

INSIGHT TO THE CONCEPTUAL ASPECT OF AGNI AND AGNIBALA IN AYURVEDA

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ABSTRACT

Agni is one among the Five Mahabhutas described in Ayurveda. It is stated that Mandagni (hypofunctioning of Agni) is the root cause of all diseases. The colour, complexion, vigour, vitality, strength, oja, teja and Prana these all depends on Agni. Agni is an important integral part of the body responsible for digestion and metabolism in our body. It is explained as digestive fire of our body and destruction of Agni causes death. The treatment of Agni is Kayachikitsa which means the whole treatment of Ayurveda revolves around the Agni. So the examination of Agni-bala should be the first step before initiating the treatment of patient. There are 13 types of Agni described in Ayurveda, 1 Jatharagni, 5 Bhutagni and 7 Dhatvagni. Among these 13 Jatharagni is the most important and base of the other Agnis. The Bala of Jatharagni is known as Agni Bala, it is of 4 types namely Tikshna-agni, Manda-agni, Sama-agni and Vishama-agni. Ahara Matra (quantity of food intake) also depends on Agni Bala. This article shows the importance of Agni & Agni-Bala Pariksha described in Ayurveda.

KEYWORDS: Agni, Agni-Bala, Jatharagni, Bhutagni, Dhatvagni.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is a science of life which not only focus on cure of diseases but also in prevention of diseases. Due to today's sedentary lifestyle and faulty dietary habits Agni gets vitiated and causes many diseases. So the diet and lifestyle modification works as a major preventive aspect. Due to vitiation of Agni a person is unable to digest the food taken in proper amount and quantity too this condition is known as Ajirna. Which having symptoms like abdominal distention, headache, fainting, body ache, anorexia, etc. on the basis of prominent of Dosha Ajirna can be different types Ama-ajirna, Vishtabdha-ajirna, Vidagdha-ajirna etc.

Therefore, maintenance of Agni becomes very important. Ayurveda has an elaborate discussion on Agni, its different types and Agni bala. In terms of Ayurveda the word 'Agni' contains vast meanings. Agni is derivative of Tejas (fire) mahabhuta, it carries metabolic transformations in which the inherent feature is change. Agni converts food in the form of energy, which is responsible for all the vital functions of our body. Agni in Ayurveda, is reflected in the concept of "Pitta" of the system. The term Pitta is derived from "Tap Santape" which refers to generation of heat.^[1] Acharya Sushruta has mentioned Agni as Pitta which

performs functions such as Pachana and Dahana in the body. It is regarded as “Antaragni”.^[2] In Charak Samhita Acharya Marichi has described the Shubha and Ashubha Karma of Pitta. The Shubha karma are Pakti, Darshana, Prakriti, Varna, Shaurya, Harsha etc. and the Asubha Karma are Apakti, Adarshan, Vikriti, Bhaya, Kroddh, Moha etc.^[3] Grahani is described as an Agni Adhishtana (prime site of Agni) by most of the Acharyas. According to Acharya Charak Grahani is positioned above umbilicus which gets strengthened by the power of Agni and because it holds the food, it is called Grahani.^[4] There are 13 types of Agni described in Ayurveda, 1 Jatharagni, 5 Bhutagni and 7 Dhatvagni. The Bala of Jathargani is known as Agni Bala.

DISCUSSION

Agni maintains the following things in human body :-

- Ayu (longevity – lifespan)
- Varna (if Agni works properly it maintains the colour complexion)
- Bala (Agni provides strength to body)
- Swasthya (maintenance of mental and physical health)
- Utsaha (enthusiasm)
- Upchaya (Body metabolism)
- Prabha (Lustre – the shine and glow of body)
- Ojas (maintains the immunity of the body)
- Agneya (the digestive power)
- Prana (stable life)

In Samyavastha (balance state), Agni is responsible for health and longevity of life. Vitiating of Agni causes diseases and destruction of Agni causes death.^[5]

TYPES OF AGNI:

1) Jatharagni – This is the principal Agni among the 13 Agnis. It digests the food and

known as the Master of all Agnis because increasing and of other Agnis depend on the it. This Agni converts Ahara into Ahara Rasa. Hence it should be maintained carefully.^[6] Grahani is the prime site of Jathargani.^[7]

2) Bhutagni – The human body is made up of Pancha-Mahabhutas i.e. Akash, Vayu, Agni, Jala and Prithvi. Each Mahabhuta has its own Bhutagni which digests the respective fractions of the food.^[8] For example, the fraction of Prithvi in food will nourish the respective fraction of Prithvi in body.^[9] The 5 Bhutagnis are – “Nabhas-agni, Vayavya-agni, Agneya-agni, Aapya-agni and Parthiv-agni.”

