

AGNI VIVECHAN IN AYUERVEDA - A REVIEW ARTICLE

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ABSTRACT

According to *Ayurveda*, *Agni* happens to be the entity that is responsible for all digestive and metabolic processes in the human being. It is the substance in the secretions of the body which are directly responsible for digestive and chemical changes in the body. Ingested food is to be digested, absorbed and assimilated, which is unavoidable for the maintenance of life, and is performed by *the Agni*. According to the functions and site of action, *Agni* has been divided into 13 types, i.e One *Jatharagni* (Digestive enzymes) Five *Bhutagni* and Seven *Dhatvahagni* (metabolism at tissue level). *Jatharagni* is the most important one, which digests food and transforms it into *Rasa & Mala*. Function of *Bhutagni* and *Dhatvagni* depends on this. *Agni* provides *Bala, Arogya, Ayu, Swasthyam, Prabha, Teja, Ojha* to the body. This article revolves the details of *Agni* described in various texts of *Ayurveda*.

Keywords: *Agni, Bhutagni, Dhatavagni, Jatharagni.*

INTRODUCTION

The digestive fire (*Agni*), according to *Ayurveda*, is such a dynamic concept, it is stated to be the main determiner of one's energy, vitality and well being. One's overall digestion is likely to determine the overall health of that individual. If the fire is strong, one is able to take in various types of food and properly absorb, metabolize and eventually eliminate any unused portion. The channels of

the body will remain open and the energies of the body can flow freely. If the fire is weak or imbalanced, even the healthiest of food that is taken in will not go through this process and therefore remain in the body causing a toxic sludge known as *Ama*. *This Ama* then fills the channels of the body, causing stagnation and blockage which eventually will lead to the pathway of disease.

Ayurveda considers that *Dehagni* is the cause of life, complexion, strength, health, nourishment, *Oja*, *Teja*, *Prana*¹. This *Agni* is not in the form of flame but is in the form of liquid which is called as *Pitta*. *Charak Samhita* quotes that *Agni* is located in fluidly *Dosha* called *Pitta*. They always remain together². In *Pitta* there is dominance of *Agni Mahabhuta* and recessiveness of *Soma Guna (Jala Mahabhuta)*. For this reason and also due to digestive action of *pachak pitta* (like process of cooking by fire) *Pitta (Pachak)* and *Agni* are considered same. Other four types of *pitta* are not called *Agni*. *Vagbhat* has quoted the refined definition of *Agni*. This states that *Antah Ushma* produced due to *Sannipat* of *Dosha*, *Dhatu* and *Mala* is the *Agni* that does *Paak* of the food in the *Grahni*, *Rag-karana* and other actions of other *Dhatuagnis*³. *Pitta* and *Agni* is not the same thing they are different from each other. For the function of *Agni*, *Pitta* acts as a medium. All the transformations in the body are catalyzed by *Agni*. *Agni* is subdivided into thirteen kinds viz; One-*Jatharagni*, Five-*Bhutagni* and Seven – *Dhatwagnis*.

(I) *Jatharagni/Pachakagni-*

It is the main *Agni* (digestive juice) present in the body which is situated in *Kostha* and does *Pakadi Karmas*(digestion). Existence of all the different kind of *Agni* in their required *Pramana*, *Guna* and *Karma* is known as *Agnivai-shamyam* (abnormal function of metabolism and digestion).In all the classical texts four states of *Jatharagni* are described.

(1) ***Vishama Agni:*** This *Agni* type is related to *Vata Dosha* and typically shows an imbalance of wind in the body. *Agni* varies with pe-

riods of strong appetite alternating with loss of appetite⁴. Common symptoms would be gas, bloating and gurgling after food intake. The appetite and metabolism tends to fluctuate and be irregular. Constipation is common, and the digestion is variable. When *Ama* accumulates in these individuals, a brownish-black coating will form on the tongue. Emotional imbalances that relate to *Vishama Agni* tend to be anxiety, fear, insecurity, restless mind, spacey mind, and quickly fluctuating emotions.

(2) ***Tikshna Agni:*** This *Agni* type is in relation with *Pitta Dosha* it digests even large quantity of food in scheduled time⁵, and will reveal an imbalance of fire in the body, caused by the hot, sharp, and penetrating qualities that this *Dosha* possesses. Common symptoms include an over-active metabolism and hypoglycemia (low blood sugar). These individuals tend to have a sharp appetite that will lead to extreme crankiness if this hunger is not fulfilled. Once food is taken in, a person with *Tikshna Agni* may experience heartburn, acid indigestion, dry mouth, hot flashes, and inflammation. Elimination tends to be over-active and typically is soft, loose, and at times even liquid. *Ama* accumulation will show as a yellowish, orange coating on the tongue. Emotional imbalances that are related will be anger, frustration, a quick temper, envy, jealousy, and judgmental tendencies.

(3) ***Manda Agni:*** This metabolic imbalance is linked to *Kapha Dosha* and reveals a disruption of the water and earth element in the body. These individuals show symptoms of slow metabolism, excessive weight, allergies and an overall feeling of heaviness both physically and mentally. The appetite is typically

quite low and skipping meals is never a problem.

