

A Critical Conceptual Study on Agnikarma

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Abstract: Karma which is done using by Agni is known as Agni karma. Agni karma is said to be one of the best para surgical procedures in which "AGNI" is used for intentional burning as therapeutic purpose. It is indicated for various Vata - Kapha disorders. It is considered as Roganam Apunarbhava means disease which is treated with Agni karma never recur. It destroys the diseases from the root. In the field of pain management and cosmetic therapy, Agnikarma procedure can be done very effectively and safely. Its procedures are simple and almost have no medicines for internal and external use. Agnikarma will become one of the most promising branches of Ayurveda in future.

Keywords: Agni Karma, Chikitsa, Dagdha, Lakshanas, Pathya Apathya

1. Introduction

Agni karma technique involves procedure in which heat is transferred to the affected part by using Agni karma. A therapeutic burn is created in form of Bindu which helps to subside pain. 2000 - 3000 years back when techniques were not much developed our acharyas were using instruments like Pipalli, Godant, Shar, Shalaka, Jambosta, Loh, Madhu Guda and Sneha in muscular and joint disorder for pain management.

Agnikarma Review

Nirukti: - Karma which is done using Agni and related with Agni is known as Agni karma.

Vyutpatti: - The term Agnikarma consists of two words Agni and Karma, i. e., fire and procedure. The word Agni is in male gender. The word Agni denotes its upward going nature and universal presence.

Paryayas: - Aigna, Aignakma

Dictionary Meaning: - 1) Aigna: - fire, sacrificial fire, fire of the stomach. 2) Aignakma: - 'fire act', action of Agni, cauterization.

Definition: An effective superior among all Para surgical procedure is Agnikarma, in which heat is transferred to the body by various Dravyas.

Historical Glimpses: - Regarding the Agnikarma Chikitsa various references available in the ayurvedic literature.

Vedas: In Atharva Veda Agni is accepted as God and Bhesaja in the references of Krimi. (5/23/1.35). In Rigveda Agnikarma Chikitsa available in the reference obstetric disease (10 /162/1 - 4). In Yajurveda Agnikarma has been mentioned for the treatment of Sita. (23/ 10/1). In a Samveda importance of Agni is proved by the presence of the chapter known as Agneyakhanda.

Samhita Period

Sushruta Samhita: Sushruta has given great contribution to Ayurveda regarding Agnikarma Chikitsa. Now this Agnikarma procedure modified scientifically as electric cauterization which is used for various therapeutic purposes starting from minor surgical procedure to major surgical procedure. In the context of Sonitavarnaniya four types of procedure (Sandhana, Skandana, Pachana, and Dahana) have mentioned to control bleeding. Dahana is the last procedure for stoppage of bleeding when others three procedures are failed. Blood less surgery is evolved from this principle. There are Sample of references available regarding Agnikarma in Susruta Samhita. A Complete chapter is described for Agnikarma chikitsa in Sutrasthan 12. Agnikarma is mentioned as Upayantra and Anusastra. The use of Agnitapta Salaka is mentioned for extraction of Kanthagata Salya. In the context of Vata Vyadhi Chikitsa Agnikarma is mentioned for the management of Sira, Snayu, Asthi, Sandhi Vikara. Agnikarma is one of the Upakarma for the Arsa Chikitsa. Agnikarma Chikitsa has mentioned to control discharge from Bhagandara. As a treatment modality for Granthi, Apachi, Arbuda. As a treatment modality for Antravidradhi, Upadansa, Sleepada.

Charak Samhita:

1) Agnikarma Chikitsa is explained in the context of Sastra Pranidhana. 2) Agnikarma is mentioned for the management of Mamsaja vikara. 3) Agnikarma is mentioned as an upakarma in Dwivraniya Adhyaya. 4) Agnikarma is mentioned for the management of Kaphaja Gulma. 5) Agnikarma is mentioned in Sotha Chikitsa for the management of Granthi and Bhagandara. 6) Agnikarma is mentioned in Udara Roga for the management of Plihodara and Yakritdora. 7) Agnikarma is one of the treatment modalities for Arsa Chikitsa. (Ca Chi.14/33.8). Agnikarma is one of the treatment modalities for Ardhavedaka. Ca. Si.9 / 78.

