

## Conceptual Study on Agni in Ayurveda and Its Importance in Medical Science

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### ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is one of the oldest life science which has thoroughly explained the effect of diet and lifestyle on health of an individual. I remain within the creatures in the form of Agni and digest Chaturvidha Ahar with the help of Prana and Apana. This is stated by Lord Srikrishna in Srimadbhagvat Gita. Ayurveda has described an important factor of digestion and metabolism in our body as Agni. Charaka has mentioned about 13 types of Agni - Jatharagni, five-Bhutagni and seven Dhatwagni. Jatharagni is responsible for the digestion of food, and has maximum potential because other Bhautik Agnis are dependent over it. The potentiality of Bhautik Agnis depends on potential of Jatharagni. {1}. Jatharagni converts food in the form of energy, which is responsible for all the vital functions of our body. The strength, complexion, potential, glow and anabolism of body depend on Agni. But, if the Agni of a person is vitiated, the whole metabolism in his body would be disturbed, resulting in ill health and existence of all types of Sharir-Vyapad is due to Agni described in different samhitas Like – Amatisar, Aamvata, Agirana, Aamdosa, Aamvisha, Alasak, Visuchika, bha-yajatisar, Sokajatisar, Urustambh etc.. When the Agni of an individual is sama, then that person would be absolutely healthy and would lead a long, happy, healthy life. Therefore life ends with the end of Agni. Hence, Agni is said to be the base (mool) of life. (Cha.Chi.15/4.){2}. Thus learning of Agni concept is really useful of Ayurvedic physician to determine the root causes of diseases and status of Agni during prescribing and drug dose along with prescription of Aahara and Vihara.

**Keywords:** Agni, Jatharagni, Bhutagni, Dhatwagni, Aamvata, Aamdosa, etc.

### INTRODUCTION

Word Agni is derived from ‘Ag’ Dhatu, means which is wide spreading, progressive and transformative substance. Agni is one of the Panchamahabhutas (the basic elements of creation), also called Nitya Dravyas (Amarakosha) [1]. The term of Agni, in common language means fire, but this term does not actually mean fire in these sequences, in Ayurveda, 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 [2]. Food is the factor which sustains and support the Deha Dhatus (tissue elements), Ojas (the factor resistance to disease and decay), Bala (strength or capacity to perform physical work) complexion and others. This food depends upon Agni for proper nourishment and development of Deha Dhatus after its proper digestion [3]. (Ch.chi.15/39-40). Ayurveda has described an important

factor of digestion and metabolism in our body as Agni. Ingested food is to be digested, absorbed and assimilated, which is unavoidable for the maintenance of life, and is performed by Agni [4].

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Ayurveda consider that no diseases ever be develop without the derangement of Agni. Therefore in the management of each and every diseases, Agni gets primary Focus. Though in Ayurvedic literature, a detailed explanation of Agni is available but there is lack of its practical utility. So, in this paper is a sincere effort to elaborate the practical utility of Agni.

### CONCEPT OF AGNI

कायस्य नाम : अन्तराग्ने (चक्र)

कायः शब्देन अग्निरुच्यते (शिव दास सेन)

कायस्यान्तराग्नेः चिकित्सा कायचिकित्सा ( चक्रपाणि )

Thus, chikitsa is based upon Agni and regulation.

समदोषः समाग्निश्च समधातुमलक्रीयः।

प्रसन्नात्मैन्द्रियन्द्रियमनाः स्वस्थ

इत्यभिधीयते॥ (सु. सू. १५/४८){4}

According to Ayurveda when Dosha Dhatu and Mala are in sama awstha and indriya, aatma and mann all are working properly then person considered as swasth person. In Brahmasutra, Agni has been meant to be a sign of life in the body. Agni moves everywhere and metamorphoses substances, burns, assimilates, glitters and grows. Agni is a pivot around which the remaining factors responsible for the maintenance of health and causation of disease as well as decay revolve. In Shabdakalpa druma, 61 synonyms of Agni have been compiled. These synonyms help in explaining the nature and functions of the Agni e.g. Vaishvanara, Sarva Paka,

Tanoonpata, Amivachatana, Vishwambhar, Rudra etc. [5].

### PITTA-VIS-A-VIS-AGNI

There is an ambiguity exist that regarding Pitta and Agni. Is there a separate Agni (fire) apart from Pitta or is Pitta itself the Agni? Different views have been suggested regarding Pitta and Agni by different Acharyas. Some Acharyas consider Pitta to be Agni while other speaks differently.

