



UDVARTANA- SAMVAHANA VIS-A-VIS EFFLEURAGE

Dr. Pulak Kanti Kar*

MD, PhD, Lecturer Panchakarma Dept. J.B.Roy State Ayurvedic Medical College and Hospital, Kolkata 4.

*Corresponding Author: Dr. Pulak Kanti Kar

MD, PhD, Lecturer Panchakarma Dept. J.B.Roy State Ayurvedic Medical College and Hospital, Kolkata 4.

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INTRODUCTION

Since ancient times Ayurvedic Acharyayas have given major importance to Abhyanga to maintain a good health. Not only that, it plays a vital role as a therapeutic measure to combat various types of diseases in Ayurvedic system of medicine even in this era. Especially in last few years a tremendous craze of massage therapy is seen throughout the world. In western countries the Panchakarma therapy is becoming popular only for this Abhyanga-Udvartana-Samvahana therapy.

Udvartana, Samvahana therapies are slightly different from Abhyanga though popularly all are named as Abhyanga. Chakrapani opines that Udvartana is applied after Abhyanga,^[1] and it is same as 'sharira parimarjana' mentioned by Charaka. Udvartana is a process in which massage is done with some pressure in a opposite sequence (pratiloma gati).^[2] So basically it is Abhyanga but the difference is due to its direction of movement and the force acting during procedure.

Udvartana-Samvahana therapy is more or less similar to 'Effleurage'. The word 'Effleurage' is derived from the French word 'Effleurer' that means 'to touch lightly'; though it is not always true in clinical practice. It may be of light stroking as well as deep stroking. Generally effleurage is given towards heart. It is included under both 'stroking movement' and 'lymph massage movement'.

Udvartana: In the texts Udvartana is also named as 'churnodvartana'. Actually some powders or pastes (kalkas) are used during this procedure. According to Charaka, Udvartana is of two types:

- Snigdha Udvartana: indicated for lean and thin (krisha).
- Ruksha Udvartana: indicated for obese (sthoola).

In Sushruta it is classified in more details. According to him it is of three types: a) Udvartana, b) Udgharshana, c) Utsadana.^[3] Dalhana clarifies the basic differences in clinical procedures of these three.^[4]

Udvartana: It is done by the methods used in Pravilapana and Vimlapana. Sushruta has advised to use palm and thumb with some pressure to perform Vimlapana.^[5] This procedure is similar to thumb or palm effleurage, which

may be used to treat oedema. Generally deep stroking is applied in this procedure. In deep stroke, a heavy pressure is transmitted to the deeper tissues to enhance venous circulation and lymphatic drainage. It has also a stretching effect on the superficial fascia that reduces congestion and nodular formation. When the pressure is to be given in a small area thumb may also be used.

Usgharsana: It is done by the brick powder or wood powder etc that are unctuous (ruksha) in nature⁶. It is a friction movement applied in opposite sequence (pratiloma gati). It may be compared with intermittent type of lymph massage movement. A variable degree of pressure by palm and fingers are applied for short time, in this procedure. Underlying tissues are stretched in two directions here one along with the finger line and the other as clockwise or anti clockwise as per the position of the physician towards the next proximal lymph nodes. During this procedure lubrication should be avoided to facilitate the stretching. Unctuous (ruksha) drugs used in Udgharshana as mentioned in Ayurvedic texts shows some additional benefits than just intermittent massage.

Utsadana: It is done by the application of oils or pastes of fatty substances (sneha kalkas).^[7] in almost same procedure. It is specially indicated for the beautification of women.^[8] It is also a kind of effleurage where stretching is not intended. Light or deep stroke may be used as per requirement of the patients.

Samvahana: It is also an important procedure mentioned in the Ayurveda. Dalhana defines it as a pleasant touch (sukhakra sparsha).^[9] According to Amit prabha Tikakara it is performed by hand and intermittent in nature (hastabhyam shanai shanai abahanam iti badati). It is similar to light effleurage in lymphatic

massage movement which is pleasant and relaxing in nature. It is very light and performed very slow in rhythm. When enhancement of lymphatic circulation is intended then direction of the massage should be towards the next proximal lymph nodes. To drain the muscles and deeper tissues, heavy (deep, tivra) but slow effleurage is required. In long muscles this massage is given towards centre from periphery, which is an opposite sequence (pratiloma gati). When only relaxation is required a slow rhythmic light stroking effleurage movement can induce tranquility. In back and neck, movements towards caudal direction are more relaxing to the central nervous system.

In Vatarakta chikitsa Sushruta has mention that 'mridu' type of Samvahana is helpful to treat that disease,^[10] which indicates that Samvahana may either be mild (mridu) or deep (tivra).

