

## ALLEVIATING KNEE JOINT DISORDERS WITH AYURVEDIC JANU DHARA THERAPY – A REVIEW ARTICLE

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### ABSTRACT

*Janu Dhara* is an Ayurvedic procedure where lukewarm medicated oil is poured over the knee joint for a certain period with the help of a *Dhara Patra*. The word *Janu* refers to knee and *Dhara* means to pour, mainly medicated oil. It is a very unique procedure mentioned as ‘*Snehayukta Swedana*’ due to the fact that it comprises both *Snehana* (therapeutic oleation) and *Swedana* (sudation therapy). The *Taila* (oil) used for this procedure does the *Snehana* and due to the *Agni Samyoga* in this procedure it has the resulting *Swedana* effect. *Janu Dhara* is advised in painful conditions caused mainly by *Vata Dosha*, usually for degenerative diseases, stiffness associated with bone, joint and or musculoskeletal pains, it relieves swelling and inflammation in the knee joint. At the end of the procedure perspiration is noticed and an increased range of motion can be observed. Previous clinical studies also suggest the efficacy of *Janu Dhara* in knee joint pain. *Janu Dhara* helps to tone muscles, provides lubrication and improves the working mobility of the joint.

**Keywords:** Ayurveda, *Janu Dhara*, Knee Joint, *Panchakarma*

### INTRODUCTION

*Acharya Charaka*<sup>1</sup> has classified *Trividha Aoushadhi* as *Anta-Parimarjana* (internal therapies), *Bahi-Pari-marjana* (external therapies) and *Shastra-Pranidhana* (therapies requiring surgical intervention). *Janu Dhara*

is included in *Bahi-Parimarjana* type of treatment. Based on mode of application, the *Bahya* procedures may be classified into pouring type: medicated *Kvatha*,

*Ksheera* or *Sneha* etc., are poured from a specific distance over the required places. It may be *Ekanga* like *Janu Dhara* or *Sarvanga* like *Kayaseka*. *Snehana* is the main *Purvakarma* (preparatory procedures) of *Panchakarma* (five bio-cleansing therapies). Literally *Snehana* means to oleate or to make smooth<sup>2</sup>. *Acharya Charaka*<sup>3</sup> has said that the procedure which causes unctuousness, fluidity, softness and moistness in the body is *Snehana* or Oleation therapy. The fatty substances used in this therapy are for the purpose of producing lubrication or oleating effect on the internal as well as external organs. This treatment has qualities like restfulness, strength, and invigoration and cognition. Generally, *Sneha Dravya* are having properties like *Drava* (fluidity), *Sukshma* (minuteness), *Sara* (mobility), *Snigdha* (unctuousness), *Picchila* (sliminess), *Guru* (heaviness), *Sheeta* (coldness), *Manda* (slowness) and *Mrdu* (softness) which are having antagonistic properties of *Rukshana* (dryness) *Dravya*<sup>4,5</sup> *Swedana* is the process by which the sweat or perspiration is produced in the body by using various methods. *Swedana* is the procedure which relieves Stiffness, Heaviness and Coldness of the body and produces Sweating<sup>6</sup>. It is the specific treatment for a number of disorders especially in *Vata* dominant diseases. The drugs used for *Swedana* therapy should possess following properties – *Ushna* (hotness, *Tejas Mahabhut Pradhana*), *Tikshna* (sharpness), *Sara* (mobility), *Snigdha* (unctuousness), *Ruksha* (dryness), *Sukshma* (minuteness), *Drava* (fluidity), *Sthira* (stability) and *Guru* (heaviness).

#### Materials Required

The following equipment should be made available for conduction of the procedure.

- *Droni* or *Dhara* table- This is a waist high table that is used to perform *Abhyanga* as well as the *Dhara* procedure. The upper surface is shallow and concave. An outlet is located at the foot of the table. The top end of the table has a separate rounded part and the surface of the table also forms a concave slight depression.
- 2 *Dharapatra* or *Sarawa* (of 2 litre capacity) (as in Figure 1 Below)
- 2 Vessels of 3 litres capacity (1 litre more than the *Dharapatra* capacity)

- 2 Dry and clean towels.
- 2 litres of Medicated oil.
- 1 Helper to assist for changing the Medicated oil.
- Bowl of 150 ml capacity for *Taila* dispensing.
- Wide mouthed vessel for indirect heating of Medicated oil.
- Gas stove /Induction heater
- Warm drinking water if required by the patient.
- Cold water for sprinkling if any complications are observed.



