



**Original Article**

**Agni the main cause of disease in Ayurveda: a review**

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**Abstract**

The Ayurvedic concept of Agni is one of the most contribution to healthcare system. Agni is the biological fire that governs the process of metabolism in the body. It powers the transformation of one substance into another. Agni encompasses all the changes in the body and mind from the dense to the subtler. Agni is found in the alimentary canal and digests food. The main function of Agni is the promotion of process of digestion. Therefore, the digestive abilities are related to the strength of Agni. Maximum number of diseases is directly or indirectly related to the improper functioning of Agni. It is responsible for neutralizing toxins, bacteria and viruses that hinders with the functioning of immune system. According to the functions and site of action Agni has been divided into 3 types i.e. one Jathragni, 5 Bhutagni and 7 Dhatvagni.

They work together to maintain the balance in the body as Jhataragni is maintaining metabolism and Bhutagni and Dhatuagni is maintaining the cellular metabolism. Imbalance in the physiology of Agni is the main cause for the formation of Ama which is the main reason for many diseases. So Agni is important for every function of body. So agni is main cause of all disease in Ayurveda.

**Keywords:**Agni, Jhataragni, Bhutagni, Dhatuagni

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**INTRODUCTION**

As per Ayurveda Agni is having many derivatives which shows the importance of Agni as Ayu (longevity) which means it increases the life span of the human if Agni is working properly, Varna (complexion) it maintains the color complexion of the body, Balam (strength) Agni maintains the strength of the body, Swasthyam (health) it maintain the health i.e., physical, mental status of the human being, Utsaha (enthusiasm) it maintain the interest of the human being in the life, Upachaya (body metabolism) it maintain the digestive system and metabolism of the body, Prabha (luster) it maintain the gentle sheen and soft glow of the body, Ojas (tissue essence) it maintains the immunity of the body, Agnayah(bio fires) it maintains the digestive fires of the body, Prana (life) it maintains the stable life of human being. When Agni of the body get extinguished then the body (Sharir) is considered as dead. As far as Agni inside the body remains in Sam Avastha (in proper amount), person live long without any ailment or disease.1

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As Agni is correlated with Pitta and the type of Pitta which is basically correlated with Agni is Panchakpitta. It is explained from the way in which it performs the Pakadi Karmas i.e., it digests food, separates Sara from Kitta of the food, because of this, it is known as Pachakpitta.2Pachakpitta has following synonyms Jatharagni, Kosthagni, directly participates in the digestion of food and at the same time, support to and augments the functions of remaining Pittas, present elsewhere in the body. Agni in Ayurveda is reflected in the concept of Pitta of the system. The term of Pitta is derived from root to heat or to burn. Agni is having both Subha Asubha Karma.

As Subha Karma is Pakati, Darshanam, Prakriti, Varan, Moha, Harsha and Asubha Karma are Apakti, Adarshnam, Bhaya, Vikrta Varan etc.3 The seat of Agni is Grahani. Grahani is named as it receives the food. It is situated in between Amashya and Pakwashaya.4 That is also the place of Pitta there are five types of Pitta that also are considered in Agni Raag (Ranjak Pitta) that has Rasa Ranjan Karma, Pakti (Pachak pitta) that has AhaarPaachan karma, Tejo (Alochak Pitta) that has Darshan karma, Medho (Sadhak pitta) that has properties to maintain as Budhi, Medh. Ushma (Bhrajak pitta) has properties to maintain skin complexion.5 Agni is the energy in our body which activates metabolism function in the body which converts the food into the substance which gives strength to the body.

**AIMS & OBJECTIVES:**

1. To study the literature of agni.
2. To study the role of agni in disease.

# Types of Agni Jatharangi

This Agni is considered to be the Pradhyantam (principal fire) of all the Agni. This Agni is situated in Amashya, because it contains food in it which stimulates the functions of digestion. The Kala in which is situated in the entry of Pakvashya is Pittdhara which is basically like a way to entrance of the food in the stomach. Jatharangni is the energy which maintains the process of Paka of Dhatus which controls all the functions and balance of the other twelve Agni in the body which are equally important for the body. This Agni is explained by Chakarpani that Jatharagni treatment is considered as treatment of body. Its main function is digestion of food. This Agni converts Ahaar into Ahaar Rasa. These Ahara rasa will form the other Dhatus. In modern Jatharagni is related with the digestion of food which is done in stomach and intestines by the chemicals present in the stomach and peristaltic movements in the intestine.

# Bhutagni

The Agni which acts on cellular level of body. The body is formed by Panchmahabutas which are Akasha (the vacant spaces of the body), Vayu (the air spaces in the tissues) Agni (digestive fire), Jala (the watery material in the body as- lymph, blood), Pritivi (solid material in body organs). Butagni is divided into five types of Agni which act on these Panchmahabutas. They are Parthivagni, Aapyagni, Agneyagni, Vayavyagni, Nabhasagni. Each body cell and tissues are formed of these Agni. They are the basic units for the formation of elements in the body. These Agni which are formed of Panchmahabutas will work on only the same part of the food element which is consisting of same Agni particle. Even after the digestion of these elements in the food it specifically nourishes its ownBhutas present in the body.6 In modern it can be correlated with the enzymatic functions which are performed by the liver in the metabolism of food particles as liver has many enzymatic actions on the food digestion as metabolism of carbohydrates, proteins and fats which provide the energy for the biochemical functions of the body.

