

## PADAABHYANGA IN CLASSICAL TEXTS: A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW

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### ABSTRACT

*Padaabyanga* is a holistic therapy and a religious approach towards an effective psychosomatic healing. Application of oil to the feet, followed by massage is popularly known as *Padaabhyanga*. Reflexology, Acupuncture, Acupressure and Pedicure seems to have originated from this ancient art of healing. The science of reflexology states that the sole of the feet is connected to various organs of the body. According to this science, organs such as the heart, lungs, kidney, brain, and intestines can be stimulated by foot massage. *Padabhyanga* can be done at any time of the day; it is more effective when it is done at end part of the evening or at night before going to bed. Since *Abhyanga* is advised to be done on a daily basis for maintenance of good health, so *Padabhyanga* too can be done on a daily basis. The hectic computerized life style, Faulty food habits, Stress, Irregular sleeping habits, strain the body and

eyes. Oil applied to the feet, makes the feet strong (*Sthairya*) and induces sleep (*Nidra*). According to *Charaka* and *Vagbhata* *Padaabhyanga* is described as *Dristiprasadaka* and according to *Sushruta Chakshushya*.

**KEYWORDS:** Ayurveda, Abhyanga, Padaabhyanga, Snehana Guna, Vata, Dinacharya.

## ABHYANGA

### Etymology of *Abhyanga*

The word *Abhyanga* is derived from 'Anga' *Dhatu* which is used to indicate motion or movement. "Abhi" *Upasarga* to 'Anga' *Dhatu* makes the word *Abhyanga* which means to induce specific movements. Rubbing or stroking after applying *Ghrita*, *Taila*, etc. on the skin, helps in their absorption.

### Definition

Massage of the body with use of *Taila*, *Ghrita* etc. in the same direction of the body hair (*Anulomana*) is called *Abhyanga*.

### Contraindications

- *Abhyanga* is best in both the conditions ie. health and disease except few exceptions, which are as follows
- Patients suffering from *Kaphaja* or *Kapha* dominant diseases.
- Person suffering from indigestion.
- Those who have given *Vamana* or *Virecana* and those who have given the *Niruha Basti* too.
- Persons having 'Ama Dosha' and 'Aaghat'
- *Taruna jvara*
- Persons suffering from *Jwara*.
- Patients suffering from *Kaphaja* or *Kapha* dominant diseases.
- In the disease caused by excessive nutrition.<sup>[1,2]</sup> *Abhyanga* in above mentioned conditions causes *Agnimandya* and increases in those diseases.

### *Abhyanga Dravya*

The drug having properties like *Drava* (liquid), *Suksma* (Subtle), *Sara* (fluid), *Snigdha* (unctuous), *Picchil* (Slimy), *Guru* (heavy), *Sitala* (cold), *Manda* (sluggish) and *Mridu* (soft) is called the *Snehana* drug.<sup>[3,4]</sup>

- *Abhyanga* should be done with lukewarm medicated oil or *Ghee* or 'Vasa' prepared with aromatic and 'Doshaghna' drugs.<sup>[5]</sup>
- Use of *Ghrita* for *Abhyanga* is indicated in *Vata Vyadhi*.
- In general, oil is used for *Abhyanga*.
- The oil should be lukewarm in general condition

- Warm oil in winter season and cold oil in summer season is indicated.

The fatty substances used in this therapy are for the purpose of producing lubrication, anointing or oleating effect on the internal as well as external organs. This treatment has qualities like restfulness, strength, invigoration and cognition. This is mainly done with substances like *Tila-Taila* and *Ghrita*. The *Vasa* and *Majja* are rarely used now a day.

### Method of *Abhyanga*

*Abhyanga* should be done with luke-warm medicated oil or *Ghee*, prepared with aromatic and *Doshaghna* drugs suitable to the season, *Prakriti*, disease, *Dosha* etc.

- *Abhyanga* is done particularly on head, foot sole and ears daily.
- *Abhyanga* should be done in round pattern on joints like elbow, shoulder, knee, ankle and hip joints.
- For proper massage of each and every part of body, seven positions are to be adopted i.e.
  - i) Sitting position with straight legs.
  - ii) Supine position.
  - iii) Left lateral lying position.
  - iv) Prone position.
  - v) Right lateral lying position.
  - vi) Supine position.
  - vii) Sitting position with straight legs.

### Effect of *Abhyanga* on Various Dhatus

*Dalhana*, the commentator of *Sushruta Samhita* has described the effect of *Abhyanga* according to its duration.

