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 lifestyle disorders. In simple language, lifestyle 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 lifestyle 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. Lifestyle 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. All the three pillars of body are correlated with agni. Wellbeing of body depend on this three pillars and so on harmony of agni. Aahara 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.

**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.

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.

Acharya Vagbhata: Acharya Vagbhata has counted Jathargni as antarushma, five bhutagni and seven dhatvagni. He have further added the doshaagni and malagni.

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**

| Prakruti | Agni  |
|----------|-------|
| Vaat     | Visham|
| Pitta    | Tikshna|
| Kapha    | Manda |
| Sama     | Sama  |
Mandagni means the state of Agni at which it is unable to digest even a small quantity of easily digestible food. Tikshagni 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.

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.

Role of Agni in Swastha purusha

Ayurveda is life Science mainly aims to restore the heath. 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 jathargni 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 vyayam vaayu. This aahararasa get circulated through srotasas of dhatu. Then the useful part of this is taken by respective srotasa according to khailekapot 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 route 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). 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 its 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.

  4. *Vihara* (Physical activity) - *Aavayam* (Sedentary lifestyle), *atinidra* (excessive sleep), *divaswap* (daytime sleep) after eating this all decreases the

The Factors vitiating agni and correlating them with today’s lifestyle

1) *Abhojanad* – 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 vitiated due to elevated *dosha* and *aama* otherwise 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* – 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* – taking unnecessarily excess amount of food hampers *agni*.

4) *Vishamashana* – 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 todays generation. Almost everyone eats food without following proper guideline.
5) **Asatmya bhojana** - 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** - 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, shreekhand 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** - includes un fresh food, fermented food, having excess amount of kleda, e.g. idali, vada, dosa, preserved foods.

8) **Vega vidharana** – 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** – excessive stress, anxiety, anger, depression

### Guidelines for maintenance of agni

For maintenance of agni, one have to follow the aahara vidhi vidhan 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 Aatreyabhadrapiya 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. 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 Grahani 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. Acharya Charaka in Grahani 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. Acharya Charaka in Grahani 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. 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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. Sushrutacharyya have given virechana is procedure which will help in management of tikshnaagni and vamana is procedure which treat mandagni.17

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 vyaaan 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

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.
samagni should be maintained. As other agni condition 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 agni nibala. 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 type 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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