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CONCEPT OF AGNI IN AYURVEDA AND ITS APPLIED ASPECT – A LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract:

Health is the state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. According to Ayurveda, when Doshas, Dhatus, and Malas are in sama-awastha and Indriya, Aatma, and Mana all are working properly then this state is considered as 'Swastha'. To maintain the state of health Agni should be normal (Samagni) Agni is the invariable agent consisting digestive and different kinds of hormones, enzymes, and co-enzymes activities which plays important role in the process of digestion and transformation. It is known fact that at each and every second multiple procedures of transformation takes place in the body. Due to these constant transformation procedures, body grows, develops, and lastly destroys too. So, it can be said that life is nothing but a constant process of transformation. The diseased state of body is also due to the vitiation of Agni. Ayurveda considered that no disease ever be developed without the vitiation of Agni. Thus, the principle of Agni becomes important to understand healthy and diseased state.

Keywords:

Agni, Digestion, Disease, Dhatus, Jatharagni, Swastha

Introduction:

The Sanskrit word 'Agni' means 'Fire'. According to Darshana, all things in the universe are made from pancha-mahabhutas. Agni is one of the mahabhuta out of them. Agni is an important factor of digestion and metabolism in our body. Ingested food is to be digested, absorbed, and assimilated which is unavoidable for the maintenance of life, and it is performed by Agni. [3,7]

Acharya Charaka has mentioned that after stoppage of the function of Agni, individuals dies, and when the Agni of individual is 'Sama', then that person would be healthy and would lead a healthy and long life. But, if the Agni of a person is vitiated, then the whole digestion process in his body would be disturbed, leading to the diseased state of body. Thus, the Agni is said to be 'mool' (base) of life. [2]

Synonyms of Agni:

According to shabd kalpadrum, there are 61 synonyms of Agni e.g. Vaishwanara, SarvaPaka, Tanoonpata, Amivachantana, Damunasa, Shuchi, Vishwambhar, Rudra, Tejasa, Shikhi, Anala, Vanhi etc.

Types of Agni:[1,2,3,4,5,6,9]

Sr. No.	Author	No.	Names	Reference
1	Acharya Charaka	13	Jatharagni-1, Bhutagni-5, Dhatvagni-7	Ch.Chi.15/38
2	Acharya Sushruta	5 (Agni)	Pachakagni, Ranjakagni, Sadhakagni, Bhrajakagni, alochakagni	Su.Su.21/10
3	Acharya Vagbhata	18	Bhutagni-5, Dhatvagni-7, Doshagni-3, Malagni-3	
4	Sharangadhara	5 (Pitta)	Pachaka, Ranjaka, Sadhaka, Bhrajaka, alochaka	Sha.Sa.Pu.Kh.5/32
5	Bhavamishra		Same as Acharya Charaka and Vagbhata	Bh.Pu.kh.3/169,180

Nyaya and Vaisheshika Darshanadescribed following forms of Agni's:

- Bhaumai.e. physical fire
- Divya i.e. celestial fire like the lightning, rays of sun, moon, and stars etc.
- Audarya i.e. abdominal fire which is responsible for the process of digestion and metabolism of food
- Akaraja i.e. Agni present in a metal such as gold and silver

Jatharagni (Macrofire): Jatharagni is said to be the central government of all other Agni's because all types of agni depend on the quality and quantity of Jatharagni. It is injathara (stomach and duodenum). According to Ashtanga HrudayamJatharagni is present in Grahani (duodenum). [4]Jatharagni is the most important because every ingested food first comes to jathara and is subjected to the action of Jatharagni. Jatharagni digests the food nutrients that consist of pancha-mahabhutas transforms it for utilization by the respective dhatus paramanus. It also separates the food material into prasada (essence portion) and kitta (waste products) in our body. [4]

Jatharagni is also classified into 4 categories according to predominance of doshas: [2,6]

Sr. No.	Doshik predominance	Agni dushti	Associated pathology
1	Vata	Vishamagni	Disturbed digestive and metabolic activities e.g. UdargataRoga
2	Pitta	Tikshnagni	Hyper metabolism e.g. BhasmakRoga
3	Kapha	Mandagni	Hypo metabolism e.g. Ajirna
4	Sama- doshas	Samagni	Heathy state of body.

