

## ABHYANGA – A CONCEPTUALIZED STUDY

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### ABSTRACT

The prime aspiration of *Ayurveda* is *Swasthtasyasvastysya rakshnam then aturasvikarpraman ch*. So to avert ailments they proffer several principal in that one is *Dincharya*. In *dincharya* *Abhyanga* is massage of whole body with oil is the one main procedure to maintaining, caring, to rejuvenate, to improve blood circulation, strength and to have a cosmetology effect of the largest sense organ i.e. skin, which have full exposure to the environment i.e. to sun, to moon, to air (to their pure form to polluted forms). According to season and climate condition on skin vasodilatation and vasoconstriction take place and by these two ways skin also effect inner tissues i.e. *dhaturs*. Hence our *acharyas* described *abhyanga* in very scientific elaborated manner with definition to timing and duration of *abhyanga*, its effects on the body, its indications and contra indications to body. But in present era people are very busy in material possession that *abhyanga* and other health care *dincharya* procedures are looks impossible for them and to apply on skin many chemical things come in the fashion, advertisement and selling marketing on so much big level that it made impact on every one mind so drastically. *Abhyanga* with oil on daily bases is not only beneficial to skin but have benefited to full body. Hence this work is indented to discuss the details of *abhyanga* by *ayurveda* and modern point of view.

**Keywords:** *Abhyanga, Skin, Dincharya*

### INTRODUCTION

Massage is not a new concept. Almost every culture has employed massage; including Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Japanese, Chinese and the *Ayurvedic* manage by Indians. But the oldest and most scientific scripture is *ayurveda* only. Massage is a systematic rubbing and manipulation of the body to prevent stiffness, promoting circulation and positive health. Massage is one of the most valuable of remedial measures. Basis of massage is touch, and there is a increasing medical evidence to show the great

value of touch. The *Abhyanga* is said to be an external Oleation (*Bahya sneha*) therapy described in *dinacharya, ritu charya* and also in *Sneha Vicharana* i.e. roots of administration of unctuousness and in modern science also many study conducted and researches were done.

#### Paribhasha<sup>1</sup>:

The word *Abhyanga* is derived from *Abhi+Anjana-Abhyanjana*  
*Abhi-* towards, into, upon etc

*Anjana* - to smear, to anoint

Rubbing with unctuous substance, smearing the body with oil

**Definition<sup>2</sup>:** Abhyanga means massage of whole body including head with oil.

**IMPORTANCE:**

- Tree grows by absorbing water; tender leaves of tree grow on absorption of water just like body tissues known as *dhatu* also develops. In other words the different tissue of body grows and develops due to *taila abhyanga*<sup>3</sup>.
- *Abhyanga* should be done daily before physical exercise. It should be done specially to the head, ears and feet<sup>4</sup>
- As a pitcher, a dry skin and an axis (of a cart) become strong and resistant by application of oil. So by massage of oil human body become

strong and smoothed skinned, it is not susceptible to the diseases due to *vata*, it is resistant to exhaustions and exertions<sup>5</sup>.

- The body is compared to tree. If the roots of trees are given water regularly, then it lives for long time. In the same way by *abhyanga* the person *dhatu* becomes healthy<sup>6</sup>.
- The intelligent person should make use of either medicated oil or ghee for oil bath and anointing, considering the nature of the body, constitution, habituation, season, habitat and aggravated *dosha* etc<sup>7</sup>.

**MODE OF ACTION OF ABHAYANGA:**

*Dalhana*, commentator of *sushruta samita* has described the effect of *abhyanga* according to duration. The oil used in *abhyanga* reaches the *dhatu*s as shown in below table<sup>8</sup>:

**Table 1:** Reaching of *taila* to different *dhatu*s or effect on *dhatu*s:

<i>DHATU</i>	<i>KAALA</i>	
	<i>Matra</i>	Time/Sec.
<i>Romante</i>	300	95
<i>Twak</i>	400	127
<i>Rakta</i>	500	159
<i>Mamsa</i>	600	190
<i>Meda</i>	700	220
<i>Asthi</i>	800	254
<i>Majja</i>	900	284

- **Charka:** *Vayu* dominates in the tactile sensory organ and this sensory organ is lodged in the skin. The massage is exceedingly beneficial to the skin. So one should practise regularly<sup>9</sup>
- **Vagbhata:** *Vata* mainly responsible for tactile sensation and tactile sensation is through skin. Oil bath is best for the skin and so it should be done daily<sup>10</sup>.
- According to *Ayurveda*, oil etc. used for massage does not have their actions confined to skin alone. The drugs with which these are boiled permeate through the skin and reach different tissue elements of the body. The medicated oil used for massage remain in the skin for 300 sec-

onds (*matras*) and gradually and consecutively permeates through different tissues elements like *rakta*, *masna*, *meda*, *asthi*, *majja*, the medicated oil takes about 100 *matras* each, to persuade and permeate through these different categories of tissue elements<sup>11</sup>.

