

## Rukshana: Exploring Its concept and practical applications

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### Abstract

Shadvidha Upakrama, a fundamental treatment approach in Ayurveda, consists of six modalities, including Rukshana. Rukshana therapy induces dryness (Roukshyam), roughness (Kharatvam), and non-sliminess (Vaishadyam), making it a key treatment for Santarpana Janya Vikaras caused by excessive nourishment. It plays a crucial role in managing lifestyle disorders linked to medo dhatu accumulation. Additionally, Rukshana is vital in managing kleda-dominant conditions and addressing Ama dosha. The therapy can be administered through internal medications, dietary modifications, and external applications. With evolving dietary habits and sedentary lifestyles, Rukshana serves as a first-line treatment to counteract Amaavastha and halt disease progression. This review article explores the therapeutic potential of Rukshana and its diverse applications in Ayurveda.

**Keywords:** Rukshana; Amavastha; Shadvidha Upakrama; Ruksha guna; Ama dosha; Santarpana janya vikara

### 1. Introduction

Shadvidha upakrama is one of the important treatment modalities in Ayurveda. Shad vidha upakrama [6-fold treatment modalities] explained by Charaka are brumhana, langana, rukshana, snehana, swedana, and sthambana<sup>1</sup>. These treatments will undoubtedly result in the cure of all treatable conditions if they are applied properly in all the indicated diseases, taking due consideration of matra and kala. Rukshana therapy is one among the shadvidha upakramas. Rukshana is the therapy which cause dryness[roukshyam], roughness [ kharatvam] and non- sliminess [ vaishadyam] to the body. Roukshyata is the main property achieved through rukshana therapy and later kharatvam and vaishadyam follows it<sup>2</sup>. Rukshana is a therapy that has the ability for soshana<sup>3</sup>. Rukshana which is one of the shadvidha upakrama plays an important role in maintaining the health of a person and treating the diseased one. As a preventive measure, certain Dinacharya practices possess ruksha guna(properties). In curative aspect, it is the main line of treatment of santarpana janya vikaras. In shadvidha upakrama, application of medicine can be in any forms like internal medications, drinks, foods or external therapies<sup>4</sup>. All sadhya rogas can be cured by judicious administration of such upakrama. With evolving lifestyles and dietary habits, people are increasingly at risk of developing various lifestyle diseases. The accumulation of fat mass including visceral fat plays a crucial role in the development of various disorders. The primary factors contributing to excessive fat accumulation and its dysfunction are unhealthy dietary and lifestyle habits, such as overeating and physical inactivity. To halt the progression of such Santarpanajanya conditions, Rukshana can be considered the first line of treatment. Additionally, Rukshana serves as an effective approach for managing the initial Amaavastha of a disease<sup>5</sup>. Rukshana holds significant importance in Ayurveda, with a broad spectrum of applications. This study explores the concept of rukshana and its therapeutic potential in Ayurveda.

### Aim

To explore the concept of Rukshana in Ayurveda and evaluate its clinical utility.

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## Objectives

- To understand the fundamental principles of Rukshana as described in Ayurvedic texts.
- To analyze the therapeutic properties and indications of Rukshana therapy.
- To assess the role of Rukshana in managing Santarpanajanya Vikaras and other clinical conditions.

## 2. Materials and Methods

Relevant data were gathered from classical Ayurvedic texts, including Bruhatrayee and Laghutrayees. Data collected from various panchakarma textbooks. A total of 8 articles were collected and reviewed, along with additional sources available through search engines.

### 2.1. RUKSHANA UPAKRAMA

- Nirukti: Ruksham aprema, achikkanae: Parooshyae ; parushyam asnigdheebhava. The word rukshana is having different meanings like dryness, harshness, roughness, dryness<sup>6</sup>
- Definition: Rukshana is the therapy which cause dryness [ roukshyam], roughness [ kharatvam] and non-sliminess [ vaishadyam] to the body<sup>2</sup>. According to Chakrapani dutta commentary of Charaka samhitha, rukshana can be attained by sneha abhava in body<sup>7</sup>.

