

International Research Journal of Ayurveda & Yoga

Vol. 4 (12),81-87, December, 2021

ISSN: 2581-785X; <https://irjay.com/>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47223/IRJAY.2021.41213>



A Comprehensive Critical Analysis of *Upanaha Sweda* Along with its Mode of Action.

Bhagyashree¹, Anand Katti²

1-PG scholar, Department of Panchakarma, Government Ayurveda Medical College, Bengaluru.

2-Associate Professor, Department of Samhita & Siddhant, Government Ayurveda Medical College, Bengaluru.

Article Info

Article history:

Received on: 03-11-2021

Accepted on: 14-12-2021

Available online: 31-12-2021

Corresponding author-

Dr. Bhagyashree, PG scholar,
Department of Panchakarma,
Government Ayurveda Medical College
Bengaluru. Tel.no:7892597690,

[Email: shreebhagyabhat13@gmail.com](mailto:shreebhagyabhat13@gmail.com)

ABSTRACT:

Swedana is standard therapeutic procedure in Ayurvedic science which is intended to relieve stiffness, heaviness, coldness of the body part and induce perspiration which can be used as *Poorva*, *Pradhana* and *Paschat Karma* according to the need. *Upanaha* is one such procedure usually used as *Ekanga sweda* characterised by application of medicinal paste over affected part of body with or without heating, covering it with thick leather material as bandaging. It is considered as *Vatahara*, can be used in *vata vyadhi* with stiffness, contracture and pain predominant. Transdermal drug delivery system depends upon multiple factors and their combined effect in *Upanaha sweda* like prevention of heat loss, to increase effective absorption of active ingredients, self-fermentation process and presence of solubility enhancer causes the treatment effective. Main intention of this procedure is to provide contact of medicine with body part for long hours so has to provide effective *swedana* action and to bring its anti-inflammatory and analgesics effect to act upon body for long duration. By considering present day busy lifestyle of patient, many modifications can be made into this process. This article compiles all the literature available on *upanaha*, analyses it and presents with a temporal sequence to clarify all the nuances related to *upanaha sweda*.

KEYWORD: *Ayurveda, Upanaha, Sweda, Vatahara, Mode of action.*

INTRODUCTION

Panchakarma consists of number of physio-psychological measures which are advocated for prevention, detoxification, rejuvenation and revitalisation of body tissue. *Swedana* is one among prerequisite to detox therapy, which can also be used as individual entity in the treatment of various disease conditions. *Swedana* is included under *shadupakrama* which relieves stiffness,

heaviness and coldness in body and causes perspiration¹. It is useful in treating various *vata- kaphaja* disorder. *Upanaha* is one such procedure specially mentioned as *Vatahara* (pacifies *vata*).² It is local treatment where in combination of *aoushada churnas* (medicinal powders), *sneha* (unctuous material like oil, ghee), *kinva* (fermented liquid) and *dhanya churna* (powdered grains), *gandha dravya* (fragrant material) are mixed together and applied



This work is licensed under a CC BY 4.0 License

over required site³. This means to reduce local inflammation and acts as analgesics. *Upanaha* is a *sweda* that falls in both *Sagni* and *niragni sweda*. The references of *Upanaha* are scattered in Ayurveda samhitas and even in same *Samhita* it is stated in different contexts. Hence there is a need to review, compile, analyse and present the details with a temporal sequence. Also, there is a need to analyse its mode of action in the background of modern medical science.

Upanaha

Derivation:

The word *Upanaha* is derived from *UP+NAH+GNJ*⁴, Where ‘*up*’ is prefix which means near and ‘*nah*’ *Bhandane* means to tie or to wrap.

Definitions:

Many Acharyas have given different definition for word *Upanaha*.

1. *Upanaha* is a form of *sweda* done by applying thick paste of medicinal drug.⁵
 2. *Upanaha* is the procedure of application of medicinal paste for *vranaropana*.⁶
 3. Procedure of application of paste of medicinal drugs followed by tying it with thick leather piece.⁷
 4. Tying off body parts with hot bolus of medicinal paste.⁸
- Thus, *Upanaha* can be defined as procedure where thick paste of medicine is applied over specific part of body followed by bandaging.

