

A Review Article on Mode of Action of *Padabhyanga*

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ABSTRACT

Padaabhyanga is a holistic therapy and a religious approach towards an effective psychosomatic healing. Application of oil to the feet, followed by massage is popularly known as *Padaabhyanga*. Reflexology, Acupuncture, Acupressure and Pedicure seems to have originated from this ancient art of healing. The science of reflexology states that the sole of the feet is connected to various organs of the body. According to this science, organs such as the heart, lungs, kidney, brain, and intestines can be stimulated by foot massage. *Padabhyanga* can be done at any time of the day; it is more effective when it is done at end part of the evening or at night before going to bed. Since *Abhyanga* is advised to be done on a daily basis for maintenance of good health, so *Padabhyanga* too can be done on a daily basis. The hectic computerized life style, Faulty food habits, Stress, Irregular sleeping habits, strain the body and eyes. Oil applied to the feet, makes the feet strong (*sthairyra*) and induces sleep (*nidra*). According to *Charaka* and *Vagbhata Padaabhyanga* is described as *Dristiprasadaka* and according to *Sushruta Chakshushya*.

KEYWORDS: *Chakshushya*, *Dristiprasadaka*, *Padaabhyanga*, Reflexology

INTRODUCTION

The first and foremost aim of Ayurveda is Swasthasya swasthya Rakshanam i.e. Preservation of health. Ayurveda have given more stress on preservation of health and curing the disease. To get perfect physical and mental health it is essential to follow *dinacharya* as a preventive aspect for various diseases. *Dinacharya* means the daily routine profile that explains all the routine works from early rising to, bowel clearance habit, washing of face teeth brushing and up to bed with proper procedure. But now in this present era it is difficult to perform all the activities of *Dinacharya* in a single day due to lack of time, lack of interest.

Among the variety of procedures of *Dinacharya*, *Padabhyanga* is one of them¹, *Pada* refers to foot Application of oil to the feet, followed by massage is known as *Padaabhyanga*². It is very simple process, requires very less time, less equipment, without assistance with no chances of complication.

Ayurveda says that eleven *marmas* (vital areas) out of 107 *marmas* are located in each leg³ the feet are very important part in our body as it contains many nerve endings. So *Padabhyanga* is very necessary for day to day life. *Astanga hridaya* says that there are 4 major nerves in the feet that connect to the eyes. These nerves helps maintain good eyesight and relieve body strain when subjected to *Padabhyanga*.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1. Concept of *Padaabhyanga*
2. Procedure of *Padaabhyanga*
3. Mode of action of *Padaabhyanga*

MATERIALS AND METHODS

1. Different *Ayurveda samhitas* with their commentaries by different authors.
2. Different text books, journals, dissertations, web search and peer review journals were revised to acquire the present content of this topic.

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LITERATURE REVIEW:**Etymology of Abhyanga:**

According to *Amarakosha*, 'Abhi' *upasarga* and 'Anga' *dhatu* makes the word *Abhyanga*. This means to induce specific movements on the body.

Paribhasha : The oil (*taila*) which is applied to the *pada* i.e. feet to help and cure diseases. Massage of the body with the help of *Taila*, *Ghruta* in the same direction of the body hair (*anuloma gati*) is called as *Abhyanga*.

Paryaya:

Synonyms of *Abhyanga* is *Abhyanjana*

Abhyanjana : The word *Abhyanjana* derived from the root word 'Anj' by adding *upasarga* 'Abhi' with 'lyut' *pratyay* means to smear or to anoint (*shabdakalpadruma*). The word *Abhyanjan* means applying oil all over the body including *Shirah* (head) and *Pada*.

Sthana of Abhyanga:

*Vishesh sthana*⁴ mentioned in classical texts are as follows-

- *Shirah* (Head)
- *Shravana* (Ear)
- *Pada* (Foot)

Direction of Abhyanga:

According to *Chikitsa Manjari* and *Chikitsa Sangraha*; it is said that generally *Abhyanga* should be performed in *Anuloma Gati* (in the direction of hair). They have also explained the specific direction of movement depending on involvement of *Dosha* as, one must follow the movement as *Anuloma Gati* in *Vata Dushti*, *Pratiloma Gati* in *Kapha Dushti* and alternate *Anuloma* and *Pratiloma Gati* in *Pitta Dushti*.

Abhyanga Dravya:

Abhyanga (massage) should be performed with luke warm medicated *taila* (oil) or *ghrita* (ghee) or 'Vasa' prepared with 'Doshaghna' and 'Sugandhita' *Dravyas*. Generally *taila* is used for *Abhyanga*. The oil should be lukewarm in general.

Procedure⁵:

Includes

1. Poorva karma
2. Pradhana karma
3. Paschat karma

Poorva karma:

Sambara sangraha (materials required): Table for *abhyanga*, Medicated *Taila*, Water bath for heating the oil, Towel.

