



CLASSICAL REVIEW ON SHIRO-ABHYANGA

**DR. AISHWARYA DATTAJIRAO
JADHAV.**

*P.G. SCHOLAR
DEPARTMENT OF P.G. STUDIES IN
KAYA CHIKITSA
S.V.M. AYURVEDIC MEDICAL
COLLEGE AND P.G. RESEARCH
CENTER, ILKAL587125,
DIST-BAGALKOT*

DR. PRAVEENKUMAR S. SAJJAN
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR
DEPARTMENT OF P.G. STUDIES IN
KAYA CHIKITSA,
SHRI VIJAY MAHANTESHA
AYURVEDIC MEDICAL COLLEGE
AND P.G.
RESEARCH CENTER, ILKAL-
587125, DIST-BAGALKOT

**DR.PRO.REVAPPA
YADAVANNAVAR.**

*PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF
P.G. STUDIES IN KAYA CHIKITSA
S.V.M. AYURVEDIC MEDICAL
COLLEGE AND P.G. RESEARCH
CENTER, ILKAL
KARNATAKA*

ABSTRACT-

It is mandatory to accomplish Snehana and Swedana before Pradhana Karma. These Purva Karma in itself bear ample importance and they too have the potency to abolish disease alone. Shiro-abhyanga comes under the classification of the Murdha Taila, which itself is a subset of Abhyanga, a further classified type of external oleation. Oleation or Snehana is Purva Karma of Panchakarma. Snehana is further classified into Bahya and Abhyantara types, obviously Shiro-abhyanga coming under the former type Bahya. Before being acquainted with knowledge Shiro-abhyanga, we will have a birds eye view over Snehana.

KEYWORDS-*Snehana,Shiroabhngya,Properties,Uses,Importance,Mode Of Action*

INTRODUCTION-

Snehana is defined as that which causes Snigdhatva (unctuousness), Mrudutva (softness), Dravatva (liquidity) and Picchilatva (Sluggish) in the body is named as Snehana¹.

Dominancy of Mahabhoota :

Sneha is Prithvi and Jala dominant matter.

Properties of Drugs having of Snehana properties :²

③ Drava (Liquid) □ Sheeta (Cold) □ Sukshma (Subtile)

③ Manda (Sluggish) □ Sara (Mobility) □ Guru (Heavy)

③ Snigdha (Unctuous) □ Mrudu (Soft) □ Pichchhila (Slimmy) Sneha Dravyas can be used both internally as well as externally. It can be classified as under :

SHIRO-ABHYANGA

Definition :

Application of medicated or non-medicated Taila, Ghrita to the head is said to be Shiro-abhyanga.

Shiro-abhyanga is a subtype of Murdha Taila. It can be included in subtype of Abhyanga also. Detailed description of Abhyanga with special concentration on Shiro-abhyanga is as follows :

ABHYANGA

Etymology of Abhyanga :

The word Abhyanga is derived from 'Anga' Dhatu which is used to indicated motion or movement.

'Abhi' Upasarga to 'Anga' Dhatu makes the word Abhyanga which means to induce specific movements. Thus Abhyanga (massage) indicates some movement done on the body with use of Taila, Ghrita etc.

Definition :

Massage of the body with use of Taila, Ghrita etc. in the same direction of the body hair (Anulomana) is called Abhyanga.

Indications :³

Though direct reference of indication of Abhyanga is not available, but scattered reference can be seen like –

- ❑ In disease of hairs like Khalitya, Palitya etc.
- ❑ In daily routine to maintain the health of the body.
- ❑ Acharya Vagbhatta has indicated Shiro-abhyanga in dryness and itching of the scalp and in accumulation of Mala on head. (A. H. Su. 22/24).

