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A REVIEW ON PHYSIOLOGICAL AND THERAPEUTIC SIGNIFICANCE OF AGNI AND KOSTHA IN AYURVEDA

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ABSTRACT

Agni and Kostha are fundamental concepts in Ayurveda that influence physiological balance, disease development, and treatment effects. Agni manages digestion, metabolism, and the transformation of tissues. Kostha indicates bowel habits and the functioning of the gastrointestinal tract. Assessing both factors is essential when choosing between Samana (palliative therapy) and Shodhana (purificatory therapy). Individual differences in Agni – such as Vishama, Tikshna, Manda, and Sama – along with Kostha types – Krura, Madhyama, and Mridu – inform the strength, dosage, and order of treatments. A poor assessment can reduce treatment effectiveness, resulting in incomplete detoxification or worsened dosha conditions. Classical texts like Charaka Samhita and Ashtanga Hridaya highlight that the success of therapies such as Deepana-Pachana, Snehapana, Swedana, Vamana, Virechana, and Basti relies significantly on the evaluation of Agni and Kostha. This article examines the physiological importance of these factors, discusses their influence on selecting Samana and Shodhana Chikitsa, and emphasizes how personalized therapy leads to safer and more effective results. By combining traditional knowledge with modern clinical views, the article highlights the need for individualized Ayurvedic care. Understanding Agni and Kostha gives a solid foundation for choosing treatment options, optimizing detoxification, improving metabolic functions, and avoiding treatment-related issues. This review concludes that a thorough evaluation of Agni and Kostha is central to evidence-based Panchakarma practice and supports long-term health recovery.

KEY WORDS; *Deepana-Pachana, Snehapana, Swedana, Vamana, Virechana, and Basti.*

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, the ancient Indian system of medicine, gives much importance to individualized treatment in which *Agni and Kostha* serve as cardinal diagnostic and therapeutic determinants. The term Agni is derived from the Sanskrit root "ag" meaning to move or transform[1]. It is the principal force behind digestion, absorption, metabolism, and cellular transformation. Classically, the science describes Agni as the basis of life: when balanced, Agni maintains health; when disturbed, it is at the root of disease. The four main types of *Jatharagni - Vishama*, Tikshna, Manda, and Sama[2] - explain different patterns of digestion based on the predominance of the doshas.

On the other hand, *Kostha* is said to be functional constitution representing gastrointestinal tract and bowel habits. Again, *Kostha* is classified as Krura corresponding to Vata-dominant, constipated; Madhyama corresponding to Pitta-dominant, moderate; and Mridu corresponding to Kapha-dominant, loose stool. Kostha determines receptivity and intensity of therapeutic procedures. Kostha has been described by Acharya Charaka as Mahasrotas, reflecting its vital role in systemic homeostasis and disease progression.

Proper assessment of Agni and *Kostha* is essential for the choice of appropriate therapies in *Samana and Shodhana Chikitsa*. The Samana-which is advised for mild imbalance and for a weakened Agni-includes *Deepana-Pachana*, dietetic modifications, and local treatment. Shodhana, on the other hand, is prescribed for deep-seated *doshic* aggravation; this incorporates Panchakarma procedures *like Vamana, Virechana, Basti, Raktamokshana*, and Nasya. Success, safety, calculation of dose, and prognosis of the treatment depend upon the knowledge of Agni and *Kostha* of the physician. An attempt has been made to review their pivotal role and its relevance to the creation of a sound and rational treatment approach.

METHODS

The conceptual study was conducted by observing and analysing the textual data gathered from classical textbooks, Journals, Published research articles in PubMed google scholar, and web search.The riview focuses on the Physiological and Therapeutic Significance of Agni and *Kostha in Ayurveda*.

RIVIEW OF LITERATURE

The *Kostha* concept is illustrated in *Charaka* as mentioned as Mahasrotas, governing the movement of the intestines, digestive processes, and elimination from the body[3]. Kostha types, or

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Krura, Madhyama, and Mridu, correspond to the dominance of Vata, Pitta, and Kapha doshas, respectively[4]. The images accurately illustrate and correlate Kostha type, as well as stool characteristics, with digestive speed.

