

AGNIKARMA AS PAIN MANAGEMENT MODALITY -THE CONCEPT OF ACHARYA  
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## ABSTRACT

*Shalya Tantra* is one of the important branches of Ayurveda in which Surgical and Para-surgical techniques has described for management of various diseases. “*Agni Karma*” is one amongst these Para-surgical procedures. Simultaneously it is observed that it has a great contribution in pain management also. In this procedure actual heat is transmitted into the tissues to relieving the pain. In Ayurveda, *Vata Dosha* is the root cause of all types of pain (*Ruja*) - “*Vatatruite Nasti Ruja*” as mentioned by *Acharya Sushruta*. And *Agnikarma* pacifies the *Vata* and *Kapha doshas*. *Agnikarma* technique has effect on disorder of *Asthi* (bone), *Sandhi* (joints), *Snayu* (ligament and tendon) as told by Vedic Indian surgeon, *Sushrutacharya*. It nullifies the disease process to relieve the pain in many musculoskeletal and arthritic problems. *Acharya Sushruta* has considered *Agnikarma* superior than *Aushadha*, *Kshara* and *Shastra Chikitsa* as the diseases which are not cured by the above are cured by *Agnikarma* and the disease treated by *Agnikarma*, do not reoccur. This *Agnikarma* can be utilized as preventive measure, as post-operative procedure, and as a haemostatic manner.

**KEYWORDS:** *Agni Karma*, Para-surgical procedure, *Sushruta samhita*, Pain management.

## INTRODUCTION

Pain is defined as an unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage, or described in terms of such damage. And to relieve pain all Medical and paramedical systems are working simultaneously with their own modalities. So as the Ayurveda science also have its own local therapies. All basic *Samhita* have explained local as well as systemic medication and procedures for the same, but local procedures are accepted the most. *Sushruta Samhita*, the first surgical manuscript of Ayurveda Science accommodates mostly surgical and Para-surgical techniques. *Agni Karma* is second important Para-surgical procedure (*Anushastra Karma*) which is described by all the *Acharyas*. *Anushastra Karma* means surgical procedure performed by non-surgical items or instruments in absence of surgical instruments. There are so many tools for *Agni Karma* like *Pippali*, goat stool pellets, teeth of different animals, *Shalaka* (probes) and *Snehapadartha* (ghee, tail, guda, honey). *Acharya Sushruta* has mentioned *Agnikarma* in various disorders such as *Granthi*, *Arsha*, *Bhagandar*, *Arbuda*, *Shlipad*, *Antra Vrana*, *Nadi Vrana* and in various musculoskeletal disorders such as chronic plantar fasciitis, sciatica, osteoarthritis, calcaneal spur, cervical spondylosis and frozen shoulder etc. there is a predominant involvement

of *Vata* and *Kapha Dosha*. In the procedure of *Agnikarma*, *Agni* is given at the site of pain which acts by its *Ushna* (hot), *Tikshna* (penetrating), *Sukshma* (minute), *Laghu* (small), *Vyavayi* (quick acting) and *Vikasi* (quickly spreading) *Guna*. The *Guna* act against *Vata* and *Kapha Doshas*, thereby relieving pain and inflammation at that site. *Acharya Charak* has not described *Agnikarma* in separate chapter but has described it as one of the treatment measures in different *Vatavyadhis* such as *Gridhrasi*.

## DEFINITION OF AGNI KARMA

The *Agni Karma* word made up with combination of two words - *Agni* and *Karma* (i.e. fire and procedure). “When *Samyaka Dagdha Vrana* produced by *Agni* with the help of various *Dravyas* called as *Agnikarma*”. In short we can say that the procedure which is performed with the help of *Agni* for treating the disease is called as *Agni Karma*.

## CLASSIFICATION OF AGNI KARMA

It can be classified as below.

## 1. ACCORDING TO TYPES OF DRAVYA

*Agni Karma* can be classified into two groups

- ***Snigdha Agni Karma***:- *Agni Karma* done by *Madhu*, *Ghrta*, *Taila* etc.

- **Ruksha Agni Karma:-** Agni Karma done by Pippali, Shalaka, Ajasakrida etc.

## 2. ACCORDING TO SITE

- **Sthanika (local):** Kadara, Arsha, Vicharchika.
- **Sthanantariya (systemic):** Apachi, Gridhrasi.

## 3. ACCORDING TO THE DISEASE

There are so many types of Agni Karma e.g.

- In the disease like Arsha, Kandara etc. it should be done after surgical excision.
- In Sinus, fistula in Ano etc. it should be done after incision.
- In Krimidanta, it should be done after filing the cavity by Jaggery, Madhuchhista etc.

## 4. ACCORDING TO AKRUTI

In regard to Akruti, Acharya Sushruta has mentioned four types of Agni Karma.

- Valaya (Circular shape)
- Bindu (Dot like shape)
- Vilekha (Making of different shapes by heated Shalaka)
- Pratisarana (Rubbing at indicated site by heated Shalaka and there is no specific shape)

Acharya Vagbhata has added more three types.

- Ardha Chandra (Crescent shape)
- Astapada (It is specific shape containing eight limbs in different directions)
- Swastika (It is specific shape of Swastika Yantra)

## 5. ACCORDING TO DHATUS

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

- Twakadagha
- Sira and Snayudagha
- Mamsadagha
- Asthi Sandhidagha

## DAHNOPAKARANA USED FOR AGNI KARMA

In classics, different Dahnopakarana have been described during the description of diseases cured by Agni Karma. Dahnopakarana means accessories like drugs, articles and substances used for Agni Karma. Each of them is having their own peculiarity in Dahnopakarana.

