

## Evaluating the rationality and efficacy of Snigdha and Ruksha Pinda Sweda in managing Musculoskeletal Disorders - A Conceptual Review

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DOI:10.21760/jaims.10.3.45

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Swedana, derived from "Sweda" with the suffixes 'Nich' and 'Lyut,' refers to a therapeutic practice inducing sweat. Swedana alleviates conditions like heaviness and coldness by promoting perspiration. Swedana is classified into three types based on properties: Snigdha (oleation), Ruksha (dryness), and Snigdha Ruksha. It can also be categorized by the involvement of Agni into Saagni and Niragni forms. Particularly, Sankara Sweda, a historical therapy, utilizes herbal boluses for sudation. Snigdha Sweda is effective for Vata disorders, promoting nourishment and relieving pain, while Ruksha Sweda facilitates detoxification and reduces Vata Kapha-related symptoms. Effective for musculoskeletal disorders, Swedana acts as both a primary and supplementary treatment, detoxifying the body, enhancing blood circulation, and relieving stiffness. Different techniques like Patra Pottali and Kukkutanda Pinda Sweda target specific ailments. The therapeutic advantages are achieved from the balanced use of Snigdha and Ruksha qualities, which target Vata and Kapha imbalances, enhancing overall health by improving muscle flexibility and joint mobility.

**Keywords:** Snigdha Sweda, Ruksha Pinda Sweda, Sudation, Musculoskeletal Disorders

Corresponding Author	How to Cite this Article	To Browse
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<b>Manuscript Received</b> 2025-02-16	<b>Review Round 1</b> 2025-02-26	<b>Review Round 2</b> 2025-03-06	<b>Review Round 3</b> 2025-03-14	<b>Accepted</b> 2025-03-24
<b>Conflict of Interest</b> None	<b>Funding</b> Nil	<b>Ethical Approval</b> Not required	<b>Plagiarism X-checker</b> 12.64	<b>Note</b>
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## Introduction

The *Swedana* (~sudation) *Shabda* is derived by adding the *Pratyayas 'Nich' & 'Lyut'* with the term *Sweda*. The literal meaning of this term is to induce sweating.[1] In '*Langhana Brahmaneeya Adhyaya'* Acharya *Charaka* mentioned the procedure that relives the *Gouravata* (~Heaviness), *Sheetata* (~coldness), and makes the person to sweat is called as *Swedana*.

According to *Guna* (~properties) *Swedana* is again classified into 3 types *Snigdha* (~oleation), *Ruksha* (~dryness) and *Snigdha Ruksha Sweda*. This *Sweda* is used according to *Dosha Avastha*. *Snigdha Sweda* produces *Swedana* as well as maintains the *Snigdhata* of the body. *Ruksha Sweda* makes to perspire and brings about the body's dryness by removing *Kledata* and *Dosha Pachana*. [2]

Based on the involvement of *Agni*, *Swedana* can be classified into two types: *Saagni and Niragni Sweda*. Out of the 13 varieties of *Saagni Sweda*, *Sankara Sweda* is one of them. Classical literature indicates that *Sankaradi Sweda* is one of the most ancient therapies in Ayurveda. *Sankara Sweda*, a form of *Tapa Sweda*, involves fomentation using a bolus (*Pinda*) made with various drugs, processed, heated and used for sudation directly or wrapped with a cloth. It is further divided into *Rooksha Sankara Sweda* and *Snigdha Sankara Sweda* based on the materials used. [3]

A wide range of illnesses involving bones, joints, muscles, and connective tissues are referred to as musculoskeletal disorders. These conditions are among most incapacitating and can cause discomfort and loss of function. More than 150 distinct diseases and ailments affect musculoskeletal system. These impairments are characterized by problems with muscles, bones, joints, & surrounding connective tissues, which can limit involvement & functioning temporarily or permanently.