Asthanga Sangraha:

40th chapter deals with Agnikarma Vidhi and there are many other references of other diseases regarding Agnikarma. As. su. ch.40.

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Ashtanga Hridaya: - In ashtanga Hridaya Su.30th chapter deals with Agnikarma Vidhi Ah. Su. ch.30/40.

Harita Samhita: - Agnikarma indicated as an important type of treatment out of eight types of treatment. H. S.1/2/7 - 8, H. S.3/11/99 - 100, H. S.3/14 /14/23, H. S.3/18/37, H. S.3/22/ 9 - 11, H. S.3/54/30.

Chakradatta: - In the context of Vatavyadhi, Chakradatta has explained the Agnikarma regarding the disease Gridhrasi. (Ch.22/53 - 55).

Yoga Ratnakara - In the context of Vatavyadhi, Yogaratnakara has explained the Agnikarma regarding the disease Gridhrasi. (Ch. va. vy. chi.157. p.446)

Dahana Samprapti: - The blood agitated by fire is severely aggravated in the person leading to aggravation of pitta with the same speed as both are similar in Veerya, Rasa & Dravya that is why there is severe pain, excessive burning, and quick appearance of blisters, fever & thirst. (su. ch.12/17, 18. pg.129)

Agnikarma - TAU - DAM: - Tau - dam is basically a traditional Himalayan therapy, practiced by the rural Himalayan people for liver trouble, stomach troubles, backache, etc. this therapy was also practiced by the ancient people and also mentioned in Ayurveda as Agnikarma. The therapy is practiced by the older people of village and compulsory for 6 months - 1 year old children. A 45 - 60cm long iron rod is called the Tau, which is sharply curved at one end & has one or two holes depending upon the disease. In this therapy, Tau device is placed on the fire till it gets red hot and touched on the affected skin for few seconds & treated with mustard or olive oil.

In Dam technique, fresh seeds of Terminalia Chebula, or Anaphalis Arneosa are burnt on the fire & touched on the required part of the body for few seconds. Generally, this therapy is practiced in the month of April, because according to Ayurveda this is the suitable time for Vata and Kapha diseases treatment.

References: Sushrut Samhita: Sushrut has told Agni karma as a best Parasurgical procedure. Sushrut has mentioned detail Description of Agni karma in separate chapter of Sutra Sthan. Sushrut mentioned Agni Karma as Upanyantra, Anushastra and one among sixty measures of Vrana. Following REFERENCES are available regarding Agni karma in Sushrut Samhita. Sutrasthan - 7/14, 12/9 - 10, 27/14, Chikitsasthan - 4/8, 7/35, 8/14, 21, 24, 29, 9/3, 5, 18/14, 19/21, 20/10 - 11, 29, 32, 22/9, 23, 27, 28, 29, 40. Kalpa sthan - 5/5, 7/35, 50, Uttara tantra - 14/5, 40/49.

Charak Samhita: Agni karma has been mentioned at different Chapters. Charak have mentioned Agni karma as 36 Chiktisa of Vrana and one among three - fold treatment Shastra Pranidhana. Sutra Sthan - 24/46, 28/26, Chiktisa Sthan - 5/55, 61, 62, 63, 163, 186, 12/97, 13/86, 14/33, 21/132, 25/101, 102, 28/100. Sidhisthan - 9/78.

Ashtang Hridaya: Agni karma has mentioned as a treatment method in many diseases.40th chapter Sutra Sthan have detail description regarding Agni karma.

Ashtang Sangraha: 30th chapter of Sutra sthan have details of Agni karma.

Importance of Agni Karma: - 1) Agni karma said to be the best among Para surgical procedure like Kshar karma because it's said to be ROGANAAM APUNARV BHAVA Diseases which is treated by Agni karma never recure and its destroy diseases from root.2) Diseases which are not treated by Aushad, shastra, and Kshar can be treated by Agni karma Hence Agni karma said to be the best.3) Fire (thermal cautery) is better than even the alkali, for the diseases burnt by it (treated) do not reccur and it can be used even in (diseases) which have not been successful treated with drugs, alkalies and knife.