Contraindications :⁴

- ❑ Patients suffering from Kaphaja or Kapha dominant diseases.
 - ❑ Person suffering from indigestion.
 - ❑ Persons having ‘Ama Dosha’ and ‘Aaghat’.
 - ❑ Persons suffering from Jwara.
 - ❑ In the disease caused by excessive nutrition. (A. H. Su. 2/9; Su. Chi. 24/35-37)
- Abhyanga in above mentioned conditions causes Agnimandya and increases in those diseases.

Abhyanga Dravya :^{5,6}

- ❑ Abhyanga should be done with lukewarm medicated oil or Ghee or ‘Vasa’ prepared with aromatic and ‘Doshaghna’ drugs (A. S. Su. 3).
- ❑ Use of Ghrita for Abhyanga is indicated in Vata Vyadhi (Su. Chi. 23/34).
- ❑ In general, oil is used for Abhyanga.
- ❑ The oil should be lukewarm in general condition but in Shiro-abhyanga cold oil can be used.
- ❑ Warm oil in winter season and cold oil in summer season is indicated.

Method of Abhyanga :^{7,8}

- ❑ Abhyanga should be applied gently and in the direction of the hair with the use of above mentioned drugs suitable to season, disease and place of Abhyanga.
- ❑ Abhyanga is done particularly on head, foot sole and ears daily.

- ❏ Shiro-abhyanga should be done with cold or lukewarm oil because the head is the place of all the senses and it is considered as the most vital part.
- ❏ Shiro-abhyanga should be done gently with finger tips because forceful massage can damage the hair.
- ❏ Abhyanga should be done in round pattern on joints like elbow, shoulder, knee, ankle and hip joints.
- ❏ For proper massage of each and every part of body, seven positions are to be adopted i.e.
 - i) Sitting position with straight legs.
 - ii) Supine position.
 - iii) Left lateral lying position. iv) Prone position.
 - v) Right lateral lying position.
 - vi) Supine position.
 - vii) Sitting position with straight legs.

In this study Shiro-abhyanga is in focus. For Shiro-abhyanga, sitting position should be adopted.

Effect of Abhyanga on Various Dhatu : ^{9,10}

- Dalhana, the commentator of Sushruta has described the effect of Abhyanga according to its duration.
- The oil reaches to hair root when the Abhyanga is done for 300 Matras
- (1 Matra = 19/60 seconds so, 300 Matras means 95 seconds).
- The oil reaches in skin in 400 Matras (133 seconds)
- The oil reaches in Rakta Dhatu if done for 500 Matras (160 seconds).
- It reaches in Mamsa Dhatu in 600 Matras (190 seconds), in the Meda Dhatu in 700 Matras (228 seconds), in the Asthi Dhatu in 800 Matras (240 seconds) and in reaches to the Majja Dhatu if the Abhyanga perform up to 900 Matra (280 seconds).

Benefits of Abhyanga : ^{11,12,13}

Many benefits of Abhyanga have been described in ancient Ayurvedic texts like –

- ❏ **Jarahara** : It prevents the ageing process.
- ❏ **Shramahara** : It is useful to overcome fatigue.

- ❑ **Vatahara** : It prevents and corrects the disorders caused by vitiated Vata. ❑ **Drashti Prasadakara** : It promotes sharp eye sight.
- ❑ **Pushtikara** : It makes the body well formed by nourishing all seven Dhatus.
- ❑ **Ayushkara** : It promotes longevity of an individual.
- ❑ **Svapnakara** : It helps in inducing sound sleep.
- ❑ **Tvaka Dardhyakara** : Abhyanga makes the skin healthy, soft and strong.
- ❑ **Klesha Sahatva** : By practicing Abhyanga body becomes capable of tolerating physical stress.
- ❑ **Abhighata Sahatva** : Body can tolerate any type of trauma by performing Abhyanga regularly.
- ❑ **Kapha-Vata Nirodhana** : According to Sushruta, Abhyanga prevents Kapha and Vata from vitiation.
- ❑ **Varna Bala Prada** : Abhyanga improves complexion of skin and gives strength to a person.

