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Review Article

### AGNIKARMA IN THE MANAGEMENT OF JOINT PAIN – AS COMPLIMENTARY THERAPY

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#### ABSTRACT

At present the human society is leading with mechanical life, frequent changing of lifestyle, environmental factors, climate, etc. The critical busy schedule, restless, anxiety, stress & strain, running after comfortable life, comparing to higher group curses different psychosomatic disorders. The major somatic disorders involves, the constant work schedule in improper sitting posture, continuous & over exertion, prolonged travelling by different vehicles, less sports activities, exercises, etc. which in fact cause undue pressure on spinal cord, knee joints, shoulder joints, wrist joint, etc. and produce low backache, joint pain, while estimating the joint pain and low backache the incidence rate of this disease goes higher than 60%. Now-a-days, the disorders like Gridhrasi (sciatica), SandhigataVata (lumbar spondylosis, cervical spondylosis), Katishoola (ankylosing spondylitis, lumbago), SandhiVata (osteoarthritis), SnayugataVata (Tennis elbow), MansagataVata (myofascial pain), Jirna Vatika Vedana (chronic fatigue pain), KandaragatVata (tendonitis) are found in routine clinical practice. These all disease have pain and person is in much painful condition.

Although a lot of pain modalities are at present scenario like - Acupuncture, Acupressure, Jalaukaavcharan, Agni karma, Rakthmokshan, Aroma therapy, Magnet therapy, Yoga therapy, Mud therapy, Spa, Hydrotherapy, Physiotherapy along with Modern and Ayurvedic drugs for pain management. Agni karma has one of the best goal in the field of joint pain management.

**Keywords:** Gridhrasi, SandhigataVata, Katishoola, SnayugataVata, MansagataVata, KandaragatVata, MansagataVata, Magnet therapy, Aroma therapy, Agni karma therapy.

#### INTRODUCTION

In Ayurvedic medical science, various modalities of treatment are explained for the management of pain, Agnikarmachikitsa is said to be superior. Various painful conditions like joint pain, headache, abdominal cramps/discomfort & few convulsive disorders like epilepsy, schizophrenia & psychosomatic disorders can be treated with this intentional heat burn therapy. In Chakradatta & Yogratnakara, we find direct reference of Agnikarma indicated for pain management. Now a days the process of Agnikarma done by using gold, silver, Panchadhatu, Iron shalaka, pippali etc. The procedure of Agnikarma does not have side effect, it is cost effective, can be managed with patients as ambulatory & can be done in OPD itself.

#### Agni Karma:

*Aganinakritva yat karma,agnehe sambhandhi va yat karma tadagnikarma*

Dalhan comentry on sushrut Samhita Sutras-12/1

**Agni karma** is the work performed by application of Agni.

#### Synonyms of Agni karma

- i) Agni chikitsa
- ii) Agni karma
- iii) Agni kasya
- iv) Dagdhakarm
- v) Dahan karam
- vi) Dagdha chikitsa
- vii) Dambhakriya
- viii) Pachanakriya

#### Historical Review of Agnikarma:

History is a part of description of any object. In this way an attempt has been made to trace references regarding agni karma available till now beginning right from vedic period. For the total coverage of historical aspect, it has been divided into two sections viz.,

- (i) Vedic period,

(ii) Samhita period

**(i) Vedic Period**

In **Rig veda** Specific treatment by Agni and its material was advised for the vaginal and uterine disease (10/162/1-4).

**Yajurveda** again emphasized the use of Agni in case of sheeta and sheeta induced disease. (23/10/01).

**Samaveda** bears elaborated description about Agni which is clear by enumeration of a separate chapter as 'Agnaneyakanda'. In this veda Agni is given special names as Parmeshwar, Aatma, Vaishwanar etc. It is considered as the life existing in the creatures of the universe and which spreads/ propagates all over the area is called Agni.

**Atharvaveda** has identified Agni as God and treatment for diseases from the verses it becomes clear that Agni was used to protect the body from the invading microorganisms. (5/23/1,3,5).

**(ii) Samhita Period**

**CharakSamhita**

- *Ch. Su 11/55* i.e. *ShastraPranidhana*.
- In *VidhishonitaAdhyaya (Ch. Su. 24/46)*. In *VividhasitapityaAdhyaya (28/26)*.
- In *Dwivraniyaadhyayachikitsa* as a treatment of Vrana (*Ch. Chi. 25/101-103*).
- In *Kaphajagulma (Ch. Chi 5/55, 61, 62,163,86)*.
- In *Shvayathuchikitsa* in the reference of Granthirog and *BhaganderChikitsa (Ch. Chi. 12/82,97)*
- In *UdaraChikitsa* in the reference of *Pleehodararog* and *Yakritodarachikitsa (Ch. Chi. 13/86)*.
- In *Arshachikitsa (Ch. Chi. 14/33)*.
- In reference of *Granthivisarpachikitsa (Ch. Chi. 21/132)*.
- In the context of *vishavegachikitsa (Ch. Chi. 23/45)*.
- In *vatayadhichikitsa* in reference of *Gridharasirogchikitsa (Ch. Chi. 28/100)*.
- In context of *Trimarmiyachikitsa* in the reference of *Ardhavybedhakarogachikitsa. (Ch. Si. 9/78)*

**SushrutaSamhita**

MaharshiSushruta told Agnikarma as a parasurgical procedure and it is superior to all parasurgical procedures. Many references are available in Sushrutasamhita regarding agni karma.

