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AGNI KARMA: THERMAL THERAPEUTICS IN SHALYA -TANTRA

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda has eight branches, like islands in the sea, separated on the surface but connected in the deep as *Ayurveda*. Among these eight branches “*Shalya Tantra*” is one of the prestigious branch which manage the diseases not only with the oral medications but also with some therapeutic procedures having marvelous effects on diseases. *Shalya Tantra* deals with extraction of *trana*, *kashta*, *pashana*, *panshu*, *loha*, *loshta*, *asthi*, *bala*, *nakha* *puya-shrava*, *dushta-vrana*, *antar-garbha* and *antar-shalya*. It also explains about *yantra*, *shastra*, *Kshara* and *Agni karma*. In addition to this, it also helps in diagnosis of various stages of *vrana*. *Ayurveda* deals with curing of disease of those afflicted by diseases and protecting those who are healthy. *Acharya Sushruta* known as “Father of Surgery” has described various conservative, surgical and Para surgical measures for management of various ailments. Para surgical measures are those which are parallel to surgery and equally effective. These include *Raktamokshana*, *Agni karma* and *Kshara karma*. These procedures are best for the patients who are delicate, like *Balak*, *Vridha*, *Bhiru*, *Garbhini*, *Raja*, and for those who are unwilling to undergo surgery. *Acharya Sushruta* has mentioned that the disease which are not cured by *Aushad*, *Shastra* and *Bheshaja* can be cured by therapeutic fire in the procedure called *Agni karma*. *Acharya Sushruta* has described a separate chapter for *Agni karma* and also mentioned about the materials used for *Agni karma* called *Dahanopakarana*, the indications and contraindications for the procedure, etc. In the continuity, he also mentioned the season which is best for the procedure along with the types of *Agni karma*. *Acharya Sushruta* has also explained about the types of ‘*dagdha*’ with their management.

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INTRODUCTION

The term *Agni karma* is made up of two words ‘*Agni*’ which means ‘fire’ and ‘*Karma*’ which means procedure. In *Ayurveda*, it is defined as the procedure by which therapeutic *Agni* is used for the treatment of various diseases.

HISTORY

- Vedic Period- In the vedic period *agni* is identified as God, which is superior in humans in every aspect. As in ‘*Rigveda*’, *agni* was considered as a source of sterilization. [2] It was also believed that *agni* was able to cure most diseases. ‘*Atharvaveda*’ has also emphasized *agni* as *rakshak* of human body from diseases. It becomes clear that *agni* was used to protect the body from the invading microorganisms. [3] ‘*Samaveda*’ bears elaborated descriptions about *agni* which is clear by enumeration of a separate chapter as ‘*Agnaneya parva*’. [4]
- Acharya Sushruta* has mentioned a separate chapter ‘*Agni karma Vidhi adhyaya*’ for *Agni karma*. [5]

- Agni karma* is also one of sixty *upakarma* of *Vrana*. [6]
- Acharya Charaka* has described *Agni karma* under 36 *upakramas* of *Vrana* in the chapter ‘*Dwivrananiya-chikitsa*’. [7]
- Astanga Samgraha* has detailed description of *Agni karma* in *Sutra sthana* chapter-40. [8]
- Astanga Hridaya* explains *Agni karma* in 30th chapter of *Sutra sthana*. [9]
- Acharya Harita* has mentioned *Agni karma* as an important treatment procedure for various diseases, like in *Gridhrasi*. [10]

IMPORTANCE OF AGNI KARMA: *Acharya Sushruta* has mentioned that there is no possibility of recurrence of disease once treated with *Agni karma*. [11] *Ushna* and *Tikshna*, two of its qualities, are effective in treating *vata* and *kaphaja* diseases, which are frequently challenging to treat due to the hostile nature of the *doshas*. Its preventative, therapeutic and hemostatic effects were first discovered centuries ago. These same principles are adopted in advanced technologies like cauterization, diathermy, radiation therapy, laser therapy, etc. which are in fact modified *Agni karma*. Among *Shashti-upkramas*, *Agni karma*, *Kshara karma* and *Vrana-dhoopana* mentioned by *Acharya Sushruta* hold their importance in sterilization.

NIRUKTI OF AGNI

The word *Agni* is having two kinds of *nirukties* depending upon its *swarupa* and *swabhava*. According to *Swarupa*- 'which spreads to various parts or organs' is called *Agni*. According to *Swabhava*- 'which moves in upward direction' is called *Agni*.

