

A Comprehensive understanding of Snehana- A contribution of Bruhatrayee for Ayurvedic Therapeutics

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Abstract— Snehana (oleation therapy) is an important preparatory procedure described in Ayurveda, especially in the context of Panchakarma. These therapies are extensively elaborated in the Bruhatrayee the three classical Ayurvedic compendia comprising the Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, and Ashtanga Hridaya. The Bruhatrayee presents Snehana and Svedana not merely as therapeutic procedures but as foundational modalities that maintain physiological balance, alleviate disease, and prepare the body for purification therapies. This article explores the concepts, classifications, indications, contraindications, therapeutic applications, and unique contributions of each classical text toward understanding Snehana.

Index Terms— Snehana, Abhyantara Snehana, Bahya Snehana, Ghrita, Taila, Sneha Paaka

I. INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda emphasizes both preventive and curative approaches for maintaining health. Among the various therapeutic procedures, Snehana and Svedana occupy a prominent position due to their role in mitigating Doshas and preparing the body for Shodhana (purificatory therapies). These procedures are particularly important in the management of Vaata Praadhanya Vyaadhi, Mamsa dhatu gata, Snayu gata Vata (Joint disorders, musculoskeletal conditions, neurological diseases, and metabolic imbalances).

The Bruhatrayee collectively offers a detailed understanding of these therapies:

- Charaka Samhita primarily focuses on the internal physiological and medicinal aspects.
- Sushruta Samhita highlights surgical relevance and practical applications.

- Ashtanga Hridaya presents concise and clinically oriented guidelines.

The integration of these perspectives provides a comprehensive framework for Ayurvedic practice.

Concept of Snehana

The term “Sneha” literally means oiliness, affection, or unctuousness. Therapeutically, Snehana refers to the administration of oleaginous substances internally or externally to lubricate the body, soften tissues, pacify Vata, and facilitate elimination of Doshas.

Definition

According to Ayurvedic classics, substances possessing qualities such as Guru, Sheeta, Sara, Snigdha, Manda, Sukshma, Mrudu, Drava (Heaviness, Coldness, unctuousness, softness, fluidity, and smoothness) are capable of producing Sneha in the body.

II. TYPES OF SNEHANA

The Bruhatrayee describes two major types:

1. Internal Oleation (Abhyantara Snehana)

- Administration of Sneha internally.
- Includes Snehapana using:
 - Ghrita (ghee)
 - Taila (oil)
 - Vasa (muscle fat)
 - Majja (bone marrow)

2. External Oleation (Bahya Snehana)

- Application of Sneha externally.
- Includes:
 - Abhyanga
 - Mardana
 - Pichu

- Shirodhara
- Kati Basti
- Karna Purana

Contribution Of Charaka Samhita Toward Snehana
The Charaka Samhita provides extensive detail regarding the pharmacological and physiological aspects of Snehana in Sutrasthana chapter 13 named as Sneha Adhyaya (Kalpana Chatushka)

Key Contributions

Detailed Classification

Charaka classifies Sneha into four principal categories:¹

1. Ghrita
2. Taila
3. Vasa
4. Majja

Among these, Ghrita is considered superior due to its ability to acquire the properties of drugs processed with it (Samskara Anuvartana).

Indications

Charaka recommends Snehana in²:

- Rooksha (Dryness of body)
- Vatarta (Joint disorders)
- Vrudhha baala abala krusha (Degenerative diseases)
- Samshodhya (Before Vamana and Virechana/fit for Shodhana)

Contraindications

The text contraindicates Snehana in³:

- Ama (Indigestion)
- Sthoola, Durbala (Obesity, Debility)
- Mandaagni (Less Digestive fire)
- Teekshnaagni (more digestive fire)
- Urusthambha
- Atisara
- Galaroga
- Udara roga
- Murcha
- Aruchi
- Shleshma Kapha predominance
- Madhya sevita

Samyak Snigdha Lakshana

Charaka elaborates signs of proper oleation such as⁴:

- Maardavam (Softness of body)

- Agnideepti (Improved digestion)
 - Snigdhaanga (Oily skin)
 - Varcha Snigdhama asamhatama (Sticky/unctuous stools)
 - Vatanulomana (Proper bowel movement)
- Emphasis on Personalized Therapy

Charaka emphasizes assessment of:

- Agni
- Kostha
- Vaya (Age)
- Bala (Strength)
- Roga avasta (Disease condition)

before administering Sneha.

Contribution Of Sushruta Samhita Toward Snehana

The Sushruta Samhita highlights the role of Snehana in surgical practice and trauma care in Chikitsa sthana 31st Chapter Snehopayogika chikitsitam adhyaya

Key Contributions

Preoperative Preparation

Sushruta advocates Snehana before surgical and para-surgical procedures to:

- Reduce tissue rigidity
- Enhance flexibility
- Minimize pain
- Facilitate healing

Wound Management

Sneha preparations are used in:

- Vrana Chikitsa
- Burn management
- Fracture care
- Ulcer healing

External Therapies

Sushruta gives practical importance to external oleation methods such as⁵:

- Paana
- Anuvasana
- Mastishka
- Shirobasti
- Uttara basti
- Nasya
- Karnapurana
- Abhyanga
- Parisheka
- Pichu

- Avagaha
- Bhojana

III. VATA PACIFICATION

The text strongly emphasizes Sneha as the primary therapy for Vata disorders because Vata possesses opposite qualities such as dryness and roughness.

