



A Review article on action of Shirodhara

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ABSTRACT

Shirodhara is one of the Bahya snehana (external Oleation therapy) method mentioned in Ayurveda. Shira (head) is the Seat of Mind. Shirodhara is mainly indicated in Manasa bhava pradhan vikaras (mental disorders) i.e Raja & Tama Dosha Pradhana (predominated). The apparent mode of action of this procedure is not understood. Ayurveda extensively highlighted the outcome of the procedure rather than its action. To influence & enhance the perception, it is needed to have the hypothetical views regarding the apparent mode of action of any treatment procedures. Hence, present work was planned to foot forth a hypothetical view of its action, since the site of procedure which performing is Sthapani marma (level of pituitary gland), Ajnya chakra (Penial gland and Medulla oblongata in brain), Shavasana (Yogic corpus posture) is the posture in which therapy is performing and Manomaya kosha (mental sheath) which yogic science believed that which responsible for mental status of an individual. We hypothesize the action of Shirodhara might be stimulation of Sthapani marma and motivation of Ajnya chakra and organizing different phases of Manomaya kosha and added benefit of posture Shavasana with auto body suggestion therapy facilitates to counterbalance the Manasika and shareerika doshas which occurs simultaneously and this is potentiated by Psychoneuroimmunology (PNI) mechanism, hence the effect may be seen instantly.

KeyWords: Shirodhara, Marma, Chakra, Shavasana, Manomaya kosha, Psychoneuroimmunology.

INTRODUCTION

Shirodhara is one of the Bahya snehana (external Oleation therapy) procedures being practiced in Ayurveda. The author Vagbhata grouped under group of Murdni taila1 (process of anointing the head with oil). Technically this procedure is defined as a stream of continuous pouring of liquid over forehead or scalp with specified time is known as the Shirodhara2. It can be done by different medicaments like Taila (oil), Takra (medicatedbutter milk), Kshira (alkali), Kwatha (decoction) etc3, and Shirasheka, Shirodhara, Pariseka, Sechana are synonyms of Shirodhara3. Due to synergetic action over Kapha, it is contraindicated in Kaphavikaras (diseases of Kapha). Therapy extensively indicated in Ardhavabhedaka (migraine) 4, 5, Suryavarta6 (type of headache), Ardita (facial palsy), Pakshaghata (stroke), Hanugraha (loc jaw), Nidranasha

(insomnia), Shirogata Vata (diseases of vata in head region), Shirahkampa (head tremors) 6, 7. Other than these indications, present day it has extended its utility in diseases like Diabetes, Hypertension, Psychosomatic diseases, pre mature graying of hairs, fatigue, and infertility etc8. Ayurveda extensively highlighted the outcome of the procedure rather than its action. This therapy appears to be simple but essentially complex to understand its mode action. The apparent mode of action of this therapy is not critically understood. Hence present study was planned to generate a hypothesis to predict the apparent action of Shirodhara. The classical literatures of Ayurveda, Yoga and recently published research updates were reviewed to generate the possible mode of action of this therapy.

METHODOLOGY

Procedure of Shirodhara⁹

The procedure of this therapy includes 3- stages for the descriptive purpose as Purvakarma (pre procedural), Pradanakarma (actual procedure) and Paschat karma (post procedural).

Purva Karma:

It includes preparation of drug and patient for the procedure. Drug is selected based on the disease and patient comfort. As the routine check up patient must undergo physical examinations to evaluate fitness, then patient must have pass stool and urine before the procedure. Recommended position of patient is supine position for this procedure and Dharapatra (vessel) should be fixed 4-angula (inches) above the fore head and eyes and ears are covered with cotton to prevent the entry of liquid into eyes.

Pradhana Karma:

Room must be cleaned and well ventilated and procedure is done in empty stomach preferably after Abhyanga (massage).

The selected warm liquid is kept in Dharapatra (vessel) and poured continuously, neither too fast nor too slow on the fore head of the patient for about 45-minutes to one hour.

Pashchat Karma:

After completing the procedure the head of the patient is wiped out and dried. This followed a short duration of rest and later massage of the body and head with oil. Then lukewarm bath is advised.

Mode of action:

The mode of action of Shirodhara is hypothesized by incorporating Marma concept (Vital Spots), Chakra Concept (Energy Vertex), Manomaya Kosha (Mental sheath) and Asana (Yogic Posture) – involved in the procedure.