Mechanism of action of Samvahana: The effects of Samvahana as per Sushruta,^[11] are:

i) Euphoria (Preeti): Samvahana being a pleasant touch, relaxes body and mind of the patients. Moreover reduction of pain by this procedure gives preeti to the affected persons. The increased venous flow helps to remove inflammatory products, which are the main cause of pain. Samvahana may reduce oedema, as a result pressure over nociceptors of the surrounding tissue is removed and pain is sub sided.

Massage has the effect of blocking the pain impulse to the spinal cord as well as stimulating the secretion of natural pain killers (endorphins).

Effleurage (and hence Samvahana) increases the secretion of serotonin that is responsible to combat depression, schizophrenia, anxiety, irritability etc. As a result Preeti is obtained.

ii) Tranquilizer (Nidrakara): Melatonin is secreted by pineal gland of the brain. It is formed from the serotonin. Melatonin is responsible for sleep.

iii) Aphrodisiac (Vrishya): Samvahana may be a very good Vajeeekarana if practiced between husband and wife. Samvahana may be a part of lovemaking. It may increase sexual desire.

KaphaVataShramapaham

Kaphapaha: The main features of Kapha are heaviness (gaurava), itching (kandu) etc. After Ruksha Udvartana or Udgharsana Kapha is reduced. In this procedure the metabolic waste products are carried by lymphatics to the blood and ultimately excreted through the urine. So body becomes free of any toxins and feels unheaviness. Lymph contains histaminase approximately 30 times more than blood. Histaminase breaks down histamine, responsible for itching, lethargy, acidity, allergic response, nasal obstruction, and redness of eyes etc.

Vatapha: The main features of Vata is pain (shoola).

The pain reducing mechanism is discussed under 'Preeti'.

Moreover effleurage may reduce somatic dysfunctions. As a result referred pain due to somatic dysfunction is subsided spontaneously.

Shramapaha: When men work, their muscles need ATP, which is produced by glycolysis. This process may be performed with or without oxygen. When oxygen is available, the end product of glycolysis is carbon di oxide and ATP. But in the absence of oxygen the end product is pyruvic acid, which turns into lactic acid. 80% of lactic acid enters into venous return. The rest accumulate in the muscle ultimately turning into carbon di oxide and water. Lactic acid in muscles causes fatigue. When man works hard or works continuously, the muscles cannot get oxygen as per demand. As a result muscles undergo glycolysis without oxygen leading to fatigue. It is 'Shrama'. Lactic acid produces large concentration of H⁺ ion, which affects the myosine and actin protein molecules. The pain receptors of this area are also affected by H⁺ ions causing pain. Udvartana Samvahanadi procedures drain out these metabolites including lactic acid, water and carbon di oxide. So 'Shrama' is reduced.

Mamsa Rakta Twaka Prasadakaram: lymph contains Proteins, aminoacids, fats, glucose, enzymes, salts, lymphocytes etc. The nutrition is carried by the blood plasma to all cells and tissues. At the periphery the nutrients are leaked out through the capillaries into the tissue spaces. All these products that are not utilized or the metabolic products of those tissues are then entered to the lymphatics and ultimately returned into blood stream again. The lymphatic movement is slow. If Udvartanadi massages are done these products may come to blood approximately 6 times more than the normal. So the food materials may be reutilized for the nourishment of all dhatus. The waste products are also excreted from the body causing the body free from 'Mala'. As a result Twaka, Mamsa, Rakta, Asthi etc are nourished properly. If they nourished their Dhatwagnis also get nourished causing a balanced condition called Dhatusamya. Twaka Prasada is due to the increased local blood supply serving a good nutrition to the skin as well as simultaneous excretion of waste products. Moreover the herbs or Snehas (fats) used in these procedures also give shine and 'Mrija' to the skin.

The effects of Udvartana Udgharsana and Utsadana,^[12] are:

- Kapha Vata nasha – discussed earlier.
- Demolition of fat (meda vilayana): Massage when performed vigorously may emulsify fat in the superficial connective tissue cells. In the emulsified state the fat globules may enter the lymphatic system and may be metabolized.
- Twaka, Kandu, Prasadana – discussed earlier
- Lightness (laghava) of the body

- Shiramookha virechana by Udgharshana: In Udgharshana, ruksha dravyas are applied in opposite sequence (pratiloma gati). As a result heat is produced due to friction. Due to mechanical effect, the dirty particles over hair follicle are also removed. Both are responsible for sweating, which reduces bodily heat. It is Shiramookha virechana.
- Body odour (dourgandha) due to sweat is lost: As the hair follicles are cleared up and Sharira becomes Parjmarjita, the bacteria responsible for body odour are unable to get entry to show their game.
- Thus we can conclude that Udvartana, Udgharshana, Utsadana and Samvahana are very much similar to effleurage and all are vital to keep body healthy as well as to fight against diseases.

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