

A Conceptual Study on Abhyanga

Dr Roopa.L¹, DrVM Hugar², Dr Varsha kulkarni³.

P G Scholar Department of PG Studies in Panchakarma, Government Ayurveda Medical College, Mysore, Karnataka

Associate Professor, Department of PG Studies in Panchakarma, Government Ayurveda Medical College, Mysore, Karnataka

Professor and Head, Department of Panchakarma, Government Ayurveda Medical Collage, Mysore, Karnataka

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ABSTRACT:

The Panchakarma treatments are like super specialty treatments in Ayurveda. Among Panchakarma Therapies Abhyanga is widely practiced in Ayurveda; especially in Dinacharya and Rutucharya, to maintain the swastata of a person and to attain the Deerghayu. Abhyanga consists of various types, intensity of pressure and area of coverage with respect to different indications.

In India Abhyanga will be practiced under the age group of infants to old people, this becomes tradition for Indians. By performing nithya Abhyanga, promotes the deep sleep of a person, relaxation of muscles, relieve the stress, stimulates to nerves, increase the blood circulations, removal of impurities, minimize the hyper tension and eliminates the toxins in the skin. There by the entire world is turned towards practicing of Abhyanga by different names and techniques.

KEYWORDS: Abhyanga, Shiro abhyanga, karnapoorana, padabhyanga

I. INTRODUCTION:

“Abhyangam Achareth Nityam” by palana of nithya abhyanga, a person will be out of various diseases as well as he can maintain good health¹. The various Acharyas has mentioned Phala Shruthi of Abhyanga as vata kaphahara, Mardavakara, Shramahara, Varnaprada, Dhadyakara, Dhrusti prasadakara, Twak Prasadaka, twak dhadyakara, vyadhikshamatwa, jarahara, vedana shamaka, Pustikara, balavardaka and Nidrajanaka². Abhyanga is also used as pravicharana sneha, especially in baala, vrudha, bheeru, sukumara³. It is also used as poorva karma forshodhana procedures.

The Abhyanga will be performed in seven postures, there by the intended area can be covered. Dalhana has commented on the time taken to reach

Loma Koopa to Majja Dhatu is 300 to 900 Matra Kala⁴, hence, it can be understanding the time taken for each posture will be 4 to 5 minutes. In Ayurveda various Taila and Grutha are explained for the Swastha and diseased person. Currently for the cosmetics and muscular relaxation purpose various fragmented oils are in the practice.

NIRUKTHI

Abhyanga is derived from ‘ang’ dhatu and ‘abhi’ upasarga.

‘Abhi’ means ‘Garshana’

‘Anga’ means ‘chestayathi Anga’/Angaya Chestayathi Anga⁵.

Thus, literally means ‘Motion in different direction’

Etymology: Anointing the body with taila, grutha, etc. called as Abhyanga. Generally, simple or medicated taila are extensively used, grutha is occasionally, where vasa majja are rarely used.

Paryaya: The two synonyms of Abhyanga are Abhyanjana and Snehana.

Abhyanjana: The word Abhyanjana derived from the root ‘Anj’ by adding ‘Abhi’ Upsarga with LyutPratyaya which means to smear or to Anoint (Shabda Kalpa Druma). The word Abhyanjana means applying oil all over the body including Shiras (Head)⁶.

TYPES OF ABHYANGA:

According to Vatsayana Kamasutra in 64 kalas, Abhyanga classified in to

- Samvahana- ‘seshangeshu Mardanam Samvahanam’.
- Keshamardana- ‘Hastabhyam Yath Siro abhyangana Karma Tat Keshamardanam’.
- Utsadana- ‘Tatra Padabhyam Yath Mardanam Tat Utsadana Muchitein’.

According to Tiruka (author of text of Angamardana)

- Shushkangamardana

- Tailangamardana
- Ksheerangamardana
- Swayam Angamardana
- Yamalangamardana

According to Sthana bhedha Abhyangais classified into:

- Stanika Abhyanga: - Abhyanga to a particular part of the body.
- Sarvadhika Abhyanga: - Abhyanga to complete body parts.

