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### *Role of 'agni maintenance' in prevention of lifestyle disorders*

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#### **ABSTRACT-**

In present era, lifestyle disorders are gift of rapid industrialization of environment and increasing westernization of lifestyle. Lifestyle of people has undergone numerous changes, many of them are affecting the body badly and causing the diseases called as life style disorders. In simple language, life style disorders are disorders caused due to faulty life style. According to Ayurveda *roga sarvepi mandagni* i.e. main reason behind all the diseases is *mandagni* along with their respective causative factors. The hurry, worry and curry are three gifts of today's lifestyle which mainly affect the harmony of *agni* eventually disturb the normal physiology of body and cause many life style diseases. Therefore *Agni* plays dominant role in manifestation of lifestyle disorders. Aim of the study is to understand the pathophysiology of *agni* and to enlist various factors affecting *agni*. But due to industrialization and pollution of surrounding environment, some of these factors are unavoidable. So in today's fast world maintaining the

harmony of *agni* is the best way of prevention of lifestyle disorder. And also understanding the factors affecting the *agni* will be helpful in planning the preventive measurements of lifestyle disorders.

**Keywords:** *Agni, Aahara vidhividhan, Lifestyle, Samaagni, Preventive measurements*

#### **INTRODUCTION-**

From ancient age to modern age Life style of people has been changed. This sedentary lifestyle has created many health problems. In recent years, prevalence of these lifestyle disorders are reached at alarming position in India. Life style disorders are disorders caused due to faulty life style habits. Lifestyle diseases include heart diseases, stroke, obesity and diabetes, intestinal bowl syndrome, metabolic syndrome, depression. Sedentary lifestyle, faulty eating habits such as ignorance toward diet, eating spicy oily unhealthy food, eating in hurry or in unpleasant places due to lack of

time, and stress anxiety are mainly affecting the *agni* of body which is the ultimate digestive power . Body with weakened digestive power give rises to many diseases. As Ayurveda mainly focus on preventive measures , it always tries to attain the harmony of body through maintenance of equilibrium of *agni*. The purpose of the article is to understand the pathophysiology of *agni*, to enlist the factors affecting the *agni* in today's prospective and to figure out the factors which are avoidable for maintaining the harmony of *agni*.

### **MATERIAL AND METHOD –**

Classical texts of Ayurveda were studied for references related to *Agni*. Also all the references related to *agni* and *annapachana* are studied. The references were compiled, analysed and discussed for in-depth understanding of the concept of *Agni* and factors affecting *agni* and to evaluate role of *Agni* in lifestyle disorders.

### **OBESERVATION**

#### **Understanding the concept of *Agni***

*Aahara* , *nidra* and *brahmacharya* are the three pillars of body<sup>1</sup>. All the three pillars of body are corelated with *agni*. Wellbeing of body depend on this three pillars and so on harmony of *agni*. *Ahara* has given first priority as body is mainly derived and nourished through the *aahara*. But *Aahara* we eat is in complex form , and for nourishing body it have to be converted in simpler form. This is only possible due to Digestive process. According to Ayurveda *Agni* is the Digestive power which is responsible for the process of digestion. So that the

consumed food can provide nourishment to bodily tissues. *Agni* plays a vital role in this connection between food and tissue elements through process of digestion and formation of *Aahara rasa*<sup>2</sup>.

#### **Types of *Agni***

Acharya Charaka : Acharya Charaka has enlisted *bhoutikagni* and *dhatvagni* along with the *jatharagni* . Acharya Chakrapani have explained that there are five types of *bhoutik agni* , seven type of *dhatvagni* and one *jathargni*.<sup>3</sup>

Acharya Sushruta : Acharya Sushruta has enlisted five types of *Agnis* viz. *Pachakagni*, *Ranjakagni*, *Alochakagni*, *Sadhakagni* and *Bhrajakagni*. Further he have noted that *bhutagni* also take part in process of digestion.<sup>4</sup>

Acharya Vagbhata : Acharya Vagbhata has counted *Jathargni* as *antarushma* , five *bhutagni* and seven *dhatvagni* . He have further added the *doshaagni* and *malagni*<sup>5</sup>

Summing up there are mainly 13 types of *agni* i.e. one *Jathargni*, five *bhutagni*, seven *dhatvagni* . Acharya Charaka have explained that the power of all other types of *agni* depends on the *jatharagni*. As *jatharagni* is increased , all other *agnis* will be increased and as power of *jatharagni* is decreased, all other *agnis* will eventually got weakened.