न खलु पित्तव्यतिरेकादन्योग्निरूप लभ्यते।

(सू. सु. २१/९){6}

अग्निरेव शरीरे पित्तान्तर्गतः कुपिताकुपितः

शुभाशुभानि करोति । (च. सु. १२/११){7}

Agni in the body is Pitta. The Pitta expression of heat and digestion sustain the life. Five groups (5 Pitta ) of Agni derivatives disposed in wholesome body distributes the effects of Agni. According to Acharya Sushruta, there is no existence of any other Agni in the body without Pitta because when the qualities/ properties of fire are diminished, the use of substances of similar qualities/properties have been prescribed and when the properties are greatly increased, resorting to cold treatments have been advocated [6-7].

Acharya Marichi has also emphasized that the Agni present in the Pitta gives good or bad results when it is normal or vitiated [8]. Chakrapani has commented on “Pittantargata” that the function of Pitta inside the body is not combustion but its work is to provide heat of Agni. According to Hemadri, Pitta is of five divisions, which are located between the Pakvashaya and Amashaya, although it is composed of Panchabhutas. Because of an increase of (predominance qualities of Tejas Bhuta, it is devoid of liquidity (although it is a liquid). Also, because it does not possess

Snigdha (viscosity), Sita (coldness) and such other properties of Apa Ahuta, it is called by the term “Anal” because of its function of Paka. It cooks the food, dividing it into essence and waste separately. Being localized there, it bestows grace (help) to the other pitta present there and also the other Dhatvagni present in the Dhatus by giving them strength (power of functioning), which is known as “Pachaka Pitta” [9].

Different examples are available in our classics to indicate the Pitta is the same as Agni. But, some doubts arise behind the concept of whether Pitta is Agni *e.g.* why indulgence of aggravating factors like Katu, Vidahi, etc. reduces the strength of Agni instead of enhancing it. Appropriate example to highlight the above concept that ghee alleviates Pitta but enhances Agni. The quotation of Acharya Sushruta, Samadoshah Samagnishcha has clearly indicated that Pitta and Agni are not the same [10].

## TYPES OF AGNIS

भौतिकाः पंच, धात्वग्नयः सप्ता, अन्नपक्ता  
एक Chakrapani

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

- 1) Charaka has mentioned about 13 Agnis. Jatharagni-1, Bhutagni-5, Dhatvagni-7
- 2) According to Sushruta, five types of Agnis are illustrated, viz. Pachakagni, Ranjakagni, Alochakagni, Sadhakagni and Bhrajakagni [10]. However, there is an indirect reference of five Bhutagnis underlying in the brief description made to the transformation of food stuff [11].

- 3) Vagbhata has described different types of Agni, viz.-Audaryagni-1, Bhutagnis-5 [12], Dhatvagnis-7, Dhoshagni-3 and Malagni-3[13], Pitta-5.
- 4) Sharangadhara has recognized five Pittas only (Pachak, Bhrajak, Ranjak, Alochaka and Sadhak)
- 5) Bhavamishra has followed Acharya Charaka and Vagbhata [14].

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.

Accordingly, they are classified into three groups, namely Jatharagni, Bhutagni and Dhatvagni [15].

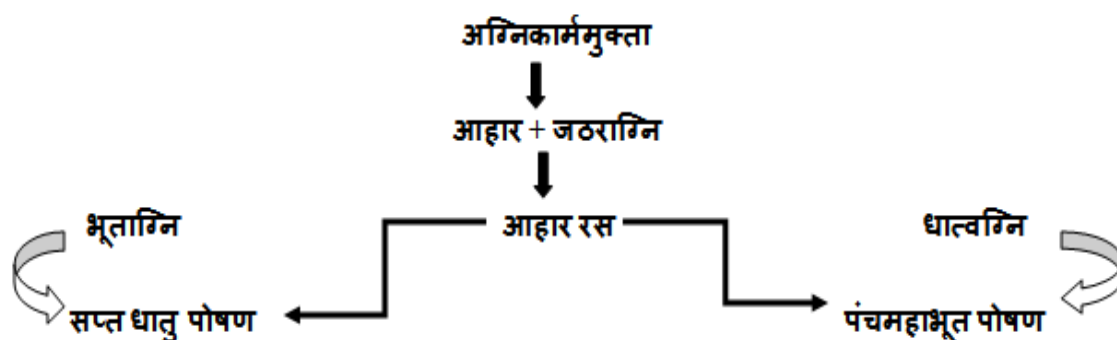
**Jatharagni:** Jatharagni is the Agni or bioenergy present in the Jathara (stomach and duodenum). According to Ashtanga Hridaya, Jatharagni, the seat is Grahani (duodenum), so called because it withholds the food for a certain time inside the Amasaya (stomach) to facilitate digestion. In the opinion of Dhanvantari, it is the Kala known as “Pittadhara,” situated at the entrance of the Pakvashaya (intestine) and acting as a bolt to the door of the pathway/channel of food. It is responsible for the duration of life, health, Ojas (essence of the dhatus), strength of all the Bhutagni and Dhatvagni. The strength of the Grahani is from Agni itself, and the strength of Agni is from Grahani. When the Agni undergoes vitiation, Grahani also gets vitiated and produces diseases [15].

