



## Review Article

www.ijrap.net (ISSN:2229-3566)



### A CRITICAL LITERARY REVIEW OF AGNI AND ITS ROLE IN AHARAPAKA AND IMPORTANCE OF SHADRASATMAK AHARA FOR A HEALTHY LIFE

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Received on: 22/06/21 Accepted on: 25/07/21

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DOI: 10.7897/2277-4343.1204118

#### ABSTRACT

Health is a state of physical, mental, and social wellbeing. And according to Ayurveda this state of physical and mental wellbeing is related to Agni; as the person is Swastha when the Dosha Dhatu and Mala are in samyavastha with Indriya, Atma and Mana performing their karmas efficiently. And for these Dosha, Dhatu and Mala to be in proportion Agni (digestive fire) must be in proportion (samyavastha- Samagni). This Agni digests the Sthula Ahara into Sukshma Ahara i.e., the nutrients to nourish the tissues and cells at micro level, which is utilized by the body for its growth and development. Thus, the type of Ahara taken also plays an important role as what is being digested will only be converted for the utilization by the body. This article will focus on the concept of Agni its role in the process of Aharapaka and importance of the complete Shadrasatmak Ahara for a healthy life.

**Keywords:** Agni, Aharapaka, Shadrasatmak Ahara.

#### INTRODUCTION

Agni in Ayurveda is described as the concept of Pitta of the system. Word Pitta is derived from the root word 'tapa' meaning 'to burn'<sup>1</sup>. The word tapa is used in three different contexts with three different meanings as 'tapa santape' meaning generation of heat, 'tapa dahe' meaning the act of burning/ metabolism and 'tapa aishwarye' i.e., factor responsible for achievement of Ashta Sukha.

Agni in Ayurveda is the term given to the complete process of energy liberation through the digestion of food from the macro (Sthula) to the micro (Sukshma) level and thus formation of Dhatus that nourish the body.

This process of metabolism occurring with the help of Agni is known as Aharapaka which builds the body. Aharapaka (Samyak Pachana) of the ingested food contributes greatly towards the healthy status of the body and this process is affected by the potency of the Agni, thus proper functioning of Agni is very essential for healthy living. This improper functioning of the Agni leads to impaired formation of Dhatus and Mala which forms the base for Deha Dharan, thus resulting in abnormal physiological functioning of the body.

This Agni in samyavastha i.e., Amagni (in proportion) performs the karma of Samyak Pachana of Ahara thus forming the Dhatu and Mala for Deha Dharan (healthy body).

Thus, for a healthy body both complete Shadrasatmak Ahara and Samagni (proportionate Agni) to digest it are equally important.

#### Review of literature

Agni is basically considered as the digestive fire. With controversies whether Agni is same as Pitta or a part of Pitta,<sup>2</sup> Acharya Sushruta says that Pitta and Agni are same as they

perform similar functions. Also, he calls all the types of Pitta's by the term Agni as Pachakagni, Ranjakagni, Bhrajakagni, Alochakagni, Sadhakagni. Whereas the Sushruta Samhita commentator Dalhana says Pitta is a part of Agni or say Pitta is a Agneya bhava.

#### Differences between Pitta and Agni

There are a few references which state that both are different

- A reference from pathogenesis of Grahani disease Pitta vitiated by intake of pungent, corrosive, sour, alkalis and due to indigestion of food or foods causing indigestion will suppress digestive fire just as boiling water extinguishes fire despite being extremely hot.<sup>3</sup>

If Pitta and Agni were to be same substances, Pitta would not put off fire. This substantiates Pitta and Agni to be different substances.

- Pathogenesis of Palitya

Body heat and Pitta which are vitiated by Krodha, Shoka, and exhaustion reach head and cause Palitya i.e., greying of hair.<sup>4</sup>

Here the terms Pitta and Agni are used differently which shows they are different entities.

- Pitta and Agni are different in their properties as well.

