



---

**Title: Concept of *Shiroabhyanga***

---

**Authors: Kumbhar Jayesh Laxman <sup>\*1</sup>, Jayashri P. Patil<sup>2</sup>**

1. P.G Scholar *Swasthavritta* and Yoga Dept.
2. Asso. Professor, *Swasthavritta* and Yoga,

Loknete Rajarambapu Patil Ayurvedic Medical College, Hospital, P.G.Institute & Research Centre, Islampur (Maharashtra).

**\*Corresponding Author:** Mob.: 9664751117, Email id- [drjayeshkumbhar@gmail.com](mailto:drjayeshkumbhar@gmail.com)

---

**Abstract:**

*Shiroabhyanga* is narrated in many *Samhitas* as a part of *dinacharya* (daily regime of personal hygiene) and part of treatment for *shiroroga*. *Shiroabhyanga* is to be considered in *snehan* therapy. As it nourishes the senses of mind and gives the strength. Before starting any type of research, an Ayurvedic research scholar is required to go through critical literary review. This is a lantern in the direction of the pathway of that particular work. This review article deals with *nirukti* (Origin) *paribhasha* (definition), classification, benefits, procedure, modern review of the *Shiroabhyanga* and hypothetic reasoning of its action.

**Keyword:** *Shiroabhyanga*, *Murdha taila*, *Snehan*, Head Massage.

## Introduction:

In Ayurveda various *aacharya* has explained *dinacharya* as a preventive aspect for various diseases. *Shiroabhyanga* is one of the major *upakrama* described in *Dinacharya*. *Shiroabhyanga* comes under the type *Murdha Taila* which is type of *Bahya Snehana*<sup>1</sup>. *Snehana* is told as *poorva karma* in *Panchakarma*. *Snehana* is further divided in to *bahya* and *abhyantara* types, obviously *Shiroabhyanga* comes under *bahya* type. In *Charak samhita* it is mentioned that *Shiroabhyanga* helps to promote *Nidra* i.e. daily practice of *Shiroabhyanga* prevents headache, greying of hair, hair fall and it also gives strength to skull, strengthen hair root and makes the hair black and long. It helps in maintaining the health. It also nourishes the sense organs, softens the skin and provides lustre to face and one get good sleep after *Shiroabhyanga*<sup>2</sup>.

## Aims and Objects:

To review *Shiroabhyanga* from available various *samhitas*, various texts, journals and its allied modern literature.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS:

Various Ayurveda *samhitas* with their commentaries by different others, various text books journals, dissertations, web search and peer review journals were revised to acquire the present knowledge of this topic. All Compiled matter is reorganized and critically analysed for the discussion and attempt has been made to draw some fruitful conclusions.

## LITERATURE REVIEW:

### Etymology of *Shiroabhyanga*:

'*Abhi*' *upasarga* is added to '*Anga*' *dhatu* makes this word *Abhyanga* (*amarkosha*) which means to induce specific and special movements. In this way, *abhyanga* (massage) indicates some movement done on the body by using *Taila*, *Ghruta* etc.

### Paribhasha:

The oil (*taila*) which is applied to the *Shirah pradesha* i.e. head to prevent and cure diseases of head, such process is called *Shiroabhyanga*. Massage of the body with the help of *Taila*, *Ghruta* etc. in the same direction of the body hair (*anuloman gati*) is called as *Abhyanga*.

### Paryay:

The two synonymous of *Abhyanga* are *Abhyanjana* and *Snehana*.

**Abhyanjana:** The word *Abhyanjana* derived from the root '*Anj*' by adding of '*Abhi*' *upasarga* with '*lyut*' *pratyay* means to smear or to anoint (*shabda kalpa drum*). The word *Abhyangan* means applying oil all over the body including *Shirah* (head).

**Snehana:** The word *snehana* is derived from root '*snih*' which means to be adhesive or to be attached to (*Vachaspatyam*).

### Sthana of *Abhyangha*:

शिरः श्रवणपादेषु तं विशेषेण शीलयेत्।  
(अ.ह.सु.२।८)

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

- *Shira* (Head)
- *Shravana* (Ear)
- *Paada* (Foot sole).

