



Concept Note

A conceptual study of Agni with respect to disease formation (*Rogotpatti*)

Usha Dwivedi

Department of Kriya Sharir, State Ayurvedic College and Hospital, Handia, Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, India.

E-mail: ushadwivedi572@gmail.com; Phone: +91-9455530358.

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ABSTRACT

According to Ayurveda, *Ahar sambhavam vastu rogashch ahar sambhavah*, which means, body is the outcome of food and so is the disease. Under normal conditions, food provides energy for body's functions and building material for growth and repair. Most of the food substances require changes before utilization. These changes begin with the culinary and end in the intestine with digestion. Cooking and digestion both require heat energy given in any form. Heat energy required for digestion is known as *pachakagni* in Ayurveda. The entire process (digestion-metabolism) of conversion of food is performed successively by *Pachakagni*, *Bhootagni* and *Dhatwagni*. The present article focuses on how does the normalcy of these *Agnis* causes *ahar sambhavam vastu* and abnormality causes *rogastu ahar sambhavah* on the basis of Ayurvedic and modern science.

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INTRODUCTION

The word 'Agni' is derived from *anga dhatu* reflecting the meaning omnipresent (*angati vyapnoti iti agni*) and also from *aga dhatu* reflecting the meaning upward movement (*agra gamne iti agni*). Hence *Agni* can be interpreted as omnipresent movement causing factor. Although, *vayu* has been considered as movement causing factor in Ayurveda, but the description applies to *Agni* as well because it consists of *Vayu* as per the principle *vayuoragni* (Shastri and Chaturvedi, 1984, 28/45). In this reference, movement may be considered as change (biophysical and biochemical) and *vayu* is the controlling factor of all these changes *vayustntrayantradarah*. *Kapha* is the sustaining factor of formed entities (*sthiratwam*) and *Pitta* acts as substratum for *Agni* (*agnirev sharire pittantargtah*) (Shastri and Chaturvedi, 1984, 28/45).

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Thorough study of Ayurvedic classics and modern texts on Physiology was done. Relevant information was gathered and critically analyzed to justify the principle "*rogah sarveapi mandagnau*".

ORIGIN OF CONCEPT OF AGNI

Most of the Ayurvedic fundamentals are based on the principle of commonness of person and

universe "*purushoayam lokasammitah*" (Ghanekar, 1977, 21/6). Human being is analogous to the universe. Whatever formed entities exist in the universe, also exist in human beings and vice versa. Not only formed entities, but their functions are also common.

*Visargadan vikchhapayh soma suryanila yatha |
Dharyanti jagatdeham kafapittanilastatha | |*

As the *soma*, *surya* and *vayu* maintain the integrity of terrestrial world, in the same way, *Kafa*, *Pitta* and *Vayu* maintain the integrity of body by creating, assimilating and diffusing power respectively (Shastri and Chaturvedi, 1984, 28/45). *Pitta* (group of biochemical substances involved in assimilation) represents *surya* in our body. Sun is the ultimate source of energy for all living beings. *agni* is a form of energy that resides in *Pitta* and performs functions - favorable and unfavorable in non-vitiated and vitiated states respectively, such as digestion-indigestion, vision- blindness, normal-abnormal body temperature, normal-abnormal complexion, valor-fear, anger-cheerfulness, confusion- clarity and so on.

Due to its manifold functions *agni* is considered as-

1. Structural component - *Sarvam dravyam panchbhauticam* (Shastri and Chaturvedi,

- 1984, 26/10). All the substances present in universe are pentaphysical. *Agni* is one of the physical elements (*Akash, Vayu, Agni, Jal, Prithvi*).
2. As the biochemical substances responsible for biochemical and biophysical processes - *Na khalu pittavyatirekatanyo agni roop labhyate* (Ghanekar, 1977, 21/8). It is an undisputable fact that there is no independent existence of *Agni* in body besides *Pitta*.
 3. As assimilating power - Described as *Dehagni, Bhootagni* and *Dhatwagni* (Shastri and Chaturvedi, 1984, 15/10).
 4. As absolute substances - *Khadinyatma manah kalo dishashch dravya sangraha* (Shastri and Chaturvedi, 1984, 15/15). *Akash* and so on (*Akash, Vayu, Agni, Jala, Prithivi*), Soul, Mind, Time and Space are *Dravya* (causative substances).
 5. As vital force - *Agnisomovayuh satvamrajastamah panchendriyani bhootatmani pranah*" (Shastri and Chaturvedi, 1984, 1/11). *Agni, Soma, Vayu, Satva, Raja, Tama*, five sense organs and Soul together constitute *Prana* (Vital force).
 6. As optimum temperature - *Shante agnau mriyate ykte chiram geevatyanamayah* (Ghanekar, 1977, 4/3). Optimum temperature is one of the essential factors for proper Homeostatic mechanism.

NATURE OF AGNI

In the terrestrial world, *Agni* means fire (combined form of heat and light energy) which is one of the factors responsible for physical and chemical changes. In a living body it resides in *Pitta* - *agnirev sharire pittantargatah* (Shastri and Chaturvedi, 1984, 15/4). Terrestrial and bio fire (*Agni*) although perform similar functions, but are different in nature. *Bhautic agni* (fire) combines both heat and light energy and always requires free oxygen to sustain. On the other hand bio fire (*Dehagni*) has no component of light energy and can function even in the absence of free oxygen (anaerobic respiration).

According to Ayurveda, fundamentally *Agni* is a *Karan Dravya* (subtle substance) having *Pakadi Karma* and hotness like properties in an inseparable form. According to physics, fire is a kind of energy. After years of brain storming and rigorous experimentation, science has now proved and accepted the fact that matter and energy are two forms of same entity.

