

Jatharagni Mandya: Understanding Digestive Dysfunction Through Ayurvedic Principles and Contemporary Gastrointestinal Science—A Comprehensive Review

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Abstract—Agni is regarded as the fundamental biological force responsible for digestion, metabolism, absorption, tissue nourishment, and maintenance of life according to Ayurveda. Among the thirteen types of Agni described in classical Ayurvedic literature, Jatharagni is considered the principal digestive fire governing the transformation of ingested food into nutritive essence (Ahara Rasa). Any impairment in its function results in Jatharagni Mandya, a condition characterized by diminished digestive capacity leading to incomplete digestion, formation of Ama, metabolic disturbances, and initiation of numerous diseases. Contemporary lifestyle modifications including irregular dietary habits, excessive intake of processed foods, psychological stress, sedentary behaviour, and disturbed sleep have substantially increased the prevalence of digestive disorders worldwide. Interestingly, these disorders closely resemble the Ayurvedic concept of Agnimandya. Functional dyspepsia, indigestion, bloating, gastroesophageal reflux disease, irritable bowel syndrome, and chronic constipation may all be understood through the concept of impaired digestive fire. This review critically analyses the classical Ayurvedic understanding of Jatharagni Mandya and correlates it with current biomedical knowledge of digestive physiology and gastrointestinal dysfunction. Furthermore, Ayurvedic preventive and therapeutic strategies including Deepana, Pachana, dietary regulation, lifestyle modifications, Panchakarma, and Rasayana therapies are discussed. Understanding digestive dysfunction through Ayurvedic principles provides a holistic, preventive, and patient-centred

approach for improving gastrointestinal health and overall wellbeing.

Index Terms—Agni, Jatharagni, Mandagni, Ama, Digestive Disorders, Ayurveda, Functional Dyspepsia, Deepana, Pachana

I. INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda considers proper digestion as the foundation of health. Unlike modern medicine, which primarily focuses on structural abnormalities, Ayurveda attributes the origin of most diseases to disturbances in digestion and metabolism. This concept is centred on Agni, the biological fire responsible for digestion, absorption, assimilation, and transformation of nutrients.

Among the thirteen Agnis described in Ayurvedic classics, Jatharagni is regarded as the master regulator because all subsequent metabolic activities depend upon its proper functioning. Charaka states that maintenance of normal Agni ensures longevity, complexion, strength, immunity, enthusiasm, and vitality, whereas impairment of Agni initiates disease processes.

The classical statement, Emphasizes that almost every disease originates from impaired digestive fire.

In the present era, unhealthy eating habits, excessive consumption of processed foods, irregular meal timings, psychological stress, sleep disturbances, and physical inactivity have significantly increased digestive disorders. Functional gastrointestinal disorders affect millions worldwide and considerably reduce quality of life.

The Ayurvedic concept of Jatharagni Mandya provides a comprehensive explanation for these digestive disturbances by considering impaired digestion as the fundamental pathological event leading to Ama formation, Dosha imbalance, Srotorodha, and disease manifestation.

Therefore, revisiting this classical concept through current scientific understanding may offer valuable insights into preventive gastroenterology and integrative digestive healthcare.

Aim

To critically review the Ayurvedic concept of Jatharagni Mandya and understand digestive dysfunction through classical principles with correlation to modern gastrointestinal physiology.

Objectives

- To review the concept of Agni described in Ayurveda.
- To explain physiology of Jatharagni.
- To understand Mandagni and Ama formation.
- To analyse etiological factors and pathogenesis.
- To correlate Ayurvedic concepts with digestive disorders.
- To review Ayurvedic management principles.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This review is based on an extensive literature search performed using classical Ayurvedic texts including Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Ashtanga Hridaya, Kashyapa Samhita, and their commentaries. Electronic databases including PubMed, Google Scholar, Scopus, AYUSH Research Portal, and peer-reviewed journals were searched using keywords such as *Agni*, *Jatharagni*, *Agnimandya*, *Ama*, *Digestive Disorders*, *Functional Dyspepsia*, and *Ayurveda*. Relevant articles published in English were reviewed and integrated with classical Ayurvedic concepts.

