A REVIEW ON THE CONCEPT OF AGNI IN AYURVEDA

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Abstract

The concept of Agni is basic concept of Ayurveda. This Siddhanta provides fundamental knowledge for understanding of the theories of Ayurveda viz. Ahara Pacana, Dhatu Upatti, Vyadhi Upatti, Ayu Parijñana etc. Concept of Agni in Ayurveda is quiet different than of philosophical concept. Various Indian philosophies describe Agni as an important Tatva (element) of the universe. Though there is some difference of opinions among philosophies regarding Upatti of Agni, e.g. Samkhya describes it as one of the Mahabhuta generated from Rupa Tanmatra which is resultant of Tamasika Ahamkara. Vaisesika opines that Agni is one of the Karana Dravya which is eternal and one of the material cause of the entire universe. It further mentions types of Agni; one among them is Audaryagni which resides in the body of animate world performing the function of digestion and metabolism¹. Ayurveda deals with this kind of Agni only. Agni is believed to be the agency for any kind of transformation. It is a known fact that at each and every second multiple procedures of transformations take place in the body. These may be bio chemical or bio physical or any other type of bio transformations. Due to these constant transformation procedures, body grows, develops and lastly destroys too. Thus the principle of Agni becomes vital as either the healthy or the diseased state can only be understood with understanding of changes.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of Agni is basic concept of Ayurveda. This Siddhanta provides fundamental knowledge for understanding of the theories of Ayurveda viz. Ahara Pacana, Dhatu Upatti, Vyadhi Upatti, Ayu Parijñana etc. Concept of Agni in Ayurveda is quiet different than of philosophical concept. Various Indian philosophies describe Agni as an important Tatva (element) of the universe. Though there is some difference of opinions among philosophies regarding Upatti of Agni, e.g. Samkhya describes it as one of the Mahabhuta generated from Rupa Tanmatra which is resultant of Tamasika Ahamkara. Vaisesika opines that Agni is one of the Karana Dravya which is eternal and one of the material cause of the entire universe. It further mentions types of Agni; one among them is Audaryagni which resides in the body of animate world performing the function of digestion and metabolism¹. Ayurveda deals with this kind of Agni only. Agni is believed to be the agency for any kind of transformation. It is a known fact that at each and every second multiple procedures of transformations take place in the body. These may be bio chemical or bio physical or any other type of bio transformations. Due to these constant transformation procedures, body grows, develops and lastly destroys too. Thus the principle of Agni becomes vital as either the healthy or the diseased state can only be understood with understanding of changes². With the help of that particular Agni, the body substances can get nourishment and can perform their functions normally. This can be understood in the terms of wear and tear phenomena of each body cell. It is very clear that any of the body cell cannot do anything without the help of Agni, therefore a Vaidya should always take care of Agni as the Prasama or Prakopa of Dosa, Dhatu and Malas are depended on the status of Agni. In other words, it can be said that homeostasis of Dosa etc can be maintained through Agni³.

Keywords: Agni, Jatharagni, dhatvagni, Pitta.
Although Agni is a single entity, Acarya Caraka describes 13 types of Agnis, according to its place and actions during food digestion, assimilation and metabolism. They are grouped under three broad headings, single Jatharagni, five types of Bhutagnis and seven types of Dhatvagnis. These 13 types are mentioned for clinical purpose. These 13 types of Agnis perform their function at different level, right from Ahara Grahana to Dhatu Nirmana.

PHYSIOLOGY OF JATHARAGNI

Prahnava, the property of which is to convey the food from mouth downwards, takes the food from mouth to Koshta. There, it will be subjected to Samghatabhedana (chymilification) by Dravatva and Snigdhatva Of Kledaka Kaptha which is present in Amasaya. This makes food soft and mucillagenous.

Jatharagni situated below the Amasaya in Garahani is activated by Samana Vayu and digests the food which is taken in proper Matra and in proper manner observing all the Aharavidhivisesayatanas and Ahara Vidhihidvihana, in order to increase the longevity of life. All this process can be compared with that of the preparation of rice for meals in a vessel kept on a stove with fire under the vessel.