3) Dhatvagni – There is one Dhatvagni for each Dhatu so there are 7 types of Dhatvagni– Rasa-agni, Rakta-agni, Mamsa-agni, Meda-agni, Asthaya-agni, Majja-agni and Shukra-agni. it maintains the formation and function of all the Dhatus.^[10]

AGNI DUSHTI & AGNI BALA

In Samvyavastha (balance state) Agni maintains the body equilibrium. It gets vitiated due to Abhojana, Ajirna, Atibhojana (over eating), Vishamasana (irregular eating), Asatmya Bhojana, improper use of Panchakarma, Vegadharana, Ritu Viparyaya (Seasonal variations), etc. which further produce Ama which causes many diseases.^[11]

Acharya Sushruta has described the Agni Dushti on the bases of Doshas^[12]-

Vishama-agni – Vata

Tikshna-agni – Pitta

Manda-agni – Kapha

Sama-agni – Equilibrium of 3 Doshas maintains health.

The power of Agni (Jathargni) is known as Agni-Bala. According to Agni-Bala

(intensity) Acharya Charak has mentioned 4 types of Agni^[13]

1) Tikshna-Agni – “Sarva-Apcharasah” (It can tolerate all types of food regimen) and is dominated by Pitta.

2) Manda-Agni – it opposite to Tikshna Agni and is dominated by Kapha Dosha.

3) Sama-Agni – it is normal digestive fire, easily satisfied by normal food. Here all the three Doshas are seen in equilibrium.

4) Vishama-Agni – in this digestion occurs irregularly and is dominated by Vata Dosha.

AGNI BALA PARIKSHA

Aharamatra (the quantity of taken food) depends on Agni-Bala (intensity of digestion).^[14] Therefore Agni-Bala Pariksha should be the first step before starting the treatment. Agni-Bala Pariksha is not only concerned with the functional state of Agni but also its capacity to metabolise the digested food and produce energy.^[15]

According to Acharya Charak Agni Bala can be measured by Jarana Shakti.^[16] It can be related with Jeerna Ahara Lakshana which symptoms are as follows^[17] :-

- Udgara Suddhi (Pure belchings)
- Utsaha (enthusiasm)
- Vegotsarga (elimination of urges like faeces, flatus, urine)
- Laghuta (lightness of body)
- Kshudha (hunger)
- Pipasa (thirst)

CONCLUSION

Agni maintains the health of an individual because any vitiation in Agni results in various diseases. Destruction of Agni causes death. In this article Agni, Agni Dushti, Agni-Bala and Agni-Bala Pariksha is discussed in brief which signifies that Agni is important for functions such as Pachana, Dahana, Darshan, Upchaya etc. Pancha-

Mahabhutas are the basic elements of our body Agni is one of them. Agni also maintains balance between the Doshas & Dhatus. It is the base of our Prana. In ayurveda there are 13 types of Agni mainly categorised as Jatharagni, Bhutagni and Dhatvagni. Jatharagni is the base of all these Agnis which gives strength to all other Agnis in our body. The strength of Jatharagni is mentioned as Agni Bala. According to Agni Bala Agni are divided in Tikshna, Manda, Sama or Vishama. The Aharamatra (quantity of food intake) depends on Agni-Bala and it can be measured by Jarana Shakti. Hence, Agni-Bala Pariksha is an important aspect before starting the treatment of patient. In this article Agni its types, Agni Bala and its Pariksha is described which paves way in understanding the state of Agni and Agni Bala of an individual and formulate specific, rational treatment and management.

The whole empire of Ayurveda is based on the concept of Agni. Kayachikista (internal medicine) being the synonym of Agni emphasize the importance of this concept in the management of diseases. Basically whole of the treatment methodology in Ayurveda revolves around the modulation and management of Agni. Agni literally means fire and in human being it denotes the power of digestion, metabolism and assimilation. Derangement of Agni produces diseases and its destruction causes death.

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