



Significance of *Sanskara* in *Sneha Kalpana*: A Review

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Abstract:

Ayurveda is the most ancient science of life and health, its antiquity goes back to the Vedas. Ayurveda is not merely a folklore belief system. *Brihatrayee*, i. e. three major treatises of Ayurveda emphasize mainly on *Tri-Sutras* – *Hetu* (etiological factors), *Linga* (symptoms and signs) and *Aushadha* (treatment). To gain clear knowledge of Ayurveda and to apply it in practice, it was necessary to search for scientific devices or methods of approach. This necessity has prompted the *Samhitakaras* to adopt scientific methods. Indian culture, Vedas as well as Ayurveda have given lot of importance to '*Sanskara*' as it is one of the

most effective technique to enhance the qualities of substances that may be animate or inanimate, movable or stable, subtle or gross. Thus, Ayurveda is an amalgamation of ancient traditions and scientific methods. *Sanskara* concept is extensively used in the Ayurvedic pharmaceuticals in order to make the medicine more efficient, long lasting, palatable, easy to administer etc. *Sneha Kalpana* is widely described in Ayurvedic pharmaceuticals under which medicated oil and *Ghrita* are prepared. The present study is an attempt to review the various aspects of *Sanskaras* implied in *Sneha Kalpana*.

Key Words: *Sanskara, Sneha Kalpana, Taila, Ghrita*

Introduction:

Sanskara is one of the important concepts of Ayurveda. It is said to be a process to transform the natural attributes of a substance with the aim of modification.¹ Significance of *Sanskara* can be identified even in *Ahara* as it is one of the *Ashtau Ahar Vidhi Visheshayatanas*.² This is why *Sanskaras* not only play an important role in *Aahara Kalpana* and *Bhaishajya Kalpana* but also for cultured mind, refined intellect and overall an impressive personality. *Sanskara* is one of the best implements to alter the substance in such a way that, efficiency of substance is improved, it can be administered easily, it has less or no adverse effects, it can be aimed at specific target location as per the necessity.³ *Sanskara* is explained as a 'Gunantaradhanam' means a change in properties of substance, thus altering the nature of a substance.⁴ The properties are of two types, forever stable and those which can be altered. *Sanskaras* can change only the latter type of properties and not the former. e. g. no *Sanskara* can remove the heat from the fire or lubrication from the oil or ghee. Usually properties (*Guna*) and functions (*Karma*) of any substance depend on conjugation and configuration of five elements present in it.⁵ Since, properties are

the manifestation of five elemental compositions, it can be understood that *Sanskaras* work on the basic five elemental composition of a substance and change its nature. Here in this paper an attempt has been made to understand the basic concept of *Sanskara* and its significance in the field of pharmaceuticals.

Conceptual Study:

Etymology of *Sanskara*:

*Samyak Karoti anena iti Sanskarah |
Sankriyate anena iti Sanskarah ||
Amarkosh*

The process or means by which a substance is modified as presumed is termed as *Sanskara*. In *Gruhya Sutras*, *Sanskaras* are supposed to accomplish two things as below,

*Dosha apanayanena va gunadhanen va
|...Gruhya sootra*

Sanskaras eliminate the impurities and add special virtues or properties to a substance.

Literary Review of *Sanskara*:

Vedika Kala -The seed of *Sanskara* is in Vedas. The word *Sanskara* and its processes are given in *Gruhya Sootras* and the main aim of *Sanskara* is purification at the physical as well as spiritual level. After purification a new quality is believed to be born in the entity (or human being) which then becomes eligible to be offered to lord. On the same basis we can understand that

after *Sanskaras*, the food or medicines become eligible to be accepted and assimilated in the body. Vedic literature mentions about the '*Soma Nirmana Vidhi*' in which various *Sanskaras* like *Kuttana* (pounding), *Peshana* (pulverizing), *Nishpidana* (squeezing) are mentioned. *Samhita Kala-* In *Bruhatrayi*, *Sanskara* word is used at many places indicating different processes such as *Shodhana* (purification), *Mardana* (grinding), *Manthana* (churning) etc. In *Charaka Samhita*, *Sanskara* word is defined and list of various *Sanskaraas* is given as well.⁶ *Ashtanga Sangraha* has also given a good contribution by mentioning various examples of *Sanskara* collected at one place.⁷