Pitta is Drava, Sandra and tend to move downwards. Whereas Agni is Ruksha, devoid of moisture and tend to move in upward direction.

- Even when observed from treatment point of view few medicines act differently for Pitta and Agni. E.g., Ghee is

Pitta Shamak and intensifies Agni. Which justifies Pitta and Agni are different entities.

Pitta is also known as Antaragni. It is explained by the functions it performs i.e., Pakadi karmas i.e., digestion, separation of Sara and Kitta Bhaga known as Pachak Pitta. When this Pitta is balanced, it is beneficial for the body and mind. As all functions of body like digestion, segregation, absorption, assimilation, and conversion of food into body elements and tissue are carried out by this balanced Pitta. Acharya Sushruta declares we cannot find any other Agni/fire in the body other than Pitta. He calls all types of Pitta's by the name of Agni i.e., while being placed in the area between Amashaya and Pakwashaya, directly participates in the process of digestion (Pachakagni) and also supports and augments the function of the Pittas (Agni) present all over the body i.e. Ranjakagni, Sadhakagni, Bhrajakagni, Alochakagni.

Both this Agni and Pitta are involved in the process of Aharapaka. This is performed by the Jatharagni, Bhutagni and Dhatwagni. These help the conversion from Sthula Pachana (macro level) to the Sukshma Pachana (micro tissue level).

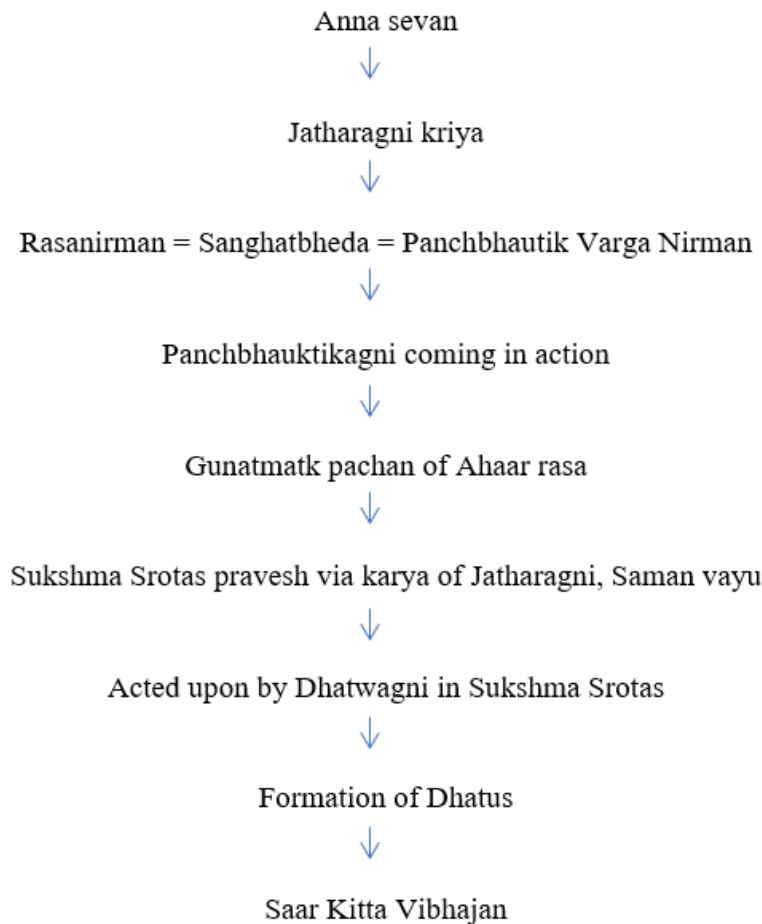
#### Role of Agni in the Process of Aharapaka

As the Ahara is consumed its digestion occurs by these 3 types of Agni at different levels, where when the food enters the Jathar, it is acted upon by the Jatharagni, situated between Amashaya and Pakwashaya, which is the primary digestive fire and the Pakadi karmas are performed. The basic Sthula Pachana of the Ahara starts in the Jathar by the Jatharagni, where the formation of Ahara rasa is initiated.

