

REVIEW ARTICLE

Literary Review on the Concept of *Agni* and *Kosthavadhata* in *Brihatrayee*

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is the ancient Indian system of life sciences and Medicine, its historicity going back to the Vedas. *Ayurveda* has described an important factor of digestion and metabolism in our body as *Agni*. In *Ayurveda*, the *Agni* is also called as "*Kaya*" means *Shareera*. The *Ayurvedic* principle of treating the disease is based on *Agni*. *Agni* is responsible for strength, health, longevity, and vital breath and it determines the quantity of food to be consumed. Ingested food is to be digested absorbed and assimilated, which is unavoidable for the maintenance of life and is performed by *Agni* that mentioned in *Ayurveda*. The term "*Agni*" is used in the sense of digestion of food and metabolic products. According to the functions and sites of action, *Agni* has been divided into 13 types, that is, one *Jatharagni*, five *Bhutagni*, and seven *Dhatvagni*. These 13 types of *Agni* are further divided into four types on the basis of *bal*, that is, *tikhnagni*, *mandagni*, *visamagni*, and *samagni*. About the importance of *Agni*, *Acharya charak* has mentioned that after stoppage of the function of *Agni*, the individual dies, and when the *Agni* of an individual is *sama*, then that person would be absolutely healthy and would lead a long, happy, and healthy life. However, if the *Agni* of a person is vitiated, the whole metabolism in his body would be disturbed, resulting in ill health and disease. This deranged (*vikrita*) leads to different type of diseases. Out of that *Kosthavadhata*, one of them *Kosthavadhata* means defecation of hard stool with strain, it occurs due to excess *vata* (*vidhi*) that *Acharya charaka* mention in *grahani Doshadhikar* that is included in *vatajagrahani*. Hence, *Agni* is said to be the base (*mool*) of life.

1. INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is a holistic life science which is based on numbers of basic factors, out of that *Agni* is one of them. In *Ayurveda*, the *Agni* is also called as "*Kaya*" means *Shareera*. As a whole the *Chikitsa* of *Ayurveda* is based on *Agni*. The word "*Agni*" mentioned in *Sabdakalpadruma*. *Ayurveda* has considered *Agni* a very important entity for the maintenance of good health. *Ayurveda* says that if *Agni* is not in its normal state, then it will lead to produce different ailments. The entire basic physics and biology of *Ayurveda* are greatly different from the modern basic sciences and the understanding of the structure and function of human body. The pathology and diagnostics are based on its own theories of *Triguna* (*Sattva-Raja-Tama*), *Panchamahabhuta*, *Tridosha* (*Vata-Pitta-Kapha*), and *Agni*. In *Ayurveda*, the term "*Agni*" is used in the sense of digestion of food and metabolic products. *Agni*

converts food in the form of energy, which is responsible for all the vital functions of our body. *Sushruta* has mentioned that there cannot be any *Agni* without *Pitta*. *Pitta* is the same as *Agni* and it is called as *Antaragni*, since it possesses the properties of *Agni* and performs similar actions as performed by the *Agni* (digestive fire) itself. During *Pitta Kshayavasta*, use of drugs which are having *Agneya Guna* will increase *Pitta*.^[1] Consumption of food may be various forms, that is, eatables, beverages, linctus (licked), and masticable foods, which is wholesome if consumed in suitable quantity and free from contamination. These substances undergo metabolic transformation by the effect of *Jatharagni*, *Bhutagni*, and *Dhatvagni*. Initially *Jatharagni* gives stimulation to *Bhutagni* because consumed food is *Panchabhautika*, it has to undergo transformation by the respective *Bhutagni*'s then only it becomes easy for tissue metabolism by *Dhatvagnis*. Then, processed metabolic products circulate inside the *srotas* continuously by the help of *Vatadosha*. This favors the development, strength, complexion and happiness as well as growth of tissues. *Dhatu*s remain in their normalcy after receiving respective

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nutrients from metabolized food substances. *Jatharagni* is the main principal substance responsible for disease and health. During its normalcy, it is responsible for longevity, complexion, strength, health, enthusiasm, well-built, luster, immunity (*ojas*), temperature, other *Agni*'s (*bhutagni* and *dhatvagni*), and other vital functions; all are dependent on *Jatharagni*. When this *Jatharagni* (fire) extinguishes, man dies. When a man is endowed with it adequately he lives along with good health. When it is deranged, he falls ill. This deranged (*vikrita*) leads to different types of diseases. Out of that *Kosthavadhata*, one of them *Kosthavadhata* means defecation of hard stool with strain; it occurs due to excess *Vatavridhi* that *Acharya Charaka* mentions in *Grahani Doshadhikar* that is included in *vatajagrahani*. *Agni* is situated in *grahani* and it is a common problem of the human being.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This article material is collected from Ancient books such as *Charak Samhita*, *Sushrut Samhita*, *Astangahrudaya*, and *Astangasangraha* and various articles, Web, authentic books, inquire about papers, and courses are the essential sources.