Ritu and Jatharagni: [4]

Jatharagni	Prabala	Manda
Ritu -	Hemanta	Vasant
Ritu -	Shishira	Varsha
Ritu -		Pravritta

Bhutagni (Micro fire):The physical matter in the universe is formed by the combination of five bhutas. Whatever thing is available and is used in therapy is created from the five bhutas. [1] Five bhutagni's are located in the five mahabhutas. They digest their own part of element present in the food materials. After the digestion of food by bhutagni, digested material containing the element and qualities similar to each bhutas nourishes their own specific bhoutika elements of the body. [2]

Sr. No.	Pacha-mahabhutas	Type of Agni's
1	Space	Nabhasa Agni
2	Air	Vayaveeya Agni
3	Fire	Tejasa Agni
4	Water	Aapya Agni
5	Earth	Nabhasa Agni

Dhatvagni: All the seven dhatus contains their own Agni to metabolise the nutrient material to them through their own strotasas. [2,9]

Sr. No.	Dhatus	Type of Agni's
1	Rasa dhatu (nutrient fluid)	Rasagni
2	Rakta dhatu (blood tissue)	Raktagni
3	Mamsa dhatu (muscle tissue)	Mamsagni
4	Medas dhatu (adipose tissue)	Medoagni
5	Asthi dhatu (bony tissue)	Asthyagni
6	Majja dhatu (bone marrow and nervous tissue)	Majjagni
7	Shukra dhatu (reproductive tissue including sperm and ovum)	Shukragni

Causes of vitiation of Agni: [2]

Dietary factors: Excessive fasting, indigestion, overeating, irregular eating, and inappropriate food materials.

Incompatible activities: Improper administration of panchakarma therapies, emaciation because of disease, seasonal perversions, suppuration of natural urges, lack of physical activities

Psychological factors: mental tension, emotional instabilities like anger, anxiety, fear, lust, greed, jealousy, depression etc.

Discussion:

Agni and Pitta: Pitta is same as Agni since, it performs digestion, combustion and similar actions performed by Agni. According to Acharya Sushruta, we can't find any other agni or fire in the body other than pitta, because when there is increased digestion and combustion in the body is due to the ushnaguna of pitta and the treatment is like the Agni. [1] Acharya Chakrapani has mentioned that the function of pitta inside the body is not combustion, but its work is to provide heat of Agni. [6] Acharya Sushruta has described the five types of Agni as a variety of pitta. The pachakagni is also known as Jatharagni, koshtagni, antaragni, and dehagni because it digests the food and separates the sara from the kitta portion, like the Agni. Acharya Bhoja is also considered the pitta as Agni. Hence, some Acharya consider pitta to be Agni while others speak differently.

Agni and Prakriti:

Sr. No.	Prakriti	Agni
1	Vata prakriti	Vishamagni
2	Pitta prakriti	Tikshnagni
3	Kapha prakriti	Mandagni

Homeostasis (Samagni) is maintained by the proper functioning of Agni. Seasonal change also influences the functioning of Agni. [4]

Agni and Aama: Aama is nothing but the unhealthy, indigested food. [4] Hypo functioning of Agni leads indigestion and formation of aama which is the root cause of various diseases. [2] This aama is formed by the mandagni. Due to mandagni the undigested food particles start get accumulated in the body. According to Madhav Nidana- Madhukosh Tika, there are three pakavasthas, in first avastha due to weakness of Jatharagni aama get accumulated in Amashaya (stomach). In second avastha due to weakness of dhatvagni the dhatus didn't get digested and forms aama which is also known as aama-visha. In third avastha the mostly undigested food gets accumulated and leads to the formation of aama.

Significance of Agni:

1) 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. [2,4,8]

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. [2]

Agni and diseases: [1,2,4]

- Aamadoshha, 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 [4]
- 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.

Conclusion:

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. 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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