Types:

On the basis of *Agni samskara*:

- *Sagni Upanaha*
- *Niragni Upanaha*

1. *Niragni upanaha*- where there is no direct contact of medicinal drugs with *agni*. In this method drugs in the powder form is mixed with suitable liquid media and applied over affected part of body. Mainly drugs of hot potency are used in this type to serve *swedana* (perspiration) purpose.

2. *Sagni upanaha*- there is direct contact of medicinal drugs with *agni*. Here paste of medicinal drugs are added with suitable *dravadravya*, heated and then applied over specific part of body.

On the basis of method of application, Acharya Dalhana classifies *upanaha* into 3 types⁹:

- *Pradeha*
- *Sankara*

- *Bhandhana*

1. *Pradeha*:

Method of application of thick paste of medicinal drugs over affected part. Drugs like *vatahara* powders (drugs which pacifies *vata*), *amla dravya*(sour substance), *sneha* (unctuous material), *lavana* (salt) are made into paste form and applied in the form of *lepa* over affected body part after heating or without heating depending upon potency of drug. Acharya Indu opines that, application of the medicinal *lepa* repeatedly over affected body will serve perspiration.¹⁰ Acharya Sushruta mentions 3 types of *lepa* as *pradeha*, *pralepa* and *alepa*.¹¹ *Pralepa* is the thin, cold medicinal paste applied over body which can be allowed to dry. *Pradeha* is application of thick medicinal paste which is either *sheertha* or *ushna* and should not allowed to dry. It serves as *vatakaphahara*, does *Shodana*, *Ropana*, *Sandhana*, *Shophavedanapaha*. Thickness of *Alepa* is between these two acts as *raktapitta prasadaka*. Acharya Charaka mentioned different varieties of *pradeha* in *soothra sthana*, *Aragvadadiya adhyaya* can be included under this.

2. *Sankara*:

Medicinal drugs in the form of *payasa*, *krushara* etc are made into bolus and is rubbed over affected part of body with firm pressure. It can be served as *ekanga sweda* or *sarvanga sweda*.

3. *Bandhana*:

Thick paste of medicinal drug is applied and bandaging is done with thick material like skin of hot potency animal. In absence of these silk, woollen material can be used for tying.

On the basis of site of application:

1. *Ekanga sweda*: Performed over particular part of body.
2. *Sarvanga sweda*: *Sankara* type *upanaha* can be performed over whole body.

On the basis of drugs used:

1. *Snigdha upanaha*: consists of *sneha* (unctuous substance) as base along with *vatahara* churna, powder of *dhanya*, *lavana*. It helps in causing *sandhana karma*, *rujahara*.
2. *Rooksha upanaha*: is devoid of *snehadravya*, instead *gomuthra*, *kanji* can be used. This helps in absorption of excessive fluid content in the area.

Indications and Contraindications:

Indications:

- Acharya Sushruta specially explains *Upanaha* as *Vatahara*. This can be used in conditions of *vatavyadi* which are pain predominant, association of contractures and stiffness¹².
- Acharya Indu opines *Niragni upanaha* are useful in *vatapitta samsarga* condition¹³.
- Sushruta mentions *upanaha* in *sapthavidha vranashotha upakrama*¹⁴ and also in *shasti vrana upakrama*¹⁵.
- In *vranashopha*, *Upanaha* is used in both *ama avastha* (pre-suppurate stage) and *vidhagdha avastha* (suppurate stage). It helps in resolving *Ama shotha* and causes *paka* in the later one¹⁶.
- There is a mentioning of *Upanaha* in many diseases like *snayu sandhi asthigata vata*, *gulma*, *nethraroga*, *shiroroga* etc

Contraindication:

Upanaha is contraindicated in *pitta raktavarana* condition.

