

Review Article

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AYURVEDA PERSPECTIVE ON SWEDANA AND ITS CLINICAL IMPORTANCE

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Abstract

Swedanam is a therapeutic approach used to alleviate stiffness, heaviness and other health issues, etc. *Swedana* drugs with *Ushna* and *Tikshnaguna* have the unique ability to penetrate the microcirculatory channels, activating sweat glands to produce additional heat. *Swedana Karma* enhances permeability of capillaries and facilitating the removal of impurities from the body's extracellular fluid. *Swedanakarma* plays a crucial role in maintaining the body's thermoregulation system. The herbs employed in fomentation therapy possess specific attributes, including warmth, deep penetration, oiliness, weightiness, liquidity and mobility, etc. *Sweda karma* functions by restoring the balance of *Medadhatwagni* and *Bhutagni*, thereby expediting the digestive process, leading to *Srotomukhashodhana* and an increased production of profuse sweating. This, in turn, results in the displacement of exudates, offering relief from pain and relaxing muscular spasms.

Keywords: *Ayurveda, Swedana karma, Sweating, Sudation* therapy

Introduction

Sweda is the derivative of *Medadhātu*, primarily associated with the water element. *Sweda* is responsible for generating *Kleda* within the body, which is also predominantly governed by the *Apamahabhuta*. *Swedana* therapy, with its *Ushna* and *Tikshna* properties stimulates the body's metabolic rate and dilates capillaries, thereby increasing circulation. This heightened circulation facilitates the removal of waste products and enhances the absorption of substances, like *Sneha* or therapeutic oils, through the skin. Additionally, it stimulates muscles and nerves, contributing to their revitalization [1-3].

Swedana therapy induces sweating and, in some cases, can result in a hypoalgesic effect by diverting sensory stimuli. The term '*Swedana*' denotes the application of fomentation, sudation, or steam to induce sweating, making it a pivotal therapeutic approach within Ayurveda. It stands as one of the six primary treatments in Ayurveda and serves as the principal treatment for conditions arising from imbalances in *Vata* and *Kapha dosha* [2-4].

Methods of *Swedana*:

***Sankara*:** This technique involves the application of a heated herbal bolus to the patient, who may be clothed or unclothed. The bolus is used for fomentation or massaging the body. After several rounds of bolus application, the cloth is unwrapped, and the herbal paste is gently rubbed all over the body. The process concludes with a warm water bath, followed by rest at room temperature.

***Prasthara*:** In the *Prasthara* procedure, the patient is positioned on a bed made of leaves from the *Ricinus Communis* plant, along with ingredients such as corn, pulses, *Pippali*, *Maricha*, *Paayasa* and *krushara*. The patient is then covered with either silk or wool blankets for further relaxation.

***Nadi*:** This involves uses of medicated steam; that is directed through a hose or tube to either the entire body or specific areas as needed for therapy.

Parisheka: During this process, a hot herbal decoction is showered over the body using a pitcher, pot or a pipe with multiple holes, providing a soothing and therapeutic experience.

Jentaaka: For the *Jentaaka* procedure, the patient is seated in a circular room near a pond or small lake where special herbs are burned in an oven to generate heat, creating a unique and healing environment.

Swedana serves as a crucial procedure that alleviates conditions such as stiffness and heaviness, etc. According to *Charaka*, there are two main types of *Swedana*; *Sagnisweda* and *Niragnisweda*. Additionally *Niragnisweda* further includes ten subtypes including *Vyayama*, *Ushnasadana*, *Guru pravarana*, *Kshudha*, *Bahupana*, *Bhaya*, *Krodha*, *Upanaha*, *Ahava* and *Atapa*. *Sagnisweda* is divided into 13 types, including *Sankara*, *Prastara*, *Nadi*, *Parisheka*, *Avagaha*, *Jentaka*, *Asmaghana*, *Karshu*, *Kuti*, *Bhu*, *Kumbhi*, *Kupa* and *Holaka* [3-6]. *Acharya Sushruta*, on the other hand, classifies *Swedana* into four main types as depicted in **Figure 1**.

