



A BRIEF MENTION OF AGNI IN AYURVEDA

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ABSTRACT

The primary aim and objective of *Ayurveda* is to maintain the health of healthy person and to eradicate the diseases of a diseased person is the secondary one. One whose *dosa*, *agni*, *dhatu* and *malas* are in balanced state and whose senses, mind and soul are functioning properly is a healthy individual. *Agni* maintains the physiology of this *deha desha*. In other words *agni* controls the state of biological equilibrium of *dosha*, *dhatu* and *mala*. The derangement of *agni* produces various diseases and it is the root cause of all diseases. 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.

KEYWORDS : ayurveda, agni, dosha, dhatu, mala.

INTRODUCTION:

The *Ayurvedic* concept of *agni* is critically important to our overall health. *Agni* is the force of intelligence within each cell, each tissue and every system within the body. It is the discernment of *agni* that determines which substances enter our cells and tissues, and which substance should be removed as a waste. In this way *agni* is the gatekeeper of life. *Ayurveda* identifies a vast range of functions for which *agni* is directly responsible, but it also teaches us that impaired *agni* is at the root of all imbalances and diseases.¹ *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*. Therefore, *ayurveda* considers that *kayagni* is the cause of life, complexion, strength, health, nourishment, lusture, *oja*, *teja* and *prana*²

METHOD AND METHODOLOGY:

Manual and electronic search was done on *charak samhita*, *susruta sahita*, *astanga hridayam*, *madhab nidan*, *bhavap rash* and available commentary on it.

DISCUSSION:

About the importance of *agni*, *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 ill health and disease. Hence, *agni* is said to be the *moola* (base) of life³.

Agni is one of the most important *dravya* in the universe. The changes and transformation in each and every object in the universe are due to application of heat only. Because of *agni bhuta* only, the stages of transformation take place in every object. *Agni tatwa* has pivotal role in the nature as well as human beings also.

According to modern, metabolic processes, division and multiplication are going on in all (cells) of our body from till death. The cell is the functional unit of the body. According to *charak*, the constituent parts of the body, if further divided into atoms, are sure to become innumerable, as such cells or atoms are exceedingly numerous, very minute and ultrasensory.

For these constant process in all cells, a biological energy is constantly essential, without which the survival of our body

will be quite impossible. The same biological energy is provided by *agni* in *ayurveda*.

TYPES OF AGNI

CHARAK: *jatharagni-1*, *bhutagni-5*, *dhatwagni-7*⁴

SUSRUTA: *pachakagni*, *ranjakagni*, *alochakagni*, *shadh akgni*, *bharjakgni*.⁵

jatharagni is the *agni* or bioenergy present in the *jathara* (stomach and duodenum). According to *astanga hrdaya*, *jatharagni* the seat is *grahani* (duodenum)⁶, so called because it witholds the food for a certain time inside the *amasaya* (stomach) to facilitate digestion. In the opinion of *dhavantari*, it is the *kala* known as *pittadhara* situated at the entrance of the *pakvasaya* and acting as abolt to the door to the door of the channel of food. It is responsible for the duration of life, health, valour, *ojas*, strength of all *bhutagni* and *dhatwagni*. The strength of *grahani* is from *agni* itself, and the strength of *agni* is from *grahani*.

When the *agni* undergoes vitiation, *grahani* also vitiates and produces diseases. *Jatharagni* digests the food materials that consist of the five basic elements and transforms it for utilization by the respective *dhatu paramanus* (tissues) *Jatharagni* is also responsible for separation of the food material into the essence portion and the waste products in our body.

Jatharagni is directly related to *dhatvagni* or bioenergy in the cells and their metabolic processes, with ultimate tissue metabolism or *dhatu paka* process. All the *dhatwagni* depend on the normal. Healthy state of *jatharagni*. If the *jatharagni* is hyperactive or hypoactive, it will cause an excessive or retarded action of *dhatvagni*. It is the main *agni* that controls the function of all other 12 *agnis*.

Samagni: it digests and assimilate food properly at the proper time. This thus increase qualities of *dhatu*s. Persons having *samagni* are always healthy and happy^{7,8}

Vishamagni: this type of *agni* changes between digesting food quickly and slowly. It causes irregular appetite, variable digestion, abdominal distension, gas, gurgling intestine, alternating constipation and diarrhoea, colicky pain, dry mouth, receding gums, dry skin, joint pain, insomnia. The tongue can develop indentation along the margins.^{7,8}

Tikshnagni: means very quick/sharp/fast. It is a state of very quick digestion of food. *Susruta* states that when the power of digestion is increased from normal to above normal, food digests very quickly and produces hunger. After digestion the oral cavity become dry with burning sensation. *Tikshnagni* people experience fiery symptoms like hyperacidity, heartburn, gastritis, acidic saliva, fever. Again they have hypoglycemia, nausea, vomiting, loose stool, ibd, hives, rashes.^{7,8}

Mandagni: The meaning of *mandagni* is slow digestive capacity. Those who are having *mandagni* eat very little and are unable to digest the smallest amount of food. It is associated with *kapha dosa*. It causes underactive, dull, sluggish digestion. It slows the metabolism and causes heaviness in stomach, body and mind especially after eating. It causes over salivation, nausea, , hyperglycemia, hypothyroid, obesity, clammy skin, weakness. Mentally it causes lethargy, boredom, attachment, greed, desire for sleep.^{7,8}

