

A review on relation between *prakruti* and *agni*

Review article

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Abstract

Ayurveda takes into account an individual in his entirety and advises to follow daily regimen and adopt *achar-rasayan* (fixed rules conduct in life) accordingly. But today's irregular and fast lifestyle, irregularities in diet, sleep, high stress levels at the workplace and emotional factors can lead to indigestion. It occurs due to deficiency in quality and quantity of digestive juices, which is termed as *mandagni* (deficient digestive fire).

Prakruti means neutrality or habits or condition. Ayurvedic treatment emphasizes on examining the *prakruti* or the natural states of an individual's before proceeding. In Ayurvedic compendia, relation between *prakruti* and *agni* is not quoted directly except *tikshnagni* (intense digestive fire) in *pitta prakruti*, if it is quoted indirectly (*anukta*) elsewhere in Ayurvedic texts then it should be enlightened. Hence the concept of *agni, prakruti* & its inter-relation are vital factors which are to be studied in detail for wellbeing of a person. Hence aim is conceptual study of *prakruti, agni* and their inter relation. For this, Ayurvedic literature regarding *prakruti* and *agni* is reviewed.

Summing up all literature regarding *prakruti* and *agni*, study shows that not only influence of factors like *dosha, kaala* (season), *aahar* (diet), *desha* (habitat) are but also *jati, kula, panchmahabhuta* (five elements) etc. plays important role in formation of *prakruti* and it should be determined by all aspects and not by the influence of *dosha* only. Likewise, *agni* also should not only judged by *prakruti* but also by considering other factors like influence of *dosha, age, season, work pattern, yoga, quality and quantity food habit, mental states, desha, effect of treatment* etc.

Keywords: *Agni, Mandaagni, Prakruti, Tikshnagni* .

Introduction:

Ayurvedic treatment differs from the majority of conventional cures because of its unique approach towards healing. The principle of Ayurvedic treatment is curing the sick, and not the sickness.

Rather than trying to cure a disease in isolation, Ayurveda takes into account an individual in his entirety and advises to follow daily regimen and adopt *achar rasayan* accordingly.

In today's irregular and fast lifestyle skipping regular meals, excessive intake of food or drinks, irregularities in diet and sleep; and high stress levels at the workplace, emotional factors such as envy, fear, anger, etc. can lead to indigestion. Indigestion can also be due to uncomfortable postures, controlling natural urges and changes in the period and pattern of sleep. It can lead to waking up frequently at night, several diseases and

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psychological disturbances. It occurs due to deficiency in quality and quantity of digestive juices, which is termed as *mandagni* (deficient digestive fire). (1)

Agni is one of the ten factors which is to be examined before initiating, the treatment of patient. The role of *agni* in body is very much emphasized for example, having a balanced state of *doshas*, *agni* (digestive fire), *dhatu*s (tissues) normal functioning of *mala* (waste products), cheerful state of *atman* (soul), sensory organs and mind are the symptoms of healthy life. (2)

It is stated that all internal disease are caused by vitiation of this *agni*, another meaning of *agni* is *kaya*, and *kaya (agni)* chikita is included in Ashtang Ayurved. (3)

Prakruti means neutrality or habits or condition. (4) In *Ayurveda*, *prakruti* concept has been given much importance. *Ayurvedic* treatment also emphasize on examining the *prakruti* or the natural states of an individual before proceeding. The *prakruti* or the physical constitution,

Susceptibility to diseases, mental make-up and lifestyle of an individual is ascertained in accordance to the elemental constitution of the universe. Hence the concept of *agni*, *prakruti* & its inter-relation are vital factors which are to be studied in detail for wellbeing of a person.

Need of topic

In *Ayurvedic* compendia relation between *prakruti* and *Agni* is not quoted directly except *Tikshnagni* in *Pitta prakruti*. (5) If it is quoted indirectly (anukta) elsewhere in *Ayurvedic* texts then it should be enlightened.

This study may give some idea of preventive measures for diseases caused by *agni* and *prakruti*.

