



Concept of *Agni* in Ayurveda

1.Raushan Jahan

Post Graduate Scholar, Department of Rog Nidan Evam Vikriti Vigyan, Government Ayurvedic college and hospital, Patna, Bihar, India.

2.Amarendra Kr.Singh

Professor and HOD, Department of Roga Nidan Evam Vikriti Vigyan, Government Ayurvedic college and hospital, Patna, Bihar, India.

ABSTRACT

Health is the state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. According to *Ayurveda*, when *Doshas*, *Agni*, *Dhatu*s, and *Malas* are in *Sama-awastha* and *Indriya*, *Aatma*, and *Mana* all are working properly then this state is considered as "*Swasthaya*". To maintain the state of health *Agni* should be normal (*Samagni*). *Agni* is the invariable agent consisting digestive and different kinds of hormones, enzymes, and co-enzymes activities which plays important role in the process of digestion and transformation.. The diseased state of body is also due to the vitiation of *Agni*. *Ayurveda* considered that no disease ever be developed without the vitiation of *Agni*. Thus, the principle of *Agni* becomes important to understand healthy and diseased state.

Keywords

Agni, *Pawak*, *Tej*, *Anal*, *Agnimandya*, *Ajirna*, *Mandagni*, *Udargatropa*, *Bhasmakropa*, *Antaragni*.

Introduction

The concept of *Agni* of Ayurveda, which refers to the manifold functions ascribed to pitta is at once comprehensive. It not only includes chemical agencies responsible for *Ahārapacana* in the *kostha* (corresponding to gastro-intestinal digestion), which leads to separation of *sārabhāga* (nutrient fraction) of the *Ahara* (food) from the *kittabhāga* (the indigestible or undigested residue of the food) but also metabolic events-energy, synthesis and maintenance metabolism. (*Astanga hrudya sutra* 12:11)

Aim and Objective

To emphasize literature knowledge of all the aspects of *Agni*.

To elaborate the Ayurvedic and modern approach towards *Agni* or *Pitta*.

Materials & Method

This study is based on literature review. Materials has been collected from Ayurvedic Texts of *Charaka Samhita*, *Susrutha Samhita*, *Ashtanga hrudaya*, *Astanga sangrah*, *Kashyapa Samhita*, *Bhavaprakasha* with different commentaries. Modern books and research articles

DISCUSSION

Agni in *Ayurveda*, is reflected in the concept of *pitta* of this system.[1] The term *pitta* is derived from the root - to heat or 'to burn.[2] This term is seen to have three meanings viz., तप ऐश्वर्ये, तप दाहे and तप सन्तापे. [3] (a) तप *santape* refers to the generation of heat:[4] (b) तप *dōhe* relates to the act of burning of the nutrition consumed[5] and (c) *Tap aisvarve* refers to that factor which is responsible to make one achieve the eight kinds of benefits,[6] are obtained from the *Bhattoji's Siddhāntakaumudi* and These references would therefore furnish the *vyākaraṇa* version of the term *pitte*. From the point of view of Ayurveda, pitta has been described as agni

(fire), since it performs fire-like actions i.e. *pāka*, which refers to *pācana* (digestion); *Dahana* (burning, combustion or oxidation) including *Bhinna samghāta* (splitting); *Tapona* (heat production), *parinama* (conversion), *parā- veti* (transformation), *prakāśana* (illumination), *rañjana* or *varṇakara* (colouration) and *prabhākara* (to cause lustre).

In a general sense, the term *kaya* or body itself has been equated to *agni*. [7] Caraka has recorded Marici as having stated that "it is only *agni*, which is located in pitta, that gives rise to beneficial or adverse consequences according as it is in normal or abnormal state of functioning. [8] Clarifying the implication of the term *pittāntargata*, used in above description, *Cakrapāṇi* has observed that, this term does not mean that the pitta of the body is flaming fire and it only refers to the phenomenon of heat which is associated with fire. [9] The implications of these two aspects of *pitta-vyāpāra*, are the digestion of food and its transformation into various functional and structural factors of the body.

The question if pitta and *agni* are identical or different has been raised and answered by *Suśruta* in the 21st chapter of the *sutrasthana* of his *Samhita*. The passage under reference runs as follows "It may now be asked, if pitta is the same as *Agni* or it is something different. This question may be answered by stating that pitta is the same as *agni*, since it performs *dahana* [10] (burning, combustion or oxidation) *pacana* (digestion) and similar actions performed by fire, hence pitta is known as *antaragni*. [11]

A careful study of the existing editions of ancient Ayurvedic classics and allied literature shows that pitta performs functions similar to those of *agni*.