Snehana Dravya for specific indications

according to necessity and predominance, the Taila (plant-derived unctuous substances) will be described⁶.

Among them:

- The Taila of Tilvaka, Eraṇḍa, Kośāmra, Dantī, Dravantī, Saptalā, Śaṅkhinī, Palāśa, Viṣāṇikā, Gavākṣī, Kampillaka, Śampāka, and Nīlinī act as Virechana purgatives.
- The Taila of Jīmūtaka, Kuṭaja, Kṛtavedhana, Ikṣvāku, Dhāmārgava, and Madana induce Vamana (Vomiting therapy). Etc

Sneha-Paaka Krama

the method of processing medicated fats/oils (Sneha-pāka-krama) will be explained.

It is of three types, namely⁷:

1. Mṛdu Pāka (mild cooking),
2. Madhyama Pāka (moderate cooking),
3. Khara Pāka (hard/intense cooking).

Among these:

- When the herbal paste (kalka) can just be distinguished separately from the sneha and medicine, that condition is called Mṛdu Pāka.
- When the herbal paste becomes clear, non-slimy, and non-sticky like beeswax residue (madhūcchiṣṭa), that is called Madhyama Pāka.
- When the paste becomes blackish, settled down, slightly clear, and rough/dry in nature, that is known as Khara Pāka.

Beyond this stage, the sneha becomes burnt (Dagdha Sneha); such improperly burnt sneha should be prepared again correctly. Of these:

- Mṛdu Pāka is suitable for internal drinking and food use.
- Madhyama Pāka is suitable for nasal administration (nasya) and external oleation/massage (abhyanga).
- Khara Pāka is suitable for basti (enema) and karṇapūraṇa (instillation into the ears)."

Contribution of Ashtanga Hridaya toward Snehana

The Ashtanga Hridaya by Vagbhata presents Snehana in a concise and clinically practical manner in Sutrasthana 16th Chapter Snehavidhi adhyaya

Key Contributions

Simplified Clinical Guidelines

Vagbhata provides practical instructions regarding:

- Dose selection
- Time of administration
- Dietary regimen
- Duration of therapy

Daily Oleation Practices

The text advocates regular external oleation practices such as⁸:

- Daily Abhyanga
- Padabhyanga
- Shiroabhyanga

for prevention of aging and maintenance of health.

Integration with Dinacharya

Snehana is incorporated into daily routine for⁹:

- Improved sleep
- Strengthening body tissues
- Preventing Vata aggravation
- Enhancing complexion

Emphasis on Rasayana Effect

Vagbhata emphasizes the Rasayana effect of regular Snehana¹⁰.

Benefits include:

- Longevity
- Improved strength
- Better complexion
- Sound sleep
- Stability of body and mind

Thus, Snehana is presented not only as therapy but also as a preventive health measure.

Practical Panchakarma Utility

Ashtanga Hridaya clearly explains the use of Snehana before:

- Vamana
- Virechana
- Basti
- Nasya

The text also highlights the importance of observing proper signs of oleation before proceeding to purification therapies.

Aspect	Charaka Samhita	Sushruta Samhita	Ashtanga Hridaya
Main Focus	Internal medicine	Surgical utility	Practical clinical application
Snehana Emphasis	Pharmacological and physiological	External and surgical relevance	Daily regimen and concise guidance
Svedana Emphasis	Detailed classification	Rehabilitation and pain management	Integrated Panchakarma practice
Clinical Orientation	Theoretical and individualized	Practical and procedural	Simplified and accessible

Importance of Snehana in Panchakarma

The Bruhatrayee unanimously considers Snehana as an essential Purvakarma before Shodhana.

Mechanism of Action

Snehana:

- Softens tissues
- Liquefies Doshas
- Lubricates channels
- Facilitates Dosha movement
- Reduces dryness and stiffness

This prepares the body for effective elimination of morbid Doshas.

IV. CONCLUSION

Snehana is one of the foundational therapeutic principles of Ayurveda and receives extensive attention in the Bruhatrayee. The collective contributions of Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, and Ashtanga Hridaya establish Snehana as a comprehensive therapeutic modality with preventive, curative, rejuvenative, and preparatory significance. Charaka provides detailed theoretical and physiological understanding, Sushruta contributes practical and surgical applications, while Vagbhata offers simplified clinical guidance suitable for routine practice. Together, the Bruhatrayee demonstrates the immense therapeutic importance of Snehana in maintaining health, preventing disease, and supporting Panchakarma therapies.

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