



ISSN 2456-3110

Vol 9 · Issue 4

April 2024

Journal of
**Ayurveda and Integrated
Medical Sciences**

www.jaims.in

JAIMS

An International Journal for Researches in Ayurveda and Allied Sciences



Maharshi Charaka
Ayurveda

Indexed

Role of *Agnikarma* in Pain Management

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ABSTRACT

Pain is a bad feeling that makes a person visit a doctor because it prevents them from doing their daily tasks. When *Sandhigata Vata* affects movable joints of the body, like the knee joint (*Janusandhi*), the condition becomes more excruciating. Due to its frequent involvement in daily routine work, its status as a weight-bearing joint, and its tendency to develop in overweight patients, the disease *Sandhigata Vata* is more likely to affect the knee joint. *Vata Dosha* is predominant in the pathophysiology of *Sandhigata Vata*, exhibiting symptoms like *Vedana* (pain during joint movement) and *Shopha* (swelling). The joint stiffness and crepitus (specific sound during joint movement) are symptoms that may be correlated in modern parlance with osteoarthritis (OA) of the knee joint in this article details description given about *Agnikarma*.

Key words: Ayurved, Pain, Vata, Agnikarma

INTRODUCTION

According to the International Association for the Study of Pain, pain is defined as an unpleasant emotional and sensory experience that is linked to or implies actual or potential tissue damage. Pain can be interpreted as a sign of an underlying illness or as a side effect of another illness. Pain is described by Sushruta Samhita as a distinct entity known as *Shool*.^[1] One of the eight branches of Ayurveda is *Shalya Tantra* or surgery.^[2] Various approaches to managing a disease have been mentioned by Acharya Sushruta. Examples are *Bheshaja Karma* (drugs), *Kshara Karma* (caustic therapy), *Agni Karma* (thermal cautery), and *Shastra Karma* (operations).^[3] *Agnikarma*, also known as thermal therapy, is the use of various materials to

apply *Agni* both directly and indirectly to treat a patient's illness. Thermotherapy practitioner Sushruta *Agnikarma* is categorized as "*Agni Krita Karma*" because of the *Karma* or action.^[4,5]

Classification of *Agnikarma*

1. According to *Dravya*

a) *Snigdha Agnikarma*: *Madhu, Ghrita, Taila* etc. are used for *Sira, Snayu, Sandhi, Asthi* type of *Agnikarma*.
b) *Ruksha Agnikarma*: *Pippali, Shalaka, Godanta* are used for *Twak* and *Mamsa Dagdha*.

2. According to Site: a) *Sthanika* (local): *Kadara, Arsha, Vicharchika* b) *Sthanantariya* (systemic): *Apachi, Gridhrasi*

3. According to Disease a) In the disease like *Arsha, Kadara* etc. it should be done after surgical excision (*Chhedana*). b) In the disease like fistula, sinus etc. it should be done after surgical incision (*Bhedana*). c) In the disease like *Krimidanta*, it should be done after filling by the *Guda*.

4. According to *Akrti* as described earlier in *Dahana Visheshha. Itratha Dagdha* according to Sushruta, all *Dagdha* are included under four types of *Dagdha Vrana*.

a. *Plushtha Dagdha* - *Plushtha* is that which has pigmented area on the skin has associated with severe burning sensation.

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Submission Date: 16/02/2024 Accepted Date: 25/03/2024

Access this article online

Quick Response Code



Website: www.jaims.in

DOI: 10.21760/jaims.9.4.37

- b. *Durdagdha* - *Durdagdha* is that in which *Sphota* (blebs, vesicles) appear, accompanied with severe pain such as sucking, burning, redness, *Paka* (exudation or ulceration) and pain, these subsiding after a long time.
- c. *Samyaka Dagdha* - There are *Samanya Lakshana* (common symptoms) produced in any type of *Dhatu* (tissue) and special symptoms are only related to the *Dhatu* concerned.
- d. *Ati Dagdha* - (Deep burn) *Mamsa-Avalambana* (Hanging of burnt tissue), *Gatra-Vishlesha* (Parts become loose and useless), Destruction of *Sira*, *Snayu*, *Sandhi* (tendons in joints), *Jwara* (Fever), *Daha* (Burning), *Pipasa* (Thirst), *Murchha* (Unconsciousness), Wound heals after a long time and healed ulcers have discoloration.

