ROLE OF AGNI IN LIFESTYLE DISORDERS

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ABSTRACT
Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely an absence of disease or infirmity. Each and every living being needs disease free life. But unfortunately one or the other day human being is expected to have some sort of disease or discomfort amongst which lifestyle disorders has a lead due to increasing sedentary lifestyle and unhealthy eating. The qualities of healthy individual are narrated in Ayurveda as equilibrium of all three Doshas; Normal state of Jataragni, normal state and function of Dhathus (Tissues); Normal state and function of Malas; Pleasant soul, mind and sense objects. Agni is the sole cause for existence of life, and its Extinction leads to death; its proper maintenance helps to live a long life, and its impairment gives rise to lifestyle disorders. It is also cause for colour, strength, health, enthusiasm, plumpness, complexion, helps to live a long life, and its impairment gives rise to lifestyle disorders. It is also cause for colour, strength, health, enthusiasm, plumpness, complexion, Ojus, Tejas, other varieties of Agni and Prana. There are four different states of Jataragni. Vishama (irregular), Teekshana (intense), Manda (weak or less powered) and Sama (well maintained and regular) states. Among the four different states of Agni, Samagni is considered as normal one, all others are considered as abnormal. Samagni is the only state which is beneficial to maintain health and thus prevent lifestyle disorders. So the maintenance of Samagni State can be carried out by following AshtaAharaVidhiViseshaAyatanas (Eight rules for eating). Agni is the one of the important and basic phenomena of the life. It should be maintained at any cost to live a disease free life. State of Agni is having dominant role in the manifestation of lifestyle disorders. Maintenance of Samagni is essential for the disease free life especially for diseases associated with lifestyle.

Keywords: Health, Agni, Maintenance, lifestyle diseases

INTRODUCTION

Background:
All the living beings aim for a disease free life. But fail to do so because of the sedentary life style and unhealthy eating habits which alters the normal state of Agni intern causing lifestyle disorders. Ayurveda one of the ancient systems of medicine very specifically stated about importance of being healthy.¹ The qualities of healthy individual are narrated in Ayurveda as equilibrium of all three Doshas viz. Vata, Pitta and Kapha; Normal state of Jataragni, normal state and function of Dhathus (Tissues) Viz. Rasa, Raktha, Mamsa, Medhas, Asthi, Majja, Shukra;
Normal state and function of Malas viz. Purisha (faeces), Mooтра (urine), Sveda (sweat); Pleasant soul, mind and sense objects. 

**Lifestyle disorders:**

Lifestyle diseases are diseases linked with the way people live their life. This is commonly caused by alcohol, drug and smoking as well as lack of physical activity and unhealthy eating. Diseases that impact on our lifestyle are heart diseases, stroke, obesity and type 2 diabetes. They also include Alzheimer’s disease, rheumatoid arthritis, atherosclerosis, asthma, cancer, chronic liver disease or cirrhosis, metabolic syndrome, osteoporosis and depression. With increasing prevalence of lifestyle disorders in India one out of four Indians is at risk of dying from non-communicable diseases before the age of 70. 

Even though a variety of medicines are available, the management is incomplete without lifestyle modifications. Healthy lifestyle includes various activities performed by an individual with an objective of physical and mental health along with longevity by means of proper hygiene, exercise for fitness, diet regulation etc.

**Role of Agni in lifestyle disorders:**

Agni is given prime importance in the maintenance of health as well as causation of lifestyle disorders. Food which is consumed by the person is the major responsible factor for the state of health and manifestation of diseases. Food is ranked first for the maintenance of health or manifestation of lifestyle disorders. Consumed foods and drinks undergo metabolic transformation in the digestive system. After the process of digestion, it will produce effects on the body which may be agreeable or disagreeable. The process of digestion is mainly carried out by Agni (digestive fire). The food provides nourishment to bodily tissues which is reached to end organ by the action of Agni. It is the Agni that plays a vital role in this connection because tissue elements like, rasa etc. cannot originate from undigested food particles. Lifestyle disorders like obesity, diabetes mellitus, dyslipidemia and cardiovascular diseases etc are produced mainly due to Medhodhatvagni.