Upkarana for Doing Agni Karma: - **According to Sushrut Instruments of Agni Karma Are:** - 1) Pippali (piper longum) 2) Aja shkrut (Dried Excreta of goat), Madhuccista 3) Go Danta (teeth of cow), 4) Shara, 5) Shalaka, 6) Jambavastha, 7) Swarna, Rajat, Tamra, loha and 8) Snigdha padarth like Madu, Gud, Ghrut, tail, 9) Ardhendu Vaktra Shalaka 10) Kalasthidal Tulya Shalaka

According to Charak instruments of Agni Karma are: - 1) Shara, 2) Kshaudra (Honey), 3) Madhuchista (Wax) 4) Loha, 5) Ghrita, 6) Tail, 7) Vasa, 8) Majja, 9) Hema (Gold) 10) Tamra (Copper).

According to Asthag Sangraha 40th Chapter Sutra Sthan Instruments of Agni Karma are: - 1) Pippali (piper longum) 2) Aja shkrut (Dried Excreta of goat), 3) Go Danta (teeth of cow), 4) Shara, 5) Shalaka, 6) Jambavastha, 7) Swarna, 8) Rajat, 9) Tamra, 10) loha and 11) Snigdha Padarth like Madu, Gud, Ghrut, Tail, Vasa, Mazza 12) Ardhendu Vaktra Shalaka 13) Kalasthidal Tulya Shalaka 14) Yasti Madhu, Suchi (Needle), Rajat (Silver), Kansya (Bronze), Suryakant - Additional Upkarana.

According to Asthag Hridaya 30th chapter Sutra Sthan Instruments of Agni Karma Are: - 1) Shara, Shalaka, 2) Suryakant, Kshaudra (Honey) 3) Guda, Sneha 4) Ardhendu Vaktra Shalaka 5) Kalasthidal Tulya Shalaka 6) Other metals.

Classification of Agnikarma:

Based On Akroti: - 1) Bindu 2) Vilekha 3) Valaya 4) Pratisaran. Vagbhata added 3 more 1) Ashtapada 2) Ardh Chandrika 3) Swastika.

Based On Dhatus: - 1) Twakdaghdta 2) Sira snayu Dagdha 3) Mamsa Dagdha 4) Asthi Sandhi Dagdha.

According to Dravyas Used: - 1) Snigdha - It Is done by sneha padarth like madhu ghrita and tail. And it should be used by sira snayu etc. 2) Ruksha - It is Done by pippali shalaka, ajashakra etc. and it should be used for twak dagdha.

According to Site: - 1) Sthanikas in vicharchika and arsha 2) Sthanantriya Distal to the site of disease.

Indication of Agnikarma: Cauterization should also be performed in case when Vayu, with intense pain, is situated in skin, muscle, blood vessel, ligament, joint and bone, wound with raised, hard and numbed granulation; in glands, piles, tumours, fistula - inano, scrofula, elephantiasis, wart, mole, inguinalhernia and disease of joint and cutting of blood vessel etc. and also in sinus and excessive haemorrhage. 1) Vatakantaka 2) Adhavedaka 3) Shiriroga 4) Alaji 5) Vartmaroga 6) Shilistha Vartma 7) Vishavratma 8) Arbuda 9) Krimi Danta 10) Medaj Oshta Roga 11) Danta Nadi 12) Lagan 13) Puyalasa 14) Abhiishyanda 15) Arsha 16) Nashaarsha 17) Adhidanta 18) Shitadanta 19) Dantavridhii 20) Gridrisi 21) Charmakeel 22) Kadara 23) Kunaka 24) Chipa 25) Bhagandara 26) Lingarsha 27) Karnaarsha 28) Massaka 29) Tilakalaka 30) Jatumani 31) Valmika 32) Visa Chikitsa 33) Prasupti 34) Visarpa 35) Unmade 36) Yakruta And Pleehodra 37) Shonitta Atipravritti 38) Gulma 39) Vilambika 40) Sanyas 41) Granthi 42) Gandmala 43) Vishwachi 44) Vatajshlushta 45) Antravidhi 46) Shlepada 47) Nadivrana 48) Upadansha 49) Galaganda 50) Chippa.