*Swedana* can be applied as both *Pradhana Karma* and *Paschata Karma* in various *Vatavyadhis*. It offers several benefits, including *Malapaham* (~eliminating toxins from the body through sweating) and *Rogapaham* (~treating numerous *Vatavyadhis* as a primary therapy). Additionally, it enhances strength and complexion by stimulating sweat glands, detoxifying the body, and improving blood circulation. [4]

## Classification of Sweda[5]

**Table 1: Classification of Swedana**

I	II	III	IV
Sagni Sweda	Ekanga Sweda	Samshamaneeya Sweda	Snigdha Sweda
Niragni Sweda	Sarvanga Sweda	Samshodhananga Sweda	Ruksha Sweda

## Dwividha Sweda

### Properties of Swedana Dravyas[2]

*Ushna, Tikshna, Sara, Snigdha, Ruksha, Sukshma, Drava, Sthira* and *Guru* (PubMed). Among the various properties mentioned, we will focus on the *Gunas* of *Snigdha* and *Ruksha Sweda*.

**Table 2: Properties of Swedana Dravyas[2]**

Gunas	Actions
Ushna	It induces Sweda
Tikshna	It helps in Shodana of Doshas and removes Srotorodha
Sara	It induces movement in morbid Doshas
Snigdha	It induces Kleda
Ruksha	It removes extra fluid and induces Dryness
Sukshma	It helps in reaching micro channels
Drava	It helps in liquefaction of morbid Doshas
Sthira	It helps in inducing stability
Guru	It helps in Vriddhi of Doshas and also it helps in Brimhana

## Swedopaga Gana[2]

The *Dravyas* which helps for *Swedana Karma* or Perspiration called as *Swedopaga*. *Dravya* are mentioned in *Charaka Samhita* 4th chapter *Swedopaga Gana*.

**Table 3: Swedopaga Gana[2]**

Snigdha Dravyas	
Swedana Dravya	Action
Eranda	Kapha, Vatahara
Tila	Vatahara
Masha	Vatahara
Badara	Kapha, Vatahara
Ruksha Dravyas	
Shobanjana	Kapha, Vatahara
Arka	Vatahara
Sweta Punarnava	Kapha, Vatahara
Rakta Punarnava	Kapha, Vatahara
Yava	Kaphahara
Kulatha	Kapha, Vatahara

## Swedana mentioned based on Sthana of Doshas[5]

If *Vata* is accumulated in the *Amashaya* region (Seat of *Kapha Dosha*), then *Ruksha Swedana* is applied followed by *Snigdha Swedana*.

If *Kapha* is accumulated in the *Pakwashaya* region (Seat of *Vata Dosha*) then firstly *Snigdha Sweda* followed by *Ruksha Sweda*.

**Based on Properties of Swedana[5]**

*Snigdha-Ruksha Swedana - Vata Dosha Prakopa*  
*Snigdha Swedana - Vata Dosha*  
*Ruksha Swedana - Kapha Dosha*

**Table 4: Based on properties of Swedana[18]**

SN	Snigdha - Ruksha Sweda	Snigdha Sweda	Ruksha Sweda
1.	Patra Pottali Sweda	Sastika Sali Pinda Sweda	Valuka Sweda
2.	Jambeera Pinda Sweda	Kukkutanda Pinda Sweda	Istika Pinda Sweda
3.	Churna Pinda Sweda with Snigdha and Ruksha Dravyas	Masha Pinda Sweda	Churna Pinda Sweda with Ruksha Dravyas
4.	Chincha Lavana Pinda Sweda	Mamsa Pinda Sweda	Tusha Pinda Sweda
5.		Godhuma Pinda Sweda	Karisha Pinda Sweda
			Salavana Pinda Sweda
			Karpasa Beeja Pinda Sweda

**Importance of Snigdha and Ruksha Gunas in Sweda Karma:**

According to the *Samanya - Vishesh Siddhanta*, the *Snigdha Guna* counteracts the *Ruksha Guna* of *Vata* while exacerbating *Kapha*. Conversely, the *Ruksha Guna* mitigates the *Snigdha Guna* of *Kapha* and intensifies *Vata*. The *Snigdha* quality is a unique characteristic of *Jaliya Mahabhuta* and is defined by its ability to promote moisture in tissues and the body.

