

## CONCEPT OF AGNI AND ITS CLINICAL ASSESSMENT – A BRIEF REVIEW

<sup>1</sup>\*Dr. Suhas D. Naidu and <sup>2</sup>Dr. Lalitkumar V. Vithalani

<sup>1</sup>M.D. Kriya Sharir, Professor and HOD (Dept. of Kriyasharir), Sant Gajanan Maharaj Ayurved Medical College, Mahagaon, Kolhapur.

<sup>2</sup>M.D. Kriyasharir, Associate Professor and HOD (Dept. of Kriyasharir), B.S. Ayurved College, Sawantwadi.

Article Received on  
20 April 2019,

Revised on 10 May 2019,  
Accepted on 31 May 2019,

DOI: 10.20959/wjpr20197-15215

### \*Corresponding Author

**Dr. Suhas D. Naidu**

M.D. Kriya Sharir,  
Professor and HOD (Dept.  
of Kriyasharir), Sant  
Gajanan Maharaj Ayurved  
Medical College,  
Mahagaon, Kolhapur.

### ABSTRACT

IN twenty-first century we are living in an age of technological revolution. It has drastically affected our lifestyle along with alteration in dietary habits of society at large. This change in food habit by incorporation of fast food, frozen and preserved food, aerated and caffeinated drinks etc. has eventually resulted in manifestation of many problems related to gastrointestinal tract. *Ayurveda* is one of the oldest life science which has thoroughly explained the effect of diet and lifestyle on health of an individual. In *Ayurveda* concept of *Agni* is very specific and one of its kind among other existing sciences. *Agni* is systematically discussed in *Ayurveda* as it is the most significant entity for maintaining well-being of an individual. As per *Ayurveda*, *Agnimandya* is believed to be the root cause of most of the diseases

and treatment (*Chikitsa*) of *Agni* is the first line of treatment in *Ayurveda*. Hence it is imperative to understand the basic nature of *Agni* so as to take care of it for overall wellbeing of an individual. In the present study we have reviewed the basic concept of *Agni*, its types systematically and also discussed its importance and clinical assessment.

**KEYWORDS:** *Mandagni, Dhatwagni, Jatharagni, Jatharanal, Pachaka Pitta.*

### INTRODUCTION

*Ayurveda* is divided into eight main branches. *Kayachikitsa* is the first among *Ashtangas* (eight branches) of *Ayurveda*. *Agni* is of prime importance in *Kayachikitsa*, as *Kayachikitsa* is

nothing but the *Chikista* of *Agni*. Primary goal of *Ayurveda* is to conserve healthy status of an individual and for that purpose a physician must know the status of one's *Agni*.

In *Ayurveda*, the term *Agni* is used in the sense of power which converts substances from one form to another. *Jatharagni*, the most important *Agni* converts foodstuff in the form of substances which are acceptable by body. *Ayurveda* considers that *Dehagni* is the fundamental cause of life, skin texture, strength, health, nourishment, lustre, *Oja*, *Teja* and *Prana*.<sup>[1]</sup>

*Sushruta* one of the greatest stalwart of *Ayurveda* explains the qualities of *Swastha Purusha* (healthy person) by defining his physical and mental health. A person is considered to be healthy when, all three *Doshas* (*Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*) are in well balanced condition; the *Agni* is working normally; the *Dhatus* are normally formed and proportionally well balanced performing their respective functions; the *Malas* are properly formed and timely eliminated out of the body; the soul, mind and all other sense organs working well with pleasure and happiness. In short we can conclude that overall well-being of a person depends on the equilibrium of *Dosha*, *Agni*, *Dhatu*, *Mala*, soul, sense organs and mind.<sup>[2]</sup>

Dictionary meaning of the word disease- It is a particular abnormal condition that negatively affects the structure or function of part or all of an organism, and that is not necessarily due to external injury.<sup>[3]</sup>

While addressing process of disease formation, *Aacharya* has mentioned that weakened power of assimilation (*Agnimandya*) is the root cause of most of the disorders.<sup>[4]</sup> Hence it turns out to be important for an *Ayurvedic* physician to understand and study the concept of *Agni* thoroughly.

