

Review Article

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FITNESS OF SWEDANA BEFORE PROCEDURE: A COMPARATIVE REVIEW BASED ON CLASSICAL ĀCHĀRYAS

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Abstract-

Swedana, or therapeutic sweating, is a fundamental preparatory (Purvakarma) procedure in Ayurvedic therapy, especially before procedures such as Vamana, Virechana, Basti, Raktamokshana, and Shodhana. The concept of fitness (Yogyatā/Upayukatā/Arambhaka Kṣamata) for Swedana is given varying importance by different Āchāryas depending on the doshic status, Bala (strength), Agni (digestive power), and disease pathology. This paper tries to review the classical Ayurvedic texts to provide a comparative study of the fitness criteria of Swedana and its application in patients undergoing procedures.

Keywords - Swedana, Shodhana, Vamana, Virechana, Basti

Introduction-

Swedana, or the therapeutic use of heat to produce sweating, has three roles in the management of diseases:¹

1. Purvakarma—to liquefy and mobilize the morbid Doshas.

***According to Acharya Sushruta-**

सर्वान् स्वेदात्रिवाते च जीर्णात्रस्यावचारयेत् । स्नेह्यभ्यक्तशरीरस्य शीतैराच्छाद्य चक्षुषी ॥(Su.Ch.32/28)

Swedana should be done in Nivata Schana, after the previous meal is digested. Before Swedana Abhyanga is done & eyes are protected by covering with cold objects. (Su.Ch.32/28) (Sh.Ut2/9)

***According to Acharya Vāgbhata**

निवातेऽन्तर्बहिः स्निग्धो जीर्णान्नः स्वेदमाचरेत्॥ (Ah.Su.17/12)

If Swedana is administered before Sansodhana then before Swedana, Snehana (external - internal) should be carried out (for 3-7 days). If Swedana is carried out for Shamana Karma then only external Snehana (Abhyanga) should be carried out before Swedana.²

2. Nirvāhana—to facilitate the expulsion of Doshas during main procedures.

3. Paschata Karma- After completion of Swedana Karma subject is kept in Nivata Sthana till his body temperature is normalized. Then his body is sponged with a cloth using warm water. After taking rest for a while he should take bath with warm water. Then Anabhisyandhi Ahara (meals which is easily digestible) should be served. Subject is instructed to take similar meals during the course of Swedana. Subject is instructed to avoid Vyayama (physical exertion) on the days when Swedana Karma is administered. (Su.Ch.32/29-30)

सम्यस्विन्नं विमृदितं स्नातमुष्णाम्बुभिः शनैः । स्वभ्यक्तं प्रावृताङ्गं च निवातशरणस्थितम्॥ भोजयेदनभिष्यन्दि सर्वं चाचारमादिशेत्॥ (Su.Ch.32/29-30)

Patient selection or fitness for Swedana is required to avoid iatrogenic complications.

Definition and Rationale of Swedana-

According to the Āyurvedic classics:

* **Caraka:** Svedana therapy is the best treatment for vitiated Vata and Kapha dominant diseases.

स्वेदसाध्याः प्रशाम्यन्ति गदा वातकफात्मकाः।(Cha.Su. 14/3)

Svedana is done to liquefy the vitiated Dosha which are spread throughout the body. As a result of the application of Svedana, the vitiated Dosha are made easily expelled out with the help of Pradhana Karma such as Vamana, Virechana, and basti,etc

स्तम्भगौरवशतिहनं स्वेदनं स्वेदकारकम् ॥ (च.सू.22/11)

Anything that relieves body stiffness, heaviness, and cold, and induces sweating, is called swedana.

* **Sushruta**: “Swedana is heat therapy causing requisite sweat which helps in lysis of Doshas and preparation for next therapeutic steps.”

* **Vāgbhaṭa**: Swedana increases Srotas permeability and decreases rigidity of Dhatus.

The preparatory role is to make Doshas ready and liquefied for deeper therapies like Virechana. It also reduces Kapha and Vāta.

Classification of SWEDANA-

Ayurvedic classics have described a wide range of sudation procedures which are classified into different categories depending upon various factors-

On Intensity of Swedana-

According to intensity Swedana are of three types - (Ca.Su. 14/6-7) (Ah.Su. 17/12)

(As.Su. 16/18) (Sh.Ut.2/3) (Bh.Pa. Swedavidhi.42)

1. Mahana Swedana (Swedana of high intensity) - if the intensity of disease, strength of individual is high & in cold temperature Mahana Swedana is applied.

