

CRITICAL STUDY OF ABHYANGA W.S.R. TO COSMETIC EFFECT: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Introduction- Ayurveda is the ancient science of complete health. *Abhyanga* is the essential part of *Dincharya* advised for overall health. In today's developed era, maintaining cosmetic health naturally, is the need. In *Dincharya*, *Acharyas* have explained *Abhyanga* for Healthy, beautiful skin and hair. *Abhyanga* not only prevents diseases but it is useful to maintain and restore cosmetic wellness also. In this article a thorough review on cosmetic benefits of *Abhyanga*, *Shirobhyanga* & *Padabhyanga*, their procedures, mode of action is explained with the help of various classical texts like *Charak Samhita*, *Sushrut Samhita* etc. Relevant articles were analyzed & reviewed for deeper understanding about *Abhyanga*. **Discussion:** *Twacha* is *Aashrayasthan* of *Bhrajak Pitta*. Application of *Snehan dravyas* for *Abhyanga* leads to its *Pachana* by *Bhrajak Pitta*. Health of skin can be improved by proper action of *Bhrajak Pitta*. Lymphatic system runs superficially under the skin & thus *Abhyanga* helps in removal of lymphatic waste & metabolic waste. **Conclusion** – *Abhyanga* is beneficial for cosmetic purpose. It makes skin healthy, soft and moisturized. It delays signs of aging. *Shirobhyanga* makes hair beautiful and lustrous and *Pa-dabhyanga* makes feet beautiful and healthy.

Keywords- *Abhyanga*, Cosmetology, *Padabhyanga*, *Shirobhyanga*, *Taila*

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is the traditional health care system. It not only deals with health of a person, but it teaches a complete way of life. Ayurveda deals with internal beauty (health) as well as external beauty and they both are closely related to each other. In today's modern lifestyle and practices external beauty plays a vital role and hence cosmetology is the emerging branch. Cosmetology is the branch which helps to alter the external appearance of a person & modification of beauty. Cosmetology helps in developing an outwardly pleasant and attractive personality and thus helpful in achievement (*punya*), longevity with good health (*Ayushya & Arogyam*) and happiness (*Anandam*).¹ Cosmetology covers beauty of a whole body, especially beauty of a skin, complexion, healthy and lustrous hair, foot care etc. Skin not only covers our body, but it holds our emotions together. In *Dincharya Acharyas* have explained *Abhyanga* for healthy and beautiful skin & hair. *Abhyanga* covers whole body massage for the benefits of skin, *Shirobhyanga* for maintenance of healthy hair and *Padabhyanga* for foot care. Daily practice of *Abhyanga* delays ageing, cures tiredness and *Vata* disorders, improves vision & complexion and provides nourishment to body, increases longevity, makes skin lustrous and gives strength.² In modern era *Abhyanga* is correlated with massage, but it's a broad term. Massage is particularly based on techniques of systemic rubbing, while *Abhyanga* is specially a massage with oil or unctuous substance. *Abhyanga* provides a passive form of exercise even for those who cannot perform active physical exercise. *Abhyanga* means application of oil, ghee or any *snigdha dravyas* to the skin followed by massage in specific directions. *Abhyanga* should be done with Lukewarm oil. It should be done in the direction of hair (*anulom gati*) for proper absorption of oil. At joint it should be done in circular motion.³

Effect of Abhyanga on Skin

Beautiful skin gives pleasure and boosts up the confidence to some extent. Healthy skin is vital for our survival both, emotionally and physically. *Vata dosha*