In the context of Panchakarma treatment, the Kostha type will influence the specific dosage, the strength of the medicine used in treatment, and the selection of which medicines to use. This is depicted in a table of images illustrating how the dosage for Snehapana is determined based on Kostha type, with appropriate combinations of Agni level, Kostha type, Sneha type, and Anupana type. This is further clarified *in Chakrapani's* commentary on *Charaka Saṃhita*, where he indicates that the Kostha type will determine the level of oleation and the length of time needed to complete the Snehapana treatment[5].

Sushruta described the *Swedana* procedure as an important part of the process of liquefying morbid doshas and transporting them from the s*akha* (skeleton) to *the Kostha* for proper elimination in the case of *Vamana or Virechana*[6]. Images illustrating the Swedana technique explain *Shamana versus Shodhana Sweda* according to these classical indications.

The Shodhana technique known as Vamana is used primarily for the purpose of removing excess Kapha dosha from the stomach and upper digestive system. According to Charaka Samhita, it should be administered while the *Kapha dosha* is dominant in both the Kostha and channels[7]. Conditions presenting with *Kaphaja* disorders, skin disorders, respiratory disorder, metabolic disorder, etc., are good candidates for *Vamana.* The degree of success that can be achieved with Vamana will depend primarily upon the ability to accurately assess the individual's Agni and their Kostha. *Manda agni and Kapha* dominant individuals respond very well to Vamana therapy since their slow digestion acts as a good base for the accumulation of Kapha and for emesis therapy.

The assessment of the individual's Kostha will determine the amount, strength, and type of Vamana herbs to use. A person with *Mridu Koṣṭha* should receive mild emetic herbs such as Yashtimadhu phanta, whereas people with *Krura Kostha* would do well to take stronger herbs, e.g*., Madanaphala or Vacha*. Methods of preparation, e.g., Deepana-Pachana, Snehapana, and *Swedana*, can help prepare the Kapha from peripheral areas of the body to move into the digestive tract, thereby creating opportunities for successful *Vamana* therapy.
The results that can be obtained from the *Vamana* method demonstrate that an effective Vamana treatment produces signs of successful emesis (heaviness in the body has decreased, clarity of senses has improved, respiration is clearer, and the Agni has been restored or rekindled). Following Vamana, proper procedures of *Samsarjana Krama* are required in order to gradually increase the Agni and normalise digestive processes. When the *Vamana* technique is administered in accordance with the above evaluation of *Agni-Kostha*, then Vamana will create an effective and long-lasting cleansing and doshic balance.

The aim of Virechana, as a purging method, is to eliminate an excess of the *Pitta dosha* in the small intestine, liver, and blood channels. Charaka Samhita indicates that Virechana can treat many different kinds of diseases, including skin disorders, hyperacidity, liver disease, gallbladder disease, and Rakta-Pitta disease[8]. Evaluation of Agni and *Kostha is* essential to determining how strong a purgative should be and the correct amount of each drug.

For individuals with *Teekshna Agni* and a Pitta-dominant Kostha, using a strong purgative can lead to excessive purging of waste; therefore, gentler purgatives will be used such as Draksha, Cow's milk, or Trivrit lehya. If the person has Krura Kostha, which is known for having a slow bowel movement, then a stronger purgative may be used, such as *Trivrit churna, Katuki, or Swarna Ksheera.* In the classical books, as well as in the images, it also illustrates that Snehapana provides the necessary oleation for good purification, and Swedana helps transport the doshas from the body to the Kostha, thereby allowing them to be expelled easily.

Virechana requires monitoring the progression of bowel movements from a thick or semiliquid consistency through a liquid form to determine if the Therapy was successfully accomplished. After taking Virechana, Agni will go into a manda (weak) stage. A properly structured Samsarjana Krama is necessary to gradually increase the patient's Agni and return their ability to consume food. When *Virechana* is provided based on an accurate assessment of Agni and Koṣṭha, it results in thorough detoxification, digestive improvement, and an increase in metabolism stability.

In Basti, Kostha, Agni, and compatibility of drugs are very important. Samhita mentions contraindications for Mridu Kosta until they are removed with either *Niruha Basti or Anuvasana* Basti (like Agni Mandya) is considered harmful. The picture you created of contraindications and Agni's role in fixing Basti's dose are based on these classical writings.

