas.

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 (fire-like activity). So, Acharya Charak has mentioned that after stoppage of the function of Agni, the individual dies and when the Agni of an individual is sama then that person would be absolutely healthy and would lead a long happy, healthy life. But, if the Agni of a person is vitiated, the whole metabolism in his body would be disturbed resulting in ill health and disease. Hence, Agni is said to be the base (mool) of life.

Types of Agni -

- Acharya Charaka has described about 13 Agnis. Jatharagni – 1, Bhutagni – 5, Dhatwagni – 7.
- Acharya Sushruta has described five types of Pitta, which are indirectly types five Bhutagnis that are, viz. Pachakagni, Ranjakagni, Alochakagni, Sadhakagni and Bhrajakagni.
- Acharya Vagbhata has described different types Agni, viz. – Bhutagnis – 5,
- Dhatvagnis– 7, Dhoshagni – 3 and Malagni – 3.
- Acharya Sharangadhara has recognized five types pittas only (Pachaka, Bhrajaka, Ranjaka, Alochaka and Sadhaka) .
- Achayra Bhavamishra has followed Acharya Charaka and Vagbhata.
- Agni has been divided into 13 types according to the function and site of action.
- Jathragni=refers to the whole process of digestion in G.I.T

- Bhutagni=refers to the final digestion in liver
- Dhatwagni=refers to tissue metabolism

Relation Between Agni & Pitta -

The term Pitta is derived from "tapasantape". Pitta is the factor, which regulates all the thermo dynamics, Chemodynamic activities in the body, in which function of agni are a part. Agni within the body represented by heat of the pitta.

Agni and pitta both have few similarities and dissimilarities. The similarities of agni and pitta are dahana, pachana karmas and similar response to sheetala, ushna. Both are possessing of agni mahabhoota. The Dissimilarities are, agni is sushka and ruksha in nature, Pitta is drava and snigda. Agni maintains pakadi karmas but pitta maintains dhi, buddhi, body maintenance in addition to pakadi karmas.

- According to Acharya Sushruta , that there is not Agni without Pitta. He says that in elevated conditions of increased digestion and combustion, due to Ushna Guna of Pitta, the treatment is given similar to Agni.
- Acharya Marichi has also given own view that the Agni present in the Pitta gives good or bad results when it is normal or vitiated stages.
- Acharya Chakrapani has also commented that “Pittantargatta,” refers to the
- Pitta inside the body is not combustion but its work is to provide heat of Agni.
- Acharya Bhoj also considered Pitta as Agni, digestive fire is included within Agni, which is specially meant for different enzymatic activities of the body, i.e. Pachana, Deepan, Bhedana, etc.

Properties –

Agni possess similar properties like agni mahabhuta. These properties are as follows:

- Hot (ushna)
- Sharp (teekshna)
- Subtle (sukshma)
- Light (laghu)
- Dry (ruksha)
- Clear (vishada)
- Rupa (vision)

FACTORS INFLUENCING AGNI.

I. Diet

1. Quantity of diet Food acts as fuel for agni. Food in proper quantity in accordance with agni (yatha agni abhyavahara) promotes digestion. Unsuitable food at an improper time and improper quantity (vishamashana) impairs digestion. Suitable variation in the quantity of food helps to maintain proper digestion and metabolism. The quantity further depends on heavy to digest (gurutva) and light to digest (laghutva) nature of food. Nourishing benefits of diet is subjected to the status of agni. Thus, agni is an important facilitator between health and food.

2. Tastes

The sour taste (amla rasa) and pungent taste (katu rasa) kindle agni.

3. Variety of forms of food

Different types of wholesome foods ingested in the form of eatable, drinkable, lickable and masticable stimulate the antaragni (digestive process).

4. Oleation therapy or fats

The unctuous or fat portion of food enhances taste, stimulates and expedites digestion. The oleation therapy (snehana) is prescribed before purification process to correct digestion. Administration of fat in moderate quantity is advised to kindle digestion in low digestive process. It is contraindicated in persons with polyphagia or aggravated pitta.

II. Pathophysiological conditions

5. Status of pitta dosha and rakta dhatu Individuals with highly aggravated pitta dosha in duodenum have excessive digestive strength. Therefore, are able to digest and metabolize fats easily. The circadian variation of pitta dosha may also influence the status of agni. Proper physiological functioning of the agni is considered to the resultant of the vishuddha (pure) rakta dhatu in the body. Abnormalities in rakta dhatu can result in disorders of agni.

