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"STUDY OF AGNI IN DIFFERENT METABOLIC DISORDERS"- A REVIEW

Dr. Ajay Malviya*[1], Dr. Janmejay Shakya[2], Dr. Puspendra Kumar Pandey[3] and Dr. Rahul Palsedkar[4]

[1]M.D. (Samhita Siddhant) Scholar, Dept. of Samhita Siddhant, Pt. Dr. Shivshaktilal Sharma Ayurveda College, Ratlam, M.P.

[2]Asst. Professor, Dept. of Panchakarma, Pt. Dr. Shivshaktilal Sharma Ayurveda College, Ratlam, M.P.

[3]Professor & H.O.D., Dept. of Samhita Siddhant, Pt. Dr. Shivshaktilal Sharma Ayurveda College, Ratlam, M.P.

[4]Reader, Dept. of Samhita Siddhant, Pt. Dr. Shivshaktilal Sharma Ayurveda College, Ratlam, M.P.

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Corresponding Author: Dr. Ajay Malviya
M.D. (Samhita Siddhant) Scholar, Dept. of Samhita Siddhant, Pt. Dr. Shivshaktilal Sharma Ayurveda College, Ratlam, M.P.

1. ABSTRACT

In *Brahmasutra*, Agni has been meant to be a sign of life in the body. In *Shabdakalpadruma*, 61 synonyms of Agni have been compiled. These synonyms help in explaining the nature and functions of the Agni, e.g., *Vaishvanara, Sarva Paka, Shuchi, Vishwambhar, Rudra* etc. The metabolism and catabolism in organism all are regulated through Agni. The presence of 'Agni' in human system responsible for digestion and metabolism. Agni is the digestive and metabolic fire of the body. *Ayurveda* emphasizes that all the diseases are the result of weak state of Agni. Improper functioning of Agni leads to various gastrointestinal disorders as well as various metabolic disturbances.

KEYWORDS: *Agni, Ahara-vihar, Tridosh*, Metabolism, *Abhyavaharana Shakti.*

2. INTRODUCTION

Agni digests the *Ahara* (food) on which the strength of body i.e. *Bala, Oja*, etc depends. Hypo functioning of Agni leads to indigestion and formation of *Ama* which in turn is the root cause of various ailments meanwhile hyper functioning leads to several other digestive as well as generalized metabolic anomalies. Agni is the most important aspect of *Ayurveda* as all the states diseased or health revolves around the status of *agni. Agni* encompasses all the changes include the digestion and absorption of food, cellular transformation, and assimilation of sensory perception, mental and emotional experiences.

Metabolic syndrome is increasing and up to one-third of Indian population. If you have metabolic syndrome or any of its components, aggressive lifestyle changes can delay or even prevent the development of serious health problems.

Risk factors

The following factors are responsible for metabolic syndrome:

- **Age.** Your risk of metabolic syndrome increases with age.
- **Ethnicity.** In the United States, Hispanics — especially Hispanic women — appear to be at the greatest risk of developing metabolic syndrome. The reasons for this are not entirely clear.
- **Obesity.** Carrying too much weight, especially in your abdomen, increases your risk of metabolic syndrome.
- **Diabetes.** You're more likely to have metabolic syndrome if you had diabetes during pregnancy (gestational diabetes) or if you have a family history of type 2 diabetes.
- **Thyroid, Heart diseases and Other.** Your risk of metabolic syndrome is higher if you've ever had non alcoholic fatty liver disease, polycystic ovary syndrome or sleep apnea, Thyroid, heart disease and stroke.

Complications

Having metabolic syndrome can increase your risk of developing:

- **Type II diabetes.** If you don't make lifestyle changes to control your excess weight, you may develop insulin resistance, which can cause your blood sugar levels to rise. Eventually, insulin resistance can lead to type II diabetes.
- **Heart and blood vessel disease.** High cholesterol and high blood pressure can contribute to the buildup of plaques in your arteries. These plaques can narrow and harden your arteries, which can lead to a heart attack or stroke.

3. DISCUSSION

Review of Literature

***Nyaya-Vaisesika Darshana* divided Agni into following categories**

Bhauma or the physical fire, *Divya* or the celestial fire like the lightening, rays of sun, moon, and the stars, *Audarya* or the abdominal fire which is responsible for the digestion as well as metabolism and, *Akaraja* which is present in the metals such as gold and silver.

