



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY HEALTH SCIENCES

ISSN: 2394 9406

LITERATURE REVIEW ON AGNIKARMA AND IT'S CLINICAL APPLICATION

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ABSTRACT

Acharya Sushruta has described *Agnikarma* as one among the *Anushastras* or parasurgical procedures. According to *Sushruta* diseases which cannot be cured by *Bheshaj* (Herbal medicine), *Shashtra* (Surgical interventions) and *Ksharkarma* (Alkaline cauterization), can be cured by *Agnikarma* and it is believed that diseases treated by *Agnikarma* never reoccurs. In this modern era everyone needs instant relief from pain. *Agnikarma* is one of the fast procedures to relief pain or *vedana*. In modern time it is termed as therapeutic burns or cauterization. *Agnikarma* can be used as preventive measure as postoperative procedure and as haemostatic measure. *Agnikarma* procedure has effect on disorders of bone (*Asthi*), Joint (*Sandhi*), Ligament and Tendon.

Keywords: *Agnikarma*, Cauterization, Parasurgical.

INTRODUCTION

Agnikarma means procedure done with fire. References about *Agnikarma* are available in almost all Ayurvedic classics. It's preventive, curative and haemostatic properties were unveiled even centuries back. These same principles are adopted in advanced technologies like cauterization, diathermy, radiation therapy, laser therapy, starion device etc. Clinically *Agnikarma* is the prime para-surgical procedure, to treat chronic diseases, which are mostly difficult to manage because of the antagonistic property of *doshas*, like disease caused by *vata* and *kapha*. *Agnikarma* can be done in all seasons except autumn and summer due to the increase in *pitta*, which generated out of the excessive hot climate.¹ *Dalhana* opines, in an emergency, even in any season it can be done. But precautions like covering the site with moist clothes, having cold foods and smearing cold pastes over the body has to be adopted, so that the *pitta* vitiation can be countered by the cold applications. Most commonly *Agnikarma* is done in neurogenic pain, tendinopathies or in diseases of skin, muscle, vein, ligament, bone or joint where pain is an exclusive factor. It is also suggested in hyper-granulated neurogenic ulcers, sinuses, tumor, haemorrhoids, fistula-in-ano, warts, moles, trauma to joints and

veins². *Agnikarma* is earmarked for its haemostatic properties as well. But in internal haemorrhage, multiple wounds and in rupture of internal organs it should not be practiced. Fearful persons, old aged, debilitated and children are also exempted because of their weak mental strength and persons with dominant *Pitta* traits of traits of the body (*pitha prakruthi*) and in un-retrieved foreign body which is a potent source of infection, the persons contraindicated for *swedana* are contraindicated for *Agnikarma* as it causes further vitiation of *pitta*. Based on the part where cauterization to be done and the ability of a material to retain and transmit heat energy, different instruments are enumerated by the ancient physicians. Substances which can retain less heat and can transmit lesser amount of heat energy are indicated for skin (*twak dagdha*) like pippur longum, goat's, cow's tooth, wooden arrow and *shalaka*. Substances which can retain more heat energy and can transmit it to further deeper layers are used for burning the muscles, tendons and ligaments. For e. g *jambavoshtha* (a stone carved in the shape of *Eugenia jambolana* Lam.) and metals are used for transmitting the heat energy to the level of muscles and honey, jaggery or other viscous materials like oil, fat etc. are used to transmit the heat energy to ligaments, tendons or blood

vessels.³ Different *Acharyas* are having some difference in opinion regarding the instruments to be used. involvement of tissue as *twak dagdha* (Skin burn), *mansa dagdha* (muscle burn), *Sira-snayu dagdha* (burn of tendon and vessels) and *asthi-sandhi dagdha* (burn of bone and Joints).

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the present study was to study in detail about *Agnikarma* and its clinical applications in *shalya tantra*.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The materials were collected from the classical *ayurvedic* literature, magazine's and research journals.

Dahnopakarana used for *Agnikarma*^{4,5}

In classics, there are different *Dahnopakarana*, have been described during the descriptions of disease cured by *AgniKarma*. *Dahnopakarana* means accessories like drugs, articles and substances used for *AgniKarma*. Each of them is having their own peculiarity in *Dahnopakarana*. *Pippali, loha suchi varti tamraaja jambu sneha majja rajata shakrit godanta ghritha yashtimadhu kansy ect.* Objects are used for *Agnikarma*. *Acharya Charaka* has described various *Agnikarma Sadhana* for *Sukumar* and *Asukumar* out of these *Ghritha, Taila, Vasa, Majja, Wax* are to be used in *Sukumar* person and *Lohashalaka* and *Madhu* in Strong person.

Objects used in *Agnikarma* according to disease condition⁶

Twak Dhatu (skin): *Pippali, Ajashakrit* (Excreta of goat), *Godanta* (Cows teeth), *Shara* (Arrow head), *Shalaka* (Metal rod)-*Loha Shalaka* i.e. made of Iron.

