



Review Article

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CONCEPTUAL AND COMPARATIVE STUDY ON MECHANISM AND SIGNIFICANCE OF SNEHANA KARMA: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is one of the most ancient systems of life, health and cure whose antiquity goes back to Vedas. It is a highly evolved and categorized system of life and health science based on its unique original concepts and fundamental principles, among the various concepts the Snehana concepts is explained by our great acharyas in various Samhitas, as they had explained about Sarpi, Taila, Vasa and Majja are the four basic snehas which obtained from plant and animals sources. These snehas are the fatty acids and contains the active medicaments. It can be used internally either in form of Nasya, Basti, Pana and externally for Abhyanga. As Sneha is composed of basic elements Panchamahabhutas Prithvi and Jala, it has qualities like guru, sheeta, sara, snigdha, manda, sukshma and mridu, produces unctuousness, softness, moisture, and also increased secretions in body, on internal intake sneha acts as solvent and increases apyamsha (liquid content) of the body which will ultimately leads to aggravation of doshas and helps for proper removal of doshas, whereas externally it helps in increasing lymph flow in the body at the marma sthanas (vital points), which nourishes the whole body. This also helps in relieving the mental illness like depression, hallucinations, headache, anxiety, irritability etc. Hence in the present paper an attempt is made to compile the different references of various sneha Kalpanas explained by our acharyas and tried to critically explain their probable mode of action when taken internally as well as externally.

Keywords: Snehana, Sarpi, Taila, Vasa, Majja, Panchamahabhutas

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is the science of life which explains about the various karmas and Snehana karmas is one among those which had been explained by our great acharyas and they elaborated extensively in Charaka Samhita, Ashtanga Samgraha and Ashtanga Hridaya¹, The references of sneha, especially ghrta was well known since Vedic era where people well versed with Snehana. Following words are used as synonyms for ghrta as Ajya, Ghrita and Sarpi also the mentioning of ghrta²- Navanita, Ajya, Ghrita and Ayuta, which definitely tells as that use of sneha was known since Vedic period. Samhita² period can be considered as 'golden period for Snehana' in this period Snehana karma is described elaborately and indicated them for many therapeutic purposes in many routes like internal administration (Nasal, oral, Anal etc.) as well as external administration Abhyanga (external application-oleation).

Acharya charaka³ mentioned four types of Sneha, Sarpi, Taila, Vasa, Majja all are obtained from two yonies i.e. Sthavara-vegetable origin and Jangama-animal origin. Ghrita, Taila, Vasa, Majja are the best sneha dravyas among all snehas out of these four ghrta is the best sneha dravya for excellence because of its power to assimilate the properties of the substance. This assimilating property is not so prominent in other sneha dravyas.

Acharyas have mentioned that ghrta is a rasayana, good for the eye, stimulant for digestion, supports glow and beauty, enhances memory, voice and stamina promotes longevity and protects body from various diseases like eczema, blisters, scabies, seborrhea and other condition like neurasthenia, headaches, sleeplessness, gouty arthritis, polio, obesity, and mental disorders.

Since Snehana can be taken as Abhyantara (internally) in the form of Pana (administration) and also can be used as external application increases the physical stamina of body and mind along with sexual vitality. Externally (oil massage) is the technique of applying pressure towards increasing lymph flow in the body at the marma sthanas (vital points), which nourishes the body and give proper stimulation to the joint. When there is increase in the lymph by the Snehana karma, there are several processes like Amino acid to tryptophan. These results parallel increase in the neurotransmitter, serotonin. Serotonin has implicated in several psychiatric disease with low levels of metabolic in case of depression, hallucinations, headache, anxiety and irritability. So Snehana kalpana is very effective in both internal and external use.

The various information's regarding the subject is collected from the authoritative books of Ayurveda and its analyzed critically and compared with modern parameters.

