



ANESTHESIA AND PAIN MANAGEMENT IN AYURVEDA

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Abstract-

Introduction- Anesthesia and pain management are critical components of modern and traditional medical practices. The ancient Indian medical system known as Ayurveda provides a distinctive viewpoint on how pain is perceived and how to manage it holistically. In Ayurveda, the imbalance of the Doshas Vata, Pitta, and Kapha with a primary emphasis on Vata is how the idea of pain (Shoola) is interpreted. Many herbo-mineral formulations, Snehana (oleation), Swedana (sudation), and Marma Chikitsa (vital point therapy) are described in traditional Ayurvedic scriptures as ways to relieve pain. Analgesic effects are also shown by techniques like Raktamokshana (bloodletting), Ksharakarma (alkaline cauterization), and Agnikarma (therapeutic cauterization). **Material and methods-** The present study aims to explore and analyze the principles and practices of anesthesia (Sangyaharana) and pain management (Vedana Shamana) as described in Ayurvedic literature. Ayurveda, the ancient Indian system of medicine, offers various approaches for managing pain and inducing unconsciousness through herbal preparations, therapeutic procedures, and surgical techniques. **Result-** Combining Ayurvedic methods with traditional systems provides a safer, more individualized, and more sustainable approach in the current healthcare environment, where chronic pain and surgical problems are common. To create true integrated pain management, future developments should concentrate on the

standardization, clinical trials, and scientific validation of Ayurvedic analgesic and anesthetic treatments. **Discussion-** Additionally, several herbal medications, such as Jatamansi (*Nardostachys jatamansi*), Tagara (*Valeriana wallichii*), and ashwagandha (*Withania somnifera*), have calming and analgesic qualities that make them useful for chronic or perioperative pain. Ayurvedic pain therapy is a viable adjunct to contemporary anesthetic and pain management procedures because it places an emphasis on non-invasive techniques, psychosomatic integration, and Tridosha balance. Its application in modern medical systems can be improved with more clinical validation and integrative research.

Keywords- Ayurveda, shalya, Anesthesia, Pain Management.

Introduction-

According to Ayurveda, Vata dosha is largely linked to pain (Shoola). Using herbal, mineral, and external treatments, management seeks to reduce inflammation (Pitta) and balance Vata. Despite lacking a clear notion of contemporary anesthesia, Ayurveda provides functionally equivalent sedative, analgesic, and local pain-relieving methods. One of the primary clinical symptoms and a major reason for seeking medical care is pain. In contemporary medicine, anesthetic is essential for reducing discomfort during operations and surgeries.¹ However, traditional medical systems like Ayurveda had their own ways of dealing with pain even before the invention of contemporary anesthetics. Ayurveda, the traditional system of Indian medicine, views pain (Shoola) not merely as a physical symptom but as a result of doshic imbalance, particularly of Vata dosha, which governs movement and sensory perception.²

Classical Ayurvedic texts including Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, and Ashtanga Hridaya provide a variety of methods for managing and minimizing pain that include herbal remedies, external treatments, dietary adjustments, and mind-body procedures. An early reference to anesthesia was made by Sushruta, the founder of surgery, who explained how to produce insensibility prior to surgical procedures using herbal sedatives, wine (Madya), and other drugs. Ayurvedic pain management encompasses a variety of techniques, including medicated enema (Basti), snehana (oleation), swedana (sudation), marma therapy,

agnikarma, and leech therapy. Natural pain management is facilitated by the analgesic, sedative, and anti-inflammatory qualities of several plants that are listed in Ayurvedic writings.³ Unlike modern anesthesia, which is often pharmacologically driven and target-specific, Ayurvedic pain management emphasizes holistic well-being, dosha balance, and minimally invasive techniques.

The first instance of a methodical attempt to structuring the surgical knowledge of more seasoned surgeons may be found in the Sushruta Samhita. Sushruta has mentioned several dravyas, such Madya (wine), whereas Bhojaprabandha has talked about mohachurna. Before surgery, the patient should be given the tikshna sura, according to Charaka. Ayurvedic drugs such as Vacha, Ashwagandha, Bramhi, Parijata, and Parasika yavani have also been used postoperatively to help patients with pain, edema, and anxiety, according to certain research specialists. However, a strong herbal anesthetic is still required.⁴ An overview of the Sangyahaarana (anesthesia) used by ancient surgeons is given in this review. This page discusses Ayurvedic pain treatment and sangyahaarana, or anesthesia. This article's primary goal was to compile information from many texts and publications and present it in an organized manner. All of the medications and ayurvedic herbal remedies for sangyahaarana and pain relief are discussed in this review article. Integrating Ayurvedic ideas into modern pain and anesthetic management has garnered increasing attention in recent years, particularly for palliative therapies, postoperative care, and chronic pain. In the context of anesthesia and pain management, this essay examines the theoretical underpinnings and therapeutic applications of Ayurveda.⁵

