

PANCHKARMA – A UNIQUE AYURVEDIC THERAPY

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda through its holistic approach suggest complete care for mind, body and soul. No other medical sciences have the knowledge of detoxification of mind and body. Panchkarma is one of the massive Ayurvedic therapies known around the world. It involves five types of Ayurvedic diagnostic tools (*Karmas*) for the purification of the body and to detoxify the toxin elements causing the diseases. Body is like a machine (vehicle). As how a vehicle needs service for its proper smoothness, maintenance likewise due to its routine work there is wear and tear of the cells of the body which also needs service for doing its normal routine work and to be healthy. Panchkarma also strengthens the immune system of the body. The paper highlights the detailed information on Panchkarma and its unbelievable therapeutic uses.

Keywords: Panchkarma, Ayurvedic therapies, detoxification.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is one of the ancient sciences known worldwide. The main aim of Ayurveda is to keep healthy to fully fit person and to detoxify the toxin elements from the body of an unfit person. (*Swasthasya swastha rakshanam, aaturasya vikara prashanam*). There are two main types of diagnosis of disease,

- A. *Sadhya* - This can be cured. It is of two types – Easy to cure (*Sukha Sadhya*), Difficult to cure (*Krichra Sadhya*).
- B. *Asadhya* - This cannot be cured. It is of two types – *Yapya* (medicine is required for as long as patient is alive), *Anupakrama* (nothing can be done.)

There are two types of medicines;

(1) *Shamana* (Palliative treatment) – *Shamana* – palliative treatment is that which does not expel the increased *Doshas* out of the body, it does not increase the normal *Dosha*, but makes the abnormal- *Doshas* normal. In short, *Shamana* treatment brings imbalanced *Dosha* to normalcy.

(2) *Shodhana* (Purification treatment) – which expels imbalanced *Dosha* out of body. – Useful in aggravated stages of diseases. *Shodhana upakrama* is one of the best therapies but it cannot be used in patients who have low strength to tolerate the disease and treatment (*dhatukshaya*), mainly the diseases of *shakhaagata* and *madhayam marga vyadhi*. *Doshas* getting loosened from the body by oleation and Sweating therapies are expelled out by purification

therapies just like the dirt from the cloth – by washing.

Panchkarma is one of the *shodhana* procedures to remove imbalance *doshas* from the body. The principles of Panchkarma, one of the unique *karma*, known through five thousand years mention in the Ayurvedic literatures is to detoxify and purify the body. None other medical sciences have the knowledge to clean or to detoxify mind, body and soul. Panchkarma not only cleans the body from inside but it also refreshes both mind and soul by its karma. It has both preventive and curative mechanisms. The therapy involves five-fold procedures, depending on patient's age (*vayah*), different climatic conditions (*rutu*), Ayurvedic constitutional type (*prakruti*), condition of *tri-doshas* (*vata*, *pitta*, *kapha*), digestive strength (type of *kostha*), the level of immunity (*vyadhiksamatavah*), and many other factors.

AIM & OBJECTIVES

To study literary view in detail about the importance of Panchkarma.

PANCHKARMA AN OVERVIEW

According to *Charaka Acharya* Panchkarma includes *Vamana*, *Virechana*, *Nasya*, *Anuvasana basti* and *Niruha basti*. He hasn't included *Rakhtamokshan* while describing five folds of Panchkarma. *Acharya Sushruta* and *Vagbhata* Had include *Rakhtamokshan* in there five folds of Panchkarma.

Panchkarma involves the major five folds of cures with some minor procedures to be done before (pre), and after (post) the therapy. They are;

- 1) *Poorva karma* (Pre)
- 2) *Pradhana karma* (Main)
- 3) *Paschata karama* (Post)

1) **POORVA KARMA** –

It includes the procedures to be done before the main therapy to dislodge the toxin elements in the body. This procedure helps to dilute the excess amount of imbalanced *doshas* in our body, and to remove impurities by the nearest route in a very healthy manner. Even if they are not taken in panchakrama this

stage is important which gives support to the *pradhana karma*.

Doshas getting loosened from the body by oleation and Sweating therapies are expelled out by purification therapies just like the dirt from the cloth – by washing.

“*malo hii dehadutkleshya hriyate vasaso tatha | Snehaswedayettathoutkilshata shoshayate shodhan-yermalaha ||*”

..... *Ah.Hru. Su. 18*

The body of the person who resorts to purification therapies without undergoing oleation and sweating therapy habitually gets broken just like a log of dry wood while being bent.

