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# A Handbook on Practical Approach to Panchakarma (Poorvakarma)



**Anup Jain**

2nd Edition

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# Contents


**1. Introduction** **1**

- Significance of *Panchakarma* Therapy *1*
- What is the Need of *Panchakarma*? *1*
  - *Poorvakarma* *2*
  - *Pradhana Karma* *2*
  - *Pashchat Karma* *3*
  - Patients not Suitable for *Panchakarma* *3*
  - How to Establish a *Panchakarma* Theatre/Clinic/Hospital? *4*

**2. Snehana** **13**

- Definition *13*
- Properties of *Snehana Dravya* *13*
- Indications *13*
  - Internal *Snehana* *14*
  - External *Snehana* *18*

**3. Svedana** **48**

- Definition *48*
- Properties of *Svedana Dravya* *48*
- Classification of *Svedana* *48*
- *Svedana Yogya–Ayogya* *50*
  - People Who are *Svedana Yogya* *50*
  - People Who are *Svedana Ayogya* *50*
- *Sankara Sveda* *50*
  - *Snigdha Sankara Sveda* *51*
  - *Ruksha Sankara Sveda* *58*
- *Prastara Sveda* *61*
  - Medicines Required *61*
  - Materials Required *61*
  - Preparation *61*
  - Procedure *61*
  - Uses *61*
- *Nadi Sveda* *61*
  - Medicines Required *62*
  - Materials Required *62*
  - Preparation *62*
  - Procedure *62*

- *Sarvanga Vashpa Sveda* 63
  - Medicines Required 63
  - Materials Required 63
  - Preparation 64
  - Procedure 64
  - Uses 64
- *Dhara/Parisheka Sveda* 64
  - Pizhichil 64
  - *Dhanyamladhara* 66
- *Avagaha Sveda* 67
  - Materials Required 67
  - Medicines Required 67
  - Preparation 67
  - Procedure 67
  - Uses 68
- *Jentaka Sveda* 68
  - Construction of *Kutagara* 68
  - Materials Required 69
  - Medicines Required 69
  - Preparation 69
  - Procedure 69
  - Uses 69
- *Ashmaghna Sveda* 69
  - Materials Required 69
  - Medicines Required 70
  - Preparation 70
  - Procedure 70
  - Uses 70
- *Karshu Sveda* 70
- *Kuti Sveda* 70
  - Construction of *Kuti* 70
  - Materials Required 71
  - Medicines Required 71
  - Preparation 71
  - Procedure 71
  - Uses 72
- *Bhu Sveda* 72
- *Kumbhi Sveda* 72
- *Kupa Sveda* 72
- *Holaka Sveda* 73
- *Tapa Sveda* 73

- *Ushma Sveda* 73
- *Upnaha Sveda* 73
  - *Pradeha* 73
  - *Sankara* 74
  - *Bandhana* 74
  - *Salvana Upnaha Sveda* 74
- *Drava Sveda* 74
- Signs and Symptoms of *Svedana* 75
  - *Samyaka Svinna Lakshana* 75
  - *Asvinna Lakshana* 75
  - *Atisvinna Lakshana* 75
- Procedures to be given after *Sveda* 76
- *Svedana Karmukatva* 76

**4. Important Medicines for Snehana and Svedana** **77**

- *Taila* (Medicated oils) 77
  - *Anu Taila* 77
  - *Asana Bilwadi Taila* 77
  - *Bala Taila* 78
  - *Balaguluchyadi Taila* 78
  - *Balaswagandha Lakshadi Taila* 78
  - *Brahmi Taila* 78
  - *Chandanadi Taila* 78
  - *Chinchadi Taila* 79
  - *Dashmula Taila* 79
  - *Dhanwantara Taila* 79
  - *Dhanwantara Taila (101)* 79
  - *Dhanwantara Kuzhambu* 79
  - *Dhurdhurapatradi* Coconut *Taila* 80
  - *Eladi Taila* 80
  - *Gandha Taila* 80
  - *Himasagara Taila* 80
  - *Jatamansi Taila* 81
  - *Jatyadi Taila* 81
  - *Jeevanthyadi Yamakam* 81
  - *Karpasasthyadi Taila* 81
  - *Karpasasthyadi Kuzhambu* 81
  - *Karpooradi Taila* 82
  - *Kottamchukkadi Taila* 82
  - *Kshara Taila* 82