Drugs used:

Upanaha sweda is consisting of *vatahara dravyas*, *amla dravya* like *takra*, *chukra*, *kanji* etc, *sneha*, *saindhava lavana*, *yava* and *godhuma churna*. Based on the association of other *dosha* selection of drugs will be done. Specific drugs for *Upanaha* (Table 1) (Table 2)

Procedure:

- **Poorva karma:** It includes
 - a) *Atura pareeksha*
 - b) *Sambhara sangraha*
 - c) *Atura siddhata*
- a. *Atura pareeksha* (Examination of patient):
 1. Examination of patient should be done *prakratitaha*, *vikratitaha* and including 10 fold of examination.
 2. Examine for wound or scar if any at the site of *Upanaha* application.
 - b. *Sambhara sangraha* (collection and preparation of medicine):
 1. Drugs required for the *upanaha* like fresh *vatahara patra* or powder, *amla dravya*, *sneha*, *lavana* are selected and made ready according to condition of patient.
 2. The required *vatahara churna*, *sneha*, *amla dravya*, *lavana* are mixed together and made thick paste form.
 3. If the *Upanaha* desired is of *saagni* then the powder along with *dravadravya* and *saindhava* in a suitable amount is

heated. If it is of *Anagni* type the powdered form of drug is mixed with *dravadravya* without heating and made into thick paste.

4. Small amount of medicinal paste applied over skin to check for allergic reaction

c. *Atura siddhata* (preparation of patient):

1. Patient is asked to sit comfortably with exposed the affected part.
 2. Desired area for *upanaha* is properly supported.
 3. *Sthanika abhyanga* can be done according to condition.
- **Pradhana karma:**
 1. Prepared paste is applied over *pratiloma gati* (opposite to the direction of hair follicle) over affected part in proper thickness after checking temperature.
 2. Then area is covered with *vatahara patra* like *Arka* or *Eranda patra* and bandaged with cotton cloth or gauge roll.

- **Paschat karma:**

1. *Upanaha* can be removed after stipulated time.
2. The part should be cleaned with warm water
3. Gentle massage is to be done to relieve possible stiffness.

Duration of *Upanaha sweda*:

In ayurvedic classics we get the reference regarding the *Upanaha* which is tied at morning hours are to be removed during night hours and which are tied during night hours are to be removed in morning hours¹⁹.

But this rule can be changed according to the severity of the disease, condition of the patient and season of the treatment.

Precautions:

1. Once used medicinal paste should not be used again,
2. Unused, prepared medicine which is kept for long duration should be discarded.
3. Temperature of medicinal paste should be checked before applying to avoid burn
4. While tying *upanaha*, it should not be tied too tightly nor too loosely.
5. *Upanaha* must be of suitable consistency so that it should not fall off from its position.
6. It should be avoided in case of *visarpa*, *raktavruta vata* condition.

Different methods in *Upanaha sweda*:

1. *Lepa*: In this method, medicinal drug is applied in the form of thick paste and left till it dries.
2. *Bhandana*: in this method, mixture of *vatahara* drugs, *amla dravya*, *sneha*, *lavana* are made into paste form applied over affected part of body and tied with thick cotton cloth.
3. *Rotika/Apupa*: In this method, initially *godhuma* and *yava* powder along with *vatahara churma*, *amla dravya*, *saindhava* are mixed together and dough should be prepared. Later they made into roti form, heated on iron tava and tied around affected part of body with thick cotton cloth.
4. *Pinda sweda*: In this paste of medicinal drug is taken in the form of bolus form covered with cloth and rubbed over affected part of body.
5. *Vestana* method: In this method medicinal drug prepared should be in liquid consistency, 2-3 rolls of bandage are to be dipped in that *upanaha dravya*. After proper soaking one can use this bandage material to wrap around affected part.

Mode of action:

Skin is dynamic living tissue, rate of absorption of any drug through skin depends upon many factors such as drug concentration, solubility of medicine, duration of contact, physical condition of skin such as humidity.