There is proof of the above with modern research supporting these traditional theories. The 3 types of Kostha (Krura, Madhyama, and Mridu) indicated clear differences in time taken for colonic transit, as well as summary of results to one-time purgation[10]. They illustrates significant correlations between Agni types and metabolic markers, including basal metabolic rate, glucose variability, and diversity of intestinal microbacteria[11]. Additional studies confirm that *Deepaana Pachana* before *Panchakarma* increased the beneficial effects of both the treatments by decreasing endotoxin levels and improving metabolic fitness.

DISCUSSION

The Agni *and Kostha* basically make up the first stages of therapeutic planning (*Samana and Shodhana Chikitsa*). In *Samana t*herapy, the therapeutic treatment for mild doshic imbalances and weak Agni is to strengthen the Agni of the body through Deepana and Pachana. Individuals with Manda Agni

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(weak Agni) and/or Kapha-dominant Kostha respond well to Deepana-Pachana therapy, whereas individuals *with Vishama Agni* (variable Agni) usually will require more stabilizing dietary patterns and mild formulations for digestion regulation. Thus, Samana therapy is usually gentle, supportive, and beneficial for individuals who have lower-than-*average dosha aggravation*.

In *Shodhana Chikitsa*, since the Panchakarma (purification through five forms) procedures are directly designed to mobilize and eliminate aceumulated doshas, therefore a more accurate assessment of Agni and *Kostha* will allow for a successful therapeutic process. For example, in *Mridu Kostha* there will be an effective use of *Virechana* (a purgative) with mild purgative drugs such as *Draksha* (dried grapes) and cow's milk, while *Krura Kostha* (with stronger Agni)

must be treated with stronger purgative drugs such as *Trivrit or Jayapala*. Additionally, the success of *Snehapana (*oleation) will be dependent upon the Agni and the *Kostha*; for example, individuals with *Krura Kostha* should have an extended duration of snehana spanning 5–7 days to allow for adequate oleation of their *Kostha,* whereas individuals with Kostha can achieve adequate oleation in a shorter period of time.

Similarly, *Swedana (*steaming to enhance Agni and facilitate Ama processing) is dependent on the nature of the individual; that is, Shamana Sweda (cooling steam) is utilized to help enhance the Agni and facilitate the processing *of Ama,* while *Shodhana Sweda* is utilized to push doshas from *Shakha to Kostha* which subsequently 'prepares' an individual to receive either Vamana or Virechana. The assessment of Agni *and Kostha* ensures avoidance of complications that may arise in a case of severe *Ama.*

CONCLUSION

The Agni and Kostha evaluation serves three purposes: (1) to provide guidance on whether to use Samana or Shodhana Chikitsa, (2) to help ensure safety, efficacy, and predictability of treatment responses, and (3) to provide information about *Agni and Kostha* Conditions. Agni relates to how well a patient digests foods, and Kostha relates to how well their digestive tract reacts to those foods; and both are necessary for determining the best way to prescribe *Deepana-Pachana, Snehapana, Swedana*, and other *Panchakarma therapies*.

When the Agni and Kostha evaluations are performed properly and treated within an appropriate range for an individual, then the corresponding treatments should provide effective detoxification, adequate absorption of medications, and minimal potential for problems (e.g., excessive purgation or inadequate therapeutic response). Conversely, when the evaluations are done incorrectly, then patients may experience a lack of effective detoxification or appropriate medication absorption, as well as poor therapeutic response or excessive purgation.

By being aware of variations in *Kostha*, such as Krura (strong), or Mridu (weak), and Agni, such as Manda (weak), or Tikshna (strong), physicians can individualize the dosages, durations, and intensities of treatments that they provide. Additionally, the importance of these parameters as a baseline for developing the treatment regimen is consistent with contemporary knowledge of digestive physiology and metabolism and provides a scientific basis for development of a personalized plan of care. When using the Agni-Kostha evaluations to create individualized treatment plans, the detoxification process is undoubtedly more complete, tissue nutrients are provided more effectively, and the potential for long-term.

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