



## A BOON TO HEALTHY LIVING THROUGH “SHIRA SRAVANA PADESHU ABYANGA”

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### ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Dinacharya is a unique concept of *Ayurveda* where a single procedure like *Abhyanga*, a kind of *Bahyasneha* helps to prevent multiple ailments. In the present scenario of busy lifestyle and hectic workload people find it difficult to practice their daily regimens. The regular application of oil on head, ears & foot are especially emphasized in *Ayurvedic* treatises. *Shira* is known as *uttamanga* which is the seat of *indriya*. *Sravana* is the *vata stana* & *pada*, the *karmendriya* used for *gamana* and is the body part which is continuously exposed with wind, dust etc hence *rookshata* of this body part is always higher than the others. Considering all these aspects oiling is needed to achieve *snigdhatva* for the maintainance of healthy life. **Methods:** Literature Review **Discussion:** The study tries to validate the statement “*Shira Sravana Padeshu Tham Viseshena Seelayet*” with modern interpretation.

**KEYWORDS:** \*Dinacharya \*Viseshena Abhyanga \*Health Promotion\*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The maintenance of health in *Ayurveda* is by following the *Dinacharya*, *Ritucharya*, *Nisacharya* etc.<sup>[1]</sup> One among the major component of *Dinacharya* as well as *Ritucharya* is the concept of *Abhyanga*. *Abhyanga* as a daily regimen results in very important benefits like *Jaraapaha*(delays ageing), *Shramahara*(relives fatigue), *Drishti prasadakara*(imparts good vision), *Ayupushtikara* (prolonging strength and age), *Swapnakara*(imparts good sleep), *Sutwak*(good skin), *Druda twak*(strong skin) and *Vata shamaka*(mitigates vata).<sup>[2]</sup> *Abhyanga* has been highlighted with its wide spectrum of usage for both preventive and curative purpose. The importance of *Abhyanga* has been shown by the way of different metaphoric illustration as a pitcher or dry leather or an axis of a wheel become strong and resistant to a wear and tear by application of oil.<sup>[3]</sup> Similarly the human body become strong, becomes unsusceptible to the disease of vata, resistant to exhaustion and exertion. The body is compared to the tree. If the roots of trees are given water regularly, then it lives for a long, in the same way by *abhyanga* the person's *dhatu* becomes healthy.<sup>[4]</sup> In the present scenario of busy lifestyle and hectic workload people find it difficult to practice their daily regimens. *Acharyas* have specifically mentioned that *Abhyanga* should be done at least to the head, ears and foot

regularly to maintain health.

### 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Information were collected and documented from relevant *Ayurvedic* and Modern literatures, various websites & online published research articles.

### 3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### 3.1. Viseshena Abhyanga

“*Shira Sravana Padeshu Tham Viseshena Seelayet*” // *A.H.Su 2/8*

*Abhyanga*, a kind of *Bahyasneha* is one among major component of *Dinacharya* procedure. *Acharyas* has specifically mentioned that it should be applied at least on Head, feet and ear daily for the maintenance of health.<sup>[5]</sup>

**Table 1: Benefits of Shiroabhyanga.**<sup>[6,7,8]</sup>

Promotive benefits	Preventive benefits
<i>Shira-kapala bala</i> (Enhances strength of scalp)	<i>Shirashula</i> (Headache)
<i>Drudamoola - Dirgha krishna kेशha</i> (Deep-rooted long black hair)	<i>Khalitya</i> (Hair fall)
<i>Sutwak aanana</i> (Enhances colour & complexion of skin)	<i>Palitya</i> (Baldness)
<i>Drudamoola</i> (Increases strength of hair roots)	<i>Na kesah prapatanti</i> (No hair fall)
<i>Nidralabha</i> (proper sleep)	
<i>Indriyaprasada</i> (clarity of sense organs)	
<i>Sukha</i> (happiness)	

**Table 2: Benefits of Karnabhyanga**<sup>[10,11,12,13]</sup>

Promotive benefits	Preventive benefits
<i>Na ucha shruti</i> (Increases ability to withstand loud voice)	<i>Na karnaroga</i> (No ear disease due to vata)
	<i>Na Manya-Hanu sangraha</i> (No rigidity in the baack of neck and jaw)
	<i>Na Shirashula</i> ( No headache)
	<i>Na Karnashula</i> (No earache )
	<i>Na Badhira</i> (No deafness)

**Table 3: Benefits of Padabhyanga**<sup>[14,15,16,17]</sup>

Promotive benefits	Preventive benefits
Increases the <i>sukumarata, bala</i> and <i>sthairya</i> of <i>pada</i> (strength and stability of foot)	Prevents <i>pada kharatwa</i> (roughness of feet)
<i>Drushti prasada</i> (clarity of vision )	Prevents <i>pada stabdhata</i> (stiffness of feet)
<i>Nidrakara</i> (imparts sound sleep)	Prevents <i>pada roukshya</i> (dryness of feet)
<i>Vata samana</i> (subsides vata)	Prevents <i>pada shrama</i> (tiredness of feet)
	Prevents <i>pada supti</i> (numbness of feet)
	Prevents pain in <i>pada</i> due to <i>grudrasi</i> (sciatica)
	Prevents <i>pada sphutana</i> (cracking of feet)
	Prevents <i>sira &amp; snayu sankocha</i>

