

## APPLICABILITY OF ABHYANGA AS PREVENTIVE ASPECT IN GRACEFUL AGING

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### **Abstract:**

**Purpose:** Ageing is a process of physical, psychological and social change through multi-dimensional aspects, both *Vagbhata* & *Sharngadhara* have described decade wise ageing process where one particular vitality is being lost by each decay of lifespan. *Rasa Vagbhata* has also mentioned *Pantha* (excessive walking) and *Manas Pratikulata* (unfavorable condition to mind) as specific causes of *AkalajaJara* in each decade of life. Old age is a stage of *Dhatu Kshaya* (due to *Kala Prabhava*) where the destructive (*Hrasa*) phenomenon occurs due to *Rukshadi Gunas* of *Vata Dosha*. The strategies mentioned in *Svastha Catuṣka* Of *Charakasamhita* helps to achieve and maintain *Arogya* and *Tarunya*, ruling out the principle of '*Shiryate Iti Shariram*'. Ayurveda advocates an excellent approach *Abhyanga*, which is a unique therapeutic methodology to delay ageing and to minimize the intensity of problems occurring in this degenerative phase of one's life. **Aim:** To review the literature regarding prophylactic effect of *Abhyanga* in graceful aging. **Material & Method:** Information was extracted and documented from relevant Ayurvedic and Modern literatures & online published research articles. **Result & Conclusion:** Ayurveda reckons *Abhyanga* as a daily regimen owing to its univocal properties like *Jaraapaha*, *Pushtirit* (nourishing), *Shramahara*, *Drishtrikara*, *Prasadkara*, *Ayu-pushtikara* (prolonging age), *Swapnakara*, *Vata shamaka*. It is mentioned that *Abhyanga* should at least be done to the head, ears and feet regularly. Old age people experiencing physical, mental and emotional stress that can contribute to feeling of emotionally disconnected with each other, and from the world. This ancient regimen include the "Art of Self Love" that can heal and manage human physiological disconnections. Geriatric massage encompasses basic relaxation, stress relief and is also a beneficial tool in fighting many of the symptoms of aging. The chief aim of geriatrics is to "Add life to years" rather than "years to life."

**Keywords:** Abhyanga, Ayurveda, Graceful aging, Geriatric massage

## INTRODUCTION:

Ageing is a process of physical, psy-chological and social change in multi-di-mensional aspects. The World population of the elderly is increasing and by the year 2050, adults older than 65 years will com-prise 1/5th of the global population. In India 3.8% of the population are older than 65 years of age. According to an estimate the likely number of elderly people in India by 2016 will be around 113 million.<sup>[1]</sup> *Ayurveda*, the Indian traditional holistic health science has got the potential for prevention of diseases by promotion of health and management of diseases occurring in old age. *Abhyanga* is one among the *Dinacharya* and it is a kind of *Bahyasneha*. It gives strength to the body, nourishes the sense organs, increases longevity etc. it is the most natural and powerful method of relaxing and at the same time rejuvenating the body. *Abhyanga* preserves the body energy and saves the individual from degeneration. It also works as a cleanser and helps the individual in expelling the toxins out of the body through sweat, urine and mucus, thus rejuvenating the body. It is done to whole body or to a particular part of the body (*Shira, Karna, Pada etc*). *Abhyanga* has been highlighted with its wide spectrum of usage both for preventive and curative purpose. *Abhyanga* can be correlated to massage in contemporary science. The term is applied to certain manipulations of soft tissue which are effectively performed with the *palmar* aspect of the hand and administered for the purpose of producing effect on nervous system, muscular system as well as on the local and general circulation of blood and lymph.

## ABHYANGA

Description of *Abhyanga* is available in *BruhatTrayis*, *Sharangadhara* and *Bhavaprakasha* as for prevention and cure of disease. Other than Ayurvedic text the description of *Abhyanga* is also available in *Vatsyayana Kamasutra* as one among the 64 *Kala* (art) which has been specifically explained to enhance sexual power of an individual and in *Bahvishya Purana* different techniques of massage have been explained which specifies importance of pressure on different parts. The synonyms<sup>[2]</sup> of *Abhyanga* are *Abhyanjana*, *Snehana*, *Vimardana* and *Samvahana*.

