



REVIEW ARTICLE

## Exploring the Methods and Benefits of Rookshana: A Review

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### Abstract

*Rookshana* (dehydrating/drying therapy) is one of the six treatment modalities of Ayurveda (*Shadvidha Upakrama*). *Rookshana* is a therapy which produces dryness, roughness, non-sliminess in the body or body parts. *Rookshana* can be imparted internally through diet and drugs and externally using therapies like *Rooksha Swedana*, *Udvartana* and *Lepa*. Furthermore, depending on the individual's *Dosha* status and the choice of drugs, *Rookshana* can also be achieved through Panchakarma procedures such as *Nasya*, *Vasti*, and *Virechana*. *Rookshana* is an important Ayurvedic modality that serves as a preparatory therapy for *Snehanapana*, a prophylactic therapy to prevent and manage postoperative complications, and as a standalone or initial line of treatment for a variety of diseases. This review provides a comprehensive overview of various *Rookshana* methods and their clinical utility.

### Introduction

#### Background and context of *Rookshana*

*Rookshana* (dehydrating/drying therapy) is among the six modalities of treatment (*Shadvidha Upakrama*) in Ayurveda.<sup>1,2</sup> Other five Ayurvedic treatment modalities are *Langhana* (depleting therapy), *Brimhana* (nourishing therapy), *Snehana* (oleation), *Swedana* (sudation) and *Stambhana* (astriction therapy). Based on their properties and effects on the body, these six modalities of treatment can be merged into two categories, namely *Langhana* and *Brimhana*.<sup>3</sup> *Langhana* includes *Rookshana* and *Swedana* and *Brimhana* includes *Snehana* and *Stambhana*. In Ayurveda, *Rookshana* is utilised as a preparatory process for *Snehapana* (internal administration of fats), prevent and manage postoperative complications, and as a standalone or initial line of treatment to various diseases.

#### Objective and scope of the review

This review provides a comprehensive overview of various methods of *Rookshana* and their clinical utility. To gather relevant information for our review, we conducted a thorough literature search that included various

classical Ayurvedic texts such as Charaka Samhita (2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE), Sushruta Samhita (6<sup>th</sup> century BCE) and Ashtanga Hrudaya (7<sup>th</sup> century AD) among others, as well as electronic databases like PubMed and other relevant sources.

### Etiology, Properties and Methods of Rookshana

#### Etiology and properties of Rookshana

The word *Rooksha* has different meanings viz. rough, dry, arid, parched, and harsh.<sup>4</sup> *Rookshana* is a therapy which produces dryness, roughness, non-sliminess in the body or body parts. Hemadri, commentator of Astangha Hrudaya, defines *Rookshana* as a therapy that has a capacity for *Shoshana* (absorption of liquid/fat fraction in body).<sup>5</sup> Chakrapani Datta, commentator of Charaka Samhita, has mentioned that *Rookshana* is achieved by the *Sneha Abhava* (absence of fats) in the body.<sup>6</sup> Bhavaprakasha (16<sup>th</sup> century AD) suggests that *Rooksha* increases *Vata* exceedingly and mitigates the *Kapha*.<sup>7</sup>

According to Vagbhata, *Rookshana* is a type of *Langhana*. *Rooksha Dravyas* are mainly predominant of *Prithivi*, *Akasha* and *Agni Mahabhuta* whereas *Langhana Dravyas* are mainly predominant of *Vayu*, *Akasha* and *Agni Mahabhuta*.<sup>8,9</sup> *Rookshana* is absence of *Snehana*, but *Langhana* is the absence of *Gourava* (heaviness). *Rookshana* also has properties opposite to those of *Snehana*. The properties of *Rooksha Dravyas* are *Laghu* (Light), *Ushna* (Hot), *Tikshna* (Sharp), *Vishada* (Non-slimy or clear), *Khara* (Coarse), *Sthira* (Stable or immobile), *Kathina* (Hard) while the properties of *Sneha Dravyas* are *Guru* (Heavy), *Sheeta* (Cold), *Sara* (Mobile), *Manda* (Sluggish), *Sukshma* (Minute), *Mrudu* (Soft), *Drava* (liquid).<sup>10</sup> Therefore, any treatment that does not make use of *Sneha* or aims to decrease the amount of *Sneha* present in the body is also called as *Rookshana*.

