

The Agnikarma(Cauterization): A Mastery Procedure in Susruta Samhitha

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is the ancient science of human civilization. *Sushruta Samhita* is the most important literature in surgery. *Maharshi Sushruta*, known as the father of surgery has also explained the Para-surgical procedures in different diseases among them *Agnikarma* as the greatest/superior curative treatment to avoid recurrence. We can observe Susruta has explained in detail the importance of *Agnikarma*, varieties and criteria of successful cauterization, specific sites, indications, patterns, and pre and post-cautery management. *Agnikarma* has its *Ushna Guna* and *Sookshma Guna* it pacifies the *vata* and *Kapha* and burns the unwanted tissue done by the different materials such as *Shalaka* (gold, silver, *panchadhātu*, etc), *Ajashakrut*, *Godanta*, *Madhu*, *Guda*, *Sneha* (oil, *Ghrita*). In the present study humble attempt was made for Ayurvedic surgical practice. This study concludes that *Agnikarma*(cauterization) is a very effective and simple, non-occurrence and minimal invasive procedure able to be conducted at the Out Patient Department(OPD) level.

KEYWORDS: *Agnikarma*, Para-surgical, different materials, management

INTRODUCTION:

Ayurveda is the oldest origin of life sciences. *Ayurveda* is *upaveda* of *Atharvana Veda* also known as *Pancham Veda*. Ayurvedic texts like *Brihatrayee* (*Charak*, *Susrutha* & *Vagbhata*) widely explained *Agnikarma* in different contexts for different diseases as a curative treatment. *Maharshi Susruta*, known as the father of surgery has also explained the Para-surgical procedure *Agnikarma* as the greatest/superior curative treatment moreover those which are incurable by *Bheshaja* (medicines), *Shastra* (operations) and *ksharakarma* (caustics) also yield to it that's the importance of *Agnikarma*^[1]. *Maharshi Susruta* has explained different aspects of *Agnikarma* do's & don'ts such as different material instruments for application, Suitable seasons, preparation of the patient, varieties, criteria for successful, specific sites, indications, pattern, post-cautery management, contraindication, *Virya* (Potency) in the *sutrasthana* of

chapter Twelve^[2]. Besides this in the chapter 9 given Experiments hand demonstrated on soft muscle pieces^[3]. In Chapter 14, *Maharshi Susruta* also explained in the treatment perspective in Haemostasis like *Dahan* as a last choice^[4]. In the Chapter 27. The operative procedure of foreign body removal advised Haemostasis with dry heat or hot *ghrita* application^[5]. In the chapter 40. related to the *Dravya* has *Ushna Virya* (Potency) to use as the most important factor for *Agnikarma*^[6]. e.g. - *Pippali*, *Ajashakrut*, *Godanta*, *Suryakanta*, *Madhu*, *Guda*, *Sneha* (tail, *Ghrita*).

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:

To study and discuss the various basic concepts of *Agnikarma* of *Susruta Samhita*.

To collect the data at a one-point structure to understand easily.

MATERIAL AND METHODS:

The *Agnikarma* references were collected and compiled from *Susruta Samhita Tika*. We also referred to various English-translated textbooks of *Susruta Samhita*. The various methods of *Agnikarma* are discussed and their importance in Ayurvedic surgical practice.

OBSERVATION:

In the phenomena of *Agnikarma*(~cauterization), we will see the concepts explained by the *Acharya Susruta* to achieve the Mastery Procedure completely in a step-by-step manner^[7].

Importance of Cauterization -

क्षारादग्निर्गरीयान् क्रियासु व्याख्यातः, तद्धानां रोगाणामपुनर्भावाद्भेषजशस्त्रक्षारैरसाध्यानां तत्साध्यत्वाच्च ||

Agnikarma treatment is superior then *Kshara* (Caustics) having capacity of *Apunarbhava* of diseases^[8].

Instruments applying Cautery -

तद्यथा- पिप्पल्यजाशकृद्दोदन्तशरशलाकाजाम्बवौष्ठेतरलौहाः क्षौद्रगुडस्नेहाश्च|तत्र, पिप्पल्यजाशकृद्दोदन्तशरशलाकास्त्वग्गतानां, जाम्बवौष्ठेतरलौहा मांसगतानां, क्षौद्रगुड स्नेहाः सिरास्नायुसन्ध्यस्थिगतानाम् ||

Materials useful for skin lesions(*Twak Dagdha*) are: *Pippali* (Piper longum), *Ajashakrut* (faecal pellets of a goat), *Godanta* (Moonstone), *Shara* (arrow-like device), *Shalaka* (rod of metal)^[9].

Muscular lesions (*Mamsa Dagdha*) are *Jambaustha* (device/stone resembling *Jambu*) and other metallic instruments.

For Vessels (*Sira*), ligaments (*Snayu*), bones (*Asthi*) and joints (*Sandhi*) are *Madhu* (honey), *Guda* (jaggary), and *Sneha*(fats-oil/ghee).

