



Review Article

Volume 15 Issue 06

June 2026

PRINCIPLE OF PRACTICE OF SWEDANA KARMA IN THE CLINICAL CONDITION OF SANDHIGATA VATA, VATARAKTA, PAKSHAGHAT, ARDITA

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Abstract

Swedana Karma (sudation therapy) is an important therapeutic modality in Ayurveda, primarily indicated in Vata and Kapha dominant disorders. It helps in relieving stiffness, heaviness, and coldness by inducing sweating and improving circulation. Diseases like Sandhigata Vata, Vatarakta, Pakshaghata, and Ardita are characterized by Vata predominance, often associated with obstruction (Avarana) by Kapha or Rakta. Swedana plays a crucial role as a Purvakarma as well as a main line of treatment in these conditions. It aids in Srotoshodhana (channel purification), relieves pain and stiffness, and enhances the efficacy of further therapies like Panchakarma. This article discusses the principles and clinical application of Swedana Karma in these major Vata Vyadhis.

Keywords Swedana Karma, Sandhigata Vata, Vatarakta, Pakshaghata, Ardita, Vat-a Vyadhi, Sudation Therapy, Ayurveda

Introduction

Swedana Karma is one of the major Śaḍvidha Upakrama and a key poorav Karma of Panchakarma therapy in Ayurveda. The word “Swed” meaning perspiration. Swedana Karma is defined as the therapeutic procedure that brings about sweating, thereby relieving Stambha (stiffness), Gaurav (heaviness), Śheet (coldness) and shoola (pain) predominantly caused by vata and Kapha Doṣa.¹

Acharya Charak ji says that Swedana is highly beneficial in diseases caused by vata Doṣa either alone or in combination with Kapha. Therefore, Swedana plays a crucial role in the treatment of diseases such as Sandhigatvaat, vaatrakta, pakshaghata, and Ardita.²

General Principles of Swedana Karma

Objectives of Swedana

1. vata shaman by Ushṇa and Snigdha Guṇa
2. Srotoshodhana (clearing microchannel)
3. Reduction of pain, stiffness, and restriction of movement
4. Facilitation of Dosha movement from shakha to Koṣṭha

Mode of Action

Swedana acts through:

- Ushna Guna – counters sheeta Guna of vata
- Snigdha Guna – alleviates rukshta
- Svedo-utpatti – opens sweat channels and improves circulation.

Types of Swedana

Swedana is broadly classified into:

1. Saagni Sweda – with direct heat³

संकरः प्रस्तरो नाडी परिषेकोऽवगाहनम् । जेन्ताकोऽश्मधनः कूर्षः कुटी भूः कुम्भिकैव च॥

कूपो होलाक इत्येते स्वेदयन्ति त्रयोदशः॥ (च. सू. 14/39-40)

- संकर
- प्रस्तर
- नाडी
- परिषेक
- अवगाहन

- जेन्ताक
- अश्मघन
- कर्पू
- कुटी
- भू
- कुम्भी
- कूप
- होलाक

2. Niragni Sweda – without direct heat

व्यायाम उष्ण सदनं च गुरुप्रावरणं क्षुधा । बहुपानं भयक्रोधवुपनाहाहवातपाः ॥ (च. सू. 14/64)

- व्यायाम
- ऊष्णसदन
- गुरुप्रावरण
- क्षुधा
- बहुपान
- भय
- क्रोध
- उपनाह
- आहव
- आतप

Application of Swedana in Specific Clinical Conditions

1. Swedana in Sandhigata Vata

SAMPRAPTI GHATAK-

1. Dosha (Vitiated Doṣa)

- Primary Doṣa: Vāta (mainly Vyana Vāta)
- Associated Doṣa: Sometimes Kapha Kṣhaya contributes
- Nature: Rūkṣa (dry), Śīta (cold), Khara (rough), Chala (mobile)

2. Duṣhya (Affected Tissue)

- Asthi Dhātu (bone tissue)
- Majjā Dhātu (bone marrow)
- Sandhi structures (joints, cartilage, ligaments)
- Snāyu (ligaments)

3. Srotas (Channels Involved)

- Asthivaha Srotas
- Majjavaha Srotas

4. Srotoduṣṭi (Type of Channel Vitiation)

- Saṅga (obstruction)
- Kṣhaya (degeneration of tissues)

5. Agni

- Mandāgni (low digestive/metabolic fire) → Āma formation in some cases
- Dhātvaṅni mandya causing poor nourishment of Asthi Dhātu

6. Udbhava Sthāna (Origin Site)

- Pakvāśaya (large intestine — main seat of Vāta)