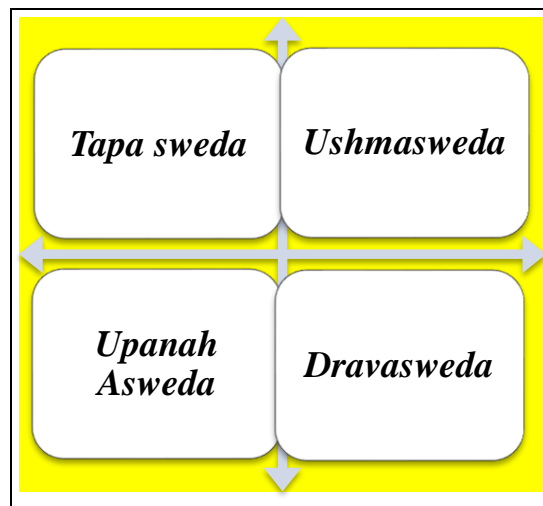


Figure 1: Swedana Types According to Acharya Sushruta

Swedana Properties:

In the context of *Swedana*, selecting substances with opposite properties like *Sthira* and *Sara* is crucial. When local *Swedana* is required, choosing substances with *Sthira* property is appropriate, while generalized *Swedana* benefits from substances with *Sara*

property. Similarly, *Snigdha* substances are chosen for *Snigdha swedana* and *Ruksha* substances are selected for *Ruksha swedana*. *Swedana* possess *Ushnata*, *Tikshnata*, *Rukshta*, *Sthirata*, *Sarata*, *Snigdhatata*, *Dravata* and *Sukshmata* properties.

Ushnata property fosters enthusiasm, relieves stiffness, induces unconsciousness, burning sensation and sweating, etc. *Tikshnata* property produces burning sensation, contributes towards the maturation of imbalanced *Dosha* and *Malas*, facilitate their elimination from their respective locations. *Rukshta* property imparts dryness to the body and is characterized by non-unctuous properties. It fosters firmness in the body and counteracts softness. *Sthirata* property represents immobility and instills firmness and stability in the body. *Sarata* influenced by the *Jalamahabhuta* element, possesses the property of advancement. These properties play a crucial role in the therapeutic effects of *Swedana* on the body, helping to restore balance and harmony of body with nature.

Snigdhatata property is dominance of *Jala* and *Prithvi* elements, imparting unctuousness, strength and softness, etc. *Dravata* substances are primarily influenced by the *Jalamahabhuta* promoting stickiness, softness and a sense of well-being. *Dravata* liquefy *Dosha* and facilitate the movement of fluids from one part of the body to another. *Sukshmata* property is primarily composed of *Agnimahabhuta* represents the property that allows substances to pass through the *Srotas*. *Swedana* exerts its primary actions as *Stambhaghna*, *Gauravaghna*, *Shitaghna* and *Swedakarakatva* by virtue of these properties of *Swedana Karma* [7-10].

Clinical Significance:

- ✓ *Swedana* alleviates stiffness by releasing *Sthambha*
- ✓ *Swedana* being *Snigdha* and *Ushna*, relieves stiffness by promoting *Srotoshuddhi* and *Amapachana*.
- ✓ *Swedana* alleviates the sensation of heaviness in the body by facilitating the expulsion of liquid substances through sweat.
- ✓ *Swedana* stimulates muscles and nerves, further enhancing the feeling of lightness.

- ✓ *Swedana*, primarily characterized by its *Ushna* quality, counteracts the sensation of coldness through its opposite properties.
- ✓ *Swedana* therapy promotes sweating which is considered a type of *Mala* (waste product), thus it removes toxins from body.
- ✓ *Swedana* drugs with their *Ushna* and *Tikshnaguna* properties activating sweat glands to produce more sweat this process results in *Srotoshodhana* effect.
- ✓ *Swedana* relieves conditions like earaches, cervical pain, headaches and thigh pain, etc.
- ✓ *Swedana* prevent joint stiffness, lumbar stiffness and abdominal rigidity.
- ✓ *Swedana* helps to treat disorders linked to *Vata dosha* such as facial palsy and sciatica.
- ✓ *Swedana* alleviates conditions like rhinitis, breathing difficulties and heaviness.

Conclusion

Sweda karma functions by restoring the balance of *Medadhatwagni* and *Bhutagni*, thereby expediting the digestive process, leading to *Srotomukhashodhana* and an increased production of profuse sweating. This, in turn, results in the displacement of exudates, offering relief from pain and relaxing muscular spasms. *Swedana* therapy facilitates improved circulation in the affected area. This multifaceted approach acts as *Stambhaghna*, *Gourabaghna* and *Sitaghna*, etc. *Sweda karma* plays a pivotal role in maintaining the body's thermoregulation system by ensuring a balance between internal body temperature and skin temperature. *Sweda karma* accelerates this process by enhancing capillary permeability and effectively moving morbid substances into the extracellular fluid through the dilation and clearance of bodily channels. This comprehensive approach represents significant potential in preventing and treating various ailments.

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