Figure 1: Dhara Yantra

#### Procedure

- Examination of Patient:** The patient is examined with reference to with *Dashvidha Pariksha* (Ten-fold examination) and the *Vyadhi* (disease) as well as *Deha Bala* should be evaluated using *Pratyaksha* (direct perception), *Aptopadesha* (advice from the wise) and *Anumana* (inferential reasoning). The affected knee should be examined properly for abrasions and injuries, then the tender area marked.
- Preparation of the Patient:** The *Dhara Karma* is to be done in the morning hours after the evacuation of the bowel and bladder. The patient is made to lie down or to sit erect on the *Abhyanga* table. The affected knee joint is properly exposed. To begin with, the patient is subjected to local *Abhyanga* procedure. The limbs are supported in a horizontal position ensuring that the patient is also comfortable.

- c) **Main Procedure** The bowl containing medicated oil is heated gently by keeping over hot water (water bath). The lukewarm *Taila* (having bearable warmth to the patient) is poured into the *Dhara* pot and made to flow on the *Janu-Sandhi* (knee joint) in a regular, steady stream. The height of the stream should be maintained at 12 *Angula* (approx. 9 inches) throughout the procedure. Mild massage should be done with left hand continuously along with the flowing oil. The medicated oil should be continuously taken and reheated in order to maintain the temperature throughout the procedure. The medicated oil can be used for three days consecutively and fresh oil should be used on every fourth day of the procedure.
- d) **Signs of Properly Administered Procedure:** *Samyak Lakshana* of *Janu-Dhara* is not mentioned in classics. Since it is a type of *Swedana* and *Snehana*, *Samyak Swedana* and *Samyak Snehana Lakshana* can be considered. Among *Samyak Swedana Lakshana Sheetoparama*, *Stambhanigraha*, *Gauravanigraha* and *Vyadhihani* can be considered for assessment. In case of *Samyak Snigdha Lakshana Snigdha Gatravta* and *Mrdu Gatravta* can be taken for assessment.
- e) **Time Duration:** The medicated oil should be poured for ten thousand *Matra Kala*. Hence the procedure is performed for 40-50 minutes each day, for 7 days, 14 days or 21 days.
- f) **Post Procedural Activities**
- After the *Taila Dhara*, light *Abhyanga* is done over the *Janu-Sandhi* for about 5 minutes.
  - Patient is advised to take rest for at least 15 minutes.
  - Patient is permitted to take bath with lukewarm water after a minimum of 1-hour time has elapsed after procedure.

#### MODE OF ACTION OF JANUDHARA

The therapeutic action of *Janu Dhara* depends on: Procedural action of *Swedana* and the pharmacological action of the medicine. The actions of *Swedana* can be understood as

*Stambhaghna*: *Swedana* relieves *Stambha* (stiffness). *Stambha* is mainly caused by *Vyana Vayu*, *Sleshmaka*

*Kapha*, *Amarasa*, *Mamsa*, *Meda* and *Vasa*. *Vayu* by *Rooksha Guna* absorbs *Snigdha* so causes *Stambha*. *Swedana* by its *Snigdha* and *Ushna Guna* does *Srotosuddhi* (cleansing of micro channels) and *Ama Pachana*, thereby relieving stiffness.

- *Gouravaghna*: It causes excretion of watery content (*Apya Ghataka*) of the body through *Swedana*. *Apya Tatva* is *Guru*. Due to elimination, lightness is achieved.
- *Sheetaghna*: *Swedana* is chiefly *Ushna* (hot) and thus relieves *Sheeta* (coldness) by opposite property.
- *Swedakaravata*: *Swedana* promotes sweating. *Sweda* is a type of *Mala* and impurities come out through it from the body. *Swedana* drugs by *Ushna* and *Teekshna Guna* are capable of penetrating the microcirculatory channels (*Srotas*) where they activate the sweat gland to produce more sweat.
- The dilation of the microchannels allows *Laghu* and *Sara Guna* to act on *Dosha* in the channels, to remove stagnation, to make the sticky content mobile to excrete them into micro pores in the form of sweat.
- *Acharya Vagbhata* said that the waste is removed from the body just as soap and hot water removes dirt from the cloth.