#### Methods and Techniques of Rookshana

*Rookshana* can be performed through internal and external methods. Regular use of substances having *Katu* (pungent), *Tikta* (bitter) and *Kashaya* (astringent) tastes, use of oilcakes of mustard and sesame, buttermilk, honey induces *Rookshana*.<sup>11</sup> Acharya Charaka has mentioned that food prepared from boiled *Uddalaka* (a millet variety - *Pennisetum glaucum*) is best for attaining *Rookshana*.<sup>12</sup> Vagbhata has also recommended some of the diets and drugs having *Rookshana* property such as *Takrarista* (beverage prepared with buttermilk), *Khala* (a prepared food item), *Uddala* (a millet variety - *Pennisetum glaucum*), *Yava* (Barley - *Hordeum vulgare*), *Samyaka* (Little millet - *Panicum sumatrense*), *Kodrava* (Kodo millet - *Paspalum*

*scrobiculatum*), *Pippali* (*Piper longum*), *Triphala* (fruits of *Terminalia chebula*, *Emblica officinalis*, *Terminalia bellerica* and *Belleric myrobalan*), honey, *Pathya* (*Terminalia chebula*), and *Guggulu* (resin of *Commiphora mukul*).<sup>13</sup>

*Rookshana* can be imparted internally through drugs in the form of *Kashaya* (decoction), *Arishta* (fermented liquids), *Churna* (powdered drugs) and externally using therapies such as *Rooksha Swedana* (non-unctuous sudation) viz. *Rooksha Pinda Sweda* (sudation through poultice), *Rooksha Parisekha Sweda* (sudation by pouring medicated liquids over the body), *Udvartana* (dry massage with powders) and *Lepa* (application of medicated paste). Furthermore, depending on the individual's *Dosha* status and the choice of drugs, *Rookshana* can also be achieved through Panchakarma procedures such as *Nasya* (Errhine), *Vasti* (Enema), and *Virechana* (Purgation). Methods of executing *Rookshana* through external and internal methods are explained in Table 1.

Table 1 : Various methods and techniques of Rookshana

External Methods
<p><b>Rooksha Swedana (Non-unctuous Sudation):</b> <i>Rooksha Pinda Sweda</i> – <i>Valuka Sweda</i>, <i>Ishtika Choorna Pinda Sweda</i>, <i>Churna Pinda Sweda</i>, <i>Kadikizhi</i>, <i>Kulatha Kareesha Bhasma Pinda Sweda</i>, etc.; <i>Rooksha Parisekha Sweda</i> – <i>Kashayadhara</i>, <i>Dhanyamladhara</i>, etc.</p> <p><i>Udvartana</i>, <i>Rooksha Lepa</i> (<i>Kottamchukadi Churna</i>, etc.), <i>Vrana Pidan</i>, <i>Lekhana Anjana</i> (Collyrium), <i>Lekhana Putapaka</i>, <i>Pratisarana</i>, <i>Avagundan</i>, <i>Vidakala</i>, <i>Netrasek</i>, <i>Yoni Kshalanam</i> (Vaginal douche), <i>Rooksha Avagaha</i> (<i>Triphala Kashaya</i>, etc.), <i>Rooksha Thalam</i> (<i>Rasnadi Churna</i>, etc.), <i>Thalapothishil</i> (Medicated paste on head)</p>
Internal Methods
<p><b>Diets:</b> <i>Katu</i>, <i>Tikta</i>, <i>Kashaya Rasa</i>, Mustard and Sesame oilcakes, <i>Takra</i> (Buttermilk), <i>Madhu</i> (Honey), <i>Ushna Jala</i> (Hot water), <i>Tamboola</i>, <i>Khala</i>, <i>Uddala</i>, <i>Syamaka</i>, <i>Kodrava</i>, <i>Sarshapa</i>, <i>Pinyaka</i>, <i>Yava</i>, <i>Rookshanartha Yavagu</i></p> <p><b>Drugs:</b> <i>Kashaya</i> – <i>Amritotharam</i>; <i>Asava Arishta</i> – <i>Takrarishta</i>; <i>Churna</i> – <i>Triphala</i>; Single drugs like <i>Guggulu</i>, <i>Pippali</i>, <i>Pathya</i>, etc.</p> <p><b>Panchakarma:</b> <i>Vasti</i> – <i>Lekhana vasti</i>, <i>Churna Vasti</i>, <i>Kshara Vasti</i>, <i>Niruha Vasti</i> containing <i>Gomutra</i>, <i>Madhu</i>, <i>Kshara</i>, <i>Dhanyamla</i>, <i>Ushakadi Gana</i> drugs; <i>Nasya</i> – <i>Churna Nasya</i> (<i>Vacha Churna</i>, etc.), <i>Arka Nasya</i> (<i>Sigru Arka</i>, etc.), <i>Swarasa Nasya</i> (<i>Durwa Swarasa</i>, etc.); <i>Virechana</i> – <i>Rooksha Virechana</i> (<i>Avipatthy Churna</i>, etc.)</p>
Habits
<p><i>Atapa Sevana</i> (Sun bathing), <i>Vyayama</i> (Exercise), <i>Nithya Madyapana</i> (Regular intake of alcohol), <i>Vyavaya</i> (Sexual intercourse), <i>Chinta</i> (Mental stress), <i>Ratrijagarana</i> (Awakening at night), <i>Gandusha</i>, etc.</p>

