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Concept of *Abhyanga* in Enhancing Beauty

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ABSTRACT

Beauty is defined in *Ayurveda* as '*Subhanga Karnam*' which is basically transformation of body as well as mind to most auspicious stage. Our body is in constant phase of transformation. Managing this process of transformation is key to radiant beauty. *Abhyanga* not only improves texture and complexion of skin but also reduces muscle tension, improves circulation, induces better lymph drainage, stimulates both endocrine and exocrine systems. Today's lifestyle leads to development of immense stress which adversely affects beauty. *Abhyanga* reduces Cortisol- the stress hormone, thereby delays ageing process. Stress increases *Vata* thus making skin dry as well as signs of ageing are reflected onto skin. *Abhyanga* helps to pacify *Vata Dosha*. In classics of *Ayurveda*, *Abhyanga* has been mentioned as part of Daily regime (*Dincharya*) and also used in management of various ailments. An effort to explore the concept of *Abhyanga*, its effects on different body systems and its ultimate outcome that is Beauty has been highlighted in this paper. An effort is made to present the relationship between *Abhyanga* and Beauty.

KEYWORDS

Abhyanga, *Beauty*, *Stress*, *Dincharya*



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INTRODUCTION

Beauty is defined in *Ayurveda* as "Subhanga Karnam Sundaram"¹ which is basically transformation of body as well as mind to most auspicious stage. This auspicious stage of mind and body is attained by balance of three energies ie. *Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha*, our *Agni* that digests food, seven *Dhatus* and body wastes. The perfect balance of these body systems leads to good health and ultimately enhances beauty. Health and Beauty are much more than what we see on the outer aspect of body, they depend on what is going on inside. Now a days the erratic lifestyle has lead to development of immense stress which adversely affects both health and beauty.

Regular *Abhyanga* reduces muscle tension, improves blood circulation, induces better lymph drainage, stimulates nerves and endocrine system, improves digestion and intestinal function. It thereby reduces stress that results in delayed Ageing process². Hence, we get a healthy and beautiful body with *Abhyanga*. An effort to explore the concept of *Abhyanga* in enhancing beauty has been made in this paper.

MATERIALS

Different Classics of *Ayurveda*, Journals, Articles published, Web media.

WHAT ABHYANGA MEANS?

It is a *Sanskrit* word which comes from root 'Anj' (means movement or to smear) by adding 'Abhi' *upsarga* and 'Ghana' *pratyaya*. *Abhyanga* means to smear the body with oily substance or movement towards inner *dhatu*s. *Bahya snehan* is another synonym of *Abhyanga*. It is also termed as *Oelation* which means tremendous love and immense tenderness. Thus, we can say that it is a process which affects body and also beneficial to mind and emotions which ultimately results in complete beauty. It is a part of important therapeutic procedure in *Ayurveda* called *Panchkarma*. In *Ayurveda*, *Abhyanga* is *Jaraha-* delay of ageing process; *Sharamha-* fatigue remover; *Vataha-* Nervous system stress remover; *Drishtiprasadka-* those suffering from weak eyesight should massage their feet; *Pushtika-* makes body strong; *Ayushka-* increases longevity by creating an electro chemical balance; *Swapnaka-* induces sleep; *Twakdridhaka-* strengthens skin; *Kleshasahatwa-* provides resistance against diseases and disharmony; *Abhighatsahatwa-* resistance to injuries and power to recover quickly; *Kapha- vata nirodhak-* subsides ailments caused by mucous and *vata dosh*; *Mrija-varna-bala-prad-* improves colour and texture of skin.³ It should be normally done one hour



before bath and only when food taken is digested.⁴

HOW ABHYANGA AFFECTS ACCORDING TO IT'S PROPERTIES

1. *SNIGDHA GUNA*: *snehan, kledan, vishyandanakar*. These *Gunas* are opposite to *Vata gunas* so *Vatahar*.
2. *GURU GUNA*: It is *Vatahar* by this *guna*.
3. *SHEETA GUNA*: Decrease perspiration thus helps in maintaining body temperature.
4. *MRIDU GUNA*: Decrease stiffness. Has anti-ageing property.
5. *DRAVA GUNA*: Mobilize *doshas* by increasing their flowing capacity.
6. *PICCHILA GUNA*: For longevity of *Abhyanga*.
7. *SAR GUNA*: Mobilize *Doshas* and *Malas*.
8. *MANDA GUNA*: Leads to slow diffusion through skin. Thus, longer contact period with skin.
9. *SUKSHMA GUNA*: To enter fine channels of body.

