CONCEPT OF AGNI AND ITS CLINICAL IMPORTANCE IN DAY TO DAY PRACTICE OF AYURVEDIC DRUGS

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ABSTRACT

In Ayurveda, the term “Agni” is used in the sense of digestion of food and metabolic products. Agni converts food in the form of biological energy, which is responsible for all the vital functions of our body. Therefore, Ayurveda considers that Dehagni is the cause of life, complexion, strength, health, nourishment, luster, oja, teja (energy) and prana (life energy). About the importance of Agni, Acharya Charak has mentioned that after stoppage of the function of Agni, the individual dies, and when the Agni of an individual is samagni, then that person would be absolutely healthy and would lead a long, happy, healthy life. But, if the Agni of a person is vitiated, the whole metabolism in his body would be disturbed, resulting in ill health and disease. Hence, Agni is said to be the base (mool) of life. Vagbhatta says that root of all diseases is Mandagni. And Samagni is for health. There are a variety of physical and psycho-physical diseases developed due to loss of agni simply from indigestion to death. As discussed in different samhitas. Like – Agirana, Aamdosa, Aamvisha, alasak, visuchika, Ghradhnirog, bhayajatisar, Sokajatisar, Urustambh etc. So understanding of agni concept is need of Ayurvedic physician to determine the status of agni during prescribing drugs and drug doses along with prescription of Aahar and Vihara. 

Key word:- Agni, Agirana (Indigestion), Jatharagni, Dehagni, Mandagni. And Samagni

INTRODUCTION

The term of Agni, in common language means fire. However, in the context of the functioning of a living organism, which maintains its integrity and performs its vital activities, by converting in Pakadi-Kar-mas or bio-physical and bio-chemical processes, the foods consumed in various ways – licked, masticated, drunk, etc. not only into its various structural and functional constituents but also to provide the Shakti or energy necessary for processing with its innumerable vital activities, this term does not actually mean fire. In these sequences, the term Agni comprehends various factors which participate in and direct the course of digestion and metabolism in living organism.[1]

Synonyms of agni: - In shabdakalpadruma, 61 synonyms of Agni have been compiled. These synonyms help in explaining the nature and functions of the Agni, e.g., Vaishvanara, Sarva Paka, Tanoopata, Amivachatana, Damunasa, Shuchi, Vishwambhar, Rudra etc. (Shabdakalpadrum). [2]
Types of Agni: - Agni is innumerable because of its presence in each and every dhatuparamanu (cell) of the body. But, enumeration of the number of Agnis varies in various classical Ayurvedic texts, as shown below

- Charaka has mentioned about 13 Agnis. Jatharagni – 1, Bhutagni – 5, Dhatvagni – 7 (Ch.Chi.15/38).[3]
- According to AcharyaSushruta, five types of Agnis are illustrated, viz. Pachakagni, Ranjakagni, Alokakagni, Sadhakagni and Bhrajakagni. However, there is an indirect reference of five Bhutagnis underlying in the brief description made to the transformation of food stuff. (Sh.Su.21/10.)[4]
- Vagbhata has described different types Agni, viz. – Bhutagnis – 5,– Dhatvagni – 7, –Dhoshagni – 3 and– Malagni – 3.
- Sharangadhara has recognized five pittas only (Pachak, Bhrajak, Ranjak, Alokak and Sadhak) (Sha.Sa.Pu.Kh.-5/32).[5]
- Bhavamishra has followed AcharyaCharaka and Vagbhata (Bh.Pu.Kh.-3/169,180).[6]

Agni has been divided into 13 types according to the function and site of action. These are:

1. Jatharagni – one Agni present in the stomach and duodenum.
2. Bhutagni – five Agni from five basic elements.
3. Dhatwagni – seven Agni present, one in each of the seven dhatus.

Accordingly, they are classified into three groups, namely Jatharagni, Bhutagni and Dhatwagni.

Jatharagni: Jatharagni is the Agni or bioenergy present in the Jathara (stomach and duodenum). According to AshtangaHridaya, Jatharagni, the seat is grahani (duodenum), so called because it withholds the food for a certain time inside the Amasaya (stomach) to facilitate digestion. In the opinion of Dhanvantari, it is the Kala known as “Pittadhara,” situated at the entrance of the Pakvashaya (intestine) and acting as a bolt to the door of the pathway/channel of food. It is responsible for the duration of life, health, valour, ojas (essence of the dhatus), strength of all the bhutagni and dhatvagni. The strength of the grahani is from Agni itself, and the strength of Agni is from grahani. When the Agni undergoes vitiation, grahani also gets vitiated and produces diseases (As.Hr.Sha.3/50-54).[7]

Jatharagni is considered to be the most important because each and every nutrient that one ingests first comes to the Jathara and is subjected to the action of Jatharagni. Jatharagni digests the food materials that consist of the five basic elements and transforms it for utilization by the respective Dhatusparamanus(tissues).