**The pharmacological action of the medicine:** Different drugs are used in various types of *Dhara Karma*. *Swedana* causes vasodilatation by which drugs enters into the body. According to *Acharya Sushruta*, each of the four *Tiryakdhamani* gradually divides up one hundred thousand times, making them countless. The body is connected to *Romakoopa* as well as the network. *Veeryas* from *Abhyanga*, *Parisheka*, *Avagaha*, *Alepa* etc. enter the body through them after they have undergone *Paka* in the skin with *Bhrajaka Pitta*.<sup>7</sup>

- **MODERN VIEW** *Swedana* operates as the metabolism of body increases. *Swedana Ushna Guna* expands the capillaries and increases the circulation. Increasing circulation increases waste disposal and increased absorption of *Sneha* or drugs by the skin. It also promotes the rehabilitation of muscles and heat management may have the hypo analgesic effects.

- Increased Metabolism: Tissue heating speeds up chemical changes, i.e. body temperature. Sympathetic activities are also increased because of the increased body temperature. Hormones such as epinephrine, nor-epinephrine, cortisol, thyroid hormones are released because of increased sympathetic activity, thus speeding up the metabolism rate. The increased metabolism means that oxygen and food products are being increasingly demanded and waste products, including metabolites, are being produced. Two important mechanisms for reducing heat are employed when the temperature of the body is too high in *Swedana Karma*. They are-
- Vasodilation-When body temperature increases, a negative feedback action is activated in order to achieve a normal temperature. Higher blood temperatures stimulate thermal receptors that transfer nerve impulses to the present area of the brain that stimulates the thermal centre, in turn, and inhibits the heat fostering centre. The heat losing centre nerve impulses cause blood vessel dilation in the skin. So, radiation and conduction are used to lose excess heat to the environment. Due to vasodilation, blood flow through the area increases to supply the necessary oxygen and nutrients and remove waste products.
- Induction of Sweating: By hypothermic activation of sympathetic nerves, a high temperature of blood stimulates sweat glands of the skin, resulting in excessive sweating. Increased body temperature by one degree causes sufficient sweat to reduce the basic body heat production rate 10 times. Body temperature rises to over 2-3 degrees Celsius during *Swedana Karma*. The above-mentioned mechanism results in increased sweating. So, it can be inferred that the *Ushna Guna* of *Swedana Karma* leads to stimulation of sympathetic nervous system and there is vasodilation with increased sweating.

## DISCUSSION

The general line of treatment mentioned for *Sandhigata Vata*<sup>8</sup> is *Snehana* and *Swedana* in the form of *Janu Dhara*, and it is a very promising therapy to relieve the

symptoms. *Dhara Karma* is one of the treatment mentioned under *Murdha Tail Chikitsa* as *Shirodhara*.<sup>9</sup> The same *Dhara*, when applied on any localised part then it is called as *Ekanga Dhara* (and named according to the part being treated i.e. *Janu Dhara* for knee joint). According to *Acharya Sushruta*, the *Veerya* of the *Dravyas* applied over the skin is absorbed by *Tryagaami Dhamanis*<sup>10</sup>, which are present all over the body and are attached to *Romakoopas*. *Swedana* open these *Romakoopas*. These *Dravyas* are mostly *Ushna*, *Teekshna*, *Laghu*, in properties and thereby ascertain *Kaphvatahara* and *Shopahara* effects. Due to these properties oil reaches the target part. Hence these will be helpful in pacification of the vitiated *Vata Dosha*.

## CONCLUSION

*Janu Dhara* is recommended in conditions like osteoarthritis, stiffness and pain of knee joints. It may help to increase blood circulation to the affected area, gets rid of *Dosha* imbalances, strengthens the muscles in the area, helps the release of toxins and reduces inflammation. Due to the effect of medicated oils used, the procedure of *Janu Dhara* pacifies *Vata Dosha* and thus is especially effective in *Vata Vyadhi*, making it an easy yet effective treatment in disorders related to the knee joint.

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