CONCEPT OF AGNI IN AYURVEDA (REVIEW ARTICLE)

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ABSTRACT

The concept of Agni in Ayurveda which refers to the manifold functions ascribed to Pitta is at once comprehensive. It not only includes chemical agencies responsible for Aahar-rapacana in the Kotha (gastrointestinal) which leads to separation of Sarabhaga (Nutrient fraction) of Aahar (food) from the Kittabhaga (the indigestible residue of the food) but also metabolic events – energy, synthesis and maintenance of metabolism.

“Agni eva Sharire Pittantargata Kupitakupita Shubhashubani Karoti. Tadyatha-Paktimapaktim Darshanam adarshanam prakriti vikriti varna shaurayam bhayam krodam harsham moham prasadam ityaveamadini chaprani dvandvanitii.”¹

Agni which is situated inside the Pitta does the shubha and ashubha karyas in the body according to its kupita and akupita avastha. It has manifold functions like pacana of the anna, visualizing things with the help of eyes, maintaining of the body temperature, understanding many feelings such as Shaurya, Bhaya, Krodha, Harsha, Moha, Dukh, Sukh etc… “Na Khalu Pitta vyatirekaad Anyoagniruplabhyte agneytwaat pitte dahana pacanaadi abhipravritmaneshav agnivadupchar: Kiety antaragniritii. Kesheene hayagnigune tasmandravyeupyoagaad ativiridhe sheetkriyoupyoagaad gamanaach pashyamo na khalu Pitta vyatirekadanyo agniritii”² Different comments have been given regarding Agni and Pitta…. Sushruta has said that the direct action of Agni and Pitta can be seen through Dahana-Pacana and through Anumaana pramaana, “Ksheene hayagni gune tatsamaan dravyaupyoagaat.”, also proves that Agni and Pitta are same. It is very well said in classics – “Sarve Roga Api Mandagni” means all diseases in the body are caused due to Mandagni (due to improper functioning of digestive fire). In modern era, most of the diseases are caused due to Mandagni, Vishamagni or Teekshanagni. So it has been tried to concentrate on the causes of such problems and provide a healthy citizen to the society who is free from all these diseases.

This work is a fact finding activity purely based on fundamental research. No hypothesis is proposed or tested. This work may have no immediate or planned application but may later result into further research of an applied matter.

KEYWORDS: Pachakagni, Kostha, Sarabhaga, Kittabhaga, Pachak pitta, Dhatavagni, Bhutagni

INTRODUCTION

Agni in Ayurveda, is reflected in the concept of Pitta of this system. The term Pitta is derived from the root “tapa” – “to heat” or “to burn”. This term is seen to have three meanings viz.:-

“Tapa Ashvarye”, “Tapa Dahe” and “Tapa Samtape”. “Tapa Samtape” refers to the act of burning of the nutrition consumed and “Tapa Ashvarye” refers to the factor which is responsible to make one achieve the eight kinds of benefits.

Tapa Samtape³

Tapa Ashvarye (Divadi Guna)

Tapa Dahe – Suradi Guna (Siddhanta Kavya)
From the point of view of Ayurveda, Pitta has been described as Agni (fire) since it performs fire-like actions i.e. Paka, which refers to Pacana (Digestion); Dahana (Burning) including Bhinna Samghatata (splitting), Tapana (Heat production) Parinamama (Conversion), Paravritti (Transformation) Prakasana (Illumination), Ranjana or Varnakara (Colouration) and Prabhakara (to cause luster). In a general sense, the term Kaya or body itself has been equated to Agni. “Jathar Praninamagni Kaya Itybhidyate. Yastam Chikitsetsidantam Sev Kaychikitsika”.  

DISCUSSION

Caraka has said that it is only Agni which is located in pitta, that gives rise to beneficial or adverse consequences as it is in normal or abnormal state of functioning. “Agniirev Sharire Pittantargata Kupitakupita Shubhashubani Karoti”. 

Chakrapani has said that the term “Pittantargata” does not mean that the Pitta of the body is flaming fire and it only refers to the phenomenon of heat which is associated with fire. By implication, heat is seen to be associated with the function of Pitta.

Acharya Sushruta has said that Pitta is the same as Agni, since it performs Dahana (Burning or oxidation), Pacana (Digestion) and similar actions as performed by fire, hence Pitta is known as Antaragni.