### Benefits of *shiroabhyanga*:



### According to Charaka Samhita

नित्यं स्नेहार्द्रशिरसः शिरःशूलं न जायते ।  
न खलित्यं न पालित्यं न केशाः प्रपतन्ति  
च॥

बलं शिरः कपालनां विशेषणाभिवर्तते।  
द्रुढमुलाश्च दीर्घाश्च कृष्णाः केशा भवन्ति  
च॥

इन्द्रियाणि प्रसीदन्ति सुत्वग्भवति चाननम्।  
निद्रालाभः सुखं च  
स्यान्मूर्ध्नि तैलनिषेवाणात्॥ (च.सू.५/८१-८३)

- *Shiroabhyanga* helps to prevent Shirahshoola (headache), Khalitya (hair fall), Palitya (greying of hair).
- It gives strength to scalp, forehead, strengthen hair root and makes the hair black and long.

### According to Sushruta Samhita

शिरोरोगास्तथारोगाच्छिरोऽभ्यंगोऽपकर्षति।  
केशानामार्दवंदैर्धर्यबहुत्वं स्निग्धकृष्णताम्॥  
करोति शिरस्तृप्ति सुत्वक्कमपिचाननम्।  
संतर्पणंचेन्द्रियाणां शिरसः परिपूरणम्॥  
(सु.चि.२४/२५,२६)

- *Shiroabhyanga* cures diseases of shirah (head), softens the hair, increases density and black (krushna) colour of hair.
- It nourishes the sense organs.

### According to Ashtanga Sangrah

तत्राभ्यंगो रुक्षकण्डुमलादिषु प्रयुज्यते ।  
(अ.सं.सू. ३५/१६)

कचसदनसितत्व पिंजरत्वं परिफुतनं शिरसः  
समीररोगान्  
जयति जनयतीन्द्रियप्रसादं स्वरहनुमूर्धबलं च  
मूर्धतैलम् ॥ (अ.सं.सू.३१/२०)

- *Shiroabhyanga* is indicated in dry scalp associated with itching.
- It is also indicated in *Khalitya*, *Palitya* and *Vata roga*.
- It gives strength to *swara*, *hanu* and *shirah* (head).

### Contraindications:

वर्ज्योऽभ्यंगः कफग्रस्त  
कृतसंशुद्ध्यजीर्णभिः ॥ (अ.ह.सू.२)

Contraindications of *Abhyanga* are as follows –

- It is contraindicated in *Ajeerna* and *Nava* or *Taruna Jwara* because if performed in this condition becomes *kruchrasadhya* or *asadhya*.
- It is contraindicated after *samshodhana* i.e. immediate after *Vamana*, *Virechana* and *Niruh Basti* ; as it causes *agnimandya*.
- It is contraindicated in person suffering from *Netra roga*, *Karna roga*, *Atisara*, *Aadhman*, *Peenasa*, *Agnimandya*.
- It is contraindicated in person suffering from *Pitta roga*, *Trishna*, *Rakta pitta*, *Prameha* and *ati kshudhita*.



- It is contraindicated in *Kaphaja Roga*, *Santarpita Roga*, if done then it gets aggravated.
- It is contraindicated immediately after consumption of food, accustomed to *ruksha* and *abhishandi aahar*.
- It is contraindicated immediately after *snehapana* and *tarpana kriya*.
- It is contraindicated after *snan*, *vyayama*, *divaswapna*, *vegadharana*, *sheet vayu sevana*<sup>3,4</sup>.

#### **Time of Abhyanga:**

*Abhyanga* is advised to practice once in a day or once in two days or once in three days regularly as it does not vitiate *Dosha*<sup>5</sup>.

#### **Direction of Abhyanga:**

According to *Chikitsa Manjiri* and *Chikitsa Sangrah*, it is mentioned that generally *Abhyanga* should be performed in *Anuloma Gati*. They have also explained the specific direction of movement depending on different 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* should be performed with lukewarm medicated oil prepared with *doshaghna* drugs. Generally oil is used for *abhyanga*. The oil should be lukewarm in general condition but cold oil may be used in *shiroabhyanga*.