2. Madhyama Swedana (Swedana of medium intensity) - if the intensity of disease, strength of individual & temperature is moderate Madhyama Swedana is applied.

3. Mridu Swedana (Swedana of low intensity) - if the intensity of disease, strength of individual is low & in warm temperature Mridu Swedana is applied.

रोगर्तुव्याधितापेक्षो नात्युष्मोऽतिमृदुर्न चा द्रव्यवान् कल्पितो देशे स्वेदः कार्यकरो मतः ॥

व्याधी शीते शरीरे च महान् स्वेदो महाबलो दुर्बले दुर्बलः स्वेदो मध्यमे मध्यमो हितः ॥

(CaSu 145-7) (Chakradutta Swedaadhikara 2)

व्याधिव्याधित देशर्तुवशान्मध्यवरावरम् ॥ (Ah.Su. 17/12) (As.Su. 16/18)

महाबले महाव्याधी शीते स्वेदो महान्स्मृतः । दुर्बले दुर्बलः स्वेदो मध्ये मध्यतमो मतः ॥

(Sh.UL.2/3) (Bh.Pa. Swedavidhi.42)

On properties of Swedana-

According to Guna (Properties) Swedana are of three types-(Ca.Su. 14/6-7) (Ka.Su.23/7)

1. Snigdha Ruksha Swedana or Shadharana (Kashyapa) - in vata kaphaja disorders, Snigdha Ruksha Swedana is applied.
2. Snigdha Swedana in Vata disorders Snigdha Swedana is applied.
3. Ruksha Swedana-in Kaphaja disorders Ruksha Swedana is applied.

वातश्लेष्मण वाते वा कफे वा स्वदे इष्यते। स्निग्धरूक्षस्तथा स्निग्धो रूक्षश्चाप्युपकल्पितः ॥ (Ca. Su. 14/6-7)

According to involvement of Agni-

Swedana are of two types -

इत्युक्तो द्विविधः स्वेदः संयुक्तोऽग्निगुणैर्न च॥ (Ca.Su. 14/65)

1. **Saagni Swedana** It is type of Swedana where direct involvement of heat is present.

Charaka Samhita They are further classified in 13 types due to difference in method of administration. They are(Ca.Su.14/39-40)

- (a) Sankara Sweda (b) Prastara Sweda (c) Nadi Sweda
- (d) Parisheka Sweda (e) Avaghana Sweda (f) Jaintaka Sweda
- (g) Ashmaghana Sweda (h) Karshu Sweda (i) Kuti Sweda
- (1) Bhū Sweda (k) Kumbhika Sweda (1) Kupa Sweda
- (m) Holaka Sweda

सङ्करः प्रस्तरो नाडी परिषेकोऽवगाहनम्। जेन्ताकोश्मघनः कर्पूः कुटी भूः कुम्भिकैव च ॥ कूपो होलाक इत्येते स्वेदयन्ति त्रयोदश। तान् यथावत् प्रवक्ष्यामि सर्वानिवानुपूर्वशः ॥ (Ca.Su. 14/39-40)

Sushruta Samhita, Vagabhata Samhita, Sharangdhara Samhita and Bhavaprakasha Samhita

1. Saagni Swedana They are further classified in 4 types (Su.Ch.32/3,14) (Ah. Su. 17/1) (Sh.Ut.2/1-2) (Bh.Pa. Swedavidhi 40-41)

- (a) Tapa Sweda (dry sudation) - this type of Swedana is indicated in Kaphaja disorders.

(b) Ushma Sweda (sudation with vapours) - this type of Swedana is indicated in Kaphaja disorders.

(c) Upanaha Sweda (sudation with poultice) this type of Swedana is indicated in Vataja disorders.

(d) Drava Sweda (sudation with liquid) - this type of Swedana is indicated where Pitta Dosha are associated with Vataja disorders.