2.1. Importance of Agni

Bala (strength), *varna* (color), *swasthya* (health), *utsaha* (enthusiasm), *upacaya* (development of the body), *prabha* (complexion), *ojas* (strength), *tejas* (valor), *vaya* (age), and *evenayu* (life) – all depend on *Agni* and its function (fire-like activity). So long as, *agni* is normal, man can have a healthy and long life, loss of *Agni* leads to loss of life.^[2] Foods containing the nutrient materials of the *dhatu*s can be of help to the *dhatu*s, only after they are cooked (digested) well by the *Agni*.

2.2. Concept of Pitta and Agni in Ayurveda

It is a question of debate to say *pitta* and *agni* that are one and the same. Is there any separate *agni* other than *pitta*? Or *pitta* itself is *agni*? For this, *Sushruta* said no separate *agni* is found other than *pitta*. It is due to the properties of hotness in *pitta* leading to burning cooking and such similar functions performed by *pitta* are considered as *Agni* itself and it is called *antaragni*. During diminished state, use of similar properties of drugs advised and during increased state resorting to cold treatments have been advocated, no mention of *Agni* found in the texts.^[3] Large food molecules are broken down to smaller molecules both mechanically and chemically by the action of *pitta*. Further *pitta* helps for the process of transporting these smaller molecules across the intestinal wall which facilitates absorption and lastly undigested portions of food and waste products are removed from the body. Dissimilarities are given in Table 1.

2.3. Types of Agnis

Agni is innumerable because of its presence in each and every *dhatuparamanu* (cell) of the body. However, enumeration of the number of *Agnis* varies in various classical *Ayurvedic* texts, as shown below *Charaka* has mentioned about 13 *Agnis*: *Jatharagni* – one, *Bhutagni* – five, and *Dhatvagni* – seven.^[4]

According to *Sushruta*, five types of *Agnis* are illustrated, namely, *Pachakagni*, *Ranjakagni*, *Alochakagni*, *Sadhakagni*, and *Bhrajakagni*.^[5] However, there is an indirect reference of five *Bhutagnis* underlying in the brief description made to the transformation of food stuff.^[6]

Vagbhata has described different types of *Agni*, namely, – *Audaryagni* – one, *Bhutagnis* – five,^[7] *Dhatvagnis* – seven, *Dhoshagni* – three and *Malagni* – three, and *Pitta* – five.^[8]

Sharangadhara has recognized five *pittas* only (*Pachak*, *Bhrajak*, *Ranjak*, *Alochaka*, and *Sadhak*).^[9]

Bhavamishra has followed *Acharya Charaka* and *Vagbhata*.^[10]

Agni has been divided into 13 types according to the function and site of action.

These are

1. *Jatharagni* – One *Agni* present in the stomach and duodenum.
2. *Bhutagni* – Five *Agni* from five basic elements.
3. *Dhatvagni* – Seven *Agni* present, one in each of the seven *dhatu*s.

Accordingly, they are classified into three groups, namely, *Jatharagni*, *Bhutagni*, and *Dhatvagni*.

2.3.1. Jatharagni

Jatharagni is the *Agni* or bioenergy present in the *Jathara* (stomach and duodenum). According to *Ashtanga Hridaya*, *Jatharagni*, the seat is *grahani* (duodenum), so called because it withholds the food for a certain time inside the *Amasaya* (stomach) to facilitate digestion. In the opinion of *Dhanvantari*, it is the *Kala* known as “*Pittadhara*,” situated at the entrance of the *Pakvashaya* (intestine) and acting as a bolt to the door of the pathway/channel of food. It is responsible for the duration of life, health, valor, *ojas* (essence of the *dhatu*s), and strength of all the *Bhutagni* and *Dhatvagni*. The strength of the *grahani* is from *Agni* itself, and the strength of *Agni* is from *grahani*. When the *Agni* undergoes vitiation, *grahani* also gets vitiated and produces diseases.^[11]

Jatharagni is considered to be the most important because each and every nutrient that one ingests first comes to the *Jathara* and is subjected to the action of *Jatharagni*. *Jatharagni* digests the food materials that consist of the five basic elements and transforms it for utilization by the respective *Dhatuparamanus* (tissues). It is also responsible for separation of the food material into the essence portion (*Prasad*) and the waste products (*kitta*) in our body.^[12]

