

## ROLE OF AGNI IN AYURVEDA

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**ABSTRACT**

A healthy body creates a healthy mind. Mental health is a result of physical health. A healthy body is shaped by an effective stomach. The connection between the gut and the brain is established through this. In the process of *paka*, *Agni* acts as an unchangeable agent. The *Agni* is responsible for performing the necessary digestion, absorption, and assimilation of food that has been consumed in order to maintain life.

**KEYWORDS:** Agni, Mahasrota, Panchmahabhuta, Tanmatra.

**INTRODUCTION**

*Agni* has been regarded by *Ayurveda* as being a crucial entity for the preservation of healthy health. According to *Ayurveda*, if *agni* is not functioning normally, an illness will develop. The pathology and diagnostic are based on its own theories of triguna (*sattva - raja - tama*), *Tanmatra*, *Panchamahabhuta*, *Tridosha* (*vata - pitta - kapha*) and *agni*. The basic physics and biology of *Ayurveda* are entirely different from the understanding of the structure and function of the human body in modern basic sciences.

The main texts are the *Brihatrayi* (*Charak Samhita*, *Sushrut Samhita*, and *AshtangaSangraha*) and *laghutrayi* (*MadhavNidana*, *Sharangdhara Samhita*, and

*Bhavaprakash Samhita*) texts with and considered the most respected authentic source books. This ancient classical knowledge base of *Ayurveda* is still available today.

*Agni* is a key element of our body's metabolism and digestion according to *Ayurveda*. Assimilation, absorption, and digestion of ingested food are essential for the sustenance of life and are carried out by *Agni*. The term "*Agni*" in *Ayurveda* refers to the process of digesting food and producing metabolic byproducts.

*Agni* transforms food into energy, which is in charge of all the essential bodily processes. *Dehagni* is therefore regarded by *ayurveda* as the origin of life, appearance, strength, health, sustenance, luster, *oja*, *teja*(energy), and *prana* (life energy). (Cha. Chi. 15/3.)<sup>[1]</sup>

On the significance of *Agni*, *Acharya Charak* stated that when *Agni's* function is interrupted, a person dies; nevertheless, when *Agni* is *sama*, a person is completely well and lives a long, happy, and healthy life. Yet, a person's entire body's metabolism would be disrupted if their *Agni* was vitiated, leading to illness and disease. *Agni* is regarded as the foundation (mool) of life as a result. (Cha.Chi.15/4.)<sup>[2]</sup>

Modern medicine holds that all of our body's cells (*dhatu paramanu*) undergo metabolic activities, division, and multiplication from birth till death. The basic building block of the body is the cell. According to *Charak*, the body's component parts will inevitably become infinite if further broken down into atoms since these cells or atoms are incredibly many, incredibly small, and ultrasensory. *Vata* and the character of the action are the activating factors in the conjunction and disjunction of cells (Cha. Sha.7/17).<sup>[3]</sup> According to *Shushrut*, "different *dhatu*s" are used to create the "*Avayavaas*" (Su.Sha.4/25-30).<sup>[4]</sup> The aforementioned cells are thus "*dhatu paramanus*" according to *Charak* and *Shushrut*. A biological energy is always required for these ongoing operations in every cell; otherwise, it would be quite difficult for our body to survive. According to *Ayurveda*, *Agni* supplies the same biological energy. Our body's cells (*dhatu paramanu*) store two different types of biological energy provided by *Agni*: kinetic and potential.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

This concept is based on a review of *Ayurvedic* texts. Materials related to *kala*, *agni* and other relevant topics have been collected and compiled. The main *Ayurvedic* texts used in this

study are *Charak Samhita*, *Susruta Samhita*, *Astangsangraha*, *astanghridaya* and current articles.

### Concept of Agni

*Ayurveda* has described an important factor of digestion and metabolism in our body as *Agni*. Ingested food is to be digested, absorbed and assimilated, which is unavoidable for the maintenance of life, and is performed by *Agni* in *Ayurveda*, the term *Agni* is used in the sense of digestion of food and metabolic products. *Agni* converts food in the form of energy, which is responsible for all the vital functions of body.

### Concept of PITTA & AGNI in Ayurveda

This is a question of debate to say *pitta* and *agni* are one and the same. Is there any separate *agni* apart from *pitta*? Or *pitta* itself is *agni*? Different views have been suggested regarding *Pitta* and *Agni* by different *Acharyas*. For this *Sushruta* said no separate *agni* is found other than *pitta*. It is due to the properties of hotness in *pitta* leading to burning cooking and such similar functions performed by *pitta* are considered as *Agni* itself & it is called *antaragni*. During diminished state, use of similar properties of drugs advised & during increased state resorting to cold treatments have been Advocated, no mention of *Agni* found in the texts. Large food molecules are broken down to smaller molecules both mechanically & chemically by the action of *pitta*. Further *pitta* helps for the process of transporting these smaller molecules across the intestinal wall which facilitates absorption & lastly undigested portions of food and waste products are removed from the body.

