

CONCEPTUAL STUDY OF AGNI AND ITS VARIATIONS

¹*Dr. Mahendra Kumar Sourtha ²Dr. Rajendra Singh¹Assistant Professor, Department of Kriya Sharir, Govt. Ayurveda College Sikar, Rajasthan.²Assistant Professor, Department of Samhita and Maulik Siddhant, Govt. Ayurveda College Sikar, Rajasthan.Article Received on
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*Corresponding Author

**Dr. Mahendra Kumar
Sourtha**Assistant Professor,
Department of Kriya Sharir,
Govt. Ayurveda College
Sikar, Rajasthan.

ABSTRACT

Agni is the prime factor which plays an important role in the maintenance of health. *Ayurveda* specially focus on the protection of the *agni*. *Agni* gets vitiated due to various reasons including *ahara* and *vihara*. The imbalance of the three types of *agni*, *jatharagni*, *bhootagni* and *dhatwagni* is responsible for the vitiation of *agni* and the production of *ama*. *Ama* is one of the main factors that cause the vitiation of *agni* and is responsible for producing many diseases. Pathologically *agni* has three types *mandagni*, *teekshnagni* and *vishamagni*. Vitiation of the *jatharagni* leads to many diseases like *ajirna*, *alasaka*, *visuchika*, *grahani* and *atisara* etc. The imbalance of *bhootagni* leads to the diseases like iron, deficiency anemia, calcium deficiency and electrolyte imbalance etc. Altered functions of *dhatvagni* cause *dhatu-pradoshaja vikara* like *rasa-pradoshaja vikara*, *rakta pradoshaja vikara*. Hence understanding the pathological states of *agni* is important in the treatment of various diseases.

KEYWORDS: *Agni*, health, *jatharagni*, *bhootagni*, *teekshnagni*.

INTRODUCTION

Agni in the body is a form of solar energy of the universe. It is responsible for many transformations in nature. It is responsible for all body's digestion and metabolism, pigmentation, body temperature, hunger, thirst, vision, thinking process and intelligence.^[1]

Types of Agni

Agni varies in various classical Ayurveda texts, as shown below

- *Charaka* (Cha.Chi.15/38): 13 types as *Jatharagni*-1, *Bhutagni*-5, *Dhatwagni*-7
- *Sushruta* (Su.Su.21/10): 5 types as *Pachakagni*, *Ranjakagni*, *Alochakagni*, *Sadhakagni* and *Bhrajakagni*.
- *Vagbhata* (A. Hr. Sha.3/70): as *Bhutagnis* – 5, *Dhatvagnis* – 7, *Dhoshagni* – 3, *Malagni* – 3.
- *Sharangadhara* (Sha.Sa.Pu.Kh. -5/47-50) five pittas only- *Pachaka*, *Bhrajaka*, *Ranjaka*, *Alochaka* and *Sadhaka*.
- *Bhavamishra* (Bh.Pu.Kh.3/169,180)- Same as *Charaka* and *Vagbhata* classification or enumeration of *Agni* varies from author to author.

Agni can be classified as *Jatharagni*, *Bhutagni* and *Dhatwagni*

1. *Jatharagni*

- Present in *jathara* or *koshta*.
- Responsible mainly for the digestion of ingested food material.
- considered as most important because each and every nutrient that one ingests comes to the *jathara* and is then subjected to the action of *jatharagni*.
- Types: four types according to the performance of digestion in the human being.
 - Vishamagni*,
 - Theekshnagni*,
 - Mandagni* and
 - Samagni*.^[2]

This classification is based on two aspects; according to *prakriti* of an individual and the according to *dosha* involvement. In the first aspect, *Vataprakrti* individual is more prone to *Vishamagni*, *pitta prakrti* to *theekshnagni*, *kaphaprakrti* to *mandagni* and *samagni* in *samaprakrti* individual or healthy people.^[3] In the second aspect, the division is based on the pathological aspect, where the vitiated *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha dosha* results in *Vishamagni*, *Teekshnagni* and *Mandagni* respectively.^[4]

2. *Bhutagni*

- Five Agni from *Panchamahabhuta* (five basic elements) as *akashagni*, *vayvagni*, *tejagni*, *jalagni* and *prithvyagni*.

- *Bhutagni* are part of the *jatharagni*. It acts upon the *bhootamsa* of the ingested food and converts heterogeneous food material into a homologous form of the body.

3. *Dhatwagni*

- *Dhatwagni* is the miniature form of *Jatharagni*. Parts of *jatharagni* are located in the *dhatu* constitute the *dhatwagni*.
- Total seven in number. Present in each of the seven *dhatu*s as *rasagni*, *raktagni*, *mamsagni*, *medagni*, *asthyagni*, *majjagni* and *shukragni*.
- *Dhatwagni* is responsible for the conversion of these homologous materials to its own *dhatu*s.