dominates the tactile sensory organ and this sensory organ is lodged in the skin.⁴ *Vata dosha* causes various disorders of skin. When *Vayu* is aggravated in the skin it causes *Rukshata* (dryness), *Twaksphutan* (cracking), and *Karshnya* (black coloration of skin). It also causes stretching and redness of the skin.⁵ *Abhyanga* is best for aggravated *Vata dosha* in the skin.⁶ Commonly *Abhyanga* is done with *Snehan dravyas*. *Snehan dravyas* are having opposite properties of *Vata dosha* that is *Snigdha, Guru, Sheet, Mrudu Guna*. *Abhyanga* done to the skin improves texture of skin, prevents wrinkles & skin diseases like acne, gives strength to the face muscles and cheeks. *Abhyanga* improves blood circulation of the skin. The oxygen caring capacity of blood increases by doing *Abhyanga*. *Abhyanga* improves the skin by enhancing the functions of sebaceous & sweat glands. *Abhyanga* done with *Kumkumadi taila, Eladi taila* enhances complexion and make skin smooth and glowing.⁷ According to *Acharya Sushrut* *Abhyanga* provides a glossy softness to the skin, inhibits aggravation of *Vata & Kapha dosha*.⁸ During winter season (*Hemant and Shishir Ritu*), atmospheric temperature is low and weather is cold. Due to this, blood vessels below the skin get constricted, less amount of blood flow to the surface of the skin & complexion becomes dull. So, if regular *Abhyanga* is done then it will help to keep skin moisturized & healthy.⁹ In old age, there is diminution of all *Saptadhatu* and dominance of *Vata dosha*.¹⁰ With the increase in age, skin related changes are most prominently noticeable. It includes wrinkles, sagging skin, outer layer of skin becomes thin. Changes in connective tissues reduces strength of skin and elasticity. Sebaceous glands functions become low & it produces less oil. *Abhyanga* is said to be *jarahar* and it delays aging and thus it is useful in age related changes.¹¹ In *Abhyanga* oil is used and the skin is relatively permeable to fat soluble substances. The oil molecules pass through dermis into the capillaries and into blood stream. The oil is also absorbed through hair follicle and sweat ducts.

Table 1: Cosmetic benefits of different oils used for *Abhyanga* ^{12,13,14}

Oils for <i>Abhyanga</i>	Cosmetic benefits
sesame oil	It acts as an antioxidant as it contains vitamin E and penetrates skin easily. It has best <i>Vatshamak</i> property and hence used in dryness, cracking & black coloration of skin. It enhances complexion and makes healthy skin.
Coconut Oil	It is an effective moisturizer for all skin types. Prevents dryness & flaking of skin, delays appearance of wrinkles and sagging of skin. Helps in treating various skin problems & prevents premature aging.
Olive oil	It prevents signs of photo aging & sun damage. It has anti-aging properties. It acts as an antioxidant, moisturizer and repairs cracked heels. Useful to cure brittle nails.

Effect of *Shiroabhyanga*: Application and *Mardan* of *Taila* to the *Shirah Pradesha* (head) is called *Shirobhyanga*. In Ayurveda, much importance is given to the *Shirobhyanga*. It is mentioned that if whole body massage is not possible everyday then at least one should massage to *Shir* (head), *Shravan* (Ear), & *Pada* (foot sole) on daily basis. ¹⁵

Procedure – *Shirobhyanga* should be done with cold or lukewarm oil, because head is the place of all senses & it is the most vital part of body. *Shirobhyanga* should be done for at least 400 *Matra kal* (127 sec). At first, one should do massage to left and right parietal region and then to frontal, vertex & occipital regions. One should massage gently to the scalp with the fingertips. ¹⁶

Cosmetic Benefits

- Ayurveda considers hair as a byproduct of bone. The tissues which are responsible for formation of bones are also responsible for hair growth. When massage is done to the scalp heat is generated & blood vessels get dilated, thus blood circulation towards it increases & thus improves health of hair and scalp.
- One who does *Shirobhyanga* daily, gets the benefits of preventing hair fall & graying of hair. It gives strength to scalp, strengthens hair roots & makes the hair black & long. Daily massage to the head make facial skin soft & provides luster to face. ¹⁷
- *Shirobhyanga* softens the hair & increases density. ¹⁸ It is indicated in dry scalp & it stops itching of scalp. ¹⁹
- The skin, hair, horn & bones of quadruped animals is burnt & reduced to ash and it is mixed in

the oil. After application of this medicated oil fresh skin is developed over the ulcer & natural hair grows at that site. ²⁰

Effect of *Padabhyanga*: *Padabhyanga* means *Mardan* with oil or ghee to the sole. It is an effective procedure. It is very simple process and requires less time & equipment. The foot and particularly sole contain specific points where the nerve endings relating to various body organs congregate.

Procedure- *Padabhyanga* can be done anytime but its effectiveness increases when it is done at bedtime. First Feet should be washed with warm water before massaging. Any medicated oil is best but in summer season *Tila Taila* and in winter season Mustard oil should be used. Massage should be done in downward direction (from ankle to toe). At joint circular movement should be done. It should be done for at least 10 to 15 minutes or till warmth is produced.

Cosmetic Benefits: *Padabhyanga* prevents and cures dryness, stiffness & roughness of feet. It makes smooth skin and makes feet attractive and provides strength to the feet. ²¹ so it is beneficial for cracked heels & dryness of feet. Having low eyesight is the stigma on a beautiful face but *Padabhyanga* is said to be *Drushtiprasadkrut* means has a great role in improving eyesight, pleasantness of vision, & eye health. Regular *Padabhyanga* soothes the feet, skin gets rejuvenated and begins to glow.