- *Ksheerabala Taila* 82
- *Ksheerabala Taila (7/11/101)* 83
- *Kumkumadi Taila* 83
- *Lakshadi Taila* 83
- *Mahamasha Taila* 83
- *Marichyadi Taila* 83
- *Murivenna Taila* 84
- *Nalpamaradi* Coconut *Taila* 84
- *Narayana Taila* 84
- *Neelibringadi* Coconut *Taila* 84
- *Panchavalkala* Coconut *Taila* 85
- *Pinda Taila* 85
- *Prabhanjana Vimardhana Taila* 85
- *Prasarini Taila* 85
- *Sahacharadi Kuzhambu* 86
- *Sahacharadi Taila* 86
- *Saindhavadi Taila (Brihat)* 86
- *Shadbindu Taila* 86
- *Suddhabala Taila* 87
- *Triphaladi Taila* 87
- *Vishagarbha Taila* 87

• *Ghrita* (Medicated *Ghee*) 87
- *Mahatiktaka Ghrita* 87
- *Panchatiktak Ghrita* 88
- *Tiktak Ghrita* 88
- *Triphaladi Ghrita* 88
- *Jatyadi Ghrita* 88
- *Jeevanthyadi Ghrita* 88
- *Shatavaryadi Ghrita* 89
- *Indukanta Ghrita* 89
- *Kalyanak Ghrita* 89
- *Sukumar Ghrita* 89

• Other Materials Required 89

**5. Diet and Regime** **91**

• What is the Right Kind of Food? 92
• Use of Beverages and Water 93
• Clothing 95
• Exercise and Recreation 95
• Bathing 96

*Index* 97

CHAPTER

# 1 Introduction

*Panchakarma* is a specialised branch of *Ayurveda*, which deals with purification as well as pacification of the *tridosha*, viz. *Vata, Pitta and Kapha* and brings the body to a state of (*Samadosha*) normal health. It is effective in physical as well as mental disorders. *Panchakarma* is not just limited to only *Kayachikitsa* but through its various procedures and ability to cure all types of diseases, this branch has proven that it can help in all the *eight branches* of *Ashtanga Ayurveda*.

The word *panchakarma* is made up from two separate words, i.e. *"Pancha"* and *"Karma"* – '*Pancha'* meaning 'Five' and *'Karma'* meaning work done or treatment procedures. So, *panchakarma* in essentiality means five purification procedures, namely, *Vamana, Virechana, Vasti, Nasya and Raktamokshana*. The word *panchakarma* is mostly used by *Acharya Charaka*; other *Acharyas* like *Vagbhata* and *Sushruta* have not put much emphasis on the word *panchakarma*, although the commentators on these texts have used the term to elaborate the concepts.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF PANCHAKARMA THERAPY

*Panchakarma* is a sort of bio-purification process, also known as *shodhana* therapy in *Ayurveda*, by the administration of which an attempt is made to purify or cleanse all the body tissues (*sroto-shodhana*) and to bring about harmony of *Tridosha*. In broader aspect, we can say it as a body detoxification procedure or technique which cleans the body at the very cellular level.

## WHAT IS THE NEED OF PANCHAKARMA?

When the *doshas* are vitiated in such abundance that the palliative treatment is of no help, it is indicated to get rid of excess of vitiated *dosha* by therapeutically eliminating them out of the body.

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But these are not the only procedures which this branch is all about. *Panchakarma* is done in three stages—*Poorvakarma, Pradhanakarma* and *Pashchatkarma*. There are plenty of other procedures which are included under the *Poorvakarma* heading of *Panchakarma*. Many of which are independent treatment modalities. In this book, we will try to give the details of all the procedures which come under the heading of *Panchakarma*, their methodology, utility and indications.

## Poorvakarma

*Poorvakarma includes—Deepana, Pachana, Snehana* and *Svedana*.

*Deepana and Pachana* medicine is given to digest the *Ama dosha* present in the body of a patient and to improve the digestive power (*jatharagni*). It is achieved by giving medicines which improve the digestive power and is done with the help of different medicines. Some of the important medicines which are used for *pachana karma* are *hingwashtaka churna, lavanabhaskara churna, chitrakadi vati, shankha vati, vyoshadi vati* and *lashunadi vati*. Depending upon the requirement as per the digestive power of the patient, *pachana* can be given for 3–5 or more days, depending upon the state of *Ama dosha* and *Jatharagni*.

