

MODE OF ACTION OF PADA-ABHYANGA: A CONCEPTUAL STUDY**Dr. Lunagariya Trusha^{*1}, Dr. Salil Jain², Dr. Lajwanti Keswani³, Dr. Paras Jain⁴**

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ABSTRACT

Application of oil on foot followed by massage is popularly known as Pada abhyanga. Usually, pada abhyanga is performed as a part of Sarvang-Abhyanga. However, it is mentioned to massage over the head, ear and foot especially. Duration, procedure and specific medicines is not mentioned. Eastern spiritual practices believe that our body and soul are connected and embodied in our feet. In Indian culture therefor, washing and touching feet of guru, elders and parents show respect to them. Pad abhayanga provides benefits as pada sakumaya, pad sthairyra, nidrakara, deha-sukhkar, chakshusya, shram-supti hara, Marut-upshaman. The science of Reflexology states that there are connections with the soles of the feet and the various organs of the body. Hence proper foot massage, irrespective of site with

specific oils prevents and cures various diseases. In present era most of people have hectic lifestyle so practicing full abhayanga is inconvenient. Pada abhyanga is very simple procedure, requires very less time, less equipment, self-practicable, economic and bare minimum chances of complication and can be practice without special assistance. So, in this article attempt has been made to explain mode of action pada abhayanga.

KEYWORDS: Pada abhyanga, Massage, Drastiprasadam, nidrakara, shramhara.

INTRODUCTION

Pada abhyanga is made of two words, here *pada* means foot^[1] and *abhyanga*^[2] means massage with *Sneha* on body in *anuloma* direction. *Pada abhaynaga* means massage on feet. In detail procedure of *padabhyanga* is not mentioned in classics. *Padabhyanga* is a type of *bahya snehana* wherein application of *sneha* to the foot is done in different maneuver to get local and systemic benefit. Eastern spiritual practices believe that our body and soul are connected and embodied in our feet. In Indian culture therefor, touching, washing feet of guru, elders and parents show respect to another body and soul. *Padabhyanga* makes skin soft, increases *bala* of legs, reduces *Padsphutan* (Cracking of feet), *Srama* (Fatigue), *Sthambha* (Stiffness), *Sankocha* (Contraction or Flexion).^[3] So our ancient Acharyas advised daily *Padabhyanga* as a part of prophylactic principle of *dinacharya*.^[4] The feet are very important part in our body as it contains many nerve endings. Ayurveda says that five *marmas* (vital areas) out of 107 *marmas* are located in each foot.^[5] *Padabhyanga* releases negative energy from these *marmas*.

In present era most of people have hectic lifestyle so practicing full *abhyanga* is inconvenient. *Pada abhyanga* is very simple procedure, requires very less time, less equipment, self-practicable, economic and bare minimum chances of complication and can be practice without special assistance.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Benefits of *pad abhyanga* as per *acharya charak*

खरत्वं स्तब्धता रौक्ष्यं श्रमः सुप्तिश्च पादयोः।

सद्य एवोपशाम्यन्ति पादाभ्यङ्गनिषेवणात्।

जायते सौकुमार्यं च बलं स्थैर्यं च पादयोः।

दृष्टिः प्रसादं लभते मारुतश्चोपशाम्यति।

न च स्याद्गृध्रसीवातः पादयोः स्फुटनं न च।

न सिरास्नायुसङ्कोचः पादाभ्यङ्गेन पादयोः।

The roughness, stiffness, dryness, fatigue and numbness of feet are alleviated by massaging the feet. The feet attain gentleness, strength, firmness, the eyes attain brightness, and the vata is pacified. Foot massage also prevents *grudhrasi* (sciatica), cracks in the feet, contraction of the muscles and blood vessels of legs.^[6]

1. *Kharathva*- clears roughness of the soles,
2. *Stabdhatam*- cures stiffness,
3. *Roukshyam*- corrects excessive dryness of feet,
4. *Shrama*- relieves strain or exhaustion of feet,
5. *Supti*- cures numbness of feet
6. *Saukumarya* – feet become soft and smooth
7. *Balam-sthairyam*-promotes strength of feet
8. *Drushti-prassadam*- improves eyesight,
9. *marut-upshaman* - alleviates *vatadosha*,
10. *Gridrasivata na cha*-protects from risk of *Grudhrasi*,
11. *Sputanam na cha* -prevents or cures crack foot,
12. *Sirasnayu-sankochah na cha* -prevents cramps of muscles of feet.

