

**IMPORTANCE OF AHAR AND AGNI IN MAINTENANCE FOR HEALTHY LIFE**Priti Pragat Gahukar¹, Vedprakash Gahukar²

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**ABSTRACT**

The body is the outcome of food. Even so, the disease is the outcome of food. The distinction between ease and disease arises on account of wholesome nutrition or the lack of it respectively. Food is the factor that sustains and supports the *Deha Dhatus*, *Ojas*, *Bala* and *Varna*. Ayurved is mainly based on preventive aspects first than curative. Food is considered as the first pillar among the *Nidra*(Sleep) and *Brahmacharya* being the other two. Food is important as a nutritional source, also with therapeutic value. It also plays a very important role during the post-treatment period in regaining the diminished strength due to the harmful effect of the disease. Ayurveda gives immense importance to *Pathya Ahar* in the words "without the use of *Pathyakar Ahar* medicines is of no use and if *Pathyakar Ahar* is taken there is no need of other medicines." This food depends upon *Agni* to contribute to the nourishment of the body. The body elements or *Sharira Dhatus* cannot be nourished and developed when food is not properly digested by *Agni*. Ayurveda considers *Dehagni* as a cause of life, complexion, strength, health, lustre, *Oja*, *Teja*, nourishment and Prana. As per Acharya Charak, *Agni* is divided into 13 types i.e. one *Jatharagni*, five *Bhutagni* and seven *Dhatvagni*. *Jatharagni* (Digestive power) is directly related to *Dhatvagni* or bioenergy in the cells and their metabolic processes, with ultimate tissue metabolism or *Dhatu Nirmana* Processes. All the

normal functions of *Dhatu*, *Upadhatu* and *Mala* in the body all are directly dependent on the health status of *Agni*. Thus, *Pathyakar Ahar* and *Agni* play an important role in the maintenance of healthy life.

Keywords: *Ahar, Agni, Jatharagni, Hair, Kesha*

INTRODUCTION

The body is the outcome of food. Even so, the disease is the outcome of food. The distinction between ease and disease arises on account of wholesome nutrition or the lack of it respectively. Food is the factor that sustains and supports the *Deha Dhatus* i.e. tissue element, *Ojas* i.e. the factor of resistance to disease and decay, *Bala* i.e. strength or capacity to perform Physical work and complexion among others. This food depends upon *Agni* to contribute to the nourishment of the body. The body elements or *Sharira Dhatus* (*Body tissue*) cannot be nourished and developed when food is not properly digested by *Agni*.

The Sanskrit "Agni" represents the fire element responsible for generating heat and chemical energy in the body. *Agni* has been described as the one who carries everything, moves everywhere, which can metamorphoses substances, which can bring transformation in substances, assimilates, which gives and takes, which can enter into minute channels, which burns, which glows etc. ¹ *Agni* is a key factor in the transformation of consumed *Ahara Viharadi dravyas* of *Vijatiya* origin to *Sajatiya* nature, *Agni* is derivative of *Tejas Mahabhuta*, and it carries metabolic transformations in which the inherent feature changes.

Ingested food is to be digested, absorbed, and assimilated, which is inevitable for the preservation of life, and is performed by the *Agni*. In Ayurveda, the term "Agni" is used in the logic of digestion of food and metabolic products. As per Acharya Charak according to the various functions and place of action *Agni* is divided into 13 types i.e. one *Jatharagni*, five *Bhutagni* and seven *Dhatvagni*. According to Acharya Sushruta, five types of *Agnis* are illustrated, viz. *Pachakagni*, *Ranjakagni*, *Alochakagni*, *Sadhakagni* and *Bhrajakagni*. *Agni* renovates food in the form of energy, sugar which is accountable for all the vital functions of our body. Acharya Charak has mentioned

that after slowdown or stoppage of the function of *Agni*, the individual dies, and when the *Agni* of an individual is *Sama*, then that person would be healthy and would lead a happy, healthy lengthy life. Therefore, Ayurveda considers that *Dehagni* is the cause of life, complexion, strength, health, lusture, *Oja*, *Teja* (energy), nourishment, prana (life energy). *Jatharagni* is directly related to *Dhatvagni* or bioenergy in the cells and their metabolic processes, with ultimate tissue metabolism or the *Dhatu-Paka* process. *Jatharagni* is considered to be the most important because every nutrient that one ingests first comes to the *Jathara* and is subjected to the action of *Jatharagni*. All the *Dhatvagni* depend on the normal, healthy state of *Jatharagni*. Therefore, in Ayurveda, the concept of *Agni*, its importance in *Ahar*, its *Dushikar Hetu* and its *Chikitsa* provides an extensive field of research in the present day.

