



## 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 *Vridhnavastha*; *Rasarakta*, *Dhatu*, *Indriya*, *Bala* etc. became *Kshina*. Aging related changes are noticeable from the 5<sup>th</sup> 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*, *Madhyamavastha*, *Vridhnavastha* i.e. *Jara*, having influence of *Vata*. *Jara* is the last phase of life which describes as *Swabhava*<sup>1</sup>. Which means natural and irreversible process as well as natural disorder. *Jarachikitsa* is mentioned as separate branch in *Asthanga Ayurveda* contributing the treatment of *Jara*<sup>2</sup>. *Acharya Vagbhata* quoted *Abhyanga Aachareanitiya* as *Jarahar* in *Dincharyaadhyaya*<sup>3</sup>. 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 Vagbhata* 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 *Vruiddhavastha* from the age 70 to 100 years. There is a diminution of *Dhatu* and dominance of *Vata*<sup>4</sup>. *Acharya Sushruta* classified *Vaya* as *Balyavastha*, *Madhyamavastha* and *Vridhdhavastha*<sup>5</sup>. While *Acharya Sharangadhara* has narrated decade wise decline condition of body. According to him *Balyavastha* will diminished in 1<sup>st</sup> decade, in 2<sup>nd</sup> decade *Vridhhi*, in 3<sup>rd</sup> decade *Chhavi* means complexion diminished, In 4<sup>th</sup> decade *Medha* i. e. intellectual capacity of individual decreases. In 5<sup>th</sup> decade *Twak* i.e. Skin losses its elasticity and *Valli* (wrinkles) appears. In 6<sup>th</sup> decade *Drishti* diminished. In 7<sup>th</sup> decade *Shukrakhaya*, And *Buddhi* in the 8<sup>th</sup> decade, *Karmendriya* in 9<sup>th</sup> and *Manas* in 10<sup>th</sup> decade<sup>6</sup>. The effect of *Jara* is clearly noticeable from the 5<sup>th</sup> decade of life. *Acharya Sushruta* has mentioned *Jara* as *Svabhavajvyadhi*. After age of 70 years, *Rasarakta* *Dhatu*s, *Indriya*, *Bala*, *Virya*, *Utsaha* become *Kshina* and *Valli*, *pallitya*, *Khallitya*, *Twakparushta* noticeable sign<sup>7</sup>.

### 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<sup>8</sup>.

### 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 *Padabhyanga*.

#### Indication of Abhyanga

##### Abhyanga in Dincharya

*Abhyanga* is indicated as part of *Dincharya* to promote the health. Regular practice of *Abhyanga* acts as *Jarahar*, *Shramahar*, *Vatahar*. It also beneficial for *Netra* especially *Padabhyanga*, 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*, *Mutra*, *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 Dhātu

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

When *Abhyanga* done for 300 *Matras* *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 *Raktadhatu*, in 600 *Matra* (190 second) it reaches up to *Mamsa Dhātu*, in 700 *Matra* (228 second) it reaches up to *Meda Dhātu*, in 800 *Matra* (240 second) it reaches up to *Asthi Dhātu* and it reaches up to *Majja Dhātu* 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<sup>9</sup>. In *Abhyanga* the *Snehadravya* 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 *Dhatus* 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<sup>10</sup>.

*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<sup>11</sup>. As there is a link between *Pada* and *Netra*. Both are consider as two poles of body<sup>12</sup>. The medicine administrated from *Pada* reaches up to *Netra*. Hence, we can say that *Padabhyanga* can be beneficial for the *Netra*. Also, *Padabhyanga* relieves *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<sup>13</sup>.

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

The *Snehadravyas* 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 *Abhyanga* 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 diffuses slowly by this property and it remains 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 Modern View

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 causes 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 causes a parallel increase in the neuron transmitter serotonin; which is made from tryptophan at motor end 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 mylenated 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 neuro chemical 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<sup>14</sup>.

### 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<sup>15</sup>.

### DISCUSSION

In *Ayurvedic* classical text it was stated that *Vatadosha* 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 5<sup>th</sup> decade of life *Twacha* means skin losses its elasticity and wrinkles appear, also the sebaceous glands and sweat gland produces less oil due to this skin becomes *Rooksha*. Skin related changes are noticeable in elderly person from 5<sup>th</sup> 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* of *Rasarakta* 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 9<sup>th</sup> decade of life there will be *Hrasa* of *Manaha*. *Acharya Charaka* stated that *Vayu* is dominant in *Sparshanendriya* which is located in *Twacha*, further he also describes the important link between *Manas*, and all senses. So *Abhyanga* acts on *Manovahastrotas*, 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, insomnia; when levels of serotonin are brought normal, sleep falls into place<sup>16</sup>.

## 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 *Rasarakta* *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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