

SHIRODHARA FROM SAMHITA-UNDERSTANDING & APPLICATION

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ABSTRACT

Shirodhara is a procedure where medicated oil or liquid is poured over the forehead in a to-and-fro motion uniformly. This procedure is widely used in Ayurveda for many psychic and psychosomatic diseases, as well as sleep disorders or diseases related to the head or eyes. In the Ashtanga Hridaya Sutrasthana, Acharya Vaghbhata in Gandushadi Vidhi Adhyaya mentions Murdha Taila (application of oil on the head), which includes Abhyanga, Parishek (Shirodhara), Pichu, and Shirobasti, which are superior to one another in their succeeding order.

There is a proper procedure for Shirodhara, which includes three steps: Purvakarma (preop), Pradhankarma (operative), Paschat karma (post-operative)

Keywords: Shirodhara, Murdha Taila, Arunshika, Takradhara,

INTRODUCTION

Shirodhara is a process in which medicated oil, milk or Kwath (medicated decoction) is poured in a continuous Stream on the head, especially on the forehead, in a specific manner. Depending on the drug or liquid used, it is called by different names, i.e., Tak-

radhara, where buttermilk is used; Tailadhara oil is used; Kwathadhara, where medicated decoction is used, and Jalandhar, where water is used.

Synonyms

Dhara, Seka, Parisheka, Avashaka, Sechana, Prasechana.

History

Acharya Vagbhat, in Ashtang Hridaya Sutrasthan 22nd chapter Gandushadi Vidhi Adhyaya has mentioned Murdha Taila. Murdha Taila is the application of oil on the head. Murdha Taila is of 4 types: Abhyanga, Seka, Pichu & Basti. Seka or Shirodhara is one procedure mentioned by Acharya Vaghubhat in Ashtanga Hridaya Sutrasthana in Murdha Taila. There are few classical references about Shirodhara & not available in detail.

Indications:

1. Stress and psychosomatic disorders
2. Anxiety
3. Insomnia
4. Psychiatric disorders (psychosis, neurosis, etc)
5. Neurological disorders like headaches epilepsy

Procedure of Shirodhara:

Purva Karma:

Material required:

1. Shirodhara Yantra.	4. Suitable oil, milk, buttermilk.	7. Hot water bath.	10. Soft towels.
2. Droni.	5. Cotton ear plugs.	8. Vessels.	11. Attendants.
3. Gauze.	6. Soft pillow covered with rexin.	9. Rasanadi Churna.	12. Selection of Sneha.

According to Dharakalpa, Sneha is taken according to the condition of doshas.

Vata - Tila taila.

Pitta – Ghrita.

Kapha - Tila Taila.

Rakta – Ghrita.

Vata+Pitta+Rakta – Ghrita + taila in equal portion.

Vata+ Kapha+Rakta – 1/2-part Ghrita + 1 part Taila.

For Takra Dhara Takra -other drugs used are Musta and Amlaki Kwath; for Shiroroga –Ushira, Jatamamsi, Guduchi Vataja Shiroroga (Tension head-

6. Migraines, cerebral palsy, autism, learning disability
7. Hypertension
8. Trigeminal neuralgia
9. Convulsions
10. Psoriasis, scalp disorders, dandruff, chronic eczema
11. Alcoholism and other addictive disorders
12. Vatavyadhi, facial palsy neuropathy, Loss of memory
13. Wounds of the scalp (अरुणिका) pricking pain in the head, burning sensation, suppuration & wound in the scalp.

Contraindications

- In Kaphaja Vikara Shirodhara further increases Kapha, which makes the disease difficult to cure
- After Shodhankarma of Panchakarma, Ajirna.

ache), Migraine, etc. Bala Taila, Dashamula Taila, Dhanvantara Taila. Mahanarayan Taila. Dhara Table This is needed to make the client lie down in a supine position during the Dhara procedure. This unique table has a shallow, rounded depression at its head end where the client keeps his head. The depressed head portion is large enough to accommodate the head and is approximately 45 cm in diameter. Also, this head portion of the table possesses a small hole of 1 cm diameter at the centre of the shallow depression. This hole is fitted with a tube on its surface. Any liquid that falls on this depression will drain out completely through this hole. A vessel may be placed under the table to collect this liquid.

Dhara Yantra: This is a unique instrument used for the Dhara procedure. It consists of a Dhara pot, a coconut shell, a small stick the size of a little finger, and a wick prepared from cotton wool or gauze. Dhara Pot. This refers to a unique two-litre vessel with a

wide mouth and rounded base. A hole of half cm diameter is at the bottom of the boat. The dhara pot is made up of clay or any other suitable metal. Pot is provided with three metal chain or rope anchored to the margin of the vessel mouth. The opposite free end of the chain or rope is fixed to a hook so that the Dhara pot may be hanged on a stand. Coconut shell - Upper half of the empty coconut shell is selected with one of its eyes opened. The free border of the coconut shell half is made uneven.