Aim and Objectives:

1. To study and discuss the concept of *Ahar* for maintenance of healthy life
2. To study and discuss the concept of *Agni* for maintenance of healthy life

Material and Methods:

This article is a review of various Ayurvedic classical texts. Materials related to *Ahar*, *Agni* and its importance for the maintenance of life in Ayurveda and other related topics have been collected from various Ayurvedic classical texts. The references were compiled, analyzed and discussed for a thorough understanding of the concept of *Ahar* and *Agni* and its importance for a healthy life. The Samhitas used in the present study were Charak Samhita, Sushruta Samhita and Ashtanga Hrudaya with commentaries on them.

Concept of Ahar: The Ayurvedic diet pattern is an eating pattern that's been around for thousands of years. It's based on the principles of Ayurvedic Sid-

dhanta and focuses on *balancing Tridosha* within the body, which is said to improve health. Food is the factor that sustains and supports the *Deha Dhatus* i.e. tissue element, *Ojas* i.e. the factor of resistance to disease and decay, *Bala* i.e. strength or capacity to perform Physical work and complexion among others. *Agni* is also dependent on the quantity and quality of diet taking. *Satva* i.e. *Manas Bhav* also gets energy from *Ahar*. Various types of *Ahar* gets digested with different types of *Agni* and gets transferred into *Sharir Dhatu*. Our life is dependent on *Ahar*. *Ahar* is the ultimate cause of *Shubha Ashubha Bhav* in the body. The body gets nourished by the healthy *Ahar* and gets diseased by the unhealthy *Ahar*. It means that it is one of the important causes of healthy or unhealthy life. Diet should be *Matravat* i.e. in proper quantity. It should not be more or less. Quantity of diet should be dependent on one digestive capacity i.e. *Agni*. *Amatratvat Ahar* (diet in less quantity) is said to be *Anayushyakar* i.e. dangerous for life. *Atimatratvat Ahar* (diet in more quantity) is responsible for *Tridosha Prakopa* which is a cause of disease and ultimately *Dukhayu* (Painful life). Diet should be changed according to seasonal change, which is termed *Rutusatmya Ahar*. It is responsible for *Bala*, *Varna* and *Sukhayu* (happy life). *Ahar* should be *Hitahar (Pathyakar)* which is beneficial for the body in the long term. *Ahitakar Ahar* is responsible for various disorders in the body. *Ahar* should be *Shad-rasatmak* (with all the six tastes). Excess intake of any one of the tastes will cause disease. Therefore, the use of all six *Rasa* should be Practiced in the diet, not a specific one. The person who practices all the tastes and *Ghruta Kshir*, etc. *hitakar Ahar*, will be always *Balawan* (strong) and *Dirghayushi* (long life). And the person, who practices *Ruksha Ahar* and only one taste, will always be *Alpa Bala* and *Alpayush* (short life). *Ahar* should not be *Viruddha* means opposite to properties of Body. It can cause various disorders like *Kushtha*, *Kilas* and *Grahani*, etc. One should take diet with consideration of *Ash-taaharvidhi Visheshayatan* and *Ahar Vidhi Vidhan*, it will ultimately be responsible for long life.

