PRACTICE OF PANCAKARMA IN WESTERN COUNTRIES
-A GERMAN EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT: Ayurveda is gaining popularity in European countries. Because of the unique curative properties, pancakarma is being sought by many. However, there are some limitations in its application to western people. These points are highlighted in this article.

INTRODUCTION

In Sanskrit, the most ancient Indian language, Ayurveda means the knowledge of life. It deals with life as a whole, not only the treatment of disease. Hence Ayurveda should not only be viewed as a system of medicine. It deals with all aspects of life. The main objective of this science is the preservation of health and the cure of disease. To achieve this objective, Ayurveda, being a holistic system, offers ways to balance the fundamental “energies”, called tridoshas, which play a vital role from birth to the breath.

Vata, Pitta and Kapha are tridoshas which govern almost every activity of life. They are responsible for developing the foetus into a vital man with a particular constitution which remains throughout life. These doshas are responsible for all physiological functions controlling the psychoneurological, digestive, metabolic, and structural functions. They dominate in certain parts of the body, segments of life, parts of the day and night the seasons etc the are also part of the fundamental factors which play a vital part in the causation of disease, patho physiology diagnosis, prognosis and in the most important part of this medical science, the treatment.

Ayurveda considers the tridoshas as the primary and essential constitutional factors for the human organism. They maintain the integrity of the body. The body is supported by these three biological humours in the same way as a dwelling house is supported by three pillars.

Whatever may be the nature of the factors that lead to disease – they are many and various – the actual intrinsic factors which become excited and imbalanced either conferring a predisposition to or actually causing the morbidities, are tridoshas, the disequilibrium of these three basic doshas nay bring about the dissolution of the body or cause its death. On their state of equilibrium depends the well being of the organism. Their balance or imbalance influences the structural and excretory elements of the body called dhatus and malas.

The purpose of Ayurveda is to bring about the balance of the three doshas based on the constitution. According to the degree of imbalance, the treatment is planned. The general principle of treatment in Ayurveda is
“decreased doshas to be promoted, aggravated ones to be pacified, those much advanced should be eliminated and the normal ones should be preserved as such” thus the disequilibrium will be either aggravated or decreased. But when the Dosha is more than aggravated, i.e in the advanced stage, it has to be eliminated from the body. The therapy consists of:

a) Shodhana (purification)
b) Shamana (pacification )
c) Ahara (diet) and
d) Acara (habits)

Shodhana comprises pancakarma and shamana of shadupakramas. The shadupakramas (six therapies) are six in number consisting of two for each doshas langhana (reducing), Brimhana (strengthening) for kapha svedana (sudation) and sthambhana (cooling) for pitta and Rukshana (dry methods) and snehana (oleation) for Vata.

Shodhana means elimination or purification or cleansing. Therapies included under this heading aim at the removal of the causative morbific and morbid factors, the doshas. Why do we need shodhana? According to the theory of natural cessation (svabhavoparamavada) the doshas which tend to aggravate during certain seasons of the year naturally pacify in the successive seasons. But when the doshas are over-vitiated compared to their normal state, the need for shodhana arises, the doshas turn into malas which need to be eliminated from the body. Shodhana strikes at the root of the malas and eradicates them. Therefore the disorders treated with shodhana do not recur, while those treated with other methods might relapse.

Samshodhana comprises of there measures:

1. Antahparimarjana – internal cleansing
2. Bahirparimarjana – external purification and
3. Sastrapranidhana – surgical removals

The internal cleansing involves pancakarma while the external one involves Abhyanga, svedana, pradeha, pariseka, Mardana etc.

WHAT IS PANCAKARMA?

Pancakarma consists of two words ‘Panca’ and ‘Karma’. Panca means five and Karma means method of therapy or treatment. These are five kinds of important and well known procedures of shodhana. They are Vamana (emesis), virecana (purgation) Vasti (Enema), Nasya (nasal medication) and Raktamokshana (blood letting).

Pancakarma are preceded by purvakarma i.e snehana and svedana snehana means oleation therapy using oily and slimy substances which make the vitiating doshas easily extractable. It removes roughness and dryness of the body. This is a very important therapeutic measure for vata Dosha as well. Svedana means sudation or fomentation or sweating, svedana will help to move the vitiating doshas from one place to another, generally this method is used after oleation. By this procedure the body becomes soft.

Vamana brings out the loosened doshas which are collected in the upper part of the gastro intestinal tract, by emetic procedures, virecana does the similar action in the downward direction, vamana is for the elimination of kapha Dosha and virecana is for pitta. Vasti removes the excess vata Dosha by introducing the medicaments through the rectum, Nasya removes the Dosha from the frontal and maxillary sinuses. This is done by applying the
medicaments through the nostrils, raktamokshana removes the doshas through bloodletting.

**SCOPE OF PANCAKARMA**

Pancakarma may be adopted for the following purposes:-

a) Curative,
b) Preventive,
c) Rajuvenation and
d) Preparation for surgery.

**PANCAKARMA IN THE WEST**

Ayurveda is attracting the interest of the western world during the last two decades and in the last few years its popularity is increasing tremendously. The reason why westerners and attracted is, because Ayurveda deals mainly with nature. Apart from this, Ayurveda is able to provide answers for the health problems in the western world such as-

1. Stress – Chemical, emotional, physical.
   
   a) Chemical – proliferation of plastics, petroleum products, television, X-rays, exposure to fluorescent radiation, nuclear reactors, bomb testing, destruction of ozone, heavy metals, chemicals toxins in water.

   b) New emotional stress of a faster, more affluent life style.

   c) Physical trauma resulting from bodily injuries.

