ROLE OF ABHYANGA IN JARA – A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is a science of life which deals with preventive and curative aspects of the disease. Jara is the natural and irreversible process of decaying and this manifested by various degenerative changes. In Vridhavastha; Rasaraktadi, Dhatu, Indriya, Bala etc became Kshin. Aging related changes are noticeable from the 5th decade of life; among them skin related changes are mostly noticeable. Valli, Khalli, Twakparushata, diminished vision, Nidranasha are common problems of old age persons. In benefits of Abhyanga it was stated that, it prevents from the aging process by nourishing the Dhatus. In benefits of Padabhyanga, Acharya Vagbhata stated that it helps in improving vision. During Abhyang, serotonin released which helps in Nidranasha. So Abhyanga helps in prevention of Jara.

KEYWORDS :- Jara, Abhyanga .

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda having holistic approach in prevention, promotion, preservation and also cure from disease. The life span of every individual has divided into 3 parts Balyavastha, Madhyamvastha, Vridhavastha i.e. Jara, having influence of Vata. Jara is the last phase of life which describes as Swabhavaj. Which means natural and irreversible process as well as natural disorder. Jarachikitsa is mentioned as separate branch in Asthnga Ayurveda contributing the treatment of Jara. Acharya Vagbhta quoted Abhyanga Aachareanilya as Jarahar in Dincharyaadhyaya. Aging is a complex and inevitable process begins before birth and continues through the entire life span. Every cell and tissue of body undergoes changes as age advances. The word Geriatric consist of two words Gerias and iatric. Gerias means to grow old whereas iatric means medical treatment. In this paper role of Abhyanga geriatric is discussed as Acharya Vagbhta say that Abhyanga as Jarahar.

MATERIALS AND METHODS:

Material:

1) Literature review from Ayurvedic Classics.
2) Literature review from Modern Text.
3) Journals and websites.

**Methods:**

**Concept of Jara**

Ayurveda classics has given detailed description about Vaya which is based on the degenerative changes in the body. Acharya Charaka defines Vaya as state of body corresponding to the length of time that passed since birth. Further he divided Vaya in 3 parts, Balyavastha, from the age of 1 to 16 Aparipakva Dhatu and Vivardhanam Dhatu from the age of 17 to 30 years, Madhyamavastha from the age of 30 to 60 years and Vriddhavastha from the age 70 to 100 years. There is a diminution of Dhatu and dominance of Vata.

Acharya Sushruta classified Vaya as Balyavatsha, Madhyamavastha and Vriddhavastha. While Acharya Sharangadhara has narrated decade wise decline condition of body. According to him Balyavastha will diminished in 1st decade, in 2nd decade Vriddhi, in 3rd decade Chhavi means complexion diminished, In 4th decade Medha i.e. intellectual capacity of individual decreases. In 5th decade Twak i.e. Skin losses its elasticity and Valli (wrinkles) appears. In 6th decade Drishti diminished. In 7th decade Shukrakhaya, And Buddh in the 8th decade, Karmendriya in 9th and Manas in 10th decade. The effect of Jara is clearly noticeable from the 5th decade of life. Acharya Sushruta has mentioned Jara as Svabhavajyadhi. After age of 70 years, Rasaraktadi Dhatus, Indriya, Bal, Virya, Utsaha become Kshina and Valli, pallitya, Khallitya, Twakparushtha noticeable sign.

**Skin related changes in Aging**

Skin related changes are most visible sign of aging process. Evidence of increasing age includes wrinkles and sagging skin. With age outer skin layer thins, even though the number of cell layers remains unchanged. Changes in the connective tissue reduces the skins strength and elasticity. This is known as elastosis. Sebaceous glands produce less oil as increased with age.

**Concept of Abhyanga**

**Etymology of Abhyanga**

According to Amarkosha the word Abhyanga derived when “Abhi” upasarga is added to Anga which means to induce specific in special movement. In Ayurveda Abhyanga means applying oil followed by light massage in specific direction. There is various terminology of Abhyanga according to part of body for example when Sneha is applied on head it is called as Shirobhyanga, when Sneha applied on foot it called as Padabhyaanga.

**Indication of Abhyanga**

**Abhyanga in Dinacharya**

Abhyanga is indicated as part of Dinacharya to promote the health. Regular practice of Abhyanga acts as Jarahar, Shramahar, Vatahar. It also beneficial for Netra especially Padabhyaanga, acts as Prushtikara, Nidrakara.

**Abhyanga in Rutucharya**

Abhyanga is to be advised in Hemant ritu to protect the body from biting cold of Hemant ritu.

**Abhyanga in Vegavidharniyajanya vyadhi**
Abhyanga is advised for the treatment of symptoms caused due to holding or suppressing the urges of Adhovata, Shakrit, Matra, Kshut, Nidra, Shramashwasa, Vamathu, Shukra etc.

Abhyanga in different diseases

Sneha used for Pana, Nasya, Anuvasana, and Abhyanga. Abhyanga is mainly indicated in Vata predominant states of diseases. Abhyanga followed by Swedana bring down the disfigured and painful body parts which occur due to aggravation Vata.

