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Shiro Pichu: A Literary Review**Vd. Jayvant Kharat**

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Abstract:-

Among the different treatment modalities of Murdha Tailam described in Ayurveda Shiro Pichu is one of the commonly practiced procedures in the disorders of head & scalp. Shiro Pichu is the best treatment which Ayurveda advises for curing distress relaxing and to get rid of many psychosomatic disorders. It can be done as a daily OPD level treatment. It can also be used as preventive measure in different stressful conditions. Treatment of diseases pertaining to body, mind and all our sense or- gans is the greatest benefit of Shiro Pichu.

Introduction:-

Shiro Pichu is an even easier form of treatment which is preventive and curative of many psychosomatic illnesses. It can be done easily at home by healthy and diseased people with or without attendants (People suffering from neurological conditions like paralysis and rheumatological conditions like frozen shoulder, arthritis of hand joints etc might need assistance.

This treatment provides the same benefits as that of Shiro-Abhyanga or any type of Murdhni Taila (treatment procedures involving application or pooling of oil over the head and scalp) procedures but is the easiest to do. In relation to Shiro-Abhyanga, Shiro-Pichu has added benefits towards prevention and treatment of psychosomatic disorders.

What is Shiro Pichu?

Shiro Pichu is a word comprising of 2 terms, Shiro meaning head, Pichu meaning a swab or sterile cotton pad or a sterile cloth dipped in medicated oils.

Thus Shiro Pichu means an Ayurvedic treatment procedure which includes keeping a sterile cotton pad dipped in herbal oils on the crown of the head and wrapping it up with a bandage cloth.

Category of Shiro Pichu:

Shiro Pichu is a procedure which is included in the category of Murdhni Taila (various methods of applying oil over the head). It is a type of Bahya Snehana (using of oil and conducting treatments over the body, externally).

If time permits it shall be practiced on a daily basis by those who are susceptible to get neurological disorders or having nerve related weakness. It can also be selectively brought in as a treatment option for many Vata related disorders and disorders affecting the head, sense organs and neck and for control and prevention of many psychosomatic disorders.

Read related: Moordha Taila, Murdhni Taila: Ayurvedic Oil Treatment On Head

Why Shiro Pichu?

Ayurveda considers the human body as an inverted tree wherein the roots are at the top and the branches pointing downwards.

If the human body is considered to be a tree –

The head of the human body will be considered to be the roots of this tree,

The central portion of the body made up of thorax and abdomen is said to be the trunk of this tree and the limbs (upper and lower) are considered to be the branches of this tree just like the roots nurture and controls all the activities and well being of the tree, the head is the operational centre of the entire body. The head comprises of all the components and machinery to control the entire body mechanics and dynamics.

Head is an abode of the remote control of the entire body – ‘The Brain and nerves’ and all the components which keep us attached and attracted to this material world – ‘The Sense Organs’. For these reasons, the head is called as ‘Uttamanga’ – ‘The best organ of the lot in the body’

Indications of Shiro Pichu –

Shiro Pichu is an Ayurvedic treatment advised for prevention and getting rid of many psychosomatic illnesses. Since it can be done on a daily basis by those who have weak nerves, it is also a preventive measure. Prevention of diseases pertaining to body, mind and sense organs is the first indication of Shiro Pichu, it also has highly effective curative dimension.

Shiro Pichu is used to treat many diseases occurring due to Shiro Abhigata or damage to the head and its components either from exterior or due to morbid doshas from within.

Shiro Roga – Different types of headaches and diseases pertaining to head

Pakshaghata – Hemiplegia, paralysis

Anidra – sleeplessness

Vata prakopa – to control the vitiated Vata

Vata Roga – diseases of Vata origin, mainly degenerative diseases Pitta Roga – diseases of Pitta origin, mainly inflammatory diseases Shiro rukshata – dryness of the head

Shiro Pichu Procedure, How to do?

Shiro Pichu is done in the below said method –

Purvakarma (Pre-treatment procedures): This includes –

Preparation of the patient:

The patient is thoroughly examined using Ayurvedic tools and methods of examination. The Prakriti (basic constitution) and Vikriti (details of morbidity) are documented in detail. The disease is also examined with the help of Ayurvedic parameters of diagnosis (and also modern investigations as and when required). After careful assessment, it is decided if Shiro Pichu is suitable to the disease and diseased or not. The treatment line-up, materials and medicines which need to be used are enlisted.

The patient is advised to shave the head (according to their convenience) or make it as short as possible. Shiro Pichu done after removal of hairs will yield better results than done with hair intact.

Preparation for the Treatment:

Materials needed for the treatment are collected beforehand. They are:

The basic material needed for Shiro Pichu is oil. The oil shall be sesame oil (unless specified), coconut oil or any herbal oil.

The procedure is to prepare the medicated oil (oil processed with herbal decoctions) according to the constitution of the patient or the nature of morbidity.

It is not practical to prepare medicines instantly now days as all raw materials are not available at a given point of time nor any pharmacy equipped with all the raw materials needed to prepare various medicated oils.

