Upanaha Sveda and its modification - A Critical Review

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ABSTRACT

“A fired building is best saved by pouring water”, in the same way tropical problems are successfully managed by tropical treatment rather than systemic treatment. Upanaha is an ideal tropical treatment. Pradeha, Sankara/Panda Sveda, Bandhana are three varieties of Upanaha. It helps in reducing Vata Dosha, Sheeta (coldness), Shoola (pain), Sthambha (stiffness), Gouravatha (heaviness). It induces sweating and brings Doshavilayana. Sveda helps in Gatravinamana (increase the flexibility of body). Upanaha an Ayurvedic tropical treatment needs to evolve or adapt according to time so that it is easy to practice without changing its efficacy. Here an effort made to bring some modification in Upanaha.

Key words: Upanaha, Svedana, Tropical treatment, Poultice, Modification.

INTRODUCTION

In Ayurveda, there are three treatment modalities explained such as, Bahirparimarjana (external therapies), Anthaparimarjana (internal therapies) and Shastrapranidhana (surgical therapy).

Paste prepared by adding different combination of drugs such as Kinva (fermented liquid), Amla Dravya (sour material), Sneha Dravya (oil, ghee, muscle fast bone marrow) according to condition of person and applying to part of the body is Upanaha (application of poultices). It is a type of Svedana indicated in Kevala Vata condition.

Kevala Vata condition.

Etymology

Upanaha is derived by adding the Upasarga ‘Upa’ to ‘Nah’ Dhatu which means Bandhana.

‘Nah Bandhane’ – (Shabdastoma). Upanaha means Bandhana.[¹⁻⁵]

Acharya Chakrapani classifies Upanaha Sveda into 2 types. a) Sagni type and b) Niragni type.[⁶] Acharya describes that the recipes used for thick application on the body are belonging to Niragni type of Upanaha Sveda. The Sankara methods in which there is a direct contact of Agni is called as Sagni type. In Niragni type the powder form of the drugs are applied directly on the body parts without exposing them into direct Agni for heating.

Three possible varieties of Upanaha Sveda. They are:

1. Pradeha - Here the roots and leaves of the drugs that are having Vata Shamana properties, are made to Kalka form by grinding with Kanji or Amla and applied on the body parts in a thick form after adding Saindhava Lavana.

2. Sankara / Pinda Sveda - Here the drugs of Kokalyadi or Surasadri or Eladi are selected along with other drugs like Atasi, Tila etc. and made to
Kalka form like the above procedure and Pottali’s are prepared to perform Svedana Karma.

3. Bandhana - The drugs mentioned in the above two procedures are heated after powdering and applied over the body parts and then Bandhana is done with cotton cloth.

Duration of Upanaha Sveda

Upanaha applied at night should be removed in the morning, so the one applied in the morning should be removed at night.\[7,8\]

Procedure of Upanaha

Upanaha medicine should be applied against the direction of hair follicle. Quantity of Upanaha should be more for the better retention of heat.

Upanaha Svedakarma Karmukata

Svedakarma has four major actions over the body.\[9\]

1. Sthambhaghnata (reduces stiffness): Sthambha means stiffness. This attribute is a resultant of excess Sheeta Guna and also influence factors such as Samana Vata, Sleshaka Kapha, Ama, Mamsa (muscles), Vasa (muscle fat) and Medas (adipose fat) is contributory to the production of Sthambha. Samana Vata having Ruksha (rough) as a predominant quality and it does excessive Shoshana (drying) of body in its abnormal state, there by producing contractures and stiffness. Sleshaka Kapha is Snigdha (unctuous) and Picchila (sticky) and hence if decreased results in less lubrication of joints causing stiffness.

Svedakarma being Snigdha and Ushna (hot) corrects both these deranged Dosha Ghatakas and relieves stiffness. Chakrapani had stated that Sthambha also means obstruction or block. Therefore, Svedana not only relieves stiffness, but also clears blocking of passages. Srotas as a structural entity is Kapha Pradhana. Ayana (transportation) is the most important function of Srotas. This is under the control of Vatadosha. There by it is evident that there is a predominant influence of Vatadosha and Kaphadosha over the Srotas. Vitiation of these two hamper the structural and functional aspects of the Srotas. Svedana has the opposite qualities to that of Vata and Kapha, there by producing a palliative effect on them and the Srotas is becoming normal. It is well known that unless there is a Srotodushti (vitiated channel) there is no disease. Thus, it is evident that Svedana clears the Srotodushti or Sanga.

In other words, by contact of bearable warmth, the area in contact gets more circulation. The lumina of the contracted body architecture get smoother and wider.

2. Gouravaghnata (reduces heaviness): Heaviness of the body is being relieved by Svedana. By means of Svedana, the fluids in the body are being excreted through the Sveda (sweat) and hence it feels lightness in the body. Svedana stimulates the nerve endings and promotes muscle strength.

