Special Procedures

Unit 4. Special Procedures (Vishesha Upakrama): Definitions, Types, Procedures, Benefits

This chapter consolidates seven high-yield fomentation/oleation-based procedures frequently used in Panchakarma. For each, you get: definition, types/variants, step-wise procedure (pūrva-pradhāna-paścāt karma), classical logic, and benefits/indications with cautions.

Core Classical Anchors (for the whole unit)

- Pinda-sweda (Sankara-sweda) media:
 - ''तिलमाषकुलत्थाम्लघृततैलामिषोदनैः । पायसैः कृशरैर्मांसैः पिण्डस्वेदं प्रयोजयेत् ॥"
 - Caraka Samhitā, Sūtrasthāna 14/25

(Use boluses prepared from sesame, black gram, horse gram, sour media, ghee, oil, meat, rice gruel, milk preparations, kṛśara, meat etc.)

- Rūkṣa vs. Snigdha selection:
 - "... श्लैष्मिकान् स्वेदयेत् पूर्वैः वातिकान् समुपाचरेत् ॥"
 - Caraka Saṃhitā, Sūtrasthāna 14/27
 - (Dry media for Kapha states; unctuous/wet for Vāta states.)
- Ten Nirāgni (non-fire) sweda principles (useful where dhāra/steam are avoided/contraindicated):
 - ''व्यायाम उष्णसदनं गुरुप्रावरणं क्षुधा ।
 - बहपानं भयक्रोधावुपनाहाहवातपाः ॥ स्वेदयन्ति दशैतानि नरमग्निगुणादृते ॥"
 - Caraka Saṃhitā, Sūtrasthāna 14/64-65

1) Sankara-Sweda (Pinda-Sweda; Bolus Fomentation)

Definition

A **sāgni-sweda** where heat and selected drugs are delivered through **boluses** (**piṇḍa**) wrapped in cloth and applied rhythmically over the body/region. "Saṅkara" signifies mixing of media (leaf/powder/rice/meat/milk etc.).

Common Types (by media)

- Snigdha Pinda-Sweda (for Vāta-rukṣa states):
 - o Patra-piṇḍa (herbal leaves with taila/ghṛta)
 - o Curna-pinda (herb powders roasted in taila)
 - Śāṣṭika-śālī piṇḍa (navara rice cooked in milk-decoction)
- Rūkṣa Piṇḍa-Sweda (for Kapha-āma-meda):
 - Vāluka-pinda (hot sand)
 - Yava-Kulatta-Triphalā powder boluses (dry)

Indications (illustrative)

Sandhigata-Vāta, Gridhrasī (sciatica), Pakṣāghāta (stiff phase), muscular spasm, osteoarthritis phenotype, chronic back pain, āma-resolved phases of Āmavāta (then shift to snigdha).

Contraindications

Pitta-prakope (burning tendency), acute inflammation/fever, pregnancy (abdomen/lumbosacral), open wounds, severe debility.

[©] Ayurvite Wellness Pvt Ltd. All rights reserved. This PDF is for personal use only Unauthorized reproduction, distribution, or commercial use is strictly prohibited.



AYURVED BHARATI® WHERE CLASSICAL WISDOM MEETS INTELLIGENT LEARNING

Procedure (step-wise)

- Pūrva-karma: assessment (doṣa/āma, agni, bala), abhyanga with suitable taila; protect eyes/genitals/heart.
- **Pradhāna-karma**: heat 2-4 boluses; alternate in rotation to maintain uniform warmth. Stroke pattern—long strokes on muscles, circular over joints; pressure mild-moderate; session **30-45 min**. Watch for **samyak-sveda** signs (relief of Śīta-stambha-gaurava; mārdava).
- Paścāt-karma: gentle nāḍī-sveda (if needed), warm bath, light laghu-āhāra, rest.

Benefits

• Relieves pain-stiffness, improves range of motion, softens tissues, mobilises doșa for later śodhana, nourishes when Śāṣṭika-śālī is used (bṛṃhaṇa).

2) Kṣīrādhūma (Medicated Milk Vapour/Fume)

Definition

Directed application of warm vapour/fume generated from milk (kṣīra) processed with suitable drugs (e.g., Daśamūla, Vāta-hara leaves), channelled to the **orofacial/aural** or regional site. It blends **snehana** + **mṛdu swedana** with soothing action.

Indications

Ardita (facial palsy) – mṛdu local sweda; Hanustambha (trismus), Mukhapāka (stomatitis—mild), Dantashūla (tooth pain), dry rhinitis, post-nasal dryness, certain voice disorders; also for delicate constitutions needing gentle heat.

