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Review Article

A Review on *Agnikarma* an Unique Therapeutic Approach W.S.R. to Plantar Fascia

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ABSTRACT

Plantar fasciitis is a painful condition associated with injury or trauma in heel. The plantar fasciitis sometimes observed as consequences of other conditions like; calcaneal knob, bursitis, orsteomyelitis and bony spur. It is characterized as bony outgrowth on the heel that results painful heel, it may occur due to the deposition of calcium on heel bone, strain on ligaments, strain on foot muscle, plantar fascia stretching and tearing of heel bone membrane. Ayurveda correlates chronic plantar fasciitis with *Vatakantaka* as *Snaya Asthi Sandhi Aashrita*. Ayurveda mentioned involvement of *Asthisanyugata vata* in such type of painful conditions. The management of such condition requires use of medicine along with para surgical and surgical procedures. Surgical treatment and excision of calcaneal spur may suffer some disadvantages like; pain, wound scar and incomplete relief. Therefore some other therapeutic modalities of Ayurveda can be used for the management of plantar fasciitis. *Agnikarma* involves use of heat on particular body part to reduce inflammation and pain. Present article described role of *Agnikarma* in the management of plantar fasciitis.

Keywords: *Ayurveda, Plantar Fasciitis, Vatakantaka, Painful Heel, Agnikarma.*

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Introduction

Plantar Fasciitis is a painful condition can be correlated with *Asthi-Snayugat Vata* as per ayurveda. The condition mainly involves pain on heel due to aggravated *Vayus* in bones that induces degeneration of bone leading to pain and tenderness. Pain mainly occurs during walking, standing and running at posterior part. Ayurveda considered vitiation of *Kapha-Vata* as responsible factor of *Vatakandaka*. It is commonly occurs in old age people especially in rural area. The vitiated *Dosha* blocks channels that restrict immune response to exert their action on affected area. Ayurveda described some common causes of painful heel i.e. obesity, long walk, ageing, improper walk, use of wrong footwear, excessive exercise, excess consumption of hot and spicy food and long running on rough surface, etc.

Symptoms of Plantar Fasciitis

- Pain in surrounding region of spur/ heel pain
- Disturbances in walking pattern

- Slight numbness
- Stiff in the morning
- Tenderness & burning sensation
- Painful walk and difficulty in standing position.

Vatakantak (plantar fasciitis) mainly affects mobile joints; *Gulfa Sandhi* therefore weight wearing capacity and ability to perform daily routine work decreases significantly. Ayurveda further mentioned various treatment options for the management of plantar fasciitis like; *Vataghna Chikitsa*, use of *Eranda Tailm*, oleation, poultice, bandaging, *Ruksha Sweda*, *Rakthamoksha*, *Raktaavasechanam* and *Agnikarma*. *Agnikarma* is a para surgical procedure which involves use of heat on affected tissue surface with the help of *Dahanopakaranas*, this therapy provides relief in pain and inflammation due to inherent characteristics of heat energy. Some therapeutic importance of *Agnikarma* depicted in **Figure 1**.

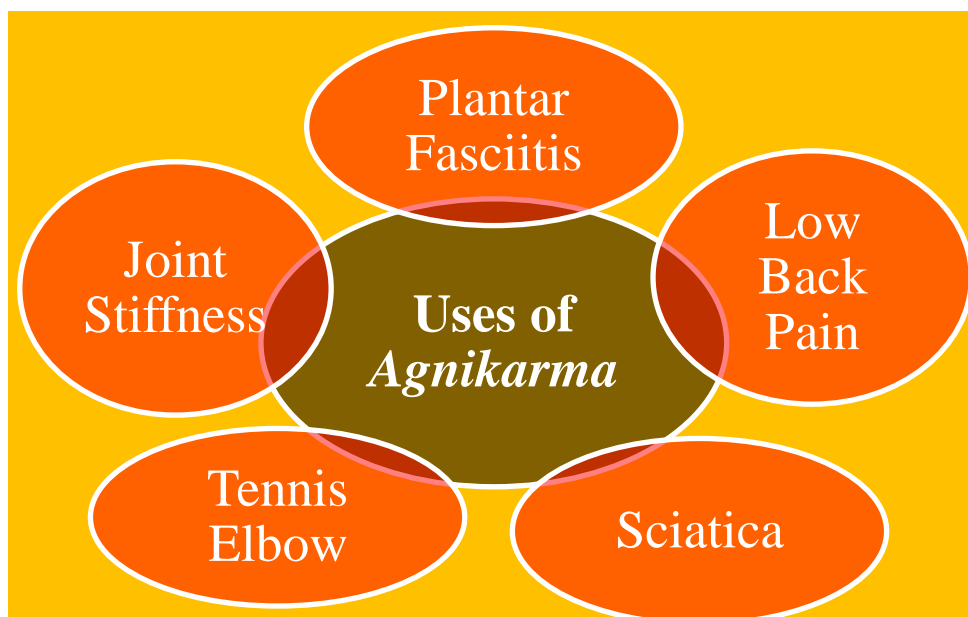


Figure 1: Common uses of *Agnikarma* in medical field.

***Agnikarma* (cauterization)**

Agnikarma (cauterization) involves use of various materials such as; *Pippali, Shara, Aja Shakrit, Shalaka, Varti, Suryakanta* and *Godanta* etc. Moreover *Madhu, Vasa, Guda, Taila, Madhucchishta* and *Ghrta* can be used in cauterization for tissues like; ligaments, bones and tendons etc. *Swarna, Loha, Tamra* and *Kamsya* can be used for diseases of muscles. Traditionally *Pancha dhatu shalaka* recommended for regular purpose of *Agnikarma* made up of Copper, Bronze, Brass, Lead and Tin.

