

## AGNI IN ĀYURVEDIC CONCEPT

By

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### Abstract

*Āyurveda is the traditional ancient Indian system of health science. In this science gave more importance to Agni or fire. It has a significant role to maintain body homeostasis, body functioning, metabolism, of body and proper functioning of the body. According to the functions and site of action, Agni has been divided into 13 as, 1 jadaragni, 5 Bhudagni, 7 Jadaragni. Agni also used into the surgical purpose. Agnikarma has been given a special place in surgery by Suśruta and it is believed that disease treated by Agnikarma never reoccurs. This paper deals with the concept of Agni in Āyurveda and surgery.*

**Keywords:** *agni, bhūdagni, jadarāgni dagdāgni, agnikarma*

Āyurveda is a name which the ancient people give their science of medicine. The word “Āyurveda” is tatpuruṣa compound of the word āyus meaning “life” or “living principle” and the word Veda, which refers to a system of “knowledge” (Sharma Chakrapani, 2014). This refers to all aspects of life from birth to death and all aspects of our nature from body to immortal spirit. According to Caraka Samhita - “शरीरेन्द्रियसत्त्वात्मसम्योगो आयुः” (Sukumar, Bargale Sushant & Shashirekha, H.K (Ed.), 2017). *śarīra* means physical body, *indriya* means sense. *Satva* refers to the combination of mind and heart. When all these body

sense, heart, mind, spirit are in proper balance and function in a harmonious, coordinate manner that is true life-“the living body”.

According to Āyurveda all creation made up of five great elements or pañcabhudika (earth, water, fire, air, ether), “sarvam dravyam pañcabhudikam.” In Āyurvedic concept all the universal matter our body is also formed by these pañcabhudika. This Pañcabautika śarśra (body) goes continuous metabolic transformation. Agni is the main factor of this transformation and it is derivate from the tejas (fire) mahābūta.

## Divisions of Agni

Agni is having thirteen categories. They are-

- Jatarāgni: It can see after the functions of food digestion and absorption
- Bhūtagni: it is present in a basic element. There are five Agni in each of the five basic elements; each and every cell of the human body contains these Agni.
- Datvagni: It promotes the growth of the body. They are seven in number are rasa, raktha, māmsa, meda, asthi, majja and shukra. These seven dātus gets nourishment from āhāra rasa.

## Agni and Pitta

Agni is an important factor in Āyurveda. It is used in the sense of digestion of food and metabolism in our body. In Āyurveda Agni is one of the ten factors which are required to be examined before initiating the treatment of the patient (Amrit et al., 2017). In our body balance of Agni is an essential factor. The superiority, mediocrity and inferiority nature of Agni digest the food in the form of

good, moderate and less amount of food respectively. Agni converts food into the form of energy, which is responsible for all the vital functions of the body. Hence Āyurveda considered the cause of life, complexion, strength, health, nourishment, ōja, teja, and prāṇa is “Dehagni”( Shastri Kashinath, & Chaturvedi Gorakhnath (Ed.), 2004), the Agni not only in the form of flame but also in the form of liquid is called pitta’

The term pitta is derived from the root ‘tap’ which means to heat or to burn. So it has been described as Agni (*fire*). Since it performs fire like actions that is pāka, which refers to pacana (digestion), dahana (burning, combustion or oxidation) including bhinna samghāta (*splitting*), tapana (*heat production*), pariṇamana (*conversion*), parāvṛtti (*transformation*), prakāśana (*illumination*), rañjana or varṇakara (*coloration*) and prabhākara (Dash Bhagawan, 1993), (*to cause lustre*) In a general sense the term Kāya or body itself has been equated to Agni.