Role of five elements in *Sanskara*:

Entire universe as well as each and every substance in universe is formed from a specific combination of five elements and there is a continuous interaction going on between the elements of the universe and the substance. This is the reason for infinite transformations taking place in the universe like the sprouting of a seed, the growth of a tree, the leaves falling, the flowers blooming, the ripening of fruits etc. It is believed that *Sanskara* of *Kala* (time) is ongoing and it affects each and every object,

it may be living or non living, in the universe. It is due to *Kala Sanskara* that huge rock at the seashore disappears completely or drugs which are potent gradually lose their patency.

Since *Sanskara* is a process responsible for change in the properties of substance, it's obvious that this change has to be done at the level of five elements and also with the help of five elements. Role of each element in *Sanskara* is extremely important.

Akasha Mahabhuta provides the space for all the processes to take place. Space element is also responsible for *Desha Sanskara*. *Desha* means the habitat of medicines, as potency of medicine is largely dependent on its habitat. *Desha* also means a specific place where the on process medicine is to be kept for a specific time or ready medicine is told to be stored. Since Space and time are proven to be rotated into each other according to relativity theory, *Kala Sanskara* is also included under Space element. For e.g. ghee stored for 100 years is one of the best medicines for psychological diseases.

Peshana Sanskara is for Pulverizing or grinding, it is a process to break the solid substance to smaller particles and this is possible due to *Vayu Mahabhuta*.

Agni Mahabhuta is most effective element for any kind of transformation as well as purification. *Sanskaras*, like *Paka Sanskara* (cooking or heating), *Daha Sanskara* (burning or cauterizing). *Manthana Sanskara* (churning) involves *Agni* as well as *Vayu Mahabhutas* as the main transforming agents. *Shoshana Sanskara* (desiccation of a substance) can be achieved with the help of *Vayu Mahabhuta* as well as *Agni Mahabhuta*. *Bhavana Sanskara*⁸ (process of grinding the substance with a liquid in mortar and pestle till the liquid gets absorbed in substance to improve its potency) involves *Jala* as well as *Agni Mahabhuta*. *Swedana Sanskara* (boiling a substance in specific liquid), *Dhalana* or *Nirvapana Sanskara* (heating a substance and then immersing it in specific liquid) involve participation of *Jala* and *Agni Mahabhuta*. *Dhavana Sanskara* (washing) *Nimajjana* (soaking), *Sinchana* (sprinkling) are done with the help of *Jala Mahabhuta*. *Bhajana Sanskara* (to store the substance in a specific pot, e.g. *Rasayana* medicine if kept in gold pot, gets more potent), *Vasan Sanskara* (to use fragrant flowers or herbs for their aroma) are the examples of *Sanskara* where *Prithvi Mahabhuta* is involved. Utility of *Sanskara* in Pharmaceutics: In modern era, people are

becoming more and more health conscious and are sooner or later realizing that the only ray of hope is Ayurveda. This is why demand of Ayurvedic medicines is increasing day by day in the entire world. The success of Ayurvedic medicines lies in its manufacturing process especially in pursuing the process of *Sanskara*. If all the *Sanskaras* proposed for that particular formulation are done to its 100 %, then the end product has to be effective without any adverse effect. This can be confirmed from the statement of Charakacharya that if processed properly, even poison can serve as a best medicine.⁹ A medicinal substance can be made suitable (*Yogya*) for that particular disease or for a particular stage of the same disease, and potency (*Sampat*) can be increased by giving *Bhavana* etc. In short to increase qualities of medicine, *Sanskara* is the only important tool. With help of *Sanskara* even a small dose of a drug can be proven to be high in efficiency by increasing its potency or a drug with an intense nature can be made mild.¹⁰ For example, to increase the cooling effect of *Pravala*, *Bhavana* of rose water is given to *Pravala* in moon light or to reduce the heat and intense properties of *Gandhaka*, it is purified with ghee and milk. Sometimes *Sanskara* is capable of reversing the properties of the substance

