

CRITICAL REVIEW ON VISHRAMKALA (GAP DAYS) IN PANCHAKARMA

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Abstract

In Panchakarma (five purificatory procedures) particular order should be followed. After Snehapana (internal oleation), Abhyanga (external oleation) and Swedana (fomentation) should be done for specific time duration then only Panchakarma can be administered. After Snehapana or Samyak Snigdha Lakshana (getting proper oleation characters), there is a variation in duration of Abhyanga and Swedana classically and practically. Also there are different opinions among the Acharyas regarding Vishramkala (gap days). So this manuscript is to exemplify the concept of Vishramkala from Brihatrayi and the commentators for Shodhana (purification) therapy.

Key words: Abhyanga; Gap day; Panchakarma; Snehana; Vishramkala.

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INTRODUCTION

According to Ayurveda, health is our natural, balanced state. Ayurveda defines the many Panchakarma procedures, both internal and external those are beneficial to a balanced state of human being. Ayurveda offers knowledge to increase awareness of the factors that may cause imbalance and ways to create balance by regulating the systems of the body through Panchakarma. Today there is need of genuine and authentic Panchakarma which will give better results than modifying schedule with subjects. Suitable time duration for specific procedure is most important in Panchakarma. Appropriate time duration is explained for all Panchakarma that is Asthapana Basti (decoction enema) should be given in early hours of afternoon that is Madhyanhe Kinchit Avarte,^[1] Vamana (emesis) should be given in morning hours that is Purvahne.^[2] Virechana (purgation) should be given at the end of morning hours that is Shleshmakale Gate Dnyatva.^[3] For Snehapana also, in Mrudu Koshtha it should be given for 3 days, for Madhyama (Moderate type of intestinal constitution) - 5 days and for Krura Koshtha (Strong type of intestinal constitution) - 7 days.^[4] In cold season (Shishir and Hemant) unctuous enema should be administered in day time whereas in hot season (Sharad and Grishma) in night time.^[5]

Vishramkala is the time period between purificatory oleation therapy and purificatory procedure. It is also called as gap days. It is different for emesis and purgation therapy. For emesis it is the time period of one day where as for purgation it is of three days but there are some differences of opinion among the Acharyas and commentators. In practices also many physicians cut off the gap period due to lack of time or to shorten the elongated purificatory procedures. It can understand that due to hectic life style nobody is having time for classical Panchakarma. So this manuscript aimed to put light on different opinions regarding gap days and the need of the same.

In Panchakarma specific series should be followed. After Snehapana, Abhyanga and Swedana should be done for specific time duration then only Panchakarma can be administered. After Snehapana or getting proper oleation characters (Samyak Snigdha Lakshana - SSL) there is a variation in duration of Abhyanga and Swedana theoretically and practically. Among the Acharyas also some difference of opinions are there. So this manuscript is to exemplify the concept of gap days from Brihatrayi in support of Shodhana purpose.

VAMANA

After getting proper oleation (SSL) characters irrespective of Koshtha, patient should be undergo for Abhyanga and Swedana for one day, that is emesis is to be administered one day after the completion of Snehapana. The food prescribed during this interval of one day is the same as indicated in the Snehapana.

Charaka

Chakrapani commented on the same that on the 1st day of gap day i.e. one day after getting SSL, diet should be similar to the diet given during oleation that is Drava (liquid), Ushna (hot) and meat soup along with rice.^[6]

In Kalpashthana, Charaka depict that the person who has to undergo for emesis procedure, oleation and fomentation should be performed for two or three days. On the previous day of emesis, if subject is adequately oleated and fomented then only Kapha exciting diet should be given. On the next day morning emesis drugs should be administered.^[7]

Chakrapani enlighten the Charaka's opinion about Dvaham (two days) and Tryaham (three days) that after getting SSL patient should undergo for external oleation and fomentation either for two days or three days irrespective of time taken for the proper oleation. It may be

3, 5 or 7 days which clarifies the gap period is the unchanged.