जाठरः प्राणिनामग्निः काय इत्यभिधीयते ।

यस्तं चिकित्सेत्सीदन्तं स वै कायचिकित्सकः॥

(Bhoja)

## Surgical use of Agni

In Āyurveda Agni used for surgical purposes. Agnikarma is the most important therapy in Śalyatantra of Āyurveda. The procedure which is performed with the help of Agni or any procedure related to Agni is called as Agnikarma. The term Agnikarma comprises of two words- Agni and Karma collectively give the meaning, as the procedure done by Agni. Any procedure that involves the Agni directly or indirectly i.e. by the help of different materials to cure the disease, is considered under Agnikarma. The word Agni is derived by the root 'agi dadhu'. It is a pulling śabda. That which has the course of action in the upward direction is Agni. It also bears the meaning of 'movement'. Karma derived from 'kriyā karaṇa' different types of karma like spandana, gamana etc. It defined as- "अग्निना कृत्वा यत् कर्मा, अग्ने सम्बन्धि वा यत् कर्मा तदग्नि कर्म"। (Ravishankar. A. G., 2013). The uniqueness of Śalyatantra is due to the availability of dual treatment procedures, śastra karma (*surgical procedure*) and Anuśastra karma (*para surgical procedures*). Further śastra karma is eight types and Anuśastra karma includes Kshārakarma, Agnikarma and Raktamokshaṇa.

## Table No. 1 Synonymous of Agnikarma

Agnikarma	Agnicikitsa
Agnikasya	Dahanakarma
Dagdhacikitsa	Dambhakriya
Pacanakriya	Vahnikriya

## Historical review

In Agnikarma Agni is the main object for treatment. In the early period people know the different usages of Agni. Many ancient Sanskrit treatises like Veda and Purāṇa considered Agni like a God or protector of people from diseases and demons.

Agnikarma is available till now beginning right from the Vedic period. For the total overages of historical aspects, it has been divided into three sections.

1. Vedic period.
2. Samhitha period
3. Sangraha period

## Vedic Period

Serving the historical background of Agnikarma we can find Veda's bear a handful of literature about the Agnikarma. From this, we can realize the Pre Vedic existence of Agnikarma.

## **Ṛgveda**

In Ṛgveda, Agni is the most prominent God among the terrestrial Gods. The entire world is concerned and covered with Agni. Agni lives in water, wood, and people. He is in the form of Jadarāgni. Agni is there in the water, in the form of Apāmnāpāt it is there in the forest trees in the form of Dāvāgni. Agni is there in inanimate beings. It is there in the form of men and animals in the Jadarāgni (Ranganath. S., 2003) form.

Ṛgveda many hymns have pointed out the remedy of different gynecological and obstetrical diseases (Ṛgveda. 10/162/ 1- 4). In many verses in Ṛgveda mentioned Agni is capable of destroying the invading parasites and demons in the Vagina and uterus of the women and to save the fetus from the latter. In these signifies the utilization of Agnikarma as a sterilizer.

## **Yajur Veda**

In Yajur Veda emphasize the use of Agni as a therapy for śīta It is indicated that use of Agni in case of 'śīta' induced disease. Application of Svēdana karma by hot cotton piece, sand, brick etc. was practiced in the ancient period. It is a very significant method, the approach behind it being hot objects

emit infrared rays, e.g. sun, coal, electric fire etc. which have been established effect in pain management.

## **Sāmaveda**

Sāmaveda contains elaborate description of Agni. The importance of Agni is proved by the presence of a chapter known as 'Āgneyakānda'. In this Veda, Agni is given special names as Paramēswara, Ātma and Vaishvānara etc

## **Atharava Veda**

In Atharva Veda Agni considered as God (Atharvaveda) and Bheṣaja in the context of Krimi. From these verses, it becomes clear that Agni was used to protect the body from the attacking micro organism. In currently the sterilization by the heating process can be interpreted as the above idea of Atharva Veda. The cauterization of the skin of effected area also done to remove the infections and it is an effective treatment.

All these methods of utilization of Agni as therapeutic measures helping in medical practice are nothing but the ancient idea. The Atharva Veda also mentioned as 'Rakṣōhāgni'.

## **Agni Purāṇa**

In Purana Agni considered as God Agni Deva. There are descriptions about the ancestry of Agni. It is given that- धर्मस्य वसु भार्या जातः प्रथमोऽग्निः। Svāha is mentioned as the wife of Agni and said to have three sons with name Pavamān, Pāvaka and Śuchi. In the sixth Manvanthara of this Purāṇa considered that there were forty-nine Agni (Vedavyasa, 1957). It also discusses the various aspects of Agni. Agni is considered as 'Paro-svedanīya' (Vedavyasa, 1957). There is a specific description of the kaphavatdagna effect of Agni and uṣṇa vīrya dravya (Vedavyasa, 1957).