Many musculoskeletal and neuromuscular disorders caused by imbalanced *Vata* can be effectively treated with *Snigdha Dravyas*, which can be applied both internally and externally. *Snigdha* nurtures tissues, reduces inherent dryness and wear, and strengthens cellular immunity. Dryness, on the other hand, is a distinctive quality of *Vayu* and *Agneya Mahabhuta*. *Ruksha Guna* is characterized by its capacity to induce dryness, helping to reduce fat accumulation and address various issues associated with elevated *Kapha* and *Snigdha*.

**Table 5: Showing clinical conditions where Snigdha and Ruksha Sweda are Indicated**

SN	Snigdha Sweda	Ruksha Sweda
1.	Viswachi	Amavata[7]
2.	Kati Sula	Manyastamba[8]
3.	Janu Sandhi Gata Vata	Urustamba[9]
4.	Khalli Vata	Amasaya Gata Vata[10]
5.		Trika Sula[11]

**Mode of action of Swedana[2]**

*Swedakarma* has the following major actions over the body:

*Stambhaghata, Gouravaghata, Sheetaghata, Swedakaraka, Dosha Draveekarana.*

*Stambhaghata* - *Stambha* means stiffness/hindering/obstruction/paralyzing/suppression of any of bodily faculties / making rigid / immovable as a resultant of increased *Sheeta Guna* and also influence of factors such as *Samanavata, Sleshakakapha, Mamsa, and Medas*. *Samanavata* is *Ruksha Gunapradhana* and hence if vitiated does excessive *Shoshana* of *Shareera*, thereby producing contractures and stiffness. *Sleshakakapha* is *Snigdha* and *Pichila* and if decreased, results in less lubrication of joints causing stiffness. *Swedakarma* is *Snigdha and Ushna*, which corrects both deranged *Dosha Ghataka* and relieves stiffness. *Acharya Chakrapani* has stated that *Stambha* also means obstruction or block. Therefore, *Swedana* not only relieves stiffness but also clears blockage of passages (*Srotrodha*).

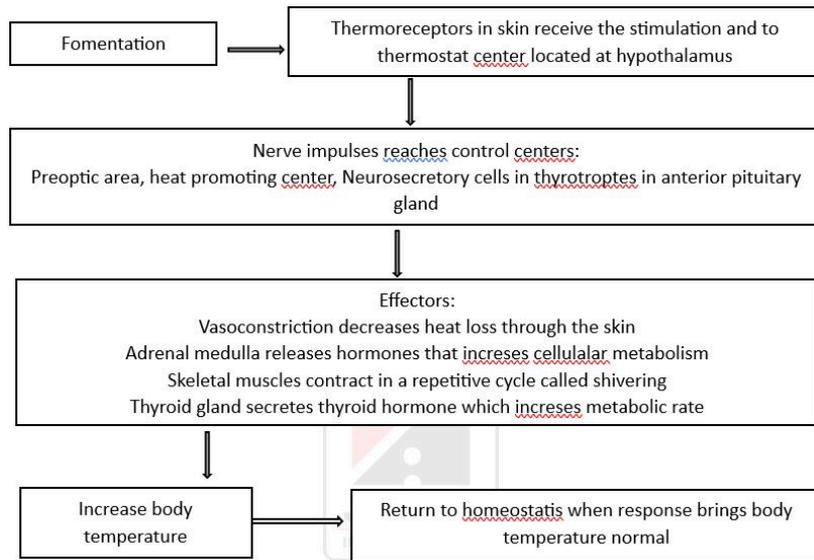
*Gouravaghata* - *Gourava* can be seen in aggravated *Kapha* condition and *Ama Avastha*. *Swedana* will help to reduce the *Kapha Dosha* as well it relieves the *Ama Avastha* thereby the person will feel lightness of the body.

