

A CRITICAL REVIEW ON ROLE OF ABHYANGA IN PAIN MANAGEMENT

^{*1}Dr. Jyoti Balasaheb Mane, ²Dr. Jatved J. Pawar, ³Dr. Kishor R. Ugale and
Dr. Shilpa K. Ingle

¹PG Scholar, Department of Kriya Sharir, Government Ayurved College, Nanded,
Maharashtra State, India.

²Guide, Professor and HOD, Department of Kriya Sharir, Government Ayurved College,
Nanded, Maharashtra State, India.

³Associate Professor, Department of Kriya Sharir, Government Ayurved College, Nanded,
Maharashtra State, India.

⁴Associate Professor, Department of Kriya Sharir, Government Ayurved College, Nanded,
Maharashtra State, India.

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***Corresponding Author**

Dr. Jyoti Balasaheb Mane

PG Scholar, Department of
Kriya Sharir, Government
Ayurved College, Nanded,
Maharashtra State, India.

ABSTRACT

Pain is the unpleasant and emotional experience associated with or without actual tissue damage.^[1] It is estimated that approximately 30% of the world's population suffers from pain. Pain is a very first symptom experienced in many diseases. It is described under terminologies like *Vedana*, *Shool*, *Ruja* etc. in ayurveda. All of these words describes pain with different perception. Vitiating of *Vata* is the main causative factor for all types of pain.^[2] Ayurveda has given different therapies and also oral medications for managing various types of pain like joint pain, muscle pain, headache etc. *Abhyanga* is one of the therapies which is beneficial for maintaining health as well as used as a medicine for certain disorders. It offers an immune-modulatory action, improves the quality of life thus beneficial to persons of all age groups. It includes massage of the entire body with

warm medicated oil.^[3] *Vata* dominates in *Sparshanendriya*^[4] (skin) and *Tail* (oil) possess those qualities opposite to that of *Vata*. So, *Abhyanga* produces *Snigdghata* (oiliness), *Vishyandata* (liquefaction), *Mardavata* (softness) and *Kledana* (moistness) in the body and regulates properties of *Vata dosha* ultimately acting as *Vatahara*.^[5] Thus the probable result

will be decrease in pain hence, *Abhyanga* has physiologic as well as psychogenic benefits because it also helps in de-stressing & keeps a healthy mind. This study enlightens *Abhyanga* in details as mentioned in ayurvedic literature, it's mode of action and it's effects in pain management.

KEYWORDS: Pain, *Vedana*, *Vata*, *Abhyanga*.

INTRODUCTION

Pain is an important sensory symptom as it gives a warning signal and aware us about the existence of a problem or threat, also the most common symptom bringing patient to physician's attention. It is associated with many of the medical conditions including various *Vatavyadhis* in ayurveda like *Sandhigata vata*, *Aamvata* etc. *Vedana* and *Ruja* according to ayurveda relates to severe pain and *Shool* is a broad concept related to colicky abdominal pain. Due to this different type of pain in different locations like joint pain, muscle pain, neck pain peoples are unable to do work properly, have disturbed sleep, have problems like depression or stress which are affecting their lifestyle. So, it becomes very important to treat pain and get relief from it to work faster but effectively and smartly to suit in this modern lifestyle. There are many treatments to reduce pain including modern medicines but it has many side effects and are harmful to our body, Also they provide temporary relief from pain and has to be used frequently. With the consideration of various side effects caused due to modern medicines, it is important to find an alternative way like ayurveda to reduce pain associated with different disorders which has no any side effects. Ayurveda has described not only medicinal drugs to decrease pain but also different procedures like *Snehana* (*Abhyanga*), *Swedana*, *Basti*, *Agnikarma*, *Siravedha* etc. which provides permanent relief from pain. Among these procedures *Abhyanga* is a therapeutic as well as preventive therapy. It is one of the *Bahiparimarjana Chikitsa* (external oleation therapy). It is included in *Dincharya*^[6] so, it can be practiced as a daily routine because it is simple to practice daily, effective, safe, and economically least cost for patient. At ancient times peoples use to practice this procedure for maintaining the strength, mobility, flexibility. It can also used as medical therapy for management of pain.^[7] Intensity of pain can be reduced by it, especially in backache. The back massage also improves the sleep patterns. It is included as *Poorvakarma* for all major *Panchkarmas*.^[8] It has multiple benefits which includes prevention of diseases, rejuvenation of tissues and cure of the diseases along with pain relief. The bipolar disorders like stress, anxiety, dementia are also relieved by the *abhyanga*. It is most important in the treatment of

Vatvyadhis, Stambha, Shoola etc. Peoples now a day's have irregular lifestyle and are not following the ancient regimes like *abhyanga* given by *aacharyas* so, this study focuses on importance of *abhyanga* as daily routine and it's role in pain management.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

Aim: To review the role of *abhyanga* in pain management.

