



INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES AND INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

(Peer-reviewed, Refereed, Indexed & Open Access Journal)

DOI : 03.2021-11278686

ISSN : 2582-8568

IMPACT FACTOR : 8.031 (SJIF 2025)

Swedana – A Contemporary Critical Review

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DOI No. **03.2021-11278686** DOI Link :: <https://doi-ds.org/doi/10.2582/05.2025-97494484/IRJHIS2505009>

Abstract:

Ayurveda is an ageold holistic life science. It aims towards maintenance of sound health as well as curing the diseased conditions. Swedana is one such fundamental treatment modality which is used to induce sweating / perspiration in body. Owing to its two basic types Sagni and Niragni Swedana, there are further many types or procedural subtypes mentioned in Ayurveda classics. The benefits of each type are different according to underlying conditions. Here the contemporary view of this Swedana therapy in accordance to classical Ayurveda is studied for its utmost positive outcomes.

Keywords: Swedana, Sagniswedana, Niragni Swedana

Introduction:

Swedana, derived from the Sanskrit word *Sweda* meaning sweat, is a therapeutic process in Ayurveda that involves inducing sweating to promote detoxification and balance the body's *Dosha* (*Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*). It is one of the vital therapeutic treatments, especially when combined with other therapies like *Abhyanga* (oil massage), and is often prescribed in *Panchakarma* treatments to cleanse the body of impurities. It is the part of *Purva Karma* in *Panchakarma* procedures and also used as an independent treatment modality for various diseased conditions. Through the synergistic application of *Abhyanga* (oil massage) and *Swedana*- sudation therapy, one can witness the transformation of rigidity into flexibility and toughness into suppleness. Ayurveda classics had mentioned various types of *Swedana*, this can be classified as follows,

- a) Based on *Agni* –
 - *Sagni*
 - *Niragni*
- b) Based on site of *Swedana*
 - *Sarvanga*
 - *Ekanga*
- c) Based on drug used
 - *Snigdhaushna*
 - *Rukshaushna*

Acharya Sushruta had explained four types of *Sweda*

- a) *Tapa Sweda* – use of direct heat
- b) *Ushma Sweda* – use of steam
- c) *Upanahasweda* – poultice
- d) *Drava Sweda* – use of warm liquids

Acharya Charaka had described two basic types and their sub types as follows,

- a) *Niragni Sweda* – no use of direct heat

- *Vyayama,*
- *Ushnasadana,*
- *Guru pravarana,*
- *Kshudha,*
- *Bahupana,*
- *Bhaya,*
- *Krodha,*
- *Upanaha,*
- *Ahava*
- *Atapa.*

- b) *Sagni Sweda* – use of direct heat

- *Sankara,*
- *Prastara,*
- *Nadi,*
- *Parisheka,*
- *Avagaha,*
- *Jentaka,*
- *Asmaghana,*

- *Karshu,*
- *Kuti,*
- *Bhu,*
- *Kumbhi,*
- *Kupa*
- *Holaka*

The types mentioned by *Acharya Charka* are been included by *Acharya Sushruta* in their four major types. The indications of each changes according to the disease conditions.

Type of Sweda	Subtypes	Indications
<i>Tapa Sweda</i>	<i>Jentaka, Karshu, Kuti, Kupa</i>	<i>Kapha Roga, Jadatva</i>
<i>Ushmasweda</i>	<i>Sankara, Prastara, Nadi, Ashmaghana, Kumbha, Bhusweda</i>	<i>Kapha Roga, Pachana, Dosha Vilayan</i>
<i>Dravsweda</i>	<i>Parisheka, Avagaha</i>	<i>Vata Roga, Stambha</i>
<i>Upanahasweda</i>	<i>Upanaha</i>	<i>Vata Roga, Shool</i>
<i>Niragnisweda</i>		<i>Kapha Roga, Meda Avrut Vata</i>

In contemporary science the following can be considered in accordance to above mentioned types the *Swedana* therapy and its uses,

Bashpa Swedana (Steam Therapy)

In *Bashpa Swedana*, the patient is exposed to a steam chamber infused with medicinal herbs. The steam generated from boiling water and herbs helps open the body's pores, allowing for a deep release of toxins and promoting relaxation. It also promotes excessive sweating and there by act hemodynamically on body system.

Nadi Swedana (Localized Steam Therapy)

Nadi Swedana involves directing steam to specific areas of the body, usually focusing on areas with localized pain, stiffness, or congestion. In this procedure *Nadi* – pipe is used for *Swedana* purpose. This targeted approach allows for concentrated healing in the affected regions. This also helps in local *Ama Pachana* and elimination of the toxins through enlarged vessels by the virtue of *Nadi Sweda*.

Upanaha Swedana (Herbal Poultice Therapy)

This therapy involves applying warm herbal poultices to the body. The poultices, often containing a blend of medicinal herbs, are heated and applied to specific areas, promoting relaxation, improving circulation, and relieving muscle tension. The *Mamsa* and *Meda Dhatugat Vata Dushti*

can be pacified by use of such medicated poultice.

Patra Pinda Swedana (Leaf Bundle Therapy)

Patra Pinda Swedana utilizes bundles of heated leaves of *Eranda*, *Arka* etc. tied into poultices. These bundles are then used to massage the body, promoting relaxation, relieving muscle stiffness, and enhancing the therapeutic effects of the herbs.

Avagaha Swedana (Tub Bath Therapy)

Avagaha Swedana involves immersing the body in a tub filled with a warm herbal decoction or medicated oil or sour *Kanji*. This therapy is particularly beneficial for joint pain, stiffness, and muscle relaxation.

Vyayama –

Through exercise in order to increase the circulation and resulting in sweating all over the body. This can be achieved with moderate form of strength and stamina training exercises. This helps to generate body heat and gives the benefits of *Niragni Swedana*.

Upavasa – Kshudha

By virtue of fasting the *Pachaka Agni* by its nature tends to digest *Ama* – toxins elsewhere in the body and results in *Swedana*.

Atapsewana –

By exposing oneself to the heat of sun the *Swedana* occurs and thus helps to get its benefits. All the procedures which results in increased circulation and in turn perspiration occurs can be considered for the *Swedana* part.

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सञ्जातेमार्दवेस्वेदेस्वेदनाद्विरतिर्मता॥

- Ch. Su 14/13

Acharya Charka had mentioned the properties of *Swedana*, it is useful in cold, pain, stiffness in body and also relieves heaviness. Apart from it following benefits can be seen on subjecting patients for *Swedana*,

- Improves circulation
- *Agni Vardhana* – improves digestion
- *Laghvkar* – by sweating the heaviness is reduced
- *Shoolhar* – reduces pain
- Reduces stress and promotes relaxation
- Metabolic correction – useful in weight loss
- Improves skin health
- *Swedana* dilates all the pores of *Strotasa* – helps to flush toxins from the body

Inference:

Swedana primarily acts on *Meda Dhatu* and increase the *Dhatvagni* thereby resulting in perspiration. This helps to eliminate unwanted toxins in form of *Mala – Sweda* by *Stotomukhvishodhana*. *Swedana* increases the heat quotient of the body and thereby increases dilatation and permeability of micro vessels. Due to increased permeability at capillary level the heavy toxins in form of *Ama* are expelled through extracellular fluids through the dilation and clearance of bodily channels. This holistic treatment modality serves the purpose of Ayurveda of preventive as well as curative quality.

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