# Dhatvagni

Dhatvagni is used for the formation of Dhatu Utpati Karama (formation of the Dhatus). It is subdived into seven types Rasagni, Raktagni, Maansagni, Medoagni, Ashthyagni, Majjagni, Shukragni which ultimately form the immunity of the body. These Agni maintains the functions of the organs of the body.2 These all Agni has different Srotas for their functioning. These Srotas will provide a pathway for supplying nutrients for metabolism. Each Agni presents a Dhatu. As Rasagni represents Ras Dhatu, Rakhtagni represents Rakta dhatu, Maansagni represents Maans Dhatu, Medoagni represents Medho Dhatu, Ashthyagni represents Ashtha Dhatu, Majja Agni represents Majja Dhatu, Shukkaragni represents Sukhra dhatu. Dhalhan has mentioned that at the end all the Dhatus Sara is Oja i.e., immunity in modern. It has given in Ayurveda that Agni is having Oja as its derivative. These all Agni particular Dhatu and this action of these Dhatvagni is correlated as selective absorption criteria. As they absorb its specific nutrient from the food or nutrient to form its specified Dhatu and get there proper and same nutrients.7

**Causes of Vitiation of Agni**

Excessive (fast), indigestion, over eating and irregular eating, inappropriate food materials, improper use of Panchakarma, Emaciation as a result of diseases, seasonal perversion, suppressions of naturals urges. Being thus vitiated does not digest even light food. This undigested food becomes sour in taste and it works like poison and it gives rise to several diseases. These diseases will not be cured if the vitiation or Dushti of Agni is cured. There are many herbs, compositions, remedies, Yoga in Ayurveda to cure these diseases which are caused due to Agni.

Due to vitiation of Agni it is sub dived into four types as-

# Vishamagni

Here the digestive fire is disturbed by Vata. Because of variability in Vata, there are episodes of alternating cycles of strong appetite with loss of appetite.

# Tikshanagni

Here the digestive fire is disturbed by Pitta. This type of Agni can easily digest even high amount of ingested food. Sometimes in the absence of fuel it start consuming body’s own tissues (Dhatu).

# Mandagni

Here the digestive fire is disturbed by Kapha. Because of variability in Kapha, there are episodes of poor appetite, sluggish metabolism and tendency to weight gain despite optimal food consumption. Due to sluggish metabolism food becomes Vidagadh.

# Samagni (Normal)

Normal digestive fire is characterised by strong and appealing appetite that is easily satisfied with normal food. Digestive functions are proper; there are no episodes of gas, colic and constipation. Samagni is largely responsible for human body nutrition and building strong foundation of seven tissues.

**DISCUSSION**

# Agni versus Ama8

In Ayurveda, the theory of Agni or biological fire is of prime importance. Agni is among the critical factors in determining optimal health and internal homeostasis. On the contrary, Ama is a toxin or pathogen, responsible for aetiology of all diseases. Major cause behind Ama production is impairment of unhealthy, indigested food. It is the dry form of the food which is considered to be waste product for the body. This Ama is formed by Mandhagni which form Rasaja and food indigestion which act on sub cellular level and form disease. Due to Mandhagni these undigested food particles start get accumulated in the body and form AamaDhosha. It is again explained as the undigested formed which is formed due to the weakness of Jhatharagni and Dhatvagni is called as Ama. These are dividedinto three pakaavasthaas- In first Avastha due to weakness of Jhatharagni Ama get accumulated in Amashya (stomach).

In second Avastha due to weakness of Dhatvagni the Dhatus didn’t get digested and form Ama which is known as Ama visha.

In third Avastha the mostly undigested food gets accumulated and forms Ama. This Ama food, Ama rasa, Ama Dhatus all are known as Ama. This Ama gets accumulated and stay in body as an auto antigen which cause many autoimmune disorders which causes allergies in the body. Due to these reactions many antibodies will be formed in the body which ultimately causes many diseases and one of them is Amavata. Acharya Charak also explained the undigested food as Amavisha.9 There are many causative factors for Amavisha which are divided into Aaharaja and Viharaja causes. Overeating, less eating, improper eating,

Guru, Sheet, AtirukhshaAahar, preventing natural urges, day sleeping, lethargy. And these all are the same reasons for the weakness of Agni in the body that is Mandagni, which is the main reason for the formation of Ama. This Amavisha will form the symptoms in the body which are stiffness, stasis of faecal matter, fatigue, headache, fainting, vertigo, backache, yawning, malaise, vertigo, fever, thirst, anorexia, tenesmus, indigestion and these symptoms will also be seen in improper functioning of the Agni.10 In modern the main contents of food that is carbohydrates, proteins and fats are digested by Jhataragni, Dhatvagni, Bhutagni and form a end product. Protein is converted into amino acids in the presence of Jhataragni and in the presence of Dhatvagni it is converted into urea. Carbohydrates and fat end product is carbon dioxide and energy. If the Agni is in a condition of Madhagni then there will be no formation of end product and intermediate product will be formed which are lactic acids, uric acids and ketone bodies and they are a form of Ama. Due to increased formation of these products they cause many diseases like Urusthamba, Vatarakta (gout) and diabetes. This Ama can be correlated with many forms as the undigested Ras Dhatu is form of Dhusti is also Ama.

