



AGNIKARMA: A BLESSING FOR PAIN MANAGEMENT

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Article Received on 12/11/2018

Article Revised on 02/12/2018

Article Accepted on 23/12/2018

ABSTRACT

Efficient pain management has always been a hurdle. A pain-free life is the longing of everyone. *Agnikarma* has been explained as one among the *Anushastras* having greater importance in the management of diseases. All Ayurvedic classics have described *Agnikarma* in curing different disorders. In *Agnikarma* the recurrence of the diseases will not be there if once they are treated and cured by it. This *Agnikarma* can be utilized as preventive measure, as post-operative procedure, and as a haemostatic manner. *Agnikarma* technique has effect on disorder of *Asthi* (bone), *Sandhi* (joint's), *Snayu* (ligament and tendon) as told by Vedic Indian surgeon, *Sushrutacharya*.

KEYWORDS: *Agnikarma*, Cauterization

INTRODUCTION

Agnikarma (Thermal Cautery) is an Ancient Medical Technique derived from the Indian system of medicine, Ayurveda. The technique of *Agnikarma* has been designed to relieve various muscular and joint disorders. The most important procedure of the *Shalya Chikitsa* (surgical treatment). It comprises of two words i.e *Agni* and *Karma*. "When *Samyaka Dagdha Vrana* produced by *Agni* with the help of various *Dravyas* called as *Agnikarma*". The *Agnikarma* (Thermal Cautery) involves a procedure whereby heat is transferred to the affected parts of the body using a metal *Shalaka* (metal rod) in various procedure heat is used directly or indirectly all these are come under the *Agnikarma*. *Agnikarma* is effective and superior among all surgical procedure. *Agnikarma* has important role in the *Vataj* and *Kaphaj Vyadhi* involving the *Dhatu* that are predominant with *Pruthvi* and *Aap Mahabhuta*. On the basis of *Lok Purusa Samnaya Sidhant Agni* that exit in the body (*Bhutagni*, *Dhatwagni*, etc.) have similar properties that exit outside the body. *Agni* (fire) is better than alkali in action of burning; it is said so, because disease treated by burning will not recur again and also because, those diseases which are incurable by the use of medicines, sharp instruments and alkalis may be cured by *Agnikarma*. *Dalhana* has mentioned *Agnitapta Shastras* that prevent sepsis in surgical procedure. *Agnikarma* is also useful after *Shastra Karma* to avoid recurrence for eg. *Kadara Sastrakarma*. Due to these properties *Agnikarma* is accepted as superior than other procedures.

Cauterization was used to stop heavy bleeding, especially during amputations. The procedure is simple: a piece of metal will be heated over fire and applied to the wound

***Agnikarma* as Tau-Dam**

Tau-dam is a basically a traditional Himalayan therapy practiced by the rural Himalayan people for liver troubles, stomach troubles, backache, etc. Tau therapy is generally practiced by the older people of village and is compulsory for 6 month to 1-year old children. A 45- 60 cm long iron rod is called the tau, which is sharply curved at one end and has one or two holes depending upon the diseases. In this therapy, tau device is placed on burning fire till it gets red-hot. And after branding it, they massage the affected area with the mustard or olive oil.

In the *dam* technique, fresh seeds of *Terminalia chebula* or *Anaphalis araneosa* are burned on fire and touched on the required part of the body for only few seconds. After this, like tau, the effective area is massaged with the mustard or olive oil.^[1]

Dahana Upkarana: (Yantra for Agnikarma)

Dahanupakarana are the instrument to produce therapeutic burns (*Samyak Dagdha*) during *Agnikarma Chikitsa*. These *dahanupakarana* are distributed in 3 categories.^[2]

1. Useful in *Agnikarma Chikitsa* of *Twak dhatu* (skin). *Pippali*, *Ajashakrut*, *Gaudanta*, *Shara*, *Shalaka*.
2. Useful in *Agnikarma Chikitsa* of *Mamsa dhatu*.

Jambaustha, Loha

3. Useful in *Agnikarma Chikitsa* of *Sira, Snayu, Sandhi, Asthi dhatu*.

Madhu, Guda, Sneha

Burn Marks

Dahana Vishesha is the mark of figure produced on the skin after *Agnikarma Chikitsa* are as follow.^[3]

1. *Valaya* (Circle): *Agnikarma* done at the site of disease in circular manner.
2. *Bindu* (Dot): In this the tip of *Shalaka Yantra* is heated till red hot and applied at the site of *Vikṛuti* in the shape of dot.
3. *Vilekha* (Parallel line): In this line in zig zag manner are produce with red hot *Shalaka* at the site of application of *Agnikarma*.
4. *Pratisarana* (Rubbing) : In this affected part is rubbed with red hot *Shalaka Ardhchandra*

