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## Review Article on “Ksharakarma and Agnikarma in Shalaky Tantra”

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### ABSTRACT:

*Ksharakarma* and *Agnikarma* are two among the para surgical techniques mentioned in Ayurveda and are explained to provide complete relief in certain diseases which are not cured by herbal medicine or surgical interventions. According to Ayurveda *Kshara* is ‘*Pradhanatama*’ among *Shastra* and *Anushastra*, and *Agni* is ‘*Shreshta*’ among *Anushastras*. Our Ancient Acharyas described external and internal uses of *Ksharakarma* in various disorders in two forms- *Pratisaaraneeya* and *Paaneeya*; whereas based on the specific site, heat retention and transmission capacity different materials had prescribed to perform *Agnikarma*. The use of these two para-surgical procedures has been mentioned in the different contexts of *Shalyatantra*. This review article deals with various aspects of *Kshara* and *Agnikarma* in *Netra- Karna- Nasa- Mukha* and *Shiroroga*.

**Keywords:** *Ksharakarma, Agnikarma, Netra- Karna- Nasa- Mukha and Shiroroga*

### INTRODUCTION

*Kshara* is a caustic alkaline substance obtained from the ashes prepared in a specific way from medicinal plants. *Ksharakarma* is versatile because even in places that are difficult to approach by ordinary measures can be treated by *Ksharakarma* and it is the only thing that can take internally among *Shastra* and *Anushastra*. The etymological significance of the term *Kshara* is based on their property of corroding (the skin or the flesh of an affected part of the body), or on their peculiar quality in destroying the skin and flesh where such an effect is desired. Because of its *Chedya- Bhedya- Lekhya* action, *Tridoshaghna* property and *Visheshakriyavacharanata*; Acharya Sushruta considered *Kshara* as ‘*Pradhanatama*’ among *Shastra* and *Anushastra*<sup>1</sup>. According to Ashtanga

Sangraha, *Kshara* is ‘*Sarvashastra-Anushastranam Varishta*’ (superior)<sup>2</sup>. Clinically *Agnikarma* is the prime para-surgical procedure, to treat chronic diseases, which are most difficult to manage because of the antagonistic property of *doshas*, like disease caused by *Vata* and *Kapha*. *Agnikarma* can be done in all seasons except autumn and summer but in an emergency it can be performed in any seasons with appropriate precautions<sup>3</sup> like covering the site with moist clothes, having *Piccchila- Sheeta* foods and smearing cold pastes over the body so that the increase in *pitta* which generated out of the excessive hot climate can be countered. Among *Anushastra* *Agni* is ‘*Shreshta*’ according to Acharya Sushruta and *Agni* is ‘*Pradhanatara*’ according to



Acharya Dalhana. While explaining the importance of *Agni karma*, Acharya Sushruta told that in *Dagdha Kriya*, *Agnikarma* is better than *Kshara* because *Agnidagdha Rogas* are *Apunarbhava* and *Bheshaja- Shastra- Kshara Asadhya Rogas* are *Sadhya* by *Agnikarma*<sup>4</sup>.

Ayurveda Acharyas have mentioned these two para surgical procedures in different diseases explained in *Shalaky tantra*. The purpose of this review article is to combine the various aspects of *Kshara* and *Agnikarma* mentioned in *Shalaky Tantra*.

#### **Ksharakarma:**

##### **Classification of Kshara<sup>5</sup>:**

On the basis of Administration:

- 1- *Pratisaaraneeya Kshara (Bahyaparimaarjanam- Ashtanga Sangraha)* - External administration
- 2- *Paaneeya Kshara (Anta: parimaarjanam- Ashtanga Sangraha)* - Internal administration

*Pratisaaraneeya Kshara* is again classified into three on the basis of Concentration:

- i- *Mridu*
- ii- *Madhyama*
- iii- *Teekshna*

##### **General dose of Kshara:**

###### **Dose of Paaneeya Kshara**

- i- *Uttama*: 1 Pala (4 *Karsha*)
- ii- *Madhyama*: ¾ Pala (3 *Karsha*)
- iii- *Avara*: ½ Pala (2 *Karsha*)