“*snehaswedavanabhasya kuryata sanshodhanam tu yaha |*

Daru shushakm eva naame shariram tasaya dirayate ||

..... *Ah.Hru. Su. 18*

It includes;

a) **SNEHANA (ABHAYANGA / OLEATION / LUBRICATION)-**

In this process warm medicated oil or ghee is applied to all over the body or at specific regions. It helps to dilute the excess amount of imbalanced *doshas* from the body and to eliminate the *doshas* by the nearest route.

The *Hraseeyasi matra* is the very little quantity of *sneha* that is given orally / internally to the patient, just to judge the digestive strength. After judging the digestion power, the right dose of the fat is decided. As a preparation procedure to Panchakarma therapy, *Acchasneha* – drinking of fat alone should be soon after digestion of previous food and in maximum dose.

Shamana Sneha – palliative oleation therapy the regimen as suggested for the person who has undergone purgation therapy.

“*Diptaantragnihi parishudhakosthaha pratyagra dhatubalavarnayuktaha |*

Drudhindriyo mandhajaraha shatayuha snehoupasavi purushaha pradishtaha ||”

..... *Ah.Hru. Su. 16*

It gives a keen digestive activity (*diptaagni*), clean alimentary tract, well developed strong tissues, good

physical strength, colour – complexion and powerful sense faculties, to one who is slow in getting old and who lives for a hundred years is the person who is habituated to oleation in other words these are the benefits of oleation therapy if adopted often.

It is effective in *sandhigatavata*, *grudhrasi*, *pakshaghata* (paralysis), skin disorders, respiratory disorders, gastrointestinal diseases, etc. but *bhaya snehana* is contradicted in *amvatata*.

b) **SWEDANA** –

“*snehakilannaha koshtaga dhatuga va strotolina ye cha shakaasthisanstha* |

Doshaha swedayeste dravikrutya kostham nitaha samyaka shudhibhi nihinayante ||”

It can be given in two way (a) *Agni sweda* and (b) *Anagni sweda*.

Doshas which have been lubricated by *snehana* therapy, which lies either in the alimentary tract, tissues, or hidden in the channels of the extremities, bones etc. are liquefied by Sweating therapy, and then brought into the alimenantray canal to be eliminated out of the body completely, by appropriate purification therapies (Panchkarma). So, *swedana* is done after *snehana karma*, but before elimination of *Doshas* by Panchakarma.

It is effective in above diseases; *ruksha swedana* is given to *amvatata* patients.

2) **PRADHANA KARMA** –

The main step to remove the impurities from the body and for purification is done by this fold of therapy. It contains main five folds of cures to eliminate the toxins by the nearest route in upward (*urdhva gati*) i.e. through oral route, downward (*adohg gati*) i.e. through anal route, lateral manner (*tiryagh gati*) or through tiny pores i.e sweat glands (*romkupaha*) present on skin. The five folds of cures are;

- 1) *Vamana* (Emesis)
- 2) *Virechana* (Purgation)
- 3) *Basti* (Medicated Enema)
- 4) *Nasya* (Nasal oleation)
- 5) *Rakthmokshan* (Bloodletting).

A) **VAMANA (EMESIS)** –

It should be administered in increase *Kapha dosha*, either alone or in combination with other *Doshas*

where *Kapha* is predominant. It cleans the alimentary tract upto the small intestine.

On clear seasons, after administering *snehana* and sweating therapy properly, on the day previous to the day of emesis, the patient is made sure that he has slept well the previous night and his previous food (gives *kapha dosha* excited food like black gram, curd, fish etc) is well digested. Next day, *Kapha Dosha* excited patient is given emetic medicine which usually contains *Madanaphala* (*Randia spinosa*), sugarcane juice etc. *Kapha, Pitta and Vata* coming out in successive order, without any complication, relaxation of the mind and cessation of *Vamana* on its own, and feeling of not too much of discomfort is *samyaka yoga*.

It is very effective in respiratory problems like *Kasa, shwasa, rajyakshayama*, bronchial asthma, skin disorders (*kustha roga*) like eczema, psoriasis (*kitibha kustha*) and leukoderma (*shweta kustha*), chronic cold, diabetes mellitus (*prameha*), *adhoga amlapitta* (hyper acidity), *navajwara* (acute fever), diseases of *urdhavroga* (above neck), *hrulaas* (nausea), etc.

B) **VIRECHANA (PURGATION)** –

It should be administered in increase *Pitta dosha*, either alone or in combination with other *Doshas* where *Pitta* is predominant. The kind and quantity of purgation medicine should be administered according to the nature of *Kostha* (alimentary tract, bowels).