Contraindication of Agni Karma: - 1) According to Charak Agnikarma should not be done in the Vrana of Snayu Marma, Netra Kushta, and Vrana Ved Vish and Shalya. 2) Pitta Prakruti 3) Bhinna Kostha 4) Daurbalya 5) Vriddha 6) Antah Shonita 7) Bala 8) Bhiru 9) Multiple Vrana 10) Balaka

Method Of Agnikarma: 1) **PURVAKARMA:** - The physician should perform cauterization after considering well the shape and size of the lesion, vital spots and strength of the patient, disorder and season. 1) Pichhila anna Padartha 2) Patient should keep Nil by mouth in diseases like Moodgrbha, Ashmari, Bhagandar, Udarrog, Arsha, and Mukh rog. 3) Agni karma instrument should keep ready.

Pradhankarma

The patient who is eligible for branding should be instructed to perform all auspicious ceremonies; (the physician should) keep ready all the equipment needed (make the patient) sit or lie down with his head held tight by attendant a small open hearth is to be constructed, fixed with below similar to that of an iron smith; into the hearth wood of Khadir or Badar are put in and set fire. When the smoke has seized and red burning coal is ready, the physician should put Jambuausta and other instruments into the hearth, make their points (tips) red hot, take them out and place them on the body of the patient creating marks such as circular, semi - circular, swastika, number eight, point, straight line, and such others; the patient being kept assured encouraging words all the time. Branding should be as much as deep as required for the disease and till the symptoms of proper cauterization manifest.

Samyak Dagdha Lakshan:

- 1) **Twak Dagdha Lakshanas:** Appearance of sounds, foul smell and constriction of skin are the signs in skin burn, Characteristic features of properly done branding in case of skin burning are burning associated with sound, bad smell and contraction of the skin.
- 2) **Mamsa Dagdha Lakshanas:** Pigeon's colour, little swelling and pain along with dry and constricted wound

are in muscle burning: Manifestation of colour of pigeon's (light grey), slight swelling and pain, the wound becoming dry (without exudations) and constricted in case of burning of the muscles.

- 3) **Sira Snayu Dagdha Lakshanas:** Black and raised wound and cessation of discharge are in burning of blood vessels and ligaments. The wound becoming black and swollen, stoppage of bleeding but discharge of Lasika (lymph) in case of burning of the veins; The wound becoming blackish - red, rough and hard in case of burning of the tendons etc.
- 4) **Sandhi Asthi Dagdha Lakshanas:** While in that of joints and bones are roughness, dark reddishness, and hard and firm wound.

The Signs of Samyak Dagdha (Proper Burning): - are stoppage of bleeding, emergence of crackling sound accompanied with lymph, the area having colour resembling a ripe tala fruit or a pigeon (dark grey), (the wound) healing easily and not too much of pain.

Pashchat Karma:

- 1) After attaining Samyak Dagdha Lakshan Madhu and Ghrita should be applied over Dagdha Sthan.
- 2) According to Vagbhata he said application of Madhu Ghrita Snigdha and Shital Lepa should be used.

Pathya Apathya Follows to Avoid Complication: - 1) Burnt area or Dagdha Sthan is observed for any complication. 2) After Madhu and Ghrita Lapan over Dagdha Sthan care should be taken to avoid water contact on Dagdha Sthan for 24hr. 3) Usually Healing of therapeutic burnt area gets attained by 7th day without local complications.

Contraindicate Season of Agni Karma: - Agni karma can be done in every season except Sharad and Grishma. though acharyas clearly mentioned Agni karma can also be done during Sharad and Ghrisma Ritu in Aatyail Avastha.

Action of Agni Karma - Rakta and pitta attained Shudha Avastha and there will be Vedna Upshaman.