### Signs and Symptoms of Samyak Deepana—Pachana

- *Laghuta* (feeling of lightness in the body)
- *Kshudha Pravritti* (improved appetite)
- *Pipasa* (improved thirst)
- *Nirama Mala Pravritti* (stool without *Ama dosha*)

*Snehana* is again of two types *Bahya*, i.e. external and *Abhyantara*, i.e. internal. Out of these; internal *snehapana* again can be broadly classified into *vicharana sneha* and *acchapeya sneha*.

*Svedana* mainly is of two types—*Sagni* and *Niragni*. *Niragni* includes *vayayam*—exercise, *ushna sadan*—sitting in hot room, *guru pravaran*—covering one with heavy woollen clothes, *kshudha*—staying hungry, *bahupan*—drinking hot liquids in excess, *Bhaya*—fear, *Krodha*—anger, *Upanah*—poultice, *Aahav*—wrestling and *Aatap*—sunbath.

*Sagni* is mainly of four types—*Taapa, upanaha, ushma* and *drava sveda*, which again have many subtypes.

## Pradhana Karma

*Pradhana karma* includes five purification procedures, viz.

1. *Vamana karma (Therapeutic emesis)*: Elimination of vitiated *doshas* through oral route by inducing vomiting is called as *vamana*.

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It is very useful in eliminating the excessive *kapha* and is mainly indicated in *kapha dosha pradhana* diseases.

2. *Virechana karma (Therapeutic purgation)*: Elimination of vitiated *doshas* through the anal route by inducing purgation is called as *virechana*. It is very useful in eliminating the excessive *pitta* and is mainly indicated in *pitta dosha pradhana* diseases.
3. *Vasti karma (Medicated enema therapy)*: Administration of medicine through anal, vaginal or urethral route is called *vasti*. It is a very important treatment as it mainly works on *vata dosha*.
4. *Nasya/Shirovirechana karma (Errhine therapy)*: Nasal administration of medicines is called *Nasya*. It is useful mainly in *urdhvajatrugata* diseases.
5. *Raktamokshana karma (Bloodletting therapy)*: Elimination of vitiated *rakta* from the body is called *raktamokshana*. It can be done in six different ways.

### *Pashchat Karma*

*Pashchat karma includes Sansarjana krama, Rasayana chikitsa* and *Shamana chikitsa* (pacification therapy).

## Patients not Suitable for *Panchakarma*

The texts give details of all the indications and contraindications but suggest a few things to keep in mind before we begin a treatment, which is about the patients to reject even if they are indicated for *Panchakarma* treatment. They are:

i. *Anapvad pratikari*: One who keeps arguing and does not follow what his doctor advises.
ii. *Adhana*: Very poor people who cannot afford the medicines.
iii. *Aparicharakavan*: Those who do not have an attendant to take care of them.
iv. *Vaidyamani*: One who thinks of himself as a doctor.
v. *Chanda*: One who does not rest and does stressful and heavy works.
vi. *Asuyaka*: Who is jealous of others.
vii. *Tivradharma aruchi*: Those who are strictly against *panchakarma* or religions.
viii. *Atikshina*: Those who are very weak as they will not be able to bear the harshness of procedures.
ix. *Asadhya roga*: Those with diseases which are described as incurable.
x. *Mumurshalinganvita*: Those who have signs which indicate close end of life.

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*Acharya Charaka* has told the above 10 kinds of people to be rejected for *Panchakarma chikitsa*.

### *Ashtou Mahadoshakara Vishaya*

After this, the texts have also advised to take precautions during the treatment time as well as after a few days, according to the number of days of treatment given, called as *Parihar kala*. They are known as "*Ashtou Mahadoshakara Vishaya*"

These precautions are:

- Do not speak in loud voice.
- Do not travel by horse, elephant or motorbike, scooter, etc.
- Do not travel or walk in excess.
- Do not sit in one position and on one seat for long hours or duration.
- Do not eat before first meal is already digested.
- Do not eat unhealthy and nonsuitable food.
- Do not sleep in day time.
- Do not engage in coitus.

*Panchakarma chikitsa* is majorly based on *dvividha* or *shadavidha upkrama*. It is important to understand the details of preparation and execution of all the procedures and do them with own hands to achieve proficiency in this subject. In the coming chapters, we will try to summarize the same things.

