A REVIEW ARTICLE ON PHYSIOLOGICAL ASPECT OF “AGNI”

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ABSTRACT

The term Agni, in common language, means fire or we can say the bio-energy of the body is Agni. It converts food into the form of energy which is responsible for all the vital functions of the living creative. Agni maintains its integrity and performs its vital activities, by converting- in Pakadi karmas or bio-physical or bio-chemical processes- the foods consumed in various ways- licked, masticated, drunk etc., not only into its various structural and functional constituents but also to provide the Shakti or energy necessary for proceeding with its innumerable vital activities. According to the functions and site of action, Agni has been divided into 13 types, i.e. one Jatharagni, five Bhutagni and seven Dhatvagni. Jatharagni is the most important one, which digests four types of food and transforms it into Rasa and Mala. The five Bhutagnis act on the respective bhaunrikaportion of the food and thereby nourish the Bhutasin the body. The seven Dhatvagni act on the respective dhatus by which each Dhatu is broken into three parts. In this way, the entire process of transformation consists of two types of products – Prasad (essence) and Kitta (excrete). The former is taken for nourishment while the latter one is thrown out, which otherwise defiles the body if it stays longer.

KEYWORDS: Agni, Jatharagni, Bhutagni, Dhatvagni, Sara, Kitta.
INTRODUCTION

The factor responsible for forwarding the *rasa* and *rakta* (blood) etc. tissues in next (higher) *dhatus* e.g. the transformation process in the body has been indicated as *agni*. Again the factor which stands first in all the individuals.\[^1\] About the importance of *Agni*, *Acharya Charak* has mentioned that after stoppage of the function of *Agni*, the individual dies, and when the *Agni* of an individual is *sama*, then that person would be absolutely healthy and would lead a long, happy, healthy life. But, if the *Agni* of a person is vitiated, the whole metabolism in his body would be disturbed, resulting in ill health and disease. Hence, *Agni* is said to be the base (mool) of life.\[^2\]

*Agni*- its utility in Health- The main functions of internal (bodily) *agni* are *dahana* (oxidation or combustion) and *paka* or *pachana* (physical and/or chemical transformation) of the *ahara*.\[^3\]

Types of *Agni*

"Agni" is innumerable because of its presence in each and every dhatuparamanu(cell) of the body. But, enumeration of the number of Agnis varies in various classical Ayurvedic texts, as shown below. *Charaka* has mentioned about 13 Agnis.\[^4\] *Jatharagni*-1, *Bhutagni*- 5, *Dhatvagni*-7

1. *Jatharagni*

"Jatharagni" is mainly concerned with chemical processes involved in gastro intestinal digestion or we can say digestion in Jathar or Koshta. *Acharya Charaka* says that Kosthagnis considered to be the leader of all factors concerned with metabolism in the body. All other Agnis are derived from it. Their activities or otherwise, are dependent upon an increase or decrease of Jathargni.\[^5\] According to Vagbhatta Pitta is stated to be located in an area between the Pakwashay and Amashay; in its constitution, it is, *Panchabhautic*; it is *drava* or liquid in consistency, in spite of which it performs action similar to *Anala* or *Agni*, largely due to the accession of its *tejas* component over the rest. This fact is inferred from the way in which it performs *pakadikarmas* (chemical actions) viz., it digests the food, and separates the *sara* (the nutrient fraction) from the *kitta* (the residue fraction).\[^6\]

2. *Bhutagni*

According to Charak the digestion of food by *jatharagni* leads to the breakdown – *sanghatbheda* of the former into five distinct physiochemical groups viz., *parthiva*, *apya*, *parvata*, *shakti*, and *rajas*.
agneya, vayava and nabhasa.[7] The agni moiety present in substances belonging to each group is, then, stated to digest the substance of that group, leading to a radical change in their qualities- vilakshanaguna. Thus, food substances are rendered fit for being assimilated into and built up as parts of the corresponding bhuta class of substances present in dhatus. This process of assimilation is stated to be mediated, as it were, by the seven dhatwagnis, present in each dhatu.[8]

According to Sushruta this animated organism is composed of five mahabhutas and the food of living organic being necessarily partakes the character of its corporeal components. The food which consists of the five mahabhutas, is digested, and its turn, by five bhutagnis and each of its principles proceeds to augment its own analogue (sajatiyata) in the human organism.[9]

3. Dhatvagni
Agnis concerned with the pakas of ahardravyas previously dealt with by five species of dhatvagnis. Dhatvagnis are seven in number, corresponding to the seven dhatus. They are Rasagni, Raktagni, Mansagni, Medagni, Asthyagni, Majjagni and Shukragni. According to Charak the nutrients that support the body are subjected to paka again, being acted upon by the seven dhatvagnis, leading to the formation of two products, the kitta and prasada.[10]

Four functional states of the agni[11]
1. Mandagni
Due to the influence, predominantly, of kapha. The one which does the delayed pachan of the food even though taken in very less quantity, is called as Mandagni. Complications are Udarpidaa, Heaviness in Shiras, Prasek, Chardiand Shvaas.

2. Tikshnagni
Due to the influence, predominantly, of Pitta. Tikshnagni easily digests even a very heavy meal, in a very short space of time. It is stated to produce parched throat, palate and lips, heat and other complication.

3. Vishmagni
Due to the influence, predominantly, of Vata. In this state, the action of agni is irregular and fitful. It sometimes helps the process of complete digestion and, at other times, produces
distention of the abdomen, colicky pain, constipation of the bowel dysentery, ascites, heaviness of the limbs and loose motions.

4. **Samagni**

Due to the influence of the normally equilibrated *doshas*, which would represent the normal states of the functioning of the *agni*.

**CONCLUSION**

After a detailed discussion on *Agni*, it is concluded that according to *Ayurveda*, the *gunas* (qualities, properties) potentially present in *ahardravyas* are activated by *jatharagnipaka* and actualized by *bhutagnipaka* in the final stages of digestive process, in the *adho-amashya* or *pittashay* or *pachyamanashay* before they are utilized in *dhatupaka*. The various factors of the body like life, complexion, strength, health, metabolic process, growth and development, lusture, *ojas* and *tejas*, various factors responsible for transformation and metabolism of the tissues and even *prana* (life) are due to *agni*. Until the digestive fire is in balanced (*yukta*) stage, individual remains healthy for a long period and when it becomes abnormal and imbalances (*vikrata*), the individual become ill. If the digestive fire is completely lost, the person dies. So *agni* is the root of life.

**REFERENCES**


