

ROLE OF AGNIKARMA IN THE MANAGEMENT OF VARIOUS DISEASES

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ABSTRACT

Agnikarma means application of *Agni* directly or indirectly with the help of different materials to relieve the patient from disease. *Agnikarma* means treatment with the help of *Agni*. *Sushruta* indicated ‘*Agnikarma*’ in various disorders of skin, muscles, vessels, ligaments joints and bones. The disease which are treated with the help of *Agnikarma* therapy, do not reoccur. The approach of *Agnikarma* has been mentioned in the context of diseases like *Arsha*, *Arbuda*, *Bhagandara*, *Sira*, *Snayu*, *Asthi*, *Sandhigata Vata Vikara* and *Gridhrasi*. In *Agnikarma* therapy part or tissue is burned with the help of various special materials called *Dahanopakarana* like drugs, articles and substance used to produce therapeutic burns (*samyakadagha*) during *Agnikarma chikitsa*. With the advancements of medical science many techniques have been designed for pain management which work on the principle of *Agnikarma* for pain relief e.g. Transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation(TENS), Therapeutic ultrasound, Pulsed electromagnetic Field therapy(PEMF), Interferential Therapy(IFT) Electrical muscle stimulator (EMS) Radiation therapies like Infra-red therapy Diathermy, Electro cautery, Cauterization.

Keywords: *Agnikarma*, *Dagha*, *Dahana*, Radiations, Cauterization.

INTRODUCTION

Sushruta has mentioned different methods of management of diseases, such as *Bheshaja karma*, *Kshar karma*, *Agnikarma*, *Shastra karma* and *Raktamokshana* in medical science.

The word *Agnikarma* consists of *Agni* and *karma* i.e. heat and procedure. When *samyaka dagha vrana* produced by *Agni* with the help of various *Dravyas* called as *Agnikarma*.

Agnikarma means application of *Agni* directly or indirectly with the help of different materials to relieve the patient from disease. *Dalhana*, commentator of

Sushruta classified *Agnikrita* as *karma* or action carried out by *Agni*. *Sushruta* indicated ‘*Agnikarma*’ in various disorders of skin, muscles, vessels, ligaments joints and bones. *Sushruta* has also explained that the diseases treated with *Agnikarma* modality will be not reoccur.^[3] *Yogaratanakara* has explained the *Agnikarma* regarding the disease *Gridhrasi Sharangdhara*, *Gadanigrah*, *Vangasena*, *Bhavaprakash* also mentioned *Agnikar-ama Chikitsa* in the management of various disease. The approach of *Agnikarma* has been mentioned in the context of diseases like *Arsha*, *Arbuda*, *Bhagandara*,

Sira, Snayu, Asthi, Sandhigata Vata Vikara and Gridhrasi. In Agnikarma therapy part or tissue is burned or heat is applied with the help of various special materials called *dahanopakarana*. *Dahanopakarana* are various accessories like drugs, articles and substance used to produce therapeutic burns (*Samyaka-dagdha*) during Agnikarmachikitsa.

Methods: Study is literary review emphasizing on procedure of *agnikarma* as described by ancient *acharya, Sushruta* in *Sushruta samhita*. The study also includes critical study of various treatment modalities related to *agnikarma* (heat therapy) available as per classical literature of ayurveda and use of the principle of *agnikarma* in present era. Critical study. of multiple heat therapies available and effective in the management of arthropathies and musculo-skeletal disorders especially in pain management^[6].

Classification of Agni Karma: During describing the *Agni Karma* there is no description available regarding its classification, but it can be classified on various basis as below.

1-According to Dravyas used.

2- According to the Site.

3- According to the Disease.

4- According to Akriti.

5- According to Dhatus to be cauterised.

According to Dravya used –*Snigdha Agnikarma* - performed by means of *madhu, grith, tailam* used for *Agnikarma* to treat diseases situated in *Sira, Snayu, Sandhi, Asthi- Ruksha Agnikarma* - performed by means of *pippali, shara, shalaka, godanta* used for *Agnikarma* to treat diseases situated in *Twak and Mamsa dhatu*.

