



Review Article

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PHYSIOLOGICAL ASPECT OF AGNI IN AYURVEDA - A LITERARY REVIEW

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Abstract

In the holistic approach of *Ayurveda*, *Agni* plays a very important role for the transformation and assimilation of *Aahar*. In our classical references different Acharya explained *Agni* according to location and function. *Jatharagni* and *Bhutagni* among them are the major *Agni*. *Jatharagni* process the four types of food for digestion and *Bhutagni* is derived from Panchamahabhutas which act on five *bhutika* form of food. After this process there will be *sara* (nutritive part) and *kitta* (excretory part) these two different products will form. Ultimately, it is the discernment of *Agni* that determines which substances enter our cells and tissues and which substances should be removed as waste. To state the importance of *Agni*, *Acharya Charak* also mention *Agni* as functional important part, if it's stopped its function the person will die. Therefore, *Agni* is the very important topic to study and review as per Ayurveda treatment purpose. In this review article attempt to make detailed explanation of *Agni*.

Keywords: - Ayurveda, Agni, Metabolism, Panchamahabhuta.

Introduction: -

Agni is the fundamental and important concept in *Ayurveda*. *Agni* is said to be the reason for existence and it is compared to God.¹*Agni* is one among the vital substance of living beings this shows the high importance of *Agni* in the body. It brings the transformation of the *Ahara* and helps in the formation of *Rasadisaptadhatu*, *Upadhatu*s and *Malas*. Any alteration in the function of *Agni* will lead to malabsorption and causing disturbance in the normal function of the body. The *samyata* of all these is brought about by the *samagni* and *purush* will be called as *Swastha*, if this *Agni* in the body subsides it causes *Vikruti* and may also lead to the death of a person. It is mainly divided into 3 categories viz., *Jatharagni*, *Dhatvagni* and *Bhutagni*.

In *Shabdakalpadruma*, 61 synonyms of *Agni* have been compiled.

These synonyms help in explaining the nature and function of the *Agni*. e.g. *Vaishvanara*, *Sarva paka*, *Tanoonpata*, *Amivachatana*, *Damunasa*, *Shuchi*, *Vishwambhar*, *Rudra* etc.²

***Nyaya & Vaisesika Darshana* divided *Agni* into following categories:**

Bhauma or the physical fire, Divya or the celestial fire like the lightening, rays of sun, moon, and the stars, Audarya or the abdominal fire which is responsible for the digestion as well as metabolism and, Akaraja which is present in the metals such as gold and silver.

Solar energy is the source of any sort of conversion in the living beings. *Agni* represents this solar energy in the living beings. *Agni* has the capacity to convert the substance in any form because of its occult power. Maintenance of physiological actions in a state dependent on the normal state of *Agni* while the abnormal state of *Agni* contributes to pathological changes and absence of *Agni* results in death of the living being. *Ayurveda* has described an important factor of digestion and metabolism in our body as *Agni*.

Ayurveda system has unique explanation regarding *Purusha* and *Prakriti* which are dependent on each other and is justified by the concepts like *Panchamahabhuta Siddhanta*, *Lok purusha - samyavada*, *Chaturvimshatika purusha* etc. Keeping this in view it is considered that *Purusha* is made up of *Panchmahabhuta* in which *Agni Mahabhuta* is one and is responsible for all the activities of life. The one who present or reside in between *pakvashaya* and *amashaya* having *panchmahabhuta* formed with *tejas guna* doing the *paka karma*. *Agni*

Mahabhuta presents in *sharira* in the form of *Jatharagni* which is responsible for *Ayu, Varna, Bala, Swasthya, Utsaha, Upachaya, Prabha* and hence considered as *Oja and prana of deha*.³

Types of Agnis describes in various classical Ayurvedic texts, as follow:

1. *Acharya Charaka* has described about 13 *Agni*⁴

Jatharagni-1, Bhutagni-5, Dhatvagni-7

2. *Acharya Sushruta*⁵ has described five types of *pitta*⁷-

Pachakagni, Ranjakagni, Alochakagni, Sadhakagni and Bhrajakagni

3. *Acharya Vagbhata*⁶ has described different types of *Agni*-

Bhutagni-5, Dhatvagni-7, Doshagni-3 and Malagni-3

4. *Acharya Sharangadhara*⁶ has described 5 types of *Pittas*-

Pachak, Bhrajak, Ranjak, Alochaka and Sadhak

5. *Acharya Bhavamishra*⁷ has followed *Acharya Charaka* and *Acharya vagbhata*:

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.

Aim and Objectives: -

To study physiological (*Kriya sharir*) aspect of *Agni*.

