



Varied Applications of Padabhyanga with Special Reference To Mode of Action – Narrative Review

Veena L¹, Anu M S²

¹Assistant Professor, Department of Swasthavritta, Kala Ashram Ayurved Medical College, Gogunda, Udaipur, Rajasthan 313705

²Assistant Professor, Department of Prasuti Tantra & Striroga, Madan Mohan Malviya Government Ayurved College, Udaipur, Rajasthan 313001

Abstract

Ayurveda emphasizes on the practice of Padabhyanga, one among the Dinacharya procedure for maintaining health and also to prevent diseases. Padabhyanga, a simple cost-effective procedure has a varied applications in the current scenario of life style disease such as insomnia, dry eye syndrome etc. In nowadays fast-paced lifestyle, the prevalence of psychosomatic and lifestyle-associated issues such as insomnia, anxiety, and dry eye syndrome is on the rise. Padabhyanga, being a non-invasive, cost-powerful, and without difficulty adoptable approach, offers a promising supportive remedy for such conditions.

This review tries to severely analyze to be had literature, possible mechanisms of action, and medical proof helping the application of Padabhyanga in coping with sleep disturbances and ocular situations. Incorporating this age-antique practice into daily existence may also substantially enhance usual well-being in the modern way of life context.

Keywords: Padabhyanga, Dinacharya, Insomnia, Dry Eye Syndrome

Introduction

The foremost aim of Ayurveda is “*Swasthasya swasthya rakshanam*”; preservation of health. Ayurveda has given more importance for promoting health rather than curing diseases. For gaining perfect physical and mental health, it is very much essential to follow *Dinacharya* means daily routine practice from rising up to sleeping at night. But in the present scenario, our busy life style hinders us to follow these *Dinacharya* procedures, it will affect our quality of life negatively.

Among the variety of procedures in *Dinacharya*, *Padabhyanga* is one among them¹. Application of oil to feet followed by massage is termed as *Padabhyanga*². It is a simple, cost-effective procedure good for inducing sleep, providing health to body and eyes, reducing fatigue and provide softness to the feet. In *Charaka Samhita* and *Susruta Samhita*, *Padabhyanga* has been mentioned in the context of *Sadvritta* as a preventive strategy.

In *Ashtanga Hridaya* and *Yoga Ratnakara*, *Padabhyanga* is been mentioned under the concept of *Sarvanga Abhyanga*. Even though *Padabhyanga* is a simple *dinacharya* procedure, it has varied applications in the conditions such as insomnia, vision, mental relaxation and cracked feet.

Despite its simplicity, *Padabhyanga* is renowned for its wide healing potential. It is historically indicated for selling sound sleep, enhancing vision, relieving fatigue, nourishing the nervous device, and stopping dryness or cracking of the ft. This narrative review pursuits to explore and bring together the various applications and feasible mechanisms of action of Padabhyanga in current fitness contexts, mainly on the subject of sleep problems, ocular fitness, and pressure control.

Methods

This narrative evaluate was performed by way of comprehensively analyzing classical Ayurvedic texts, posted peer-reviewed research articles, and authoritative overview papers to discover the conventional and present day relevance of Padabhyanga. The technique involved multiple degrees to make certain a holistic know-how of the method, its symptoms, and mechanisms of motion. Primary Ayurvedic references have been drawn from *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Ashtanga Hridaya*, and *Yoga Ratnakara*. Relevant commentaries were also consulted for interpretative clarity.

A systematic seek was performed on PubMed, Scopus, Google Scholar, and the AYUSH Research Portal the use of key phrases along with “Padabhyanga,” “Ayurvedic foot massage,” “insomnia,” “sleep issues,” “dry eye,” and “Abhyanga.” Studies from 2000 to 2024 had been included, with an emphasis on human clinical trials, physiological studies, and conventional therapeutic evaluations.

Inclusion standards centered on:

- Studies on the clinical consequences of foot rubdown or Abhyanga on sleep and eye fitness
- Articles available in complete-text and posted in English
- Ayurvedic texts discussing *Padabhyanga* below *Dinacharya* and associated contexts

Data from selected resources had been synthesized to provide an evidence-informed perspective on the relevance and healing software of *Padabhyanga*.

Discussion

Classical References and Theoretical Basis of *Padabhyanga*

Padabhyanga is massing the feet after application of oil or another *Sneha Dravya*. It comes under the category of *Bahya Snehana*. The term *Abhyanga* is derived from the derived from the root word *Aṅga* to which *abhiupasarga* is attached. *Aṅgadhātu* is used in the context of motion or movement³. So *abhyāṅga* is the movement of *sneha* over the body applied using hand. *Abhi* means all sides and *aṅgā* means body parts. So, in short *Abhyanga* is the application of oil and massaging the body parts. *Abhyāṅga* destroys *jarā*, tiredness and fatigue, is *vāta harā, dr̥ṣṭiprasādakarā*, nourishing, increases the lifespan, gives good sleep, blesses with healthy skin and increases the physical stamina⁴.