Table 1: Area of Dhatu & useful material for Agnikarma.

Sr. No.	Site/ dhatu	Material useful
1.	skin lesions(<i>Twak Dagdha</i>)	<i>Pippali</i> (Piper longum), <i>Ajashakrut</i> (faecal pellets of a goat), <i>Godanta</i> (Moonstone), <i>Shara</i> (arrow-like device), <i>Shalaka</i> (rod of metal).
2.	Muscular lesions(<i>Mamsa Dagdha</i>)	<i>Jambaustha</i> (device/stone resembling like <i>Jambu</i>) and other metallic instruments.
3.	Vessels (<i>Sira</i>), ligaments (<i>Snayu</i>), bones (<i>Asthi</i>) and joints (<i>Sandhi</i>)	<i>Madhu</i> (honey), <i>Guda</i> (jaggary), <i>Sneha</i> (fats-oil/ghee).

Suitable seasons -

तत्राग्निकर्म सर्वर्तुषु कुर्यादन्यत्र शरद्रीष्माभ्यां; तत्राप्यात्ययिकेऽग्निकर्मसाध्ये व्याधौ तत्प्रत्यनीकं विधिं कृत्वा ॥

Contraindicated in *Sharad rutu* & *Grishma rutu* but if emergency with counter measures can perform^[10].

Patient preparation –

सर्वव्याधिष्वृतुषु च पिच्छिलमन्नं भुक्तवतः; मूढगर्भाशिमरीभगन्दरोदराशोमुखरोगेष्वभुक्तवतः कर्म कुर्वीत ॥

Feed with slimy diet and empty stomach in *mudagarba* (mal presentation), calculous diseases, fistula-in-Ano, abdominal diseases, piles and oral cavity^[11].

Varieties & criteria of successful Cauterization –

तत्र, शब्दप्रादुर्भावो दुर्गन्धता त्वक्सङ्कोचश्च त्वग्दग्धे, कपोतवर्णताऽल्पश्चयथुवेदना शुष्कसङ्कुचितव्रणता च मांसदग्धे; कृष्णोन्नतव्रणता स्रावसन्निरोधश्च सिरास्नायुदग्धे, रूक्षारणता कर्कशस्थिरव्रणता च सन्ध्यस्थिदग्धे ॥

Skin cauterization - crackling sound, bad odour & contraction of skin.

Muscle cauterization - Pigeon/Ash-like discolouration, mild inflammation & pain, lesion gets dried up & shrivelled.

Vessel & Ligament cauterization - Black discolouration, swelling & cessation of discharge.

Bone & joint cauterization - Dryness, redness, hardness & fixity of lesion^[12].

Table 2: Showing Varieties & criteria of successful Cauterization

Sr. No.	Site of Cauterization	Successesful criteria Cauterization
1.	Skin cauterization	crackling sound, bad odour & contraction of skin
2.	Muscle cauterization	Pigeon/Ash-like discolouration, mild inflammation & pain, lesion gets dried up & shrivelled.
3.	Vessel & Ligament cauterization	Black discolouration, swelling & cessation of discharge.
4.	Bone & joint cauterization	Dryness, redness, hardness & fixity of lesion

Specific site of cauterization –

तत्र शिरोरोगाधिमन्थयोर्भ्रूललाटशङ्खप्रदेशेषु दहेत्, वर्त्मरोगेष्वार्द्रालक्तकप्रतिच्छन्नां दृष्टिं कृत्वा वर्त्मरोमकूपान् ॥

Disease of head & in Glaucoma, eyebrows, frontal-temporal, diseases eyelids, roots of eyelashes, should perform *Agnikarma* with wet cloth covered^[13].

Table 3: Image showing Agnikarma with Protection near eye region.



Indications-

त्वङ्मांससिरास्नायुसन्ध्यस्थिस्थितेऽत्युग्ररुजि वायावुच्छ्रितकठिनसुप्तमांसे व्रणे ग्रन्थ्यशोर्ऽर्बुदभगन्दरापचीश्ल्लीपदचर्मकीलतिलकालकान्त्रवृद्धिसन्धिसिराच्छेदनादिषु नाडीशो गितातिप्रवृत्तिषु चाग्निकर्म कुर्यात् ॥

Vitiated *vayu* afflicts skin, muscle, vessels, ligaments, Joints & bones with severe pain in ulcers with excessive granulations indurated tissues & anaesthetic patches, in lymph nodes, piles, tumours, fistula-in-Ano, lymphadenitis, elephantiasis, warts, pigmented moles, inguinoscrotal hernias, diseases of vessels & joints, in excision, track of sinuses in case of excessive bleeding^[14].

Pattern of cauterization-

तत्र वलय-बिन्दु-विलेखा-प्रतिसारणानीति दहनविशेषाः ॥

Circular, Dotted, Linear & Flat^[15].