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1. To appraise, discuss, and elaborate the *Ayurvedic* concept of *Agni*.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

This article is founded on a review of *Ayurvedic* scripts. Materials related to *Agni* and other relevant topics have been collected. The main *Ayurvedic* texts used in this study are *Charaka Samhitha*, *Ashtanga Sangraha*, *Ashtanga Hridaya* and available commentaries on these texts. We have also referred to the various scientific journals to collect information on the relevant topics.

## Literature Review

### Agni

We all know that *Aahar* (diet) of a person plays an important role in the maintenance of good health and prevention of diseases. But ultimately it is the *Jatharagni* (power of assimilation) which will decide the fate of consumed substances. The whole domain of *Ayurvedic* treatment is based on the concept of *Agni*. Basically overall treatment plan in *Ayurveda* revolves around the management of *Agni*. In the word *Kayachikitsa* (internal medicine) the word *Kaya* is synonym of *Agni*. This depicts the importance of concept of *Agni* in the management of diseases.

*Acharya Yasaka* has given the etymology of the term *Agni*. The word “A” denotes root ‘I’, which means “to go”; “G” denotes the root ‘*Anja*’, means ‘to glitter’ or root ‘*Daha*’, meaning ‘to burn’ and ‘Ni’ means ‘to carry’. It means *Agni* carries everything in it. It moves everywhere and transforms substances, burns, assimilates, glitters and grows. In the text *Brahmasutra*, presence of *Agni* has been said to be the sign of life in the body.<sup>[5]</sup>

### Synonyms of Agni

In *Shabdakalpadruma* sixty-one synonyms of *Agni* have been piled up. These helps in explaining the nature and functions of the *Agni*, e.g., *Vaishvanara*, *Sarva Paka*, *Tanoonpata*, *Amivachatana*, *Damunasa*, *Shuchi*, *Vishwambhar*, *Rudra* etc. (*Shabdakalpadrum*).<sup>[6]</sup>

### Types of Agni

Basically *Agni* is uncountable because of its presence in each and every atom (*Parmanu*) of the body. Number of *Agnis* varies in various classical *Ayurvedic* texts as follow.

*Aacharya Charaka* has mentioned about thirteen *Agni*; one *Jatharagni*, five *Bhutagni* and seven *Dhatvagni*.<sup>[7]</sup> According to *Acharya Sushruta*, five types of *Agnis* are illustrated, viz. *Pachakagni*, *Ranjakagni*, *Alochakagni*, *Sadhakagni* and *Bhrajakagni*. There is an indirect reference of five *Bhutagnis* mentioned while describing the transformation of food stuff.<sup>[8]</sup> *Sharangadhara* has documented five types of *Pitta*. (*Pachaka*, *Bhrajaka*, *Ranjaka*, *Alochaka* and *Sadhaka*).<sup>[9]</sup> *Bhavamishra* has followed *Acharya Charaka* while describing types of *Agni*.<sup>[10]</sup>

According to the functions and site of action, *Agni* has been divided into 13 main types, i.e. one *Jatharagni* (*Jatharanala*), five *Bhutagni* (one for each *Mahabhuta*) and seven *Dhatvagni* (one for each *Dhatu*).

