



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 transform¹. 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 Sama² - 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 review focuses on the Physiological and Therapeutic Significance of Agni and Kostha in Ayurveda.

REVIEW 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 body³. Kostha types, or



Krura, Madhyama, and Mridu, correspond to the dominance of Vata, Pitta, and Kapha doshas, respectively⁴. 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 Samhita*, where he indicates that the *Kostha* type will determine the level of oleation and the length of time needed to complete the *Snehapana* treatment⁵.

Sushruta described the *Swedana* procedure as an important part of the process of liquefying morbid doshas and transporting them from the *sakha* (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 channels⁷. 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 Kostha* 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* disease⁸. 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 *Kostha*, 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 purgation¹⁰. They illustrates significant correlations between Agni types and metabolic markers, including basal metabolic rate, glucose variability, and diversity of intestinal microbacteria¹¹. Additional studies confirm that *Deepana 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* therapy, 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*



(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 accumulated *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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