Mechanism of Snehana (Massage) Therapy

Snehan therapy is always applied before and along with Swedana, Snehana (massage) can increase the fresh oxygenated blood supply to the muscles and organs, drainage of venous blood, promoting the removal of waste products from the body as per study we have revealed the fact that lipid barrier is very much suitable for penetration of drug molecule through stratum corneum. On this basis we can assume that in the procedure, Snehana (massage) may serve lipid barrier for the penetration of drug molecules into the skin.⁴⁻⁶

Types of Sneha - Unctuous Substances

According to Ashtanga Hridaya Ghee, oil, muscle fat and bone marrow are the best unctuous substances of all. Amongst them ghee is the unctuous substance par-excellence because of its power to assimilate effectively the properties of other substances. Ghee alleviates the vata due to its unctuous quality and pitta due to its sweetness and coolness. Even though, kapha possesses qualities (like sweetness, coldness, unctuousness, etc.) homologous with ghee, the latter when mixed up with drugs possessing opposite qualities, alleviates the former.

Indication for the administration of Ghrita

According to Ashtanga Hridaya⁷ intake of ghee is prescribed for those whose bodily constitution is dominated by vata and pitta, who is suffering from, diseases due to the vitiation of vata and pitta, those desirous of good eye sight, those suffering from phthisis and consumption, old, children, weak, those desirous of longevity, those desirous of strength, good complexion, voice, nourishment, progeny, tenderness (of the body), luster, Ojas, memory, intelligence, power of digestion, wisdom, proper functioning of sense organs and those afflicted with injuries due to burns, by weapons, poisons and fire.

Indication for the administration of Taila

According to Charaka Samhita⁸ intake of oil is prescribed even in the winter for those who are having kapha and medas in excess, whose throat and abdomen are loose but plumpy, those suffering from diseases due to the vitiation of vata and those of vatika constitution, those desirous of strength, slimness, lightness, sturdiness, steadiness (of the body), tenderness and smoothness of the skin, those having worms and other infection in their bowels, those having hard bowel, those afflicted with sinuses and those who are accustomed to the intake of oil.

Table 1: Drugs used in Snehana Karma as per Charaka

Name of drug	Rasa	Guna	Virya	Vipaka	Karma	Indications	Therapeutic Usage
Tila (<i>Sesamum indicum</i>)	Madhura Kashaya Tikta	Guru Snigdha	Ushna	Madhura	Vatahara Tvacya Balya Keshya	Vata Roga Grahani Agnimandya Yoniroga	Bahu mutra Bhagandara Udara
Priyal (<i>Buchanania lanzan</i>)	Madhura	Guru Snigdha Sara	Sita	Madhura	Vata-pitta hara Hridaya Vrishya	Vata Roga Udarda, daha Sirahsula	Raktatisara Rakt pitta
Karanja (<i>Pongamia pinnata</i>)	Tikta katu Kashaya	Laghu Tikshna	Ushna	Katu	Kapha-Vatahar Shothahar	Yoniroga Udavarta Gulma Arsha Kandu etc	Granthi-Visarpa etc
Vibhitaki (<i>Terminalia bellerica</i>)	Kashaya	Ruksha Laghu	Ushna	Madhura	Kapha-pitta hara Keshya	Jwara, Kasa Atisara Chardi Trishna	Switra Ashmari Kasa- Shwasa
Dantimula (<i>Baliospermum montanum</i>)	Katu	Guru, Tikshna	Ushna	Katu	Kapha-Vatahar, Rechana Dipana	Vataja udara, Arsas, Vrana, Ashmari, Shula, Krimi, etc	Gulma Netrabhishyanda, udara
Haritaki (<i>Terminalia chebula</i>)	Pancharas (except Lavana), kashaya	Laghu Ruksha	Ushna	Madhura	Tridosahara, Anulomana, Rasayana,	Shotha, Prameha, Kustha, Vrana, Chardi, etc.	Ajirna Prameha Amlapitta Upadamsha
Eranda (<i>Ricinus communis</i>)	Madhura Katu Kashaya	Snigdha Tikshna, Sukshma	Ushna	Madhura	Vatahara, Rechana, Vrishya	Vatavyadhi, Pliha roga, Udavarta, etc	Shlipada Parshvasula Kasa
Madhuka (<i>Madhuca longifolia</i>)	Madhura Kashaya	Guru Snigdha	Sita	Madhura	Vata-Pittahara, Balya, etc	Raktapitta ,Trishna Kshaya	Raktapitta Trishna Kshaya
Sarshapa (<i>Brassica nigra</i>)	Katu, Tikta	Laghu Snigdha	Ushna	Katu	Kapha-vatahara, vidahi, etc	Krimi kushtha Kandu	Danta-Roga Shlipada
Bilva (<i>Aegle marmelos</i>)	Kashaya, Tikta	Laghu Ruksha	Ushna	Katu	Vata-Kapha hara	Atisara, Grahani Prameha	Pittatisara Grahani
Mulaka (<i>Raphanus sativus</i>)	Katu, Tikta	Laghu	Ushna	Katu	Tridosahara	Jwara, Kasa, Nasaroga, Netra, etc	Shotha Atisara
Atasi (<i>Linum usitatissimum</i>)	Madhura Tikta	Guru, Snigdha, Picchila	Ushna	Katu	Vata-hara, Acaksusya Shukra hara,	Vrana-Shotha, Arsas, Grahani, Kushtha,	Prameha Vatarakta

