



Review Article

REVIEW ON ROLE OF AVAGAHA SWEDA IN ANORECTAL DISORDERS

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ABSTRACT

In today's fast-paced world, environmental factors and lifestyle changes contribute to various diseases, including anorectal disorders. *Swedana* (sudation therapy) is primarily a *Purva karma* (preparatory procedure) but serves as a *Pradhana Karma* (main therapy) in certain conditions. *Avagaha Sweda* involves immersing the affected body part in a tub containing medicated liquids like *Kwatha* (decoctions), *Taila* (medicated oils), or *Sneha Dravyas* (unctuous substances). This therapy induces localized fomentation, which helps in pain relief, inflammation reduction, and wound healing. It is particularly beneficial in anorectal diseases such as hemorrhoids, fissures, and fistulas by improving local circulation, softening tissues, and promoting faster recovery. This review article highlights the importance, mechanism of action, and therapeutic efficacy of *Avagaha Sweda* in managing anorectal disorders, emphasizing its relevance in contemporary Ayurvedic practice.

INTRODUCTION

Anorectal diseases are increasingly prevalent in today's fast-paced world, largely due to sedentary habits, prolonged sitting, low physical activity, and unhealthy diets. Processed foods, poor fibre intake, and inadequate hydration contribute to chronic constipation, a major risk factor for haemorrhoids, fissures, and fistulas. Stress, obesity, and irregular bowel habits further aggravate these conditions. With the rising burden, effective preventive and therapeutic approaches are essential to improve patient outcomes.

Swedana Karma, one of the *Shadvidha Upakarma* in *Panchakarma*, is the therapeutic induction of sweating aimed at relieving stiffness, heaviness, and coldness while promoting stability and circulation^[1]. It plays a vital role as *Purvakarma*, *Pradhanakarma*, and *Paschatkarma* in Ayurveda. Among its types, *Avagaha Swedana* (immersion therapy) is particularly relevant in anorectal disorders. Acharya Charaka recommends using *Vatahara* decoctions, milk, oil, ghee, meat soup, or warm water for *Avagaha* ^[2].

In modern parallels, *Avagaha Swedana* is closely related with the warm sitz bath, a widely practiced conservative measure for anorectal care. It relaxes the anal sphincter, reduces pain and spasm, enhances blood circulation, and accelerates wound healing^[3]. This makes it beneficial not only in managing haemorrhoids and fissures but also in postoperative care of fistulas and perineal wounds, ensuring effective symptom relief and recovery.

Avagaha Sweda

Procedure of *Avagaha sweda*^[4]

Materials required

Bath tub (5.6ft × 2.6ft × 1.4ft) – 1, vessels, suitable *Dravadravya*- 40-6- litres (*Sarvanga*)/10-15 litres (*Adhakaya*), Oil for *Abhyanga*- 100ml, oil for *talam*-10ml, *Choorna* for *talam*-5g, Towel-1

- The selection of a suitable *Dravadravya* (medicated liquid) is based on the disease condition. The chosen liquid should be poured into the tub and maintained at a temperature of approximately 38°C to 42°C.
- A *Talam* (medicated paste) should be applied to the head using an appropriate oil and *Choorna* (powder).
- *Abhyanga* (oil massage) should be performed with prescribed medicated oil, extending from the umbilical region to the thighs or, if required, over the entire body. However, in certain conditions, *Abhyanga* may be omitted.

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- The patient should be comfortably seated in the tub containing the medicated *Dravadravya*, ensuring that the lower body is submerged above the umbilical level.
- For *Sarvanga Avagaha Sweda*, the body should be submerged up to the neck.
- As the temperature of the medicated liquid decreases, a portion should be replaced with warm *Dravadravya* to maintain a consistent temperature throughout the procedure.
- After the prescribed duration, the patient should step out of the tub, and the body should be gently wiped with a towel or tissue.
- The *Talam* should be removed using a dry towel, and prescribed *Choorna* such as *Rasnadi Choorna* or *Kacchooradi Choorna* should be applied. The patient is advised to rest for 30 minutes to an hour before taking a bath with lukewarm water.