Acharya Charaka have added that, with the help of Abhyanga, one can get good looking (Ch. Su. 5/87-89; Su. Chi. 24/30; A. H. Su. 2/7).

As Shiro-abhyanga is a subtype of Abhyanga, besides above mentioned benefits of Abhyanga some special benefits of Shiro-abhyanga are also mentioned like –

- ❑ A person who does Shiro-abhyanga daily is never affected with headache, hair falling or hair greying.
- ❑ His hair becomes strong rooted, black and long.
- ❑ All senses of that person become healthy.
- ❑ His facial skin becomes soft, shiny and gets a good sleep¹⁵. (Ch. Su. 5/81-83)

DISCUSSION-

Mode of Action of Abhyanga :

Mode of action of Abhyanga is described as under. The same should

be understood in the case of Shiro-abhyanga. Dalhana has explained in detail the absorption of Sneha used in Abhyanga procedure, accordingly the oil used in Abhyanga reaches up to the different Dhatus if it is applied for the sufficient time. Hence, it is clear that the drug used in the Abhyanga gets absorbed by the skin. Dalhana also mentions that when Snehana drug reaches to

the particular Dhatu it subsides the diseases of that particular Dhatu. Charaka has also described that Vayu dominates in the Sparshanendriya and its Adhithana is Tvacha i.e. skin.

The mode of action of Abhyanga can be understood by the properties of Snehana drugs that are used for Abhyanga in the following way :

- 1) **Snigdha Guna** : This is the main property of Snehana drug. Snigdha Guna acts through its Vatahara, Kaphahara and Vrisya properties. It performs the action like Snehana, Kledana and Vishyandana at cellular level of the body.
- 2) **Guru Guna** : It increases the bodily strength and Kapha. Hemadri has called it nutritious for the body. According to Bhavaprakasha Guru Guna has the properties like Vatahara, Kaphakara and Pushtikara. Due to these properties it alleviates the morbid Vata, increases the decreased Kapha and nourishes the body.
- 3) **Sheeta Guna** : It keeps the mind healthy by increasing pleasure and enthusiasm. It prevents fainting, decrease the perspiration. It stabilizes the muscles and organs.
- 4) **Mrudu Guna** : Mrudu means soft. This is the opposite attribute or Kathina Guna. By this property Abhyanga reduces the stiffness.
- 5) **Drava Guna** : Drava means liquid, which causes humidity. By this Snehana drug propagates swiftly all over the body. It liquefies the Doshas and mobilizes them by increasing their flowing capacity.
- 6) **Pichchhila Guna** : Pichchhila means slimy. It causes longevity, increases body strength. It increases Kapha and produces heaviness.
- 7) **Sara Guna** : The common meaning of Sara is to slip or mobility. It mobilizes the Doshas and Mala i.e. waste products by this property.
- 8) **Manda Guna** : It is indicative of sluggishness. The Snehana drug diffuses slowly by this and it remains in the contact of Doshas, Dhatus and Malas for long time.
- 9) **Sukshma** : Sukshma means subtle and it helps the drug to enter in the fine channels.

In this way, Abhyanga acts through the above properties of Sneha. Because all the properties are opposite to the Vata, Abhyanga is considered useful treatment in the disease occurred by provoked Vata.

MODERN POINT OF VIEW

Abhyanga improves arterial, venous and lymphatic flow and thus nourishes skin and local tissues. It improves the health of skin, which may cease hair fall.

CONCLUSION- On virtue of such good properties, Shiro-abhyanga has been included in the chapter of daily routine of a person (Dinacharya). The Abhyanga is exceedingly beneficial to the skin, so one should practice it regularly (Ch. Su. 5/87). Indriyas are in close contact of mind hence if Indriyas remain healthy mind automatically remains healthy. Thus, Abhyanga keeps body and mind healthy.

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