#### **Types of *agni* according to *prakruti*<sup>6</sup>**

<i>Prakruti</i>	<i>Agni</i>
<i>Vaat</i>	<i>Visham</i>
<i>Pitta</i>	<i>Tikshna</i>
<i>Kapha</i>	<i>Manda</i>
<i>Sama</i>	<i>Sama</i>

*Mandagni* means the state of *Agni* at which it is unable to digest even a small quantity of easily digestible food. *Tikshnagni* refer to that state of *agni* where even a very heavy diet is digested in a short span of time again create hunger. *Agni* is unpredictable, sometimes functions like *mandagni* and sometimes functions as *tikshagni*, it is referred as *Vishmagni*. State of equilibrium of *agni* is called as *samagni* which represents normal functional state of *agni*. Only *Samagni* is the healthy state while remaining three are the abnormal states of *agni* leading to various disorders.<sup>7</sup>

### **Agni relation between dosha**

*Agni* is correlated with *Pachaka pitta*. The *Samana Vaayu* triggers the *agni*. And presence of *kapha* is also needed for performing the function of *agni* properly. So equilibrium of dosha is the requirement for harmony of *agni*.

### **Importance of Agni**

As already seen that *Agni* is the digestive power and plays vital role in digestion. Life, complexion, strength, health, enthusiasm, body building, lustre, immunity, body temperature, and vitality all these depend on the normal state of *Agni*. *Agni* is said to be the sign of life and due to harmony of *Agni* human can live longer with healthy life, the disturbed harmony of *agni* gives invitation to many diseases and its absence is death. So *agni* is ultimately called as base of life.<sup>8</sup>

### **Role of Agni in Swastha purusha**

Ayurveda is life Science mainly aims to restore the health. Ayurveda has defined *swastha* as person having balanced

condition of *dosha*, *dhatu*, *mala* along with harmony of *agni* and also having sound soul, senses and mind. Ayurveda consider the harmony of *agni* as one of the dimension of health.

### **Role of Agni in normal physiology**

Firstly all taken food is digested with the help of *jatharagni* and converted into *aahar-rasa*. For nutrition of body the *aahararasa* formed from process of digestion is circulated throughout the body by the support of *vyaan vaayu*<sup>9</sup>. This *aahararasa* get circulated through *srotasas* of *dhatu*. Then the useful part of this is taken by respective *srotasa* according to *khalekapot nyaya*. Here the *dhatvagni* works on this useful part so that it can be further utilized by body. So all the functions of body gets its energy supply through this process of digestion. So for performing all the function of body in harmony, the process of digestion must be carried out properly. For this *jatharagni* must be in state of equilibrium as all other *agnis* are regulated by *jatharagni*.

### **Role of Agni in pathology of diseases**

According to Acharya Charaka any disturbance in normal physiology of *agni*, will give rise to various diseases. According to Vagbhatacharya, *Mandagni* is root cause behind every disease. According to him the *pakva aahara* (well digested form of food) works as *amruta* while the *apakva aahara* (undigested food) works as *visha* (poison)<sup>10</sup>. The *aama* thus formed by improper digestion due to diminished digestive fire, give rise to many diseases.

**Factors affecting Agni:** Factors affecting Agni can be divided in

- **Endogenous factor:**

*Prakruti, Doshasthiti, Vaya* are the factors influencing the *Agni*. *Pitta prakruti*, *pitta dosha* and young age are the condition which favour the *bala* of *agni*. While *Kapha prakruti, Kapha dosha* and old age are the factor which give rise to *mandagni*.

- **Exogenous factor:**

1. **Din and ratra** (Diurnal variation) – *agni* is favoured by stage of day having the prominence of *pitta dosha* so *agni* performs best functions in second *prahara* of day (before noon). But in night the srotasa start to closing so first *prahara* of night (late evening) is consider as better period of taking food compared to other part of night.
2. **Rutu** (Seasonal variation) – *agni* is at it peak in *Shishira* and *Hemant Rutu* ( In winter season) as the route of sweat glands are closed so heat in body remained inside body and triggers the digestive power and *agni* become *mandagni* in *Varsha Rutu* ( In rainy season)
3. **Aahara** (Diet) – *Aahara* is considered as fuel to *Agni*. Pleasant diet which follows all the guidelines of Ayurveda increases *Agni* and vice versa.<sup>11</sup>
4. **Vihara** (Physical activity) – *Avyayam* (Sedentary lifestyle), *atinidra* (excessive sleep), *divaswap* (daytime sleep) after eating this all decreases the

strength of *agni* and *Vyayama* (exercise) elevates *Agni*.