The importance of *abhyāṅga* has been shown by the way of different metamorphic illustrations. As a pitcher or dry leather or an axis of a wheel become strong and resistant by the application of oil, so by the *abhyāṅga* of oil, human body becomes strong and smooth- skinned, non-susceptable to the disease of *vāta* and resistant to exhaustion and exertions.

Acārya Susrutā advocates “*abhyāṅga* imparts glossy softness to the skin, guards against the aggravation of *vāta* and *kapha*, improves colour and strength and gives tone to the tissues of the body⁵. Oily substance effused on the human organism impart a tone and vigor to its tissue in the same manner as water furnishes the roots of a tree or plant with the necessary nutritive elements and fosters its growth when poured into the soil where it grows.

Procedure of *Padabhyanga*

The oil should be applied to the feet and gently rub the base of the little toe, then the base of the next toe. Then apply slight pressure in between the fourth and fifth toes nicely. Then apply the oil in between the third and fourth toes thoroughly. Then massage, stretch and pull the big toe gently and rub each side of the nail. Then massage the heels of the foot in circular motion. Gently apply pressure on both sides of the heels below the ankle joints followed by circling around the ankle joint with both hands in a clock- wise and anti- clockwise motion. This improves the blood and oxygen circulation and the energy levels of the body. Finally massage the calf muscles to release tension.

Probable mode of action of *Padabhyanga* in Insomnia

Massaging the feet enhances the frontal delta activity and decreases frontal alpha and beta activity. Thus, sleep was initiated by a rise in frontal delta activity⁶. Another probable mechanism of action is that *abhyāṅga* is *svapnakarā* by decreasing beta brain activity this leads to increase in release of relaxing neurotransmitters serotonin and dopamine as well as decreased release of cortisol levels. Since feet is embedded with sensory neurons, by massaging with oil stimulates the nerve endings and thereby increases the level of production of neurotransmitters serotonin and dopamine, which calms the mind. Piezoelectricity derived from the pressure of *abhyāṅga*, increases the conductivity of nerves and also due to the increased level of amino acids in the blood, parallelly it increases the neurotransmitter serotonin which regulates sleep⁷. Massage enhances the secretion of neurotransmitters endorphin, which is a pleasing hormone that calms and relaxes the body and mind, and eventually induces sleep. After massage, amino acids like tryptophan increase in the blood. It results into a parallel increase in the neuron transmitter serotonin, which is made from tryptophan at motor ends plates. Presence of melatonin in the CNS is necessary for induction of sleep and maintenance of nocturnal sleep. Literature review also revealed that massaging with warm oil, tactile and mechano receptors gets stimulated and kinetic energy thus developed leads to the activation of axons at surface level, thereby producing neurotransmitters serotonin and nor epinephrine which regulates sleep⁸. So, *Padabhyanga* is very much effective in curing insomnia.

Probable mode of action of *Padabhyanga* in Eye health

According to Physiology, by doing *Padabhyanga* the somatic sensory area in the cortex gets stimulated and as both the feet and eyes are in the same area 2nd of cortex, its stimulant effect may improve the function of eye and it also reduces eye strain. *Padabhyanga* may have a nourishing or stimulation effect on the eyes through the interpretative areas of feet and eyes, as both meets the Wernicke's area and improving the function of the eyes.

Clinical Evidence Supporting *Padabhyanga*

Though restricted in number, numerous current studies have evaluated the consequences of foot massage or comparable healing procedures on sleep and intellectual relaxation:

- A randomized controlled trial on elderly people confirmed large improvement in sleep first-rate after nightly foot massage the usage of heat sesame oil over 14 days⁹.
- Reflexology and foot rubdown had been found to reduce tension and enhance sleep in patients with continual conditions like most cancers and hypertension^{10,11}.
- In people with digital eye strain, heat oil rub down accompanied through foot soaking became associated with decreased eye fatigue and higher night time-time visual comfort¹².

These findings, although initial, confirm the healing capacity of *Padabhyanga* when tailored to fashionable preventive healthcare.

Conclusion

Padabhyanga, a traditional Ayurvedic practice, offers a promising and proof-aligned method to handling way of life disorders including insomnia and visible strain. Its physiological outcomes—starting from modulation of mind wave styles and neurotransmitter secretion to progressed flow and Marma stimulation—support its huge-ranging therapeutic application. In the era of virtual fatigue and growing psychosomatic proceedings, re-integrating such simple, natural, and value-powerful methods into everyday life may want to have some distance-attaining fitness advantages.

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