The duration of external oleation and fomentation should be decided by the physician using Yukti (intellect and interpretation) or after assessing the condition of patient because Charaka has already instructed as either 2 or 3 days.

If the condition of patient or Utkeshanavastha is permitting external oleation and fomentation can be done for 3 days. It can be calculated as first day is last day of internal oleation, 2nd day is gap day and 3rd day is the day on which emesis is to be performed.

Sushruta

The patient having been oleated and fomented and when it is observed that *Doshas* are loosened or vitiated *Doshas* goes upwards by intake of various soft (slimy) food items it moves out properly. On next day, emetic drugs should be administered.^[8]

Dalhana commentary

Dalhana commented on above cited lines that in the temperate season, on the previous day of Vamana patient should take diet as soft with Abhishyandi (slimy) and Gramya, Anupa (marshy land) and watery animals flesh, milk and black gram etc. On the next day in the morning Vamana should be administered.

Ashtanga Hridaya

After one more day of oleation therapy and another day with foods which cause increase of Kapha. Such as Tila (sesame), Masha (black gram) Dadhi (curd), milk jaggary (molasses) fish and meat soup, the person can be given Vamana. The Vishramkala or gap days should be two. On third day Vamana can be given.^[9]

Indu commentary

Indu commented that after getting proper oleation symptoms two days interval should be there before emesis. On 1st day, patient should be administered warm, thin soup prepared from the meat of animals living in desert like regions, added with fatty materials along with sudation should be given. On the next day, to vitiate Kapha, the food which cause increase Kapha such as sesame, black gram, curds, milk, jaggery, fish and meat soup should be given. On 3rd day emesis should be performed.

Ashtanga Sangraha

To perform Vamana Karma, person has to consume similar meat soup for one day only. On next day, person has to take food which enhances the quantity of Kapha Dosha. On third day, emetics should be administered.^[10]

According to Arundutta

After getting proper oleation symptoms, on the next day, the diet should be liquid, warm, thin soup prepared from the meat of animals living in desert like regions, added with fatty materials along with sudation. On 2nd day, patient should take diet like black gram, fish and sesame and on 3rd day emetic drugs should be given.

VIRECHANA

Virechana (purgation) should be administered 3 days after the completion of the oleation therapy.

Charaka

Chakrapani says that after getting SSL or after completion of internal oleation therapy, patient should wait for 3 days and on 4th day, Virechana should be administered.^[11]

Sushruta

Sushruta stated as, purgation should be given after the 15 days of emesis. Dalhana clarifies that after emesis, 6 days Samsarjana Karma (special diet pattern after Purification) will be given followed by next 6 days of Snehapana as a preliminary preparation of purgation. The remaining 3 days are Vishramakala. That means on the 4th day of SSL, purgation should be given which is similar to the Charaka's opinion.^[12]

Ashtanga Sangraha

The patient should be administered warm, thin soup prepared from the meat of animals living in desert like regions added with fatty materials. The patient had been oleated and fomented when it is observed that Doshas are loosened or vitiated after 3 days of such treatment should be given purgation therapy.^[13]

Indu commentary

After getting proper unctuous symptoms, if physician is planning for Virechana without performing Vamana previously then also he should wait for 3 days or perform Virechana on 4th day.