Mamsa Dhatu (muscle): *Jambavoushta*: a piece of black stone made like a *Jambuphala* (fruit of *Syzygium cumini*, *Eugenia jambolana* Lam), Rods of other metals like *Tamra, Rajata* etc are used.

Sira, Snayu, Sandhi and Asthi Dhatus (vessels, ligaments, joints and Bones): *Kshaudra* or *Madhu* (Honey), *Guda* (Jaggery), *Sneha- Ghritha, Taila, Vasa and Majja*.

Classification of *Agnikarma* –

Agnikarma can be divided as- According to site

1. *Sthanika* (local) - As in *vicharchika, kadara, arsha*
2. *Sthanantariya* (Distal to site of disease)-As in *visuchika, apachi, gridhrasi* etc.

According to *Dravyas* used⁷

Snigdha Agnikarma: performed by means of *madhu, grith, tailam* used for *Agnikarma* to treat diseases situated in *Sira, Snayu, Sandhi, Asthi*.

Ruksha Agnikarma: performed by means of *pippali, godanta shara, shalaka* used for *Agnikarma* to treat

diseases situated in *Twak* and *Mamsa dhatu*.

According to *Akriti*⁸

Valaya - Circular shape.

Bindu - Dot like shape. According to Acharya Dalhana *shalaka* should be of pointed tip.

Vilekha - Making of different shapes by heated *shalaka*. *Vilekha* type of *agnikarma* is further subdivided by Acharya Dalhana into three types according to the direction of line- *Tiryak* (Oblique), *Riju* (Straight), *Vakra* (Zigzag) *Pratisarana* - Rubbing at indicated site by heated *shalaka* and there is no specific shape.

According to *Ashtang Hridaya* there are 3 more types based on *akriti*⁹

- *Ardhachandra*- Crescent shape.
- *Swastika*- Specific shape of *Swastika Yantra*.
- *Ashtapada* - Specific shape containing eight limbs in different direction.

According to *Dhatus* affected¹⁰

- *Twak dagdha*
- *Mamsa dagdha*
- *Sira snayu dagdha*
- *Sandhi asthi dagdha* \

Indications of *Agnikarma*:-¹¹

- Severe pain caused by Vata in the skin, muscles, veins, ligaments, bony joints and bones
- Pain in sciatica like diseases

- Arsh, kadar- *Agnikarma* should be done after *chhedana karma*.
- Tumours, haemorrhoids, fistula in ano, glands in neck region. In fistula in ano *Agnikarma* should be done after *Bhedana karma*.
- Filariasis, warts on skin, moles, hernia, tearing of the joints and veins, sinus, profuse haemorrhages etc.

Agnikarma contraindications:-¹²

- *Pitta prakriti*
- Ruptured viscera
- Generalized weakness
- Old age
- Internal bleeding.
- Children
- *Aswedya vyadhi* described in *samhita* like *Kshaya, Timir, Raktapitta* etc.

*Agnikarma Kala*¹³ (Suitable time)

Agnikarma can be done in all seasons except *Grishma* (summer) and *Sharada* (autumn). In emergency condition, the procedure can be adopted after proper counter measures during these seasons too. It is so because in *Sharada* there is *Prakopa of Pitta* and *Agnikarma* aggravates *Pitta* too so is contraindicated. While in *Grishma* season as it is hot *Agnikarma* is contraindicated.

Proper Instrumentation (*Agropaharaniyani*)

- The *Agnikarma room* should be well prepared with all required

Agropaharaniyani described by *Acharya Sushruta*.¹⁴

- Prepare *Triphala Kashaya* for *Prakshalana* of the local part of patient.
- *Yashtimadhu Churna*, small pieces of *Kumari Patra*, swab holding forceps, *Plota*(gauze piece), *Pichu*(cotton) and gas stove, *Shalaka* etc. should be kept ready for use.
- The *Shalaka* is to be heated upto red hot.

PROCEDURE OF AGNIKARMA:¹⁵

Pre-Operative Assessment for Agnikarma

- *Agnikarma* is contraindicated in *Pitta* predominant *Prakriti* people.
- There is involvement of *Snayu*, *Kandara*, *Asthi* or *Sandhi*, hence, radiological investigations, M.R.I., C.T. Scan etc. are to be done to find out the pathology as per requirement.
- Patient is advised to take *Pichchhila* and *Snigdha* light diet before Therapy.
- Take informed consent.

Painting and Draping

- The patient is asked to lie down on the table in prone position. Then the diseased area is exposed and painted (*Prakshalana*) with *TriphalaKashaya*.
- Drape the local part of the patient with sterilized cut sheets.

- On the diseased skin of the patient, the *Samyak Dagdha Vrana* should be produced by red hot *Shalaka*. The number of *Samyak DagdhabVrana* should be 15-30 or according to the extent of the diseased area.
- Apply immediately cooling agents to subside burning sensation.