This Ahara rasa is acted upon by the Bhutagni which is already situated in the Padartha (Bhutagni dravyasthitatva- stated by

Chakrapani) that is consumed and metabolizes it at the microcellular level and provides strength to the body. These Pancha Mahabhutagni act upon the respective Mahabhuta Pradhan Ghataka of the Ahara dravya consumed to convert it into the respective Mahabhuta Pradhan Padartha bhava in our body. Our body is made up of the Panchamahabhuta Bhava Padartha i.e., Akash (the vacant spaces of the body, hollow areas), Vayu (air spaces in the tissues), Agni (digestive fire), Jala (liquid material in the body- lymph, blood, and other body fluids), Prithvi (solid or dense parts of the body i.e., organs and bones). These 5 Bhutagni i.e., Nabhasagni, Vayavyagni, Agneyagni, Prathivagni already present in the Padarthas act upon the respective Panchamahabhutatmak elements of food consumed leading to Pachana of Gunas and convert it to the respective Panchamahabhuta elements of the body and provide health and strength to the body and help information of Dhatu after respective Pachana of Gunas.

This Ahara rasa is further acted upon by the Dhatwagni, which is concerned with the formation of Dhatus. This Ahara rasa after being acted upon by Jatharagni and Bhutagni where its Gunatmak Pachana occurs, at the same time with the help of Pittadhara Kala and Saman Vayu this Pachit Ahara rasa is being carried to all the Sukshma Srotas via Hrudaya and Yakrit where simultaneously is being digested in the respective Parmanu form and is acted upon by the Sapta Dhatwagni, where each Dhatwagni i.e., Rasagni, Raktagni, Mamsagni, Medoagni, Asthiagni, Majjagni, Shukragni acts on the Sukshma Gunatmak Ahara Rasa to absorb the specific nutrients required to form the specific Dhatus by the specific Dhatwagni. This formation of Dhatus occurs in their respective Srotas by the action of their respective Dhatwagni and these Dhatus then perform the function of Deha Dharan for a healthy and long life.



### Shadrasatmak Ahara and its importance

Shadrasatmak Ahara is the concept which means consumption of Ahara which has inclusion of all the 6 Rasa i.e., Madhur, Amla, Lavana, Katu, Tikta, Kashaya Rasa in the diet. This concept in Ayurveda has a specific scientific logic behind which states that like the modern science focuses on consumption of all Proteins, Fats, Carbohydrates and Minerals in the diet Ayurveda focuses on consumption of all the 6 Rasa. Charaka acharya mentions in his Agreya as “Sarvarasabhyasam Balakaranam, Ek Rasabhyaaso Daurbalyakaranam”<sup>5</sup> meaning consumption of Shadrasatmak Ahara is considered healthy i.e., Balyakaranam and consumption of any one Rasa is cause of weakness i.e., Daurbalyakaranam.

These Rasa initially help in the process of digestion and later when acted upon by the Dhatwagni and Bhutagni help in the formation of respective Bhava Padartha in the body for a healthy life.

Ayurveda also states the importance of sequential consumption of these Rasa which help in the process of digestion i.e., initially the diet should be started with Madhura and Snigdha rasa, then Amla Lavana and Katu rasa and then Tikta and Kashaya rasa at the end. The science behind this is explained as when the jathara (stomach) is empty it is dominant of vayu mahabhuta and initial

consumption of Madhura and Snigdha rasa causes shaman of this Vayu and Madhura and Snigdha rasa being heavy to digest should be consumed initially. Then the consumption of ushna rasa i.e., Amla, Lavana and Katu rasa help in ignition of Jatharagni which helps in the Pakadi karma and the shaman of remaining Vayu and at the end Tikta and Kashaya rasa should be consumed as these two rasas are said to perform the Mukha and Kantha Shuddhi and the naturally occurring Kapha Vruddhi after food consumption is also controlled. In this way sequential consumption of this rasa helps in the digestion and is given utmost importance for a healthy digestion and health.