OBJECTIVES

1. Literary study of *abhyanga*.
2. To evaluate the role of *abhyanga* in pain management.
3. Review for highlighting the mode of action of *abhyanga* in pain management.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Materials

1. Classical textbooks
2. Modern textbooks
3. Articles from internet, journals.
4. Related source of data from internet.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. Review on Pain: Pain is a sensation where emotional distress or spiritual distress may induce the same overall feeling as a physical injury. It often induces crying and fainting. Pain may be.

- a) Acute
- b) Chronic

a) Acute pain: It is a sharp pain of short duration with easily identified cause. It is often localized in a small area before spreading to neighbouring areas. Usually it is treated by medications.

b) Chronic pain: It is the intermittent or constant pain with different intensities. It lasts for longer periods. It is somewhat difficult to treat chronic pain and it needs professional expert care.^[1]

In Ayurveda, According to *Madhavnidana*, *Vata* is the main causative factor for *Shool*. *Aacharya Charaka* had also given that *Ruja* is due to *vata dosha*. When *vata* gets aggravated

it's *prakopa* occurs and this *Vataprakopa* is of two types *Dhatukshayaja* (*Nirupstambhita*) and *Margaavarodhaja* (*Upstambhita*).^[9] In *Dhatukshayaja* *Vatprakopa* is due to *Dhatukshaya* and in *Margaavarodhaja* *vataprakopa* is due to obstruction to the normal *Gati* of *Vayu*. This obstruction leads to pain in different locations according to it's *Sthansamshraya*.

Pathogenesis of Pain

According to Ayurveda pain cannot occur if *Vata dosha* is not involved in it. *Pitta* and *Kapha doshas* are also involved and it can be explained with the help of *avarana* principle. *Shool* has been described in Ayurvedic literatures as painful abdomen; mainly four types of *shool* are given and their *sthan* are different according to *doshas* involvement. *Vatik Shool* in *basti*, *paittik shool* in *nabhi*, *kaphaja shool* in *Hridaya- parshwa- kukshi*. *Shool* has been also named according to different parts of body i.e. *Shira shool*, *karna shool*, *Hrid shool*, *Sandhi shool* and *Asthi Shool* etc. Ayurveda has explained pathogenesis of some of the *shool* roga clearly. *Suryavarta* among eleven types of *Shira shool* is due to *tridosha* vitiation and pain intensity increases or decreases according to Sun's position.

Table 1: Types of *shool* and their features.

Features	<i>Vataja shool</i>	<i>Pittaja shool</i>	<i>Kaphaja shool</i>
Time of onset	After digestion, during evening	During digestion, mid noon and mid night	Just after meal, morning
Character	Pricking and piercing	Burning	With heaviness
Aggravating factor	Cold and rainy weather	Autumn	Cold season
intensity	Fluctuating		Less as compared to other

Review on *Abhyanga*: It is the *Samvahana* of the body done in the same direction of the body hair, (i.e. in *Anuloma* direction) along with the *Sneha Dravya*.

Aacharya Charaka gives an example of wooden wheel which becomes smoother and stronger by proper application of oil in a regular manner and thus prevents wear and tear, in the same way application of oil for the body on a daily basis prevents the degenerative changes of the body.

Prerequisites to perform *Abhyanga*

Abhyanga should be performed only when a person has digested the previous food taken and when he feels *kshudhita* and *trisharta*.

Kaala for Abhyanga

Early morning hours are the ideal time for *Abhyanga*.

Duration

Total duration should be around 35 min. 5 minutes in each position.

Method of Procedure

In limbs *Abhyanga* should be done in the direction of hair growth. over joints it should be done in circular movements.

Different postures of *Abhyanga*

1. Sitting upright with knees extended
2. Supine position
3. Left lateral position
4. Prone position
5. Right lateral position
6. Supine position
7. Sitting upright with knees extended

Site of Application

Abhyanga has to be done on the whole body (*Sarvanga*), special emphasis should be given on head, ears and feet.^[10]

Benefits

- *Jarahara* (prevents aging process, rejuvenates body tissues).
- *Shramhara* (relieves fatigue).
- *Vatahara* (*vata dosha shamak*).
- *Drishtiprasadkara* (improves eyesight).
- *Pushtikara* (nourishes body tissues).
- *Ayushya* (promotes lifespan).
- *Swapnakara* (induces sound sleep).
- *Tvakdardhyakara* (improves the elasticity of skin).^[6]

Contraindications Of *Abhyanga*

- It is not to be practised by those having vitiation of *Kapha Dosha*.

- Those who have undergone either one of the *panchakarma*. [*Vamana*, *Virechana*, *Nasya*, *basti*, *Raktamokshan*]
- Those who have *Ajirna* (indigestion).
- Immediately after eating.
- During the first 3 days, or during heavy flow of menstruating women.
- *Sushruta* also given that who have *ama lakshanas* and peoples suffering from *Tarunajwara* (recent onset of fever).

