



Review Article

AGNIKARMA UNVEILED: A CONCEPTUAL INSIGHT INTO AGNIKARMA'S THERAPEUTIC POTENTIAL

Farista^{1*}, Suman Kumari¹, Suman Sharma², Manorma Singh³, Hemantha Kumar⁴

*1PG Scholar, ²Professor, ³Assistant Professor, ⁴Head of Department, Department of Shalya Tantra, National Institute of Ayurveda, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India.

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ABSTRACT

Agnikarma, a significant therapeutic technique in *Ayurveda*, involves the application of heat to specific points on the body for healing purposes. *Sushruta*, recognized as the father of surgery, meticulously outlined a variety of surgical techniques in conjunction with several parasurgical methods. Among these, '*Agnikarma*' is distinguished as a significant parasurgical procedure. *Agnikarma* is regarded as a highly effective therapeutic procedure, as diseases treated with this method are believed to be free from relapse. Additionally, conditions that are deemed incurable by conventional medicine, surgical interventions, or *Kshara* applications may find resolution through this therapy. This review article provides a comprehensive analysis of *Agnikarma*, exploring its historical origins, underlying principles, and clinical applications. We examine the mechanisms by which thermal energy influences physiological processes, including pain modulation and tissue regeneration. The review highlights various methodologies of *Agnikarma*, such as the types of instruments used and the specific techniques for different conditions, emphasizing its efficacy in managing musculoskeletal disorders, inflammatory diseases, and post-surgical recovery. The article also explores the clinical applications of *Agnikarma* in addressing conditions that are resistant to conventional therapies.

INTRODUCTION

Agnikarma, a revered therapeutic technique in *Ayurveda*, embodies the principles of fire and healing, offering a unique approach to medical intervention. *Agnikarma* stands out as a superior treatment among the other parasurgical procedures and acts as a significant remedy for localized *Vata* and *Kapha* conditions. Diseases addressed through this method do not relapse and provide immediate relief to patients^[1]. Numerous *Samhitas* contain detailed descriptions of *Agnikarma*. This includes comprehensive information on its meaning, indications, contraindications, and its advantages, as documented in texts such as *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Vagbhata*, and *Harita Samhita*.

The *Sushruta Samhita* emphasizes *Sushruta's* contributions to *Agni Karma Chikitsa*, which has evolved into electric cauterization for various surgical procedures. In controlling bleeding, four methods-*Sandhana*, *Skandana*, *Pachana*, and *Dahana* are outlined, with *Dahana* as the last resort, leading to bloodless surgery.

Key references include:

- A dedicated chapter on *Agni Karma Chikitsa* in *Sutrasthan 12*.
- *Agni Karma* as *Upayantra* and *Anusastra*.
- Use of *Agnitapta Salaka* for *Kanthagata Shalya* extraction.
- Applications in *Vata Vyadhi* for *Sira*, *Snayu*, *Asthi*, and *Sandhi*.
- Its role as an *Upakarma* for *Arsha Chikitsa* and in managing discharge in *Bhagandara*.
- Treatments for *Granthi*, *Apachi*, *Arbuda*, *Antravidradhi*, *Upadansa*, and *Shleepada*.

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In the *Charak Samhita*, *Agni Karma* is referenced across several chapters, highlighting its significance in *Ayurvedic* practice. *Charak* classifies *AgniKarma* as one of the thirty-six *Upkarama* for wounds (*Vrana*).

Agni Karma Chikitsa is explained in the context of *Shashtra Pranidhana* and is used for:

1. Managing *Mamsaja vikara*.
2. As an *Upakarma* in *Dwivraniya Adhyaya*.
3. Addressing *Kaphaja Gulma*.
4. Treating *Granthi* and *Bhagandara* in *Shotha Chikitsa*.
5. Managing *Plihodara* and *Yakritdora* in *Udara Roga*.
6. Serving as a treatment for *Arsha Chikitsa* (*Ch. Chi. 14/33*) and *Ardhavavedaka* (*Ch. Si. 9*).

The 40th chapter of *Asthanga Sangraha* focuses on the procedures of *Agnikarma*, and it also includes numerous references to its application for various other diseases.

In the *Ashtanga Hridaya*, the 30th chapter discusses the procedures for *Agni Karma*, as referenced in *Ah. Su. ch. 30/40*.