### Types:<sup>[3]</sup>

According to *Vatsyayana Kamasutra*

- *Samvahana*- whole body massage
- *Keshamardana*- head massage
- *Utsadana*- massage with *Kalka*(paste)/*sneha*

### **According to Tiruka (author of text of Angamardana)**

- *Shushkangamardana*
- *Tailangamardana*
- *Ksheerangamardana*
- *Swayam Angamardana*
- *Yamalangamardana*

### **According to Charaka Samhita<sup>[4]</sup>**

- *Shiroabhyanga*
- *padabhyanga*
- *karnapoorana*

### **According to Ashtanga Hrudaya<sup>[5]</sup>**

- *Shiroabhyanga*
- *padabhyanga*
- *karnapoorana*

### **Procedure<sup>[6]</sup>**

#### **1. Poorvakarma**

The person should undergo *Abhyanga* only when he feels hunger (*Jata Annapanecha*)

The vitals should be checked.

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

#### **2. Pradhanakarma**

First importance should be given to *Shira*(head) *Sravana* (ears) and *Pada* (foot). After this the *Abhyanga* should be done in a 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. It is mentioned that *Abhyanga* should be performed in *Anulomagati*. Also explained the specific direction of movement depending on involvement of *Dosha* ie, *Anuloma Gati* in *Vata Dushti*, *Pratiloma Gati* in *Kapha Dushti* and alternate *Pratiloma* and *Anuloma Gati* in *Pitta Dushti*<sup>[7]</sup>. On joints abdomen and buttocks should be in circular manner.

#### **3. Paschatkarma**

The procedure of *Abhyanga* should be followed by removal of the oil with a cloth, *Swedana* and *Snana*.

### **Penetration of Sneha to different Dhatu<sup>[8]</sup>(Therapeutic duration)**

It is mentioned that it takes 300 *Matrakala* (approximately 1.5 mts) for *Sneha* to penetrate *Romakupa* (hair roots), 400 *Matrakala* (2.1mts) to penetrete *Twak*, 500 *Matrakala* (2.6mts) to penetrate *Rakta*, 600 *Matrakala* (3.1 mts) for *Mamsa*, 700 *Matrkala* (3.6 mts) for *Meda*, 800 *Matrakala* (4.2 mts) for *Asti* and 900 *Matrakala* (4.7 mts) for *Majja*.so for the complete benefit of *Abhyanga* one should perform it for 35 mts, 5 mts in each 7 postures.

### **Benefits**

It mitigates *Vata*, *Pustida* (nourishment), *Nidrajanaka* (induces good sleep), *Twachya* (good lustrous skin), *Bruhatwakrut* (gives strength to body) *Sramahara* (cures tiredness), *Jarapaha* (delays aging), *Drustiparsadana* (improves vision), *Ayuprada* (improves longevity), *Kaphavatahara* (mitigates the *vata* and *kapha* )

### **Types and Benefits of Abhyanga**

#### ***Shiroabhyanga* (head massage)**

*Kapala* and *Indriya tarpana*<sup>[9]</sup> (nourishes the brain and sensory and motor organs), will not suffer from *Shirashoola* (prevents headache), *Khalitya* (baldness), *Palithya* (graying of hair), *Keshapatana* (hair fall), increases the *Bala* of *Shira* (strengthens the scalp) and *Kapalaa*, the hairs will be strong black and long, there will be *Indriyaprasada* (strengthens the sense organs), good for skin and renders sound sleep<sup>[10]</sup>.

#### ***Karna Abhyanga/Tarpana/Poorana* (massage to ears)**

*Hanu*, *Manya*, *Shira*, and *Karna Shoolaghna*<sup>[11]</sup> (relieves pain from neck and facial region). The person will not suffer from *Vataja Karnarogas*, *Manya* and *Hanusangrana* will not suffer from *Uchasruti* or *Badhira* (deafness) who dose *karnatarpana* daily<sup>[12]</sup>.