Absorption of Sneha

Effect of Abhyanga on various Dhatu

The commentator of Sushruta, Dalhana has describes the effect of Abhyanga is described according to its duration.

When Abhyanga done for 300 Matra Sneha reaches to Romkupa. Here 1 Matra is equal to 19/60 seconds, so 300 Matra means 95 seconds. Similarly in 400 Matra (133 second) Sneha reaches up to Twacha, in 500 Matra (160 second) it reaches up to Raktedhatu, in 600 Matra (190 second ) it reaches up to Mamsa Dhatu, in 700 Matra (228 second) it reaches up to Meda Dhatu, in 800 Matra (240 second) it reaches up to Asthi Dhatu and it reaches up to Majja Dhatu when Abhyanga is performed up to 900 Matra (280 seconds).

Absorption of oil through Skin

The skin is relatively permeable to fat soluble substances. Essential oil molecules are so minute that when they are able to pass through stratum corneum (outer layer of the epidermis). From here the oil molecules passes through dermis, into the capillaries and into bloodstream. Absorption also occurs through hair follicle and sweat ducts. In Abhyanga the Snehadrayya has applied over the skin and gently massaged with light pressure, due to this penetration of Sneha is forced into the hair follicle and gland is increased. In this way absorption oil through skin layer occurs.

Mode of action of Abhyanga

Commentator of Sushrut Samhita, Dalhana has described the absorption of Sneha used in Abhyanga reaches up to the different Dhatu when it applied for the sufficient time. Thus, the Dravya used in Abhyanga get absorbed through skin and it reaches to the particular Dhatu and it subside the diseases of particular Dhatu.

Acharya Charaka stated that Vayu is dominates in Sparshanendriya which is located in Twacha, further he also describes the important link between Mana, and all senses.

Indriya are in close contact of mind, so when Indriyas remain healthy then mind automatically remains healthy, thus Abhyanga keep body and mind healthy.

The colour and luster of Skin is mainly due to the Bhrajaka pitta which is located in skin. Acharya Charaka has stated that the normal and abnormal temperature and colour is due to Bhrajaka pitta. The variation in skin is due to Bhrajak pitta. Arundatta has describes Bhrajaka Pitta and its functions like Deepana and Pachana. Thus, when Sneha applied over skin it got digested by the Bhrajaka pitta. According to Acharya Indu, Abhyanga diminished the hardness and roughness of skin, so from this point of view we can say
that Abhyanga help in improving the quality of skin.

*Padabhyanga*, helps in improve vision\(^{11}\) As there is a link between *Pada* and *Netra*. Both are consider as two poles of body\(^{12}\). The medicine administrated from *Pada* reaches up to *Netra*. Hence, we can say that *Padabhyanga* can beneficial for the *Netra*. Also, *Padabhyanga* relived Kharata, Suptata, Srama and Suptata of *Pada*. The *Bhavaprakasha* have quoted that disease do not go near one who massage his feet before sleeping just as snake do not approach eagles\(^{13}\).

### Mode of action of Abhyanga on the basis of properties of Snehadrayya

The *Snehadrayyas* contains the following *Gunas* and their properties are mentioned below

**Snigdha Guna** responsible for the action of *Snehana, Kledana* and *Vishyandana* at cellular level of body. The properties of *Snigdha Guna* are opposite that of *Vata*, so it acts as *Vatahar* and *Kaphakar*. *Guru Guna* having the property like *Vatahara* and *Kaphakara*, due to this it alleviates the morbid *Vata*, increases the decreases *Kapha*. *Sheeta Guna* prevents fainting and decreases the perspiration. It helps in stabilizing the muscles and organs. *Mridu Guna* have opposite properties that of *Kathin Guna*. By this property of *Abhynaga* it reduces the stiffness. *Drava Guna* liquefies the *Doshas* and mobilizes the *Doshas* by increasing their flowing capacity. *Picchila Guna* gives longevity, increases body strength. *Sara Guna* mobilizes the *Doshas* and *Malas* i.e. mobilizes waste product by this property. Because of *Manda Guna* the drug diffuse slowly by this property and it remain in the contact of *Dosha, Dhatus* and *Malas* for longer time. *Sukshma Guna* helps the drug to enter in the fine channels.

### Mode of action of Abhyanga according to ModernView

The internal fluids of the skin are subjected to movement in the massage because of osmotic pressure. Here massage is causing mechanical hydrostatic pressure in the extra cellular compartment. A forceful expulsion from peripheral vessel cause splanchnic pooling of the body. Massage helps fluid enter into viscera, tissues and dilute the accumulated toxins.

After the completion of procedure; when it refills the peripheral vessels, the diluted toxins are brought into general circulation and during course; they are expelled out via elimination procedures.

*Abhyanga* acts on skin (*Twacha*), which is the seat for the both *Vata* and *lasika*. In this way; the lymphatic drainage will be the prime effect of *Abhyanga*. Lymph exhibits large amount of amino acid tryptophan.