### Types of Agni

These are

*Jatharagni* – One *Agni* present in the stomach and Duodenum.

*Bhutagni* – Five *Agni* from five basic elements.

*Dhatwagni* – Seven *Agni* present, one in each of the Seven *dhatu*s.

Accordingly, they are classified into three groups, Namely *Jatharagni*, *Bhutagni* and *Dhatvagni*<sup>16</sup>.

#### (A). *Jatharagni*

1. *Jatharagni* is the *Agni* or bioenergy present in the *Jathara* (stomach and duodenum).

According to *Acharya Dhanvantari*, it is the *Kala* known as “*Pittadhara*,” situated at the entrance of the *Pakvashaya* (intestine) and acting as a bolt to the door of the Pathway/channel

of food. It is responsible for the Duration of Ayu (Life), *Swasthya* (health), *Prabha* (valour), *Ojas* (essence of the dhatus), *Bala*(strength) of all the *Bhutagni* and *Dhatvagni* depends on *Jatharagni*.

*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 *Dhatusparamanus* (tissues). It is also responsible for separation of the food material Into the essence portion (*Prasad*) and the waste products (*kitta*) in our body.

*Jatharagni* is directly related to *Dhatvagni* or bio-energy 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 control the functions of all Other 12 *Agnis*. All the *Agnis* are totally dependent on The status of *Jatharagni*.

*Acharya Sushruta* has given names of all the *Pitta* in the form of *Agni* as *Pachkagni*, *Ranjakagni*, *Sadhakagni*, *Bhrajakagni*, *Alochakagni*. In *Charak Samhita* thirteen types of *Agni* are stated viz,- one *Jatharagni*, seven *Dhatwagni* and five *Bhutagni*. *Acharya Vagbhata* follow the same pattern as *Sushruta Samhita* and *Charak Samhita* both *Vagbhatas* described different types of *Agni*, viz. – *Audaryagni*-one, *Bhutagni*- five, *Dhatvagnis* –seven, *Doshagni*–three and *Malagni*- three<sup>10</sup>, *Pitta* –five. There are eighteen types of *Agni* according to *Sharangadhara Samhita* *Bhutagni*- five, *Dhatvagnis* – seven, *Doshagni*–three and *Malagni*- three.

*Bhavamishra* accepted same as *Charak Samhita*<sup>12</sup>. *Jatharagni* is the chief among all types of *Agni* supplying strength to all the other kinds of *Agni*, present especially in the *Jathara Pradesh* (stomach and duodenum). *Jatharagni* is also classified into four categories According to its performance of digestion in the human Being namely *Vishmagni*, *Tikshanagni*, *Mandagni* and *Samagni*.<sup>[1]</sup>

**Samagni:-** When all *Doshas* are in equilibrium state, *Agni* is called as *Samagni*. Persons having *Samagni* are healthy. Digestive functions are proper; there are no episodes of gas, colic and constipation. *Samagni* digests and assimilates food properly at the proper time. The *Samagni* is characterized by regular and strong appetite that is easily satisfied with normal food. This thus maintains the quality of the *Dhatus* (supportive tissues) of the body.

**Vishamagni:-** The *Agni*, which gets affected by irregular qualities of *Vatadosha* is called as *Vishamagni*. Sometimes it digests properly sometimes not. There are episodes of alternating cycles of heavy appetite with lack of appetite and food intake is irregular in *Vishmagni*. This type of *Agni* switches between digesting food quickly and slowly digesting food. *Vishmagni* is disturbed by variability of *Vata*. During *Vishmagni* improper digestion and metabolism takes place i.e. sometimes performs normal functions followed by abnormal one and manifest flatulence, abdominal pain, upward movement of *Vata* inside the *Koshtha*, diarrhea and heaviness in abdomen, intestinal gurgling and straining exercise for evacuation of stools. *Vishmagni* creates different types of *Vatavyadhi* and is responsible for *krurakoshtha*.

**Tikshnagni:-** When *Agni* gets affected by hot, liquid, and *Tikshna* qualities of *Pitta*, digestive capacity of *Agni* increases tremendously so that it can digest any type of food. *Tikshnagni* is a state of very quick digestion of food, regardless of the type of food. When the power of digestion is elevated from normal to above normal, food digests very quickly and produces hunger or excessive desire for food within short span of time. After digestion of food, the throat, the mouth cavity and the lips become dry with a feeling of burning sensation. This condition is termed as “*BhasmakRoga*” in *Ayurveda*. *Tiksnagni* state gives rise to manifestation of *PittajaVikaras*.