These four types of marks are suggested by Sushruta in the context of *Agnikarma Vidhi Adhyaya*. On the other hand, Vagbhatta mentioned three more *Dahana Vishesha* with addition of Sushruta *Dahana Vishesha* i.e.^[4]

1. *Ardhchandra* (Semi Lunar): In this *Shalaka* of semicircular tip is red hot and applied to affected area.
2. *Swastika* (Four Tailed Mark) : In this *swastika* shaped *Yantra* is used for *Agnikarma*
3. *Ashtapada* (Eigh Tailed Mark): In this making eight line with red hot *Shalaka* crossing each other at a single point.

Classification of Agnikarma^[5]

- 1) According to *Dravya*
 - a) *Snigdha Agnikarma*: *Madhu, Ghrita, Taila* etc. are used for *Sira, Snayu, Sandhi, Asthi* type of *Agnikarma*.
 - b) *Ruksha Agnikarma*: *Pippali, Shalaka, Godanta* are used for *Twak* and *Mamsa Dagdha*.
- 2) According to Site
 - a) *Sthanika* (local) : *Kadara, Arsha, Vicharchika*
 - b) *Sthanantariya* (systemic) : *Apachi, Gridhrasi*
- 3) According to Disease
 - a) In the disease like *Arsha, Kadara* etc. it should be done after surgical excision (*Chhedan*).
 - b) In the disease like fistula, sinus etc. it should be done after surgical incision (*Bhedana*).
 - c) In the disease like *Krimidanta*, it should be done after filling by the *Guda*.
- 4) According to *Akriti*
As described earlier in *Dahana Vishesha*.

Itratha Dagdha

According to Sushruta, all *Dagdha* are included under four types of *Dagdha Vrana*.^[6]

1. Plushtha Dagdha

Plushtha is that which has pigmented area on the skin has associated with severe burning sensation.

2. Durdagdha

Durdagdha is that in which *Sphota* (blebs, vesicles) appear, accompanied with severe pain such as sucking, burning, redness, *Paka* (exudation or ulceration) and pain, these subsiding after a long time.

3. Samyaka Dagdha

There are *Samanya Lakshana* (common symptoms) produced in any type of *Dhatu* (tissue) and special symptoms are only related to the *Dhatu* concerned.

4. Ati Dagdha: (Deep burn)

Mamsa-avalambana (Hanging of burnt tissue), *Gatra-vishlesha* (Parts become loose and useless), Destruction of *Sira, Snayu, Sandhi* (Tendons in joints), *Jwara* (Fever), *Daha* (Burning), *Pipasa* (Thirst), *Murchha* (Unconsciousness), Wound heals after a long time and healed ulcers have discoloration.

Samanya Lakshana

Samyaka Dagdha Vrana

Ana-awagadha Vranata (Wound which is not deep), *Talphala Varnata* (Fruit of Tala tree-blue-black in color), *Susamshita Vrana* (Without elevation or depression).

Samyaka Dagdha Vrana of Twak

Shabdapradurbhao (Production of sound), *Durgandhata* (Bed odor), *Twak Sankocha* (Contraction of the skin).

Samyaka Dagdha Vrana of Mamsa Dhatu

Kapotvarnata (Color like that of pigeon i.e. ashy, dark grey), *Alpa Swayathu* (Mild swelling), *Alpa Vedana* (Less pain), *Shuska Sankuchit Vranata* (Dry, contracted wound).

Samyaka Dagdha Vrana of Sira, Snayu

Krishna Vranata (Black coloration), *Unnata Vranata* (Elevated), *Srava – Sannirodha* (Stoppage of discharge).

Samyaka Dagdha Vrana of Sandhi, Asthi

Rukshata (Dryness), *Arunata* (Dark red coloration), *Karkashata* (Roughness), *Sthirata* (Stability).

Suitable Time for agnikarma

Agnikarma can be done in all seasons, except *Sharad* (autumn) and *Grishma* (Summer); because, in *Sharad* there is a *Prakopa* of *Pitta* and *Agnikarma* also aggravates.^[6]

Indication of Agnikarma

Vatakanṭaka, Shiroroga, Ardhavabhedaka, Vratma Roga, Pakshmakopa, Shlista Vratma, Vishavratma, Alaji, Arbuda, Puyalasa, Abhiṣyanda, Adhimantha, Lagana Medoj Oshtha roga, Danta Nadi, Krimidanta, Adhidanta, Shitadanta, Dantavruddhi, Jalarbuda, Arsha, Nasa Arsha Karnarsha, Lingarsha, Yoniarsha, Bhagandara, Nadivrana, Upadvansha, Gulma, Vilambika, Sanyasa, Unmada, Yakruta & Plihodara, Shonita Atipravrutti, Shira Sandhi Cheda, Visarpa.

