



## ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Ayurveda

## CONCEPTUAL AND APPLIED STUDY ON ABHYANGA (AYURVEDIC MASSAGE)

KEY WORDS:

Dr.B.Kothainayagi

Assistant Professor, Department of Samhita Siddhant, FIMS, SGT University, Gurugram

Dr.Sangeeta Gupta

Professor, Department of Roga Nidana, FIMS, SGT University, Gurugram

## ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is a system of medicine which is both a philosophy and science. Scientific validity of Ayurveda is evident with the logical justification for its theories and its applications. To achieve the preventive & curative purpose of Ayurveda, the role and utility of Abhyanga (massage) as a therapy has been clearly mentioned in text. Applied aspect of Abhyanga is widely accepted, discussed and also practically evidenced in number of studies conducted from time to time. Abhyanga is widely perceived as a procedure which not only bestows pleasantness, rejuvenation and recreation but is also helpful in treating a number of chronic diseases. In this article, an earnest attempt is being made to explore in depth, the conceptual as well as applied aspects of Abhyanga.

## Introduction:

Abhyanga helps human to prevent the common health hazards of physique and psyche. It helps to lead a healthy life if practiced regularly. Regular application of oil on head, ears and soles are emphasized by Ayurvedic treatises. Now a days people are not following such daily regimen as Abhyanga due to an irregular lifestyle leading to many life style diseases. In such life style disorders and also in other diseases Abhyanga plays a vital role as a preventive and curative tool. On this point of view, this study aims at analyzing Abhyanga (simple oil application) and its role in maintenance of swaasthya and also its effect as a therapy.

## Materials and methods:

1. A Literary study was done with the brihatrayee as the base.
2. Review of literature from Authentic Research Journals, Websites, and Digital Publications etc.
3. The subject and data, which were obtained by the literary study were logically analysed.

## Abhyanga and its Benefits:

In general, the salient features and utility of Abhyanga in Ayurveda are manifold. For a healthy person regular application of oil delays the process of senility, reduces fatigue, nurtures the body, prolongs life span and induces sound sleep and makes the skin healthy and the body strong. (1) Researches in other bio-medical sciences showed that the regular application of oil over skin helps in improving skin's suppleness and also avoids premature aging by improving circulation and increasing nutrition to the cells. It enhances the skin complexion by vaso dilation of surface capillaries and improves the elasticity of skin. (2) Regular application of oil on head will make hair black, long and deep rooted, proper working of Sense organs. The skin of face gets brightened by abhyanga. Daily application of oil on head will produce sound sleep and happiness. Daily scalp massage prevents head ache, baldness, graying of hair and hair fall. (3) Pada Abhyanga or foot massages bestows good vision (4) and also has been proven to reduce stress, agitation and behavioural problems in older people with dementia (5). Application of oil in ears prevents the diseases of head and application of oil on head cures the disease afflicting the whole body. So, in short, if Sarvanga Abhyanga is not possible daily, at least a person may have a head or foot massage everyday. This will provide a basic ground for one's general health.

For a diseased person, the indication of Abhyanga whether local or general depends on the clinical condition (Doshas & Malas) and the site of disease. (6) As discussed, in general, oil massage prevents excess increase of Vata, nourishes body tissues, and imparts complexion, color and strength to skin (7). So, it is the most commonly indicated and extensively applied treatment procedure amongst the Bahirparimarjana Chikitsa (8).

In various physical ailments specially the musculoskeletal disorders therapeutic massages are done to relax the body muscles, to

relieve the pain and stiffness and to increase the joint mobility (9). They act by increasing circulation and bringing more oxygen and nutrients to muscles. This reduces muscle fatigue and soreness by rapid removal of toxins and waste products from the muscle. It was also seen that chronic pain and fatigue was significantly reduced with abhyanga in people with spinal cord injury in a clinical study (10). Abhyanga also has been found useful in reducing anxiety, stress and depression. The effect has been elicited in a clinical study on cancer patients (11). The effect of massage on agitated behaviours in older people with dementia is also well studied (12). One study concluded that physiological and psychological indicators suggested that slow stroke back massage and hand massage were effective in promoting relaxation in older people across all settings (13). Besides this direct therapeutic application, abhyanga is also indicated as an Upakrama before any shodana karma in order to produce dosha vilayanam so that it becomes easy to remove the vitiated dosha during the pradhana karma.