अग्नयधिष्ठानं अन्नस्य गृहणात् ग्रहणीमता।  
नाभेरुपर्यग्निबलेनोपष्टब्धोपबर्हिता।।

( च. चि. १५ )

Jatharagni is considered to be the most important because each and every nutrient that one ingests first comes to the Jathara and is subjected to the action of Jatharagni. Jatharagni digests the food materials that consist of the five basic elements and transforms it for utilization by the respective Dhatus Paramanus (tissues). It is also responsible for separation of the food material into the essence portion (Prasad) and the waste products (kitta) in our body [16]. Jatharagni is directly related to Dhatvagni or bio-energy in the cells and

their metabolic processes, with ultimate tissue metabolism or Dhatu-Paka process. All the Dhatvagni depend on the normal, healthy state of Jatharagni. If the Jatharagni is hyperactive (Tikshna) or hypoactive (Manda), it will cause an excessive or retarded action of the Dhatvagni. This disturbed action ultimately leads to various disorders. Jatharagni is the main important Agni that controls the function of all other 12 Agnis. All the Agnis are totally dependent on the status of Jatharagni [17].



**Bhutagni:** Bhutagni is the one that is present in a basic element (Bhutas). There are five Agnis in each of the five basic elements, namely – Parthiva (earth), Apya (water), Tejas (Agni), Vayavya (vayu) and Nabhasa (akash). Each and every cell in our body is composed of the five Mahabhutas or five basic elements. Naturally, each cell (dhatu paramanu) consists of these five Bhutagni also. All the nutrients in this world that we eat also consist of the same five basic elements with their respective Agni or bioenergy. Thus, they are completely similar with respect to the five basic elements with their Bhutagni in our body cells as well in the entire outside nutrient that we ingest for the nutrition of our body. Acharya Charak has mentioned that the five Bhutagni digest their own part of the element present in the food materials. After the digestion of food by the

Bhutagni, digested materials containing the elements and qualities similar to each Bhutas nourish their own specific Bhautika elements of the body [18]. These Bhutagnis act after the Jatharagni present in the stomach and duodenum, acting on the food and causing their disintegration. In the modern physiological perspective, the action of Jatharagni can be equated with the digestion in the stomach and duodenum, and the action of the Bhutagni can be equated with the conversion of digested materials in the liver.

### **Dhatvagni**

All the seven Dhatus (seven element tissues of the body) contain their own Agni to metabolize the nutrient materials supplied to them through their own Srotas. (a). Rasagni present in the Rasa Dhatu. (b). Raktagni present in the Rakta Dhatu. (c). Mamsagni present in the Mamsa Dhatu.

- (d). Medagni present in the Meda Dhatu.
- (e). Asthyagni present in the Asthi Dhatu.
- (f). Majjagni present in the Majja Dhatu.
- (g). Shukragni present in the Shukra

**Dhatu:** Each Dhatvagni or the bioenergy present in each Dhatu synthesizes and transforms the essential Rasa Dhatu required for that particular Dhatu or cell from the basic nutrients present in the Anna Rasa or essence of the diet that we consume. Each Dhatvagni has got a speciality to synthesize and transform the constituents suitable to its particular Dhatu. This action is a sort of selective action. Acharya Charaka has mentioned the fact that the seven dhatus that are a support of the body contain their own Agni, and by their own Agni they digest and transform the materials supplied to them to make the substances alike to them for assimilation and nourishment [19 -20].

### **Physiological and Pathological State of Agni [21-24]**

**Jatharagni:** Jatharagni is also classified into four categories according to its performance of digestion in the human being namely Vishamagni, Tikshanagni, Mandagni and Samagni [20]. 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 Tikshanagni. When Vata and Kapha are higher than normal, the condition is known as Mandgni.

**Samagni:** First variety is not associated with Dosha and it is called Samagni state and it is the physiological state of Agni. The Samagni digests and assimilates food properly at the proper time. This thus increases the quality of the Dhatus (supportive tissues of the body). Persons having Samagni are always hale and healthy.