Atura Pariksha: *Samanya pareeksha* (*nadi, mala, mutra* etc), *Vishesh pareeksha* (Systemic examinations)

Atura Siddhata: Patient is asked to evacuate natural urges, Wash the feet and tap dry with clean towel, patient is asked lie in supine position on *Abhyanga* table.

Pradhana karma:

The oil is made Luke warm. Then warm oil is smeared to the feet both in its planter and dorsal aspects up to ankle. Then start the massage with following 9 steps.

LINEAR MANOEUVRE ON THE FOOT:

Therapist stands at the foot end of the table facing the head end. The patient in the supine position, the leg is grasped just above the ankle with both the hands move the hands by applying firm pressure and do the same in prone position.

LINEAR MANOEUVRE ON THE SIDES OF THE FOOT:

In lateral position leg is flexed at the knee and the foot placed on the other leg resting on the ankle. Therapist places the pulp of both the thumbs just below the ankles. Then move thumbs distally towards the little toe applying firm pressure.

LINEAR MANOEUVRE ON THE DORSUM OF FOOT:

In supine position of the patient, Therapist grasps the foot of the client in one hand at the ankle, and firmly places the thumb of the other hand on one of the soft between the bones on the space dorsum of the foot. He then move thumb towards the toes applying firm pressure. In this way each soft space between the bones on the dorsum of the foot is treated.

THUMB POKING ON THE SOLES: In supine position of the patient the foot is stabilized by grasping with both the hands with thumbs on the soles and fingers on the dorsum of foot. Thumbs are then poked on the soles gently and firmly. Whole of the sole is treated by this procedure.

LINEAR MANOEUVRE ON THE SOLES: In the prone position of the patient the Therapist by his both hands holds heel of the patient, with thumbs approximating on the heel and the other fingers at the dorsum of the foot. While doing so, firm pressure is placed on the sole, with the pulp of the thumb.

CIRCULAR MANOEUVRE ON THE SOLES: In supine position therapist grasps patient's foot with his fingers at the dorsum of the foot and the thumb at the soles. Thumb is then moved in circular fashion over the sole applying firm pressure.

TO & FRO MANOEUVRE ON THE SOLES: In supine position, the therapist grasps patient's leg at the ankle with one hand. With the palmar aspects of the other hands rubs the sole along its length in both the directions.

LINEAR & CIRCULAR MASSAGE ON TOES:

Patient’s leg is held firmly at the ankle with one hand and then each toe is separately massaged with the other hand. For this patients toe is grasped between the thumb and index finger. And then applied linear movement between joints and circular movement on joints of toes.

LINEAR MASSAGE ON WEB SPACES:

In supine position Foot is grasped with one hand to stabilize, and then the index finger of the other hand is inserted into the web space between the big toe and second toe. Then the index finger is moved in to and fro manner several times exerting firm pressure on the floor of the web space. Other web spaces are also treated in the same way.

Paschath karma:

After following this procedure; the patient is asked to rest for 15 minutes and then advised to wash the feet with hot water.

Marmas⁶ in Paada

Table no 1 Showing Marmas in one Paada

Name of the marma	Number	Type
<i>Kshipra</i>	2	<i>Kaalantara pranahara marma</i>
<i>Talahridaya</i>	1	<i>Kaalantara pranahara marma</i>
<i>Koorcha</i>	2	<i>Vaikalyakara</i>
<i>Koorchashira</i>	2	<i>Rujaakara marma</i>
<i>Gulpha</i>	2	<i>Rujaakara marma</i>
<i>Indrabasti</i>	2	<i>Kaalantara pranahara marma</i>

Effect of Abhyanga on different Dhatu⁷:

Dalhana has described the effect of *abhyanga* according to its duration.

1. When the *abhyanga* is done for 300 Matras the oil reaches to hair root.
2. When done for 400 Matras the oil reaches the skin.
3. When done for 500 Matras it reaches in Rakta Dhatu.
4. The oil reaches in Mamsa dhatu in 600 Matras.
5. Reaches Meda Dhatu in 700 Matras,.
6. Reaches Asthi Dhatu in 800 Matras and it reaches Majja Dhatu when the *Abhyanga* is performed up to 900 Matra.

Table no 2 Showing Abhyanga matra as per dhatu

Tissue	Time	
	Matra	Second
Hair Follicle	300	95
Skin	400	127
Blood	500	159
Muscular tissue	600	190
Fat	700	220
Bones	800	254
Nervous tissue or bone marrow	900	285

Benefits of Paadabhyanga:

It has external or localized and internal or systemic effect^{8, 9, 10, 11}.

