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RESEARCH ARTICLE

A CONCEPTUAL STUDY OF EFFECTIVENESS OF ABHYANGA VIS-À-VIS MASSAGE THERAPY IN RELIEVING PAIN

Dr. Parshant, Dr. Uma Thakur, Prof. B. L. Mehra and Prof. Vijay Chaudhary

¹General physician (Private practitioner), Arogyadham Clinic Distt. Bilaspur H.P.

²Asst. Professor, Babe ke ayurvedic medical college and hospital, Daudhar, Moga, Punjab

³Prof. & Head Deptt. of Kayachikitsa RGGPG Ayu. College and Hospital Paprola, Distt. Kangra

⁴Prof. Deptt. of Kayachikitsa RGGPG Ayu. College and Hospital Paprola, Distt. Kangra

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ABSTRACT

With the advent of improved health services and facility life expectancy of average human has increased significantly. Because of advancing age and erroneous life style the prevalence of degenerative diseases are on a rise. In old age, the *Vata Dosha* predominate that increases the susceptibility of individuals for various *Vata Vyadhi* which in turn reflects as pain and stiffness of the joints along with restricted motion to various degrees. *Taila* is considered as the best *Shamana Aushadha* for *Vaatik Vikaras* and it can be used both externally as well as internally. The present study will incorporate the *Abhyanga* (external application of *Sneha*) from various points of views and its utility in controlling pain and stiffness related to advancing age. This study is a humble attempt to compile all the scattered references related to the context and to make it useful or increase its practical utility.

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INTRODUCTION

Abhyanga is an important type of external *Snehana*. In *Charaka Samhita* 24 *Pravicharana* of *Sneha* has been mentioned in *Sneha Adhyaya* (Caraka Samhita of Agnivesha Revised by Caraka and Drdhabala, 2013): *Abhyanga* is one of them. *Abhyanga* is mentioned in detail in all classical texts in the chapter of *Dinacharya* (Caraka Samhita of Agnivesha Revised by Caraka and Drdhabala, 2013). In *Charaka Samhita* it is mentioned in *Sutrasthana* chapter 5 – *Matrashitiya Adhyaya*. In *Sushruta Samhita* it is mentioned in *Chikitsasthana* chapter 24 – *Anagatabadh Pratishedh Adhyaya* and in *Astanga Hridaya* it is mentioned in *Sutrasthana* chapter 2 – *Dinacharya Adhyaya*.

Snehana: *Snehana* is the main *Purvakarma* of *Panchakarma*. Literally *Snehana* means to oleate or to make smooth (Caraka Samhita of Agnivesha Revised by Caraka and Drdhabala, 2013).

Derivation–The word *Snehana* is derived from the root ‘*Snih*’ with ‘*Lyt*’ *pratyaya*. Thus *Snehana* means *Abhyanga* with *taila* etc. (*Vacaspatyam*); “The procedure which causes unctuousness, fluidity, softness and moistness in the body is *Snehana* or Oleation therapy (Caraka Samhita of Agnivesha Revised by Caraka and Drdhabala, 2013).

The fatty substances used in this therapy are for the purpose of producing lubrication or oleating effect on the internal as well as external organs. This treatment has qualities like restfulness, strength, invigoration and cognition. *Sneha* destroys the *Vata*, soften the body and eliminates the accumulated *Malas* (Charaka Samhita, 2011).

Snehana Drugs–The drug having properties like *Drava* (Liquid), *Sara* (Fluid), *Snigdha*(Unctuous), *Picchil* (Slimy), *Guru* (Heavy), *Shitala* (Cold), *Manda* (Sluggish)and *Mrudu* (Soft) (Caraka Samhita of Agnivesha Revised by Caraka and Drdhabala, 2013). *Guru*, *Sheeta*, *Kshara*, *Snigdha*, *Manda*,*Sukshma*, *Mridu*, *Drava* (Brahmanand Tripathi, 2013).