#### **Method of Shiroabhyanga:**<sup>6</sup>

*Abhyanga* should be performed gently and in the direction of the hair (*anuloma gati*). *Shiroabhyanga* should be followed with

cold or lukewarm oil because the head is the place of all senses and it is explained as the most vital part. *Shiroabhyanga* should be performed gently with finger tips because forceful massage may damage the hair. In *shiroabhyanga* sitting position must be adopted.

#### **Poorvakarma:**

The patient is made to sit on a knee high chair. The body of the patient is wrapped with a cloth below the neck then the procedure should be followed by standing behind the patient; it is ideal position to perform *Shiroabhyanga*.

#### **Pradhankarma:**

The technique includes smearing the oil to the portions of the scalp above the neck and placing specific strokes.

1. Smearing the oil –

The oil for application is first heated on a water bath to make it lukewarm. Then the oil is applied in to the head of the patient and spread all over the head including the neck and ear pinna. To spread the oil on the scalp has short trimmed hair; moving the palms from before backwards is enough.

2. Massage from before backward (*Gharshan Hasta*) –

After smearing the oil massage the whole head and then neck, moving palmer surface of the hand from before backwards applying gentle as well as firm pressure. Thus one should massage the complete area of the scalp.

3. Picking strokes (*Mridvanguli Tadana*) –



Fingers of the both hands are to be moved as if picking up tuft of hair. The fingers are partially approximated and then gently and firmly placed on the scalp. This procedure should be gentle producing mild traction effect on hair. By this way each area of the head is similarly treated.

4. Flat palm strokes (*Dvihasta Tadana*) –

Gentle strokes are placed with the palmer surface on the scalp by both hands. Strokes are followed on vertex, occipital and temporal region.

5. Fist strokes (*Mridu Mushti Tadana*) –

In this gentle strokes are placed on all areas of the head with the closed fist through the ulnar border.

6. Pressing (*Ghatita Hasta*) – Flat of the palm are placed on the patient's head and moulded in to the shape of the scalp so that every portion of the palmer aspect of the palm and fingers comes in contact of the head.

**Pascchatkarma:**

After following this procedure the patient is asked to rest on the chair for about 15 minutes and then advised to take head bath with hot water.

**Effect of *Abhyanga* on Various Dhatu: <sup>7</sup>**

The commentator of Sushrutacharya Dalhana has described the effect of

*abhyanga* is described 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 Mansa dhatu in 600 Matras, in Meda Dhatu in 700 Matras, in Asthi Dhatu in 800 Matras and it reaches to Majja Dhatu when the *Abhyanga* is performed up to 900 Matra.

1 Matra = 1 Nimesh Kala ( Su. Chi 24(30)  
(dalhan tika)

Tissue	Time	
	Matra	Seconds
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

**Mode of action of *Abhyanga*:**

*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 *snehan* drug reaches to the particular *dhatu* then subsides the disease of that particular

*dhatu*. Charaka has mentioned that *vayu* dominates in the *sparshanendriya* and its *adhishtana* is *twacha* i.e. skin, so one should follow it regularly<sup>7</sup>. *Indriyas* are in close contact of mind so when *Indriyas* remain healthy then mind automatically remains healthy. In this way *Abhyanga* keeps body and mind healthy.

### Mode of action of *Abhyanga* in Modern View:

The internal fluids of the skin are subjected to movement in the massage because of osmotic pressure. Here massage is causing mechanical hydrostatic pressure in the extra cellular compartment. A forceful expulsion from peripheral vessels causes splanchnic pooling of the body. Massage helps fluid enter into viscera, tissue and dilute the accumulated toxins.

After the completion of procedure when it refills the peripheral vessels, the diluted toxins are brought into general circulation and during the course; they are expelled out via elimination procedures.

*Abhyanga* acts on skin, which is the seat for both *vata* and *lasika*. In this way; the lymphatic drainage will be the prime effect of *Abhyanga*. Lymph exhibits large amount of amino acid tryptophan.

Hypothetically, after massage; amino acids like tryptophan increases in blood. It causes increase in the neuron transmitter serotonin; which is made from tryptophan at motor ends plates.