*Sheetaghata* - *Swedana* reduces the *Sheeta Guna* and thereby it relieves the diseases or symptoms by *Ushna Guna*.

*Swedakaraka* - *Swedana* produces perspiration which eliminates the *Mala* (excretory product). Therefore, it is a mechanism of excreting the metabolic wastes from the body tissues.

*Dosha Darveekarana* - *Ushna Veerya* of *Swedana Dravya* penetrates to each and every channel in the body and liquefies the *Dosha*. This liquefied *Dosha* will move from *Shakha* to *Koshta* and is eliminated by *Shodhana Karma*.

*Gatra Vinamana* - Acharya Charaka says that by application of oil and heat, even dry wood can be bent and so the *Shareera*. It cures *Ruk*, *Ayama*, *Shopha*, *Stambha*, *Graha* and produces *Mardava*, thereby permitting normal flexible body movement.



## Discussion

*Patra Pottali Sweda* is indicated for conditions such as *Upstambhita Vata Vyadhi*, *Upastambhita Sandhivata*, *Katigraha* (lower back pain), *Vataja Manyastambha* (cervical spondylosis), tenderness, and inflammation. This treatment alleviates pain and stiffness, particularly when *Vata* and *Kapha Doshas* are imbalanced. *Patra Pottali Sweda* is a type of *Sankara Swedana* due to its *Ushna Guna*, which activates the sympathetic nervous system and promotes vasodilation. The *Sara* and *Sukshma Guna* of the *Swedana Dravya* helps to liquefy the *Doshas*, allowing them to be expelled through the skin's micropores.[12]

*Kukkutanda Pinda Sweda* is a distinctive *Swedana* method described in *Bhavaprakash*. It is mainly indicated in *Manyastambha*, *Greevagraha*, *Apabahuka*, Muscle wasting, muscle weakness and *Vata Vyadhi*. Its effects are attributed to properties like *Stambhaghna*, *Gouravaghna*, *Ushna*, *Vedana-Shamaka*, *Brimhana*, *Balya*, and *Tridoshaghna*. Acharya Charaka highlights *Kukkutanda* as a powerful remedy for quickly restoring *Bala*, particularly in individuals with *Dhatu Kshaya* or injuries. Its *Brimhana* (nourishing) and *Snigdha* (unctuous) qualities support *Snehana* (oleation), which helps balance the vitiated *Vata Dosh*, enhancing the strength of fibrous tissues and improving joint movement and flexibility by reducing pain and stiffness.

Additionally, its *Balya* (strengthening) properties fortify the nerves, while the *Snehana* effect helps alleviate nerve compression.[13]

**Table 6: Swedana mentioned in various musculoskeletal disorders**

Disorders	Chakra datta	Yogarat nakar	Astanga Sangraha	Bhavapra kasha	Vangas ena	Sushr uta
Amavata	+	+				
Sandhigatavata		+	+	+		
Vatarakta						
Avabahuka					+	
Urusthamba				+		
Manyasthamba						+
Viswachi						
Khalli	+					

*Sashtika Shali Pinda Sweda*, also known as *Navarakizhi* in Kerala, is a type of *Snigdha Sankara Sweda* under the *Sagni Sweda* category. This therapy involves processing *Shashtika Shali* rice in a decoction of *Balamoola* (*Sida cordifolia* root) and milk, providing simultaneous benefits of *Swedana* (sweating), *Snehana* (oleation), and *Brimhana* (nourishment). It is particularly effective for *Vata* and *Vata-Pitta* imbalances and is used during the *Nirama Avastha* of *Gambhira Vatarakta* (Ankylosing spondylitis).[14] It addresses a range of conditions, including nervous system disorders, spinal degeneration, neuropathy, chronic rheumatism, and muscle dystrophy. The *Ushna Guna* (hot property) stimulates the sympathetic nervous system, leading to vasodilation,