Table 2: Snehana Kalpanas in different diseases as per Charaka

Medicine	Application	Disease	Reference
Vajikarana ghrita	Internal	Infertility	Ch.chi.[2-1]34,35,36
Vrishya Shatavari ghrita	Internal	Infertility	Ch.chi[2-3]18
Pippalyadighrita, vasadi ghrita, baladi ghrita	Internal	Jwara	Ch.chi 3/223,226
Shashastra dhaut ghrita, Chandanadi tail, agurvadi tail	External	Jwara	Ch.chi 3/257,258, 267
Vasa ghrita, Shatavaryadi ghrita	Internal	Raktapitta	Ch.chi4/88,95,96
Tilwakghrita, tryushanadi ghrita, hingusauvarchaladya ghrita,	Internal	Gulma	Ch.chi5/35,65,66,70-73,
Trikantakadya sneha	Internal	Prameha	Ch.chi 6/39
Kushthadya tail, shwetkarviradi tail, kanaksheeri tail,	External	Kushtha	Cha chi 7/104,105,112,
Tiktshatpalghrita, mahatiktak ghrita, mahakhadirghrita	Internal	Kushtha	Ch.chi 7/141,148,152,
Dashmuladyaghrita, kharjuraadighrita, panchpanchmula ghrita,	Internal	Yakshama	Ch.chi8/93,96,99,113,Ch.chi
jivantyadi ghrita, panchkoladi ghrita, rasna ghrita			8/169,170
Hingvadyaghrita, kalyanakghrita, mahakalyanakghrita, mahapaishachik	Internal	Unmada	Ch.chi9/34,36,43,45,51Chachi
ghrita			9/57,59
Panchgavyaghrita, mahapanchgavya ghrita, brahmi ghrita, vachadi	Internal,	Apasamara	Ch.chi10/17,18,25,27,44Ch.chi
ghrita, triphaladi tail, katabhyadi tail, palankashadi taila	External		10/33,34
Amritprash ghrita, shwadanstradi ghrita	Internal	Kshat Ksheena	Ch.chi 11/36,44,
Chitrakadi ghrita, Chitraka ghrita	Internal	Shotha	Ch.chi 12/55,58
Rohitakghrita, panchkolghrita, nagaradighrita, Chitrakadi ghrita, yavadi	Internal	Udara	Ch.chi13/84,112,115,116Ch.chi
ghrita, snuhiksheer ghrita, erand tail			13/117,140,172
Pippalyadighrita, chavyadighrita, nagradyaghrita, kutajphaladighrita,	Internal	Arsha	Ch.chi14/104,107,111,117,230,239
hriberaadighrita			
Dashmuladya ghrita, Tryushanadyaghrita, Panchmuladya ghrita,	Internal	Grahani	Ch.chi15/82,87,88,125, 172
Chandanadya ghrita, ksharghrita			
Dadimadya ghrita, katukadya ghrita, Pathya ghrita, Danti ghrita,	Internal	Pandu	Ch.chi 16/44,47,51,52,53
draksha ghrita, haridradi ghrita, vyosadya ghrita			
Tejovatyadi ghrita, manah shiladi ghrita	Internal	Hikka-Shwasa	Ch.chi 17/141, 145
Kantkarighrita, Pipalyadighrita, Tryushnyadighrita, Rasnaghrita,	Internal	Kasha	Ch.chi18/35,36,39,43,123,125,1291
Dashmuladighrita, Kantakari ghrita			58,161
Changeri ghrita, Chavyadi ghrita, Darvyadi ghrita	Internal	Atisara	Cha chi 19/42,44,80 ¹¹⁻¹⁴