Abhyanga also classified based pressure used: -

- **Mardhana:**- Applying deep pressure after application of Taila in downward direction (Anuloma gathi) particularly in twak- siramamsa- raktha- snayu- sandhi-asti gata vatavyadhi
- **Unmadrana:** -Applying deep pressure after application of taila in upward direction (prathiloma gathi) particularly in siraja ghranti, rakta gata vata Kapha vikara.
- **Samvahana:** -It means sukhakara sparsha (comfortable touch) squeezing with gentle pressure after application of Taila. It acts as preethikara, nidrakara, vrishya, kapha vata hara, mamsa rakta twak prasadakara.
- **Padaghata:** -Abhyanga by foot with deep pressure after Taila Abhyanga particularly in person of well-built body and after exercise in wrestlers.
- **Udvarthana:** -Reinforced rubbing of the body with churna and it is done in upward direction. Indicated in Siramukha vikaras.

Udvarthana again divided in to 2 types-

- a. Udgarsana means Garshana with churna without mixing sneha beneficial in kandu, sphota pidika. Kapha medho vilayanartha
- b. Utsadana means rubbing the body with kalka mixed with sneha.

INDICATION OF ABHYANGA⁷: -

In swasta person: -

- In Dinacharya
- In Rutucharya
- Poorva karma for panchakarma

In Atura: -

- Vata Vyadhishaving predominance of Shola, Sankocha, Graha, Stambha, Shosha.
- Karma Kshaya Pradhana Vyadhis such as Pakshaghata, Pangu, Arditha.
- Asthi Bagna, chinna, binna
- Vriddha, bala, Krusha,
- Vishama jwara

- Twak vikaras

CONTRA INDICATION OF ABHYANGA⁸: -

In spite of therapeutic benefits, it is not ideal to practice Abhyanga in following conditions

- Kaphagrasta- patient suffering from Kaphaja disorders.
- Ajirna-Suffering from indigestion.
- Kritasamsuddha- person who are just subjected to Shodhana procedures like Vamanaand virechana.
- Ama-Suffering from ama condition.
- Sama dosha-Having vitiated dosha in ama state.
- Navajwara-Suffering from navajwara
- Santarpanasamuttharoga-Disease caused due to over nourishment.
- Agnimandya-Suffering from impaired digestive ability.
- In kruchra sadya, asadya vyadhis, shesha vama, virechana condition Abhyanga causes agni mandya
- According to Kaiya deva Nighantu taila abhyanga is Nishida in Ravivara, Aravara, Sankranthi, vaigrutha (in an auspicious day), vyathipathayoga, parva, Bhadra, shasti nakshatra.

IMPORTANCE OF ABHYANGA: -

Some similes are mentioned in our classics about importance of Abhyanga.

They are: -Abhyanga pacifies vata, and body becomes capable of withstanding fatigue and exercise. Skin becomes dhruva by anointing it with oil, in the same manner as that of a pot, leather and axle of cart becomes strong and efficient by oiling, similarly the body becomes strong and stable⁹.

The body of the person is compared to the tree, if the root of the tree given water regularly, then it lives for a long time similarly, on the above analogy, if the body of an individual is oiled properly through Abhyanga, then he lives for a long time, without any disease¹⁰.

How the leaves of the plant look fresh when water sprinkles on it, in the same way Twacha of the person becomes Snigdha and druda when applying taila¹¹.

Benefits Of Abhyanga explained as follows¹²

- Mrija-prada-Cleans the skin from any dirt.
- Varna-prada- Improves the body complexion.
- Twak-dardhyakara-Helps to maintain the original softness and luster to skin.
- Vyadhikshamatva- Restores the natural immunity of the skin.