It has been shown here that the matter and energy are separable only up to a certain level beyond which they are interchangeable and inseparable from each other.

Acharya Charak mentioned that after cessation of the function of Agni, the individual dies, and when the Agni of an individual is *sama*, then that person would be absolutely healthy and would lead a long, happy, healthy life. If somehow the Agni of a person is disturbed either vitiated or diminished, the whole metabolism of the body would be disturbed, resulting in ill health and diseased state. That's why Agni is said to be the base (*mool*) of life. (Cha.Chi.15/4.).[1]

According to *Acharya Sushruta*, there is no other form of Agni in the body except the *Pitta*, and when this *Pitta dosha* is vitiated or diminished the digestion of the food material is affected the same way as the combustion of fuel is affected with diminished or vitiated fire in the outer world and both the conditions are tackled in a similar manner. (Su. Su. 21/09)[2]

Chakrapani has commented on "*Pittantargatta*," that the function of *Pitta* inside the body is not combustion but its work is to provide heat energy of Agni (*Chakrapani Tika* on Cha.Su.-12/11).[1]

According to *Hemadri, Pitta* is of five divisions, which is located in the middle of the *pakvashaya* and *amashaya*, although it is composed of *panchabhutas*, because of an increase of (predominance qualities of) *tejas bhuta*, it is devoid of liquidity (although it is a liquid). Also, because it does not possess *snigdha* (viscidity), *sita* and such other properties of apa *bhuta*, it is called by the term "Anal". Because of its function of *paka* it cooks the food, dividing it into essence (*prasad*) and waste (*kitta*) separately. The *Jatharagni* bestows grace (help) to the other *Pitta* in the body and to the *dhatvagni* present in the *dhatus* (As.Hr.Su.12/10-12).[3]

Detailed Study of *Jatharagni, Bhutagni, Dhatvagni*- The strength of the *Grahani* is from Agni itself, and the strength of Agni is from *Grahani*. When the Agni undergoes vitiation, *Grahani* also gets vitiated and produces diseases (As.Hr.Sha.3/50-54).[4]

Jatharagni is the Agni present in the *Jathara* stands for the stomach and duodenum. As per *Ashtanga Hridaya*, seat of *Jatharagni* is *Grahani* (duodenum). The name *Grahani*, as it holds the food for certain amount of time inside the *Amasaya* (stomach) in order to initiate digestion. *Jatharagni* is the main important Agni that controls the function of all other 12 *Agnis*. All the *Agnis* are totally dependent on the status of *Jatharagni* (Cha. Chi. 15/39-40).[5]

1. *Jatharagni* is considered to be the prime because each and every nutrient that one ingests first comes to the stomach and duodenum and is subjected to the action of *Jatharagni*. It plays a key role in digestion of food-stuffs composed of the five basic elements and transforms it for utilization by the respective tissues. *Jatharagni* separates food material into the sara (essence portion) and *kitta* (waste products) in the human body. *Jatharagni* is also classified into four categories according to its performance of digestion in the human being (Cha.Chi.15/51)[6] namely *Vishamagni, tikshanagni, Mandagni* and *Samagni.*

A. *Samagni*- Normal digestive fire is characterized by strong and appealing appetite that is easily satisfied with normal food. Digestive functions are proper; there are no episodes of gas, colic and constipation.[7] It digests and assimilates food properly at the proper time. This thus increases the quality of the *Dhatus* (supportive tissues of the body).[8]

B. *Vishamagni* (Variable)- Here the digestive fire is disturbed by *vata*. Because of variability in vata, there are episodes of alternating cycles of strong appetite with loss of appetite and forget fulness to consume foods. This type of Agni changes between digesting food quickly and slowly. It creates different types of *udargata roga*.

C. *Tikshnagni* (High)- Here the digestive fire is disturbed by *pitta*. In these cases, *agni* is usually high and both *pitta* and *agni* share same properties. In these cases, immunity against diseases is good. Because of variability in *pitta*, there are episodes excessive appetites. T*ikshnagni* mean very quick/very sharp/very fast. *Acharya Shushrut* states that when the power of digestion is increased from normal to above normal, food digests very quickly and produces hunger or the desire for food. When food is digested, the throat, the mouth cavity and the lips become dry with a burning sensation. This condition is known as "*Bhasmak Roga* according to *Ayurveda*.