**Table 1** Properties of rukshana dravya

Gunash <sup>8</sup>	Pradhana karma	Panchamahabhuta predominance	Dosha karma <sup>9</sup>
Ruksha	Soshana	Prithvi, Vayu, Agni	Vata kara, kaphahara
Laghu	Langana	Vayu, Akasha	Vata kara, kaphaghna
Khara	Leghana	Vayu	Vata kara
Teekshna	Sodhana	Agni	Kaphahara, pithakara
Ushna	Swedana	Agni	Vata kapha hara, pithakara
Sthiram	Dharana	Prithvi	Kaphakara
Apichilam	Kshalanam	Prithvi, Vayu, Teja, Akasha	Vata kara
Katinam	Dridheekaranam	Prithvi	Vata kara

Acharya Vagbata opines that properties of rukshana materials are opposite of snehana. In addition to these gunas, Arunadutta mentioned sthoola and Sandra guna.<sup>10</sup>

#### 2.1.1. Ahara vihara having ruksha guna

- Ahara: Agrya dravya for rukshana is udhalakanna.<sup>11</sup> Ahara producing ruksha guna in body are Khala, takra , udhalaka, makshika, priyangu, syamyaka, mudga, kodravam<sup>12</sup> kulatha, chakramudga, adaki beeja , yava, venuyava.<sup>13</sup>
- Vihara: Madya nitya sevana, vyavaya, vyayama, chinta<sup>14</sup>
- Oushada: Oushada dravya producing ruksha guna in body are haritaka, amalaka, vibhitaki, guduchi, musta, arishta, kshara, vidanga, nagara, loharaja, rasanjana, vilwadi panchamoola, silajathu, agnimantha rasa, pippali and guggulu. Other dravyas having ruksha guna are kutaja, triphala, maricha, pippalimula, shunti, chitraka, shatapushpa, jiraka, shonyaka, chandana, katuka, bilwa, ela, kiratatikta, vidanga<sup>4</sup> etc

Yavagu - 28 types of yavagu kalpanas are explained by Acharya Charaka. One among them is rukshanartha yavagu. Syamaka, extract of kusa [Desmostachya bipinnata] and amalaka are used for preparing the yavagu<sup>15</sup>.

#### 2.1.2. Mode of administration of rukshana

Rukshana can be administered to a person by 2 methods. Abhyantara method and Bahya method.

- Abhyantara method: Rukshana is achieved by providing anna, pana, oushada which are ruksha in nature.
- Anna: udhaalka, khali, pinyaka.

- Pana: ushna jala pana
- Oushada –
  - Kashaya - Amruthotharam kashayam, nimbadi kashayam
  - Arishta - takra arishta, abhayarishta
  - Choorna - sudarsana choorna, vaiswanara choorna, shaddharana choorna.
  - Single drugs – Guggulu, pathya, pippali<sup>4</sup>

## 2.2. Bahya method

Rukshana is achieved by means of externally administering therapies which are ruksha in nature. External rukshana procedures includes ruksha swedana (non-unctuous sudation) i.e., ruksha pinda sweda (sudation through poultice), ruksha parisheka sweda (sudation by pouring medicated liquids over the body), udwarthana (dry massage with powders) and lepa (application of medicated paste). Based on the choice of drugs and dosha status of individual rukshana can also be achieved through panchakarma procedures such as nasya, vasti, and virechana. Ruksha pinda sweda includes valuka sweda, choorna pinda sweda, ishtika choorna pinda sweda, kulatha kareesha bhasma pinda sweda, kadikizhi etc. Ruksha parisheka sweda includes dhanyamladhara, kashayadhara etc. Ruksha lepa [Kottamchukadi Churna etc], udwarthana. Panchakarma: Procedures like Vasti [lekhana vasti, kshara vasti, churna vasti], Nasya – arka nasya (sigru arka), swarasa nasya (durva swarasa, etc.), Virechana–Ruksha virechana (avipathy churna) etc. Habits which produce rukshana are Vyayama (Exercise), atapa Sevana (Sun bathing), chintna (mental stress), vyavaya (Sexual intercourse), ratri jagarana (awakening at night) etc<sup>16</sup>.

Lekhaneeya mahakashaya as rukshana : 50 mahakashayas are explained by Acharya Charaka with each group of kashaya having specific properties and actions. Lekhaneeya gana can be considered as rukshana gana because of similarities in their properties. Lekhaneeya gana includes musta, kushta, haridra, vacha, ativisha, katurhini, chithraka, karanja and haimavathy. It will produce rukshatha in body<sup>17</sup>.

