A CRITICAL INTERPRETATION ON AGNI: A REVIEW STUDY

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Abstract: Ayurveda has identified as Agni a significant factor in our body's digestion and metabolism. The ingested food is to be digested, absorbed and assimilated, which is inevitable for life maintenance and is performed in Ayurveda by Agni. The word Agni is used in the sense of food and metabolic products being digested. Agni converts food into energy, which is responsible for all of the body's vital functions. Regarding the importance of Agni, Acharya Charaka said that the individual dies after the stoppage of Agni’s function. The individual will be totally safe, and lead a long, happy and prosperous life. But if a person's Agni is vitiated, the entire metabolism in his body will be disrupted, contributing to ill health, and creating body disease. Therefore it is said that Agni is the Mool of creation.

Keywords – Agni, Ayurveda, Metabolism.

BACKGROUND

61 synonyms of Agni were compiled at Shabdakalpadruma. Those synonyms help to clarify the Agni’s existence and purpose. Tanoonpata, Amivachatana, Damunasa, Shuchi, Vishwambhar, Rudra etc.

Solar power is the source of conversion in living beings of any sort. In living beings Agni represents this solar power. Because of its occult power Agni has the capacity to convert the substance in any form. Maintaining physiological actions in a state dependent on Agni’s normal state while Agni’s abnormal state contributes to pathological changes, and the absence of Agni leads to the death of the living being. Ayurveda has identified as Agni a significant factor in our body's digestion and metabolism. In Ayurveda the term "Agni" is used in the context of food and metabolic products being digested

The destruction of Agni leads to the death of the individual. If Agni held in Samyavastha, that person will have a long life span without disease affliction. One of the factors noted by Acharya Sushruta in Swastha Purusha’s meaning is "Samagni" which shows the importance of Agni Samyavastha for Swasthyata. Ayurveda philosophy has a specific definition of Purusha and Prakruti that are mutually dependent and explained by principles such as Panchmahabhuta Siddhanta

Lok purusha -samayavada, 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 and Tyaktadravatva Karma etc. is called Agni. Agni Mahabhuta present in Sharira in the form of Jatharagni which is responsible for Ayu, Swasthya, Varna, Bala, Utsaha, Upachaya, Prabha and hence considered as Oja and Prana of deha.
Agni is considered to be the reason for creation and is related to Divinity. Agni is one of living beings' vital substances which shows the high importance of Agni in the body. It brings about the Ahara transformation and helps in the creation of Rasadi Saptadhatu, Upadhatus, and Malas. Some alteration in Agni function may result in malabsorption and disruption to the body's normal function. The Samyata of all these is purchased by the Samagni and Purush is called Swastha. When this Agni subsides in the body, it induces Vikruti, and it may also lead to a person's death. It is divided mainly into 3 groups, namely, Jatharagni, Dhatwagni, and Bhutagni.

Agni’s forms are listed in different classical Ayurvedic texts, as shown below:

• About 13 Agni’s 6 - Jatharagni-1, Bhatagni-5, Dhatwagni-7 described Acharya Charaka
• According to Acharya Sushruta, 5 types of Pitta7- Pachakagni, Ranjakagni, Alochakagni, Sadhakagni and Bhrajakagni are described
• Acharya Vagbhata has identified the Agni- Bhutagni-5, Dhatvagni-7, Doshagni-3 and Malagni-3 forms.
• Acharya Sharangadhara identified 5 Pitta8 forms- Pachak, Bhrajak Ranjak, Alochaka and Sadhak.

Acharya Bhavamishra preceded Acharya Charaka and Vagbhata Acharya9. Agni was divided into 13 forms by role and place of operation. Those are:

1. Jatharagni- An Agni in the stomach and duodenum
2. Bhutagni- Five Agni of five essential elements
3. Dhatwagni- Seven Agni present, one in seven Dhatus each.

They are, therefore, divided into three categories, that is

• Jatharagni, Dhatvagni and Bhutagni;

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Agni - related materials were collected from various Ayurvedic text books, authentic websites, reputed magazines, authentic literatures, manuscripts, Sanskrit dictionary, etc.

JATHARAGNI

Jatharagni is the Jathara (stomach and duodenum) Agni, or bioenergy present. Grahani is Agni’s site. It is largely responsible for digestion of the food being consumed. In Dhanwantari’s opinion, it is the Kala known as "Pittadharā;" Kala responsible for producing Pitta, situated at the entrance of the Pakvashaya (intestine) and functioning as a bolt to the door of the food channel / pathway. It is responsible for the longevity, fitness, colour, Ojas (Dhatu essence), power of all the Bhutagni and Dhatvagni. The Grahani’s strength is from Agni himself, and Agni’s strength is from Grahani. When the Agni is undergoing vitiation, Grahani also gets vitiated as the Agni undergoes vitiation and causes diseases10.
Jatharagni is also responsible for the division of the Ahara Rasa in our body into the Prasad Bhag and Kitta bhag\(^1\). All of the Dhatvagni depend on Jatharagni’s natural, safe state. Unless the Jatharagni is Tikshana or Manda, this will cause the Dhatvagni to behave inappropriately or retarded. Eventually, the disturbed behaviour contributes to multiple disorders. The role of all other 12 Agni’s is regulated by Jatharagni. All the Agni’s rely totally on Jatharagni’s status.\(^12\)

Jatharagni is also classified into four categories according to its human digestion performance\(^13\). Namely Vishamagni, Mandagni, Tikshanagni and Samagni.