BENEFITS OF ABHYANGA ON OUTER BEAUTY i.e. ON SKIN

Acharya Charak has mentioned benefits of *Abhyanga* in *Dincharya* as "*Sutwagbhavati cha ananam*"⁵. It nourishes the skin. The touch sensation of skin is under *Vata* control⁶. This sense spreads over the entire body and is derived from the power of *Vayu*- The neuro sensory element. The role of skin is to communicate to the mind within about the outside world. Daily

Abhyanga helps to regulate *Vata* content thus maintaining complexion of skin. Stress increases *Vata* thus making skin dry as well as signs of ageing are also reflected on the skin. *Abhyanga* is done by medicated oils. Our skin is permeable to fat soluble substances. Rapid, controlled molecular transport across human skin, is of great interest for transdermal medication delivery. The main barrier is the *Stratum Corneum*, which consists of old dead cells, surrounded by multilamellar lipid bilayer membranes. Small lipid soluble molecules can partition into the *Stratum Corneum*, and then diffuse across the lipid bilayer membranes, but water-soluble molecules, particularly charged molecules, cannot penetrate significantly by this route. Pre-existing aqueous pathways associated with the skin's appendages (sweat gland ducts and hair follicles) admit water soluble molecules and are believed to provide one major route for iontophoresis, in which low voltage buffers are used to move ions and molecules across skin. Essential oil molecules pass through *Stratum Corneum*. *Acharya Charak* has mentioned that color complexion and temperature of skin is maintained by *Bhrajak Pitta*. *Sneha* applied over Skin is digested and absorbed by *Bhrajak Pitta*.



BENEFITS OF ABHYANGA ON INTERNAL BODY SYSTEMS-

- 1) DIGESTIVE SYSTEM- *Abhyanga* improves *Agni* which leads to improved digestion. This helps in nourishment of *Dhatu* and internal nourishment is ultimately reflected onto skin.
- 2) RESPIRATORY SYSTEM- *Abhyanga* deepens and normalizes the breathing pattern; helps to relieve congestion in lungs through percussive and compressive movements. So, absorption of oxygen would be more and blood enriched with oxygen would reflect on the skin.
- 3) CIRCULATORY SYSTEM- When process of *Abhyanga* is performed, manual pressure is applied to that particular area, it pushes blood out of that area and when we release the pressure fresh blood rushes to the tissues. It also causes relaxation in arterial wall thus helps in creating unrestricted pathway for proper blood flow.
- 4) NERVOUS SYSTEM- The sympathetic and parasympathetic systems work in conjunction with each other to balance body needs. Too much sympathetic activity makes us stressed. So *Abhyanga* activates parasympathetic nervous system causing vasodilation, muscle relaxation, balance and rejuvenation.
- 5) MUSCULAR SYSTEM- *Abhyanga* increases blood supply and nutrition to our muscles, reduces muscle and soft tissue

pain, increases work capacity and breakdown adhesions and fibrosis.

6) SKELETAL SYSTEM- *Abhyanga* increases range of joint movements. It helps to increase retention of nitrogen, phosphorus and sulphur in bones and this aids in fracture healing. *Acharya Sushruta* has mentioned it as *Bhagna sandhi prasada*⁷.

7) LYMPHATIC SYSTEM- *Abhyanga* helps in draining lymph towards correct node.

8) ENDOCRINE SYSTEM- Research have shown that *Abhyanga* reduces Cortisol and Adrenaline secretion thereby reducing stress.

DISCUSSION

Abhyanga has marked effect on health of skin both internally and externally. *Acharya Dalhan* has described effects of *Abhyanga* according to time duration i.e.

300 *matra kaal*

(1*matra kaal* = 19/60 seconds

So, 300 *matra kaal* = 95 seconds)Reaches
Romkoopa

400 *matra kaal* Reaches *Twak*

500 *matra kaal* Reaches *Rakta*
Dhatu

600 *matra kaal* Reaches *Mansa*
Dhatu



700 *matra kaal* Reaches *Meda Dhatu*

800 *matra kaal* Reaches *Asthi Dhatu*

900 *matra kaal* Reaches *Majja Dhatu*

Our classical texts of *Ayurveda* had mentioned that *Twak* is seat for *Vata dosha* and *Vata sthan* is related to tactile sensory organ. When tactile sensory nerves are stimulated by *Abhyanga* it provides impulses to muscular, glandular, skeletal, digestive, respiratory and circulatory systems, thus improving their functioning. Head, Ear, Foot⁸ are seats of many vital *marma* points. *Abhyanga* on body stimulate these *marma* points to provide positive energy and acts as immunity booster.

CONCLUSION

Recent researches and texts of *Ayurveda*, revealed an association between *Abhyanga* and health. When we are internally healthy, the skin which is a mirror image of healthy body, reflects it. That's what is called a Beauty. *Abhyanga* not only improves texture and complexion of skin but also reduces Muscle tension, improves circulation of blood, induces better lymph drainage, stimulates both endocrine and exocrine systems. It reduces the level of stress hormone, cortisol that results in delaying of ageing process which is

important for External Beauty and for proper functioning of our body systems that comprises Internal Beauty. *Abhyanga* should be done in *Anuloma direction* (i.e. Direction of hair growth) to prevent damage to hair roots. It nourishes seven layers of skin that broadly corresponds to seven *Dhatus* of body i.e. Plasma, RBC, Muscle, Fat, Bone, Nervous tissue and Reproductive tissue. As each layer of skin digests oil, metabolism of that tissue is activated. Hence, we can achieve the complete aspect of beauty in today's era with *Abhyanga*.



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