Acharya Sushruta has indicated the materials by name according to the site of Agni Karma e.g.

- Twakadagha - Pippali, Ajasakrida, Godanta, Shara, Shalaka.
- Mamsadagha – Jambhavsta Shalakla and Other Metals.
- Sira, Snayu, Sandhi and Asthidagha - Madhu, Jaggery and Sneha.

According to Acharya Vagbhata, for Twakadah, Godanta and Suryakanta should be used. Madhu, Sneha,

Jambavastha and Jaggery should be employed for Agni Karma of Arsha, Bhagandara, Granthi, Nadivrana etc.

## INDICATION OF AGNIKARMA

Vatakanṭaka, Shiroroga, Ardhavabhedaka, Vratma Roga, Pakshmakopa, Shlista Vratma, Vishavratma, Alaji, Arbuda, Puyalasa, Abhisyanda, 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 etc.

## CONTRAINDICATIONS OF AGNIKARMA

Pitta Prakruti, Bhinna Kostha, 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, Vigagdhya, Rakta Pitta, Sthula, Ajirna, Kroddha, Trushna, Adhya Rogi, Garbhini, Prameha, Ruksha, Daurbalya, Visha, Kshudha, Timira, Kshata.

According to Acharya Charaka, Agnikarma should not be done in the Vrana of Snayu, Marma, Netra, Kushtha and Vrana with Visha and shalya.

## 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.

## PROCEDURE OF AGNI KARMA

### PURVA KARMA

#### Pre-operative assessment

Agni Karma is contraindicated in the person who has Pitta predominant Prakruti (constitution) or diseases of Paitika Dosha.

**Diet:** Patient is advised to take Pichchhila and Snigdha light diet before treatment.

**Inform consent:** It is advisable to take written inform consent of the patient before going to Agni Karma.

#### Proper instrumentation (Agropaharaniyani)

Arrange all required Agropaharaniyani described by Acharya. Prepare suitable decoction for Prakshalana of the local part of patient. Madhu, Grita, Yashimadhu Churna, small pieces of Kumari Patra, Plota (gauze piece), Pichu (cotton) and required Dahanopkaran are kept ready for use.

### PRADHANA KARMA

**Aasana for Agni Karma:** It should be according to diseased site.

**Painting and Drapping:** The diseased area is isolated and paint (Prakshalana) with suitable Kashaya.

**Dagdhkarma:** After carefully considering the symptoms of the disease, the vital spots and the strength of the patient, the physician should perform *Agni Karma*. On the diseased skin of the patient, the *Samyak Dagdha Vrana* is done by suitable *Dahanopkaran*. After making *Samyak Dagdha Vrana* immediately apply cooling agent like *Kumari gel*, *Ghrta* to subside burning pain. Here, we can do dusting of *Yashtimadhu Churna* and *Samyak Dagdha Vrana* is covered with *Plota* (gauze piece) and proper *Patta Bandhana* (bandaging) is applied.

#### **PASHCHAT KARMA**

After *Agni Karma*, it should be observed for any complications. If there may sepsis in the wound, treat the patient accordingly. All the *Pathya-Apathya* 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.

#### **SAMYAKA DAGDHA VRANA LAKSHANA**

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

#### **AGNIKARMA IN MODERN ERA**

In modern medicine era, there is no use of therapeutic 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.

#### **Electro Cautery**

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, papilloma and also to control the bleeding during surgical procedures.

#### **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, 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 haemostatic 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.

#### **PROBABLE MODE OF ACTION OF AGNI KARMA ACCORDING TO AYURVEDA**

##### **1. Effect on Dosh**

*Agni Karma* is considered as best therapy for *Vata* and *Kapha Dosh* because *Agni* possesses *Ushna*, *Sukshma*, *Tikshna*, *Aashukari Guna* which are opposite to *Vata* and *Kapha*. It removes *Srotovarodha* and increases the *Rasa Rakta Samvahana* to the affected site and relieves pain and inflammation at the affected site.

##### **2. Effect on Dhatu**

Therapeutic heat transferred by *Agni Karma* increase the *Dhatwagni*, so metabolism at *Dhatu* level increases which helps to digest the *Ama Dosh*.

#### **ACCORDING TO MODERN SCIENCE**

The heat therapy, which is given at the local or affected area increase the blood circulation with metabolism by causing vasodilation, increase in the elasticity of connective tissue and exudation of fluid with increase in white blood cells and antibodies. Local tissue metabolism rate is increased by warming, which helps in healing. As there is an increase in local metabolism, the waste products that are generated get excreted, which normalize the blood circulation, resulting in decreased intensity of pain. Heat may stimulate lateral Spinothalamic tract, which causes stimulation of descending pain inhibitory fibers which again causes release of endogenous opioid peptide that binds with the opioid receptors to Substantia Gelatinosa of Rolando, leading to inhibition of release of P-substance with blockade of transmission of pain sensation.

#### **CONCLUSION**

*Agni Karma* and its uses are described in Ayurveda much earlier than its utility was discovered by surgeons of rest medicine branches. The technique and equipment have become advance but the basic principles are still the same. *Agni Karma* works on the law of pain management. It works on *Doshadhatu* level, CVS, CNS, musculoskeletal system, tissue regeneration and sweat glands. The procedure is simple, economical and required no hospitalization and could be done at the OPD itself. After *Agni Karma* there is no chance of reoccurrence of disease. 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. So, it can be concluded that this *Agnikarma* can be utilized as pain management modality, as preventive measure, as post-operative procedure and as a haemostatic manner.

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