PREPARATION OF THE DHARA POT

The Dhara pot is made to hang on a stand so that it lies just above the head side of the Dhara table. Plantain leaf is cut into a round, whose diameter should be lesser than that of the Dhara pot. A hole is made at the centre of the leaf that should be larger than the hole in the Dhara pot. This plantain leaf is gently heated in a direct fire to reduce its stiffness and make it plain. Thus, prepared plantain leaf is placed on the bottom of the vessel so that the pore in the vessel is not closed.

Then, the wick is passed through the eye of the nutshell, and one end of the wick is tied to the stick so that the wick does not slip from the nutshell eye. The nutshell is then placed upside down in the vessel, simultaneously passing the wick out of the boat through the pore present on the bottom. Thus, the prepared dhara pot now hangs on the stand with the wick hanging from the pore in the bottom of the dhara pot.

Stand – Thus, the prepared Dhara pot is mounted on a stand, the height of which can be adjusted according to the requirement.

The stand with the dhara pot hanging is placed beside the head end of the dhana table.

MECHANISM OF THE DHARA INSTRUMENT

Dhara pots are meant for the steady flow of decoction or oil. When any liquid is poured into the pot, it steadily flows from the bottom hole. The liquid medicine poured into the pot may have suspended fine solid materials, obstructing the free flow. The nutshell is placed upside down, and the plantain leaf prevents the solids from reaching the pore and block-

ing it. The wick helps in the steady stream of liquids rather than the turbulent flow.

PREPARATION OF THE CLIENT

Even though Shirahseka may be performed at any time of the day before the bath according to the client's habit, early morning at sunrise is the ideal time for the Shirahseka procedure. After evacuating the bowel and voiding urine, the client is asked to refresh himself by brushing his teeth and washing his face. This may be followed by moderate warming-up exercise. The client may be subjected to Shiro-Abhyanga if oil will be used for the Dhara.

Now, the client is ready for Shirahseka. He is made to lie down on the Dhara table. His body below the neck is draped with a cloth. A 12-inch long and 2-inch-wide cotton ribbon is folded twice along its length to make it a thick ribbon. This ribbon is placed along the lower border of the client's forehead upon the eyebrows. This will prevent the fluids from escaping into the eyes during the Shirodhara procedure. The eyes are then covered with cotton pads. The Dhara Yantra is placed at the head end of the table, with the Dhara pot hanging above the client's head, its wick pointing towards the centre of his forehead. A distance of about 3 inches is maintained between the free end of the wick and the forehead of the client. The therapist should first chant the Swastivacana Mantra or prayer and then perform the Shirahseka procedure. The therapist standing on the client's right side is an ideal position to carry out the Shirahseka procedure.

PROCEDURE

The procedure of Shirahseka involves steadily pouring liquid medicine on the forehead for a certain period, which is performed in the following steps.

WARMING LIQUID MEDICINE

Oil or infusion, depending on the prescription, is heated to lukewarm in a water bath. Cold infusions or other liquid medicines are preferred if the client has a predominant Pitta Dosha.

FILLING THE DHARA POT

The hole in the bottom of the Dhara pot is closed with a finger, and then the lukewarm or cold infusion

is poured into it. About one to two litres of liquid medicine may be poured into the Dhara pot. The position of the Dhara pot should be adjusted so that the stream of liquid medicine falls on the centre of the forehead.

MOVING STREAM

The finger closing the Dhara pot is removed, and the liquid starts flowing steadily onto the client's forehead. The Dhara pot is then oscillated constantly and steadily in to and fro fashion across the head so that the fluid falls on the entire forehead from one lateral to another. Otherwise, the Dhara pot may be moved in the shape of the number eight so that the stream of liquid medicine falls across the forehead in the same shape. During the whole Dhara procedure, the jerky movement of the pot should be avoided as much as possible.

REFILLING

The fluid that falls on the forehead flows first into the head support of the Dhara table and then collects in a container placed under it. This fluid is then taken and again poured into the Dhara pot as and when the liquid level in the Dhara pot decreases. As a result, one can achieve a continuous flow of the fluid for a desirable period. When the fluid has cooled down, it is heated once again and used to continue the procedure. In this way, the method continues for about 30 minutes.

AFTER PROCEDURE

After the Shirahseka, the client is asked to rest for about 15 minutes and then to take a head bath with warm water. Soap should be discouraged; alternatively, one can ask the client to use gram powder.

DURATION AND COURSE OF DHARA

The process of pouring the liquid lasts about 30 to 90 minutes. Depending on the nature of the illness and the client's physical condition, Shirodhara is performed daily and continued for 7 or 14 days.

PRECAUTIONS

During the procedure, the eyes and ears are well protected and covered so that medicinal liquid does not leak into the eyes or ears and produce any irritation.

