



Review article

Description of Shiro Basti in Panchakarma

Amit A. Desale¹, Shrikant S. Bagul^{2,*}

Associate Professor^{1,2}

Department of Panchakarma¹, Department of Rasashastra & Bhaishajya Kalpana²

¹Smt. K. V. T. R. Ayurved College, Boradi Maharashtra, India - 425428,

²K. C. Ajmera Ayurved Mahavidyalaya, Deopur Dhule, Maharashtra - India 424002

* **Corresponding Author:** Dr. Shrikant S. Bagul, E-mail: drshreekant.bagul@gmail.com

Article Received on: 27/05/2025 Accepted on: 17/12/2025 Published on: 20/04/2026

ABSTRACT:

Man has urge to live long and healthy life since along. Mankind has suffered from many types of physical and mental changes which may lead to disease. Therapeutic measures help human bodies to fight and sustain against disease. There are various types of therapies. One of them is Ayurved. There are certain specific treatment procedures in Ayurved. Among them Panchakarma is highly preferred to cure any disease with least possibility of recurrence. It consists of five main procedures. Charaksamhita has stated in praise of Panchakarma that doshas which are cured by langhan, pachan, etc.

may aggravate to cause the disease again, but doshas cured by Samshodhana doesn't recur. (Ch. su. 16/20).

KEY WORDS: Mental, Bodies, Sustain, Langhan, Pachan, Panchakarma etc.

INTRODUCTION:

Sushruta samhita indicates that during the period of classics, Bastikosha or animal bladder was used for Shirobasti (Su. Utt. 18/50). Gradually, due to the difficulty in application and inavailability the use of Bastikosha was

replaced by the use of "Charmapatta"- a folded leather made cap open on both sides. This device was commonly used during the period of Vagbhatta and that's why, Indu, the commentator of Ashtang Samgraha describes 'Basti' as a 'Charmapatta' (Indu on A.S.Su. 31/17). Sharangadhara samhita named the same apparatus made of leather as 'Shirobasti' (Sha. Utt. 22/123) Thus, Shirobasti is a procedure in which unctuous substances are allowed to remain on

the head by means of application of a device known as 'Vasti' to mitigate the adverse effects of diseases due to localization of the provoked Doshas in the head.

Aims & Objectives-

Aims - Description of Shiro Basti in Panchakarma

Objectives - study of Conceptual study Shiro Basti and emphasis on Ayurveda Review of Shiro Basti.

MATERIALS AND METHODS:

Materials: Source of Data-

- Sushruta Samhita
- Charaka Samhita
- Vagbhata Samhita
- Dhalla Commentary

- Sharangadhara Samhita
- Madhava Nidana
- E-Journal

METHODS:

compile available literature, conceptual study, and literary research study, on Shiro Basti. In this articles all the references from Ayurveda Samhita and respective commentaries regarding Description of Shiro Basti in Panchakarma.

Review of literature -

Historical Review Of Shirobasti:

Vedic Kala (Pre-Samhita Period, 10,000 B.C. To 500 B.C.)

The Vedas are original source of knowledge enriched with philosophy leads to the ultimate truth. The knowledge regarding medical science is spreaded in Vedas. Atharvaveda which denotes the knowledge of external or immortal by the word iteslef, consists of many references related to medical field. But there is no reference found regarding Shirobasti in any of the Vedas.

Samhita Kala (200 B.C. - 400 A.D.)

Samhitas contains a larger part regarding various therapies and therapeutic procedures according to the line of treatment of the diseases. Shirobsti is specifically mentioned.

Charak Samhita (2nd Century B.C.)

There are some indications of Shirobasti found in Charaksamhita are –

- Ardhavabhedaka (Ch. Si. 9/18)
- Suryavarta (Ch. Si. 9/82)
- Kaphaja Shiroroga (Ch. Chi. 26/180)
- Ardit (Ch. Chi. 28/99)
- Anantavata (Ch. Si. 9/86)

No further explanation regarding procedure and administration of Shirobasti is found in Charak samhita.

