



Review Article

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PAIN MANAGEMENT IN AYURVEDIC CLASSICS: AN ANALYTICAL OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Pain can be described as any physical and mental suffering or discomfort caused by illness or injury. The International Association for the Study of Pain defines pain as "an unpleasant sensory and emotional experience arising from actual or potential tissue damage." Pain always lands a person in discomfort and interferes with daily tasks, regardless of severity or location. Different terminologies viz. vedana, shool, ruja, etc. are used for pain in Ayurvedic classics. It is mentioned as a premonitory sign as well as a symptom of many diseases. According to Acharya Sushruta "Vatat rute nasti ruja" i.e., the root cause of all types of pain is Vata dosha. The effectiveness and safety of the therapeutic drugs that are currently utilised to relieve pain are often limited. Therefore, there is an urgent need for research into novel analgesics that are safe, efficacious, and tolerated well. Description of a variety of therapeutic approaches for pain management is available in the Ayurvedic classical text. Agnikarma, Jalaukavacharana, Marma chikitsa, and other Ayurvedic treatment modalities provide immediate pain relief without untoward effects. Along with these therapies, there are descriptions of many other therapeutic procedures such as Vedhankarma, Bastikarma, Lepa, Snehana, Swedana, and internal use of medicine in Ayurvedic classical texts. Therefore, it is essential to evaluate the concept of pain and its practical utility, which necessitates the development of pain management techniques recognised in Ayurveda.

Keywords: Pain Management, Shool, Vedana, Ayurvedic Pain Management.

INTRODUCTION

In spite of very advanced research in science, pain remains the leading cause of disability for a vast number of people worldwide. Pain can be described as a symptom or a complication of another condition. Pain is the most prevalent sign of many diseases, which compels patients to seek medical attention. Any pain, whether of moderate or higher intensity, is accompanied by anxiety. It disturbs the routine life of the patient. The patient becomes worried or anxious to get relief from pain. The symptom 'pain' is closely related to shool or vedana in textual references of Ayurveda. In this condition, the vitiated Vata Dosha is localized in different regions of the body like asthi, sandhi, kati, prushtha and produces pain. In modern science, there are various managements in different forms for relieving pain. These remedies provide only temporary relief from pain and may adversely affect the liver and kidneys. In Ayurveda, there are various methods used for treating different types of pain like shoulder pain, knee joint pain, etc. These Ayurvedic methods are simple, safe, effective, and economically least costly for the patient e.g., Jalaukavacharana, Agnikarma, Basti, Marma chikitsa, Lepa, Snehana, Swedana, and oral medication.

Description of Pain in Ayurveda

In Ayurvedic texts, various terms such as ruk, ruja, vedana, and shool are commonly used for pain. First of all, Acharya Sushruta describes shool as the complication of Gulma.¹ Acharya Sushruta

defines shool as an experience similar to driving a nail into the body of a person.² Further Acharya describes shool that appears without Gulma and explains its type according to dosha, its symptoms, and detailed management. Along with this Acharya also explains shool related to the specific body parts and their treatment like parshwashool, hritshool, bastishool, and kukshishool, etc.³

In Vransravavigjyaniya adhyaya, Acharya Sushruta mentioned five types of shool according to different types of Vrana as follows⁴:

Vataj vrana vedana: Todan (pricking), bhedan (breaking), shitosha sparsh, patan (tearing up), vidaran (lacerating), sankoch (drawn in, contraction), harsh (erection of hair), stambha (immovable).

Pittaj vrana vedana: Daha (burning), paka (suppuration), sweda (sweating), krodha (anger).

Shleshma vrana vedana: Shaitya (coldness), gaurav (heaviness), sthairya (firmness), stambha (immovable), kandu (itching), shwaithya (paleness), supti (numbness).

Raktawat vedana: Same as Pitta vrana vedana.

Sannipataj vedana: Here combination of symptoms of Vataj, Pittaj, and Kaphaj vrana vedana is seen.