चतुर्विधः स्वेदः तद्यथातापस्वेद ऊष्मस्वेद उपनाहस्वेदो द्रवस्वेद इति अत्र सर्वस्वेदविकल्पावरोधः ॥ (Su.Ch.32/3)

2.Niraagni Swedana

Charaka Samhita It is type of Swedana where indirect involvement of heat is present. They are further classified in 10 types due to difference in method of administration.³ They are- (Ca.Su.14/64-65)

(a) Vyayama-physical exertion

(b) Ushna Sadana - staying in warm houses (c) Guru Pravarana - covering with warm clothes

(d) Kshudha-fasting

(e) Bahupana excessive intake of substance of warm potency like alcohol

(f) Bhaya-by inducing fear

(g) Krodha-by inducing anger

(h) Upanaha by applying pack with bandages

(1) Ahava-physical exertion

(j) Atapa-exposure to sunlight.

व्यायाम उष्णसदनं गुरुप्रावरणं क्षुधा । बहुपानं भयक्रोधवुपनाहाहवातपाः ॥

स्वेदयन्ति दशैतानि नरमग्निगुणादृते ॥ (Ca.Su.14/64-65)

Sushruta Samhita They are further classified in 8 types due to difference in method of administration. Niraagni Swedana is applied in Vata disorders having Kapha & Meda Dushti involvement. They are (Su.Ch.32/15)

(a) Nivata residing in a place where ventilation is minimum

- (b) Atapa-exposure to sunlight
- (c) Guru Pravarana covering with warm
- (d) Niyudha-fighting
- (e) Adhawa-running
- (f) Vyayama-exercise
- (g) Bhara Harana - weight lifting
- (h) Amarsha-anger

कफमेदोन्विते वायौ निवातातपगुरुप्रावरणनियुद्धाध्वव्यायामभारहरणामर्षेः स्वेदमुत्पादयेदिति ॥ (Su.Ch.32-15)

Classical Āchārya Concepts on Fitness for Swedana

1. Caraka:

Caraka's views on the importance of patient's strength (Bala) and Agni (digestive/metabolic fire) are as follows:

- Should have Samāhita Sharīra – balance of Doshas and Dhatus.
- Patients with Krūra Agni are unfit for Swedana.
- Swedana is indicated in-

प्रतिश्याये च कासे च हिक्का श्वासेष्वलाघवे । कर्णमन्याशिरःशूले स्वरभेदे गलग्रहे॥

अर्दितैकाङ्गसर्वाङ्गपक्षाघाते विनामके । कोष्ठानाहविवन्येषु मूत्राघाते विजृम्भके॥ पार्श्वपृष्ठकटीकुक्षिसंग्रहे गृधसीषु चा

मूत्रकृच्छ्रे महत्त्वे च मुष्कयोरङ्गमर्दके॥ पादजानूरुजङ्गार्तिसंग्रहे श्वयथावपि।

खल्लीष्वाभेषु शीते च वेपथौ वातकण्ठके ॥ संकोचयामशूलेषु स्तम्भगौरवसुप्तिषु।

सर्वाङ्गेषु विकारेषु स्वेदनं हितमुच्यते ॥ (Ca Su 14/20-24)

* Swedana is contraindicated in:

कषायमद्यनित्यानां गर्भिण्या रक्तपित्तिनाम् । पित्तिनां सातिसाराणां रूक्षाणां मधुमेहिनाम्॥

विदग्धभ्रष्टवघ्नानां विषमद्यविकारिणाम् । श्रन्तानां नष्टसंज्ञानां स्थूलानां पित्तमेहिनाम् ॥

तृष्यतां क्षुधितानां च कुद्धानां शोचतामपि । कामल्युदरिणां चैव क्षतानामाब्धरोगिणाम्॥

दुर्बलातिविशुष्काणामुपक्षीणौजसां तथा॥ भिषक् तैमिरिकाणां च न स्वेदमवतारयेत्॥ (Ca.Su. 14/16-19)

- Ati-Vāta dominance

- Excessive Pitta conditions
- Severe Kṣaya (Emaciation)

Caraka stresses the importance of Yuktivyapāra (proper application) based on:

- Age
- Seasonal variations
- Nature and severity of disease
- Fitness Requirements:
- Balanced Doshas
- Sufficient strength
- No acute inflammatory conditions

2. Sushruta

Sushruta's views are very procedural:

- Swedana as Purvakarma preceding:
- Vamana
- Virechana
- Basti
- Raktamokshana

Sushruta stresses the following:

