

A CLINICAL APPLICATION ON ABHYANGA (INDIAN CLASSICAL MASSAGE THERAPY) – AN OVERVIEW

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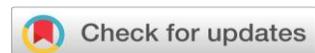
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ABSTRACT

Objectives: *Abhyanga* improves blood circulation (arterial as well as venous), lymphatic flow and nourishment to the body cells. *Abhyanga* controls the *Vata dosha*, which is the causative factor for the pathogenesis of diseases. *Abhyanga* preserves the body energy and saves the individual from degeneration. **Methods:** *Abhyanga* is considered best for preventing diseases and promoting health. It is included in the concept of *Dinacharya* and also as the treatment measure for a variety of diseases. In *Dinacharya Abhyanga*, having the benefit of treating many diseases and for maintenance of health. **Conclusion:** *Abhyanga* helps the individual in expelling the toxins out of the body through sweat, urine and mucus, thus rejuvenating the body.

Keywords: *Abyanga*, *Dinacharya*, Skin, *Vatadosha*

INTRODUCTION

Abhyanga is one among the *Dinacharya* and is an ancient Indian Ayurvedic approach adopted for healing, relaxation and treating various diseases. It has multifaceted benefits which range from prevention,

rejuvenation to the cure of the diseases. *Abhyanga* assists in the trans-dermal absorption of various *Sneha dravyas* as skin is the largest organ of the body for absorption.

MESSAGE

Massage therapy is the systematic application of medicated oil on soft tissue to enhance health and wellbeing.¹

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Importance of Abhyanga

The growth of the tree and its tender leaves are formed due to the absorption of water at its roots, similarly dhatus get nourishment due to the application of medicated oil through abhyanga².

Concept of Skin as per Ayurveda

According to acharya Sushruta, a combination of *sukra* and *shonitha* acted upon by Agni leads to the formation of seven layers of skin. Just like the formation of cream when the milk is boiled³.

Acharya Vagbhata has mentioned skin as a *matruja* organ⁴

Matruja organ as skin also mentioned by *acharya Charaka*⁵

Layers of Skin as per Different Acharyas

According To Acharya Charaka⁶

Outer layer – *Udaka dhara*

2nd layer – *Asrugdara*

3rd layer – a seat for *Sidhma* and *Kilasa*

4th layer – the seat of *Dadru* and *Kushta*

5th layer – the seat of *Alaji* and *vidradhi*

6th layer – the seat of boils- *Asadhya*

According To Acharya Vagbhata: Acharya Vagbhata mentioned the same as *Charaka's* opinion but changed 6th layer as *pranadhara*⁷

According to Acharya Susruta

Acharya *Susrutha* has mentioned 7 layers of skin about diseases⁸

Avabhasini - *Sidhma*

Lohitha - *Tilkalaka, nyacha, vyanga*

Sweta - *Charamdala, ajagallika*

Tamra - *Kilasa, kushta*

Vedini - *Kushta, visarpa*

Rohini - *Apachi, galaganda*

Mamsadhara - *Arshas, bhagandara*

Clinical utility of Abhyanga

The preventive aspect of abhyanga has been mentioned in the context of *Dinacharya* in order to keep a healthy state of mind and body intact⁹ As a pitcher, dry

skin and an axis become strong and resistant by the application of oil, by the use of *abhyanga* the human body becomes strong, and skin becomes smooth. It is not susceptible to disease due to *vata* dosha, it is resistant to exertion and exhaustion¹⁰. The main beneficial functions of *abhyanga* impact on *dosha* particularly *vata dosha*. The advantage of abhyanga in *vata dosha* is because of its application on prime locations of *vata* i.e., *Twak*¹¹.

Importance of Abhyanga as Purvakarma¹²

Abhyanga does the property of *snigdhatva* of the body makes the body suitable for *sodhana karma*. Abhyanga is done as a *Purvakarma* for *sodhanakarma*. *Abhyanga* produces *Srotovishodhan*, *abhishyandana* of *dosha* and *vata* is aggravated thereby moving aggravated *dosha* from *sakha* to *koshta* after which doshas can be easily removed through *sodhana karma*

Importance of abhyanga as pradhana karma¹³

Shakhagata rogamarga consists of *Raktadi dhatu* and *twak* which gets vitiated produces diseases, *abhyanga* is considered as treatment because root action is *twak*.

Research regarding abhyanga in various disorders¹⁴

In the management of psychological disorders – manages anxiety, dementia, in cancer-associated symptoms – reduces cancer association with nausea and pain, In the management of pain intensity – abhyanga lowers down the intensity of pain, In the management of backache – helps to get rid of backache, In the management of heart rate and blood pressure- helps in reducing the heart rate and maintains blood pressure.

Benefits of abhyanga

The benefits of abhyanga are *jarahara* (slows down ageing process), *sramahara* (decreases fatigue caused by physical work), *vatahara* (prevents disorders caused by *vata dosha*), *drushtiprasadakara* (improves eyesight, eye diseases caused due to ageing), *pushitikara* (nourishes sarva dhatus), *ayushya* (functions of vital organs are improved and life span is promoted), *swapnakara* (useful to overcome sleeplessness)¹⁵.