6. Purification procedures

The digestion is weakened after administration of purification procedures. Therefore, a specific diet pattern (sansarjana krama) is prescribed to correct digestion as a follow up protocol. On the contrary, proper purification (shodhana) including vamana, virechana and basti leads to the optimum ignition of agni in the body. Depletion therapies (Apatarpana or

langhana) also leads to normalizing agni in proper way and diminution when performed in excess.

7. Excess fat deposition or corpulence (aavarana of vata dosha by meda)

Due to the obstruction of body channels by medas, the movement of vata dosha is specially confined to koshta (gut). This results in stimulation of agni and rapid digestion of food. Hence, the person quickly feels hunger pains and suffers from voracious appetite

8. Exercise Physical exercise enhances digestion and metabolic processes. Therefore, one shall follow exercise as per the status of agni to maintain equilibrium and health.

III. Environmental conditions

9. Seasons

The changes in atmosphere influence agni. The strength of agni is low in rainy season. Hence, measures promoting agni and light to digest food is prescribed in seasonal regimen of rainy season. In winter season, the strength of agni is good. Hence, heavy to digest food in good quantity is prescribed in the seasonal regimen. These examples show environmental conditions can influence the digestion and metabolism.

10. Age

The strength of agni is at peak in young and middle age. It is low in old age. The ageing process adversely affects agni. Hence, the food pattern shall be modified as per age.

11. Dravya (medication)

The consumption of dravya like ghee, Drakshasava, Snehapana or Snehakarma in general can lead to the ignition and improvement. Deepana and pachana are lead to the ignition of agni and digestion of ama result in proper functioning of the agni. The consumption of rasayana like Chyavanprasha, Bhallataka rasayana help in improving the agni and digestive function in general.

12. Prakriti (body constitution)

Agni and Prakriti:


1 Vata prakriti - Vishamagni 2 Pitta prakriti - Tikshnagni 3 Kapha prakriti - Mandagni

1) SIGNIFICANCE OF AGNI: Physiological significance Agni is one of the most important aspect which affects the health status of human being. It is central root of life as majority of the diseases are

caused due to the derangement of Agni. All the functions of the body like segregation, digestion, absorption, assimilation, conversion of food into body elements and tissues and elimination of toxins and waste from the body is performed by the Agni. Agni is also destructive to pathogens. The unhealthy and undigested is referred as 'Aama' in Ayurveda and it is nothing but a toxin or pathogen responsible for diseases. Proper functioning of Agni is essential for normal digestion, circulation, strength, colour, complexion, immunity, nourishment, enthusiasm, intelligence, and many other factors. This affects both physical and psychological state of the human being and makes coordination between both which leads to the healthy lifestyle.

2) Pathological significance: Malfunctioning of the Agni leads to poor digestion, improper circulation, poor complexion, poor immunity, low energy levels, and lethargy. Thus, promoting the proper functioning of Agni is treating the root cause of disease, according to ayurvedic principles. Hypo functioning of Agni leads to the formation of aama, which is responsible for diseases. Therefore, understanding the relationship between Agni and aama is important in treating the diseases.

AGNI AND DISEASES-

- 1] Aamadosha,  alasaka, ajirna, aamavisha, urusthamba, grahini, visuchika etc are diseases related to Agni. - Vishamagni when affected by vata dosha, it leads to pain, paralysis, and udargatarogas. - Tikshnagni is when affected by pitta dosha, it digests food quickly and produces hunger which causes bhasmakaroga.
- 2] Madagni is when affected by kapha, it leads to anorexia, loss of appetite etc - Mandagni and vishamagni leads to accumulation of aama and rasa dhatu dushti which produces symptoms like strotorodha, balabhransha, anilmudhata, aalasya, nishthiva, malasanga and aruchi .
- 3] Hypo functioning of dhatvagni leads to the formation of aama in dhatus, which results into improper dhati-vridhhi - Hyper functioning of dhatvagni utilizes nutrients quickly and destroys the dhatus itself, which results into dhatukshaya. - In old age potency of Agni is lost, which leads to degeneration, decay, atrophy, and defective

metabolic functioning followed by disease pathogenesis.

