A review article on Agnikarma in Ayurveda

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is the eternal science of medicine as it aims to prevent and promotion of health and cure diseases. Ayurveda has eight branches among which Shalyatantra is renowned part and it deals with different major methods of surgical management along with para-surgical procedures including Ksharakarma, Agnikarma, Jalaukavacharan. Acharya Sushruta has mentioned Agnikarma in different disorders like Arsa, Arbuda, Bhagandar, granthi, etc. Agnikarma is considered one of the instants and fast pain managing procedures for different painful conditions like heel pain, osteoarthritis, frozen shoulder, etc. This procedure leads to the pacification of Vata and Kapha and helps to relieve pain. It is believed to be superior to all other para-surgical procedures as there is no possibility of recurrence of diseases once treated with the Agnikarma procedure. Agnikarma is termed a cautery process in modern medicine. This review article includes the introduction, types, indication, contraindication, and many more related to the Agnikarma procedure.

Keyword: Agnikarma, Cautery, Dagdha, Ayurveda.

INTRODUCTION:

The term Agnikarma is made up of two words ‘’Agni’’ which means ‘‘fire’’ and ‘’Karma’’ which means ‘procedure’. In Ayurveda, is defined as the procedure by which Agni is used for the treatment of various diseases.¹ ² It is an ancient treatment procedure for pain management that has a history of at least 3000 years.³
Acharya Charak has described Agnikarma under 36 Upakramas of Vrana in the chapter “Dwivrani- yachikitsha”. Acharya Sushruta has mentioned a separate chapter Agnikarma Vidhi Adhyaya for the explanation of Agnikarma. In Sushruta Uttartantra and one of 60 Upakarma of Vrana. In the 40th chapter of Sutrasthana of Astanga Samgraha detailed description of Agnikarma is found. In Ashtanga Hridaya, 30th chapter of Sutrasthana explains Agnikarma. Acharya Harita has mentioned Agnikarma as an important treatment procedure for various diseases.

Dalhana has described Agnikarma as ‘Agni Krita Karma’, where Agni is used directly for the procedure and ‘Agni Sambandhi karma’, where Agni is used indirectly for the procedure. Based on Dravya used it can be classified as Snigdha Agni Karma (used materials are Madhu, Taila, Ghrita, etc) and Ruksha Agni Karma (used materials are Pippali, Shalaka, Ajasakrida, etc). Based on Akriti, Acharya Sushruta has mentioned, Valaya (Circular shape), Bindu (Dot like shape), Vilekha (Different shape made by heated Shalaka), Pratisarana (no specific shape and rubbing of heated Shalaka at a specific site) Acharya Vagbhata has mentioned 3 extra types of Agnikarma based on Akriti and they are Ardha Chandra (Crescent shape), Astapada (specific shape containing eight limbs in a different position), and Swastika(shape of swastika yantra).

Agnikarma mentioned after chhedan in diseases like Arsha, Kadara, etc, After Bhedana in diseases like fistula, sinus, etc, filling by the Guda in diseases like Krimidanta, etc. Agnikarma also narrated as Sthani (local) and Sthanantariya(systemic). On the basis of Dhatu Agnikarma Twaka dagtha, Sira and Snayudagdha, Mamsa dagtha, and Asthi Sandhi dagtha.  

Based on Dagdha Bheda Agnikarma classified into Plushtha Dagdha (Scorched Burn), Dur Dagdha (Blistered Burn), Samyaka Dagdha (Superfi- cial Burn), Ati Dagdha (Deep Burn)

Agnikarma produces the following signs and symptoms on respective Dhatu

In Twaka Dagdha, Agnikarma done on Twaka produce a crackling sound, bad odour, and contraction of the skin. Mamsa Dagdha Agnikarma produced discoloration like pigeon, mild pain, inflammation, and the dried lesion is observed. Sira Snayu Dagdha create black colour discoloration, swelling of the lesion, and cessation of discharge are seen while during Sandhi and Asthi Dagdha dryness, hardness, redness, and fixation of the lesion are observed.

