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## Physiological aspect of *Upavasa (langhana)* w.s.r indigestion (*Mandagni/Agnimandhya*)

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**ABSTRACT:** *Ayurveda*, the science of life, has much to discuss diet and fasting. Fasting is going without food and drink for a while. In *Dharmashastra* the *langhana* has been told as *vrata* which are often practiced by religious-minded people on certain specific religious days of the month. The verbal meaning of *Agni* is fire (digestive fire) and *mandhya* is decreased or reduced. According to *Ayurveda*, low or disturbed digestive fire is considered as the root cause of all the diseases. *Agni mandhya* is a chronic disease in which the digestion of food and nourishment of body tissue does not take place properly due to reduction in the digestive capacity of *Agni*. The process by which food is broken down into simple chemical compounds that can be absorbed and used as nutrients or eliminated by the body is called digestion.

**Key words:-** *Ayurveda, Mandhyaya Agni, Dharmashastra, langhana*

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## INTRODUCTION:

*Agni* (digestive and metabolic agents), based on their specific functions of conversion of food into biological elements of the body are classified into thirteen types. First, the *jatharagni* is most important because it is the initiator of the digestive process and it strengthens the digestive ability of the other twelve *agnis*. Five *bhutagnis* transform the *panchmahabhauika* components of *ahara rasa* created by *jatharagni* into different structures of the body. Seven *dhatvagnis* create seven tissue elements (*dhatu*). *Mandāgni* is one of the four states of *Jāṭharāgni* (digestive system); the word *Manda* means mild. The strength of *Agni* is less in this state. Even the slightest variation in regular amount is felt heavy for its capacity of digestion impairing the functions of *Agni*. *Mandāgni*

is influenced by *kapha-doṣa*. Among the 13 types of *Agni*, *Jāṭharāgni* is the most important; therefore, *Mandāgni* should be treated properly to prevent the progress of the disease to other disorders of *Āma* (The end product of improper digestion and metabolism). *Agnimandya* and *ama* are considered to be the main reason for disease. *Fasting* is the willful self-control from eating for a while.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS:-

### 1. *Upavasa (langhana)*:-

In *Ayurveda* the term *langhana* refers to the procedure which brings about lightness in the body. Here we use the “*ghan*” *prathyaya* that is why “*laghi + ghan*” equals *langhanam*. It means “*langhayati abhojanam karoti*”.

The term *abhojana* has two parts, *Na+Bhojana*, the term “No” has six meanings. One among them is *alpa* or light, here *abhojana* means *laghu bhojana*. In *Ayurvedic* literature *langhana* and *apatarpana* are mostly used in the context of *Upavasa* and convey the same Meaning. *Anasana*, *apatarpana*, *laghubhojna*, and *upavasa* are the synonyms of *langhana*. In our classics we find the indication of *upavasa* in terms of *langhana* in many instances. Fasting/*Upavasa* is a type of *adravya aushada*. *Acharya Charak* mainly described the ten types of *Langhan* as-

1. *Vaman*
2. *Virechan*
3. *Nasya (Sirovirechan)*
4. *Niruha Vasti*
5. To suppress the urge of thirst
6. *Vayu*
7. *Atap sevan*
8. Uses of *Pachan aushadhiya*
9. *Upvash*
10. *Vyayam*.

*Langhana* is been advised in many of the diseases as a prime treatment or in *Ama* of the diseases and also according to the strength of the diseases and the patient and also as a precautionary and

preventive modality. *Langhan* therapy is applied it can resolve many problems which persons are facing in this busy life schedule such as Metabolic Disorders which are the root cause of all disease, as this disturbs the *Agni* and for balancing *Agni*. *Langhan* is the first line of treatment for maintaining it. *Langhan* is the main tool to resolve all disease, moreover the *Pipasa*, *Marutsevan*, *Aatapsevan*, *Upwas*, *Vyayam* all these are cost-effective too.

