

CONCEPT OF AGNI IN AYURVEDA (REVIEW ARTICLE)

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ABSTRACT

The concept of *Agni* in Ayurveda which refers to the manifold functions ascribed to *Pitta* is at once comprehensive. It not only includes chemical agencies responsible for *Aaharapacana* in the *Koshtha* (gastrointestinal) which leads to separation of *Sarabhaga* (Nutrient fraction) of *Aahar* (food) from the *Kittabhaga* (the indigestible residue of the food) but also metabolic events – energy, synthesis and maintenance of metabolism.

*“Agnirev Sharire Pittantargata Kupitakupita Shubhashubani Karoti. Tadytha-Paktimapaktim Darshanam adarshanam matramatratvam ushmana prakriti vikriti varno shaurayam bhayam krodam harsham moham prasadam ityevemaadini chaprani dvandvaniti.”*¹

Agni which is situated inside the *Pitta* does the shubha and ashubha karyas in the body according to its kupita and akupita avastha. It has manifold functions like *pacana* of the *anna*, visualizing things with the help of eyes, maintenance of the body temperature, understanding many feelings such as *Shaurya*, *Bhaya*, *Krodha*, *Harsha*, *Moha*, *Dukh*, *Sukh* etc... *“Na Khalu Pitta vyatirekaad Anyoagniruplabhyte agneytwaat pitte dahana pacanaadi abhipravritmaneshav agnivadupchar: Kriyte antaragniriti. Ksheene hayagnigune tasmandravyeupyogaad ativridhe sheetkriyopyogaad gamanaach pashyamo na khalu pitta vyatirekadanyo agniriti”*² Different comments have been given regarding *Agni* and *Pitta*....

Sushruta has said that the direct action of *Agni* and *Pitta* can be seen through *Dahana-Pacana* and through *Anumaana pramaana*, *“Ksheene hayagni gune tatsamaan dravyaupyogaat.”*, also proves that *Agni* and *Pitta* are same. It is very well said in classics – *“Sarve Roga Api Mandagni”* means all diseases in the body are caused due to *Mandagni* (due to improper functioning of digestive fire). In modern era, most of the diseases are caused due to *Mandagni*, *Vishamagni* or *Teekshanagni*. So it has been tried to concentrate on the causes of such problems and provide a healthy citizen to the society who is free from all these diseases.

This work is a fact finding activity purely based on fundamental research. No hypothesis is proposed or tested. This work may have no immediate or planned application but may later result into further research of an applied matter.

KEYWORDS: *Pachakagni*, *Koshtha*, *Sarabhaga*, *Kittabhaga*, *Pachak pitta*, *Dhatavagni*, *Bhutagni*

INTRODUCTION

Agni in *Ayurveda*, is reflected in the concept of *Pitta* of this system. The term *Pitta* is derived from the root “*tap*” – “to heat” or “to burn”. This term is seen to have three meanings viz.:-

“*Tap Ashvarye*”, “*Tap Dahe*” and “*Tap Samtapa*” “*Tap Samtapa*” refers to the

the act of burning of the nutrition consumed and “*Tap Ashvarye*” refers to the factor which is responsible to make one achieve the eight kinds of benefits.

*Tap Samtapa*³

Tap Ashvarye (Divadi Guna)

Tap Dahe – *Swedhi Guna* (Siddhanta Kay

*Tap Samtape – Bhvadi Guna
Tapyti Ushmanamutpadyatiti Pittam
Tapyti Dahti Bukhtamaaharjatam its Pit-
tam
Tapyti Ashtvidharmanamadikimiti Pittam.*

From the point of view of Ayurveda, *Pitta* has been described as *Agni* (fire) since it performs fire-like actions i.e. *Paka*, which refers to *Pacana* (Digestion); *Dahana* (Burning) including *Bhinna Samghata* (splitting), *Tapana* (Heat production) *Parinamana* (Conversion), *Paravritti* (Transformation) *Prakasana* (Illumination), *Ranjana* or *Varnakara* (Colouration) and *Prabhakara* (to cause luster). In a general sense, the term *Kaya* or body itself has been equated to *Agni*.