Contraindications

Pitta-rakta vitiation locally (burning/bleeding), acute purulent infections, uncontrolled hypertension (face-steam caution).

Procedure

- **Pūrva**: mild **abhyanga** on target area; patient seated comfortably; eye protection.
- **Pradhāna**: boil medicated milk; conduct vapour through a nozzle/tube; expose **15-20 minutes**, **comfortable warmth only**; keep head supported.
- Paścāt: wipe moisture; avoid cold exposure, gargle with lukewarm decoction if oral route used.

Benefits

Soothes mucosa, reduces stiffness/spasm, relieves pain, improves salivary/secretory lubrication; excellent where **mrdu, snigdha sweda** is preferred.

3) Pizhichil (Kāyaseka / Taila-Dhāra; "Oil Bath")

Definition

A **continuous warm stream of medicated oil** poured systematically over the whole body or a large region while gentle **abhyanga** is performed. It is a Kerala classic combining **snehana with snigdha-swedana** (akin to *pariśeka* in classics).

Variants

- Sarvānga Pizhichil (whole body)
- Ekaṅga Pizhichil (regional—back/hip/limb)

[©] Ayurvite Wellness Pvt Ltd. All rights reserved. This PDF is for personal use only Unauthorized reproduction, distribution, or commercial use is strictly prohibited.



• Oil choice: **Tila taila** base with Vāta-hara formulations (e.g., Kṣīrabala, Dhanvantara, Mahānārāyaṇa), or **ghṛta** in Pitta-skin.

WHERE CLASSICAL WISDOM MEETS INTELLIGENT LEARNING

Indications

Sandhigata-Vāta, Pakṣāghāta (chronic), cervical/lumbar spondylosis, neuromuscular stiffness, insomnia/stress with Vāta predominance, dry skin/eczema in nirāma stage.

Contraindications

Āma-jvara, Kapha-sañcaya with heaviness, open/wet skin lesions, uncontrolled diabetes/obesity (prolonged oil bath cautioned), pregnancy (abdomen).

Procedure

- Pūrva: assessment; bowel/bladder empty; baseline vitals; light food prior; select oil, lukewarm.
- Pradhāna: 2-4 therapists synchronised strokes; head protection with cotton/ghee pad; 40-60 min; maintain oil warmth.
- Paścāt: sveda chamber (jentāka/kuţi) short sitting if planned; wipe; warm bath; pathya-āhāra.

Benefits

Deep Vāta-śamana, analgesia, relaxation, improved sleep, skin softness, better joint glide; primes for **Basti** in Vāta disorders.

4) Dhanyāmla-Dhāra (Fermented Cereal Sour Pour)

Definition

A **rūkṣa-uṣṇa dhāra** using **Dhanyāmla**—a sour, fermented liquid prepared from cereals/pulses (e.g., rice, barley) with spices and herbs—poured in streams over the body/region.

Indications

Āmavāta (āma-dominant), Kapha-Meda sañcaya with heaviness, myofascial pain with edema, cellulitic congestion, post-traumatic stiffness without acute inflammation.

Contraindications

Dry Vāta states without āma (can aggravate), active Pitta disorders (burning), pregnancy abdomen, very delicate/sensitive skin.

Procedure

- **Pūrva**: no heavy abhyanga (keeps it rūkṣa); protect eyes/genitals.
- Pradhāna: warm Dhanyāmla to comfortable heat; continuous pouring with gentle rubbing 30-45 min; keep patient warm.
- Paścāt: wipe; valuka-sweda if indicated; light, warm diet.

Benefits

Reduces **āma-kapha**, edema, heaviness; improves circulation and mobility; transitions patients toward **snigdha** modalities once āma declines.

[©] Ayurvite Wellness Pvt Ltd. All rights reserved. This PDF is for personal use only Unauthorized reproduction, distribution, or commercial use is strictly prohibited.



5) Takra-Dhāra (Buttermilk Stream)

Definition

Medicated buttermilk (takra)—often processed with Dhānyaka, Mustā, Amlī, Amalaki etc.—is poured lukewarm over the forehead (śiro-dhāra) or the body in a steady stream.

Indications

Pitta-dominant **śiroroga** (burning scalp, headache with heat), insomnia/anxiety with heat signs, psoriasis/seborrhea of scalp (non-oozing), menopausal heat intolerance with anxiety, stress-headaches.

Contraindications

Strong Vāta-cold states (prefer oil dhāra), sinusitis with acute kapha (risk of chill if fluid too cool), head cold.

Procedure

- Pūrva: light head abhyanga with pitta-pacifying oil (optional/individualised).
- Pradhāna: position dhāra pot 4-6 inches above; oscillate stream forehead-temple-forehead; 30-45 min; maintain uniform lukewarm temperature.
- Paścāt: wipe; head kept warm; avoid wind/cold; mild steam for body if needed.