- Long duration of drug contact:
Duration of drug contact is one among main cause for good absorption of active ingredients. When compared to any other *sweda* procedure the duration drug contact is more in case of *Upanaha*, may help in complete drug absorption.
- Solubility:
Absorption depends on solubility of drug. It is easy for lipid base or lipid soluble substance to get absorbed through skin. Since *Upanaha* consists of *sneha dravya* which yields lipid base, helps in better absorption of active substances.
- Permeability:
Use of acidic drugs like *takra*, *chukra* or *kanji* causes decrease in pH of medicine to moderate level. Moderate Decrease in pH increases permeability of drug through skin. Earlier researches proved that presence of alcoholic substance like ethanol cause easy absorption of active ingredients²⁰. *Kanji* (fermented liquid) a *dravadavya* used in many *upanaha* helps in quick and easy absorption of active ingredients.
- Self-fermentation and exothermic reaction:
Drugs used in *Upanaha* like *chukra*, *takra*, *kanji* are responsible for continuous fermentation when they come

in contact with wheat flour, barley flour and oil. Since fermentation is exothermic process causing self-generation of heat. Generally if any hot substance is applied over skin, the temperature will not retain due to large surface area. But in case of *Upanaha* due to fermentation heat will remain for more duration.

- Minimizing heat loss :
Upanaha sweda acts by trapping the heat inside the body by preventing the heat loss through *romakoopa*. As soon as hot paste of medicine is applied over skin there will be local raise in skin temperature because of heat gain through radiation and conduction. This heat will trapped by thickness of paste and covering it with fresh leaves of *arka*, *eranda* and finally bandaged with thick cotton cloth. These acts as thermoregulation as they are bad conduction of heat.
- Supporting and immobilization:
Vestana is one among *vata upakrama* which by virtue responsible for pacifying pain. This along with *vatahara* drugs, *sneha* responsible for further increasing potency of procedure.
- Action of *brajaka pitta*:
Acharya Sushruta mentions 4 *tiryak dhamanies*. These are further divides and become innumerable and cover whole body like network with their opening at *romakoopa*. Through these only *veerya* (potency) of drug used in procedure can enter into skin. Later they act upon by *Brajaka pitta* present in skin undergo *paka*. This is how the tropical application of drug acts upon body²¹.

Limitations:

When we look into the procedure of *upanaha* with *bandhana* method, it is very easy to perform as *ekanga sweda* than *Sarvanga*. Thus even though it has *Rujahara*, *stambhahara* action, *Sarvanga Upanaha* with *bandhana* method is difficult to perform. Thus practical utility of such *upanaha* in case of are rare. It may not be a comfortable procedure as it requires the patients to have their body parts being applied with medicine and tied with thick cloth material for long duration. It causes limitation in movement of body part and by the end of 12 hours patient may start developing stiffness. Since we use *ushna veerya* drugs or *agnisamskara* in process it cannot be used in *piitaja vrana*, *pitta raktavruta* condition. Even it may causes skin irritation if we use it for long duration in summer season.

DISCUSSION

Upanaha widely used therapeutic procedure in treatment of *vatavyadhi*. The action of *Upanaha* is based on two criteria i.e one from *karmukata* and other from *dravya*. As part of *karmukata* it does *swedanakarma*, *vestanakarma*. *Ushnatva* and other properties of drugs helps in alleviating stiffness, coldness by pacifying vata. This therapy is primarily used to prolong thermal conduction and regulation.

Skin being largest organ in the body offers advantages compared to other routes of administration. The rate of drug absorption through skin depends on solubility, duration of contact, skin physical condition etc. *Upanaha* applied immediately increases raise in temperature at the site of application. It further prevents heat loss because of thick layer of paste and bandaging. These together acts as bad conductor of heat. It also maintain humidity, moisture and prevents evaporation of sweat there by acts as thermo regulator. As that of other *sweda*, it also causes local hyperthermia which improves local blood and lymphatic circulation hence improves local tissue metabolism, reduces inflammation and relaxes local musculature.

CONCLUSION

Upanaha is easy, simple yet most efficient procedure used in treatment of many vata disorders. Even in this no time era, *Upanaha* is one such procedure helps the patient to get treatment in spite of their busy lifestyle without much alteration in their work schedule. The modifications from the classical method also helps to uplift the efficiency of procedure, thus according to the patients disease condition drugs, method, duration of *upanaha* should be selected.