## Application in terms of Shadpadarthas:

Abhyanga when it is viewed in general perspective is limited to anointing of the shareeram with any sneha dravya. But on the other hand when it is perceived with the basic concepts and doctrines of Ayurveda the utility of Abhyanga emerges beyond imagination. The action of Abhyanga based on its applied aspects as an upakrama of Shodhana karma with respect to either Swasthya rakshanam or vikara prashamanam or when it is seen with theoretical concept of Shad padartha new ideas get evolved.

1. Dravya: Dravya to be used in Abhyanga has been specified in accordance to the need. As for maintenance of health certain specifications have been prescribed in general and for the treatment, the dravya to be used has been referred by taking cognizance of the Doshas, Dushya, Bala, Kaalam, Analam, Vaya, Satvam, Sathmyam, Ahara, Avastha.
2. Guna: In the perspective of guna, for swasthya rakshana Abhyanga has been either indicated or contraindicated according to its karma. e.g In Shishira and Hemantha Abhyanga is indicated and in Vasantha rtu it is contra indicated. Due to climatic influence on the shareera Abhyanga is prescribed in shishira and hemantha rtu to maintain the temperature. And due to utkledanam in vasantha rtu, it has been contra indicated as this may increase the Doshas utklesham
3. Karma: The aspect of karma with respect to Abhyanga is quiet evident as it reduces vata by decreasing kharatva, rukshatva, laghutva etc and paves the way for movement of doshas from sakra to koshta due to its sukshma guna.
4. Samanya Vishesha: The aspect of Samanya & Vishesha which is said to be the first padartha according to Ayurveda and based on which the system of Ayurveda has developed. When Abhyanga is seen with the prism of Samanya & Vishesha siddhanta the utility and its significance gets in to horizon in

the minds of an ayurvedic scholar. In aspect of Swasthya rakshana, Abhyanga by Samanya, snigdhatva and ushnatva in taila and its application, the body temperature gets maintained. Simultaneously by Vishesha the excessive shita guna gets reduced.

5. Samavaya: The aspect of samavaya with respect to abhyanga is found with all the padarthas. Only because of this samavaya the purpose of abhyanga is achieved.

#### Ashraya Ashrayi Siddhanta:

Twak is the ashraya for vata and bhrajaka pitta. Abhyanga is done on twak, twak being the sthana of vata abhyanga is vata hara predominantly due to its guna. Absorption of the dravyas applied on skin is through bhrajaka pitta.

#### Mode of action of Abhyanga:

The drugs used in Abhyanga have the Sneha property. The mode of action of Abhyanga can be understood by the properties of Snehana drugs in the following way:

1. 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.
2. Guru Guna – It increases the bodily strength and Kapha. Hemadri called it nutritious for the body. According to Bhavaprakasa 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. Sita Guna – It keeps the mind healthy by increasing pleasure and enthusiasm. It prevents fainting, decrease the perspiration. It stabilizes the muscles and organs.
4. Mrdu Guna – Mrdu means soft. This is the opposite attribute of Kathina i.e. hard. 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 liquifies the Dosas and mobilizes them by increasing their flowing capacity.
6. Picchila Guna – Picchila means slimy. It causes longevity, increases body strength and maintains the structure at molecular level. It increases Kapha and produces heavy-ness.
7. Sara Guna – The common meaning of Sara is to slip or mobility. It mobilizes the Dosas and Malas 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 context of Dosas, 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 diseases occurred by provoked Vata. Skin is a metabolically active organ. UV exposure can influence enzyme activity, thus altering the types and ratios of eicosanoids produced from PUFA precursors. Dietary supplementation and topical application of certain PUFAs can minimize the damage to dermal collagen which governs skin aging process (14). Tila taila plays a prominent role in Indian Ayurvedic medicine. Tila taila which is indicated for Abhyanga in most of the conditions is said to be best absorbed and metabolized in the skin. Modern system also accepts the deficiency of poly unsaturated fatty acids in the skin produces skin problems like, itching, Psoriasis etc