Duration of *Abhyanga* (Massage)

रोमान्तेषु अनुदेहस्य स्थित्वा मात्राशतत्रयम्।

ततः प्रविशति स्नेहश्वतुर्भिर्गच्छति त्वचम् ।

रक्तं गच्छति मात्राणां शतैः पंचभिरेव तु।

षडभिर्मासं प्रपद्येत भेदः सप्तभिरेव च।

शतैरष्टाभिरस्थीनि मज्जानं नवभिर्व्रजेत ।

तत्रस्थान शमयेत् रोगान् वातपित्त कफात्मकम् ।

- The oil reaches to hair root when the *Abhyanga* is done for 300 *Matras* (1 *Matra* 19/60 seconds so, 300 *Matras* means 95 seconds).
- The oil reaches in skin in 400 *Matras* (133 seconds)
- The oil reaches in *Rakta Dhatu* if done for 500 *Matras* (160 seconds).
- It reaches in *Mamsa Dhatu* in 600 *Matras* (190 seconds), in the *Meda Dhatu* in 700 *Matras* (228 seconds), in the *Asthi Dhatu* in 800 *Matras* (240 seconds) and in reaches to the *Majja Dhatu* if the *Abhyanga* perform up to 900 *Matra* (280 seconds).<sup>[6]</sup> Thus *Abhyanga* should be applied at least 5 minutes in each position if one wants to get its effect in deeper tissues like *Majja*.

### Benefits of *Abhyanga*

Many benefits of *Abhyanga* have been described in ancient Ayurvedic texts like-

- *Jarahara*: It prevents the ageing process.
- *Shramahara*: It is useful to overcome fatigue.
- *Vatahara*: It prevents and corrects the disorders caused by vitiated *Vata*.
- *Drushti Prasadakara*: It promotes sharp eye sight.
- *Pushtikara*: It makes the body well formed by nourishing all seven *Dhatu*s.
- *Ayushkara*: It promotes longevity of an individual.
- *Svapnakar*: It helps in inducing sound sleep.
- *Tvaka Dardhyakara*: *Abhyanga* makes the skin healthy, soft and strong.
- *Klesha Sahatva*: By practicing *Abhyanga* body becomes capable of tolerating physical stress.
- *Abhighata Sahatva*: Body can tolerate any type of trauma by performing *Abhyanga* regularly.
- *Kapha-Vata Nirodhana*: According to *Sushruta*, *Abhyanga* prevents *Kapha* and *Vata* from vitiation.
- *Varna Bala Prada*: *Abhyanga* improves complex of skin and gives strength to a person.

### Mode of Action of *Abhyanga*

*Dalhana* has explained in detail the absorption of *Sneha* used in *Abhyanga* procedure, accordingly the oil used in *Abhyanga* reaches up to the different *Dhatu*s if it is applied for the

sufficient time. Hence, it is clear that the drug used in the *Abhyanga* gets absorbed by the skin. *Dalhana* also mentions that when *Snehana* drug reaches to the particular *Dhatu* it subside the diseases of that particular *Dhatu*. *Charaka* has also described that *Vayu* dominates in the *Sparshanendriya* and its *Adhisthana* is *Tvacha* i.e. skin. The *Abhyanga* is exceedingly beneficial to the skin, so One should practice it regularly.<sup>[7]</sup> *Indriyas* are in close contact of mind hence if *Indriyas* remain healthy mind automatically remains healthy. Thus *Abhyanga* keeps body and mind healthy.

The mode of action of *Abhyanga* can be understood by the properties of *Snehana* drugs that are used for *Abhyanga* in the following way:

- 1) *Snigdha Guna*: This is the main property of *Snehana* drug. *Snigdha Guna* acts through its *Vatahara*, *Kaphahara* and *Vrisya* properties. It performs the action like *Snehana*, *Kledana* and *Vishyandana* at cellular level of the body.
- 2) *Guru Guna*: It increases the bodily strength and *Kapha*. *Hemadri* has called it nutritious for the body. According to *Bhavaprakasha* *Guru Guna* have the properties like *Vatahara*, *Kaphakara* and *Pushtikara*. Due to these properties it alleviates the morbid *Vata*, increases the decreased *Kapha* and nourishes the body.
- 3) *Sheeta Guna*: It keeps the mind healthy by increasing pleasure and enthusiasm. It prevents fainting, decrease the perspiration. It stabilizes the muscles and organs.
- 4) *Mrudu Guna*: *Mrudu* means soft. This is the opposite attribute or *Kathinya Guna*. By this property *Abhyanga* reduces the stiffness.
- 5) *Drava Guna*: *Drava* means liquid, which causes humidity. By this *Snehana* drug propagates swiftly all over the body. It liquefies the *Doshas* and mobiliz them by increasing their flowing capacity.
- 6) *Pichchhila Guna*: *Pichchhila* means slimy. It causes longevity, increases body strength. It increases *Kapha* and produces heaviness.
- 7) *Sara Guna*: The common meaning of *Sara* is to slip or mobility. It mobilizes the *Doshas* and *Mala* i.e. waste products by this property.
- 8) *Manda Guna*: It is indicative of sluggishness. The *Snehana* drug diffuses slowly by this and it remains in the contact of *Doshas*, *Dhatus* and *Malas* for long time.
- 9) *Sukshma*: *Sukshma* means subtle and it helps the drug to enter in the fine channels. In this way, *Abhyanga* acts through the above properties of *Sneha*. Because all the properties are opposite to the *Vata*, *Abhyanga* is considered useful treatment in the disease occurred by provoked *Vata*.

