



PHYSIOLOGICAL ASPECT OF AGNI AND ITS IMPORTANCE IN MAINTAINING HEALTH

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Article Received on 03/08/2021

Article Revised on 23/08/2021

Article Accepted on 11/09/2021

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* is critically chief to our overall health. Actually *Agni* is the force of intelligence within each cell, each tissue, and every system within the body. *Jatharagni* the main *Agni* is considered as *Dehagni/Kayagni* which affects the functions of other *Agni* - *Bhutagni* and *Dhatwagni* leading to formation of *Ama* in the different stages of *Pachanprakriya*. Different theories regarding *Agni* and *Pitta* are there in *Ayurveda* but *Pitta* and *Agni* are the same i.e. *Tyaktadravita Pitta* is *Agni*, whereas in relation with their, build they differ from each other. 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). Lastly we can say that *Agni* plays very important role in growth, development & maintenance of the body.

KEYWORDS: *Agni*, *bhutagni*, *dhatvagni*, *jatharagni*, *Pitta Dosha*, energy.

INTRODUCTION

Agni itself is a very broad term used widely, having different types according to location and body constitution and have various synonyms also. In *Ayurveda*, *Agni* is correlated with the digestive fire and has very significant role in maintaining the whole internal environment of the body and it is used in the sense of digestion of food and metabolic products and also included as a part of *SwasthVyakhya*. The term of *Agni*, in day today language is said to be fire. But in the context of *Ayurveda* it the main entity of a living organism, which maintains its integrity along with performing normal activities of vitals by converting *Vijatiy Aahar Ghatak* to *Sajatiy Ghatak* through *PakadiKarmas*. The food taken has to be digested, absorbed and assimilated for the maintenance of life and energy and these actions are performed by *Agni*. So in *Ayurveda* the theory states that *Dehagni* is the cause of life, complexion, strength, health, tissue nutrition, lusture, glow, *ojas*, *tejas* (energy) and *prana* (life energy), vitality. The foods with different consistencies and tastes is consumed and converted in to absorbable material with the help of *Agni*. In these sequences, *Agni*

involves other factors too which participate in and perform the act of digestion and metabolism in living organism.^[1] *Agni* may be correlated with digestive and metabolic fire in the body which is directly responsible for ingested food changes in the body. It has been divided into 13 types depending upon the function and location.

These are:

1. *Jatharagni* –

This *Agni* is present in the stomach and duodenum, it digests the *Panchmahbhutatmak* food materials and transforms it for the utilization by the respective *Dhatus* which is also responsible for *Sara* – the essence portion and *kitta* – waste products *Vibhajan* of the food material in our body.^[2] All the *Agnis* are totally dependent on the status of *Jatharagni*^[3] it is further classified into four categories according to digestion power and presence of predominance of either of *Tridoshas*.

a. *Vishmagni*: When *Vata Dosha* is higher than normal then there is *Vishmagni* which digests food sometimes quickly and sometimes slowly.

b. Tikshanagni: When the *Pitta* is higher than normal then there is *Tikshnagni* which digests food very quickly irrespective of its *Laghu* or *Guru Guna*.

c. Mandagni: When *Vata* and *Kapha* are higher than normal then there is *Mandgni*. *Mand* means slow here the digestive power is low, even *Laghu Aahar* is digested slowly.

d. Samagni: Here all the *Doshas* are in balanced form. The *Samagni* digests and assimilates food properly at the proper time and is said the best type of *Agni*.^[4]

2. Bhutagni

Are five *Agni* from five basic elements, namely-
Parthiva (earth),
Apya (water),
Tejas (*Agni*),
Vayavya (vayu) and
Nabhasa (*akash*)

Bhutagnis act after the *Jatharagni* in the *Pachanprakriya*. Each and every cell in our body is composed of basic five elements. *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 similar qualities to each *bhutas* nourish their own specific *Bhautika* entity of body i.e. *ParthivAgni* nourishes *Ghranendriy*.^[5]

3. Dhatwagni

are seven one in each of the seven *Dhatu*s.

- Rasa Dhatwgni* present in the *Rasa Dhatu*.
- Rakta Dhatwgni* present in the *Rakta Dhatu*.
- Mamsa Dhatwagni* present in the *Mamsa Dhatu*.
- Meda Dhatwagni* present in the *Meda Dhatu*.
- Asthya Dhatwagni* present in the *Asthi Dhatu*.
- MajjaDhatwagni* present in the *Majja Dhatu*.
- ShukraDhatwagni* present in the *Shukra Dhatu*.

Acharya Charaka has mentioned the fact that the seven *Dhatu*s which are 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 entities as similar to them for assimilation and nourishment.^[6] If hypo-functioning of *Agni* is there at any level of *Avasthapaak* i.e. *Madhur*, *Amla* and *Katuavasthapaka* or also at *Vipak*, *Ama* is produced which root cause of many diseases. Hypo or hyper functioning of *Jatharagni* is likely to affect the function of other too and so *Agni* plays very important role in growth, development and homeostasis of the body. According to modern medicine, metabolic processes, division and multiplication are going on in all cells means *Dhatuparamanu* of our body from birth till death and *Agni* provides biological energy to these cells of our body by converting food into its absorbable form.

AIM

To interpret an *Ayurvedic* aspect of *Agni* and its role in maintaining the health.

OBJECTIVE

- To understand the *Agni* with *Ayurvedic* perspective.
- To evaluate the importance of *Agni* in relation with health.
- To percept the role of *Agni* in relation with diseases.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Textual references are taken from *Ayurvedic* classics also related modern texts, journals and websites are referred

DISCUSSION

The question, Are *Agni* and *Pitta* same or differ from each other? is always discussed. The origin of *Pitta* is from *Tapa* word meaning digestion, digestion of ingested food for the purpose of nourishment of body. Another one meaning of '*Tapa*' is to maintain heat by maintaining the colour, complexion, lusture, glow of skin. According to different *Acharyas* *Pitta* to be *Agni* are same while other said both are different. According to *Acharya Sushruta* there is no existence of *Agni* in the body without *Pitta*, he has also described five types of *Agnis* - *Pachakagni*, *Ranjakagni*, *Alochakagni*, *Sadhakagni* and *Bhrajakagni* as the variety *Pitta*.⁷ *Acharya Charak* has mentioned the importance of *Agni* in one verse '*Shanteagnoumriyate*' that means after stoppage of the function of *Agni* death of individual occurs. When the *Agni* is at balanced level i.e. *Sama* then it gives emmence health with long, happy, healthy life when the *Agni* gets vitiated due to *Apathyakar Aahar vihar* then homeostasis of body gets disturbed resulting in loss of health. That's why *Agni* is said to be the root (*Mool*) of life.⁸ Its assessment before giving treatment to patient or even advising about lifestyle is necessary. Depending upon the *Agni* type i.e. *Mandagni*, *Tikshnagni*, *Vishamagni* and *Samagni* of person; the diet should be is advised and treatment should be given and overall health is maintained.

CONCLUSION

From the above discussion following conclusions can be drawn

- 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.
- All diseases occur are due to vitiation of *Agni* and it is assessed according ones digestive power.
- 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.

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