###### **Dose of Pratisaaraneeya Kshara:**

- *Mridu*: 2 Pala
- *Madhyama*: 1 Pala
- *Teekshna*: ½ Pala

**Properties of Kshara<sup>6</sup>:** *Kshara* is *Tridoshagna* (pacifies *Tridosha*) because of *Nanaaushadha samavaayat* (as it contains variety of medicines), *Shuklatwat* (white colour) it is *Soumya* (cooling), has good *Dahana* (digestive), *Pachana* (suppurating) and *Dharana Shakti*, *Katu rasa (Katu- Lavana rasa bhuyishtam- Ashtanga Sangraha)*, it has *Ushana* (hot), *Teekshna* (sharp), *Paachana* (suppurating), *Vilayana* (liquefacient), *Shodhana* (purifying), *Ropana* (healing), *Shoshana* (drying), *Stambhana* (stopping) and *Lekhana* (scraping) *guna*, it is *Krimi- Aama- Kapha- Kushta- Visha* and *Medhohara* (act as antihelentic, reduce phlegm, cures skin ailments, has antitoxic effect and reduces fat).

**General indications of Pratisaarneeya Kshara<sup>7</sup>:** Alkaline preparation should be externally used in diseases such as Skin diseases such as *Kitibha Kushta*, *Dadru*, *Mandal* and, *Kilasa*, *Bhagandara* (Fistula-in-ano), *Arbudha* (Tumour), *Arsha* (Haemorrhoids), *Dushta*

*vrana* (chronic ulcer), *Nadi vrana* (sinus), *Charma kila*(warts on skin), *Tilkalaka*(moles), *Nyaccha*, *Vyanga*, *Mashaka*, *Bahya Vidradhi* (External abscess), *Krimi* (worms), *Visha* (toxins), Seven forms of diseases which affect the cavity of the mouth such as *Upajihvika*, *Adhigihvka*, *Upakusha*, *Danta vaidarbha* and in the three types of *Rohinis*. *Ashtanga Sangraha* added the disease *Granthi* and *Vartmagata roga*.

**General indications of Paaneeya Kshara<sup>8</sup>:** *Garavisha*, *Gulma*, *Udara*, *Agnisanga*, *Ajeerna*, *Arochaka*, *Aanaha*, *Sharkara*, *Ashmari*, *Abhyantara Vidradhi*, *Krimi*, *Visha*, *Arshas*. *Ashtanga Sangraha* added *Shoola*.

**General contra indications of Kshara<sup>9</sup>:** *Raktapitta*, *Jwara*, *Pittaprakruti (Vata Pittardhita- Ashtanga Sangraha)*, *Baala*, *Vriddha*, *Durbala*, *Moorcha*, *Timira*, *Brama* and *Mada*.

#### **Ksharakarma in Shalaky Tantra:**

Indication of *Ksharakarma* in *Shalaky Tantra*: (Table 1)  
Contra indication of *Ksharakarma* in *Shalaky Tantra* (Table 2)

#### **Kshara prayoga:**

##### **Poorvakarma:**

The patient is made to sit in *Nivata pradesha*(devoid of sun light), all the necessary arrangements should be done which is told in *Agropaharaneeya Adhyaya*. Examination of the patient and *Ksharakarma Pradesha* has to be done. Do *Doshanusaara poorvakarma* like In *Vata dushti- Lekhana karma*(scraping); In *Pitta dushti- Gharshana Karma*(scrubbing) and in *Kapha Dushti- Pracchana karma*(incision).

##### **Pradhanakarma:**

Apply *Kshara* using *Shalaka*(rodlike instrument) for the duration of 100 *maatrakaala*.

According to *Ashtanga Sangraha*<sup>10</sup>:

##### **In Vartmagata roga:**

*Vartma Nirbhujya* (eyelid should be held everted), Cover the *Krishnamandala* using *Pichu* or *Madhucchistha* Apply *Kshara* in ‘*Patmapatra tanu pramana*’(thin layer as lotus petal).