Ama related diseases which are caused due to Jhataragni are Alasaka, Visuchika, Atisara, Vilambika, Pravahika, Amalpitta, BasamakRoga, IBS.Ama related diseases which are caused due to Dhatvagni are Raspradhoshajvikara, Rakhta- pradhoshajavikara, Masa pradhoshajvikara, Medhapradhoshajavikara etc. Madhumeha (diabetes), Aamavata (rheumatoid arthritis), fever, Shawas (COPD), Sthaulya (obesity), inflammation. Ama related diseases which are caused due to Bhutagni are liver disorders, metabolic disorders. These all diseases are caused due to the formation of Ama which is formed by the imbalance of the Agni in the body.

# Agni and Pitta

Pitta is originated by two words in Ayurveda is metabolism and maintain the haemostasis (maintained heat in the body). By metabolism it will provide energy to the body by metabolizing the food and by maintain the heat of the body it will provide shine and enthusiasm to the body.11 It is explained by some Ayurvedic texts that there is no existence of separate

Agni in the body. The basic Agni that provides heat and has metabolic functions in the body is Pitta in the body. This Pitta has many Gunas but its main Guna that is UshanaGuna represents Agni and its function in the body.12 As the Pitta situation in the body is formed of Panchmahabutas. So the Agni and Pitta has the same composition. But there are many examples which are given in Samhitas that Grit is Pitashamaka but it aggravates Agni. Even in Sushrut it is maintained that SamdhoshasSamagniSamdhatu Mala Kriya indicates that Agni and Pitta are different.13

# Physiological significance of Agni[14

Majority of the diseases are outcome of malfunctioning of the Agni which rightly has been called as central root to health.15 Agni not only plays vital role in absorption of macro as well as micronutrients, but is destructive to pathogens also. The food that in not properly digested is referred as "Ama" in Ayurveda and it is nothing but a toxin or pathogen responsible for diseases. Proper functioning of digestive fire is evident from normal tone of the digestivesystem, circulatory-system, strong immunity or resistance against diseases, proper tissue growth and body complexion. It is also the source of intelligence, nutrition and awareness in the body. It coordinates many physiological processes of the body from the digestion, reabsorption, sensations and formation of energy. This affects both body and mind of the human being which leads to a healthy lifestyle.

# Pathological significance of Agni14

If digestive fire is not functioning properly, one has poor digestion, improper bloodcirculation, poor complexion, low energy levels, flatulence and poor immunity against diseases. Thus promoting proper functioning of the digestive fire is treating the root cause of the diseases, according to Ayurvedic principles. Thus a vicious cycle of impaired Agni and the production of Ama is established. Understanding basic relationship between Ama and Agni is of prime importance in treating the diseases. Maintaining good appetite, use of digestive stimulants and ensuring regular bowel movements are of prime importance in enkindling the digestive fire and preventing the production of root cause of all diseases, Ama.

This shows Agni has the most important role in Dosha Dhatu balance in the body and it will produce diseases as it get imbalance in the body. In Ayurveda it has been said that with decrease in functions of these thirteen types of Agni there will be production of disease.

**Importance of Agni**

As it is explained in many Samhitas that Agni plays an important role in maintain health. As Agni is the main cause of many diseases. Agni in Vedas is said to be fire for light, heat, ability to cook food. But in Ayurveda Agni is taken on another level that is it constitutes of Panchmahabutas which form the elements of the body, these elements are the basic of the cellular and tissue level formation of the body. If this is not working properly the imbalance will cause many diseases.

**CONCLUSION:**

In this paper after a brief discussion on Agni, Ama, Pitta and there correlations it shows that Agni is important for digestion and metabolism on cellular level, it also signify the importance of Agni on physiological and pathological levels. Agni is of 13 types which maintain the balance of metabolism in the body, Agni which is Samagni (normal) maintains the health of a human being. Agni is having many digestive enzymes which help to maintain the digestive and metabolic functions of the body. By the indigestion due to imbalance of Agni they produce Ama, which produce diseases. This Ama can be formed at any level of Pakavastha of the food. So the management of Agni Dhusti can lead to a healthy life. In this article this is concluded that if there is imbalance in Agni there will be production of diseases. So according to Ayurveda Agni is main cause of all disease in ayurveda.and by treating agni all disease can be cure easily.

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