Avasthapaka: *Jatharagni paka* is described as *avasthapaka* in *Ayurveda*. *Avasthapaka* is the change in the state of food substance in the *amasaya* and *pakwasaya* in course of digestive process. In *avasthapaka* there are two phases called *PRAPAKA* and *VIPAKA*. *Prapakaka* phase contains three phases. *MADHURA BHAVA, AMLA BHAVA, KATU BHAVA*.⁹

Madhurbhava: this phase commences from the entry of food into the mouth. Propulsion of food from mouth to the *urdhva amasaya* is brought by *prana vayu*. This aspect of digestion in the upper portion of *urdhva amasaya* is comprehended by *madhura bhava*. The process of digestion, especially the fraction of it commences in the mouth, under the influence of *bodhaka kapha*. It is responsible for taste perception, equalant to saliva. This stage of digestion is reminiscent of salivary digestion and completed in the fundus of stomach. The insoluble starch polysaccharides are converted to soluble dextrin, under influence of salivary amylase (ptyalin). Salivary amylase action is *bhinnasamghata* (spitting) brought about by hydrolysis. The final *rasa* of the resultant product in the upper portion of *urdhva amasaya* is *madhura*. The insoluble starch polysaccharide are converted to soluble dextrin *Amlabhava*: it occurs in *pachyamanasay*. Digestion of protein and fats occurs in this stage by *pachaka pitta*. This makes the commencement of the *amlabhava* or the acid phase of *prapakaka*. This paka involves the conversion of insoluble protein into soluble ones under influence of pepsin and HCl. This aspect of *prapakaka* does not seem to have anything to do with the digestion of the end products of *madhura paka*. The outcome of this phase is acidic chyme. It is in *pakwaapakwam* stage. It has to go further digestion in *adho amasaya*. The partly digested food which attained *amlabhava* is moved down and stimulate the humoral mechanism in *adho amasaya* and discharge of *accha pitta* into it. The concept of *accha pitta* includes the bile and pancreatic secretion responsible for digestion of fat, protein and carbohydrate. Acidified chyme passes down from the pylorus into duodenum. It stimulates the bruner's glands to secrete a number of intestinal juices. These are responsible for bile and pancreatic secretion to the duodenum for further digestion of partly digested carbohydrate, protein and fats of the chyme.

Katubhava: it is the third phase of *avasthapaka* occurs in *pakwasaya* leading the formation of faeces and gases. This aspect relate to the acrid and pungent nature of reactions that occur in the large intestine. The material passed down from the *amasaya* and reached the *pakwasaya* is dehydrated and converted into lumps by heat, an acrid and pungent gas being produced in the process. The foregoing modern contribution is seen not only to confirm but also amplify the *ayurvedic* version of events that takes place in large intestine and formation of feces and *vayu*

Bhutagni: It is present in a basic element (bhutas). There are five agnis in each of the five basic elements namely- *parthiva, apya, tejas, vayavya and nabhasa*¹⁰.

Each and every cell in our body is composed of the five *mahabhutas*. Naturally each cell consists of these five *bhutagni* also. Thus they are completely similar with respect to the 5 basic elements with their *bhutagni* in our body cells as well in all the outside nutrient, that we ingest for nutrition of our body. *Charaka* has mentioned that the 5 *bhutagni* digests their own part of the element present in the food material. The exogenous substance must be subjected to *bhutagni paka* to become endogenous. It causes appropriate nourishment to tissue

Dhatwagni: All the seven *dhatu* contain their own *agni* to metabolize the nutrient materials supplied to them through their own *srotas*. Each *dhatwagni* or 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 *annarasa* or essence of the diet. Each *dhatwagni* has got a speciality to synthesize and transform the constituents suitable to its particular *dhatu*. This action is a sort of selective action. The seven *dhatu*s contain their own *agni* and by the help of that *agni* they digest and transforms the materials supplied to them to make the substances alike to them for assimilation and nourishment.

Dhatwagni (tissue metabolism) that which promotes the growth of *sharira*. Each *dhatu* of 2 kinds. *ASTHAYI* (mobile or non static) or *POSAKA* and *STHAYI* (fixed) or *POSYA*. *Srotamsi* do not transport *sthayai dhatu*s. *Dhatu*s are formed consequently, one after another from the *asthaya dhatu*s. *Dhatwagni* are 7 and located in own *dhatu*. The circulating constituent of *ahara rasa* were selected by *dhatu* through *khalekapota nyay* or *kshira dhdhi nyay* or *kedarikulya nyaya*. Functions of *dhatwagni* are mainly two—

- Synthesis of new tissue and
- To yield energy for the function of tissue.

Dhatwagni undergo metabolic transformation in two different ways for the sustainers of the body. One is *prasada bhaga* and *kitta bhaga*.¹¹

CONCLUSION:

Agni is the invariable agent in the process of *paka*. Ingested food to be digested, absorbed and assimilated, which is unavoidable for maintenance of life, and is performed by *agni*. *Agni* is innumerable as it is present each and every *paramanu* of the body. *Jatharagni* is the most important one, which digest food. *Bhutagnis* act on respective *bhoutika* portion and the seven *dhatwagnis* act on respective *dhatu*s for nutritional strength, complexion and happy life.

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