Material and Methods:

This concept is based on a review of Ayurveda Classics such as *Charak Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Ashtanga Sangraha, Astang Hridaya, Bhavprakash* and *Yogaratanakara, Commentaries of Samhita* and related journal articles.

Discussion:

***Jatharagni*: -**

Jatharagni is the *Agni* or bioenergy present in the *Jathara* (stomach and Duodenum). *Grahani* is the site of *Agni*. This is mainly responsible for the digestion of the ingested food. Thus, *Jatharagni* depicts the physiological components of digestion and metabolism which takes place in the stomach and intestines. *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*.⁸ *Jatharagni* digests the food materials that consist of the *Panchamahabhuta* and transforms it for utilization by the respective *Dhatu paramanus* (tissues). *Jatharagni* is also responsible for separation of the *Ahara rasa* into the *Prasad bhag* and *Kitta bhag* in our body. All the *Dhatvagni* depend on the normal, healthy state of *Jatharagni*. If the *Jatharagni* is *Tikshna* or *Manda*, it will cause an excessive or retarded action of the *Dhatvagni*. This disturbed action ultimately leads to various disorders. *Jatharagni* controls the function of all other 12 *Agni*.⁹

***Bhutagni*: -**

Bhutagni is the one that is present every basic element in a *Panchabhoutik sharir*. Body, being *Panchabhoutik*, has corresponding *Pancha bhutagnis* which aid in metabolism. These fires help in the digestion of *Panchabhoutik ahaar* and thus aid in the assimilation of nutrient parts. **There is five *Agni* in each of the five basic elements namely: -**

1. *Parthiva Agni* (of earth element)
2. *Apya Agni* (of water element)
3. *Tejasa or Agneya Agni* (of fire element)
4. *Vayavya Agni* (of the wind or air element)
5. *Akasheeya / Naabhasa Agni* (of space or ether element)

Panchabhoutik quality of body is present from the minute to gross level. So, each cell (*Dhatu paramanu*) will also be having *Panchabhoutik* constitution. It has corresponding *panchabhuta agnis* for the digestion of *panchabhuta* elements. Everything in the world is *Panchabhoutik*. Hence the food we take in is also *panchabhoutik*. Its *pacana* can be carried out by respective *bhutagnis*. The digestion of food by *bhutagnis* is well explained by *Acharya Charaka*. The nourishment of specific *Panchabhoutik* component in our body happens as a result of assimilation of *Panchabhoutik sara* from *ahaar* with the action of *bhutagni*. This

happens because of the similarity of composition of sharir, ahaar and corresponding *bhutagni*.¹⁰

Dhatvagni: -

Dhatvagni means the fire which is located inside the *sharir dhatu*(tissues). *Saptha Dhatus* (seven tissue elements) are present in the body. Digestion and assimilation happens at every level of *dhatu* by its corresponding *agni*. The nutrient materials that has to undergo *pacana* is transported through corresponding *srotases*.

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*
6. *Majjagni* present in the *Majja Dhatu*
7. *Shukragni* present in the *Shukra Dhatu*

The *dhatvagni* acts on *ahaararas* in the (circulation) resulting in the formation of same *dhatu*, nourishment of next *dhatu* and the formation of *kitta bhaga* (waste products/tissue toxins). *Rasadhatu* is metabolized at the level of every *dhatu* and *poshana* happens by its transformation. Each *Dhatvagni* has got a speciality to synthesize and transform the constituents suitable to its particular *Dhatu*. This process is specific for every *dhatu*. According to *Acharya Charaka*, *sapthadhatu*s with specific *agni* of their own does the *dharana* (support) of the body by performing the metabolism of the nutrients supplied to them, hence does its assimilation by converting it to its alike form.¹¹

Conclusion: -

Charakacharya has mentioned that various types of food materials are digested by their own *Bhutagni*, uplifted and intensified by *Antaragni (JatharAgni)*, which is further digested and metabolized by *Dhatvagni* to associate the body with the *bala* (strength) and *varna*(complexion) along with providing energy to the *saptha dhatus*. When the *Agni* is in a

normal condition it supports life unconditionally. When this *Agni* gets morbid or contaminated it becomes a cause for many diseases. It is also said that all the diseases have their origin in the imbalanced *Agni*, it is chief culprit in the causation of all psychosomatic diseases. The imbalance of *doshas* cause impairment in the normal body physiology, resulting in occurrence of diseases. The imbalance of these *dosha* in the form of pathological increase or decrease always depends on the status of *Agni*. If the *Agni* is functioning normally, the *dosha* also remain in an undisturbed form and support our body, mind and life. *Agni* is the physiological entity responsible for the balancing status of *dosha*. Hence understanding of *Agni* is one of the important concepts for the understanding of disease process as well as to prescribed principles of treatment.

Conflict of Interest -Nil

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