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A conceptual study of Agnikarm in ayurveda: A review article

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Abstract

Ayurveda is the everlasting supreme science of medicine because it deals with promotion of health and curing diseases. Sushruta known as father of surgery has described various surgical and para surgical measures. Sushruta has mentioned different methods of management of diseases, such as Bhesaja Karma, Ksharkarma, Agnikarma and Shastrakarma. Agnikarma is one such procedure and it is believed that disease treated with this never reoccurs.

Pain has always been a distressing feeling or the unpleasant sensory and emotional experience. There is a need to find a way to relieve pain without much suffering to the patient and Agnikarma is one of the sound ways to do so. It is therapeutic burning with special tools on specific sites according to the disease. It is a parasurgical procedure that is utilized as curative procedure, or as postoperative procedure or in hemostatic manner. In Ayurveda Vata Dosha is responsible mainly for various types of Ruja or pain in the body and Agnikarma is one of the best method to pacifying Vata and Kapha Dosha and hence relieves pain. In modern time also it is used and it is termed as therapeutic burns or cauterization.

Keywords: Agnikarma, ayurveda, sushruta, cauterization

Introduction

The word Agnikarma is made of two terms: Agni+Karma that means fire and procedure respectively or the procedure done by Agni for treating disease. This is therapeutic heat burn therapy which helps in relieving pain in various painful conditions. As mentioned in our Ayurveda classics Agni having Ushna Guna (hot property) leads to the pacification of Vata-Kapha Doshas and further increases Dhatwagni. In doing so, it breaks the pathology of the disease along with reduction in pain. Agnikarma plays a significant role in relieving pain in diseases with musculoskeletal.

Acharya sushruta is the pioneer of the field of surgery. Sushruta has mentioned different methods of management of diseases, such as Bhesaja karma, Kshara Karma, Agni karma, Shastrakarma and Raktamokshana^[2]. In that Agni karma means application of Agni directly or indirectly with the help of different materials to relieve the patient from disease. The word Agnikarma comprises Agni+karma. The procedure in which Samyak Dagdha Vrana produced by Agni with the help of various Dravyasis called as Agnikarma. In modern terminology, "Agnikarma" therapy can be termed as "Intentional therapeutic heat burns"

Historical View

Vedas

1. In Atharvaveda, Agni is accepted as God and Bhesaja in the reference of Krimi.
2. In Rigveda Agnikarma Chikitsa available in the reference of obstetric disease.
3. In Yajurveda as a treatment of Sheeta.
4. In Samavaeda, importance of Agni is proved by the presence of the chapter known as Agneykanda.

Charak Samhita

Charaka explained the Agnikarma Chikitsa in the reference of Shastra Pranidhana in 11th chapter of Sutra sthana. Charaka also explained Agnikarma Chikitsa in Divarniyaadhyaya Chikitsa as a treatment of Vrana. In reference of treatment of Mansaja Roga in Vividhashitapitiya Adhyaya. In Gulma Chikitsa, at reference of KaphajaGulma. In Shvayathu Chikitsa, in reference of Granthi Roga and Bhagandara Chikitsa. In Udara Chikitsa, in reference of Pleehodara Roga and Yakritodara Chikitsa. In Arsha Chikitsa, in reference of Arshashastra Karma, Kshara Karma and Agnikarma.

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In Visarpa Chikitsa, in reference of Granthi Visarpa Chikitsa. In Visha Chikitsa, in reference of Visha Vega Chikitsa. In Vatavyadhi Chikitsa, in reference of Gridhrasi Roga Chikitsa. In Siddhisthan, in context of Trimarmiya Chikitsa and in reference of Ardhavabhedaka Roga Chikitsa. Acharya Suśruta has given great contribution to Ayurveda regarding Agnikarma Chikitsa.

Sushrutasaṃhita

Many references are available in SushrutaSaṃhita regarding Agnikarma. In Sutrasthana, in context of Yantravidhi Adhyaya as an Upayantra. A detailed Agnikarma Vidhi Adhyaya has described separately. In Pranasta Shalya Vigyaniya Adhyaya as a Shalyaniraharana Vidhi. In Vatavyadhi Chikitsa, in reference of Sira, Snayu, Sandhi, Asthigat Vyadhi. In Arsha Roga Chikitsa. In Ashmari Chikitsa, for management of Vrana. In Bhagandara Chikitsa, for management of Vrana. In reference of Granthiapachaya-Arbuda Chikitsa. In reference of Vridhiupadhansha Chikitsa. In Kshudra Roga Chikitsa.

Ashtangahridaya

In Ashtanga HridayaSutrasthana chapter 30 deals with Agnikarmavidhi and there are many other references of other disease. In Harita Saṃhita, Agnikarma indicated as important types of treatment out of eight types of treatment. In the context of Vatavyadhi, Chakradatta has explained the Agnikarma regarding the disease Gridhrasi. In the context of Vatavyadhi, Yogaratnakara has explained the Agnikarma regarding the disease Gridhrasi.