## PADABHYANGA

In *Ayurveda* the *Acharyas* has understand its importance and they included foot care in their daily routine activity and to do list to live healthy, fit and happy called "*Dincharya*".<sup>[8]</sup> In that they have explained various activity like "*Brahmamuhurteuthishte*" "early to bed and early to rise", "*Dantdhawan*" daily brushing of teeth, "*Snana*" daily bath etc. Padabhyanga are one of them.

"*Pada*" is one of the body part i.e. foot. & "*Abhyanga*" is application of medicated oil over body and body parts. Reflexology, Acupuncture, Acupressure and Pedicure have to be originated from this science of ancient foot care methodology. Caring of foot through traditional Ayurvedic methods goes beyond the cosmetic purpose it benefits the whole body and nervous systems also. Feet is very important part of body where points called "*Marma*" are situated.<sup>[9]</sup> These are the points where our energy is concentrated in the form a matrix of 107 energy points which stimulate the function and responses of the body hence caring the feet give us good health. Foot massage is also the important rout of drug administration in the patients suffering from disease of eye and foot. It says that practice of *Padabhyanga* daily before sleeping can improve eye sight and induce good sleep. For *massage* of feet used *Tila Tail*.

## PROPERTIES OF PADABHYANGA

### According to Acharya Charak

खरत्वं स्तब्धता रौक्ष्यं श्रमः सुप्तिश्च पादयोः।

सद्ध्य एवोपशाम्यन्ति पादाभ्यंग निषेवणात् ॥

जायते सौकुमार्यं च बलं स्थिर्यं च पादयोः ।

दृष्टि प्रसादः लभते मारुतश्चोपशान्यति ॥

न च स्यात् गृध्रसीवातः पादयोः स्फुटनं न च।

न सिरा स्नायु संकोचः पादाभ्यगने पादयोः ॥

*Padabhyanga* helps to remove dryness, stiffness, roughness, tiredness and numbness instantly. It also makes the skin smooth, provides strength & stability to feet, improve the vision & pacifies *vata*. It also prevents diseases like sciatica (*Gridhriasi*), cracking foot & stiffness of ligaments & tendons of foot.<sup>[10]</sup>

According to *Acharya Sushruta*

निद्राकरो देह सुखश्चक्षुष्यः श्रमसुप्तिनुत् ।

पादत्वमृदुकारी च पादाभ्यंग सदा हितः ॥

Massage of the feet i.e. *Padabhyanga*, induces sleep, is pleasant to the body, beneficial for the eyes, relieves fatigue, removes numbness, makes the skin of the feet smooth and is always commendable.<sup>[11]</sup>

According to *Ashtanga Sangraha*

पादाभ्यंगस्तु तत्स्यैर्य निद्रा दृष्टिप्रसादकृत ।

पादसुप्तिश्रम स्तम्भ संकोच स्फुटन प्रणुत् ॥

Massage to the feet (soles) it makes them strong, promotes sleep and vision, cures loss of sensation, tiredness, stiffness, contractures and cracking of the feet.<sup>[12]</sup>

According to *Ashtanga Hridaya*

अभ्यंगमाचरेन्नित्यं स जराश्रमवातहा ।

दृष्टिप्रसाद पुष्टयायुः स्वप्नसूत्ववदाकृत ॥

शिरः श्रवण पायेषु तं विशेषेण शीलयेत् ।

Daily Practice of *Abhyanga* delays ageing, cures tiredness & *Vata* disorders. It improves vision, complexion, nourishment, life span, sleep, skin complexion & strength. This should be done specially to head, ears & feet.<sup>[13]</sup>

According to *Bhavaprakash-*

पादभ्यंगश्च तत्स्यैर्यनिद्रा दृष्टि प्रसादकृत ।

पादसुप्तिश्रम स्तम्भ संकोच स्फुटनप्रणुत ।।

Application of oil to feet (*Padabhyanga*) stimulates strength, promotes sleep, enhance vision. It cures numbness of feet, tiredness, stiffness, contractures and cracking of the feet.<sup>[14]</sup>

## PROCEDURE

### PURVAKARMA

Selection and examination of patient were done.