Acknowledgement: Nil

Conflict of Interest – None

Source of Finance & Support - Nil

REFERENCES

1. Acharya YT, ed. Charaka Samhita of agnivesha elaborated by Charaka and Drdhabala with Ayurveda deepika commentary by Sri Chakrapanidatta, Sutrasthana 22nd chapter 4th verse, Varanasi:Choukamba Surbharati Prakashan,2014; pp:120
2. Acharya Yt, ed. Sushruta samhita of Sushruta with the Nibandhasangraha commentary of Sri Dalhanacharya and the Nyayachandrika Panjika of Sri
3. Pardakara HSS, ed., Astangahrdaya of Vagbhata with the commentaries Sarvangasundara of Arunadatta and Ayurvedarasayana of Hemadri, Sutrasthana,17thchapter, Choukamba Sanskrit samstan, Varanasi:2016; pp:253
4. Syara RR, Shabdakalpadruma, Pratama khand, vol.1,Varanasi:Choukamba Sanskrit series office,1967;pp256
5. Gupta KUC, Vaidyaka shabda Sindhu, Choukamba orientalia, Varanasi, 1999, pp.143.
6. Bhattacharya ST, Vachaspathyam, vol 2, Choukamba Sanskrit series,Varanasi,1962, pp 1221
7. Acharya YT,ed., Charaka Samhita of agnivesha elaborated by Charaka and Drdhabala with Ayurveda deepika commentary by Sri Chakrapanidatta, Sutrasthana 14nd chapter, Varanasi:Choukamba Surbharati Prakashan,2014, pp:89
8. Dr.Sharma S, ed., Astangasangraha of Vahata or Vrdda vagbhata with Shashilekha commentary by Indu, Sutrasthana 26th chapter, Varanasi,Choukamba Sanskrit Samstan, 2016, pp 196
9. Acharya YT, ed., Sushruta samhita of Sushruta with the Nibandhasangraha commentary of Sri Dalhanacharya and the Nyayachandrika Panjika of Sri Gayadasacharya on Nidanastana,Chikitsa stana 32nd chapter,Varanasi: Choukamba Surbarati Prakashan, 2014, pp.513
10. Dr. Sharma S, ed., Astangasangraha of Vahata or Vrdda vagbhata with Shashilekha commentary by Indu, Sutrasthana Varanasi: Choukamba Sanskrit Samstan 26th chapter, 2016, pp 200
11. Acharya YT, ed., Sushruta samhita of Sushruta with the Nibandhasangraha commentary of Sri Dalhanacharya and the Nyayachandrika Panjika of Sri Gayadasacharya on Nidanastana,sootra stana 18th chapter,Varanasi: Choukamba Surbarati Prakashan, 2014, pp.85
12. Acharya YT, ed., Sushruta samhita of Sushruta with the Nibandhasangraha commentary of Sri Dalhanacharya and the Nyayachandrika Panjika of Sri Gayadasacharya on Nidanastana, chikitsa stana,4th chapter,16th verse, Varanasi: Choukamba Surbarati Prakashan, 2014, pp.421
13. Dr.Sharma S, ed., Astangasangraha of Vahata or Vrdda vagbhata with Shashilekha commentary by

