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# 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.

## Etimology

*Upanaha* is derived by adding the *Upasarga 'Upa'* to '*Nah*' *Dhatu* which means *Bandhana*.

'*Nah Bandhane*' – (*Shabdastoma*). *Upanaha* means *Bandhana*.<sup>[1-5]</sup>

*Acharya Chakrapani* classifies *Upanaha Sveda* into 2 types. a) *Sagni* type and b) *Niragni* type.<sup>[6]</sup> *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 *Kakolyadi* or *Surasadi* or *Eladi* are selected along with other drugs like *Atasi*, *Tila* etc. and made to

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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.<sup>[7,8]</sup>

#### 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.<sup>[9]</sup>

- 1. Sthambhagnata (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*. Vitiating of these two hampers 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* (vitiating 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. Gouravagnata (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. Sheetagnata (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. Doshadraveekarana :** *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 liquifies the *Doshas*. Thus it can eliminate from the body with help of *Shodhana Karma*.<sup>[10]</sup>
- 6. Vata Shamana :** *Snigdhaupanaha Sveda* pacifies the *Vata Dosha* by its properties opposite to that of *Vata*.<sup>[11],[12]</sup>
- 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*, *Shopha*, *Sthambha*, *Graha* and produces *Mardava*, there by permitting normal flexible body movements.<sup>[13]</sup>
- 8. Agnideepana:** As *Svedana* is *Ushnaguna Pradhana*, it does the *Amapachana* there by promoting the *Agni* in the body.<sup>[14]</sup>

**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.<sup>[14]</sup>

**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, *Srotosuddhi* takes place, by which the *Vata* is, regulated which in turn, regulates the movement of urine, faeces and flatus.<sup>[14]</sup>

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

#### Upanaha effect on Doshha

*Upanaha Sveda* is *Vatanashaka*<sup>[15]</sup> by virtue of its *Ushna, Snigdha Guna*. It combats with the properties of *Vata Doshha* like *Sheeta, Ruksha, Laghu Gunas*.

The associated symptoms due to the *Prakopa* of *Kapha Doshha* are also reduced due to properties like *Ushna, Ruksha* and *Tikshna* Properties of *Sveda Dravyas*. Thus at the same time the symptoms caused by both *Vata* and *Kapha Doshhas* are reduced by doing this *Sveda* and *Sheetata, Gaurava, Sthambha, Shula* caused by these *Doshhas* 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, Snigdha, Tikshna* and *Sukshma* (minute quality). By virtue of these qualities the potency of drugs enters into the *Sandhi*, bring along proper *Dhatu Pushti*, 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

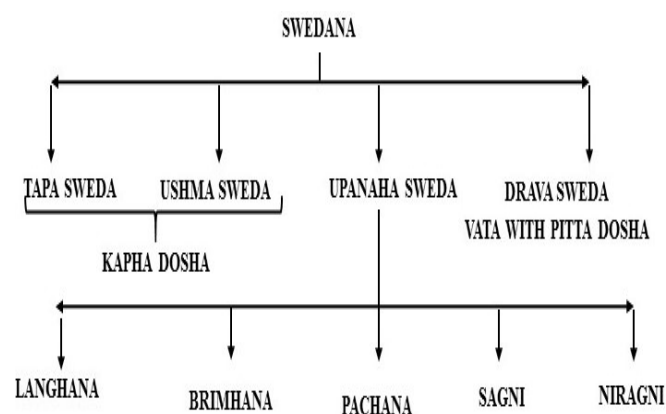
*Ushna, Tikshna Gunas* of the drugs intensity interfere with the *Dhatwagnis* concerned with *Sandhivata*.

#### 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 Doshha* and *Shoola*, it also does *Langhana* and *Brimhana* etc. *Karma*.



#### 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.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4

## 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.



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8

### 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.<sup>[16]</sup> *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*<sup>[17]</sup> 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*.<sup>[18]</sup> *Lepa* is one among *Bahirparimarjana* treatments yield result by entering to *Romakoopa* thereby circulating through *Svedavaha Srotas*.<sup>[19]</sup>

### 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 *Sthulyahara 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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