## Clinical significance of *Rookshana* in Ayurveda

### *Rookshana* as a preparatory procedure

*Vamana* (regulated emesis) or *Virechana* (regulated purgation) should be preceded by *Snehapana* (internal administration of fats) for *Dosha Utkleshana* (excitement of *Doshas*).<sup>14</sup> However, those who are *Mamsala* (stout), *Medura* (obese), *Bhurisleshmala* (with *Kapha* predominance), *Vishamagni* (unpredictable digestion, *Agni* = digestive capacity), who habitually ingest high-fat diets are recommended to undergo *Rookshana* before *Snehapana*. These are cohorts suffering from lifestyle related disorders and metabolic syndrome. *Rookshana* as a preparatory process prevents complications and helps in the proper elimination of the vitiated *Doshas* from the body without causing habituation of oleating substances.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, *Rookshana* provides better action and bioavailability of subsequent therapies.<sup>16</sup>

### *Rookshana* as prophylaxis and management of postoperative complications

*Rookshana* can be adopted to prevent and manage *Sneha Vyapath* (complications during and after *Snehapana*).<sup>17</sup> *Snehapana* in inappropriate doses leads to complications such as *Sopha* (edema), *Arsha* (piles), *Tandra* (lethargy), *Stambha* (akinesia), *Visamjnata* (unconsciousness), *Kandu* (pruritus), *Kustha* (skin diseases), *Jwara* (fever), *Utklesha* (excess secretions), *Shula* (abdominal pain), *Anaha* (tympanites), *Bhrama* (giddiness), etc.<sup>18</sup>

Higher doses of *Snehapana* cause pallor, heaviness, and stiffness in the body, secretions from the nose, mouth, and anus, undigested food in the stool, drowsiness, anorexia, nausea.<sup>19</sup> Symptoms such as secretions from the nose, mouth, and anus indicate an increase in *Kleda*, which can be corrected using *Rookshana*. Therefore, when complications arise due to inappropriate and higher doses of *Snehapana*, appropriate method of *Rookshana* can be used to mitigate them. For example, at one instance, Acharya Charaka recommends *Rooksha Virechana* (Purgation with *Rooksha* drugs) in the case of excessive oleation.<sup>20</sup>