Possible Complications

- Fainting- Due to increased body temperature or low heat threshold of patient or *Atiyoga* of *Kriyakrama*. Sprinkling cold water on face and body; providing sufficient water supplement or *Drakshadikashaya* are useful in this condition.
- Burns- Due to heat intolerance of patient or excessive heat of *Drava*. Apply *Madhu* and *Ghrita* preferably *Shatadhouta Ghrita*.

Classical References of Avagaha Sweda in Anorectal Disorders

Table 1: Arsas (Haemorrhoids)

Condition	Drugs Used for Avagaha	References
In <i>Shakrit mutra prathighatha</i> ^[5] (obstruction of faeces and urine)	Decoction made of <i>Varuna</i> (<i>Creativa nurvala</i>), <i>Alambusa</i> - (<i>Biophytum sensitivum/Sphaeranthus indicus</i>), <i>Eranda</i> (<i>Ricinus communis</i>), <i>Gokanṭaka</i> (<i>Tribulus terrestris</i>), <i>Punarnava</i> (<i>Boerhavia diffusa</i>), <i>Susavi</i> (<i>Carum carvi</i>), <i>Surabhī</i> (<i>Ocimum sanctum</i>)	AHCh 8/12-13
	With <i>Vathahara Dravya siddha dugda</i> and <i>Taila</i> (milk/oil boiled with <i>Vata</i> alleviating drugs)	AHCh 8/12-13
<i>Shoola</i> ^[6]	Decoction of <i>Kola</i> (<i>Ziziphus mauritiana</i>)/ <i>Souviraka</i> (fermented barley water)/ <i>Tushodaka</i> after <i>Abyanga</i>	CaCh 14/45-47
	Decoction made of <i>Mulaka</i> (<i>Raphanus sativus</i>), <i>Triphala</i> (<i>Haritaki</i> , <i>Bibhitaki</i> , and <i>Amalki</i>), <i>Arka</i> - <i>Calotropis gigantea</i> , <i>Venu</i> , <i>Varuna</i> (<i>Crataeva nurvala</i>), <i>Agnimantha</i> (<i>Clerodendrum phlomidis</i>), <i>Shigru</i> (<i>Moringa oleifera</i>) and <i>Ashmantaka</i> - (<i>Ficus rumphii</i>)	
	Decoction of <i>Bilva</i>	
	Butter milk or <i>Dadhimanda</i> (Whey) or sour <i>Kanjika</i> or cow's urine	
<i>Raktha ativartamaane, Daha, Kleda</i> (<i>Raktharsas</i>) ^[7]	1. <i>Ikshu rasa</i>	CaCh 14/216
	2. Decoction of <i>Madhuka</i> (<i>Glycirriza glabra</i>) and <i>Vetasa</i> (<i>Salix caprea</i>)	
	3. <i>Sheetha jala</i> (cold water)	
After <i>kshara karma</i> ^[8]	<i>Avagaha</i> with <i>Ushnodaka</i> Acc. to Dalhana commentary (<i>Vatakapha</i> - <i>Ushnodaka</i> , <i>Pitharaktha</i> - <i>Seethodaka</i>)	Su ci 6/4
After <i>Chedana</i> and <i>Dahana</i> of <i>Mahaanti Doshapurna, Nirgata arshas</i> ^[9]	<i>Avagaha</i>	SuCi 6/7

Table 2: Bagandara (Fistula in Ano)

Condition	Drugs Used for Avagaha	Reference
<i>Pakwa pidaka</i> ^[10]	<i>Avagaha</i>	Su ci 8/4, AH Ut 28/23
<i>Pain after sastrakarma</i> ^[11]	<i>Avagaha</i> in <i>Ushnodaka</i>	Su ci 8/36

Table 3: Parikarthika (Fissure in Ano)^[12]

Condition	Drugs used for Avagaha	Reference
<i>Parikarthika</i>	<i>Dasamoola Kashaya</i>	
<i>Partikarthika</i>	Warm water/warm water mixed with alum	Diagnosis and management of anorectal diseases, 6 th chapter.