3. Sheetaghnata (reduces coldness): It has to be understood by relieved in coldness. Here Ushna Guna Pradhana Sveda Karma is performed.

4. Svedakarakata (induces sweat): Svedana induces sweat which includes the wastes of all the layers of skin, muscles, nerves, Rasa, Rakta, Meda etc. Therefore, it is a mechanism of excreting the metabolic wastes in the body tissues.

5. Doshadraveekaranaka: Svedana makes the Doshas Mridu and eradicates the Mala Sanga. Because of its Ushna and Tikshna property it penetrates to each channel in the body and liquefies the Doshas. Thus it can eliminate from the body with help of Shodhana Karma.\[10\]

6. Vata Shamana: Snigdhaupanaha Sveda pacifies the Vata Dosha by its properties opposite to that of Vata.\[11,12\]

7. Gatra Vinamana: It is said by the application of oil and heat, even dry wood can be bent then what is the wonder about Shareera. It cures Harsha, Ruk, Ayama, Shopho, Sthambha, Graha and produces Mardova, there by permitting normal flexible body movements.\[13\]

8. Agnideepana: As Svedana is Ushnaguna Pradhana, it does the Amapachana there by promoting the Agni in the body.\[14\]
9. **Tvak Mardava and Prasadana**: Perspiration is dependent on skin, where in the hair follicles which are the Moolas of Svedavaha Srotas are situated. Due to sweating and excretion of wastes, the skin becomes soft and pleasant.[14]

10. **Srotosuddhi**: Due to the production of sweat in the body, there will be dilatation of Srotas and the channels of the body will be cleared. Thus, *Srotoshudhi* takes place, by which the Vata is, regulated which in turn, regulates the movement of urine, faeces and flatus.[14]

11. **Sandhicheshtakara**: Svedana relieves Sthambha and Graha there by promoting the easy movement in joints.[14]

**Upanaha effect on Dosha**

*Upanaha Sveda* is *Vatanashaka* by virtue of its *Ushna, Snigdha Guna*. It combats with the properties of *Vata Dosha* like *Sheeta, Ruksha, Laghu Gunas*. The associated symptoms due to the *Prakopa* of *Kapha Dosha* are also reduced due to properties like *Ushna, Ruksa* and *Tikshna Properties of Sveda Drayvas*. Thus at the same time the symptoms caused by both Vata and Kapha Doshas are reduced by doing this *Sveda* and *Sheetata, Gaurava, Sthambha, Shula* caused by these *Doshas* are reduced.

**Upanaha effect on Dushya**

The *Dushya* connected with *Sandhi Vata Roga* are *Asthi, Majja* and *Meda*. *Upanaha Svedayoga* contained the drugs, which are *Guru, Ushna, Snigdhna, Tikshna* and *Sukshma* (minute quality). By virtue of these qualities the potency of drugs enters into the *Sandhi*, bring along proper *Dhatu Pushi*, increased *Rakta Samvahana* and fast removal of *Malas* which are accumulated. Due to increased temperature produced the waste products are removed through increased blood circulation and sweat.

**Upanaha effect on Agni**

*Ushna, Tikshna Gunas* of the drugs intensity interfere with the *Dhatwagnis* concerned with *Sandhivata*.

**Upanaha effect on Srotas**

Srotas are cleared due to the properties drugs like *Ushna, Tikshna, Sara, Sukshma Gunas* and serves better to open up the Srotas, which are under obstruction. By the virtue of *Pachana* properties the *Doshas* undergo liquefaction and finally removes the *Upalepa* of the Srotas.

**Modification in Upanaha**

*Upanaha Chikitsa* is not only for reduction of *Vata Dosha* and *Shoola*, it also does *Langhana* and *Brimhana* etc. *Karma*.

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**Some modifications are**

**1. Raping method:**

In this method *Upanaha* medicine should be prepared in liquid consistency. Keep two to three bandage roles for soaking in *Upanaha*. After proper soaking, one can use it for bandaging or raping the part of body.

**Advantages**

- Easy to apply.
- Proper pressure can be maintained.

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**Figure 1**
2. **Shiro Upanaha** - cake method

Application of *Upanaha* to *Shiras* is called as *Shiroupanaha*. *Shiroupanaha* in female is difficult due to the presence of huge amounts of hairs. Due to its sticky nature it is difficult to clean the hairs after *Upanaha*. It needs long time for washing and it results retention of water in hairs. Retained water and coldness may trigger the head ache. Here, an effort is made to avoid this complication by *Shiroupanaha* cake method.
3. **Sthoulyahara Upanaha**

Application of *Upanaha* to the abdomen is called as **Sthoulyahara Upanaha**. Here *Lekhana Dravya* are the main ingredients. Prepare *Upanaha* with powders of *Lekhana Gana Dravya*, *Dhanayamla* and *Gomutra*. Apply paste uniformly to whole abdomen followed by tight bandaging helps in reduction of belly fat.

