

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 **Sodhana** (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 (**pravīcāraṇa**), and success signs (**samyak-sneha lakṣaṇa**). This chapter gives you a practical, exam-ready framework, aligned with **Cāraka Saṃhitā, Sūtrasthāna 13 (Snehādhya)** and allied classics.

“अथातः स्नेहाद्यायं व्याख्यास्यामः ॥” — *Cha. Sa. Sū. 13/1*

2. Snea 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 **Gṛhṛta** (ghee), **Taila** (oil), **Vasā** (muscle fat), and **Majjā** (bone marrow).

“स्नेहानां द्विविधा... स्थावरजडगमा... तेषां दधिक्षीरघृतामिषं वसा... मज्जा...” — *Cha. Sa. Sū. 13/9-11*

2.2 The “Catur-Sneha”: classical properties & clinical hints

Sneha	Core guna & doṣa effect	Prime uses (Ayurvedic)	Typical modern examples
Gṛhṛta (clarified butter)	Śīta, Madhura, Sūkṣma, Yogavāhi ; 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 (Abhyāṅga), musculoskeletal Vāta, women's health (yoni-śodhana)	Tila taila (sesame), Nārāyaṇa taila, Mahānārāyaṇa taila
Vasā (muscle fat)	Guru, Snigdha, Br̥hmaṇa	Wounds, fractures, trauma, prolapse, śukra-vardhana , oleation in heavy workers	Goat fat, boar fat (context-specific in classics)
Majjā (bone marrow)	Guru, Br̥hmaṇa ; strengthens Asthi, Meda-Majjā	Deep oleation where bone strength is desired	Bone-marrow fat (classical medicated uses)

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

2.3 Season, time, and anupāna (vehicle)

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

“सर्पिः शरदि... वसा मज्जा... तैलं प्रावृष्टिः... नात्युष्णशीते...” — *Cha. Sa. Sū. 13/18-19*
“जलमुष्णं घृते पेयं... यूषस्तैले... मण्डः वसामज्जयोः...” — *Cha. Sa. Sū. 13/22*

2.4 Pravicāraṇa (24 alternative modes of administration)

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

“...भक्ष्यमभ्यज्जनं बस्तिः... गण्डूषः कर्णतैलं... नस्तः कर्णाक्षितर्पणम्... चतुर्विंशतिर्... प्रविचारणाः” — *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:

- **Gṛhita** is rich in short/medium-chain fatty acids and conjugated complexes; its **lipid-soluble drug-carrying** ability parallels the classical **yogavāhi** 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 (**brmhāṇa**), 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-āvaraṇa** 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**);

- **Āhāra-Vihāra:** **Yava, Śyāmāka, Mudga, Takra, Madhu;** **Vyayāma** (exercise), **Rātrau jāgarāṇa** 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.

“स्वेच्छा: शोधनयितव्याश्च रक्षा... व्यायाम-मद्य-स्त्री-नित्याः... स्नेहाः” — *Cha. Sa. Sū. 13/52*

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

“...न तेषां स्नेहनं शस्त्रम् उत्सन्नकफमेदसाम्... गर्भिण्यः... स्नेहपानात् प्रजायन्ते तेषां रोगाः...” — *Cha. Sa. Sū. 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 कृत्त्वम् अधीह... प्रधाना, मध्यमा, हृस्वा स्नेहमात्राः...” — *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/Atisāra/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 प्रथितं रूक्षं... अस्तिग्धलक्षणम् [Hīna]... वातानुलोम्यं दीप्तोऽग्निः... [samyak]... पाण्डुता गौरवं... तन्द्रा... [ati]” — *Cha. Sa. Sū. 13/57-59*

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

Pre: “द्रवोष्म... नातिस्निग्धम्... श्वः स्नेहं...”; **During:** “उष्णोदकोपचारी... व्यायामम्... वर्जयेत्...” — *Cha. Sa. Sū. 13/60-64*

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

“स्नेहस्य प्रकर्षौ तु सप्तरात्र-त्रिरात्रकौ” — *Cha. Sa. Sū. 13/51*

6. Bāhya Snehana (External Oleation)

6.1 Core procedures

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

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

6.2 Abhyāṅga—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/Śodhana, in acute **Āma-jvara**, very oily/Kapha-dominant states, open wounds (unless medicated protocol).

Purva-karma

- Choose oil by doṣa & tissue: **Tila taila** (Vātahara), **Kṣīra-bala taila**, **Mahānārāyaṇa** for joints; **Gṛhṛta** 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



Context	Preferred sneha	Notes
Vāta dominance, neuromuscular stiffness	Tila-taila, Mahānārāyaṇa taila, Kṣirabala taila	Uṣṇa, Vātahara, penetrative
Pitta skin, burning	Gṛhṛta, Coconut oil (cool), Tiktaka-gṛhṛta	Śīta, pittahara, tvacya
Kapha / Meda with heaviness	Limited/brief oiling, consider rūkṣa-udvartana first	Prevents āvaraṇa
Asthi/joint depletion	Majjā-piṣṭi, Māṣa/Śāli piṇḍa-sveda with gṛhṛta	Brmhāṇa emphasis
Women's pelvic health (under supervision)	Yoni-pichu with Tila-taila/Gṛhṛta	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 **Abhyāṅga**: 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 (5×5=25 marks)

1. Enumerate the **Catur-Sneha** and give two clinical indications for each.
2. Explain **pravīcāraṇa** (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 Gṛhṛta vs. Taila intake with reason.
7. Differentiate **Accha-sneha** vs **Vīchāraṇa-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 Gṛhṛta/Taila/Vasā-Majjā.

MCQs (mark the single best answer) - 10×1 = 10 marks

1. The first-choice method for deep oleation before Śodhana is:
 - a) Vīchāraṇa-sneha
 - b) Accha-snehapāna
 - c) Seka
 - d) Udvartanā
2. **Śarad** season is advised for:
 - a) Taila
 - b) Gṛhṛta
 - 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

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) Yūṣa c) Maṇḍa d) Milk
9. Maximum prakarṣa (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 Śodhana is to:
a) Suppress doṣa b) Mobilize doṣa 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**.”