Source of *Snehana Dravya*

•**Sthavar (Vegetable source):** *Tila*, *Priyala*, *Abhishuka*, *Bibitaka*, *Eranda*, *Madhuka*, *Chitraka*,*Abhaya*, *Madhuka*, *Sarshapa*, *Kusumbha*, *Bilva*, *Aruka*, *Mulaka*, *Atasi*,*Nikochaka*, *Akshoda*, *Karanja*, *Shigruka*

•**Jangam (animal source):** The fish, four footed animals and birds constitute the sources of animal fat. Curd, milk, *ghee*, meat, (muscle) fat and (bone) marrow of these animals and birds are administered as *Sneha* substances (Kasinath sastri, 2013).

General Indication of Snehana- *Snehana* (oleation) therapy in general is prescribed for those who are to be given *Swedana* (fomentation) or elimination therapy, those who have roughness in the skin, those suffering from diseases due to the vitiation of *Vata*; those who indulge in physical exercise, wine and women, and those who suffer from mental strain (Kasinath sastri, 2013).

Contraindication of Snehana Therapy

- Who are eligible for *Rukshana* therapy, in whom *Kapha* and *Meda* are aggravated and the aggravated condition of *Kapha* reflects itself in the form of mucus secretion from the mouth and anus.
- Whose *Agni* is continuously weak and suffering from thirst and fainting (*Murccha*)
- The pregnant women.
- Those whose palate gets dried up and persons having aversion to food. (*Annadvasha*).
- Persons having Vomiting, *Udarroga*, *Amadosha* or *Garavisha* or *Madaroga* etc.
- Persons who are very weak or tired and who hate *Sneha*.
- *Snehana* should not be done when *Nasya* or *Basti* therapy is being done (Gorakha Nath Chaturvedi, 2013).

Types of Snehana

The *Snehana* is classified mainly in two types.

- **Internal Snehana**– It is administered prior to *Sodhana* therapy as a *Purvakarma* or independently as a *Shamana* therapy.
- **External Snehana**–The types of external *Snehana* has not been mentioned in *Sneha-Adhyaya*, but the scattered references are available especially in the *Dinacharya Adhyaya*.

Abhyanga: *Abhyanga* is a very important type of external *Snehana*. The word *Abhyanga* derived from the “*Ang*” *Dhatu*, Which is used for the meaning of motion and “*Abhi*” *Upasarga* in it. Its literary meaning is to produce some motion.

Importance: A person should resort to *Abhyanga* every day if he wants to keep himself healthy. In classics, *Abhyanga* has been mentioned as the part of *Dinacharya* i.e. daily routine (Gorakha Nath Chaturvedi, 2013). The importance of *Abhyanga* has been shown by the way of different metaphoric illustrations. As a pitcher or a dry leather an axis of a wheel become strong and resistant to wear and tear by the application of oil. Similarly by the *Abhyanga* of oil, human body becomes strong and smooth skinned, it becomes unsusceptible to the disease of *Vata* and resistant to exhaustions and exertions (Gorakha Nath Chaturvedi, 2013). *Vayu* is dominant in *Sparsha Indriya* and skin is the place of *Sparsha Indriya*. So *Abhyanga* is beneficial for the skin and also for *Sparshan Indriya* so a person should perform *Abhyanga* daily (Dr. Gorakha Nath Chaturvedi, 2013). The body is compared to the tree. If the root of tree is given water regularly, it nourishes whole the tree and it lives for a long time. Similarly, on the above analogy, if the body of an individual is oleated properly through *Abhyanga*, it nourishes all the *Dhatu*s. The person lives for a long time without any decay or disease (Kaviraja Ambikadutta Shastri, 2012).

Purpose of Abhyanga Therapy: *Abhyanga* can be done to a person for two different purposes.

- It can be done regularly to a person for the prevention of several diseases and for the maintenance as well as promotion of positive health.
- It can also be done as a special therapy for a limited period. This special massage therapy is generally carried out for the purposes of- Rejuvenating the body to prevent and arrest the ageing process.- Curing several obstinate and otherwise incurable diseases.

Apart from the above mentioned purposes, *Abhyanga* therapy along with *Svedana*. Fomentation is also given before administering several categories of purification of body- *Shodhana Chikitsa* like *Vamana*, *Virechana*, *Basti* and *Nasya*.

Contraindication: *Abhyanga* is the best in both the conditions i.e. Health and Disease except few exceptions, which are as follow.