Indication for the administration of Vasa (Muscle Fat)

According to Charaka Samhita Ayurved Dipika⁹ intake of muscle fat is prescribed for those who can stand in the wind and the sun, those with roughness (in their skin), those who are emaciated due to the bearing of heavy loads or exertion from long walks, those with feeble semen and blood, those whose kapha and medas (fat) are below normal, those having excruciating pain, in bone joints, veins, ligaments, vital organs, Koshta (abdominal viscera), those whose channels of circulation are affected by strong vata, those whose power of digestion is superior and those who are accustomed to the intake of fats. This is, however, to be administered only to such of the patients as are required to be given Snehana therapy.

Indication for the administration of Majja (Bone Marrow)

According to Charaka Samhita intake of Majja (bone marrow) improves strength, semen, rasa, kapha, meda and majja. It especially strengthens bones and useful for oleation.

DISCUSSION

Snehana karma is explained by our acharyas in Charaka Samhita, Ashtanga Samgraha and Ashtanga Hridaya. Sarpi, Taila, Vasa and Majja are the four basic snehas which obtained from plant as well as from animals' sources. These snehas are the fatty acids and contains the active medicaments and can be used internally either in form of Nasya, Basti, Pana and externally for Abhyanga. As Sneha is composed of basic elements Panmahabhutas - Prithvi and Jala, it has qualities like guru, sheeta, Sara, snigdha, manda, sukshma and mridu, produces unctuousness, softness, moisture and increased secretions in body¹⁵.

On internal administration sneha acts as solvent and increases apyamsha (liquid content) of the body which will cause utklesha of doshas and also increases rasa dhatu and kledatwa and

ultimately this helps for proper removal of doshas from the body, moreover when we will see its qualities, sneha compounds are hydrophilic in nature, after proper administration of sneha all the cells of body become saturated with fats and then the fats material comes out from cells to extracellular fluid by the simple process called osmosis¹⁶. so by this process the liquefied waste are brought out from tissues resulting in increase in plasma volume, thus to keep the equilibrium of normal plasma extra amount of liquid reaches from Shakha to Koshta and excreted out from the body by the process of shodhana i.e. Vaman and Virechan.

Whereas; externally Abhyanga (oil massage) nourishes and strengthen the tissues of body. After massage, the blood amino acids like tryptophan increases which further helps to produce niacin, melatonin, serotonin which helps to produce healthy sleep and stable mood. Also, by Snehana therapy the nervous system gets stimulated, thus giving stimulation to the muscular system, vessels and glands governed by the particular nerve and keeps the human body healthy. It increases the blood circulation, thus revealing pain, stiffness, and contraction of vessels. So, external body massage helps in increasing lymph flow in the body at the marma sthanas (vital points), and its whole nourishes the entire body.

CONCLUSION

Sneha karma is the one of the basic practices in Ayurveda; it has its own significant effect in the treatment process which not only effective in one system but its overall regulates all body physiological functions and pathological conditions. Thus, Snehana karma can be used internally and externally and gives its great results in practice.

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