

A Systematic Review on *Agnidushtias* a foremost element in Diseases causation

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Abstract

Every individual wishes a disease free life but is inevitable to suffer from some sort of disease or discomfort at various stages of life. *Ayurveda* describes various concepts related to the physiological functioning and biological response; *Agni* is one of such concept. It is the digestive and metabolic fire of the body. In modern era of fast developing technology, industrialization and increasing population have made life very fast and full of stress. To adjust in such get-up people are constrained to change their life style, food habits and type of food which hampers *Agni*. Improper functioning of *Agni* leads to various gastrointestinal disorders as

well as various metabolic disturbances. If the *Agni* gets vitiated, the whole metabolism in body would be disturbed, resulting in ill health and disease. *Vagbhata* says that *Mandagni* is the root of all diseases. This article emphasized on the conceptual understanding of *Agni*, *Agnidushti* and its relation in disease causation.

Keywords-*Agni*, *Jathragni*, *Agnidushti* (*Agni* Vitiating)

Aim and Objective

To work on the concept of *Agnidushti* (*Agni* Vitiating) in circumstance of disease causation.

Material and Methods

Only textual materials have been used for this review, from which various references have been collected.

Introduction

The qualities of healthy individual as describe in *Ayurveda* include equilibrium of all three *Doshas*, normal state of *Agni*, *Saptadhatu*, *Trimala*, pleasant sound, pleasant mind and sound sense perception.¹ *Agni* has given prime importance in the maintenance of health as well as causation of disease. *Ayurveda* emphasizes that all the diseases are the result of weak state of *Agni*.² *Ayurveda* has described *Agni* as an important factor for digestion and metabolism in our body. In *Ayurveda*, the term “*Agni*” is used in the logic of digestion of food and metabolic products. *Agni* converts food in the form of energy, which is responsible for all the vital functions of our body. *Agni* is important element of body that is ‘*Poshak*’ for *Deha*, *Dhatu*, *Oja*, *Bala* and *Varna*. This *Agni* digests the *Bahyaahara* and then nourishes the whole body.³

Etymology of Agni

1. According to the 5th century BCE *Sanskrit* text *Nirukta Nighantu* in section 7.14 sage *Sakapuni* states that the word *Agni* is derived from three verbs-from

‘going’, from ‘shining or burning’, and from ‘leading’ the letter “a” is from root “i” which he claims implies ‘to go’, the letter “g” is from the root “anj” meaning ‘to shine’ or “dah” meaning ‘to burn’, and the last letter is by itself the root “ni” which means ‘to lead’⁴

2. From root *aj*, which in *sanskrit* means “to drive” and mirrors in Indo-European languages (Latin *ago*) in the sense of “nimble, agile”.⁵

Synonyms of Agni

- *Vaishwanar*- Just as the illuminating power in the fire is a part of *Agni*’s own effluence, even so the heating power in the food’s digestive and appetizing power is also a part of *Agni*’s energy or potency.⁶
- In *Shabdakalpadruma*, 61 synonyms of *Agni* have been compiled. These synonyms help in explaining the nature and functions of the *Agni* e.g. *Vaishvanara*, *SarvaPaka*, *Tanoonpata*, *Amivachatana*, *Vishwambhar*, *Rudra*, *Antaragni*, *Vahni*, *Jyotis*, *Archis*, *Sarvpak*, *Tanupak*, *Shuchi*, *Homa*

(Ritual), Svaha, Audarya, Tejas.

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- *Pachakagni*.
- *Pavakam*⁸
- Fire-The Sanskrit word *Agni* means fire.⁹
- Apart from Vaidik literature *Rudra, Mahadev, Sharva* and *Pashupati* like several synonyms are seen in *Brahmana* literature. As per *Kriya-Sharir* is concern, *Jatharagni, Dehagni, Dehoshma, Kayagni, Pachakagni* are few synonyms of *Agni* applied thoughtfully by *Aacharya*.

Site (Sthana) of Agni

- *Pittadharakala* situated between *Amashaya* and *Pakvashaya* is considered as the seat of digestive fire, and owing to its action of absorption of food, is called the organ of assimilation. This anatomical location is known as *Grahani*. It is situated above the umbilical region and is supported and strengthens by the gastric fire. It retains the food till it is fully digested and discharges it on completion of digestion into the large intestine situated on either side of the abdomen. But if it is vitiated by the weakness of

gastric fire it is go even undigested food.¹⁰

- In *Bhel samhita* it is mentioned that the *Soma Mandal* is situated in the *Nabhi*, while the *Surya Mandal* is situated in the centre of *Soma Mandal* and *Agni* is situated in the centre of the *Surya Mandala*.¹¹
- As per *Sharangdhar Samhita*, *Pitta* present in *Tilpramana* in *Agnyashaya* is in the form of *Agni*.¹²

Relation between Agni and Pachaka Pitta

That *Pitta* resides in between the *Aamashaya* and *Pakvashaya* though composed of all the five *Mahabhutas* yet has the predominance of qualities of *Tejasmahabhuta* and deficiency of qualities of *Apbhuta*. Hence it is devoid of the qualities of liquids. Helped by exciting causes such as *Vata*, moisture and others it attends to the functions such as burning and digestion, so obtain the name *Agni*; it digests the food, separates the essence and wastes from it; remaining in its own place it supports the other *Pittas*. This *pitta* is known as *Pachak pitta*.¹³

Classifications of Agni:

1. According to *Darshana Shastra* – *Tarka Sangraha*
A. *Nitya Agni* - *Paramanu Rupa*

B. Anitya Agni- KaaryaRupa

Jatharagni is one of the type of *Anitya Agni* also known as *Audarya Agni* and it does the vital function of metabolism of the food taken.