In these cases the doctor should judiciously plan and short list a few oils mentioned in the classics which can be generally used in many conditions. These medicines shall be prepared in the pharmacy or hospital.

Alternatively, the medicines (medicated oils) are readily available in bottled forms now days. They shall be collected before hand and the stocks of the same shall be maintained.

The oils shall be – Prakriti (constitution) specific, Vikriti (morbidity or nature of disease) specific and Dosha (involved dosha) specific.

The below mentioned oils are usually preferred for conducting Shiro Abhyanga
Tila tailam – sesame oil, Ksheerabala Tailam, Chandanabala Lakshadi Tailam,
Lakshadi Tailam, Shatavari Tailam, Mahamasha Tailam, Yashtimadhu tailam, Dhanwantaram Tailam, Manjishtadi Tailam, Mahanarayana Tailam, Balashwagandhadi Tailam Karpasasthyadi Tailam etc

Other Tailas used over the head are –

Amrutadi Tailam – Headache, burning sensation in the head, Gout, High Pitta conditions etc
Eladi Tailam – Kapha-Vata disorders, chronic cold, ear ache etc

Kadaleephaladi Tailam – Chronic headache
Kayyannadi Tailam – Headache, burning sensation, eye disorders etc

Kaakadanyadi Tailam – In lymphadenitis, goitre etc

Kuntalakanti Tailam – For hair health

Chandanadi Tailam – Coolant, used in giddiness, burning sensation, loss of consciousness, High Pitta etc

Tulasyadi tailam – Chronic cold, sinusitis, dandruff, etc

Tengingupushpadi Tailam – Headache, burning sensation of head, high pitta, etc

Tekaraja Tailam – For cough, asthma, cold etc

Triphaladi Tailam – For chronic eye and ear related disorders

Dhurdhurapatradi Tailam – Dandruff

Nagaradi Tailam – Chronic nasal and oral disorders

Nimbadi tailam – Itches and boils on the scalp, hairfall etc

Neeli Bhringadi Tailam / Kera Tailam – For hair health

Punarnavadi Taila

Prapaundarikadi Tailam – Premature greying of hairs

Balaguluchyadi Tailam – Gout

Bala Tailam – Vata disorders

Baladhatryadi Tailam – Headache, eye disorders, etc

Balahatadi Tailam – Headache and burning sensation of head, coolant

Brahmi Tailam – Vata disorders, sleeplessness, stress etc

Bhringamalakadi Tailam – Headache and burning sensation of head, coolant

Marichadi Tailam – Chronic cold, nasal polyps, cough, asthma etc

Mahabala Tailam – Vata Diseases

Malatyadi Tailam – Hairfall

Rasnadashamuladi Tailam – Facial paralysis etc

Vachadi Tailam – Chronic cold, cervical lymphadenitis etc

Vachalashunadi Tailam – Ear discharges etc

Vilwapatradi Tailam – Chronic cold, dandruff etc

Venupatradi Tailam – Cervical Lymphadenitis, goitre, neck swellings etc

Surasadi Tailam – Chronic cold, sinusitis

Himasagara Tailam – Premature greying of hairs, insanity (lunacy) etc

Options according to morbidity: Ksheerabala Tailam and Chandanabala Lakshadi Tailam in pitta morbidity and Dhanwantaram Tailam or Mahanarayana Tailam is used in Vata morbidity etc.

Doctors can do the permutations and combinations of choice of medicine and their subtypes based on their wisdom and experience. Different oils can be mixed and used depending on the practical experience and judgement of the physician.

Shiro Pichu can also be done in healthy individuals. In predominance of Vata, Kapha or Vata-Kapha morbidity or diseases caused due to them, warm or hot oil should be used. In case of Pitta predominance or Pitta disorders, cold oils should be used.

In Pitta disorders, warm oil or ghee can be used for Shiro Pichu. Oil and or ghee shall be used in predominance of Vata, In morbidity wherein vitiated pitta and rakta (blood) are associated ghee shall be used for massage, Tila taila (sesame oil) should be used in Kapha disorders, In disorders caused by vitiated Vata, Pitta and Rakta – oil and ghee should be mixed in equal proportions to conduct Shiro Pichu. In Kapha association oil and ghee should be taken in 1:1/2 proportions.

Shiro Abhyanga is usually carried out as a part of Sarva Abhyanga (whole body massage using herbal oils). In fact, Sarva Abhyanga procedure is started with Shiro Abhyanga. In conditions, where the Doctor thinks Shiro Pichu is more beneficial than Shiro Abhyanga, he shall plan for it to be done alongside Sarvabhyanga. In such cases, Shiro Pichu and Sarva Abhyanga will become an effective combo. In these cases, Shiro Pichu is tied and later Sarva Abhyanga or full body massage will be conducted.

Shiro Pichu actually can be individually planned and used skilfully to mitigate the above mentioned diseases or for prevention of many psychosomatic diseases.

On the contrary, when we plan Shiro Pichu, we can also think of conducting Sarva Abhyanga along with Padabhyanga (foot massage) for added benefits of the treatment. When we plan Sarva Abhyanga alongside Shiro Pichu we need to collect the oils needed for Sarva Abhyanga as well. Different oils are preferred for Sarva Abhyanga and Shiro Pichu.