- Patients suffering by *Kaphaja* or *Kapha* dominant diseases.
- Those who have been given *Vamana* or *Virechana*.
- Persons suffering from Indigestion.
- Persons having *Amadosha*, *Taruna Jvara*.
- Those who have been given *Niruha Basti*.
- In the diseases caused by excessive nutrition.

The *Abhyanga* in above conditions, if done, it causes *Agnimandya* and increases those diseases.¹⁵

Method of Abhyanga: *Abhyanga* should be done with luke warm medicated oil or ghee, prepared with *Doshaghna* and aromatic drugs suitable to the *Ritu*, *Desha*, *Satmya Prakriti*, *Roga*, *Dosha* etc (Kaviraja Ambikadutta Shastri, 2012). It should be applied slowly, gently and in the direction of hair. *Abhyanga* should be specially. done on head, legs and ear daily (Brahmanand Tripathi, 2013). For the *Abhyanga* on head, cold or lukewarm oil should be used, because head is the place of all senses and it is considered as the most vital part, hence it should be protected from heat. For *Abhyanga*, in cold season warm oil should be used and in hot season cold oil may be used. *Abhyanga* should be done in the direction of hairs. It should be done in round pattern on joints.

Benefits of Abhyanga (Gorakha Nath Chaturvedi, 2013)

- **Jarahara:** It prevents and corrects ageing process. The *Abhyanga* nourishes the *Dhatu*s and increases their strength.
- **Sramahara:** It helps a person to overcome fatigue due to hard work.
- **Vatahara:** It corrects and prevents disorders caused by affliction of *Vata*. *Abhyanga* helps in the promotion and regulation of the proper function of *Vata*.
- **Drishti Prasada Kara:** It promotes eyesight. The diseases of the eye like *Timira* and other diseases, which are caused due to ageing could be prevented and cured by *Abhyanga*.
- **Pustikara:** It helps in nourishment of the body. It nourishes all the *Dhatu*s of the body.

- **Ayushyakara:** It promotes longevity of an individual. The functions of the vital organs and tissues are improved and life span is promoted through *Abhyanga*.
- **Svapnakara:** It helps the individual to get sleep. The *Abhyanga* is very useful to overcome sleeplessness and other mental ailments.
- **Tvak Dardhyakara:** It promotes sturdiness of an individual. *Abhyanga* provides a passive form of exercise even for those who cannot perform active physical exercise because of debility and old age. Even for abnormal healthy person, *Abhyanga* provides sturdiness of the body, which keeps him healthy and happy.
- **Klesha Sahatva:** By the sturdiness due to *Abhyanga*, body becomes capable to tolerate the stress and strains of life.
- **Abhighat Sahatva:** In the persons who always use *Abhyanga* therapy, trauma cannot cause as much trouble as in other individual.
- **KaphaVata Nirodhan:** According to *Acharya Sushruta*, *Abhyanga* prevents both *Vata* and *Kapha*.
- **Varna, Bala Prada:** *Abhyanga* improves the colour of the skin and gives strength to a person. Special benefits are mentioned of *Abhyanga* which is done over the head and feet in *Charaka Samhita*.

Nityamsnehard Shirasashirashoolanajayetee Na Khalityam Na Palityam Na Kesha Prapatanti cha, Balam Shirakapalanam Visheshenabhirvadhte, Dridhmoola Dirga Krishnakesha Bhavanti cha, Indiyani praseedanti sutwagbhavti chanan, Nidralabha Sukham cha syanmurdhitailanishevanath ||

(Ch. Su. 5/81-83)

Benefits of Shiro-abhyanga – It is good for headache. It prevents baldness, whiteness and falling of hairs. It provides strength to the skull. It makes strong the root at hairs. It nourishes hairs and *Indriyas* (senses). The skin of the face becomes beautiful. It causes good sleep and happiness (Gorakha Nath Chaturvedi, 2013).

Benefits of Pada-abhyanga– It is good in dryness, roughness, stiffness, numbness of the legs. It makes the legs soft, strong and stable. It promotes eyesight. It controls *Vata* and is good for *Gridhrasi*. It prevents cracks over the legs and *Sankocha* of *Shira* and *Snayu* (Kasinath satri, 2013).

