

Concept of Agni in Ayurveda

In Sanskrit *Agni* means fire and according to Ayurveda *Agni* happens to be the entity that is responsible for all digestive and metabolic processes in the human beings. *Agni* is the invariable agent in the process of *Paka* (digestion, transformation). Ingested food is to be digested, absorbed and assimilated, which is unavoidable for the maintenance of life, and is performed by the *Agni*. There are many reasons behind the maintenance of *Agni* (digestive power of body) in Ayurveda. Different examples are available in our classics to indicate that *Pitta* is the same as *Agni*. *Agni* is innumerable because of its presence in each and every *paramanu* of the body. According to the functions and site of action, *Agni* has been divided into 13 types, i.e. one *Jatharagni* (digestive fire), five *Bhutagni* and seven *Dhatvagni* (metabolism at cellular level). *Jatharagni* is the most important one, which digests four types of food and transforms it into *Rasa* and *Mala*. The five *Bhutagnis* act on the respective *bhutika* portion of the food and thereby nourish the *Bhutas* in the body. The seven *Dhatvagni* act on the respective *dhatu*s by which each *Dhatu* is broken into three parts. In this way, the entire process of transformation consists of two types of products – *Prasad* (essence) and *Kitta* (excrete). The former is taken for nourishment while the latter one is thrown out, which otherwise defiles the body if it stays longer. *Jatharagni* is also classified into four categories according to its performance of digestion in the human being, namely *Vishmagni*, *Tikshanagni*, *Mandagni* and *Samagni*.

Samagni: (due to *samyavastha* of all *doshas*) digests food properly at the proper time.

Vishmagni: (due to *vata*)- This type of *Agni* changes between digesting food, sometimes quickly sometimes slowly.

Tikshnagni: (due to *pitta*) - It is a state of very quick digestion of food, regardless of the type of food.

Mandagni: (due to *kapha*)-“*Manda*” means slow. Less quantity of food also will take more time for digestion.

Imbalance in the physiology of *Agni* is the main cause for the formation of *Ama* which is the main reason for many disease. So *Agni* is important for every function of the body.

Dr. Akanksha Tiwari

Email: akanksha.atrey@yahoo.com