**Shirodhara – An Ayurvedic Therapeutic**

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**Abstract**

*Shirodhara* is an allied *Panchakarma* procedure, which has got worldwide popularity because of its simple administration and efficacy in variety of disorders. Pouring of liquid on head in *Shirodhara* is designed to relieve the psychological stress and mental fatigue. *Acharya Vagbhata* has considered it under the broad heading of *Moordha Taila*. He recommended it for the prevention of *Khalitya, Palitya*, etc. disorders. A variety of material is used for the *Shirodhara* procedure depending on the disease and involved pathological factors. In the present review article, attempt has been made to understand the mode of action i.e. pharmacodynamics of *Ayurved* technique *Shirodhara* along with its therapeutic utility.

**Keywords**

*Shirodhara, Dharapatra, Droni, Moordha Taila*
Shirodhara is a unique form of ancient therapy of pouring oil on the forehead from a specific height and for a specific period; continuously and rhythmically with allowing the oil to run through the scalp and into the hair. It is one of the important and globally recognized as a stress relieving procedure of Ayurvedic system of medicine. It is not only used in disease of skin or hair but also used in psychic and psychosomatic conditions. Depending upon the drug components used for Shirodhara, it is known by different names viz. Jaladhara, Kwathadhara, Takradhara, Tailadhara and Kshiradhara.

MATERIALS AND METHODS
The literature was collected from Samhitas, various Ayurvedic and modern books, theses, published papers and e-media.

METHOD OF SHIRODHARA:
For the descriptive purpose, it can be divided into three stages:
(1) Purvakarma (2) Pradhanakarma (3) Paschatkarma

1) Purvakarma:
It is related with the preparation of Shirodhara. First it should be examined that whether the patient is fit for Shirodhara or not. Then the patient is advised to pass his/her natural urges. Afterwards, he/she lie down in supine position on the Droni. The eyes and ears are covered with cotton so that liquid may not enter in them. His/her head is rested in slightly elevated position, preferably on soft cotton pad.

Droni: In Shirodhara, a special type of wooden table is used which is known as Droni. The edges of Droni should be raised at all the four sides so that the poured material may not flow out.

Dhara Patra: It is a vessel in which liquids used for Shirodhara are filled in. The mouth of vessel is wide and sides are tapering gradually to a central point in the bottom. At this point a hole is made approximately of little finger size. The depth of vessel is about 5 to 6 inches with a capacity of 2½ liters. Nowadays a nozzle having the provision to stop and open cork is fitted to control the flow. Dhara Patra is suspended three Angul (4 inches) above the forehead.

Medicament for Shirodhara: It can be performed with various liquid medicaments like Jala, Kwatha, Takra, Taila, Kshira etc., depending on the involvement of Dosha, Dushya, Kala etc. pathophysiological factors in the disease. Drugs specifically indicated in certain diseases are:
• Vataja Roga: Bala taila, Dashmula Kwatha and Ghrita etc.
• Pittaja Roga: Chandana, Ushira Kwatha, Takra, Jala etc.
• Kaphaja Roga: Nagara, Mustaka and Madhuyasti Kwatha.

As per the recommendation of Dharakalpa, Sneha is taken for Shirodhara according to the condition of Doshas.

- Vata Dosha: Taila
- Pitta Dosha: Ghrita
- Kapha Dosha: Taila
- Rakta Dosha: Ghrita
- Vata + Pitta + Rakta: Ghrita + Taila in equal portion
- Vata + Kapha + Rakta: ½ part Ghrita + 1 part Taila

2) Pradhanakarma:

The medicament fills in the Dharapatra and pours continuously, neither very fast nor very slow on the forehead of the patient. When the liquid starts pouring then the vessel is moved in the pendulum manner starting from one lateral side to the other lateral side. The poured liquid is collected in another vessel and is used to refill the vessel before it become empty.

Dharakala: As Shirodhara is one type of Bahya Snehana Karma, it can be done in the morning on empty stomach or after 3 hours of taking food.

According to Dharakalpa, patient having dryness and Pittanubandhit Vata, the period of Shirodhara is 2½ Prahora or 2 Prahora while in Snigdha Kaphanubandhit Vata, it is one Prahora or it should be upto initiation of perspiration.

Dhara process can be done for half an hour to 90 minutes in the morning upto 21 days.

It is believed that through this irrigation method of head, the effect of medications can be achieved upto the limbs and entire body within 21 days. Usually Dhara process is performed in different course of 7 days, 14 days or 21 days like wise.

Period for Changing the Liquid: When milk or water is used for Parisechana, it should be changed everyday, whereas Dhanyamla can be used upto three days. The oil also should be changed every third day, but it can be reused. In seven days of Tailadhara course, for the first three days half of the oil is used and for next three days later half of oil is utilized. While on the seventh day, remaining oil of first and second half are mixed together and used, then it should be discarded.