Further, a proper appreciation of the physical structure (Composition) of pitta described in terms of *pañcabhūtas* may go a long way in the clarification of the *agneyaguna* of this factor. According to *Caraka*, *Suśruta* and *Vāgbhaṭa*, the composition of pitta is dominated by *agnibhūta*, [12] Caraka, as well as *Vāgbhaṭa* have stated that pitta is the fluid (*sāra*) and liquid (draw).

Vāgbhaṭa has clearly stated that pitta is *Pañcabhautic* and it is *Drava* in consistency, in spite of which, it performs actions, similar to *Anala* (fire- like), in the course of the process of digestion, largely due to the actualisation of its *Tejas* component (discarding its liquidity-*Dravatva*). This fact is inferred from the way in which it performs *Pākādi* karmas, viz., it digests food, separates *sāra* from *kitta* of the food. It is because of this, it is known as *Pacakapitta*. [13]

By implication, the pitta complex would appear to contain as one of its essential constituent elements, a substance possessing *Aagneya-guna* by virtue of which it (the pitta) is the process of digestion of food. able to perform various chemical actions, implied in the process of digestion of food.

The concept of *Agni* of Ayurveda, which refers to the manifold functions ascribed to pitta is at once comprehensive. It not only includes chemical agencies responsible for *Ahārapacana* in the *kostha* (corresponding to gastro-intestinal digestion), which leads to separation of *sārabhāga* (nutrient fraction) of the *Ahara* (food) from the *kittabhāga* [14] (the indigestible or undigested residue of the food) but also metabolic events- energy, synthesis and maintenance metabolism.

In addition, it is seen to comprehend photo and chemo synthetic processes. *Pacakapitta* known variously as *Jātharāgni*, *kosthāgni*, *Antaragni*, *Pācakāgni* and *Dehāgni* etc.; while being located in its own place in an area between *Amāśaya* and *Pakvāśaya* [15], directly participates in the digestion of food and at the same time, lends support to and augments the functions of the remaining pittas, present elsewhere in the body. [16]

It is held that the *Pacakapitta* contributes moieties of itself to the seven *Dhātvaṅnis*, and supports and augments the function of the latter. [17]

Types of Agni In Our Body

It would be seen from the foregoing that the Ayurvedic concept of *Agni* includes, not only five kinds of pittas but also, the *Dhatvaṅnis* and *Bhūtvaṅnis*.

According to Caraka Samhita, read together with its main commentary by *Cakrapāṇi Datta*, the number of *Agnis* enumerated are over 13 as shown below-
Antaragni 1, Bhūtāgni 5, Dhātvaṅni 7. [18]

On the other hand, *Suśruta* is seen to have described only five, *Rañjakūgni*, *Alocakāgni*, *Sādhakāgni* and *Bhrājakāgni* [19]. There is however an indirect reference in *Suśruta Samhitā* to five *Bhūtāṅnis*, in the brief description made to the transformation, which foodstuffs undergo in the organism. When these five *Agnis* are taken into consideration, the total number of *Agnis* according to *Suśruta* would be ten [20].

Agnis viz. Pācakāgni

Vāgbhaṭa is seen to have reckoned-following twenty three *Agnis*.

- 5 *Pittas*
- 5 *Bhūtāgris*
- 7 *Dhātvaṅnis*
- 3 *Doṣāṅnis*, [21]

Of the more recent authorities, *Sarngadhara* is seen to have recognised five *pittas* only [22]. On the other hand, *Bhāva Mīśra* is seen to have followed *Caraka* and *Vāgbhaṭa* [23].

Physical characteristics and properties of *pitta* or *Agni*

The general physical characteristics and properties of *pitta* or *Agni*, as could be gathered from the available addition of the work of *Charaka* [24], *Susruta* [25], *Kashayap* [26], *Vagbhata* [27] *Sharangadhara* [28], *Bhava-Misra* [29].