Complication of Agni Karma:

- 1) **Plushta Dagdha** - when Twak Varna gets Vikrut or there will be just Discolouration of skin is known as Plushta Dagdha. Vagbhata renamed it as Tuttha Dagdha. Chiktisa of Plusta Dagdha - Usnoupharta with Ushna Lep and Ushna internal medication. Vrana Prakhalan with Ushna Jal. If one takes Sheta Upcha of Plusta Dagdha it may cause for Rakta Skandan.
- 2) **Durdagdha** - Syntoms of Durdagdha Teevra, Shotha, Daha, Lalima, Paak and Vedna. Chiktisa of Durdagdha - Sheet and Usno Upchar like Ghrita and Sek.
- 3) **Atidagdha** - symptoms of Atidagdha are - Mamsa will get detached from body, Burn will go deep into Sira Snayu sandhi and Asthi along with Jwara, Pipasa, Murcha, Dah. Vrana takes time to get heal, if attained healing left with scar mark on area of burn.

Chiktisa of Atidagdha: 1) Dead Tissue should debride 2) Sheetal Upchar 3) Lapan of Shali Churna or Tinduk Twak Kashay added in Ghrut 4) Burnt area should cover with

Gudhuci Patra and Kamal Patra.5) Ropan Ghрут and Chiltsa like Pittja Visarp vat.

Mode of Action of Agni Karma: According to Ayurved - Based on Samanya Vishesh Siddhanta.1) Vata is a cause for Shool or pain. Agni karma having Ushna and Teeksna Guna which is opposite to Vata and subsides Vata therefore decreases pain.2) According to Ayurved every Dhatu (tissue) has its own Agni called as Dhatvagni which is responsible for nourishment.3) When Dhatvagni becomes vitiated, a disease begins to manifest. Agni Karm Ushna Guna Increase in Dhatvagni gets rectified Enhance nourishment and newer tissue.

Agni possesses Ushna, Tikshna, Sukshma and Aashukari Gunas, which are opposite to Vata and anti Kapha properties. Physical heat from red hot Shalaka is transferred atherapeuticheatto Twakdhatu by producing Samyak Dagdha Vrana. From Twakdhatu this therapeutic heat acts in three ways.

First, due to Ushna, Tikshna, Sukshma, Ashukari Guna it removes the Srotavarodha, pacifies the vitiated Vata and Kapha Dosha and maintains their equilibrium. Secondly, it increases the Rasa Rakta Samvahana (blood circulation) to affected site. The excess blood circulation to the affected part flushes away the pain producing substances and patient gets relief from symptoms. Third, therapeutic heat increases the Dhatvagni, so metabolism of Dhatu becomes proper and digests the Amadosha from the affected site and promotes proper nutrition from Purva Dhatu.

In this way, Asthi and Majja Dhatu become more stable. Thus, result is precipitated in the form of relief from all symptoms of Gridhrasi. 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 Doshas come to the phase of equilibrium and patients got relief from the symptoms.

Agni karma at a Glance: - Agnikarma is a thermal para - surgical procedure, in which "AGNI" is used for intentional burning as therapeutic purpose. It is indicated for various Vata - Kapha disorders.

Importance of Agni Karma: - 1) It is a highly potential procedure than the Bsheshaja, Shastra & Kshara Karma.2) It is very effective to terminate the chance of recurrence of the disease.3) No infection.4) No secondary complication if done properly.

Where to do Agni Karma: - 1) Painful conditions of musculoskeletal disorders.2) Hard, elevated and desensitized Vranas/ulcer.3) Granthi, Arsas, Bhagandara, Arbuda, Sleepada, Charmakeela and Antravidhi.4) Severe bleeding condition.

Where not to do Agni Karma: - 1) Pitta Prakruti 2) Antah shonita (Internal bleeding) 3) Bhinna Koshta (Ruptured viscera) 4) Nuddhrita Shalya (in presence of foreign body) 5) Durbala (emaciated), Bala (children), Vriddha (old aged), Bheeru (coward), Aneka Vrana Peedita (with multiple wounds).

Modern Procedure of Agnikarma:

Infrastructure Facilities: - 1) Manpower: A trained doctor and technician 2) Space and requirements: 1 small sized room (10x 10) with proper light. It can be done in OPD level also.3) Chair or stool - 1, 4) Examination table/ Droni - 1.

Materials required: - 1) Shalaka 2) Permanent Marker 3) Gloves 4) Cotton gauze 5) Ghee.

Preoperative: - 1) Educate the patient 2) Obtain informed consent 3) Ask the patient to satisfy natural urges 4) Check vitals.