Shiro abhyanga: *Abhyanga* does nourishment to *kapala* and *indriyas*. On a daily application person does not suffer from *sirasula* (headache), *Khalitya*, *palitya*, *keshapatanam*¹⁶, increases the bala of *siras* and

kapala, *indriyaprasada*, good for skin and produces sound sleep¹⁷. **Karna abhyanga/ Karna tarpana:** It relieves the pain of *hanu* (lower jaw), *manya* (neck), *siras*(head), *karna*¹⁸. *Karna abhyanga* who does daily will not suffer from *vataja rogas*, *manyagraha* (torticollis), *hanugraha* (lockjaw), *badirya* (deafness), *uchairsruti* (hardness of hearing)¹⁹. **Pada abhyangam:** Application of oil in pada relieves *kharatva* (roughness), *rookshatva* (dryness), *Sthabdata* (immobility), *srama*(fatigue), *supti* (numbness) is instantaneous gets cured, improves eyesight and mitigates vata. The person will not suffer from *gridhrasi*(sciatica), *padasputanam* (cracking of feet) *sira* and *snayu sankocha* (constriction of veins and ligaments)²⁰.

Mode of action of abhyanga

The mode of action of *abhyanga* depends on the *Sneha gunas* that are used for the *abhyanga*

<i>Sneha Gunas</i>	Mode of actions
Mrudu guna	<i>Mrudu</i> guna reduces the amount of stiffness, which does slathana property and it is the opposite of <i>katina guna</i>
Snigdha guna	It acts mainly <i>vatahara</i> , <i>balya</i> , does the action of <i>snehana kledana</i> and <i>vishyanadana</i>
Sheeta guna	It decreases excess sweating(<i>swedanashaka</i>), prevents fainting, acts as <i>pittahara</i>
Sara guna	It mobilizes the <i>mala</i> and also <i>dosha</i> (<i>mala pravartaka</i>) and <i>Anulomana</i>
Drava guna	<i>Drava guna</i> liquefies the <i>dosha</i> and mobilizes them by increasing their flow
Manda guna	The drugs having <i>manda guna</i> diffuses slowly
Sukshma guna	It helps in easy entering of drugs substance in <i>sukshma srotas</i>
Pichila guna	It causes longevity, increases body strength It increases Kapha and produces <i>sandhanakara</i> .
Guru guna	It increases body strength and <i>kapha</i> . according to <i>Bhava prakasha guru guna</i> has properties like <i>vata hara</i> , <i>kapha hara</i> , <i>pushtikara</i> . It alleviates <i>vata dosha</i> and nourishes the body.

DISCUSSION

Abhyanga is one of the *bahirparimarjana chikitsa*, the effects may range from dosha dhatu mala, muscular system to central nervous system. It removes toxins from the body and relaxes the muscular tissues. Since the skin is the largest organ of the body, the absorption of the drugs used for abhyanga is considered to be a good remedial measure. *Abhyanga* imparts *snigdha*, *kleda mrudu guna* to the body. These therapeutic properties of abhyanga are observed due to the *gunas* of *Sneha dravyas* like *guru*, *sita*, *manda*, *sukshma*, *snigdha*, *pichila sara*, *drava*. *Abhyanga* regulates *vata dosha*. *Twak* is a *jnanendriya* whose health is maintained by doing abhyanga as *dinacharya*. *Vayu* dominates in the tactile sense organ and this sensory organ

Therapeutic duration for penetration of Sneha to different dhatus

Acharya *dalhana* mentioned abhyanga should be done for specific times and also described the penetration of *Sneha* at various levels. It is mentioned that it takes 300 *matra kala* (1.5minutes) for *Sneha* to penetrate through *romakupa* (hair roots), 400 *matrakala* to penetrate through *twak* (2.1 minutes), 500 *matrakala* to penetrate through *rakta* (2.6minutes), 600 *matrakala* for *Sneha* to penetrate through *mamsa* (3.1 minutes), 700 *matrakala* for *Sneha* to penetrate through *medas* (3.6minutes), 800 *matrakala* to penetrate to *asthi* (4.1 minutes), 900 *matrakala* to penetrate through *majja* (4.7 minutes). So, for attaining complete benefits of *abhyanga*, one should perform for 35 minutes, 5 minutes for every 7 positions of *abhyanga*.

is lodged in the skin. The site of *vata* being *twak* oil applied to skin mitigates *vata*. *Sthana* for *brajaka pitta* is also *twak* which helps in easy and good absorption. *Dhamani* who starts from *hurudaya* opens into *romakoopa*, so oil absorbed through skin circulates *dhamani*. *Abhyanga* stimulates *swedavaha* srotas causing dilation of the blood vessel, thereby increasing the blood circulation reducing pain and stiffness pada abhyanga are said to have a relation with *marma* which in turn stimulates the *indriyas*. *Abhyanga* should be done in *anuloma* directions to prevent any damage to hair roots. Practically circular movements in joints are done to facilitate lymph drainage and venous drainage.

CONCLUSION

Abhyanga is one of the procedures among the *dinacharya*, which should be performed daily to maintain health and to prevent disease. If not done daily at least should apply oil to the head, ears and feet which improves the quality of life benefitting persons of all ages. It is a *purvakarma* of *shodhana chikitsa* and also a *pradhana karma*. It is one of the most effective treatments in most of all *marma vidha* conditions. Abhyanga has potential psychogenic and physiologic benefits. Abhyanga increases the circulation of vital fluid in the applied part stimulates the nervous system to provide a relaxing effect. Thus, the benefits of *abhyanga* can be achieved to promote health and to achieve disease-free state.

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