AGNI AND NCDS: AN AYURVEDIC APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda emphasis that all the disease are the result of weak state of Agni. Agni is the digestive and metabolic power of the body. A non-communicable disease is a medical condition or disease that is not caused by infectious agents (non-infectious or non-transmissible). Non communicable or chronic disease are disease of long duration and generally slow progression. Now-a-days due to modernization the changes in life style are observed and the day to day regimen as prescribed in Ayurveda could not be followed properly. That’s why human beings are suffering from various types of non-communicable disease like Diabetes, Hypertension etc. Agni consist of digestive (Pak) and different kinds of hormones, enzyme and co-enzyme activities etc. which participated in digestive and metabolic functions. According to Ayurveda, health is the dynamic integration between body, soul, mind and sensory organ. It plays great emphasis in prevention and promotion of health there by preventing the disease. Therefore, main principle of treatment of all disease as per Ayurveda is to restore and to strengthen the Agni. The aim of this article is to review the important role of Agni in managing the health of healthy as well as diseased person.

KEYWORDS: Agni, Ayurveda, Metabolism, Non-communicable disease.

INTRODUCTION

The power element present in human body in microscopic level is called Agni. It is compared to God because its exact structure is not known and its function is very important. Agni maintain body temperature, health and keeps the person active. It also develop courage. Agni
keeps a person alive and is therefore considered as a sign of life.\(^{[1]}\) Power or condition of Agni determines the quantity of food to be consumed.\(^{[2]}\) Agni is considered to be present everywhere where digestion is taking place. Agni is in the form of energy and it works through the medium of Pitta. When it is functioning properly it plays an important role in digestion. Digestion is nothing but conversion of complex insoluble molecules into simple soluble molecule for the use of body. When it becomes abnormal then this same Agni is the reason for indigestion. Improper functioning of Agni leads to various gastrointestinal disorder as well as metabolic disturbances.\(^{[3]}\)

**MATERIAL AND METHOD**

**Physiological aspect of Agni**

The concept of Agni of Ayurveda, which refers to the manifold functions ascribed to Pitta is at comprehensive. Literally it stimulates the digestive power. It not only includes chemical agencies responsible for Aharapachana in the Kostha but also metabolic events like energy, synthesis and metabolism.\(^{[4]}\) As per season and age functions of Agni differs i.e. during Hemanta Ritu (winter) and Yauvana (young age), Agni is powerful, during rainy season and old age Agni is mild in nature. Consumption of food in suitable quantity and free from contamination undergo metabolic transformation by the effects of Jatharagni, Bhutagni and Dhatvagni. Initially Jatharagni gives stimulation to Bhutagni because consumed food is Panchbhautika, it has to undergo transformation by respective Bhutagni’s then only it becomes easy for tissue metabolism by Dhatvagnis. Then processed metabolic products circulates inside the Srotas continuously by the help of Vata Dosa.\(^{[5]}\)

Agni is basically divided into three categories: Jatharagni, Bhutagni and Dhatvagni.\(^{[6]}\)

1. **Jatharagni**

Jatharagni is main principle substance responsible for disease and health. During its normalicy it is responsible for longevity, complexion, strength, health, enthusiasm, well built, luster, immunity(\(\text{Ojas}\)), temperature. Other Agni (Bhutagni and Dhatvagni) and other vital functions all are dependent on Jatharagni.\(^{[7]}\) This is also called Kayagni or Kosthagni. Kostha means body or gastro-intestinal tract. As it helps in digestion also called Pachakagni. Kayagni works through the medium Pachak Pitta and perform primary digestion. The place of this Agni is in lower part of stomach and small intestine.
Food is digested and after digestion Jatharagni separates it from useful(Sara) part and waste(Kitta) part. From the useful part chyme or Ahara Rasa is formed and from waste part urine and faces is formed.[8]

2. Bhutagni or Bhautikagni[9]
As we know, human body is made up of five primordial elements. For its growth and development, it naturally needs foods having all these elements. Each of these needs Bhutagni for their transformation e.g. food containing earth elements are digested by Parthivagni. Bhutagni is present in gastro-intestinal tract as well as at the level of tissue in respective channel. Five Bhutagni exist for taking the five elements portions of the digested food mass and converting them into nutritive substances for five sense organs. Some of these specialized materials are the rods and cones responsible for photosensitivity in the eye etc.

