Snehana Karma

Unit 2. Snehana Karma (Oleation Therapy)

1. Introduction

Snehana Karma is the therapeutic induction of **snigdhatā**—unctuousness, softness, and lubrication—within the body. It is the chief **pūrvakarma** before **Śodhana** (Vamana, Virechana, Basti), and the most reliable modality for pacifying **Vāta** (principle of motion). Proper oleation loosens morbid **doṣa** from peripheral sites, facilitates their movement toward the gut, kindles **agni** (digestive fire), softens feces, and makes tissues supple—thereby preparing the patient for safe and complete elimination. Classical texts discuss sources of **Sneha dravya** (lipids), indications–contraindications, timing, dose (**mātrā**), recipes (**pravicāraṇa**), and success signs (**samyak-sneha lakṣaṇa**). This chapter gives you a practical, examready framework, aligned with **Cāraka Saṃhitā**, **Sūtrasthāna 13** (**Snehādhyāya**) and allied classics.

"अथातः स्नेहाध्यायं व्याख्यास्यामः॥" — Cha. Sa. Sū. 13/1

2. Sneha Dravya (Sources, Properties, Selection)

2.1 Sources (Snehayoni)

Classically, sneha originates from two "yonis"—**Sthāvara** (vegetable) and **Jaṅgama** (animal). Among them, the four principal oleating agents used therapeutically are **Ghṛta** (ghee), **Taila** (oil), **Vasā** (muscle fat), and **Majjā** (bone marrow).

"स्नेहानां द्विविधा... स्थावरजङ्गमा... तेषां दिधिक्षीरघृतामिषं वसा... मज्जा..." — Cha. Sa. Sū. 13/9-11

2.2 The "Catur-Sneha": classical properties & clinical hints

Sneha	Core guṇa & doṣa effect	Prime uses (Ayurvedic)	Typical modern examples
Ghṛta (clarified butter)	Śīta, Madhura, Sūkṣma, Yogavāhī; pacifies Pitta-Vāta, supports Rasa-Śukra-Ojas	Burning sensation, tissue softness, voice and complexion improvement; medhya	Cow ghee; medicated ghṛtas (e.g., Triphala-ghṛta , Mahātikta-ghṛta)
Taila (esp. sesame)	Uṣṇa, Snigdha, Sāra ; powerful Vātahara , does not aggravate Kapha much, Tvacya	External massage (Abhyaṅga), musculoskeletal Vāta, women's health (yoni-śodhana)	Tila taila (sesame), Nārāyaṇa taila, Mahānārāyaṇa taila
Vasā (muscle fat)	Guru, Snigdha, Brṃhaṇa	Wounds, fractures, trauma, prolapse, śukra-vardhana , oleation in heavy workers	Goat fat, boar fat (context- specific in classics)
Majjā (bone marrow)	Guru, Brṃhaṇa; strengthens Asthi, Meda-Majjā	Deep oleation where bone strength is desired	Bone-marrow fat (classical medicated uses)

(Derived from Snehādhyāya's descriptions on the four lipids.)

2.3 Season, time, and anupāna (vehicle)

- Season: Ghṛta in Śarad (autumn); Vasā-Majjā in Mādhava (spring); Taila in Prāvṛṭ (early monsoon).
- Diurnal: In Vāta-Pitta aggravation or hot season, take at night; in Kapha or cold season, take in daytime.
- Anupāna: After Ghṛta, sip uṣṇa-jala (warm water); after Taila, Yūṣa (pulse soup); after Vasā-Majjā, Maṇḍa (thin rice gruel).

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"सर्पि: शरदि... वसा मज्जा... तैलं प्रावृषि... नात्युष्णशीते..." — Cha. Sa. Sū. 13/18-19 "जलमुष्णं घृते पेयं... यूषस्तैले... मण्डः वसामज्जयो:..." — Cha. Sa. Sū. 13/22

2.4 Pravicāraņa (24 alternative modes of administration)

Cāraka lists 24 ways of using sneha—Odana, Vilepī, Māṃsa-rasa, Payaḥ, Dadhi, Yavāgū, Sūpa-Śāka, Yūṣa, Saktu, Madya, Leha, Bhakṣya, Abhyañjana (massage), Basti including Uttara-basti, Gaṇḍūṣa, Karṇa-taila, Nasya, Akṣi-tarpaṇa, etc.