According to the Sushruta, all the Dagdha are mentioned under the four Dagdha Vrana

If the shalaka used for the procedure of Agni karma is not heated properly then Plushtha Dagdha is seen. The site is affected by a burning sensation. It is related to the burn of the first degree. Drugs of Ushna Virya should be admitted to patients. In Dur Dagdha: It mainly occurs when there is unusual mobility of either unskilled surgeons or patients due to fear. It is related to the burn of the second degree. Patients should be administered with both warm and cold therapies. In Samyaka Dag- dha, Anaawagandha Vranata (not deep wound), Talphala Varnata (blue-black colour fruit of the tall tree), Susamshita Vrana (lack of elevation and depression) Ati Dagdha occurs when an excess of heat is transferred from Shalaka yantra to the diseased part. Gatrawishlesha, Mamsa-Avalambana, Jwara, Daha, Pipasa, Murcha etc are the symptoms seen.
All the seasons except *Grishma* (summer) and *Sharada* (autumn) are considered the best season for the *Agnikarma* procedure. In emergency conditions, *Agnikarma* can be performed during *Grishma* and *Sharada* by adopting certain precautions.  

*Agnikarma* indicated in excessive pain in *Twaka, Sira, Mamsa, Asthi, Sandhi, Snayu, Arsa, Shlipad, Charmakil, Antravrudhi, Siracheda, Shiraroga, Puyalasa, Abhisyandhi, Arbuda, Lingarsha, Yonyarsha, Bhagandar, Krimidanta, Adhidanta, Sheetadanta, Kadara* etc.  

Acharya Sushrut has mentioned that *Agnikarma* should not be practiced in *Pitta Prakriti, Bala, Vriddhi, Daurbalya, Bhinna Kostha, Bhiru,* etc. A person with a large number of *Varna* and not indicated for *Swedana karma* should not go for this procedure. Acharya Charak has mentioned that *Agnikarma* should not be done in *Varna* of *Marma, Snayu, Netra, Kustha, Visha,* and Shalya. According to Astangasangraha, it should not be done in a person suffering from *Atisar,* boils, who takes *Virechana,* and is contraindicated for *ksharakarma.*  

*Agnikarma* is considered superior among all the para surgical procedures as there are no chances of reoccurrence of disease treated with this procedure. *Agnikarma* can also treat diseases that cannot be treated with *Kshara karma,* medicines etc.  

**Method:** This review article is mainly based on several classical books, research papers, journals, observations, experiences, and internet sources.  

**Result:** After viewing multiple textbooks and journals, it is found that the concept of *Agnikarma* is well explained for instant pain relief. This review article explains and explores the pain management concept found in Ayurveda with its level of superiority. It has gathered all the information on *Agnikarma* procedure along with its benefits in several diseases.  

**Discussion:** This review article is a small attempt to compile and describe all the scattered information regarding *Agnikarma.* As *Agni* possesses the characteristics of *Ushna, Tikshna, Asukari, Sukshma,* etc it relieves pain as all of the characters are opposite to *Vataj and Kaphaj.* It pacifies the vitiated *Vata* and *Kapha* dosha. Therapeutic heat removes the *Srotavarodha* by it increases *Rasa dhatu* circulation to the affected site, increasing *Mahabhutagni* which helps in the digestion of *Ama Dosha* and heals the pain. Selection of different *Agnikarma Upakarma* depend on the type of *Agnikarma* and heat capacity of *Dahan Upakarana.* Among all *Dahana upakarana Panchadhatu shalaka* has the highest heat capacity and heated *Upakarna* also helps to maintain aseptic condition during the treatment procedure. The process of Cauterization in modern medicine is believed to be the modified form of *Agnikarma.* *Agnikarma* helps to remove the diseased condition from the root and cures it completely. Rather than pain management, agnikarm is also mentioned for tissue excision, to stop bleeding, and to close the amputated stump. Thus, *Agnikarma* should be given first and valuable priority in context to other modern pain-relieving factors and para surgical procedures.  

**Conclusion:** In Ayurveda, *Agnikarma* is considered the best pain management procedure, and also it is regarded as the superior procedure among all the para-surgical procedures. It is the most effective procedure for the management of
local Vata Kapha disorder.

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