Concept of Agni: - An almost complete account of the process of digestion and metabolism of food as understood and explained by Ayurveda is seen described by Chakrapani Datta, in this commentary on chapters entitled *Vividhashitapitita* in the *Sutrasthana* and *Grahani chikitsa* in *Chikitsa sthana* of *Charaka Samhita*. A careful and critical study of the original texts in these chapters and the commentary of Chakrapani Datta thereon are revealing and already reached a high degree of development. "Agni of the body, according to Ayurveda is implicit in pitta and "as pitta performs *Dahana* i.e. oxidation or combustion, *Pachana* i.e. physical or chemical transformations like fire, it is spoken of as internal fire. The *Dahana* and *Pachana* refer to the food, drinks etc., ingested. Confining ourselves to the essentially digestive and metabolic functions of pitta, it is seen that the *Pachaka Pitta*, located in the *Adhoamahaya*, splits the different components of food into their respective elemental units i.e. *Anus*; the five kinds of *Bhutagni*, at this level, makes the absorption of the end-products of digestion present in the *Ahararasa* possible; as seven specific pittas (*Saptadhatvagnis*), it metabolizes and transforms species *Prasada/Poshaka/Asthayi Dhatus*, on the one hand, and metabolic wastes i.e. *Mala* on the other; as *Bhutagnis*, again, in tissues, it initiates physicochemical reactions concerned with the incorporation of the nutrient precursor in the corresponding tissue elements and, as *Pachaka pitta*, at this level, it completes, energy and synthesis metabolism. The constant destruction of tissues that occurs throughout life, in the Ayurvedic view, is offset by the synthesis of tissues with materials derived from food sources.

While the pitta or *Agni* organization represents an inbuilt mechanism, both at the level of *Shariravaya Paramanus* as well as at that of the human organism as a whole-its proper functioning, according to Ayurveda, is stated to be determined by food. Elsewhere *Charaka* was quoted as stating *Bala*, *Arogya* and *Ayuh* are dependent on *Agni*. He has proceeded to observe in this passage that "Agni in its turn waxes being fed with *Indhana* i.e., fuel, in the form of foods and drinks and that, it wanes in its absence"

In addition, according to him, the food which is the factor that nourishes tissue elements and Ojas i.e., the factor of resistance to disease or immunity and contributes to *Bala* i.e., capacity to perform work, complexion etc. itself depends upon *Agni* for its utilization, as *Rasadhidhatu*s (metabolically processed precursor nutrients of tissue elements or *Poshaka dhatu*s) cannot be formed from a food that has not been digested and metabolized.

Moiety or aspects of *Kayagni*, which latter while being in its place, are contributed to and permeate all the *Dhatu*s. A decrease of *Kayagni* and the contribution it makes to the *Dhatu*s, makes for an increase of the latter, while an increase makes for a decrease of them.

The concept of *Pachaka pitta*, as reflected in the citations above, studied together with the citation quoted earlier from Charaka Samhita, that “*Koshthagni* is the leader of all *Agnis*” open out many significant and far-reaching possibilities. The life of all living beings is food, and the world seeks food. The complexion, clearness of mind, good voice, longevity, understanding, ease and pleasure, satisfaction, growth, strength, and intelligence are all dependent upon food. It should not be assumed that every substance which is homologous to the tissues of the body will straight away contribute to the growth of corresponding tissues of the body. It must be noted that food substances are drawn from the body. It must be noted that food substances drawn from the environment are all *Vijatiya* or foreign to the body and they should be suitably processed before they are utilized by and made part and parcel of the *Sharira dhatu*s, that is to say, they must be transformed as *Sajatiya* or body i.e., tissue-specific substances or, in other words, *Dhatwaharas* (nutrients specific to each species of *Sharira-dhatu*s viz., *Rasa poshaka dhatu*, *Rakta poshaka dhatu*, *Mamsa poshaka dhatu*, *Medo poshaka dhatu*, *Asthi poshaka dhatu*, *Majja poshaka dhatu* and *Shukra Poshaka dhatu*. Such a *paka* i.e. transformation, mutation and transmutation are made possible by *Jatharagni*, *Bhutagni* and *Dhatwagni*. The food, after being transformed by *dhatvagnis*, as seven kinds of *poshaka* or *asthaya dhatu*s (i.e., the seven

kinds of specific nutrient homologues of the corresponding seven species of basic tissue elements) is transported by *Rasadhatu* to the remaining *poshaka dhatu*s, through their *srotasas*, to nourish them.

The foods consumed in different forms viz., drunk fluids, electuaries that are licked and solids that are masticated etc., after being digested and ignited by *Antaragni*, are again dealt with efficiently by their own *Ushma*, in a continuous process, throughout the body, without any respite or resting at any point, like the inexorable time, which is always on the move forward. *Dhatupaka*, under the influence of *Dhatushmas*, the circulation of the products of this *Paka* through transport pathways the physiological integrity of which is not impaired, being directed and controlled by normally functioning *Vayu*, they promote the growth of the body, strength, complexion, health, longevity and the tone of the *Dhatu*s. The nutrient *dhatu*s contribute to the maintenance of the normalcy of the *Sharira Dhatu*s.