Dahanam Daha, Pacana Pakam; Aaharade (Dalnana on Sushruta Sutra 21/9). The concept of Agni of Ayurveda, which refers to the manifold functions ascribed to Pitta is at once comprehensive. It not only includes chemical agencies responsible for Aaharapacana in the Kostha (corresponding to gastro-intestinal digestion), which leads to separation of Sarabhaga (Nutrient fraction) of the Aahara from the Kittabhaga (the indigestible or undigested residue of the food) but also metabolic events, energy, synthesis and maintenance of metabolism.

Pachatyannam Vibhajye Sarakitto Pri-thaktatha. 

In addition, it is seen to comprehend photo and chemo synthetic processes, Pacakapitta known variously as Jatharagni, Kosthagni, Antaragni, Pachakagni, Dehagni etc., while being located in its own place in an area between Amasaya and Pakvasaya, “Tatra Pakvamashyamadagam”.

Directly participates in the digestion of food and at the same time, leads support to and augments the functions of the remaining pittas, present elsewhere in the body. “Taturasthamev Pittanam Sheshanamayrukarout Karoti Baladanen Pachakam Naam Tatsamritam”. 

Classifications of Agni:

The Ayurvedic concept of Agni includes, not only five kinds of Pittas, but also the Dhatavagnis and Bhutagnis. It is clear from the classical Ayurvedic texts that the enumeration of the number of Agnies varies from author to author. According to Caraka Samhita, as commented by Cakrapani Datta, the number of Agnis enumerated are over thirteen:-

1) Antaragni - 1
2) Bhutagni - 5
3) Dhatavagni - 7

On the other hand, Acharya Sushruta has described only five Agnies viz.
Pachakagni, Ranjakagni, Alocakagni, Sadhakagni and Bhrajakagni.

There is however an indirect reference in Sushruta Samhita to five Bhutagnis, in the brief description made to the transformation, which foodstuffs undergo in the organism.

**Panchbhutatmake Dehe Aahar Panchbhautik**

**Vipakwa: Panchda Samyak Svan Gunanabhivar Dhyet**.8

Vaghbhata has described:-

5 Pittas
5 Bhutagnis
7 Dhatavagnis
3 Dosagnis
3 Malagnis

That is he has enumerated twenty three Agnis

Acharya Sarangdhar is seen to have recognized five Pittas only. On the other hand, Acharya Bhavmishra, is seen to have followed Caraka and Vaghbhata.

**Bhutagni:**

"Yatha Svara Pushyante Dehe Dravyaguna Prithak
Pasthiva Parthivanev Shesha Sheshach Kritsnach".9

Means in sharira, all gunas get pushti from their respective amshas. Parthiv apye gunas for apye gunas, agneya for agneya, Vayvey for Vayvey and similarly Nabhas for Nabhas respectively.

**Dhatavagni:**

"Vinmutramaaharasyemala Sara Pragirito Rasa
Tu Vyanen Vikshipit Sarvan Dhatun Pratarpyet".10

Vistha and Mutra are the Malas of Aahara whereas Rasa is the sara of Aahara. With the help of Vyana Vaayu, this Rasa does the tarpan of all Dhatus.

"Saptabhidehadhataro Dhatavo Dividam Puna

Yatha Svamagnibhi Pakam Yanti Kitta Prasadata".11

Due to the action of Dhatavagni on their respective Dhatus i.e. Rasa, Rakta, Mamsa, Meda, Asthi, Majja and Shukra, dhatus get converted into Prasad – Bhag and Kitta – Bhag.

Acharya Sushruta and Vaghbhata have indicated that the organ known as Grahani is located between Pakvasaya and Amasaya and that the relation that exists between Agni and Grahani is reciprocal i.e. Agni supports the function of Grahani and Grahani supports the function of Agni.

**Importance of Antaragni/Kosthagni/Jathargni**

Acharya Caraka says that Kosthagni is considered to be the leader of all factors concerned with metabolism in the body. All other Agnis are derived from it. Their activities or otherwise, are dependent upon an increase or decrease as the case may be of Jathargni.

"Annasye Pakta Servesham Paktsinamhipo Mata
Tanmulaste Hi Tadvidikhshay wridhi kshayatmaka."12

Says Sushrute, "By a dispensation which is unseen (a cause which cannot be perceived or explained and which is hidden), pitta which is located in an area between Amasaya and Pakvasaya, is responsible for the digestion of four kinds of food ingested by living beings and the elimination of the residue in the form of urine and farces after the completion of the process. Located in its own place (between Amasaya and Pakvasaya) it contributes to and augments the functions of other locations of pittas, in the performance of actions. This pitta, is therefore, spoken of as "Pachakagni".