CLASSIFICATION OF AGNI

In the context of *Ahar Paka and Chayapachaya* (digestion and metabolism), *Agni* is classified into three groups.

1. Pachkagni
2. Bhootagni
3. Dhatwagni

The food after reaching in *Amashaya*, gets digested completely and its absorbable part, thereafter reaches all the organs through blood vessels. The conversion of food substances into absorbable form is digestion. Fundamental entity for this digestion is *Agni*. *Agni(s)* perform their functions through *Pitta*, hence the name *Pachkagni*. Among the three *Agnis*, *Pachkagni* is indispensable because of following three reasons.

1. This is the first *Agni* acting on food.
2. The resultant of *Pachkagni* is acted upon by *bhootagni* and *Dhatwagni* successively.
3. It provides strength and nourishment to their distant fractions.

Pachakagni is located in the region between stomach and intestine - *paqamashaya madhyastha* (Shastri and Chaturvedi, 1984, 12/14), a part of *Mahasrotas*. In *Mahasrotas*, *Pachakagni* only changes the *Awastha* (form) of food. The product of *Awasthapaka* is *Sar* (absorbable form) and *Mala* (excreta).

FACTORS AFFECTING PACHKAGNI

Aharparinamkarastu ime bhava bhawanti (Ghanekar, 1977, 21/09). These are the factors affecting transformation of food, such as - *Ushma, Vayu, Klada, Sneha, Kala* and *Samyoga*.

Ushma pachati - Heat digests (optimum temperature required for proper functioning of enzymes).

Vayurapkarshati - *Vayu* helps in deglutition.

Kladahshathilyamapadayati - Moisture causes looseness in food (hydrolysis), may be considered as thin and watery secretion of serous glands.

Snahomardavamganayati - unctuousness generates softness. May be considered as thick viscous saliva with more mucin secreted by mucous glands.

Kalah paryaptimabhinirvertayati - For complete conversion of food into *dhatu* (growth and repair) and *ushma* (energy) certain time is required. Brief digestion of carbohydrates begins from mouth, proteins from stomach and fat from duodenum.

Samyogastesam parinam dhatusamyakarah - Balanced diet maintains the equilibrium of *Dhatus*. It is composed of requisite amounts of protein, fat and carbohydrates, vitamins, minerals etc. to meet the requirement of the body.

Awasthapaka is followed by *Vipaka* resulting in ultimate change in absorbed *Sarbhag* of food. *Bhootagni* and *Dhatwagni* are responsible for *Vipaka*. During *Bhootagni paka*, *Sarbhag* of *Ahar Rasa* (absorbed part of food) is converted into *Bhootansha* (elemental form). These *Bhootansha* reach in *Dhatus* and each *Dhatu* selects its similar

Bhootansha and transforms them into their own form (*Swadhatu*) with the help of *Dhatwagnis*.

FUNCTIONAL STATES OF AGNI

Normalcy of Agni is determined by *Doshas* i.e. *Vata* acts as stimulator (*samirano agne*) (Shastri and Chaturvedi, 1984, 6/14), *Kapha* hydrolyzes the food (*tad dravyah bhinnasamghatam*) (Shastri and Chaturvedi, 1984, 12/8) and *Pitta* act as substratum for Agni (*agnirev sharire pittantargatah*) (Shastri and Chaturvedi, 1984, 15/5). When *Doshas* get vitiated they influence *Agni* first such as vitiated *Vata* causes *Vishmagani*, *Pitta* causes *Teekchanagni*, *Kapha* causes *Mandagni* and balanced *Doshas* cause *Samagni*. Out of them, *Vishmagani*,

Teekchnagni and *Mandagni* causes ill effects in body. Among these three ill effecting functional states of *Agni*, *Mandagni* causes numerous diseases included under *Sama Vyadhis*. Although vitiated *Vata* and *Pitta* causes *vishmagani* and *teekchnagni* successively. Still if *Vata* get vitiated with their cold property and *pitta* with their liquidity causes *Mandagni*.

EXAMINATION OF FUNCTIONAL STATES OF AGNI

It can be examined with following preformat as per *agnim jaran shaktya parikchhate* concept which is given in Table 1.

Table 1. Examination of functional states of *Agni*

Characteristics	<i>Samagni</i>	<i>Vishmagani</i>	<i>Mandagni</i>	<i>Teekshnagni</i>
Appetite	Normal	Sometimes poor and sometimes increased	Always poor	Always intensified
Quantity of food	Normal	Some times less than normal and some times more than normal	Always less than normal	Always more than normal
Homologation heavy/light food articles	Mixed quality of food suitable	Sometimes even heavy food digests and sometimes light food remains undigested	Light food if taken in more quantity remains undigested	Heavy food even in more quantity digest easily
Bowel habit	Normal	Mostly constipation and rarely normal	Evacuate normally but stool is often containing undigested food particles with foul smell	Frequently evacuate
Nature of person	Enthusiastic	Irritable	Lazy	Delicate

CONCLUSION

On basis of Ayurvedic classics it can be concluded that *Agni* is the most important factor involved in all the diseases either infectious or noninfectious. In case of infectious diseases pathogenic microorganisms can be effective only when body's resistance became poor. In *ayurvedanambalamswasthyam.....dehagni hatukah*.

The world *bala* indicates *vyadhikchhamatva bala* which depends on *Agni*. In the same way non infectious diseases are also caused by disturbed *Agni* - *Samoprakopo doshanam sarvesham-agnisanshritau.....tasmadagni rakchhayat* (Shastri and Chaturvedi, 1984, 15/136). Normalcy and deviation of *Dosha* depends on *Agni*, hence, it must be conserved always.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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