While the *Sara* and *Sukshma Gunas* (mobile and subtle properties) liquefy accumulated *Lina Dosha*, allowing toxins to be expelled through the skin's micropores. This treatment enhances flexibility, reduces joint stiffness, improves circulation, and supports better digestion and metabolism. Its *Brimhana* effect nourishes and strengthens body tissues, while its heat properties promote blood flow, liquefying deep-seated toxins and *Doshas* for improved overall health and well-being.[15]

*Jambira Pinda Sweda* was specifically utilized to manage the symptoms of cervical spondylosis. It is a modified version of *Sankara Sweda*, characterized by its *Mridu* and *Snigdha* properties. *Swedana* is a key treatment method for various disorders, particularly those of *Vata-Kapha* origin, as outlined in *Panchakarma*. This technique enhances blood circulation, boosts muscle strength, and alleviates pain and stiffness. The components of *Jambira Pinda Sweda Pottali* are designed to balance *Vata* and *Kapha*, provide analgesic effects, and reduce inflammation. With *Jambira* being the primary ingredient and known for its sour taste, it offers *Vata*-pacifying properties.[16]

*Godhuma Pinda Sweda* is a powerful Ayurvedic therapy aimed at treating various *Vata* disorders, especially those affecting the musculoskeletal system. *Godhuma* (wheat) has qualities like *Snigdha* (unctuous), *Grahi* (absorbent), *Guru* (heavy), *Madhura* (sweet), *Sheeta* (cooling), *Sthira* (stable), and *Sandhana* (binding), making it effective as a nourishing (*Brimhana*) treatment to balance both *Vata* and *Pitta Doshas*. It is particularly beneficial in managing *Dhatukshayajanya Vatarogas* (degenerative disorders), helping to restore depleted tissues (*Kshayadhatus*) while providing a soothing and revitalizing effect. The therapeutic properties of *Godhuma* are linked to its amino acid threonine, which may be a key active component. Additionally, when cow's milk is incorporated into the therapy, its fats are absorbed into the body during the *Pinda Sweda*, enhancing the nourishing benefits. *Bala* (*Sida cordifolia*) further boosts efficacy with its alkaloid ephedrine, which has stimulating and therapeutic effects.[17]

*Masha Pinda Swedana* is a highly effective therapy for managing *Nirama Avastha Sandhishula* (joint pain without toxins), particularly in cases like *Janusandhishula* (knee joint pain).

This treatment is *Brimhana* (nourishing) in nature due to the *Guru* (heavy), *Ushna* (hot), and *Balya* (strengthening) qualities of *Masha* (black gram), which help pacify aggravated *Vata Dosha* in the joints (*Sandhithana*). It is an ideal first line of treatment for knee pain in the *Nirama Avastha* (absence of toxins). Additionally, *Masha Pinda Swedana* is beneficial in conditions related to *Dhatukshaya* (tissue depletion), where *Vata dosha* is aggravated. The *Ushna Veerya* (hot potency) of *Masha* counters the *Sheeta* (cold) nature of *Vata*, and when applied as a hot bolus fomentation, it provides warmth and softness to the joints. The predominance of *Madhura Rasa* (sweet taste), *Snigdha* (unctuousness), *Guru* (heaviness), *Mrudu* (softness), and *Sthira* (stability) further enhances its ability to calm *Vata*, reduce pain, and promote nourishment (*Brimhana*).[18]

*Churna Pinda Sweda* is one type of *Ruksha Sankara Sweda* comprising of *Ruksha*, *Ushna Tikshna* properties and it involves using a combination of various powders, including Fenugreek (*Methika*), Mustard (*Sarshapa*), Dill (*Shatapushpa*), *Nardostachys jatamansi*, and Flax seeds (*Atasi*). There are two methods for performing *Pinda Sweda*: *Snigdha* and *Rooksha*. In the *Snigdha* method, oil is first massaged onto the body, and the *Pottalis* are heated in oil as well. Alternatively, the *Pottalis* can be warmed using the steam from specific liquid substances, such as *Dhanyamla*, in certain conditions. It possesses properties like *Vatahara*, *Sulahara*, *Sothahara* and *Vedanasthapana*. [19] *Churna Pinda Sweda* utilizes the properties of *Swedana* drugs to implement two key mechanisms: vasodilation and the induction of sweating.[20]