Results and Discussion:

Shirodhara, a traditional Ayurvedic therapy, has proven highly effective in treating various health conditions. This section presents findings from different clinical studies highlighting its benefits and therapeutic effects.

1. **Reduction in Stress Biomarkers:** Research shows that Shirodhara can significantly lower stress biomarkers in the body. It has also been shown to improve mood scores, specifically reducing scores on the Profile of Mood States (POMS), indicating its positive impact on mental well-being.
2. **Effective Treatment for Insomnia:** When combined with Brahmi oil, Shirodhara is particularly effective in managing moderate to severe insomnia, helping individuals sleep better and feel more rested.
3. **Physiological Benefits:** Shirodhara can bring about noticeable changes in the body, such as lowering heart rate, blood pressure, and respiratory rate. Additionally, brainwave activity, measured through EEG, shows an increase in the calming alpha waves and a reduction in beta waves, further confirming its relaxing effects.
4. **Versatility in Treating Various Conditions:** Shirodhara has been beneficial for a wide range of conditions, including ADHD in children, cerebellar ataxia, high blood pressure (essential hypertension), psychological symptoms of menopause, premature ejaculation, generalised anxiety disorder, and insomnia. It has also shown an ability to reduce anxiety, as reflected in decreased levels of plasma nor-adrenaline and urinary serotonin.
5. **Takradhara and Stress Relief:** Takradhara (a type of Shirodhara using medicated buttermilk) has been found to significantly alleviate stress-induced disorders, adding to its list of therapeutic applications.
6. **ADHD Treatment:** Shirodhara has also shown remarkable effectiveness in treating children with ADHD, reducing hyperactivity and improving focus, making it a promising alternative or complementary therapy for this condition.

7. **Tension Headaches:** Shirodhara has proven very effective in treating tension headaches, especially those caused by stress or nervous tension. It offers significant relief to those suffering from such conditions.
8. **ADHD in Children:** Additional studies have reaffirmed that Shirodhara can be particularly helpful in managing the symptoms of ADHD in children, supporting its potential as a natural remedy for this increasingly common disorder.
9. **Managing Hypertension:** Shirodhara has demonstrated its effectiveness in controlling high blood pressure, with results comparable to traditional medications like Sarpagandha Vati. Thus, it could be a valuable option for managing essential hypertension.
10. **Treating Insomnia and Promoting Well-being:** Clinical evidence supports Shirodhara's effectiveness in treating insomnia (Anidra). It helps individuals feel a sense of well-being without harmful side effects or toxicity.
11. **Premature Ejaculation:** Shirodhara has also shown promising results in the psychosomatic treatment of premature ejaculation, improving various aspects such as ejaculatory latency, voluntary control, patient satisfaction, and performance anxiety.
12. **Stroke Rehabilitation:** Shirodhara has been found to aid in rehabilitation for individuals recovering from strokes, particularly those with Pakshaghat (hemiplegia). It improves motor functions like limb strength and overall mobility, making a noticeable difference in recovery.
13. Studies also highlight Shirodhara's role in treating stress-induced insomnia, providing effective relief and improving sleep quality without adverse effects.
14. **Blood Pressure Control (Ksheerdhara):** Ksheerdhara, another variation of Shirodhara, has been found to reduce both systolic and diastolic blood pressure, demonstrating its effectiveness in managing hypertension naturally.
15. In summary, Shirodhara has shown wide-ranging benefits for managing stress, improving sleep,

controlling blood pressure, and addressing mental health conditions like anxiety and ADHD. The evidence from various studies underscores its potential as a holistic, natural therapy for improving physical and psychological health.

MECHANISM OF ACTION:

1. Effect on the Nervous System:

- Stimulates the limbic system, which regulates emotions and behaviour.
- Activates the parasympathetic nervous system, inducing deep relaxation.
- Reduces sympathetic overactivity, thereby lowering stress and anxiety.

2. Effect on Hormonal Balance:

- Lowers cortisol (stress hormone) levels.
- It may enhance serotonin and melatonin secretion, improving mood and sleep quality.

1. **Effect on Brain Waves:** Shirodhara enhances alpha brain wave activity, which is associated with a relaxed but alert mental state.

CONCLUSION

Shirodhara is a therapeutic technique from Ayurvedic Panchkarma that has proven highly effective for various health conditions. Also known as Dhara, Parisek, or Paricsechan, it is commonly used to treat issues such as chronic headaches, insomnia, anxiety, depression, and even more complex disorders like Parkinson's disease and motor neuron diseases. Shirodhara shows the positive results in treating conditions like insomnia, psoriasis, ADHD in children, high blood pressure, strokes, and premature ejaculation—mainly when used alongside other treatments. When performed under the guidance of an experienced practitioner and combined with other medications, Shirodhara can offer significant relief for these conditions. The research consistently shows its value as an effective complementary therapy, helping to improve well-being and manage various challenging health issues.

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