



## Review Article

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### A REVIEW ON SHIROBASTI

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#### ABSTRACT

Shiras, (head) one among dashapranayatana, marma traya, (vital points), and indriya adhistana (seat of sense organs) control the activities of the whole body, for that purpose this organ should be carefully protected and nourished regularly. Since shiras is also the adhistana of prana vayu which is normally responsible for the life. The head comprises all the components and machinery to control the body's mechanics and dynamics. The brain, nerves, and all the elements that keep us glued to and drawn to this material world through our sense organs reside in the skull, which serves as the remote control for the entire body. According to Ayurveda, the human body is like an upside-down tree, with the branches pointing down and the roots at the top. Assume the human body is compared to a tree. The head of the body is regarded as the tree's root. The upper and lower limbs are thought of as the branches of this tree, much as the roots nourish and regulate all of the activities and well-being of the tree. The core region of the body, which is made up of the thorax and abdomen, is believed to be the trunk of this tree. In that scenario, the head serves as the body's operating center. While explaining the importance of Shiras, Vagbhata described the body as Urdhvamoola (Shiras), Adhashaka (lower trunk). If the root is destructed plant is also destructed likewise. If the head is injured the death proceeds. So only it is advised to protect the head from diseases, here Shirobasti plays an important role.

**Keywords:** Shirobasti, Dharakalpa, Murdhnitaila, Mastishkya, Tantra

#### INTRODUCTION

Shirobasti is one of the important therapies for all urdwajatra vikara, (diseases affecting the upper parts of the body) it comes under Bahya-Snehana Karma. There are two modes of administration of snehana (oleation). One is the internal route and the other is the external route. Moordhnitaila is one of the bahyasneha procedures in which the oil is to be applied differently over the Shiras. Acharya Vagbhata has classified Shirobasti under Murdha taila,<sup>1</sup> consists of Shiroabhyanga (head massage), Shiroseka (pouring of medicated dravya), Shiropichu (retention of oil over the head with the help of cotton pad), and Shirobasti. The word "Basti" is used here which indicates "to hold or to retain." Thus, the definition of Shirobasti goes as a procedure where oil is made to retain over the head with the help of a leather cap for a stipulated period. Acharya Dalhana tells the importance of Shirobasti as it alleviates vata dosha, and nourishes all the indriya,<sup>2</sup> also it will help cure severe diseases of the head by concurring pain.<sup>3</sup> Acharya Dalhana explains the difference between Shirobasti and Mastishka. Mastishka is the type of Shirobasti.<sup>4,5</sup> Retention of oil over the scalp without cap or tying is called Mastishkya.<sup>6</sup>

**Definition:** A procedure where oil is made to retain over the head with the help of a leather cap for a stipulated period.

#### Shirobasti procedure

##### Purvakarma (pre-therapeutic measures)

##### Sambarasangraha (collection of instruments)

Shirobasti patta / Charmapatta (Gavya/Mahisha) - 1 Vastrapatta and Challavenika (A cloth strips) -2 Mrudu Peeta (Chair)-1 Masha churna - Quantity sufficient  
Sukoshnajala (lukewarm water)  
Taila (oil) - 1.5 liter Vessel, Spoon-1

##### Preparation of patient

- **Shodhana:** The patient is prepared for Shirobasti by administering vamanaadi shodhana initially. (purification procedure's)
- The patient is subjected for Snehana and Swedana. (abhyanga and steam)
- **Bhojana:** In the evening, the patient is advised to take pathya ahara (wholesome diet) according to vyadhi (disease).
- The patient should be on an empty stomach
- The patient is made to sit in an erect posture on a knee-height chair comfortably (Rijvaaseena).
- Later, Bastikosha (shirobasti cap) is tied over the patient's head.<sup>7,8</sup>

##### Characteristics of Shirobasti cap

Various classical texts of Ayurveda have described the characteristics of Shirobasti cap<sup>9,10,11</sup> as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Measurements of the Shirobasti cap**

Author	Height	Width
Sharangdhara, Vagbhata	12 Angula (9 inches approximately)	Shirapramana (circumference of head)
Dharakalpa	12 Angula	Shirasama (circumference of head)
Vrundamadhava, Chakradatta	16 Angula (12 inches)	Circumference of head

This disparity in the opinion of Vrundamadhava on the height of the cap is clarified as follows:

The lower 3 angula of the cap is covered with the strap of cloth by which it is tied tight to the head. The upper 1 angula of the container is left free without snehadravaya (medicated oil). Thus, leaving these 4 angula, the rest 12 angula is filled by the snehadravayas.

The materials used for shirobasti kosha are the skins of cows, buffalos, or a Leather strap. It should be open at both ends (Dwimukho).