##### **In Ghrana Arsha and Arbuda:**

The Patient is made to sit *Pratyadithyamukha* (facing towards the sun), *Unnamya Nasa* (Lift the tip of the nose) Apply *Kshara* with *Shalaka*. It should retain 50 *Maatrakaala*.

##### **In Karna:**

The procedure is the same as that of *Ghrana*(nose).

##### **Paschatkarma:**

After observing *Samyak dagdha lakshnana*(proper cauterization), *Shamana prayoga* is done with *Amlavarga*, *Sarpi* and *Madhuka* (*Vaghbhatta* told *Madhu*

instead of *Madhuka*). For *Kshara vana ropana*, *Tilakalka*, *Madhuka* and *Ghrita* have to be applied as *Lepana* thereafter. In the case of *Heena* or *Adhidagdha Vrana* do treatment according to the *Dosha*.

**Samyak- Heena- Atiyoga Lakshana of Ksharakarma<sup>11,12</sup>: (Table 3)**

**Agnikarma:**

Based on the part where cauterization is to be done and the ability of a material to retain and transmit heat energy, different instruments are enumerated by *Acharyas*. (Table 4)

**General indications of Agnikarma<sup>15</sup>:** Agnikarma is indicated in all ritus except *Sharat* and *Greeshma* ritu; but in *Aatyayika* condition, it can be done in all *Ritus* with proper *Pratyaneeka Chikitsa*. Indicated conditions are *Twakroga*, *Mamsaroga*, *Sira*, *Snayu*, *Sandhi*, *Astigata rogas*, *Teevravedhana*, *Vrana* with *Uchrita-Katina* and *Supta mamsa*, *Granthi*, *Arsha*, *Arbuda*, *Bhagandara*, *Apachi*, *Shleepada*, *Charmakeela*, *Tilakaalaka*, *Antravridhi*, in *Sandhi-Sira Chedana*, *Naadivrana* and *Shonitaatipravritti*. While performing *Agnikarma Rogasamsthana*, *Marma*, *Balaabala* and *Ritu* should be considered.

**General contraindications of Agnikarma<sup>16</sup>:** *Pittaprakruti*, *Anta:Shonita*, *Bhinnakoshta*, *Anudhruta Shalya*, *Durbala*, *Baala*, *Vridha*, *Bheeru*, *Anekavrana peedita* (*Aneka vyadhi peedita*) and *Aswedya* (*Pandu-Meha- Raktapitta* and *Trisha*).

**Therapeutic burn patterns (Dahana Visesh)(Table 5) Agnikarma in Shalaky Tantra:**

Indication of *Agnikarma* in *Shalaky Tantra*:(Table 6)

Contra indication of *Agnikarma* in *Shalaky Tantra*:(Table 7)

*Dahanapradesha* told in *Shalaky Tantra*<sup>19</sup>:

- In *Shiroroga* and *Adhimandha*: *Bhru*, *Shanka* and *Lalata*
- In *Vartmagata rogas*: *Dahana* on affected *Romakoopa*s after covering *Drishti* with *Ardra Alaktaka*.
- In *Sushira*, *Danta nadi* etc: The hole should be first filled with *Sneha*, *Guda*, *Madhu* or *Madhuchishta* then do *Agnikarma*.

**Agnikarma Vidhi:**

*Poorvakarma*:

The patient is made to sit facing *Poorvadik*(towards east) and make the patient comfortable with *Vak*(words) and *Ambu*(water). Examination of the patient and *Agnikarma Pradesha* has to be done. Heat the *Dahanopakarana*(cauterization equipments) till *Agnivarna*(fire coloured) with *Nirdhooma Khadira-Badaradi Angara*. Patient should take *Picchilanna*(sticky food) before the procedure and patient should

be *Abhukta*(without taking food) in case of *Moodagharbha*, *Ashmari*, *Bhagandara*, *Udara*, *Arsha* and *Mukharoga*.

*Pradhanakarma*:

Do *Dahana karma*(thermal cautery) with proper *Dahanopakarana* on affected part and observe *Samyak Dagdha Lakshanas*(properly burnt).