Colour	Consistency	Taste	Smell	Other properties
<i>Suklaruna varja</i> (Colour other than red-and white)	<i>Sara</i> (fluid) Laghu	<i>Katu</i> (Acrid)	<i>Visra</i> Fleshy Vaigandhya (unpleasant smell)	<i>Sattva</i> <i>Usna</i> (hot) <i>Tikṣna</i> (keen sharp)
<i>Panduvivarjit</i>	<i>Drava</i> (liquid) (light)	<i>Amla</i> (sour) normal	<i>Putigandha</i> (putrid smell)	
<i>Nila and Pita</i>	<i>Isat</i> -or <i>Anatisneha</i> (slightly viscous)	When <i>vidagdha</i> <i>Tikta</i> (bitter)		

Functions of *Pitta*:-

According to *Caraka*, who has recorded *Marici*, in his *Samhitā*, as having stated that "Digestion or indigestion, visual perception or impairment of it; the normal or abnormal body temperature; the normal or abnormal colour of the body; courage or fear; anger or cheerfulness; lucidity or confusion of mind and such opposite traits are the functions of *pitta* [30]

. According to *Susruta*, *pitta* in its five varieties, imparts colour (*Rāgakṛt*), promotes digestion and metabolism (*paktikṛt*) forms *ojas* (*ojakṛt*) promotes vision (*Tejaskṛt*), causes intellect (*Medhākṛt*) and body heat (*Uṣmakṛt*) [31].

In the opinion of *Vāgbhaṭa* *pitta* is responsible for the causation of body-heat; it contributes to vision, confers *prabhā* (lustre of the body) and is responsible for *Buddhi* and *Medha*, courage or valour and *Mardana* or softness of the body [32].

***Jatharagni* (Macrofire):** *Jatharagni* is said to be supreme among all other types of *Agni*'s because all types of *Agni* depend on the quality and quantity of *Jatharagni*. Including the *Vridhi* and *Kshaya* of *Bhutagnis* and *Dhatwagnis* are depend on it. [cha.chi.15/39].

It is *Injathara* (stomach and duodenum). According to *Ashtanga Hrudayam* *Jatharagni* is present in *Grahani* (duodenum).

Jatharagni is the most important because every ingested food first comes to *Jathara* and is subjected to the action of *Jatharagni*. *Jatharagni* digests the food nutrients that consist of *Pancha-Mahabhutas* transforms it for utilization by the respective *Dhatus Paramanus*. It also separates the food material into *Prasada* (essence portion) and *Kitta* (waste products) in our body.[33]

***Jatharagni* is also classified into 4 categories according to predominance of *Doshas*:[34]**

Sr. No.	Doshik Predominene	Agni Dushti	Associated pathology
1	<i>Vata</i>	<i>Vishamagni</i>	Disturbed digestive and metabolic activities.eg. <i>Udargata roga</i>
2	<i>Pitta</i>	<i>Tikshnagni</i>	Hypermetabolism eg. <i>Bhasmak roga</i> .
3	<i>Kapha</i>	<i>Mandagni</i>	Hypometabolism eg. <i>Ajirna</i>
4	<i>Sama-Doshas</i>	<i>Samagni</i>	Healthy state of body.

Ritu and Jatharagni: *Jatharagni* is *Prabala* in *Hemanta* and *Shishira Ritu*. And *Manda* in *Vasant*, *Varsha* and *Pravritta Ritu*. [Ch.Su 6]

Bhutagni (Microfire):The physical matter in the universe is formed by the combination of five *Bhutas*. Whatever thing is available and is used in therapy is created from the five *Bhutas*. Five *Bhutagni*'s located in the five *Mahabhutas*. They digest their own part of element present in the food materials. After the digestion of food by *Bhutagni*, digested material containing the element and qualities similar to each *Bhutas* nourishes their own specific *Bhautika* elements of the body. [Ch.chi 15/13, Su. su 46/53].

Causes of vitiation of *Agni*:-[35]

Dietary factors:- Excessive fasting, indigestion, overeating, irregular eating, and inappropriate food materials.

Incompatible activities:- Improper administration of *Panchakarma* therapies, emaciation because of disease, seasonal perversions, suppuration of natural urges, lack of physical activities

Psychological factors:- Mental tension, emotional instabilities like anger, anxiety, fear, lust, greed, jealousy, depression etc.

