

A REVIEW OF UNIQUE PANCHAKARMA MODALITY- SARVANGADHARA

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ABSTRACT

The classical Ayurvedic texts are endowed with unique treatment modalities. *Panchakarma* procedures form an important backbone in Ayurvedic treatment. One of the *Panchakarma* therapies is the *Sarvangadhara*. It is also known as *Kayaseka*, *Pizhichil*, *Seka* and *Dhara*. It is classified under *Sagni Sweda* as *Parisheka Swedana* by *Acharya Charaka* whereas *Acharya Sushruta* mentions it under *Drava Sweda*. It is a special *Bahir-Parimarjana* therapy where it does both *Snehana* and *Swedana* simultaneously. In this procedure medicated liquid (oil/*Kwatha/Takra*) is poured over the body in form of *Dhara* or stream for a stipulated period. The present study aims to review the procedure of *Sarvangadhara* through the study of various Ayurvedic and modern literature, published research papers, and textbooks. The procedure induces sweating and relieves stiffness, heaviness and coldness in the body. It is very helpful in *Vata-Pradhana* diseases like neurological diseases and degenerative disorders. *Parisheka Swedana* is mentioned as *Samanya-Chikitsa* of *Vata-Vyadhi*. It is widely practised in Ankylosing spondylosis and the chronic stage of osteoarthritis condition. The medicines are changed based on the conditions like *Takra-Dhara* is adopted in cases of psoriasis and *Dhanyamla-Dhara* in obesity. In the present article, an attempt has been made to review the procedure and benefits of *Sarvangadhara* as a *Panchakarma* therapy in the treatment of various diseases.

Keywords: *Sarvangadhara*, *Parishek*, *Pizhichil*, *Seka*, *Dhara*, *Swedana*

INTRODUCTION

The main treatment principle in Ayurveda is based on the *Tridosha* theory. The balance of these *Dosha* brings about a sense of well-being in the body. The *Vata-Dosha* being the powerful causes eighty diseases (eighty *Vataja-Nanatmaja Vyadhi*).¹ The classical Ayurvedic texts are endowed with unique procedures. *Panchakarma* which is one of the essential therapies of *Shodhana* forms the backbone of Ayurvedic treatment. The procedures like *Snehana* and *Swedana* are highly innovative practices in the mainstream of Ayurveda. One such procedure called *Sarvangadhara* provides twin benefits of *Snehana* (if oil is used) and *Swedana*. It is an effective procedure, which is also called *Parishek*, *Pizhichil*, *Kaya-Seka* and *Dhara*. It is mentioned as *Samanya-Chikitsa* of *Vata-Vyadhi* wherein a medicated liquid (oil/*Kwath*/*Takra*) is showered over the body for a stipulated time frame.²

Materials and Method-

The study of various Ayurvedic and modern texts has been done. References regarding *Sarvangadhara* is collected from various textbooks, published research papers, previous work done, and its probable mode of action is explained in the present study.

Sarvangadhara

Sarvangadhara is made from two words- *Sarvanga* means all over the body and *Dhara* represents stream while the word *Pizhichil* (Malayalam word) means squeezing. In this process, a continuous stream of medicated oil/*Kwath*/liquid is poured over the body which is simultaneously followed with a mild massage. This process provides a sudation effect all over

the body. It is considered under *Parishek Swedana* as per *Charaka* whereas *Sushruta* considers it under *Drava Sweda*. The liquid is poured from a height of 12 *Angula* (9 inches). There are varieties of *Sarvangadhara* based on the liquid medium used eg. *Sneha-Dhara* (oil/lipids), *Takra-Dhara* (buttermilk), *Ksheera-Dhara* (medicated milk), *Gomutra* (cow urine), *Kwath-Parisheka* (decoction) and *Kanji*. It holds immense benefits due to its dual function of *Snehana* and *Swedana*. It is practised in diseases where there is the involvement of the whole body, *Sarvangavata*, *Sarvanga Kushtha*, *Sarvanga Shopha* etc to name a few.

The procedure of Sarvangadhara- the entire process is categorized into 3 parts-

1. *Poorva-Karma* (pre-operative procedure) –

- Collection of essential material for *Sarvangadhara*
- Preparation of the patient
- Preparation of the medicated liquid

Materials required for the procedure include-

- Medicated liquid- *Taila/Takra/Ksheera*- 3-5 litres
- Gas stove
- Cloth pieces- 4 (18" x 18")
- Masseurs – 5 (2 on each side of upper and lower limbs)
- Iron vessel - 6 (2 for heating the oil and 2 for keeping and 2 for collecting it)
- Soft cotton towel- 2

Table 1: Showing the medicated liquid used based on various conditions ³

Condition	Medicated liquid used
<i>Vata Pradhan Avastha</i>	<i>Dhanwantara Taila, Mahanarayan Taila</i>
<i>Pitta Pradhan Avastha</i>	<i>Kshera Bala Taila, Chandan-Bala-Lakshadi Taila</i>
<i>Kapha Pradhan Avastha</i>	<i>Sahacharadi Taila</i>

Pre-preparation – heat the oil in a double boiler and place it in the vessels kept on the *Droni*.