- *Paada sputana*
- *Paada supti*
- *Paada sthamba*
- *Paada sankocha*
- *Paada rukshata*
- *Paada daha*
- *Vrsya*
- *Netrarogahara*
- *Dantarogahara*
- *Sukhakara*
- *Shramahara*
- *Gridrasi*

- It has role in improving eyesight
- Produces calm and quite sleep
- Suppress *kapha* and *vataja* disease
- Provides physical strength

Taila yogas for Paadabhyanga:

Based on Prakriti:

Table no 3 Showing selection of Taila Based on Prakriti

Sl no	Prakriti	Yogas
1	<i>Vata</i>	<i>Himasagara Taila, Tila taila, goghrita</i>
2	<i>Pitta</i>	<i>Chandanadi Taila, Ksheerabala Taila, goghrita</i>
3	<i>Kapha</i>	<i>Triphaladya Taila, goghrita</i>

Table no 4 Showing Disease wise selection of Yogas¹²

Sl no	Disease	Yogas
1	Crack foot	Vipadikahara Taila
2	Eczema Feet	Marichadi Taila
3	Fungal infection	Chakramarda Taila
4	Vascular diseases	Pinda Taila
5	Degenerative Joint disease	Karpooradi Taila
6	Calcaneal spur	Vishagarbha Taila
7	Plantar faceitis	Vishagarbha Taila

Probable mode of Action as chakshushya:

- In *nadi vigyana*, *nadi darpana* it has been quoted that there are 10 *nadi* in head among which 2 are related to eyes.
- *Gandhari*- surrounds *Ida nadi*, which extends from *paada* and ends in left eye.
- *Hastijihwa*- surrounds *Pingala nadi*, which extends from *paada* and ends in right eye.
- *Acharya Vagbhata* also mentioned that there are 2 *siras* situated in the centre of *pada* which connects to eyes.
- According to Physiology, by *Padabhyanga* the somatic sensory area in the cortex may get stimulation and as both feet and eyes are in the same area i.e. area II of cortex, its stimulant effect may go to the eyes and may act by improving the function of eyes and reducing the Eye Strain. Also by *Padabhyanga* there might be nourishing or stimulation effect on eyes through the interpretative (association) areas of feet and eyes, as both meets at Wernicke's area and improving the function of eyes.

Mode of action of *Abhyanga* modern view:

The fluids of skin are drained to different parts of the body while doing *abhyanga* due to the osmotic pressure. *Abhyanga* causes hydrostatic pressure in the extracellular compartment of the skin. This pressure increases the blood circulation to a part where massage is done, causing splanchnic pooling of the blood to that surface, which leads to the absorption of the medicated oil/ghee and allows the passive entrance of the phytonutrients into the systemic circulation and then to the target structure.

Very good lymph drainage may occur during *abhyanga*. During and after massage amino acids like tryptophan may increase in the blood which may lead to increase in the production of the neurotransmitter serotonin, which is made from tryptophan at motor end plates. Massage may also cause increased acetylcholine production due to the action potential generated from the massage due to friction and pressure which are inserted during massage. The myelinated nerve fiber sheets are chiefly made up of lipids. This action potential with the association of serotonin is responsible for the pleasant and calming effect during massage¹³.

Discussion

Dalhana has described the absorption of *sneha* used in *abhyanga* procedure in detail, the oil used in *abhyanga* reaches up to different *dhatu*s when it is applied for the sufficient time. Thus, the drug used in the *abhyanga* gets absorbed by the skin. *Dalhana*

explains that when *snehana dravya* reaches to the particular *dhatu* then it subsides the disease of that *dhatu*¹⁴. *Charaka* has mentioned that *vayu* dominates in the *sparshanendriya* and its *adhishtana* is *twacha* (Skin). *Padabhyanga* pacifies *Doshas* through the *siras* which reaches the *netras* thereby nourishing them and soothing them so one should follow it regularly as it keeps *bdpy* and *mind* healthy¹⁵.

Conclusion:

So it can be conclude that by coming in contact of palm and sole during massage a energy is produced which has many effective role in various aspect of body system. As it is quite simple process it can be followed by everyone. As the foundation of the human body, feet receive a lot of abuse from their owners in day-to-day tasks such as standing, walking and running. According to the American Podiatric Medical Association "An average day of walking brings a force equal to several hundred tons to bear on the feet."The advantages and benefits of *Padabhyanga* are self-practicable, easy procedure, economic and effective. It improves arterial, venous and lymphatic flow and in this way nourishes the skin and local tissues. It is beneficial for de-stressing the whole body, strengthening the nervous system and inducing sleep. It nourishes eyes, helps in reducing *padasputana*, *padadaha*, *padasuptat* etc. It gives relaxation. It provides overall enhancement in physical health and quality of life. It gives good feeling so one must practice *padabhyanga* in day today life on a regular base.

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