



ELEMENTARY REVIEW OF AGNIKARMA AN AYURVEDIC PAIN KILLER

Satyanarain*	P.G. Scholar, Department of Shalya Tantra, Parul institute of Ayurveda, Parul University, Limda, Vadodara, Gujarat. *Corresponding Author
Hemant Toshikhane	Dean & Professor, Faculty of Ayurveda, Parul University, Limda, Vadodara, Gujarat.
GS Chakraborty	Professor, Parul Institute of Pharmacy & Research, Parul University, Limda, Vadodara, Gujarat.
Snigdha Das Mandal	Associate Professor, Parul Institute of Pharmacy & Research, Parul University, Limda, Vadodara, Gujarat.

ABSTRACT

Agnikarma or thermal cauterization is one among the Anushastras or para-surgical technique mentioned in all literatures of Ayurveda. Agnikarma as defined by Acharya Sushruta is one of the treatment in which with the help of particular shalaka the Agni is transferred into the tissue. Agnikarma is stated as more important than ksara or other surgical management because of non-recurrence of diseases treated with Agni and its success in diseases incurable by drugs, instrument and Ksara. Agni having usna, Tikshna, Sukshma and Ashukari properties pacify vitiated vata and kapha dosha bringing them to their normal function. Sushruta says the pain aggravated by vata in twak, mamsa, sira, snayu, sandhi and asthi. Chronic wounds having some hard elevated tissue, Cystic lesions, haemorrhoids, tumour, fistula, sinus lymphadenopathy, filarial, skin tag, hernia, joints disorders, to stop bleeding from cut vessels. In current practises we are using Agnikarma for all the said purposes but most frequently for analgesic properties of Agnikarma.

KEYWORDS : *Agnikarma*, Analgesic, Parasurgical procedure, Therapeutic Burn

INTRODUCTION

Agnikarma is practised in our country since many centuries. Acharya Sushruta [1] has documented the details of *Agnikarma*. *Agnikarma* is an strength of Ayurvedic surgeons which has been used widely in the clinical practice since ancient times. *Agnikarma* is mainly indicated in *Shoola pradhana*, *Vata* and *Kaphaja vyadhis*. Mainly of two types *Ruksha Agnikarma* and *Snigdha Agnikarma*. *Panchadhatu shalaka* is been used for the purpose of *Agnikarma* irrespective of the structure involved or level of the pathology. But according to the classic, selectivity of *Dahanopakarana* [2] depends on the disease concerned. Most of the painful conditions of musculoskeletal system comprises bones, joints, tendons, ligaments etc [3]. The *Dahnopakaranas* mentioned for the diseases of these locations are *Snigdha dravyas* such as *Kshaudra*, *Guda*, *Taila*, *Vasa*, *Madhuchista* etc., as they have the deep heat penetration capacity with a greater latent heat period.

Acharya Sushruta has also mentioned prevention of recurrence of various disorders by advocating the parasurgical procedures like *Agnikarma* emerged as an integral part of the Ayurvedic therapeutics. These same principles are adopted in advanced technologies like cauterization, diathermy, radiation therapy, laser therapy etc. Efficient pain management has always been a hurdle. A pain-free life is the longing of everyone. *Agnikarma* has been explained as an *Anushastras* having great importance in the management of diseases. All Ayurvedic classics have described *Agnikarma* as therapeutic in different disorders. In *Agnikarma* there is less recurrence of the diseases if once they are treated and cured by it. This *Agnikarma* can be utilized as preventive measure, as post-operative procedure, such as a haemostatic manner.

AGNIKARMA:

Agnikarma is one among the Para surgical procedures which have been mentioned in Ayurvedic literature [4]. The term *Agnikarma* has two words *Agni* + *Karma* = *Agnikarma* i.e a procedure performed with the help of *Agni* is known as *Agnikarma*.

**INDICATIONS:**

- Disorders involving Twaka, Mamsa, Sira, Sanayu, Asthi and Sandhi
- Diseases like Granthi, Arsha, Bhagandara, Arbuda, Apachi, Shlipada, Charamkila, Tilkalaka, Antra vridhi, Nadi vrana etc
- Due to Vata causing severe pain in the areas especially in utchhrita, kathin and supta mamsa (where muscles are functioning adequately).
- In emergency conditions where Sira (veins) are cut, discharging sinuses and acute or chronic hemorrhage (rakta strava) [5]
- It can be carried out in all kinds of pain like Gridhrasi (Sciatica) due to Vata, after excision of cysts, mass, warts, tumor, fistula, and also Shiroroga. [6]

In *twak*, *mamsa*, *sira*, *snayu*, *sandhi*, *asthi* and *atiruja* conditions, *Agnikarma* is done at the place of *Vedana* (pain) .

CONTRAINDICATION:

- Nishedha Kala (unfavorable time) - refers to the period or environmental condition during which *Agnikarma* cannot be performed on any patient except in a case of an emergency. Acharayas have referred to Sharad ritu and Grishma ritu unfavorable for carrying out the procedure.

[7]

- Rogi Nishedha (unfavorable patient) - refers to the patients who stand rejected for the procedure due to their vulnerability of the increase in the intensity of disorder based on their prakriti or body constitution like
- Pitta prakriti people
- Raktapitta
- Atisari (diarrhoea)
- Durbala (weak)
- Bala (child)
- Bhiru (one who is afraid to get the procedure done)
- Vrani (one who is inflicted with many wounds). [8]
- Person who are unfit for Swedana therapy.
- Medical Contraindication includes:
 - Sensitive skin,
 - Acute trauma,
 - Venous obstruction
 - Arterial insufficiency

PROBABLE MODE OF ACTION OF AGNIKARMA

Agni possesses *Ushna*, *Tikshna*, *Sukshma* and *Aashu kari* *Gunas*. Heat from red hot *Shalaka* (Peating Metal probe) is transferred as therapeutic heat to *Twakdhātu* which produces *Samyak Dagdha Vrana*. From *Twakdhātu* following are the different postulates on this therapeutic heat which may act in subsiding the diseases.

- First, due to *Ushna*, *Tikshna*, *Sukshma*, *Ashukari Guna* it may removes the *Srotavarodha*, pacifies the vitiated *Vata* and *Kapha Doshā* and maintains their equilibrium.
- Secondly, the heat can increase the *Rasa Rakta Samvahana* (blood circulation) to affected site. Improved blood circulation to the affected part flushes away the pain producing substances and patient gets relief from symptoms.
- Third, therapeutic heat may increase the *Dhatwagni*, so metabolism of *Dhatu* becomes proper and digests the *Amadosha* from the affected site and promotes proper nutrition from *Purva Dhatu*.
- 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 Doshā* and in this way vitiated *Doshas* come to the phase of equilibrium and patients may get relief from the symptoms.

CONCLUSION

In today's era of fast paced lifestyle palliative care has become more important than ever. *Agnikarma's* importance lies in its action, because of its ability to cure those diseases which can't be cured by the *Bheshaja*, *Shastra* and *Ksharakarma*. And it gives results more quickly than other ways to cure *ruja*. *Agni* acts directly on *Vata Kapha Doshā* eases the causative factor of pain. The cause of pain possibly is a result of the accumulation of metabolic waste materials in the tissues and an improved flow of blood in the area is the possible mechanism that is responsible for removal of these substances and relieving pain. Another possibility is that the pain releasing mechanism is associated with muscle relaxation.

Worldwide there is extensive morbidity due to musculoskeletal pain. This is problematic in developing countries due to the high cost and access to therapy. *Agnikarma* is an ancient surgical treatment for pain. Which has potential to serve humanity in palliative care in long run with very few side effects.

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