

PADAABYANGA THE MIRACULOUS HEALING TECHNIQUE – A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

“Diseases do not go near one who massages his feet before sleeping, just as snakes do not approach eagles” as said in Ayurveda, it is very true and practical. *Padaabhyanga* is one among the *Dinacharya* (daily routine). Application of oil to the feet, followed by massage is popularly known as *Padaabhyanga*. This procedure will help to overcome *Rukshya* (dryness), *Sphutanata* (crackling), *Vedana* (pain), *Shrama* (tired) and pacifies the *Vatadosha*. The science of reflexology states that the sole of the feet is connected to various organs of the body. According to this science, organs such as the heart, lungs, kidney, brain, and intestines can be stimulated by foot massage. 21 steps and duration of 60 minutes is required for *Padaabhyanga* to gain maximum benefits. Many different techniques exist for giving a foot massage but one need to modify the techniques according to the convenience of a patient. Thus, here an effort made to explain the importance of *karma* – the procedure in treatment with different possible techniques and duration.

Keyword: *Padaabhyanga*, Reflexology

INTRODUCTION

Pada refers to foot.¹ Application of oil to the feet, followed by massage is popularly known as *Padaabhyanga*.² It is an important route of drug administration in patients suffering from disorders of the feet. It is explained under *Dinacharya* for preventive and promotive measure.³ This procedure will help to overcome *Rukshya*, *Sphutanata*, *Vedana*, *Shrama* and pacifies the *Vata dosha*.⁴ Daily practice of *Padaabhyanga* brings the beneficial effects like *Snigdhatva* (Unctuous), *Balya* (Strength) and rejuvenates the body. Massaging the sole before going to bed is a very beneficial practice, even in the healthy individuals. *Padaabhyanga* is one among the *Dinacharya*.⁵ According to the ancient texts of

Ayurveda. Diseases do not go near one who massages his feet before sleeping, just as snakes do not approach eagles.⁶

The science of reflexology⁷ states that the soles of the feet are connected to various organs of the body. According to this science, organs such as the heart, lungs, kidney, brain, and intestines can be stimulated by foot massage. Hence, a proper massage at specific sites on the foot, with specific oils, will prevent and cure various diseases.

PROCEDURE

Requirements: *Abhyanga* table, medicated oil, warm water, water bath for heating oil, a towel.

Preparation of the Subject: Ideally, the routine practice of *Padaabhyanga* for a healthy person should be in empty stomach before bath.

Position of the Subject: The subject is asked to lying supine position on the table. A pillow is kept under the legs so that the subject is comfortable.

PURVA KARMA

Draping: The subject is covered with a sheet, leaving only the lower legs exposed.

Cleaning: The foots are wiped with a towel dipped in warm water.

FIGURE1



Cleaning



Draping

PRADHANA KARMA

All movements are described for one foot. After all the steps are finished on one foot, the same should be followed on other foot.

1. **Brisk shaking movements (30 sec):** The therapist holds his hands on the sides of the foot and briskly moves his hands forward and backward.

2. **Brisk shaking movements (8 sec 10 times):** The hands are positioned on either side of the foot, and move up and down the length of the foot.

FIGURE 2



Fast shaking movements



Fast shaking movements from up & down

3. **Flexion and extension of toes (30 sec 10 times):** The foot is steadied in one hand while other hand flexes and extends the toes.

4. **Twisting of foot (30 sec 10 times):** The foot is firmly gripped with one hand above the other.

One hand is moved clockwise, while the other is moved anti clockwise. This produces a gentle twist of the foot.

FIGURE 3



Flexion & extension of toes

Twisting of foot

5. **Application of oil** (60 sec): The oil is heated in the water bath up to around 40 degrees centigrade. The warm oil is applied to the foot.

6. **Pulling of toes** (20 sec 2 times): Beginning with big toe, each toe is held between the thumb and index.