Hypothetically, after massage; amino acids like tryptophan increase in blood. It cause a parallel increase in the neuron transmitter serotonin; which is made from tryptophan at motor ends plates.

The piezoelectricity is derived from pressure. While utilizing a medium of unctuous substance to reduce the friction a good amount of rhythm is used and creates magnetic field and electricity in the body. By charging the conductivity of nerves will be increased which may go up 100 metres per second. Electricity is
discharged in nerve fibre at regular intervals and moves in circular pattern.

Interruption to momentum is resulting into the state of disease, which may be pacified by doing massage with specific pressure. Acetylcholine acts as transmitter at motor end in the presence of calcium ion and facilitates synaptic action potential.

The nerve fibres have a myelinated sheet in which lipids are the chief ingredients. Na and K ions are responsible for the repolarisation in the nerve fibre. This action with the association of melatonin; a by-product of serotonin and a neurochemical is causing pleasant and calming effect by the massage. With the concentrated from of the drug; the absorption rate increases. Percutaneous absorption is observed in the inflammatory condition due to the presence of substances\textsuperscript{14}.

**Health benefits of Massage**

The following are the key effect of Massage

- **Reduce Muscle Tension**

  Massage affects the muscles in the body. It affects the muscles and other soft tissue in the body. Massage loosens contracted, shortened, hardened muscles. It may stimulate flaccid muscles. Chronic muscle tension is causing in reduction of the circulation of the body and movement of lymph area.

- **Improves Blood Circulation**

  The oxygen capacity of the blood can increase 10-15\% by the procedure of massage. With the help of direct or indirect stimulating nerves that supply internal organs, blood vessels of these organ dilated and allow more blood supply to them.

- **Induces better Lymph Movement**

  Lymph is milky white fluid that helps in draining of impurities and waste away from the tissue cells. A component of these waste is called as toxins which are the by-product of metabolism. That’s why; it is vital to our health. Muscular contraction is having a pumping effect that moves lymph. Massage helps to move lymph.

- **Results in Increased Mobility and Range of Motion of Joints**

  Massage provides a gentle stretching action to both the muscles and connective tissues which supports the muscles and many other parts of the body and which help to keep these tissues elastic.

- **Stimulation or Soothes Nervous system**

  Massage enhances the skin condition by improving the function the function of the sebaceous and sweat glands, which keep the skin lubricated, clean.

- **Results in Better Digestion and Intestinal Function**

  Massage procedure increases the body’s secretions and excretion. It also increases the production of gastric juices, saliva and urine. There is an increased excretion of nitrogen, inorganic phosphorous and salt also. Thus, results in increasing metabolic rate\textsuperscript{15}.

**DISCUSSION**

In Ayurvedic classical text it was stated that *Vata dosha* is dominant in
Vriddhavastha, Snehadravya used for Abhyanga has opposite properties that of Vata, so it alleviates the Vata. According to Sharangadhara there is Hrasa of Chhavi means complexion from 3rd decade of life. In Abhyanga procedure Snehadravya is applied over skin which is seat of Bhrajaka pitta. According to Acharya Charaka Bhrajaka Pitta is responsible for the complexion of skin. So we can say that Abhyanga helpful in the enhancing the complexion of skin. In the 5th decade of life Twacha means skin loses its elasticity and wrinkles appears, also the sebaceous glands and sweat gland produces less oil due to this skin became Rooksha. Skin related changes are noticeable in elderly person from 5th decade. According to Charaka Valli (Wrinkles) are due to Rasakshya and Sushruta says that it is because of Raktakshaya, further he also stated that there is a Kshaya or Rasaraktadi Dhaus in Vriddhavastha. According to Dalhana, while describing the time duration of Abhyanga, the Snehadravya nourishes the Dhatus. Hence, Abhyanga slows the aging process. Abhyanga improves the function of Sebaceous gland and sweat glands, which keep the skin lubricated, so that there is Shaman of Rooksh Guna of Vata. In 9th decade of life there will be Hrasa of Manaha. Acharya Charaka stated that Vayu is dominates in Sparshanendriya which is located in Twacha, further he also describes the important link between Mana, and all senses. So Abhyanga acts on Manovahastrots, and produces sound sleep. During Abhyanga amino acids like tryptophan increase in blood. It causes a parallel increase in the neuron transmitter serotonin. Low Serotonin levels are believed to be linked with depression, insomnìa; when levels of serotonin are brought normal, sleep falls into place.

CONCLUSION

Abhyanga is one of the procedures to be practiced in Dincharya. The advantages and beneficial in the management of Jara. Abhyanga is easy procedure, economic and effective. It increases the blood and lymph flow and in this way nourishes skin and local tissue. Abhyanga improves the complexion of skin, it also nourishes the Rasaraktadi Dhatu, improves the functioning of sebaceous gland and sweat gland, prevent from the skin related changes occurs in old age. Increased in the level of neuron transmitter serotonin produces sound sleep in elderly persons. So we can say that Abhyanga in daily beneficial in preventing ageing related changes.

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