### PRADHAN KARMA

- Procedures were carried out in supine, lateral and prone position of patient.
- Clean the feet surface with lukewarm water and herbal soap gently. Wipe it out nicely with soft cotton towel sit in comfortable position.
- Apply the oil to one of the feet for lubrication.
- Start with gently rubbing to the base of great toe squeezing with thumb with continuation of next toe.
- Allow proper pressure and massage with using palms and thumb of hand.
- Next apply slight pressure and oil in between toes.
- Stretch and pull the big toe gently and rub each side of nails.
- Now, next massage to base at Calcaneous region in circular motion with gently pressure.
- Also allowed massage and apply oil on dorsum of foot along ankle joint in circular and linear pattern respectively.
- During massage used each steps like a stroking, ankle rotation, pivoting, kneading, finger walking, pulling and squeezing, sliding and arch pressure.

## IMPORTANCE OF *PADABHYANGA*<sup>[15]</sup>

### *Padabhyanga* can cure

- *Kharatava*-clear the roughness
- *Stabdata*-cure stiffness
- *Rukhshtava*-corrects excessive dryness of feet
- *Shrama*-Relives exhaustion of feet
- *Sthairya*-promotes strength of feet
- *Drushtiprasdakar*-Nourishment to eye
- *Drudindriyatva* - Provides strengths to all sensory organs



- *Padasukumaryam*-Tenderness and attractiveness of foot
- *Padabalam*-Strength in foot, joints and soft tissue in foot
- *Marutopshamana* - Controls and balances Vayu
- *Nidraakara*-Induces sleep, provide soothing effect to whole body

### MODE OF ACTION OF PADABHYANGA

*Tila Tail* were mentioned as superior in all varieties of oil.

- it is *Marutaghana*- reduced the effect of vitiated *Vata Dosha*, control that *Vata* to regain its normal function in body
- *Balavardhan*-Provides strength to body
- *Sthairakar*-give stability to body parts or organ
- *Twachyam*-good for skin
- *Nachashleshmvardhanam*<sup>[16]</sup> the oil is lustrous but cannot affect *Kapha Dosha* collection he reduced that *Kapha* with its *Ushna Guna* so can be effective in *Anidrajanya* vitiated *Vata Dosha* etc.

*Tila Tail* were massage on feet get absorbed percutaneously through the skin comparatively easy because it is in the lipid form.<sup>[17]</sup> When the oil applied to the skin it get absorbed to provide systemic effect about the time taken for the absorption of oil and the herbal ingredients present in it, been says that as the time passes oil get enters into deeper and deeper tissues in body, enters into root of hair follicle in 96 sec. (300 matra), to reach full thickness of dermis in 128 sec. (400 matra) and keep going deeper and deeper so from skin to *Majja Dhatu* takes 288 sec.(900 matra). There are one important point situated on both the feet is solar plexus reflex. The solar plexus is stress warehouse, it stored all stress full activity as the solar plexus point is get pressed during process all stress is relive and body get calm.<sup>[18]</sup>

### DISCUSSION

*Dalhana* has described the absorption of *Sneha* used in abhyanga procedure in detail, the oil used in *Abhyanga* reaches up to different *Dhatus* when it is applied for the sufficient time. Thus, the drug used in the *Abhyanga* gets absorbed by the skin. *Dalhana* explains that when *Snehana Dravya* reaches to the particular *Dhatu* then it subsides the disease of that *Dhatu*. *Charaka* has mentioned that *Vayu* dominates in the *Sparshanendriya* and its *Adhishtana* is *Twacha* (Skin). *Padabhyanga* pacifies *Doshas* through the *Siras* which reaches the *Netras*

thereby nourishing them and soothing them so one should follow it regularly as it keeps body and mind healthy.

## CONCLUSION

So it can be conclude that by coming in contact of palm and sole during massage energy is produced which has many effective role in various aspect of body system. As it is quite simple process it can be followed by everyone. As the foundation of the human body, feet receive a lot of abuse from their owners in day-to-day tasks such as standing, walking and running. According to the American Podiatric Medical Association An average day of walking brings a force equal to several hundred tons to bear on the feet. The advantages and benefits of *Padabhyanga* are self-practicable, easy procedure, economic and effective. It improves arterial, venous and lymphatic flow and in this way nourishes the skin and local tissues. It is beneficial for de-stressing the whole body, strengthening the nervous system and inducing sleep. It nourishes eyes, helps in reducing *Padasputana*, *Padadaha*, *Padasuptat* etc. It gives relaxation. It provides overall enhancement in physical health and quality of life. It gives good feeling so one must practice *Padabhyanga* in day today life on a regular base.

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