**Mandagni:-** When *Agni* gets affected by *Snighdha* (oily), *Sheet* (cold), *Manda* (slow) qualities of *Kapha*, it is called as *Mandagni*. It can't digest food even in small quantities because plenty of *Aamadravyas* remain in *Aahar Rasa*. The *Sama Rasa* while circulating in the body being unable to enter *Strotas* and cause *Strotorodha* vitiates *Dhatus* and cause diseases. “*Mand*” means slow acting. *Mandagni* is a state of slow digestive power or low digestive capacity. Here the *Agni* is disturbed by *Kapha*. Because of excessive *Kapha*, there are episodes of poor appetite, depressed metabolism and tendency to weight gain despite optimal food consumption. Excessive mucus or phlegm production and congestion are prominent features. Those who are having *Mandagni* eat very little and find it difficult to digest even the small amount of food and manifest heaviness in abdomen and head region,

cough, dyspnea, excessive salivation, vomiting and weakness of the body. *Mandagni* state may leads to manifestation of many *kaphajavikaras*.

### **(B). *Bhutagni***

*Bhutagnis* are fine and subtler *Agnis* located in the five *Mahabhutas* (five basic elements). Every cell of the body is consists of the five *Mahabhutas*.

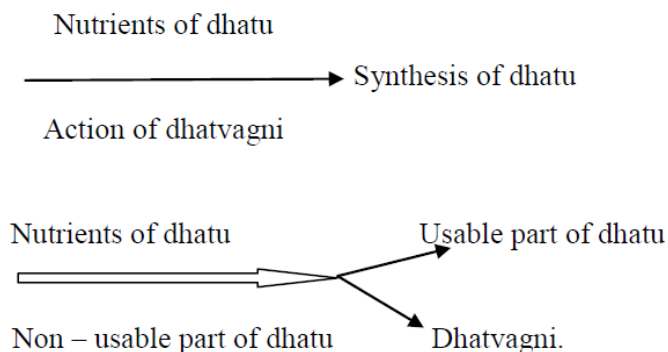
There are five *Agnis* in each of the five basic elements, namely – *Akashagni*, *Vayvagni*, *Tejoagni*, *Aapyagni* and *Parthivagni*. All the nutrients in this world also consist of the same five basic elements with their respective *Agni* or bioenergies. Thus, *Bhutagni* digests all the ingested nutrient and converts them to absorbable form and provides nutrition to the whole body. These *Agnis* are responsible for the molecular metabolism and help in synthesis and break down of materials at molecular level.

The five *Bhutagnis* digest their own part of the ingredient present in the food materials. Digested materials containing elements and qualities identical to each *Bhuta* nourish their own unique *Bhautika* elements of the body after the digestion of the food by the *Bhutgni*. Food present in the stomach and duodenum is first acted upon and integrated by *Jathragani* and then *Bhutagni* acts on it. The functions of *Jatharagni* can be correlated with the digestion in the stomach and duodenum and the functions of the *Bhutagni* can be equated with the conversion of digested materials in the liver.

### **(C). *Dhatvagni***

*Dhatus* are the support systems of the body. All the seven *Dhatus* (seven element tissues of the body) possess its own *Agni* to metabolize the nutrient materials supplied to them through their own *Srotas* Viz,- *Rasagni* in *Rasa Dhatu*, *Raktagni* in *RaktaDhatu*, *Mansagni* in *Mansa dhatu*, *Medoagni* in *Medadhatu*, *Asthyagni* in *Asthidhatu*, *Majjagni* in *Majjadhatu*, *Shukragni* in *Shukradhatu*. Each *Dhatvagni* has got a specialty to synthesize and transform the constituents suitable to its particular *Dhatu*. Each *Dhatvagni* synthesizes and transforms the essential nutrient of *Dhatu* required for that particular *Dhatu* or cell from the basic nutrients present in the *Anna Rasa*. This action is a sort of selective action. *Acharya Charaka* has mentioned the fact that each *Dhatu* contain their own *Agni*, by which they digest and transform the materials supplied to them to make the substances alike to them for assimilation and nourishment.





## CONCLUSION

*Agni* is responsible for the development of strength apart from the digestive process, which has two facets, namely strength to prevent the incidence of illness and decay in the human body and strength to perform physical exercises. Many intermediate, undigested or unmetabolized byproducts are produced due to vitiated *Agni* and appear to block the body's micro channel. Therefore, *Doshas* accumulate and ultimately precipitate in the form of disease. *Ayurveda* emphasizes that most diseases are the byproducts of *Agnidushti*, hence restoring *Agni* and improving *Agnidushti* is the core concept of treatment of every disease.

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