Preparation of the patient- The patient is advised to evacuate his natural urges and is examined for vitals before the start of the procedure. The *Rogi-Bala* and

Roga-Bala are also assessed, and the patient is made to sit on the *Droni*.

The patient wearing minimum clothing is advised to be seated with leg extended over the table. *Abhyanga* is performed firstly on the vertex, ear and feet. Later

Sarvanga Abhyanga is to be done with the prescribed medicated oil for about 10 minutes. The eyes of the patient are covered with thick cotton pads and *Amalaki Kalka Talam* is kept over the vertex.

The *Sarvangadhara* can be performed above the neck based on the severity and nature of the disease.

Pradhana Karma (main procedure)- the patient after *Abhyanga* is advised to sit over the *Droni*. The cloth pieces are dipped in the hot medicated liquid (temperature between 42-45°C). Two attendants are placed on either side of the patient such that two attendants pour the oil from the shoulder to palm and the other two pour the oil from the root of the thigh to feet. The soaked cotton pieces are squeezed over the body such that the medicated liquid should flow in a uniform stream from the thumb facing downwards in *Anuloma* direction from a height of 12 *Angula* (9 inches). In some cases, a specialised *Varshulika* (watering vessel having holes in the bottom) or *Kindi* (tea kettle like pot) is used for the purpose of *Sarvangadhara*. Nowadays, automatic machines are used for sprinkling medicated liquid over the body. The masseurs after sprinkling the oil with one hand should simultaneously massage with the other hand. The oil flowing out is collected in a vessel and used after reheating. The process is repeated in all seven postures.

Paschata Karma (Post-operative procedure)-

- *Abhyanga* is done again.
- Excessive oil is removed using napkin or cotton towel.
- The patient is advised to keep himself covered properly and avoid exposure to breeze and sunlight.
- The patient is advised to take a warm water bath after 2-3 hrs.
- A freshly prepared light diet is to be taken.
- The patient is refrained from indulging in *Asta-Maha-Dosha Kara Bhava* (eight factors to be avoided).
- The patient is advised to take *Gandharvasthyadi Kwatha* in the dose of 20-40ml twice a day as it helps in the easy evacuation of *Dosha* accumulated in the *Koshtha*.

Change of oil/medicated liquid-

- Freshly prepared *Kwath, Ksheera, Takra and Gomutra* should be taken.
- Use half of the oil (~2.5 - 3ltr) in the first three days and the oil is changed on the 4th day.
- The oil at the end of the 3rd day and 6th day is mixed and used on the 7th day.

Duration of the procedure- 45 minutes to 1 hour for 7-21 days.

Table 2: Showing the duration of *Sarvangadhara* based on the condition⁴.

Based on condition	Duration
In <i>Vata Vyadhi</i>	5 <i>Nadika</i> (~2 hours)
In <i>Vata-Kaphaja</i> Disorders	~1 hour
General indication	3¾ <i>Nadika</i> (~1½ hours) or till the appearance of sweat

Indications⁵-

- *Sarvangavata* condition
- *Pakshaghata* (hemiplegia)
- *Parshava-Prishta-Kati Graha*, Ankylosing spondylitis
- *Apatantraka* (neurological disorder associated with seizures)
- *Vatavyadhi*
- Muscle wasting in Rheumatoid arthritis
- *Gulma*

- *Udavarta*
- *Moodha-Vata* (obstructed *Vayu*)
- *Kampa* (tremors and chorea)
- The patient indicated for *Swedana* procedure

Contraindications-

- *Madhumeha*
- *Paittika Prakriti*
- *Udara roga*
- *Ajeerna* condition

- Other patients contraindicated for *Swedana* procedure

Precautions-

- The temperature of the medicated liquid should be checked before the start of the main procedure.
- The stream should not be poured over a single place for too long as it may lead to burning.
- The *Sarvangadhara* process should be performed in a non-airy room.
- The temperature of the medicated liquid should be constant throughout the procedure to avoid temperature variations and provide even sudation.
- The stream should be uniform and continuous.
- The height of 12 *Angula* must be maintained throughout the procedure.