Dahanopakarna^[2]

<i>Dahanupakarana</i>	Su.	Ch.	A.S.	A.H.
<i>Pippali</i>	+	-	-	+
<i>Godanta</i>	+	-	-	+
<i>Ajashakrit</i>	+	-	-	+
<i>Shara</i>	+	-	-	+
<i>Shalaka</i>		-	-	+
<i>Jambavostha</i>	+	-	-	+
<i>Dhatu</i>	+	-	-	+
<i>Madhu</i>	+	+	+	+
<i>Madhuchista</i>	+	+	+	+
<i>Guda</i>	+	-	+	+
<i>Vasa</i>	+	-	-	-
<i>Ghrita</i>	+	+	-	-
<i>Tailam</i>	+	+	-	-
<i>Vasa</i>	-	+	-	-
<i>Majja</i>	-	+	-	-
<i>Varti</i>	-	-	-	+
<i>Suryakanta</i>	-	-	+	+
<i>Ardhenduvaktra Shalaka</i>	+	-	+	+
<i>Kolasthidal Tulya Shalaka</i>	+	-	+	+
<i>Nadi Yantra</i>	-	-	-	+
<i>Suchi</i>	-	-	+	-

Agnikarma is recognized as a significant treatment among the eight types of therapies in *Harita Samhita*. Relevant references include H. S. 1/2/7-8, H. S. 3/11/99-100, H. S. 3/14/14/23, H. S. 3/18/37, H. S. 3/22/9-11, and H. S. 3/54/30.


In the context of *Vatavyadhi*, *Chakradatta* discusses *Agnikarma* concerning the condition of *Gridhrasi* (sciatica) in chapters 22/53-55.

In the context of *Vatavyadhi*, *Yogaratanakara* describes *Agni Karma* in relation to the disease *Gridhrasi* (sciatica) in chapter *Va. Vy. Chi. 157*, page 446.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this review study, a thorough literary analysis has been conducted. The content and references from the available texts have been examined in detail. The primary texts referenced include *Charaka*, *Sushruta*, *Vagbhatta*, and *Harita*, *Chakradatta Samhita*, along with relevant information drawn from thesis, research articles.

Classification of Agnikarma

1. According to Dravyas used^[3]	
<i>Snigdha Agnikarma</i>	Performed using substances like <i>Madhu</i> , <i>Ghrita</i> , and <i>Tailam</i> to treat diseases located in the <i>Sira</i> , <i>Snayu</i> , <i>Sandhi</i> , and <i>Asthi</i> .
<i>Ruksha Agnikarma</i>	<i>Agnikarma</i> utilizes <i>Pippali</i> , <i>Shara</i> , <i>Shalaka</i> , and <i>Godanta</i> to treat diseases in the <i>Twak</i> and <i>Mamsa Dhatus</i> .
2. According to Akriti	
Valaya (O)	Circular shape
Bindu (.)	Dot like shape. According to <i>Acharya Dalhana</i> <i>Shalaka</i> should be of pointed tip
Vilekha	Making of different shapes by heated <i>Shalaka</i> . <i>Vilekha</i> type of <i>Agni karma</i> is further subdivided by <i>Acharya Dalhana</i> into three types according to the direction of line. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Tiryak</i> (Oblique) (/) 2. <i>Riju</i> (Straight) (-----) 3. <i>Vakra</i> (Zigzag) ()
Pratisarana^[4]	Applying friction at the specified area using heated <i>Shalaka</i> , without any defined shape
Ardhachandra	Crescent shape
Swastika	Specific shape of <i>Swastika Yantra</i>
Ashtapada^[5]	A distinct shape with eight protruding limbs extending in various directions.



3. According to Dhatus^[6]	
Twak dagdha	<i>Shabda Pradurbhavo</i> (production of crackling sound), <i>Durgandha</i> (bad odour) and <i>Twak Sankocha</i> (contraction of skin).
Mamsa dagdha	<i>Kapotvarnata</i> i.e. color like that of pigeon i.e. ashy, dark grey. <i>Alpaswayathu</i> i.e. mild swelling, <i>Alpa Vedana</i> i.e. mild pains, <i>Sushka Sankuchit Vrana</i> i.e. dry contracted wound.
Sira snayu dagdha	<i>Krishna Vranata</i> i.e. black coloration, <i>Unnata Vranata</i> i.e. elevation of site, <i>Srava-Sannirodha</i> i.e. stoppage of discharge.
Sandhi asthi dagdha	<i>Rukshata</i> i.e. dryness, <i>Arunta</i> i.e. dark red coloration, <i>Karkashata</i> i.e. roughness and <i>Sthirata</i> i.e. stability of part. These are the signs and symptoms of <i>Samayak Dagdha</i> mentioned for <i>Agni karma</i> done on respective <i>Dhatus</i> .

Procedure**Purvakarma**

Before the main procedure (*Pradhan Karma*), preparatory steps called *Purva Karma* are essential. After assessing the disease's location, the individual's strength, *Marma* points, and seasonal factors, *Agnikarma* can be performed^[7].