- Dose (Matra) of application of heat
- Dravya selection (use of specific herbs for steam)
- Kala (time), Ritu (season)

Sushruta has clearly mentioned the indications and contraindications: Indicated When:

- Vāta-Kapha dominance
- Doshas are upadhūta (loosely situated)

Contraindicated when-

पाण्डुमेही पित्तरक्ती क्षयार्तःक्षामोऽजीर्णी चोदरार्तो विधार्तः ।
तृच्छार्तो गर्भिणी पीतमद्यो नैते स्वेद्या यश्च मर्योऽतिसारी ॥
स्वेदादेशां यान्ति देहा विनाशं नोसाध्यत्वं यान्ति चैषां विकाराः।

स्वेदैः साध्यो दुर्बलोऽजीर्णभक्तः स्यातां चेद्वौ स्वेदनीयौ ततस्ती॥

एतेषां स्वेदसाध्या ये व्याधयस्तेषु बुद्धिमान् मृदून् स्वेदान् प्रयुञ्जीत तथा इन्मुष्कदृष्टिषु ॥ (Su.Ch.32/25-27)

Fitness (Yogyatā) Requirements in Sushruta:

- Digestifer
- stable vitals
- absence of acute febrile/ inflammatory pathology

Benefits of Snehana and Swedana in Sansodhana-Through Snehana the Dhatus and obstructed Dosha are moisten & on application of Swedana they are mobilized flows towards Koshta & accumulates in Koshta, which are later removed from body through Sodhana process. (Su.Ch.32/21)⁴

स्नेहक्लिन्ना धातुसंस्थाश्च दोषाः नवस्थानस्था ये च मार्गेषु लीनाः ।

सम्यक् स्वेदैर्योजितैस्ते द्रवत्वं प्राप्ताः कोष्ठं शोधनैर्यान्त्यशेषम् ॥ (Su.Ch.32/21)

3. Vāgbhaṭa

Vāgbhaṭa, in Ashtānga Hrdaya, focuses on patient comfort and dosha balance:

- “He takes into account:
- Dominant dosha
- Koshta (bowel temperament)
- Body Habitus (Prakriti)

According to Vāgbhaṭa’s opinion:

- In Kapha diseases, more intensive Swedana is required.
- In Pitta dominant patients, Swedana should be moderate (tempered or mild).
- In Vāta predominant patients, supportive therapy (taila drava, oil-based fomentation) is indicated instead of hot treatment.”
- indicated in-

श्वासकासप्रतिश्यायहिध्माध्मानविवन्धिषु। स्वरभेदानिलव्याधिश्लेष्मा मस्तम्मगौरवे॥

अङ्गमर्दकटीपार्श्वपृष्ठ कुक्षिहनुग्रहे। महत्त्वे मुष्कयोः खल्यामायामे वातकण्ठके।

मूत्रकृच्छ्रार्बुदग्रन्थि शुक्राघातव्यमारुते। स्वेदं यथायथं कुर्यात्तौषधविभागतः ॥ (Ah.Su.17/25-27)

*** Contraindicated in-**

न स्वेदयेत अतिस्थूलरुक्षा दुर्बलमूच्छितानां स्तम्भनीय क्षतक्षीण श्राममधविकारिणः ।

तिमिरोदर विसर्वाकृष्टशोषाढ्य रोगिणः पीतदुग्धदधिस्नेह मधून् कृतविरेचनान् ।

भ्रष्टदग्ध गुदम्लानिक्रोध शोक भयार्दितान् । क्षुत्तृष्णाकामलापाण्डुमेहिनः पित्त पीडितान् ।

गर्भिणी दुविपता सूतां, मृदु च अत्यभिके गदे । [अ.ह. सू 17/21-24]

Fitness Includes:

*Check for dehydration

- Body resistance
- Mental state

Clinical Application: How to Determine Fitness for Swedana-

Pre-Assessment Checklist

1. Clinical Evaluation

- Vitals
- Hydration
- Pain level
- Skin condition

2. Dosha Assessment

- Dominant Dosha
- Acute vs. chronic
- Presence of inflammation

3. Individualized Considerations

- Age
- Co-morbidities (e.g., diabetes, cardiovascular disorders)
- Sensitivity to heat

4. Contraindications

- Febrile states

- Severe dehydration
- Uncontrolled Pitta or Ulcerative lesions

5. Procedure Goals

- If preparation for Virechana, Swedana must be adequate, not excessive.

