

**DHOOPANA KARMA IN AYURVEDA****Dr. Bindu Ahlawat\***

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Article Received on 31/12/2022

Article Revised on 20/01/2023

Article Accepted on 10/02/2023

Dhoopana Karma in ayurveda is the procedure that deals with *dhoopana* i.e fumigation made by burning herbs or products of animal origin that act as medication and help treat various health conditions. Since Vedic times, Dhoopana has been regularly used to sterilize home and surrounding environment and is a much welcomed tradition in households of India. It is a primitive approach to reduce microbial load in the surroundings or specific areas of body and achieve a sterile healthy state. Thus it is a method that helps to maintain optimal health in both internal and external environments of human.

This branch of Ayurveda which holds immense potential in treatment of unknown energies, air-borne infections and disease of unknown aetiology. Air born infections are much more common in daily life than vector-borne infections. Through a thorough knowledge of this methodology, one will surely welcome its inclusion in daily life in one form or another. Aromatherapy and spas also seem to take some inspiration from this basic concept that was defined by *Acharya Kashyapa* in Vedic times.

Innumerable references of Dhoopa are present in varied Vedic texts of *Atharva Veda*, *Astanga hridaya*, *Astanga samhita*, *Charak Samhita*, *Kashyap Samhita* and *Sushruta samhita*. Dhoopa can be taken either via direct inhalation or can be absorbed from skin either from entire body or specifically on affected body parts like ear, anus or open wounds. Thus it has great healing properties. Elements from both plants and animal origins are taken in varied calculated combinations as per *Kashyapa Samhita* to treat different disease or serve various purposes.

**Classifications In Ayurvedic Texts.**

Rishi Kashyapa has mentioned its varied importance encompassing psychological, medicinal and aesthetic aspects in *Kashyap Samhita* where he has dedicated one full chapter to Dhoopa Kalpa. He classified Dhoopana in 3 sections on the basis of its action or Karma:

1. **Dhoopana:** When used for specific purpose
2. **Anudhoopana:** (subsequent fumigation)
3. **Pratidhoopana:** (anti fumigation): the procedure done after dhoopana to prevent recurrence of disease.

**Other classification can be made on the source of origin****Jangama**

The animal origin e.g. hair, nails and horns of animals have been used in Dhoopana Karma as they have Keratin structure which contains of Sulphur. Cow excreta when dried is used to ignite dhoopana as a fuel and is considered to emanate positive energies and combating negativity.

Animals excreta also acts as fuel for good combustion and its smell drives away many unwanted organisms from the surroundings.

**Sthavara**

The plant origin. Herbs like Neem, laksha, haridra, vacha, tagar, vidanga etc are used. **Khanija** Minerals origin. Hartal Arsenic Trisulphide and Manashila Arsenic Disulphide have been used for Dhoopana Chikitsa i.e. Therapy as disinfectants.

In *Sushruta samhita*, interestingly, there is a mention that during a war, a king should be careful enough as the enemy can try to vitiate food, water, smoke, lands or air. Hence medicinal fumigation can handle Air-borne contamination or microbial load as most diseases are caused by this route (*Auopasrgika roga*– communicable disease).

Similarly *Acharya Kashyapa* has mentioned a story where demons were harassing the health of small children in olden times. Then the Vedic seers went to *Agni devta* or Fire God for a solution and that's when they were offered Dhoopana Therapy as an answer.

**Principal Concept of Dhoopana**

- A Dhoopa is composed of – Agni (fire) and Vayu Mahabhoot Pradhana Dravyas (Ingredients having

dominance of Air element in them).

- These Dravyas or ingredients have properties of Ruksha, Sheeta, Laghu and Vishada.
- Above properties of predominant Air element in the ingredients enable them to spread rapidly and show good combustion and great volatility which in turn reduces air contamination and reduces microbial load.

### Uses of Dhoopana

**Below are some of the instances where Dhoopana has been used since Vedic times:**

- For repelling mosquitoes and poisonous insects.
- For treating contagious air-borne diseases.
- Disinfecting clothes and beddings.
- For disinfection of Kumaragara (neonatal intensive care unit).
- To fumigate operation theatres and labour rooms in Vedic times.
- Sterilization of pots that contain medicinal formulations like Asavas and Aristhas.
- For sterilization at homes and environments.
- Treatment of female genital infections.
- Its vasodilator, thrombolytic, anesthetizing and anti-inflammatory actions also help in treating Piles.
- Beautification and aesthetic treatments for hair, skin in human.
- Holistic upliftment in poojas (praying to deity), rituals and Indian ceremonies to promote positive energies.
- Treating Psychological problems, epilepsy.
- To treat skin conditions, skin wounds, ear infections.
- Treat fevers due to Vata dosha.
- To treat Balagraha (Infectious disease in children).
- Its use has also been mentioned in cases of Retained placenta in delivery (Aparasanga).
- Treat various graharogas that is diseases of unknown aetiology.
- Helps combating disorders caused by ill energies and unknown bad omens that no one is aware of.

### Method of Collection

**There is a specific methodology for collection and preparation of Dhoopana items/ agents.**

- Person: Ideally a Vaidhya (Ayurveda practitioner) should do the collection of items.
- Timing: All ingredients used in Dhoopana must be ideally harvested during either Pushya (aka Poosa or Tishya) nakshatra timing as not only is it considered auspicious but provides nourishment for all ingredients.
- Direction: Place of growth of these ingredients should be in Uttar disha (north direction) or Agneya (south-east direction).
- Preparation: Ingredients are pound to make a powder.
- Storage: in a clean safe place.
- Carrier Agents or Fuel: Dhoopana has to be fired finally and the best fuel considered for this purpose

is cow dung because it causes even combustion and releases steady smoke. However now-a-days, charcoal, coconut shells or even electrical appliances are being used as fuel for Dhoopana.

- Main ingredients of Dhoopa commonly are Ghruta, Laksha, Vacha, Haridra, Daruharidra, Guggul, Sarshap and Nimba. These carry anti-inflammatory, anti-pyretic, antibacterial and deodorant properties.
- Most of the Dhoopa formulations have a source of combustible ingredient e.g. ghee which acts as a potentiator or activator of formulation.

### CONCLUSION

Thus Dhoopana Karma or therapy is a very powerful Ayurvedic eco-friendly tool with widespread and far-reaching benefits for purification and disinfection along with its ability to protect from the unknown bad energies that surround human time to time. I feel we need to understand and make this a part of our daily lives more often to lead a healthy fulfilling life.

*Dhoopana dravyas* (formulated powders) are available in the market for varied purposes. These *dravyas* should always be carefully stored in dry air-tight containers. This helps to keep them useful and formula stable for 2 years easily. One needs to be careful that it doesn't change its original colour and smell.

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