**BENEFITS:**

1. It wards off old age, exertion and aggravation of *vata*, improve vision, nourishment to the body, long life, good sleep, good and strong (healthy) skin<sup>12</sup>.
2. One who practises oil massages regularly, the body even if subjected to injuries or strenuous

work is not much injuries. His physique is smooth, flabby strong and charming<sup>13</sup>.

3. Oil bath makes the body soft, controls *kapha* and *vata* aggravation, and bestows nourishment to the tissues, good complexion/colour and strength to the body<sup>14</sup>.
4. The practice of *abhyanga* pacifies *vata*, *kapha*, aliments, removes tiredness, improves strength, relaxes the body, brings in sleep and improves colour, complexion and softness of the body<sup>15</sup>.

#### CLASSIFICATION OF *ABHYANGA*<sup>16</sup>:

1. According to materials used
2. According to region
3. According to pressure exerted
4. According to *Guna of dravya*

**According to the pressure applied the division is as follows.**

1. *lepa* - application of oil over the body
2. *Abhyanga* - application of unctuous substances along with necessitate pressure
3. *Udvardana* or *shareera parimarjana* - reverse application of pressure
4. *Udghrshana* - rubbing with ununctuous substances (*Rookshana vidhi*)
5. *Utsadana* - rubbing of unctuous pasts
6. *Mardana* - application of more pressure towards midline of body
7. *Unmardana* - holding and pulling of the muscles

#### QUALITIES OF *SNEHA (ABHYANGA) DRAVYA*

There are nine qualities explained by Charaka.

1. *Drava* - liquid
  2. *Sookshama* – minuteness
  3. *Sara* - flowing
  4. *Snigdha* - unctuous
  5. *Pichila* - gelatinous
  6. *Guru* - heavy
  7. *Seeta* – cold
  8. *Manda* – slow
  9. *Mrudu* - soft
- Out of the above said qualities some are not seen in many of the *Sneha Dravyas*.

#### CONTRA INDICATIONS FOR *ABHYANGA*:

1. It should be avoided by suffering from aggravation of *kapha*, in purifying therapies like emesis, purgations, *vamana*, *virechana* etc. and who are suffering from indigestion<sup>17</sup>.
2. In *ama* state, patient of nascent fever and indigestion should never be anointed<sup>18</sup>.

#### MESSAGE

##### DEFINITION<sup>19</sup>:

- Massage is the scientific mode of curing certain forms of disease by systematic manipulations. – Murrel
- Massage signifies a group of procedures, which are usually done with hand on the external tissue of the body in a variety of ways either with a curative, palliative or hygienic point in view. – Graham
- Massage is the scientific manipulation of the soft tissues of the body with the palmer aspect of hand(s) and or fingers.
- Massage is a term applied to certain manipulations of the soft tissues. These manipulations are most efficient performed with the palmer aspect of hand and administered for the purpose of producing effects on the nervous system, muscular system as well as on the local and general circulation of the blood and lymph. – Beard
- Massage is the mechanical stimulation of soft tissues of the body by rhythmically applied pressure and stretching.

#### FEATURES OF MESSAGE TECHNIQUE:

Essential features of massage technique can be listed as follows:

- 1) Technique should apply mechanical force to the soft tissue of the body.
- 2) These forces must not produce any change in the position of the joint.
- 3) The technique must evoke some physiological and/or psychological effect which serves to

achieve the therapeutic, restorative or, the preventive goal.

**BASIS OF CLASSIFICATION OF MASSAGE:**

Application of touch and pressure in various manners constitute the manoeuvres of massage. The effects produced by a technique entirely depend upon

the type of tissue approached during a particular technique and the character of the technique governs this. Magnitude of the applied force

- Direction of force
- Duration of force
- Means of application of force.

**Table 2: CLASSIFICATION OF MASSAGE ON THE BASIS OF CHARACTER OF TECHNIQUE:**  
Character of techniques

Character of techniques	Depth of tissue approached	Part of body massage	Means of application of pressure
1.Stroking	1.Light massage	1.General massage	1.Manual massage
2.Pressure	2.Deep massage	2.Local massage	2.Mechanical massage
3.Percussion			
4.Vibration			

**Table 3: Features types of character of techniques<sup>20</sup>:**

Stroking manipulation	Pressure manipulation			Percussion manipulations	Vibratory manipulations
	Kneading	Petrissage	Friction		
1.Superficial stroking 2.Deep stroking	1.Palmer kneading 2. Digital kneading 3. Ironing	1.Picking up 2.Wringing 3.Skin rolling	1.Circular friction 2. Transverse friction	1.Clapping 2.Hacking 3.Tapping 4.Beating 5.Pounding 6.Tenting 7.Contact heel percussion	1.Vibration 2.Shaking

**PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECTS<sup>21</sup>:**

The therapeutic value of massage lies in its numerous and combined physiological effects and technique dependent. Massage, be it manual or mechanical, imparts pressure and stimulates mechanically the various tissue approached at the time of application of a particular technique. It is the magnitude, duration, and the direction of force applied during a particular technique that determines the effects, produced by that technique on that body.

