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## A conceptual study: Role of *Agnikarma* in shoola with special reference to acute pain

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### Abstract

*Agnikarma* is a therapeutic heat burn therapy performed with the help of hot *Shalaka* (Probe) and it is an effective procedure for management of pain in *Ayurveda*. *Ayurveda* is the everlasting supreme science of medicine because it deals with promotion of health and curing the diseases. The aim of Medical Science is to provide better health to every human being. To achieve this goal the patha should be able to eliminate the disease and that to be without any side effects.

*Ayurveda* have *Shamana* and *Shodhana Chikitsa*. Variety of medical procedure mentioned in *Ayurved Samhitas* like *Ksharkarma*, *Lepana* etc. *Agnikarma* is one of the important procedures described in *Ayurveda*. In this fast lifestyle patients need instant result on all pain. *Agnikarma* is one of the fast procedures to reduced *Vedana* (Pain). Many *Samhita* have description of *Agnikarma*. From meaning to indication, contraindication, its superiority all information included in *Charak*, *Sushrut*, *Vagbhat*, *Harita Samhita*, *Acharya Dalhana* have given explanation regarding the shapes of *Agnikarma* in his commentary. This *Agnikarma* is original idea of modern cauterization procedure. This review article will help to all to gain best knowledge about *Agnikarma*.

**Keywords:** *Agnikarma*; *Dahana Karma*; Shoola; Acute Pain; Suvarna Shalaka Dahanakarma; External heat

### 1. Introduction

In today's most busy life style pain is the commonest complaint and everyone is in the search of easy, simple and fast acting treatment which has no side effects. As per modern concept of medicine, the unbearable pain at shoulder or neck region is considered as cervical spondylosis [1] and general line of treatment for this contains painkiller tablets or injectables or traction therapy. Most of the times these medicaments are expensive, uncomfortable and cause many side effects which may cause harm to other body systems. On the other hand treatment called as *Agnikarma* which is offered by *Ayurveda* for this same ailment is non-invasive, non-harmful, fast resulting and also cost effective. *Shoola* is comprised under *Vatavyadhi* as per *Ayurvedic science*<sup>[2]</sup>. *Vata Dosha* is main leading factor to cause *Vatavyadhi* while other *Dosha* [*Kapha* & *Pitta*] involvement is secondary. In *Chikitsa Sutra* of *Sandhigat Vata* it is primely said as; *Sandhigata* should be treated by '*Dahana Karma*'<sup>[3]</sup> i.e. by applying external heat which directly refers to *Agnikarma* as the alternative mode of treatment of painful joints.

In *Agnikarma*, heat is transferred in to the affected body parts with the help of *Shalaka*<sup>[4]</sup> (Metal Probe which are good conductors of heat) made up of different metals like *Suvarna* (Gold), *Raupya* (Silver), *Loha* (Iron), or *Panchadhatu* (alloy of 5 metals) as per the disease mentioned in the classical texts.

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## 2. Definition of *Agnikarma*

The *Agnikarma* word made up with combination of two words *Agni* and *Karma* (i.e. fire and procedure). In short we can said as a procedure done by *Agni* for treating a disease.<sup>[5]</sup>

The treatment done for immediate relief from pain in various ailments via advocating indirect heat by using *Shalaka* [blunt probe] of different materials like iron, gold, clay etc. is called as *Agnikarma*. *Agnikarma* is considered as the most effective, simple, low cost and fast resulting para surgical procedure advocated by *Acharya Sushruta* regarding relief of pain especially joint pain. Unfortunately it is not in wide practice and is neglected by *Ayurvedic* Physicians.

### 2.1. Indications of *Agnikarma*

A number of diseases and conditions have been explained in text where *Agnikarma* as therapeutic measure has been indicated as below:

If there is excessive pain (Due to *Vataprakopa*) in *Twak* (Skin), *Mansa* (Muscles), *Sira* (Veins), *Snayu*, *Sandhi* (Joints), *Asthi* (Bones), *Granthi* (Lymphnodes), *Arsha* (Piles), *Bhagandara* (Fistula in ano), *Apache* (lymphadenitis), *Shlipad* (Filariasis), *Chrmakil* (Warts), *Tilkalaka* (Pigmented moles), *Antravrudhi* (Inguinoscrotal Hernia), excessive bleeding from *Sandhi* (Joints), *Sirachcheda* (Cutting of veins), *Nadivrana* (Sinus )<sup>[6]</sup>.