## **Samhitha Period**

In this period Agni believed that the equilibrium condition of Agni helps in the maintenance of health, metabolism and violation of Agni is rōga, destruction of Agni is death, for this reasons Agni is considered as the base or root of creation.

## **Caraka Samhita**

This is mainly a text of medical treatment but the use of Agni karma has been indicated at deferent places. Ācārya Caraka explained Agni karma

under the threefold treatment. Śāstra-pranidhāna vidhi śonidādhyāya. In the chapter of "Dwivṛṇiṇi cikitsa" Agni karma is indicated under 36 Upakramas of vṛṇa (Sharma P.V., 1998). In the context said in mamsajavrana (Sharma P.V., 1998). Management of kaphajagulma (Sharma P.V., 1998).

## **Suśruta Samhita**

Suśruta mentioned Agni as a Para surgical procedure and it is superior to all Para surgical procedures. A separate chapter is given to discuss this topic (Srikantha Murthy K, R., 2004). Many references regarding these topics are available in the context of Yantravidi adyāya, as an Upayantra. Śalyanirahana of sūtrasthāna; sira, snāyu, sandhi, asthi, arsharoga cikitsa, Bhagandara cikitsa, Kshudraroga, Mukharoga, Prameha cikitsa of cikitsa sthana, in kalpa stana references of (5/5); 7/33, 50) (Srikantha Murthy K, R., 2004).

## **Vāgbhata**

**Aṣṭāṅga Sangraha:** In Aṣṭāṅga Sangraha Sūtrastāna chapter 40 deals with Agni karma vidhi and there are many other references of other diseases

**Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya:** In Aṣṭāṅga hṛdaya sūtra sthāna deals with Agni karma vidhi and there are many other references of other diseases regarding Agni karma.

### Importance of Agnikarma

Ācārya Suśruta and Ācārya Vāgbhata have both given superior place to Agnikarma as compared to Kshāra (*Alkali*) Karma. In Āyurveda pain and tumour or skin diseases that cannot cure with Bheṣaja, Śāstra and Kshārakarma can be treating with Agnikarma (Srikantha Murthy K, R., 2004). This concept purely mentioned in the Suśrutasaṁhita. Suśruta suggested that- क्षारादग्निर्गरीयान् क्रियासु व्याख्यातः तद्गंधानां

रोगाणामपुनर्भावाद्भेषजशस्त्रक्षारैरसा-ध्यानां तत्साध्यत्वाश्च॥

- Agnikarma is always utilized as the ultimate measure among the Yantra, śāstra, Anuśāstra, Kshāra etc., because of its ability to cure those diseases also, which can't be cured by bheṣaja, śāstra and Kshāra (Srikantha Murthy K, R., 2004).
- Apunarbhāvata (*No replaces*) Agni is complete eradicating treatment though Kshāra karma is effective too, in the case treated with

Agnikarma, chances of recurrence are not present.

- Sterilization properly Agnikarma is having the effect of niṛjīvānukaraṇa (*Sterilization*).
- Haemostatic action: Due to Agnikarma bleeding can be checked. It causes coagulation and closure of bleeding vessels. In Suśruta Saṁhita also, four methods of haemostatic i.e. Sandhana, Skandhana, Dahana, (Agnikarma), Pachana are mentioned.
- Curative property: Agnikarma eradicates diseases from its root.
- Effect on doṣa's: It shows shamaka effects on both Vāta and Kapha doṣa's.

### Conclusion

Agni is the invariable agent in the process of digestion and transformation. Ingested food is to be digested, absorbed and assimilated which is unavoidable for the maintenance of life, and is performed by the Agni. Pitta has the attributes of Agni because of which it causes combustion and digestion, in the body. Balance of Agni is the sign of good health. It also used for the purpose of sterilization. Agni directly or indirectly used in the surgery called Agnikarma. It well defined by Ācharya Suśruta

and gave a prime position. Agnikarma is the asset of the Āyurvedic surgeons. So many diseases like tennis elbow,

Kandara, śirōrōga, warts etc. are now treated with this method. The simple treatment gets the maximum result.

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### To cite this article

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Sudhalakshmi C. (2020). Agni in Āyurvedic Concept. *John Foundation Journal of EduSpark*, 2(1), 53-60.

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