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Research Article

Integrative Analysis Of Agni And Ama In The Context Of The Manasika Bhava

Dr. Aayushi Choudhary[1]*, Prof. (Dr.) Chhaju Ram Yadav[2] and Dr. Sarika Yadav[3]

[1]PG Scholar, Department of Kriya Sharir, National Institute of Ayurveda, Deemed University, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India
[2]Professor & HOD, PG Department of Kriya Sharir, National Institute of Ayurveda, Deemed University, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India
[3]Assistant Professor, Department of Kriya Sharir, IASR & FOA, SKAU, Kurukshetra, Haryana, India

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ABSTRACT

Background: Digestive disorders are increasingly prevalent in the present era, largely influenced by altered dietary patterns, a sedentary lifestyle, and psychological stress. Integrative physiology explains this phenomenon through the gut–brain axis, a complex bidirectional communication system linking gastrointestinal and neurological functions. Ayurveda, on the other hand, considers *Agni* as the fundamental determinant of digestion and metabolic balance. **Methods:** A conceptual narrative review was undertaken using classical Ayurvedic texts, primarily *Charaka Samhita* and *Sushruta Samhita*, along with modern scientific literature on gut–brain interactions. The collected information was systematically analyzed to identify conceptual similarities and physiological correlations. **Discussion:** The analysis suggests that *Agni* may be understood as a broader regulatory principle encompassing digestive transformation, metabolic activity, and systemic homeostasis. The concept of *Ama* shows resemblance to metabolic by-products, inflammatory mediators, and microbial imbalance described in modern science. The gut–brain axis provides a physiological basis for the interaction between digestive function and mental state, which is also emphasized in Ayurvedic literature. **Conclusion:** The correlation between *Agni* and the gut–brain axis highlights a shared understanding of digestion as a central regulator of health. This integrative perspective may contribute to a better understanding of lifestyle-related disorders and support the development of holistic therapeutic approaches.

Introduction

Digestive disorders have become increasingly common in recent years, reflecting changes in dietary habits, lifestyle patterns, and stress levels. Irregular meal timings, excessive intake of processed foods, low dietary fiber, and reduced physical activity have significantly impaired digestive efficiency. In addition, chronic psychological stress further contributes to disturbances in gastrointestinal function, leading to a wide spectrum of functional and metabolic disorders.[1] These observations indicate that digestion is not merely a localized process but is closely integrated with systemic physiological regulation.[2]

Modern biomedical science explains this integration through the concept of the gut–brain axis, which represents a bidirectional communication network between the gastrointestinal tract and the central nervous system.[3] This interaction is mediated through neural pathways, endocrine signaling, immune mechanisms, and gut microbiota. The functioning of this axis influences not only digestion and metabolism but also emotional and cognitive processes.

Ayurveda also places significant emphasis on digestion through the concept of *Agni*, which is considered responsible for the transformation, absorption, and assimilation of food.[4] Proper functioning of *Agni* ensures nourishment of body tissues and maintenance of health, whereas its impairment leads to the formation of *Ama*, which plays a crucial role in disease development. Acharya Charaka further indicates

Corresponding author.
Dr. Aayushi Choudhary,
PG Scholar, Department of Kriya Sharir, National Institute of Ayurveda, Deemed University, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India
E-mail address: aayushichoudhary563@gmail.com

that dietary habits and mental states directly influence *Agni*, suggesting a close relationship between digestive and psychological processes.[5]

Considering these parallels, understanding *Agni* in the context of the gut–brain axis may provide a meaningful integrative perspective on digestion and its role in maintaining overall health.

Materials and Methods

This study is based on a conceptual review of classical Ayurvedic texts, including *Charaka Samhita* and *Sushruta Samhita*, along with relevant contemporary literature on gut–brain axis physiology. The collected data were critically analyzed and interpreted to identify conceptual and functional correlations.

Discussion

In Ayurveda, *Agni* is regarded as the fundamental principle governing digestion and metabolism, extending beyond the simple breakdown of food to encompass transformation, absorption, and assimilation at multiple levels. The classification into *Jatharagni*, *Bhutagni*, and *Dhatvagni* reflects a comprehensive and hierarchical model of metabolic regulation, wherein each level contributes to the progressive conversion of nutrients into forms suitable for tissue nourishment.[6] This multi-layered understanding closely parallels modern concepts of digestion, cellular metabolism, and tissue-specific biochemical processes.