"...भक्ष्यमभ्यञ्जनं बस्ति:... गण्ड्रष: कर्णतैलं... नस्त: कर्णाक्षितर्पणम्... चतुर्विशतिर्... प्रविचारणा:" — Cha. Sa. Sū. 13/23-25

3. Lipids (Modern Perspective—quick bridge)

From a biomedical standpoint, "lipids" include **triacylglycerols**, **phospholipids**, and **sterols** (e.g., **cholesterol**). They are hydrophobic or amphipathic molecules that:

- provide energy (9 kcal/g) and fuel prolonged, low-intensity work;
- constitute **cell membranes** (phospholipid bilayer, cholesterol for fluidity);
- carry fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E, K;
- supply **essential fatty acids**—linoleic (n-6) and α-linolenic (n-3).

Digestion & absorption: Bile salts emulsify dietary fat; pancreatic lipase yields free fatty acids and monoacylglycerol; enterocytes re-esterify and package them into **chylomicrons** for lymphatic transport. Hepatic metabolism later yields **VLDL** → **LDL** (peripheral delivery) and **HDL** (reverse transport).

Ayurveda-modern linkage:

- Ghṛta is rich in short/medium-chain fatty acids and conjugated complexes; its lipid-soluble drug-carrying ability
 parallels the classical yogavāhī concept.
- **Tila taila** (sesame oil) contains lignans (e.g., sesamin) and a favorable unsaturated profile, aligning with **tvacya** and **vātahara** actions.
- Vasā-Majjā represent dense energy, structural replenishment (brṃhaṇa), analogous to targeted anabolic support in tissue repair—used judiciously.

4. Rūkṣaṇa (Drying Therapy)

Definition: Rūkṣaṇa induces **raukṣya** (dryness), **kharatā** (roughness), and **vaiśadya** (non-sliminess), thereby reducing **kleda** and **snehatā** in tissues. It is counted among **Ṣaḍvidhopakrama** and is especially useful in **Santarpana-janya vikāra** (over-nourishment disorders) like **Sthaulya** (obesity), **Śleṣma-Meda** predominance, **Śotha/Śleṣma-udara**, and when **Āma**, heaviness, and oiliness obstruct proper snehana.

When to prefer rūkṣaṇa before snehana:

- Kapha-Meda excess, **manda-agni**, coated tongue, heaviness;
- Oily skin/stools, aversion to fats, or **Kapha-āvaraņa** of Vāta;
- Preparatory step to make tissues responsive to later snehana.

Methods & Dravya:

- Rūkṣa-Udvartanā (dry powder massage) with Yava, Kulatta, Triphalā cūrṇa;
- Rūkṣa-Svedana (dry fomentation: Valuka-sveda);

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Āhāra-Vihāra: Yava, Śyāmāka, Mudga, Takra, Madhu; Vyayāma (exercise), Rātrau jāgaraņa temporarily if indicated.

Avoid / caution: marked **Vāta-prakopa**, debility, pregnancy, severe dryness, or aged/child patients unless strongly indicated.

5. Abhyantara Snehana (Internal Oleation)

5.1 Indications & contraindications

Indications: patients requiring **Śodhana**, Vāta-dominant diseases, those accustomed to exercise/alcohol/sexual activity, and rūkṣa-prakṛti individuals.

"स्वेद्याः शोधनयितव्याश्च रूक्षा... व्यायाम-मद्य-स्त्री-नित्याः... स्नेह्याः" — Cha. Sa. Sū. 13/52

Contraindications: Utsanna Kapha-Meda, habitual **māndāgni**, nausea/vomiting, active jaundice/fainting, pregnancy, severe anemia, those already undergoing **Nasya/Basti** etc.

"...न तेषां स्नेहनं शस्तम् उत्सन्नकफमेदसाम्... गर्भिण्यः... स्नेहपानात् प्रजायन्ते तेषां रोगाः..." — Cha. Sa. Sü. 13/53-56

5.2 Forms and scheduling

- Accha-snehapāna (drinking the fat alone): the prathama-kalpika (first-choice) method for deep oleation before Śodhana.
- Vichāraṇa-sneha: when accha-pāna is not tolerated—use food-based recipes (see §2.4).

Arohaṇa krama (step-up dosing): Begin with a digestible dose in the morning on empty stomach, **increase gradually** until **samyak-sneha** signs appear. **Anupāna** according to the fat (see §2.3). Follow **pathya** (see §5.5).