Many times the doctor intellectually plans to use the same oil for both Sarva Abhyanga and Shiro Abhyanga. Ex, Ksheerabala Taila is an oil which can be used for both head and body in case of Vata afflictions, Vata disorders, degenerative diseases and headache and insomnia.

Skilfully planning the oil also will curtail the expenses of the treatment and make it affordable. Ayurveda advocates using fresh oil for massage, every day. Therefore the pharmacy should have adequate stock of the oil. Even when the Shiro Pichu is planned to be carried out at home (since the procedure is simple and easy to do at home), the patient shall have sufficient oil stored at home (after having taken the consent and advice of the consulting doctor).

For Sharira Abhyanga (body massage) the below mentioned oils may be preferably used:

Sahacharadi Taila,

Ksheerabala Taila,

Chandanabala Lakshadi Tailam,

Dhanwantara Tailam,

Mahanarayana Tailam,

Balashwagandhadi Tailam,

Karpasastyadi Tailam,

Panchaguna Tailam etc

The oils should be selected keeping in view the body constitution, morbid doshas and nature of morbidity involved

Other materials needed –

Small vessels for heating oil Large vessels for heating water Spoons

Stove for heating

Sterile cotton pads or sterile bandage cloth folded and cut in the form of square shaped swab or pad

Bandage cloth for tying the Pichu

Leaves of Eranda (castor plant)

Sterile clothes, sponges, napkins or tissue papers for wiping etc

Pradhana Karma – Treatment proper (Shiro Pichu procedure):

The patient or the person who is supposed to take Shiro Pichu is brought into the treatment room after having conducted Prayers, worship and holistic rituals and recitation of hymns as indicated in Ayurveda texts. These things are performed for welfare of the patient and for the success of the treatment.

The patient is made to sit on a comfortable chair, facing east or north direction. The doctor, therapist (masseur) or attendant (while doing at home) who is conducting the treatment should take the small bowl filled with the medicated oil (chosen for the treatment). The temperature of the oil should be checked. It should be luke warm and not too hot.

Procedure of heating the oil –

The oil used for Pichu should not be heated directly on fire. The oil is taken in a small bowl. Another big vessel should be filled with water, kept on fire (stove) and heated until it boils. The small bowl consisting of the oil should be placed over the boiling water. The oil should be allowed to get warm passively. The bowl should be removed after checking the temperature of the oil with the help of sterile fingers and after making sure that it is warm. The masseur takes a small amount of the heated oil in his hands. He applies a small amount of oil first on the crown of the head.

Preparation of Gauze piece or sterile pad (Pichu) –

Take sterile cotton and make a thick pad out of it such that it is square in shape. This gauze pad is interposed between layers of bandage cloth. Alternatively the cotton pad is kept on the bandage cloth and the bandage cloth is wound around the pad 3-4 times such that the cotton pad is locked within the bandage cloth. The extra hanging edges of the bandage cloth and or cotton are cut and trimmed into a pad of uniform dimension.

The whole material is available in the medical store in the form of wound dressing material. They can be collected beforehand.

Soaking the pad or Pichu –

The Pichu or cotton pad thus prepared is now dipped in the warm oil in the small bowl. It is left in place until the whole pad gets wet with the oil. This is an indication that the gauze piece or cotton pad or Pichu has absorbed the oil.

Placing the Pichu on the head of the patient –

The Pichu soaked with oil is squeezed along the borders of the bowl to remove excess oil. Otherwise, the oil will start dropping all over the body after the pad has been kept on the scalp. The Pichu is now kept on the crown of the head. The pad is now wrapped with Castor leaf or any leaf which is known to alleviate Vata. Castor plant leaf is the easily available one.

Tying the bandage cloth –

Now the sterile bandage cloth is tied around the Pichu in such a way that the bandage cloth takes 3-4 windings starting from the crown of the head and going behind the left ear, down the chin and upwards and behind the right ear and over the crown once again, it now appears like a monkey cap.

The free ends of the bandage cloth are tied and knotted behind the right ear. Care should be taken not to tie the bandage cloth tightly as it may choke the patient and make him or her breathless. The knot

should be so easily tied that it can be removed easily. This procedure is done to keep the Pichu in position and to prevent it from falling down.

Precautions to be taken while conducting Shiro Pichu –

Sterile cotton and bandage clothes shall be used. They should not be reused. Fresh oil shall be used daily

The knot should not be tied too tightly as it may strangulate or choke the patient The knot shall not be tied too loosely as the Pichu might fall down

Also, the person undergoing Shiro Pichu should not be having – Head injuries, scalp or hair root infections or any autoimmune problems like scalp psoriasis and diseases like eczema etc, alcoholic intoxication etc

The person or attendant tying the Pichu should not have any infectious skin disorders of the hands, infected cracks and fissures

Paschat Karma (Post-treatment procedures):

Sarva Abhyanga – If the physician has planned to carry on Sarva Abhyanga (full body herbal oil massage) along with Shiro Pichu, that procedure will be conducted. The combo provides an added advantage towards the body-mind relief. Sarva Abhyanga shall be conducted after having tied the Pichu. Sarvanga dhara (stream pouring of medicated liquids like oils, milk etc all over the body) can also be skilfully combined with Shiro-Pichu.

