

UDVARTANA – SAMVAHANA VIS-A-VIS EFFLEURAGE

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ABSTRACT

Since ancient times, *Ayurvedic Acharyas* have given major importance to *Abhyanga* i.e. massage therapy 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 mostly for this *Abhyanga-Udvartana-Samvahana* therapy. In this article, general description of these therapies especially of *Udvartana-Samvahana* along with their process of administration and mechanism of action has been discussed.

Keywords: *Udvartana, Samvahana, Abhyanga, Sharira parimarjana, Effleurage,*

INTRODUCTION

Abhyanga may be defined as a process by which the underneath tissues get mobilization. *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 an 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. a) *Snigdha Udvartana*: indicated for lean and thin (*krisha*). b) *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. The basic differences in clinical procedures of these three are as follows⁴:

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.

Usggharsana: It is done by the brick powder or wood powder, etc. which 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 women⁸. 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 (*sukhakara sparsha*)⁹. It is performed by hand and intermittent in nature. 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) 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.

Sushruta has mentioned that '*mridu*' type of *Samvahana* is helpful to treat *Vatarakta*¹⁰, which indicates that *Samvahana* may either be mild (*mridu*) or deep (*tivra*).

DISCUSSION

The effects of *Samvahana* as per *Sushruta* are *preeti*, *Nidrakara*, *Vrishya*, *Kapha-Vatapaha*, *Shramapaha*, *Mamsa Rakta Twaka Prasadakaram*, *Shiramookha virechana*, *dourgandha*, *meda vilayana*.¹¹ These effects are achieved by *Samvahana*, *udvartana* etc. by following mechanism of action:

Euphoria (Preeti): *Samvahana* being a pleasant touch relaxes body and mind of the patients. Moreover reduction of pain by this procedure gives euphoria 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 subsided.

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 euphoria is obtained.

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

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

Pacifier of *Kapha-Vata* and *Shrama* (fatigue):

***Kaphapaha*:** The main features of *Kapha* are heaviness (*gaurava*), itching (*kandu*) etc. After *Ruksha Udvartana* or *Udgharshana*, *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 devoid of heaviness.

Lymph contains histaminases, approximately 30 times more than blood. Histaminase breaks down histamine that is responsible for itching, lethargy, acidity, allergic response, nasal obstruction, and redness of eyes etc. By these therapies, more histaminase comes into blood.

***Vatapaha*:** The main feature 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* - *Samvahana* like 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 which 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 *Udvartana* or *samvahana* types of 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 *dhatu*s. 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 get nourished, their *Dhatwagnis* also get nourished causing a balanced condition called *Dhatusamyā*. *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 to the skin.

Cleansing of minute Channels (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, the bacteria responsible for body odour are unable to get entry to show their game.

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.

CONCLUSION

The effects of *Udvartana Udgharshana* and *Utsadana* are multifold^{12, 13,14}. They pacify *Kapha-Vata*, itching, fatigue; offer lightness of the body and enhance sleep, vitality & vigour, euphoria, etc. *Udgharshana* clears up minute

channels, demolishes fat and body odour. As per the technique is concerned, *Udvartana*, *Udgharshana*, *Utsadana* and *Samvahana* are very much similar to effleurage and these are vital to keep body healthy as well as to fight against diseases.

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