



Review Article

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CONCEPTUAL AND APPLIED ANALYSIS OF SNIGDHA AND RUKSHA: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Concept of guna (quality) is an important theory in Ayurveda. The word meaning of guna is that which creates attraction. According to Sankhya darshana world originated from triguna in the process of evolution. So it considers the whole universe as trigunatmaka. Vaisheshika includes guna under shadpadartha. The relevance of guna increases on coming to classical period. In the context of roga (disease) and chikitsa (treatment), guna has an important role. We can see the role of guna in all areas of trisutra Ayurveda. Gurvadi guna have more importance because of its pharmacological and therapeutic application. Snigdha and Ruksha are important pair of guna. In normal state both have a role in Dosha and Dhatu level. When disturbed it leads to many ill effects and takes part in pathogenesis of many diseases. As our chikitsa is based on Nidana Parivarjana (avoidance of cause) and Samprapti vighattana (intervention in the pathogenesis), we have to concentrate more on these guna while doing treatment. The present study aims to expose Snigdha and Ruksha guna in perspective of its importance in physiological, pathological and therapeutic aspects. Proper identification and precise application of these guna will help in our chikitsa.

Keywords: Snigdha, Ruksha, Guna, Darshana, therapeutic

INTRODUCTION

The whole universe is made up of Panchamahabhuta (five existents). Each bhuta (existent) possess a specific quality. We perceive the world around us through these 5 qualities which are Roopa (shape), Rasa (taste), Gandha (smell), Sparsha (touch) and Shabda (sound). Some of the knowledge is not perceived by senses. They are exclusively related with atma (soul) and those guna (quality) are atmaguna (qualities of soul). Another group of qualities are assumed by their action. These are Gurvadi guna. They reside not only in the dravya (matter) but also in the body. So these guna (qualities) are very important in chikitsa (treatment). Last group of gunas help as the associating guna in chikitsa. These are Paradi guna (Para pharmacological). Thus we can say that everything in the universe as expressions of guna.¹

Enumeration of guna

Charaka accepts 41 guna which includes five arthaguna (specific qualities), 20 Gurvadi guna (biological qualities), 6 atmaguna (qualities of soul) and 10 Paradi guna (Para pharmacological). Sushruta and Vagbhata accept only 20 Gurvadi guna. Hemadri gives definitions for all Gurvadi guna. Yogendranath Sen adds mind as a guna to Charaka's 41 guna.

Importance of Snigdha and Ruksha guna

Gurvadi guna are very important from the therapeutic point of view because action of drugs is explained on the basis of these guna. We can see the influence of Gurvadi guna in triskandha, which is the basic pillar of chikitsa. Hetu (cause) is narrated in the form of ahara (food) and vihara (activities). These mithya (improper) ahara and vihara possess certain guna which can make changes in body. Linga (symptoms) is the reflection of status of

guna in body elements and chikitsa (treatment) is the balancing of these guna.

Among twenty Gurvadi guna, six guna – guru (heavy), laghu (light) snigdha (unctuous), ruksha (rough), sheeta (cold) and ushna (hot) have more importance in chikitsa. Snigdha and ruksha have very important role in physiological, pathological and therapeutic aspect.

Nirukti (derivation) of snigdha and Ruksha

Physiological, Psychological and Pharmacological meanings can be seen for the terms snigdha (unctuous) and ruksha (rough). The root word of snigdha is 'snih' which has got two meaning preet (pleasing) and preenane (saturated). It has also physiological meanings of oily, sticky, viscous etc. Psychologically it means attached or affectionate. Pharmacologically it means raktaeranda or saralavriksha.

The root word of ruksha is ruksha parushye meaning something which is rough. Psychologically it means harsh, unkind, cruel etc. Pharmacologically it means astringent taste or black pepper.

Definitions of snigdha and ruksha

- Choornadi pindibhavahetu guna sneha, jalamatravritt²
- According to Prasasthapadabhashya sneha is the special quality of jalamahabhuta.
- According to hemadri vyakhyana of Ashtangahridaya the matter which possess wetting capacity.
- According to Susruta snigdha guna gives softness, bala (strength) and varna (complexion).

In the historical hierarchy we can see that these gunas are applied to dravyas only as if sneha helps as binding force. But when it comes to classical texts we can see it is described as what does it do in our body i.e. Snigdha possess moistening capacity and also helps in alleviating vata and aggravating kapha.

- According to Hemadri, ruksha guna possess drying capacity.
- According to Rasavaisheshikam, ruksha guna is possessed by prithwi and vayu mahabhuta.

Ruksha guna cause shoshana of matter i.e., It attracts the fluid content of matter with the help of ushna (hot) quality. It aggravates vata and alleviates kapha.

