



Review Article

UNDERSTANDING *STHANIKA UPAKRAMA* IN *KARNA ROGAS*: A TRADITIONAL APPROACH TO EAR DISORDERS

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ABSTRACT

This article delves into the traditional Ayurvedic approach of *Sthanika Upakrama* in managing *Karnagata Rogas*, or ear disorders, through localized treatments aimed at restoring *Doshic* balance and alleviating related symptoms. The study explores the methodology and results of employing *Sthanika Upakrama* as a holistic ear health approach, highlighting its potential benefits in modern healthcare practices. Ayurvedic scholars have outlined specialized methods, such as *Karna pramarjanya*, *Karna abhyanga*, *Karna poorana*, and *Karna dhoopana* etc, which hold promise for addressing auditory impairments. Amidst a substantial burden of auditory impairment in India, these ancient interventions offer potential solutions to contemporary challenges in auditory health. The integrated approach of *Sthanika Upakrama* presents a comprehensive strategy to prevent and manage ear-related ailments.

INTRODUCTION

Shalakyta Tantra, is a significant division of Ayurveda deals with *Urdhwajatrugata vikaras*, which places considerable importance on the sense of hearing (*Shrotrendriya*). This sense is ranked second only to the sense of sight (*Chakshurendriya*) when it comes to perceiving distant objects. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), around 63 million people in India have noticeable problems with their hearing. Predictions indicate that by 2050, more than 900 million people, or about 1 in 10 individuals, might have severe hearing difficulties.

The esteemed Ayurvedic Acharyas have described local therapeutic procedures that offer effective ways to treat *Karnagata rogas*, ensuring thorough healing. *Sthanika upakramas*, specialized local treatment techniques, emphasize the essential need for a distinct approach to various *Karnagata* and *Karnapaali rogas*. These *Sthanika upakrama* practices for ear health are part of *Bahirparimarjanya chikitsa* in Ayurveda. They include methods like

Karnapramarnya, Karna abhyanga, Karna swedana, Karna prakshalana, Karna poorana, Karna avachurna, Karna pichu, Karna lepa, and Karna dhupana. This article highlights the significant importance placed on both *Karna* and *Karnagata rogas*.

AIMS & OBJECTIVE OF STUDY

A literary review on different *Sthanika upkrama* in managing *Karnagata rogas*.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Various Ayurvedic texts such as Brihatrayi, Laghutrayi, Yogratnakara, etc, medical journals, published articles were studied and all the relevant points have been explained in this study.

Various *Sthanika Upkrama* for Treating *Karnagata Rogas*

Karna Pramarnya

In Ayurveda, the cavities, channels, sounds, and auditory function are associated with the *Akasha Mahabhuta*. The ear, as one of the sites of "*Kha mala*" of *Mamsa dhatu*, needs regular and careful cleansing. *Karna pramarjanya* is a procedure involving the cleaning of the ear using cotton or gauze.

Aushadhi dravya, such as *Sneha, Churna, Kshara, Arka, and Mutra*, can also be applied to the ear using a "*Pramarnya yantra*". According to Sushruta Samhita, There are 28 *Shalaka yantras*, with 6 designed specifically for *Pramarnya* and *Procchana kriya*

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(mopping action). One end of these *Shalaka yantras* is wrapped with cotton, which is used for cleaning and mopping the ear canal.^[1]

The procedure of *Karna pramarjana* is detailed in the *Yogaratanakara* for managing *Karna vit* or accumulated earwax. This involves softening the accumulated material with oil, mobilizing it with *Swedana*, and then extracting it using the *Shalaka* instrument.^[2]

In the context of treating *Karnasrava*, *Aacharya Sushruta* suggests various therapies, including *Shirovirechana*, *Dhupana*, *Purana*, and *Pramarjana*. *Dalhana's* commentary specifies that *Pramarjana* involves *Pichukurchika*, which refers to the action of cleaning the ear canal with a *Shalaka*.^[3] In *Karna srava* treatment, *Pramarjana* should be carried out after a thorough examination to ensure appropriate and effective cleansing.

Indication of karna pramarjana

Karna gutha/Karnavit, *Karna srava*, any *Vrana* inside the ear *Krimikarna*, *Karnagata shalya*, *Puti karna*.

Probable Mode of Action of Karna Pramarnya

Karna pramarjana serves to purify the *Karnavaha* srotas by eliminating earwax, moisture, and impurities. This dry mopping technique effectively clears the ear canal, ensuring unobstructed sound conduction. It also maintains the normal pH of the external auditory canal, promoting optimal ear health and function.