D. *Mandagni* (Low)- "*Mand"* means slow. Here the digestive fire is disturbed by *kapha*. Because of variability in *kapha*, there are episodes of poor appetite, sluggish metabolism and tendency to weight gain despite optimal food consumption. Excessive mucus or phlegm production and congestion are striking features.

The meaning of the *Mandagni* is slow digestive power or digestive capacity. Those who are having *Mandagni* eat very little and are unable to digest the smallest amount of food. Lord *Dhanvantri* says that Agni digests the least amount of food in the greatest amount of time. According to *Hareet Samhita, Samagni* depends on whether the

Doshas (*Vata, Pitta, Kapha*) are in normal stage. When the *Pitta* is higher than normal, the condition is known as *Tikshnagni*. When *Vata* and *Kapha* are higher than normal, the condition is known as *Mandgni.*

2. Five *bhutagni* are fine and subtler *agnis* located in the five *mahabhutas*. These *agni* are responsible for the molecular metabolism and help in synthesis and break down of materials at molecular level. These represent the catabolic processes in our body. There are five *Agnis* in each of the five basic elements, namely– *Parthiva* (earth), *Apya* (water), *Tejas* (Fire), *Vayavya* (Wind) and *Nabhasa* (sky).
3. Seven *dhatu agni* are responsible for the formation of tissues (*dhatus*) and participate in the specific tissue metabolism. The dhatvagni represent the entire range of anabolic processes functioning in the respective tissues. *Acharya Charaka* has mentioned the fact that that the seven dhatus that are a support system of the body contain their own Agnis, and by its virtue they digest and transform the materials supplied to them to make the substances alike to them for nourishment (Cha. Su. 28/15).

Sr. no.	Author	No. of Agni	Name of Agni	References
1	Acharya Charak	13	Jatharagni-1, Bhutagni-5, Dhatawagni-7	Ch.Chi. 15/38
2	Acharya Susruta	05	Pachak, Ranjak, Bhrajak, Sadhak, Alochak	Su. Sut. 21/10
3	Acharya Vagvatta	18	Bhutagni-5, Dhatawagni-7, Doshagni-3, Malagni-3	Vagbhata, 'Sarvanga sundra' of Arunadatta and'Ayurvedarasayana' of Hemadri
4	Acharya Sharangdhara	05	Pachak, Ranjak, Bhrajak, Sadhak, Alochak	Sha. Sa. Pu. Kha. 5/32
5	Bhavmishra		Same As Acharya Charak & Susruta	Bha. Pu. Kha. 3/169, 180

1. Rasadhatu (nutrient fluid) – Rasagni.
2. Rakta dhatu (blood tissue) - Raktagni.
3. Mamsa dhatu (muscle tissue) - Mamsagni.
4. Medas dhatu (Adipose tissue) – Medo agni
5. Asthi dhatu (Bony tissue) – Asthyagni.
6. Majja dhatu (Bone marrow and nervous tissue) – Majjagni
7. Sukra dhatu (Reproductive tissues including sperm and ovum) – Sukragni

***Aahar* and *Vihar*: The causative factor for disturbance of Agni**

Excessive fasting or over eating causes *mandagni*, as like fire in environment is extinguished if there is no fuel supply or if excessive fuel covers the *agni*. One should take the right quantity of food always since it is the quantity which helps to maintain proper digestive power and also provides strength, complexion, happiness and longevity to the person without disturbing the normalcy.[9] Meals even if suitable and taken in proper measure does not get digested properly if the person suffers from anxiety, sadness, fear, anger and has undergone uncomfortable sleep and has remain awake for a long period. Psychological attitudes like envy, fear, anger etc are the causative factors of indigestion. So strength of *agni* depends upon the proper diet and mental factors.[10]

Agni and Metabolic disorder

All the transformations in the body are catalyzed by Agni, if *agni* is impaired, the proper transformation of food into *Dhatus* and *Malas* are also impaired and this will lead to accumulation of waste products in the body. Some infants are born with hormonal problems that can lead to a range of health issues, such as low growth. Endocrine-disrupting chemicals, such as pesticides, lead, and phthalates, which are used in plastic food containers, can sometimes lead to hormonal problems. A hormone imbalance can result from genetic or environmental factors. The three broad groups of endocrine disorders are:

- A gland does not produce enough of its hormones known as hypo- secretion.
- A gland produces too much of its hormones, also referred to as hyper- secretion.
- Due hormonal imbalance/ metabolism may leads to tumors development in the endocrine glands. They may be malignant, or cancerous, but they may also be benign, or non-cancerous.