### 2.2.1. Concept of Rukshana Vs Langana

Guna of rukshana dravya is similar to the guna of langana dravya. Sthira guna is absent in langana dravya. Sthira guna in rukshana dravya provides stability to dhatu. While langana dravya possess 2 additional properties like sukshma and saram. Even though there is a similarity in properties of both rukshana and langana but difference lies in predominance of these gunas. Ruksha guna is predominant in virukshana drugs while laghu guna in langana drugs. Sneha abhava [elimination of unctuous property] is the target of rukshana karma while gourava abhava [eliminating heaviness] is the target of langana kriya<sup>18</sup>.

### 2.2.2. Body prakrti and rukshana

Prakrti of an individual is unique. Dasa vidha pareeksha begins with the identification of prakrti of individual<sup>19</sup>. Lifestyle modifications and treatment should be planned in accordance with the prakrti of individual. If a person is kapha prakrti, he should follow diets which are ruksha in nature. Katu, tikta, kashaya pradhana ahara and exercise should be included in his regimen.

## 3. Application Of Rukshana Therapy

### 3.1. Rukshana in preventive Aspect - Dinacharya

Eyes are teja predominant and hence there is chance to get frequently affected with sleshma vikaras. So once in a week rasanjana should be used to eliminate sleshma. As kapha dosha is predominant at morning time, a healthy person should clean his mouth with a twig that is katu, tikta, kashaya rasa pradhana. The ability to reduce sleshma is a characteristic of katu, tikta, kashaya rasa. Exercise and udwarthana should be recommended based on the condition of individual. Both udwarthana and exercise have the ability to reduce kapha and liquify fat<sup>20</sup>.

### 3.2. Rukshana in curative Aspect

Indicated in disease conditions like Abhishyanna [obstruction of bodily channels - drava pradhana sleshma vikara] prameha, Mahadosha –[domination of aggravated dosha, kapha vridhi state of bahudosha], Marmastha vyadhi - manifested in vital organs of body, Urusthambha, adyavata, prameha<sup>21</sup>, Kapha sthanagata vikara, Krimi koshta person. A person whose body has a significant amount [prachura matra] of dosha sanchaya should treated with rukshana karma

initially. It is the important line of treatment in kleda predominant conditions. In conditions like, amavata, swasa, pratishyaya, pidaka, kandu, kota, atisthoulya, alsya, gurugatrata, sophia etc. rukshana is the primary mode of treatment<sup>4</sup>

### 3.2.1. Virukshana before snehapana

In conditions like mamasala[stout], medura[obese], bhurishleshma[with kapha predominance], vishamagni [unpredictable digestion] rukshana karma is advised as purvakarma before the administration of snehapana for sodhana. Sneha vyapat will occur if it is not carried out. If performed correctly, snehavyapat wouldn't happen, fat[Sneha] used for therapy wouldn't acclimate[satmya] and malas would be able to be broken down for elimination.<sup>21</sup>

### 3.2.2. Sneha vyapat chikitsa

Ruksha pana anna and bhesajam like takrarishta [ beverage prepared with butter milk], khala, uddala [ a paddy variety], samyaka [ little millet – Panicum sumatrense], kodrava [ Paspalum scrobiculatum], yava [ Hordeum vulgare], pippali [Piper longum], thriphala, honey, pathya [ Terminalia chebula], cow's urine and guggulu are indicated<sup>22</sup>.

### 3.2.3. Urusthambha

Urusthambha is a condition when pitha and vata are affected by kapha and medas, resulting in sthambha of thighs[uru] characterised by stiffness and coldness<sup>23</sup>. Snehana, vasti, vama and virechana are contraindicated in treatment of urusthambha. Purgation therapy [ virechana karma] is unsuccessful for treating kapha that is localised in thighs. Snehana and vasti procedures aggravates kapha. Thridoshas that are localised in thighs and associated with ama cannot be removed with panchakarma procedure. In urusthambha, administration of therapies which are kshapana and soshana in nature is needed to alleviate aggravated kapha and ama. The patients of urusthambha should be given rookshopachara as treatment. Syamaka, yava and kodrava along with vegetables cooked with water and oil without adding salt, leaves of sunishannaka, arka, nimba, aragwada, vetra, vayasi, vasthuka and karavellaka can also be given to patient. Administration of ruksha pana like kshara, arishta, haritaki, madhoodaka, pippali are very effective to patients suffering from urusthambha.<sup>24</sup>

