ABHYANG –WAY TO HEALTH

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ABSTRACT
Abhyang is the daily oil massage as recommend in Ayurveda., Literally, abhyanga means: smearing the body with unctuous or oily substance. The knowledge of Ayurveda is timeless, it exists primarily as an oral tradition. Caraka Samhita, considered the oldest, refers to abhyanga often. Caraka advocates skin organ of touch connects with mind, gives rise to pleasure and pain experiences.” sparsanendriyasamsparsah sparso manasa eva ca dvividhah sukhadukhhanam vedananam pravartakah. Sa.I.133. So Abhyang is important procedure to control mind and normal physiology of body. Other the benefits of applying oil to the body are firm, smooth-skin, free from disturbances of vata and tolerant of exertions and exercise. The body of one who uses oil massage regularly does not become affected much even if subjected to accidental injuries or strenuous work. By using oil massage daily, a person is endowed with pleasant touch, trimmed body parts and becomes strong, charming and least affected by old age. According to Modern physiology massage soothes the two master systems of the body, the nervous system and the endocrine system. Nervous and endocrine systems are seen as communication systems connecting all cells. The pleasure from touching is mediated through the limbic system which causes the secretion of hormones physically equivalent to health and happiness. Massage or touching, from the perspective of modern physiology, has been found to increase secretion of human growth hormone (HGH). Growth hormone is believed to speed up the movement of digested proteins (amino acids) out of the blood and into the cells, and this accelerates the cell’s anabolism (build up of amino acids to form tissue proteins), hence this action promotes normal growth. It’s also responsible for increased protein synthesis and decreased oxidation of proteins. Growth Hormone also affects fat and carbohydrate In fact, scientists now believe that HGH has a role in most healthy functions of the body, including
sexual function, proper operation of stomach and bowels, liver, immune system, and all glandular systems. Thus Abyang contribute to the various components of health. The mind-body integration and purification which takes place form the basis of the growth of consciousness as well. These form the basis of immortality. Both cure and prevention depend upon these aspects and are directly addressed by this simple daily task. In modern and ancient paradigms abhyanga does indeed promote strength and immunity also.

**Keyword:** Abhyanga, massage, stress, neurotransmitters.

**INTRODUCTION**

Ayurveda is said to be ancient science of perfect health, comes from the highly developed Vedic civilization. The Ayurveda has wealth of principles for maintaining and promoting good health. The ayurvedic oil massage called Abhyanga is an integral part of the Dinacharya(daily routine) recommended for overall health. Abhyanga is a Sanskrit word comes from verb root “Anj”( means to anoint, movement or to smear) by adding Abhi upsarga and Ghan Partyaya. Literally, abhyanga means smearing the body with unctuous or oily substance or movement toward dhatus i.e. oil smeared moves towards the inner dhatus. Often abhyanga is considered a part of an important rejuvenation/purification therapy of Ayurveda, called pancakarma (meaning 5 actions). It is said to effect by moving the doshas (impurities) out of their locations to the channels of elimination and thence out of the body.

As such, it is both curative and preventive. If total body Abhyanga is not possible daily, at least a person may do Abhyanga on Shirah, Sravana and Paada. This will provide a minimum guarantee of our general health.

**REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Bahya Snehana described in ayurveda are Abhyanga, Gandusha, Lepa, Nasa Tarpana, Udvartana, Utsadana, Moordhntail, etc. Among them preference has been given to abyanga. Acharya Charaka in Sutrasthana advocates- The body of one who uses oil massage regularly does not become affected much even if subjected to accidental injuries, or strenuous work. By using oil massage daily, a person is endowed with pleasant touch, trimmed body parts and becomes strong, charming and least affected by old age."[1] Person practicing abyanga become physically and psychologically strong enough to bear exercise and stress. He also get resistant to all vatajanya disorders.
Susruta advocates “abyanga imparts a glossy softness to the skin, guards against the aggravation of vata and kapha, improves color and strength and gives tone to the tissues of the body. Oily substances affused on the human organism imparts a tone and vigor to its tissues in the same manner as water furnishes the roots of a tree or a plant with the necessary nutritive elements and fosters its growth when poured into the soil where it grows.”[2]

In Ashtanga Hrdayam, daily practice of abyanga evident to delay ageing cures tiredness and vata disorders, improves vision, complexion, nourishes, lead to healthy life, sound sleep, lustourous skin. Abyanaga done daily is best but ‘Sarvanga sundara teeka’ says that if it is not possible to do abhyanga daily, at least it must be done once in two to three days. Achara smruti text book mention effect of taila on particular day. Abhyanga should be done especially on head, ear and feet.[3-5]

Padabhyanga makes skin soft, beautiful, provide strength and stability to feet. It reduces Padsphutan, Srama, Sthambha, Sankocha. Coarseness, stiffness, roughness, fatigue and numbness of the feet are alleviated. Strength and firmness of the feet is attained. Vision is enhanced.