Causes of Imbalance of Agni

which lead to indigestion

1. Spicy foods, chilly, oily foods, medicines, milk and milk products, tobacco and alcohol.
2. Irregular food habits and sleeping patterns.
3. Medications like pain killers, antibiotics, oral contraceptives and steroids.
4. Intestinal parasites.
5. Diseases of pancreas, liver, gall bladder, intestinal infections etc.
6. During pregnancy, premenstrual period, menopausal period in women. Emotional upset like anxiety, stress, examination, family tensions, etc.

Management of Disorders Due to Impairment of Agni

I. Lowered state of agni

The lowered functions of agni can be managed by administration of low dose of unctuous substance (sneha) to kindle it. Deepana (stimulation) of agni is the main therapy. Various dietary recipes, lifestyle modifications, panchakarma therapies and medicines are prescribed in management of grahani are prescribed for restoring equilibrium state of agni. The food, beverages and medicines with hot potency, sour and pungent taste are prescribed to kindle agni. Langhana (therapeutic fasting) is an important measure in the management of vitiation of agni. Food and beverages to kindle agni Lukewarm water Manda (thin soup) ,Curd Butter ,Ghee , Meat of common quail (lava bird), Fresh ginger (zingiber officinale) , powder of dried ginger, lemon/ jambira (Citrus limon (Linn.) Burm.F) ,15/20 Varieties of wines like arishta (prepared from medicinal decoction), pakwarasa(prepared from sugarcane juice), gauda(prepared from jaggery) ,Gruel-water (manda) ,Thin gruel (peya) and gruel water (manda) of roasted paddy ,Sesame oil ,Black pepper (maricha) ,Asa foetida (hingu) ,Rock salt (saindhav) ,Celery seeds (karavi, Carum bulbocastanum W.Koch.), black cumin (kunchika, Nigella sativa Linn.), cumin (ajaji, Cuminum cyminum Linn.), bishops weed (yavani, Trachyspermum ammi Linn.), coriander (dhanyaka, Coriandrum sativum) and Indian tooth-ache tree

(tumburu, Zanthoxylum armatum DC). Alkali (kshara) .Sequential administration of thin gruel, thick gruel kindles agni after purification procedures as dietary .Medicinal formulations Talisadi churna Shadava recipe (an ayurvedic formulation) ,Chiktrak ghritam ,Phalarishta , Dashamuladi ghrita , Panchamuladi churna or ghrita , Kshara ghrita , Agastya haritaki avaleha.

Therapeutic procedures, Therapeutic purgation (virechana) Therapeutic enema with decoction (niruha basti)

Treatment For Excess Agni -

Excess agni is generally caused due to vitiation of pitta dosha. Hence treatment of pitta dosha is prescribed. The other condition is obstruction of vata dosha by excess fats (medasavritta vata), it causes excess stimulation of agni and polyphagia. This condition is treated with reducing therapy for fats (meda dhatu). It normalizes vata dosha and reduces appetite. Paravata fruit (Garcinia cowa ROxb.) is used to reduce agni. The alangy / ankota phala (alanguium salviifolium (Linn.F.) Wang.) is used to reduce excess heat caused by agni.

Discussion

Agni is present in each and every cell of the body, accordingly Ama formed by derangement of Agni is also present in each and every cell. It will also be of several types.

- In most of the disease some types of Agnimandya is often found. Therefore understanding the concept of Agni and its practical applicability is very essential.
- This is an attempt to explore the concept of Agni in Ayurveda. Much more is yet needed to define agni at physiological, clinical, and therapeutic level.
- Agni literally means fire and in human being it denotes the power of digestion, metabolism and assimilation. Derangement of Agni produces diseases and its destruction causes death.
- As it is explained in many Samhita’s that agni is vital component in the process of digestion and transformation. It plays an important role in maintain health.

- Agni also contributes to strength, lustre, ojas, tejas, and prana (life energy). Samagni resembles the healthy physical and mental status, while vitiated Agni results into diseases condition.

Conclusion

From the above discussion following conclusions can be drawn

1. Though there are many theories regarding the similarity and dissimilarity between Pitta and Agni, finally we can conclude both are same as per their functions but differ from each other due to their physical appearance or constitution.
2. All diseases occur are due to vitiation of Agni and it is assessed according ones digestive power.
3. It is much more important to assess Agni type (Digestive power) of patient before prescribing Aushadhi, planning Panchkarma procedures or suggesting Aahar. Hence Agni has foremost importance in maintaining ones health.
4. In short, Agni has significant role to maintain body homeostasis, body functioning, metabolism of body and proper functioning of body. Thus, the well managed interior fire will surely be the key factor for the evolution of good health in successive generation.

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