Complications-

- There are chances of skin burns when excessive hot medicated liquid is poured. The procedure must be stopped and managed accordingly.
- Due to excessive and long duration sudation, there are chances of vaso-dilation which may result in raised blood pressure.
- Excessive sudation may cause giddiness and fainting.
- Direct exposure to cold temperature after sudation may cause fever, headache and the common cold.

DISCUSSION

Sarvangadhara or *Pizhichil* is an important part of *Swedana* procedure. It is mentioned under the variety of *Drava Sweda*. Based on the liquid media used, it can be of *Ruksha* and *Snigdha* nature. When the liquid media has *Snigdha* properties, it does both *Snehana* and *Swedana* whereas on having *Ruksha* properties, it does *Swedana* along with *Rukshana*.

As per *Dharakalp*, it is mentioned that *Sarvangadhara* brings *Dridta* (firmness) and *Vrishta* (vigour) in the body. It increases the *Agni* (digestive fire), *Oja* (immunity) and enhances the complexion of the body. Regular practice of *Sarvangadhara* delays old age prevents fractures and dislocation and alleviates vitiated *Vata Dosha*. It results in stability of *Indriya* and boosts its function. When the *Sarvangadhara* is done with

lukewarm medicated liquid, it pacifies all the aggravated *Dosha*.⁶

Sarvangadhara is also indicated in gynaecological disorders and females undergoing difficult labour. A case of *Apatantraka* (neurological disorder associated with seizures) in a full-term pregnant woman was recorded wherein *Pizhichil* was performed for 24 hours and another where it was performed for 36 hours continuously based on the treatment principle of *Tailadronisayana* (lying in table specifically designed for the purpose) in *Apatantraka*. The second case was saved, and the lady delivered a child, but the first case was a stillbirth though the woman survived.⁷

Probable mode of action-

Sarvangadhara works on the similar principle of *Swedana* process. Based on the quality of the drug used, it does *Snehana* or *Rukshana*. It is effective in *Vata Vyadhi*, *Pakshaghat*, *Apatantraka*, *Stambha* (stiffness), ankylosing spondylitis and other neurological conditions. Just like *Swedana* therapy, *Sarvangadhara* acts due to its *Ushna* and *Teekshna* properties. The application of lukewarm/ mild hot medicated liquid increases the metabolic rate which causes vasodilation of the blood vessels. This vasodilation opens the smaller channels and increases the peripheral circulation. The pores in the skin open leading to an elimination of waste products through sweat. The increased circulation promotes better absorption of medicated liquid into the body. *Dhanyamla Sarvangadhara* is effective obesity treatment. One of the factors can be the *Rukshana* action brought about by *Dhanyamla*.⁸ Other factors can be assumed that the drug when poured from a height creates an impact force that liquefies the *Medo Dhatu* and removes the adhered adipose tissue. Thus, continuous use of *Dhanyamla Sarvangadhara* brings about *Dridta* and helps in obesity. The four *Tiryak Dhamani* in the body divide into hundred and thousand times and become innumerable. These cover the body like a network and their openings are attached to *Roma Kupa* (skin pores). Through these *Roma Kupa*, the *Veerya* of *Abhyanga*, *Parishek*, *Avagaha*, *Alepa* enter the body after undergoing *Paka* by *Bhrajaka Pitta* in the skin. The *Bhrajaka Pitta* present in the skin gets stimulated and helps in transdermal

absorption of the medicated liquid.^{9, 10} The medicated liquid absorbed through the skin into the blood vessels shows systemic results all over the body. A probable hypothesis can be made for the action of *Sarvangadhara*. The medicated liquid is poured from a height of 12 *Angula*. The liquid falling over the body surface creates a ripple effect. An impact force is generated which transfers into the deeper tissues. This stimulus thus created, stimulates the sympathetic nervous system. The fibres from the sympathetic nervous system innervate the tissues in every organ system and provide physiological regulation over diverse body processes. The morbid *Dosha* then move from *Shakha* to *Koshtha*. The *Dosha* accumulated in the *Koshtha* is gradually removed from the *Koshtha* by regular use of *Gandharvahastadi Kwatha*. It pacifies *Vata*, enhances digestive power and does *Mala-Shodhana*.¹¹ This helps in pacifying and eliminating morbid deep-seated *Dosha*.

CONCLUSION

Sarvangadhara is an important therapeutic measure of Panchakarma which is effective in various disorders. It is a complete therapy as it provides multiple health benefits. Based on the medicated liquid used, it does *Snehana* and *Rukshana* along with *Swedana*. It is used in *Vataja* and *Vata-Kaphaja* disorders, neurological disorders, gynaecological disorders and difficult labour. Further research needs to be carried out to explore the versatile and systemic results of the therapy.

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