2. Geriatric diseases and other aging problems.

3. Synthetic and toxic drugs used in modern medicine.

4. Faulty food habits – particularly excess of animal food, use of food additives etc.

5. The rapid increase of so called infectious diseases.

These factors vitiate the tridoshas so severely that the approach needs to be:

I) Cleansing
II) Relaxing
III) Rejuvenating,
IV) Non-pharmacological
V) Health promoting etc.

Pancakarma brings the following benefit, to fight the problems of the western world mentioned above:

A. Strengthening of the immune system
B. Slowing of the aging processes
C. Prevention of wrinkles of the skin.
D. Improvement in the performance
E. Development of a positive attitude
F. Getting a beautifully soft glowing skin.
G. Developing a strong, healthy and attractive body.
H. Filling up with energy and zest apart from the fact of being a non-pharmacological and natural approach.

**THE PROBLEMS**

The true form of Pancakarma as described in the ancient texts of India is very difficult to follow exactly for various reasons, some of them are

1. Availability of time – it is said that to get the optimum cleansing effect, one needs about 130 days in case of moderate cleansing one needs 85 days are necessary. In our times it is
hard to find people who can spend so much time.

2. Economy – considering this requirement of time the purification becomes too expensive and unaffordable for the common person in the west.

3. Lack of insurance support – because of the fact that these procedures are unaccepted by mainstream medicine, the insurance in the wet fails to pay for the patient.

4. Season – unlike in the Indian geoclimatic conditions, where the specific methods of Pancakarma re performed in a particular season, it is not possible in the west particularly in the northern part of Europe to ascertain the weather conditions for a specific procedure.

5. Patients compliance – though the clinical examinations indicate certain procedures, the patient is not ready to accept a particular therapy. eg. He might not like to be oleated as most of the western patients are not used to oil application, internal administration of ghee etc.

6. Post therapeutic follow-up-after the pancakarma therapies, certain post therapeutic observations are very essential such as – not to drive the vehicles, excess sedentary or mobile habits, overeating day sleep and indulgence in sex. These cannot be emphasized to the western patients as they cannot give up the way of life they have.

**MODIFIED PANCAKARMA**

With the earlier discussions on the profound benefits of pancakarma for the problems of the western world, it becomes evident that a compatible and a viable method has to be found to overcome the problems in its applications. This kind of a compromise has to be made after the due consideration of the principles of pancakarma. Suitable modifications can be made to suit the western taste in respect of –

1. Technique – certain procedures which need manual operations can be suitably mechanized, for example; In case of Kayaseka (pouring warm oil over the body) it can be done with the help of an electric pump and a heating system.

2. Time – the length of the panchakarma therapy can be suitably shortened by increasing the duration per procedure and also its quantity per week.

3. Cost – though it is very difficult to decrease, it can be done by utilizing modern equipment to significantly reduce the cost of labour.

4. Materials – As it is difficult to get the right type of medicated oils, especially with the proper herbs as described in the literature of Ayurveda alternate plants can be used that are available in western countries.

5. Weather – Generally, over a large part of the year, the weather will be cold in the west. Hence therapy rooms, patient living rooms and the whole setup should be warmed up
with heaters, infrared lamps and other methods.

6. Food – the success of the pancakarma depends also significantly on the type of food one takes. During the therapy. Such food described in Ayurveda as soups, porridges etc. can be suitably altered to suit the taste or needs of westerners.

PANCAKARMA IN KASSEL

The Ayurveda Klinik was started as a part of the habichtswald klinik by Mr. Werner wicker which is attached to kurhessen therme, the well known hot water springs of Europe. The Ayurveda Klinik was opened on 4th April 1995.

The Klinik offers the following pancakarma therapies-

Abhyanga, Svedana, Pizhichil, Navarakizhi, Padabhyanga, Netra tarpana, Kati vasti, Gharshan, Pinda sveda, Vamana, Virecana, Vasti, nasya, Rekta mokshana.

These therapies are offered in packages as –

1. 4 Days Sniffer therapy.
2. 10 Days Pancakarma therapy
3. 10 Days Manager Intensive therapy
4. 14 Days Pancakarma therapy
5. 20 Days Manager Superintensive therapy
6. 24 Days Health & Beauty Therapy

The Klinik is well equipped for Pancakarma therapy. Kayaseka (Pizhichil) is done with a motor pump and heating system to maintain a constant temperature throughout.

RESULTS

The results of these therapies are very encouraging. Many patients and even healthy people were trying these methods and have derived rich benefits.

To give an example of the benefits, some of the patients with high cholesterol and triglyceride levels have lowered these values, demonstrating the detoxifying properties of the treatments and experienced a feeling of well being.

Many of the patients with chronic insomnia and other sleep disorders have regularized their sleep patterns.

Indigestion, lack of appetite and constipation, which are some of the most important disturbances commonly found in the western people with improper food habits, have been found to be regulated.

The quality of life in case of elderly patients has improved considerably in respect of digestion, sleep and bowel movements.