### 1. *Jatharagni*

*Jatharagni* is the bioenergy which is present in the *Jathara* (stomach and duodenum). It digests all types of food which we consume and transforms it into *Aahara Rasa* and *Mala*. 'Pitta' which is present in between stomach and large intestine is called '*Pachaka Pitta*'. It is dominant in *Teja* principle among five basic principles. It is lacking liquidity and hence called as '*Anala*' ('*Agni*'). *Agni* digests the food and splits it into useful part called '*Sara*' and unwanted part called '*Kitta*'.<sup>[11]</sup>

*Jatharagni Mandya* (i.e., less active state of *Agni*) causes production of *Vipkva* (semi digested) *AaharRasa* popularly known as *Ama*.<sup>[12]</sup> *Samataa* is a condition manifesting due to the union of *Ama* with *Dosha* and *Dushya* (*Dhatus* and *Mala*) resulting into the exhibition of various disorders.<sup>[13]</sup> Any pathology of *Jatharagni* will eventually affect the normal functioning of *Bhutagni* and *Dhatwagni* all over the body; subsequently causing manifestation of various illnesses. Hence one has to protect *Jatharagni* by means of proper selection of diet; qualitatively and quantitatively which is suitable to his state of *Agni* timely.

One, who does not follow rules of diet as mentioned in *Ayurveda* and consumes unwholesome diet due to greediness, ultimately gives a way to various diseases caused by the vitiation of *Grahani*.<sup>[14]</sup>

### 2. *Bhutagni*

*Bhutagni* is the one that is present in *Bhutas* (basic elements). These are in total five in number i.e., one for each basic element, namely – *Parthiva*, *Apya*, *Tejas* (*Agni*), *Vayavya* and *Nabhasa*. Each cell (*Dhatuparamanu*) consists of these five *Bhutagnis*, as each and every cell in our body is composed of the five basic elements. The food material which we consume also consists of the five basic elements. *Acharya Charaka* has mentioned that five *Bhutagni* digest their own element present in the food materials. After digestion of food by the *Bhutagni*, digested materials containing the elements and qualities similar to each *Bhutas* nourish their own *Bhautika* elements in the body.<sup>[15]</sup>

### 3. Dhatwagni

There are seven *Dhatus* in body viz. *Rasa*, *Rakta*, *Mamsa*, *Meda*, *Asthi*, *Majja* and *Shukra*. Each of them has its own *Agni* known as *Dhatwagni*. *Dhatwagni* transforms the essential *Dhatu* nutrients required for the formation of that particular *Dhatu* from the basic nutrients present in the *Aahar Rasa*.<sup>[16]</sup> As per *Aacharya Vagbhata*, *Dhatwagni* is subtle essence of *Jatharagni* which is situated in *Dhatu*. It's *Sada* (diminished power) and *Dipti* (increased power) causes *Dhatuvruddhi* and *Dhatukshaya* respectively.<sup>[17]</sup>

#### Types of Agni with respect to Dosha Bala-

*Agni* in the body is further classified into four types with respect to their '*Bala*'.<sup>[18-19]</sup>

**A) Teekshnagni-** *Agni* showing acceptance for all types of *Apachara* (qualitative and quantitatively variations) in *Aahar* is called *Teekshnagni*. Due to predominance of *Pitta Dosha* in *Agni Adhithana* (site of *Agni*), it becomes *Teekshna*.

**B) Mandagni** - *Manda Agni* is the one having no tolerance even to a small *Apachara* (qualitative and quantitatively variations). Due to predominance of *Kapha Dosha* in *Agni Adhithana*, it becomes *Manda*.

**C) Samagni** - *Samagni* exists in persons having balance of all three *Dosha* viz. *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha Dosha* in *Agni Adhishtana*. *Agni* at its normalcy is *Samagni*.

**D) Vishamagni** - Predominance of *Vata Dosha* in *Agni Adhithana* leads to formation of *Vishamagni*.

*Bala* of *Agni* is more in *Teekshnagni* as compared to *Mandagni*. In *Vishamagni*, *Bala* of *Agni* does not remain constant. It is variable, it can be more at one time or it may become less at another time.

