

# International Research Journal of Ayurveda & Yoga

Vol. 5 (5),144-147, May, 2022

ISSN: 2581-785X;<https://irjay.com/>

DOI: [10.47223/IRJAY.2022.5523](https://doi.org/10.47223/IRJAY.2022.5523)



## Review Article on *Sarvang Abhyang* and *Swedan*

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### Article Info

#### Article history:

Received on: 26-04-2022

Accepted on: 24-05-2022

Available online: 31-05-2022

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### ABSTRACT:

Ayurveda literally translates to "life science." According to Ayurveda, health does not just refer to the absence of sickness; it also refers to a person's intellect, sense organs, and spirit being in a perfect state of harmony to bestow happiness while the body is free of disease. Abhyanga is an Ayurvedic therapy that entails massaging the entire body with a Dosha-specific warm herb-infused oil from head to toe. For specific illnesses, the oil is frequently pre-mixed with herbs. *Swedana* is a popular technique in Ayurvedic Panchakarma centres. *Sarvanga Swedana*, or passive body heat therapy, is known to generate systemic hemodynamic alterations. *Swedana* is typically performed after *Abhyanga* and/or *Snehana* (the administration of therapeutic oils and ghee in metered quantities for oral consumption as a pre-treatment technique for cleansing therapies such as *Vamana* – Therapeutic vomiting and *Virechana* – Therapeutic purgation). *Swedana* causes the body to sweat, making us feel lighter and more energised. It also causes the cells to activate and wash out pollutants. We feel lighter and more at peace when our cellular metabolism improves. The paper explains the concepts of *Sarvang Abhyang* and *Swedan* in broad terms.

**Key words-***Panchkarma, Abhyang, Swedana*

### INTRODUCTION

*Sarvanga Abhyanga* is a preventive and curative technique in which medicated oils and *ghrits* are applied to the entire body as a massage. *Sarvanga abhyanga* is a detoxifying and therapeutic cellular therapy that uses warm oils to enter deeply into the cells and eliminate physical, mental, and spiritual pollutants.<sup>1</sup> In most Ayurvedic hospitals, *Sarvanga Swedana* is a typical method of *Swedana* procedure. The patients are placed lying supine and with their heads out in a closed steam chamber with a retractable cover, which is warmed by steam impregnated with Ayurvedic decoction pouring into the chamber.<sup>2</sup> Every day,

for a few minutes, the technique is performed before a light oil massage of the entire body. Many musculoskeletal and neuromuscular illnesses defined as *Vataja Nanatmaja* (caused by *Vata* alone) diseases in Ayurveda are treated with this approach as a first-line therapy.

### MATERIAL & METHOD

Material related to *Sarvang Abhyang* and *Swedan* is collected from Ayurvedic text including *Bahatriye*, *Laghutrye* and text book of modern medicine respectively. The index, non-index medical journals has also referred to



collect information of relevant topic.

### Literary Review

**Abhyanga** -*Abhyanga* means massage of whole-body including head with oil

### Importance:

- Trees grow by absorbing water; tree delicate leaves develop in response to water absorption, same as body tissues known as *dhatu* do. In other words, *taila abhyanga* causes the body's various tissues to grow and develop.<sup>3</sup>
- *Abhyanga* should be performed every day before physical activity. It should be done to the head, ears, and feet in particular.<sup>4</sup>
- Oil makes a dry skin and an axis (of a cart) strong and resistant, just as a pitcher. As a result of oil massage, the human body becomes stronger and smoother-skinned, it is less vulnerable to *vata*-related disorders, and it is more resistant to tiredness and exertion.<sup>5</sup>
- The human body is likened to a tree. Trees can live for a long time if their roots are consistently watered. In the same manner that *abhyanga* makes a person healthy, *abhyanga* makes a person healthy.<sup>6</sup>
- Considering the nature of the body, constitution, habituation, season, habitat, and aggravated *dosha*, the intelligent person should apply therapeutic oil or ghee for oil bath and anointing.<sup>7</sup>

Dalhana, commentator of *sushruta samita* has described the effect of *abhyanga* according to duration. **Table 1: Reaching of *taila* to different *dhatu*s or effect on *dhatu*s:**<sup>8</sup>

### Uses of *Abhyang*

- It prevents old age, exertion, and *vata* aggravation, improves vision, body nourishment, long life, good sleep, and nice and strong (healthy) skin.<sup>9</sup>
- People who routinely practise oil massages have less injuries, even if they are subjected to injuries or intense employment. His body is smooth, flabby, muscular, and attractive.<sup>10</sup>
- An oil bath softens the skin, reduces *kapha* and *vata* aggravation, and provides sustenance to the tissues, a healthy complexion, and physical strength.<sup>11</sup>
- *Abhyanga* pacifies *vata*, *kapha*, and *aliments*, relieves fatigue, strengthens the body, calms the body, promotes sleep, and improves the colour, complexion, and suppleness of the skin.<sup>12</sup>

### Types of *Abhyanga* -

- *Sarvanga Abhyanga*: This is a full body massage that is done for the entire body and benefits the whole body.
- *Shiro Abhyanga*: This massage is done on the head. It is helpful in ensuring relaxation and relief from headaches and sinus problems.
- *Ekanga Abhyanga*: This massage is done on specific parts of the body, to relieve pain or stiffness.
- *Pada Abhyanga*: This is a foot massage done for the foot and toes. It helps to provide relief from aching feet and related problems.
- New-born massage: This is an oil massage done on newborn babies. This can be very helpful in improving their overall health condition and nourishes the skin.
- Postnatal massage: This *Abhyanga* massage is done for women who have just delivered a child. The massage helps restore health, which is affected after delivery. It helps to remove *Vata Dosha* that can be in excess. This massage helps strengthen muscles and make skin firm again.