## How to Establish a *Panchakarma* Theatre/Clinic/Hospital?

Detoxification procedure is the main intention and integral part of *panchakarma*. Hence, for the successful achievement of treatment, there must be appropriate equipment and facilities available. May be that is the reason why *Acharya Charaka* has described in his *upakalpaniya adhyaya* that there should be individual rooms/divisions for specific procedure and specific rooms for its collection of drugs and required equipment, so that it is easily accessible when needed. It is also specified to collect the things required, which are necessary for undertaken procedure. By observing this sensitive explanation, proper designing of a hospital/*panchakarma* treatment centre should be done.

### *Basic Requirements of a Panchakarma Theatre*

- The therapy room should be in silent place-void of noise and pollution.
- There must be windows and balcony for proper ventilation.
- Room must be spacious and big enough so that patients/therapists can easily walk around.

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- Hospital/clinic should not face to hill or mountain. It should be in such place where there is no direct entry for smoke, sun's harsh rays, water and any kind of dirt.
- There should be sufficient water availability in hospital.
- All necessary equipment should be available.

Apart from this, following divisions and rooms are required to establish a proper *panchakarma* treatment clinic/hospital:

- *Reception cum waiting area*: This area will cater to general inquiries as well as serve as waiting area for outpatient department (OPD) and therapy section of the treatment centre.
- *Equipment and dispensing room*: For *panchakarma* treatment purposes, there should be a room/section where all things are kept systematically, so that they are easily accessible when required. Equipment required are detailed under separate section.
- Therapy Rooms:
  - *For Poorvakarma–Minimum two*: One each for different gender and can be extended in multiples of two or as per the requirement/ area available of size 12' × 12'. They are utilized for simple procedures like *abhyanga, pinda sveda, shirodhara*, etc.
  - *For pradhana karma*: Two/Four rooms with attached toilets—for *vamana, virechana, vasti, nasya* and *raktamokshana*. However, in case of space constraints, a big room can be properly equipped to cater to the different needs of each therapy.
- *Doctor's room*: One for OPD section and one for therapy section.
- *Kitchen*: One for proper preparation of different decoctions and others medicinal requirements of different therapies as discussed in separate chapters.

## *Equipment(s) Required*

- *Therapy tables*: There are different types of therapy tables available for different needs of a treatment centre which are named as:
  - *Abhyanga table* ***(Fig. 1.1)***: It can serve to treatments such as *abhyanga, pinda sveda, sthanik vasti,* etc. where no recollection of oils is required.
  - *Shirodhara table* ***(Fig. 1.2)***: Name of this table explains its uses. Used for various types of *shirodhara* and allied procedures in which recollection of oils/medicines is done only from one end of the table along with the procedures which can be performed on *abhyanga* table.
  - *Droni* ***(Fig. 1.3)***: While supporting all the functions of the first two tables, it also supports pizzichil and similar treatments in which recollection from both ends of the table is required.

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**Figure 1.1:** *Abhyanga* table

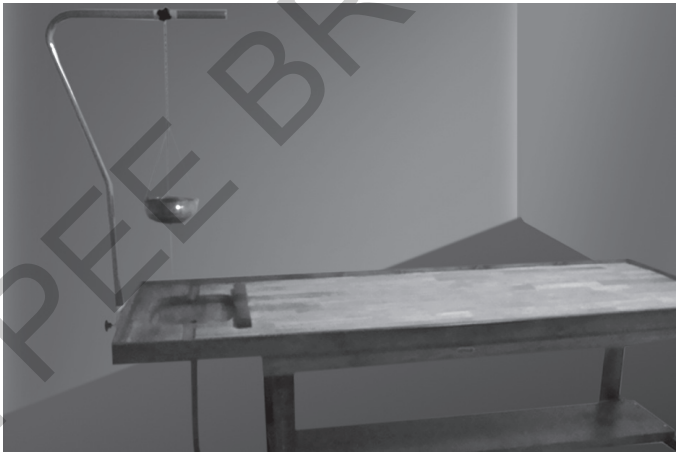

**Figure 1.2:** *Shirodhara* table

– *Multipurpose table* ***(Figs 1.4 and 1.5)***: Some of the states have developed designs in which many types of treatments can be performed like *bhaya snehana* procedures along with *shirodhara* and *vashpa sveda*.