**Pre & Post cautery management –**

रोगस्य संस्थानमवेक्ष्य सम्यङ्नरस्य मर्माणि बलाबलं च |

व्याधिं तथर्तुं च समीक्ष्य सम्यक् ततोऽव्यवस्येद्विषग्निकर्म ॥ तत्र सम्यग्दग्धे मधुसर्पिर्भ्यामभ्यङ्गः ॥

Apply the cautery treatment after thorough examination of the shape of lesions, vital parts of the body, the strength of the patient, the disease and the season.

Honey & *ghrita* should be applied after the successful *Agnikarma* done according to strength and not affecting *marma*^[16].

Contraindication of Agnikarma –

अथेमानग्निना परिहरेत्- पित्तप्रकृतिमन्तःशोणितं भिन्नकोष्ठमनुद्धृतशल्यं दुर्बलं बालं वृद्धं भीरुमनेकव्रणपीडितमस्वेद्यांश्चेति ॥

Agnikarma procedures should avoid in *Paittika* constitution, internal bleeding, ruptured viscera, unextracted foreign body & in weak, very young & very old, timid multiple lesions, fomentation^[17]. Beside this all *Acharya Sushruta* had explained were to perform experiments of *Agnikarma* in *sutrasthan adhyay 9/4* मृदुषु मांसखण्डेष्वग्निक्षारयोग्यां; i.e on soft muscle pieces^[18]. Also, in some emergency & operative conditions explained Haemostasis achievement with *Agnikarma* is best in *sutrasthan adhyay 14 –*

अस्कन्दमाने रुधिरं सन्धानानि प्रयोजयेत् | सन्धाने भ्रश्यमाने तु पाचनैः समुपाचरेत् ॥ कल्पैरैतैस्त्रिभिर्वैद्यः प्रयतेत यथाविधि | असिद्धिमत्सु चैतेषु दाहः परम इष्यते ॥

During operative procedure specially in foreign body removal and to achieve haemostasis use *Agnikarma* with dry heat or hot *ghrita*^[19].

DISCUSSION:





In current ayurvedic practice, *Agnikarma* has very good results in some chronic conditions like plantar fasciitis, calcaneal sprue, sciatic pain, peri-arthritis in shoulder joint, frozen shoulder, removing warts, plantar corn etc. Plantar fasciitis is a chronic degenerative inflammation of the plantar fascia. Here the *Bindu* type of *Agnikarma* is employed. The mode of action of *Agnikarma* can be explained as follows, the *guna* of *Agni* are *Sookshma*, *tikshna*, and *ushna*. By these *guna* *Agni* entering the different small channels (*strotas*) of the body, the *prakopaka* of *vata* is neutralized. Other theory is that *Ushna Guna Agni* improves

the *dhatvagni* that pacifies the *Aam dosha* and reduces the pain. By this means as *vata shaman* occurs the pain subsides spontaneously. Here *Agnikarma* works by its *Guna* but in some places, it works by mechanical degeneration of tissue. *Agnikarma* works by its mechanical power of destroying the tissue by heat (Unhealthy granulation tissue in chronic nonhealing hyper granulated wound, unhealthy granulation tissue in track of chronic sinus (*Nadivrana*), fistulous track (*Bhagandar*), and malignant cells in the case of *Arbuda*). In diseases with Hyper keratinised tissue like *Kadar* and *Charmakila*, it is both mechanical power and effects of *Guna* which are acting. Here by *Bindu* or *vilekha*, the hypergranulated tissue is removed by direct burn through *loha tapta Shalaka* then due to its *Guna* it destroys the deep-seated root cells of *Kadar*. *Agnikarma* explained by *Acharya Susruta* in many diseases can be understood, but it's very difficult to understand and explain how the *Agnikarma* works in *Aantravrudhi*.

CONCLUSION:

We can see *Acharya Susruta* has explained *Agnikarma* in so depth in *sutrasthanam* itself covered completely. This gives importance to performing *Agnikarma* though it is known to be a para-surgical procedure that can be called a Mastery procedure if followed with all perspective knowledge. *Acharya Susruta* has mentioned all do's and don'ts, it's a call for *Shalya chikitsa* (surgeon) to make skilled by applying *yukti* to perform *Agnikarma* properly.

Table 4: Various sites, instruments, criteria and patterns for successful Cauterization:

Site	Instruments	criteria	Pattern
Twaka(Skin)	<i>Pippali, Ajashakrut, Godanta, Shara, Shalaka,</i>	crackling sound, bad odour & contraction of skin	 विलेखा
Mausa(Muscle)	<i>Jambaustha, metallic instruments</i>	Pigeon/Ash-like discolouration, mild inflammation & pain, lesion gets dried up & shrivelled.	 बिंदु
Sira Snayu(Vessel & ligament)	<i>Madhu, Guda, Sneha</i>	Black discolouration, swelling & cessation of discharge.	 वलय
Asthi Sandhi(Bone & Joint)	<i>Madhu, Guda, Sneha</i>	Dryness, redness, hardness & fixity of lesion.	 प्रतिसारण

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