FIGURE 4



Application of oil

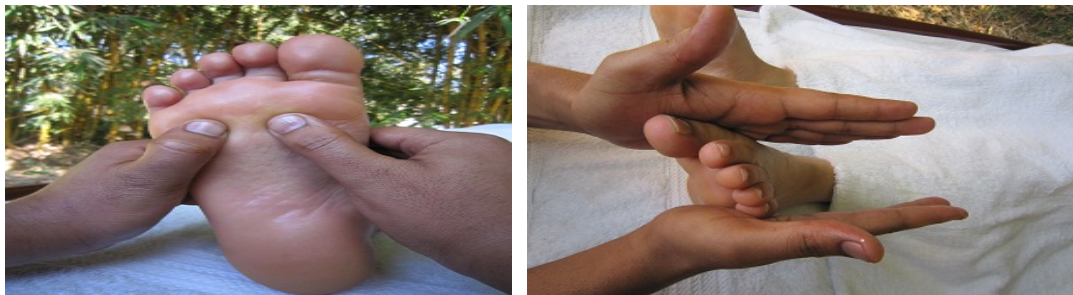
Pulling of toes

7. **Thumb poking** (60 secs 4x10): The foot of the subject is stabilized by grasping the foot with both hands, thumbs on the soles and fingers on the dorsum of the foot. The soles are gently and firmly stimulated by poking with the thumbs. The poking is

done systematically in lines beginning at the base of a toe and ending at the heel.

8. **Fast shaking movements** (30 sec): The sides of the foot are grasped in both hands, and moved briskly from toes to heel.

FIGURE 5



Thumb poking

Fast shaking movements

9. **Linear maneuver on foot** (15 secs 10 times): The therapist stands foot end of table, facing the

subject. The foot is grasped just above the ankle with both the hands. The foot then is 'milked'

firmly with both hands, the thumbs held together along the middle of the sole.

10. Linear maneuver on dorsum of foot (15 secs 2 times): The therapist holds the ankle in one hand to steady the foot, then places thumb of other

hand in the fleshy soft space between the tendons bones on the dorsum of the foot. And slides his thumb towards the toes applying firm pressure. Each soft space on the dorsum of the foot is massaged in this way.

FIGURE 6



Linear maneuver on foot



Linear maneuver on dorsum of foot

11. Circular and linear massage on toes (20 secs 2 times): The foot is held firmly at the ankle with one hand and each toe massaged with the other hand. A toe is grasped between the thumb and the Index finger. The toe is then massaged from the base to tip, applying a linear movement between the joints and a circular movement on the joint.

12. Linear maneuver in web spaces (30 secs 5x2 times): The foot is grasped at the ankle with one hand to stabilize it. The index finger of the other hand is placed between the big toe and the second toe. Pressure is exerted on the floor of the web space by briskly moving the finger horizontally. Each web space is treated similarly.

FIGURE 7



Circular and linear massage on toes



Linear maneuver in web spaces

13. Linear maneuver on sides of foot (30 secs 10 times): The therapist places the pulp of both the thumbs just below the ankles, and then moves his thumbs towards the little toe, applying firm pressure all the way.

14. Linear maneuver on plantar aspect (15 secs 10 times): The therapist holds the heel of the subject with fingers on the sole and thumbs on the dorsum of the foot, and then hands are moved from the heel to the tips of the toes in a milking movement, applying pressure throughout.

FIGURE 8



Linear maneuver on sides of foot



Linear maneuver on plantar aspect

15 Circular maneuver on pads and heel (30 secs 10 times): The therapist holds the foot with his fingers on the dorsum and the thumbs on the sole. Starting from the heel, then moves to the pads up to the base of the toes, firm pressure is applied in circular movements.

16 Thumb poking on soles (4x10 60 secs): The foot of the subject patient (Patient foot) is stabilized by holding the ankle in one hand and with the thumb of the other hand, the sole is gently and firmly poked.

FIGURE 9



Circular maneuver on pads and heel



Thumb poking on soles

17. Circular on pads to and fro movements on the plantar aspect (30 sec): The therapist grasps the foot at the ankle with one hand and with the palm of the other hand he rubs the sole along its length in both directions.