Karna Abhyanga

According to Acharya Dalhana

In *Karna rogachikitsa* it is explained that the term “*Snigdha*” means *Snehapana* and *Abhyanga*.^[4]

Here *Abhyanga* involves the application of *Sneha* externally. When *Sneha* is applied externally, it's referred to as *Bahya sneha*. In cases of illness, it's used for *Shamana chikitsa* and as a preparatory step before *Shodhana*. *Bahya sneha* can be localized (*Sthanika*) or applied all over the body (*Sarvadaihika*).

Karna abhyanga specifically entails massaging medicated *Sneha* onto the external ear and its adjoining area.

Karna Abhyanga as part of Dinacharya

In *Dinacharya*, daily *Abhyanga* (body massage) is recommended. Performing regular *Abhyanga* helps alleviate fatigue and *Vata* imbalances, enhances vision, nourishes the body, increases lifespan, improves sleep and strengthens skin. Special emphasis should be given to the head, ears and feet during *Abhyanga*.^[5]

In essence, *Karna Abhyanga* involves massaging warm medicated *Sneha*, particularly oil, onto the external ear. It is part of both treatment (*Chikitsa*) and daily self-care routine (*Dinacharya*), contributing to overall well-being and *Vata*-related concerns.

Karna Abhyanga Dravyas based on the condition

Karna abhyanga with *Murchita tila taila/Bala taila* is generally performed as *Purva karma* for the procedures like *Karna poorana*, *Karna pichu*. The medicated oil which is mentioned for *Karna poorana* purpose, can also be used for *Abhyanga* for that disease.^[6]

<i>Karna shoola, Badhira, Karna nada, Karna kshveda</i>	<i>Vatahara taila</i> such as <i>Bala taila, Katu taila</i>
<i>Pittaja karna roga</i>	<i>Priyalaka taila, Yastimadhu taila, Go grita</i> processed with <i>Madhura rasa dravya</i> and <i>Kshira</i>
<i>Karna pali roga</i>	<i>Lopakadi taila</i>
<i>Palishosha, Tantrika</i>	<i>Shatavari taila, Jivantyadi taila, Godhaadi taila.</i>
<i>Parilehi/Lehika</i>	<i>Sarshapa taila</i> processed with <i>Maricha, Nimba patra, Madhuchista, Katu taila</i>
<i>Utpata</i>	<i>Jambu pallavaadi dravya</i> along <i>Dhanyamala</i> processed with <i>taila</i>
<i>Unmantha</i>	<i>Talapatradi taila</i>
<i>Dukhavardhana</i>	<i>Jambuamradi kwatha</i> processed with <i>Taila Laksha vidanga siddha taila</i>

Probable mode of action of Karna abhyanga

The mode of action of *Karna Abhyanga* is based on the principles of *Ayurveda* as described in the *Chakrapani Commentary on Charaka Samhita* i.e., *Sneha* does *Vatahara*, brings *Mriduta* to the body, it removes *Mala sanga*.^[7]

The efficacy of *Snehana* in *Karna Abhyanga* is attributed to the qualities within the *Sneha dravya*.^[8] Based on *Charaka samhita. Sutra sthana Drava guna*

promotes oil diffusion, *Snigdha guna* softens the ear skin, *Picchila guna* sustains *Dosha* contact, *Mridu guna* induces *Srotas* relaxation, *Sukshma guna* enables deep penetration, and *Sara guna* ensures widespread coverage for the ear. These properties collectively underpin the effectiveness of *Snehana* in *Karna Abhyanga*.

Karna Swedana

As defined by Charaka, *Swedana* refers to the process that induces perspiration. [9] In the context *Karna roga chikitsa*, *Swedana* is commonly indicated before *Shodhana* and local treatments like *Karnapoorana* and *Karnapichu*. According to Sushruta Samhita, *Swedana* is a general treatment for various diseases including *Karna shula*, *Pranada*, and *Badhriya*. It is recognized that for these conditions, common treatments involve inducing sweating using methods such as *Nadi sweda* (steam) or *Pinda sweda* (fomentation with boluses). [10] Here *Pinda sweda* is *Sthanika* which can be considered as *Swedana* methods specifically for *Karna gata rogas*.

