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Review Article

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 Utpatti*, *Vyadhi Utpatti*, *Ayu Parijnana* etc.

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. Thinking on this line; it can be said that life is nothing but a constant process of transformations. Diseased state of the body is also some pathological changes either functional or structural. Thus the principle of *Agni* becomes vital as either the healthy or the diseased state can only be understood with understanding of changes.

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 Vidhividhana*, 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.

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 Samgraha Vrddha Vagbhata* quotes that according to a group of *Acaryas*; *Agni* is nothing but combined heat of *Dosa*, *Dhatu* and *Malas*.

Keywords: *Agni*, *Jatharagni*, *dhatvagni*, *Pitta*.

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 Utpatti*, *Vyadhi Utpatti*, *Ayu Parijnana* etc. Concept of *Agni* in *Ayurveda* is quite 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 *Utpatti* of *Agni*, e.g. *Samkhya* describes it as one of the *Mahabhuta* generated from *Rupa Tanmatra* which is resultant of *Tamasika Ahankara*. *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. Thinking on this line; it can be said that life is nothing but a constant process of transformations. Diseased state of the body is also some pathological changes either functional or structural. 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 *Mala* are depended on the status of *Agni*. In other words, it can be said that homeostasis of *Dosa* etc can be maintained through *Agni*³.

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

Pranavata, the property of which is to convey the food from mouth downwards, takes the food from mouth to *Kostha*. There, it will be subjected to *Samghatabhedana* (chymification) by *Dravatva* and *Snigdhatva Of Kledaka Kapha* 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 Vidhividhana*, 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 vessel⁴.

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*⁵. *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*⁶.

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 treatment⁷.

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 them⁸. 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 *Dhatu*⁹.

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*, *Vagbhata* 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; In spite of the aggravation of *Pitta*. This is observed in *Pittaja 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 Samgraha Vrddha Vagbhata* 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 lastly destroys too. Thinking on this line; it can be said that life is nothing but a constant process of transformations.

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