Concept of Agni

अन्नस्य पक्ता पित्तं तु पाचकाख्यं पुरेरितम्
दोषधातुमलादीनामूष्मेत्यात्रेयशासनम्॥४९॥ (Ash. Hru. Sha. 3/49)

Agni represents the biological energy responsible for all metabolic transformations occurring within the body. Ayurveda considers Agni as the fundamental determinant of health because nourishment of tissues depends entirely upon proper digestion.

Charaka describes Agni as the factor responsible for

- Digestion
- Absorption
- Assimilation
- Tissue metabolism
- Energy production
- Immunity
- Maintenance of life

Agni functions continuously from ingestion of food until cellular metabolism.

Jatharagni Physiology

आयुर्वर्णो बलं स्वास्थ्यमुत्साहोपचयौ प्रभा।ओजस्तेजोऽग्नयः
प्राणाश्चोक्ता देहाग्निहेतुकाः॥३॥
शान्तेऽग्नौ म्रियते, युक्ते चिरं जीवत्यनामयः।
रोगी स्याद्विकृते, मूलमग्निस्तस्मान्निरुच्यते॥४॥
(Cha. Chi. 15/ 3-4)

Jatharagni is located primarily in Grahani and governs primary digestion.

Functions include

- Digestion of food
- Separation of Sara and Kitta
- Formation of Ahara Rasa
- Activation of Bhutagni
- Nourishment of Dhatus
- Maintenance of metabolic homeostasis

Modern physiology correlates Jatharagni with

- Gastric acid secretion
- Digestive enzymes
- Pancreatic secretions
- Bile metabolism
- Gastrointestinal motility
- Nutrient absorption
- Gut microbiota regulation

Thus, Jatharagni represents integrated digestive physiology rather than a single enzyme.

Types of Agni

Ayurveda describes thirteen Agnis

Jatharagni

समोऽग्निर्विषमस्तीक्ष्णो मन्दश्चैवं चतुर्विधः।

यः पचेत्सम्यगेवात्र भुक्तं सम्यक् समस्त्वसौ॥७४॥ (Ash.

Hru. Sha. 3/74)

Responsible for primary digestion.

Based upon function, Jatharagni exists as

- Samagni
- Mandagni
- Tikshnagni
- Vishamagni

Among these, Samagni is considered ideal for health.

Five Bhutagnis

Responsible for elemental metabolism.

Seven Dhatvagnis

Responsible for tissue metabolism.

Concept of Mandagni

मन्दस्तु सम्यगप्यन्नमुपयुक्तं चिरात्पचेत्।

कृत्वाऽऽस्यशोषाटोपान्नकूजनाधानगौरवम्॥७६॥ (Ash.

Hru. Sha. 3/76)

Mandagni refers to diminished digestive capacity.

Incomplete digestion produces Ama, which is heavy, sticky, toxic, and obstructive.

Mandagni produces

- Loss of appetite
- Heaviness
- Bloating
- Flatulence
- Nausea
- Indigestion
- Lethargy
- Constipation
- Malabsorption

Mandagni is predominantly associated with Kapha Dosha.

Nidana

Major causes include

- Overeating
- Irregular meals
- Heavy foods
- Cold foods
- Viruddha Ahara
- Excessive sleep
- Sedentary habits
- Mental stress
- Anxiety
- Alcohol
- Smoking

These factors weaken digestive fire.

Samprapti

Improper diet

↓

Agnimandya

↓

Incomplete digestion

↓

Ama formation

↓

Dosha vitiation

↓

Srotorodha

↓

Dhatu Dushti

↓

Manifestation of disease

Lakshana

- Avipaka
- Aruchi
- Adhmana
- Udarashoola
- Alasya
- Gaurava
- Klama
- Malavibandha
- Utklesha
- Amlodgara

Modern Correlation

Jatharagni Mandya correlates with

- Functional Dyspepsia

- GERD
- IBS
- Gastritis
- Chronic Constipation
- Bloating
- Dysbiosis
- Malabsorption Syndrome

Recent research highlights disturbances in gut microbiota, gastrointestinal motility, inflammatory mediators, and gut-brain interactions, which conceptually align with the Ayurvedic understanding of impaired Agni and Ama.

Diagnostic Principles

- Agni Pareeksha
- Aharashakti
- Jarana Shakti
- Kostha Pareeksha
- Mala Pareeksha
- Jihva Pareeksha
- Nadi Pareeksha
- Dashavidha Pareeksha

Ayurvedic Management

Management aims to restore Agni.