Furthermore, *Agni* represents a dynamic and adaptive principle rather than a static entity. It responds to internal and external factors such as diet, environment, age, and psychological state. This dynamic nature is comparable to adaptive responses described in integrative physiology, where digestive and metabolic processes continuously adjust to maintain homeostasis.

From a physiological perspective, balanced *Agni* may be interpreted as a state of optimal digestive efficiency characterized by coordinated enzymatic activity, appropriate gastrointestinal motility, efficient absorption, and balanced metabolic turnover. Such a state ensures proper formation of *Dhatu*, indicating adequate nutritional status and metabolic stability.[7]

In contrast, impaired *Agni* leads to incomplete digestion and improper metabolic processing, resulting in the formation of *Ama*. According to Sushruta, disease develops through six stages—*Sanchaya, Prakopa, Prasara, Sthanasamsraya, Vyakti,* and *Bheda Avastha*.[8] In disorders associated with *Ama*, the initial stage involves the accumulation (*Sanchaya*) of improperly processed metabolites. This can be correlated with the accumulation of poorly metabolized substrates, inflammatory mediators, and toxic metabolic by-products that disrupt normal cellular and systemic functions.

The modern concept of the gut–brain axis provides a mechanistic framework that strengthens this interpretation. The gastrointestinal system is regulated by an intricate network involving the enteric nervous system, autonomic pathways, and central neural circuits. The enteric nervous system independently governs intestinal motility, secretion, and local reflexes, while continuous communication with the central nervous system via the vagus nerve facilitates integration of digestive and emotional responses.[9] This bidirectional interaction explains how psychological factors such as stress and anxiety influence gastrointestinal function, and how disturbances in gut physiology may, in turn, affect mood and cognition.

Endocrine and neuroendocrine mechanisms further contribute to this integration. Hormones such as cortisol, released during stress, are known to alter gastrointestinal motility, increase intestinal permeability, and modulate inflammatory responses. These changes impair digestive efficiency and promote metabolic disturbances. Such observations provide a physiological basis for the Ayurvedic view that mental and emotional factors directly influence *Agni* and contribute to disease development like *Arsha, Atisara*.[10]

In addition to neural and endocrine regulation, gut microbiota plays a critical role in maintaining gastrointestinal homeostasis. The intestinal microbial community actively participates in digestion, nutrient synthesis, and immune modulation. Microbial metabolites, including short-chain fatty acids and neurotransmitter-like substances, influence both local gut function and systemic physiological processes.[11] Alterations in microbial composition called dysbiosis have been associated with metabolic disorders, inflammatory conditions, and neuropsychiatric disturbances. This aligns conceptually with the Ayurvedic notion of *Ama*, representing a state of internal imbalance arising from impaired digestion and metabolism.

Dietary habits and lifestyle factors play a crucial role in maintaining the balance of both *Agni* and gut–brain interactions. Irregular eating patterns, excessive consumption of processed foods, and chronic stress disrupt digestive homeostasis, leading to functional disturbances. Acharya Charaka emphasizes the importance of proper dietary practices i.e. *Ahara Vidhi Vidhana*.[12] and behavioral regulation in preserving *Agni*, which may be interpreted in modern terms as maintaining gastrointestinal integrity, microbial balance, and neuroendocrine stability.

Understanding *Agni* in the context of the gut–brain axis thus provides a broader perspective on the interconnectedness of digestive, metabolic, and mental processes. It highlights that disturbances in digestion can have far-reaching systemic consequences, contributing to metabolic, inflammatory, and psychosomatic disorders. Conversely, maintaining balanced digestive function may exert a protective role in overall health.This integrative interpretation not only reinforces the relevance of classical Ayurvedic concepts

but also opens avenues for developing holistic healthcare approaches. Interventions aimed at improving digestive function including dietary regulation, lifestyle modification, and appropriate therapeutic strategies may exert beneficial effects extending beyond the gastrointestinal system to influence metabolic and neurological health.

Conclusion

The concept of *Agni* in Ayurveda and the gut–brain axis in modern physiology both emphasize the central role of digestion in maintaining health. The parallels between these frameworks suggest that traditional knowledge and contemporary science share a convergent understanding of digestive regulation. Integrating these perspectives may facilitate the development of more effective strategies for the prevention and management of lifestyle-related disorders.

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