Lack of exercise, sleep during daytime, excessive intake of fat & alcohol rich diet leads to vitiation of *medavaha srotas*.[11] Following such kind of excessive life style and dietary habit leads to accumulation of *medodhatu* in *medovaahi srotas* which causes obstruction (sang) in *medovaahi srotas*. Obstructed *medovaha srotas* causes more synthesis and accumulation of *medo dhatu* in medovaha srotas which prevents further synthesis of subsequent *dhatus* of *asthi*, *majja* and *sukra dhatu*. As per the principles of *pratisroto-margnyaayena* excess of *meda dhatu* in the *medovaha srotas* leads to excess formation of previous *mamsa dhatu*, likewise excess of *mamsa dhatu* leads to excess formation of previous *rakta dhatu*, excess of *rakta dhatu* leads to excess formation of rasa *dhatu*. [12] Further as per the principles of *Kshir Dadhi Nyayya* excess of rasa *dhatu* leads to excess synthesis of consequent *rakta dhatu*, excess of *rakta dhatu* into *mamsa dhatu* and excess of *mamsa dhatu* into *medo dhatu* and further the principles of *pratisroto-margnyaayena* takes place and ultimately excess of abnormal *medo dhatu* is formed.[13] The human endocrine system consists of a number of glands, which release hormones to control many different functions. When the hormones leave the glands, they enter the bloodstream and are transported to organs and tissues in every part of the body. Endocrinology refers to a medical focus on hormones. Hormones shape the body and drive its systems. The **adrenal glands** secrete:

- Corticosteroids, the steroids involved in stress responses, the immune system, inflammation, and more
- Catecholamines, such as norepinephrine and epinephrine, in response to stress
- Aldosterone, which affects kidney function
- Androgens, or male sex hormones, including testosterone.

Both men and women have some androgen, but men have higher levels. Androgens control the development of characteristics associated with males, like facial hair and a deeper voice. **Adrenal Gland** hypersecretion may lead to over-nervousness, sweating, raised blood pressure, and Cushing's disease. Hyposecretion may lead to Addison's disease, Mineralocorticoid deficiency, weight loss, loss of energy, and anaemia. The **hypothalamus** is located just above the brain stem and below the thalamus. This gland activates and controls involuntary body functions, including respiration, heart rate, appetite, sleep, temperature, and the circadian cycles, or daily rhythms. The hypothalamus links the nervous system to the endocrine system via the attached pituitary gland. The **ovaries** secrete the hormones estrogen and progesterone. These hormones promote sexual development, fertility, and menstruation. The testicles secrete androgens, mainly testosterone. Androgens control sexual development, puberty, facial hair, sexual behavior, libido, erectile function, and the formation of sperm cells. **Pancreas** is both an endocrine gland and a digestive organ. It releases:

- Insulin: Important for carbohydrate and fat metabolism in the body
- Somatostatin: Regulates endocrine and nervous system function and controls the secretion of several hormones, such as gastrin, insulin, and growth hormone
- Glucagon: A peptide hormone that raises blood glucose levels when they fall too low
- Pancreatic polypeptide: This helps control the secretion of substances made by the pancreas