Various Dravya used in Agnikarma ^[1]

- Snigdha:** Madhu, Guda, Sneha Padartha in diseases situated in Sira, Snayu, Asthi, Sandhi.
- Ruksha:** Performed with Pippal, Ajashakrit, Godanta, Shar, Shalaka, for diseases situated in Twak.
- Jambostha and other Dhatus are used in Mansagata diseases.

Dahana Visheshā ^[2]

The Akriti or shape formed by red hot Shalaka over the site while performing Agnikarma is known as Dahana Visheshā. Acharya Sushruta mentioned four Dahana Prakara or Visheshā which is as follows:

- Valaya:** Circular shape
- Bindu:** Dotted shape, Acharya Dalhana explained that Shalaka should be of pointed shape.
- Vilekha:** Parallel line
- Pratisarana:** It means rubbing at site by heated Shalaka and without making any specific shape.

Acharya Dalhana subdivided Vilekha further into three types

- Tiryak:** Oblique
- Riju:** Straight
- Vakra:** Zigzag

Acharya Vagbhatt added three more Akriti along with these four Akriti mentioned above

- Ardhachandra:** Crescent shape
- Swastika:** Four tailed mark
- Ashtapada:** Eight tailed mark.

Materials used for Agnikarma

Pippali, AjaShakrut, Godanta, Shara, Shalaka, Jambavastha, Dhatu, Madhu, Madhuchista Guda, Vasa Ghruta, Taila,

Yashtimadhu, Suchi, Varti, Suryakanta.

These dahan upkarana are distributed in 3 categories

- Pippali, Ajashakrut, Godanta, Shara, Shalaka are Useful in Agnikarma Chikitsa of Twakdhatu (skin)
- Loha, Jambavastha- it Useful in AgnikarmaChikitsa of Mamsadhatu.
- Madhu, Guda, Sneha. are Useful in AgnikarmaChikitsa of Sira, Snayu, Sandhi, Asthidhatu.

Classification of Agnikarma

1. According to Dravya

- Snigdha Agnikarma: Madhu, Ghrita, Taila etc. are used for Sira, Snayu, Sandhi, Asthi type of Agnikarma.
- Ruksha Agnikarma: Pippali, Shalaka, Godanta are used for Twak and Mamsa Dagdha.

2. According to Site

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

3. According to Disease

- In the diseases like Arsha, Kadara etc, it should be done after surgical excision (Chhedan).
- In the diseases like fistula, sinus etc. it should be done after surgical incision (Bhedana)
- In the diseases like Krimidanta, it should be done after filling by the Guda

4. According to Akriti: As described earlier in Dahana Visheshā.

5. According to Dhatu: Sushruta gives the meaning Twak Dagdha, Mamsa Dagdha, Sira-snayu Dagdha and Asthi Dagdha. But in practice, many Chikitsaka are giving their own opinions regarding Dhatu i.e. Suvarna, Rajata, Loha, Tamra, Kansya, Panchdhatu etc.

Pre-operative Measures ^[3]

Proper assessments should be made before going for the Agnikarma. Patient counseling is very vital before the process so it should be properly done. Instruments required during the process should be kept ready. Patients should be given Picchila Anna before the procedure except for the patients like in obstructed labour, urolithiasis, fistula, piles, abdominal diseases and oral cavity diseases where the patients should be kept empty stomach.

Operative Measures

Proper examination and cleaning of the site should be done. Site should be marked with a pen or marker and then Agnikarma should be performed. Agnikarma is done until the Samyak Dagdha Lakshana appears.

Post operative Measures ^[4]

Madhu and Ghrita should be applied to the Samyak Dagdha wound after procedure. According to Acharya Sushruta Madhuuchistha ghrita is considered as the best Ropak Ghrita in all kinds of Agnidagdha Vrana so this should be applied to the patient and proper diet should be taken.

Indication of Agnikarma ^[5]

Vatakantaka, Shiroroga, Ardhavabhedaka, Vartmakoga, Pakshmakopa, Shlista Vartma, Vishavartma Alaji. Arbuda Puyalasa. Abhisvanda Adhimantha, Lagana Medoj

Oshtharoga, Danta Naili, Krimidanta, Adhidanta, Shitadanta, Dantavruddhi, Jalurbulu, Arsha, Nasa Arsha Karnarsha. Lingarsha, Bhagandara, Chipa Kurakha, Jatimani, Mashaka. Kadara, Yoniarsha, Valmika Tilakalaka. Charmakilai, Vatamashula Vishwucht, Galagand, Gandamala, Apachi, Granti, Antravruddhi, Shlipadu, Nadvirana, Upadvansha, Gulma, Vilambika. Sanyasa. Unmada, Yakruta & Plihodara, Shonita Atipravrutti. Shira Sandhi Cheda, Visarpa.

