

THALAPOTHICHIL - A CONCEPTUAL STUDY**Libna Yudith P. S.*¹ and Sanathkumar D. G.²**

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ABSTRACT

Thalapothichil is a unique Panchakarma procedure used for the treatment of several neurological disorders. The term consists of two words ie Thala and Pothichil; Thala means 'Shiras' and Pothichil means 'covering'. In general, application of medicated paste over head is referred as Shirolepa and Thalapothichil is a modified form of Shirolepa, in this medicinal paste on the head is covered by using plantain leaf or Lotus leaf. It gives a cooling and calming effect on head and can bring benefits to the physical and mental wellbeing of individuals.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is a comprehensive system of medicine that consider Atma (soul), Mana (mind), Indriya (senses) and Shareera (body) to be equally important in restoration of health. It places great emphasis on prevention of disease and encourages the maintenance of health through close attention to balance in one's life, right thinking, diet and lifestyle. Health is order and disease is disorder. Within the body there is constant interaction between order and disorder. Many factors both internal and external acts upon to disturb this balance. Examples of these are emotional and physical stress includes one's emotional state, diet and food choices, physical trauma, work and family relationship. Ayurveda which is widely practiced has several aspects which are still unexplored.

Application of herbal paste on vertex followed by bandaging is known as Thalapothichil.^[1] Thalapothichil is a modified form of Shirolepa and reference regarding Shirolepa is available in various classics of Ayurveda. Another procedure known as 'Thalam' can be considered as

a shorter and easier means of Shirolepa.^[2] This is a procedure of keeping medicine on the center of the head for a specific time. In Swedana procedures like Shashtika Shali Pinda Sweda, Parisheka Sweda etc. there is a risk of excessive perspiration and its complication, in order to prevent this complication Thalam is done over head for a cooling effect on body, more particularly on head. Shirolepa is mentioned in different contexts of classics by different Acharyas. Acharya Susruta mentions the use of Shirolepa in case of Pittaja and Rakthaja Shirorogas.^[3] Similarly Acharya Vagbhata mentions Snigdha Sheeta Lepa in Pittaja Shirorogas.^[4] These procedures are adopted and modified as 'Thalapothichil' and is practiced as an individual procedure because of its therapeutic effects. It calms the body and mind due to the soothing effect of herb used in the procedure. It stabilizes the nervous system of the body that will leads to extreme relaxation.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Shirasekadi Vidhi authored by Vaidyan Puthiyedath Raman Menon and Keraliya Chikitsa Krama authored by Dr. Raghunath Sharma are the two text books explains about traditional keraliya Panchakarma procedures. In these books two different methods of preparation of medicine for Thalapothichil are explained and it is discussed below;

Method No. 1 – According to Shiraseka Vidhi^[5]

1 Kudava (approximately 200 gm) of dried deseeded Amalaki is boiled with 2 Kudava (approximately 400 ml) of Takra and equal quantity of water. It is kept in Mandagni until minimum amount of liquid is left behind. The preparation is allowed to cool down and made in to paste in Khalwa Yantra.

Method No.2 – According to Keraliya Chikitsa Krama^[6]

Takra is prepared according to Takradhara Vidhi. Half Pala of Musta is cleaned, crushed and made into a Pottali. Half Prastha of milk is added to 2 Prastha of water and Pottali of Musta is dipped in it. It is kept in Mandagni until it is reduced to Ksheeravashesha. Later the Pottali is squeezed into it. After cooling of milk, two teaspoon of curd is added and kept for fermentation to obtain curd. Thus obtained curd is churned using a churner and layer of butter is removed. 4 Pala of dry deseeded Amalaki is soaked overnight in half Prastha of prepared Takra. Next morning it is made into paste using Khalwa Yantra.

PROCEDURE

Whole procedure can be broadly divided into three parts.

Purva Karma

Preparation of patient: Patient is advised to trim his hairs before the procedure. He is asked to void his natural urges and made to sit on a knee high chair comfortably. Shiro Abhyanga is done to head prior to the procedure. The oil for Abhyanga is selected according to the Prakruti, disease etc. 2 feet long and 3 inches wide cotton ribbon is folded to make it a half inch wide hem. Hem is tied around patient's head at level of eyebrows and knot is placed in order to prevent the leakage of medicine down to the eyes.

Pradhana Karma

Medicinal paste which is prepared either by boiling method or triturating method as mentioned earlier, is applied on the vertex, then over right side, back side, left side and again at the center of the head in respective order. The paste should be evenly applied all over the scalp. Thickness of paste should be 1 Angula. Paste should not be neither too loose as it will ooze down the head nor too thick as it will cause Vidaha. Kadali Patra or Kamala Patra of adequate size is made plain by holding it over a flame. The medicinal paste is covered by using this Patra and tied with a cotton thread at the level above the ear. A hole is made at the center of the leaf and a shallow depression is made. About 2-5 ml of oil is filled into the depression made at the center. Refilling of oil can be done in order to maintain the moistness in medicinal paste throughout the procedure which may enhance the absorption of medicine. The medicinal paste is kept for half Yama ie, one and half hours.

Paschat Karma

Covered Patra is removed and medicinal paste is wiped off. Shiro Abhyanga is done after removing the paste and is advised to take bath in Ushna Jala.