Vata is pacified Local veins and ligaments are benefited, it also prevent the sciatica, cracking of skin, and other vatajanya foot disease. Benefits of applying oil to the scalp (Murdha taila) are also described in samhitas as shiraobyanga makes hair grow luxuriantly, thick, soft and glossy, Soothes and invigorates the sense organs, Removes facial wrinkles. Similarly applying oil to the ears leads to Benefits in the ear disorders which due to increased Vata, stiff neck, stiffness in the jaw etc.

Sarngadhara lists three kinds of topical applications (which may bear on abhyanga) antidosic, anti-poisonous, cosmetic (Su.XI.).

**INDICATION OF ABYANGA**

Direct reference are not avliable but scattered ref. can be seen according to which abyanga are indicate in Bala (childrens), vrudddha(oid age), krusha(emaciated)and rogi(diseased person). It also indicated in all vata rogas, skin rogas, hair fall, premature graying of skin. Last but most important as daily routine to maintain health.
CONTRAINDICATION OF ABYANGA

Abyanga should be done in person suffering from kapha disorder, after purificatory procedures, if indigestion (ama dosha) exists. abhyanga should be avoided when fever is present, abhyanga should not follow emesis, purgatives, or niruha enema and in over nourished disease(santarpajanya vyadhi)like prameha.

TIME OF ADMINISTRATION

After doing exercise before commencing a bath, when the person starts to have a desire for food and drinks, abhyanga should be done. The digestive fire actually determines how well oil can be utilized by the body through bhrajaka pitta. Abhyanga should be practice regularly once in a day or once in a two day or once in three day. In children daily abhyanga is advised.

CHARACTERS OF OIL

Luke warm Sesame oil is the best of oils for strength and unction according to Caraka: sarvesham tailajatanam tilatailam visisyate balarthe snehane (Su XIII.12). Further, it is sweet, with astringent subsidiary taste, penetrating, hot, readily absorbed, aggravates P and K, is constipating and anti-diuretic, the best among vata alleviating, strength promotion, beneficial for skin, promotes intellect and appetite. It destroys all diseases due to combination (of drugs) and processing.” Su.XXVII.286-294. Vagbhata gives this description: “Sesame oil possesses the properties like penetrating deep into the tissues, and spreading throughout the body fast, capable of entering into even minute pores, hot in potency, not increasing kapha, it makes lean persons fatty and fat persons lean, is constipating, kills worms; with appropriate processing it cures all diseases.”. Dalhana declares that sesame oil penetrates into the deepest level of tissues in only 5-10 minutes.)

DURATION AND DIRECTION OF ABYANGA

According to dalhan time taken for sneha to penetrate through up to romant is 300 matra kala( 1 matra kala is 19/60 sec i.e. 300 matra kala means 95 sec) further it takes 900 matra kala to reach up to majja futher it pacifies vitiated dosha. so abhyanga approx must be done for 5 mins. Abhyanga should be done in anuloma gati i.e. in direction of skin hairs.

MODE OF ACTION OF ABYANGA

Charka describe that Vayu is predominant in tactile sense organ which is located in skin, Caraka also describes in an important link between mind, touch, and all the senses “Out of
all the senses, the tactile sense alone pervades all the sense organs and is also associated inherently with mind so due to pervading of tactile sense, mind also pervades. Therefore abyanga/oil massage is the most beneficial for skin and balancing mind, hence one should use it regular.

Caraka described 107 marmas which are said that pressure at these points can have both positive or negative results. Proper massage of these points helps dissolve stresses or remove blocks accumulated there.