Procedure of Shirobasti Karma-

For the convenience, the procedure of Shirobastikarma is divided into three:

1. Poorvakarma
2. Pradhanakarma
3. Paschatkarma

1. Poorvakarma:

Main features related to Poorvakarma are described here:

- i. Season for the treatment of Shirobastikarma
- ii. Kala of Shirobastikarma
- iii. Situation advisable during the procedure of Shirobastikarma
- iv. Shirobasti yantra
- v. Mana (measurements) of Shirobastiyantra.
- vi. Mashakalka
- vii. Peetha
- viii. Preparation of the patient
- ix. Directory regimen.

2. Pradhanakarma:

- The patient prepared for Shirobastikarma, is advised to sit on the Peetha without any movement.
- Firstly, the Vastrapatta is tied around the head which is smeared with Mashakalka both the sides, covering the forehead.
- Then, Shirobastiyantra is put on the head over the Vastrapatta.
- The Challavenika is tied over the lower end of the Shirobasti yantra just above the ears. (A.S.Su. 31, A.H.Su. 22/27-29)
- Sharangadharasamhita and Yogaratnakara opins differently that Mashakalka is applied at the junction of the head. (Sh.S. Utt. 11/123, Y.R. Strirorog Chikitsa.
- The suitable prescribed Sneha is luke warmed and poured into Shirobastiyantra.
- Sushruta, Shrangadhara, Bhavamishra and Yogaratnakar, etc. have not clearly indicated that whether the Mashakalka should be applied inside Shirobastiyantra or outside of it.
- But, one of the commentary of Ashtang Hridaya, "Pathyabhidhana" has mentioned to apply Mashakalka inside Shirobastiyantra,- "Antelipte Prayujanam Bhavati" which is followed by most of the physicians.
- In clinical practice, some of the physicians apply

Mashakalka outside and some others in both of the sides. If Mashakalka is applied outside, Sneha can cover more area of the head, but possibility of leakage is there.

- The main purpose of tying bandages and applying Mashakalka is to seal Shirobastiyantra, so that Sneha poured inside may not get leakage.
- Temperature of Sneha: "Sukhoshna" or "Koshna" is indication found regarding the temperature of the Sneha in classic. (A.S. Su. 31/17, A.H.Su. 22/29, Sh.S. Utt. 11/123, B.P. Ma. 63/26, Y.R. Shiroroga Chikitsa)

According to Gadanigraha, Chakradatta and Bhaishajya Ratnavali, the Sneha should be used 'Ushna' (Gadanigraha Shiroroga Chikitsa 60/5, B.R.65/5).

The temperature of Sneha should be carefully decided, because high temperature may cause Bhrama, Daha and such other Pittavikara, while less temperature may give rise to Shirogaurava, Utlkesha and such other vikaras. Generally, head should be prevented from more heat as it is harmful to the eyes and hairs too. Sushruta says that in cases of the provocation of Vata and Kapha, the head may be washed with warm water, as a part of the treatment after a careful consideration of the intensity of the disease. (Su. Chi. 24/59)

Summarizing facts mentioned above it can be stated that Sneha should be lukewarm nearly to the body temperature for Shirobastikarma.

• Quantity of Sneha:

The level of Sneha poured in Shirobasti yantra should be two fingers above the top of the head according to Dalhana. (Dalhana on Su. Utt. 18/59).

According to Ashtang Hridaya and Ashtang Sangraha, the level of Sneha should be one finger above the top of the head. (A.H. Su. 22/29, A.S.Su. 31)

Other classic like Sushrutasamhita, Sharangadha rasamhita, Bhava-prakash and other authors of later centuries do not draw any specific note regarding the quantity or level of the Sneha.