As per doshas, shool is classified into sixteen types in Madhavnidan⁵ (eight types as per doshas + eight types of parinaam shool as per doshas). Further shool is classified into eight types in Yogratnakar⁶ and four types in Kashyap Samhita.⁷

Modalities for the management of Pain

Agnikarma: Agnikarma is one of the most effective para-surgical procedure mentioned for the management of pain which is done with the help of Shalaka. Agnikarma helps to treat disorders of Asthi, Sandhi, and Snayu, and relieves acute as well as chronic pain.⁸ This unique procedure helps in relieving pain in various painful conditions chiefly Musculoskeletal pain like Parshnishool, Sandhigatavata, Avabahuk, etc. According to Ayurveda, it acts against Vata and Kapha dosha by its ushna, tikshna, sukshma, laghu, vyavayi, and vikasi guna and it breaks srotoavarodha, produced due to Vata and Kapha, results in relieving pain and inflammation at that site.⁹ Heat given at the local or affected area, during Agnikarma, increases the local blood circulation by vasodilatation, local metabolic processes speed up, waste products get excreted, reduce edema, accelerate repair, and result in a decreased intensity of pain.¹⁰

Marma Therapy: Marma points are specific areas on the body, that have relationships to various internal organs, doshas, and srotas. An important principle of Marma therapy is quite simple: where a strong blow can cause injury, a mild touch can cause healing, and this is the most important principle of Marma chikitsa.¹¹ During Marma therapy, extremely light stimulation of points on the body is applied by hand. This gets rid of obstructions at that vital point and provides physical and psychological recreation and potency. Marma therapy is a dominant process and a therapy that works with these subtle and responsive liveliness points to unlock the energy outlets in the body, called Srotas. Marma points, when gently pressed on the skin, can stimulate a chain of positive events.¹²

Following Marma points are responsible for the relief of pain in different organs.¹³

Shoulder pain - Kshipra marma and Kurpara marma.
Pain in abdomen - Kurpara and Urvi marma.
Chest Pain - Kurpara, Urvi and Ani.
Cervical (neck) pain - Kshipra, Kurpara, Ani marma
Leg and knee pain - Kshipra, Gulpha
Sciatic pain - Kshipra, Gulpha

Basti Chikitsa: Ayurveda considers Basti chikitsa to be one of the most important Panchakarma treatments. Basti is defined as a procedure that expresses itself with its veerya and prabhava. Those are beyond our thinking and effects. Among the three doshas, Vata is the prime dosha which is responsible for pain. Basti is considered the most important treatment for Vata.¹⁴ When Basti is given, it will reach Nabhipradesa, Kati, Parshwa, and Kukshi region from these areas, the veerya of Basti reaches all over the body and churn the dosha samghata and eliminate the vitiated doshas along with pureesha.¹⁵ As soon as vitiated Vata dosha gets pacified, the shool also subsides.

Vedhan Karma: In Sushruta Samhita, eight types of Shastra karmas are explained.¹⁶ Vedhan karma is one of them which is carried by different instruments like suchi, kushyantra, aatimukh, shararimukh, antarmukh, and trikurchaka. Out of which Suchivedhan can be considered a modified form of Siravedha. According to Acharya Sushruta, Siravedha is called Shalyachikitsaardha means the half part of the Shalya Chikitsa.¹⁷ Acharya Sushruta has explained Vedhan of specific Sira in specific diseases. Siravedhan is done on the Sira that are clearly visible. But in the case when Sira is not clearly visible, Suchivedhan karma can be done. According to Ayurveda classic text, Vedana is caused by Vataprakopa. Acharya Charaka has explained the causes of Vataprakopa as Dhatukshaya and Margaavrodha.¹⁸ When Siravedha is performed, the most vitiated

Dosha i.e. Rakta is released, similarly on Suchivedhan the most vitiated Dosha i.e. Vata is released. Hence, Suchivedhan on the maximum tenderness points of joints may release the Vataavrodha and pacified Vata Dosha, and eventually, resulting in Vedna shanti.