#### Discussion on role of Abhyanga in Swastha Vrta & Aturavastha:

Body is the main source to achieve Purushartha, without the body there is nothing in the world. So a wise person should take care for protection his own body, because in the absence of the body there is nothing in the world to achieve. Definition of Svastha is 'a state of equilibrium of Dosha, Agni, Dhatu and Mala functions, a level of satisfaction shown by Atma, Indriya and Mana is considered as

Health"(15). Prasannata of indriya is described as one of the swasthya Lakshana. Twak is a jnanendriya whose health is maintained by doing Abhyanga as a dinacharya. Vayu dominates in the tactile sensory organ and this sensory organ is lodged in the skin. The Abhyanga is exceedingly beneficial to the skin; hence it should be practiced regularly. Abhyanga helps in combating Prakrita Dosha vriddhi which happens during Shishira and Hemantha ritus.

**Abhyanga as a poorva karma:** Abhyanga produces snigdhatva in the body which makes the body amenable for shodhana karma. Abhyanga is done as a poorva karma in most of the shodhana karmas. Abhyanga produces srotomukha vishodhanam, abhishyandanam of Dosha and reduces vata which is aggravated, thereby moving the aggravated Dosha from Shakha to Koshtha after which the doshas can be easily removed through shodhana karma(16).

**Abhyanga as pradhana karma:** Raktadi dhatus and Twak constitute the bahya roga marga in which diseases like mashaka, vyanga, gandaalaji, arbuda, etc arise for which Abhyanga is considered as Treatment, because the route of action of Abhyanga is twak(17). Hence Abhyanga can be considered as Pradhana karma where Vata Dosha is aggravated – Due to the Guna of Abhyanga, and in twak roga – Due to site of action.

**Abhyanga as a Paschat Karma:** Abhyanga has been indicated after most of the shodhana karma. Because after most of the shodhana karmas there is a mild aggravation of vata, and hence it is done as a bsheshaja ksapita chikitsa

#### CONCLUSION

An earnest attempt is made in this particular study and some conclusions are being drawn on the basis of conceptual references, critical review, observations made and by thorough discussion. They are, Abhyanga plays a vital role in Swasthya Rakshanam & Vikara Prashamanam

- It is concluded from the present study that the Abhyanga has been proved significant in improving overall quality of life as a whole which is the objective of Ayurveda
- Abhyanga is a Bahir Parimarjana chikitsa and not merely a poorva karma or a therapy done for joy and recreation purpose
- Abhyanga seen with the basic principles of Ayurveda gives a wider utility
- Mode of action of Abhyanga coincides with that of the modern concept.
- Abhyanga seen with the basic principles of Ayurveda gives a wider utility of it as a Poorva karma of Shodhana Chikitsa, Pradhana Karma & Pashchat Karma.

