

CHAPTER-16

SHIRODHARA: A MAGICAL THERAPY FOR SOOTHING AND CALM MIND

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ABSTRACT

Shirodhara is, pouring of medicinal Kwatha (Decoction) or oil on forehead. Shirodhara is a type external oleation therapy which comes under the Snehana Karma. Stress is a big part of today's modern lifestyle, which makes it difficult for people to go about their daily lives. The most prevalent and difficult conditions in the modern period include conditions like insomnia, headaches, facial paralysis, scalp psoriasis, hair loss, etc. However, there has not been any efficient management of these complaints up to this point. Determining safe and efficient treatment techniques for these disorders is therefore urgently needed. Thus, an effort is made to rule out Shirodhara's effectiveness in treating various psychological disorders.

Keywords: *Ayurveda, Shirodhara, Snehana Karma, BahyaSnehana, Oleation Therapy, Psychological disorders*

1. INTRODUCTION

Shirodhara is a deeply relaxing and therapeutic treatment that has its roots in ancient Indian medicine, Ayurveda. Shirodhara, derived from the Sanskrit words "Shiro" meaning head and "Dhara" meaning flow, involves pouring a continuous stream of warm herbal/ medicated oil or other liquids onto the forehead. It comes in many different forms, including Tailadhara, Jaladhara, Kvathadhara, Takradhara, and Ksheeradhara. Traditionally, this process is included under Snehana karma rather than being explained under Panchakarma. The Ayurveda describes Murdhatailam as having four types: Shiroabhyanga, Shiroshaka, Shiropichu, and Shirobasti. These are better in the following order.¹

The human body is compared to an inverted tree in Ayurveda, with the head serving as the trunk and the other organs as the branches.² So the head regulates every system, applying medicine to the head in the form of Shirodhara can treat a variety of illnesses in various body parts. Shirodhara has traditionally been recommended for a variety of illnesses, including headache (Shirahshool), Daha (burning feeling), Paka (abscess), Vrana (wound), Arunsika (boils), etc. Additionally, it was noted in the headache disorders Suryavarta and Ardhavbhedak (migraine). Oil application does not come after any kind of massage. By using this method, we can treat both psychiatric disorders and scalp dermatological conditions to the fullest extent possible. It can also be done when the scalp has ulcers or unpleasant problems.

2. MATERIAL & METHODS

The complete procedure of Shirodhara is performed in three steps-Purva Karma (preparatory phase or pre-treatment procedures), Pradhana Karma (primary phase or main treatment procedure) and Paschat Karma (post treatment procedure)³

2.1 Purva Karma (Pre-Treatment Procedures /Preparatory Phase)

"Purva" means "prior" or "before," and "Karma" refers to actions or deeds. Purva Karma refers to the preparatory phase that precedes the main Panchkarma treatment. The purpose of Purva Karma is to prepare the body for the Phadhana Karma or primary detoxification procedures. In Shirodhara, this phase involves several essential steps taken before the main Shirodhara procedure:

2.1.1 Material Required

Shirodharapatra, Shirodhara stand, Shirodhara table, gauze, cotton earplugs, and vessels. gentle towels, medicated kwatha and oil, milk, or water and buttermilk etc.

2.1.2 Selection of Patient

This typically includes assessing the individual's constitution (Prakriti) and their current state (Vikriti), as well as any specific imbalances or ailments they may have.

2.1.3 Selection of Sneha

It is very important to select the appropriate oil or liquid, considering the individual's constitution and condition. As per Dharakalpa, Sneha is consumed in accordance with Dosha conditions. Tila-Taila is used for Vata and Kapha Dosha, Ghrita is used for Pitta and Rakta Dosha. Along with Taila and Ghrita Ksheer (milk), Takra (buttermilk), Medicinal decoction etc can be used.

2.1.4 Preparation of the Patient

The room and environment where the Shirodhara will be performed are set up to create a relaxing and comfortable atmosphere. The patient is extensively checked to see whether he/she is fit for the treatment and advice to urinate and pass faeces. Following that, the patients' pulse, temperature, and blood pressure should be noted. The patient is instructed to lie down in the supine position on Shirodhara table with the DharaPatra secured 4 Angula above the forehead. Shirodhara begins with a warm oil massage of the head, neck, and shoulders. This helps to relax the muscles and prepare the body for the therapy. To prevent fluids from getting into the eyes, cover the ear and eye with cotton.