If further treatments are not planned after Shiro Pichu, the person should be allowed to relax for a while. The body should not be immediately exposed to cold or cold measures. Doing so might induce some symptoms like cold, headache etc.

Any excess oil dripping around should be wiped off using sterile clothes or tissue papers or sterile cotton pads.

Removal of Pichu – After the completion of stipulated time of application of Pichu, the knot shall be slowly removed. The bandage cloth, the leaf and the Pichu should be removed in that order. The head and scalp shall be wiped gently with a sterile cloth or tissue paper. All the materials used for Shiro Pichu shall be disposed since new materials have to be used on the next day.

Snana – Later a hot water bath should be given. Alternatively water boiled with Nirgundi (*Vitex negundo*), Nimba (neem) or Dashamula (10 roots) shall be used for bathing purpose. Warm water processed with Amalaki, Triphala or Chandana shall be used for head bath.

The oil shall be removed using green gram flour or herbal soaps or shampoos. Siddharthaka Snana Churna is readily available (bathing powder) for bathing purposes. Hot water should not be used over the head because it can damage the sense organs. Patient is advised to take a refreshing hot water bath after going home or after a few hours if the patient is being handled as in-patient.

After hot water shower, decoctions like Shunti Kwatha, Jeerakadi Kwatha or Gandharvahastadi Kwatha should be administered for oral intake either in the clinic or hospital or at home after discharge. These herbal extracts keep correcting the disturbed metabolism in the body and also keep micro-cleansing the system by removing blocks from the cells.

Application of Rasnadi Churna – Procedures conducted on the head like Murdhni Taila (including Shiro Pichu) will sometimes cause acute cold and cold related symptoms like running nose, sneeze etc. Therefore as a precautionary measure, every day after removal of Pichu, a small amount of Rasnadi Churna herbal powder is rubbed over the crown of the head.

This is generally done to people who are susceptible to catch cold or has caught cold during the first 1 or 2 sittings of Pichu application. This powder induces warmth in the head and sense organs and keeps the cold and related symptoms at bay.

If not, the cold will develop into headache and breathing problems due to post-nasal drip and produce a hindrance to the smooth conduct of the treatment. If the cold is stubborn, the treatment shall be discontinued, the cold and related complaints managed with anti-cold Ayurvedic medicines and diet and re-commenced after a few days.

Nitya Virechana – Daily metered dose of purgation with purgative decoctions especially Gandharvahastadi Kashayam should be administered every day after Shiro Pichu. It should be given in a dose of 24-48 ml at bedtime. This herbal extract is basically a laxative and best one in the business of controlling the morbidity and vitiation of Vayu.

Laghu Ahara – When the patient gets hungry, he or she should be served with light and easily digestible food. The food should preferably be liquid or semi-solid and should have been processed with ginger.

Light digestible food always complements an effective treatment and set of medications and helps in quick recovery from the ailments. Shiro Pichu is no exception.

Light food is also advised for healthy individuals undergoing Shiro Pichu. Hot liquid diet garnished with kitchen spices like ginger, pepper, cumin seeds etc should be prescribed. Laghu ahara also serves the purpose of deepana (metabolism enhancing effect) and pachana (expulsion of ama, toxic substances formed due to bad metabolism).

The lightest food format comes in the forms of:

Yavagu – is a liquid preparation in the form of thin gruel wherein rice (1part) is processed in 6 times water. It is seen that the final preparation has more of liquid than solid.

Vilepi – is a liquid preparation in the form of thin gruel wherein rice (1part) is processed in 4 times water. It is seen that the final preparation is of a semisolid nature. Apart from being nutritious and tasty, it is known to destroy ama by its root and kindle the belly fire.

Peya – is a liquid preparation in the form of thin gruel wherein rice (1part) is processed in 14 times water. It is seen that the final preparation has a small quantity of solid portion left over. Manda – is a liquid preparation in the form of thin gruel wherein rice (1part) is processed in 14 times water. It is seen that the entire solid content is filtered out from the final preparation such that only liquid remains.

Yusha – is a liquid preparation in the form of thin gruel wherein dal i.e. grams mainly green gram (1part) is processed in 18 times water and its extract is filtered out.

In current day lifestyle, it is highly difficult to prepare these forms of diet. The key is planning and consuming healthy and balanced food according to ones convenience.

If Shiro Pichu is being done as a part of treatment for some ailment or is a part of a big treatment package oriented towards some major health issue, the following restrictions shall be followed –

Keep away from:

Excessive indulgence in sexual pleasures.

Strenuous physical exercises.

Exposure to sunlight.

Exposure to cold or intake of cold food substances and smoking.

Excessive sleeping.

Standing in cool breezy or dusty areas for long time.