Anesthesia (Sangyahaarana) in Ayurveda-

Although it is frequently linked to contemporary medical research, the idea of anesthesia or making a person insensitive to pain has its origins in traditional medicinal practices such as Ayurveda. The traditional Indian medical system known as Ayurveda places a strong emphasis on holistic treatment and provides thorough explanations of surgical techniques and pain management techniques in ancient writings like the Sushruta Samhita. Ancient academics used natural drugs with sedative, analgesic, and mind-calming characteristics to address the topic of "Nirvedana," or "pain relief during surgery."⁶

Known as the father of surgery, Sushruta describes how surgical techniques like excision, incision, and cauterization are performed after the senses have been dulled by Madya - (alcoholic drinks) and plant extracts. The goal of these techniques, which date back to the early days of anesthesia, was to lessen pain and create a semi-conscious condition during procedures. Herbs with nervine, hypnotic, and analgesic properties included Jatamansi (*Nardostachys jatamansi*), Tagara (*Valeriana wallichii*), Ahiphena (*Papaver somniferum*), and Mandukaparni (*Centella asiatica*).⁷

Ayurvedic anesthesia offers a holistic approach to pain treatment by including psychological preparation, nutritional control, and spiritual activities in addition to the pharmacological effect of medications. Understanding these age-old techniques offers a useful starting point for research into safer, natural alternatives to contemporary anesthesia, particularly in the context of pre-operative care, minor surgical procedures, and chronic pain treatment, as interest in integrative medicine grows.

Types of Anesthesia (Sangyahaṛaṇa) in Ayurveda

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1. Dravyaja Saṅgyāharaṇa (Drug-Induced Anesthesia) ⁹

This involves the use of herbal, mineral, or herbo-mineral formulations to dull sensory perception, reduce pain, and induce drowsiness or unconsciousness.

- **Madya (alcohol preparations):** Sedation and pain relief from surgery were achieved through the use of fermented herbal liquors.
- **Ahiphena (Opium):** renowned for its potent analgesic and narcotic effects.
- **Mandukaparni, Tagara, and Jatamansi:** Herbs that have tranquil and peaceful properties.

- Dhumapana, often known as herbal smoke, is a sedative herb fumigation that dulls sensations.

2. Manasika Saṅgyāharaṇa (Psychological Methods) ¹⁰

Mental techniques that influence perception and reduce awareness of pain. Before a surgery, the patient might be calmed using Ashwasana (Counseling and Reassurance).

- Meditation and mantra: These methods of meditation and sound vibration are used to divert the attention and lessen sensitivity to pain.
- Satvavajaya Chikitsa: A specialty area emphasizing mental toughness and self-control.

3. Abhyantara & Bahya Saṅgyāharaṇa (Internal and External Methods) ¹¹

- Abhyantara (Internal): Sedation is achieved by the use of oral medications such as medicated ghee, oil, and alcoholic preparations.
- Bahya (External): Local methods to numb the region or lessen pain, such as Agnikarma (therapeutic cautery), Swedana (fomentation), Abhyanga (massage), and Lepa (herbal pastes).

4. Sthanik Saṅgyāharaṇa (Local Anesthesia) ¹²

The following methods might cause local or regional loss of sensation:

- Using alkaline preparations (Kshara).
- Using bloodletting or leech treatment to ease discomfort and congestion in the area.
- The direct administration of heating or cooling chemicals according to dosha participation.

5. Samanya and Vishesha Saṅgyāharaṇa (General and Specific)

- Samanya (general anesthesia): Using systemic substances like Madya or Ahiphena to induce unconsciousness.
- Vishesha (localized or specific): Using specialized herbal treatments or applications to numb or sedate a particular area of the body.

Importance of Anesthesia (Saṅgyāharaṇa) in Ayurveda ¹³

In Ayurvedic surgical and therapeutic techniques, anesthesia, or Saṅgyāharaṇa, is crucial, especially as it is explained in Sushruta Samhita, the founding text of Ayurveda's surgical science (Shalya Tantra). Despite not using the word "anesthesia" in the contemporary sense, Ayurveda's techniques for causing pain insensibility demonstrate a thorough comprehension of pain physiology and patient comfort.

