AGNI VIVECHAN IN AYUVERDA - 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 Dhatvagni (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.
Ayuerveda considers that Dehnagi is the cause of life, complexion, strength, health, nourishment, Oja, Teja, Prana¹. 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 Grahn, Rag-karana and other actions of other Dhatuagnis³. 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.

(1) 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 Pramaama, Guna and Karma is known as Agnivai-shamya (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 periods 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 fulfillment after a meal.

In Mandagni and Vishamagni there wills 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 Tridhoshas are also present in the Rasa they also get mixed with Ama and called as Samadoshas. Samadoshas get enter into the Dhatus and Malas, get lodged in them and make them Samadushya. All these together give rise to many diseases.

**(II) Bhutagni**-
The human body is composed of Panchamahabhutas (five elements 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 Dhatus 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. Acharya Vagbhata also stated that each one of the five kinds of Dravyas after Bhutagni Paka proceeds to argument the corresponding Bhuta element that composes the human body. There are five Agnis in each of the five basic elements namely- 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 –

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 Poshakamsa. Dhatwagni is essential for the maintenance and growth of the Dhatus. 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. As the weakness of Koshthagni 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 Vridhdi. If Koshthagni 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 itself. This leads to Dhatukshay. Hence both Vridhdi and Kshaya of the Dhatus are Vikrita and are mainly due to weak and powerful Dhatwagnis respectively.

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 Antaragni (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 Dhatus. The Tridoshas, Dhatus 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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