*Rookshana* is also used to treat some of the complications associated with Panchakarma procedures, such as *Vamana*, *Virechana*, and *Vasti*. *Rooksha Sweda* is recommended for the treatment of *Klama* (fatigue without exertion), which can occur as a complication of *Vasti*.<sup>21</sup> To manage complications in *Anuvasana Vasti*, administration of *Vasti* with *Rooksha* substances such as *Gomutra* (cow's urine), *Sura* (alcohol), *Kashaya*, *Katu*, *Tikshna* and *Ushna* substances has been recommended.<sup>22</sup> *Rookshana* is also

indicated in *Parikartika* (fissure in ano) presenting with *Ama Dosha* (*Ama* = residual metabolites or endogenous toxins), which could arise due to improper administration of *Virechana*.<sup>23</sup>

### *Rookshana* as the standalone or initial line of treatment

Acharya Charaka has recommended that diseases caused due to *Abhishyandha* (excessive secretions from channels due to vitiation of *Kapha* and *Pitta*), diseases with greater morbidity of *Doshas*, diseases pertaining to *Marma* (Vital points) and *Urusthambha* (thigh stiffness) should be treated with *Rookshana* therapy.<sup>24</sup> Some conditions and diseases in which *Rookshana* is indicated as the standalone or initial line of treatment is summarised in the Figure 1.

Kapha-Medo Avarana	Diseases in Marma points
Presence of Ama	Urustambha
Conditions due to excess Kleda formation	Amavata, Amasayagata Vata
Abhishyandha	Jwara, Prameha, Kustha, Sopha, Udara, Arsha, Grahani, Pandu, Visarpa, Vata-Kaphaj Gridhrasi

**Figure 1:** Conditions and diseases in which *Rookshana* is indicated as the standalone or initial line of treatment.

In the case of *Urusthambha*, the only possible treatment is *Rookshana*.<sup>25</sup> In *Urustambha*, *Kapha* with its *Sthira* (stable) and *Sheeta* (cold) properties associated with *Meda Dhatu* subdues *Vata* and causes immobility of *Uru* (thighs). The properties of the *Dosha* in *Urusthambha* also makes it difficult for Panchakarma therapy like *Vamana*, *Virechana* or *Vasti* to remove it out from the body. The *Vata* and *Kapha Dosha* are stagnant in the thighs due to the *Paichhilyam* (adherence) produced by the obstruction of *Ama* and *Meda*. Panchakarma therapy is, however, prescribed only when *Doshas* are in *Upasthitha* condition (moving to the nearest external orifices). *Rookshana* is therefore given prime importance in *Urustambha* to eliminate *Ama* and *Kapha Dosha*. For example, *Rooksha Sweda* (non-unctuous sudation) and *Lepa* (medicated paste) can be used externally in this disease<sup>26, 27</sup>.

Similarly, in *Aamavata*, *Rookshana* through *Valuka Sweda* (sand sudation) and *Rooksha Pinda Sweda* (non-unctuous poultices) is recommended as the initial

treatment.<sup>28</sup> *Aamavata* is a disease in which *Vata* and *Ama* are simultaneously vitiated in the *Trika Sandhi* (sacrum) at the initial stage and causes stiffness in the whole body. Other symptoms of *Aamavata* include pain in the body, heaviness, fever, anorexia, thirst, indigestion, and feeling of hollowness in the limbs. *Ama* is *Guru* (heavy), *Snigdha* (oily) and *Sthira* (stable) in nature, and *Valuka Sweda* has opposite properties like *Rooksha* (dry), and *Ushna* (hot). The *Ushna* and *Rooksha Guna* of *Valuka Sweda* help in the pacification of the *Ama*. *Ushna Guna* also relieves the obstruction in the channels through *Srotomukh Vishodhana* (clearing the orifices of channels) which results in increased circulation and reduction in *Sandhi Shoola* (pain in joints) and *Sandhi Sotha* (swelling in joints).<sup>29</sup>

