



AGNIKARMA: A Conventional Therapy in the Present Era an Analysis of the Literature

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Abstract- Ayurveda is the timeless and supreme science of medicine and encompasses the dual approach of promoting health and curing diseases. Sushruta known as father of surgery has described various surgical and para-surgical measures. Sushruta has mentioned different methods of management of diseases, such as Bhesaja Karma, Ksharkarma, Agnikarma, and Shastrakarma. Agnikarma therapy is believed to offer sustained relief from diseases, eliminating chances of recurrence. Agnikarma, a millennia-old Ayurvedic therapy, has its roots in ancient Indian medicine. The term "Agnikarma" derives from the Sanskrit words "Agni" (fire) and "Karma" (action), literally translating to "fire therapy" or "thermal cauterization." This traditional practice involves applying heat or fire to specific areas of the body to stimulate healing, alleviate pain, and restore balance to the body's energies.

Keywords- Agnikarma, Ayurveda, musculoskeletal disorders.

INTRODUCTION-

As one of the leading branches of Ayurveda, Shalyatantra encompasses such prominent therapies as Bhesaja karma, Kshara karma, Agni karma, Shastra karma, Raktamokshana, and many others. Among all, Agni karma is the most effective when local Vata and Kapha doshas are involved in the disease process.^[1]

The word Agnikarma is made of two terms: Agni+Karma which means fire and procedure respectively or the procedure done by Agni for treating disease. Agnikarma's philosophy is quite strongly tied to Ayurvedic knowledge of the five elements - earth, water, fire, air, and space. This is therapeutic heat burn therapy which helps relieve pain in various painful conditions. As mentioned in our Ayurveda classics Agni having Ushna Guna (hot property) leads to the pacification of Vata Kapha Doshas and further increases Dhatwagni. In doing so, it breaks the pathology of the disease along with a reduction in pain. A significant role is played by Agni karma in the relief of pain associated with diseases affecting the musculoskeletal system.^[2] Though the

procedure of *Agnikarma* has specific indications and contraindications for time and season, it can be performed in any season as per Acharya Dalhana in case of emergency with precautions such as consuming foods having *Sheeta* properties, covering the site with moist clothes, and smearing the body with cold applications etc. As the disease that are treated by *Agnikarma* do not have the recurrence *Agnikarma*, clinically is considered as the prime parasurgical procedure.^[3] The mechanism of action of *Agnikarma* is not well defined. It acts on multifactorial levels in the body. Mainly it is indicated in the disease caused by vata and kapha because of its tikshna, ushna, vikasi, and properties to remove strotorodha. Properly performed *Agnikarma* by a skilled surgeon will give excellent results on the other hand improperly performed will lead to various complications.^[4]

DEFINITION:-

The word *Agnikarma* consists of Agni + Karma i.e. Heat + Procedure. “When *Samyaka Dagdha Vrana* produced by Agni with the help of various *Dravyas* called as *Agnikarma*”

HISTORICAL GLIMPSES

Regarding the *Agnikarma Chikitsa* various references are available in the Ayurvedic literature.

In Vedas-

- In Atharvaveda, Agni is accepted as God and Bhesaja in the reference of *Krimi* (Ath. 5/23/1,3,5)
- In *Rigveda* (10/162/1-4) *Agnikarma Chikitsa* available in the reference of obstetric disease.
- In *Yajurveda* (23/10/1) as a treatment of *Sheeta*.
- In *Samaveda*, importance of Agni is proved by the presence of the chapter known as *Agneykanda*.

In Charaka Samhita:

- Acharya Charaka explained the *Agnikarma Chikitsa* in the reference of Ch. Su. 11/55 i.e. *Shastra Pranidhana*.
- Charaka also explained *Agnikarma Chikitsa* in *Divarniya Adhyaya Chikitsa* as a treatment of *Vrana*. (Ch. Chi. 25/101-103)
- In *Charaka Samhita* in the context of *Vidhishonita Adhyaya* (Ch. Su. 24/46), In *Vividhashitapitiya Adhyaya* (28/26).
- In *Charaka Chikitsa* in the context of *Gulma Chikitsa* in the reference of *Kaphaja Gulma*. (Ch. Chi. 5/55, 61, 62, 163, 186)
- In *Charaka Chikitsa* in the context of *Shvayathu Chikitsa* in the reference of *Granthi Roga* and *Bhagandara Chikitsa*. (Ch.12/82, 97)
- In *Charaka Chikitsa* in the context of *Udara Chikitsa* in the reference of *Pleehodara Roga* and *Yakrutodara Chikitsa*. (Ch. Chi. 13/86)
- In *Charaka Chikitsa* in the context of *Vatavyadhi Chikitsa* in the reference of *Gridhrasi Roga Chikitsa*. (Ch. Chi. 28/100)