DISCUSSION

Mode of Action of *Abhyanga*

Skin is the largest sensory organ also it is the main location of *vata*. So it is the best site to apply oil (oil is the best for *vata dosha shaman*) to reduce *Vataprakopa*. Skin has the capacity to absorb the oil. According to *Aacharyas Bhrajak Pitta* is located in the skin and it is responsible for absorbing the substances which are applied to the skin.^[11] It digests the oil through minute transferring pores of hair follicles, which helps to reduce the accumulation of vitiated *vata* entities. *Bhrajak pitta* causes *Deepana* and *Pachana* of applied oil. By doing *abhyanga* the circulation beneath the skin increases and it causes relaxing effect on body which helps in relieving stress and pain. Modern science states when tactile and temperature sensations are activated in particular dermatomes, it triggers the corresponding nerve fibers and reduces pain sensations. *Abhyanga* keeps the body and mind healthy as all the *Indriyas* are in close contact with the mind. The *Sneha* used in *abhyanga* reaches upto different *dhatu*s when it is applied for sufficient time. On reaching at the specified *dhatu*, it subsides the diseases of that particular *dhatu*.

Table 2: Effect of *abhyanga* on sharir *dhatu*.

Tissue	Time	
	<i>Matra</i>	Seconds
<i>Kesha</i> (Hair follicles)	300	95
<i>Twacha</i> (Skin)	400	127
<i>Rakta dhatu</i> (Blood)	500	159
<i>Mamsa dhatu</i> (Muscular tissue)	600	190
<i>Meda dhatu</i> (Fat)	700	220
<i>Asthi dhatu</i> (Bones)	800	254
<i>Majja dhatu</i> (Nervous tissue or bone marrow)	900	285

Effect of *Abhyanga* on Physical Level

Abhyanga regulates the proper functioning of *vata*. It includes rubbing of the body this improves the absorption through skin layers and if the drug used is in liquid medium then also Absorption through skin increases. This influences the soft tissues of the body and relaxes soft tissues thus relieving pain. Skin is also a site of *lasika* thus *abhyanga* acts on lymphatic drainage. Rubbing and friction tend to dilate the orifice of the superficial ducts and increase the temperature of skin. The friction mechanism pacifies *vata*, heat induced in this procedure balances *vata dosha* thus decreasing pain. Due to increased circulation in this procedure, more oxygenated blood and nutrients are brought to the area which in turn reduces muscle fatigue and soreness. *Abhyanga* relieves muscular tightness, fatigue, stiffness and spasms ultimately reducing muscle pain. *Abhyanga* done in scientific manner has been proven to stimulate the lymphatic system. It removes the bodily toxins and ultimately relaxes the muscular tissues. The gate control theory states that *abhyanga* provides stimulation that helps to block pain signals sent to the brain.

Effect of *Abhyanga* on Psychological Level

Abhyanga increases the capability to tolerate the stress. It induces sound sleep. It also relieve the stress, anxiety, dementia giving a healthy mind thus relieve pain which is related to mental health.

Effect of *Sneha Dravya*

Sneha Dravya have properties like *Drava* (liquid), *Sukshma* (subtle), *Sara* (fluid), *Picchila* (slimy), *Sheeta* (cold), *Guru* (heavy), *Snigdha* (unctuous), *Mrudu* (soft), *Manda* (sluggish) these are all opposite to *vata dosha guna*.^[12] *Tail* is considered as best *Shaman Aushadhi* in relieving *vata dosha*.^[13] So it also decreases the obstruction by *vata* resulting in decrease in pain in *Upastambhita Vatavyadhis*. In the condition of *Nirupstambhita vatprakopa abhyanga* is the first line of treatment^[14] according to *Aacharya*, It prevents degeneration. The *taila* used for *abhyanga* nourishes the tissues, gives strength and increases the *Agni*.

CONCLUSION

- Pain is a worse feeling experienced by patient so we have to give relief to them as early as possible because there is no any investigation technique to identify and measure pain. In Many conditions where medicinal treatment alone is not enough for pain management *Abhyanga* can be a ray of hope to get relief from pain especially in *vatavyadhis*.

- By using this procedure the side effects of prolonged use of modern medicines can be avoided.
- *Abhyanga* is responsible for better functioning of *Indriyas* so *Padabhyanga* is responsible for better health of *Chakshurindriya* while *Shirobhyanga* for the other *Dnyanendriyas* and *Karmendriyas*.
- *Abhyanga* alleviates pain by neural gating mechanism and by reducing the sensitivity of pain receptors.
- *Snigdha guna* from *abhyanga* helps to get sound sleep.it relaxes the body thereby, reducing the effects of stress.
- Thus, it is proved that *Abhyanga* gets relief from physical pain as well as psychological pain by it's relaxing effect.

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