"Tachadrisht visheshen pakavamashye madhyastham pittam Chaturvidam annapanam pacht, vivechyti, ch Dosha rosa
"Annasye Pakta Servesham Paktisamadhipo Mata
Tanmulaste Hi Tadvridhikshay vridhi kshayatmaka."\(^{14}\)

Pachakagni is the pradhan of all agni is:- Bhutaagnis and Dhatavagnis. If Pachakagni gets vridhi, other Agnis lget increased and of Kshay of the Pachakagni occurs, others also get Kshay.

"Aayu varno balam svasthye utshaye upchaye prabha.
Ojus Tejo Agneya Pranachokta Dehagni hetuka."\(^{15}\)

Dehagni is the only factor which is responsible for Aayu, Bala, Varna, Swasthya, Utsaha, Pusthi, Prabha and the functioning of other Agnis also. When Pachakagni is functioning properly, all other activities of the body also go on smoothly.

"Shantagni Mriyte, Yukte Chiram Jivatye Aamaye
Rogi Syad Vikrite Mulam Agni Tasmat Niruchyte"\(^{16}\)

When Agni becomes shaant, causes death of the person. If Pachakagni is working normally, the person remains nirogi and healthy but if Pachakagni is not disturbed, the person becomes unhealthy.

**Types of Pachakagni:-**

"Agnishu Tu Sharireshu Chaturvidho Vishesho Balabheden Bhavti. Tadhytha- Techshno, Mando, Samo, Vishamashiti"

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**Scheme representing the relationship between Pacakagni and other Pittas and Agnis of the body:-**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bhrajaka Pitta</th>
<th>Alocaka Pitta</th>
<th>Ranjaka Pitta</th>
<th>Sadhaka Pitta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pachakamsa</td>
<td>Shayirasa</td>
<td>Pachakamsa</td>
<td>Shayirasa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rakdhatavagni</td>
<td>Pachakamsa</td>
<td>Ashidhatavagni</td>
<td>Shukradhatavagni</td>
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<td>Pachakamsa</td>
<td>sthayirasa</td>
<td>Pachakamsa</td>
<td>sthayirasa</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mamsa Dhatvagni</td>
<td>Pachakamsa</td>
<td>Majjadhatavagni</td>
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<td>Pachakamsa</td>
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<td>Medodhatavagni</td>
<td>Pachakamsa</td>
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<td>Pachakamsa</td>
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</table>

"Mutsa pusishani Tatrasbhtamev chatamshaktaya, sheshanam pitta sthananam sarrisyae agankarmana amygram karoti, Tasmin Pitte Pachakoagniriti Sangya."\(^{13}\)
As per Bala Bheda, Agni is of 4 types:-

a) Teekshan
b) Manda
c) Sama
d) Visham

a) Teekshagni:-
"Teekshagni Sarvapcharsaha."

Teekshanagni does the ati shigra pachan of the food.

b) Mandaagni:-
"Tadviprit Lakshanastu Manda."
The one which does the delayed pachan of the food even though taken in very less quantity, is called as Mandagni complications are Udarpidaa, Heaviness in Shiras, Prasek, Chardi and Shvaas.

c) Samagni:-
"Samastu Svalapchupcharto vikritima-padhyte upchartasu prakriti avtisthte"
That which does the samyak pachan of the food taken by the person, is considered as Samagni.

d) Vishamagni:-
"Samlakshanviprit lakshanastu Visham its"
The Agni which does the irregular pachan of the food, sometimes it does the proper pachan and sometimes improper, is considered as Vishamagni. Diseases related to Vishamagni are Aadhmaan, Shula, Udavarta, Atisaar, Heaviness in Udar Pradesh, Antarkujan etc.

CONCLUSION:

So, it is concluded that Aahara-Dravya, Pachaka-pitta and Agni are co-related to each other and are responsible for carrying out the normal activities of the body. The sama and Prakopa avastha of the Doshas are totally dependent on the condition of Agni of body. So, Anurakshan of Agni is of prime importance for the physician and for the maintenance of health of a person.

I would like to pay my heartful gratitude to my teacher Dr. Nand Kishore Dadhich without whom I would not have been possible to complete this work. I would also like to pay my thanks to Librarian of Shekhawati Ayurvedic College Pilani who has given his full support to me in completing this work.

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