Samanya Lakshana

Samyaka Dagdha Vrana - *Ana-Awagadha Vranata* (Wound which is not deep), *Talphala Varnata* (Fruit of *Tala* tree-blue-black in color), *Susamshita Vrana* (Without elevation or depression).

Samyaka Dagdha Vrana of *Twak* - *Shabdapradurbhao* (Production of sound), *Durgandhata* (Bed odor), *Twak Sankocha* (Contraction of the skin).

Samyaka Dagdha Vrana of *Mamsa Dhatu* - *Kapotvarnata* (Color like that of pigeon i.e., ashy, dark grey), *Alpa Swayathu* (Mild swelling), *Alpa Vedana* (Less pain), *Shuska Sankuchit Vranata* (Dry, contracted wound).

Samyaka Dagdha Vrana of *Sira*, *Snayu* - *Krishna Vranata* (Black coloration), *Unnata Vranata* (Elevated), *Srava* - *Sannirodha* (Stoppage of discharge).

Samyaka Dagdha Vrana of *Sandhi* - *Asthi Rukshata* (Dryness), *Arunata* (Dark red coloration), *Karkashata* (Roughness), *Sthirata* (Stability).

Suitable time for Agnikarma

Agnikarma can be done in all seasons, except *Sharad* (autumn) and *Grishma* (Summer); because, in *Sharad* there is a *Prakopa* of *Pitta* and *Agnikarma* also aggravates.

Indication of Agnikarma

Vatakanṭaka, *Shiroroga*, *Ardhavabhedaka*, *Vratma Roga*, *Pakshmakopa*, *Shlista Vratma*, *Vishavratma*, *Alaji*, *Arbuda*, *Puyalasa*, *Abhiṣyanda*, *Adhimantha*, *Lagana Medoj Oshtha Roga*, *Danta Nadi*, *Krimidanta*, *Adhidanta*, *Shitadanta*, *Dantavruddhi*, *Jalarbuda*, *Arsha*, *Nasa Arsha Karnarsha*, *Lingarsha*, *Yoniarsha*, *Bhagandara*, *Nadivrana*, *Upadvansha*, *Gulma*, *Vilambika*, *Sanyasa*, *Unmada*, *Yakruta* & *Plihodara*, *Shonita Atipravrutti*, *Shira Sandhi Cheda*, *Visarpa*.

Contraindications of Agnikarma

Pitta Prakruti, *Bhinna Kostha*, *Daurbalya*, *Vruddha*, *Antah Shonita*, *Anuddhrata Shalya*, *Bala*, *Bhiru*, suffering from - *Pandu*, *Atisara*, *Kshaya*, *Guda Bhrumsha*, *Udararoga*, *Nasa Sanga*, *Chhardi*, *Shoshita*, who has taken alcohol, *Oja Kshaya*, *Vigagdha*, *Rakta Pitta*, *Sthula*, *Ajirna*, *Kroddha*, *Trushna*, *Adhya Rogi*, *Garbhini Prameha*, *Ruksha*, *Daurbalya*, *Visha*, *Kshudha*, *Timira*, *Kshata*, According to Charaka, *Agnikarma* should not be done in the *Vrana* of *Snayu*, *Marma*, *Netra*, *Kushtha* and *Vrana* with *Visha* and *Shalya*.