*Pachat karma*:

In *Samyak Dagdha Vrana* apply *Madhu* and *Sarpi*. Care should be taken not to cause *Atidagdha*.

**Dagdha Lakshana according to Pradesha<sup>20</sup>: (Table 8) Samyak- Heena- Atiyoga Lakshana of Agnikarma<sup>21</sup>:(Table 9)**

## DISCUSSION

**Probable mode of action of Ksharakarma:**

*Kshara* has *Shodhana*, *Ropana*, *Shoshana*, *Sthambhana*, *Vilayana* and *Lekhana* properties. *Shodhana* property helps in the elimination and expulsion of unwanted and harmful substances from the diseased part by desquamation of sloughs and draining the pus. *Ropana* property helps in healing due to the antiseptic action of *Kshara*. *Shoshana* property helps in drying up and absorption of mucus discharge and promote granulation. *Sthambhana* property of *Kshara* helps in the contraction of the diseased areas to promote healing and *Vilayana* property causes liquefaction and dissolves localized unhealthy tissue. Hence these all properties help to fasten the process of healing.

In the modern view, local application of *Kshara* acts on *rogas* like polyps or hypertrophied turbinate etc in two ways: 1) It cauterizes the hypertrophied or enlarged mass directly because of its corrosive nature thus producing the shrinking effect on tissues. 2) *Kshara* penetrates into tissues and coagulates protein in the local plexus. Coagulation of protein leads to the disintegration of haemoglobin into heme and globin. The synergy of these actions results in decreasing the size of the mass and further necrosis of the tissue occurs<sup>22</sup>. This necrosed tissue sloughs out within 3-7days. Thus the disease process obliterates permanently and there is no recurrence of the disease.

**Probable mode of action of Agnikarma:**

The disease in which *Agnikarma* is indicated is due to vitiation of *Vata* and *Kapha* and *Agnikarma* is considered as better therapy to pacify these *Doshas*. Due to the *Ushna*, *Teekshna*, *Shookshma* and *Aashukari guna* of *Agni*, *Agnikarma* pacifies vitiated *Vata* and *Kapha Dosha*. As per *Acharya Sushruta*, basically, *Agnikarma* is used in

two manners; ie., for *Roga unmooolana* and other for pain management. For the disease cure mainly used in the assistance with surgery and for pain management, it is used independently.

As per modern view, application of heat stimulates lateral spinothalamic tract which leads to stimulation of descending pain inhibitory (DPI) mechanism thereby causing the stimulation of CNS. Which cause the release of endogenous opioids in POMC (Proopiomelanocortin) cells in the arcuate nucleus and in the brain stem and thus blocks the transmission of pain sensation<sup>23</sup>.

## CONCLUSION

*Kshara* and *Agni karma* are the two potent and minimally invasive para surgical procedures that have far-reaching applications especially in the management of pain, recurrency and unwanted growth conditions in the number of diseases explained in *Shalaky Tantra*. New research works should be opened up in these topics for achieving a pellucid validation of its applications in the field of *Shalaky Tantra*.

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**Table 1 Indication of Ksharakarma in Shalaky Tantra:**

<i>Netra roga</i>	<i>Karna roga</i>	<i>Nasa roga</i>	<i>Shiro-kapala roga</i>	<i>Mukha roga</i>
<i>Lagana</i> <i>Arshovartma</i> <i>Shushkarsha</i> <i>Vartmarbhuda</i> <i>Pakshmakopa</i> <i>Bisavartma</i> <i>Shlishhta vartma</i>	<i>Karna Arsha</i> <i>Karna Arbuda</i>	<i>Nasa arsha</i> (A.S & Y.R) <i>Nasa Arbudha</i> (A.S, Charaka & Y.R)	-----	<i>Upajihvika</i> <i>Adhigihvika</i> <i>Upakusha</i> <i>Danta vaidarbha</i> 3 types of <i>Rohini</i> <i>Danta Puppudaka</i> <i>Jalaarbuda</i> <i>Danta Naadi</i> <i>Adhi Dantaka</i>