*Note:* Requirement of the number of tables in a treatment centre will vary according to the number of rooms available for each section.

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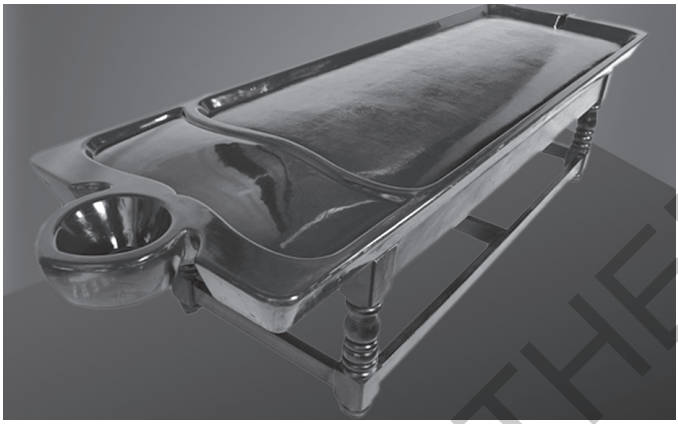

**Figure 1.3:** *Droni*

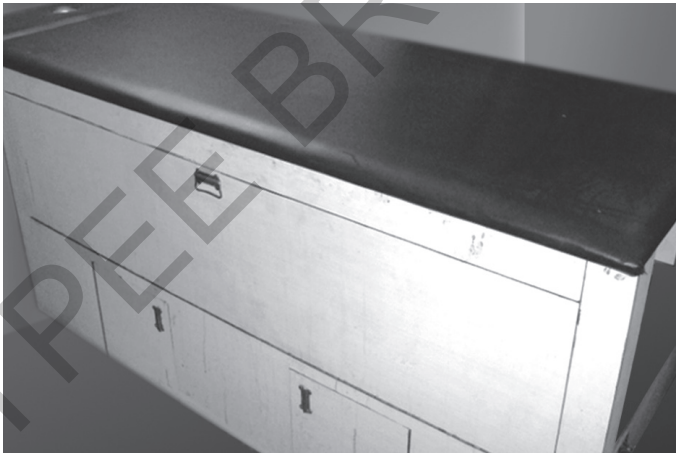

**Figure 1.4:** Multipurpose table—closed view

- *Sarvanga vashpa svedana yantra (whole body steam chamber/box)*: To give whole body steam. These are of two types—sitting type **(Fig. 1.6)** and laying down type **(Fig. 1.7)** can be chosen according to the need of the patient.
- *Nadi svedana yantra **(Fig. 1.8)***: To give localized steam.

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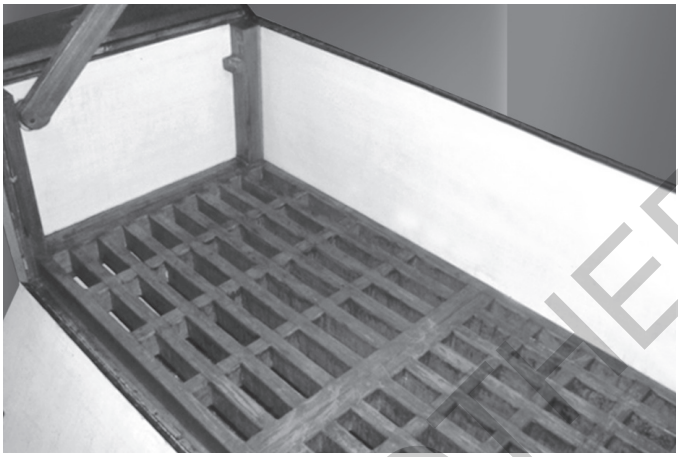