## 2. Agni According Charaka:-

**Importance of Agni:-** *Dehagni* (all the entities in the body that are responsible for digestion and metabolism) is the fundamental causative agent for longevity, normal complexion, normal strength, good health, motivation, normal growth, normal luster, normal *ojas*, normal body temperature and various other forms of *Agni*. Even the existence of an individual is said to be because of *dehagni*. When the *Agni* stops functioning, the individual dies; if the *Agni* functions normally, the individual can lead a healthy and long life. Similarly, if the *Agni* becomes abnormal, the individual suffers from various diseases; and hence, the *Agni* is said to be the root cause of health and longevity. The

food one consumes becomes capable of nourishing the body tissues and of promoting the *ojas* (vital essence), strength, complexion, etc., only in the presence of normally functioning *Agni*. In the absence of normal digestion (and metabolism), the normal body tissues such as *rasa* cannot be formed nor nourished. *Jatharagni* is known as the King among all the forms of *Agni*. The intensification and diminution of all other forms of *Agni* are dependent on *jatharagni*. An individual should take the utmost care to maintain the *Agni* by providing fuel in the form of food and drinks which should be taken as per the rules mentioned because the life and strength of an individual depend on *Agni*.

**Digestion by *charaka*:**-The ingested food is carried to *koshtha* by *prana vata*. The food disintegrates because of the liquids, and further, it becomes soft because of the fatty substances. The *samana vata*, which has an inherent ability to intensify the *Agni*, intensifies the digestive enzymes and properly digests the food that one consumes timely and in an appropriate quantity, thus leading to longevity. This process of digestion by *Agni* in the gut which leads to the formation of *rasa* and *mala* is comparable to the

process of cooking of the raw rice kept in an earthen vessel containing water on a fire.

### 3. *Agni* according *susruta*:-

*Agni* (fire) is ever found (in the body) apart from *pitta*, because of the presence of the properties of fire in *pitta*, attending to burning, cooking (digesting) and such other functions it (*pitta*) is considered as *agni* (fire) itself and designated as *antaragni* (internal fire, digestive fire), when the qualities of fire are diminished, the use of substances of similar qualities have been prescribed and when the properties are greatly increased, resorting to cold treatments have been advocated.

**Types of *Agni*:**-it is of four kinds- one not vitiated (associated with) the *dosas* and three others which are functioning improperly.

1. **Visama *Agni*** - erratic from *vata*, that which cooks the food sometimes properly and some other time cooks the food and producing flatulence, heaviness of the stomach (abdomen), intestinal gargling, and straining at stool is *visamagni* (erratic/irregular) kind of digestive power, *visamagni* gives rise to diseases of *vata* origin.

2. **Sama agni** – balanced/normal due to normalcy/equilibrium of all *dosas*. Which cooks the food consumed at the usual time properly, is known as *samagni* (normal digestive power).

3. **Tiksna Agni**- powerful from *pitta*, which cooks the ingested food, though more in quantity very quickly is known as *tiksnagni* (active/powerful digestive power), the same when greatly increased is called *atyagni* (hyperactive digestive power), it cooks very quickly even the large quantity of food ingested often, and at the end of digestion produces dryness of the throat, palate and lips, feeling of burning sensation and exhaustion by heat, *tiksnagni* to diseases of *pitta* origin.

4. **manda Agni** – from *slesma (kapha)*, which cooks the ingested food, though less in quantity, after a long time, producing heaviness of the abdomen and head, cough, dyspnoea, more salivation, vomiting, and weakness of the body, this is *manda Agni* (poor/weak digestive power), *mandagni* to diseases of *kapha* origin.

*Samagni* (normal digestive power) should be protected, *visamagni* should be treated with the use of substances (foods and drugs) which are fatty, sour, salty; *tiksnagni*

should be treated with substances which are sweet, fatty, cold and by purgation's; *atyagni* also should be treated in the same way, especially by the use of buffalo's milk, curd and ghee; *mandagni* should be treated with the use of substances which are pungent, bitter and astringent tastes and by emesis.

#### 4. **Agnimandhya:-**

**Causative factors:-** Excessive starvation, indulging in food intake although there is indigestion, overeating, the irregular habit of eating, eating unwholesome food, indulging in food which is heavy to digest or having excessive nutritional value, food which is having cold qualities or eating chilled or frozen items, food which is dry in nature or food which brings about emaciation, contaminated food, perversion of procedures like *vamana*, *virechana* and *sneha*, emaciation of body due to disease, sudden migration to unsuitable place and of time and season, suppression of natural urges are causes for vitiation of *agni*.