Effect of Abhyanga on Dhātu- Dalhana, the Commentator of *Sushruta Samhita* has described the effect of *Abhyanga* on *Dhatus*. The oil used in *Abhyanga* reaches to the Root of Hair if it is performed up to 300 *Matras* (65 sec). It reaches in the Skin in 400 *Matras* (133 sec.), in the *Rakta* in 500 *Matras* (160 sec.), reaches in *Mamsa* in 600 *Matras* (190 sec.), in *Meda* in 700 *Matras* (228 sec.), in the *Asthi* in 800 *Matras* (240 sec) and it reaches to the *Majja* if *Abhyanga* is performed upto 900 *Matras*. (app. 285 sec.). Thus, *Abhyanga* should be applied at least 5 minutes in each position if one wants to get its effect on the deeper tissues like *Majja* (Kaviraja Ambikadutta Shastri, 2012).

Mode of Action of Abhyanga: Commentator *Dalhana* has explained in detail about the absorption of *Sneha* used in *Abhyanga* procedure. According to this, the oil used in *Abhyanga* can reach 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 or cures the diseases of that particular *Dhatu*. *Acharya Sushruta* has mentioned that *Sneha* used in *Avagahana*, through *Shiramukha* (Opening of the veins), *Romakupa* (root of the hairs) and *Dhamani* (Arteries) nourishes the body and thus provides strength (Kaviraja Ambikadutta Shastri, 2012). Same thing we can understand for *Abhyanga* also which is a type of external *Snehana* only. Thus, *Sneha* (oil) used for *Snehana* (Oleation) enters in the body through *Romakupa*, *Shiramukha* and *Dhamani* and nourishes body. *Charaka Samhita* has described that *Vayu* dominates in the *Sparshanendriya* i.e. tactile sensory organ and this sensory organ is lodged in the skin. The *Abhyanga* is exceedingly beneficial to the skin, so one should practice it regularly (Gorakha Nath Chaturvedi, 2013).

- *Sparshanendriya* is present in all over the body and so it is present in the *Adhithana* of other *Indriyas* also. Other *Indriyas* are dependent on *sparsanendriya* for their *Vishayagrahana*. *Kharatva*, *Dravatva*, *Chalatva*, *Ushnata* and *Apratighat* are the specific *Lakshanas* of *Prithivi*, *Jala*, *Vayu*, *Agni* and *Aakash Mahabhut* respectively. These all are the subject of *Sparsanendriya* only (Kasinath satri, 2013).
- *Abhyanga* directly benefits to *Sparshanendriya* and so benefits all the *Indriyas*. *Indriyas* are in close contact of mind hence if *Indriyas* remain healthy, mind automatically remains healthy. Thus *Abhyanga* keeps body and mind healthy.
- The drugs used in *Abhyanga* have the *Sneha* property. It has properties opposite to the properties of *Vata*. The mode of action of *Abhyanga* can be understood by the properties of *Snehana* drugs in the following way.
- **Snigdha Guna** – This is the main property of *Snehana* drug. *Snigdha Guna* acts through its *Vatahara*, *Kaphakara* and *Vrshya* properties. It performs the action like *Snehana*, *Kledana* and *Vishyandana* at cellular level of the body.
- **Guru Guna** – It increases the *Kapha* and strength of the body. *Hemadri* has said it nutritious for the body. According to *Bhavaprakash*, *Guru Guna* has properties like *Vatahara*, *Kaphakara* and *Pustikara*. Due to these properties it alleviates the morbid *Vata*, increases the *Kapha* and nourishes the body.
- **Sheeta Guna** – It keeps the mind healthy by increasing pleasure and enthusiasm. It prevents fainting, decrease the perspiration. It stabilizes the muscles and organs.
- **Mrudu Guna** – *Mrudu* means soft. This is the opposite attribute of *Kathina* i.e. hard. By this property *Abhyanga* reduces the stiffness.
- **Drava Guna** – *Drava* means liquid, which causes humidity. By this *Guna Snehana* drug propagates swiftly all over the body. It liquefies the *Doshas* and mobilizes them by increasing their flowing capacity.
- **Picchil Guna**– *Picchil* means slimy. It causes longevity, increases body strength and maintains the structure at molecular level. It increases *Kapha* and produces heaviness.
- **Sara Guna** – The common meaning of *Sara* is to slip or mobility. It mobilizes the *Doshas* and *Malas* i.e. waste products by this property.