In case of *Vata-Kaphaja* type of *Gridhrasi* (Sciatica), the initial line of treatment is to remove the *Kapha Anubandhatva* (association of *Kapha Dosha* with the *Vata Dosha*). *Rooksha* treatment along with *Ushna Virya* (hot potency) treatment will help break the association. *Vata-Kaphaja Gridhrasi* presents with symptoms such as *Stambha* (stiffness), *Ruk* (ache) and *Toda* (pricking pain) in gluteal region, hip and posterior aspect of thigh, knee, calf and soles, *Spandana* (twitching) infrequently, *Tandra* (fatigue), *Gaurava* (heaviness) and *Aruchi* (anorexia).<sup>30</sup> In the case of *Vata-Kaphaja Gridhrasi*, *Rookshana* helps remove *Kapha Anubandha* (associated *Kapha Dosha*) and causes *Agni Deepana*, preparing the patient for subsequent therapies for *Kevala Vataja* such as *Snehana*. Thus, *Rookshana* therapy like *Rooksha Sweda* (for example, *Churna Pinda Sweda*) can be an initial treatment option in case of *Vata-Kaphaja Gridhrasi*. Acharya *Vangasena* has also indicated *Karshana* and *Rookshana* in the management of *Gridhrasi*.<sup>31</sup>

### Rookshana in Ama Avastha, Avarana and Kleda conditions

*Rookshana* also serves the purpose of transforming the *Ama Avastha* (state of *Ama*) in the body into the *Nirama Avastha* (absence of *Ama*).<sup>32</sup> Acharya *Hemadri* opines that *Pachana* (Digestion of *Ama*) has *Rookshana* action as well.<sup>33</sup> *Dalhana*, the commentator of *Sushruta Samhita*, has also recommended *Rooksha Sweda* in *Ama Avastha*.<sup>34</sup> *Rookshana* is helpful in correcting the *Agni* especially in conditions such as *Mamsala* (stout), *Medura* (obese), *Bhurisleshmala* (with *Kapha* predominance), *Vishamagni* (unpredictable digestion) and who habitually ingest high-fat diets. *Rookshana* stimulates the *Samana Vayu* which is located proximate to *Jatharagni* (core of digestive system) and increases the production of *Pachaka Pitta* which is responsible for secreting digestive enzymes. The normal functioning of *Pachaka Pitta* is dependent upon the

adequacy of *Samana Vayu*. Through internal methods, *Rookshana* creates an optimal environment for *Pachaka Pitta* to function properly. It removes excessive *Dravata* or *Snigdhatva* properties that could obstruct the correct operation of *Pachaka Pitta*.<sup>35</sup> As a result, *Pachaka Pitta* can effectively carry out *Ama Pachana*. This is also why *Rookshana* is performed as a preparatory procedure before *Snehapana*. The proposed mode of action of *Rookshana* for *Ama Pachana* through internal methods is given in Figure 2.

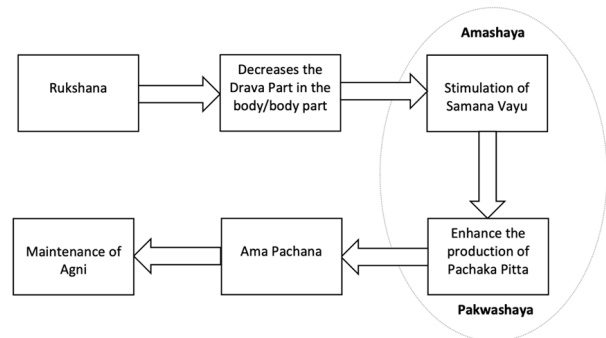


Figure 2: Proposed mode of action of *Rookshana* for *Ama Pachana* through internal methods

*Rookshana* is also the preferred approach to remove *Avarana* (obstruction by covering) caused by *Kapha* and *Meda*.<sup>36</sup> The *Gunas* of *Rooksha Dravyas* such as *Laghu*, *Ruksha*, *Ushna*, *Teekshna*, *Vishada*, *Khara*, and *Kathina* are attributed to subdue *Kapha* and *Medo Dhatu Dushti*.<sup>37</sup> In metabolic disorders such as *Sthaulya* (obesity) and *Prameha* (diabetes), *Rookshana* like *Udvarttana* (smearing or massaging powdered drugs) is mandatory as it helps to liquify *Kapha* and *Meda*.<sup>38</sup> Acharya *Vagbhata* has also indicated *Udvarttana* in all cases of *Prameha* (diabetes).<sup>39</sup> Acharya *Charaka* has emphasised on the consumption of various recipes made up of *Yava* (Barley), a *Rooksha* dietary, in the management of *Prameha*.<sup>40</sup> Some case reports have also shown the beneficial effects of *Rookshana* in reducing blood sugar and lipid levels.<sup>41, 42</sup>