Agnikarma offers beneficial effects in joint stiffness, muscle spasm, tennis elbow, sciatica, low back pain and plantar fasciitis, etc. *Agnikarma* can be used to excise extra growths on skin and it also helps in excision of fistula tracks. *Shushruta* recommended use of *Agnikarma* for disorders related to the *Asthi* and *Sanyu*.

Advantages of *Agnikarma*

- It is a noninvasive technique requires minimal surgical intervention.
- *Agnikarma* can treat diseases which cannot be cure by surgery or *Kshar Karma*
- Minimal chances of recurrence or post therapy complications
- *Agnikarma* is easy to perform, require less time and inexpensive.

***Agnikarma* for Plantar Fasciitis:**

Agnikarma described as *Agni Krita-Karma* that is perform by the action of *Agni*. The literature study suggested that *Agnikarma* can offer relief in *Vatakanatak* (plantar fasciitis) since this procedure possesses great advantages in painful diseases associated with *Vata* vitiation. The next section summarizes special use of *Agnikarma* in plantar fasciitis described by various researchers.

Materials require performing *Agnikarma* in Planter Fasciitis:

Jatyadi Taila, Loha Shalaka, turmeric powder, Aloe Vera and burner, etc.

Recommended procedure of *Agnikarma* in Planter Fasciitis:

1. Affected part should be cleaned with herbal formulation like; *Triphala Kashaya*.
2. Dry sterilized cotton gauze can be used to wipe out remaining liquid.
3. Heated *Panchdhatu Shalaka* can be used for making *Bindu Dahan Vishesh*, there should be appropriate space between *Samyak Dagdh Vrana* made by *Panchadhatu Shalaka*.
4. *Kumari Swarasa* can be used to relief burning sensation.
5. *Yashtimadhu churna* in little amount should be used after wiping of *Kumari Swarasa*
6. Same procedure was repeated several times after some interval
7. Finally it is recommended to use *Haridra* powder along with coconut oil on affected area
8. Internal medicines can also be recommended after *Agnikarma* to achieve instant relief.

Recommended mode of action of of *Agnikarma* in Planter Fasciitis:

The condition of planter fasciitis mainly associated with vitiation of *Vata* and *Kapha Dosha* that further leads *Shotha* and *Shoola* in heel area. *Agnikarma Chikitsa* employed use of heat energy in the affected area. The *Ushna, Laghu, Tikshna, Sukshma, Vikashi* and *Vyavayi Guna* of heat help to break *Kaphanubandha* associated with disease thereby reduces *Shoth* and *Shoola*. Therapy neutralizes *Vata Dosha*, reduces tenderness and offers relief in morning stiffness.

Agnikarma offers therapeutic benefits by its specific mechanism that involves transfer of heat to the skin which further removes obstruction of channels (*Srotas*) thereby enhances blood circulation at affected body part. The metabolic, cellular and enzymatic activities increases due to the rise in temperature that resulted dilatation of vessels, release of chemical mediators and anti inflammatory response. Heat energy also provides local analgesic effect to

relieve pain and counter mechanism of heat reduces burning sensation.

The condition of planter fasciitis involves vitiation of *Vata Dosha* which is *Sheeta* in *Guna* and *Agni* offers *Ushna Guna* just opposite to *Vata Dosha* therefore suppress symptoms and pathogenesis of planter fasciitis. The temperature that rises due to the *Agnikarma* reduces nerve reflexes at the affected area which resulted relaxation of muscle and reduces pain sensation. The increased local circulation provides auto immune response by virtue of cellular and chemical transportation.

Contraindication for *Agnikarma*:

- Children, elderly and pregnant patients contradicted or should treat with great care
- Persons having *Pitta prakruti*, multiple ulcers and anemic
- Alcoholic, low immunity person and diabetic patients require special attention
- Sensitive person not willing for therapy should not force for *Agnikarma*.

Precaution need to be taken care while performing *Agnikarma* in Plantar Fasciitis:

- ❖ *Agnikarma* should be under expert guidance only when ever required
- ❖ Procedure should be performing as per predetermined protocol; improper procedure may lead severe burning sensation and tissue destruction
- ❖ Great care must be taken to avoid complication like; suppuration, bleeding and burning
- ❖ Control of heat or heat intensity should be within acceptable limit so one can bear it for sufficient period of time
- ❖ Sterilization of *Shalaka* require every time or new *Shalaka* should be employed
- ❖ Pretreatment and post treatment approaches should not be omitted like use of *Triphala Kashaya* and *Kumari Swarasa*.
- ❖ Patient consent id prerequisite in case of elderly patient
- ❖ Physician should make prior arrangement for handling any adverse conditions if complication occurred
- ❖ Patient should discourage for practicing *Agnikarma* without guidance of physician.

Conclusion

Agnikarma required minimum equipment and it is considered as non-infectious procedure that offers great relief in pain associated with *Vatakantaka*. *Agnikarma* in plantar fasciitis can be performed using *Loha Shalaka* to make *Bindu* on affected part of heel. *Aloe Vera* leaf used to give cooling effects. *Jatyadi Taila* or turmeric powder can be employed after *Agnikarma* as *Paschat karma*, internal medicines can also be recommended after *Agnikarma* to achieve instant pain relief. Literary study revealed that *Agnikarma* not only sub-side symptoms of plantar fasciitis but greatly helps to cure disease completely. The chances of recurrence are minimal after performing *Agnikarma*, it is cost effective and offers beneficial effects for longer duration. *Agnikarma* avoid use of surgical intervention thus possesses minimal complication. Finally it can be concluded that *Agnikarma* is simple and effective therapy for the management of planter fasciitis or heel pain. However there are some precautions which must be consider before performing *Agnikarma*.

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