Jatharagni is also responsible for separation of the food material into the essence portion (Prasad) and the waste products (kitta) in our body (As.Hr.Su-12/8).[8]
This disturbed action ultimately leads to various disorders. Jatharagni is the main important Agni that controls the function of all other 12 Agnis. All the Agnis are totally dependent on the status of Jatharagni (Cha. Chi. 15/39-40).[9] Jatharagni is also classified into four categories according to its performance of digestion in the human being namely Vishamagni, Tikshanagni, Mandagni and Samagni. (Cha. Chi. 15/51).[10]

According to Hareet Samhita, Samagni depends on whether the Doshas (Vata, Pitta, Kapha) are in normal stage. When the Pitta is higher than normal, the condition is known as Tikshanagni. When Vata and Kapha are higher than normal, the condition is known as Mandagni.

da. **Samagni:** The Samagni digests and assimilates food properly at the proper time. This thus increases the quality of the Dhatus (supportive tissues of the body). Persons having Samagni are always hale and healthy.

db. **Vishamagni:** This type of Agni changes between digesting food quickly and slowly. When this Agni is affected by the VataDosha, it creates different types of udargataroga.

dc. **Tikshanagni:** Tikshanagni means very quick/very sharp/very fast. Tikshanagni is a state of very quick digestion of food, regardless of the type of food. Acharya Shushrut states that when the power of digestion is increased from normal to above normal, food digests very quickly and produces hunger or the desire for food. When food is digested, the throat, the mouth cavity and the lips become dry with a burning sensation. This condition is known as “BhasmakRoga” according to Ayurveda.

d. **Mandagni:** “Mand” means slow. The meaning of the Mandagni is slow digestive power or digestive capacity. Those who are having Mandagni eat very little and are unable to digest the smallest amount of food. Dhanvantri says that Agni digests the least amount of food in the greatest amount of time.

**Bhutagni**

Bhutagni is the one that is present in a basic element (Bhutas). There are five Agnis in each of the five basic elements, namely – Par-thiva (earth), Apya (water), Tejas (Agni), Vanayya (vayu) and Nabhasa (akash).

Each and every cell in our body is composed of the five mahabhutas or five basic elements. Naturally, each cell (dhatuparamanu) consists of these five Bhutagni also. All the nutrients in this world that we eat also consist of the same five basic elements with their respective Agni or bioenergies. Thus, they are completely similar with respect to the five basic elements with their Bhutagni in our body cells as well in all the outside nutrient, that we ingest for the nutrition of our body. Acharya Charak has mentioned that the five Bhutagni digest their own part of the element present in the food materials. After the digestion of food by the Bhutagni, digested materials containing the elements and qualities similar to each bhutas nourish their own specific bhautika elements of the body (Cha. Chi. 15/13, 14).[11] These Bhutagnis act after the Jatharagni present in the stomach and duodenum, acting on the food and causing their disintegration. In the modern physiological perspective, the action of Jatharagni can be equated with the diges-
tion in the stomach and duodenum, and the action of the Bhutagni can be equated with the conversion of digested materials in the liver.

**Dhatvagni**

All the seven Dhatus (seven element tissues of the body) contain their own Agni to metabolize the nutrient materials supplied to them through their own Srotas.

1. Rasagni present in the Rasa Dhatu.
2. Raktagni present in the Rakta Dhatu.
3. Mamsagni present in the Mamsa Dhatu.
4. Medagni present in the Meda Dhatu.
5. Asthyagni present in the Asthi Dhatu.
7. Shukragni present in the Shukra Dhatu.

Each Dhatvagni or the bioenergy present in each Dhatus synthesizes and transforms the essential Rasa Dhatu required for that particular Dhatus or cell from the basic nutrients present in the Anna Rasa or essence of the diet that we consume. Each Dhatvagni has got a speciality to synthesize and transform the constituents suitable to its particular Dhatus. This action is a sort of selective action. Acharya Charaka has mentioned the fact that the seven dhatus that are a support of the body contain their own Agni, and by their own Agni they digest and transform the materials supplied to them to make the substances alike to them for assimilation and nourishment (Cha. Su. 28/15). [12]

**Material and Method:**

Various Ayurvedic, modern literature, text books, articles, and journals are studied for Topic title “Concept of Agni and its Clinical Importance in day to day practice of Ayurvedic Drugs” this review work.

**Review & Discussion:** Exploring the historical background of Agni we find that the Vedas bear a handful of literature about the Agni. From this it becomes evident that the existence of Agni karma was there in the society in pre vedic period.

**Rig veda** application of Agni is indicated for the remedy of different gynaecological and obstetrical diseases. Specific treatment by Agni and its material was advised for the vaginal and uterine disease (10/162/1-4).

**Yajurveda** again emphasized the use of Agni as therapy for sheeta. It is indicated that use of Agni in case of sheeta and sheeta induced disease. (23/10/01).