Principles include

- Nidana Parivarjana
- Langhana
- Deepana
- Pachana
- Shodhana
- Rasayana

Common formulations include

- Trikatu Churna
- Hingvastaka Churna
- Chitrakadi Vati
- Panchakola Churna
- Shunthi
- Pippali
- Jeeraka
- Musta

Dietary and Lifestyle Measures

Recommended diet

- Warm freshly cooked food
- Ginger before meals

- Buttermilk
- Green gram
- Rice gruel
- Light soups
- Cumin
- Coriander
- Fennel

Avoid

- Junk food
- Frozen foods
- Excess dairy
- Heavy fried foods
- Carbonated beverages
- Late-night meals

Lifestyle

- Regular exercise
- Yoga
- Pranayama
- Meditation
- Adequate sleep
- Stress reduction

III. DISCUSSION

The review demonstrates that Jatharagni Mandya is a comprehensive physiological and pathological concept extending beyond simple indigestion. Classical Ayurvedic literature consistently identifies Agni as the primary regulator of digestion, metabolism, tissue nourishment, immunity, and vitality. Disturbance of Jatharagni initiates a cascade beginning with incomplete digestion and Ama formation, eventually leading to Dosha imbalance, obstruction of physiological channels, impaired tissue metabolism, and systemic disease.

Modern biomedical research supports many of these observations. Alterations in gastric secretion, gastrointestinal motility, digestive enzyme activity, intestinal permeability, gut microbiota composition, and the gut-brain axis have all been implicated in functional gastrointestinal disorders. Although the terminology differs, these mechanisms parallel the Ayurvedic concepts of Agnimandya, Ama, and Srotodushti. Current evidence also emphasizes the role of diet, circadian rhythm, stress management, and physical activity in maintaining digestive health,

which aligns closely with Ayurvedic recommendations.

Ayurvedic management focuses on correcting the root cause rather than merely suppressing symptoms. Deepana and Pachana therapies, individualized dietary regulation, appropriate lifestyle modifications, and Panchakarma interventions aim to restore digestive capacity and prevent recurrence. This holistic approach may complement contemporary management of functional digestive disorders and highlights the potential for integrative research.

IV. RESULTS

The literature reviewed indicates that Jatharagni is the central determinant of digestive and metabolic health in Ayurveda. Most classical texts describe impaired Agni as the initiating factor in the pathogenesis of numerous diseases. Common etiological factors include irregular food habits, excessive intake of heavy or incompatible foods, sedentary lifestyle, psychological stress, and disturbed sleep.

The reviewed evidence suggests that Jatharagni Mandya shares conceptual similarities with modern functional gastrointestinal disorders such as functional dyspepsia, irritable bowel syndrome, gastroesophageal reflux disease, bloating, and chronic constipation. Contemporary studies also support the influence of diet, gut microbiota, gastrointestinal motility, inflammation, and stress on digestive dysfunction, reinforcing the relevance of Ayurvedic concepts.

Overall, the reviewed literature supports the therapeutic importance of restoring Agni through Deepana, Pachana, dietary regulation, lifestyle modification, and individualized Ayurvedic interventions as a rational strategy for improving digestive function and overall health.

V. CONCLUSION

Jatharagni Mandya is a foundational concept in Ayurveda that provides a comprehensive explanation for digestive dysfunction and its systemic consequences. Classical Ayurvedic texts identify impaired digestive fire as the origin of Ama formation, Dosha imbalance, and disease development, while contemporary biomedical research increasingly recognizes the importance of digestive physiology, gut

microbiota, immune regulation, and the gut–brain axis in gastrointestinal health.

The remarkable conceptual overlap between Ayurvedic principles and modern understanding of digestive disorders highlights the continued relevance of Jatharagni in contemporary healthcare. Restoration of digestive fire through appropriate diet, lifestyle modification, Deepana–Pachana therapies, and other Ayurvedic interventions offers a holistic and preventive approach that addresses the root cause of disease rather than symptom suppression alone.

Future interdisciplinary clinical and experimental studies are needed to further validate Ayurvedic concepts using modern scientific methodologies and to develop evidence-based integrative strategies for the prevention and management of digestive disorders.

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