Agnikarma Vidhi (Procedure)

Purvakarma - The *Agnikarma* room should be well prepared with all required *Agropaharaniyani* described by Acharya Sushruta. Prepare *Triphala Kashaya* for *Prakshalana* of the local part of patient. *Yashtimadhu Churna*, small pieces of *Kumari Patra*, swab holding forceps, *Plota* (gauze piece), *Pichu* (cotton), and gas stove, *Shalaka* etc. are kept ready for use. The *Shalaka* is heated upto becomes red hot on fire.

Pradhana Karma - *Aasana* for *Agnikarma*: In *Sandhigata Vata*, it is easy to do *Agnikarma* in prone position as it is good and comfortable to the patient. After carefully considering the symptoms of the disease, vitals and the strength of the patient as well as disease and seasons, physician should undertake the patient for *Agnikarma*. On the diseased skin of the patient, the *Samyak Dagdha Vrana* should be produced by red hot *Shalaka*. The number of the *Samyak Dagdha Vrana* should be 15 - 30 or according to the extent of the diseased area. Apply immediate cooling agents: After making *Samyak Dagdha Vrana*

apply cooling agent immediately to subside burning pain.

Inspection of defective *Agnikarma* and management

1) *Plushtha Dagdha* - If the *Shalaka* is not properly heated then it will produce this type of *Dagdha*. Management for *Plushtha Dagdha* (burns of the first degree), warming of the body (increasing the body temperature) and administration of drugs / medicines of hot properties should be given; when the temperature of the body becomes increased, the blood becomes liquefied; water by nature is cold in potency and hence makes the blood thick to coagulate, so that, only heat gives comfort.

2) *Durdagdha* - When the physicians are unskilled hand or patient is shaking his body parts due to fear of burn then *Durdagdha* can occur. Management In *Durdagdha* (burns of the second degree) the physician should resort to both warm and cold therapies, application of Ghee, poultices and bathing the body should be done in cold state only.

3) *Ati-Dagdha* (burn of the fourth degree) - This complication is produced due to more heat which is transferred from the red hot *Shalaka* to the diseased part. In *Ati Dagdha* the torn (hanging loose) muscles should be removed followed by cold therapies, then the physician should apply the paste of rice, bark of *Tinduki* mixed with ghee or cover the wound with leaves of *Guduchi* or aquatic plant (like lotus etc.). All the treatments which are similar to that of *Visarpa* of *Pitta* origin should be done. *Madhuchhithadi Ghrita* contains *Madhuchhitha*, *Madhuka*, *Lodhra*, *Sarjarasa*, *Manjishtha*, *Chandana* and *Murva*, should be macerated together and then cooked with Ghee, is best for healing of wound in all kinds of burns.

4) *Daha* (Burning pain) - More or less burning pain is experienced by each and every patient who uses to take *Agnikarma Chikitsa*. This may be treated by *Ghrutakumari Patra Swarasa*.

5) *Dushtha Vranata* (Sepsis of wound) - After *Agnikarma*, it should be observed for any complications. If there is any sign of sepsis, treat the patient accordingly.

Pashchat Karma

Pathya Apathya in *Agnikarma* procedure, it is necessary that it should be healed without any complications. So, all the *Pathya-Apathyas* which have been described by Acharya Sushruta are advised here. It is utmost advisable to the patient that "Do not allow water to touch the *Samyak Dagdha Vrana* site for one *Ahoratra* (24 hours)". The complete *Ropana* (healing) of the *Vrana* should be observed. *Agnikarma Chikitsa* can be repeated after 7 days.

Agnikarma in Modern Era - In modern medicine era, there is no use of therapeutical burn i.e., *Samyak Dagdha Vrana*. But on the other hand, use of *Agnikarma* for other way around is used now days. There are procedures as mimic to *Agnikarma* are practiced in modern era. Electrocautery - It is a most useful instrument in surgical procedure which consists of platinum wire can be heated to red hot by using an electric current. Use of this electric cautery to cut the tissue or to coagulate the bleeding points, so this application of electro cautery is ideal for removing small skin tags, papilloma and also to control the bleeding during surgical procedures.