Also, the importance of Shadrasatmak Ahara is emphasized because of the concept of “Samanyam Vruddhikaranam” i.e., the samana guna causes the Vruddhi of saman Dosha and Dhatu and Mahabhuta. Like properties of Madhura rasa is Guru, Snigdha etc. having dominance of Ap and Prithvi Mahabhuta and with the action of Dhatwagni and Bhutagni after its consumption will lead to the Vruddhi of Padartha bhava having similar properties like Rasa, Mamsa, Meda, Majja and Shukra Dhatu and will also lead to the shaman of vitiated Dhatu having opposite properties as Rakta Dhatu. Same is the thing with another Rasa too. The table below shows the relation between Rasa and Mahabhuta Pradhanya and the Dhatu with similar properties.<sup>6</sup>

**Table 1: Relation between Shadrasa, their Guna, Mahabhuta Pradhanya, and corresponding Dhatu Vardhan**

Rasa	Guna	Mahabhuta	Dhatu
1. Madhura	Snigdha, Sheeta, Guru	Prithvi + Ap	Rasa, Mamsa, Meda, Majja, Shukra
2. Amla	Snigdha, Ushna, Guru	Prithvi + Agni	Rasa, Rakta
3. Lavana	Snigdha, Ushna, Guru	Ap + Agni	Rasa, Rakta
4. Katu	Ruksha, Ushna, Laghu	Vayu + Agni	Rakta
5. Tikta	Ruksha, Sheeta, Laghu	Vayu + Akash	Asthi
6. Kashaya	Ruksha, Sheeta, Laghu	Vayu + Prithvi	Asthi

Thus, for overall development of body and formation of all Dhatu in proportion Shadrasatmak Ahara is needed.

### DISCUSSION

Importance of Agni is depicted when Acharya Charak says “Shante agnou mriyate”<sup>7</sup> meaning when Agni is extinguished, death occurs, which can further be elaborated as Agni forms the base of all metabolisms occurring in the body which maintains life of an individual.

Along with Agni a complete Shadrasatmak Ahara is equally important as the Jatharagni digests the food forming Ahara rasa which further is being metabolized by Dhatwagni and Bhutagni to form the respective Dhatus and Mahabhuta Pradhan ghataka in the body.

When a Shadrasatmak Ahara is taken each Rasa nourishes different Dhatu and Mahabhuta e.g., Madhura rasa nourishes Rasa Dhatu and being Ap and Prithvi Mahabhuta Pradhan nourishes the respective Mahabhuta Ghataka of the body i.e., both Rasa, Mamsa, Meda and Shukra Dhatu etc.

Thus, a Shadrasatmak Ahara is important for the overall growth of the body as absence of any one Rasa in Shadrasatmak Ahara will not nourish the Dhatu and Mahabhuta Pradhan ghataka the specific absent Rasa is supposed to nourish, and the incomplete growth of the body occurs.

### CONCLUSION

In this way a complete Shadrasatmak Ahara is acted upon by the Jatharagni, Bhutagni and Dhatwagni to nourish and flourish the health of an individual. Thus, a complete Shadrasatmak Ahara and maintenance of Agni for proper metabolism is equally important for a healthy life.

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**Cite this article as:**

Himadri Hasmukhbhai Chaudhary *et al.* A Critical Literary Review of Agni and its role in Aharapaka and importance of Shadrasatmak Ahara for a healthy life. *Int. J. Res. Ayurveda Pharm.* 2021;12(4):120-123 <http://dx.doi.org/10.7897/2277-4343.1204118>

Source of support: Nil, Conflict of interest: None Declared

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