IMPORTANCE OF JATHARAGNI

All the classical texts of Ayurveda unanimously accept the importance of Jatharagni for the maintenance of health as well as manifestation of diseases. It is also an important factor to be considered while prescribing treatment. It is known fact that at each and every second multiple process of transformation take place in human body, these may be Bio-physical, bio-chemical or any other type of transformation process. The media or agency responsible for all these process is Jatharagni in human body. There are two types of procedures continuously going on in human body which are Caya and Apacaya and for that the body has got two synonym Deha and Sarira. Deha means which continuously gets nourishment from food and on performing the essential activities living body wears out some of its portion continuously is called Sarira and this wear and tear phenomenon is balanced by Jatharagni.

Importance of Agni has been seen in both the healthy and diseased condition. In healthy condition it is necessary for maintenance of health while in diseased condition it is important for diagnosis as well as treatment of the particular disease. Agni is important in all types of treatment like Samana, Sodhana And Sastrakarma. It is said that in the condition of Amajirna, a person is not able to take even food so, he should not be prescribed medicine at that time. Thus prevention and preservation of Jatharagni is one of the most important part of the treatment.

INFLUENCE AND CONTROL OF JATHARAGNI OVER DHATVAGNI

Acarya says through Jatharagni, Bhutagnis illuminate and digest their individual nutrients. It has two aspects viz. an aspect correlates the Pacakagni to the Dhatvagni and describes the outcome of the excitation or the inhibition, as the case may be of the latter; and an aspect which correlates the increase or decrease, as the case may be of the Dhatus to the quality and quantity of the nutrition supplied to them. Moieties of Kayagni, located to in its own place, are distributed to and permeate to all the Dhatus. A decrease of it (Below the normal) makes for an increase of the Dhatus, while an increase of it (Above the normal) makes for a decrease of a Dhatus.

AGNI AND PITTA

According to Maharsi Susruta there is no other substance like Agni except Pitta, Maharsi Caraka also says that Agni performs its work through Pitta, Vaghbatha in his text clearly says that only Pacaka Pitta can be correlated with Agni and all other types of Pitta are different than Agni, The term Pitta is derived from the root ‚Tap’ which means to heat or to burn. This term is seen to have three meanings viz. 1. Tap Dahe- meaning to burn 2. Tap Santape- to heat 3. Tap Aiswarye- to enable the eight fold achievement.

The Pitta as a whole itself can not be considered as Agni. Only the Agneya portion of Pitta can be considered as Agni. This is balanced and controlled by the Apya portion of Pitta. The doctrine of Agni-Soma may be remembered in this aspect. Whenever this Apya portion increases; Agni is in a state of diminution; Inspite of the aggravation of Pitta. This is observed in Pittajiva Grahani. As Hemadri commented on Astanga Hrdaya Su. 12, when due to predominancy of Tejasa Mahabhuta, Apyamsa (water part) of Pacaka Pitta gets ruined, it performs digestive functions and named as Pacakagni. Bhela Samhita has explained using the terms Agni and Soma the present in the Suryamandala of Nabhi, covered with Somamandala which regulates Agni. This is quite in accordance with the concept of Pittosma. The concept of Pittosma can be correlated with the modern concept of enzymes required for any reaction along with the energy which combinedly digest the food. Thus, Ayurvedic concept of Jatharagni is best explained in the terms of Pittosma, unlike the Usma form of Agni in the animate world, because Pitta is a speciality of the living body. In Astanga Sangraha Vrddha Vagbhatra quotes that according to a group of Acaryas; Agni is nothing but combined heat of Dosa, Dhatu and Malas.

CONCLUSION

The concept of Agni is basic concept of Ayurveda. Agni is believed to be the agency for any kind of transformation. It is a known fact that at each and every second multiple procedures of transformations take place in the body. These may be bio chemical or bio physical or any other type of bio transformations. Due to these constant transformation procedures, body grows, develops and yearly destroys too. Thinking on this line; it can be said that life is nothing but a constant process of transformations.

Jatharagni situated below the Amasaya in Garahani is activated by Samana Vayu and digests the food which is taken in proper Matra and in proper manner observing all the Aharavidhivisesayatanas and Ahara Vidhihidvihana, in order to increase the longevity of life. All this process can be compared with that of the preparation of rice for meals in a vessel kept on a stove with fire under the vessel.

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Source of support: Nil, Conflict of interest: None Declared