completely, e.g. curd is guru (heavy) in property and *Shothakara* (inducing swelling) in action, however after *Manthan Sanskara* when it's converted into buttermilk, it becomes *Laghu* (light) in property and *Shothakara* in action means is able to reduce the swelling. Such and other innumerable examples are a proof of the importance and requirement of *Sanskara*.

Importance of *Sanskara* in *Sneha Kalpana*:

Medicated oil and ghee or *Siddha Sneha* is one of the most used preparations in Ayurvedic texts. The reason for its popularity can be understood from the following statements of Charakacharya, Ghee is able to do thousands of functions if processed accordingly.¹¹ *Taila* is able to cure all the diseases if proper *Sanskara* and *Sanyog* (formulation) are applied to it.¹² *Sneha* means lubricant and *Kalpana* means to generate power in any desired manner. Four types of *Snehas* are described in Ayurvedic *Samhitas* namely, *Ghrita*, *Taila*, *Vasa* and *Majja*. Among them, *Ghrita* and *Taila* are used for *Snehapaka* and used as medicines. *Sneha kalpana* utilizes various *Sanskaras* which may be divided into, *Poorva Karma*, *Pradhan Karma*, *Pashchat Karma*.

Poorva Karma includes, a. *Bhajana Sanskara* – selection of vessel b. *Dhavana*

Sanskara – washing the ingredients c. *Peshana Sanskara* – crushing d. *Paka Sanskara* – boiling e. *Moorcchana Sanskara* – process prior to *Sneha Paka* to enhance the potency of *Sneha* f. *Desha, Kala Sanskara* – collection of herbs or raw material

Pradhana Karma includes, a. *Pak Sanskara* – boiling b. *Kala Sanskara* – Duration of boiling **Pashchat Karma** includes, a. *Snehapak Pariksha* b. Filtration c. Storage

In this way even though, *Snehapaka* word indicates importance of *Paka Sanskara*, there are many other *Sanskaras* involved in the entire process.

General Method of Preparation of *Sneha*:

To prepare any medicated *Ghrita* or *Taila*, 1 part of *Kalka* (ground herbs), 4 parts of *Ghrita* or *Taila* and 16 parts of any liquid like *Kadha* (decoction), *Swaras* (juice), Milk etc. are to be mixed together and heated on *mandagni* till all the water evaporates.¹³ Then it is filtered and stored for medicinal use.

Bhajana Sanskara – For making *Kadha*, roughly crushed herbs are soaked overnight in earthen pot with 16 times water. Next day it is boiled on mild fire in either earthen or iron pot to make a *Kadha*. For *Snehapaka* iron or copper pot is selected.

Dhavana Sanskara – All the herbs used to make *Kalka* and *Kadha* are cleaned with water.

Peshana Sanskara – Grinding the herbs in mortar and pestle is *Peshana Sanskara*.

Paka Sanskara – Preparation of *Kadha* as well as boiling the *Sneha* with *Kalka* and *Drava* is *Pak Sanskara*.

Moorcchana Sanskara - is one on the important *Sanskaras* for enhancing the potency and for removing the strong odour and amadosha from *Ghrita* or Oil. *Bhaishajya Ratnavali* has mentioned about *Moorcchana* for first time. Researches show that *Moorcchana Sanskara* decreases the acid value and increases the saponification.¹⁴ Increased saponification value indicates higher content of low molecular weight fatty acids enabling high absorption. *Moorcchana Sanskara* clears *Aama Dosha* from the *Sneha* allowing it to become potent and facilitating easy use.¹⁵

Desha Sanskara – Selection of herbs is done with utmost care so that they are potent and most effective. E.g. *Kushtha* (*Sassurea lappa*) is best when it is grown in north India, spices like cardamom, cloves are best when cultivated in south India etc. This is called *Desha Sanskara*.

