



Therapeutic Cauterization in Ayurveda: A Comprehensive Review of Agnikarma and Its Clinical Potential

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ABSTRACT

Pain has always been considered a distressing experience, including unpleasant physical and emotional sensations. Many people aspire to live pain-free lives, which poses a big obstacle for modern medical professionals looking for efficient pain management techniques. Modern medicine provides a variety of analgesic drugs that are very good for providing temporary pain relief, but long-term use frequently results in a number of negative side effects. Investigating pain management techniques that reduce patient suffering is therefore essential.

Many surgical and parasurgical techniques have been described by Acharya Sushruta, who is regarded as the father of surgery. A parasurgical procedure that is described is agnikarma. Agni is being used for the karma, or agni-karma. In Agnikarma, shalakas and other specialized tools are used for therapeutic burning. Because they have never recurred, agnikarma-treated diseases hold a special place in Sushruta Samhita and are therefore a better measure than other measures. Agnikarma is used in modern medicine as a form of therapeutic burn or cauterization.

Keywords: Agnikarma, Avabahuka, Sandhigatavata, Agnikarma, therapeutic cauterization.

INTRODUCTION

In addition to effectively reducing pain, Agnikarma also disrupts the pathology of the disease. Agnikarma is especially useful for reducing pain in musculoskeletal disorders like

Avbahuka (frozen shoulder), Sandhigatavata, and Parshnishool (calcaneal spur, plantar fasciitis), among others. In addition, the concepts of Agnikarma have been mentioned in connection with Arsha, Arbuda, Bhagandar, Sira, Snayu, Asthi, Sandhigata Vata Vikara, and Gridhasi, among other conditions. This method embodies a modern take on the classic cauterization process.

Agnikarma can be used in a variety of ways, including for skin diseases, pipalli (Piper longum), aja shakrit (goat feces), godanta (cow teeth), shara (arrow), shalaka (probes), varti (wicks), suryakanta (stone variety), and so on. Loha (iron), suvarna (gold), tamra (copper), and kamsya (bronze) are also used to treat muscular diseases. Madhu (honey), guda (jaggery), vasa (fat), ghrita (ghee), taila (oil), and madhucchishta (beeswax) are all used to treat bones, ligaments, tendons, and vessels.

METHODS

- **VISHESA DAHANA**¹

When performing Agnikarma, a red-hot Shalaka forms an Akriti, or shape, over the site that is called Dahana Vishesha.

The four Dahana Prakara, or Vishesha, that Acharya Sushruta mentioned are as follows:

1. **VALAYA:** Round form
2. **BINDU:** Dotted shape; according to Acharya Dalhana, Shalaka ought to be pointed.
3. **VILEKHA:** Line of parallel
4. **PRATISARANA:** This refers to rubbing the area with heated Shalaka without creating any particular shape.

- **SITES OF AGNIKARMA'S APPLICATION**

- **STHANIK (LOCAL SITES):** such as in Arsha, Kadara, and Vicharchika
- **STHANANTARIYA (AWAY FROM THE ILLNESS SITE):** like in Gridhasi, Apache, Visuchika, etc.

- **SAMAYAGA DAGDHA LAKSHANA DHATUGATA**²

- * **TWAKA DAGDHA LAKSHAN:** Twak sankocha (skin contraction), Durgandhta (bad odor), and Shabdapradurbhavo (sound production).

* **MANSA DAGDHA LAKSHANA:** Shushka Sankuchit Vranata (dry contracted wound), Alpa Swayathu and Vedna (mild swelling and pain), and Kapotvranata (color like pigeon ashy-grey).

* **DAGDHA SIRA-SNAYU LAKSHANA:** Srava-Sannirodha (stoppage of discharge), Krishna-Unnata Vrana (blackish and elevated).

* **ASTHI-SANDHI DAGDHA LAKSHANA:** Rukshata (dryness), Karkashata (roughness), Sthirata (stability), and Arunata (dark red coloring).

- **AGNIKARMA KALA**³

Acharya Sushruta states that Agnikarma can be performed in all Ritus, with the exception of the (autumn) Sharad Ritu and the Grishma Ritu, because in both, Pitta becomes aggravated, and Agnikarma likewise aggravates Pitta, which further causes a number of disorders related to Pitta Dosha. Only in times of emergency, Agnikarma can be used in any Ritu.

- **INDICATIONS**⁴

The text explains a number of illnesses for which Agnikarma is recommended as a treatment. Among them are Shlipada, Nadivrana, Arbuda, Charmakeel, Tilkalak, Granthi, Bhagandar, and Apachi Antarvidradhi. Additionally, Agnikarma should be done if there is severe pain in Twak, Mansa, Sira, Snayu, Sandhi, and Asthi, or if there is a condition of continuous bleeding.