#### Importance of Agni

Various types of *Agnis* have been discussed above out of which *Jatharagni* is of utmost importance because function of *Bhutagni* and *Dhatwagni* depends on it. While describing importance of *Agni*, *Acharya Charaka* states that when *Agni* ceases then that individual dies. When *Agni* of an individual remains in *Samyavastha* (balanced state), then that person remains healthy. He may lead a long, happy and healthy life. On the contrary when *Agni* of a person gets vitiated, the whole metabolism will be disturbed, resulting in ill health and manifestation of various disorders. Hence, *Agni* is said to be the base of life.<sup>[20]</sup>

**Clinical Assessment of *Agni***

In *Ayurveda* detail description of signs and symptoms of are given as follows.

**A) Signs and symptoms of proper functioning of *Agni* -**

- Adequate diet
- Timely evacuation of bowel and bladder
- Good strength and immunity
- Skin lustre and texture
- Proper functioning of all sensory organs

**B) Mild/ moderate malfunction of *Agni* –**

- Loss of appetite
- Lethargy
- Recurrent infections
- Constipation/diarrhoea
- Difficulty in micturition
- Improper functioning of sense organs,
- Depression

**C) Severe malfunction of *Agni* –**

- Collection of fluid in body (Ascites, oedema etc.)
- Loss of enthusiasm and general debility
- Improper sleep, etc.

Malfunctioning of *Agni* leads to production of *Ama*. Production of *Ama* may occur at *Jatharagni* (improper digestion in gastrointestinal tract), *Bhutagni* (Liver dysfunction) or *Dhatwagni* (disturbed tissue metabolism).<sup>[21]</sup>

**Classical principles of treating *Ama Dosha* -**

Management of *Ama Dosha* starts with *Pachana* (digestion of *Ama*) then *Deepana* (increasing digestive power) and lastly *Shodhana* (elimination of increased Dosha) after *Snehan* (internal/ external oil application) and *Swedan* (hot fomentation). *Shodhana* without *Ama Pachana* results in further complication as *Ama Dosha* is amalgamated within body tissues. Hence *Shodhana Karma* is not recommended as first line of treatment. The general treatment approach predominantly focuses on *Pachana* (digestion of *Ama*), *Deepana* (increasing digestive power), *Anulomana* (purgative) and *Shamana* (internal medication) to avoid further formation of *Ama*.<sup>[22]</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Basically, ideologies of *Ayurveda* are interlinked with observational facts of life in past which even have its importance in today's era. These principles of *Ayurveda* are based on strict experimental studies of several years. These are the outcome of extensive studies performed by stalwart *Aacharyas* and tested on various *Pramanas* (parameters) like *Pratyakshya*, *Anumana*, *Aaptopadesha* and *Yukti*. Several *Aacharyas* have tested these principles for many years and only then these are written in *Ayurvedic Samhitas*. While achieving materialistic prosperity somewhere we've neglected these advices. Hence vulnerability to diseases is greatly increased thereby barring quality of life. In this situation, a physician must have to educate patient regarding proper use these principles and accordingly modifying dietary habits for preventive and therapeutic purpose. In this regard concept of *Agni* is having utmost importance. Hence we hereby conclude that one should understand the concept of *Agni* and care should be taken for proper functioning of *Agni* as it is the one which is responsible for health of an individual.

## REFERENCES

1. Charaka S, Sashtri Kashinath, Pt, Chaturvedi Gorakhnath., Chaukhamba Bharti Academy; 2004. Chikitsanthana, 15/3.
2. Sharma PV: Editor, Sushruta Samhita of Dalhana, Sutrasthana; Chapter 15, Verse 45, Varanasi; Chaukhamba Vishvabharati, Oriental Publishers and Distributors, Ed. 1, 2010.
3. <https://www.google.com/search?q=disease+medical+defination&oq=disease+medical+defination&aqs=chrome..69i57.8331j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>
4. CharakaSamhita Part I Vaidyamanorama Hindi Commentry by Ravi Dutta Tripathi, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pratishthan, Delhi, Grahani Dosh Adhyay.
5. Shabdakalpadruma, Radhakantdev R, editors. Amar Publication Varanasi: Chaukhamba Samskrit Series, 1967.
6. Shabdakalpadruma, Radhakantdev R, editors. Amar Publication Varanasi: Chaukhamba Samskrit Series, 1967.
7. Charaka Samhita, Shastri K, Chaturvedi G., editors. Varanasi: Chaukhamba Bharti Academy, 2004.
8. Sushrut Samhita, Shastri A., editors. Varanasi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, 2005.
9. Tripathi B, editor. Sharngadhara – Samhita of Pandit Sharngadhara Charya 'Dipika' hindi. Varanasi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, 1994.p.