Table 4: Time of Swedana

Swedana as Purva karma	Nasya, Vamana, Virechana
Swedana as Paschat karma	Moodagarbha, Sugaprasava, Akala Prsava
Both	Arsha, Bagandara, Pleea, Asmari

Mode of Action**1. Vata-Kapha Shamana (Dosha Pacification)**

The warm medicated liquid counteracts Vata (*Shoola*- pain, *Stambha*- stiffness) and Kapha (*Srotorodha* - obstruction, *Snigdha* - excessive mucus secretion). It reduces dryness (*Rukshata*) caused by Vata and excess moisture (*Snigdha*, *Guru guna*) caused by Kapha, thereby maintaining a balanced environment for healing.

2. Swedana (Sudation Effect)

The warmth induces perspiration (*Swedana*), helping in the removal of localized toxins (*Ama*), reducing stiffness, and promoting flexibility in the anorectal region.

3. Srotoshodhana (Channel Cleansing)

The therapeutic warmth opens up obstructed channels (*Srotas*), particularly in conditions like perianal abscess or fistula where Kapha dominance leads to pus formation and congestion.

4. Shoolahara (Pain Relief)

Heat therapy helps in relaxing the anal sphincter, reducing spasms, and alleviating pain due to conditions like anal fissure and haemorrhoids.

Vataja Shoola (pain caused by dryness and stiffness) is reduced by the unctuous and warm nature of the medicated liquid.

5. Shothahara (Anti-Inflammatory Action)

The warmth and medicated liquids help in reducing Kapha-induced swelling (*Shotha*), which is commonly seen in thrombosed haemorrhoids and perianal abscesses. Anti-inflammatory herbs in the decoction help reduce local congestion and edema.

6. Vrana Ropana (Wound Healing)

Avagaha Sweda increases local circulation, supplying essential nutrients and oxygen, which speeds up the healing of anal fissures, fistulas, and post-surgical wounds. Medicated decoctions with *Vrana Ropana* (wound-healing) herbs enhance the regenerative process.

7. Softening of Hard Masses (*Sthirata Nivarana*)

Warmth helps in softening the hardened anal masses (*Kapha*-induced *Granthi*), reducing the discomfort caused by thrombosed haemorrhoids or chronic fissures.

8. Facilitates Smooth Defecation

The warmth relaxes the anal sphincter and lubricates the rectal canal, making bowel movements

easier and reducing pain during defecation in conditions like fissures and post- haemorrhoidectomy cases.

DISCUSSION

Avagaha Sweda is an effective Ayurvedic therapy for anorectal diseases like fissures, fistula-in-ano, and hemorrhoids. The warm medicated decoctions enhance local circulation, reduce inflammation, alleviate pain, and promote wound healing. Its muscle-relaxant effect helps relieve sphincter spasm, especially in fissure-in-ano, easing defecation and post-defecation discomfort.

Compared to sitz baths, *Avagaha Sweda* offers superior benefits due to its herbal formulations with analgesic, anti-inflammatory, and wound-healing properties. Further clinical studies are needed to standardize its application for optimal results. Integrating it with other Ayurvedic therapies can enhance its efficacy in managing anorectal disorders.

CONCLUSION

Avagaha Sweda is an effective therapy for anorectal diseases, primarily due to its Vata-Kapha pacifying action. It helps relieve pain, reduce inflammation, promote healing, and improve circulation. Clinical evidence supports its benefits in conditions like hemorrhoids, fissures, and post-surgical wounds by relaxing the anal sphincter and easing defecation. As a safe and simple non-invasive therapy, it can be integrated into both Ayurvedic and modern practice. However, further research is needed to standardize its clinical application.

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