In the *Pinda sweda upayogi dravyas* are mentioned those are *Mamsa* of *Matsya*, *Kukkuta*, *Lava* or *Ghanibhuta kshira panda*. [11] And specifically for *Parilehi roga*, *Gomaya pinda sweda* should be done & for *Palishosha tila kalka pinda sweda*. [12]

Indication for Karna swedana

Karna shula, *Karna nada*, *Karna ksweda*, *Badhriya Karna vidhradi*, *Karna nada*, *Karna vit*, *Karna palishosha*, *Karna pratinaha*, *Parilehi/ Lehika*, *Tantrika*, *Paripota*, *Utpata*, *Dukhavardhana*

Probable mode of action of Karna swedana

Swedana probable mode of action on the ears can be understood from Ayurvedic principles: as "*stambhagauravasheeta-ghnam*" [13] and being influenced by properties within *Sweda upayogi dravya*. [14] *Ushna guna* enhances *Bhrajaka pitta's* action, aiding local absorption of medicines. *Swedana dravyas* penetrate *Srotas* via *Roma kupa*, activating sweat glands, leading to cutaneous vasodilation that boosts drug absorption. *Drava guna* eradicates *Dosha* accumulation, while *Snigdha guna* pacifies *Vata*,

softens the skin, and rejuvenates the ear. Additionally, *Sara guna* aids *Srotoshodhana* by expelling *Doshas* through sweat micropores, contributing to detoxification and balance within the ear.

Karna Poorana / Karna Tarpana

The procedure of *Karnapoorana* is a distinctive technique mentioned in the context of *Pravicharana sneha* by Acharya Charaka. [15] According to Ashtanga Hridaya, *Karna poorana* involves massaging and filling the ear with medicated liquid until pain subsides, with a recommended duration of 100 *Matrakala* for both *Rogi purusha* and *Swastha purusha*. [16] Various Ayurvedic classical texts have highlighted the importance of *Karnapoorana* in addressing ear disorders. This technique involves positioning the patient laterally, followed by inducing *Snehana* and *Swedana* in the ear region. Subsequently, lukewarm *Sneha*, *Mutra*, *Swarasa*, and other substances are instilled into the ear canal. [17]

Duration of Karnapoorana [18]

Karna Roga: 100 *Matra*
Kantha Roga: 500 *Matra*
Shiro Roga: 1000 *Matra*

In Painful condition: Till pain relives &

In Swastha: 100 *Matra*.

Karna poorana kala [19]

If *Swarasadi dravya* are being used for *Karnapoorana* then it should be done before *Bhojana*, if *Tailadi dravya* are used then it should be done after *Suryaastha*.

Benefits of Karna poorana [20]

Through daily *Karnapoorana*, *Vataja Karna Roga*, *Manya*, and *Hanu roga* and *Badhriya* can be prevented.

Karna poorana yogas based on the condition

Vataja karna shoola	Pittaja karna shoola	Kaphaja karna shoola
<i>Tailas -Bala taila, Dipika taila, Bilwa taila, Shyonak taila, Hingwadi taila</i>	<i>Grita- Kakolyadi grita, Panchvalkala grita, Tiktaka grita Yastimadhu chandana siddha grita Draksha madhuka siddha kshira</i>	<i>Taila – Sarshapa taila Taila which is processed with Sursadigana or Brihat panchmula Saraladi taila or Lodhradi taila Rakshogna taila</i>
<i>Swarasa - Kapitta, Matulunga, Aadraka lashuna, Shigru, Moolaka, Kadali Arka patra (Putapaka)</i>		<i>Swarasa -Matulunga, Lashuna, Aadraka</i>
<i>Mutra - any one among Ashtamutra avi mutra with Saindhava</i>		
<i>Grita - grita processed with Aja & Avi mutra with Kalka of Vamsa twak</i>		
<i>Chatusneha</i> can be used		

<i>Badhira</i>	<i>Bilwa taila, Kshara taila, Apamarga taila, Chatwari taila, Hinguwadi kshara taila, Nirgundyadi taila, Nagaradi taila, Swarjikadi taila</i>
<i>Karna srava</i>	<i>Swarasa of Karpasa phala with Madhu Kapitta phala rasa with Madhu Kashaya-Panchakshiri kashaya, Tindukadi kashaya Once the secretions gets arrested Priyangwadi taila, Shaiwalyadi taila, Swarjika churna mixed with Bijapura rasa</i>
<i>Pootikarana</i>	<i>Stridugdha rasanjana with Madhu, Nirgundi swarasa, Tila taila with Saindhava lavana, Jambadi taila, Kustadi taila, Amradi taila</i>
<i>Karna ksveda</i>	<i>Sarshapa taila, Ksharataila, Nirgundyadi taila, Apamarga taila</i>
<i>Karna nadi</i>	<i>Shambuka taila, Gandhaka taila</i>
<i>Krimi karna</i>	<i>Sarshapa taila, Kshara taila Haratala triturated with Gomutra</i>
<i>Keeta in karna</i>	<i>Hingujala, Madhya</i>

Karna Pichu

Karna Pichu is a procedure in which a cotton swab, known as *Pichu varti* soaked in medicated oil (*Sneha*), is inserted into the ear. According to Ashtanga Hridaya, it involves placing the medicated swab inside the ear canal, particularly in the case of *Pakwa karna*. He suggests starting by cleaning the pus-filled ear using dry mopping with *Pichu*. Subsequently, the ear is to be filled with a *Pichu varti* dipped in medicated oil. This process should be performed twice daily. [21] However, there is no explicit mention of the duration for which this procedure should be administered.