#### References:

1. Vaghbhatta; Ashtanga Hrudayam, Text with, English Translation, Translated by Prof.K.R.Srikantha Murthy Vol I - III; Reprinted edition, 2012; Choukamba Krishnadas Academy, Varanasi. Uttar Pradesh, Sutrasthan:2/8-9
2. A one-stop Massage and Complementary Therapy Resource – including Articles, Treatment Descriptions and a Directory of some of the best Practitioners, Colleges and Spas in the UK
3. <http://www.organicfacts.net/organic-oils/organic-cocunut-oil/health-benefits-of-cocunut-oil.html>. domain Name: ORGANICFACTS.NET, [Cited on 2012 March 02]
4. Charaka; Charaka Samhita; redacted by Charaka and Dridabala with Ayurveda Dipika Commentary by Chakrapanidutta; edited by Vaidya Yadavji Trikamji Acharya; 4th edition, 2001; published by Chaukhambha Surabharathi Prakashana Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, Sutrasthan:5/88-89
5. Exploring the effect of foot massage on agitated behaviours in older people with dementia: A pilot study Wendy Moyle,my Nicole Burne Johnston,Siobhan Therese O'Dwyer Australasian journal on ageing 30:3 2011 Sep pg 159-61s
6. Sushruta ; Sushruta Samhita with Nibandhasarasangraha Commentary of Sri Dalhana Acharya and Nyaya Chandrika panjika of Sri Gayadasacharya; Text, English Translation, Translated by Prof.K.R.Srikantha Murthy Vol I - III; Reprinted edition, 2012; Choukamba Orientia, Varanasi. Uttar Pradesh, Chikitsa sthan:24/30 dalhana commentary.
7. Vaghbhatta; Ashtanga Hrudayam, Text with, English Translation, Translated by Prof.K.R.Srikantha Murthy Vol I - III; Reprinted edition, 2012; Choukamba Krishnadas Academy, Varanasi. Uttar Pradesh, Sutrasthan:3/59
8. Charaka; Charaka Samhita; redacted by Charaka and Dridabala with Ayurveda Dipika Commentary by Chakrapanidutta; edited by Vaidya Yadavji Trikamji Acharya; 4th edition, 2001; published by Chaukhambha Surabharathi Prakashana Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, Sutrasthan: 11/55
9. Effectiveness of Ayurvedic Massage (Sahacharadi Taila) in Patients with Chronic Low Back Pain: A Randomized Controlled Trial. Kumar S Ramp T Kessler C Jettler M Dobos GJ Lütke R Meier L Michalsen A Journal of alternative and complementary medicine (New York, N.Y.) 23:2 2017 Feb pg 109-115

10. Managing pain and fatigue in people with spinal cord injury: a randomized controlled trial feasibility study examining the efficacy of massage therapy. Lovas J Tran Y Middleton J Bartrop R Moore N Craig A, Spinal cord 55:2 2017 Feb pg 162-166
11. The use of massage therapy for reducing pain, anxiety, and depression in oncological palliative care patients: a narrative review of the literature/M Falkensteiner, F Mantovan, I Muller, and C Them. Review published: 2011. Link to full article: [Journal publisher] [PMC free article]
12. Moyle W, Murfield JE, O'Dwyer S, Van Wyk S. The effect of massage on agitated behaviours in older people with dementia: a literature review. Journal of Clinical Nursing 2013; 22(5-6): 601-610. [PubMed]
13. The university of York centre for review and dissemination /M Harris and KC Richards. published review 2010
14. Essential Fatty Acids and Skin Health Written in February 2012 by: Giana Angelo, Ph.D. Linus Pauling Institute, Oregon State University
15. Sushruta ; Sushruta Samhita with Nibandhasarasangraha Commentary of Sri Dalhana Acharya and Nyaya Chandrika panjika of Sri Gayadasacharya; Text, English Translation, Translated by Prof.K.R.Srikantha Murthy Vol I - III; Reprinted edition, 2012; Choukamba Orientia, Varanasi. Uttar Pradesh, Chikitsasthan:15/41
16. Vaghbhatta; Ashtanga Hrudayam, Text with, English Translation, Translated by Prof.K.R.Srikantha Murthy Vol I - III; Reprinted edition, 2012; Choukamba Krishnadas Academy, Varanasi. Uttar Pradesh, Sutrasthan:13/18,19
17. Vaghbhatta; Ashtanga Hrudayam, Text with, English Translation, Translated by Prof.K.R.Srikantha Murthy Vol I - III; Reprinted edition, 2012; Choukamba Krishnadas Academy, Varanasi. Uttar Pradesh, Sutrasthan:12/44 ~ -45.