**Table 2 Contra indication of Ksharakarma in Shalaky Tantra:**

<u><b>Sushruta Samhita</b></u>	<u><b>Ashtanga Sangraha</b></u>
<i>Pittaprakruti</i> <i>Baala</i> <i>Vridha</i> <i>Durbala</i> <i>Moorchhita</i> <i>Raktapitta rogi</i> <i>Marma- Sira- Snyayu- Sandhi- Tarunaasthi</i> (Ghrana- <i>Karna- Greeva- Akshiputa</i> and <i>Tarunasthi</i> by Dalhana) and <i>Jihwa</i> and <i>Gala Pradesha</i> <i>Alpamaasa pradesha</i> ( <i>Lalata</i> by Dalhana) <i>Netrarogas</i> except <i>Vartmagata rogas</i>	<i>Timira</i> <i>Shiroroga</i> <i>Akshipaaka</i>

**Table 3Samyak- Heena- Atiyoga Lakshana of Ksharakarma<sup>11,12</sup>:**

<b>Samyak Dagdha Lakshana</b>	<b>Heena Dagdha Lakshana</b>	<b>Ati Dagdha lakshana</b>
<i>Vikaropashama</i> <i>Laghava</i> <i>Asrava</i> <i>Pakwajambhu sankasha</i> (A.S) <i>Eeshat avasannam</i> (A.S)	<i>Toda</i> <i>Kandu</i> <i>Jadya</i> <i>Vyadhivridhi</i> <i>Durgandham</i> (A.S)	<i>Oosha</i> <i>Daha</i> <i>Raga</i> <i>Shopha</i> <i>Jwara</i> <i>Paka</i> <i>Visarpa</i> <i>Shiroroga</i> <i>Vata-Pitta kopa</i> In <i>Netra</i> : <i>Vartmanirbhedanam</i> <i>Indriyabhramsha</i> In <i>Ghrana/ Shrotra</i> : <i>Darana</i> and <i>Sankocha</i> of <i>Nasa vamsha/ Shrotra</i> <i>Tarunasthi</i> <i>Gandha/ Shravana ajnanam</i>

**Table 4 Shows Different Dahana upakaranani (Cauterization instruments) according to site/ disease.**

Acharya Sushruta <sup>13</sup>			Ashatanga Sangraha <sup>14</sup>		
<i>Dahana Upakaranani</i> (cauterization material)	Site/ disease		<i>Dahana Upakaranani</i> (cauterization material)	Site/ disease	
<i>Pippali, Shara, Shalaka, Ajashakrit, Godanta</i>	For <i>Twak rogas</i>		<i>Sooryakanta, Pippali, Ajashakrit, Godanta, Shara, Shalaka,</i>	<i>Abhishyanda Atimandha Shiro-Bru-Shanka- Lalata ruja</i> ( <i>Twak Daha</i> )	
<i>Jambhavoshta, Itara loha</i>	For <i>Mamsagata rogas</i>		<i>Jambhavoshta, Sooji, Shalaka, Ghrita, Guda, Madhu, Madhuchishta, Taila, Vasa, Hema, Tamra, Ayas, Roopya, Kamsya</i>	<i>Grandhi Arbuda Arsha Pooyalasaka</i> (For <i>Mamsa Daha</i> )	
<i>Kshoudra, Guda, Sneha</i>	For <i>Sira, Snayu, Sandhi and Astigata rogas</i>		<i>Jambhavoshta, Shooji, Shalaka, Madhu, Madhuchishta, Guda and Sneha</i>	<i>Dantanadi Shlishta vartma Upapakshma Lagana Linganasha Asamyak siravyadha Shonitatipravrutti Siradicheda</i> ( <i>Sira- Snayu- Sandhi and Asthigata rogas</i> )	

**Table 5 Therapeutic burn patterns (*Dahana Visesh*):**

<b>Sushruta- 04 <i>Dahana visesh</i></b> <sup>17</sup>	<b>Ashtanga Sangraha- 07 <i>Dahana visesh</i></b> <sup>18</sup>
<i>Valaya, Bindu, Vilekha and Pratisarana</i>	<i>Valaya, Ardhachandra, Swastika, Ashtapada, Bindu, Rekha and Pratisarana.</i>