3. Dhatvagni (Tissue power)[9]
The Ahara Rasa formed after digestion is converted into seven Dhatu or tissue through this Agni. Tissue power is present in each tissue channel. The main site of this is in liver.

The common function of Jathragni and Dhatvagni is transformation of food. When the Ahara Rasa comes in the respective channels then Dhatvagni acts on it and new cells similar to tissue are formed. For the nourishment of Dhatu, Dhatvagni is essential.

Amadosa
In Ayurvedic view, nearly all diseases have their origin in Amadosa. Ama has been defined as a condition in which the first Dhatu, namely Rasa is not properly formed due to the lowered strength of Agni(Usma). On the other hand, in this state, the food ingested becomes Dusta. Amadosa or Amavisa, both as acute and sub acute or chronic condition appear to relate to the gastro-intestinal as well as metabolic disturbances endangered due to the impairment of Antaragni.[10]

Etiological factors of Amadosa described by Charak and Sushruta.[10]
1. Dietetic indiscretions.
   a. Indigestion
   b. Over-eating
   c. Ingestion of unwholesome food, Heavy or indigestible food, Cold, putrid and stale food, Excessive dry dehydrated food
2. Adverse effects of Therapeutic measure-
   a. Purgation
   b. Emesis
   c. Oleation
3. Emaciation or wasting brought about by other diseases.
4. Incompatibility of the-
   a. Country
   b. Climate
   c. Season
5. Volitional inhibition of natural urges.
6. Mental tensions and emotional instabilities-
   a. Envy, Impatience
   b. Fear Complex
   c. Anger, Rage
   d. Greed
   e. Pessimistic attitude
   f. Enemity

**RISK FACTOR IN NCDs**\(^{[11]}\)
Six key sets of “risk factors” are responsible for major adults non-communicable disease.
These are as follows.
1. Cigarette use and other forms of smoking.
2. Alcohol abuse.
3. Failure or inability to obtain preventive health services for ex. Hypertension control, cancer detection, management of diabetes etc.
4. Life style changes like dietary patterns, physical activity.
5. Environmental risk factor.

**PREVENTION**\(^{[13]}\)
The preventive attack on chronic disease is based on the knowledge that they are multifactorial in causation, so their prevention demands a complex mix of interventions. Present knowledge indicate that the chronically ill require a wide spectrum of services case finding through-
Screening and health examination technique.
Application of improved methods of diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation.
Control of food, water and air pollutions, reducing accidents.
Influencing patterns of human behaviour and life styles through intensive education.
Upgrading standard of institutional care and developing and applying better methods of comprehensive medical care including primary health care.
Political approaches are also needed as in case of smoking control, control of alcohol and drug abuse.

The approach should be holistic in handling the complex medical and social needs of the chronically ill and should always be considered in relation to the family and community.

DISCUSSION
The concept of Agni is a physiological approach but to understand Ama which is a pathological entity, in a better manner, knowledge of Agni is essential. Normalcy of all mechanisms of the body is totally dependent upon the normal functioning of Agni. If due to any etiological factor, Agni gets vitiated resulting in start of pathological events, it eventually, leads to diseased condition of the body. Power of Agni or normal condition of Agni is responsible for strength, health, longevity and vital breath. That’s why it should be protected by proper intake of food and drinks because these act as a fuel, if person is deprived of food and drinks, Agni become disturbed and it leads to various types of diseases. Non communicable diseases include cardiovascular, renal, nervous and mental diseases, musculoskeletal disease, chronic non-specific respiratory disease, permanent results of accidents, senility, blindness, cancer, diabetes and various other metabolic and degenerative diseases and chronic results of communicable diseases.

CONCLUSION
The basic theories of Ayurveda as regards health and disease revolve around nutrition and its utilisation by the body under the influence of Agni. Its theories of pathogenesis are also co-related to the type of nutrition available and the functional states of Agni. Now-a-days the life style and behavioural patterns of people are changing rapidly, these being favourable to the onset of chronic diseases. Chronic non-communicable diseases are assuming increasing importance among the adult population in both developed and developing countries. Cardiovascular disease and Cancer are at present the leading causes of death in developed
countries (e.g. Europe and North America) accounting for 70 to 75% of total deaths. Hence, preservation and promotion of Agni is the first and foremost step to be taken in every therapeutic endeavor and management of a patient. So it is important to understand the concept of Agni to manage the health of a healthy individual as well as to planning the line of management of a disease.

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