- Jarahara/ vardakya hara-Rejuvenates body tissues, promotes health and prevents the aging process.
- Vatahara- Gives quick relief in imbalance of vatadosha.
- Kaphahara-Alleviates the imbalance of kapha dosha if any.
- Abhighathasahyatva-Reduces the effect of trauma.
- Kleshasaha-Helps to overcome anxiety, stress as well as mental fatigue.
- Shramahara- Relaxes the muscle and useful in eliminating fatigue.
- Balavam-Improves the physical strength.
- Dhatu pusthijanana-Promotes the excellence of body tissues.
- Priyadarshinah-Beautifies the body texture.
- Kleshasahatva-Improves the tolerance of the persons for both physical and mental strain.
- Dhrustraprasadakara-Improves eye sight.
- Pustikara-Recuperates and nourishes the body tissues.
- Ayushyakara-By nourishing the body tissues, prolongs the one's life span.
- Svapnakara/nidrajanaka-Induces sound sleep.

ABHYANGA KALA: -

- Early morning is preferred in Dinacharya after dantadhavana
- Acharya Kaiya deva mentioned period of Abhyanga in a day is 'pancha muhurta'. if it is more than this period then it causes complications¹³.
- According to 'charucharya', depending on different 'rutu', it is advised to practice Abhyanga for a particular period of time as, during hemanta rutu, Abhyanga should be performed for a period of 2 nadi i.e., 48 minutes, in shishira rutu- 3 nadi i.e 72 minutes, in vasanta rutu-5nadi i.e., 120 minutes, in grishma rutu-6 nadi i.e., 144 minutes and in varsha and sharad rutu-5 nadi or if one cannot withstand till that time then person is advised to take bath immediately¹⁴.

Dalhana the commentator of Susruta has cited a reference, which specifies the duration of Abhyanga. There is also description of time duration of penetration of sneha at various level as given as follows¹⁵

Dhathu	Kala in matra	Kala in seconds
Hair root of the skin	300 matra kala	95 seconds
Twak	400 matra kala	127 seconds
Raktha	500 matra kala	159 seconds
Mamsa	600 matra kala	190 seconds
Medha	700 matra kala	220 seconds
Asthi	800 matra kala	254 seconds
Majja	900 matra kala	285 seconds

Abhyanga should be applied at least 5minutes continuously to get its maximum effects in deep tissues like majja.

PROCEDURE OF ABHYANGA

All the classical text mentioned that 'shira shravana padeshu tham visheshena shilayeth'. That is Shiro abhyanga, karna poorana, and pada abhyanga. Each of which have their own importance and connection with each other. Abhyanga has to be performed first on the Shiras followed by Shravana and pada.

1. Poorvakarma:-

Abhyanga should be performed after the digestion of previous meal.

Selection of taila or ghrutha depends up one the assessment of prakruthi of an individual

The Sneha used for the purpose of Abhyanga should be indirectly warmed by keeping it over the hot water.

2. Pradhanakarma: -

Abhyanga should be performed by applying taila to whole body especially initiate on shira, Shravana and pada using sukoshna tailaof 39-42⁰ and do Abhyangain synchronized manner by the two therapists standing in each side of the person in 7 postures- sitting, supine, left lateral, prone, right lateral, supine, sitting to cover all the parts of the body. It is mentioned that Abhyanga should be performed in Anulomagati. On joints abdomen and buttocks. Abhyangashould be in circular manner.

3. Paschatkarma: -

The procedure of Abhyanga should be followed by Swedana and Ushnajalasnana.

Advice to take laghuanabhisyandiahara andpathyapalana

SHIROABHYANGA

Shiro abhyanga is defined as the Abhyanga will do on the Shirapadesha Visheshathah. By doing external application of oil to the head followed by placing specific strokes on the head.