**Table 6 Indication of Agnikarma in Shalaky Tantra:**

<i>Netra roga</i>	<i>Karna roga</i>	<i>Nasa roga</i>	<i>Shiro-kapala roga</i>	<i>Mukha roga</i>
<i>Krichronmeela</i>	<i>Karna Arsha</i>	<i>Nasa Arsha</i>	<i>Vataja Shiroroga</i>	<i>Medhoja Oshakopa</i>
<i>Vartmaarbuda</i>	<i>Karnaarbuda</i>	<i>Nasaarbuda</i>	<i>Kaphaja Shiroroga</i>	<i>Jalaarbuda</i>
<i>Pakshmakopa</i>			<i>Ardhavabhedaka</i>	<i>Vardhana</i>
<i>Pakshmoparodha</i>			( <i>Charaka</i> )	<i>Danta Naadi</i>
<i>Upapakshma</i>				<i>Sheeta Danta</i>
<i>Bisavartma</i>				<i>Krimi Danta</i>
<i>Shlishta Vartma</i>				<i>Medoja Galaganda</i>
<i>Pooyalasa</i>				
<i>Bahyalaji</i>				
<i>Lagana</i>				
<i>Vataja Abhishyanda</i>				
<i>Vataja Adhimantha</i>				

**Table 7 Contra indication of Agnikarma in Shalaky Tantra:**

<b>Sushruta Samhita</b>	<b>Ashtanga Sangraha</b>
<i>Jihwa rogas</i> <i>Pittaprakruti</i> <i>Raktapitta</i> <i>Baala</i> <i>Vridhdha</i> <i>Bheeru</i> <i>Durbala</i> <i>Aswedya</i>	<i>Jihwa rogas</i> <i>Ushnakaala</i> And all the <i>Ksharakarma anarhas (Timira, Shiroroga, Akshipaka)</i>

**Table 8 Dagdha Lakshana according to Pradesha<sup>20</sup>:**

<b>Twakdagdha Lakshana</b>	<b>Mamsadagdha Lakshana</b>	<b>Sandhi- Lakshana</b>	<b>Asthidahdha</b>	<b>Sira- Lakshana</b>	<b>Snayudagdha</b>
<i>Shabdha pradurbhava</i> <i>Durgandha</i> <i>Twaksankocha</i>	<i>Kapotavarna</i> <i>Alpa Shwayadhu</i> <i>Alpavedhana</i> <i>Shushka Sankuchitavrana</i>	<i>Rookshata</i> <i>Arunata</i> <i>Karkasha</i> <i>Sthirata</i>		<i>Krishnonnata Vrana</i> <i>Srava Sannirodha</i>	

**Table 9 Samyak- Heena- Atiyoga Lakshana of Agnikarma<sup>21</sup>:**

<b>Plushtadagdha Lakshana</b>	<b>Durdagdha Lakshana</b>	<b>Samyadagdha Lakshana</b>	<b>Atidagdha lakshana</b>
<i>Vivarna</i> <i>Plushyate Atimaatra</i>	<i>Sphota utpatti</i> <i>Teevra Chosha-</i> <i>Daha-Raga-Paka-</i> <i>and Vedana</i> <i>Upashyamyati Chirat</i> <i>(Ashtanga Sangraha)</i>	<i>Anavaghadam</i> <i>Pakwa Taalaphala</i> <i>varna</i> <i>Susamsthita</i> + <i>Dagdha Lakshana</i> <i>according to</i> <i>Pradesha</i>	<i>Mamsa avalambhanam</i> <i>Gaatravishlesha</i> <i>Atimaatra Vyapat for Sira- Snyau-</i> <i>Sandhi- Asthi</i> <i>Upadravas like Jwara, Daha, Pipaasa,</i> <i>Moorcha (Chardi and Shonita</i> <i>atipravrutti- Ashtanga Sangraha)</i> <i>Chirena rohana of Vrana</i> <i>Roodascha Vivarnata</i> <i>Ashtanga Sangraha- Ugravrana,</i> <i>Dhoomayana and Gambheera Vrana</i>