Impairment of all these three types of *Agni* leads to the *mandagni*. It is also considered the main cause of all the disease formation.^[5]

Causes of vitiation of *agni*

1. Disturbed pattern of daily regimen and stressed lifestyle.
2. Consumption of unwholesome diet and *viruddha ahara*.
3. Eating foods too fast or the involvement in activities while taking food.
4. Fasting, irregular dietary timing or consumption of *snigdha* food.
5. Diet which is not according to the *prakriti* of an individual.
6. Psychological factors such as anger, greed, anxiety, grief and depression.
7. Consumption of food in unhygienic conditions can lead to infections.
8. Presence of other diseases which directly affect the digestive functioning.

Vitiation of *agni* can also be correlated with the *dosha* predominance.

1. *Vata prakriti*-*Vishamagni*- Disturbed digestive and metabolic activities.
2. *Pitta prakriti*- *Tikshnagni*- Hypermetabolism
3. *Kapha prakriti*- *Mandagni*- Hypometabolism and loss of appetite.^[6]

Concept of *Ama*

- Due to *mandagni* there is formation of '*Aama*'; which is unripe / undigested food. *Aama* further causes *Jatharagni*, *Dhatvagni dushti*. The concept of *Aama* is the most important fundamental principle of *Ayurveda* is understanding the physio-pathology of the diseases.
- *Aama* is produced from *Ahararasa* when it is not properly digested. In the case of *Jatharagnimandya*, the *Ahara rasa* is the undigested food but in the case of the rest of

agni, it is the metabolites that are undergoing a process of metabolism by these *agni*. The place of origin of *Aama* is given as *Amashaya*. But considering the presence of *Agni* at different levels *Aama* can be produced at different levels such as *bhootagni*, *dhatwagni* and at the different sites in the body.^[7]

Symptoms of *ama*

Srotorodha (Obstruction in *Srotas* /body channels), *Balabhramsha* (decreased physical and immunological strength), *Gaurava* (feeling of heaviness), *Anilmudhata* (decreased activity of *Vata Dosha*), *Alasya* (laziness), *Apakti* (indigestion), *Nisthivata* (repeated spitting due to increased salivation), *Malasanga* (inadequate removal of wastes from the body), *Aruchi* (Anorexia) and *Klama* (exhaustion without any type of work) – these all the symptoms of *Ama* stated by *Acharya Vagbhata*.^[8]

Diseases caused due to the ama: Many diseases can be caused due to *ama* formation like *ajirna*, *alasaka*, *visuchika*, *grahani*, *atisara* etc.

DISCUSSION

- Healthy status of the body, as well as the disease condition depends on *Agni*. The great scholar *Vagbhata* says that all diseases can cause due to *Mandagni*.^[9] *Aama* affects the natural function of the *Agni*. It vitiates *Agni*, *Dhatvagni*, *Mahabhutagni*, etc. If this *Ahararasa* is *Apakva* due to improper function of *Jatharagni*, results in *ama dosha*.^[10] *Aama* can be produced at various levels. When it manifests due to improper function of *Jatharagni*, it causes so many diseases of gastro-intestinal origin like *ajirna*, *alasaka*, *amavisha*, *amdosha*, *visuchika*, *urustambha* and *grahani roga* etc.
- Imbalance of *bhootagni* leads to the diseases. For example, imbalance in the *agni* of *teja mahabhoota* of the *rakta* leads to iron deficiency anemia. Imbalance of the *prithvi mahabhoota* in the *asthi* leads to the calcium deficiency. Imbalance of the *jala mahabhoota* in the *rasa dhatu* leads to electrolyte imbalance etc.
- Altered functions of *dhatvagni* cause *dhatu-pradoshaja vikara* like *Rasa-pradoshaja vikara*, *Rakta Pradoshaja Vikaras*, etc.^[11] Due to improper functioning of *dhatvagni sama dhatu* is formed i.e., *Sama Rasa*, *Rakta*, *Mamsa*, etc. This incompletely formed dhatus may also hamper the nutrition of the next consecutive *dhatu* to be nourished. When there is a defect in the function of *bhutagni*, it will not be able to digest *aahara*.^[12] *Dhatwagni* impairment leads to the *rasapradoshaja vikara*, *raktapradoshaja vikara*,

mamsapradoshaja vikara, medapradoshaja vikara like *madhumeha, amavata, jvara, shwasa, sthaulya* and inflammation.

- The pathogenesis of *Prameha* is caused by decreased potency of *Medodhatwagni*.^[13] Due to lack of potency in *Medodhatwagni* excessive fat stores in the body and characteristic features of *Medodhatwagni vridhhi*.^[14]
- Parathormone, calcitonin, these hormones act on the metabolism of calcium. These hormones maintain blood calcium level.^[15] Parathormone enhances the resorption of Calcium from the bones (Osteoclastic activity) by acting on osteoblast & osteoclasts of the bone. Role of Parathormone in the activation of Vit. D is very essential for Calcium absorption from the G.I. tract. Calcitonin stimulates osteoblastic activity & facilitates the deposition of calcium on bones & inhibits the resorption of calcium from bones.^[16] Both hormones acts on bone and their functions are as similar as *Asthidhatwagni*.^[17]

CONCLUSION

- *Agnidushti* plays a crucial role in the production of disease.
- *Ama* is one of the main factors that causes vitiation of the *agni*. Treatment of *ama* is important in the diseases.

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