Shiro abhyanga helps in current general situation, most of people suffer from insomnia, by doing Shiroabhyanga with different techniques we can increase systemic circulation and also relieves Shirashoola, Indriyaprasadaka, And Nidrajanaka Does Kapala and Indriyatarpana (nourishes the sensory and motor Organs. Khalitya (baldness), Palithya (graying of hair), Keshapatana (hair fall) was reduced, increases the Bala of Shiraha (strengthens the scalp) and Kapalaa, the hairs will be strong black and long¹⁶.

Shira is known as Uttamanga which is the seat of Indriyas. Therefore, all the functions of Gnanendriya and Karmendriya are controlled by the Shira. As mentioned in ancient text that Vayu remains in the upper part of body i.e., Shira. Hence Abhyanga on head will help in pacifying Vata

Taila selected according to prakruthi as follows

For Vataprakruti- Himasagarataila

For Pitta Prakruti- chandanaditaila, ksheerabalaataila

For Kaphaprakruti- Triphaladitaila

For Samaprakruti- Asanabilwaditaila

Where the prakruti of the person is formed by the combination of doshas, mixture of the above oils in equal amount may be effective.

KARNA POORANA/TARPANA:

The name Karnapoorana is pouring oil to karna followed by mrudhu Abhyangato the karna pradesha with specific taila. Gentle massage to karna pradesha followed by filling the ear with particular Taila⁷.

Karna poorana acts as Hanu, Manya, Shira, and Karna Shoolaghna (relieves pain from neck and facial region). The person will not suffer from VatajaKarnarogas, Manya and Hanusangrana will not suffers from Badhirya (deafness)¹⁷.

Acharya Bhava prakasha mentioned the time of karnapoorana is before taking food and after Surya asta¹⁸.

The action of Karna poorana is the active principle of taila is absorbed through the mucous membrane of auditory canal, thus there will be provision of

adequate concentration of the administered drug at this site of its action.

PADABHYANGA

Padabhyanga is a technique of applying sukoshna taila over the feet, followed by gentle movement said in Dinacharya. Acharya charaka explains its benefits as Kharatwa, (dryness of foot), Rooksata is eliminated, (roughness of foot), Srama (tiredness) and Suptata of Pada (numbness of foot) will be relived immediately after Padabhyanga, increases the Sukumarata, Bala and Sthirya of Pada (strength and stability of foot), improves the vision, mitigates Vata. By doing Padabhyanga the person will not suffer from Gridhrasi (sciatica), Padasputana (cracking of foot), Sira and SnayuSankocha (stiffness of tendons and ligaments)¹⁹.

The Bhavaprakasha have quoted that slimily, the disease does not go near one, who get abhyanga his feet before sleeping just as snake do not approach eagles.

Commentary on achievement of Dristi Prasada by padabhyanga, In the benefits of Padabhyanga other than local benefits, Dhruvstiprasadakara is explained. to substantiate that we will get a reference from Ashtanga Hrudaya that in the centre of pada, two Sira's are situated namely **pusha** and **alambusha** which is connected from pada to the chakshu. By doing padabhyanga using particular taila is the veerya of the drug is transmitted to the chakshu.

Acharya charaka mentioned the drugs like Triphala, Ghrita, Madhu, Yava, Shatavari, Mudga and Padabhyanga all these things are considered as to come under Chakshushya Varga. Adding to these benefits, it also acts as dhruvstiprasadaka and also Nadra Janaka¹⁹.

CONSIDERATION BEFORE ABHYANGA: -

- One must assess prakruti, satmya, dosha, dhatu, desha and roga of the patient before administration of Abhyanga²⁰.
- For the selection of either taila or grutha one must assess prakruthi of an individual
- It is always advised to use the yamaka sneha for Abhyanga in swasta andaushadha siddha taila according to the disease
- If there is vata vitiation and in young age, one can apply taila up to 1-2 ½ pala(70ml) quantity, in vitiation of pitta or kapha dosha, one can use 2 pala(100ml) of taila and in baala, vrudhha and atura it is advised to use ½ pala(25ml) quantity of taila²¹.