DAHANOPAKARANA (with respect to site of burn) [12]:

Dahanopakarana	Site of Burn
Pippali, Aja-shakrida, Godanta, Shara, Shalaka	Twak-dagdha
Jambavoshtha, Itarloha	Mamsa-dagdha
Kshaudra, Gud, Sneha	Sira, Snayu, Sandhi, Asthi-dagdha

CLASSIFICATION OF AGNI KARMA

Acharyas have not given a separate context about the types of *Agni karma* but it can be summarized on the basis of context as follows

A. According to types of *Dravya* [13]

- Snigdha Agni karma*- *Agni karma* done by *Madhu*, *Ghritha*, *Taila*, etc. are included in *Snigdha Agni karma*.
- Ruksha Agni karma*- *Agni karma* done by *Pippali*, *Shalaka*, *Ajashakrida*, etc. are included in *Ruksha Agni karma*.

B. According to types of *Aakriti* [14]

- Valaya* (Circular shape)
 - Bindu* (Dot like shape)
 - Vilekha* (Straight lines shape)
 - Pratisarana* (Rubbing shape)
- *Acharya Vagbhata* has added three more types in *Aakriti* [15]
- Ardha Chandra* (Crescent shape)
 - Swastika* (Swastika shape)
 - Ashta-pada* (Eight-limb shape)

C. According to *Dhatus* [16]

- Twak-dagdha*
- Mamsa-dagdha*
- Sira* and *Snayu-dagdha*
- Asthi-sandhi-dagdha*

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF AGNI KARMA ON THE BASIS OF DHATU [17]

<i>Twak-dagdha</i>	<i>Shabda-pradurbhava</i> , <i>Durgandhata</i> , <i>Twak-sankocha</i>
<i>Mamsa-dagdha</i>	<i>Kapota-varnata</i> , <i>Alpa-shwayathu-vedana</i> , <i>Shushka-samkuchita-vranata</i>
<i>Sira-Snayu-dagdha</i>	<i>Krishna-unnata-vranata</i> , <i>Shrava-sannirodha</i>
<i>Sandhi-asthi-dagdha</i>	<i>Ruksha-arunta</i> , <i>Karkasha-vranata</i> , <i>Asthira-vranata</i>

AGNI KARMA VIDHI: According to principles of *Trividha karma*, *Agni karma vidhi* should be performed systematically in following three steps:-

Purva-Karma (Pre-Operative measures) -After explaining *Agni karma* procedure in detail to the patient, written informed consent should be taken in patient's own language. Vitals of the patient should be monitored. *Dahanopakarana* (required materials) should be ready like *pippali*, *jambavoshtha*, *shalaka*, *pichu*, *madhu*, *ghrita*, source of *agni*, etc. *Picchhila anna* (*Snigdha aahara*) should be given before the procedure, but in case of *moodgarbha ashmari*, *bhagandara*, *arsha* and *mukha-roga*, patient should be nil orally prior to the procedure. [18] Prior to *Agni karma* procedure, *Shalya chikitsak* should thoroughly examine the consistency/thickness of desired *Agni karma* site, whether it is '*Marma-sthan*' or otherwise, and the *bala* (tolerance power) of the patient too. Moreover, the relation to disease with *ritu* should also be duly kept in mind. [19]

Pradhan-Karma (Operative procedure) -Site of *Agni karma* procedure is well identified and made sterile by suitable measures.

Acharya Sushruta has mentioned some specific sites of *Agni karma* for various ailments, e.g., in case of *shiro-roga* and *adhimantha*, *dahana* should be done over *bhru*, *lalaata* and *shankha-pradesha*. In case of *vartma-roga*, firstly eyes should be covered with moist cloth, then *dahana* should be done over *romakupa* (eyelashes). *Agni karma* is performed at the site, until *samyak-dagdha lakshana* appears. [20]

Pashchat-Karma (Post-Operative care) -*Ghritha* and *Madhu* should be applied over the *Agni karma* site after *Agni karma* procedure, and a suitable bandage is applied. After *Agni karma*, appropriate diet is advised to the patient and he is also instructed for schedule of next visit. It is also mentioned in *Atharvaveda*, that *Ghritha* and *Madhu* purifies the path or a particular area. [21]

SUITABLE SEASONS FOR AGNI KARMA [22]: *Agni karma* can be done in all seasons except '*Sharada*' and '*Grishma*' *ritu* due to the increase in *pitta* during these seasons. Even in *Sharada* and *Grishma ritu*, when the *vyadhi* can only be cured by *Agni karma*, the procedure is allowed to be performed with some specific precautions such as *ritu-viprita aahar*, etc.