Diabetes and digestive issues can result if there are problems with the pancreas. **Pancreas** hypersecretion may lead to hyperinsulinism, too much insulin can lead to low blood glucose. Hyposecretion may lead to one type of diabetes. **Pituitary Gland-** Hypersecretion may lead to gigantism, or excessive growth. Hyposecretion may lead to slow bone growth and short stature. **Pineal body, or pineal gland,** it secretes melatonin and helps control the body's sleep patterns and moderate levels of reproductive hormones. **Pituitary gland**, it secretes hormones that regulate the functions of other glands, as well as growth and several other bodily functions. The anterior, or front, pituitary secretes hormones that affect sexual development, thyroid function, growth, skin pigmentation, and adrenocortical function. The posterior, or rear, pituitary secretes oxytocin, a hormone that increases contractions of the uterus and antidiuretic hormone (ADH) which encourages the kidneys to reabsorb water. **Thymus gland**, it plays a role in the immune system, which protects the body against disease and infection. T lymphocytes, a type of immune cell, mature and multiply in the thymus gland early in life. Hypersecretion may lead to an overactive immune system which overreacts to perceived threats. This may result in an autoimmune disease. Hyposecretion may lead to a weakened immune system, where the body is unable to fight infection and easily succumbs to viruses, bacteria, and other pathogens. **Thyroid gland** plays a key role in regulating blood pressure, body temperature, heart rate, metabolism, and how the body reacts to other hormones. The thyroid gland uses iodine to create hormones. The two main hormones it produces are thyroxine and tri-iodothyronine. It also produces calcitonin, which helps strengthen bones and regulates the metabolism of calcium. Hyperthyroidism most often stems from Graves' disease. It can lead to accelerated metabolism, sweating, arrhythmia or irregular heartbeat, weight loss, and nervousness. Hypothyroidism may lead to tiredness, weight gain, depression, abnormal bone development, developmental delay, and stunted growth. **Parathyroid Gland-** regulates calcium and phosphate in the blood. Muscles and nerves can only operate safely and effectively if these chemicals are at the correct levels. Its hypersecretion may lead to brittle bones that fracture easily, as well as stones in the urinary system. Hyposecretion may lead to involuntary muscle contractions, or tetany, caused by low levels of calcium in plasma.

Anabolism allows the body to grow new cells and maintain all the tissues. Anabolic reactions in the body use simple chemicals and molecules to manufacture many finished products. Examples include the growth and mineralization of bone and increases in muscle mass. Classic anabolic hormones include:

- **Growth hormone** – a hormone made by the pituitary gland that stimulates growth.
- **Insulin** – a hormone made by the pancreas. It regulates the level of sugar glucose in the blood. Cells cannot utilize glucose without insulin.
- **Testosterone** – causes the development of male sex characteristics, such as a deeper voice and facial hair. It also strengthens muscles and bone.
- **Estrogen** – involved in strengthening bone mass, as well as developing female characteristics, such as breasts.

Catabolism breaks things down and releases energy; it uses larger compounds to create smaller compounds, releasing energy in the process. Catabolism provides the energy our bodies need for physical activity, from cellular processes to body movements.

Catabolic reactions in the cells break down polymers (long chains of molecules) into their monomers (single units). For example:

- **Polysaccharides are broken down into monosaccharides** – for instance, starch is broken down into glucose.
- **Nucleic acids are broken down into nucleotides** – nucleic acids, such as those that make up DNA, are broken down to purines, pyrimidines, and pentose sugars. These are involved in the body's energy supply.
- **Proteins are broken down into amino acids** – in some circumstances, protein is broken down into amino acids to make glucose.

When we eat, our body breaks down nutrients – this releases energy, which is stored in molecules of adenosine triphosphate (ATP) in the body. ATP is considered to be "the energy currency of life."

The energy stored in ATP is the fuel for anabolic reactions. Catabolism creates the energy that anabolism consumes for synthesizing hormones, enzymes, sugars, and other substances for cell growth, reproduction, and tissue repair. Metabolic disorders are diverse and can affect many aspects of bodily functioning. Common symptoms include:

- Tiredness
- Muscle weakness
- Unexpected weight gain or loss
- Changes in skin color
- Stomach pain
- Nausea or vomiting
- Reduced appetite
- Developmental problems in babies and infants

4. METHODOLOGY

Literary Materials

Most of the work should be of literary type collection, interpretation and exploration of related material from different sources along with critical analysis will be done to find out a newer view which is most suitable to explain the old concept in contemporary light. The work should be carried out in the department of *Ayurveda Samhita* and *Siddhant* with collection and analysis of subject matter from *Bruhattrayi* and *Laghutrayi*. The study material should be collected from –

1. *Brihattrayi* –

I. *Charaka Samhita*, commented by

a. Chakrapani Datt

b. Yogendranath Sen

c. Gangadhar Roy

II. *Sushrut Samhita*, commented by

a. Dalhana

III. *Astang Hridayam*, commented by

a. *Arundutta*

b. *Hemadri*

2. *Laghutrayi* –

I. Madhavnidana

II. Sharangdhara Samhita

III. Bhava Prakash

Plan of study

(1) Conceptual Study should be based on-

a) Life style

b) *Tridoshaj*

c) *Raktvahstrotus*

d) *Sthanic Dose*

e) *Nidana*

f) Disease Review - Review related with all metabolic disorders i.e. Agni mentioned in *Ayurvedic* and modern text.