Forcibly withholding the natural urges or reflexes of the body like those of defecation, urination, hunger, thirst, sleep, sneeze etc,

High or low leveled pillows while sleeping.

Grief and anger.

Keeping awakened till late nights.

Walking for long distances.

Speaking or shouting in excess, speaking loudly etc.

Keep the mind free from stress, in a pleasant condition

Discharge – The patient is discharged on daily basis (out-patient) or after the course has been completed (in-patient) after giving proper lifestyle and diet advises along with suitable medicines (oral). The patient is also advised to undergo the treatment twice or thrice in a year.

Disease specific and disease modifying medications shall be given in the follow up period. Other distressing and Vata controlling activities such as Yoga, Meditation etc shall also be advised

Duration of the course –

The Pichu shall be left in place for 6-8 hours after tying. It can be applied at morning and removed by evening. If the patient is comfortable, it can be tied at night and removed in the morning. If the severity of the disease or condition demands, it shall be done twice daily. For Pitta related disorders, Pichu can be applied in the noon and removed by night.

The number of days of treatment varies from 7-21 days depending on the nature and intensity of the disease (or until the main course of which Shiro Pichu is a part and parcel has been finished as scheduled). It is usually done for 7, 14, 21 or 28 days. In chronic cases it can be conducted almost daily. In neurological, degenerative cases and Vata disorders, Shiro Pichu can be conducted for a longer duration until the disease has been dealt with.

Probable mode of action of Shiro Pichu –

It is difficult to prove with scientific measures how exactly Shiro Pichu works but we cannot ignore the magnificent results provided by these treatments. Let's work out in a hypothetical way. Below explained is the hypothetical explanation of how Moordha Taila or Murdhni Taila might work. Since Shiro Pichu is a form of Murdhni Taila, the same hypothesis works. Thus in the discussion ahead, I have used the word Moordha Taila or Murdhni Taila interchangeably with Shiro Pichu.

Controlling Vayu – Vayu is the driving force of all the activities of the body and mind. Vayu is said to be a Tantra (formula) which runs the Yantra (machine) called as Shareera (body). Pitta's, Kapha, the tissues of the body, the waste excreta of the body, all are dependent on Vata (Vayu).

If Vayu is functioning properly all these elements are in equilibrium and if Vayu is disturbed, it further disturbs other elements of the body and causes wide array of diseases. The key for well being is in having the Vayu (life force and energy) in our body in control. Murdhni Taila will have a tremendous effect on controlling Vayu.

It controls, pacifies and expels the morbid Vayu. Chakrapani has already clarified that Prana located in the Shiras is nothing but different types of Vayu. Controlling Vayu is almost catching the bull by its horns; all the activities in the body will fall in line.

Relaxing and coolant effect on the brain – Murdhni Taila (Shiro Pichu here) has a relaxing effect (and coolant effect in treatments like Takra shiro dhara) on the brain and the whole nervous system and hence releases the stress and anxiety stagnant in the chief controlling station of our body. As we know that the brain controls all the functions of the body.

The master gland Pituitary gland and the hypothalamus associated with many physical and mental functions are located in the head. When all these are relaxed, the body functions including the heart functions take place in a relaxed manner. The circulation of blood and nutrients take place in a

proper way. The peripheral resistance is reduced. The channels of the body open up. The cells start flushing the toxins and overall metabolism gets improved.

Murdhni taila (Shiro Pichu) also relieves stress to a great extent. When we get de-stressed the psychosomatic balance is established. The brain will start controlling the body mechanics in a better and efficient way. We will feel at bliss and best of body-mind health.

Balancing Pitta and Rakta – Rakta or blood is the chief site of Pitta. Variations in pitta will affect the blood flow and variations in blood tissue will have its impact on Pitta. Murdhni Taila (Shiro Pichu) procedures will bring about a balance between the circulating Rakta and Pitta located in the Rakta.

This circulating Pitta is responsible for many inflammatory processes taking place at various parts of the body, when it gets vitiated. By establishing cordiality between Pitta and Rakta, Murdhni Taila (Shiro Pichu) establishes a balanced circulation throughout the body and relieves the stress over the heart.

Diseases like hypertension, which is the key for many systemic disorders will be dealt. Inflammation taking place in various tissues and organs can be brought to the halt. The body will be in more peace with itself.

Revitalizing the nervous system – Moordha Taila (Shiro Pichu) procedures relaxes & revitalizes the central nervous system, balances the brain and hormonal functions and thus regularizes and relaxes all the functions of the body. The stress in each and every cell and passage of the body is removed. It has a soothing effect on the endocrine system.

Enhancing blood supply and nutrition to brain – Murdhni Taila (Shiro Pichu here) procedures improves the supply of blood and nutrition to the brain and thus increases its working compliance

Pressure and Temperature effect – The pressure and temperature effect of the medicament used in the Moordha Taila (Shiro Pichu here) procedures towards a comprehensive body- mind cure cannot be ruled out

Healing Marmas – With an Ayurveda perspective Moordha taila (Shiro Pichu here) procedures might communicate with the deepest recesses of the brain by soothing the Marmas (vital points of convergence of bones, muscles, blood vessels, soft tissues and joints) located in the head viz Apanga, Avarta, Shanka, Utkshepa, Seemantha and Sthapani Marma's with which the medicaments comes into contact with.