**Vishamagni:** Visamagni is the state in which improper digestion and metabolism takes place *i.e.* sometimes performs normal functions followed by abnormal one and manifest flatulence, abdominal pain, upward movement of Vata inside the kotha, diarrhea, and heaviness in abdomen, intestinal gurgling and straining exercise for evacuation of stools. When this Agni is affected by the Vata Dosha, it creates different types of vatavyadhi.

**Tikshanagni:** Tikshanagni means very quick/very sharp/very fast. Tikshanagni is a state of very quick digestion of food, regardless of the type of food. Acharya Shushrut states that when the power of digestion is increased from normal to above normal, food digests very quickly and produces hunger or the desire for food. When food is digested, the throat, the mouth cavity and the lips become dry with a burning sensation. This condition is known as “Bhasmak Roga” according to Ayurveda.

**Mandagni:** “Mand” means slow. The meaning of the Mandagni is slow digestive power or digestive capacity. Those who are having Mandagni eat very little and are unable to digest the smallest amount of food. Dhanvantri says that Agni digests the least amount of food in the greatest amount of time and manifest heaviness in abdomen and head, cough, dyspnea, excessive salivation, vomiting and weakness of the body. Mandagni state gives rise to manifestation of kaphaja vikara.

### **Intervention of Agni in Medical Science Examination of Functional States of Agni**

It can be examined with following Performa as per Agnim Jaran Shaktya Parikchhate concept which is given in Table 1.



**Table 1. Examination of Functional States of Agni**

Characteristics	Samagni	Vishamagni	Mandagni	Teekshnagni
Appetite	Normal	Sometimes poor and sometimes increased	Always poor	Always intensified
Quantity of food	Normal	Some times less than normal and some times more than normal	Always less than normal	Always more than normal
Homologation heavy/ light food particles	Mixed quality of food suitable	Sometimes even heavy food digests and sometimes light food remains undigested	Light food if taken in more quantity remains undigested	Heavy food even in more quantity digest easily
Bowel habit	Normal	Mostly constipation and rarely normal	Evacuate normally but stool is often containing undigested food particles with foul smell	Frequently evacuate
Nature of person	Enthusiastic	Irritable	Lazy	Delicate

In treatment part

रोगाः सर्वेऽपि मन्देग्नौ

सुतरमुदराणी.....। (अ. ह. नि. १२/१)

According to Acharya Vagbhatt all diseases may cause by Mandiagni. So, before the treatment physician should be done analysis all aspects of Agni, it may more helpful to cure the disease.

पचेन्नाम वह्निर्कृच्छदीपनं तदथामिसिः।

पचत्त्याम न अग्निं च कुर्यादतद्धि आचानं॥

(शारंगधर पूर्वखण्ड ४/१)

### **In Samana Chikitsa**

Deepna-without digestion the Ama improves the digestion secretions  
Pachna-digests the Ama but does not secretes the digestive secretions.  
Deepana Pachna-digest the Ama and improves digestive secretions.

### **AGNI DERIVATIVE**

आयुवर्णो बल स्वास्थ्य उत्साहोपचयो प्रभा।

ओजस्तेजोग्नयः प्राणाश्चोताः देहाग्नि हेतुकाः॥ (च. चि. १५/३)

Ayu- Longevity, Varna –Complexion, Balam–Strenth, Swasthyam–Health, Utsaaha–Enthusiasm, Upachaya–Body accumulation, Prabha–Luster, Ojas–Tissue essence Agnayah–Bio fires, Prana–Life (Pranrvata),

### **CONCLUSION**

Agni apart from the digestive function is also responsible for the production of strength which has two aspects namely 1.strength to resist the occurrence of disease and decay in the human body [2]. Strength to perform physical exercises. 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. Ayurveda emphasizes that most of the diseases are the byproduct of Agnidushti that is why the main principle of treatment of all diseases in Ayurveda is to restore and strengthen the Agni (digestive and metabolic fire). On basis of Ayurvedic classics it can be concluded that Agni is the most important factor involved in all the diseases either infectious or noninfectious. In case of infectious diseases pathogenic microorganisms can be effective only when body's resistance became poor. In Ayurveda, *Ayurveda Samhita* states, *dehagni hatukah. The world Bala indicates Vyadhikchhamatva Bala which depends on Agni.*

In the same way non infectious diseases are also caused by disturbed Agni - *Samoprakopo Doshanam Sarveshamagni sanshritau.....Tasmadagni rakchhayat* (Shastri and Chaturvedi, 1984, 15/136). Normalcy and deviation of Dosha depends on Agni, hence, it must be conserved always.

The concept of Agni is not fully utilized in Ayurveda treatments. Researchers are needed to utilize various levels of Agni Interventions. Assessment of formula for Agni interactions is needed. We have to accept that we are treating Agni in the name of treatment.

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