

AGNI PARIKSHAN IN AYURVEDA: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Agni transforms consumed *Aaharaviharaadidravya* of *Vijatiya* origin to *Sajatiya* nature. *Aahara* is responsible for *ayu, oja, bala, varna, Prabha, Utsaha* but *moola* of all these is *Agni*. A healthy life is possible only when *agni* remains *sama*. Diseases occur when *Agni* vitiates. Macro and micronutrients are absorbed by *agni* also destroys pathogens. Thirteen types of *Agni* are situated in *sharira*. *Pachakagni* is the *moola* of other *Agnis*. Therefore, *Pachakagni* should be protected by taking *Vidhivataaahar* and *vihar*. Digestion takes place in the gastro-intestinal tract, *Pachakagni* and *Jatharagni* stand for the same entity. *Agni* who stays in the stomach is called *Jatharagni*. *Agni* who converts components of food into simple products is *Pachakagni*.

Keywords: *Agni, Pachakagni, Jatharagni*

INTRODUCTION

Aahara is said to be *poshaka* of *dhatu*s, *oja, bala, varna, Prabha, utsaaha, shariraushma, pranadivayu*. But *mula* of all these is said to be *Agni*.¹Healthy and long life of a human being are due to the proper condition of *Agni*. Otherwise, diseases are caused. Life is situated in *Agni*. Death occurs when *agni* stops

working.²*Agni* carries all digestive and metabolic processes in human beings. It is an important integral part of the body. In a living organism, it maintains structural and functional integrity by performing vital activities like *pakadikarmas* (biophysical and biochemical processes). The strength of a living organ-

ism depends upon *Agni*. *Aahardravayas* are not exactly similar to body tissue. *Agni* converts the food and makes it fit for digestion. So, food particles become able to absorb into the system to reach every cell of the body. Hence nourishment of the body takes place. As it lives in every living being of the universe, it is called 'Vaishwanar'.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This article is a review of Ayurvedic texts. Various references were compiled and discussed for a thorough knowledge of the concept of *Agni*. *Samhitas* used in the present study were *Charak Samhita*, *Sushrut Samhita* and *Ashtang Hridaya* with commentaries on them.

DISCUSSION

In today's world, stress regarding job security, economical constraints, *viruddhaahara*, *Ratrijagarana*, not following proper diet regulations impairs the status of *Agni*. Also, *akalabhojana* (meal at the improper time) and *Adhyashana* (intake of food before digestion of prior meal), street food, irregularity in diet, hurries in taking a meal, lack of exercise, also housewives are careless about their own health. All these factors cause *Agnimandya* which is the root cause of diseases. Subject taking *madhura rasa* predominantly in *aahara*. *Madhura* rasa causes *agni Daurbalya* (weakness of the digestive system) and *Anannabhilasha*. *Snigdha* and *guruahara* take a long time to digest food and increase *kapha* causing *agnimandya*.³ Also habit of water intake after a meal and at sleeping time, excessive sleep, *Diwaswapna* (day sleep) respectively causing *agnimandya*.

Nomenclatures of 'Agni' in the living body: All places in the body are occupied by *Agni* as biotransformations are carried out ceaselessly in the living body at all places. Parts of *Agni* carrying out different functions are named as per their work. Based on location and functional point *Agni* can be divided as follows: -

1) Pachakagni – In all types of (13) *agni* situated in *sharira* main is the *Pachakagni*. It is the *moola* for the other 12 *Agnis*. While examining *agni*, *jatharagni* is examined. The remaining all depends on the status

of *jatharagni*. *Panchabhautika* body of an individual is the outcome of food. The health of a person not only depends upon the contents of food but also depends upon proper digestion and assimilation of the food. The digestion of the food is the main function of *pachakpitta*, along with this it controls all other *pitta*'s functions. It converts all components of food into simple products. Warmth is provided to ingested food by *Pachakagni*. Although *Pitta* is of five kinds and is composed of five *bhutas*, the one occurring between *Pakvashaya* and *Amashaya* is called *Anala* or *Pachakagni* which has more of the quality of *Tejobhuta*. It digests the food and isolates the refined and waste products and helps the rest of *pittas*.⁴

Grahani – *Pachakagni* is situated in *Grahani*. *Sushruta* takes the sixth *pittadharakala* situated between *Pakva* and *Amashaya* as *Grahani*. *Hemadri* says that *Grahani* is between *Ama* and *Pakvashaya*. *Dalhana* points out that *Nabhi* is *Grahani*. *Pitta* is released in *grahani* and is responsible for the digestion of food. Therefore, *Grahani* is considered to be an important organ where digestion of food takes place. *Agnibala* depends on healthy *grahani*. Thus, *Grahani* holds the indigested food and releases the digested food on the left side. All the five *bhutagnis* by the name of *Vaishvanara*, in the form of *Pachakagni* remain in *grahani*. Until full digestion, food after digestion in the stomach is stored in *grahani*. So, it is considered as the main location of *agni*.