II. DISCUSSION:

Abhyanga explained as part of Dinacharya because of its great importance on body like improving bodily growth and relieving stress. Abhyanga can also be understood by the properties of Sneha i.e., Snigdha and Guru acts as vatahara, snehana, balya and Pustikara; mruduguna reduces the stiffness due to kathinyaguna and sukshmaguna helps the drug to reach up to minute channel

- It acts as Jarahara by nourishing the Dhathu and increases strength.
- Acts as Shramahara by help the person to overcome fatigue caused by hard physical work.
- Vatahara prevents and corrects disorders caused by affliction of the Vata. Abhyanga helps in the promotion and regulation of the proper function of Vata.
- Drishtiprasadakara by promotes eyesight. The diseases of the eye, which are caused due to ageing could be prevented by Abhyanga
- Pushtikara by nourishment of the all the seven Dhatus of the body.
- Ayushya, by promotes longevity of an individual. The functions of the vital organs and tissues are improved and life span is promoted through Abhyanga therapy
- Svapnakara by helps the individual to get sleep. The Abhyanga is very useful to overcome sleeplessness and other mental ailment.

DISCUSSION ON MODE OF ACTION OF ABHYANGA

Sushrutha describes the mode of action of Abhyanga as follows, the 4 Tiryak Dhamani, each divide gradually hundred and thousand times and thus become innumerable. These covers the body like network and their opening are attached to roma Koopa. Dhalana commentator explained about absorption of Sneha used in Abhyanga Procedure reaches up to the different Dhathu if applied for the sufficient time. Hence it clears that the veerya of the drug used in Abhyanga get absorbed by skin and then digested by Agni(Brajakapitta) reaches to particular Dhathu, it cures the diseases of that particular dhathu²².

Acharya Sushrutha explains, sneha used in Abhyanga enters through Siramukha(opening of the vein), Romakoopa(root of the hair) and Dhamanis (Arteries) nourishes the body and provides strength.

Acharya Charaka has described that vayu dominates in Sparshanendriya and its Adhistana is Twacha I.e., tactile sensory organ and this sensory organ is lodged in the skin, other Indriya are depends on Sparshanendriya for their Vishayagrahana. Indriyas are in close contact with mind, hence if Indriya remains healthy, manas remains healthy. Thus, Abhyanga keeps Shareera and Manas healthy²³.

MODERN VIEW

Action at physiological level:

Abhyanga is thought to induce a variety of positive physiological effects, that may contribute to tissue repair, pain modulation, relaxation, and improved mood and that has beneficial effects on arterial and venous blood flow.

Increasing local Temperature:

Mechanical pressure might help to increase blood flow by increasing the arteriolar pressure, Local heating increases local blood circulation. The intense massage strokes (friction, percussion) release a greater number of vasoactive substances and triggers local and general vasodilation.

Blood Flow:

Abhyanga promotes acceleration of muscle and venous blood flow, increased blood volume and reduced muscle tightness, a local and general vasodilation triggered by release of vasoactive substances from the massaged tissues they are histamine, bradykinin and kalidin. These substances trigger local and general vasodilation

Action at neurgical level:

Promoting parasympathetic activity: Abhyangastimulates the skin receptors and subcutaneous tissues; this stimulus is transmitted from the afferent fibres of the PNS to the spinal cord to the central and ANS. Some of these effects stimulate vagal activity, resulting in a feeling of sedation and in a reduction of heart rate that may reduce anxiety, depression, and pain.

MODE OF ACTION ON EFFECTS OF ABHYANGA ON DHATHU:

Tvak Saarata:

Due to increased Rukshata, Kharata in Tvak, so application of Sneha help in reducing these lakshanas quickly, as Tvak is the outer most and first Dhathu to be nourished with Sneha, which require less time.

Rakta Saarata:

The pressure increases the temperature leads to increased peripheral circulation specially in rich vascularised.