7. Sanchara Sthāna (Spread)

- Spread through Rasavaha and Asthivaha Srotas

8. Vyaktasthāna (Site of Manifestation)

- Sandhi (joints) — especially weight-bearing joints like knee, hip

9. Rogamārga (Pathway of Disease)

- Madhyama Rogamārga (affects joints, bones)

10. Adhiṣṭhāna (Seat of Disease)

- Joint structures (Sandhi), cartilage, synovial components

11. Vyādhi Svabhāva (Nature of Disease)

- Chronic
- Degenerative
- Vāta-nanātmaja vyādhi

Nature of Disease-

Sandhigata Vaata is marked by:

- Joint pain and stiffness
- Restricted movements
- Crepitus
- Swelling

Principle of Swedana-

The disease is due to Vata prakopa with Rūkṣatā and sheeta Guṇa, which is localized in joints.

Swedana is applied as it:

- Relieves stiffness
- Improves joint mobility
- Enhances nourishment of Asthi and Sandhi.⁴

CHIKITSA SUTRA

स्नेहनं स्वेदनं चैव बस्तिकर्म विशेषतः । वातरोगेषु सर्वेषु श्रेष्ठमित्यभिधीयते ॥

Preferred Swedana-

- Nadi Swedan with Dashmoola Kwatha⁵

2. Swedana in Vatarakta

Samprapti Ghataka of Vātarakta

1. Doṣa (Vitiated Doṣa)

- Vāta — principal Doṣa (especially Vyana Vāta)
- Rakta duṣṭi — main pathological factor
- Associated Doṣa:
 - Pitta (due to Rakta relation)
 - Kapha (in chronic stage)

2. Duṣya (Affected Tissues)

- Rakta Dhātu (primary)
- Māmsa Dhātu
- Asthi Dhātu
- Sandhi (joints)
- Snāyu (ligaments)

3. Srotas (Channels Involved)

- Raktavaha Srotas
- Māmsavaha Srotas
- Asthivaha Srotas

4. Srotoduṣṭi (Type of Vitiation)⁶

- Saṅga (obstruction of Vāta by Rakta)
- Vimargagamana (abnormal movement of Doṣa)
- Atipravṛtti (increased activity/inflammatory stage)

5. Agni

- Mandāgni → improper digestion
- Āma formation → causes Rakta duṣṭi

6. Udbhava Sthāna (Site of Origin)

- Pakvāśaya (seat of Vāta)
- Yakṛt and Plihā (Rakta-related organs)

7. Sañcāra Sthāna (Spread)

- Spread through Raktavaha Srotas

8. Vyaktasthāna (Site of Manifestation)⁷

- Hasta–Pāda Sandhi (small joints of hands and feet commonly)
- Peripheral joints

9. Rogamārga

- Madhyama Rogamārga (joints and deeper tissues)

10. Adhiṣṭhāna (Seat of Diseases)

Rakta and Sandhi

11. Vyādhi Svabhāva (Nature of Disease)

- Chronic
- Painful and inflammatory
- Avarana janya vyādhi (obstructive pathology)

Nature of Disease-

Vatarakta is an outcome of vata vitiation accompanied by Rakta Doṣha, characterized by:⁸

- Severe pain
- Burning sensation
- Redness and swelling

Principle of Swedana-

Swedana should be done carefully, as it may aggravate Rakta if it becomes too hot.

CHIKITSA SUTRA-

वातशोणितयोः शान्त्यै स्नेहसेकावगाहनम् । रक्तमोक्षणमेव च प्रशस्यं भिषजा सदा ॥

Preferred Swedana-

- Mridhu Swedana
- Piṇḍa Sweda with cooling drugs
- Avgahana Sweda with Tikta and Madhura dravyas.

Contraindication-

- Teekshan and Ati-Ushna Swedana should not be given in the acute inflammatory stage.⁹

2. Swedana in Pakshaghaata

Samprapti Ghataka of Pakshaghaata

1. Doṣa (Vitiated Doṣa)

- Primary Doṣa: Vāta (mainly Vyana Vāta)
- Associated Doṣa: Kapha (causing obstruction), Pitta (in some conditions)
- Nature: Rūkṣa (dry), Śīta (cold), Chala (mobile)

2. Duṣya (Affected Tissues)

- Māmsa Dhātu (muscle tissue)
- Rakta Dhātu (blood supply)
- Snāyu (ligaments/nerves)
- Asthi Dhātu (bone)
- Majjā Dhātu (nervous tissue/bone marrow)

3. Srotas (Channels Involved)¹⁰

- Māmsavaha Srotas
- Raktavaha Srotas
- Majjavaha Srotas
- Asthivaha Srotas

4. Srotoduṣṭi (Type of Channel Vitiation)

- Saṅga (obstruction of channels)

- Vimargagamana (abnormal movement of Vāta)
- Kṣhaya (degeneration of tissues)