The piezoelectricity is derived from pressure. While utilizing a medium of unctuous substance to reduce the friction, a good amount of rhythm is used and creates magnetic field and electricity in the body. By this charging the conductivity of the nerves will be increased which may go up to 100 meters

per second. Electricity is discharged in nerve fibre at regular intervals and moves in circular pattern.

Interruption to the momentum is resulting into the state of disease, which may be pacified by doing massage with specific pressure. Acetylcholine acts as transmitter at motor end in the presence of calcium ion and facilitates synaptic action potential.

The nerve fibre has a mylenated sheet in which lipids are the chief ingredients. Na and K ions are responsible for repolarisation in the nerve fibre. This action with the association of melatonin; a by-product of serotonin and a neuro chemical is causing pleasant and calming effects by the massage.

With the concentrated form of the drug; the absorption rate increases. Percutaneous absorption is observed in the inflammatory condition due to the presence of substances like serotonin.<sup>9</sup>

### Health benefits of Massage:

Following are the key effects of massage –

- Reduce muscle tension
- Improve blood circulation
- Induces better Lymph movements
- Results in increased mobility and range of motion of joints
- Stimulates or soothes nervous system
- Enhances skin condition
- Results in better digestion and intestinal function<sup>10</sup>.

### Results:

*Shiroabhyanga* mentioned in *Dinacharya* has a great potential in preventing headache, greying of hair, hair fall, *Anidra*. Also, it is beneficial for





maintaining good health of *Indriyas* and mind and preventing *Shiirorogas*.

### Discussions and Conclusion:

The advantages and benefits of *shiroabhyanga* 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 programme for de-stressing the whole body, strengthening the nervous system, it improves blood circulation in previously congested muscle and helps oxygenate the brain, stimulates lymphatic drainage and induce sleep.

### References:

1. Dr.Brahmanand Tripathi, Astangahridayam, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pratishthan Prakashana, Delhi, 2009, sutrasthana 22/23, p.260
2. Agnivesha, Charaka Samhita, edited by Harish Kushwaha Chaukhamba Orientalia Prakashana, Varanasi, 2011, Sutrasthana 5/81-83. P. 100.
3. Dr.Brahmanand Tripathi, Astangahridayam, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pratishthan Prakashana, Delhi, 2009, sutrasthana 2/9, p.30
4. Dr.Anant Ram Sharma, Sushruta Samhita, Chaukhamba Surbharati



5. Vagbhata Ashtanga Hruday with Sarvanga Sundara commentary of Arundatta and Ayurveda rasayana of Hemadri, Chaukhamba oriental, Varanasi, 8<sup>th</sup> edition, 1998, Sutrasthana 2/8.
6. V.K. Agnihotri, Vijay Kumar, Richa Sharma. Therapeutic Significance Of *Shiroabhyanga*: A Review. IJRAP 6 (6); 8/10/2015; 2229-3566.
7. Dr.keval krishna thakaral, sushruta samhita vol 2, shree dalhanacharya nibandha sangraha vyakhya & shree gayadas aachrya nyaychandrika vyakhya, hindi commentary, chikitsa sthana, chapter 24th verse 30, chaukhamba orientalia, page no.422
8. Agnivesha, Charaka Samhita, edited by Harish Kushwaha Chaukhamba Orientalia Prakashana, Varanasi, 2011. Sutrasthana, 5/81 ,p. 101.
9. Vaidya Vasant Patil, Principles and Practise in Panchakarma, 4<sup>th</sup> edition;2012. p.137,178
10. Jennifer Jacobes, MD, MPH, Consultant editor, Encyclopaedia of Alternative Medicine; retrieved from: [http://www.lushotoexecutivelodge.co.tz/images/uploads/surhud\\_health\\_pdf.pdf](http://www.lushotoexecutivelodge.co.tz/images/uploads/surhud_health_pdf.pdf)

### Cite article:

#### Concept of *Shiroabhyanga*

Kumbhar Jayesh Laxman<sup>\*1</sup>, Jayashri P. Patil<sup>\*2</sup>

Ayurlog: National Journal of Research in Ayurved Science- 2018; (6)(4): 1-7