Mode Of Action-

Ayurvedic perspective:

The primary actions of Swedana are Stambhaghna, Gauravaghna, Shitaghna, and Swedakarakatva. How Swedana acts on these actions, we can explain it as follows:

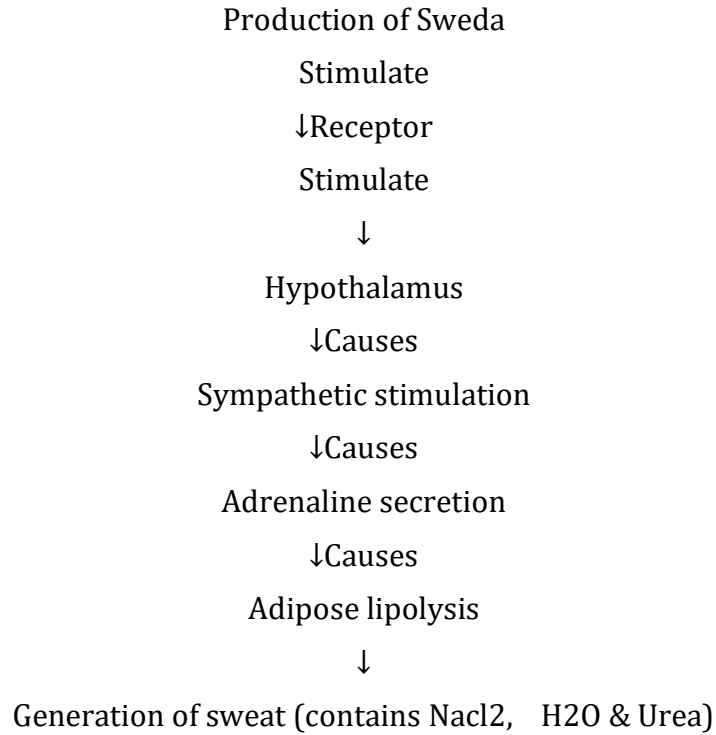
Stambhaghna: Swedana removes Sthambha means stiffness. Samana Vayu which increases agni. Sleshakapha which resides in Sandhi, Amarasa, Mansa, Meda, Vasa are primarily responsible for Stambha. Samana Vayu, by Rukshaguna, absorbs Snigdha and thus Stambha is produced. Sleshkakapha is Snigdha. Due to loss of function, Sthambha is produced. Swedana is Snigdha and Ushna.

Gauravaghna: Swedana removes heaviness in the body. Apyaghataka- liquid substances of the body are eliminated through Sweda. Apyatatva is Guru. Due to their elimination, lightness is produced. Swedana excites muscles and nerves and hence lightness is produced.

Shitaghna: Swedana is mainly Ushna and hence removes Shita by opposing action.

Sweda Karakatva: Swedana promotes sweating. Sweda is a type of mala. Impurities of the body are eliminated with Sweda. Sweda is related to Dhatvagni and Bhutagni (Metabolism). Swedana drugs are Ushna and Tikshnaguna, which have the ability to enter the micro channels (Srotas) where they stimulate the sweat glands to increase sweat secretion. After the dilation of micro-channels, the Laghu and Saraguna of these drugs have the ability to act on the Snigdha Dosha in the micro-channels and make them move towards Kostha or eliminate them through the micropores of the skin as sweat, causing Srotoshodhana. Dosha brought in Kostha are expelled out of the body with the help of Vamana or Viirechana therapy.

Heat administration by Swedana may produce hypoalgesia effect by diverted stimuli.



Discussion-

The suitability of Swedana in all classical texts is determined by the strength and dosha status of the patient and not by the disease alone. Modern correlations are:

- Heat tolerance
- Cardiovascular stability
- Fluid status

Ayurved, as a complete system of medicine, combines the preparedness for the procedure and the evaluation of the constitution, which can be extended to the modern concept of pre-procedure care.⁵

Conclusion-

The use of Swedana as a preparatory treatment for deep therapies needs to be analyzed in depth. The Āchāryas have provided a criterion for suitability that is scientific and dynamic, taking into consideration the balance of Doshas, strength, Agni, and the absence of contraindications.

Conflict of interest -nil

Source of Support -none

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