Aim & objectives

- To study concept of *prakruti*
- To study concept of *agni*.
- To re-establish relation in between *prakruti* and *agni* with help of

tantraukti, except *tikshnagni* in *pitta prakruti*.

Material and Methods

- Review of *Ayurvedic* literature will be taken regarding the *prakruti* and *agni*.
- Review of research work related to *agni* and *prakruti* will be considered.

The concept of prakruti

The word *prakruti* means "nature" or natural form of the build and constitution of the human body. *Pra* means the "beginning", "commencement" or "source of origin" and *kruti* means "to perform" or "to form". Put together, *prakruti* means "natural form" or "original form" or "original source". Disease occurs when there is a change in this original form at the psychological or physiological level.

Ayurveda lays emphasis on examining the *prakruti* or the natural state of an individual first. The disease *vikruti* is examined later. However, in terms of the functioning of living beings, *Ayurveda* sees all actions based on three basic functions called *doshas* - namely *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha*. Before a detailed description of each *prakruti* type, the qualities of each of the *doshas* are given. These qualities are manifested in the individual's personality.

Vata prakruti

Vata is dry, light, mobile, expansible, quick, cold, rough, clear and astringent in taste. So, dry quality of *vata* is manifested in the body as dry skin and thin structure i.e. lean body. The hair, nails, teeth and eyes appear dry. The voice is weak, low, crackling and hoarse. These individuals require little sleep and are hyperactive. The movements of the individuals - especially of the eyebrows, chin, lips, tongue and limbs are quick and unsteady. The expansive nature is manifest in prominent blood vessels. Due to quick action, the individual shows early initiative

in work but because of the dry quality he loses strength and becomes tired. Their memory is weak but they have a quick grasp. Due to the cold nature, the body temperature is low and body stiff. The natural desires and craving for food and environment are opposite to the qualities of *vata*. They have meager seminal fluid and have only a few children. They tend to have a short life span.(6)

Pitta prakruti

Pitta is hot, penetrating, slightly foul smelling, liquid, sour and pungent in taste. So

Due to the inherent hot quality of pitta, these individuals have a high metabolic rate, a tendency to eat and drink a lot and are often thirsty. They develop moles and skin eruptions. They possess soft and scanty hair and tend to be prematurely grey and bald. They are unable to bear even minimum heat. They are brave and courageous but cannot tolerate exertion. They get easily provoked and upset. The fluid quality makes the body parts, muscles and joints soft and flabby. The high metabolic rate leads to excessive perspiration and excretion. The foul smell of the pitta tends to give them a strong body odour. The quality of heat and pungent taste leads to limited sexual urge, scanty semen and limited progeny. Due to the sharp and quick action, they have a very good intellect, grasping power, memory and are of moderate strength and the life span is medium.(7)

Kapha prakruti

Kapha is unctuous, smooth, soft, and sweet in taste, stable, dense, slow, rigid, cold and clear. *Kapha prakruti* individuals tend to have soft limbs, slow gait and are slow to understand. .

Due to the unctuous nature of *kapha*, the individuals of *kapha prakruti* possess unctuous and oily skin. The soft quality of *kapha* makes the face

soft, the looks gentle and clear. The sweet quality gives them a large quantity of semen and they have a strong sexual urge. The stable and steady quality endows them with a well-built and steady body. The dense nature provides fullness to the body and organs. The slow quality of *kapha* makes the individuals slow in their activities but they have strong perseverance and are emotionally very mild. They have steady and slow body movements. The cold quality results in poor appetite and low body temperature. The steady and dense quality gives them steady joints and ligaments. The clear quality gives rise to a pleasant appearance, colour and voice. All the qualities of *kapha* endow the individual with strength, wealth and energy and also a long life. (8)

Most people are a combination of two *doshas* i.e. *dwandvaja prakruti*. They possess characteristics of both *doshas* involved depending on the percentage of the combination. A balanced constitution is ideal and extremely rare in which the balanced state of all the three *doshas* neutralizes the bad or unwanted qualities, support and bring out good qualities of the other.