- **CONTRAINDICATIONS**⁵

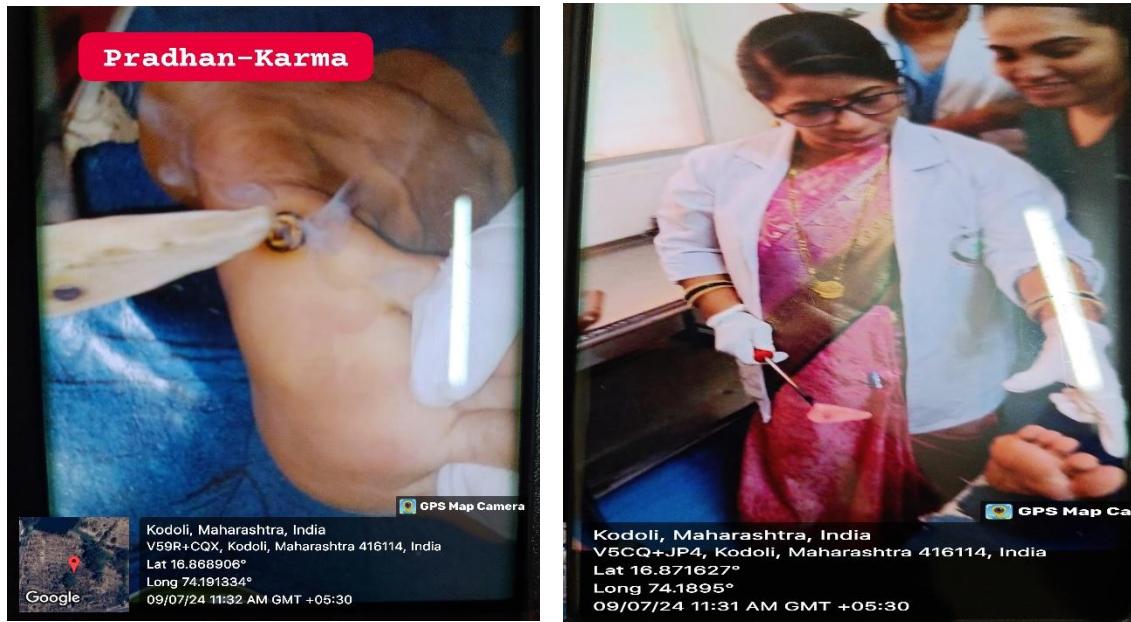
Pitta Prakriti individuals, thin and lean cowards, pregnant women, and those with internal bleeding, bleeding disorders, perforation, retained foreign bodies, etc., are not advised to use agnikarma.

- **PREOPERATIVE INTERVENTIONS**⁶

Before Agnikarma is started, extensive assessments must be carried out. Comprehensive patient counseling must be given in advance to guarantee comprehension and clarity. It is best to have all of the tools needed for the process ready beforehand. It is recommended that patients eat Picchila Anna before the procedure, except for those who should continue to fast due to conditions like obstructed labor, urolithiasis, fistula, piles, abdominal diseases, and diseases of the oral cavity.

MEASURES OF OPERATION

The site should be thoroughly inspected and cleaned. Agnikarma should be performed after marking the location with a pen or marker. Until the appearance of the Samyak Dagdha Lakshana, agnikarma is performed.



- **POST-OPERATIVE INTERVENTIONS**⁷

Following the procedure, Madhu and Ghrita should be applied to the Samyak Dagdha wound. Acharya Sushruta states that Madhuuchista ghrita is the best Ropak ghrita for all types of Agnidagdha Vrana; therefore, the patient should take it along with a healthy diet.

- **PROBABLE MODE OF ACTION**

- Since the imbalance of Vata and Kapha causes the conditions for which Agnikarma is advised, it is a useful remedy for balancing these Doshas. The Agni attributes of Ashukari, Teekshana, Sukshama, and Ushana also help to balance the Vata and Kapha Doshas. Ayurveda recognizes the Dhatwagni principle, according to which every Dhatus has a distinct Dhatwagni. When this Agni is reduced, illnesses start to appear, and in these situations, Agnikarma works very well. Using a red-hot Shalaka to apply external heat to the affected area improves the Dhatwagni, which helps the aggravated Doshas be digested and aids in the healing process.

- By raising the local temperature, the application of Agni, or local heat, improves perfusion and facilitates the effective delivery of oxygen to the tissues. Improved blood perfusion promotes the healing of tissue damage caused by ischemia and degeneration. Local inflammatory mediators are eliminated, which resolves inflammation and ultimately lessens pain. Additionally, agnikarma activates the descending pain inhibiting mechanism (DPI), which in turn activates the central nervous system. Following this, proopiomelanocortin (POMC) cells in the brain stem and arcuate nucleus release endogenous opioids, which reduces pain.
- The gate control theory of pain also provides an explanation for the likely mechanism of action of Agnikarma. According to this theory, non-painful input blocks the transmission of pain sensations to the central nervous system by closing the nerve gates to painful input. This theory describes how painful sensations can be diminished and overridden by non-painful ones. By acting as a touch stimulus, the local heat increases large fiber activity and inhibits pain signals.⁸
- Vant Hoff's principle states that for every degree that body temperature rises, the body's basal metabolism rises by a specific percentage. An increase in temperature causes muscles to relax, which lessens muscle spasms associated with pain and inflammation. Warm tissues encourage muscle relaxation, which lessens pain, inflammation, and spasm.⁹

DISCUSSION

Agnikarma is a well-known parasurgical technique that effectively treats the underlying illness and manages pain. Ayurveda attributes "Ruja," or musculoskeletal pain, to an imbalance in the Vata Dosha. Ruja manifests in many painful conditions, including Gridhasi, Avbahuka, Sandhivata, and Manyastambh, where both Vata and Kapha Doshas are disturbed. Through the properties of Ushna, Tikshna, Sukshma, Laghu, Vyavayi, and Vikasi, agnikarma provides relief from these excruciating illnesses. These traits successfully balance the Vata and Kapha Doshas, relieving pain and stiffness where they are felt.

CONCLUSION

Since ancient times, surgeons have used agnikarma, a technique that is described in Ayurveda along with its uses. Similar to cauterization, which is used to control severe bleeding, especially during amputations, this technique has changed in terms of methodology and tools in modern medical science, but it still adheres to its fundamental principles. The Agnikarma process is simple, economical, and usually does not require hospitalization. Under the

guidance of skilled professionals, it produces impressive results for a variety of ailments, especially in the treatment of pain.

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