Agni is the sole cause for existence of life, and its Extinction leads to death; its proper maintenance helps to live a long life, and its impairment gives rise to diseases. It is also cause for color, strength, health, enthusiasm, plumpness, complexion, Ojus, Tejas, other varieties of Agni and Prana.

**Types of Agni:**

There are 13 types of Agni present in the body.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Agni</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jataragni</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhootagni</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhathvagni</td>
<td>7</td>
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</tbody>
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**Importance of Jataragni:**

Jataragni, which is situated in Jatara (Stomach), is praised as god. It digests the food. Due to its subtle form, it is physically not evidenced but can be evidenced by its digestive functions. Jataragni maintains the functions of other types of Agni. Variations of Jataragni effects both Bhootagni and Dhathvagni.

**The states of Jataragni:**

There are four different states of Jataragni. Vishama (irregular), Teekshana (intense), Manda (weak or less powered) and Sama (well maintained and regular) states.

**Vishamagni:**

The word Vishama means irregular. Vishamagni digests the food at times properly and at times improperly. Vishamagni is influenced by Vatadosha and hence is unpredictable in nature. When it is not digesting food properly, it produces flatulence, colic pain, heaviness, upward movement of Vayu, diarrhoea, heaviness and gurgling sound in the abdomen and tenesmus. If a person suffers from these discomforts even after consuming regular and measured food, then the Agni is thought to be Vishamagni.

**Teekshnagni:**

The word Teekshana means intense or penetrate. Teekshanagni will digest even large amount of food quickly. It is capable of tolerating all types of irregularities in diet. It is influenced by Pittadosha.
which is the cause for its intense nature. If the intensity of \textit{Teekshnagni} is high and sufficient food is not supplied, it causes tissue destruction. Further, it has three varieties based on its degree of intensity viz., \textit{Teekshna} which digests the food quickly; \textit{Atyagni} or \textit{Basmaka} caused by not levelling \textit{Teekshnagni}; \textit{Teekshnatamo} is the effect of not levelling \textit{Atyagni} where the person is never satisfied with the quantity of food consumed. This produces burning sensation besides dryness in throat-palate-lips and pyrexia.\textsuperscript{11}

\textbf{Mandagni:}\n
The word \textit{Manda} means mild. The strength of \textit{Agni} is mild in this state. So even slightest variation in regular amount is felt heavy for its capacity of digestion impairing the functions of \textit{Agni}. \textit{Mandagni} is influenced by \textit{Kaphadosha}. It is unable to digest small amount of food; creates heaviness in abdomen and head, cough, dyspnœa, excessive salivation, vomiting, pain all over body. It takes long time to digest the food even in small quantity. This is said to be the basic cause for all pathogenesis.\textsuperscript{12}

\textbf{Samagni:}\n
The word meaning of \textit{Sama} is regular or balanced. \textit{Samagni} is influenced by the \textit{Tridoshas} in a balanced state. It maintains the health so long as there is no irregularities in food consumption. It properly digests the food that is well measured and consumed in time. Minor irregularities too hamper the balanced status of \textit{Agni} leading to impairment in health.\textsuperscript{13}

\textbf{Bhootagni and Dhatvagni:}\n
The word meaning of \textit{Bhoota} here is \textit{Panchamahabhoota}. \textit{Bhootagni} is responsible for the digestion of the 5 \textit{Pancha mahabhoota} factors present in the food. \textit{Dhatvagni} here refers to the agni present in the Dhatus i.e. the tissues which help them to absorb required nutrients. Life style disorders like obesity, diabetes mellitus, dyslipidemia and cardiovascular diseases etc are mainly produced due to impairment of \textit{medhodhatvagni}. The \textit{Jataragni} controls both bhootagni and dhatvagni thus balanced state of \textit{Jataragni} is essential to maintain health and prevent life style disorders.