Indications for Karna Pichu

Karna nada, Badhira, Karna srava, Karna shoala, and Pootikarna.

The principles of *Karna Poorana* can be extended to *Karna Pichu* using appropriate medicines. For example, *Bilwa taila* or *Kshara taila* can be utilized for *Karna Pichu* in cases of *Karna nada* or *Badhira*.

Probable mode of action for both Karna Poorana and Karna Pichu involves several factors

- Medicines instilled through *Karna Poorana* help alleviate aggravated *Doshas*.
- Lukewarm medicine instilled in *Karna Poorana* allows the skin lining the external auditory canal

and tympanic membrane to absorb the medicine, supported by the action of *Bhrajaka pitta*.

- Lukewarm medicines with *Ushna guna* in *Karna Poorana* pacify *Vata* and remove *Kapha* obstruction.
- The *Sneha dravya* used in *Karna Poorana*, containing fat-soluble active ingredients, dissolves and is assimilated through tissues, including nerve endings.
- Stimulated efferent vasodilator nerves on the skin's surface enhance blood flow to the brain and nourish the acoustic nerve.
- Increased contact time of the medicine with tissues enhances its bioavailability.

Karna Prakshalana

Karna Prakshalana is a technique involving the cleansing of the ear using *Kashaya*. The classical texts don't provide an exact procedure, but its benefits and applications are mentioned. According to Sushruta Samhita. In cases of *Kaphaja karna srava*, the ear should be cleansed (*Pramarjana*) and washed (*Dhavana*) with warm *Kashaya* of *Rajavriksha* and *Surasadi gana dravyas*. [22]

Karna prakshalana dravyas based on condition

<i>Karna srava</i>	<i>Rajavrikshadi kashaya, Sursadi gana kashaya, Panchakshiri kwatha Kwatha of Surabeeja, Pathya, Amlaka, Manjishta, Lodhra & Tinduka</i>
<i>Karna vit/ Karna gutha</i>	<i>Triphala kashaya, Nimba kashaya</i>
<i>Pootikarna</i>	<i>Pancha tikta kashaya</i>

Probable mode of action of Karna prakshalana

Karna Prakshalana's mode of action involves the effectiveness of specific herbs used, acting as *Srotoshodhana* to cleanse ear passages, *Kledahara* to prevent infectious discharge, *Kandughna* to alleviate

itching, and *Vrana ropana* for wound healing. Through these mechanisms, it promotes ear hygiene, addresses ear-related issues, and aids in preventing and managing ear conditions.

Karna Avachurnana

Karna Avachurnana involves the procedure of dusting the ear canal with finely powdered drugs. As per Ashtanga Hridaya, it is indicated for addressing *Karnagata roga* such as *Karnapaka pootikarna*

dushtavrana etc. The herbal powders used include *Surasadi gana kwatha*, *Tinduka churna*, etc and they are blown into the ear canal. [23]

Karna avachurnana dravyas based on condition

<i>Karna srava</i>	<i>Churna of Laksha, Rasanjana, Sarja Samudraphena churna Tindukadi churna</i>
<i>Pooti karna</i>	<i>Sursadigana churna</i>
<i>Dukhavardhna</i>	<i>Madhukaadi churna in Su shlakshna form</i>

Probable mode of action of Karna Avachurnana

The mode of action involves the properties of the *Churna; Rooksha, Shlakshna*, and *Sukshma*.

These properties enable penetration into deeper ear channels, facilitating the drying of secretions (*Kledahara*), ultimately leading to *Srotoshodana* within the ear.