Action of Shirodhara based on Marma

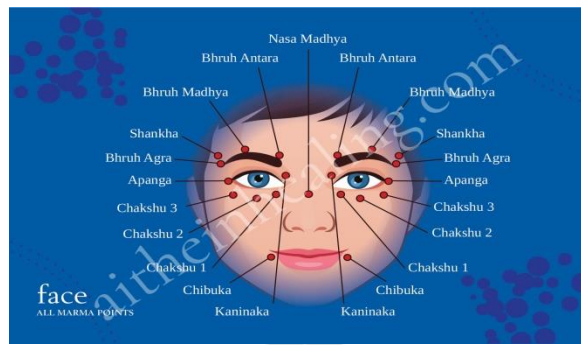
concept:

Marmas (vital Spots) are the critical spots in our body, any injury to these spots will lead to deformities or even fatality. Overall 107 Marmas are present in our body¹⁰. Out of which shiras (Head region) is having 37- marmas¹¹ (Shown in Fig No.1), in which 15 are

Sadhyopranahara (injury to which results in instant death), 5-Kalantara Pranahara (injury to which results in delayed death), 3- Vishalyagna (death after removing foreign body), and 14-Vaikalyakara (injury to which results in physical impairment)¹². Most of marmas (vital Spots) of shiras (head) are Agni (fire) and Vayu (air) Mahabuta pradhana (predominate) ¹³. The site of Sthapani marma (Sthapani vital spot) and the site of pituitary gland and pineal gland exist at the same level. The function of pituitary gland is controlled by hormones or nerve signals this gland is activated whenever the stimulus from CNS or hormones. It has the capacity to maintain all the endocrine systems of human body¹⁴. Mental stress and irritability were the causative factors were endocrine system gets imbalance of its normal function¹⁵.

Hence present therapy helps in relieving the mental stress by regulating the normal function of this gland. This can be achieved by Stimulating Sthapani marma and indirect stimulation of the master gland pituitary this in turn brings ultimatum in psycho-somatic level.

Fig No.1 Positions of Marma

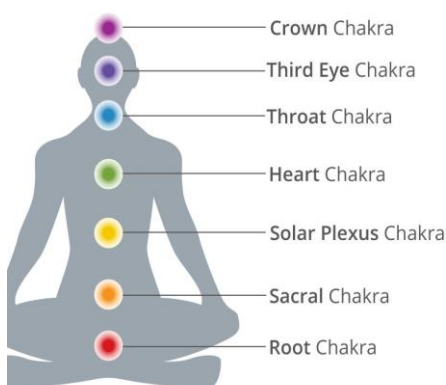


Action of Shirodhara based on Chakra

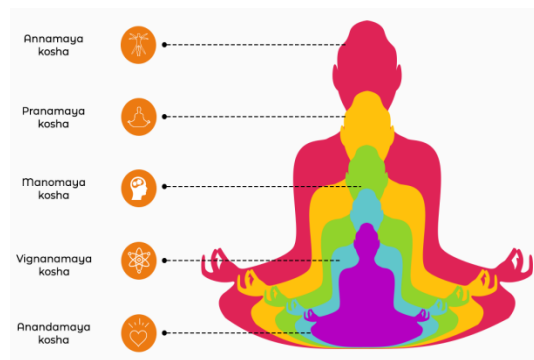
concept:

This is also a distinctive notion of the Yogic science; Chakras (nerve plexuses) means nerve centers the fly wheels in the machine that is the human body. These are the regions situated in the spinal column where the Nadi (nerve) cross each other¹⁶. It is believed that these are in a state of subtle and not easily cognizable. There are seven chakras located in our body (shown in Fig No.2), which are Muladhara (pelvic plexus), Swadistana (Hypogastric plexus), Manipura (Solar plexus), Anahata (Cardiac plexus), Vishuddha (Pharyngeal plexus), Ajna (the plexus of command between the two eye brows) and 7th one Sahastrara (the thousand petal lotus, the upper cerebral centre) it as capacity to control all other six chakras¹⁷. Shiras (head) is the seat of both Ajnya chakra (6th chakra) & Sahastrara (7th Chakra). Ajnya (6th chakra) is located at the level of external point of the eye brow center corresponds to Penial gland and Medulla oblongata in brain, and it is considered as the third eye because of its position. This point is the trigger point of concentration. Hence it is considered as centre of consciousness. From this centre the bodily systems and states of awareness are controlled.¹⁸ Hence Shirodhara treatment over Ajnya chakra (Penial gland and Medulla oblongata in brain) would stimulates Sahastrara chakra (the thousand petal lotus, the upper cerebral centre) which controls the mechanism of all chakras to generate preferred results. Penial gland one of the endocrine gland situated at the roof of third ventricle under posterior part of corpus calosum and considered as seat of soul¹⁹. It is responsible for rhythmic changes in body, mood changes, sleep promotion and sexual behavior. More importantly actual function of this gland is still mysterious. But many believed that it got stimulations from sympathetic supply from CNS²⁰. Medulla oblongata or brain stem is also one of the main sites where equilibrium of body is controlled²¹. Hence corresponding stimulation of pineal gland along with medulla oblongata both synergistically helps to produce the desired effects of Shirodhara.