10. Shastri BS, Vishya RL, editors. Bhavaprakasha of Shri Bhava Mishra, The 'Vidyotini' Hindi Commentary, Notes and Appendix. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan, 1999.
11. 'Ashtanga Hridayam' of Vagbhata, with the commentaries (Sarvangasundara) of Arunadatta and (Ayurveda Rasayana) of Hemadri, Collected by Anna Moreshwara Kunte and Krishna Ramachandra Shastri Navare, Edited by Vaidya Hari Shastri Paradakara, Eighth Edition, Chaukhambha Orientalia, Varanasi, 1998; 12/10-12.
12. Upadhyaya Y: Madhava Nidanam, 1<sup>st</sup> part. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Publication, 2007, Amavatanidanadhaya.
13. Gupt A., Hridayam A: Varanasi: Chaukhambha prakkashan, 2009 publisher Doshopkramniya.
14. Byadgi PS: Ayurvediya Vikrti Vigyan & Roga Vigyan, Chaukhambha Publications, New Delhi, Edition 1, Vol. I, 2009.
15. Sharma RK, Das VB: Editor, Caraka Samhita of Agnivesa, Chikitisa Sthan; Grahani Dosa Adhyaya: Chapter 15, Verse 13, 14, Varanasi: Chaukhamba Krishnadas Academy, Vol. IV, 2009.
16. Sharma RK, Das VB: Editor, Caraka Samhita Of Agnivesa, Chikitisa Sthan; Grahani Dosa Adhyaya: Chapter 15, Verse 15-16, Varanasi: Chaukhamba Krishnadas Academy, Ed. 1, Vol. IV, 2009; 10-11. 12. Vaidya Yadavaji Trikamji Acharya, Charak Samhita, Chakrapani Tika, Chaukhamba Prakashan, Reprint, 2013.
17. Vaidya Yadavaji Trikamji Acharya, Charak Samhita, Chakrapani Tika, Chaukhamba Prakashan, Reprint, 2013.
18. Sharma PV: Editor, Sushruta Samhita of Dalhana, Sutrasthana; Aturupkramneeya Adhyaya: Chapter 35, Verse 24-25, Varanasi: Chaukhamba Vishvabharati, Oriental Publishers and Distributors, Ed, 1, Vol. I, 2010.
19. Upadhyaya Y: Editor, Astangahrdaya of Vagbhata, Sharir Sthan; Angvibhagsharir Adhyaya: Chapter 3, Verse 76, Varanasi: Chaukhambha Prakashan, Ed. 1, 2007.
20. Charaka S, Sashtri Kashinath, Pt, Chaturvedi Gorakhnath; Varanasi: Chaukhamba Bharti Academy; 2004. Chikitsasthana, 15/2.
21. Divya K, Tripathi JS, Tiwari SK (2013) Exploring Novel Concept of Agni and its Clinical Relevance. Altern Integ Med 2: 140. doi:10.4172/2327-5162.1000140.
22. Ashtanga Hridaya, Edited by Dr. Anna Moreshwar Kunte, Chaukhambha Surbharati Prakashan, Varanasi, Reprint Edition, 2002 SutraSthana, Doshopakramniya Adhyaya, 13/28,29.