

A TRADITIONAL REVIEW ON OIL BATH

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ABSTRACT

Siddha medicine have recommended certain basic guidelines to be followed for healthy living which includes observation of certain regimen as mentioned in “*Pini anugaa vidhi*” literally meaning rules that help prevent disease. Their concept of “*Kaayakarpam*” for prevention of diseases is highly admirable as it makes one’s body resistant to infections. Oil Bath is one among the therapy used in Tamil Nadu. It is the practice of massaging the head with sesame oil heated with spices.

1. Regular practice of having oil bath relaxes and rejuvenates us. **2.** Oil bath removes the heat from our body, especially during hot summers. **3.** It helps us get a deep sleep, as we feel relaxed after an oil bath. **4.** It prevents hair loss, especially if done with good quality oils. **5.** It helps to reduce the redness in the eyes, especially people who spend a lot of time staring the computers will greatly benefit from oil bath and also it balances *thiridosha*. Siddha and Ayurveda ancient traditional system of Indian medicine has been mentioned about the procedure, directions to apply, significance of oil bath and also about *pathyam* and *apathyam* to be followed on the day of oil bath. Hence, an attempt was made to recollect all the information regarding Oil bath in ancient science of medicine.

Keywords: *Review, oil bath, Siddha, Saturday Oil Bath, Ayurveda.*

INTRODUCTION

In South India, people living in villages are having a traditional health habit from time immemorial of taking oil bath to improve and keep their good health. It is believed by the people of ancient time that oil is penetrating inside the body through the head, ears and feet, lowering body temperature and assisting an individual to endure the warm climate. But now it has been understood that applied oil dissolves

the dusty, oily particles present in the skin pores which cause the body heat and strain the body organs, disorders in brain which in turn creates weaker *kavasam* (auric field). Later those impurities stuff will be removed by the application of herbal powder and warm water. This phenomenon helps to make the skin to remove heat from inside of the body, which acts as a valve, to outside easily. Oil bath is the practising of

massaging the head and the body with oil preferably sesame oil, coconut and castor oil also can be used. Commonly two varieties of oils such as coconut and sesame oils are used. But it is experienced by the people that sesame is more desirable than the other one. About 50 - 70ml of oil heated slightly higher than body temperature is taken in a palm size bowl. Strictly avoid taking oil in plastic bowl just before the application as they might affect the medicinal properties of oils. Start putting the oil on the top of your head, in small quantities at a time, and rub it on your hair and scalp. Then you continue massaging and slowly scratch without hurting it on the rest of the head, including the face, around eyes and nasal passages. Go on massage all over the body, giving importance especially to all hairy areas, from the ears, armpits, navel, groin, anal opening and throughout whole body. The pores which are now soaked in oil will be easy to wash away the dirt that has clogged the skin later. You can soak with this oil on your body from 30 to 45 minutes. *Shikaakai* powder is the right choice for to wash the oil instead of shampoo. (There is no man-made chemical which is equal in washing capacity like the *shikaakai*. it's a nut plucked from the *shikaakai* tree). Take 5 or 8 grams of the powder in a bowl and you have to make a wet paste of it by slowly adding drops of water. After making the paste, you have to take the requisite amount of the paste in the palm and rub it with both palms; add little water if needed and then apply it on the head only first. Rub it till you see froth. Very quickly wash it with copious amount of water as *shikaakai* should not be allowed to remain on the body after it removed the oil, then likewise wash face next and then body and then legs with groin area included. Every time wash the

shikaakai froth quickly with good amount of water. You have to apply half of it on top of the head and the remaining half to be smeared all over the body till you reach the toes and can be allowed to soak for 10-15 minutes normally and not more than that is required. Now rinse the *shikaakai* with oil stuff in hot water. It is said as per Siddha Vaidyam that the vital energy in body such as *vatham*, *kapham* and *pittham* must be balanced for good health. Siddha *maruthuvam* treats a person on the assumption of disturbance to any one of the 5 vital elements in the body and making correctives to them. It is said when one takes oil bath, the balance of these is upset in the body. One can feel it also. Usually after an oil bath, one will feel sleepy. Avoid sleeping for atleast 3 to 4 hours from the time of oil bath.^{1, 2}

Within 3 hours from Sun rise is most suitable time to take oil bath

- Taking oil bath on Saturday best suits the nature of the day influenced so, by Saturn.