DISCUSSION

Probable mode of action of *Agnikarma*

Agnikarma act on a multi-factorial level in the body and its importance lies in its action. Exact mechanism action of *Agnikarma* still remains unsolved. Some theories can be adopted to explain these mechanisms but their action varies according to the condition. According to Ayurveda it acts against *Vata* and *Kapha Dosh* by its *Ushna* (hot), *Tikshna* (penetrating), *Sukshma* (minute), *Laghu* (small), *Vyavayi* (quick acting), and *Vikasi* (quickly spreading) *Guna* and it breaks *Srotoavarodha*, produced due to *Vata* and *Kapha*, results in relieving pain and inflammation at that site.^[6] The heat therapy, which is given at the local or affected area, increases the local blood circulation by vasodilatation, local metabolic process speedup, waste products get excreted, reduce edema, accelerate repair, and the which resulting in decreased intensity of pain.

Agnikarma may stimulates the sensory receptor lying in the muscle, by sending a message to the brain which stimulates the pituitary gland to release endorphin which in turn binds with opiate receptors in the pain cells to block the pain stimuli. Endorphin is a naturally occurring neuro peptide and like morphine and other opiates it has a marked propensity for binding on to the “opiate receptors” of the pain cell in the brain.^[7] The pain receptors in the skin and other tissues are all having free nerve endings, due to hot *Shalaka* there is destruction of the free nerve endings and it causes, closing the “gate” and prevent the sensory transmission of pain.^[8] By applying *Ushna* (hot), *Sukshma* (penetrating), *Ashukari* (rapid acting) properties of *Agni* through *Agnikarma* to *Asthi Sandhi* (bony joints) by approaching *Twak Dhatu* (skin), it produces direct impact on localized *Dhatvagni* (secondary level metabolism) and *Bhutagni* (tertiary level metabolism).^[9]

By hot nature, *Agni* is supposed to remove obstruction in *Dosha* pathways which may have occurred due to *Avarana* of *Vikrita Kapha* over *Vyana Vayu* and improves the circulation of *Rasa* and *Rakta* (blood circulation) to the localized pathology. By establishing proper nourishment to lumbar joints, it resumes proper lumbar joint function. In *Dhatukshaya* (tissue degeneration), it removes degenerated and necrosis tissues aggregated in lumbar joints. Osteophytes of lumbar joint are pseudo projections of bones due to irregular osteoclastic and osteoblastic activity. *Agnikarma* is supposed to weaken these structures (osteophytes) and provide relief in pain by reducing nerve compression. By elimination of accumulated tissue wastes, it may be removing extra calcium depositions of osteophytes, fibrous tissue in *Asthi Sandhi* (bony joints) through venous and lymphatic drainage. Establishment of *Agni* in particular *Sandhi* (joint) improves normal joint function and reduces further *Dhatukshaya* (degenerative changes). Thus, it provides permanent relief from painful joints and reduces recurrence of pain episodes.

CONCLUSION

This review concludes that the *Agnikarma* procedure can be performed tonally, utilizing different materials

and temperatures depending on the type of painful condition, with the goal of primarily relieving pain right away. It is a powerful and less invasive para-surgical technique. The majority of research is done on musculoskeletal conditions, such as cervical spondylosis, osteoarthritis of the knee joint, plantar fasciitis, calcaneal spur, sciatica, tennis elbow, frozen shoulder, etc. This review concludes that almost all studies have found *Agnikarma*, along with various types of *Shalakas*, to be significantly effective in pain management for musculoskeletal disorders. It can be used in conjunction with additional oral supportive medications. For the patient experiencing no or few complications, it is easy to use, economical, efficient, and convenient.

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How to cite this article: Ashima Kahi. Role of Agnikarma in Pain Management. *J Ayurveda Integr Med Sci* 2024;4:231-235.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.21760/jaims.9.4.37>

Source of Support: Nil, **Conflict of Interest:** None declared.
