

A SYSTEMIC REVIEW OF AGNIKARMA AND MOXIBUSTION ON SANDHIGATA VATA

Supreeth Joyal Lobo¹, Chathurbhuja Bhuyan², Arun Kumar Das³

¹M.S (Ayu), Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Shalya Tantra, Gopabandhu Ayurveda Mahavidyalaya, Utkal University, Odisha, India

²M.D (GAU) Ph.D., Former Professor, Post Graduate and Research Institute (IPGTRA), Jamnagar, Gujarat, India

³M.D (Ayu) Ph.D., Principal, Govt. Ayurveda College, Bolangir, Odisha, India

Email: sadhakballi@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Agnikarma, an ancient para surgical modality is lauded for its multifaceted results. Foremost written record of the utility of heat therapy in squashing ailments was found in Ancient Ayurvedic treatises. *Sushrut* have elaborated the concept considering the feasibility and the effectiveness of use of *Agnikarma* in numerous diseases which are still applicable in the present. Moxibustion is an important procedure in ancient Chinese Medicine which also involves the burning of specific sites on the body surface with the aim to alleviate pain and cure other diseases like *Agnikarma*. 'Tau-dam' is a basically traditional Himalayan therapy, practiced by the rural Himalayan people for the disease like liver troubles, stomach troubles, backache etc. This therapy was also practiced by the ancient people and is mentioned in Ayurveda as *Agnikarma*. The disease *Sandhigata Vata* is prone to be manifested in the knee joint. The dominance of *Vata dosha* is seen in the pathogenesis of *Sandhigata Vata*. The symptoms of *Sandhigata Vata* described in *Sushrut Samhita*¹⁴ are *Sandhi vedana* (Joint pain) and *Shotha* (swelling), due to these symptoms stiffness and crepitus develop, which may be correlated with disease osteoarthritis (O.A) in modern parlance. *Sushrut* has mentioned one of the effective lines of treatment for the *Sandhigata Vata* as *Agnikarma*. Numerous studies conducted on the effect of *Agnikarma* on *Sandhigata Vata* suggest that the *Agnikarma* is most efficient in the management.

Keywords: *Agnikrama*, Moxibustion, *Tau dam*, *Sandhigata Vata*

INTRODUCTION

Agnikarma, an ancient para surgical modality is lauded for its multifaceted results. Foremost written record of the utility of heat therapy in squashing ailments was found in Ancient Ayurvedic treatises. Out of many of the procedures of management of diseases in Ayurveda *Agnikarma* holds a prime position. *Sushrut*¹ have

elaborated the concept considering the feasibility and the effectiveness of use of *Agnikarma* in numerous diseases which are still applicable in the present. Ayurveda suggested thermal therapy techniques for treating certain diseases known as *Agnikarma Vidhi*. *Agnikarma* means the procedure done with 'Agni'-

Agnina Kriyathe YathKarma. Agni is one among the *Panchamahabhoothas*. In *Susrut Samhitha*, Agni is described among both '*Upayanthras*' and '*Anusasthras*'. *Upayanthras* are similar to *Yanthras* and can be used instead of them to perform their actions. *Anusasthras* are simple and easy to use than *Sasthras*. During the period of *Susrut*, *Agnikarma* got importance in the field of treatment as a curative measure of many diseases and became one among the parasurgical measures in *Salyathanthra*.

AGNIKARMA

The two words *Agni* and *Karma* combined forms a unique term or procedure i.e. *Agnikarma* which means "the action / *Karma* takes place by upward spreading nature of *Agni*".

Paryayvachi Shabd as of Agnikarma (Synonyms)

Agni Chikitsa, Agni Dagdha, Agninotra, Agnikarma, Agni Karya, Dagdhakarma Dahakarma, Dahankarma, Jwala karma, Paachan Karma, Tapana Karma, Vahni Dagdha

It is one of the parasurgical procedures of branding by fire (Thermal cautery). *Agni* is mentioned as an *Upayantra*.²

Definition:

The word *Agnikarma* consists of two words '*Agni*' + '*Karma*' i.e. Heat + Procedure.

