

COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW ON AGNIKARMA CHIKITSA (THERMAL CAUTERIZATION) – AYURVEDA CLASSICAL ASPECT

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ABSTRACT

Agnikarma (Thermal Cautery) is an Ancient Medical Technique described and followed by Indian system of medicine, Ayurveda. The technique of *Agnikarma* has been designed to relieve various muscular and joint disorders. It is the most important procedure of the *Shalya Chikitsa* (surgical treatment). It comprises of two words i.e *Agni* and *Karma*. *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 come under *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 Puruṣa Samnaya Sidhant Agni* that exit in the body (*Bhutagni, Dhatwagni, etc.*) have similar properties that exit outside the body. This article is aimed to illustrate the classical aspects of *Agnikarma*.

KEYWORDS: Ayurveda, *Agnikarma*, Pain, *Shalaka*.

INTRODUCTION

The word *Agnikarma* consists of ‘*Agni*’ + ‘*Karma*’ i.e. Heat + Procedure.

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Agni

Vyutpatti: The word Agni is a masculine gender (Pullinga Vachi Shabda). The word Agni has been derived from the Dhatu 'Agigato'. 'Agni' obtained by the Lopa of word 'Agi' and 'ni'. The word 'Agni' has derived from the Dhatu 'Agativyapnoti' which spreads very fast everywhere. "Since it acquires the highest position or most important position in the body compared to other." "Which has a direction always towards up."^[1]

Nirukti: The word Agni is having two kinds of Nirukti and are depending upon its Swarupa and Swabhava. According to Swarupa Agni is an entity which spreads to various parts or organs.

According to Swabhava the thing which moves in upward direction, is called Agni.^[2]

Nirukti of Agnikarma

The following can be taken as definitions of the terminology 'Agnikarma'.

'Agnaukarma Homey Agnihotradau Agnikarma tatah Krtve Iti Smruti, Agnikaryadayo Anyatra'

'Granthiyadin Rogeshu Dagdha Shalakadibhihi Prayojye Dahakarye'

'Agnina Kritva Yat Karma, Agne Sambandhi Va Yat Karma, Tatagnikarma'

From the above Shloka it can be understood that the term "Agnikarma" was used in multivariate meanings in all the conditions in which the use of Agni was unexceptional. It also points towards the normal and usual, physical behavior of Agni i.e. burning. In Veda and Purana 'Agnikarma' refers to the use of Agni in the Yagas such as Agnihotra, and also other deeds which are accomplished by the use of Agni. Ayurveda point of view Agnikarma has a more specific meaning. According to Dalhana there are two important usages to be stressed upon, "Agnina Krutva Yat Karma" and "Agne Sambandhi Karma". The first usage points to the innate characteristics of Agni and its Karma thereby. This Karma can be considered as of Agni in Jaivasvarupa, Agni Mahabhuta or Agni which is external and in its gross form. Agnikarma refers to the actives of Agni due to its innate Guna and also to its effective usage in Chikitsa.^[3]

Definition of AgniKarma: *AgniKarma* word made up with combination of two words - *Agni* and *Karma* (i.e. fire and procedure). In short it can be said as a procedure done by Agni for treating a disease.^[4]

History of Agnikarma

- **In Charaka Samhita:** Acharya Charaka give detail description of AgniKarma is comes under thirty six *Upakramas* of *Vrana* in the chapter of “*DwiVraniyaChikitsa*”. Also *AgniKarma* used in different disease as in *Gulmachikitsa*; *Bhagandar-chikitsa* *taildagdha*; *Pleehodar*; *Arshachikitsa*; *Visarpachikitsa*; *Arditchikitsa*.^[5]
- **In Sushruta Samhita:** *Sushruta* mentioned the *AgniKarma* as supreme in all the para surgical procedures. A separate chapter in *Sutra-Sthana* with details about every aspect of *AgniKarma*, denotes its importance in the treatment, during those period. *Sushruta* has referred Agni in *Agropaharaniya*, as *Upayantra* and *Anushstra*.^[6]
- **Ashtang Samgraha:** Details Description of *AgniKarma* found in 40th chapter of *Sutra Sthana* of *Ashtang Samgraha*.^[7]
- **In Ashtang Hridaya:** A detailed description of *AgniKarma* is described in 30th chapter of *Sutra Sthana* of *Ashtang Hridaya*.^[8]

Dahnopakarana used for Agnikarma

In classics, there are different *Dahnopakarana*, have been described during the descriptions of disease cured by *AgniKarma*. *Dahnopakarana* means accessories like drugs, articles and substances used for *AgniKarma*. Each of them is having their own peculiarity in *Dahnopakarana*. Pippali, loha suchi varti tamraaja jambu sneha majja rajata shakrit godanta ghrita yashtimadhu kansy ect. Objects are used for Agnikarma. Acharya Charaka has described various Agnikarma Sadhana for Sukumar and Asukumar out of these Ghrita, Taila, Vasa, Majja, Wax are to be used in Sukumar person and Lohashalaka and Madhu in Strong person.^{[9],[10]}

Objects used in Agnikarma according to disease condition^[11]

- **Twak Dhatu (skin):** Pippali, Ajashakrit (Excreta of goat), Godanta (Cows teeth), Shara (Arrow head), Shalaka (Metal rod) - Loha Shalaka i.e. made of Iron.
- **Mamsa Dhatu (muscle):** Jambavoushta: a piece of black stone made like a Jambuphala (fruit of *Syzygium cumini*, *Eugenia jambolana* Lam), Rods of other metals like Tamra, Rajata etc are used.