Benefits

Calms mind, reduces burning/heat, improves sleep, soothes scalp/skin (pitta); many patients report deep relaxation.

6) Thalam and Thalapothichil (Head Applications)

6A. Thalam (Topical Head Patching)

Definition: Application of **a small quantity** of medicated paste/oil on the **vertex or fontanel area** (often with a protective leaf and bandage) for a prescribed time.

Indications: Headache (vāta-pitta), insomnia, anxiety, early hair/scalp disorders, mental agitation.

Procedure:

- Pūrva: mild head massage; part hair; place a small pad/leaf.
- Pradhāna: apply paste (e.g., Kottamchukkādi paste + oil/ghṛta); secure; 30-60 min.
- Paścāt: remove; wipe; keep head warm; avoid wind.

Benefits: Focused vāta-pitta śamana at **śiras**, tranquilising effect, relief in tension-type headaches.

6B. Thalapothichil (Full Head Pack)

Definition: **Whole-scalp coating** with a **thick medicated paste** (often amla, yashtimadhu, bringaraja, chandana in pitta states; bala, ashwagandha for vāta), covered with leaves/cloth.

Indications: Pitta-predominant scalp disorders, bald patches (supportive), headache with heat, stress-insomnia, pediatric hyperirritability (gentle, short duration).

Procedure:

[©] Ayurvite Wellness Pvt Ltd. All rights reserved. This PDF is for personal use only Unauthorized reproduction, distribution, or commercial use is strictly prohibited.



- **Pūrva**: baseline check; protect ears/eyes; apply a thin trail of oil around hairline.
- Pradhāna: thick paste 0.5-1 cm layer over scalp; cover; 45-60 min.
- Paścāt: remove; warm rinse; keep head warm.

Benefits: Cools scalp, calms mind, reduces pitta-heat, nourishes follicles (supportive), improves sleep quality.

7) Annalepa (Topical Rice Poultice/Plaster)

Definition

Topical application of cooked rice—classically Śāṣṭika-śālī cooked in kṣīra + kvātha—as a paste/plaster over a region, delivering snigdha-mṛdu swedana and brṃhaṇa. (Local cousin of Śāṣṭika-śālī Piṇḍa-sweda.)

Indications

Vāta-kṣaya with muscle wasting (after āma resolution), post-fracture stiffness (late), osteoarthritis with dryness, pediatric/geriatric weakness needing gentle nourishment.

Contraindications

Āma, active edema/oozing, Pitta-heat state, acute infection.

Procedure

- Pūrva: local abhyanga with ghṛta/taila as indicated.
- **Pradhāna**: apply warm rice paste **0.5-1 cm** thick; keep **20-30 min**; replenish warmth by gentle fomentation over pad.
- Paścāt: remove; wipe; warm bath; light diet.

Benefits

Nourishes and softens tissues, reduces pain-stiffness, supports brṃhaṇa in rehabilitation phases.

Quick Comparison Table

Procedure	Nature	Best for	Avoid/caution
Saṅkara (Piṇḍa)-Sweda	Snigdha or Rūkṣa (by media)	Vāta pain-stiffness; OA; spasm	Pitta heat, acute inflammation
Kşīrādhūma	Mṛdu, snigdha-sweda vapour	Ardita, orofacial dryness, trismus	Pitta-rakta states, acute infection
Pizhichil	Snigdha-sweda (oil bath)	Chronic Vāta neuromuscular issues	Āma-kapha heaviness, open lesions
Dhanyāmla-Dhāra	Rūkṣa-uṣṇa dhāra	Āmavāta, Kapha-Meda	Dry Vāta, Pitta heat
Takra-Dhāra	Cooling-soothing (pitta śamana)	Pitta head-heat, insomnia	Vāta-cold head, sinus flares
Thālam	Local head application	Tension headache, insomnia	Uncontrolled pitta scalp
Thalapothichil	Full scalp pack	Pitta scalp, stress, heat	Cold exposure post-therapy
Annalepa	Snigdha-mṛdu local pack	Vāta-kṣaya, rehab stiffness	Āma/ooze, acute heat

[©] Ayurvite Wellness Pvt Ltd. All rights reserved. This PDF is for personal use only Unauthorized reproduction, distribution, or commercial use is strictly prohibited.



Safety & Stop-Criteria (applies to all)

- Stop at Samyak-Sveda signs: relief of śīta-stambha-gaurava, appearance of mārdava.
- Watch for Ati-sveda: excessive heat, dizziness, thirst, burning, weakness—stop immediately, cool/unctuous measures, oral warm water in sips.
- **General care**: protect eyes/heart/testes; avoid wind/cold, heavy exercise, loud speech, anger, day sleep, and cold bath post-procedure; use light, warm **pathya-āhāra**.