**DISCUSSION**

“A fired building is best saved by pouring water”, in the same way tropical problems are successfully managed by tropical treatment rather than systemic treatment. [16] *Upanaha* is an ideal tropical treatment. The action of *Upanaha* is mainly based on two factors one is on *Karma* and the other is on use of medicine. *Vata Dosha* and pain is well treated with *Upanaha*. The ingredients of *Upanaha* help in alleviation of *Vata Dosha*. *Karma* i.e. Bandana or Vestana (tying with cloth) is a treatment for *Vata Dosha* [17] and *Ushnata* (temperature) of medicine helps in alleviating coldness, pain and stiffness. *Bandana* is itself enough to alleviate pain but along with it adding of Dravya and *Ushnatha* will increase the potency of treatment. Here thick variety of Kora cloth is used. This variety is selected in order to prolong the thermoregulation to the affected area by radiation effect. The bioavailability of the drug to the affected part increases by regulation of the heat effect.

Out of the four *Tiryakdhamanis*, each is divided to hundred and thousand times and thus become innumerable. These cover the body like network and their openings are attached to *Romakoopa*. *Veeryas of Abhyanga*, *Parisheka*, *Avagaha*, *Alepa* enter into the body after undergoing *Paka* with *Bhrajaka Pitta* in skin through these *Dhamanis*. [18] *Lepa* is one among *Bahirparimarjana* treatments yield result by entering to *Romakoopa* thereby circulating through *Svedavaha Srotas*. [19]

**Thermoregulation**

The action of the skin is coordinated with the functions of the other excretory organs. It is supplied with so many groups of nerves, which conduct various stimuli. The secretion of sweat is under nervous control, especially autonomous. The tactile sensation in the skin including hairs and its secretion produces some nervous changes. Thus, sudation can bring about changes indirectly on the autonomic nervous system and the heat can bring about changes in conduction of nerve stimuli, by changing sodium-ion-concentration.

Secretion of sweat is produced by direct or reflex stimulation of the centers in the spinal cord, medulla, hypothalamus or cerebral cortex.

Sweat secretion is increased with the rise of external body temperature. This is also called thermal sweating. This thermal sweating is produced in two ways;

By the rise of body temperature directly affecting the hypothalamus and reflex from the stimulated ‘warm’ nerve endings in the skin. Thus by exposing the small area of the skin to the heat, for example by exposing hands to the heat not only the hand, entire body sweats, because the spinal segments innervating the given area of the skin and of the other segments.

**Drug delivery**

The primary barrier to absorption of exogenous substances through the skin is stratum corneum. Rate of absorption is directly proportional to concentration of drug in vehicle, partition co-efficient, diffusion co-efficient and thickness of the stratum corneum. Physiological factors that affect per cutaneous absorption include hydration, occlusion, age, intact versus disrupted skin, temperature and anatomic site.

Among vehicles, greases are anhydrous preparations that are either water insoluble or fatty. Fatty agents are more occlusive than water soluble. They restrict trans-epidermal water loss and hence preserve hydration of the stratum corneum.

Absorption depends upon lipid solubility of the drug since the epidermis acts as lipid barrier. The dermis however is freely permeable to many solutes. Suspending the drug in an oily vehicle can enhance absorption through the skin. Because hydrated skin is more permeable than dry skin.
Application of medicaments, heat and massage definitely helps in eliminating the number of noxious elements through skin. The application of heat promotes local circulation and metabolic activities and opens the pores of the skin to permit transfer of medicaments and nutrients towards to needed sites.

Biophysical effect of temperature

1. Circulatory effect - There is stimulation of superficial capillaries and arteriole causing local hyperemic and reflex vasodilatation.

2. Metabolic reaction - Temperature will raise the chemical activity in cell and metabolic rate will increase. The energy expenditure will increase and protein denaturizing will occur in human tissue.

3. Vascular effect - There are three factors that cause vasodilatation- an axon reflex release of chemical mediators, secondary to temp elevation, local spinal cord reflex.

4. Neuromuscular effect - Heat is effective to provide analgesic and assist resolution of pain muscle guarding spasm. Heating of peripheral nerve elevate pain threshold remarkably reduce muscle spasm.

5. Connective tissue effect - Temperature elevation in combination with a stretch can alter visco-elastic properties of connective tissue. The elastic properties of connective tissues result in plastic elongation.

CONCLUSION

_Upanaha_ is an effective treatment for _Vata Dosha_ and in management of pain. It can be modified according to the patient needs like _Brimhana Upanaha, Langahana Upanaha, Pachana Upanaha_ based on Dravya in it. _Sagni Upanaha, Niragni Upanaha_ based on contact of _Agni_. _Upanaha_ procedure also can be modified according to patient’s needs, like _Shiro Upanaha_ - cake method in females and _Sthuolyahara Upanaha_ to burn abdominal fat. By making slight modification a single _Upanaha_ can be used in many conditions. Many more studies and researches are required to explore efficacy and action of _Upanaha Sveda_.

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