Jatharagni is directly related to *Dhatvagni* or bio-energy in the cells and their metabolic processes, with ultimate tissue metabolism or *Dhatu-Paka* process. All the *Dhatvagni* depend on the normal, healthy state of *Jatharagni*. If the *Jatharagni* is hyperactive (*Tikshna*) or hypoactive (*Manda*), it will cause an excessive or retarded action of the *Dhatvagni*. This disturbed action ultimately leads to various disorders. *Jatharagni* is the main important *Agni* that controls the function of all other 12 *Agnis*. All the *Agnis* are totally dependent on the status of *Jatharagni*.^[13]

Jatharagni is also classified into four categories according to its performance of digestion in the human being, namely, *Vishamagni*, *Tikshanagni*, *Mandagni*, and *Samagni*.^[14] According to *Harit Samhita*, *Samagni* depends on whether the *Doshas* (*Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*) are in normal stage. When the *Pitta* is higher than normal, the condition is known as *Tikshnagni*. When *Vata* and *Kapha* are higher than normal, the condition is known as *Mandagni*.

2.3.2. Bhutagni

Bhutagni is the one that is present in a basic element (*Bhutas*). There are five *Agnis* in each of the five basic elements, namely – *Parthiva* (earth), *Apya* (water), *Tejas* (*Agni*), *Vayavya* (*vayu*), and *Nabhasa* (*akash*).

Each and every cell in our body is composed of the five *Mahabhutas* or five basic elements. Naturally, each cell (*Dhatuparamanu*) consists of these five *Bhutagni* also. All the nutrients in this world that we eat also consist of the same five basic elements with their respective *Agni* or bioenergy. Thus, they are completely similar with respect to the

five basic elements with their *Bhutagni* in our body cells as well in the entire outside nutrient that we ingest for the nutrition of our body. Acharya Charak has mentioned that the five *Bhutagni* digest their own part of the element present in the food materials. After the digestion of food by the *Bhutagni*, digested materials containing the elements and qualities similar to each *Bhutas* nourish their own specific *Bhautika* elements of the body.^[15] These *Bhutagnis* act after the *Jatharagni* present in the stomach and duodenum, acting on the food and causing their disintegration. In the modern physiological perspective, the action of *Jatharagni* can be equated with the digestion in the stomach and duodenum, and the action of the *Bhutagni* can be equated with the conversion of digested materials in the liver.

2.3.3. Dhatvagni

All the seven *Dhatus* (seven element tissues of the body) contain their own Agni to metabolize the nutrient materials supplied to them through their own *Srotas*.

- a) *Rasagni* present in the *Rasa Dhatu*.
- b) *Raktagni* present in the *Rakta Dhatu*.
- c) *Mamsagni* present in the *Mamsa Dhatu*.
- d) *Medagni* present in the *Meda Dhatu*.
- e) *Asthyagni* present in the *Asthi Dhatu*.
- f) *Majjagni* present in the *Majja Dhatu*.
- g) *Shukragni* present in the *Shukra Dhatu*.

Each *Dhatvagni* or the bioenergy present in each *Dhatu* synthesizes and transforms the essential *Rasa Dhatu* required for that particular *Dhatu* or cell from the basic nutrients present in the *Anna Rasa* or essence of the diet that we consume. Each *Dhatvagni* has got a specialty to synthesize and transform the constituents suitable to its particular *Dhatu*. This action is a sort of selective action. Acharya Charaka has mentioned the fact that that the seven dhatus that are a support of the body contain their own Agni, and by their own *Agni*, they digest and transform the materials supplied to them to make the substances alike to them for assimilation and nourishment.^[16]

Importance of *Jatharagni* functions of various *agni* elaborately discussed above in which *jatharagni* is the chief among all types of *agnis* because function of *Bhutagni* and *Dhatvagni* depends on this. Aggravation or diminution of *jatharagni* results in aggravation or diminution of *Bhutagni* and *Dhatvagni*. Therefore, by all means, one has to protect *jatharagni* by consuming suitable wholesome dietetics and behavior because longevity and strength depends on normal state of *agni*. On the contrary one, who consumes unwholesome diet due to greed, succumbs to disease caused by the vitiation of *grahani*.^[17]

2.4. Physiological and Pathological State of Agni

2.4.1. Samagni

First variety is not associated with dosa and it is called *samagni* state and it is the physiological state of *agni*. The *Samagni* digests and assimilates food properly at the proper time. This thus increases the quality of the *Dhatus* (supportive tissues of the body). Persons having *Samagni* are always hale and healthy.