### Contra indications for *Abhyanga*:

- It should be avoided by suffering from aggravation of *kapha*, in purifying therapies like emesis, purgation, *vamana*, *virechana* etc. and who are suffering from indigestion<sup>13</sup>.
- In *ama* state, patient of nascent fever and indigestion should never be anointed<sup>14</sup>.

### *Swedan*

*Swedana* or fomentation (sudation, sweat inducing treatments, steaming treatment) is a specialized Ayurvedic treatment that helps provide unparalleled relief in pain, swelling, and stiffness associated with many systemic diseases, particularly rheumatological conditions like *Amavata* (Rheumatoid arthritis), *Sandhigata Vata* (Osteoarthritis), *Kati Shula* (Low back pain) etc. It is a treatment procedure in which sweat is induced by application of heat and warmth in the form of steam or by bringing the body / body parts in contact with heated medicaments (powders, leaves, processed rice, sand etc) tied in boluses. *Swedana* provides relief from *Stambha* (stiffness and catches), *Gaurava* (heaviness) and *Sheeta* (coldness) in the body or body parts.<sup>15</sup> According to Ayurvedic texts, there are several different varieties of *Swedana*. There are approximately 13 forms of *Sagni*

*Sweda's* (sweat-inducing treatments delivered by procedures including the use of fire or heated materials) and ten types of *Niragni Sweda's* (sweat-inducing treatments administered through procedures involving the use of fire or heated materials) (sweat inducing treatments where in the fire or heated materials are not utilised ex. sleeping covering thick blankets until we sweat etc).<sup>16</sup> *Sweda* in any form can help to relieve pain, stiffness, and swelling. Their application areas, as well as the diseases and pathological situations for which they are prescribed or recommended, will differ.

#### Uses of *Swedan*

1. Helps in losing weight.
2. Effective in stress relief.
3. Provides relief from joint pain.
4. Eases sore muscles.
5. Relieves allergies/asthma.
6. Improves circulation/reduces inflammation.
7. It provides relief from coldness, stiffness, heaviness, and inflammation of the body

#### Contra indication

Contraindicated in people who regularly consume astringents and alcohol, pregnant women, people with bleeding disorders, people with Pitta predominance, people who have diarrhoea and sicca, people who have diabetes mellitus, inflamed colon, prolapsed rectum, people who are tired, unconscious, obese, people who have thirst, hunger, anger, depression, jaundice, ascites, people who are injured, rheumatoid diseases.<sup>17</sup>

#### DISCUSSION

*Swedana* should only be used after a thorough *snehana* (unless indicated otherwise). *Sweda* generates an intervening viscous barrier between the skin and the immediate surroundings prior to transdermal medication absorption when unctuous substances like oil (*taila*) are applied to various body areas. As a result, the heat lost by sudation, as well as huge volumes of fluid and a little amount of Na<sup>+</sup> and Cl<sup>-</sup> ions lost through radiation, conduction, convection, and evaporation (which could compromise thermoregulation or cause hypothermia), does not happen too quickly.<sup>18</sup> *Swedana* also enhances *sneha* transdermal absorption by causing peripheral vasodilation. However, environmental humidity and the duration of the

*swedana* technique must be closely controlled, as a minor increase in temperature over time might have a higher impact (more evaporation) than a high temperature for a short period of time in a humid atmosphere, *Swedana* (*abhyanthara and bahya*) and *snehana* (*abhyanthara and bahya*) are used to improve gastro-intestinal motility.<sup>19</sup> A study examines the immediate and long-term effects of ongoing *swedana*, determining that regular *swedana* use enhances one's heat tolerance capacity and physical endurance, as well as observing enhanced autonomic functions among individuals subjected to intermittent deliberate heat stress. Numerous studies assert that gastrointestinal motility disorders are caused by low autonomic activity, and that increasing it therapeutically helps to cure motility disorders and improve bowel-bladder function. The *sarvanga* *abhyanga* (whole body) fomentation technique should be used for 8-10 minutes in ideal humid conditions, or until the patient sweats excessively. When given for 5-20 minutes, *ekanga sweda* aids in the alleviation of individuals suffering from joint stiffness, restricted motions, and acute discomfort.<sup>20</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

Ayurveda's *Sarvang Abhyang* and *Swedan* treatments are a wonderful gift for holistic psycho-somatic healing. The treatment's beauty is that it can be used by people of all ages, including those who are healthy and those who are sick. It is not only a tried-and-true treatment for a variety of physical problems, but it is also the finest for reducing mental tension. The mind and the body are two synonymous terms. If one is healthy, the other is as well, but if one is disturbed, the other suffers as well. Both must work in unison in order to contribute to our psycho-somatic well-being. Ayurveda and the system's therapeutic procedures have traditionally advocated for a holistic approach to the body-mind component, giving equal weight to both.

**Acknowledgements:- Nil**

**Conflict of Interest – None**

**Source of Finance & Support - Nil**

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**How to cite this article:** Sharma S, Vedpathak S, Kumar V, Patidar A “Review Article On Sarvang Abhyang And Swedan ” IRJAY.[online]2022;5(5);144-147.  
Available from: <https://irjay.com>  
DOI link- <https://doi.org/10.47223/IRJAY.2022.5523>

**Table 1: Reaching of taila to different dhatus or effect on dhatus:<sup>8</sup>**

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