Contraindications of Agnikarma ^[6]

Pitta Prakruli, Bhinnakostha, Daurbalya, Vriddha, Antah Shonita, AnuddhrataShalya, Bala, Bhiru, Multiple Frana, Balaka Who is contraindicated for Swedana (sudation) therapy Swedana is contraindicated for the person and suffering from:-Pandu, Atisara, Kshaya, Guda Bhrumsha, Udararoga, NasaSanga, Chhardi. Shoshita Ojakshaya, Vigagdha, RaktaPitta, Sthula Ajirna, Kroddha. Trushna. AdhyaRogt. Garbhini Prameha, Ruksha, Daurbalya, Visha, Kshudha, Timira, Kshata. According to Charaka Agnikarma should not be done in the Frana of Snayu, Marma, Netra. Kushtaand Vrana with Vishaandshalya.

Features of proper agnikarma ^[7]

Twak dagdha: Production of crackling sound, bad odour and contraction of skin are signs of proper agnikarma.

Mamsa dagdha: Color like that of pigeon i.e. ashy, dark grey, mild swelling. Mild pain, dry contracted wound are the signs of proper mamsa dagdha.

Sira snayu dagdha: Black colourations, elevation of site, stoppage of discharge are signs of proper sira snayu dagdha.

Sandhi asthi dagdha: Dryness, dark red coloration, Roughness and stability of part are the signs and symptoms of Sandhi asthi dagdha.

Agni karma kala ^[8]

According to Acharya Sushruta, Agni karma can be done in all seasons, except Sharad ritu (autumn) and Grishma ritu (summer). It is because in Sharad season there is a Prakopa of pitta and Agni karma also aggravates pitta which may lead to Pitta prakopa, leading to production of various disorders due to vitiated Pitta. Agnikarma is contraindicated in Grishma ritu as it is the hot season which will again cause Pitta aggrrevation. But, in emergency. Agni karma can be done in any seasons.

Importance of Agnikarma

According to Acharya Sushruta basically Agnikarma is used in two manners, one for the Roga Unmulana that is disease cure and other for pain management. Acharya Sushruta and Acharya Vagbhata both have given superior place to Agnikarma as compared to Ksharakarma among Dahan Kriyas. It helps by closure of bleeding vessels and also does coagulation resulting in haemostasis. It is considered as superior procedure as it eradicates diseases from its root thus prevents the recurrence of disease. It has Shamaka effect on both Vata and Kapha doshas.

Complication of Agni Karma: ^[9]

1) **Plushta Dagdha:** When Twak Varna gets Vikrut or there will be just because Discolouration of skin is known as Plushta Dagdha. Vagbhata renamed it as Tuttha Dagdha. Chiktisa of Plusta Dagdha - Usnoupcharta 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:** Syptoms 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.

Probable Mode of Action of Agnikarma

The diseases in which Agnikarma is indicated are due to vitiation of Vata and Kapha so it is considered better therapy to pacify these Doshas. Also due to Ushana, Sukshama, Teekshana, Ashukari Guna of Agni, it pacifies Vata-Kapha Doshas.

Ayurveda believes in the concept of Dhatwagni Where each and every Dhatu possess its own Dhatwagni. When this Agni becomes low, diseases begin to manifest and in this condition, Agnikarma works efficiently. When external heat is applied at the site through red hot Shalaka the Dhatwagni increases which helps in digestion of the aggravated Doshas thus curing the disease.

Application of Agni or local heat increases the local temperature which enhances the perfusion and does efficient delivery of oxygen to the tissues. Because of the better blood perfusion ischemia and degeneration related tissue injury gets healed. There is clearance of local inflammatory mediators and so inflammation is resolved and finally pain is reduced. Agnikarma also stimulates DPI (descending pain Inhibiting mechanism) which further stimulates CNS. After this there is release of endogenous opioids in proopiomelanocortin (POMC) cells in the arcuate nucleus and in the brain stem and thus reduction of pain occurs.

The probable mode of action of Agnikarma can also be explained through the gate control theory of Pain. This theory explains that non-painful input closes the nerve gates to painful input which prevents pain sensation from travelling to the CNS. This theory explains how non-painful sensations can override and reduce painful sensations. The local heat act as touch stimulus which increases large fiber activity and it has inhibitory effect on pain signals ^[10]. According to Hoff's principle the basal metabolism of the body increases by certain Percentage for every 1 degree rise in body temperature. Rise in temperature induces relaxation of muscles and hence muscle spasm with inflammation and pain gets reduced. Muscle relaxes most readily when tissues are warm which in turn reduces the spasm, inflammation and pain ^[11].

Discussion

In Agnikarma Chiktisa 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 Chiktisa. 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)

- 1) 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 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.

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. To the patients, it is very convenient and economic.
3. Agnikarma gives excellent results in several ailments especially in the pain management when performed under skilled guidance.

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