1. Facilitates Surgical Procedures

The necessity to lessen discomfort and anxiety during invasive treatments such as suturing, cauterization, incision, and excision is acknowledged by Ayurveda. In order to make difficult procedures more humane and bearable, Sushruta promoted the use of herbal sedatives and Madya (intoxicants) to put the patient in a semi-conscious state and lessen surgical discomfort.

2. Ensures Patient Safety and Cooperation

During operations, pain might cause movement, shock, or mental disturbance. Saṅgyāharaṇa ensures accuracy and safety during surgery or therapeutic treatments by keeping patients stable, quiet, and immobile.

3. Reflects Holistic Patient Care

Before any invasive operation, Ayurveda stresses not only physical preparation but also mental and emotional preparation. This involves psychotherapy, the use of medicines that promote mental and physical relaxation, and Manasika chikitsa (psychological support). This illustrates a thorough approach to anesthesia that goes beyond merely reducing pain.

4. Foundation of Pre- and Post-Operative Management

Ayurvedic anesthesia is a component of a larger system of preoperative (Purvakarma) and postoperative (Paschatkarma) therapy. Pain management prior to, during, and following surgery promotes quicker healing, dosha balance, and the avoidance of problems.

5. Natural and Minimal Side Effects

The majority of ayurvedic anesthetic medicines come from natural sources (such as ashwagandha, jatamansi, and ahiphena), which makes them less toxic and perhaps safer

options in some situations, particularly when synthetic anesthetics might be dangerous because of sensitivity or allergy.

Pain Management in Ayurveda:¹⁴

One of the most frequent clinical symptoms that prompts patients to seek therapy is pain, or "Shoola" in Ayurveda. Ayurveda treats pain as a multifaceted imbalance of physical and mental processes, principally regulated by the Tridosha system Vata, Pitta, and Kapha in contrast to Western medicine, which frequently sees pain as a localized pathological sign. The Vata Dosha, which governs movement and sensation, is the most important of these in the development and transmission of pain.

A thorough grasp of the causes, manifestations, and treatment of pain may be found in Ayurvedic literature including Ashtanga Hridaya, Sushruta Samhita, and Charaka Samhita. Pain is categorized according to its kind (Swabhava), place (Sthana), and cause (Nidana). Ayurvedic therapy seeks to address the underlying cause, rectify the doshic imbalance, and return the body to its natural equilibrium, regardless of whether the condition is acute or chronic, inflammatory or degenerative. In Ayurveda, pain is managed by combining physical treatments (Shalya Karma), external therapies (Bahya Chikitsa), internal drugs (Aushadha), and mental health (Satvavajaya Chikitsa). Commonly used therapies include Leech treatment (Jalaukavacharana), Agnikarma (therapeutic cauterization), Basti (medicated enemas), Snehana (oleation), Swedana (sudation), and the use of strong herbs like Shallaki, Guggulu, Ashwagandha, and Rasna.

Because to its natural approach, few side effects, and emphasis on individual constitution (Prakriti), Ayurvedic pain management has gained popularity in recent years. Its use into contemporary pain management techniques is being investigated more and more, particularly in relation to chronic ailments such surgical recovery, musculoskeletal pain, arthritis, and neuralgia.

Para-surgical Procedures for pain management in Ayurveda- ¹⁵

- **Agnikarma:** A para-surgical method for relieving pain and halting the progression of some illnesses that involves applying heat (cauterization) to particular spots.

- **Jalaukavacharana:** Using leeches to extract tainted blood and alleviate pain in a variety of ailments.
- **Viddhakarma:** A sterile technique that involves using hollow needles to puncture particular areas in order to relieve pain; it is essential in Marma treatment.

Sangyahanana (Anaesthesia):

- The significance of creating a condition of inresponsiveness during surgical treatments is acknowledged by Ayurveda.
- The idea of Sangyahanana in Ayurveda is seen as a "poorva karma" (pre-work) that is crucial for surgery; classical texts such as the Sushruta Samhita address pre-operative preparations, including the use of particular substances like Guru Bhojana and Madya (wine) for sedation and anesthesia.

Herbal Remedies and Pain Management:¹⁶

Ayurvedic writings mention specific herbs like Vacha, Ashwagandha, Bramhi, Parijata, and Parasika Yavani for their anti-inflammatory and pain-relieving qualities. Ayurveda utilizes a variety of herbs to treat pain and to address the underlying cause of pain, such as vitiated Vata dosha.