- In *Su. Sutrasthan* in *yantravidhiadhyaya* as an *upayantra (Su.Su. 7/14)*.
- A detailed agni karma vidhiAdhyaya described in (*Su.Su. 12/9-10*).
- As a *shalyaniraharana(Su. Su. 27/14)*.
- Reference of *Sira, Snayu, Sandhi, Asthi, Samprapti. (Su. Chi. 4/8)*.
- In *Arsha roga chikitsa (Su. Chi. 6/3)*.
- In *Ashmarichikitsa(Su. Chi. 7/35)*.
- In *Bhagandarachikitsa* as a *vrana(Su. Chi. 8/14,21,24,29)*.
- In *SushrutaChikitsasthana* in the context of *kusthachikitsa(Su. Chi. 9/9-11,20)*.
- In *GranthiApachayaArbudaChikitsa(Su. Chi. 18/14,17,24,39,43,44)*.
- In *VrudhiapadhanshaChikitsa(Su. Chi. 19/21-23,50-51,53-54)*

- In *Kshudraroga(Su. Chi. 20/10,32)*.
- In *Mukha roga chikitsa (Su. Chi. 22/9,23,27-29,40)*
- In *Kalpasthan* is reference of (*5/5;7/33,50*).

**Vagbhatta samhita**

In *Ashtangasamgraha(Su.40)* deals with Agni karma vidhi and many other references of other diseases regarding Agni karma.

In *A.H. Su. 30* deals with Agni karma vidhi and there are many other reference of other diseases regarding Agni karma.

**HaritaSamhita**

In *Haritasamhita* Agni karma indicated as a important types of treatment out of eight types of treatment (*H.S. 1/2/7-8*).

**Dahanupakarana( Material used for Agnikarma):**

Dahanopakarana are various accessories like drugs, articles and substance used to produce therapeutic burns (samyakadagdha) during Agni karma chikitsa. They are classified as follows .

- A. *Vanaspatija- Pippalee, (PipperLongum) ,Yasht`imadhu (GlycerrhizaGlabra Linn.) , Haridraa (Curcuma longa), Gud`a,( jaggery) SnehaTaila, Sarjarasa (herbal orgin).*
- B. *Praan`ija - Ajas`hakrita, Godanta, Madhoochchhisht`a (animal-origin)*
- C. *Metallic and others - Panchadhaatu (Silver, Copper, Iron, Tin and Zinc) S`haraShalaaka, Jambavausht`ha, Sooryakaanta, Soochi, Stone For*
  1. *TvakgataVaataVikaara- Pippalee, Ajas`hakrita, Godanta, S`haraShalaka*
  2. *Maamsagata Vikaara- Jambavausht`ha, Panchadhaatu S`halaakaa Kshaudra*
  3. *Siraa, Snaayu, Sandhi, Marma- Madhu (Kshaudra), Gud`a (Jaggery), Sneha.*

**Methods of Agni Karma**

Though there is no clear cut description about the classification of Agni karma in Ayurvedic literature, still with the consideration of its type of applications, to have a clear concept following classifications have been done.

**I) According to Dravyas used**

- a) *SnigdhaAgnikarma* - performed by means of madhu, grith, tailam used for Agni karma to treat diseases situated in *Sira, Snayu, Sandhi, Asthi*.
- b) *Ruksha Agni karma* - performed by means of pippali, shara, shalaka, godanta used for Agni karma to treat diseases situated in *Twak and Mamsadhatu*.

**II) According to Site**

- a) *Sthanika (local)-As in vicharchika, kadara, arsha.*
- b) *Sthanantariya (Distal to site of disease)-As in visuchika, apachi, gridhrasi etc.*

**III) According to Akriti -**

- i **Valaya(O)** - Circular shape.
- ii **Bindu (.)** - Dot like shape. According to *Acharya Dal-hanashalaka* should be of pointed tip.
- iii **Vilekha** - Making of different shapes by heated shalaka. *Vilekha* type of agni karma is further subdivided by *Acharya Dalhana* into three types according to the direction of line.

1. *Tiryak (Oblique)* ( / )
2. *Riju (Straight)* (-----)
3. *Vakra (Zigzag)* ( )

iv **Pratisarana** - Rubbing at indicated site by heated shalaka and there is no specific shape.

v **Ardhachandra** - Crescent shape.

vi **Swastika** - Specific shape of Swastika Yantra.

vii **Ashtapada** - Specific shape containing eight limbs in different directions.

#### IV) According to Dhatus -

i) Twakdagdha ii) Mamsadagdha iii) Sirasnayudagdha

iv) Sandhiasthidagdha

#### V) According to four types of Itarthadagdha as

1. Plusht, 2. Durdagdh, 3. Samyakdagdh & 4. Atidagdh {On the basis of effect on dehdhatu}. Samyakdagdh is better in among these four. Samyakdagdh is performed when Shalaka is at red hot.