The concept of Agni

The term “Agni” generally means fire. In Ayurvedic perspective this term does not actually means fire. In this context, it comprehends various factors which participate in and direct the course of digestion and metabolism in living and physiologically functioning organism.

Etymology

The word, *agni* is the root verb of “*anga*” in the broad sense *agni*. That which is present in each and every cell of human body is called *agni*. (9)

Historical Review-Dharshan shastra and Upanishada

Agni is represented by different types like, *Teja*, *Pitta*, etc. This *agni* only

causes the regeneration and destruction of the Universe, continuation of this cycle is only due to *agni*. The cycle is maintained by *agni*.

Agni is in heat and Aura of sun, light of moon, Gold, Silver, pearls, the glow of eyes, nails, skin etc. The shining of different colours, flowers. Heat or energy located in live human being causes transformation or digestion (*paka-prinaman*). All these are different forms of *agni*.

Swarupa (properties) and Guna (Qualities)

Agni described in terms of *panchabhutas* may go a long way in the clarification of the *Tejomahabhuta*. According to Charak, Sushrut & Vagbhat the composition of *pitta* is dominated by *agnimahabhut*. *Vagbhat* has clearly stated that *pitta* is *panchabhautic* & it is *drava* in consistency, inspite of which, it performs action, similar to *Anal* (fire) – in the course of the process of digestion, largely due to the activation of its *tejas* component (discarding its liquidity - *tyaktadratva*). This *pachak pitta* is known as *jatharagi*, *kosthagni*, *antaragni*, *pachakagni* & *dehagni* etc. It is located in an area between *amashaya* & *pakwashaya*. It directly participates in the digestion of food. (10)

Types

It would be seen from the forgoing that the Ayurvedic concept of *agni* includes, not only kinds of *pittas* but also the *dhatwaagnis* (tissue fire) & *bhutaagnis* (elemental fire). It is clear from the classical Ayurvedic texts. That the enumeration of number of *agnis* (which include *pitta*) varies from author to author. According to Charak samhita, read together with its main Commentary by Chakrapani Datta, the number of *agnis* enumerated are over 13 as one *antaragni*, five *bhutaagni* seven *dhatwagni*.

On the other hand, Sushruta is seen to have described five *agni* viz. *pachakagni*, *ranjakagni*, *alochakani*, *sadhakagni* and *bhrajakagni*. In Ashtang hrudya, it is seen to have reckoned five *pitas*, five *bhutaagnis*, seven *dhatwaagnis*, three *doshagnis*, three *malagnis*, in all 23 *agnis*. In Sharangdhara, it is seen to have recognized five *pittas* only. On the other hand, Bhavprakash it is seen to have accepted types of *agni* as stated in Charka and Vagbhat. Whereas Arundatta the commentator has stated in Ashtanghrudya, that there are seven hundred *agnis* of *sira* and five hundred *agnis* of *mansa peshi*. This is all about *agni* healthy individual.

This *agni* changes due to *vishamaaahar*, *vihar*, *kaala* (*visarga*, *aadan*) etc; this turns to *vriddhi* or *kshaya* of *agni*. It has been prescribed as *vikrut agni* which changes due to predominance of *doshas*. If particular *dosha* is aggravated, means *mandagni* is due to aggravation of *kaphadosha*. *Attyagni* is due to aggravation *pittadosha*. *Vishamaagni* is due to aggravation of *vataadosha* & *Samagni* due to equal state of *tridoshas*, which leads to healthy body. (11)

Discussion

Superficially it may appear that some *prakrutis* are better than others. Each type has its positive and negative aspects. We need to understand where we stand and accept it. Then we need to plan intelligently to attain the healthiest state by realizing our potential. The Ayurvedic understanding of *prakruti* provides a way to do both these - to analyze and assess where we stand and to provide guidance to attain perfect health.