Patients should generally follow a *Picchila* diet before *Agnikarma*. However, for conditions like *Asmari* (renal stones), *Mudhagarbha* (malpresentation of the fetus), *Arsha* (hemorrhoids), *Bhagandara* (fistula in ano), *Udara* (ascites), and *Mukha Roga* (oral diseases), fasting is required prior to therapy^[8].

Pradhankarma

Agnikarma begins with a *Swasthikvachana* (auspicious invocation) for the patient, who is positioned with their head facing east and held steady by skilled assistants. The surgeon then uses heated *Shalaka* in a smoke-free fire of *Khadira* or *Badara* wood to create shapes like *Valaya*, *Ardhachandra*, and *Swastika* as required. After completing the procedure, it's crucial to assess the *Samyak Dagdha Lakshana*, the signs that indicate proper cauterization^[9].

Samyak Dagdha Lakshana^[10]

- **Stoppage of Bleeding:** No further bleeding from the site.
- **Crackling Sound:** A distinct sound accompanied by lymph discharge.
- **Colour Change:** The area displays a colour similar to a ripe tala fruit or a dark grey pigeon.
- **Easy Healing:** The wound shows good healing characteristics.
- **Minimal Pain:** The patient experiences limited discomfort.

Pashchat Karma

1. Once the *Samyak Dagdha Lakshana* is achieved, *Madhu* (honey) and *Ghrita* (ghee) should be applied to the cauterized area.
2. According to *Vagbhata*, a *Snigdha* (unctuous) and *Shital* (cooling) application of *Madhu Ghrita* should be used.
3. If the patient does not find relief from the aforementioned treatments, the surgeon should adopt the approach used for managing *Pitta Vidradhi*^[11].

Mode of action

Characteristics of *Agnikarma*

- *Ushna* (Hot)
- *Tikshna* (Sharp)
- *Sukshma* (Subtle)
- *Aashukari* (Quick)

These qualities counteract the properties of *Vata* and *Kapha*.

Mechanism of Action

Physical heat from the red-hot *Shalaka* is transferred to *Twakdhatu*, creating a *Samyak Dagdha Vrana* (properly cauterized wound). This therapeutic heat acts in three key ways:

1. Restores Balance

The *Ushna*, *Tikshna*, *Sukshma*, and *Aashukari* qualities eliminate *Srotavarodha* (blockages), pacify vitiated *Vata* and *Kapha doshas*, and restore their equilibrium.

2. Enhances Circulation

It increases the flow of *Rasa* and *Rakta* (nutrients and blood), improving circulation to the affected site.

3. Boosts Metabolism

The therapeutic heat elevates *Dhatwagni* (metabolic fire), ensuring proper metabolism of *Dhatus* and aiding in the digestion of *Amadosha* (toxins) at the affected area, while promoting optimal nutrition from *Purva Dhatu* (previous tissues).

DISCUSSION

Agnikarma, a vital therapeutic procedure in *Ayurveda*, stands out for its unique approach to treating various conditions, particularly those involving pain and inflammation. In contemporary medicine, modern cautery instruments echo the principles of *Agnikarma*, signifying its enduring relevance. The pro-inflammation theory suggests that inducing acute inflammation can attract more lymphocytes, neutrophils, histamines, and prostaglandins to a specific area, helping to resolve existing chronic inflammation. The thermodynamic principle applied to biological systems indicates that when thermal energy is transferred from a device to a tissue, the internal energy of the tissue increases, leading to heat being absorbed by the cells. This localized increase in temperature activates the body's thermostatic centre, which then distributes the heat throughout the body. This process causes vasodilation, resulting in increased blood flow. An increase in temperature promotes muscle relaxation, which can alleviate muscle spasms, inflammation, and pain. Muscles tend to relax more effectively when warmed, further reducing spasms and discomfort. This research article endeavours to provide comprehensive insights into *Agnikarma*, detailing its methodologies, benefits, and the underlying principles that make it an exceptional therapeutic option.

CONCLUSION

Agnikarma involves the use of thermal energy in the human body and is a powerful, minimally invasive parasurgical procedure. It is widely applicable for both chronic conditions and emergency situations. Modern surgical techniques like cauterization, laser treatment, and radiation reflect its broad use. The procedure is supported by various theories, and further research should be conducted to clearly validate its applications in *Ayurveda*. Future research should prioritize controlled studies to evaluate its efficacy systematically, safety profiles, and underlying mechanisms.

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*Address for correspondence

Dr. Farista

PG Scholar,

Department of Shalya Tantra,

National Institute of Ayurveda,

Jaipur, Rajasthan, India.

Email: farishtagodara7@gmail.com

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