1. **VISHAMAGNI**

This type of Agni switches quickly and slowly between digesting food. When the Vata Dosha affects this Agni it leads to various types of Udargata Roga. Vata caused irregularity has features such as Adhmana, Shoola, Udavarta, Atisara, Jathara Gaurava and Antrakunjana and Pravahana, sometimes sluggish, sometimes natural, and sometimes symptoms such as those above\(^14\).

2. **TIKSHANAGNI**

Tikshanagni is a state where Ahara digests very fast, no matter what type of food. Acharya Sushruta states that food digests very quickly and produces Kshudha when the power of digestion is increased from normal to above normal. The throat, buccal cavity and lips become dry with a burning sensation, Santapa, and Daha when the food is digested. According to Ayurveda this disease is known as "Bhasmak Roga"\(^15\).

3. **MANDAGNI**

"Mand" means slow-moving. The Mandagni's meaning is slow digestive power or ability to digest. Those who have Mandagni eat very little and are unable to digest even a small amount of Ahara. Udarashirogaurava, Shwasa, Kasa, Praseka and Chhardi, Gatrasada \(^16\).

4. **SAMAGNI**

The Samagni digests and correctly assimilates food in due time. So this increases the Dhatus quality. Samagni individuals are still happy. Because of the Tridosha balance status, whatever the individual eats, Agni digests the food if consumed in the right quantity and at the right time, the rules governing the consumption of food shall apply.\(^17\)

5. **BHUTAGNI**

Bhutagni is the one with a basic item (Bhutas) in it. Each Bhuta, or part of nature that makes up our body structure, is said to have its own Agni. These fires take the essential nutritional parts and metabolize them to support self. In any of the five basic elements, namely, there are five Agni’s.

1. **Prithvi or Parthiva Agni**

2. **Apya Agni**

3. **Taijasa or Agneya Agni**
4. Vayaveeya Agni

5. Akasheeya / Naabhasa Agni

Through and every cell in our body is composed of five or five essential elements of the Mahabhuta. Of course every Dhatu Paramanu also consists of these five Bhutagni. All the nutrients we consume in this world are often made up of the same 5 essential elements with their respective Agni or bioenergy’s. Thus, with regard to the five basic elements, they are completely similar with their Bhutagni in our body cells as well as in all the external nutrients we ingest for the nutrition of our body. Acharya Charaka said the five Bhutagni digest their own part of the ingredient present in the materials of the food. After the Bhutagni have digested the food, Digested materials containing similar elements and qualities of each Bhuta nourish their own unique Bhutika elements of the body.

**DHATVAGNI**

Dhatvagni means the Agni that is inside the Dhatus. All seven Dhatus contain their own Agni to metabolize the nutrient materials supplied to them through their own Srotas.

1. Rasagni is present in the Rasa Dhatu.
2. Raktagni is present in the Rakta Dhatu.
3. Mamsagni is present in Mamsa Dhatu.
4. Medagni present at the Dhatu Meda.
5. Asthyagni is present in the Asthi Dhatu.
6. Majjagni is present in Majja Dhatu.
7. Shukragni is present in Shukra Dhatu.

The components thus produced after Dhatvagni’s action on the food (in circulation) aid in the creation of the same Dhatus, sequentially nourish the next Dhatus, generate energy and Dhatus toxins or waste components which are intended to be expelled.

Every Dhatvagni in every Dhatu synthesizes and transforms the essential Rasa Dhatu required for that particular Dhatu or cell from the basic nutrients present in the Anna Rasa or essence of the diet we eat. Every Dhatvagni has a specially designed to synthesize and transform the constituents that suit their particular Dhatu.

That is a kind of selective action. Acharya Charaka stated the fact that the seven Dhatus which are the body’s support contain their own Agni, and by their own Agni they digest and turn the materials supplied to them in order to render the substances for assimilation and nutrition alike.
AGNI VAISAMYATA AND AGNI SAMYATA

The existence of all the different kinds of Agni is known as Agni Samya in their required Pramana, Gunas, and Karma. Whereas in these ways Vruddhi and Kshaya are known as Agni Vaishamya. Vruddhi and Kshaya are respectively known as Tikshana, and Manda. Both of these are anomalous and cause numerous diseases in the body19.

IMPACT OF AGNI VAISHAMYA

When the three types of abnormal Agni mentioned above is present in Sharira, it will not be proper to digest the food. In Mandagni, the food will be Apaka, in Tikshanagni’s case it will be Dagdhapaka and in Vishamagni’s case it will be Pakwa- Apakwa and also different from one digestion time to the other19.

CONCLUSION

Acharya Charaka mentioned that different types of dietary materials are digested by their own Bhutagni, encouraged and enhanced by Antaragni (Jatharagni), who is further digested and metabolized by Dhatwagni to associate the body with the nutritional strength, complexion and happy life along with providing the seven Dhatus with energy. When the Agni is in a normal condition it provides unconditional support for life. When this Agni is unhealthy or corrupted it is a source of several diseases. This is often claimed that all the diseases originate in the morbid Agni i.e. a depressed Agni is the prime culprit in causing all psychosomatic diseases. We know the morbid doses because diseases by attacking and disturbing the normality of the Dhatus of the body that is the cornerstones of defence, immunity and health maintenance. The morbidity of these Doshas in the form of an increase or decrease in pathology is always dependent on the Agni state. The Doshas always remain in an undisturbed state if the Agni operates normally and sustain our body, mind and life. On the opposite, if the Agni gets disturbed, the Doshas get disturbed too and cause many illnesses. Hence understanding Agni in one of the important concepts for understanding the process of disease as well as prescribed therapeutic principles.

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