2.4.2. Vishamagni

Visamagni is the state in which improper digestion and metabolism take place, that is, sometimes perform normal functions followed by abnormal one and manifest flatulence, abdominal pain, upward movement of *vata* inside the *kostha*, diarrhea, heaviness in abdomen, intestinal gurgling, and straining exercise for evacuation of stools. When this Agni is affected by the *Vata Dosha*, it creates different types of *vatavyadhi*.

2.4.3. Tikshnagni

Tikshnagni means very quick/very sharp/very fast. *Tikshnagni* is a state of very quick digestion of food, regardless of the type of food. Acharya Shushrut states that when the power of digestion is increased from normal to above normal, food digests very quickly and produces hunger or the desire for food. When food is digested, the throat, the mouth cavity, and the lips become dry with a burning sensation. This condition is known as "*Bhasmak Roga*" according to Ayurveda. *Tikshnagni* state gives rise to manifestation of *vatavyadhi*.

2.4.4. Mandagni

The meaning of the *Mandagni* is slow digestive power or digestive capacity. Those who are having *Mandagni* eat very little and are unable to digest the smallest amount of food. Dhanvantri says that *Agni* digests the least amount of food in the greatest amount of time and manifests heaviness in abdomen and head, cough, dyspnea, excessive salivation, vomiting, and weakness of the body. *Mandagni* state gives rise to manifestation of *Kaphajavikara*.

2.5. Kosthavadhata

Kosthavadhata (constipation) is one of the common problems of human being on the society which is mainly based on the state of Agni. Because the *vikritaagni* responsible for creating different type of *Ajirna* which is the initial or earlier symptom of *Grahani Dosha*, on the basics of involvement, *dosha* in different *ajirnavikara* are formed like *Vishabdajirna* - *vatavitiated agnivikara*, *Vidagdhajirna* - *pitta vitiateagnivikara* and *Amajirna* - *kapha vitiated agniVikara* "7, and concern to *kosthavadhata* (constipation), It is *vatapradhanyaagnivikara*.

By observing the features of *Kosthavadhata* to a maximum extent, it can be very well correlated with disease simple constipation. This disorder is mentioned in almost all the textbooks of modern medicines, few enlisted as follows: Gyton and Hall textbook of medical physiology and Golwall's medicine for students and Davidson. Constipation is defined as infrequent passage of hard stools, straining, sensation of incomplete evacuation, and abdominal discomforts; it can be end result of many gastro intestinal or other health disorders. Simple constipation is due to an inadequate diet and life style.

3. CONCLUSION

After detailed discussion of Agni, it can be concluded that Agni plays a pivotal role in maintaining good health of a human being. *Agni* is an important integral part of the body. The entire range of digestive and metabolic activity of the body takes place with the help of biological fire of the body known as *Agni*. Normal state of *Agni* should be maintained by consuming suitable diet and behavior because longevity and strength depends on the healthy state of *Agni*. These pathological events ultimately lead to various gastrointestinal, allergic, auto-immune, and metabolic disorders. Clinical practice *Agni Pariksha* of the patient is very important, because on the basis of this *pariksha* future treatment plan can be decided. Healthy state of the body and diseased condition depends entirely on *Agni*. *Vata (prana, saman, apana, and udan)* stimulates the digestive fire. Agni should be protected by proper intake of food because this acts as a fuel. If a person is deprived of food or takes too much food for quite some time, then it results in the disturbance of *Agni* and disease develops in the body. *Jatharagni* is important because it facilitates secretion of various chemicals, enzymes, etc. leading to proper digestion of food. Further *Dhatvagni* and *bhutagni* help for the digestion absorption and assimilation of food substances into the body. Ayurveda says that disturbed function of Agni is the root cause of all diseases.

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9. DATA AVAILABILITY

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Table 1: Dissimilarities between Agni and Pitta

	<i>Agni</i>	<i>Pitta</i>
Color	----	<i>Neela(Ama), pitta (Nirama)</i>
Taste	No taste	<i>Katu</i>
Smell	No taste	<i>Vista and pooti</i>
Consistency	<i>Sushka</i>	<i>Snigdha</i>
<i>Guna</i>	<i>Ruksha</i>	<i>Snigdha</i>
Intake of <i>Ghrita</i>	<i>Agni deepana</i>	<i>Pitta shaman</i>
<i>Gati</i>	<i>UrdhaGati</i>	<i>AdhoGati</i>