Mamsa Saarata:

Due to the pressure of the Abhyanga more oxygenate blood is supplied to the muscular area, circulation increases and it relieves muscular tightness, fatigue, stiffness and spasms hence require more time to get nourish.

Meda Saarata:

As Sneha and Meda guna are similar, and main function of Meda is Sneha, to know the effect of Sneha on Kesha, Loma, Nakha etc Dhatu require more days to get nourish as it is deep seated.

Asthi Saarata:

Vata has Aashraya in Asthi dhatu, as Vata increases Asthi dhatu decrease, some of the degenerative changes takes place in Asthi dhatu seen in Jaraavstha, so for the nourishment of Asthi dhatu, and Shamana of Vata dosha, can be possible with the Abhyanga.

Majja Saarata:

Krishata and Bala kshaya is observed in because of Vata, by Abhyangathe Guru guna and Snigdthaguna of Sneha dravya help to mitigate the Laghu and Ruksha guna of Vata dosha and nourishes the Majja dhatu.

Shukra Saarata:

Due to the similar Guna of Shukra dhatu and Sneha dravya and subsequent nourishment of the other Dhatu, which automatically nourishes Shukra Dhatu.

Procedure effect: Abyanga bysukoshna taila is applied in Anulomagathi for 7 postures, Here the temperature of the Taila should be maintained throughout the procedure, due to maintained temperature sheeta guna of vata is substantiated by Ushnatha of Taila and also rate of absorption will be more also stimulates swedhavaha srothas thus causing dilatation of blood vessels increases blood circulation, thus relieving pain, stiffness and contraction of vessels. Taila is absorbed into the skin with the help of Bhrajaka Pittaand veerya of drug absorbed and circulate all over the body. According to structure, origin, and insertion of muscle and joints, the essence of Taila reaches different Dhatuin different Matrakalathus, Abhyanga can be performed at different time intervals considering the disease located in particular Dhathu.

Drug effect: When Abhyanga is performed with Luke warm taila to the skin in anulomagati, its ingredients reach to the Romakupa and through Swedawaha strotasa and Siramukha it is carried upto the Majjadhatu. Taila is having Vyavayi, Vikasi and Sukshmaguna, which helps the oil to cross all the Dhatu from Rasa to Asthi and reach up to Majja dhatu. Madhura rasa, Madhura vipaka and

Snigdthaguna will help in reducing Rooksha, Laghu and Chalaguna of Vata also helps in pacifying Pitta. Snigdthaguna will help in reducing Kaphakshaya and Majja dhatu kshaya. Guru guna of taila acts as vatahara, kaphahara and Pushti kara, mrudhu Guna of taila reduces stiffness of the muscle, sheeta guna stabilizes the muscle tone. Sara gunamobilizes the dosha and mala. Due to Vatashamana, Rajoguna also gets decreased. Due to this mechanism Gnanendriya and karmendriya also gets relaxed. Mana which is ubhayendriya is also relaxed.

Forexample, Abhyangausing ksheerabala taila pacify all eighty nanatmaja vata vyadhi. due to Madura rasa and Madhuravipaka, which is vata and pitta shamaka, balya and indriya prasada, Dhathunaamprabalam, sheeta guna acts as tarpaka murchaprasamana and medhya, also suppress the nerve inflammation, promotes nerve regeneration and give strength to muscle due to its balya and brimhana guna and checks the dhathu kshaya.

III. CONCLUSION: -

Abhyanga is the procedure can be done for two purposes. It can be regularly to a person for the prevention of several diseases and for the maintenance as well as promotion of positive health. Abhyanga is followed daily as it makes the person healthy. The Talia used for Abhyanga nourishes the tissues, gives strength and increases the Agni. Nourishment of tissues through Abhyanga is understood hypothetically by the knowledge about the layers of skin, its thickness and the time duration for the oil to reach the different Dhatus and also increases the circulation of vital fluid as well as stimulates the nervous system.

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