



## AGNI AND IT'S ROLE IN THE HEALTH AND DISEASE

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**ABSTRACT**

Agni is the factor governing the process of digestion & transformation. Agni is responsible for the digestion, absorption, and assimilation of ingested food. Some scholars opined that the functional form of agni exists as pitta, i.e., agni resides in the body as pitta. The varieties of agni have been enumerated in the Ayurvedic texts according to the functions and site of action; Agni has been divided into 13 types, i.e., one Jataragni, five Bhutagni, and seven Dhatvagni. Jatharagni is the most important, digesting four kinds of food and transforming them into Rasa and Mala. The five Bhutagnis act on the respective Bhutika portion of the food, nourishing the Bhutas in the body. The seven Dhatvagni act on the respective dhatus; each Dhātu is broken into three parts. In this way, the entire transformation process consists of two types of products – Prasad (essence) and Kitta (excrete). The former is taken for nourishment while the latter is thrown out, which otherwise defiles the body if it stays longer. The disease origin and pathogenesis involve the disturbance and vitiation of agni. So, the effective way to tackle this is to protect and maintain the agni. The ultimate essence of treatment lies in the correction of Agni, as it is the primary driving force in initiating the disease process.

**Keywords:** Agni, Pitta, Digestion, Disease.

## INTRODUCTION

One of the most essential ideas in the ancient study of Ayurveda is agni, or the "digestive fire." It is in charge of all metabolic functions. Agni makes Food particles digestible, making it easier for the tissues to absorb the nutrients. The constant force behind Paka<sup>1</sup> digestion and metamorphosis is Agni. Food that has been ingested needs to be digested, interested, and assimilated; the Agni carry out this process, which is necessary to maintain life. Agni also significantly impacts the body's ability to eliminate heavy pollutants and excessive waste, maintaining a healthy digestive system and a youthful appearance on the outside. Thirteen distinct Agni's are in total control of the body's metabolic processes. A well-balanced agni controls digestion and maintains an individual's health, assuring a longer life, according to Acharya Charaka, who also underlined the importance of Agni and said that when it stops, death is guaranteed. Conversely, a vitiated agni causes a disrupted metabolism, the buildup of toxins in the body, and a shorter life span. As a result, Agni is regarded as the foundation (moola) of life.<sup>2</sup> *Some scholars opined that the functional form of agni exists as pitta, i.e., agni resides in the body.*<sup>3</sup> Agni converts food in the form of energy; Food is broken down into absorbable molecules via the process of digestion (PAKA), which is aided by the complex array of digestive enzymes (jataragni and dhatwagni) and is then carried to the liver, which is the site of metabolism.

Various biochemical processes result in utilizing these food molecules and generating ATPs in which the molecules provide energy. This 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* (*Essence of body tissues*), *Teja* (energy), and *prana* (life energy).<sup>5</sup>

Each Dhatu is divided into three parts by the seven Dhatvagni acting on the individual Dhatus. In this way, the entire transformation process consists of two types of products – *Prasad* (essence) and *Kitta* (excrete).<sup>4</sup> When Agni is balanced, there is healthy digestion, efficient blood flow, pleasant breath, enough

energy, and a robust immune system. It also allows the mind to discipline itself intelligently and develop inner beauty. The digestive process and preserving good health depend on Agni, whose vitiation causes sickness. Therefore, it is inferred that maintaining and protecting Agni can be a practical therapeutic approach.

## REVIEW & DISCUSSION

Balanced Agni leads to optimal health and well-being because it quickly digests food. On the other hand, weak or low Agni causes poor digestion, creating toxic residue or indigested food that lodges deep into our cells, eventually causing diseases and upsetting the autoimmune system of our body. Agni tends to be variable in vata types with periods of strong appetite, even excessive hunger, alternating with loss of appetite. Gas, distention, and sometimes constipation are usually signs of variable Agni. When pitta is dominant, high Agni is observed with excessive appetite, strong belching, burning sensation in the digestive tract, rashes, heavy perspiration and heartburn, Irritability and anger, and Diarrhea. Disease resistance is good, but diseases are apt to be sudden and severe. Agni is generally low in kapha types with poor appetite, low metabolism, and a tendency to gain weight without excess food consumption. Excess mucus and congestion are also seen, and cold and flu are more common.

When Agni is balanced, regular and constant appetite is observed, bowel movements are expected, and there will be little production of gas or bloating. Sensory sharpness and mental clarity will also usually be intense. More usually, as said before, problems come to the surface for us only when Agni is not balanced; hence, treating the digestive system-regulating Agni – is considered of prime importance in treating many disorders caused by malfunctioning Agni. So, how do we harmonize the function of Agni? A good starting principle that Ayurveda offers is to use different herbs that have the exact nature of digestive fire, like hot, dry, light, and fragrant. Spices are usually considered the best thing to enhance Agni. Proper intake

of spices can be a significant aid in treating most diseases as they help break down the food during cooking and stimulate the digestive juices in the mouth and stomach. When one's Agni is low, hot spices like cayenne, ginger, and black pepper can be taken. When Agni is variable, spices and salts like ginger, cumin, asafoetida, and rock salt can be taken. If one's agni is high, spices should be avoided, and digestive bitters like aloe, gentian, and barberry can be consumed. Mild spices- like cardamom, turmeric, fennel, and coriander can be taken to maintain and balance normal Agni.

### **CAUSES OF WEAK AGNI**

- I was eating out of accordance with my body constitution.
- We are eating at irregular times without digesting the previous food.
- Overeat and drink cold beverages and cold water with meals.
- I was consistently eating the same food.
- I do not eat when I am hungry.
- Heavy, too oily food and too sweet.
- Sedentary lifestyle.
- Excessive sleeping after meals.

### **GUIDING PRINCIPLE FOR IMPROVING AGNI....**

- Chew your Food properly for excellent digestion.
- Eat smaller meals.
- Sip Warm ginger tea a little before and a little after a meal.
- Include lime or lemon water in your daily food habits.
- Regularly examine your state of digestion by observing your tongue, breath, appetite, and elimination, ensuring that toxins are not forming in your digestive system.
- The six tastes, sweet, salty, sour, spicy, bitter, and astringent, play a significant role in digestion in this order. Sweet taste is always digested first, precisely that of sugars. Hence, one should always start their food first with a sweet dessert. Sweet slows the digestive process if eaten after other foods, causing undigested food mass and

fermenting. Salty food is digested next, changing into a sweet taste in the stomach.

- Food with a sour taste is digested when it enters the small intestine, whereas pungent taste is digested when it enters the large intestine. Hence, having sour and spicy food articles, spices, chutneys, or yogurt in the middle of the meal is excellent.
- Bitter and astringent are digested at the end. They help to close up the digestive process and also help generate fecal matter. Hence, having astringent teas, such as herbal or black tea, is suitable after meals. If these two tastes are eaten first, they will diminish the appetite and decline the digestive process.
- Salads are better at the end of the meal and desserts at the beginning of the meal. Proper order of the Dietetic can also help us maintain and sustain good agni.
- Some of the other modalities can also help us enhance Agni, such as yoga postures, exercise, deep breathing, fasting, having light and digestible food, and not sleeping during the day.

### **CONCLUSION**

To sum up, bringing balance and health to the whole system by regulating and enhancing agni is the fundamental principle of Ayurvedic healing. So, we must feed ourselves and nourish our body correctly, but our digestive fire must also be fed and cared for to give it the power to extract our nourishment sufficiently to keep the body and mind balanced and disease-free.

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