### The Factors vitiating *agni* and correlating them with today's lifestyle

- 1) **Abhojanad**<sup>12</sup> – taking food in less amount or completely avoiding food will ultimately vitiate *agni* as *aahara* is called as fuel for *agni*. *Langhan* is helpful in increasing the power of *agni* only when *agni* is vitiating due to elevated *dosha* and *aama* otherwise the it will vitiate *agni*. so false belief of today's generation about dieting will surely hamper the digestive system. Also in today's fast and competitive lifestyle, not everyone get sufficient time to eat whenever they feel truly hungry, it affect *agni* badly.
- 2) **Ajirna bhojane**<sup>12</sup> – taking food when the previously taken food is not digested properly, the undigested food is already present in digestive system, this hampers process of digestion. Person in hurry or in stress eats unnecessarily, without appetite.
- 3) **Atibhojanad**<sup>12</sup> – taking unnecessarily excess amount of food hampers *agni*.
- 4) **Vishamashana**<sup>12</sup> – taking food in less amount or in excess amount or not in proper time, Food which don't follow the rules of *Aahara vidhividhana* comes under the concept of *vishamashana*. This is main reason for *agnidushti* in today's generation. Almost everyone eats food without following proper guideline.

- 5) **Asatmya bhojana**<sup>12</sup> -Some food are unfit to person according to his *prakruti, desha* or *kaala* and some food are unhealthy for everyone , all this type of food are called as *asatmya* .
- 6) **Guru,sheet,ruksha bhojanad**<sup>12</sup> - *Guru* refers to food which needs more time span for digestion than usual . In today's aspect the cheese, *panir*, junk food and sweet dish after lunch or dinner such as *gulabjamun, shreekhanda* are simply called as *guru ahara*. *Sheeta ahara* includes cold drinks and food stuff from fridge . While *ruksha* refers to bread, biscuit, chips . This all affect the *agni*,
- 7) **Sandushta bhojana**<sup>12</sup>- includes unfresh food , fermented food, having excess amount of *kleda*, e.g. *idali, vada, dosa* , preserved foods.
- 8) **Vega vidharana**<sup>12</sup> – the ignorance toward urges such as *chardi vega, nidra vega , kshuda vega* affect the *agni*.
- 9) Exercise after eating heavy ,oily diet
- 10)Eating in unhygienic , unpleasant place,
- 11)**Manasa bhava**<sup>13</sup> – excessive stress, anxiety, anger, depression

#### Guidelines for maintenance of *agni*

For maintenance of *agni* , one have to follow the *aahara vidhi vidhan*<sup>14</sup> and *sadvrutta*

- 1) We should eat fresh , hot food containing *Sneha ansha* in proper quantity . This help in proper digestion by increasing the strength of *agni*.

- 2) Eat food in sufficient quantity , we have to take food according to our appetite.
- 3) Eat food when you actually feels hunger , eating only after digestion of previously taken food help us in maintenance of *agni* .
- 4) We should avoid unhealthy combination of food.
- 5) We should eat food in pleasant, hygienic place.
- 6) Hurry and worry should be avoided while eating food
- 7) Eat with all concentration on your food.
- 8) Eating without laughing and talking helps to keep your digestive system healthy.

#### Maintenance of *agni*

In this modern era of industrialization and pollution , some vitiating factors are very hard to avoid. And also in today's fast competitive life every one cant avoid some factors in their busy schedule. Some of them eat unhealthy combination of food unknowingly. Acharya charaka in *Aatreyabhadrakapyyiya Adhyaya* have noted that *Virrudha anna* provide less harm to person having *Diptagni* i.e. *agni* having high strength capable of digesting all type of food <sup>15</sup>. So one should maintain *agni bala* . so that this external factors will have less effects on *agni* and body. Therefore Stronger is *Agni* the stronger will be immunity of body and lesser will be the hazardous effects of pollution and unavoidable harmful factors.