**“Jathar Pratinamagni Kaya Itybhidiyte.
Yastam Chikitsesidantam Sev Kaychikitsika”.**⁴

DISCUSSION

Caraka has said that it is only *Agni* which is located in *pitta*, that gives rise to beneficial or adverse consequences as it is in normal or abnormal state of functioning. **“Agnirev Sharire Pittantargata Kupitakupita Shubhashubani Karoti”.**⁵

Chakrapani has said that the term “*Pittantargata*” does not mean that the *Pitta* of the body is flaming fire and it only refers to the phenomenon of heat which is associated with fire. By implication, heat is seen to be associated with the function of *Pitta*.

Acharya Sushruta has said that *Pitta* is the same as *Agni*, since it performs *Dahana* (Burning or oxidation), *Pacana* (Digestion) and similar actions as performed by fire, hence *Pitta* is known as *Antaragni*.

Dahanam Daha, Pacana Pakam; Aaharade (Dalnana on Sushruta Sutra 21/9). The concept of *Agni* of Ayurveda, which refers to the manifold functions as-

cribed to *Pitta* is at once comprehensive. It not only includes chemical agencies responsible for *Aaharapacana* in the *Kostha* (corresponding to gastro-intestinal digestion), which leads to separation of *Sarabhaga* (Nutrient fraction) of the *Aahara* from the *Kittabhaga* (the indigestible or undigested residue of the food) but also metabolic events, energy, synthesis and maintenance of metabolism.

Pachatyannam Vibhajate Sarakitto Prithaktatha.⁶

In addition, it is seen to comprehend photo and chemo synthetic processes, *Pacakapitta* known variously as *Jatharagni*, *Kosthagni*, *Antaragni*, *Pachakagni*, *Dehagni* etc., while being located in its own place in an area between *Amasaya* and *Pakvasaya*,

“Tatra Pakvamashymadhagam”.

Directly participates in the digestion of food and at the same time, leads support to and augments the functions of the remaining *pittas*, present elsewhere in the body.

“Tatrasthamev Pittanam Sheshanama-payeanugraham Karoti Baladanen Pachakam Naam Tattsamritam”.⁷

Classifications of Agni:

The Ayurvedic concept of *Agni* includes, not only five kinds of *Pittas*, but also the *Dhatavagnis* and *Bhutagnis*. It is clear from the classical Ayurvedic texts that the enumeration of the number of *Agnies* varies from author to author. According to Caraka Samhita, as commented by Chakrapani Datta, the number of *Agnies* enumerated are over thirteen:-

- | | | | |
|----|-------------------|---|---|
| 1) | <i>Antaragni</i> | - | 1 |
| 2) | <i>Bhutagni</i> | - | 5 |
| 3) | <i>Dhatavagni</i> | - | 7 |

On the other hand, Acharya Sushruta has described only five *Agnies* viz.

Pachakagni, Ranjakagni, Alocakagni, Sadhakagni and Bhrajakagni.

There is however an indirect reference in Sushruta Samhita to five *Bhutagnis*, in the brief description made to the transformation, which foodstuffs undergo in the organism.

Panchbhutatmake Dehe Aahar Panchbhautik

Vipakwa: Panchda Samyak Svan Gunanabhivar Dhyet.⁸

Vagbhata has described:-

5 *Pittas*

5 *Bhutagnis*

7 *Dhatavagnis*

3 *Dosagnis*

3 *Malagnis*

That is he has enumerated twenty three *Agnis*

Acharya Sarangdhar is seen to have recognized five *Pittas* only. On the other hand, Acharya Bhavmishra, is seen to have followed Caraka and Vagbhata.

Bhutagni:

"Yatha Svava Pushyante Dehe Dravyaguna Prithak

Pasthiva Parthivanev Shesha Sheshach Kritsnach".⁹

Means in *sharira*, all *gunas* get *pushti* from their respective *amshas*. *Parthiv* apye *gunas* for *apye* *gunas*, *agneya* for *agneya*, *Vayvey* for *Vayvey* and similarly *Nabhas* for *Nabhas* respectively.

Dhatavagni:

"Vinmutramaaharasyemala Sara Pragiritto Rasa

Tu Vyanen Vikshipit Sarvan Dhatun Pratarpyet".¹⁰

Vistha and *Mutra* are the *Malas* of *Aahara* whereas *Rasa* is the *sara* of *Aahara*. With the help of *Vyana Vaayu*, this *Rasa* does the *tarpan* of all *Dhatu*s.

