

Fire in Water

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Abstract: The existence of fire in water refers to an unprecedented appearance of a material in an unexpected surrounding. The presence of fire in between the rain clouds when they dash with each other as a lightning is called as Vaidyuda agni is an example to quote here. The second one is the fire in between the sea waters. This is meant to protect the earth from excess flow of sea water to the land by drying it by which it is kept under control. This fire is referred as bāḍava agni. The third one is the fire in between the secretory juices meant for digestion in all living beings which is called as jāṭharāgni in Ayurveda. The substratum for these fires is water. A humble attempt is made here for the preservation of this jāṭharāgni hidden amidst water in Gastro Intestinal Tract for a sound health in human beings.

Key Words: Fire, Water, Preservation, Sound health

Date of Submission: 11-01-2018

Date of acceptance: 03-02-2018

I. Introduction

Fire has a nature of engulfing a material on which it gets the support or on which it is dependent upon. This is due to its nature of burning beyond the control. When it burns dull, even a small log can extinguish its existence or when not supplied properly with fuel, it is put off. Seasonal weather conditions have an impact on fire. In dry weather conditions with a strong wind, fire burns the complete surroundings. However, in wet grass with wind not blowing, the same fire emits smoke and is put off. This theory holds well in the case of jāṭharāgni also. In a good condition it has the ability to digest any quantum of food and in dull condition with obstruction due to gas; it becomes further weak as soon as food is consumed. When not supplied with proper fuel called food, it eats away the body itself.

The concept of light and heavy food

Food items are generally classified as light and heavy food. Items which are easily digestible come under the category of light items, those which are difficult to digest come under heavy items. Rice harvested before one year, horse gram, fried rice, bitter and astringent tastes are few examples of light items and so are easily digestible. Flour items, sweets, oily and non vegetarian items are few examples of heavy items and so, difficult to digest. However, by processing some of these items, we can make heavy items to lighter substances and the vice versa. Cooked raw rice when warm is light, whereas the same raw rice when processed with jaggery, becomes heavy. Wheat flour is heavy but without adding oil or ghee, made into a dough state and rolled into chapattis, heated over the oven becomes light.

Those who are habituated to take light food items, suffers even on consuming a slight heavy item and for those who consume heavy items regularly, will suffer out of peptic ulcer, reflux oesophagitis etc. due to short fall of heavy items when they eat light foods. Those who do regular exercise, field workers, possessing good physique naturally will have a good jāṭharāgni and so, able to digest heavy foods with ease. Those who are lazy, having general debility will take time even to digest a light food.

Role of seasons on power of digestion

In winter, the external chillness does not allow the body heat to radiate out and so, the heat gets converged to the central stomach area thereby enhancing its ability to digest food items easily. It is not a harm to consume heavy items even in the early morning as the appetite is severe during a chill weather. This does not happen in a rainy season as the weather as well as the internal parts of the body become less warm, the digestion becomes dull. Only a moderate food neither too heavy nor too light should be consumed with care during rainy seasons. During summer, the external heat coincides with the internal heat of the body. Though one has the appetite, cannot consume a good quantity of food.

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Appetite based on constitution

Jātharāgni is an agent concerned with disintegration or break down process of food consumed. When Vātadoṣa influences agni (digestive fire), the condition is known as viṣamāgni. In this state, the agni functions in an irregular manner. It sometimes easily digests even a heavy meal or otherwise, cannot digest even a very light meal. When the digestive fire is influenced by Pitta doṣa, it is excited and hence easily digests even a heavy meal within short span of time. This is called as tīkṣṇāgni. Digestive fire influenced by Kapha doṣa is unable to breakdown even normal food and causes indigestion which is called as mandāgni. When all the three types of doṣa-s are present in equilibrium state in digestive fire, then the individual is able to complete the digestion of food taken in proper time and proper quantity without causing discomfort.

Ways to maintain a proper bio fire

1. Half² of the stomach is to be filled with food and one fourth with water. The rest of the stomach is to be left empty for the doshas such as Vāta, Pitta and Kapha to aid normal physiology of digestion. The filling capacity should be learned by one's own experience and cannot be understood by any parameters.
2. When³ faeces and urine are excreted, with a clear mind and heart and not brooding over something, doṣa-s such as Vāta, Pitta and Kapha traverse in their right pathways, belching becomes clear, hunger begins, digestive power increases, the body becomes light and capable of perceiving the senses, food is to be taken, as it is the right time scientifically recommended for food intake.
3. Avoid⁴ abhorrent, constipative, over cooked or under cooked, heavy, dry, cold, contaminated, causing burning sensation in stomach, dried, excessively water soaked and consumed with grief, anger and ravenous hunger.

II. Conclusion

From the above version it is clearly perceived that the existence of fire is undoubtedly proved in the textbooks of Ayurveda and the preservation of this bio fire in water is a supreme entity for the existence of human life. The factors which would support for the digestion of the food, also supports the jātharāgni to exist in a fine tune for the survival of the individual in a very healthy state. It is from this jātharāgni that the remaining bhūtāgni such as earth, water, fire, space and ether which are present in conglomeration in the body get their sustenance for their survival. The dhātvaṅni which are seven in number receive their share of nutrients from the proper digestion of the food only with the help of jātharāgni.

Sārṅgadhara⁵ quotes that the existence of this fire called jātharāgni is only up to the size of sesame and gives a prime value for the entire metabolism to happen in the body through it.

Acharya Caraka⁶ has opined that when jātharāgni amidst water stops functioning, the individual dies and when the jātharāgni functions normally, the individual can lead a healthy and long life provided the proper fuel in the form of nutrient food supply is being given at periodical intervals and that too after the complete digestion of the previous meal.

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Prof.Dr.S.Swaminathan "Fire in Water." IOSR Journal of Dental and Medical Sciences (IOSR-JDMS), vol. 17, no. 1, 2018, pp. 54-55

² Aṣṭāṅgahr̥daya - sūtrasthāna - 8 adhyāyaḥ - 46 ślokaḥ

³ Aṣṭāṅgahr̥daya - sūtrasthāna - 8 adhyāyaḥ - 55 ślokaḥ

⁴ Aṣṭāṅgahr̥daya - sūtrasthāna - 8 adhyāyaḥ - 31-32 ślokaḥ

⁵ Sārṅgadharaśāstrī - pūrvakhaṇḍaḥ - 5 adhyāyaḥ - 30 ślokaḥ

⁶ carakaśāstrī - cikitsāsthānam - 15 adhyāyaḥ -3 ślokaḥ