- Effects on the circulatory system
  - A .On the venous and the lymphatic flow
  - B. On the arterial flow
- Effects on the mobility of the soft tissue.
- Effects on the skin.

1. Effects of massage on the circulatory system<sup>22</sup>:

- A. On the venous and the lymphatic flow:

- Massage facilitates the forward movement of the venous blood and the lymph
- So reduces the chance of stagnation of the blood and the lymph in the tissue space. The mechanical action of massage resembles with that of normal muscular contraction. The different techniques of massage alternately compress and release the soft tissue. This facilitates the venous and lymphatic flow.

- Massage facilitates the drainage, and reduces the stagnation of fluids and speeds up the removal of waste products.

**B. On the arterial flow<sup>23</sup>:**

- Massage improves the blood supply of the area being massaged. A definite vasodilation along with an increase in the peripheral blood flow is usually observed after massage. This moderate, consistent and definite increase in the arterial

flow may be attributed to the following events happening during massage.

1. Release of vasodilators
2. Activation of axon reflex
3. Decrease of venous congestion.

**1. EFFECTS ON THE SOFT TISSUE<sup>24</sup>**

- Elasticity, Plasticity and Mobility of soft tissue enhanced. The tissues which can be affected by massage include muscles, sheath, ligaments, tendons, aponeursios, and joint capsule sand superficial as well as deep fascia.

**1. EFFECTS ON THE SKIN<sup>25</sup>:**

- It improves the nutritive status of skin and rises the temperature of skin. Massage facilitates the movement of skin over the subcutaneous structure. As a result skin becomes soften, more supple and finer.
- After prolonged massage the skin also becomes tough, more flexible, elastic and its sensitivity is reduced. It has a soothing effect on the highly sensitive and vascular papillae, over which deeper layers of the cuticle fits.
- The dead cells are removed by the constant contact of the hand over the skin. The sweat glands, hair follicles and the sebaceous glands, thus, become free from obstruction and can function more effectively.
- Massage, by activating the sweat glands, increases perspiration, so that the heat dissipation is increased. It also facilitates the sebaceous se-

cretions from exocrine glands of skin and thus, improves the lubrication and appearance of skin.

**COMBINE PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF MASSAGE<sup>26</sup>:**

- Increases Venous and lymphatic flow.
- Increases Arterial blood flow to the muscle and skin.
- Increases Stagnation of fluid in tissue space.
- Increases Removal of waste products of metabolism.
- Increases WBC, RBC and platelets count in circulating blood.
- Increases Nutritive exchange between blood and cells.
- Increases Tropic status of the part massaged.
- Induce sedation.
- Decreases Pain.
- Facilitate contraction in hypotonic muscle.
- Increases Excitability of motoneuronal pool in neurologically health person.
- Modulate autonomic response.
- Increases Electroderma response or GSR.
- Increases Removal of secretion from lung.
- Increases Gaseous exchange across pulmonary capillaries.
- Increases Removal of dead cells from skin.
- Increases Activity of sweat and sebaceous gland.
- Modulate psychosomatic arousal.
- Mobilise soft tissue.
- Break the soft tissue adhesions.
- Accelerate various metabolic processes.
- Promote lypolysis.

**Table 4: CONTRAINDICATIONS OF MASSAGE<sup>27</sup>:**

General contraindication	Local contraindication
1. High fever 2. Severe renal or cardiac diseases 3. Deep X- Ray therapy 4. Osteoporosis 5. Severe spasticity 6. Very hairy skin 7. Patient's preference	1. Acute inflammations 2. Skin diseases 3. Recent fractures 4. Severe varicose veins 5. Atherosclerosis 6. Thrombosis 7. Mysositis ossificans 8. Malignancy 9. Open wound 10. Poisonous foci

### Some basic principles are according to *Ayurveda*, before *Abhyanga* doctor must examine:

#### ➤ Screenings of Patient:

1. a) To selection of a patient according to *prakrurti*  
b) Taking the full history of patient.
2. a) Behaviour modification of patient  
b) Physical activity  
c) *Desha, kala (Ritu)*
3. Selection of oil according to this condition.

### CONCLUSION

Hence *abhyanga* is a fully scientific procedure people of India need to believe in *abhyanga* not only for multiple benefit for skin but for whole body *dhatu Vardhna*. The further processional analysis has to be elucidated by scientific methodology under the shade of scientific knowledge.

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