- In Charaka Siddhistan in the context of Trimarmiya Chikitsa in the reference of Ardhavabhedaka Roga Chikitsa. (Ch. Si. 9/78)

Sushruta Samhita :

Maharshi Sushruta told Agnikarma as a Parasurgical procedure and it is superior to all Parasurgical procedure. Many references are available in Sushruta Samhita regarding Agnikarma.

In Sushruta Sutrasthana in the context of Yantravidhi Adhyaya as an Upayantra. (Su. Su. 7/14)

In Sushruta Sutrasthana, Detailed Agnikarma Vidhi Adhyaya described (Su. Su.12/9-10)

$\frac{3}{4}$ In Sushruta Sutrasthana in the context of Shalya Upaniya

Adhyaya as a Shalyaniraharana.(Su. Su. 27/14)

$\frac{3}{4}$ In Sushruta Chikitsa Sthana in the context of Vatavyadhi Chikitsa

in the reference of Sira, Snayu, Sandhi, Asthi, samprapti.(Su. Chi.

4/8)

$\frac{3}{4}$ In Sushruta Chikitsa Sthana in the context of Arsha roga

Chikitsa.(Su. Chi. 6/3)

$\frac{3}{4}$ In Sushruta Chikitsa Sthana in the context of Ashmari Chikitsa as

a Varana. (Su. Chi. 7/35)

CLASSIFICATION OF AGNIKARMA: -

As of yet, there is no direct description of AgniKarma's classification, but it can be classified on the following bases:

1 According to the type of Dravya:

AgniKarmacan be classified into two groups-

1. SnigdhaAgniKarma: -AgniKarma done byMadhu, Ghrita,Taila etc.
2. RukshaAgniKarma:- AgniKarma done by Pippali, Shalaka, Ajasakrida etc.

2 According to the Disease:

There are so many types of AgniKarmaeg.

1. A disease like Arsha, Kandara, etc. should be done after surgical excision.
2. Sinus, fistula in ano, etc. should be done after incision.
3. In Krimidanta it should be done after filing the cavity by Jaggery, Madhuchhista, etc.

3 According to Akriti:

Regarding Akriti, Acharya Sushruta has mentioned four types of AgniKarma.^[5]

1. Valaya(Circular shape)
2. Bindu(Dot like shape)
3. Vilekha (Making of different shapes by heated shalaka)
4. Pratisarana (Rubbing at the indicated site by heated Shalaka and there is no specific shape)

Acharya Vagbhata has added more three types. ^[6]

1. ArdhaChandra (Crescent shape)
2. Astapada (It is a specific shape containing eight limbs in different directions)
3. Swastika (It is specific shape of Swastika Yantra)

4 According to Dhatus:-^[7]

According to Acharya Sushruta and Vagbhata, the AgniKarma should be done as per the involvement of the Dhatus such as -

1. Twakadagdha
2. Sira and Snayudagdha
3. Mamsadagdha
4. AsthiSandhidagdha

Indications of Agnikarma-

- Arthritis and degenerative joint disorder
- Ankle pain, lower backache, neck pain and knee pain
- Calcaneal spur and achilles tendon
- Sciatica and post fracture residual pain
- Migraine and frozen shoulder

Contraindication for Agnikarma-

- Persons of Pitta prakruti should avoid Agnikarma
- Emaciated and feared person
- Children and elderly patient
- Pregnant lady
- Patient suffering from multiple ulcers

Advantages of Agnikarma-

- It is a simple and easy to perform.
- It is performed without uses of drugs and other materials.
- Safe and no serious complication after therapy.
- Cost-effective procedure and minimal invasion.
- Helps to treat verities of diseases of muscle, tendon, ligament and joint. Reduces need for surgical interventions.
- Patients can rejoin work sooner after the procedure and hospitalization is not required.
- Routine day life remains unaffected.