- **Manda Guna** – It is indicative of sluggishness. The *Snehana* drug diffuses slowly by this *Guna* and it remains in the contact of *Doshas*, *Dhatu*s and *Malas* for long time.
- **Sukshma Guna**– *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* as all the properties are opposite to the *Vata*. *Abhyanga* is considered useful treatment in the diseases occurred by provoked *Vata*.

Guru Sheetā Sara Snighdhā Mandhā Suksham Mridu Dravam, Aushadham Snehānamprayoviprīta Virukshanam

(A.H.Su.16/1)

MASSAGE: Massage is one of the oldest simplest forms of therapy and is a system of stroking, pressing and kneading different areas of the body to relieve pain, relax, stimulates and tones the body. Massage does much more than create a pleasant sensation on the skin. It also works on the soft tissues (the muscles, tendons and ligaments) to improve muscle tone. Although it largely affects those muscles just under the skin, its benefits may also reach the deeper layers of muscle and possibly even the organs themselves. Massage also stimulates blood circulation and assists the lymphatic system, improving the elimination of waste throughout the body. By touch, which is a sense of love and warmth. Massage has its emotional aspect also. It provides comfort, consolation and feeling of security to the patients.

Techniques: There are a variety of different strokes that can be used for massage, ranging from the most delicate touch with the fingertips to focused deep tissue work. Various strokes like gliding, kneading, draining, pulling, wringing, friction, percussive, hacking, cupping, pinching etc. may be used according to need and area on which massage is to be done.

Indications: Massage can be used either to soothe and relax or to stimulate and revitalize. It is particularly effective for any stress related disorders such as tension, anxiety, headaches, muscle pain, sleeplessness, depression and digestive disorders and its gentle healing properties are effective on ailments ranging from babies colic to the painful arthritis of the elderly.

Contraindications: In general, Massage is an extremely safe form of therapy however there are some situations where Massage should be avoided. These include areas of local infection, bruising, eczema, high temperature or fever, full stomach, heart disorders, menstruation, pregnancy, nausea, open cuts or sores, swelling or inflammation etc.

Effects of Massage: Regular massage can have the effect of strengthening and toning the entire body mechanism, and so help to prevent unnecessary strains and injuries that might otherwise occur due to excess tension and any resulting structural weaknesses. Massage can stimulate or calm the nervous system. Depending upon what is required by the individual and thus help reduce fatigue, leaving the receiver with a feeling of replenished energy. At the best Massage has the potential to restore the individual physically, mentally and spiritually. The power of massage is largely due to the positive effect it has on the entire body mechanism, improving the body's general resistance to disease, producing a feeling of well being and encouraging the body's innate ability to heal itself.

Benefits of Massage

- Relaxing
- Soothing
- Healing
- Reassuring
- Eases tension, stiffness and pain
- Improves breathing
- Improves circulation
- Enhances well-being

Mode of Action

The oil used for Massage may get absorbed through the skin and shows effect. According to modern medical science, absorption through the skin can be enhanced by suspending the drug in an oily vehicle and rubbing the resulting preparation into the skin.²⁵ Thus it can be said that the drug used for Massage is absorbed through the skin. The effect of *Abhyanga* can assume in two ways i.e. physical manipulations and the effect of medicated oil. Physical manipulation in the form of Massage increases the circulation of blood and plasma. It can stimulate and strengthen the lymphatic system and remove internal waste products. Muscles and deep connective tissues get relaxation. The strokes used in massage have effect like,

- Increase in flow of circulation local to the area treated.
- Reduction of tone in muscles, which are in a state of excess tension.
- Stretching of tight fascia and restoration of mobility of soft tissues.
- Relief in pain is obtained by releasing acute and chronic tension in muscles and by affecting pressure and touch nerve endings.
- Where there is chronic edema, the fibrin within the fluid can be stretched, so facilitating drainage of the fluid in to lymph vessels.

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