Table 1: Physiological aspects of Snigdha – Ruksha

		Snigdha	Ruksha
1	Bhuta	Jala	Agni, Vayu
2	Dosha	Kapha, Pitta	Vata
3	Dhatu	Rasa, Rakta, Mamsa, Meda, Majja, Shukra	Asthi
4	Rasa	Madhura, Amla, Lavana	Kashaya, Katu, Tikta
5	Veerya	Sheeta	Ushna
6	Vipaka	Madhura	Katu
7	Kala	Visarga Kala	Adana Kala
8	Desha	Anupa	Jangala
9	Prakriti	Kapha prakriti	Vata prakriti
10	Sara	Twak, Rakta, Meda, Majja, Shukra	
11	Ahara	Shastika dhanya, urad dal, fish, dry grapes, cow's milk, Fruit juice, ice cream etc.	Black gram, gooseberry, camels milk Beverages, carbonated drinks, junk food, salty food, pickles, pappad etc.
12	Vihara	Abhyanga (oil massage)	Udwartana (massage with powder)

Table 2: Actions of Snigdha- Ruksha

	Snigdha	Ruksha
Dosha	Kapha vardhana Pitta vardhana Vata samana	Vata vardhana Kapha shamana
Dhatu	Nourishing	Dehydration
Mala	Easy evacuation	Blockage
Other actions	Moisture, softness, strength, Aphrodisiac	Dehydration, roughness

Physiological aspect of snigdha and ruksha

Physiological action of these qualities can be described in following Table 1.

Actions of snigdha and ruksha

Actions of snigdha and ruksha are described in Table 2.

Snigdha guna in kapha and pitta dosha

When we come across the actions done by five types of kapha, we can see the involvement of snigdha guna. Avalambaka kapha does lubrication, nourishing etc., Kledaka kapha moistens the hard food mass and helps in digestion, Bodhaka kapha helps in taste perception, Tarpaka kapha nourishes sense organs and Shleshaka kapha lubricates the joints.

Pitta is termed as Sasneha meaning not excess snigdha. Pitta indicates the liquid fire and snigdha is needed in fewer amounts only. This property is more prominent in the case of Pachakapitta which involves directly in the digestive process.

Ruksha guna in vata dosha

Presence of ruksha guna can be seen all sites where moisture is absorbed. In the digestive system, pakwashaya (large intestine) is the site where all the water content is absorbed. So here ruksha guna is increased and it is the prime location of vata. Controlling mechanism of kapha, pitta, mala and dhatu is vayu. This is possible by chala guna of vayu. Other qualities like ruksha, laghu and sukshma helps in this chalatwa of vayu.

Psychological aspect of snigdha-ruksha

Even though there are emotional meaning attachment/ affection for snigdha, no classical reference is seen in classics. In Bhaishajya ratnavali, as a cause for yoshapasmara, bhartho: nisnehataya..... nisneha (lack of affection) of bhartha (husband) is given.

In vata prakriti (constitution) persons, due to ruksha there is a feature jagaruka which means becoming alert all time. This is direct positive aspect of ruksha guna.³

Pathological aspect of snigdha - ruksha

We can see the involvement of snigdha and ruksha along with sheeta and ushna in the Chaya (accumulation), prakopa (aggravation) and prashama (pacification) of vata and kapha.⁴

In vatajanatmakavyadhi like nakhabheda (cracks in nail), vipadika (fissured foot) we can see the effect of ruksha guna and in kaphajanatmakavyadhi like nidradikya (excessive sleep), praseka (salivation) etc. increase in Snigdha can be seen.⁵

Food we eat and nature of daily routine makes changes in qualities of our body. Sweet taste is most unctuous and excess use of sweet in food increases unctuous nature of body and may cause symptoms like obesity, loss of appetite etc⁶. Astringent taste is most ruksha and its overuse leads to some dehydrating conditions like pathological thirst, emaciation etc⁷. Malpractice of some activities like day sleep leads to pathological increase of snigdha in body and avoidance of sleep in night leads to increase of rukshata in body.

Effect of guna in pathogenesis

Pathological aggravation of certain quantities in body due to above mentioned causes like food, regimen leads to changes in dosha level and leads to pathogenesis of disease. This is very clear in the example of pathogenesis of kaphaja prameha. Usage of snigdha sheeta guna in the form of food (soup of meat of aquatic animals, milk, jaggery) and activities (sedentary habits, sleep) leads to accumulation of kapha dosha. Certain conditions (involvement of ushna guna) leads to aggravation of kapha and spreads all over body, then localized in certain areas like Meda, kleda, mamsa and basti and finally leading to the disease kaphaja prameha⁸.

Therapeutic aspect of snigdha and ruksha

Snehana (oleation therapy) and Rukshana (drying therapy) are important method of treatment among Shadupakrama. We can apply these guna during specific conditions of treatment like use of ghee in jeerna jwara and ruksha prayoga in urustambha. If the fever is not relieved by initial treatments, vata along with pitta becomes more powerful and body becomes weak. Rukshata (dryness) of body increases due to two reasons; one due to body temperature and also due to initial treatment procedures. In this stage, application of sneha in the form of ghee helps in giving strength to body and in vatasamana also⁹. Urustambha is a condition where ama, kapha and medas are in increased state. Here we have to apply ruksha guna in the form of medicines, food, drinks and external procedures¹⁰.

CONCLUSION

It is difficult to identify the effect of each guna separately in body. But combined effects make some symptoms. Snigdha guna along with sheeta guna helps in a structural integrity. When ushna starts to act with snigdha, it reverberate an active process. Pathological action may be the beginning of an inflammatory process. Ruksha along with ushna indicates a degenerative process whereas ruksha sheeta indicates a destructive phase.

Everything in the universe can be expressed or identified with the help of guna. Body expresses these guna in the form of certain signs and symptoms. By proper identification and timely intervention we can make use of these guna in preventive and curative aspect.

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