- Indu, Sutrastana Varanasi, Choukamba Sanskrit Samstan 26th chapter, 2016, pp 196
14. Acharya YT, ed., Sushruta samhita of Sushruta with the Nibandhasangraha commentary of Sri Dalhanacharya and the Nyayachandrika Panjika of Sri Gayadasacharya on Nidanastana, Sutra stana 17 th chapter, 17th verse Varanasi: Choukamba Surbarati Prakashan, 2014, pp.84
 15. Acharya YT, ed., Sushruta samhita of Sushruta with the Nibandhasangraha commentary of Sri Dalhanacharya and the Nyayachandrika Panjika of Sri Gayadasacharya on Nidanastana, Chikitsa stana 1st chapter, 8th verse, Varanasi: Choukamba Surbarati Prakashan, 2014, pp 397
 16. Acharya YT, ed., Sushruta samhita of Sushruta with the Nibandhasangraha commentary of Sri Dalhanacharya and the Nyayachandrika Panjika of Sri Gayadasacharya on Nidanastana, Chikitsa stana 1st chapter, 23 verse, Varanasi: Choukamba Surbarati Prakashan, 2014, pp 399
 17. Acharya YT, ed., Sushruta samhita of Sushruta with the Nibandhasangraha commentary of Sri Dalhanacharya and the Nyayachandrika Panjika of Sri Gayadasacharya on Nidanastana, Chikitsa stana 32nd chapter, Varanasi: Choukamba Surbarati Prakashan, 2014, pp 513
 18. Pardakara HSS, ed., Astangahrdaya of Vagbhata with the commentaries Sarvangasundara of Arunadatta and Ayurvedarasayana of Hemadri, Sootra stana, 17th chapter, Choukamba Samskrit samstan, Varanasi: 2016, pp:253
 19. Pardakara HSS, ed., Astangahrdaya of Vagbhata with the commentaries Sarvangasundara of Arunadatta and Ayurvedarasayana of Hemadri, Sootra stana, 17th chapter, 5th verse, Choukamba Samskrit samstan, Varanasi: 2016, pp:254
 20. Kouchak M, Handali S, Effects of various Penetration Enhancers on penetration of Aminophylline through shed snake skin, Jundishapur journal of Natural Pharmaceutical Products, 2014 feb; 9(1):24-9
 21. Acharya Y, ed., Sushruta samhita of Sushruta with the Nibandhasangraha commentary of Sri Dalhanacharya and the Nyayachandrika Panjika of Sri Gayadasacharya on Nidanastana, Sharira stana, 9th chapter, 9th verse Varanasi: Choukamba Surbarati Prakashan, 2014, pp.385

How to cite this article: Bhagyashree, Katti A “A Comprehensive Critical Analysis Of *Upanaha Sweda* Along With Its Mode Of Action.” IRJAY. [online] 2021; 4(12); 81--87. Available from: <https://irjay.com>; Doi: <https://doi.org/10.47223/IRJAY.2021.41213>

Table: 1. UPANAHA DRUGS ACCORDING TO DIFFERENT DOSHAS.

	Acc. to dhalhanacharya ¹⁷	Acc. Hemadri ¹⁸
<i>Kevala vata</i>	<i>Eladi gana, saalvana upanaha</i>	<i>Vachadi upanaha</i>
<i>Pitta samsrasta vata</i>	<i>Kakolyadi gana</i>	<i>Padmakadi gana</i>
<i>Kapha samsrasta vata</i>	<i>Surasadi gana, tilatasi yukta</i>	<i>Surasadi gana</i>

Table: 2. DIFFERENT GROUPS OF DRUGS USED IN UPANAHA

GROUP	DRUGS
<i>Kakolyadi gana</i>	<i>Kakoli,ksheerakakoli,jivaka,rishabaka,mudgaparni,mashaparni,medha,mahameda,chinnaruha,karkatashringi</i>
<i>Surasadi gana</i>	<i>Surasa,swetha,phaninjaka,ajraka,bhutrina,sugandhaka,sumukha,kalamalika,kuteruka,kasamardam,kharapushpa,vidanga,khatphala,nirgundi,mundika,undukarnika,vishamusti</i>
<i>Eladi gana</i>	<i>Ela,tagara,kusta,mamsi,jala,dhyamaka,twak,patra,nagapushpa,priyangau,harenu,vyaghranakha,sukthi,chandanaStouneyaka,srvestaka,chocha,chouraka,valuca,gugulu,sarjarasa</i>
<i>Padmakadi gana</i>	<i>Padmaka,pundra,rudhi,vrudhi,tuga,shringi,amrutha,jeevanti,kaakoli,meda,mahameda,mudgaparni,mashaparni,vrushabhaka,jeevaka,madhuka</i>