Significance of *Agni*:[36]

All the body entities such as *Bala*, *Varna*, *Swasthya*, *Utsaha*, *Upchaya*, *Prabha*, *Ojus*, *Shareerausma (Teja)*, *Dehapushti*, *Vridhhi* are all the function of *Agni*. [Ch.chi.15/3] *Agni* and *Retas* are the sources of strength.Hence one must protect them. (Yogratnakar)

Proper functioning of *agni* results in sustainance of good health and life.While impaired *Agni* causes ill health or even death. [Ch.chi 15]

1) Physiological significance:-[37]

Agni is one of the most important aspects which affects the health status of human being. It is central root of life as majority of the diseases are caused due to the derangement of *Agni*. All the functions of the body like segregation, digestion, absorption, assimilation, conversion of food into body elements and tissues and elimination of toxins and waste from the body is performed by the *Agni*. *Agni* is also destructive to pathogens. The unhealthy and undigested is referred as '*Ama*' in *Ayurveda* and it is nothing but a toxin or pathogen responsible for diseases. Proper functioning of *Agni* is essential for normal digestion, circulation, strength, colour, complexion, immunity, nourishment, enthusiasm, intelligence, and many other factors.

This affects both physical and psychological state of the human being and makes coordination between both which leads to the healthy lifestyle.

2) Pathological significance:-[38]

Malfunctioning of the *Agni* leads to poor digestion, improper circulation, poor complexion, poor immunity, low energy levels, and lethargy. Thus, promoting the proper functioning of *Agni* is treating the root cause of disease, according to *Ayurvedic* principles. Hypofunctioning of *Agni* leads to the formation of *Aama*, which is responsible for diseases. Therefore, understanding the relationship between *Agni* and *Aama* is important in treating the diseases.

Agni and Disease:-[39]

Aamadasha, *Alasaka*, *Ajirna*, *Aamavisha*, *Urusthamba*, *Grahini*, *Visuchika* etc are diseases related to *Agni*.

Vishamagni when affected by *Vata Dosh*, it leads to pain, paralysis, and *Udargatarogas*.

Tikshnagni is when affected by *Pitta Dosha*, it digests food quickly and produces hunger which causes *Bhasmakaroga*.

Madagni is when affected by *Kapha*, it leads to anorexia, loss of appetite etc

Mandagni and Vishamagni leads to accumulation of *Aama* and *Rasa Dhatu Dushti* which produces symptoms like *Sttorodha, Balabhransha, Aalasya, Nishthiva, Malasanga and Aruchi*.

Hypo functioning of Dhatvagni leads to the formation of *Aama* in *Dhatu*, which results into improper *Dhatu Vriddhi*.

Hyper functioning of Dhatvagni utilizes nutrients quickly and destroys the *Dhatu* itself, which results into *Dhatukshaya*.

In old age potency of Agni is lost, which leads to degeneration, decay, atrophy, and defective metabolic functioning followed by disease pathogenesis.

CONCLUSION

As it is explained in many *Samhita's* that *Agni* is vital component in the process of digestion and transformation. It plays an important role in maintain health. *Agni* also contributes to strength, lustre, *Ojasa, Tejasa, and Prana* (life energy). *Samagni* resembles the healthy physical and mental status, while vitiated *Agni* results into diseases condition. In short, *Agni* has significant role to maintain body homeostasis, body functioning, metabolism of body and proper functioning of body. Thus, the well managed interior fire will surely be the key factor for the evolution of good health in successive generation.

