



Integration Of Ayurvedic Shalya Techniques In Modern Minor Surgical Practice

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Abstract

Shalya Tantra is one of the major branches of Ayurveda that deals with surgical care, combining traditional surgical techniques with holistic treatment methods. Drawing its foundation from classical Ayurvedic texts such as the *Sushruta Samhita*, it includes procedures like cutting, removal, stitching, and cauterization using herbal-based preparations. These interventions are supported by internal and external herbal therapies aimed at enhancing healing, minimizing complications, and reducing the chances of recurrence. Shalya Tantra provides solutions for a broad spectrum of conditions, including disorders of the anal region, bone injuries, and various types of wounds. It gives equal importance to the care before and after surgery to ensure smooth and complete recovery. By merging time-tested principles with practical utility, Shalya Tantra continues to show promise as a valuable approach in today's evolving healthcare systems.

Key Words: Shalya Tantra, Ayurveda, surgical techniques

Introduction

Ayurveda, the ancient system of medicine, offers a comprehensive view of health that emphasizes balance in body, mind, and spirit. Within its various specialties, Shalya Tantra stands out as the branch dedicated to surgical and para-surgical procedures. Rooted in timeless Ayurvedic classics like the *Sushruta Samhita*, this discipline includes a variety of methods designed to identify and manage conditions that necessitate surgical care. It reflects the depth of ancient knowledge applied to practical healing through precise interventions. ¹

This important branch of Ayurveda places equal emphasis on surgical accuracy and therapeutic support before and after procedures. Unlike conventional surgery, which often targets only the physical aspect of disease,

Shalya Tantra adopts a broader perspective by addressing the patient's physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. It acknowledges the interconnected nature of bodily systems and utilizes both surgical and non-surgical methods to promote overall health and restore harmony. Shalya Tantra has proven effective in managing a wide range of conditions, including cysts, piles, abscesses, wounds, urinary difficulties, stones, fractures, and various ano-rectal disorders. Techniques such as cutting, removal, cauterization, and stitching are used in conjunction with herbal remedies and supportive care. This well-rounded approach not only treats the main issue but also helps prevent further complications and relapses, highlighting its relevance in both traditional and modern healthcare contexts. ²⁻⁵

In the context of modern healthcare, Shalya Tantra continues to hold significance by offering distinctive approaches to surgery that emphasize minimal invasion and natural healing. Its integration of time-honored techniques with current medical understanding presents a well-rounded strategy for effectively addressing surgical conditions, with reduced risk and improved recovery outcomes. This article explores the foundational principles, practical applications, and therapeutic value of Shalya Tantra, highlighting its lasting importance in the treatment of ailments requiring surgical care.

Therapeutic Approaches in Shalya Tantra

Shalya Tantra, the surgical branch of Ayurveda, encompasses various treatment strategies aimed at managing conditions that require surgical or para-surgical care. Key therapeutic areas include:

- **Gudaroga Chikitsa:** Focused on the treatment of ano-rectal conditions such as fissures, piles, abscesses, and hemorrhoids using techniques like *Ksharasutra*, *Agnikarma*, and herbal formulations.
- **Vrana Chikitsa:** Deals with effective wound management, including chronic non-healing ulcers, lacerations, and infected wounds, through the use of medicated oils, lepa (pastes), and bandaging techniques.
- **Asthi Chikitsa:** Involves the correction and rehabilitation of fractures and dislocations, utilizing methods to restore proper alignment and mobility of bones and joints.

Beyond these, Shalya Tantra plays a vital role in addressing post-operative care, preventing complications, and managing both minor and major surgical emergencies through holistic protocols.

Essential Precautions in Surgery

For the safe and effective practice of Ayurvedic surgery, several precautions must be observed:

1. **Sterilization** of instruments to maintain hygiene.
2. Ensuring a **completely aseptic surgical environment** to avoid infections.
3. Use of **precise and minimally invasive techniques** for better healing.

4. Awareness and **protection of Marma points** (vital anatomical locations) to prevent serious complications.
5. Accurate **dosage and duration of anesthesia**, particularly in high-risk or sensitive cases.
6. Comprehensive **assessment of patient history** and coexisting health conditions.
7. Special care and modified approaches for **pediatric and geriatric patients**, who are more vulnerable to surgical stress.

Surgical Instruments Used in Shalya Tantra

Shalya Tantra employs a wide range of surgical tools, each serving a specific purpose:

- **Shastra** – Sharp instruments used for incisions and excisions.
- **Yantra** – Blunt instruments designed for grasping, probing, or manipulation.
- **Suturing Materials** – Used for closing wounds and incisions.
- **Bandages and Surgical Cloths** – Essential for dressing and wound protection.

These instruments are described in detail in Ayurvedic classics, particularly the *Sushruta Samhita*, which outlines their structure, usage, and sterilization methods, demonstrating the advanced understanding of surgical science in ancient times.

Pre- and Post-Operative Considerations in Shalya Chikitsa ^{6,7}

In Shalya Chikitsa, both pre-operative and post-operative phases are crucial for the success of surgical interventions.

- **Pre-operative care** involves careful patient preparation, including appropriate dietary adjustments, cleansing procedures (*Shodhana*), psychological reassurance, and selection of suitable surgical methods. These steps help reduce intraoperative risks and enhance patient cooperation.
- **Post-operative care** focuses on minimizing the risk of infection, managing pain, accelerating wound healing, and restoring normal physiological function. Proper monitoring, use of medicated dressings, internal medications, and dietary recommendations form the core of post-surgical recovery in Ayurveda.