### Preparation and tying of Shirobasti cap

Masha kalka (horse gram paste) is prepared using sukoshna jala. A long cloth strap, of the width of 3 angula smeared with the paste of masha kalka is tied around the head along the margin of the hair. The cap of a leather strap is fixed around the head's lower

end reaching up to the ears. A cloth strap smeared with masha kalka is wrapped above the lower border of the cap again. The borders of the cap are again smeared with the masha kalka to prevent leaking.<sup>12,13</sup>

### Pradhana karma (main procedure):

The Sneha which is selected according to vyadhi is filled inside the shirobasti cap.

Temperature of the oil should be maintained throughout the procedure. The temperature of the Sneha needs to be Sukoshna.<sup>15</sup> Table 2 shows the quantity of sneha to be filled into the shirobasti cap according to different acharyas. Table 3 shows the retention time of the taila according to the vitiated doshas. The duration of retention according to Bhavaprakasa is 1 yama / yamardha and Yogarathnakara is 1 prahara / ½ prahara. Table 4 shows the samyak lakshanas of shirobasti.<sup>14</sup>

**Table 2: Quantity of Sneha<sup>16</sup>**

Author	Quantity
Ashtanga Hridaya	1 Angula above the scalp (1.9 cm /0.75inches)
Dalhana, Dharakalpa	2 Angula above the scalp (1 ½ inches approximately)
Vyakyakusumavalli teeka	1 Angula above the scalp or 5-6 Angula
Tatvachandrika teeka	1 Angula above the scalp

**Table 3: Retention time of the taila according to dosha<sup>17,18,19</sup>**

Dosha	Ashtanga Hridaya, Sushruta	Chakradatta	Jejjata	Gayadasa
Vata	10,000 matrakala (~ 53 min)	1000 matrakala /Shola shamana	10,000 matrakala	-
Pitta	8,000 matra kala (~ 43 min)	800 matrakala /1 yama	-	-
Kapha	6,000 matrakala (~ 31 min)	500 matrakala / ½ yama	-	-
Swastha	1000 matrakala (~ 5-6 min)	-	-	1000 matrakala

**Table 4: Smayak lakshana of Shirobasti<sup>20,21,22</sup>**

Author	Smayak Lakshana
Dharakalpa	Aavaktranaasika kledath
Ashtanga Hridaya	Karnamukhanaasaashruti, Vedanopashamana
Sharangdhara	Naasakarnamukhashuti, Vedanopashamana

Adamalla and Deepika commentaries give the reason behind the secretions from the facial orifices. It is because of oil entering through the romakupa of the scalp that results in the secretion of morbid matter or it is due to the result of vilayana (concoction) of dosha (dosha samvalana) happening that brings about this phenomenon.

**Table 5: Duration of administering Shirobasti.<sup>23,24</sup>**

Author	Duration
Dharakalpa and Vagbhata	7 days (Param Saptaham)
Ashtanga Samgraha, Shreedas (in Shirasekavidhi adhyaya)	3,5,7 days
Adamalla (Deepika commentary)	1 day to Rogasamkshaya
Sharangdhara	5 days /a week (Panchasaptahameva)
Yogarathnakara	5,6 or7 days

### Time of conducting Shirobasti

**Bhavaprakasa and Sharangdhara:** On an empty stomach and at Forenoon.

**Vagbhata and Sushruta:** “Dinante” (it should be done after food in the evening time)

Among the 4 Murdhnitailas, only Shirobasti is indicated before meals.<sup>25</sup>

The ideal season for conducting shirobasti is Sarvakala (All-season).

**Pashchat karma (post-therapeutic measures)**

Oil should be removed with the help of a spoon or sponge after assessing samyak lakshanas.

Remove the Shirobasti cap. Skandhadi mardana (massage should be done to the shoulder, head, neck, etc.) is to be done to the patient. Urdhvakaya snana with koshnajala (Advice to take a head bath with lukewarm water) is advised for the patient. Later, Rasnadi churna is applied over the vertex.<sup>26,27</sup>

Precautions: Throughout the process, it is important to keep the oil at the same temperature. It should be around 40° C ± 1 degrees, neither too hot nor too cold. To prevent oil leaking, make sure there is no gap at the junction of the scalp and the Shirobasti cap while sealing. Additionally, the strap of the cloth should be fastened so that it is neither too tight, which can irritate, nor too slack, which can cause leakage. Table 6 shows the indications and contraindications of shirobasti. Table 7 shows the different aushadha yogas that are indicated for murdhnitaila. Table 8 shows the indicated disease conditions for shirobasti.