Jathragni is said to be the leader of all other *Agni*. Because *Jatharagni* supports and stimulates the other types of *Agni* i.e. If *Jatharagni* is healthy, it will make other types of *Agni* healthy. Also, *Agni* plays an important role in the determination of *Matra* of diet. The quantity which does not harm after ingestion of food is called the proper quantity of food. The quantity depends on the strength of the digestive fire. Chakrapani says that looking to first, the second and third-degree of digestive fire the quantity of diet is also decided accordingly. If *Agni* is *Tikshna*, *Ahar* should be taken in more quantity. If *Agni* is *Manda*, *Ahar* should be taken in less quantity and if *Agni Bala* is *Madhyam*, *Ahar* should be taken in moderate quantity. The word ‘*Punah*’ denotes reveals of the quantity according to variation in the strength of digestive fire because it varies in the individual according to variation of season and Age. For instance, digestive fire is strong in winter and youthful; an age whereas in diet also can’t be fixed for ever but it modified according to the present state of digestive fire. Thus, *Agni Parikshan* is important.

Agni parikshan: - Following are the function status of *Agni* under various conditions

1. **Tikshnagni:** - Agni under the influence of pitta dosha is *tikshnagni*. Agni is intense and can digest all types of *Pathyakar* and *Apathyakar Ahar*.
2. **Mandagni:** - Agni under the influence of *Kapha* dosha is *mandagni*. Agni cannot even digest ***Pathyakar Ahar***, even in a small amount
3. **Samagni:** - Agni under the influence of equilibrium of *Tridosha* result of well-balanced Dosha. If *Pathyakar Ahar* is taken it remains unaffected and if *Apathyakar Ahar* is taken it gets affected.
4. **Vishamagni:** - Agni under the influence of *Vata dosha* is *Vishamagni*.

Even if *Pathyakar Ahar* is taken it gets affected and even if *Apathyakar ahar* is taken it remains unaffected.

One dies if this *Agni* gets extinguished, lived long free from disorders if it is functioning properly gets ill if it is deranged, Hence *Agni* is the root cause for all *Agni*, *Bala*, *Varna* etc. The *Agni* which digests food is regarded as the master of all *Agni* because the increase and decrease of other *Agni* depend on the digestive fire. Hence one should maintain it carefully by taking properly the wholesome full of food and drinks because on its maintenance depends on the maintenance of lifespan and strength. *Agni* is stabilized by the application of unctuous food. For *Agni pravartan*, *Ahar* should be *Hitakar Jirna* and *Matravat*.

DISCUSSION

Food is the factor that sustains and supports the *Deha Dhatus*, *Ojas*, *Bala* and *Varna*. Ayurved is mainly based on preventive aspects first than curative. Food is considered as the first pillar among the *Nidra* and *Bramhacharya* being the other two. Food is important as a nutritional source, also with therapeutic value. It also plays a very important role during the post-treatment period in regaining the diminished strength due to the harmful effect of the disease. Diet should be *Rutusatmya* changed according to seasonal change, *Pathyakar*, *Shadrasatmak* but should not be *Viruddha*. One should take diet with consideration of *Ashtaaharvidhi Visheshayatan* and *Ahar Vidhi Vidhan*, it will ultimately be responsible for long life.

Diet should be *Matravat*, and quantity of diet is dependent on *Agni*. *Agni* is a variable factor. So, *Agni Parikshan* should be done frequently, and the quantity of diet should be changed accordingly. *Agni Viruddha* diet can be responsible for various disorders in the body. So *Ahar* and *Agni* both play an important role in the maintenance of healthy life.

CONCLUSION

Agni plays an important role in maintaining health of body, the functioning of the body, the body's metabolism and the proper functioning of the body. In Ayurveda, *Agni* correlates with the digestive power of the body. There are many reasons for maintaining *agni* (digestive power of the body). *Bhutagni* and *Dhatvagni* (metabolism at the cellular level). They work together to maintain balance in the body as *Jhataragni* maintains metabolism and *Bhutagni* and *Dhatuagni* maintain cell metabolism. The imbalance in the physiology of *Agni* is the main cause of the formation of *Ama*, which is the main cause of many diseases. So, in order to treat any disease, the concept of *Agni* should be taken care of during management.

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