5. Agni¹¹

- Mandāgni → improper nourishment of Dhātus
- Dhātavgni mandya → tissue depletion and weakness

6. Udbhava Sthāna (Site of Origin)

- Pakvāśaya (large intestine — main seat of Vāta)

7. Sañcāra Sthāna (Spread)

- Spread through Rasavaha, Raktavaha, and Majjavaha Srotas

8. Vyaktasthāna (Site of Manifestation)

- Half of the body (one side — right or left)
- Limbs, face, and body parts on one side

9. Rogamārga (Pathway of Disease)

- Madhyama Rogamārga (affects vital structures, nerves, joints)

10. Adhiṣṭhāna (Seat of Disease)

- Snāyu, Māmsa, and Majjā (neuromuscular structures)

11. Vyādhi Svabhāva (Nature of Disease)¹²

- Vāta-nanātmaja vyādhi
- Chronic and debilitating
- Loss of motor function and movement

Nature of Diseases-

Pakshaghaata (hemiplegia) is a vata Nanatmaj Vyadhi, which has the following characteristics:

- Loss of movement
- Muscle rigidity
- Sensory impairments

Principle of Swedana-

In this context, Swedana benefits the patient by:

- Relieving stiffness and spasm

- Improving neuromuscular conduction
- Aiding functional recovery

CHIKITSA SUTRA –

स्नेहनं स्वेदनं चैव बस्तिकर्म विशेषतः । वातरोगेषु सर्वेषु श्रेष्ठमित्यभिधीयते ॥

Preferred Swedana-

- Nadi Sweda
- Pinda Sweda

Note:- Swedana is followed by abhayanga for better results.

3. Swedana in Ardita

Samprapti Ghataka of Ardita

1. Doṣa (Vitiated Doṣa)¹³

- Primary Doṣa: Vāta (mainly Vyana Vāta and Udāna Vāta)
- Associated Doṣa:
 - Kapha → obstruction of channels
 - Pitta → inflammatory features in some cases

2. Duṣya (Affected Tissues)

- Māmsa Dhātu (facial muscles)
- Rakta Dhātu (blood supply)
- Snāyu (ligaments/nerves)
- Asthi Dhātu (facial bones)
- Majjā Dhātu (nervous tissue)

3. Srotas (Channels Involved)

- Māmsavaha Srotas
- Raktavaha Srotas
- Majjavaha Srotas

4. Srotoduṣṭi (Type of Channel Vitiation)

- Saṅga (obstruction)
- Vimargagamana (abnormal movement of Vāta)
- Kṣhaya (degeneration of tissues)

5. Agni

- Mandāgni → improper nourishment of Dhātus
- Dhātavagni mandya → weakness of facial tissues

6. Udbhava Sthāna (Site of Origin)

- Pakvāśaya (main seat of Vāta)

7. Sañcāra Sthāna (Spread)

- Spread through Rasavaha and Raktavaha Srotas

8. Vyaktasthāna (Site of Manifestation)

- Mukha (face) — one side of the face
- Jaw, eye, eyebrow, lips, and cheek

9. Rogamārga (Pathway of Disease)

- Madhyama Rogamārga (affects vital structures, nerves, joints)

10. Adhiṣṭhāna (Seat of Disease)

- Facial muscles (Māmsa), Snāyu, and Sandhi of face

11. Vyādhi Svabhāva (Nature of Disease)

- Vāta-nanātmaja vyādhi
- Sudden onset
- Motor dysfunction of facial structures

Nature of Disease-

Ardita (facial paralysis) is due to localized Vata prakopa involving facial nerves.

Principle of Swedana-

Swedana gives relief from:

- Facial stiffness
- Pain
- Mouth and eye deviation

CHIKITSA SUTRA-

स्नेहनं स्वेदनं चैव बस्तिकर्म विशेषतः । वातरोगेषु सर्वेषु श्रेष्ठमित्यभिधीयते ॥

Preferred Swedana-

- Mukha Nadi Sweda
- Ksheera Dhooma

- Upanaha Sweda locally

Note:- Facial area should be protected from excessive heat.

Contraindications of Swedana

Swedana is contraindicated in:

- Pitta Prakopa
 - Rakta Pitta
 - Pregnancy
 - Severe debility
- Short term fever

Discussion and Conclusion

Swedana Karma is an essential therapeutic technique in Ayurveda, particularly in Vatavyadhis. Appropriate application of Swedana Karma according to Dosha, Bala, Kala, and Rogi Avastha helps in effective control of diseases such as Sandhigatavata , Vatarakta, Pakshaghaata, and Ardita. Proper choice of the type and intensity of Swedana enhances clinical outcomes while preventing complications.

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