Similarly, *Rookshana* is also equally important in conditions caused by excess *Kleda* (water elementary principle). Optimum amount of *Kleda* is required for all body functioning from digestion to maintaining tissue integrity. Excessive *Kleda* interferes with the functioning of *Pachaka Pitta* and also results in the loss of tissue integrity. For example, in the case of *Vicharchika* type of *Kustha* (Weeping eczema), *Rookshana* like *Kashaya Dhara* can be used to reduce pus discharge, which is a sign of *Kleda*.<sup>43</sup> Similarly, for the treatment of external lesions in *Visarpa* (acute spreading erysepals), repeated use of *Lepa* (application of medicated paste) has been recommended.<sup>44</sup>

Predominantly in *Kaphaja* type of *Visarpa*, *Rooksha* measures are indicated. In *Granthi Visarpa*, where *Kapha* and *Vata* is dominant, the treatment usually begins with *Rookshana* followed by *Langhana* and other measures.<sup>45</sup> The role of *Rookshana* therapies in *Visarpa* is *Kleda Shoshana*.

### Evaluation and Assessment of *Rookshana*

Acharya Charaka and Vagbhata has stated signs of proper *Rookshana* to be similar as signs of proper *Langhana*.<sup>46,47</sup> *Rookshana* and *Langhana* also share similar *Gunas* (properties). Therefore, a person who has properly performed *Rookshana* has proper elimination of flatus, urine, and faeces, feeling of lightness in body, cleansing of the heart, eructation, throat and mouth, the disappearance of drowsiness and exhaustion, proper functioning of sense organs, the appearance of perspiration and reappearance of taste, hunger, and thirst, control of the respective diseases, feeling of well-being and enthusiasm.<sup>48</sup>

Similarly, in the event of excessive *Rookshana*, the person will experience *Parva Bheda* (joint pains), *Asthi Bheda* (joint pain), *Anga Marda* (body aches), pain in *Vasti* (urinary bladder), *Hridaya* (cardiac region), *Murdha* (head), *Jangha* (calf muscle), *Uru* (thigh), *Trika* (sacrum) and *Parsava* (lateral aspect of thorax), *Kasa* (dry cough), *Mukha Shosha* (dry mouth), *Kshuth Pranasha* (complete loss of hunger), *Aruchi* (anorexia), *Agni Bala Nasha* (weak digestive capacity), *Trishna* (excess thirst), *Shrotha Netra Daurbalya* (weakness in the sense of hearing and vision), *Mana Sambrama* (mental confusion), *Urdva Vata* (frequent eructation), *Tama* (fainting), *Deha Bala Nasha* (loss of strength), *Tandra* (fatigue), *Klama* (exhaustion), *Swara Kshaya* (loss of voice), decrease in *Sneha* (lubricity), *Nidra* (sleep), *Drik* (power of vision), *Srotra* (power of audition), *Sukla* (virility) and *Ojas* (vitality) and obstruction of *Vita* (faeces) and *Mutra* (urine).<sup>49,50</sup> These signs show that excessive *Rookshana* can cause increase in the *Vata Dosha*, decrease in the *Agni*, *Snigdhatva* and *Kleda* of the body.<sup>51</sup>

### Conclusion and Future Directions

*Rookshana* is an important modality of Ayurvedic treatment. It serves as a preparatory process for *Snehapana*, prophylaxis, and treatment for postoperative complications, and as a standalone or initial line of treatment of various diseases. *Rookshana* aims to address pathological entities such as *Amavastha*, *Kleda Vriddhi*, *Avarana* of *Kapha* and *Meda*, and *Kapha Anubandhatva* and creates an optimal environment for succeeding procedures. However, the mechanism of action of *Rookshana* and its assessments are not well-defined or standardized. More

research is warranted to scientifically interpret the endpoints of *Rookshana* and establish the clinical benefits of this procedure.

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