Itartha Dagdha [23]: *Itartha dagdha* is caused by the negligence of a person other than the *vadiya*. It can be by one of the two *dravyas*, i.e. *Snigdha* and *Ruksha*. *Acharya Sushruta* has mentioned that the *Snigdha dagdha* is more painful because *Sneha padartha* used in this, has the property of penetration into minute channels under the skin and thus cause rapid *dahana*. *Acharya Vagbhata* named *Itartha dagdha* as *Pramada-dagdha*

TYPES OF AGNI-DAGDHA [24]:

Acharya Sushruta has mentioned that *Agni-dagdha* can be of four types, if done without precautions.

Dagdha	Signs and Symptoms
<i>Plushta-dagdha</i>	<i>Vivarnata</i> , <i>Ati-plushyata</i>
<i>Durdagdha</i>	<i>Teevra-sphota</i> , <i>Chosha</i> , <i>Daha</i> , <i>Raga</i> , <i>Paka</i> , <i>vedana-chira-shamyanti</i>
<i>Samyak-dagdha</i>	<i>Ana-avgada</i> , <i>Talaphala varna</i> , <i>su-sansthitam</i> and symptoms same as <i>dhatu</i>
<i>Atidagdha</i>	<i>Mamsa-avalamban</i> , <i>gatra-vishlesha</i> , <i>sira-snayu-sandi-asthi-ativyapada</i> , complications like <i>jwar</i> , <i>daha</i> , <i>pipasa</i> and <i>murchha</i>

Dagdha chikitsa [25]

Plusta-dagdha:- *Ushna karma* and *Ushna guna aushada* (medicine) are used in *Plusta dagdha*

Durdagdha:- *Sheeta* as well as *Ushna chikitsa* are used in *Durdagdha*, but *Ghritha*, *Aalepa* and *Seka* should be used in *sheeta* form.

Samyak-dagdha:- *Ghritha* processed with *tugakshiri*, *plaksha*, *chandan*, *garika* and *amrita* should be applied over the *samyak-dagdha* site. In the case of continuous *daha*, *chikitsa* similar to *pitta-vidradhi* is done over the *samyak-dagdha* site.

Atidagdha:- Firstly, burnt skin and flesh should be removed, and *sheeta chikitsa* is done. Then, *kashaya* of *shaali-tandula* and *tinduka-twak* is mixed with *ghrita*, and the prepared *pralepa* is applied over the *dagdha* site. Finally, the site is covered with *Guduchi patra*. The rest of the *chikitsa* is same as *pitta-visarpa*.

In all types of agni-dagdha [26]: A mixture of *madhuchhista*, *madhuka*, *rodra*, *sarjrasa*, *manjishta*, *chandan* and *murva* is mixed with water, to prepare *kalka*, which is further added with *ghrita* and *paak* is done. This preparation is used in all types of *dagdha*.

It is worth mentioning that *Agni* vitiates the *rakta dosha*, which in turn vitiates the *pitta dosha* due to their *virya* resemblance. Furthermore, because of the similarity in *rasa* and *dravya*, it causes

intense pain, natural *dahana*, and *sphota* (blister) production. Also, the patient suffers from *jwar* (fever) and *trishna* (thirst).

INDICATIONS FOR AGNI KARMA^[27]: *Agni karma* procedure is commonly performed in *Vata vedna* in *twaka* (skin), *mamsa* (muscles), *sira* (veins), *Snayu* (ligaments), *sandhi* (joints), *asthi* (bones). *Granthi* (lymphnodes), *Arsha* (Piles), *Arbuda* (Tumour), *Bhagandra* (Fistula-in-ano), *Apachi* (Lymphadenitis), *Shlipada* (Filariasis), *Charmakil* (Warts), *Tilkalaka* (pigmented moles), *Antravrudhi* (inguinoscrotal hernia), *Sandhi-sira-chhedana*, *Naadvirana* (Sinus), *shonita-atishrava* (profuse bleeding), etc.

CONTRAINDICATIONS FOR AGNI KARMA^[28]

Pitta-prakriti, *Antha-shonita*, *Bhinna-koshtha*, *Anuddhrata shalya*, *Daurbalya*, *Baal*, *Vridhdha*, *Bhiru*, *Anek-vrana*, *aswedyu*, etc are the contraindications for *Agni karma* procedure.