AGNI:

Vyuttpatti:

The word *Agni* is a masculine gender³ (*Pullinga Vachi Shabda*). The word *Agni* has been derived from the *Dhatu* '*Agigato*'^{4,5}

NIRUKTI:

The word *Agni* is having two kinds of *Nirukti* and are depending upon its *Swarupa* and *Swabhava*.⁶

According to *Swarupa*- which spreads to various parts or organs, is called *Agni*.

According to *Swabhava*- which moves in upward direction, is called *Agni*. This statement can be clubbed and defined it as which spreads by moving upward is called *Agni*

KARMA

Vyuttpatti: The *karma* is derived from the *dhatu* "*du kriyate kru karne*" and formed as '*Karma*' which means action.

Nirukti: Which acts that is called as *Karma*.^{7,8}

Through which the action takes place is called *Karma*.

Nirukti of Agnikarma^{8,9,10}

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 behaviour of *Agni* i.e. burning.

From the Ayurvedic 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.

Since *Sushrut* has already mentioned about *Shareera Antargata Agni* earlier, this explanation probably points towards the *Agni* in its gross form. The second part of the commentary seems to give more importance to the utility and positive aspects of *Agni*. In Ayurveda this positive utility is in *Chikitsa*. Therefore, it can be considered that, *Agnikarma* refers to the actives of *Agni* due to its innate *Guna* and also to its effective usage in *Chikitsa*.

Apart from the field of medicine in Indian system other system of medicine also has similar procedure to that of *Agnikarma*.

Use of Cautery in Other System of Medicine

MOXIBUSTION¹²

Moxibustion is an important procedure in ancient Chinese Medicine which also involves the burning of specific sites on the body surface with the aim to alleviate pain and cure other diseases like *Agnikarma*.

In this procedure the dry powder of the leaf of *Artemisia vulgaris* is known as '*moxa*' and when used for Acupuncture therapy, the method is termed Moxibustion. Moxibustion was introduced in the field of Acupuncture during 1102 to 1106 AD. The application of heat over painful area in the body is capable of relieving pain is a well-known fact and the results are much better when the centre of the painful area is selected for heating. The same principle forms the basis for Moxibustion. It is known to increase the number of red blood cells and the percentage of haemoglobin in blood.

Different methods of Moxibustion

Moxibustion therapy on the basis of treatment is divided into two categories;

1. Direct Moxibustion
 2. Indirect Moxibustion
1. Direct Moxibustion – In this method the moxa wool is kept over a selected point on the body and burnt.

Direct Moxibustion is of two types:

- a. Scarring Moxibustion: Moxa wool is kept directly over the desired point and ignited until the skin is burnt. As the term scarring indicates, the burning leads to the scarring of the skin and the scar persists.
- b. Non – scarring Moxibustion: In this method the moxa wool is kept on the body surface and ignited. But, the burning of the skin is prevented by removing the moxa wool when skin becomes very hot.

Direct Moxibustion can produce many other beneficial effects, particularly of the histotoxins which the humoral substances are produced by the burning skin.

Indirect Moxibustion – In this procedure moxa wool is never brought in direct contact with the skin. A barrier is kept between the moxa and skin which may be ginger, garlic or salt.

Precautions to be taken in Moxibustion

Patient should be maintained in position to avoid burning due to change of posture. In indirect Moxibustion care should be taken so that blisters are not formed. If at all blisters are formed, it should be treated as in burns. Moxibustion is contra indicated near sense organs or on mucous membrane and also in febrile diseases.