Contraindications of Agnikarma

Pitta Prakruti, Bhinna Kosta, Daurbalya, Vruddha, Antah Shonita, Anuddhrata Shalya, Bala, Bhiru, suffering from – Pandu, Atisara, Kshaya, Guda Bhrumsha, Udararoga, Nasa Sanga, Chhardi, Shoshita Who Has Taken Alcohol Oja Kshaya, Vigagdha, Rakta Pitta, Sthula, Ajirna, Kroddha, Trushna, Adhya Rogi, Garbhini Prameha, Ruksha, Daurbalya, Visha, Kshudha, Timira, Kshata, According to Charaka Agnikarma should not be done in the Vrana of Snayu, Marma, Netra, Kushtha and Vrana with Visha and shalya.^[7]

Agnikarma Vidhi (Procedure)

The Agnikarma room should be well prepared with all required Agropaharanianiyani described by Acharya Sushruta. 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. are kept ready for use. The *Shalaka* is heated upto becomes red hot on fire.^[8]

Pradhana Karma

Aasana for Agnikarma: In *Sandhigata Vata*, it is easy to do Agnikarma in prone position as it is good and comfortable to the patient. After carefully considering the symptoms of the disease, vitals and the strength of the patient as well as disease and seasons, physician should undertake the patient for Agnikarma. On the diseased skin of the patient, the *Samyak Dagdha Vrana* should be produced by red hot *Shalaka*. The number of the *Samyak Dagdha Vrana* should be 15 – 30 or according to the extent of the diseased area. Apply immediate cooling agents: After making *Samyak Dagdha Vrana* apply cooling agent immediately to subside burning pain.

Inspection of defective Agnikarma and management**1) Plushtha Dagdha**

If the *Shalaka* is not properly heated then it will produce this type of *Dagdha*.

Management

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; when the temperature of the body becomes increased, the blood becomes liquefied; water by nature is cold in potency and hence makes the blood thick to coagulate, so that, only heat gives comfort.

2) Durdagdha

When the physicians are unskilled hand or patient is shaking his body parts due to fear of burn then *Durdagdha* can occur.

Management

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

Madhuchhithadi Ghrita contains *Madhuchhitha, Madhuka, Lodhra, Sarjarasa, Manjishtha, Chandana* and *Murva*, should be macerated together and then cooked with Ghee, is best for healing of wound in all kinds of burns.

4) Daha (Burning pain)

More or less burning pain is experienced by each and every patient who uses to take *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, 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 Vrana* site for one *Ahoratra* (24 hours)". The complete *Ropana* (healing) of the *Vrana* should be observed. *Agnikarma Chikitsa* can be repeated after 7 days.

Agnikarma In Modern Era

In modern medicine era, there is no use of therapeutical burn i.e. *Samyak Dagdha* vrana. But on the other hand, use of *Agnikarma* for other way around is used now days. There are procedures as mimic to *Agnikarma* are practiced in modern era.

Electrocautery

It is a most useful instrument in surgical procedure which consists of platinum wire can be heated to red hot by using an electric current. Use of this electric cautery to cut the tissue or to coagulate the bleeding points, so this application of electro cautery is ideal for removing small skin tags, papiloma and also to control the bleeding during surgical procedures.^[9]

Diathermy

The basic principle is to deliver high frequency current to the human body by means of active electrode and this after passing through the tissue to be diathermied returns via a return electrode. The intense heat produced by the passage of current destroys it in different ways depending on the type of current used cutting current is undamped and produce cutting effect secondary to intense heat generation within the tissue. It is hemostatic and no bleeding can occur. Blended current is a combination of two types of waves introducing both cutting and coagulating effects. Most new surgical units deliver low voltage cutting or blended current from a solid state generating unit through an isolated bipolar system which is considered the safest.^[10]

CONCLUSION

Agnikarma technique has effect on disorder of *Asthi* (bone), *Sandhi* (joint's), *Snayu* (ligament and tendon). No untoward effects observed in *Agnikarma*. The procedure is simple, economical and required no hospitalization and could be done at the OPD itself. Hot cauters were applied to tissues or arteries to stop them from bleeding. Improperly performed *Agnikarma* will lead to severe burning sensation, increased pain, destruction of tissue, suppuration, bleeding, non healing ulcer formation etc. Properly performed *Agnikarma* by skilled surgeon will give excellent result in several conditions. On the other hand improperly performed will lead to many complications.

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