Procedure: - 1) The patient should be allowed to be in a comfortable position, exposing the site of the problem.2) Wear surgical gloves.3) Mark the tenderest.4) Agni karma should do till Samyak Dagdhata symptoms is achieved.

Post Operative: - Apply ghee over the Agnikarma site.

Mode of Action: - Agnikarma (Ushna Guna) >> Utkleshnam to Dhathu >> Activates Dhatvagni >> Digest Aama and achieve Niramavastha >> Pacifies Vata & Kapha. Agnikarma produces a coagulative necrosis on the surface layers of skin which causes self - healing. There is no need of post - procedural medication locally or orally.

Effects of Agnikarma: - 1) Increases metabolism 2) Increases blood circulation 3) Decreases pain 4) Exciting/stimulating nerves 5) Relaxation to muscles 6) Decreases infection 7) Decreases joint stiffness and inflammation.

Application & Duration: - 1) It depends up on site & disease 2) Usually 2 to 5 seconds & more than 5 seconds in corn, callosity etc. 3) Effect of Agnikarma on Mamsa dhatu will reaches into Sira, Snayu, Asthi & sandhi.

Time / Season: - All seasons except Greeshma & Sharad Ritu. In the case of emergency, it can be done in any season with special precaution.

Precautions: - 1) Agnikarma should not be done empty stomach. It is better to take Pichchila anna before Agnikarma. 2) Should be aware of vital parts of the body, season, and Vyadhi Dosha avastha.3) Care should be taken while heating Shalaka and placing it in specified place after Agnikarma.

2. Discussion

1) In Agnikarma Chikitsa Shalaka plays an important role. Vata and Kapha possess Sheeta Guna, for this to neutralize the Vata and Kapha Dosha, require opposite Guna treatment that is Ushna Chikitsa. Ushna Guna and Agni having Anyonyasritabhava, hence Agnikarma by virtue of its Ushna, Tikshna, and Sukshma and Laghu property breaks Srotavarodha, which was produced by Vata and Kapha Dosha is neutralized. When a heated Tamra Shalaka applied over skin tissue stored heat is transferred from Tamra Shalaka to skin tissue in the form of Ushna, Tikshna,

Sukshma and Laghu Guna neutralizes the Sheeta Guna of Vata resulting in minimizing the severity of the pain. Agnikarma also acts like a Dosha Dushya Vighatanakarka because Ushna Guna performs two functions. Firstly, by stimulating i.e., Utkleshana of Dhatvagni and due to this action same dhatu (localized ama) is digested and secondly Ushna Guna dilates the channels of Srotas. Hence Srotovarodha is removed (cleaning the respective srotas channel). It is hypothetically stated that Binduwat Agnikarma which practically used, is probably capable to break down various cycles of painful adhesions.

- 2) It is hypothetically stated that after Samyak Dagdha some local antibodies or non - specific immune - globins may acts as a disease modifying activity.
- 3) Agnikarma may stimulates the sensory receptor lying in the muscle, sends message to the brain which stimulates the pituitary gland to release endorphin which in turn binds with opiate receptors in the pain cells to block the pain stimuli. Endorphin is a naturally occurring neuro peptide and like morphine and other opiates it has a marked propensity for binding on to the "opiate receptor" of the pain cell in the brain.
- 4) Raising the temperature of damaged tissue through red hot Shalaka may speed up the metabolic process, improves circulation by vasodilatation, reduce oedema, accelerate repair, which can reduce painful stiffness joints like arthritis. Thus, Agnikarma may help in reducing the pain.
- 5) The pain receptors in the skin and other tissues are all having free nerve endings. The red hot Shalaka, which causes destruction of the free nerve endings, tend to close the gate and prevent the sensory transmission of pain.

3. Conclusion

- 1) In the field of pain management and cosmetic therapy, Agnikarma procedure can be done very effectively and safely.
- 2) Its procedures are simple and almost have no medicines for internal and external use.
- 3) To the patients, it is very convenient and economic.
- 4) Agnikarma procedure needed to have more scientific studies and evaluation.
- 5) Agnikarma will become one of the most promising branches of Ayurveda in future.

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