### 3.2.4. Amavata

Indulgence in incompatible food and drinks, lack of physical activity and having a weak digestive fire[agni] contribute to the production of ama in body. This ama obstructs the dhamanis since it quickly moves to different kapha sthanas after combining with vata. Ama combines with thridoshas cause abhisyantana of srotas which ultimately results in development of amavata<sup>25</sup>. Clinical features include pain all over body, loss of taste, thirst, lack of enthusiasm, heaviness, fever, indigestion and swelling of body parts. It is a dreadful condition that is difficult to treat<sup>26</sup>. Langana will be beneficial if the individual has alpa bala and alpa dosha. Langana helps in pachana of ama dosha. Next therapy is ruksha sweda which helps in liquefaction of ama and relieves stiffness. Valuka sweda is special treatment mentioned in amavata. The vitiated ama and kapha dosha are treated with dipana and pachana dravyas. Atapa swedana, ruksha vasti, ruksha virechana etc. may also be employed depending on the condition of individual.<sup>27</sup>

### 3.2.5. Kaphavrutha vata and medasavrutha vata

Symptom includes body heaviness, colic pain and a feeling of coldness<sup>28</sup>. By performing langana, ayasa, ruksha vihara as well as staying in warm room, patient feels better. Ruksha chikitsa like jangala ahara, tikshna swedana, niruha vasti, vama virechana are useful in this condition.<sup>29</sup>

### 3.2.6. Sthoulya

In sthoulya passage of vata is obstructed by morbid medo dhatu. The vata circulates widely in koshta and results in agni dushti. Dushti of medovaha srotas resulting in the ativrudhi of mamsa dhatu. Due to excessive increase of mamsa and medo dhatu, buttock, breast and abdomen become pendulous. Such individual experiences energy and metabolism deficiencies<sup>30</sup>. Due to their ability to liquefy and expel stagnant morbid doshas, rukshana dravyas assist in removing the obstruction in medovaha srotas. Vasti[enema] with drugs which are tikshna, ruksha and ushna in nature and udwarthana with ruksha drug is also beneficial in the management<sup>31</sup>.

## 3.3. Samyak, Ayoga, Atiyoga lakshana of rukshana

Samyak[proper],Atiyoga[excessive] lakshana of rukshana is not mentioned separately. Acharya Charaka opines that samyak langana lakshana can be considered as samyak rukshana lakshana.<sup>32</sup>

**Table 2** Samyak, Atiyoga, Ayoga lakshana of Rukshana

<b>Samyak<sup>33</sup></b>	<b>Atiyoga<sup>34</sup></b>	<b>Ayoga<sup>35</sup></b>
Elimination of flatus [Samyak vata pravvruthi]	Pain in the joints [parvabheda]	Roga Vridhi [aggravate the condition]
Elimination of Urine [Samyak mutra pravvruthi]	Body aches[angamarda]	Oushadaanam dhatoonam ashama [leave dosha unpacified]
Elimination of faeces [Samyak mala pravvruthi]	Dryness of the mouth[mugasosha]	
Feeling of lightness In Body [Gatra laghava]	Cough[kasa]	
Hrudaya shudhi	complete loss of hunger [kshut pranasha]	
Udgara Shudhi	Anorexia [Aruchi]	
Asya shudhi	Excessive thirst [Trushna]	
Kanta shudhi	weakness of hearing and vision [dourbalyam srotra netra]	
Devoid of Tantra [Tantra nasha]	loss of digestive power and strength [agni bala nasha]	
Devoid of klama [klama gata]	Fainting [bhrama]	
Appearance of Perspiration [sweda]	frequent upward movement of vata [urdhva vata]	
Reappearance of Taste [Ruchi]	feeling of darkness in the heart (tamo hridi)	
Kshut sahodaya [Reappearance of Taste]	loss of body weight [deha balanasha]	
Pipasa sahodaya [Reappearance of thirst]		
Nirvyadhae antaratma [Feeling of wellbeing]		

#### 4. Conclusion

Rukshana, one of the Shadvidha Upakrama, is a significant treatment modality in Ayurveda with a wide range of therapeutic applications. The Rukshana Dravyas possess Ruksha (dry), Laghu (light), and Khara (rough) Gunas, which help balance excessive Kapha and Meda Dosha. This treatment can be administered through both Bahya (external) and Abhyantara (internal) methods, making it a versatile approach in disease prevention and management. Daily regimens like Vyayama and Udwartana also exhibit Ruksha Guna, contributing to overall health maintenance. Rukshana is particularly effective in conditions such as Urusthamba and Amavata, where it serves as a primary treatment modality, reinforcing its importance in Ayurvedic therapeutics.

#### Compliance with ethical standards

##### *Disclosure of conflict of interest*

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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