### 2.2. Contra-indications for *Agnikarma*

*Agnikarma* should not be done in the *Pitta Prakriti*, *Bhinna Kosta*, *Daurbalya*, *Vridha*<sup>[7]</sup>

*Vrana* of *Snayu*, *Marma*, *Netra*, *Kushtha* and *Vrana* with *Visha* and *Shalya*<sup>[8]</sup>. who is contraindicated for it.

*Ksharkarma*.<sup>[9]</sup>

### 2.3. Suitable Season for *Agnikarma*

*Agnikarma* can be done during all the seasons except *Grishma* and *Sharada*.

### 2.4. Types of *Agnikarma*<sup>[10]</sup>

- *Valaya*- Circular, ring like.
- *Bindu* - Dots done with *Shalaka*.
- *Vilekha* - Straight lines.
- *Pratisarana* - Wide spread, flat lines.
- *Ardhcandra* - Semicircular.
- *Ashtapada*- Having eight branches.
- *Swastika*- Cross lined.

#### *Aim*

To assess the efficacy of *Agnikarma* with '*Suvarna Shalaka* [Gold bar]<sup>[11]</sup> in management of *Shoola* as the pain relieving procedure.

The method of *Agnikarma* applied in this study is '*Bindu*'.

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## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Material

Blunt probe [*Shalaka*] of Gold, length- 7 cm, weight - 4 g.

Candle, Probe holder, match box, *Snehadravya* [*Ghrita*/*Ghee*].

### 3.1.1. Poorvakarma

Patient is made aware of the procedure with written/ informed consent. Thereafter, patient is allowed to sit comfortably, and the most tender and painful point is marked with the marker. Before starting the procedure. the desired site where *Agnikarma* is to be done was properly cleaned with distilled water allowed to dry.

### 3.1.2. Pradhan Karma

After cleaning the site, Burn the candle and then with the help of probe holder *Suvarna Shalaka* applied on marked site.) the *Samyak Dagdha Agnikarma* is done intermittently on affected site as marked and thus, *Bindu* (dot) type of *Agnikarma* is performed. The *Shalaka* (tip of probe) is kept in contact of skin.

### 3.1.3. Pashchat Karma

Post *Agnikarma* procedure, soothing *Yastimadhu Ghrita* is applied to the patient at the site of *Agnikarma* for relieving post burn discomfort as it has *Vednasthapak* (Analgesic) and *Vranropak* (healing) property as mentioned in classical text of *Sushrua Samhita*. The site of *Agnikarma* should be water-proofed to prevent wound infection.

## 3.2. Mode of action of *Agnikarma*

*Agnikarma* is considered as the method of choice to treat pain due to aggravated *Vatadosha* in *Vatavyadhi samprapti* as it relieves pain and provides easy pain less movements of the related body part. The heat advocated via the medium of gold bar brings the aggravated *Vata Dosha* to normalcy and thus normalizes the equilibrium between *dosha*. The qualities of *Agni* being *Ushna*-hot, *Laghu*-light, *Sukshma*-penetrating, *Ashukari*- fast spreading, *Aamapachaka*- digestive to auto toxins and *kriyakashtata*- restricted movements of the joint which are strictly opposite to *Vata & Kaphadosha* qualities which are particularly vitiated in *Vatavyadhi*. *Vata Dosha* normalizes due to effect of heat produced by *Agnikarma*. Also *Agni* helps in digestion of *Ama*-auto toxins to remove the *margavarodha* pathway obstruction which also is a major event in the etiology of *Vatavyadhi*. The effect of *Agni* also reaches the deepest and smallest structures of the body system to improve *Dhatvagni*.

## 3.3. Effects of *Agnikarma*

Its increases metabolism, blood circulation, decreased pain, stimulates nerves, relaxed muscles, decreased infection, decreased joint stiffness and inflammation.

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## 4. Conclusion

- *Agnikarma* provides significant relief in acute pain.
- It is the most simple and fast effective procedure which can easily be administered on O.P.D. level.
- No wound, bleeding, scar or after marks of the procedure is visible on the body. It is a cost effective, non-troublesome procedure which relieves pain instantly from the affected sites.

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## Compliance with ethical standards

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### *Disclosure of conflict of interest*

The authors declare that there was no conflict of interest regarding the publication of manuscript.

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## Author's short biography



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