2) Jatharagni– This *agni* is also called 'Kayagni'. It remains in *jathara* or stomach. It is like God, and analyses *Rasa* and other things and due to minute structure is not perceivable. *Pachakagni* and *jatharagni* stand for the same entity. *Jatharagni*, *Pachakagni* or *pachakpitta* is a synonym of each other as their function is the same.

The location of *jatharagni* is *grahani*.⁵ It remains between *Aamashaya* and *pakwashaya* and digests the food. This *agni* digests food to *vipaka* stage.

3) Bhutagni– According to *Aacharya Chakrapani*, *panchabhutagni* are present in *Aahara dravya*. (Food material) The human body and the food that goes to build it are *panchbhautika* in structure. i.e., made up of five *Mahabhutas*. Therefore, five *Agnis* for five

bhutas is present. It is responsible to convert 'Panchbhautik food' into 'panchbhautic part of body constituents. It has also to maintain the proper function of sense organs. Part of *agni* maintaining the proper proportion of Panchbhautik components is called *Bhutagni*. These are also five in number like *panchmahabhutas*.⁶

The action of *bhutagni* starts after the action of *jatharagni*. The *bhutagni* will digest their *bhoutikamsha* (respective substance) and convert them into respective *bhutadravyas* which are useful for the formation of different *dhatu*s. *Parthivagni* digest *parthivamshas*, *apyagni-apyamsha* and so on. If *parthivansh* which is present in food is not digested by *parthivagni* and next *asthidhatwagni*, the *Asthidhatu* cannot develop properly.

4)Dhatwagni –A minute part of *jatharagni* present inside the *dhatu*s are called *dhatwagni*. If *dhatwagni* becomes slow (*manda*), *dhatu*s get increased (*Dhatuvridhi*). And if *dhatwagni* becomes strong (*tikshna*), waning of *dhatu*s occurs. It synthesizes the 'Dhatwah' of a living body. These are located in 'srotas' related to that particular *dhatu*. *Dhatwagni* is seven in number. They are *rasadhatwagni*, *raktadhatwagni*, *mansadhatwagni*, *medadhatwagni*, *asthidhatwagni*, *majjadhatwagni* and *shukradhatwagni*. Only digestion by *bhautikagni* is not useful. The action of *dhatwagni* is important for the formation of *rasadisaptadhatu*s. *Dhatwagni* act on *poshakamsha* circulating in *ahararasa* and form respective *dhatu*. Saptadhatu are digested by their *dhatwagnis*. They are separated by *sara* and *kittabhaga*. *Sarabhaga* nourishes the concerned *dhatu* and *kittabhaga* becomes mala. *Aaharrasa* is formed after the digestion of food. This *aaharrasa* is called *poshak* rasa as it nourishes the *rasadhatu*, which is called *poshya*.⁷The metabolic function pattern of the *dhatu-agnis* holds the same vital position in the fundamental structure of the Ayurvedic concept as that of the *tridoshas*. This is amply demonstrated by the well-known definition of *swasthya* (health) in the ayurvedic texts which equate the normality of the *doshic* balance with that of the *agni* balance or the *dehadhatwagni* equilibrium in an individual. At a physiological level, *Agni* is very im-

portant. When food taken is not properly digested it converts into toxins, called *Aama* according to Ayurveda.

Examination of Pachakagni:

The *Agni* is of four types.

1)Vishamagni: Irregularly functioning digestive fire is called *vishamagni*. This type of *Agni* is unpredictable. It sometimes does the complete process of digestion and sometimes indigestion. Sometimes it vitiates even after following all rules and regulations of eating.⁸Sometimes the digestive fire offers results of functioning properly even after rules are not followed properly. Also, in *vatala* individuals, if *vata* dominates the location of digestive fire, it becomes '*Vishama*'.⁹

Agni is disturbed by *vata*. Because of variability in *vata* cycles of strong appetite with loss of appetite occurs. Constipation and abdominal distensions are the main signs.

2)Tikshnagni: This is a special type of digestive fire. Meals are digested too frequently. Even a heavy meal is easily digested within a very short period. It allows a person to eat as and when a person likes to eat. Even if all rules and regulations of eating are neglected digestive fire remains functioning properly. *Charaksamhita* defines it as; this *agni* remains in function even though rules and regulations of ingesting food are not followed.¹⁰In *pittala* individual, if *pitta* dominates the location of digestive fire, it becomes *tikshna*. *Agni* is disturbed by *pitta*.