According to the Site used- *Sthanika (Local-)* As in *Vicharchika, Arsha* etc. *Sthanantariya* (Distal to the site of disease)-as in *Visuchikta, Apachi* etc.

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.

According to Akriti- Regarding *Akriti, Acharya Sushruta* have mentioned four types of *Agni Karma*. *Valaya, Bindu, Vilekha, Pratisarana*. *Acharya*

Vagbhata has added more three types of *Agni karma - Ardha Chandra, Astapada, Swastika*. Here *Akriti* should be taken as shape of *Dahnopakarana* and final shape produced after actual *Agni Karma* both.

Acharya Dalhana have given explanation regarding the shapes of *Agni Karma* in his commentary.

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

Agnikarma is divided in four types on the basis of part involved e.g. *twaka dagdha, mamsa dagdha, sira snayu dagdha* and *sandhi asthi dagdha*.^[5] After studying the literature available related to *Agnikarma*, it is clarified that various pain management therapies which use heating process as their basic principle are based on the principle as described in *Ayurvedic* literatures. They are modified and advanced techniques suitable in the context of time. In present time there are various treatment modalities are available which work on the principle of *Agnikarma* for pain relief e.g. therapeutic ultrasound TENS, Interferential therapy, Radiation therapies like Infra-red therapy Diathermy, PEMF, Electro cautery, Cauterization.

Agni Karma in Modern Perspective-

After the detailed description of *Agni Karma* from *Ayurvedic* viewpoint, a brief description in modern perspective of the same therapy has been presented in following paragraphs.

There are two procedures like *Agni Karma* are available in modern Science.

1. Electrocautery

2. Diathermy

(1) Electrocautery-

Electrocautery is one of the most useful instruments for surgical procedure. It consists essentially of a platinum wire which, can be heated to red hot by means of an electric current.

Application of the red-hot wire to tissues will either cut them or seal any bleeding points by coagulation. It is thus ideal for removing small skin tags and pappillomats etc. and for controlling the bleeding following curretting works, granulomas and similar lesions. The earliest Electrocauteries used a standard battery, and rheostat to control the temperature of the tip. Subsequently

with the change in domestic electricity supplies from D.C. to A.C. It was possible to use step down transformers and rheostats and it avoided flat batteries. Most recently with the introduction of nickel cadmium rechargeable batteries with their ability to withstand high current drain without damage.^[8]

A variety of different shaped Platinum tips are produced for different applications, but for general use simply a wire is all that is needed, with careful handling. It will last for many years, does not corrode, and can be immediately sterilised merely switching on the current and heating the tip for a few seconds.

(2) Diathermy-

It is a bi-polar apparatus being used in most of operative procedures. In this a very high frequency current is passed through the patient's body and generates heat. Three types of diathermy are available.

1-Medicinal diathermy- It is mild degree and does not cause destruction of tissues.

2-Short wave diathermy- It is used as a therapeutic elevation of temperature in the tissue by means of an oscillating electric current of extremely high frequency (10-100 million cycles/seconds) and a short wavelength of 3-30 meters.

3-Surgical diathermy- In this diathermy, a very high frequency current is passed through the patient's body and generated heat. By making one electrode relatively large and strapping it firmly to one limb and making the other electrode a pointed moveable tip, enough heat is generated at the tip to coagulate or cut tissue. The effect is localised because the current from live electrode spreads out in the patient's body and travels to the 'Indifferent' electrode which is a large electrode placed in contact with the patient's body. A high density of current occurs only immediately beneath.

the live electrode because further away the current density is too small to have any heating effect.

Advantage: - Absence of bleeding; it's effect is very similar to that of the electrocautery, and the heat generated automatically sterilises the area treated, a sterile dry dressing or no dressing at all is, therefore, all that is needed to promote healing.