It is medicated induced purgation and even milk can induce purgation in patients having *mrudu kostha*. It cleans small intestine up to the anal region. After administering *snehana* and sweating therapy properly, on the day previous to the day of purgation when the alimentary tract is lubricated purgative medicine is administered to *pitta* excited patients.

It is effective in *Tamaka shwasa* – “*tamake tu virechanam*” (bronchial asthma), *pakshaghata* (paralysis), *urdhvaga amlapitta*, *udar vyadhi* (ascites), *kustha roga* (skin disorders) like psoriasis, eczema, *kamala* (jaundice), etc.

IMPORTANCE OF VAMANA AND VIRECHANA –

“*budhiprasadam balaindriyanam dhatustiratvam jwalanasya diptam | chirach cha pakam vayasaha karoti sanshodhanam samyagupasamanam ||*

..... *Ah.Hru. Su. 18*

If purification therapies, properly undertaken then following results are seen - clarity of the mind, strength of the sense organs, stability of the tissues, keenness of digestive power and slow ageing.

C) BASTI (MEDICATED ENEMA) –

“*upakramanam sarvesham so aagranihi*”

..... *Ah.Hru. Su. 19*

Basti is said to be *Ardh chikitsa*. Mainly given in patients having *Vata dosha* predominance. The normal flow of *Apan vayu* is in downward direction. In some of the diseases the direction of *Apan vayu* and other types of *vata* are reversed. With the help of *Basti* it is possible to change the direction of *vayu*. According to age, *vaya*, *kala*, *bala*, *rutu* here medicated oil or ghee or medicated decoction of Ayurvedic herbs is given through the anal route with the help of specify *basti pot*, *basti dravya nad basti netra*. *Basti* can be given to both (*krusha*) thin person or (*sthula*) obese person, according to the need of the patient. This enema is different than enema given by modern science. *Basti dravya* is mainly administered through anal route in the colon. As the root nourishes the tree, its flowers, stem, fruits etc, likewise the colon nourishes the body where it absorbs the useful nutrients needed for the body and expels out the waste products out of the body. Just as the cloth adsorbs the colour from the water, boiled with *Kusumbha* etc, colouring materials, similarly, the *basti*, absorbs the *Doshas* from the moistened body.

- Before administration of *Niruha Basti* the body should be lubricated. *Niruha basti* contains medicated *kwatha* as main content with low or no fat in it. *Niruha basti* should be administered in empty stomach (*bhuktabhakt avastha*).
- *Auvasana basti* is only of medicated fat (oil or ghee). It should be given before *niruha basti* to

lubricate the body. It can be administered after eating.

- *Uttarabasti* administered through urethral route. It is given in both males and females. It is useful mainly in infertility patients.

For all the diseases which are localized in the *Shakha* (extremities), *Koshta* (alimentary tract), *Marma* (vital organs), all the organs above the shoulders, there is no other cause, more important than *Vata*.

Vata is the one responsible for transportation and destruction of the increased faeces, *Kapha*, *Pitta* and other *Malas* – wastes; therapy.

“*tasmatachikitsaardhaha itti pradishtaha krutsana chikitsa api ch bastirekaha*”

..... *Ah.Hru.*

Su.19

Hence it is described as half of the treatment (*Ardha Chikitsa*) – of all diseases while some others authorities say, that it is full treatment even.

It is effective in 80 types of *vata vyadhis*, skin disorders, disorders related to intestinal tract, *madhumeha* (diabetes mellitus), *ajirna vyadhi*, constipation, different neurological disorders, *gulma*, *anaha*, splenomegaly etc.

D) NASYA (NASAL MEDICATION)

“*urdhavajatru vikareshu visheshan nasya ishiyate*”

..... *Ah.Hru. Su.20*

In Ayurveda literature *Acharayas* has said nose has the doorway to brain (“*naasaa hi shirso dwaram*”), hence it is very useful in tissues and organs in diseases related to *urdhva jatrugata*. *Nasya* is medicated oil or ghee administered through nasal route, in a specific manner.

Nasya treatment is of three kinds –

1. *Virechana Nasya* – purgatory
2. *Brimhana Nasya* – nourishing and
3. *Shamana* – Palliative

Other kinds of Nasya are;

- *Marsha* and *Pratimarsha* are the two subdivisions of *sneha nasya*- nasal medication with fat material based on the quantity –of fats used.

- *Avapeeda* is from paste (*Kalka*), fresh juice, decoction and it is a strong purgation to the head.
- *Dhmana* is in the form of powder- to be blown into the nose and is a purgative.