TAU-DAM¹³

‘Tau-dam’ is a basically traditional Himalayan therapy, practiced by the rural Himalayan people for the disease like liver troubles, stomach troubles, backache etc. This therapy was also practiced by the ancient people and is mentioned in Ayurveda as *Agnikarma*. ‘Tau’ therapy is generally practiced by the older people of village and is compulsory for 6 months to 1-year old children. The ‘Tau’ is made up of 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 nature of diseases. In this therapy, ‘Tau’ device is placed directly on burning fire till it becomes red-hot and an older people of that area touches this red-hot ‘Tau’ on the affected skin site of the patient for only a fraction of a second and after burning it, the massage of the affected area with the mustard or olive oil is done. In the ‘Dam’ technique, fresh seeds of *Terminalia chebula* or *Anaphalis araneosa* are heated on fire up to red hot and touched on the affected part of the body for only fraction of a second. After this, like ‘Tau’, the affected area is massaged with the mustard or olive oil.

Agnikarma is pain management procedure described in Ayurveda. From ancient period this procedure is performed in different place with different name. Nowadays modern science used cautery like instruments which is nothing but modified *Agnikarma* only. This is superior treatment than all para surgical procedures. Pain is an unfavorable sensation, which may bring an individual a halt from his routine works. The condition is more painful when mobile joints like *Janusandhi* (knee joint) of the body are involved. The disease *Sandhigata Vata* is prone to be manifested in the knee joint. The dominance of *Vata dosha* is seen in the pathogenesis of *Sandhigata Vata*. The symptoms of *Sandhigata Vata* described in *Sushrut Samhita*¹⁴ are *Sandhi vedana* (Joint pain) and *Shotha* (swelling), due to these symptoms stiffness and crepitus develop, which may be correlated with disease osteoarthritis (O.A) in modern parlance. Osteoarthritis is the commonest form of joint disease which cause pain and disability in advancing years of life. Before 60 years of age 1 out of 10 persons (10%) and after 60 years 3 out of 4 (75%) persons suffer from O.A of knee joint.¹⁵

CHIKITSA

The main aim of treatment is to cure the disease following to restoration of health. It means to maintain normal functions of *Agni*, *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, and *Mala* of the physical body and also to maintain the mental health. The primary importance of any Chikitsa lies in *Samprapti Vighatana* (braking of pathogenesis). In

this regard it becomes a known factor that *Sandhigata Vata* is predominantly a *Vataja* disorder. So, keeping an eye on this, the general treatment of *Vata Vyadhi* should be adopted. In this context *Sushrut* has mentioned one of the effective lines of treatment for the *Sandhigata Vata* as Agni karma.¹⁶

Probable mode of Action

The application of the *Agnikarma* (Cauterization) produce physical heat by its red hot *Salaka* (probes) which counts with its various properties *Ushna* (hot), *Tikshna* (acute/potent), *Asukhari* (immediate effective) and *Sukshma* (minute).

All these properties are transferred to first dermis followed by epidermis of the skin (*Twak dhatu*) while the cauterization continues. Then these forms of actions penetrate to deeper dhatu and act probable in three forms, like

1. It removes blockage of channels (*Srothavarodha*) which increases the circulation of plasma and blood (*Rasa* and *Rakta*) and thereby flush out/pacifies the pain.
2. It increases the metabolism of body elements (Dhatu) by which it enhances the digestion by removing deranged *doshas* and at the same time it supplements nutrition to body tissues (Dhatu) that makes healthy to the diseased area.
3. And it acts on the deep tissue by neutralizing the cold property (*Sheeta guna*) and simultaneously pacifying other features of *Vata* and *Kapha dosha* which alleviates *Vata* and *Kapha* diseases. By which the *Sira* (Vein), *Snayu* (Tendon), *Sandhi* (joints) and *Asthi* (Bone) becomes stable.