2. The Ayurvedic concept of *Agni* includes, not only five kinds of *Pittas*, but also the *Dhatavagnis* and *Bhutagnis*.¹⁴

Charaka	Sushruta	Vaghbhat	Bhavprakash	Sharangdhar
<i>Antaragni</i> (1)	<i>Pachakagni</i>	<i>Pittas</i> (5)	<i>Jatharagni</i> (1)	Pachak
<i>Bhutagni</i> (5)	<i>Ranjakagni</i>	<i>Bhutagnis</i> (5),	<i>Bhutagni</i> (5)	Bhrajak
<i>Dhatavagni</i> (7)	<i>Alocakagni</i>	<i>Dhatavagni</i> (7)	<i>Dhatavagni</i> (7)	Ranjak
	<i>Sadhakagni</i>	<i>Doshagni</i> (3)		Alochak
	<i>Bhrajakagni</i>	<i>Malagnis</i> (3)		Sadhak

Jatharagni

It is considered as primary digestive fire present in *kostha* and performs *pakadikarmas*. The *Aahar rasa* enters in *Mahasrotas* through *mukha*, gets digested by various *skshara* and *amlas* as created in

mahasrotas.¹⁵ The *agni* responsible for this process is called as *Jatharagni*. *Jatharagni* may be different at various level such as; *Samagni*, *Vishamagni*, *Tikshnagni* and *Mandagni*. As per the influence of *doshas*, four functional states of *Agni* have been stated¹⁶.

Sr no	Agni	Dosha	Sign and Symptoms
1	<i>Mandagni</i>	<i>Kapha pradhan</i>	<i>Agni</i> is unable to digest or metabolize even a small quantity of easily digestible food
2	<i>Tikshnagni</i>	<i>Pitta pradhan</i>	Digest the food quickly causing hunger even though take improperly.
3	<i>Vishamagni</i>	<i>Vata pradhan</i>	Digest the food sometimes taken in proper quantity and time but sometimes not even in proper quantity.
4	<i>Samagni</i>	<i>Tridoshasamyavastha</i>	Digestion of the food occurs completely without any irregularity taken in proper time and quantity.

All the above *Agnis* can be categorized as follows

Sr No.	Type of Jathragni	Apacharasah atva	Annapachan Kala	Dosha predominance	Vyadhi Hetu
1	Mandagni	No	>4 yama	Kapha	Yes
2	Tikshagni	Yes	<4 Yama	Pitta	No
3	Vishamagni	Sometime	Irregular	Vata	Sometimes
4	Samagni	No	4 Yama	Tridosha	No

Factors Governing Balanced state of Agni

➤ Prakriti (Biological Constitution)

Prakriti make a difference in the state of *Agni*. *Vata Prakriti* individual may have *Vishamagni* which involve disturbed digestive & metabolic activities. *Pitta Prakriti* person may have *Tikshagni* which is associated with hyper-metabolism. *Kapha Prakriti* predominantly persist; *Mandagni* which involve hypo-metabolism and loss of appetite.¹⁷

➤ Age

In adult state, it is on the peak and in old age, it diminishes gradually.

➤ Ritu (Season)

Shita atmosphere increases *Vayu*, which in turn stimulates the *Agni*. The rate of dissipating of heat is less in *Hemant Ritu* and hence *Agni* is at peak in *Hemanta Ritu* (early winter). The *Agni* remains increased in *Shishir Ritu* also. The *Agni* decreases in *Vasanta* and *Varsha Ritu*.¹⁸ The *Kapha dosha* accumulated in *Hemant Ritu* gets

liquefied by the effect of hot rays of sun. The *Kayagni* gets diminished and produces various diseases.¹⁹

➤ Psychic influence

Mana and *Sharir* both are considered to be the abodes of diseases and likewise of *Sukha*; their concordance is the cause of well-being.²⁰

➤ Aahar Matra

Pramana or *Matra* of *Ahara* could be either *Hina* or *Adhika Matra*. The *Hina Matra* will lead to deficiency disorders while *Adhika Matra* provokes the *Tridoshas*.²¹

One must eat in measure and the measure of food is determined by the strength of one's gastric fire.²² Food taken with due consideration to one's *Agni* will enhance its efficiency.