Proper Quantity of Food : Strength of *Agni* is not increased by completely avoiding food and also not by taking excess amount of food . *Aahara* is fuel

for *agni* (digestive fire). As insufficient fuel fails to increase fire and also excess of fuel destroy fire . In the same manner only *Aahara* in less or excess quantity is unable to increase *agni* . only *aahara* in proper quantity according to ones *agnibala* helps to increase strength of *agni* .

If one can't avoid the heavy diet due to some occasion then skipping the next dinner is best way . and also if heavy dinner is not digested properly then one should avoid breakfast and lunch until he feel appetite truly. Avoid drinking of water after diet for about one hour instead you can drink water within your diet.

Medication: Acharya Charaka in *Ghrahani adhyaya* have given that along with food containing *Sneha*, medicines like *Churna* of *deepaka dravya* i.e. *panchakol churna* , *hingavashtaka churna* , *Asava* , *Arishta* i.e. *panchkola asava* , *drankshasava*, *takrarishta* helps in elevating the *agni bala*.<sup>16</sup>

Acharya Sushruta have given line of treatment for *Agni*. For *Vishamaagni aahara* and *aushadhi* containing *snigdha*, *amla*, *lavana dravya* . For treating *Tikshnagni* buffalo milk , and milk product and for management of *mandagni aahara aushadhi* having prominence of *katu*, *tikta*, *Kashaya rasa* i.e. *maricha* , *pippali*. Further he have noted that '*Same parirakshana kurvanti*' one should maintain the *samaagni*.<sup>17</sup>

Exercise : The person doing regular exercise have *diptagni* so they can easily digest food . Due to exercise the excess quantity of *dosha* present in body are reduced due to the *shakhagamana* so the

strength of *agni* present in *koshta* is increased.

Shodhana :As vitiation of *agni* is mainly caused due to disturbed equilibrium of *dosha* so *Shodhana* is best way to attain equilibrium of *dosha* and therefore harmony of *agni*. Sushrutacharya have given *virechana* is procedure which will help in management of *tikshnaagni* and *vamana* is procedure which treat *mandagni*.<sup>17</sup>

### DISCUSSION:

There are basically three types of *agni* i.e. *Jatharagni*, *Bhutagni* and *Dhatvagni*. *Jatharagni* is also known as *Kayagni*, *Kosthagni*. It is the *Agni* present in gastro intestinal tract and makes the digestion of food which is followed by absorption of *saarabhaga* (nutrients) through intestinal villi and mucosa to further enter into lymph or blood and which is circulated throughout the body with the help of *vyaan vaayu*. This process further followed by process of *dhatvagni* on their respective *saara bhaga* in their respective *srotasa*. All the *Bhutagni* and *Dhatvagni* are regulated by the *jatharagni* . Their strength is also depend on strength of *jatharagni*. So if we maintain *jatharagni bala* , all other *agni bala* will be maintained provided body is not having any *sroto-avrodha*(obstruction in pathway)

According to *prakruti* and prominence of *dosha* in body , there are four type of *agni* i.e. *mandagni*, *tikshnagni*, *vishamagni* and *vishamagni* . Out of which the *samagni* is said to be one of the dimension of health . and other *agnis* are consider as pathological conditions . Acharya Sushruta have emphasized that

*samagni* should be maintained. As other *agni* conditions are caused due to disturbed condition of dosha, *agni* should be corrected accordingly. *Mandagni* is having dominant role in the manifestation of lifestyle disorders. As long as *Samana vata* is carrying out its normal functions, the state of *Agni* is also *Sama*. So the maintenance of *Samagni* can be achieved by following *Ashtaahara Vidhividhana* (Eight rules for eating) and by avoiding factors which vitiate *agni*. But sometimes factors are hard to avoid then we have to make *agni bala* powerful. As Acharya Charaka have noted that unhealthy food have less effects in the person having strong *agnibala*. Maintenance of *Samagni* is essential for the disease free life especially when we cannot maintain the quality of food in these polluted era. *Samagni* is the only state which is beneficial to maintain healthy state in the human beings and prevent lifestyle disorders.

### CONCLUSION:

Healthy life is right of every person and *Samagni* is one of the dimension of health according to Ayurveda which should be maintained in present lifestyle. *Agni* converts food in the form of energy. All types of *agnis* are regulated by *Jathargni*. All types of diseases are mainly caused due to diminished power of *agni*. Strength of *agni* provide health and also increases immunity of body. It also help the body to sustain in today's unavoidable polluted lifestyle. For this one should change some unhealthy life style habits and should take care of digestive power by following simple guidelines of Ayurveda.

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