CONCLUSION

Agnikarma is one of the specific treatments indicated in case of *Sandhigata Vata*. *Dahana* or cauterization is done in the affected part which should be done in the affected joint till the *Samyak lakshana* obtained. Osteoarthritis (*Sandhigata Vata*) is having a fast-growing incidence in day to day practice. Since the disease is more prone to computer professionals, people with sedentary lifestyle, house wives, strenuous workers etc. those activities needed repetitive flexion and ex-

tension of the knee joint. Conservative management methods often meet with recurrence adversely affecting the ambulence and daily activities of the patient. Para surgical methods like *Agnikarma* and Moxibustion are said to have sudden and long-lasting results. In these procedures heating the tissue results in increased metabolic activity, increased blood flow and stimulation of neural receptors in the skin or tissue and many others in direct effects. Numerous studies conducted on the effect of *Agnikarma* on *Sandhigata Vata* suggest that the *Agnikarma* is most efficient in the management.

REFERENCES

1. Sushrut, Sushrut Samhita, with the Nibandhasangraha Commentary by Dalhanaacharya and the Nyayachandrikakhya Panjika of Sri Gayadasacharya on Nidanasthana, edited by Vaidya Yadavji Trikamji Acharya. ed. Reprint 2009, Varanasi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthana. Sootrasthaana 7/15
2. Sushrut, Sushrut Samhita, with the Nibandhasangraha Commentary by Dalhanaacharya and the Nyayachandrikakhya Panjika of Sri Gayadasacharya on Nidanasthana, edited by Vaidya Yadavji Trikamji Acharya. ed. Reprint 2009, Varanasi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthana. Sootrasthaana 7/15
3. Sushrut, Sushrut Samhita, with the Nibandhasangraha Commentary by Dalhanaacharya and the Nyayachandrikakhya Panjika of Sri Gayadasacharya on Nidanasthana, edited by Vaidya Yadavji Trikamji Acharya. ed. Reprint 2009, Varanasi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthana. Sootrasthaana 7/15
4. Sab Kal Dru, Vol 1, page 8, Vach, Vol 1, page 55
5. Sab Kal Dru Vol 1, page 7, Vach, Vol 1, page 61
6. Agnivesha, Charaka Samhita, with Ayurveda Deepika commentary by Chakrapaanidatta, edited by Vaidya Yadavji Trikamji Acharya. Varanasi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthana. Sootrasthaana 26
7. Agnivesha, Charaka Samhita, with Ayurveda Deepika commentary by Chakrapaanidatta, edited by Vaidya Yadavji Trikamji Acharya. Varanasi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthana. Sootrasthaana 26
8. Sab Kal Dru page 45
9. Vach Vol I, page 54
10. Vaidyaka Shabda Sindhu , page no 5
11. Sushrut, Sushrut Samhita, with the Nibandhasangraha Commentary by Dalhanaacharya and the Nyayachan-

drikakhya Panjika of Sri Gayadasacharya on Nidanasthana, edited by Vaidya Yadavji Trikamji Acharya. ed. Reprint 2009, Varanasi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthana. Sootrasthaana 12/1

12. Acupuncture today, Moxibustion-Acupuncture today
 13. Ancient Indian medicine and alternative therapeutic practices Susrut's concept of surgery chapter 4, page 174
 14. Sushrut, Sushrut Samhita, with the Nibandhasangraha Commentary by Dalhanaacharya and the Nyayachandrikakhya Panjika of Sri Gayadasacharya on Nidanasthana, edited by Vaidya Yadavji Trikamji Acharya. ed. Reprint 2009, Varanasi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthana. Nidanasthaana 1/22
 15. www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2920533
 16. Sushrut, Sushrut Samhita, with the Nibandhasangraha Commentary by Dalhanaacharya and the Nyayachandrikakhya Panjika of Sri Gayadasacharya on Nidanasthana, edited by Vaidya Yadavji Trikamji Acharya. ed. Reprint 2009, Varanasi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthana. Chikitsasthaana 4/8
-

Source of Support: Nil

Conflict Of Interest: None Declared

How to cite this URL: Supreeth Joyal Lobo et al: A Systemic Review Of Agnikarma And Moxibustion On Sandhigata Vata. International Ayurvedic Medical Journal {online} 2019 {cited April, 2019} Available from: http://www.iamj.in/posts/images/upload/646_650.pdf