➤ Rasa (Taste) of Aahar

If Sweet taste (*Madhura*) diet is used exclusively it diminishes the gastric fire,

the acid taste (*Amla*) and Salt taste (*Lavan*) stimulates it.²³

➤ *Aahar Guna*

The light articles contain predominance of the innate qualities of Air and Fire. Hence, they improve *Agni* and on the other hand the heavy articles

by nature are non-stimulative of gastric fire owing to their dissimilar nature. Thus, the quality of the *Aahar* also influences the *Agni*.²⁴

One should eat food which is compatible in potency and in due measure.

➤ *Aaharkala*

Kala bhojan means appropriate time for eating and that is considered as the foremost way to maintain good health or *Aarogya*. In this continuation irregularity in eating habit has accepted as the foremost cause for *Agnidushti*.²⁵

The self-controlled man should always feed this gastric fire with the fuel of wholesome food and drinks, mindful of the consideration of measure and time.²⁶

➤ Physical activity

Sedentary lifestyle, unwholesome sleep during day time results in loss of digestive fire.²⁷ And exercise elevates *Agni*.²⁸

➤ *Bala* (Physical Strength)

Strength, health, longevity and vital breath are dependant upon the gastric fire and the gastric fire burns, feed by the fuel of food and drink, or dwindle when deprived of them.

Importance of *Agni*

Bala (strength), *Varna*

(colour), *Swasthya* (health), *Utsaha* (enthusiasm), *Upacaya* (development of the body), *Prabha* (complexion),

Oja (strength), *Tejas* (valour), *Vaya* (age), and even *Ayu* (life) - all depend on *Agni* and its function (fire-like activity). So long as *Agni* is normal, man can have a healthy and long life, loss of *Agni* leads to loss of life.²⁹

Agnidushti Hetu

1) *Aaharaj Hetu*

- *Guru bhojan*- The heavy articles by nature are non-stimulative of gastric fire owing to their dissimilar nature.³⁰

- *Atisnigdha*, *Shitabhojan*, *Atibhojana*, *Katu*, *Vidahi Bhojan* - *Madhavacharyas* mentioned *Agnimandya* as a separate disease. But still in *Grahani Adhyaya* he explains *Agni* is *Aashrayi* of *Grahani* hence *Hetu* of both disease can be taken as same.³¹

- *Madhur rasa atiupayog*- If Sweet taste (*Madhur*) diet is used exclusively it diminishes the gastric fire.³²

- *Shushkabhojan, Virudhbhojan, Vistambhi bhojan, Vidgdhabhojan, Adhyashana*³³
- Vishamana
- Atyambupan.³⁴
- *Atilanghani*.e. overdone lightening therapy.³⁵
- *Aacharya Charaka has mentioned the Hetus of Annava Srotas Dushti in Vimanasthana. These hetu leads to Agni vikruti.*³⁶

2) Viharaj Hetu

- *Swapnavipryaya*- Unwholesome sleep during day time results in loss of digestive fire.³⁷
- Vegavidharan

3) Manasika Hetu

- Chinta
- Bhaya
- Krodha
- Shoka

4) Anya Hetu

- *Virechan-Snehabasti Vyapad*
- *Snehavibhram*
- *Desha, kalavaishmya*
- *Vyadhikarshan*
- *Dhatukshya*

Agnidushti (Agni vitiation): as a foremost component in Diseases causation

Normally for all mechanisms, body totally depends upon the normal

functioning of *Agni*. If due to any etiological factor, *Agni* gets vitiated resulting in start of pathological events, it eventually, leads to diseased condition of the body. As described in *Ayurveda*, almost all diseases are due to *Mandagni* (low strength of *Agni*).³⁸ When the *Agni* becomes weak, a number of unwanted by-products of digestion start forming known as '*Ama*'. This *Ama* on further stasis attains toxic qualities, vitiates *Doshas* and leads to increased impermeability and sluggishness of *Srotas* i.e. body channels. This blockade of channels i.e. *Srotorodhais* the commonest factor in the manifestation of any disease.³⁹ The vitiated *Agni* doesn't digest even the *Laghu Aahar* taken and the *Aahar* being digested turns into *Shukta* (Sour) and acts like *Visha*.⁴⁰ This shows primacy of *Agnidushti* in occurrence of disease.

Discussion

Charaka has said that it is only *Agni* which is located in *Pitta*, that gives rise to beneficial or adverse consequences as it is in normal or abnormal state of functioning. *Agni* may be correlated with digestive & metabolic fire in the body. It is the substance secreted in our body, which is directly responsible for chemical changes in the body. At any level of the three *Pakasi*.e. *Madhura, Amla & Katu Avasthapaka & Vipaka* due

to hypo-functioning of the *Agni* concerned unwanted chemical substances are produced known as *Ama* which produces many diseases.

Conclusion

Hypo-functioning of any *Agni* especially of *Jatharagni* is likely to affect the function of other *Agni*. Due to diminished *Agni* *Aahar* is not digested properly and thus this *Apachit Aahar* leads to *Aamanirmiti* in the different stages of *Paka-karma* which produces most diseases. Lastly we can say that *Agnidushti* (*Agni vitiation*) is an important factor in disease causation.

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