- To assist control pain, anxiety, and other postoperative problems, herbal treatments can be administered prior to, during, and following surgery.

Combining Modern Medicine with Integration:

- Modern medicine, particularly anesthesia and pain management, is increasingly interested in incorporating Ayurvedic concepts and practices.
- Research is being done to see whether using Ayurvedic herbs and methods can improve patient results and safety.
- By offering comprehensive and integrated treatment, ayurvedic pain management techniques may be used in conjunction with contemporary therapies.

Discussion-

In both ancient and contemporary medical systems, anesthesia and pain control are essential elements of surgical and therapeutic care. The ancient science of life, Ayurveda, provides a comprehensive and in-depth explanation of pain (Shoola) and how to treat it using both non-pharmacological and pharmaceutical methods. Ayurveda places an emphasis on sustainable, natural techniques that not only treat pain but also address its root causes by reestablishing Tridoshic balance, whereas contemporary medicine employs synthetic anesthetics for instant relief.

1. Conceptual Understanding

According to Ayurveda, pain is mostly caused by an aggravation of the Vata dosha, which controls movement and sensory perception. A particular treatment method is needed for each form of pain that arises from the interplay of exacerbated Vata with Pitta or Kapha. These pains might be mild, throbbing, or searing. Though not systematized like in current science, the Sushruta Samhita's discussion of the loss of consciousness or feeling (Saṅgyāharaṇa) reveals early comprehension of anesthetic notions.

2. Pre-Modern Anesthetic Techniques

Before conducting procedures like excision, incision, or cauterization, Ayurvedic surgeons employed herbal sedatives, Madya (alcoholic drinks), and Ahiphena (opium) to create a condition of lethargy or unconsciousness. These techniques were successful in reducing pain and surgical trauma. Additionally used as local anesthetics were cooling lepas (pastes) and fumigation (dhumapana).

3. Holistic Pain Management Approaches

Ayurveda uses a variety of techniques to treat pain:

- Internal drugs with analgesic and anti-inflammatory properties, such as Dashamoola, Shallaki, and Guggulu.
- Panchakarma techniques include Swedana (fomentation) for systemic Vata pacification, Abhyanga (oil massage), and Basti (particularly for Vata problems).

- Local treatments for persistent musculoskeletal or nerve-related pain include agnikarma and ksharakarma.
- Jalaukavacharana, or leech treatment, helps enhance blood circulation and reduce inflammatory discomfort.

4. Mind-Body Connection

In order to modulate pain perception and lessen stress-induced symptom aggravation, Ayurveda incorporates psychological therapies such mantra chanting, meditation, yogic practices, and Satvavajaya Chikitsa (mind control therapy). An early comprehension of the biopsychosocial paradigm of pain is seen in this.

5. Contemporary Relevance

Ayurveda presents a viable alternative and integrative approach to current pain care, given the rising concerns about side effects, medication resistance, and long-term opiate dependence. The use of Ayurvedic medicines and treatments to treat ailments like fibromyalgia, migraine, osteoarthritis, sciatica, and postoperative pain is supported by clinical data. To maximize safety and effectiveness, however, standardization of formulations, scientific validation, and integration with contemporary monitoring techniques are required. Research collaboration between contemporary science and Ayurveda can improve pain management techniques worldwide.

Conclusion-

Herbo-mineral formulations, physical treatments, and dosha-balancing are the main ways that Ayurveda provides a comprehensive approach to pain management. Sedation, analgesia, and even pre-operative preparations are well-established, despite the fact that they do not quite resemble contemporary anesthetic. Individualized treatment strategies are used to address pain not just symptomatically but also at the underlying cause level. Saṅgyāharaṇa is important in Ayurveda because it integrates the physical, mental, and doshic components of the individual in addition to facilitating painless treatments. It provides insights for supplementary application in contemporary medical practice and functions as an age-old but still applicable paradigm for holistic anesthesia and pain

treatment. Based on its distinct knowledge of doshas, physical constitution (prakriti), and mind-body harmony, Ayurveda offers a tried-and-true, comprehensive framework for managing pain and inducing anesthesia. Ayurveda treats the underlying pathology as well as the pain symptom with treatments including Snehana, Swedana, Basti, Agnikarma, and medicinal herbal preparations. Long before contemporary anesthetic was developed, early Ayurvedic principles of Saṅgyāharaṇa demonstrate a sophisticated grasp of surgical readiness and patient comfort.

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