- As per astrology, *chathurthasi* (4th *tithi*) is ideal for oil bath.

- In a week, Saturday is ideal for oil bath for men and Friday for women.

So, the days chosen for oil bath are those ruled by planets that give long life, to offset the supposed fall in the balance of vital energies of the body.

BENEFITS OF OIL BATH

1. It clears oily substances from the skin of total body and facilitate the same to transfer heat from its inside to outside. This will enhance your kavas am / auric field and strengthen your spirit's anatomy to attract prosperity and spiritual energy.
2. By giving healthy cold to our body we can have good appetite and feeling of taste.

3. Healthy cold prevailing in our body prevents many diseases like migraine, depression, stomach disorder, diabetic, sexual disorder, jaundice, cancer and other viral diseases.
4. We can get healthy, deep sleep and good concentration in our daily activities.
5. The quality of the skin like complexion and colour improves. The hair grows thickly and greying of hair gets delayed. Glowing and radiant Skin and healthy hair can be maintained as it removes surface tension on the mind and body.
6. Highly beneficial for the eyes since it improves vision and removes dusty particles. It also removes the reddishness colour of the eyes that comes with stress.
7. The nerves in the body improve and your body gets rejuvenated

In the area of actually improving general good health, the use of oil baths helps to keep skin and its pores open, supple and radiant, and in reality, does help cool the body temperature by allowing perspiration to flow freely. Oil baths have a similar impact on keeping hair manageable and healthy, and prevents dry skin build-up on elbows, knees, feet and hands. In many instances, circulatory issues can be aided greatly by the use of Indian bath oils and massage in helping blood flow to extremities. It is also a very common practice in southern India for a woman following childbirth to partake of oil baths to calm strained muscles, and it is even believed to improve the amount of a nursing mother's breast milk.

Perhaps the greatest benefit attributable to those who use Indian bath oils lies in the tremendous benefit associated with the reduction of stress. The deep muscle massage combined

with healing herbs and a warm bath provides an excellent source of relaxation, lowering blood pressure and enabling healthy heart rhythms. This aspect of using Indian bath oils also has a positive impact upon the ability to sleep soundly, allowing an individual to gain deep and restorative sleep patterns that may otherwise be beyond reach. This benefit of Indian bath oils is especially useful in those with ill health or suffering from chronic medical conditions.^{3,4,5}

CONTRAINDICATIONS

1. Avoid using hot/warm water bath if you have nerves problems.
- People above the age of 65-70 may avoid taking oil bath
2. Avoid oil bath during rainy days - don't sleep during the day after taking oil bath. Sleep will further lower the body temperature and you may get sick (but not necessarily).
3. After taking bath, dry the hair in the open sun (for a few minutes) if possible or under the fan. Do this especially if you have long hair and ensure that water is removed from hair and scalp.
4. People having disc wear problem in their vertebra or having worn disc in the neck should not take oil bath. This will increase the pain further.^{6,7}

SUMMARY

There are various references regarding oil bath in traditional system of medicine like Ayurveda. We found *snehana*, i.e. *abhyanga* with various medicated oils (massage) which is equally similar to oil bath. If we look towards all the advantages of oil bath, practitioner can practice easily and can give benefits to the patient.

DISCUSSION

Sesame is rich in Vitamin E. Hence acts as a natural anti oxidant. It also contains Vitamin K. Sesame contains magnesium, copper, calcium, iron, zinc, and vitamin B6. Sesame oil is safe oil for massage of babies and children. It helps to strengthen the bones, muscles and joints. Sesame oil is used for massage, *Shiro-dhara*, etc procedures which help to calm the mind and induce deep relaxation and helps to have natural sleep and relieves headache. That is why sesame oil is used.

CONCLUSION

This paper will help us to refresh our traditional methods in a healthy way and make people to aware of the significance of oil bath.

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