A SYSTEMIC REVIEW OF AGNIKARMA AND MOXIBUSTION ON SANDHIGATA VATA

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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 Samhita⁴ 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. Sushrut¹ 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 Shabdas of Agnikarma (Synonyms)
Agni Chikitsa, Agni Dagdha, Aiginotra, Agnikarma, Agni Karya, Dagdhakarma Dahakarma, Dahankarma, Jwalan 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
Vyutpatti: 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 Agnikarma8,9,10
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-DAM
‘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 person 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 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.

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 (Dhatus) by which it enhances the digestion by removing deranged doshas and at the same time it supplements nutrition to body tissues (Dhatus) 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 ambulance 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.

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