"Saptabhidehadhataro Dhatavo Dvividam Puna

Yatha Svamagnibhi Pakam Yanti Kitta Prasadata".¹¹

Due to the action of *Dhatavagni* on their respective *Dhatu*s i.e. *Rasa*, *Rakta*, *Mamsa*, *Meda*, *Asthi*, *Majja* and *Shukra*, *dhatu*s get converted into *Prasad* – *Bhag* and *Kitta* – *Bhag*.

Acharya Sushruta and Vagbhata have indicated that the organ known as *Grahani* is located between *Pakvasaya* and *Amasaya* and that the relation that exists between *Agni* and *Grahani* is reciprocal i.e. *Agni* supports the function of *Grahani* and *Grahani* supports the function of *Agni*.

Importance of Antaragni/Kosthagni/Jatharagni

Acharya Caraka says that *Kosthagni* is considered to be the leader of all factors concerned with metabolism in the body. All other *Agnis* are derived from it. Their activities or otherwise, are dependent upon an increase or decrease as the case may be of *Jatharagni*.

"Annasye Pakta Servesham Paktsinamdhipo Mata

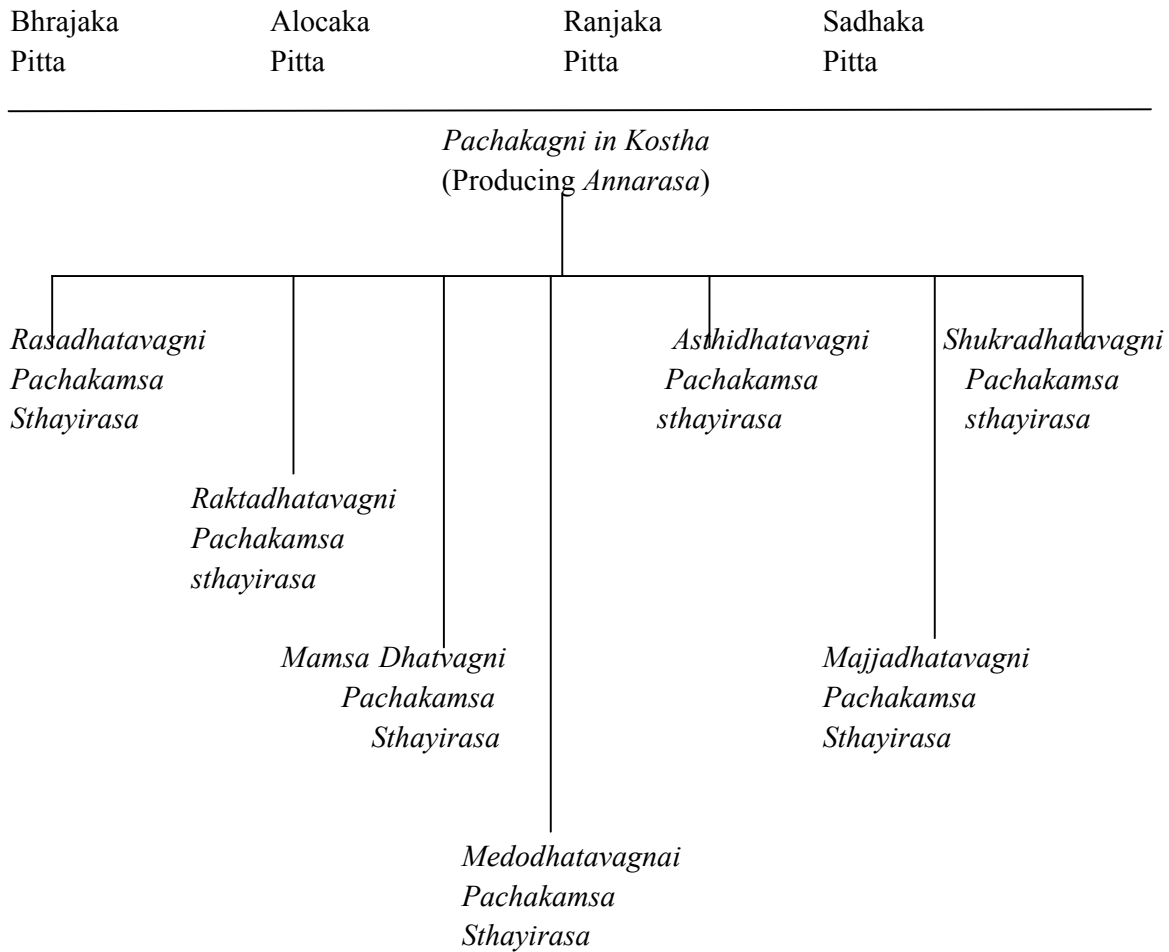
Tanmulaste Hi Tadvridhikshay vridhi kshayatmaka".¹²