**Samaveda** bears elaborated description about Agni which is clear by enumeration of a separate chapter as ‘Agnaneyakanda’. In this veda Agni is given special names as Parmeshwar, Aatma, Vaishwanar etc. It is considered as the life existing in the creatures of the universe and which spreads/propagates all over the area is called Agni.

**Atharvaveda** has identified Agni as God and treatment for diseases from the verses it becomes clear that Agni was used to protect the body from the invading microorganisms. (5/23/1,3,5).

In **Brahmasutra, Agni** has been meant to be a sign of life in the body. Agni is a pivot around which the remaining factors responsible for the maintenance of health and causation of disease as well as decay revolve (Shabdakalpadrum). [13]

**Agni as Pitta?**

The origin of Pitta is from “Tapa,” which means: (1) combustion/digestion – to give nourishment to the body by digestion of ingested food, (2) to maintain heat – by means of heat, it maintains the color, lusture, etc. of the body (Su.Su.-21/5). [14]

Now, there is a question as to whether Pitta and Agni are both the same or are different? Does any area exist of Agni without Pitta, or is it
that Pitta is Agni? This should be clearly understood. Different views have been suggested regarding Pitta and Agni by different Acharyas. Some Acharyas consider Pitta to be Agni while others speak differently.

According to Acharya Sushruta, there is no existence of any other Agni in the body without Pitta, because when there is increased digestion and combustion in the body due to Ushnaguna of Pitta, the treatment is like Agni (Su. Su. 21/09).[15] Acharya Marichi has also emphasized that the Agni present in the Pitta gives good or bad results when it is normal or vitiated (Cha. Su. 12/11).[16]

Chakrapani has commented on “Pittantar-gatta,” that the function of Pitta inside the body is not combustion but its work is to provide heat of Agni. Besides this, Acharya Shusrut has described five types of Agnis as the variety of Pitta. Acharya Bhoj also considered Pitta as Agni, digestive fire is included within Agni, which is specially meant for different enzymatic activities of the body, i.e. pachana, deepan, bhedana, etc. (Chakrapani Tika on Cha.Su.-12/11).[17]

According to Hemadri, Pitta is of five divisions, which are located in the interior of the pakhvashaya andamashaya, although it is composed of panchabhutas. Because of an increase of (predominance qualities of) tejasbhuta, it is devoid of liquidity (although it is a liquid). Also, because it does not possess snigdha(viscosity), sita and such other properties of apa bhuta, it is called by the term “Anal” because of its function of paka. It cooks the food, dividing it into essence and waste separately. Being localized there, it bestows grace (help) to the other Pitta present there and also the other dhatvagni present in the dhatu by giving them strength (power of functioning), which is known as “Pachaka Pitta” (As.Hr.Su.12/10-12).[18]

Different examples are available in our classics to indicate that Pitta is the same as Agni. But, some doubts arise behind the concept of whether Pitta is Agni.

- Why indulgence of aggravating factors like katu, vidahi, etc. reduces the strength of Agni instead of enhancing it.
- Appropriate example to highlight the above concept that ghee alleviates Pitta but enhances Agni.
- The quotation of Acharya Sushruta, Samadoshahsamagnishcha (Su. Sha. 15/48)[19] has clearly indicated that Pitta and Agni are not the same.

**CONCLUSION**

Agni may be correlated with digestive & metabolic fire in the body. It is the substance secreted in our body, which is directly responsible for chemical changes in the body. It consist digestive (pak) enzymes and different kinds of hormones, and co-enzymes activities etc. which participate in these digestive & metabolic functions. It is a logical conclusion that Ama is produced due to hypo-functioning of Agni. At any level of the three Pakas (digestion and metabolism i.e. Madhur, Amla & Katuavasthapaka & vipaka) due to hypo-functioning of the agni concerned unwanted chemical substances are produced known as Ama. Hypo-functioning of any Agni specially of Jatharagni is likely to affect the function of other too, leading to formation of Ama in the different stage of Paka-karma. Lastly we can say that Agni plays very important role in growth, development & maintenance of the body. So very Ayurvedic Physician and
Surgeon should have proper Knowledge of Agni and its Clinical Implimentation.

As described by Vagbhatta all diseases are due to lack of agni( Mandagni a functional type of agni ) due to Mandagni , Rasaj and Annajagirana these produse deformity at sub cellular levele. A lot indigested and unwanted material circulate in body due to Mandagni and agirana it is called Aamvi-sha.(A.H.Ni.12/1. & A.H.SU.13/27)[20,21]

Chakrapani also described the kal (in how much time the Drugs and food should be metabolized)two and three for Aushad and Aahar respectively.

So it is much more importance before prescribing the drugs assessment for ja-ranshakti (Digestive power ) of agni must assured and knowledge of concept of agni is compulsory to one and all (ie physician and surgeons) in field of Ayurveda.

REFERENCES


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