2.2 Pradhana Karma (Primary Phase or Main Treatment Procedure)

Pradhana Karma refers to the core or primary Panchkarma Procedures, intended to eliminate the accumulated toxins and restore the balance of the Doshas (Vata, Pitta and Kapha). Pradhana Karma treatment involves the following:

2.2.1 Method of Shirodhara

The Patient lies down on a table or mat with their eyes covered. A specialized vessel or apparatus (Dharapatra) is used to pour a gentle stream of warm oil or a herbal-infused liquid onto the forehead. The stream of liquid is directed to the middle of the forehead, just above the eyebrow level, and flows gently in a rhythmic pattern. After which the vessel is swung from one lateral side to the other in a pendulum-like motion. The liquid is collected in a different container and used to fill the Dharapatra before it runs out of liquid. Up to 14/21 days, the Shirodhara treatment is performed for at least half an hour in the morning. Liquid used for Shirodhara should be warmer than body temperature. The duration of the treatment can vary from 30 minutes to one hour, depending on individual needs and response. The patient's head needs to be cleaned off and dried when the Shirodhara procedure is finished.



Shirodhara Performing on Patients in the Panchkarma Department of Glocal Ayurvedic Hospital

2.3 Paschata Karma (Post Treatment Procedure)

Paschata Karma refers to the post treatment phase of Panchkarma which is crucial for the body to recover and stabilize after the intense detoxification procedure or Pradhana Karma. The Paschat Karma phase involves:

2.3.1 Cleansing

After the therapy is over, there is a little period of repose, an oil massage of the body and head, and a warm bath if patient wants.

2.3.2 Rest and Recovery

The individual is given time to rest and relax after the Shirodhara therapy to allow the therapeutic effects to settle in.

2.3.3 Dietary Guidelines

The patient is instructed to follow a light diet, or PathyaAhara to aid in the rejuvenation process and prevent re-accumulation of toxins.

2.3.4 Follow-up Sessions

Depending on the individual's condition and goals, there may be recommendations for additional Shirodhara sessions or other Ayurvedic treatments to further support health and well-being.

In Ayurvedic Panchakarma, Purva Karma, Pradhana Karma, and Paschat Karma are sequential and interrelated phases, each playing a specific role in the detoxification and rejuvenation process to promote holistic health and well-being.

3. PRECAUTIONS

The Shirodhara room should be thoroughly cleaned, well-ventilated, and quiet. Shirodhara should be performed in the morning on an empty stomach. Shirodhara liquid shouldn't be too hot or too chilly. Dhara should be continuously applied to the forehead, neither too quickly nor too slowly.

4. INDICATIONS/CONTRAINDICATIONS

Stress and psychosomatic illnesses like IBS (Irritable Bowel Syndrome), neurological illnesses like headaches and epilepsy, psychiatric illnesses like psychosis and neurosis, insomnia, and convulsive illnesses like psoriasis, eczema, and

hypertension, among others. Patients with VataVyadhi, facial palsy, and cognitive loss can also benefit from shirodhara.

Shirodhara increases Kapha in KaphajaVikara, making it more challenging to treat disorders.

5. DISCUSSION

The head, also known as Uttamanga, is the foundation for all of the sense faculties, or Indriyas (sensory organs), of a living creature. Clinical studies have validated Shirodhara's effectiveness.

5.1. Deep Relaxation and Stress Relief

One of the main benefits of Shirodhara is its profound calming effect on the nervous system. It helps reduce stress, anxiety, and insomnia, and promotes a deep sense of relaxation and peace. The continuous flow of warm liquid onto the forehead stimulates the marma points (energy points), inducing a state of meditative calm.

5.2. Improved Mental Clarity and Focus

Shirodhara helps calm the mind, increase concentration, and enhance overall mental clarity and cognitive function. It provides a space for the mind to quieten and releases mental and emotional tensions, allowing for better focus and presence of mind.

5.3. Rejuvenation And Anti-Aging Effects

By nourishing and strengthening the nervous system, Shirodhara promotes overall rejuvenation and vitality. It balances the doshas (Vata, Pitta, and Kapha) according to Ayurvedic principles, allowing for a state of optimal health and well-being. This can also have anti-aging effects, as the therapy supports overall balance and vitality in the body.

5.4. Relief From Headaches and Migraines

The soothing effect of Shirodhara on the head, scalp, and forehead can help alleviate tension headaches and migraines. The gentle flow of warm oil or liquid, combined with the massage of the head and neck, can provide relief from pain and promote relaxation in the muscles.

5.5. Detoxification

Shirodhara aids in the detoxification process by drawing out impurities through the scalp and skin. The warm oil used in the treatment can help release toxins and promote the overall cleansing of the body.

6. CONCLUSION

Shirodhara is a highly therapeutic treatment with numerous benefits for the mind, body, and spirit. Through the continuous flow of warm oil or other liquids onto the forehead, it helps balance the nervous system, reduce stress, and promote deep relaxation. Shirodhara can have a profound impact on mental clarity, rejuvenation, and relief from headaches. However, it is important to consult with a qualified Ayurvedic practitioner before undergoing the treatment to ensure its suitability for one's specific needs. If you are seeking a natural and holistic approach to relaxation and rejuvenation, Shirodhara can be a valuable addition to your wellness routine.

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