(4) Samagni- This Agni type occurs when one is in complete balance and all three *Doshas* remain in harmony. Digestive power is at full capacity and there are no unwanted symptoms after food intake. In fact, when one has *Sama Agni* there is a feeling of vitality, energy, and fulfilment after a meal.

In *Mandagni* and *Vishamagni* there will be accumulation of *Ama* (undigested Material) in *rasa Dhatu*. *Samarasa Dhatu* travels all over the body and produces symptoms like *Srotorodha*, *Balabhraamsa*, *Gaurava*, *Alysa*, *Aruchi*, *Kalma*. The *Doshas* which are mixed with *Ama* produce some of their own symptoms. Since the *Tridoshas* are also present in the *Rasa* they also get mixed with *Ama* and called as *Samadoshas*. *Samadoshas* get enter into the *Dhatu*s and *Malas*, get lodged in them and make them *Samadushya*. All these together give rise to many diseases⁶.

(II) Bhutagni-

The human body is composed of *Panchamahabhutas* (five element of nature) and the food on which the body survives is also made up of the same element. They are five number and present in *Koshtagni* itself. Digestion of food, by *Jataragni* leads to the breakdown or *Samghata Bheda* of the food into five distinct physiochemical groups. To convert such substances into *Amshayas* as part of the body there is a process of *Paaka*, this is attributed to *Bhutagni*. So, all the exogenous substances must be subjected to *Bhutagnipaka* to become endogenous. The *Bhutagni* action is not limited up to G.I. tract only; it extends up to the *Dhatu*s also. Its main action is to convert the

Vijateeya substance to *Sajateeya* form to make it available for assimilation. *Chakrapani* has commented that by the action of *Bhutagni*, *Vilakshana-Gunas* i.e. altogether new qualities, arise in the substances. These new qualities pertain to *Sajateeya Dravyas*.⁷ *Acharya Vaghbata* also stated that each one of the five kinds of *Dravyas* after *Bhutagni Paka* proceeds to argue the corresponding *Bhuta* element that composes the human body. There are five *Agnis* in each of the five basic elements namely-⁸ *Partiva* (earth), *Apya* (water), *Tejas* (agni), *Vayavya* (vayu), and *Nabhasa* (akash).

When in normal condition, the *Bhutagni*'s digest and micro-process the minute fractions of food supplied to them after the action and digestion of *Jataragni* on all types of food that we consume.

Each *Bhutagni* acts on the fractions of food which are concerned to them. The overall effect of the *Bhutagni*'s on the food at the cellular Tissue level converts them into nutritive components which nourish the tissues, channels of the body, *Vayu*, heat and the body as a whole. The food thus digested properly, flow in the channels of the body uninterruptedly and nourish all the tissues apart from providing *Upachaya* (tissue building), *Bala* (Strength, endurance, immunity), *Varna* (Colour and complexion), *Sukha* (Happiness, saturation, health) and *Ayush* (good and extended life span)

(III) Dhatwagni-

According to *Ayurveda*, there are 7 *Dhatu*'s or tissues. Each tissue or *Dhatu* consists of its own *Agni* or fire. They are

called *Dhatvagni's* or Tissue fire. They are 7 in number and are as mentioned below –⁹

Rasagni – Fire of *Rasa Dhatu* (Lymph, Chyle, Essence of the food, Plasma)

Raktagni – Fire of *Rakta Dhatu* (Blood)

Mamsagni – Fire of *Mamsa Dhatu* (Flesh, Muscle)

Medagni – Fire of *Meda Dhatu* (Fat, Adipose)

Asthyagni – Fire of *Asthi Dhatu* (Bone)

Majjagni – Fire of *Majja Dhatu* (Bone Marrow)

Shukragni – Fire of *Shukra Dhatu* (Semen, Reproductive fluid)

Each *Dhatwagni* attends the digestion supplied to that *Dhatu* from circulating *Poshakamsha*. *Dhatwagni* is essential for the maintenance and growth of the *Dhatu*s. Functions of *Dhatwagnis* are mainly two. One is synthesis of new tissue. Second is to yield energy for the function of tissue. If *Dhatvagni* is impaired both of these will impair.¹⁰ As the weakness of *Kosthagni* leads to formation of *Ama*, the weakness of *Dhatwagni* also leads to production and accumulation of *Ama in Dhatu* concerned, giving rise to improper *Dhatu Vriddhi*. If *Kosthagni* is strong *Dhatwagni* also become strong. If *Dhatwagni* is stronger they utilize quickly the quantity of nutrients supplied and still not getting satisfied and begins to destroy the *Dhatu*s itself. This leads to *Dhatukshay*. Hence both *Vridhhi and Kshaya* of the *Dhatu*s are *Vikrita* and are mainly due to weak and powerful *Dhatwagnis* respectively¹¹.

CONCLUSION

Explaining briefly the digestive and metabolic functions of *Agni*, *Acharya Charaka* has mentioned that various types of *Agni*. The *Bhutagni* encouraged and enhanced by *Anta-*

ragni (Jatharagni) which is further digested and metabolized by *Dhatwagni* to associate the body with the nutritional strength, complexion and happy life along with providing energy to the seven *Dhatu*s. The *Tridoshas, Dhatu*s and *Malas* are maintained normal and health by the *Agni* itself, present in each of them. Such is importance of *Agni*.

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