Says Sushruta, "By a dispensation which is unseen (a cause which cannot be perceived or explained and which is hidden), *pitta* which is located in an area between *Amasaya* and *Pakvasaya*, is responsible for the digestion of four kinds of food ingested by living beings and the elimination of the residue in the form of urine and faeces after the completion of the process. Located in its own place (between *Amasaya* and *Pakvasaya*) it contributes to and augments the functions of other locations of *pittas*, in the performance of actions. This *pitta*, is therefore, spoken of as "*Pachakagni*".

"Tachadrisht visheshen pakavamashye madhyastham pittam Chaturvidam annapanam pachti, vivechtyi, ch Dosha rosa

*mutsa pusishani Tatrashbtamev chatamshaktaya, sheshanam pitta sthananam sharirasye aganikarmana amygraham karoti, Tasmin Pitte Pachakoagniriti Sangya."*¹³

Scheme representing the relationship between *Pachakagni* and other *Pittas* and *Agnis* of the body:-



"Annasye Pakta Servesham Paktsinamdhipo Mata

Tanmulaste Hi Tadvidrikshay vridhi kshayatmaka."¹⁴

Pachakagni is the pradhan of all agni is:- *Bhutagnis* and *Dhatavagnis*. If *Pachakagni* gets *vridhi*, other *Agnis* get increased and of *Kshay* of the *Pachakagni* occurs, others also get *Kshay*.

"Aayu varno balam svasthye utsah upchaye prabha.

Ojas Tejo Agneya Pranachokta Dehagni hetuka."¹⁵

Dehagni is the only factor which is responsible for *Aayu*, *Bala*, *Varna*, *Svasthya*, *Utsaha*, *Pusthi*, *Prabha* and the func-

tioning of other *Agnis* also. When *Pachakagni* is functioning properly, all other activities of the body also go on smoothly.

"Shantagni Mriyete, Yukte Chiram Jivatye Aamaye

Rogi Syad Vikrite Mulam Agni Tasmate Niruchyete"¹⁶

When *Agni* becomes *shaant*, causes death of the person. If *Pachakagni* is working normally, the person remains *nirोगी* and healthy but if *Pachakagni* is not disturbed, the person becomes unhealthy.

Types of Pachakagni:-

"Agnishu Tu Sharisheshu Chaturvidho Vishesho Balabheden Bhavati. Tadyhytha-Techshno, Mando, Samo, Vishamashiti"

As per *Bala Bheda*, *Agni* is of 4 types:-

- a) *Teekshan*
- b) *Manda*
- c) *Sama*
- d) *Visham*

a) *Teekshagni*:-

"*Teekshnoagni Sarvapcharsaha.*"

Teekshanagni does the *ati shigra pachan* of the food.

b) *Mandaagni*:-

"*Tadviprit Lakshanastu Manda.*"

The one which does the delayed *pachan* of the food even though taken in very less quantity, is called as *Mandagni* complications are *Udarpidaa*, Heaviness in *Shiras*, *Prasek*, *Chardi* and *Shvaas*.

c) *Samagni*:-

"*Samastu Svalapchupcharto vikritimadhye upchartashu prakriti avisthite*"

That which does the *samyak pachan* of the food taken by the person, is considered as *Samagni*.

d) *Vishamagni*:-

"*Samlakshanviprit lakshanastu Visham its*"

The *Agni* which does the irregular *pachan* of the food, sometimes it does the proper *pachan* and sometimes improper, is considered as *Vishamagni*. Diseases related to *Vishamagni* are *Aadhmaan*, *Shula*, *Udavarta*, *Atisaar*, Heaviness in *Udar Pradesh*, *Antarkujan* etc.

CONCLUSION:

So, it is concluded that *Aahara-Dravya*, *Pachaka-pitta* and *Agni* are correlated to each other and are responsible for carrying out the normal activities of the body. The *sama* and *Prakopa avastha* of the *Doshas* are totally dependent on the condition of *Agni* of body. So, *Anurakshan* of *Agni* is of prime importance for the physician and for the maintenance of health of a person.

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