Sira, Snayu, Sandhi and Asthi Dhatus (vessels, ligaments, joints and Bones): Kshaudra or Madhu (Honey), Guda (Jaggery), Sneha- Ghrita, Taila, Vasa and Majja.

Indications of Agnikarma^[12]

- Severe pain caused by Vata in the skin, muscles, veins, ligaments, bony joints and bones
- Pain in sciatica like diseases
- Arsh, kadambar- Agnikarma should be done after *chhedana karma*.
- Tumours, haemorrhoids, fistula in ano, glands in neck region. In fistula in ano Agnikarma should be done after *Bhedana karma*.
- Filariasis, warts on skin, moles, hernia, tearing of the joints and veins, sinus, profuse haemorrhages etc.

Agnikarma contraindications^[13]

- Pitta prakriti
- Ruptured viscera
- Generalized weakness
- Old age
- Internal bleeding
- Children
- Aswedya vyadhi described in samhita like Kshaya, Timir, Raktapitta etc.

Suitable Time for Agnikarma (Agnikarma Kala): Thermal cautery can be done in all season, except Sharada (autumn) and Grishma (summer). In Sharada there is a Prakopa of Pitta and Agnikarma also aggravates Pitta which may lead to be Pitta Prakopa Avastha, As Agnikarma is contraindicated in Sharada and Grishma Ritu, in diseases of emergency, it can be done in all seasons after adopting counter methods. Dalhanacharya mentions Sheetachadana, Sheeta Virya Bhojana and Pradeha with Sheeta Virya Dravya (covering the body or site of burning with moist cloth, use of cold foods and applying cooling pastes), as the counter methods to mitigate the effect of burning.

Table no. 1: Types of Agnikarma.^{[14],[15]}

Sr.no.	According to Rogashraya-Sushrut (Dahana Vishesha)	Ashtang Hridaya	According to Dravya used	According to Site	According to organ involvement
1.	Valaya (Circular)	Arthachandra (Semi lunar)	Snigdha Agnikarma	<i>Sthanika</i> (local) : <i>Kadara, Arsha, Vicharchika</i>	Tvakadagdha
2.	Bindhu (Dotted)	Swastika (Four tailed mark)	Ruksha Agnikarma	<i>Sthanantariya</i> (systemic) : <i>Apachi, Gridhrasi</i>	Mamsadagdha
3.	Vilekha (Straight line)	Ashtapada (Eight tailed mark)			Sira Snayu Dagdha (in emergency condition)
4.	Pratisarana (Wide spread)	Valaya, Bindu, Vilekha, Pratisarana (4)			Asthi Sandhi Dagdha (in emergency condition)

Proper instrumentation (Agropaharaniyani)- The Roga and Rogi Pariksha should be done properly for the correct diagnosis and for identifying the structures involved in the condition (Sira, Snayu, Sandhi and Asthi). Agnikarma room should be well prepared with all required Agropaharaniyani described by Acharya Susruta.

- Prepare Triphala Kashaya for Prakshalana of the local part of patient.
- Yashtimadhu Churna, small pieces of Kumari Patra, Plota (gauze piece), Pichu (cotton), and Agni Srotas, Shalakas etc. are kept ready for use.
- The Shalaka should be heated up to become red hot on fire

Procedure of Agnikarma

Poorva karma

- Necessary equipments for Agnikarma should be kept ready.
- Patient should be given food which is Sheeta and Picchila.
- In diseases such as Mooda Garbha, Ashmari, Bhagandara, Udara Roga, Arshas and Mukha Rogas, Agnikarma should be done without taking food.

Pradhana karma- Careful assessment of the symptoms of the diseases, the vital spots and Rogi Bala and Ritu. By considering the above mentioned things doing the Agnikarma by selecting the material heating it and placing over the site for required time.

Paschat karma-Application of paste of Ghrita and Madhu to the burnt area, Application of paste of drugs which are Snigdha and Sheeta Virya.

Signs of proper Agnikarma- Samyak Dagdha Lakshana^[14]

- **Skin** - production of sound, bad odour, constriction of skin.
- **Mamsa Dagdha**- appearance of colour like that of the pigeon (ashy, dark grey), mild swelling, pain, dryness and constriction of the wound
- **Sira Snayu Dagdha** - ulcer becoming black and elevated, cessation of exudation
- **Sandhi and Asthi** - appearance of dryness and slight red colour, roughness and firmness.

Pathya – Apathya- All the Pathya – Apathya mentioned for Vrana in general are to be considered. Susruta has dedicated a separate chapter Vranitopasaniya for the description of Pathya and Apathya of Vranita. All the descriptions as per the above mentioned Adhyaya are important in the case of Dagdha Vrana. Practically it is found that wetting the burnt surface often causes increase in pain and discharge and exposes the area to super added infections, hence it has to be avoided. Agnikarma is contraindicated in the people who have Pitta predominant Prakriti.

Complications of Agnikarma^[16]

- *Plushta Dagdha*
- *Durdagdha*
- *Atidagdha*
- *Marmaghata*
- *Daha*
- *Dushtavrana*

CONCLUSION

Agnikarma is one of the most widely used procedure in Shalyatantra. *Agnikarma* technique has effect on disorder of *Asthi* (bone), *Sandhi* (joint's), *Snayu* (ligament and tendon). Improperly performed *Agnikarma* may lead to severe burning sensation, increased pain, destruction of tissue, suppuration, bleeding, non healing ulcer formation etc. Agnikarma should be practiced under all aseptic conditions by a trained Vaidya. Agnikarma is very effective in acute pain management. Agnikarma therapy should be promoted on all grounds so that it will be proved as a boon for pain management and disease treatment in utmost number of patients.

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