**Figure 1.5:** Multipurpose table—open

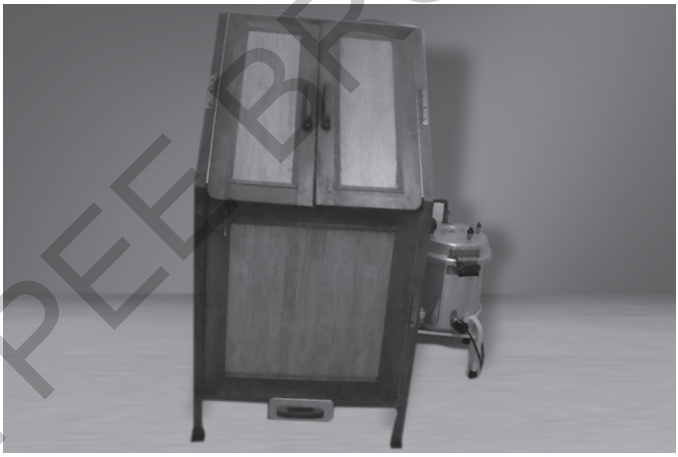

**Figure 1.6:** *Svedana yantra*—sitting type

- *Steam generators*: Cookers for steam preparation—electric steam generators can be used to serve the purpose of *vashpa svedana*. Alternatively aluminum cookers of size 5 L and above may be used to generate steam.
- *Shirodhara stands* are of three types—table mounted **(Fig. 1.9)**, wall mounted **(Fig. 1.10)** and independent stands **(Fig. 1.11)**. The number and type can be decided according to the space and infrastructure.

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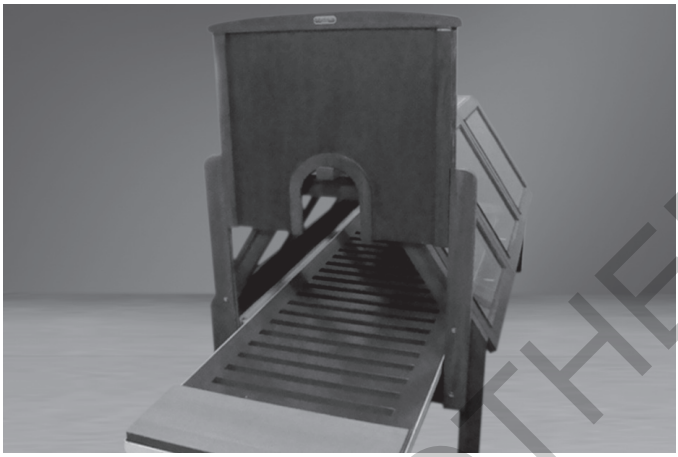

**Figure 1.7:** *Svedana yantra*—laying down type

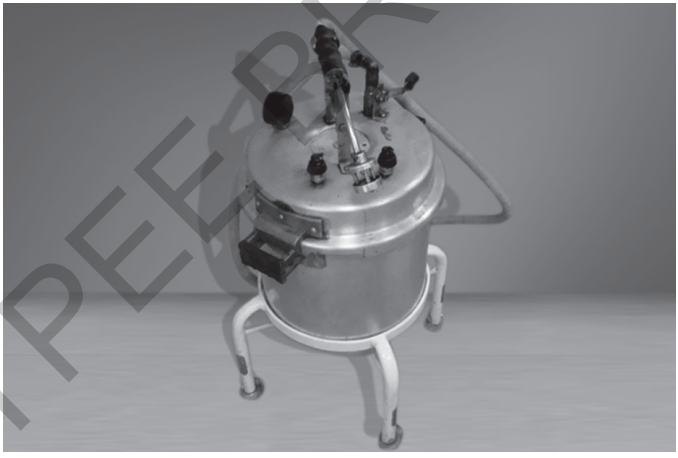

**Figure 1.8:** *Nadi svedana yantra*

- *Vamana chair/peeth* ***(Fig. 1.12)***: A knee-high chair with provision of equipment to collect the material of vomitus should be available in *vamana* room.
- *Virechana (Purgation) chair*: It can be placed in toilets or European seats can be used in their absence.

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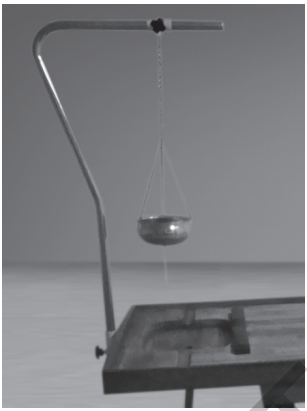