Disadvantage-

1- Histological examination of the treated lesion is not usually possible due to the distortion of the cells from the heat, thus a preliminary biopsy needs to be done, where the diagnosis is in doubt.

2- Current is likely to cause ventricular fibrillation and can cause probable death of the patients.

Procedure of Agni Karma:

Regarding the procedure of Agni Karma, there is a detailed description is available in *Astang Samgraha* (A.S. Su. 40/5) i.e., before doing the procedure of *Agni Karma*, benediction chanting and collection of related materials and instruments should be done, the patient kept in suitable position by keeping head in the East direction and held by expert assistants to avoid movement. After this the surgeon should make the different shapes of *Agni Karma* viz. *Valaya*, *Ardhchandra*, *Swastika*, etc. as per need by heated *Jambvostha* or *Shalaka* in a smoke free fire of *Khadira* or *Badara* with the help a blower or a fan. During this period if patients feels discomfort then keep them satisfies by courageous, consoling talks, give cold water for drink and sprinkle cold water. But procedure of *Agni Karma* should be done till production of complete cauterisation, anoint the *Madhu*, *Ghrita*, and followed by cold and lubricating *Dravyas* applications.^{[2],[4]}

DISCUSSION

In *Ayurveda*, treatment by heating of tissue was well known tool as early as the 1500-1000 years BC with the advancement of science techniques of *Agnikarma* improved by introduction of electricity. The use of electricity in medicine began in the 18th century.

Agnikarma alleviates all the *Vataja* and *Kaphaj* disorders as *Ushna guna* of *Agnikarma* is opposite to *Sheeta Guna* of *Vata* and *Kapha dosha*. According to *Ayurveda*, every *Dhatu* (tissue) have its own *Dhatvagni* and when it becomes low, diseases begins to manifest. In this condition, *Agnikarma* works by giving external heat there by increasing the *Dhatvagni* which helps to pacify the aggravated *dosha* and hence alleviate the disease.^[3]

-All the pain management equipments mainly use heat/energy in some or other form as a basic principle.

For example, therapeutic ultrasound is most traditionally known as a deep heating modality. It yields its effect by increased collagen extensibility, increased clearance of oedema and exudates, increased pain threshold, decreased joint stiffness and decreased muscle spasm. All these are effects of deep heating system. In the same way TENS (Transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation) is the use of electric current produced by a device to stimulate the nerves for therapeutic purposes [7]

-The main forms of cauterization used today are electrocautery and chemical cautery. Electrocautery-Electro surgery has been described as high-frequency electrical current passed through tissue to create a desired clinical effect. Electrocautery is useful in haemostasis and in the treatment of various small benign skin lesions, although only lesions that do not require histological review should be treated with electrocautery.[6] With the use of many new techniques and devices such as Transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS), Therapeutic ultrasound, Pulsed electromagnetic Field therapy (PEMF), Interferential Therapy (IFT) Electrical muscle stimulator (EMS) etc. in the pain management and musculo-skeletal disorders have proven to be much beneficial and brought revolution in the field of physiotherapy especially in chronic pain management. Though *Agnikarma* therapy been described thousands of years ago yet its principle is being used nowadays in many forms. These modern techniques/ equipments described above are need of today's generation. Older *agnikarma* therapy as described in classics are performed using limited *dahaanupkarana*, as it is not possible to use all of them in present era. With these limitations modern techniques are well accepted in the society as they are easy to handle, and modernized machines are used.[8]

CONCLUSION

Agnikarma and its uses are described in *Ayurveda* much earlier than its utility was discovered by surgeons of rest medicine branches. However, the technique and equipments have become advanced and sophisticated, but the basic principles are still the same as that of

Agnikarma i.e. use of energy- heat or current in the management of various diseases.

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Source of Support: Nil

Conflict of Interest: None Declared

How to cite this URL: Anil Kumar et al: Role Of Agnikarma In The Management Of Various Diseases. International Ayurvedic Medical Journal {online} 2020 {cited March, 2020} Available from: http://www.iamj.in/posts/images/upload/3054_3057.pdf