**Table 6: Indication and contraindications of Shirobasti**

Reference	Indication	Contraindication
Vagbhata <sup>28</sup>	Netrasthamba	Kaphaja roga
	Prasupthi	
	Ardita	
	Jagara	
	Nasaasya shosha	
	Timira	
	Daruna shiroroga	
Chakradatta <sup>29</sup> Shirorogaadhikara	Shiroroga due to vata	
	Hanu, Manya, Akshi, Karna roga	
	Ardita	
	Shirakampa	

**Table 7: Aushadha yogas indicated for murdhni taila**

Condition	Yoga
Swastha	Chakrataila <sup>30</sup>
Arumshika	Nimbambu sechana, Haridradya Taila <sup>31</sup>
	Triphaladi taila <sup>32</sup>
Darunaka	Triphaladya taila, Bhringaraja taila <sup>33</sup>
Kapala roga	Gunjadya Taila <sup>34</sup>
Shiroroga	Prapoundarikadya Taila <sup>35</sup>
Indralupta	Malatnadi Taila <sup>36</sup>
	Karanja taila <sup>37</sup>
Khalitya	Snuhyadi taila <sup>38</sup>
Palitya	Bhringaraja taila <sup>39</sup>
	Nimbabeeja taila, Yashtimadhu taila <sup>40</sup>
Akala palita	Neelikadya taila, Bringaraja taila <sup>41</sup>
Shiroroga	Dashamula kwatha seka <sup>42</sup>
Shiraha sphota	Kasisadya ghruta abhyanga <sup>43</sup>

**Table 8: Indications of Shirobasti in different diseases**

Disease
Shirakampa <sup>44</sup>
Darunaka <sup>45</sup>
Mukharoga Chikitsa <sup>46</sup>
Vatabhishyanda <sup>47</sup>
Drushtigata roga <sup>48</sup>
Pakshaghata <sup>49</sup>
Ardita <sup>50</sup>
Hanumoksha <sup>51</sup>
In Drushti vikara Shirobasti as pashchat karma <sup>52</sup>
Karnagata roga <sup>53</sup>
Nasagata roga <sup>54</sup>
Nasanaha <sup>55</sup>
Suryavarta <sup>56</sup>
Mutrakrichra <sup>57</sup>

**Route of oil absorbance:** In Shirobasti, the medicated oil is poured over the head. The oil used in Shirobasti is absorbed transversally into the scalp through the roots of the hairs. The dense subcutaneous tissue contains the vessels and nerves of the scalp. In the loose areolar tissue of the scalp, emissary veins are

present. These are valveless and connect the superficial veins of the scalp with the diploic veins of the skull bones and the intracranial sinuses. This is a route of absorption of the Basti-Dravya. Figure 1 shows the route of oil absorption.<sup>58</sup>

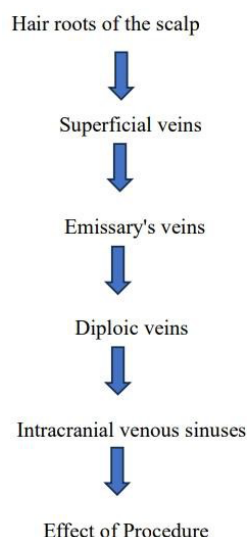


Figure 1: Route of oil absorption

The Sukhoshna dravya usually used for Shirobasti stimulates the efferent blood vessels and causes vasodilatation. Pressure is produced on the head due to Basti dravya which makes a tranquilizing effect and relaxes the patient. Pressure improves blood circulation, increases fresh oxygen and glucose supply to the brain, and relaxes muscles and nerve endings.

#### Effect of Abhayang after Shirobasti

Abhayang is the Pashchatkarma of the Shirobasti procedure in which massage is done from the top of the head to the shoulder region. By massage the lymph movement is possible and the lymph drainage is increased in the venous system. "The lymph contains a large amount of tryptophan which is used by the pineal gland to secrete melatonin and serotonin which helps to maintain equilibrium of thyroid, gonadal, and adrenal activity as well as the secretion of the growth hormone. Deficiency of serotonin is responsible for irritability, depression, schizophrenia, florid hallucination, paranoia, severe headache, anxiety etc. Melatonin is responsible for sedation and pleasant feeling in the human being. So, the manual draining of lymph by Abhayanga may play a major role in the psychological disorders.

#### DISCUSSION

Vayu is the energy that propels all bodily and mental functions. Vayu is a Tantra (formula) that powers the Shareera Yantra (body). Vayu governs the Pitta and Kapha doshas, the body's tissues, and the mala (waste excreta). When Vayu is in balance, all these components are in harmony. But when the same Vayu is out of balance, other elements of the body also go into imbalance, leading to a broad range of disorders. Controlling our body's Vayu, or life force and energy, is essential to well-being. Shirobasti, one of the Murdhni Taila will have a significant impact on Vayu control. It subdues, calms, and drives out the vitiated Vayu. As Chakrapani has previously shown, Prana, which is found in the Shiras, is nothing but a sub-type of Vayu. Managing Vayu is similar to grasping a bull by its horns. Once it is under control, all bodily functions will align.

#### CONCLUSION

Shirobasti reduces tension and anxiety that have been stored in the primary governing center of our bodies by having a calming impact on the brain and the entire nervous system. As we know the brain controls all the functions of the body. The master gland

Pituitary gland and 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 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.

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