Most of these Marma's are related to the eye and blood circulation to the brain. By activating the Marma's Murdhni Taila treatment procedures might make a strong impact on the functioning of central nervous system and important glands within the brain.

Effect on Alochaka Pitta – Alochaka Pitta (Pitta subtype) which is located in the Eye is said to be of 2 types. One is Chakshu Vaisheshika (located within the eye and maintains its well being) and the other is Buddhi Vaisheshika (the part of Alochaka Pitta which has its connectivity with higher centers of the brain and thus monitors the higher functions like intelligence, memory etc).

Apanga and Avarta marma's are related to the eye. Murdhni Taila (Shiro Pichu here) procedures especially dhara and vasti might make a soothing impact on buddhi vaisheshika alochaka pitta through these Marma's and in return soothe the nervous system.

Reversing Chitta Nasha and Bhaya – The injury of Seemantha Marma (joints of the skull) is said to cause Chitta Nasha (psychological abnormality) and Bhaya (fear complex). Thus when the same Marma is healed through Dhara and other Moordha taila procedures, it may reverse the Chitta Nasha and Bhaya, i.e. it might relieve stress, anxiety and depression. With this the relaxed nervous system will take care of heart functions and circulation patterns.

Control of governing Dosha's – The chief governing doshas in the head are Prana Vayu, Sadhaka Pitta and Tarpaka Kapha. The integrity of the functioning of these 3 sub-dosha's is the key for a perfect body-

mind health. The brain controls the whole body and mind through the balanced and properly functioning Prana, Sadhaka and Tarpaka.

Imbalance or vitiation of one or more of these 3 factors will lead to many psychosomatic diseases.

The soothing of these Marma's and in turn soothing of Nervous system and endocrine glands as an effect of MoordhaTaila (Shiro Pichu here) treatment procedures will definitely relax Prana Vayu, Sadhaka Pitta and Tarpaka Kapha in the brain (head).

These in turn will have a relaxing effect over the Vyana Vayu, Ranjaka Pitta, Avalambaka Kapha and Udana Vayu controlling the heart functions and circulation. They will also have the other sub doshas in control. By controlling the Kledaka kapha, bodhaka kapha, samana vayu, ranjaka pitta and pachaka pitta, the key brain dosha's will keep the core metabolism under control.

By controlling the apana vayu, they will keep the excretory functions under control and help in regular detoxification of the body. By controlling the bhrajaka pitta and vyana vayu, they will trim the color and complexion. By controlling the Shleshaka kapha functions they will maintain the musculoskeletal integrity.

Benefits of Shiro Pichu –

The benefits mentioned in relation to Murdhni Taila can be considered as benefits of Shiro Pichu.

They are as below mentioned –

As already said, Moordha taila (application of oil to the head) is highly beneficial for the brain, sense organs, nerves and hairs. This not only cures many disorders related to head, neck and the above mentioned organs, it also keeps many diseases at bay.

Moordha Taila controls vitiated Vayu and Pitta in the head. Vitiating Vata and Pitta would lead to many diseases of the brain, nerves and sense organs by producing degenerative and inflammatory changes respectively. They, when severely vitiated can cause irreversible damage in these organs. Thus Moordha Taila is both a prophylactic (preventive) and curative measure.

Since the brain and the nervous system controls the entire body functions, soothing them with Moordha taila procedures will keep the body fit and healthy. All the functions in the body will be carried out smoothly. Pituitary gland is the master gland which controls all the endocrine functions in the body (functions of small glands which produce important chemicals which are needed for many body functions and discharge it into the blood stream directly, they don't have ducts or tubes to drain their secretions), is located in the head.

Moordhi Taila, controls the pituitary functions and in turn all the other endocrine functions. This helps in the smooth running of the body mechanics. Moordhi Taila soothes the stressed and agitated mind and helps us to keep calm and at ease. Moordhi Taila helps in discharge of happy chemicals which helps us to come out of mood swings and live at peace.

Nityam sneha aardram shirasaha shiraha shoolam na jaayate Na khaalitiam na paalityam na kashaaha prapatanti cha Balaha shiraha kapaalaanaam visheshena abhivardhate Dridha moolaaha cha deerghaaha cha krishnaa keshaa bhavati hi Indriyaanaam praseedanti su twak bhavati cha aananam Nidraa laabhaha sukham cha syaat moordhni tailam nishevanaat (Ref – Charaka Sutra Sthanam 5/81-83)

When the head is kept moist by applying oil on it –

It prevents head ache (shira shoola)

It prevents baldness (khalitiam)

It prevents premature greying of hair (paalityam)