Fig No.2 Positions of Chakras Fig No.3 Koshas of atman



Action of Shirodhara based on Manomaya



Kosha:

Ayurveda defines Ayu (life) is the combined state of Sharira (body), Indriya (senses), Sattva (psyche) and Atma (Soul) 22. In this way, Manasa is chiefly responsible for perceiving qualitative healthy life. Signs of good health are Samadosha (Balance state of Dosha), Samagni, (Balance state of digestion) Samadathu (tissues) and Mala (by products), Prasanna (healthy state) of Atma (soul) and Manas (mind) 23. Manas and its pathogenesis can be perceived at intellectual or body level.

"Rajas" and "Tamas" are considered as "Manas doshas" and having capacity to generate Samprapti (i.e. etiopathogenesis). Any imbalance in body level would certainly cause disease of mind and vice-versa. Tripod methods of treatment which includes Daiva vyaparsraya (Magico-religious practice), Yukti vyapasraya (Physio-pharmacological procedure) and Satvavajaya (Psychological methods) 24 were followed. In that Satvavajaya chikitsa indicated specially for Mano nigraha (control over mind). Since Shiras seat of mind²⁵ treatment which provided at the level of Shiras (head) would certainly helps in controlling Manasa vikaras (diseases of mind). According to Yogic philosophy there are Kosha (sheaths) around atman (body). The nature of human being encompasses corporal and emotional phase that functions as one holistic organism. The Kosha system refers to these diverse phases as Layers of subjective experience. Layers array from the opaque corporal body to the more subtle points of emotions, mind and spirit. In another sense unfolding one by one, of five koshas leads to manifestation of a progressive expression of life.²⁶ these are five in number which are 1. Annamaya (Physical), 2. Pranamaya (vital), 3. Manomaya (mental), 4. Vijnanamaya (intellect) and 5. Anandamaya (blissful) 27 (Shown in Fig no.3).

Manomaya Kosha refers to the emotional, mental and spiritual aspects of human being collectively frame our subjective experience of being alive which is composed of manas (mind). Shiras is the seat of Manas²⁵. The Manas (mind) in conjunction with the five sensory appendages holds to represent the manomaya kosha. It is the root of diversity, it has four purposes: a) remembrance b) reasonableness c) knowledge of bliss and ache based on responses from past deeds, d) vision²⁸. Body and mind both are innately interconnected hence healing process to mind indirectly heals the body also. So dhara therapy hypothetically heals the mind in turn heals the body.

Action of Shirodhara based on Asana –involved in the procedure:

The posture of Shirodhara is similar as that of Shavasana (corpses pose). This is one of the complete relaxation procedure mentioned Yogashastra (texts of Yoga). Complete relaxation can be experienced only when both physical and mental relaxation is attained²⁹. In medical science, it is generally believed that complete mental relaxation decreases the somatic symptom because mind and body are inter-connected^{22 & 36}. Shavasana is one of the very important yogic practice, provides total relaxation. Some recent researches suggested that Shavasana is significantly reduces the subjective improvement in the symptoms like Headache, giddiness, nervousness, irritability and diminished sleep³⁰. In Shirodhara, Shavasana like posture is followed for about 45-minutes. Hence this posture may add the benefit to the procedure outcome.

Action over local site:

Skin and other its appendages are having nerve endings. They are wide spread in the superficial layers of the skin as well as certain internal tissues and are rich with pain receptors such as Bradykinin, Serotonin, histamine, potassium ions, acetylcholine etc. and these are known to get stimulated by mechanical, thermal and chemical stimuli³¹. Present therapy may act as mechanical stimulus to the receptor which counterbalances the pain regulating centre³².

Psychoneuroimmunology (PNI):

The study of relationship that exists between the central nervous system, autonomous nervous system, endocrine system and immune system is called as Psychoneuro-immunology (PNI)³³. It says that the states of anything which influence any one system among nervous system, immune system and endocrine system the effect would see all the three systems since they are mutual interrelated between them 34, 35 . This shows the relation between stress and the emotional state of an individual, this relation play a significant role in making vulnerable to diseases. This relation exists by connection between mind-body by the interactions of the endocrine, nervous, and immune systems³⁶. The core dictum of this course of action is to encourage relaxation mentally followed physically. Hence this information helps to hypothesize that stimulation of Sthapani marma, motivation of Ajnya chakra, organizing different phases of manomaya kosha and added

benefit of Shavasana would help to counterbalance the mansika and shareerika doshas. Thus synchronization of Metabolism, Immunity and nervous system, so that the deepest level of healing can be achieved.

CONCLUSION:

Action of Shirodhara has been hypothesized on the base of stimulation of Pituitary gland, pineal gland and nerve endings of skin which in turn stimulates the CNS system. The incorporation of hypothetical aspects of Manomaya kosha, Chakra, Marma and Shavasana posture would certainly help to predict hypothetical views of mode of action of Shirodhara with subjective outcomes.

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