Jalaukavacharana: Jalaukavacharana is one of the safest, most effective, locally acting blood-letting therapy. Among the different modalities of Raktamokshana, Jalaukavacharana is Ashastrakruta, a painless and easier procedure, that can be carried out even in Stree, Sukumaras, and Bala.¹⁹ Jalauka is indicated in diseases caused by vitiated Pitta and Rakta Doshas.²⁰ Raktamokshana eliminates vitiated Doshas from the body, resulting in Vednashaman. It is useful in the management of pain caused by Vicharchika, Aamvaat, Shopha, and other Rakta Pittaj Vyadhi. According to modern Science, the saliva of Jalauka contains anti-inflammatory and analgesic components which are released in tissues during the Raktamokshana procedure, and these components help in reducing inflammation and pain.

Other Modalities: In Sushruta Samhita Sutrasthan in chapter five, Acharya Sushruta has advised to do Dhoopan treatment in Shastrakrit Varna. In Dhoopan one must generate fumes by pouring herbs on burning charcoal. The herbs to be used should have Vedanahar and Rakshoghna property.²¹ Commonly used herbs for Dhoopan are Guggul, Agaru, Ral, Vacha, Neem, etc.²² Also, in a similar chapter Acharya Sushruta has explained that in any type of Shastrakrit Vrana one should pour lukewarm Yashtimadhu ghrith to relieve the pain of the patient.²³ In the postoperative procedure after Ksharkarma, Sushruta has advised to apply a mixture of herbs including Amla ras, Ghee, and Yashtimadhu.²⁴ This will relieve the burning pain that occurs after Kshar application. In Chikitsa Sthan Acharya Sushruta advised Anutaila Parishek and Naadi swedan for the management of postoperative pain after shastra Karma for Bhagandra.²⁵ Further Acharya Sushruta advised powders of Pippali, Pippalimul, Sunthi, Ela, Hing, Vacha, Ativisha, and Rasna for the management of pain caused by Shastra Karma for mudgarbh.²⁶

Similarly, Acharya Charaka also describes different treatment modalities for different types of pain. In Charaka Samhita Sutrasthan 2nd chapter, Acharya Charaka advised Nasya for shirashool.²⁷ Nasya is also mentioned in Matrashitiya Adhyaya for Shirashool caused by Hanusthambha and Manyasthambha.²⁸ In Charaka Samhita's Shadavirechana Shatashritiya Adhyaya two Mahakashaya have been mentioned for the management of pain i.e., Shulaprashaman and Vedanasthapana Mahakashaya.²⁹ This combination of drugs can be used in various forms like taila, ghrith, vati, kwath, etc. for the management of pain. Description of Dhoompana is also found in Charak Samhita for the management of Urdhvajatrugata Roga like Shirashool, Dantashoola, Karnashool, Akshishoola, etc.³⁰ For the management of Parshwapradesha Shool, Lepa prepared by Rasna, Haridra, Nalada, Shatavha, Devdaru, Sita, and Jiwanti mula is mentioned in Charaka Samhita.³¹ Acharya Charaka describes the use of Anuvasan Basti in the condition of continuous Shool accompanied by Atisaar.³²

CONCLUSION

In a nutshell, this article is an attempt to explore the concept of pain in the classical texts of Ayurveda. Re-exploring therapeutic pain management strategies that are validated and effective treatments in Ayurveda, viz., Agnikarma, Jalaukavacharana, Vedhankarma, Marma Chikitsa, Bastikarma, and a few other modalities, is discussed to help one understand the modulation of pain. The management of pain itself is still under research as it is

a subjective parameter with different thresholds for different individuals. The current article is an attempt to cover the maximum aspects of pain treatment in Ayurveda, but as the symptom is subjective; it depends on the patient, site, extent, and stage of the disease and hence doesn't offer the most appropriate modality for pain relief. The main aim of the treatment is to pacify vitiated Vata doshas. Ayurvedic pain management therapies are safe and natural ways to help in the management of different kinds of pain. An increase in the pain threshold and a reduction of the cause of pain is a whole new approach to pain. To conclude, it is a Herculean task to cover the entire concept of pain management in Ayurveda. There are treatment modalities in Ayurveda that need therapeutic validation, leaving scope for future research in pain management through Ayurveda.

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