5.3 Mātrā (dose) with classical guidance

Cāraka classifies three therapeutic doses:

"अहोरात्रमहः कृत्त्नम् अर्धाहं... प्रधाना, मध्यमा, ह्रस्वा स्नेहमात्रा..." — Cha. Sa. Sū. 13/29-30

- Pradhāna mātrā (maximum): for robust patients, tolerant to hunger/thirst (kṣut-pipāsā-saha), with strong agni, certain clinical states (e.g., Gulma, Sarpadaṣṭa, Visarpa, etc.).
- Madhyamā mātrā (moderate): for mṛdu-koṣṭha, moderate strength; useful even when planning Śodhana.
- Hrasvā mātrā (minimal): for vṛddha, bāla, sukumāra, manda-agni, or chronic Jvara/Atīsāra/Kāsa.

(See Cha. Sa. Sū. 13/31-40 for detailed indications.)

5.4 End-points: Samyak, Hīna & Ati-snehana

- Hīna (inadequate): hard, rough stools, Vāta not pacified, body remains dry/rough.
- Samyak (proper): Vātānulomana, kindled agni, stool oily/soft, body and skin soft.
- Ati (excess): pāṇḍutā, heaviness, lethargy, indigestion of stool, somnolence, hair greasiness.

"पुरीषं यथितं रूक्षं... अस्निग्धलक्षणम् [Hīna]... वातानुलोम्यं दीप्तोऽग्निः... [samyak]... पाण्डुता गौरवं... तन्द्रा... [ati]" — Cha. Sa. $Sar{u}$. 13/57-59

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5.5 Regimen before-during-after

- Pre-day diet: light, warm, non-blocking food, not overly unctuous or mixed; plan sneha next day.
- **During**: warm water sips, celibacy/rest at night, avoid exercise, loud speech, anger/grief, exposure to cold/heat/wind; do not suppress natural urges.

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• Post: after digestion, proceed to Svedana and scheduled Śodhana (Vamana/Virechana) if indicated.

Pre: "द्रवोष्णम्... नातिस्निग्धम्... श्व: स्नेहं..."; During: "उष्णोदकोपचारी... व्यायामम्... वर्जयेत्..." — Cha. Sa. Sū. 13/60-64

Duration: commonly 3 or 7 nights for prakarşa (maximal effect), individualized.

"स्नेहनस्य प्रकर्षों तु सप्तरात्र-त्रिरात्रकौ" — Cha. Sa. Sū. 13/51

6. Bāhya Snehana (External Oleation)

6.1 Core procedures

From the 24 pravicāraņa (see §2.4), the principal external forms are:

- Abhyanga (systematic oil massage),
- Mardana (kneading/pressing),
- Pīdana-Mardana for deep tissues,
- Seka (oil/medicated decoction streaming),
- Pāṇḍa/Piṇḍa Sveda with unctuous boluses,
- Śiro-Abhyanga, Pāda-Abhyanga, Gandūṣa, Karna-taila, Nasya, Akṣi-tarpana (eyes are filled with medicated ghee), and Basti (including Uttara-basti) when indicated.

6.2 Abhyanga—practical protocol

Indications: Vāta disorders, dryness/stiffness, insomnia, stress, athletes, those with rūkṣa skin; as daily dinacaryā in health maintenance.

Contraindications: immediately after heavy meals/Sodhana, in acute **Āma-jvara**, very oily/Kapha-dominant states, open wounds (unless medicated protocol).

Purva-karma

 Choose oil by doşa & tissue: Tila taila (Vātahara), Kṣīra-bala taila, Mahānārāyaṇa for joints; Ghṛta for pitta skin; Medicated ghṛtas/tailas as per condition. Warm oil to lukewarm.

Pradhāna-karma

- Position comfortably; begin with **mūrdhni** (head) and **pāda** (feet).
- Use ānulomī (direction of hair) strokes; longer strokes on limbs, circular over joints/abdomen.
- Duration **30-45 minutes** individualized; maintain warmth; monitor comfort.

Paścāt-karma

- **Svedana** (e.g., Nādi/Bāṣpa Sveda) to mobilize doṣa, followed by warm bath.
- Light, warm diet and rest.

6.3 Choosing external sneha by doṣa & tissue

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Context Preferred sneha Notes

Vāta dominance, neuromuscular stiffness

Tila-taila, Mahānārāyaṇa taila, Kṣīrabala taila Uṣṇa, Vātahara, penetrative

Pitta skin, burningGhṛta, Coconut oil (cool), Tiktaka-ghṛtaŚīta, pittahara, tvacyaKapha / Meda with heavinessLimited/brief oiling, consider rūkṣa-udvartana firstPrevents āvaraṇa

Asthi/joint depletion Majjā-piṣṭi, Māṣa/Śālī piṇḍa-sveda with ghṛta Brṃhaṇa emphasis

Women's pelvic health (under supervision)

Yoni-pichu with Tila-taila/Ghṛta

As per classical indications

Quick Reference: Samyak-Hīna-Ati Sneha Signs

Category Key signs (learn to reproduce in viva)

Hīna-sneha Hard/rough stools, persisting dryness/roughness of body, Vāta not pacified

Samyak-sneha Vātānulomana, clear appetite, soft/oily stool not clumped, body & skin softness

Ati-sneha Pallor, heaviness, lethargy, stool not properly digested, somnolence, greasy hair

(Summarized from Cha. Sa. Sū. 13/57-59.)

