Shodhana Snehapana: A Review

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Abstract

Snehapana is internal administration of Sneha (medicated or non-medicated lipid substance) with definite therapeutic aim. Apart from nutritive value, it gains importance even in therapeutic application especially in Ayurveda. Panchakarma, the unique treatment modality of Ayurveda, is basically designed to purify the body of human being by detoxification of all systems. Snehana therapy is administered to a person in two different ways, external such as Abhyanga, Unmardana, Parisheka, Janu Basti, Kati Basti etc. Internal application has been divided into three varieties on the basis of their effect viz., Brihana, Shamana and Shodhana (detoxification therapy). Present study is critical analysis of role of Snehapana as a prerequisite to Shodhana karma only and it shall be further postulated the mechanism of Snehapana in augmentation of Shodhana karma without disturbing the body functions.

Key words: Shodhana Snehapana, Panchakarma

Introduction

Amongst Panchakarma, Snehana karma is regarded as the most important preparatory measure before Shodhana therapy like Vamana and Virechana. As per the literature found in Charaka Samhita, Snehana karma has been included as one of the Shadvidhakramas\(^1\). In the treatment regimen, Shodhana therapies are major procedures or Pradhana karma. They are preceded by certain preparatory procedures known as Purva Karma and followed by certain recovery procedures known as Paschat Karma. The entire Shodhana procedure depends upon the proper mobilization of Doshas from the channels, which is achieved with the help of Snehana and Swedana.

Out of these two, the Snehana is a major procedure which leads and decides the whole outcome of Shodhana procedure. It is the first and foremost procedure of Panchakarma. Though it is not included in Panchakarma, yet without this procedure, any therapy cannot be performed.

Shodhana Snehapana – It is a pre-operative procedure for Shodhana Chikitsa where Sneha dravya (medicated fat) is administered for attainment of Upasthita Dosha Avastha and further eases elimination of the vitiated doshas. Here, Upasthita Dosha refers to presence of Dosha in the Koshtha for expulsion. The proper mobilization of dosha from Shakha to Koshtha is achieved by the action of Snehana and Swedana.
SNEHA- It is derived from ‘Snihdhatu’ and has two meanings- ‘Snih-pretau’-means to render affection. ‘Snih-snehane’-means to render lubrication.

The term sneha implies to a substance that brings softness, oiliness in the body. Acharya Charaka defines Snehana as the procedure by which Snigdhata, Vishyandana, Mardavata and Kledana are produced in the body [2].

PROPERTIES OF SNEHA DRAVYA

All Sneha dravya have Prithvi and Jala Mahabhuta. The properties of Sneha dravya’s are like Sukshma, Sara, Snigdha, Drava, Picchila, Guru, Shita, Manda and Mridu [3].

Table No. 1: Showing Guna, Bhoutika Sanghatana & Karmukata of Sneha Dravys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guna</th>
<th>Dominant Mahabhutha</th>
<th>Karmukata</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Picchila</td>
<td>Prithvi</td>
<td>Apya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sukshma</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snigdha</td>
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<td>+++</td>
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<td>Drava</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guru</td>
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<td>Mridu</td>
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By the above table it can be concluded that Sneha dravyas are predominantly Apya mahabhuta pradhan.

Accha Sneha- Oral administration of the ghee or other fat substances alone is called as Accha Sneha[4] In this procedure of Snehana, fat substances are not given in combination with other substances e.g. foods. Dalhana opines that, Kevala sneha is the synonym of Accha sneha, which means administration of processed or unprocessed sneha alone, without mixing with other liquids[5]. This method of Snehana is most ideal in patients who are capable of digesting the fat substances properly. It is always preferred in moderate climatic conditions. Depending upon the purpose of Snehapana, it is categorised into two as Shodhana Snehapana and Shamana Snehapana.

Shodhana Sneha- When the Snehapana is carried out as preliminary procedure during the Shodhana therapy (Vamana and Virechana) it is known as Shodhana Snehapana[6]. As a part of Shodhana procedure, the Snehapana is carried out to facilitate the mobilization of the Dosha from the site of its manifestation to the site of elimination i.e. koshtha. In this process, Utaklesha state of the dosha is achieved by the Snehapana. It is given early in the morning.

Shodhana procedure depends upon the proper mobilization of doshas from the channels, which is achieved with the help of Snehana and Swedana. The importance of sneha is quoted in samhita’s that, administration of Panchakarma without administering proper sneha may destroy the body as a dry wood breaks, if bent without smearing with oil[7]. It may act as Pradhana karma when administered to pacify dosha or mitigate the disease. It is a procedure which leads and decides the whole outcome of Shodhana therapy. It is the process of administering Sneha to achieve the desired effect in a precise duration prior to Vamana and Virechana Karma, with due consideration of dose, time, duration, etc. The aim of the Shodhana Snehapana is to prepare the body for Shodhana by bringing the doshas situated in peripheral tissues to the Koshtha, which are then easily expelled out just as Klishtha mala of any cloth is easily washed by water, once loosen from its site, in the similar way, mala are easily expelled out by Shodhana if we take them to Utaklisha stage by purvakarma i.e. Snehana and Swedana[8].

Discussion

While explaining the Snehana karma, Acharya Charaka states [9]

- **Snehoanilamhanti**- Sneha is having exactly opposite guna to Vatadosha, Sneha induces the
proper gati of vata. Vataniyagaha is one of the criteria mentioned by Charaka to bring dosha back to koshtha and therefore, it helps to bring the Shakhagata dosha to koshtha.