Inspection of Defective Agnikarma and their Management

- 1) *Plushtha Dagdha*: If the *Shalaka* is not properly heated then it will produce such *Dagdha*. For *Plushtha Dagdha* (burns of the first degree), warming of the body (increasing the body temperature) and administration of drugs/medicines of hot properties should be given as when the temperature of the body increased, the blood becomes liquefied helping for its normal circulation (*Dalhana*)
- 2) *Durdagdha*: Because of unskilled hand or patient shaking his body parts *Durdagdha* can occur. In *Durdagdha* (burns of the second degree) the physician should resort to both warm and cold therapies, application of *Ghee*, poultices and bathing the body should be done in cold state only.
- 3) *Ati-Dagdha* (burn of the fourth degree): This complication is produced due to more heat which is transferred from the red hot *Shalaka* to the diseased part.

In *Ati Dagdhathe* torn (hanging loose) muscles should be removed followed by cold therapies, then the physician should apply the paste of rice, bark of *Tindukimixed* with *Ghee* or cover the wound with leaves of *Guduchior* aquatic plant (like lotus etc.). All the treatments which are similar to that of *Visarpa of Pitta origin* should be done

4) *Daha* (Burning pain): More or less burning pain is experienced by each and every patient with *Agnikarma Chikitsa*. This may be treated by *Ghrutakumari Patra Swarasa*.

5) *Dushtha Vranata* (Sepsis of wound): After *Agnikarma*, it should be observed for any complications. If there is any sign of sepsis, treat the patient accordingly.

Pashchat Karma Pathya Apathya:

In *Agnikarma* procedure, *Samyak Dagdha Vrana* (therapeutic burn) is made. It is necessary that it should be healed without any complications. So, all the *Pathya-Apathyas* which have been described by *Acharya Sushruta* are advised here. It is utmost advisable to the patient that "Do not allow water to touch the *Samyak Dagdha Vranasite* for one *Ahoratra* (24 hours)". The complete *Ropana* (healing) of the *Vrana* should be observed.

Agnikarma Chikitsa can be repeated after 7 days.

MODE OF ACTION OF AGNIKARMA

Agnikarma is considered as better therapy to pacify *Vataj* and *Kaphaj doshas*, due to *ushan, sukshma, teekshan and ashukaari guna of Agni*, it pacifies vitiated *Vataj* and *Kaphaj doshas*. According to *Ayurveda*, *Mandhagni* leads to various diseases and every *dhatu* (tissue) has its own *Agni* and when it becomes low, it leads to manifestation of diseases. *Agnikarma* helps to causes increase in *Dhatavagni*, which pacifies the aggravated doshas and hence cure the condition.¹⁶

Agnikarma Importance:

Agnikarma is superior to *Kshara karma* as disease burnt with *Agni* will never re-occur. Disease which cannot be cured with medicines, *Kshara* and Surgery, can be cured with *Agni*.¹⁷

The Surgical excision should be done with the sharp instrument which is heated by *Agni* with benefit of a sepsis, otherwise there will be sepsis by unheated instrument.¹⁸

There will be *Vasa* constriction due to heat and it will check the hemorrhage.¹⁹

By this virtue *Agnikarma* is superior to every other procedure.

DISCUSSION

Agnikarma is considered as best therapy to pacify *Kaphanubandha Vata Dosha* because *Agni* possesses *Ushna, Tikshna, Sukshma, Aashukari Gunas*, which are *anti*

Vataja and anti Kaphaja properties. *Agnikarma* is done by red hot *Shalaka*. The character of physical heat of red hot *Shalaka* transferred as therapeutic heat to *Twak Dhatu* by producing *Samyak Dagdha Vrana*. From *Twak Dhatu* this therapeutic heat acts in three ways- i.e. APR Due to *Ushna, Tikshna, Sukshma, Ashukari Guna* it removes the *Srotavarodha* and pacify the vitiated *Vata and Kapha Dosha* and maintain equilibrium. It increases the *Rasa Rakta Samvahana* (Blood circulation) to affected site. More blood circulation flushes away the pain producing substances and patient gets relief from symptoms.

Therapeutic heat increase the *Dhatwagni*, so metabolism of *Dhatu* becomes proper and digest the *Ama Dosha* from the affected site and promotes proper nutrition from *Purva Dhatu* and in this way, *Asthi* and *Majja Dhatu* become more stable. Thus result precipitated in the form of relief from all symptoms. Further it can be endorsed that the therapeutic heat goes to the deeper tissue like *Mamsa Dhatu* and neutralizes the *Sheeta Guna of Vata and Kapha Dosha* and in this way vitiated *Dosha* come to the phase of equilibrium and patients get relief from the symptoms. Based on the same concept, the use of cauterization can be observed in present era. But the area of its use is so limited.

While its use in *Ayurveda* have been discussed elaborately in different ways and conditions.

CONCLUSION

Agnikarma Chikitsa is a simple effective parasurgical procedure for the management of local *Vata Kaphaja* disorder. It gives quick relief to the patient and hence is termed as best therapy.

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