Mode of action of *Abhyanga*: *Abhyanga* directly effects on epidermis and influence keratinocytes for their protective quality and also to melanocytes which are responsible for color & complexion of the skin. Under the epidermis lies dermis which contains mast cells, fibroblast and histocytes. Mast cells produce histamines. Histamines are the mediator of skin aller-

gies. *Abhyanga* may have direct mast cell stabilizing effect & mast cell cleansing effect which can be helpful in curing skin allergies & urticaria.

Abhyanga directly affects mast cell, keratocyte, melanocytes and fibroblast. Thus, leads to cyto-stabilising effect on different cells and their functions.²² Hence *Abhyanga* makes healthy skin & improves color and complexion. It also maintains elasticity of skin.

Water is the major component for keeping skin healthy and moisturized. Water originates in the deeper epidermis layer and comes upward to hydrates cells in the stratum corneum of skin and get evaporated. *Abhyanga* inhibits trans epidermal water loss, restoring the lipid barrier and amino lipid of the skin.²³

Oil used for *Abhyanga* reaches up to different *Dhatus* when massaged for certain period of time. Thus it reaches up to the skin when massage is done for 400 *Matra* and removes disorders of skin, moisturizes it and makes healthy skin. When softness is induced in skin, it becomes lustrous, attains complexion & color. An oily and unctuous skin prevents body from exposure of heat and dust also. Dust particles which are deposited are get cleaned by physical pressure applied during *Abhyanga*.

According to *Acharya Sushruta*, *Abhyanga* tend to dilate the orifices of the ducts and increases the temperature of the skin. *Abhyanga* improves the complexion and gives a lovely appearance, cleanliness, beauty and flexibility. Friction pacifies *Vata*, cures itches, rashes & eruptions.²⁴

Contraindication of *Abhyanga*

1. *Abhyaanga* is contraindicated in *Kaphaj* or *Kapha* dominant diseases.
2. After taking *Vaman*, *Virechana* or *Basti*.
3. Patients with *Samavastha* of *Doshas*, *Santarpan Janya Vyadhi* and *Agnimandya*.
4. In *Ajirna* and *Taruna Jwara*, *Netra roga*, *Karna roga*, *Atisara*, *Aadhman*, *Peenasa*, *Agnimandya*.
5. After *Snana*, *Vyayama*, *Divaswapa*, *Vegdhara-na*, *Prajagrana*, *Sheet Vayu Sevana*.
6. Immediately after consumption of food and after taking *Ruksha* and *Abhishyandi Aahar*.

DISCUSSION

In today's globalized and industrialized era, increase in stress, anxiety and pollution decreases the quality of health with increase in skin related problems. On the other hand, awareness of people for their look & beauty is the current demand. Daily practice of *Abhyanga* is the key for this problem.

Bhrajak Pitta which is located in the skin is responsible for color & luster of the skin. Normal & abnormal complexion of skin depends upon the characteristics of *Pitta Dosha*. When *Abhyanga* is done, the oil applied to the skin is digested by the *Bhrajak Pitta*. So, the health of skin can be improved only after the proper action of *Bhrajak Pitta*. *Bhrajak Pitta* can be correlated with enzyme tyrosinase, which is responsible for melanin formation in the skin. *Bhrajak Pitta* and enzyme tyrosinase both are responsible for normal color of the body. Daily practice of *Abhyanga* improves blood circulation and enhances the natural function of the skin. Due to *Abhyanga dilatation* of superficial blood vessels takes place and increases the rate of blood flow. Lymphatic system runs superficially under the skin, thus ultimately *Abhyanga* helps in removal of lymphatic fluid and metabolic waste.

Due to *Abhyanga*, production of skin nurturing sebum is increased which is natural lubricant. It protects, cools, calms and maintains youthful properties of skin.

CONCLUSION

Abhyanga is economical and highly effective therapy which one should practice in daily routine. *Abhyanga* is having multiple health benefits including cosmetic purpose. Daily practice of *Abhyanga* makes lustrous and soft skin. Even during environmental challenges for dryness and cracking, it hydrates and lubricates the skin tissues. Daily *Abhyanga* strengthens skin and improves beauty. Onset of ageing decreases due to daily practice of *Abhyanga*. Daily practice of *Shiro-abhyanga* prevents hair fall, graying of hair, gives strength to scalp, makes the hair black & long. *Pa-dabhyanga* prevents and cures dryness, roughness & stiffness of foot. It improves eyesight & sleep related disorders.

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