#### Mode of action of Agnikarma:

The use of Agni karma may provide relief of pain and painful muscle spasm by acceleration of metabolic processes where by the concentration of pain including toxic metabolites is reduced. This is primarily by an increased local circulation. Agni karma also relief of stiffness by decrease in synovial fluid viscosity. These are some hypothetical theory for mode of action of agnikarama.

#### Theory 1

Agni Karma

Ushna guna (Hot properties)

Qualities against Vata & Kapha Dosha

Pacifies Vata & Reduces Kapha

Reduces Pain

#### Theory 2

According to Ayurveda, every Dhatu (tissue) has its own Dhatvagni which is responsible for the nourishment, increase, and decrease of Dhatu. When this Dhatvagni becomes low (*manda*), diseases begin to manifest. Thus in this condition, Agni Karma works by giving external heat, thereby increasing the Dhatvagni which helps to digest the aggravated dosha and hence cures the disease.

Agni Karma

Ushna guna ( Hot properties)

Increase in Dhatvagni

Manda Dhatvagni gets rectified

Enhance nourishment & formation of newer tissues.

Also perform *Ama Pachana* & removal of accumulated toxins.

#### Theory 3 (Gate Control Theory of Pain)

Heat  Stimulation of Lateral Spinothalamic Tract (SST) stimulation of descending pain inhibitory fibres (DPI)  Release of endogenous opioid peptide which bind with opioid receptors at substantia gelatinosa rolandi  Inhibition of release of P-substance (Pre-synaptic inhibition)  Blockade of transmission of pain sensation.

#### Theory 4 (ref. [www.painfoundation.org](http://www.painfoundation.org))

Pain receptors of skin and motor end plate get stimulated at 45 °C. Pathway for pain and thermal signals run parallel and end up at same area, but only stronger one can be felt. Therefore complete exclusion of pain impulse by heat occurs.

#### Theory 5

It was suggested that various endogenous opioids such as  $\beta$  endorphin, enkephalin, and dynorphin are involved in Agni karma induced analgesia (AIA). This working hypothesis about the role endogenous opioids in Agni karma action has been widely accepted in near future.

#### Agni Karma Kal

According to Acharya Sushruta Agni karma can be done in all seasons, except sharad (autumn) there is a Prakopa of pitta and Agni karma also aggravates Pitta and it may lead to Pitta prakopa, leading to emergence of various disorders due to vitiated Pitta, and Grishma (summer) as it is the hot season. But again Acharya advices to use Agni karma in emergence conditions in these ritus also provided appropriate counter measures are adopted, part with moist cloth use of cold foods and applying cooling pastes over the part.

#### Classical Indications of Agnikarma:

The approach of Agni karma has been mentioned in the context of diseases like Arsha, Arbuda, Bhagandar, Sira, Snayu, Asthi, Sandhigata Vata Vikaras and Gridhrasi Apachi, Granthi,, Antravidhi, Shlipada, Nadivrana, Upadamsa, Gulma, Bhagandara, Sotha, Sheetadanta, (vatajakaphaja), Kadar, Prasupti, Shonita atisrava, Sira sandhi chheda etc.

Ref. (Sushruta. Acharaya Narayana Ram, Editor. Susruta Samhita Moolamaatra; Sootrasthana)

#### Application Methods of agnikarma In Joint pain:

Agni-karma is performed in three stages- (i) Poorva Karma, (ii) Pradhan Karma, and (iii) Paschata Karma.

#### i) Poorva Karma

Sterilization of local part with Triphala Kwath.

#### ii) Pradhan Karma

Most tender spot was selected and 'Bindu' type of therapeutic 'Agni karma was done with the help of red hot panchdhatu, swarnalauhshalaka etc.

#### iii) Paschat Karma

Therapeutic wound was dressed with Ghritkumari pulp, immediately along with application of Yastimadhuchurna.

#### Agni Karma Shreshthata

Acharya Sushruta and Acharya Vagbhatta have both given superior place to Agnikarma as compared to Ksharakarma among Dahanakriyas used for treatment of various diseases due to its following qualities as given below :

1. **Apunarbhavaat (no relapse)**- chances of recurrence are not present.

2. **Sterilization property** -Agni karma is having effect of Nirjiwanukaran (sterilization).

3. **Haemostatic action**- Due to Agnikarma bleeding checked. It causes coagulation and closure of bleeding vessels.

4. **Curative property**-Agnikarma eradicates disease from its root.

5. **Effect on doshas**-It shows shamaka effects on both Vata and Kaphadoshas.

## CONCLUSION

Agnikarma therapy –para surgical modality is a good therapy for acute and chronic joint pain management.

*Minimal scar with maximum vednahar properties was found. Scar diminish with in 7 day of application.*

Thus seeing that musculoskeletal disorders is quite a significant global burden, particularly for general working population and create heavy socio-economic burden over the families. From the study it is clear that Agnikarma can be practiced as an effective, safe and drug less therapy. It is an ambulatory treatment modality and can be performed as an office procedure in routine practice.

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