Karna Lepa

Lepa Kalpana is an external application method involving the preparation of a paste from either wet or dry medicinal substances, which is then applied to the body. Specifically, *Karna Lepa* is a procedure where a

medicinal paste is applied to the external ear and its surrounding area. According to Sushruta Samhita, there are three types of *Lepa: Pralepa, Pradeha*, and *Alepa*, each varying in consistency. [24]

Pralepa is a thinner paste, while *Pradeha* is thicker than the skin of a fresh buffalo. The choice between these depends on the specific condition being treated. In cases of *Karna pali rogas*, Vaghbata recommends *Pradeha Chikitsa* or *Lepa Chikitsa* as a suitable general treatment approach. [25]

Karna lepa dravyas based on conditions

<i>Pittaja karna shoola</i>	<i>Lepa of yasti, Ananta, Manjishta etc., with Ghrita</i>
<i>Karna kandu and karna shopha</i>	<i>Pradeha of Katuaadi guna dravya</i>
<i>Pali shosha</i>	<i>Kalka of Tila, Priyala, Balaja, Madhuka, Yava ashwagandha</i>
<i>Utpata</i>	<i>Pradeha with Sheeta dravya</i>
<i>Lehika</i>	<i>Shita pradeha</i>
<i>Unmantha</i>	<i>Lepa of Talisapatra, Tamala patra, Ela, Katphala and Rasanjana</i>
<i>Parilehika</i>	<i>Lepa of Vidanga sara, Ela mixed with Mutra</i>

Probable mode

of action of Karna lepa

Karna Lepa's mode of action involves applying against hair follicle direction for optimal absorption through hair roots. Moisture content affects absorption, while phytoconstituents determine effects like anti-inflammatory, pain relief, complexion improvement, and tissue healing. This targeted approach maximizes absorption and harnesses herbal properties to address ear conditions effectively.

Karna Dhoopana

Karna Dhoopana involves fumigating the ear with medicated smoke and is recommended for *Vata*-afflicted lesions with severe pain and discharge.

Karna dhoopana dravyas based on condition

<i>Krimikarna, Kaphaja karna srava</i>	<i>Ripened Vartaka, Guggulu, Vidanga, Nimba, Haridra etc.</i>
<i>Putikarna</i>	<i>Guggulu</i>
<i>Karna shoola, Badhirya, Karnanada kshveda</i>	<i>Kshouma, Guggulu, Agarū smeared with Ghrita</i>

Preparation of Dhuma varti

As per *Karnaroga chikitsa adhyaya*, a soft paste from various herbs, including *Madhuchishta, Kaidarya, Madhu, Shigru Phala, Vacha, Nalada, Ela*, and *Guggulu*. This paste is spread onto a *Kshouma vastra* (linen cloth), rolled into an 8-angula-sized *Varti*, and dried. Prior to fumigation, external oil/ghee application is done. The *varti* is ignited and placed in a *Dundukanala* (small vessel), generating smoke for the *Karna dhoopana*. [26]

Probable mode of action of Karna dhoopana

The mode of action of *Karna Dhoopana* involves its *Ruksha* and *Ushna guna*, which reduces the cold and heavy qualities of *Vata* and *Kapha*. This helps to inhibit fungal growth by decreasing excess *Kleda* that fosters it. *Dhooma* itself has *Kaphahara* and *Ropana* properties. However, excessive use or combination with *Pittakara* drugs might lead to complications. The fumes from *Dhoopana* also induce vasodilation and enhance blood circulation, promoting better absorption and healing in the affected area.

DISCUSSION

The role of *Sthanika upakrama* in *Karna* revolves around the normal functions of *Bhrajaka pitta*. *Bhrajaka pitta* is responsible for the radiance and color of the skin. Staying true to this, *Sthanika bahya upakramas* like *Snehana*, *Swedana*, *Lepana*, *Dhooma*, and *Prakshalana* primarily rely on *Bhrajaka pitta's* proper function for local absorption. Acharya Indu highlights that *Abhyanga* aids in enhancing the skin's shade and luster through digestion by *Bhrajaka pitta*.

[27]

Combining various local therapies such as *Sthanika abhyanga*, *Pinda sweda*, *Karna poorana*, *Karna dhoopana* (or) as *Karna pramarjana*, *Karna prakshalana*, and *Karna dhoopana*, becomes relevant when multiple *Doshas* are imbalanced.

While detailed information about indications, contraindications, procedures, durations, and mode of action for *Sthanika upakrama* in relation to the ear is lacking in classical texts, their application is often inferred from general principles applied elsewhere in the body.

CONCLUSION

In the modern era, the prevalence of ear-related diseases is on the rise. Conditions like *Karna shoola*, *Karna kandu*, *Karna srava*, *Karna gutha*, and *Pratinaha* can be effectively managed in their early stages using *Sthanika* or *Bahya upakramas*. The therapeutic significance of *Sthanika upakrama* highlighted in classical texts is of utmost importance due to their simplicity, practicality, and effectiveness, provided they are tailored to suit the patient's condition and disease stage. In the current context of increasing ear disorders, it is crucial to uphold the scientific validity of these local therapies and to proactively address ear-related health issues.

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