## 4. DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Mode of action of Abhyanga

*Dalhana* has described Oil used in *Abhyanga* reaches different *dhatu*s if applied for the stipulated time. This clearly indicates absorption of drugs through skin. The potency of oil applied to the skin, enters the various *dhatu*s through *Siramukha* (opening of the veins), *Romakupa* (root of the hairs), *Dhamani* (arteries) and nourishes the body, also provides strength. *Dalhana* also mentions that when *Snehana* of drugs reaches to the particular *Dhatu* then it subsides or cures the diseases of that particular *Dhatu*.<sup>[9]</sup> *Charaka* has mentioned that *Vayu* dominates in the *Sparshanendriya* and its *Adhishtana* is *Twacha* i.e. skin, so one should follow it regularly<sup>10</sup>. *Indriyas* are in close contact of mind so when *Indriyas* remain healthy then mind automatically remains healthy. In this way *Abhyanga* keeps body and mind healthy.

### 4.2. Daily Abhyanga to Shira, Sravana & Pada

*Shira* is known as *Uttamanga* which is the seat of *Indriya*. *Srotra* is the *Vata stana*<sup>11</sup> & *Pada* is one among the *Panchakarmendriya* and plays a vital role in loco motor system. Considering all these aspects regular oiling is needed to achieve *Snigdhatva* for the

maintenance of health.

### 4.3. Importance of Shiroabhyanga

*Shira* or head is known as *Uttamanga* which is the seat of *Indriyas*<sup>[12]</sup> and one among *Trimarma*. Therefore all the functions of *Jnanendriya* and *Karmendriya* are controlled by the *Shira*. As *prana* resides in *shira* it is important to protect. The proper oliation of *shira* daily prevents the conditions like *Shirashula*, *Khalitya*, *Palitya* etc. If a *Vata prakruti* person use *Vatahara* oil daily can prevent *Vataja Shirashula*. Similiarly in *Khalitya*, *Palitya* and premature greying etc one can use appropriate oil daily to prevent these conditions. It will also gives premotive benefits like enhances the strength of scalp, hair growth, colour and complexion of skin, increases strength of hair roots and imparts sound sleep.

### 4.4. Importance of karnabhyanga/karnapoorana

*Shrotra/Karna* is the *sthana* of *vata*. When ear skin get massaged with oil its active ingredients gets absorbed by *Romakupa* and through *Swedawahi Srotas* it enters in circulation. The daily oliation to *karna* will prevents *Hanushula*, *Manyashula*, *Shirashula*. When we analyze these sites, these sites are mainly associated with trigeminal nerve.

Trigeminal nerve has three different divisions such as 1) Ophthalmic division which conveys sensory information from the scalp, forehead, upper parts of sinuses, cornea of eye, bridge of nose etc. 2) Maxillary division which transmits lower eyelid and associated mucous membrane, middle part of sinuses, cheeks, upper lip, root of mouth etc. 3) Mandibular division which communicates sensory information from outer part of the ear, lower part of mouth, front and middle part of tongue, teeth of lower jaw, lower lip, chin etc.<sup>[13]</sup> The daily application of oil to this area will strengthen the trigeminal nerve by which can prevent the pain on these sites & also prevents *Karnashula*, *Badhirya* etc.

#### 4.5. Importance of Padabhyanga

*Pada* is one among the *Panchakarmendriya* and plays a vital role in loco motor system which is continuously exposed with wind, dust etc, hence *Rookshata* of this part is always higher than the other body parts. It always has fear of aggravation of *Vatadosha* and susceptible for injuries. *Padabhyanga* stimulates the *Marma* (vital points) of the sole region and restores *Prana*. The *Padabhyanga* increases the local blood circulation which prevents *Supti* (numbness), *Sankocha*, *Stambha* (Stiffness). *Kharatwa/ Rukshata* (dryness/ cracks) are also tackled by the *Snigdha guna* of *sneha*. Along with these local action it has systemic action in *Anidra* (insomnia), also acts as *Chakshushya* and has effect in *Gridhrasi*.

In *Nadi vigyana*, *Nadi darpana* it has been quoted that there are 105 nadi in head among which 2 are related to eyes.