3. Pashchatkarma

The Sneha poured on head is taken out from Shirobasti yantra after the completion of its desirable duration. It is taken out with the help of a big spoon and then remaining oil is removed by tilting the head or with the help of cotton. Then after Shirobastiyantra is removed. Then the patient's head, shoulder, neck, back, forehead, face, etc. are gently massaged. After that patient is advised to take bath with hot water and then he is allowed to take meal. Jangalmamsa (flesh of dryland animals), Shali rice etc. are wholesome. At night, the patient should take the soup of Mudga (Green gram), Masha (Black gram) and Kulattha (Horse gram) Substances of Katurasa (Pungent taste) and Ushnaviryay with Ghrita followed by hot milk is advisable (A.S. SU.31/17, A.H. Su 22/31, Sh.S. Utt. 11/126-127, B.P. Ma. 63/27-28) Shirobasti karma is a Snehana procedure. So, the patient should strictly follow the restrictions stated in the passage start with – "Ushnodakopacharisyat..." in Snehanavidhi (Cha. Su. 13/62-64).

Major indications and contraindications to be followed in an oleated person described in Charakasamhita and other classics is as follows:

One should use only warm water, observe celibacy, sleep only at night, refrain from suppressing the urges of faeces, flatus and eructation. One should avoid physical exercise, loud speaking, anger, grief, severe cold and sunshine, smoke, dust, etc. One should sleep and sit in a place free from droughts, avoid riding on elephants, horses or other vehicles, walking, speaking too long, sleeping during day time, not sleeping at nights, sitting for long time, standing continuously for a 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. (Ch. Su. 13/62-63, A. H. Su. 16/26-27, Sha. Utt. 1/35).

Indication And Contraindication Of Shirobasti Karma

Indication of Shirobastikarma:

According to various Ayurvedic classics, Shirobasti is mainly indicated for the disease of head due to provocation of Vata. It is prescribed for the following diseases.

Ardhavabhedaka (Ch. Si. 9/78), Suryavarta (Ch. Si. 9/82), Anantavata (Ch. Si. 9/86), Ardit (Ch. Si. 28/99, Y.R. Shiroragchi), Kaphaja Shiroroga (Ch. Chi. 26/180), Pakshaghata (Su. Chi. 5/19), Darunaka (Su. Chi. 20/15, A.H.Utt. 24/26), Dantaharsha (Su. Chi. 22/18), Shirogata Vata (Su. Chi. 4/19), Nasanaha (Su. Utt. 21/3), Vatabhishyanda (Su. Utt. 9/12), Vatika Karnashoola (Su. Utt. 21/3), Vaksanga (A. S. Su. 31/16), Prasupti (A.H. Su. 22/26), Asya Shosha (A.H.Su. 22/26), Timira (A. H. Su. 22/26), Nasa Shosha (A.H.Su. 22/26), Nidra Nasha (A. H. Su. 22/26, Ch. Su. 5/81), Vataj Shiroroga (Sh. S. Utt. 11/127), Vata Oshthakopa (Ch. D. 56/1), Hanushoola (B.P. Ma. 63/27), Hanu Graha (B. P. Ma. 63/27), Akshi Shoola (B. p. Ma. 63/27), Shirahkampa (B. P. Ma. 63/27), Manyashoola (B. P. Ma. 63/27), Shirograha (B. P. Ma. 24/19), Netra & Karna Shoola (Y.R. Shirorogachi.), Hanushoola (Y.R. Shirorogachi.),

Shirobasti being a part of Snehana, should be contraindicated in those conditions where in Snehana is contraindicated, Shirobasti is an external application of Sneha likewise Abhyanga, Seka, etc. So, contradictory conditions of Abhyanga, Seka, etc. are applicable to Shirobasti also.

Generally, Shirobasti should not be preferred in following conditions:-

- Kaphaja vikaras
- Agnimandya
- Ajeerna
- Samshudhya

Shirobasti increases Kapha and can aggravate kaphajavikaras. Agnimandya, Ajeerna, and Samshudhya are such conditions where Pachakapitta is diminished.