Ashtanga Hridaya

After administration Snehapana properly, the person has to take hot, fatty and liquid meat soups for a period of three days, then he should be undergo Swedana Karma for a period of three days. The next day, he may take purgative.^[14]

DISCUSSION

There must be a gap of one day between the last day of Snehapana and the day of Vamana karma, where the patient should be subjected to massage and Swedana. Chakrapani while elaborating Snehapana and Swedana states that

massage should be done along with Swedana for two or three days that is on the day when Snehapana is completed, gap day and the day on which Vamana is to be administered. Dalhana mentions that Doshas which are lodged in the shakha (extremities) are made to move towards the Kostha by means of Snehapana and Swedana, Charaka states that, fomentation liquefies the morbid matter which is stuck up in the minute channels of the body of the person who has undergone oleation therapy.^[15] Vagbhata mentions that, the waste products are removed from the body by oleation and fomentation in the same way, as the dirt of cloth is removed with the help of soap and hot water.^[16] Before performing Vamana Karma it has been clearly mentioned that patient should take rest for one day after internal oleation therapy.^[17] On that day, the patient should be given the diet which has Utklesha (kapha increasing) property. In Sushruta Samhita,^[18] it has been stated that the diet to be taken before the day of Vamana should be Abhisyandi. Dalhana comments that this particular diet should be administered to serve the purpose of Kaphaotklesha.^[19] It has been narrated in Charaka Samhita that, this type of diet must be taken on the previous night of performing of Vamana Karma. It increases the Kapha and Kleda and thus Doshas start to flow towards the Kostha.

What happens in the body during this gap days?

The aims of gap days may be different regarding type of Shodhana.

In Vamana, there are 3 goals which should be attain during this period that is

- To give rest to the body after the tiresome procedure of Snehapana.
- To prepare patient's body for further purification
- Maintain or prepare Doshavastha in the body.
- Helps in the further procedure.

In case of Virechana, these goals are

- To decrease the Utkleshana of Kapha (Vridhhi) this was increased during Snehapana.
- Maintaining the Doshavastha as Hina Kapha and Pitta Vridhhi
- Helps in further procedure by preventing complications as Vamana happens after giving the Virechana Aushadha.^[20]

Probable mode of action

First of all by the Purvakarma, when internal oleation is done, it goes upto the cellular level where the greasiness of the body parts (Gatra Snigdhatā), soft feelings of the body parts (Gatra Mardavta), oiliness of the skin (Tvaka Singdhata) like proper oleation characters are produced. Dosha becomes loosen at cellular level by Snehana. Many substances, which are deposited at cellular level, they become loosen by the Snehana. By the act of Abhyanga and Swedana loosen substance becomes mobilized and it comes in to the blood circulation. Vamana is always done with full stomach so the pyloric end of stomach is closed. The site of action of Vamana is Amashaya (stomach) which is mentioned as a place of Kapha. By the act of Vamana drug, which is having Ushna (hot), Tikshna (strong), Aashukari (Immediate acting), Vyavayi, Vikasi properties may acts by two ways, first produces medically induced mild inflammation by its Ushna, Tikshna properties at organ level i.e. stomach and second, stimulates the vomiting centre of brain with its Aashukari, Vyavayi and Vikasi properties. At stomach level when inflammation occurs, the permeability of blood vessels is increased and the Dosha which are already come into blood steam by the help of Purvakarma, they come to stomach. This process is compared with the process of where Dosha comes, in Koshtā from the extremities. By the act of vomiting they can thrown out from the body.

The reason behind the gap days is to prepare body for Shodhana. The Doshavastha should be maintained or applicable for Shodhana because the person with excessively aggravated Kapha vomits without any difficulty and the person having less aggravated Kapha purgates well. However if there is less of kapha than the medicine cause purgation through the downward tract and in the case of aggravated Kapha the purgative medicine causes emesis through the upward tract.^[21]

Snehana and Swedana Karma are performed as Purvakarma to various Shodhana therapies. The following actions are done by it.

- It increases the Apyamsha (liquid) of the body.
- It acts as solvent.
- It brings the lodged morbid and unexcreted waste products to gastro-intestinal tract.

CONCLUSION

Though Vagbhata commentator has difference of opinion about gap days before emesis, but Caraka and Sushruta opinion should be followed. Practically it not gives any impression to wait for two days. Doshavastha will be modifying. So it can be concluded as Vamana should be administered after one day gap and Virechana after 3 gap days for getting proper effect.

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