It prevents hair fall (kasha prapatana)
It helps hairs to get deep rooted, long, dense, look beautiful and pitch black in colour
It keeps the sense organs in a healthy condition
It helps in improving the glow and complexion of the face
It helps in inducing good sleep (nidraa labha)
It provides happiness and pleasantness of mind (sukham), relieves stress
Rejuvenates and energizes the body
Agni sthairyam – establishes the normalcy of digestive fire and corrects metabolism
Ojo sthairyam – stabilises and fortifies ojus in the body (ojus is the essence of all the tissues formed as an end product of tissue formation, its normalcy in terms of quality and quantity points towards an established immunity)
Soothes the nerves and improves blood circulation
Removes stress, relaxes mind
Paatavam indriyasya – relaxes and rejuvenates the mind and senses
Jaraso maandhyam – delays ageing
Chiram jeevitam – provides longevity of life
Nitaraam doshaan – controls and creates equilibrium in all the doshas
Vrishataa – acts as an aphrodisiac
Murdhni Taila also prevents those diseases caused by Shiro Abhigata (mentioned above) and if those diseases have occurred, Murdhni Taila helps in mitigating them effectively.

Shiro rogaan tathaa rogaaha shiro abhyanga upakarshitaha Kashaanaam maardavam dairghyam bahutvam snigdha krushnataam Karoti shirasaha truptim sutvakkam api cha aananam Santarpanam cha indriyaanaam shirasaha paripooranam (Ref – Sushruta Chikitsa 24/25,26)

Shiro Abhyanga is the treatment of choice for Shiro Rogas (diseases related to the head). The hairs become smooth, long, dense, oily and black. The head and its contents are nourished, the skin of the face becomes beautiful and glamorous and the sense organs are nourished.

Shiro Abhyanga wards off Roukshya (dryness of the head and scalp), Kandu (itching in the scalp) and Mala (dirt in the head)

Shiro Pichu imparts all the benefits of Abhyanga (Massage with herbal oils) –

Abhyangam acharet nityam sa jara shrama vataha Drishti prasaadaha pushti ayu swapna su twak daardhya krit (Ref – Ashtanga Hridaya Sutra 2/7)

Tathaa shareeram abhyangaat dridam su twak cha jaayate Prashaantam maaruta aabaadham klesha vyaayaama samsaham (Charaka Sutra 5/85)

susparsho upachita angaha cha balavaan priya darshinaha Bhavati abhyanga nityatvaat naro alpa jaraa eva cha (Ref – Charaka Sutra 5/89)

Abhyango maardava karaha kapha vaata nirodhinaha Dhaatoonaam drishti janano mrujaa varna bala pradaha (Ref – Sushruta Chikitsa 24/30)

Jarahara / Alpa Jaraa – Halts ageing process

Shramahara – Relieves fatigue and tiredness

Vataha / Prashanta Maruta Abadham – Controls and expels morbid Vata, cures Vata disorders

Drishti prasaada – Improves vision

Pushti / Upachita Anga – Promotes strength and bulk of muscles

Ayu – Enhances life span

Swapna – Induces good sleep and relieves insomnia

Su Twak / Susparsha – Promotes skin health

Dardhya krit – Provides strength and stability and compactness to the body

Klesha samsaham – Improves tolerance to hardships

Vyayama samsaham – Enhances the capacity of exercise tolerance

Priya darshinaha / Varna Pradaha – Enhances beauty

Balavaan / Bala pradaha – Improves strength, integrity and immunity

Mardava Kara – Brings about smoothness of the body parts

Kapha Nirodhanaha – Expels morbid Kapha

Dhatonaam Janano – Enhances quantity and quality of the tissues, thus enhancing the immunity of the body

Limitations of Shiro Pichu –

Shiro Abhyanga is one of the best Ayurvedic treatments which are used to prevent and treat many psychosomatic illnesses. It is the best stress relieving treatment. It provides good strength, freshness and energy, improves metabolism, circulation and nerve conduction.

But on the other hand it is not a sole remedy especially when used therapeutically. Parallel to it we might have to add some disease modifying drugs and or compounds and effective treatments for better relief.

Along with Shiro-Pichu some oral medications which enhance strength and stability should be included along with some immune-modulators, anti-ageing medicines and rejuvenators. Holistic mind-body healing is always the motto of Ayurveda.

Brief introduction of Murdhni Taila –

Moordha or Murdhni means Head, Taila means oil or herbal oil

Thus Murdhni Taila or Moordha Taila is a procedure of conducting treatments on the head using herbal (medicated) oils such that the oil remains in contact with the scalp for a fixed duration of time. This contact period of oil on the scalp is necessary for begetting its benefits. Murdha Taila is also practiced as a part of Dinacharya (daily regimen).