When Pachakapitta diminishes, all the other Pittas will also diminish, because all other Pittas are strengthened by Pachakapitta. (A.H. Su. 12/12)(10) Moreover, the Sneha applied externally get digested by Bhrajaka Pitta located in the skin and afterward it reaches to the deeper tissues. Hence, in any of the above condition, applied Sneha will not be digested and vitiate itself to cause further complications.

Concept Behind Selection Of The Present Therapy:

Shirobastikarma is specifically selected here to study its efficacy on Ardit. It belongs to Snehana, especially Bahyasneha, a major part of Panchakarma. Shirobastikarma is suggested as line of treatment of the disease as mentioned in almost all Ayurvedic texts. Sushrutasamhita directly recommend shirobasti alongwith Mashtishkya, Nasya, Dhum, etc. (Su. Chi. 5/22). Shirobastikarma is one type of Moordhnitaila and Moordhnitaila is recommended by other all classics likewise, Charakasamhita, Ashtang Sangraha and Ashtang Hriday. Also, Ardit being a Vata Vyadhi, Snehana is exquisitely recommend for it. Snehana is such a procedure which possess properties opposite to Vata and thus it plays an important role in alleviation of vitiated Vata. Other types of Bahyasnehana i.e. Abhyanga, Pichu, etc. are also effective to control the vitiated Vata, so as Shirobasti is thought to be highly effective due to its therapeutic as well as pharmacological virtues. There is retention of oil in higher quantity for longer duration of time on head, which is a main seat of Vata and all indriyas are also attached to Moordha. Thus, virtues of Sneha can be obtained here to its best. This is supported by Ashtang Hriday, i.e., Shirobasti is the most effective of all type of Moordhnitaila (A.H. Su. 22/23-24)

CONCLUSION:

The conceptual study. It introduces the historical developments and contribution of previous workers, it also give a glimpse of Snehana with furthermore emphasis on Shirobashtikarma and through description regarding it. Also, procedure of Shirobastikarma is vividly elaborated followed by indication and contraindication of Shirobastikarma.

REFERENCES:

- [1] Bhela Samhita- Girijadaya Shukla, chowkambha Press, Varanasi.
- [2] Kashyapa Samhita - Vidhyotini Hindi commentary - by Satyapal 2nd edition - 1976.
- [3] Kayachikista. Vaidya. N.M. Kamat, Chaukhambha Publication Delhi, Pp- 660-663
- [4] Harita Samhita - Khemaraja Shri Krishnadas, Shri Venkateswara press, Bombay.
- [5] Sushruta Samhita - Uttara Tantra, Hindi commentary, Ayurveda Tatva Sadipikaby Dr. Ambica Dutta Sastry.
- [6] Chakrapani - Chakradatta with Bhavarth Sandipani Comm. IV Edi. by Shashtri Bramhshnagr, Chaukhambha, 1976, Varanasi.

- [7] Charaka Samhita - By Chakrapani with Ayurveda Dipika commentary Nirnaya Sagar Press - Bombay.
- [8] Indu Sashilekha comm. on Astanga Samgraha of Vriddha Vagbhatta, ed. A.D.Athavale, Pub. M.A.Athavale, Poona, 1980.
- [9] Internet Source
- [10] Sharangdhara Samhita, 2nd edi - Adhamalla and Kashiram -comm., 1985, editorb Parshuram Shastry, Pub. Krishnadas Academy, Oriental pub., Varanasi.
- [11] Ashtanga Hridaya - With Sarvanga Sundari commentary Nirnaya sugar press -Bombay (1993).

Cite this article as:

[Amit A. Desale, Shrikant S. Bagul, Description of Shiro Basti in Panchakarma, ADJIM 2024: 9\(4\), p. 08-11.](#)