- **Mridakarotideham**- Sneha by virtue of its Snigdha, mridu qualities brings softness in Dosha sanghata, Srotas and Deha which helps in bringing doshas from koshtha to shakha.

- **Malanamvihantisangam-Mala Sanga** occurs due to Ruksata, Sneha decreases this Ruksata by its Snigha and Vishyanda properties

It is a well-known fact that the Doshas are present in and travel throughout the body having their own gati viz. Urdhva, Adha and Triyak etc[10]. However, in vyadhitavastha they travel from koshtha to shakha and do sthananshray in Srotasa having Kha vaigunya due to which roga is formed. Shodhana Chikitsa aims at expulsion of these vitiated doshas from the body from Urdhvanarga (inducing Vamana) or Adhomarga (inducing Virechana).

Doshas are brought back to Koshtha by Vriddhi (excessive increase of dosha), Vishyandana (liquefaction of dosha), paka (digestion of dosha), srotomukhavishodhana (cleaning and opening of channels) and vayunigrahat (controlling of vayu) which can be achieved by Snehana and Swedana Karmas[11]. Acharya Charaka gives simile that, as from a smooth container, contents easily separate without any effort, similarly Kaphadi Doshas get easily expelled out from well oeated body[12].

Sneha, by its Sukshma Guna and Kledana Karma, brings the Doshas present in the other margas to koshtha wherein Kledana Karma acts as a solvent of the morbid doshas. Here the fat-soluble impurities in the body get eliminated as Shodhana Dravya brings the Doshas to Koshtha for elimination.

Sinha Kaushal et al.concluded in their study that entire Procedure of Shodhana depends upon the proper mobilization of Dosha from the Shakha to koshtha which is achieved with the help of Snehana and Swedana. That makes changes in vitiated Doshas to mobilize them without trouble, and thus easily expelled from the body tissues without harming the body[13].

After ingestion Sneha by virtue of its properties, is absorbed from the gut and rapidly enters the micro channels (Sukshma Srotas) of the body and reach the remotest target area. After reaching the target area, it binds with the vitiated doshas (toxic elements/free radicals) and leads to Vriddhi which can also be understood by the fact that Sneha is hydrophilic, hence after appropriate oral ingestion of Sneha the cells of body become saturated with fats. Then the fat material is transported out of the cell to extra-cellular fluid by the process of osmosis. The levels of fatty acids increases in the blood resulting in the high plasma volume as there is a quantitative increase due to the aqueous properties of Sneha and liquefied metabolic waste brought from the tissues (mala). The equilibrium of the normal plasma level is maintained and so the extra amount of liquid reaches to the Koshtha (Gastro Intestinal Tract) to be expelled out of the body (Anupravannabhava)[14].

Vishyadana is vilayana or liquefication of doshas, which is achieved by snigdha, mridu and drava guna of sneha. By liquefying the doshas and dhatus it helps in bringing them to koshtha from shakha for their easy expulsion during shodhana process. Paka means the dosha which were initially sama in nature, achieved niramavastha and leads to abhaddhata or dislodgement of dosha from shakha and move towards koshtha[15]. Srotomukha vishodhana karma is achieved by Sukshma guna of sneha dravyas. It helps in removal of margavrodha and vayurnigrahana means pacification of aggravated vata which initially pushed the morbid doshas out of the koshtha, which in turns facilitates the natural return of the doshas to the koshtha.

When Snehapana is followed by swedana (Sudation) it furthers facilitates to bring back the Sneha bound doshas to the gut, where they can be easily removed out of the body by Shodhana karmas like vamana, virechana karma. It is further stressed that this ingestion of Sneha prior to Shodhana karma is not harmful to body in any way as whatever Sneha is ingested is extracted out of the body and is there is no cause of worry that it will cause hyperlipidimia, the fact which is favoured by several studies. It is also remarkable that Sneha bound doshas not only travel to gut but also are discharged out of the body through micro sweat channels. The guidelines mentioned in the classics should be taken into proper consideration for proper snehapana, otherwise complications may occur which may put the life into danger.

Patil et al. in their study concluded that oral ingestion of lipids does not cause rise in the level of lipids rather it facilitates in bringing the increased level lipids to normal; even if the lipid levels increase during oral ingestion of lipids (Snehapana) it is transient and comes to normal after purification (Samyaka Shodhana)[16].

When emetics or purgatives are administered, these increased amounts of the body fluids are evacuated by which the vitiated dosha (humours) and metabolic waste (mala) are also expelled out resulting in the radical cure of the disease.
Dr. Aparna Bagul concluded in their study that the rise in lipids is transient and comes to normal after Samyaka shodhana. Shodhanartha Snehana is safer, if proper Vamana and Sansarjana Krama are performed afterwards and at the end of therapy there is improvement in the serum lipid levels of patients even after administration of lipids in increasing order[17].

Conclusion

After critical review and analysis of the available ancient literature and various clinical studies, it can be speculated and affirmed that Shodhana Snehapana (internal oleation) certainly helps in detoxification of the body by facilitating all the prerequisites of dosha gati. It is also submitted that this short duration ingestion of sneha prior to shodhana karma does not harm the body in any way viz fear of hyperlipidimia.

References


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