Types of Moordha Taila –

Abhyangaha sekaha pichavaha bastihi cha iti chatuhu vidham Moordha tailam bahu gunam tat vidyaat uttara uttaram (Ref – Ashtanga Hridaya Sootram 2/23)

Moordha Taila or Murdhni Taila is of 4 types –

1.Shiro Abhyanga –

(Shiro=Head, Abhyanga=Massage) Shiro Abhyanga means massaging the head with herbal oils for a fixed duration of time (usually 30-40 minutes)

2.Shiro Seka / Shiro dhara –

(Shiro=Head, Seka or Dhara=Stream pouring) Shiro dhara or seka is a procedure in which the herbal oils or medicated liquids (milk, buttermilk etc) are poured in stream over the head of the person for a fixed duration of time (usually 35-45 minutes or 60 minutes)

3.Shiro Pichu –

(Shiro=Head, Pichu=Keeping a cotton pad dipped in oil) Shiro Pichu is a procedure in which a sterile cotton pad dipped in herbal oil is kept over the head (vertex or crown or entire scalp) and tied with a bandage cloth. The Pichu is kept in place for a fixed duration of time (usually 1-2 hours to 1/4 to 1/2 a day)

4. Shiro Basti (Vasti) –

(Shiro=Head, Basti or Vasti=Pooling) Shiro Basti or Shiro Vasti is a procedure in which a cabin or compartment is constructed over the head of the person (in sitting position) using a leather cap, its junction with the head sealed with wet flour of black gram and filled with herbal oils. The oil is kept in position for a fixed duration of time (usually 45 minutes to 60 minutes). The temperature of the oil in Shiro Vasti should be monitored regularly and should never allow getting cool.

Note – The duration of the treatment is flexible and is fixed depending on the morbidity or as needed for the constitution of the person in question or as per the decision of the physician.

Each type of Murdhni Taila has its own benefits but they are comparably efficient in the chronology mentioned by Acharya Vagbhata (ancient Ayurvedic physician and teacher) in the above said verse –

Shiro Seka is more effective and beneficial in comparison to Shiro Abhyanga

Shiro Pichu is more effective and beneficial in comparison to Shiro Seka Shiro Vasti is more effective and beneficial in comparison to Shiro Pichu

Use of Chakra Taila –

Sushruta (ancient Ayurvedic doctor) makes a special mention of oil called Chakra Taila for Shiro Abhyanga. This is oil which is extracted by crushing the medicinal herbs in a yantra (machine). The same oil can be used for Shiro Pichu purpose.

Ingredients used –

Yashtimadhu – Glycyrrhiza glabra (Indian liquorice) Vidari – Pueraria tuberosa

Sarala – Pinus longifolia / Pinus roxburghii Devadaru – Cedrus deodara

Laghu Panchamula – Roots of Shalaparni – Desmodium gangeticum, Prishniparni – Uraria picta, Brihati – Solanum indicum, Kantakari – Solanum surattense / Solanum xanthocarpum, Gokshura – Tribulus terrestris

The above said herbs are taken in 100 pala quantity (4800 grams approximately, all mixed together)

The above said herbs are crushed into coarse powder.

To this, 512 pala (24576 grams approximately) water is added and boiled on moderate flame of fire until only 110pala (5280 grams) of liquid remains.

The ingredients are filtered through a strong filter cloth or sieve and the solid material separated.

To the filtrate, the paste of the above said herbs is added in a quantity of 8pala (388grams) and mixed well. Later Tila Taila (sesame oil) extracted after churning it in the machine (in the form of chakra or wheel) is added in a quantity of 32 pala (1546grams) is added and boiled until the whole water evaporates. This oil is called Chakra Taila and is exclusively used for Shiro Abhyanga.

Summarizing the above said content,

The head is made up of brain and sense organs which manipulates the whole body and mind functions and keep us healthy when they are in a frame of well being. Head thus forms a control station for all our life activities. When we take care of the control station properly, the whole body factory will function smoothly.

On the other hand, to get rid of any body or mind related illness we need to go back to the control station (uttamanga) called head and address it with suitable treatments and medications.

This also gives us an impression that the most ancient science called Ayurveda very well knew that most of our diseases occur due to disturbed mind or exacerbated by a disturbed mind. Healing the body or mind alone is not a comprehensive medical approach. They should be handled as a single entity.

Since taking care of the head and its components is mandatory for maintaining a healthy life we need to nurture, pamper, relax, soothe and strengthen the engine of our system by conducting Shiro Pichu and other treatments mentioned in Moordha Taila or Murdhni Taila.

Conclusion:-

Shiro Pichu is the best treatment which Ayurveda provides for distressing, relaxing and to get rid of many psychosomatic illnesses. It is not all about keeping oil soaked cotton piece over the head, it has much to offer towards healing many ailments.

Shiro Pichu keeps our senses at peace, mind at tranquility, gives us the ability to win over day-to-day stress, regularizes metabolism, controls and balances the doshas, integrates body mind co-ordination and prevents many diseases.

It provides a comprehensive body-mind wellness. Many people may have reluctance on using the oils over their heads. But where do we get the lubrication and relaxation from if we don't come out of certain inhibitions? We can't sail in 2 boats.

Shiro Pichu has a benefit that it is very easy to do and practice within the 4 walls of your beautiful home provided you have a soul mate that can do it for you with pleasure and love. All you need to do is to find an experienced Ayurvedic doctor in your neighborhood and get some herbal oil suited to your body constitution or which can relieve your stress and morbidity! If your nerves are playing on you, you are a sure candidate for Shiro Pichu, Go for it!!

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