REFERENCES

1. अग्निरेव शरीरे पित्तान्तर्गतः। Caraka: Sūtra 12: 11.
2. तप संतापे । Suśruta: Sutra 21: 5
3. तपः ऐश्वर्ये –diondi gana-(तप्यते)
तप दाहे –suradi gana- (तापयनि, तपयति)
तप संतापे –bhoadi gana- (तपति) Siddhantakaumudi.
4. तपति ऊष्माणमुत्पादयतीति पित्तम् । Siddhantakaumudi.
5. तापयति दहति मुक्तमाहारजातं इति पित्तम् । Siddhantakaumudi.
6. तप्यतेऽष्टविधमार्गणमादिकमिति पित्तम् । Siddhantakaumudi.
7. जाठरः प्राणिनामग्निः काय इत्यभिधीयते । यस्तं चिकित्सेत्सीदन्तं स वै कायचिकित्सकः ॥ Bhoja: Quoted by Śiva dāsa Sena in his Commentary on Caraka: Sutra 30:28.
8. मरीचिरुवाच – अग्निरेव शरीरे पित्तान्तर्गतः कुपिताकुपितः शुभाशुभानि करोति । Caraka: Sutra 12: 11.
9. पित्तान्तर्गत इति वचनेन शरीरे ज्वालादियुक्तवह्निनिषेधेन पित्तोष्मरूपस्य बहेः सद्भावं दर्शयति Cakrapāṇi on Caraka: Sura 12:11.
10. दहनं दाहः, पचनं पाकः, आहारादेः । Dalhana on Suśruta: Sutra 21:9.
11. तत्र जिज्ञास्यं किं पित्तव्यतिरेकादन्योऽग्निः ? आहोस्वित् पित्तमेवाग्निरिति ? अत्रोच्यते न खलु पित्तव्यतिरेकादन्योऽग्निरुपलभ्यते, आग्नेयत्वात् पित्ते दहनपचनादिष्वभिप्रवर्त्तमानेऽग्निध्रुपचारः क्रियतेऽन्तराग्निरिति... ।
Suśruta Sutra 21:9.
- 12.(a) Caraka: Śārtra 7:16.
(b) पित्तनाग्नेयम् । Suiruta Sutra 42: 5.
(c) Aṣṣangasangraha: Sutra 20.
13. पञ्चभूतात्मकत्वेऽपि यत्तैजसगुणोदयात् ।
त्यक्तद्रवत्वं पाकादि कर्मणानलशब्दितम् ॥ Astangāhṛdaya: Sutra 12: 10.
14. पचत्यन्नं विमजते सारकिट्टौ पृथक्तया । Astangāhṛdaya : Sura 12:11.
15. तत्र पक्वामाशयमध्यगम्। (Ibid 10).
16. तत्रस्थमेव पित्तानां शेषाणामप्यनुग्रहन् । करोति बलदानेन पाचकं नाम तत्स्मृतम् ॥ Astangāhṛdaya: Sutra 12:10.
17. स्वस्थानस्थस्य कायाग्नेरंशाः धातुषु संस्थिताः ।

तेषां सादातिदीप्तिभ्यां धातुवृद्धिक्षयोद्धवम् ॥ Aangahydaya Sutra 11:34.

- 18.charak chikista15:38
- 19.susruta sutra 21:10
- 20.susruta sutra 46:526
21. Aṣṭhngahydaya Sutra 12, and śarīra 3.
22. Sarngadhara; Pūruakhanda: 5th. Chapter.
- 23.Bhavaprakasa Prathamakhanda: Sarira 3.
- 24.Caraka:Sutra 1:60 and Charaka sutra 20:15
- 25.Susruta:Sutra 21:11
- 26.Kasyapa.
- 27.Astangahridya:sutra1:11
- 28.Sarangadhara :Purvakhanda5:29
- 29.Bhavaprakasa Purvakhanda 3:120
- 30.Charaka sutra12:11
- 31.SUsruta(sutra 15:4)
- 32.Astangahridya(sutra 11:2-3)
- 33.*Astang Sangraha*, Kaviraj Atridev Gupt, Edition 2014.Chaukhamba Publication (ISBN: 9789381954980)
34. *Charak Samhita* part 2. Acharya Vidyadhar Shukl & Prof. Ravidatta Tripathi, Edition2015 CSP Publication (ISBN:9788170845096)
- 35.*Charak Samhita* part 2.Acharya Vidyadhar Shukl & Prof. Ravidatta Tripathi, Edition2015 , CSP Publication (ISBN:9788170845096)
- 36.Charaka chikitsa 15, part 2. Acharya Vidyadhar Shukl & Prof. Ravidatta Tripathi, Edition 2015. CSP Publication (ISBN:9788170845096)
- 37.a)) *Charak Samhita* part 2. Acharya Vidyadhar Shukl & Prof. Ravidatta Tripathi, Edition 2015. CSP Publication (ISBN:9788170845096)
- b) *Ashtang Hrudayam*, Dr. Shailaja Shrivastava, Edition 2017. Chaukhamba Publication (ISBN: 9788176371155)
- c) <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3221079/>
38. *Astang Sangraha*, Kaviraj Atridev Gupt, Edition 2014.Chaukhamba Publication (ISBN: 9789381954980)
- 39.a) *Sushruta Samhita* Part 1, Kaviraj Dr. Ambikadatta Shastri, Edition 2014. Chaukhamba Publication (ISBN: 9788189798192)
- b) *Charak Samhita* part 2. Acharya Vidyadhar Shukl & Prof. Ravidatta Tripathi, Edition 2015. CSP Publication (ISBN:9788170845096)
- c) *Ashtang Hrudayam*, Dr. Shailaja Shrivastava, Edition 2017. Chaukhamba Publication (ISBN: 9788176371155)