**Pathogenesis:-** vitiated *Agni* is unable to digest even the light food. This vitiated digestive agent forms an intermediate substance called *ama*, which turns sour



(*shukta*) during fermentation and finally turns in poisonous substance (*amavisha*).

**Symptoms:-**This poisonous substance (*amavisha*) manifests clinical features like flatulence, uncomfortable physical and mental miseries, headache, altered consciousness, giddiness, stiffness of the back and lumbar region, yawning, body-ache, malaise, morbid thirst, fever, vomiting, tenesmus, anorexia, and indigestion and it is similar to antigenic poison.

**Types of *agnimandhya*:-** it is of three kinds-

### 1. *Vataj agnimandhya*:-

**Causative factors:-** Excessive indulgence in diet having *katu* (pungent), *tikta* (bitter), *kashaya* (astringent) dominant food, which is dry or having absorptive or emaciation qualities; cold, chilled or frozen items, eating quantitatively less amount of food, suppression of natural urges and excessive sexual intercourse contribute to the aggravation of *vata dosha* which encompasses the *Agni* causing suppression of *Agni*.

**Symptoms:-**Pain in the abdomen, *Tympanitis*, Constipation, Pricking pain in the abdomen, Dryness of mouth, Body ache, Weakness.

### 2. *Pittaj agnimandhya*:-

**Causative factors:-** *Katu* (spicy), *ajeerna* (undigestible food), *vidahi* (food causing eructation), *amla* (sour), *kshara* (alkali) and other food items which aggravate *pitta* are causes for *pittaja grahani*. The aggravated *pitta* hampers the function of *Agni* similar to the condition wherein hot water extinguishes fire.

**Symptoms:-** The *annavisha* when associated with *pitta* causes *daha*, morbid thirst, oral diseases, *amlapitta* (acid peptic disorders), and various other *pitta* related disorders.

### 3. *Kaphaj agnimandhya*:-

**causative factors:-** Heavy to digest or excessively unctuous foods, frozen or chilled items or food having cold nature or food which has qualities similar to *kapha*, excessive intake of food, and sleeping just after the meals hamper the function of *Agni* and simultaneously vitiates *kapha*.

**Symptoms:-**Food is digested with difficulty; nausea; vomiting and anorexia are its symptoms.

### 5. Indigestion:-

When the digestive fire (Agni) is weak or not active enough, the food or drinks that we take in are normally more than what can be handled, so the result is improper digestion. It is therefore impossible to separate the beneficial ingredients from the waste. This condition of indigestion can be compared with an unripe fruit, where it is difficult to separate the juice from the pulp.

**Definition:-**Indigestion also called dyspepsia or an upset stomach is a general term that describes discomfort in your upper abdomen.

**Causative factors:-**irregular food habits, the excess quantity of food consumption, consuming food which is not wholesome, extremely dry and cold food, incompatible food, misuse of purification (*panchakarma*) treatment, weakness due to diseases.

**Symptoms:-**Burning in the stomach or upper abdomen, abdominal pain, bloating, belching and gas, nausea and vomiting, acidic taste, growling stomach.

### DISCUSSION:-

*Ayurveda* recognizes the viewpoint that fasting causes the digestion of metabolic toxin which is not good for health. *Agnimandya* (weakened digestive fire) and *ama* (toxin) is considered to be the main reason for disease manifestation. It is stated in *Ayurveda* that fasting encourages digestive fire with the exclusion of blockage in the channel which helps in reducing of effects of the disease. In digestion, time plays a very important role, when the fire subsides, then digestion not happen properly, then for fast digestion of the diet, the role of fasting becomes even more important, because to digest food during fasting the appropriate time is found, fasting also works to increase the digestive fire. The description of fasting in *ayurveda* has come in the treatment of many diseases, In all those diseases, fasting has been described only to increase digestive fire because if the digestive fire has grown, then the digestion of medicine and food will be done properly, when the digestion of the diet is done properly, the symptoms of all diseases on their own are reduced.

**CONCLUSION:-**

Due to the decrease of Agni, digestion of food is not done properly, due to which these indigestible food produces *aama* and this is believed to be the cause of all diseases,

fasting reduces the obstructions in the channels and digests the *aama*, reducing all signs and symptoms produced thereby. Hence fasting plays an important role in indigested food as well as in increasing fire.

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