Clinical Applications of Shalya Chikitsa in Specific Conditions ⁸

1. Ano-Rectal Disorders

Shalya Tantra offers effective and minimally invasive solutions for managing various ano-rectal conditions, including:

- **Arsha (Hemorrhoids)**
- **Bhagandara (Fistula-in-Ano)**
- **Parikartika (Anal Fissure)**

Therapies such as *Kshara Karma* (alkaline cauterization), *Shastra Karma* (surgical excision), *Agnikarma* (thermal cauterization), and specialized bandaging techniques are commonly employed. These treatments not only target the root pathology but also promote faster healing with minimal recurrence. These Ayurvedic methods help alleviate pain, reduce bleeding and swelling, ease discomfort, and support the body's natural healing response.

2. Arsha (Hemorrhoids):

Management involves procedures like *Ksharasutra* application, which works by chemically cauterizing and strangulating the affected blood vessels. This technique minimizes the chance of recurrence while promoting quicker tissue repair.

3. Fissure-in-Ano:

Treatment focuses on reducing sphincter spasm and controlling inflammation. Approaches such as *Ksharasutra* therapy and *Avagaha Sweda* (medicated sitz bath using *Triphala Kwatha*) are commonly employed for effective relief and healing.

4. Parikartika (Anal Fissure):

Surgical methods such as *Bhedana* (incision), *Chhedana* (excision), followed by *Shodhana* (cleansing) and *Ropana* (healing) procedures, are used to remove diseased tissue and promote healthy regeneration.

5. Bhagna (Fractures):

Management includes realignment of broken bones through traction and stabilization, followed by immobilization using traditional Ayurvedic bandaging techniques, often aided by supportive herbal formulations to enhance bone healing.

6. Vrana (Wounds):

Treatment involves the purification of infected or non-healing wounds (*Dushta Vrana*) using herbal pastes, decoctions, and surgical cleaning. This transforms the wound into a *Shuddha Vrana* (clean wound), which accelerates healing and tissue repair.

Mechanism of Action in Shalya Chikitsa

The therapeutic impact of **Shalya Chikitsa** lies in the integrated application of precise surgical techniques and supportive Ayurvedic therapies, aimed at restoring balance, removing disease-causing factors, and facilitating natural healing. The core mechanisms include:

1. Hemostasis and Disease Elimination:

Procedures such as incision, excision, and suturing are employed to control bleeding and remove diseased or obstructive tissues. By targeting the root pathology, these interventions not only manage acute symptoms but also prevent further disease progression and recurrence.

2. Antimicrobial and Protective Action:

Many Ayurvedic surgical techniques incorporate natural antiseptic measures. The use of herbs like *Haridra* (turmeric) during and after procedures offers antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory, and wound-healing effects, significantly reducing the risk of infection.

3. Promotion of Tissue Regeneration:

Therapies like *Ksharasutra* work through controlled tissue necrosis and mechanical action, stimulating granulation tissue formation and regeneration at the site of chronic wounds or fistulae. This accelerates the healing process and encourages healthy tissue growth.

4. Anti-Inflammatory Response:

Ayurvedic formulations used in surgical care help mitigate local inflammation, reducing pain, swelling, and redness. This is particularly beneficial in managing conditions such as anal fissures, abscesses, and inflamed wounds.

5. Cauterization and Debridement:

Procedures involving thermal (*Agnikarma*) or chemical (*Kshara Karma*) cauterization help debride necrotic tissues, purify wounds, and facilitate drainage. This prepares the surgical site for rapid healing by creating an infection-free environment.

6. Enhanced Healing via Herbal Support:

Herbal medicines like *Triphala*, *Guggulu*, and *Jatyadi Taila* are known for their regenerative and rejuvenative effects. These substances support cellular repair, reduce fibrosis, and promote clean scar formation.

7. Holistic Post-Operative Recovery:

Shalya Chikitsa emphasizes a complete recovery plan involving dietary guidelines, lifestyle regulations, and *Rasayana* therapy. These measures ensure the body regains strength, minimizes complications, and maintains long-term wellness.

Shalya Chikitsa functions through a multidimensional therapeutic model that unites surgical accuracy with the holistic principles of Ayurveda. This combined approach not only addresses the immediate pathological concern but also fosters overall healing and reduces the likelihood of relapse.

Conclusion

Shalya Chikitsa stands as a remarkable example of the integration between classical surgical expertise and holistic Ayurvedic principles. With its focus on precision, individualized treatment, and thorough post-operative care, it offers comprehensive and effective management for a variety of surgical and para-surgical conditions. Techniques like *Ksharasutra*, *Shastra*, and *Anushastra* address not only the physical dimensions of disease but also support systemic balance through herbal formulations and lifestyle regulations.

By aligning these traditional practices with contemporary clinical needs, Shalya Tantra continues to demonstrate its relevance in modern healthcare. Its approach minimizes complications, enhances healing, and promotes overall well-being, making it a valuable adjunct to current surgical methodologies. The continued exploration and integration of Shalya Chikitsa into mainstream medical frameworks hold promise for safer, more holistic patient outcomes and a broader understanding of health and healing.

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