Assessment Section

Long Answer Questions (LAQ) - any 1 (10 marks)

- 1. **Define Snehana.** Classify **Sneha dravya**; explain **Abhyantara Snehana** with **mātrā**, **anupāna**, **samyak/hīna/ati-sneha lakṣaṇa**, timing and regimen. Quote relevant **ślokas**.
- 2. Describe **Bāhya Snehana** with emphasis on **Abhyaṅga**: indications, contraindications, step-wise technique, choice of oils per doṣa/tissue, and post-procedure care.
- 3. Write a note on **Rūkṣaṇa**: definition, indications, methods (Udvartanā, Rūkṣa-Sveda, āhāra-vihāra), and its role as a preparatory step before Snehana/Śodhana.

Short Answer Questions (SAQ) - any 5 ($5 \times 5 = 25$ marks)

- 1. Enumerate the **Catur-Sneha** and give two clinical indications for each.
- 2. Explain **pravicāraņa** (24 ways) of sneha administration with two examples of food-based recipes.
- 3. Write Samyak-Snehana lakṣaṇa (any four) with classical reference.
- 4. Mention **contraindications** of Snehapāna (any six).
- 5. Outline pre-, during-, post-regimen for Snehapāna (any three points each).
- 6. Indicate **season & diurnal timing** for Ghṛta vs. Taila intake with reason.
- 7. Differentiate **Accha-sneha** vs **Vichāraṇa-sneha** (any four points).
- 8. List **Rūkṣaṇa dravya** and **Rūkṣaṇa vihāra** (any four).
- 9. Write clinical indications for Hrasvā, Madhyamā, Pradhāna mātrā (any two each).
- 10. Note on **Anupāna** selection for Ghṛta/Taila/Vasā-Majjā.

MCQs (mark the single best answer) - $10 \times 1 = 10$ marks

- The first-choice method for deep oleation before Sodhana is:
 a) Vichāraṇa-sneha b) Accha-snehapāna c) Seka d) Udvartanā
- 2. **Śarad** season is advised for:
 - a) Taila b) Ghṛta c) Vasā d) Majjā
- 3. The most **Vātahara** and **tvacya** external oil is traditionally:
 - a) Coconut oil b) Mustard oil c) Sesame oil d) Castor oil
- 4. Samyak-sneha includes all except:
 - a) Vātānulomana b) Dīpta-agni c) Stool hard & rough d) Softness of body

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- 5. Ati-sneha likely shows:
 - a) Weightlessness b) Pallor & heaviness c) Dry skin d) Strong appetite
- 6. One rūkṣaṇa method is:
 - a) Piṇḍa-sveda b) Udvartanā c) Abhyaṅga d) Śiro-taila
- 7. Hrasvā mātrā is best suited to:
 - a) Robust labourers b) Children/aged/sukumāra c) Strong agni subjects d) Gulma patients
- 8. After **Taila** intake, the recommended **anupāna** is:
 - a) Warm water b) Yūşa c) Maṇḍa d) Milk
- 9. Maximum prakarşa (duration) for Snehapāna is commonly:
 - a) 1 day b) 2 days c) 3 or 7 nights d) 10 nights
- 10. A key purpose of Snehana before Sodhana is to:
 - a) Suppress doșa b) Mobilize doșa toward the gut c) Increase Kapha d) Induce dehydration

Answer key: 1-b, 2-b, 3-c, 4-c, 5-b, 6-b, 7-b, 8-b, 9-c, 10-b.

Viva & Case-based Pointers (quick recall)

- One-line definition: Snehana is induction of **snigdhatā** internally/externally to mobilize doṣa, pacify Vāta, and prepare for Śodhana.
- Three must-quote ślokas: Snehayoni dvividhā (Sū. 13/9-11); Timing & Anupāna (Sū. 13/18-22); Samyak/Hīna/Ati lakṣaṇa (Sū. 13/57-59).

Revision hook: "Right fat, right time, right dose → Vātānulomana + soft tissues → safe Śodhana."

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