3)Mandagni: It is opposite to *tikshnagni*.¹¹*Agni* is unable to digest even a little amount of food. Here functions of *Pachakagni* are inhibited by *kapha*. Hence this phase is called *mandagni* or *agnimandya*. In this type, if rules are disturbed minutest extent, digestive fire may get vitiated.

In *shleshmala* individual, if *shleshma* dominates the location of digestive fire, it becomes *manda*.

Variability in *kapha* causes poor appetite, sluggish metabolism and a tendency to weight gain despite optimum food consumption.

4)Samagni: It is regular in functioning. Due to this type of *agni*, complete digestion of the food takes place which is ingested at the proper time without

any irregularity. *Doshas* are in good equilibrium and functioning normally. It depends on the rules and regulations of eating. If rules are followed, it digests well.¹²If not it vitiates. It fulfils all criteria of *uttambalaagni*. *Samaprakriti* individuals have this type of *Agni*.

Causes of types of *Jatharagni*:

Agni is *sama* when *samanavayu* is in equilibrium at its location. *Agni* becomes *vishama* when it moves from its location (becomes *Vimarga*). *Agni* becomes *tikshna* when it mixes with *Pittadosha*. And becomes *manda* when mixed with *kaphadosha*.¹³*Snehana* and *swedana* are two preoperative procedures for any *panchkarma* in ayurvedic treatment. *Snehana* (oiling) decides the total outcome of the *shodhanakarma* (purification process). To avoid *Ayoga* (less quantity) or *Atiyoga* (excess quantity) of *snehapana*, *Agni* (digestive function) and *Koshtha* (GI process) must be taken into consideration. According to *Charakacharya*, the assessment of *agni* depends on *Abhyavaharana-Shakti* (intake capacity), and *JaranaShakti* (digestive capacity).

- 1) *Abhyavaharana Shakti* depends upon the quantity and quality (*guna*) of food taken and the frequency of meals. It varies from person to person.
- 2) *Jaranashakti*– *JaranShakti* means the capacity to digest food. *Jirnaaahar lakshan* (signs of proper digestion) are *Utsaha* (enthusiasm), *Laghuta* (lightness), *Udgarashuddhi* (clear belching), *kshudha* (hunger), *trishna* (thirst), *malotsarga* (excretion of waste material). This can be observed faster if digestion is proper. During *snehapana*, *agnivridhhi* is expected. For assessment of *agniabhyavaharan Shakti* and *jaranshakti* (time required for digestion of *sneha*) should be considered.

CONCLUSION

Examination of *Agni* is important as longevity, strength, colour, health, vital breath, good physique, immunity, mental ability, lustre and power of resisting any difficulty, depends on the proper condition of *agni*. In normal conditions, we can decide the quantity of *aahara*, timings as well as types of food accord-

ing to the condition of *agni*. It helps to keep our bodies healthy. We can advise *mandagni* people to take small quantity of diet only when hunger is filled. Also, *mandagni* people should eat hot, light and dry food instead of taking heavy, oily and cold food. *Agni* decides the quality of *dosha*, *dhatu* and *mala*. So, we can judge the condition of *dosh* –*dhatu* and *mala* by examination of *Agni*. All diseases are caused by *mandagni*. By *agniparikshana* we can diagnose the disease. In many diseases treatment of *jatharagni* and *dhatwagni* is the main goal of treatment. As *kayachikitsa* is the *agnichikitsa*. When a large quantity of food is taken than the digestive capacity of *agni*. *Agni* becomes low in strength. *Agni* gets disturbed when more heavy, cold, dry and bad food is taken. *Agni* also gets vitiated due to excessive *panchkarma* therapy. Due to suppression of urges like urine, faeces and also disturbances in *dasha*, *kala* and *rutu-dosha* are increased and *agni* gets vitiated. *Agni* is present in *grahani*. If *grahani* is vitiated *agni* also get vitiated. According to Ayurveda, all diseases are caused due to *mandagni*. Mainly *jatharagnimandya* occurs, but sometimes diseases occur due to *dhatwagnimandya* even if *jatharagni* is functioning normally. e.g.- *Prameha* (diabetes), and *Medoroga* (obesity). Anger, sadness, stress also causes *agnimandya*. All have to protect *jatharagni* by following all rules and regulations about eating habits. Health, longevity and strength depend on the normal state of *agni*. All the *agnis* are dependent on the status of *Jatharagni*. *Jatharagni* is responsible for the separation of food into *sara* and *kitta*.

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