Dhoomopahata^[29]: Signs and symptoms- Commonest symptoms of *Dhoomopahata* are *Swasiti*, *kshauti*, *adhmaan*, *kasa*, *chakshu-paridaha*, *chakshu-raga*, *sadhoomakam niswas*, *dhoom gandha*, *gandha gyan naash*, *rasa gyan naash*, *shravan shakti naash*, *trishna*, *daha*, *jwar* and *murchha*. Treatment^[30]- Treatment modalities of *Dhoomopahata* includes *vaman* by *sarpi*, *ikshu rasa*, *draksha*, *paya* and *sharkara-ambu*, mixed with *madhura* and *amla rasa*. This causes *koshta-shuddhi*, *dhoom-gandha naash*, and relief in other symptoms like *jwar*, *daha*, *trishna*, etc. Then, *kawalgraha* by *swarasa* prepared with *madhur*, *lavan*, *amla* and *katu rasa dravyas* is done. This causes *indriya-artha shuddhi*. After this, *shiro-virechana* is done, which causes *drishtti*, *shira* and *griva shuddhi*. At last, *avidaahi*, *laghu* and *Snigdha aahar* is given to the patient.

CAUSES OF DAGDHA^[31]

Causes	Treatment
<i>Ushna vaata</i> , <i>aatap</i>	<i>Sheeta chikitsa</i>
<i>Sheeta</i> , <i>varsha</i> , <i>anil</i>	<i>Snigdha</i> and <i>Ushna chikitsa</i>
<i>Atiteja dagdha</i> (<i>indra-vajra</i>)	Can not be cured, but if the patient is alive then <i>sneha</i> , <i>abhyanga</i> , <i>parisheka</i> , and <i>pradeha</i> should be done

DISCUSSION

Shalya Tantra is like the warrior in the battlefield of *Ayurveda*, in which *Agni karma* plays a crucial role in treating diseases and minimizing their recurrence. According to *Ayurveda*, *dhatu* has its own *dhatvagni*, and when it is low, disease starts to develop. This is known to be the root cause of any disease. *Acharyas* have co-related human body with the universe or the outer world. Same as with the *Agni*, the internal *agni* is that which is present in our body that helps in digestion of food and *pachana* of *doshas*. Similarly, by the procedure called *Agni Karma*, external therapeutic *Agni* is provided that causes *pachana* of vitiated *doshas* of that particular site. *Acharya Sushruta* was so specific about *Agni karma* that he indicated different *Dahanopakarana* depending on the site of *Agni Karma*. As it is already known that *agni* itself has the property of killing bacteria and is used in different ways for the process of Sterilization. So, the therapeutic *agni* used in *Agni karma* has its own benefits of providing Sterilization. Sterilization was discovered so early that it was mentioned in the *Vedas*. *Agni karma* is also effective in diseases such as Osteoarthritis, lumbar Spondylosis, Cervical Spondylosis, Sciatica, Frozen shoulder, etc. Generally, the severe pain in the diseases like Sciatica is managed by analgesics or some sort of surgeries which have their own limitations and side effects where as in *Ayurveda*, *Agni karma* is the procedure that is non-surgical with higher success rate. *Acharya Charaka* has also mentioned *Agni* as the best treatment for *shoola*. As *Ushna guna* of *Agni* helps to remove the *avarana* effectively and control the movement of *vata*, which provide relief from *shoola*.

CONCLUSION

Agni karma has been practiced since long ago with absolute results. It is simple, day care procedure and non-invasive and highly effective. As it is seen that something that went through heat cannot be replaced in its previous state, this is also true in case of the disease. Also, *Acharya Sushruta* has mentioned "*ksharaad agni gariyan kriyaasu viyakhayata, tadh dagdhanaam roganaam apunarbhavad, bhaishaja-shastra-kshara-asadhyanam tat-sadhyatvaach*" which means *agni* is superior to *kshara* because there is no chance of recurrence of the disease after *Agni karma* and the diseases which are not cured by *bhaishaja shastra* and *kshara* can be cured by *Agni karma*.^[32] In this context *Acharya Dalhana* has explained that *Agni* is superior in *kriya* and *karma* whereas *kshara* is superior in *guna*.^[33] *Acharyas* have also mentioned that "*daha sankochyhet sira*", which means *dahana* causes vasoconstriction and hence stops bleeding, which further helps in haemostasis. In today's era patient needs instant results in all sort of pain, and therefore, this is a procedure that fulfill the requirement without complications.

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