#### ***Padabhyanga* (foot massage)**

*Kharatwa*, (dryness of foot), *Rooksata* (roughness of foot), *Srama* (tiredness) and *Suptata* of *Pada* (numbness of foot ) will be relieved 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 *Snayu Sankocha*<sup>[13]</sup> (stiffness of tendons and ligaments). The simile have been quoted that disease do not go near one who massages his feet before sleeping just as snake do not approach eagles<sup>[14]</sup>.

### **Mode of action of massage- Ayurvedic view**

Oil applied in skin reaches up till *Majja Dhatu* and does nourishment of each *Dhatu*, if done for sufficient time and there by subsides disease related to particular *Dhatu*. The site of *Vata* being *Twak* (skin) oil applied directly to skin mitigates *Vata*. *Stana* for *Bhrajaka Pitta* is in *Twak* which helps in easy and good absorption<sup>[15]</sup>. *Dashadhamanies* which starts from *Hrudaya* makes many networks and finally opens into *Romakoopa*. So oil will be absorbed in skin and circulates through

*Dhamanies*.

As per our classics *Abhyanga* is to be done in *Anuloma* direction, as the strokes will be in the direction of muscle fiber i.e., origin and insertion, and in circular manner in joints as the muscle bulk will be less and vasculature will be more and in circular manner. *Karnapoorana*, *Karnatarpana* and *Karna Abhyanga* are mentioned under *Karna Abhyanga* only among this practically *Karna Abhyanga* can be done. The mode of action of *Karna Abhyanga* and *Karnapoorana* is that it comes under local levels of drug administration and the drug 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. The medicine poured into the ears thus produce immediate therapeutic effects<sup>[16]</sup>.

While explaining the *Poorvakarma* it is told that *Abhyanga* should be performed when the subject feels hunger (*Jata Annapanecha*) it indirectly tells that the subject should be in empty stomach otherwise there will be chances of regurgitation of food materials and the digestion also will be delayed. In the benefits of *Padabhyanga* other than local benefits *Drushti prasadana* is explained to substantiate that we will get a reference from *Ashtanga Hrudaya* that in the centre of foot two *Siras* are situated which is connected to the eyes. Any vitiation to these *Siras* causes abnormalities

to the eyes and through these *Siras* the effect of drugs on external application to *Pada* is transmitted to the eyes<sup>[17]</sup>.

**In modern view the effect of massage can be assumed in two ways-** by physical manipulation and by the effect of drug in medicated oil by absorption.

**By physical manipulation**

- Mechanical emptying of veins and lymphatic's by contraction of smooth muscles. When the contraction increases beyond threshold the valves get open and the fluid moves to next segment thus facilitate the forward movement of venous blood<sup>[18]</sup>.
- Improves the blood circulation of the area being massaged
- Increases RBC, HB count.
- Helps in removal of waste products.
- Increase in serum myoglobin secretion in case of muscle tension and pain<sup>[19]</sup>.
- Massage is having the analgesic effect which is supported by the pain gate theory<sup>[20]</sup> i.e., by stimulating the peripheral receptors like touch and pressure which may release anti pain substance and helps in relieving pain.
- The adhesions present between the fibers are broken and maximum mobility between
- fibers and the adjacent structures are ensured.
- Percussion and vibration techniques of massage assist the removal of secretion from the large airways.

### **Absorption through skin**

Absorption through the skin is due to their lipid solubility since the epidermis behaves as a lipid barrier. Dermis is freely permeable to many solutes. So the absorption via skin can be enhanced by suspending the drug in an oil vehicle and rubbing<sup>[21]</sup>.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Ayurveda reckons *Abhyanga* as a daily regimen owing to its univocal properties like *Jaraapaha*, *Pushtirit* (nourishing), *Shramahara*, *Drishtrikara*, *Prasadkara*, *Ayu-pushtikara* (prolonging age), *Swapnakara*, *Vata shamaka*. It is mentioned that *Abhyanga* should at least be done to the head, ears and feet regularly. Old age people experiencing physical, mental and emotional stress that can contribute to feeling of emotionally disconnected with each other, and from the world. This ancient regimen include the “Art of Self Love” that can heal and manage human physiological disconnections. Geriatric massage encompasses basic relaxation, stress relief and is also a beneficial tool in fighting many of the symptoms of aging. The chief aim of geriatrics is to “Add life to years” rather than “years to life.”

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