3. Literary Observation and discussion should be done as per the methodology mentioned. All classical, modern literature and contemporary texts including the journals and websites about the disease drug and procedure will be reviewed and documented for the study. The patient will be diagnosed with the help of various subjective and objective parameters as per *Ayurvedic* as well as modern science.

Study Design: Observational and Survey clinical study of selected groups should be based on inclusion and exclusion criteria with subjective and objective parameters are as follow:

Inclusion Criteria

For the assessment of *Agni dipana, Abhyavaharana Shakti* was the main criteria. So for the present study, patients were selected on the basis of criteria fulfilling state of *Agnimandya*. The gradation for the inclusion criteria are as follows:

- Patients having decrease in *Abhyavaharana Shakti*

1. Patient is able to consume food only up to 75% of his capacity with normal frequency-1
2. Patient is able to consume food only up to 50% of his capacity with irregular frequency-2
3. Patient is able to consume food only up to 25% of his capacity-3

- Decrease in *Jarana Shakti*:

– All the symptoms are present - 3

– Four-five symptoms are present (75%) - 2

– Three symptoms are present (50%) - 1

– One-two symptoms are present (25%) – 0

4. Patients suffering from classical signs and symptoms of *Agnimandya*
5. Patients having age between 25 and 60 years
6. Chronicity not more than 1 month.

Exclusion Criteria

1. Patients having age <25 years and >61 years
2. Patients suffering from any major systemic diseases other than diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, Obesity, Thyroid.
3. Pregnant women
4. Conditions where *Ekakala bhojana* is indicated.

Objective parameters: Pre & Post Agni assessment should be assessed as per clinical research protocol in the given groups:

Group 1: Diabetes Type I & II

Group 2: Obesity

Group 3: Heart disease/ Stroke/ Hypertension/ abnormal cholesterol or triglyceride levels.

Group 4: Thyroid

Group 5: Others-A. Gaucher's disease is a rare; It is the result of a genetic mutation that limits the production of glucocerebrosidase. Insufficient amounts of this enzyme cause the accumulation of lipids, which are fatty substances. Lipids typically accumulate in the spleen or liver, which can cause them to grow larger than they should be and lead to a range of problems. Most people with the condition have type 1 Gaucher's disease, which causes symptoms that include tiredness and bruising easily.

B. Hemochromatosis- is a condition that affects how the body absorbs iron. It can result from a mutation in the *HFE* gene or excessive iron from a person's diet or blood transfusions. The disease causes iron buildups that can lead to symptoms including:

- Tiredness or weakness
- Joint pains
- Sexual difficulties
- Stomach pain
- Darkening of the skin

C. **Phenylketonuria (PKU)-** is where someone is born without the ability, or has a reduced ability, to produce phenylalanine hydroxylase. This is an enzyme that is important for processing amino acids. Metabolic processes use amino acids to build proteins, which are essential for bodily growth and development. The body breaks down excess amino acids and removes them. However, people with PKU are unable to process excess amino acids, which can build up to cause brain damage. Early treatment is necessary to prevent severe complications from PKU.

D. Mitochondrial disorders- are a group of conditions that prevent the mitochondria from producing enough energy for cells to function correctly. They usually result from a genetic mutation that passes through families. These disorders can affect any part of the body as all cells contain mitochondria and require energy. For example, they can affect muscle growth and function or cause diabetes.

5. CONCLUSION

Metabolic disorders have a wide range of treatments depending on the cause. Many of these conditions are genetic or currently without a cure. *Agni* apart from the digestive function, is also responsible for the production of strength which

has two aspects namely 1.strength to resist the occurrence of disease and decay in the human body 2. strength to perform physical exercises. Due to faulty *agni* status, a number of unripe, undigested metabolites block the micro channels of the body, thus resulting in accumulation of *doshas* (morbid matters) and finally precipitate in the form of disease. *Ayurveda* emphasizes that most of the diseases are the by product of *agni-dushti* that is why the main principle of treatment of all diseases in *Ayurveda* is to restore and strengthen the *agni* (digestive and metabolic fire). This means that a person could require lifelong medications or need to make lifestyle changes to manage their symptoms/ disease.

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