3) Paschatkarma:
After Shirodhara, oil on the head is wipeout and advised rest for a short duration. Followed by massage of the body including head is given. Then a bath with lukewarm water is suggested\(^{12}\).

*Pariharyani*\(^{14}\): The patient should avoid physical exertions, mental excitement such as anger, grief, sexual desire and exposure to cold, sun, dew, wind, smoke or dust. Riding, excessive walking, travelling, speaking too long or loudly and such other acts that give strain to the body must be avoided. Sleeping during daytime and standing continuously for long period must also be avoided. It is also advisable to use a pillow which is neither very high nor very low, during sleep at night.

*Pariharakala*\(^{15}\): The patient should follow *Pathya Ahara-Vihara* and remain as *Jitendriya* during the Dharakarma.

**DISCUSSION**

**POSTULATED MECHANISM OF JALADHARA:**

Clinically the efficacy of Jaladhar is proved, still it is a difficult task to understand the mode of action of Jaladhar. Generally, Shirodhara is effective in following two ways.

1) Therapeutic effect of medicament,
2) Procedural effect of the process.

**Therapeutic effect of medicament:**
- As per the principle of drug absorption, maximum absorption is in the scalp region and comparatively oil is better absorbed than water\(^{16}\). That’s why most of the Ayurveda formulations are based on oil for the Shirodhara purpose. Moreover, Shirodhara helps to prevent Khalitya, Palitya etc. diseases\(^{17}\). Therefore, it can be said that the medicament used for Dhara is certainly absorbed.

**Procedural effect of the process:**
- The procedural effect of Shirodhara is also significant. The water has no any chemical or therapeutic properties but has only physical properties, however practically it is observed that the Jaladhar i.e. Shirodhara with water is found beneficial because of its mechanical effect\(^{18}\).
- Acharyas have given four type of techniques for Moordha Tail, which include Abhyanga, Seka, Pichu and Basti. They are mentioned “Uttarottara Gunaprada”\(^{19}\). It means that one after one it becomes more and more beneficial. The description itself indicates that there is a mechanical effect of therapy.
• Mind, body and spirit are intimately connected and Shirodhara by calming the stressful mind, relaxes the entire physiology.  

• In Shirodhara liquid is poured on a forehead, which induces the somato-autonomic reflex through thermosensors or pressure sensors of the skin or hair follicles via the trigeminal cranial nerve and provides physiological effect of therapy.

Aromatic science:
• The well-known relaxing action of medicated aromatic oils used for Shirodhara mediated by olfactory nerves.

Ayurveda science:
• Imbalance of Prana, Udana and Vyana Vayu, Sadhaka Pitta and Tarpaka Kapha can produce stress and tension. Shirodhara reestablishes the functional integrity between these three subtypes of Dosha through its mechanical effect.

Yogic science:
• In Shirodhara, patient is asked to lie down in supine position as in Savasana. This position is used for relaxation in Yogic science. Again during Shirodhara patients concentrate where Dhara poured on the forehead. Moreover, he is devoid of surroundings during the procedure, which helps him to calm the stressful mind. As the patient concentrates on a particular place, the thought process decreases and thus entire physiology relaxes.

• Agna Chakra (the space between the two eyebrows) is the seat of Pituitary and Pineal gland. As we know, the pituitary gland is one of the main glands of the endocrine system. Shirodhara regulates its stimulation by its penetrating effect, which helps in bring the hormonal balance. It also decreases the brain cortisone and adrenaline level; synchronizes the brain wave (alpha waves), strengthens the mind and spirit and this continues even after the relaxation.

Marma science:
• The forehead and head are areas of many vital spots (Marma) as mentioned in Ayurvedic classics. Mainly Sthapani, Utkshepa, Avarta Marma are situated in this region. As mentioned earlier it is also a place of Agna Chakra. According to Acharya Bhela, the location of Chitta (Mana) is Bhrumadhya. It is place of Sthapani Marma. Shirodhara makes the patient concentrate on this area by which the stability arrives in the functions of mind. In this way, the probable mode of action of Shirodhara can be understood from different aspects.
CONCLUSION

On the basis of above description, it is clear that Shirodhara has both therapeutic effect of medicament and procedural effect. These can be understood from the aspect of Ayurveda, mechanical, Marma, aromatic and yoga science. The complicated pharmaco-physio-psychologic action of Ayurvedic Shirodhara treatment may provide a useful model for future pharmaco-physio-psychotherapy. Shirodhara can be used for the treatment of scalp, hair, psychological and psychosomatic disorders.
REFERENCES


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