

IMPORTANCE OF AGNI IN CHIKITS

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ABSTRACT

Agni means fire. Agni is basic essential of life. Agni is a invariable agent of human being which is important factor for the digestion & transformation. Ingested food is to be digested, absorbed & assimilated & this process performed by agni. Agni converts the food in the form of energy, which is responsible for all vital functions of our body. While stating the importance of agni, acharya charaka has mention that after stoppage the function of agni, the individual dies. Also states that if the agni is in samavastha the individual would be absolutely healthy & lead to happy, healthy life. But if the agni of a person is vitiated the whole metabolism in his body would be disturbed, resulting in many diseases. Hence agni is said moola of life in charak samhita chikitsasthan. While diagnose the disease, have to focus on agni, which may pathological factor for the disease. While treating a patient with ayurvedic principles the agni is important factor.

KEYWORDS: Agni, agnimandya, vyadhi, chikitsa.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda has described an important factor of digestion and metabolism in our body as Agni.

Agni is responsible for all the vital functions of our body. Therefore, Ayurveda considers that Dehagni is the cause of life, complexion, strength, health, nourishment, lusture, oja, teja (energy) and prana (life energy).^[1]

Charak states that Agni is mool of life.^[2]

Acharya charak states that, when the Agni of an individual is samavastha, then that person would be absolutely healthy and leads 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 diseases.

According to modern medicine, metabolic processes, division and multiplication are going on in all cells of our body from birth till death. The cell is the functional unit of the body.

According to Charak, the constituent part of the body, if further divided into the atoms, are sure to become innumerable, as such cells or atoms are exceedingly

numerous, very minute and ultra sensory. In the conjunction and disjunction of cells, the activating factors are vata and the nature of action.^[3]

Synonyms of agni

Tejas, tejo, tejobhuta, tejo mahabhuta, vahni, agni tatwa, shikhi, anala.

Agni as pitta

The origin of Pitta is from tapa which means:

- Combustion/digestion – to give nourishment to the body by digestion of ingested food &
- To maintain heat – by means of heat, it maintains the color, luster, etc. of the body.^[4]

Different views by acharyas have been suggested regarding relation in between Pitta and Agni. Some Acharyas consider Pitta to be Agni while others view are difference between agni & pitta. According to Acharya Sushruta, there is no existence of any other Agni in the body without Pitta, because when there is increased digestion in the body due to Ushna guna of Pitta, the treatment is like Agni.^[5]

Acharya Marichi has also emphasized that the Agni present in the Pitta gives good or bad results when it is normal or vitiated.^[6]

Chakrapani has commented on Pittantargatta 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.

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, e.g.

- 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, Samadoshah samagnishcha.^[7] has clearly indicated that Pitta and Agni are not the same.

Types of pitta & relation of agni-

Agni represented in the body in the form of pitta, which is located in grahani, primarily takes part in the digestion of food, & controls the other subtypes of pitta.

Pachakapitta- the fire in the form of pachak pitta, which is located in grahani, & primarily takes part in the digestion of food & controls the other subtype of pitta.

Ranjakapitta – fire located in yakrit & pliha & takes part in haematopoiesis, imparts colour & complexion.

Alochakapitta- the pitta or fire located in eyes, takes part in processing vision.

Sadhakagni- located in hridaya. Takes part in circulation. Hridaya taken as brain the agni takes maintains brain function & also higher skills, intelligence, emotions, decision making capacity, memory etc.

Type of agnis

Agni is innumerable because of its presence in each and every dhatu paramanu 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.^[8]

Jatharagni – 1

Bhutagni – 5

Dhatvagni – 7

- According to Acharya Sushruta, five types of Agnis are illustrated, viz. Pachakagni, Ranjakagni, Alochakagni, Sadhakagni and Bhrajakagni. However, there is an indirect reference of five Bhutagnis underlying in the brief description made to the transformation of food stuff.^[9]
- Sharangadhara has recognized five pittas only (Pachak, Bhrajak, Ranjak, Alochaka and Sadhak).^[10]
- Bhavamishra has followed Acharya Charaka and Vagbhata.^[11]

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. Dhatvagni – seven Agni present, one in each of the seven dhatus.

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

Jatharagni

Jatharagni is the Agni or bioenergy present in the Jathara. According to Ashtanga Hridaya, Jatharagni, the seat is grahani (duodenum).

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^[12]

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 Dhatus paramanus (tissues). Jatharagni is also responsible for separation of the food material into the essence portion (PRasad) and the waste products (kitta) in our body.^[13]

Jatharagni is directly related to Dhatvagni or bioenergy in the cells and their metabolic processes, with ultimate tissue metabolism or Dhatu-Paka process. All the Dhatvagni depend on the normal, healthy state of Jatharagni. If the Jatharagni is hyperactive (Tikshna) or hypoactive (Manda), it will cause an excessive or retarded action of the Dhatvagni. 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.^[14]

Importance of jatharagni in all types of agni

Jatharagni which digests the anything offered to it, also said king of all agnis.

The other types are totally depends on status of jatharagni & have a similar impact on other agnis of body.

Jatharagni is also classified into four categories according to its performance of digestion in the human being.^[15]

- Vishamagni,
- Tikshanagni,
- Mandagni
- Samagni.

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 Tikshnagni. When Vata and Kapha are higher than normal, the condition is known as Mandagni.

- **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.
- **Vishamagni:** This type of Agni changes between digesting food quickly and slowly. When this Agni is affected by the Vata Dosha, it creates different types of udargata roga.
- **Tikshnagni:** Tikshnagni means very quick/very sharp/very fast. Tikshnagni is a state of very quick digestion of food, regardless of the type of food. Acharya Shushruta 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 "Bhasmak Roga" according to Ayurveda.
- **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 Bhutas. There are five Agnis in each of the five basic elements, namely –

- Parthiva agni,
- Apya agni
- TejasAgni
- Vayavyagni
- Nabhagni

Each and every cell in our body is composed of the five mahabhutas or five basic elements.

Dhatvagni

All the seven Dhatus contain their own Agni to metabolize the nutrient materials supplied to them through their own Strotas.

1. Rasagni present in the RasaDhatu.
2. Raktagni present in the RaktaDhatu.
3. Mamsagni present in the MamsaDhatu.
4. Medagni present in the MedaDhatu.
5. Asthyagni present in the Asthi Dhatu.
6. Majjagni present in the Majja Dhatu.
7. Shukragni present in the ShukraDhatu.

Each Dhatvagni or the bioenergy present in each Dhatu synthesizes and transforms the essential Rasa Dhatu required for that particular Dhatu or cell from the basic nutrients present in the AnnaRasa or essence of the diet that we consume. Each Dhatvagni has got a

speciality to synthesize and transform the constituents suitable to its particular Dhatu. 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.^[16]

Physiological aspect of Agni

Malfunctioning of agni results in majority of diseases. Proper functioning of jatharagni results in normal functioning of digestive, circulatory system, strong immunity.

It is the source of intelligence, nutrition in body, it coordinates many physiological processes of body from digestion. This acts not only physical function but also on mental & spiritual level.

Pathological aspect of agni

- If jatharagni is not functions properly person suffer from digestive problems, improper blood circulation low energy etc.
- Ama & agni is basic pathological factor for the many diseases.
- After maintain the proper function of agni one can prevent the root cause of diseases.

Chikitsa wise aspect of agni

Agni plays an important role in maintaining of health & cause of many diseases.

Management of agni dushti may lead in normal healthy life, Also normal function of agni can prevent the amajanya diseases. So agni is important factor for the human body.

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