“*ghan unnat prasana twaksandagrivasayavakshasaha | Drudhaindriyaastapalita bhaveryunasayashiilinaha ||*”
..... *Ah.Hru. Su.20*

The skin, shoulders, neck, face and chest become thick, well developed and bright; the body parts and the sense organs become strong, disappearance of grey hairs will be obtained by persons who becomes habituated to nasal medication are the benefits of *nasya*.

It is very effective in headache, migraine, *shiroroga* (*ardhavabhedaka, suryavarta, anantavata*), sinusitis (*pratishaya*), rhinitis (*peenasa*), paralysis (*pakshaghata*), diseases related to hairs (*khalitya, palitya*), epilepsy (*apsamara*), *krumi* (worm infestations), *granthi, kustha roga*, diseases of throat etc.

E) RAKHTAMOKSHANA (BLOOD LETTING)

This therapy is not included by *Charaka Acharaya* in his five folds of Panchakarma, but he has specified *Rakthamokshan* wherever there is *rakthadushthi*. *Sushruta Acharya* had described in details about this therapy. This therapy had limitations as the main component of the body i. e (*rakth*) blood is removed directly. In this procedure small quantity of impure blood is let (*mokshan*) out from the body by leeches (*jaluka*), by puncturing the vein with the help of syringes (*siravedha*), *prachhan* (with the help of surgical blade), *shrunga* (horns of animals) etc.

Pitta and Raktha have *Ashrya- ashray bhava sambandha*. Hence with the help of bloodletting not only impure blood is removed from the body but *dushit* (vitiated) *pitta* is also removed from the body.

It is very effective in skin disorders as psoriasis, eczema, acne, scabies, urticarial, leucoderma, etc; in *vatavyadhis* as paralysis, sciatica etc.

3) PASCHATA KARAMA

After *pradhana karma* of Panchkarma specific diet and regimen i.e. *Pandanshik kram* and small procedures like *dhumarapana* after *vamana* etc. is suggested in the Ayurvedic literature. Because, after Panchkarma, there is *agnimandya* and therefore weakness of body tissues. So to give strength to body tissues and *agni pradipiti (deepana)*, and *pachana* of the left out *doshas* in the body, this is the important step to be done.

OTHER PROCEDURES –

There are also some procedures (which are used under the name Panchkarma), as *katibasti, shirodhara, shirobasti, udhvartana, gandhusa, dhumarapana, hrudhbasti*, etc. but these are not the part of Panchkarma.

Panchkarma means only five procedures.

According to **Charaka**: 1) *Vamana* 2) *Virechana* 3) *Nasya* 4) *Anuvasana basti* 5) *Niruha basti*.

According to *Sushruta*: 1) *Vamana* 2) *Virechana* 3) *Nasya* 4) *Basti (Niruha and Anuvasana)* 5) *Rakhtmokshan*.

DISCUSSION

Good health depends upon our capability to fully metabolize all aspects of life, assimilating that which nourishes and eliminating the rest. If we can't completely digest our food, experiences and emotions, toxins accumulate in our body tissues, creating imbalance in the body mechanism and ultimately creates disease. Panchkarma is an elegant cleansing process that releases stored toxins and restores the body's innate healing ability.

Same like a Vehicle mechanic do the servicing of vehicle, change the engine oil and replace new part with, not functioning part, which leads to proper smoothness and maintenance, like that due to routine work there is wear and tear of the cell of the body which also needs service for doing its normal routine work and to be healthy.

If our digestive energies known as *Agni* (fire) are strong or *samyak*, we create healthy tissues, elimi-

nate waste products efficiently and produce a subtle essence called Ojas.

Ojas, is the basis for clarity of perception, physical strength and immunity. On the other hand, if our Agni is weakened, digestion is incomplete and creates toxins that get stored in the body. This toxic residue is known as *Ama*.

Accumulation of *ama* in the body leads to blockage of flow of energy, information and nourishment throughout the system. Ayurveda considers these build-up toxins the underlying cause of all the diseases. A common example can be given as cholesterol deposition in the vessels leads to blockage of Blood vessels i.e. arteries, veins and capillaries which ultimately results to heart attacks.

Panchakarma reverses the degenerative process quickly and its effects are often profound and long-lasting and essential. These will help stimulate your liver and digestive organs, helping them to purge toxins.

CONCLUSION

Panchkarma is not only a preventive measure but also has a curative mechanism. It rejuvenates the body and gives strength to the body and the immune system of the body. To keep body fit and fine one should do Panchkarma regularly. If we want to experience optimal health, it is crucial to maintain a strong digestive fire and eliminate toxins from the body. Panchakarma is a time-proven natural therapy that detoxifies and restores the body's inner balance and vitality.

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