Assessment

Long Answer (10 marks — answer any 1)

- 1. Define **Saṅkara-Sweda**. Classify its variants with media. Describe full procedure (pūrva-pradhāna-paścāt), indications/contraindications, and benefits. Quote **Caraka Sū. 14/25**.
- 2. Compare **Pizhichil**, **Dhanyāmla-Dhāra**, and **Takra-Dhāra** with respect to doşa targeting, āma status, and tissue goals. Give a protocol for switching from rūkṣa to snigdha phases in Āmavāta.
- Write short essays on Kṣīrādhūma, Thālam/Thalapothichil, and Annalepa—definitions, indications, step-wise procedures, and cautions.

Short Answer ($5 \times 5 = 25$ marks — answer any 5)

- 1. Enumerate **Snigdha vs Rūkṣa** piṇḍa-sweda media with two examples each.
- 2. Write the samyak-sveda stop-criteria and two steps of paścāt-karma common to all seven procedures.
- 3. Indications and step-points for **Takra-Dhāra** (**śiro-dhāra**) in pitta head-heat.
- 4. Procedure highlights of **Dhanyāmla-Dhāra**, including temperature control and duration.
- 5. Thālam vs Thalapothichil—two differences in indication and application.
- 6. Write a note on **Annalepa**: when to choose it over Śāṣṭika-śālī Piṇḍa-sweda.
- 7. Kṣīrādhūma—apparatus, exposure time, and after-care.
- 8. List three **contraindications** common to Pizhichil and Annalepa.

MCQs $(10 \times 1 = 10 \text{ marks})$

- 1. The verse listing media for Piṇḍa-Sweda occurs in:
 - a) Ca. Sū. 13 b) Ca. Sū. 14 c) Su. Sū. 12 d) A.H. Sū. 20
- 2. Dhanyāmla-Dhāra primarily provides:
 - a) Snigdha-sweda b) Rūkṣa-sweda c) Śīta-upakrama d) Nirāgni-sweda
- 3. For Vāta-neuromuscular stiffness without āma, the **best first choice** is:
 - a) Pizhichil b) Dhanyāmla-Dhāra c) Takra-Dhāra d) Nirāgni vyayāma
- 4. Kşīrādhūma is **least appropriate** in:
 - a) Trismus b) Facial palsy (mṛdu heat) c) Acute purulent sinusitis d) Dry rhinitis
- 5. Thalapothichil primarily targets:
 - a) Kapha cold b) Pitta head-heat c) Vāta dryness only d) Rakta bleeding disorders
- 6. Annalepa is contraindicated in:
 - a) Vāta-kṣaya b) Late rehab stiffness c) Active ooze/āma d) Dry skin
- 7. Pizhichil maps closest to which classical mode?
 - a) Upanāha b) Pariśeka c) Nāḍī-sweda d) Ātapa
- 8. In Piṇḍa-Sweda, pressure should be:
 - a) Strong and focal b) Mild-moderate and rhythmic c) Negligible d) Variable lightning strokes
- 9. A pitta-pacifying dhāra commonly used over scalp is:
 - a) Taila-dhāra b) Takra-Dhāra c) Dhanyāmla-Dhāra d) Jambīra-pinda
- 10. The ten nirāgni sweda principles include all except:
 - a) Vyayāma b) Uṣṇa-sadana c) Nāḍī-sweda d) Ātapa

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

[©] Ayurvite Wellness Pvt Ltd. All rights reserved. This PDF is for personal use only. Unauthorized reproduction, distribution, or commercial use is strictly prohibited.



Viva-Voce Hooks (rapid recall)

• One-liners:

- o Saṅkara-sweda = bolus fomentation; choose **snigdha** for Vāta, **rūkṣa** for Kapha/āma.
- o Pizhichil = oil-dhāra + abhyanga (snigdha-sweda).
- o Dhanyāmla-Dhāra = rūkṣa-uṣṇa sour pour; āma-Kapha reducer.
- Takra-Dhāra = pitta-calming head/body stream.
- Thālam/Thalapothichil = focal vs full-scalp head applications.
- Annalepa = local rice plaster for **brṃhaṇa** and mṛdu sweda.
- Quote at least once in exam:
 - o Piṇḍa-sweda media (Ca. Sū. 14/25) and
 - o Nirāgni ten (Ca. Sū. 14/64-65) to establish classical command.

© Ayurvite Wellness Pvt Ltd. All rights reserved. This PDF is for personal use only. Unauthorized reproduction, distribution, or commercial use is strictly prohibited.