\textbf{DISCUSSION}\n
Among the four different states of \textit{Agni}, \textit{Samagni} is considered as normal one, all others are considered as abnormal.\textsuperscript{14} By seeing the basic characteristics of different states of \textit{Agni} the \textit{Teekshnagni} should be the best because it is capable of tolerating all types of irregularities. In the present scenario the dietary and eating practices of people has changed a lot and the irregularity at times is expectable. It seems that \textit{Teekshnagni} is better when compared to \textit{Samagni} as \textit{Samagni} will get disturbed even by small irregularities. But it is not true because the normal bodily functions can’t be carried out with \textit{Teekshnagni}. Also it indicates the \textit{doshas} are not in a balanced status. This can be explained by a simili of cooking food. The food gets cooked properly when the fire is in a normal level. Supplying high level of fire will burn off the food. Thus maintaining \textit{Samagni} is one of the target while maintaining health. As discussed above the \textit{Teekshnagni} has 3 different states as per its degree of intensity. Controlling the \textit{Teekshnagni} in its first degree is difficult without proper assessment. \textit{Teekshnagni} with increased intensity (other two varieties) is dreadful and cause destruction quickly. Medications consumed for the purpose of purification gets digested quickly by \textit{Teekshnagni} and unable to produce desired effects also it rises chance of unwanted complications.\textsuperscript{15} So the \textit{Samagni} state is crucial for being healthy and preventing life style disorders. Giving prime importance for healthy eating habits is vital.

\textbf{Management:}\n
The state of \textit{Agni} is not only based on food quality and quantity it also has number of confounding factors like \textit{Prakruti}, \textit{Kala}, \textit{Desa}, \textit{ManasikaAvastha}, etc. Depending on which the variation of the state of \textit{Agni} is often expectable and unavoidable. All the human being in the world should come across all the different states of \textit{Agni}. To avoid the disease
manifestation and to retain the healthy state one should always concentrate on state of Agni and its management.

Management of Vishamagni: Vishamagni is treated with foods with the quality of Snigdha (unctous) and lavana rasa (salty taste). As Vishamagni digest the food sometimes properly and sometimes improperly. It seems combined effect of Teekshana and Manda states of Agni. So the management carried out as per the condition. As vişhâmaguni is caused by Vata Dosha, the simple Sneha dravya (unctues substances) like oil is sufficient along with Saindhva Lavana (rock salt).

Management of Teekshnagni: Teekshnagni is treated with foods with the quality of Snigdha (unctues), Sheeta (cold) and Madhurarasa (sweet taste). Virechana (Purgation) is the optimum procedure to manage Teekshnagni. As Teekshnagni is caused by pittadosha, Ghrita (ghee) is the best substance to manage Teekshnagni.

Management of Mandagni: Mandagni is treated with foods with the taste of Katu (Pungent), Tiktha (bitter) and Kashaya (astringent). As Mandagni caused by Kapha, Vanama (Emesis) is the optimum procedure to treat Mandagni. Pippali (piper longum), Maricha (piper nigrum) is the good substances to manage Mandagni.

Maintanance of Samagni: Samagni is the only state which is beneficial to maintain healthy state in the human beings and prevent lifestyle disorders. So the maintainance of Samagni State can be carried out by following AshtaAharaVidhiViseshaAyatanas (Eight rules for eating). In general SamanaVata is the main culprit for vitiation of Agni. As long as Samanavata is carrying out its normal fuctions, the state of Agni is also Sama. Vishama is caused by Vinmargamamana of Samanavata. Teekshnagni is caused by combination of Samanavata with pitta. Mandagni is caused by combination of Samanavata with Kapha. In Samanavata vikruti the medications should be taken in Madhyabhaktam (middle of meals). Obiviously daily use of ghee in proper quantity in the middle of meals is essential for the maintainance of Samagni.

CONCLUSION

Being healthy throughout the life span is not only the need of a person, also a basic right of a person. Agni is the one of the important and basic phenomena of the life. It should be maintained at any cost to live a disease free life. In the present scenario of the developed countries life style disorders are having more prevalence rate than infectious diseases. Ayurveda emphasizes on Agni for maintenance of health and considers diminished Agni as the chief etiological factor for all diseases. State of Agni is having dominant role in the manifestation of lifestyle disorders. Nature of food and optimum quantity of food, Maintainance of Samagni is essential for the disease free life especially for lifestyle disorders.Hence a healthy lifestyle is mandatory for normal Agni and prevention of lifestyle disorders through vitiated Agni.

REFERENCES


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