Susruta (Su.XXIV.29-32) Rubbing and friction tend to dilate the orifice of the (superficial) ducts and increase the temperature of the skin. Rubbing specifically improves the complexion of females and gives a lovely appearance, cleanliness, beauty, and suppleness to the female form. Friction pacifies vata, cures itches, rashes, and eruptions.”

The mode of action of abyanga can also be understand by the properties of snehan i.e.Snigdha and guru acts as vatahara, snehana, balya and pustikara, Mridu guna reduces the stiffness due to kathinya guna and sukshma guna help the drug to reach upto minute channel.

**DISCUSSION**

Abyanga(Massage) is jarahara(delay aging), klesha sahatva(tolerating stress) because it is evident to reducing physiological measures of stress, including hormonal (cortisol, epinephrine and norepinephrine) as well as physical (heart rate and blood pressure) variables.\(^4\) Massage activate the parasympathetic nervous system to slow down heart rate and breathing, relax musculature and improve digestion.\(^5\) This had been described as Deeptagni(improves appetite), suddha kosta(proper digestion)in benefits of abhyaga. Massage increases endorphin release, Endorphins are pain reducing neurotransmitters. Endorphins also stop transmission of pain signals, so abhyanga said to be abhigata sahatva, dagdha, bhagna,kusta,rujapaha(resistant to pain).\(^6\)

Abhyanga is svapnakara(sound sleep) by decreasing Beta Brainwave activity, this leads to increase release of relaxing neurotransmitters serotonin and dopamine as well as decreased release of cortisol levels. This type of brain activity is one which facilitates deep sleep induction.\(^7\)
Abhyanga is ayushkara(longevity) vrisya (vigor), tvaka dardhyakara(skin soft , strong, complexion)because massage improve circulation. Massage dilates superficial blood vessels and increases the rate of blood flow. Since lymphatic system runs quite superficially under the skin, specific massage techniques have well developed to encourage better flow and ultimately improves removal of lymphatic fluid, which in turn helps improve removal of metabolic waste keeps blood pressure low and avoiding unnecessary stress on cardiovascular system. Skin related benefits include assistance in overall cellular function and increasing production of skin-nurturing sebum. Sebum is our bodies’ natural lubricant; it protects, cools, calms and maintains skins youthful properties.\[9,10]\n
As Abhyanga/massage improves the lymphatic circulatory system, thus also improve the immune.\[11\] Massage has shown to naturally improve the the immune system’s cytotoxic capacity by increasing the Natural Killer. Since both cortisol and insulin are linked with impaired immune function, massage can also help immunity by controlling levels of these stress hormones. Serotonin releases and bacteria fighting peptides have been linked to improved immunity.\[12\]

Abhyanga said to br shramahara(overcome fatigue)balaprad(strength), pustikara ,brihatvakara(increase muscle bulk) as regular massage therapy relaxes the muscles and passively stretches and lengthens them, encouraging better blood perfusion to these tissues, healthier oxygen are nurturing and nutrient exchange, improving muscle ability to regenerate and heal reducing tension and pain.. The healthier our muscles are, the better they can accommodate sudden movements and twists. This protects muscles from strains, tears The more flexible the tissue and muscles around the joints, the less the tug and pulling on them, preserving their integrity and health.\[13\]

**CONCLUSION**

Abhyanga is one of the procedures to be practiced routinely in the system of once living. It is the most commonly indicated and extensively applied treatment procedure amongst the Bahirparimarjana Chikitsa. It is clear from discussion that Abhyanga helps man to prevent the common health hazards. It will helps to lead a healthy life. Massage has been used for centuries for both therapeutic and preventing purposes. It is, and should be used as, a preventative medicine technique. Modern medicine has, however, changed the perception towards massage and created an illusion in which massage is seen as a luxury in which most cannot invest. Abhyanga or massage heal damaged muscle, stimulate circulation, clear waste
products via the lymphatic system, boost the activity of the immune system, reduce pain and tension, and induce a calming effect. Massage may also enhance well being by stimulating the release of endorphins (natural painkillers and mood elevators) and reducing levels of certain stress hormones. Abhanga nourishes dhatus, pacifies the doshas, relieves fatigue, provides stamina, pleasure and perfect sleep, enhances the complexion and the luster of the skin, promotes longevity and nourishes all parts of the body. So everyone should do Abhyanga and enjoy the gods best gift i.e. healthy life.

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