

CONCEPT OF AGNI: PRINCIPLE ASPECT OF AYURVED

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Abstract:

Agni is a Sanskrit word. Vedas and Upanishads have given much importance to Agni. Agni is also worshiped as deity. Agni is equivalent to fire. Fire is one of the panchmahabhutas. Agni is a unique concept in Ayurveda. There are total 13 types of Agni. Normal and healthy agni can give robust health and very strong immunity. Bad Eating food habits can cause impairment of Agni. Ayurved has described Asthavidhaharavisehsayatan that is the rules and regulations for Ahara. Different seasons have different actions on Agni. In the rainy season Agni becomes weak. Out of 13 types Jatharagni play important role in the digestion of food and the formation of Ahara rasa. This Ahara rasa is the primary constituent in the formation of further dhatus. Each Dhatus have its agnis and they nourish their dhatus and form the primary constituent of the next succeeding dhatus. Panchmahabhuta Agni play important role in the digestion of panchbhautik food and the formation of the main elements of doshas. Vitiation of agni results in Ama a toxic product formed due to impaired digestion.

Key words Agni, Ama, Jataragni Dhatvagni

Introduction

Agni is a derived from Sanskrit language which means fire. Agni in Indian Vedic literature is also considered as diety. Agni is said to represent all the gods, all concepts of spiritual energy that permeates everything in the universe.[1]Vedic literature and Ayurved has given lot of emphasis on Panchmahabhuta which are the five impermanent element namely Akasha(Space), Aap (water), Vayu(Air), Prithvi (Earth) and Agni (Fire).[2] It is also believed that whatever elements present in outer world same elements are present within the body also. Agni became a metaphor for immortal principle in man, and any energy or knowledge that consumes and dispels a state of darkness transforms and procreates an enlightened state of existence.[3]

Agni is also famously known as:[4],[5]

- **Pavaka** – sanctifier of everything;
- **Havyavahana** – one who carries the sacrificial butter;
- **Saptajihvi** – one with seven tongues (flames); consumes the sacrificial butter very fast;
- **Vahni** – travelling with wind;
- **Anala** – as one of the Vasus;
- **Hutashana**;
- **Chitrabhanu** – colorful light;
- **Jvalana** – glowing;
- **Vaiswanara**; big fire
- **Vibhvasu** – whose light is wealth.

Other names include Sikhi, Pingesa, Plavanga, Bhuritejah, Rudragarva and Hiranyakrit.

In Ayurveda Acharyas have given lot of importance to Agni. Commenter of Charak Samhita Shivdas Sen has said that one can hear a typical sound of Agni if one closes his ear with fingers.[6]AcharayCharak states one is dead if his fire is off, that's the level of importance given

to agni.[7]When Agni resides in kaya and its treatment is called Kayachikitsa.[8]Agni is representative of solar energy in living organisms. Its appearance in kaya is unique and is responsible for all the metabolic activities which take place in the body. All body entities like Bala (Strength), Varna(complexion), swasthya(health), utsaha(energy), Prabha (Lustre), Ojus(vitality)Shareerusha(tej), dehapushthiand vrudhi(growth of body elements) all are the functions performed by healthy Agni.[9] As its clear that all metabolism are happening under the cover of agni one needs to take proper balanced food for attaining bala and Arogya or else health will be deprived.[10] In yoga ratankar text also agni is said to be site of origin for strength or bala of body and hence it must be protected[11] Likewise impaired Agni causes ill health and can also cause death. Acharyas have mentioned Aharavidhividhanasie rules to be followed for intake of food. If not followed person can suffer from grahani[12] Doshas and dushyas constitute the body. Normal functioning of doshas or their vitiation depends on the state of Agni. And in turn food intake decides the state of Agni[13]

Viceversa Agni also gets influence by external conditions like change in season and food eating habits. Quality, as well as quantity both, affect the Agni. Asthavidhiaharavidhivishesayatan play major role on Agni.[14] While Ahara plays a critical role in preserving or destruction of Agni Abstinence from food can vitiate Agni in other words Agni cannot survive without food[15] Assessment of Agni is understood by its ability or capacity to digest food [16] Power of Agni determines the quantity of food to be consumed so that Bala is achieved[17] Balanced Agni maintains equilibrium in doshas and dushyas. But one should remember that this normalcy can be disturbed even there is minor irregularities in food eating habits.[18]

Ayurved states Agni is of 13 types. Jatharagni, seven Dhatvagnis, (rasa dhatu has its own agniRakta dhatu has its own agnilike wise seven dhatus have seven agnis and 5 PanchmahabhutaAgnis. Pruthvimahabhuta have its own agnilike wise 5 mahabhutas have its own Agni. Among all the 13 main and supreme agni is Jatharagni. This agni digests the food. Ahara rasa and mala are generated at this level of digestion.[19] The potency and efficiency of other agnis directly depend on this agni. [20]This Ahara rasa is further digested by Dhatu agnis. While Dhatvaagni are responsible for the nourishment of its dhatus and manufacturing vital aspects for next dhatus Five bhutaagnis bring about pak of five respective aharadravyas. [21]The action of bhutagni on respective aharaguna results in the production of certain elements which attribute to the formation of doshas. This Agni recedes within pitta dosha [22][23] but the digestion is performed by Agni only. Further, Acharya states thatAgni recedes in the Grahani organ when Agni is healthy grahani is healthy, and vice versa.[24]

Vitiation of Agni is the root cause of all the diseases [25] When Agni functions become weak then Ama is formed. This Ama becomes the cause of many diseases [26] It is formed due to the impairment of Agni. This toxic substance when formed further vitiates Agni [27] This Ama when gets associated with doshas cause sama dosha. This Sama dosha becomesan important constituent of disease.

Ayurveda states that no two people are alike. Everyone has a different constitution which is called Prakruti in ayurveda. Main prakrutis are Vata dominant, Pitta dominant and Kapha dominant. Each of thesehasunique features. Agni plays a major role in differentiating them. There are mainly four types of normal agnis. [28]

- 1) Samaagni : Agni functions are much more balanced, and function regularly and systemically. There is not much of dosha vitiation.
- 2) Vishmagni: This type of Agni behaves in an erratic way sometimes the ahara is digested properly and sometimes simple and laghuahara is also not digested properly. This kind

of Agni is mainly seen in vata prakriti persons. If Agni is vitiated mostly Vistabdhaajirna is seen in such patients

- 3) Teekshnagmi : This type of Agni is very powerful and performs digestion very well. Agni is capable of digesting guru as well as laghuahara. This type of Agni is seen mostly in Pitta Prakriti. If Agni is vitiated mostly Vidagdhaajirna is seen in such patients
- 4) Mandagni: This type of Agni is slow in digesting food. Normal digestion is comparatively slow even with light diet. If Agni is vitiated mostly Ama ajirna is seen in such patients

Conclusion

Agni is a unique concept described in Ayurved. All metabolic activities taking place in the body can be grouped under the 13 types of Agni. Agni plays an important role not only in the digestion of food but proper digestion generates healthy body tissues which result in optimum health. Balanced and proper functioning of Agni boosts immunity and gives strength to fight diseases.

In any Diseased before starting the treatment Amavastha is to be ruled out. If Agni is impaired Ama can cause dosha and dushya in samaavastha. Chikitsa should be the first to resolve the Ama avastha and restore the functions of Agni. Utmost care has to be taken for keeping Agni healthy.

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