Benefits of *pad abhyanga* as per *acharya Sushrut*

निद्राकरो देहसुखश्चक्षुष्यः श्रमसुप्तिनुत् ।

पादत्वङ्मृदुकारी च पादाभ्यङ्गः सदा हितः ।

Pada abhyanga induces sleep, relax body, beneficiary for eye, reduces fatigue, numbness of leg and makes skin soft.^[7]

As per *acharya vagbhatta*

पादाभ्यङ्गस्तु तत्स्थैर्यनिद्राद्वष्टिप्रसादकृत् ।

पादसुप्तिश्रमस्तम्भसङ्कोचस्फुटनप्रणुत्^[8]

पादाभ्यङ्गस्तु तत्स्थैर्यनिद्राद्वष्टिप्रसादकृत् ।

पादसुप्तिश्रमस्तम्भसङ्कोचस्फुटनप्रणुत्^[9]

Pada abhyanga endows the person with sound sleep during night, improves eye, reduces numbness of leg, fatigue, stiffness, contraction of muscles and cracks in feet.

Procedure

1. *Purva karma*: It includes: -

- 1) *Sambhara sangraha* – *Abhyanga* room should be clean and calm place. Medicated oil, stove to heat oil, Powder to clean oil, Towel.

2) Preparation of individual –Wash feet and tap dry with soft, clean towel. Explain the procedure to patient and make to lie in supine /siting position on *abhyanga* table.

2. Pradhana karma: *Padabhyang* can be done in different position.

i) Supine position: -

a) Linear maneuver b) Circular maneuver c) Linear & circular massage

ii) Lateral position: - Linear maneuver on right and left lateral sides of foot

iii) Prone position: - a) Linear maneuver to the soles b) Thumb poking on soles

3. Paschat karma: In swastha avastha, Rest for 15-30min is advisable. Then clean oil with powder later washes feet with hot water. In disease condition, for several hours or till next application oil can be retained. Later clean with powder, wash with hot water.

DISCUSSION

Mode of action

Abhyanga causes hydrostatic pressure in the extra cellular compartment of the skin. The fluids of skin are drained to various parts of body during *abhyanga* due to osmotic pressure. This pressure increases the blood circulation to the part where *abhyanga* is done, causing pooling of the blood to that surface, which leads to absorption of the medicated *Sneha*.

Massage has local and systemic effects on the body. It mainly affects the nervous system and endocrine system. But also helps in increasing blood circulation to the skin. It increases circulation to massaged area, bringing more oxygenated blood and nutrients to the area which in turn reduces muscle fatigue and soreness. This increase in circulation also aids the removal of toxins and waste products from the muscle. It relieves muscular tightness, fatigue, stiffness and spasms.^[10]

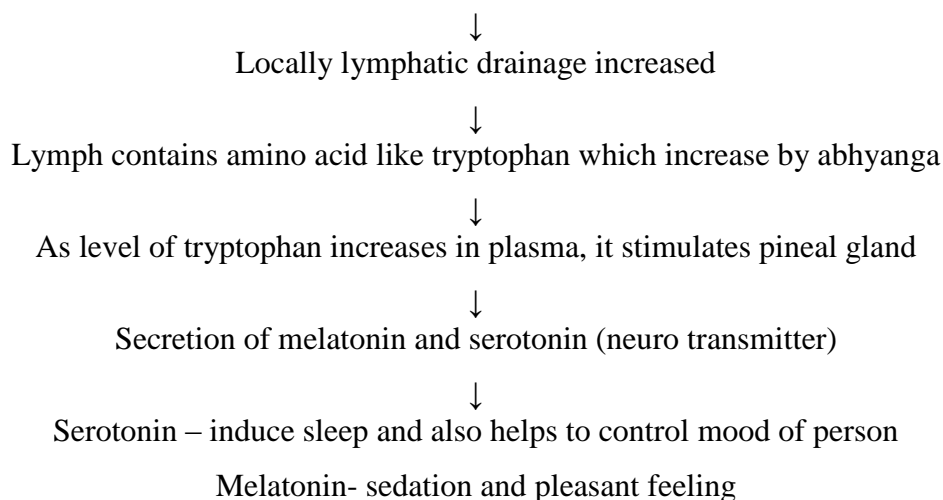
As Kharathva-Roukshya-Sputana- Supti hara, marut shaman