The Ayurvedic system of diagnosing *prakruti* offers unique insights in understanding and assessing one's health. It is comprehensive in scope, spanning both physical and mental aspects. It is not merely a diagnostic device but also a guide to action for good health. But diagnosing

our *prakruti* should not become a rationalization for better health. It provides detailed guidelines to adapt one's food and behavior to suit one's *prakruti*.

As per the Ayurvedic view, food is digested by *agni* within us - just as it is cooked by *agni* outside. According to Ayurveda, there is a "stimulus-response" relation between the *agni* within us and the outside *agni* - namely the sun. When the *agni* outside is strong (i.e. in summer) the *agni* inside us (our digestion) is weak and vice-versa. This is reflected in the way in which our food customs have been adapted to seasonal changes. Knowledge regarding changes in our digestive power with the varying seasons has been well understood in society. To understand, in which direction we should move and how we should act to improve our physical and mental well-being relation between *prakruti* and *agni* discussed here.

All available editions of the the main Ayurvedic compendia have described four states of jatharagi viz. *sama*, *vishama*, *tikshna*, and *manda*. Depending upon their intensity, *agni* (factor responsible for digestion and metabolism) located in body human being can be classified under four categories; viz sharp, mild, regular, and irregular. The sharp type is capable to tolerate all types of irregularities where as the mild types are of the opposite functioning. The regular or balance type of *agni* gets impaired even by minor irregularities and maintains its normalcy so long as there is no irregularity. The irregular type of *agni* is opposed to that of regular and balanced type of in nature. Sometimes it gets impaired and sometimes irregularities do not get impair it. (12)

These four types of *agni* occur in the four types of individuals. Individuals having *vata*dosh, *pitta*dosh, and *kapha*dosh in their balanced and normal state, *agnis* are regular or balanced. In case of individuals having the dominance of *pitta*dosh in their constitution; the *agnis*

are sharp due to affliction of the site of *agni* by *pitta*dosh, similarly incase of individuals having the dominance of *kapha*dosh in their constitution, the *agnis* are mild due to affliction of the site of *agni* by *kapha*dosh. In case of individual s having the dominance of *vata*dosh in their constitution; the *agnis* are irregular due to affliction of the site of *agni* by *vata*dosh. In Charak Samhita Vimansthan sixth chapter four types of *agni* viz *tikshana* (sharp); *manda* (mild); *vishama*(irregular) and *sama* (regular) are spelt. The first three (excluding *sama* or normal type of *agni*) are types of disorders of *agni* which constitute *grahani dosha* (disorders of duodenum and small intestine. (13, 14, 15, 16)

Agni (digestive fire); which digest food, is of four types .the three types are irregular, intense and mild by dominance of *vata*dosh *pitta*dosh *kapha*dosh respectively and the forth one is *sama* (normal) due to equilibrium of all *doshas*, this *sama agni* digest the ingested food properly and in time. But, if the *agni* is irregular the symptoms will be flatulence; colic upward movement of *vayu*, diarrhea, heaviness and gurgling sound in abdomen and tenesmus; The *agni*, which digest the food taken in large quantity in short time is intense, the same is in advanced stage is known as *atyagni* (excessive digestive capacity) this *agni* digest the food taken even in large quantity and frequently in shorter duration and also produces dryness of throat, palate and lips, burning sensation and pyrexia at the end .and the *agni*, which digest even little food in longer duration producing heaviness in abdomen and head, cough, dyspnoea, salivation vomiting malaise is mild. All these three are abnormal and give rise to many diseases of the causative *doshas*. (17)

Jatharagi is *sama* (normal) when *saman vayu* is in normal seat or in normal condition. It becomes *vishama* (erratic) when *saman vayu* in wrong path or increased. (18) *Vishamaagni* due to

dominance of *vata* dosha; it would mean either *tikshna* agni or *manda* agni because *yogavahi* (catalyst) is one of the properties of *vata* dosha. (19) It means when *vata* dosha associated with *pitta* dosha, along *tikshna* (sharp), *ushna* (warm) properties the symptoms of *tikshna* agni will be present, if more intense then symptoms of *atya* agni will be present. If *vata* dosha associated with *kapha* dosha along *sheet* (cold) property, symptoms of *manda* agni will be present. It is *tikshna* (very powerful) when *samanvayu* is associated with *pitta* dosha and it is *manda* (weak) associated with *kapha* dosha. The strength of the *grahani* is due to *agni* and strength of *agni* is due to *grahani* when the *agni* undergoes vitiation and *grahani* also gets altered and produces diseases. Irregular, intense and *agni* produces diseases of *vata* dosha, *pitta* dosha, and *kapha* dosha respectively (20).