*Valuka Sweda* is a form of *Ruksha Sweda* (dry heat therapy) that uses a *Pottali* (bolus) filled with sand, which is rich in silica known for its excellent thermal properties that facilitate efficient heat transfer. When heated, sand acts as a bio-ceramic material that emits far-infrared energy, penetrating the skin to cause capillary expansion and promoting the elimination of toxins and metabolic waste. The therapeutic benefits of far-infrared energy, supported by modern research, align with the physiological advantages of *Swedana* therapy in Ayurveda. *Valuka Sweda* is particularly effective in reducing the *Sheeta* (cold) quality of aggravated *Vata Dosha*. It is also *Kaphahara* (alleviating *Kapha*), *Stambhagna* (reducing stiffness),

And helps in cleansing the channels (*Srothoshodhana*) by reducing localized *Ama* (toxins) that cause stiffness. Its application is especially beneficial for alleviating *Kapha* and *Vata Dosh*, particularly in the neck region (*Manyapradesha*), where it can relieve *Kaphavarana* (obstruction by *Kapha*). The heat promotes muscle relaxation, improves blood circulation, and stimulates local metabolic processes, all of which help reduce pain, swelling, tenderness, and stiffness, making *Valuka Sweda* effective in managing neck pain and stiffness.[21]

*Kareesha Pinda Sweda* is classified as *Ushmasweda* by *Acharya Vagbhata*, while *Acharya Charaka* refers to it as *Pinda Sweda*, specifically used to treat *Kaphaja Vyadhis*. The *Ruksha* (dry) quality of *Kareesha* helps in the digestion of *Ama* and pacifies *Kapha*. *Twak* (skin) is the seat of *Bhrajaka Pitta*, and the *Swedana* procedure stimulates *Bhrajaka Pitta*, which aids in the digestion of *ama* present in the skin. Thus, *Kareesha Pinda Sweda* effectively digests *Ama* and alleviates the obstruction of *Kapha* on *Vata* in conditions like *Vatakaphaja Gridhrasi*(sciatica).[21]

## Conclusion

Both *Snigdha* (unctuous) and *Rooksha* (dry) *Sweda* play vital roles in managing musculoskeletal disorders, particularly those involving *Vata* and *Kapha* imbalances. *Snigdha Sweda* therapies, such as *Kukkutanda Pinda Sweda*, *Sashtika Shali Pinda Sweda*, and *Masha Pinda Sweda*, use nourishing, strengthening, and lubricating properties to address conditions like muscle weakness and tissue depletion. These treatments balance *Vata Dosh* by promoting *Snehana* (oleation), enhancing flexibility, improving blood circulation, and restoring the strength of tissues, nerves, and joints. Their *Brimhana* (nourishing) and *Balya* (strengthening) qualities make them especially effective in treating degenerative and nervous system disorders. In contrast, *Rooksha Sweda* therapies like *Valuka Sweda*, *Churna Pinda Sweda*, and *Kareesha Pinda Sweda* focus on reducing *Kapha* and *Vata*-related stiffness, swelling, and toxins. By applying dry heat, these treatments promote vasodilation, stimulate local metabolic processes, and facilitate the elimination of accumulated toxins (*Ama*) through sweating. *Rooksha Sweda* is particularly effective in alleviating stiffness, improving mobility,

And reducing inflammation, especially in conditions involving *Kapha* dominance and *Ama* obstruction, such as neck pain, sciatica, and joint disorders where *Kapha* and *Vata Dosh* are imbalanced.

The use of *Snigdha* and *Rooksha Sweda* therapies offers a holistic approach to managing musculoskeletal diseases by addressing the specific *Dosha* imbalances, promoting tissue repair, and enhancing overall physical function.

Both methods complement each other in Ayurveda's comprehensive approach to restoring musculoskeletal health and well-being.

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