**Figure 1.9:** *Shirodhara* stand—table mounted

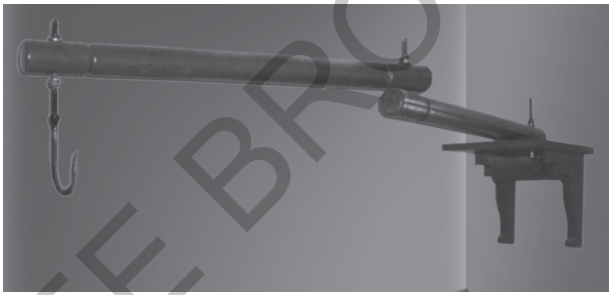

**Figure 1.10:** *Shirodhara* stand—wall mounted



**Figure 1.11:** *Shirodhara* stand—independent unit

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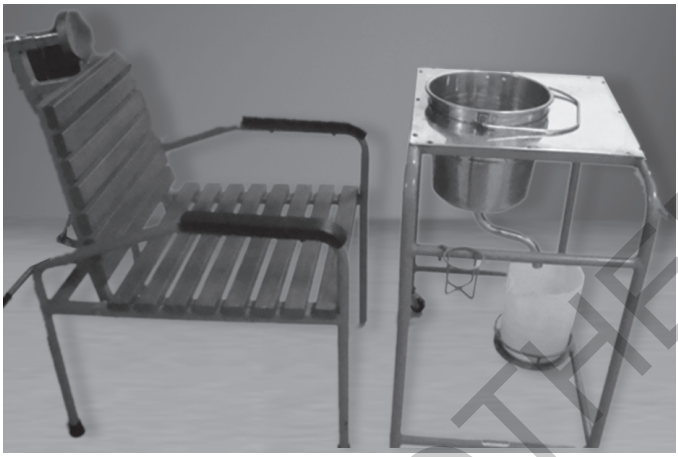

**Figure 1.12:** *Vamana peeth*



**Figure 1.13:** *Avagaha yantra*

- *Vasti yantra (Enema equipment/enema can/syringes)*: At least 4 sets with simple rubber catheters in sufficient quantity.
- *Avagaha sveda yantra* ***(Fig. 1.13)***: Tub bath—one for the purpose of *avagahana*.
- *Shirovasti cap* ***(Fig. 1.14)***: One with a knee high armed chair and stepping stool should be available to perform shirovasti.
- *Shirodhara yantra/patra* ***(Figs 1.15A and B)***: These are made of different designs and metals. Should be arranged according to the number of tables supporting *shirodhara*.

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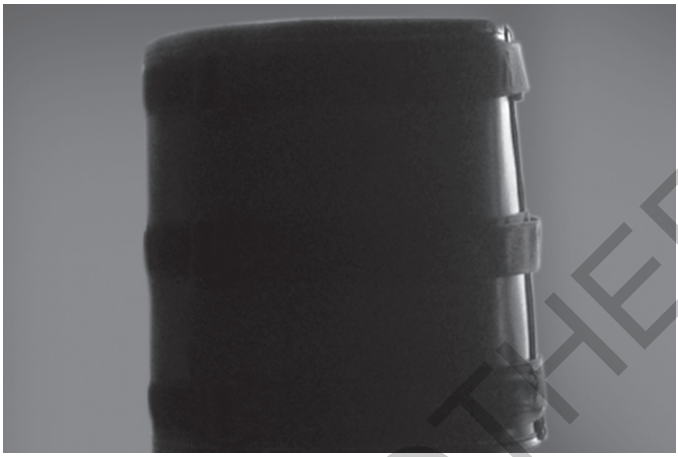

**Figure 1.14:** *Shirovasti* cap




**Figures 1.15A and B:** *Shirodhara yantra*

- *Nasya peeth:* One—it helps in providing proper position to the patients when administering *nasya*. However, with proper positioning, *abhyanga* table too can be used to administer nasya.
- Other equipment like storage containers, aprons, disposable gloves, gas stoves, heatres, hot plates, bowls and spoons, etc. should be available in sufficient numbers.
- For *raktamokashana*—kidney tray, syringes, cotton and gauge pieces, etc. should be stored in sufficient quantities.

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A Handbook on
Practical Approach to

# Panchakarma
## (Poorvakarma)

### *Salient Features*

- Describes the practical aspects of various Panchakarma procedures, which are being routinely carried out in various hospitals and clinics offering Panchakarma procedures.
- Simplifies the traditional knowledge and also gives an insight into various medicines being used in the field of Panchakarma.
- Procedures have been divided into *Trividha Karma*.
- Useful to all the people involved in providing Panchakarma care right from the physicians to the technicians and the supporting staff as well.



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