18. Simultaneous relaxing stroke (30 sec 10 times): The foot is held in both hands with the thumbs on the sole and fingers on the dorsal aspect then firm pressure is applied to the sole from the heel towards the toes.

FIGURE 10



To and fro movements



Relaxing stroke

PASCHATH KARMA

Wipe the feet with a warm, damp towel. After the foot massage, provide bathroom slippers to prevent slipping. The subject is asked to rest for 15 to 30 minutes, and then wash his feet with hot water.

Virtues of Padaabyanga as a daily regimen

Effect of *Padaabyanga* is not only depends on selection oil but also depends on karma or performance of *padaabyanga* with suitable technique. *Pada* gives *Ashraya* to *Marmas* like *Kurchashira* – *Snayumarma*, *Talahridaya* – *Kaalantara pranahara marma*, *Kurcha* – *Vaikalyakara marma* *Kshiptam* – *Kaalantara pranahara marma*. Hence, different techniques play a pivotal role in manipulating the *marma* points. *Padaabyanga* with proper selection of oil and proper set of technique will enhance its effect. It helps in alleviation of roughness, stiffness, numbness and excessive dryness of feet. It prevents or cures cracking of the heels, Strain or tiredness of the feet, Promotes the strength to feet, and Improves eyesight. Feet become soft and smooth and Protect against the risk of sciatica, alleviates *vata*dosha and Prevents the cramping of feet.⁸ It prevents *Grudrasi vata*, *Padasputana*, *Sirasnaayusankocha*, *Padaabyanga* and *Marmaparipaalana*.

DISCUSSION

Massage is one among *bahirparimarjana chikitsa* and it can be divided into whole body massage and part of body massage. Among single part body massage, Head massage, Ear massage and Foot massage are given more importance.⁹ Many different tech-

niques exist for giving a foot massage. One should modify the techniques according to the convenience of the patient. Apply more pressure when hands are massaging from the toes towards the ankles and less pressure from the ankles to the toes. This will help push extra fluid out of the feet. Action of *padaabyanga* is depends on *karma* – the procedure and medicated oil taken for procedure. Nowadays importance is being given only for the selection of oil and neglecting procedural part. Modification in massage techniques is much essential like deep massage in thick and bulky area (heel) superficial massage over sensitive area (fingers, foot arch). *Padaabyanga* induces pleasing effect if done with trained technical steps otherwise it may lead to complication like sprain, bone fracture, tendon and muscle tear etc.

Oil used in *Abhyanga* reaches different *dhatu*s if applied for the stipulated time. This clearly indicates absorption of drugs through skin. The *virya* (potency) of oil applied to the feet, 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 cure the diseases of that particular *dhatu*.¹⁰ Incenter of the feet there are two *Siras* are situated which are directly connected to the eyes. These transmit the effect of the medicines applied over the feet in the form of massage etc.¹¹ *Vayu* dominates in the *sparshanendriya* (Tactile sensory organ) and this sensory organ is lodged in the skin. *Sparshanendriya*

is present all over the body and so it is present in the place of other *indriya* also and they are dependent on *Sparshanendriya* for their *Vishayagrahan*. *Indriya* is in close contact of mind hence if *indriya* remain healthy, mind also remains healthy. Thus, *Padaabhyanga* keeps body and mind healthy.¹²

CONCLUSION

Pada being one amongst the *panchakarmendriya* and plays a pivotal role in the locomotor system. *Pada* is the *stana* of *vata-dosha*. It always have fear of aggravation of *vata-dosha* and susceptible for injury. And even *pada* are connected to various organs of the body so its ones duty to protect it from *vata-dosha*. *Padaabhyanga* is one *bahirparimarjana chikitsa* with application of oil to the feet. *Padaabhyanga* is a *nityakarma* mentioned under the *dinacharya*. For successful flying how a bird required two wings in same way for successful treatment along with medicine procedure is also important. Thus there are many different techniques exist for giving a foot massage. And here an attempt made to describe different techniques involved in *padaabhyanga* with time period and its benefits.

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