Kharatwa/ Rukshata (dryness/cracks) are tackled by the *snigdha guna* of *sneha*. Local action like *snigdhatva* can be attained by the *sneha* used for *abhyanga*. Local blood circulation increases through strokes of massage done in *padabhyanga*. So, *Supti* (numbness), *Sankocha*, *Stambha* (Stiffness) are relieved.

Vayu dominates in the *Sparshanendriya*, and this sensory organ is located in the skin. So, *abhyanga* pacifies *vata dosha*.^[11]

As nidrakara and shramahara

Pada abhyanga → Increased acetyl-choline production due to the action potential generated from the massage due to friction and pressure which are applied during abhyanga.



So, this action potential with the association of serotonin is responsible for the pleasant and calming effect during *abhyanga*.

As chakshusya

Nadi Darpana has enumerated ten *nadis* situated in head, among which *Gandhari* and *Hastijihva* are related to Left eye and right eye respectively.^[12]

The *Gandhari nadi* is having peacock's neck like colour, surrounds *Ida nadi* extends from *pada* and end in left *netra*. *Hastijivha* is having colour of blue lotus, surrounds the *pingala nadi*, extends from *pada* and ends in *netra* on the right side.

Acharya Vagbhatta also mentioned that there are 2 *siras* situated in the centre of *pada* which connects to eyes.^[13] This relation signifies the role of *pad abhyanga* with *Netra*. Routine *abyanaga* over the feet will help to strengthen the Visual activity.

➤ Pada abhyanga and reflexology

The science of Reflexology states that there are connections with the soles of the feet and the various organs of the body. The point of the foot that directly affects the eyes and ears is located on the bottom of the foot just below the three middle toes. Second toe corresponds to eyes and applying pressure over it will relax the muscles of eyes.

Probable mode of action in *Gridhrasi* / sciatic pain

Gridhrasi, is a condition where pain starts from low back which radiates to buttocks, thigh, leg, foot, which simulates with the sciatica- pain along sciatic nerve course.^[14] Sciatic nerve originates in the low back from lumbar spine, passes underneath the gluteal muscles, runs down the leg and ends in the heel of the foot. There is a sciatic reflex area on the feet which is a band that run horizontally across the middle of the heel. *Padabhyanga* done at the sciatic reflex area may help in preventing sciatica also pain management in sciatica.

Following are the some common benefits of *padabhyanga*

- Regular practice of *Padabhyanga* stimulates the vital points on the feet which effectively improves blood and lymph circulation.
- It effectively works in reducing aches and pain in the lower extremities and also helps in relieving pains and aches by relaxing muscles and ligaments of body.
- It helps in removing contraction of the ligaments, vessels, and muscles of the feet.
- *Padabhyanga* is known to stimulate some special regions in the brain that effectively work in mental relaxation and improve mental health.
- Regular practice of *pada abhyanga* helps to calm and maintain the “*Vata Dosha*”.
- It helps in managing sciatica through enhanced blood circulation and improved peripheral circulation.
- Regular practice provides amazing benefits of *Padabhyanga* as it helps to overcome general weakness and fatigue from the lower limbs and improves the quality of sleep and promotes healthy eyesight.

CONCLUSION

Padabhyanga is a concept beyond massage. *Padabhyanga* is a holistic approach towards an effective psychosomatic healing. It improves eyesight, bestows sound sleep, relaxes body and mind hence reducing stress, and gives pleasant feeling. (*Deh sukhkara*). Instead of practicing *padabhyanga* only as part of *sarvang abhyanga*, it should be practiced individually as a part of *dincharya* for prevention various diseases and for promotion of the health. *Pada abhyanga* is very simple procedure, requires very less time, less equipment, self-practicable, economic and bare minimum chances of complication and can be practiced without special assistance and still having broad spectrum beneficial effect locally as well as systemic level.

So, *pada abhyanga* is surely a boon of Ayurveda for the humans(mankind).

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