1. *Gandhari*- Surrounds *Ida nadi*, which extends from *pada* and ends in left eye.
2. *Hastijihwa*- Surrounds *Pingala nadi*, which extends from *pada* and ends in right eye.<sup>[14]</sup>

According to Vagbhata, there are two *siras* in each *padamadhya pradesha* (which is in middle part of sole), which are connected to the head. Because of continuous standing, walking or excessive pressure on the soles of feet, these *siras* gets affected, as a result of which eyesight of a person gets reduced. If at the roots of *siras* (i.e. in the sole of the feet) *Padabhyanga* is done regularly can prevent eye diseases. It promotes strength for walking and running and gives sturdiness to the limbs.<sup>[15]</sup>

*Gridhrasi* is a condition where pain starts from low back which radiates to buttocks, thigh, and leg up to foot, which simulates with the sciatica- pain along with sciatic nerve course. Sciatic nerve originates in the lowback 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 runs horizontally across the middle of the heel where the sciatic nerve ends. *Padabhyanga* done at the sciatic reflex area may help in preventing sciatica and also pain management in sciatica.<sup>[16]</sup>

#### 4.8. Modern view

##### 4.8.1. Physiological effects of oil massage

The physiological effect of massage in general can be divided into two.

1. Relaxation effect
2. Stimulation effect.

Relaxation effect involves hypothalamic reactions associated with the decline of sympathetic system activity and an increase in parasympathetic system activity. There are two types of stimulation effects; one is reflexive and the other is mechanical. The reflex effect is refreshing and relaxing due to delivering stimulation at the cutaneous peripheral nerve to the cerebrum. Peripheral cutaneous stimulation promotes circulation through stimulation of the parasympathetic nerve, relaxation of muscles and extension of capillary vessels. Ultimately, massage reduces sympathetic nerve activity while increasing parasympathetic nerve activity.<sup>[17]</sup>

##### 4.8.2. Oil massage to head

During massage, different type of mechanical sensation is given to the skin like pressure, rubbing, touches etc. So these sensory impulses are received by respective receptors present on the surface of skin and carried to the hypothalamus in the brain.<sup>[18]</sup> After reaching hypothalamus it provides soothing effect and stimulates parasympathetic nervous system. Parasympathetic nervous system decreases the activity of sympathetic nervous system. So decreases releases of stress hormones like cortisol and adrenalin. Due to this, heart rate decreases, blood pressure decreases, blood glucose level returns to normal and blood vessels get dilate. All these factors provide relaxation to the mind. When mind gets relax, the ascending reticular activating system which is responsible for wakefulness stops functioning and the sleep centers in the brain get activated. One of the sleep centers, Raphe nucleus starts releasing serotonin from nerve fibers arising from its nucleus, which is responsible for Non REM (Non Rapid Eye Movement) sleep. This is a deep and rest full form of sleep. Another centre Locus Ceruleus of Pons also get activated and releases Nor-adrenalin from nerve fibers arising from its nucleus.<sup>[19]</sup> Nor-adrenalin is responsible for REM (rapid eye movement) sleep.

##### 4.8.3. Oil massage to ear

When external ear gets massaged, the vagus nerve get stimulated, the upper two third and lower one-third of lateral surface of external ear is supplied by auricular nerve which is a branch of vagus nerve and these afferent sensory impulses are carried by afferent sensory nerve pathway to hypothalamus via peripheral nerve and spinal cord where it activates parasympathetic nervous system. Parasympathetic nervous system is responsible for relieving stress by lowering blood pressure, lowering blood glucose level and decreasing heart rate. After brain gets relaxed ascending reticular activating system get suppressed and sleep centers get stimulated. Sleep centers releases serotonin and noradrenalin which are

responsible for inducing non-REM and REM sleep respectively.<sup>[20]</sup>

#### 4.8.4. Oil massage to foot

When foot get massaged locally, lymphatic drainage get increases and the lymph contains amino acid like tryptophan which increases. As level of tryptophan increases in plasma, it accumulates and stimulates pineal gland. Secretion of melatonin and serotonin increases. Melatonin induces the sedation and pleasant feeling and Serotonin induces sleep and also helps to control mood of person.<sup>[21]</sup>

The science of reflexology states that the sole of feet has connections with various organs of the body. Hence proper foot massage at respective site on the foot with specific oils prevents and cures diseases. According to the science, various organs like heart, lungs, kidney, brain, intestines all can be stimulated by feet massage. Above all a massage helps a person to have a sound sleep at night. It is based on the principle that the body can be divided into 10 vertical zones, each corresponding to an area of the foot so that the feet are in effect a map of the body. A sensitive area of the foot indicates a problem in the corresponding organ of the body and by working on the appropriate painful spot, the problem can be solved.<sup>[22]</sup>

## 5. CONCLUSION

In *Ayurveda* much importance is given to personal hygiene which, when followed will definitely prevent many of today's lifestyle problems. Everyone who wants to live a long and healthy life is expected to follow the rules of conduct which are given in *Dinacharya* and *Ritucharya upakrama* in *Ayurveda*. *Acharyas* have specifically mentioned *Shira*, *Shravana* & *Pada* as sites which need to be oiled on a daily basis. By understanding the physiological & anatomical specialties of this site on the basis of *Panchabhuta* & *Doshic* basis, we should consider it as a protocol to be followed on every part of the body depending up on the *Prakruti*, *Desa*, *kala* etc.

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