Appliability 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, Pushtrita (nourishing), Shramahara, Drishtrikara, Prasadkara, Ayu-pushtrakara (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.[1] Ayurveda, the Indian traditional holistic health science has got the potential for pre-vention 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. Is 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 Bhavapraka sha 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 enhancesexual power of an individual and in Bahvishya Purana different techniques of massagehave been explained which specifies importance of pressure on different parts. The synonyms[2] of Abhyanga are Abhyanjana, Snehana, Vimardana and Samvahana.

Types:[3]

According to Vatsayana 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*[^4]
- Shiroabhyanga
- padabhyanga
- karnapoorana

According to *Ashtanga Hrudaya*[^5]
- Shiroabhyanga
- padabhyanga
- karnapoorana

Procedure[^6]

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*[^7]. On joints abdomen and buttock 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*. 

[^4]: Charaka Samhita
[^5]: Ashtanga Hrudaya
[^6]: Procedure
[^7]: Anulomagati
Penetration of Sneha to different Dhatu\(^8\) (Therapeutic duration)

It is mentioned that it takes 300 Matrakala (approximately 1.5 mts) for Sneha to penetrate Romakupa (hair roots), 400 Matrakala (2.1 mts) to penetrate Twak, 500 Matrakala (2.6 mts) 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\(^9\) (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 Kapala, the hairs will be strong black and long, there will be Indriyaprasada (strengthens the sense organs), good for skin and renders sound sleep\(^10\).

Karna Abhyanga/Tarpanal Poorana (massage to ears)

Hanu, Manya, Shira, and Karna Shoolaguna\(^11\) (relieves pain from neck and facial region). The person will not suffer from Vataja Karnarogas, Manya and Hanusangrana will not suffer from Uchasruti or Badhirya (deafness) who dose karnatarpa\(^n\) daily\(^12\).

Padabhyanaga (foot massage)

Kharatwa, (dryness of foot), Rooksata (roghness 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 Padabhyangathe person will not suffer from Gridhrasii (sciatica), Padasputana (cracking of foot), Sira and Snayu Sankocha\(^13\) (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\(^14\).
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. 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.

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 Drushtiprasadana 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.

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\(^{18}\).

- 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\(^{19}\).
- Massage is having the analgesic effect which is supported by the pain gate theory\(^{20}\) 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\(^{21}\).

**CONCLUSION:**

Ayurveda reckons *Abhyanga* as a daily regimen owing to its univocal properties like *Jaraapaha, Pushirit* (nourishing), *Shramahara, Drishtrikara, Prasadkara, Ayu-pushikara* (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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