Types of Agnikarma:-^[4]

There are different types of Agnikarma described by our Acharya based on various categories.-

a)Shape of Burn: Based on the shapes of burns, Agnikarma can be either.

1. Valay -Encircling the root of the diseased portion.
2. Bindu –Dots made with the tip of shalaka.
3. Vilekha – Straight curved or horizontal line drawn with shalaka.
4. Pratisaran- Rubbing with the side of

According to AcharyaVagbhata, it can also be of-

5. Ardhchandra(semiluner)
6. Swastika (swastik sign shaped)
7. Ashtapada (direction eight direction)

b) Site of burn: Agnikarma can be done at the site of the disease i.e. sthanika e.g. kadara or at different sites i.e. sthnanantariya e.g. gridhrasi.

c) Involvement in burn: Due precautions should also be taken when the burn extends beyond skin, so it is classified clinically based on involvement of tissue as twakdagdha (skin burn), mansadagdha (muscleburn), sirasnayudagdha (burn of tendon and vessels) and asthi sandhi dagdha (burn of bone and joints)

d) Material used for Burn: According to the nature of material used for Agnikarma, it can be done with viscous liquid (snighadravya e.g. ghee) or with dry substance (rakshadravyae.g.pippali)

e) Extent of burn: According to the extent of the burn, Agnikarm can be either

- 1) Plashtam: insufficient burn (1-degree burn)
- 2) Durdagdha: Insufficient burnt (2-degree burn)

3) Samyakdagdha: properly burnt

4) Atidagdha: Excessively burnt.

Precautions-^[8]

- Agnikarma should not be done empty stomach. It is better to take PichchilaAnna before Agnikarma.
- Should be aware of vital parts of the body, season, and VyadhiDoshaavastha.
- Care should be taken while heating Shalaka and placing it in a specified place after Agnikarma.

Procedure of Agnikarma:

A detailed description of the procedure of AgniKarma is available in AstangSamgraha.

AgniKarma Methodology includes three steps:

1. PurvaKarma (Pre-procedure of AgniKarma)-

Pre AgniKarma-Diet:^[9]In all diseases and during all seasons, the *AgniKarma* can be done after feeding the patient with *pichhiladiet*, and on an empty stomach in case of Mal-presentation of the fetus, Calculus diseases, Fistula in ano, abdominal diseases, Piles and diseases of Oral Cavity.

Pre AgniKarma-Assessment:^[10]Before going to any surgical or para-surgical procedure complete assessment should be carried out regarding all the factors. So here too before going to *AgniKarma* thorough examination of the patient, the shape of the lesion, related vital parts of the body, the disease, the season, etc. should be done.

2. PradhanaKarma (Principal procedure of AgniKarma)^[11].

Before doing the procedure of *AgniKarma*, *swasthikvachan* should be done; the patient kept in a suitable position by keeping their head in the East direction and held by expert assistants to avoid movement. After this the surgeon should make the different shapes of *AgniKarma* viz.: -*Valaya*, *Ardhchandra*, *Swastika*, etc. as per need by heated *Shalaka* in a smoke free fire of *Khadira* or *Badara* with the help a blower or a fan. During this period if patients feel discomfort, then keep them satisfied by courageous, consolations talk, give cold water for drink and sprinkle cold water. But procedure of *AgniKarma* should be done till production of complete cauterisation.

3. Paschyat Karma (Post AgniKarma Management)^[12].

After completion of *AgniKarma* Madhu and Ghrita apply on the part where *AgniKarma* has done for Ropana of Dagdha Varna.

Effects of Agnikarma^[13].

- Increases metabolism

- Increases blood circulation
- Decreases pain
- Exciting/stimulating nerves
- Relaxation to muscles
- Decreases infection
- Decreases joint stiffness and inflammation.

Conclusion-

Agnikarma, with its historical significance and proven therapeutic benefits, is a testament to the timelessness of traditional healing practices. Although not a traditional medical treatment, it has its place in alternative medicine and continues to provide relief to people seeking non-invasive and holistic solutions to their health problems. While research in alternative therapies is advancing, Agnikarma remains a valuable and culturally significant aspect of healing traditions that deserves further exploration and recognition in the field of modern medicine.

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