It is also necessary to take into account the sign and symptoms of the normal and abnormal states of *jatharagi* according to age, season, *aharvihar* etc. (21, 22, 23) Among these *agni*, normal *agni* should be preserved. *Vishama* agni (irregular) should be treated with unctuous, sour, salty substances and other specific measures. (Intense) should be treated with sweet, unctuous, cold substances as well as purgatives should be applied. *Atya* agni (More intense *agni*) should be treated with buffalo's milk curd and ghee. While mild *agni* should be treated with pungent, bitter, astringent substances as well as emetics. (24)

Agni should be preserved with great efforts by the proper use of suitable foods and drinks on its normalcy depends the life span condition of depends the life span and condition of strength of the persons. Such diet and regimen, as stand in the *dosha* responsible for the particular *prakruti* (body constitution) are prescribed for the maintenance of positive health for individuals have equipoise state of *dosha* in proportionate quantity is prescribed.

(25), (26), (27) This type of *agni* helps in proper nourishment and promotion of health as well as strength.

To understand the relation between *prakruti* and *agni*, *tantrayukti* will be helpful. *tantrayukti* i.e. the basic knowledge to learn science; which provides knowledge of *vakyayojana* (technique of writing) and *arthayojana* (explains hidden meanings).

It would be incorrect to say that to avoid *ativyapti* (excess explanation of literature) of *granthas*, Acharya quoted *vishama* agni and *manda* agni belong to *vata* *prakruti* and *pitta* *prakruti* respectively according to *madhyalopa* and *aadimadhyanta arthashraya tantrayukti*. Instead of which it would be more correct that *vishama* agni, *manda* agni are disorders of *grahani* as per *prakarnaadhikar tantrayukti*.

Hence mild, sharp (*atya* agni) and irregular types of *agni* came in context of disorder of *grahani*. It is observed that, *tikshna* agni is quoted in individual having *pitta* *prakruti*, because there is *ashraya ashryee* relation in *pitta* dosha and *agni*. (28) Dominance of *pitta* dosha in *pitta* *prakruti* as well as *tikshna* agni with the *tikshna*, *ushna* properties of *pitta* dosha are similar to the properties of *agni*. (29) Hence all these literature would be justified in context with *pitta* *prakruti* and *tikshna* agni according to *samanyavishesh siddhant*.

Summing up all literature regarding *prakruti* and *agni*, study shows that not only influence of *dosha*, *kala*, *aahar*, *desha* are the factors but also *jati*, *kula*, *panch mahabhuta* etc. plays an important role in formation of *prakruti*. Hence it should be determined by all aspects and not only by the influence of *dosha*. Likewise, *agni* also should not only judged by *prakruti* but also by considering other factors like *dosha*, age, season, work pattern, yoga practice, quality and quantity food, habit, mental states, *desha*, effect of treatment etc.

Conclusion

By reviewing literature, it can be concluded that there is no relation between *prakruti* and *agni* except *pitta prakruti* and *tikshna agni*. Because it varies with external environmental factors like seasons, diurnal change etc. It also depends upon age, *aaharmatra* (quantity of food), *aahar swarup* (quality of food), and not on *prakruti* except *pitta prakruti*. *Jatharagi* cannot be comprehended directly due to subtlety. It is located in interior of the body remains in equilibrium state if there is equilibrium amongst the *dosha*; but it should be preserved in all ways by staying three types of *vayu*, i.e. *prana*, *apana*, and *saman* in their respective positions.

Scope for further study

With help of this study, experimental research can be carried out.

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