Mode of action of drugs

Takra mitigates Kapha Dosha due to its Kashaya Rasa, Ushna Virya, Ruksha and Vikasi Guna and it mitigates Vata Dosha with its Madhura Amla Rasa and Sandra Guna.^[7]

Amalaki possess Amla Pradhana Pancha Rasa (except Lavana), Sheeta Virya and Madhura Vipaka and it is Tridoshahara. It has Medya, Rasayana, Vayastapana, Jwaragna and Chakshushya property.^[8]

Musta has Katu Tikta Kashaya Rasa, Laghu Ruksha Guna, Sheeta Virya and Katu Vipaka. It is Kapha Pittahara.^[9]

DISCUSSION

Shiras is considered as Uttamanga ie, supreme part of body where life along with sense faculties resides. All the Indrias, Indriyavahi and Pranavaha Strotas depend on Shiras for their function.^[10] In Thalapothichil medicinal paste is applied over the Shiras which is the seat of Prana Vayu, Tarpaka Kapha and Sadhaka Pitta.^[11] Kashaya Rasa, Ushna Virya and Ruksha Guna of Takra will act on Kapha Dosha and its Madhura Amla Rasa and Sandra Guna will balance the Vata Dosha. Sheeta Virya of Amalaki balances Pitta Dosha. It induces a cooling effect and gives relaxation and calmness to the body.

Amalaki has Ruksha Guna and contains Tikta and Kashaya Rasa which are Srotoshodhaka. Tikta and Kashaya are said to be Kledopashoshana and Kleda Upyokta respectively.^[12] Amla Rasa possess the qualities of Indriya Sthairyakara (stabilizes sense organ) and Moodavata Anuloma.^[13] Takra and Amalaki are Amla Rasa Pradhana Dravya, thus the procedure renders the Srotamsi ie, channel of body free from stagnation making Doshas mobile and directing them in appropriate direction. Due to Madhura Vipaka and Sheeta Virya it is Vata Pitta Shamaka thus can help in suppressing the inflammation of nerves. As it has Medhya property it will provide nourishment to nerves and will act as nervine tonic.

Due to Sheeta Virya of Amalaki it is very effective in correcting imbalance of Pitta Dosha. Alochaka Pitta which is located in eye is said to be two types; one is Chakshu Vaisheshya which is related to eyes and other is Budhi Vaisheshya which has its connectivity with higher centres of brain. Thus Thalapothichil might improve vision and relieve stress, anxiety and depression.

Palitya (premature greying of hair) occurs when Tejas of the body in association with the Vayu and other doshas scorches up the hair root. When Pitta combines with Vata or Kapha Dosha to destroy the hair it is called Khalitya (falling of hair). Rakta and Pitta have an inseparable relationship as Pitta resides in the Rakta. Thalapothichil by the virtue of its coolant effect pacifies the hot, intense and penetrating nature of both Pitta and Rakta. Thus it can prevent Khalitya and Palitya.

The pituitary gland and hypothalamus are associated with many physical and mental functions. When all these are relaxed, body functions take place in a relaxed manner. Due to the Ruksha Guna of medicines used, the channels of the body open up, the cells start flushing the Doshas, results in proper circulation of blood and nutrients and improved metabolism.

Drugs can be altered according to the Prakruti or condition of the disease. Paste of Balamoola processed with milk can be used in Vata Pittaja Vyadhis because of its Madhura Rasa, Snigdha Guna it alleviates Vata Dosha and its Sheeta Virya alleviates Pitta Dosha.^[14] Paste of Vacha Choorna can improve memory and intellectual power because of its Medhya Rasayana property.^[15] Application of paste of Yashtimadhu is also beneficial, because of its Sheeta Virya it can be used in Pitta predominant conditions and it can relieve burning sensation of scalp because of its Dahahara Property. It might be considered useful in reducing pain and inflammation when applied externally due to its anti-inflammatory property.^[16] Application of Triphala Choorna helps to reduce stress and headaches as it balances all the three doshas – Kapha, Vata and Pitta.^[17] Triphala helps to control hair fall and promote hair growth when applied on the scalp. Triphala gives good result in case of skin problems related to scalp. Application of Kachooradi Choorna along with Ksheera Bala Thaila helps to control blood pressure because of its Rakta Pittahara action. It helps to relieve headache, burning sensation and is very beneficial in confusion of mind, giddiness and insomnia. Traditionally it is made paste with breastmilk or suitable medicated oil or ghee.^[18] Application of paste of Panchagandha Choorna^[19] either processed with Takra or Ksheera is found very effective in Pittaja Unmada and it helps to relieve burning sensation and giddiness.

The medicinal paste used for the procedure can be prepared in Ksheera, Takra, Sheeta Jala, medicated oil or Ghrita according to the condition.

Indications mentioned for Takradhara can be considered as indications of Thalapothichil using the drugs Amalaki and Takra. It cures diseases like Klama, Apachi, Shiro Daha, Ruja, Unmada, Premaha and all other disorders predominated by Kapha and Pitta. It imparts strength to sight and induces good sleep. It is generally contraindicated in Vata Predominant disorders.^[20]

CONCLUSION

Thalapothichil is found very effective in management of many psychological disorders. Amalaki and Takra possess Vata Pitta Shamaka property which not only reduces stress and anxiety but also reduces burning sensation of the body. Takra has Ushna Virya but combination of Musta, Amalaki with Takra produces a coolant effect on head. It relaxes mind and body, cures headaches, reduces body heat, prevents greying of hair, improves vision, improves memory and is also useful in Insomnia, depression and other stress related ailments. Drugs used for Thalapothichil can be altered according to different disease condition and the

effects of the procedure changes accordingly. Therefore it can be concluded that Thalapothishil is very safe and effective treatment modality and can be used effectively in management of various neurological disorders.

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