Kala Sanskara - means herbs like *Pimpli* (*Piper longum*) are to be used after storing

for a year or grains like rice are to be used only after one year. Time required for *Paka Sanskara* is also a kind of *Kala Sanskara*, e.g. if *Snehapaka* consists of milk, it should be made ready in two nights, if *Swaras* is used as a *Drava*, *Paka Sanskara* should be completed in three nights, if *Sneha* formulation contains substances like curd, kanji, cow urine etc. it should be cultured in five nights, if root and stem of creeper are used, *Paka Sanskara* should be completed in 12 nights and if grains and mansaras (non vegetarian soup) are to be used, then it has to get ready in one day. *Snehapaka Pariksha* –

Various types of *Snehapaka* mentioned in Ayurvedic literature are, *Ama Paka*, *Mrudu Paka*, *Madhyama pak*, *Khara Paka* and *Dagdha Paka*.^{16, 17}

Out of them, *Mrudu*, *Madhyama* and *Khara Paka* formulations are therapeutically important; other two have to be rejected. Characteristic features of *Snehapaka* during the pharmaceutical processing are described as follows,

Mrudu Paka: According to *Acharya Charaka*, *Kalka* becomes like *niryas*¹⁸ (fresh exudate), according to *Acharya Sharangdhar* *Kalka* becomes soft and contains very little amount of moisture.

Madhya Paka: According to *Acharya Charak*, *Kalka* becomes like a *sanyav* (dough

made from ghee, jaggery and wheat flour in equal quantity)²⁰; according to Acharya Sharangdhar, *Kalka* is soft and without any traces of moisture.²¹

Khara Paka: According to Acharya Charaka if pressed in between two fingers, *Kalka* breaks into pieces,²² according to Acharya Sharangdhar *Kalka* becomes little hard.²³

Sneha Siddhi Lakshana (Signs of completion of medicated *Ghrita* or Oil):²⁴ *Ghrita* or *Taila* are considered to be ready when *Kalka* in ghee or oil can be rolled to make a wick, if few drops of oil or ghee along with little *Kalka* is put in fire, it doesn't make any sound, oil is considered to be ready when foam starts forming and ghee is ready when foam starts diminishing both oil and ghee emerge appropriate aroma, taste and color.

Filtration – Ready oil or ghee are to be filtered till the *Kalka* is hot so that it can yield maximum amount of medicated oil or ghee. It is best to be done with cotton cloth.

Storage – Ready oil or ghee is then allowed to cool down to room temperature and then stored in glass or metal container.

Shelf life of *Ghrita* / *Taila*: According to government of India notification 2009, shelf life of *Ghrita* is 2 years and *Taila* is 3 years.

Discussion:

Thus efficiency of Ayurvedic medicine lies in improvement in pharmacodynamics and

pharmacokinetics of a substance and this can be attained with the help of *Sanskaras*. Since *Sanskara* is a process responsible for change in the properties of substance (*Gunantaradhana*), it's obvious that this has to be done at the level of five elements and also with the help of five elements. All the five elements, namely *Akasha*, *Vayu*, *Agni*, *Jala* and *Pruthvi* have their individual role in enhancing the inherent qualities of a substance and this technique is explained as '*Sanskara*' in Ayurveda. Appropriate *Sanskara*, when applied on a substance in correct way, leads to improvement in its potency, removal of defect (if any) and allows it to get assimilated in body without any adverse effect. It is only *Sanskara* through which medicine can treat that particular state of patient or stage of disease in an effective way.

Conclusion:

Sanskara is a unique concept contributed by our ancient culture as well as traditions and therefore it is reflected at every mode of life. Ayurveda considers *Sanskara* as one and the only important tool to transform the inherent attributes of a substance with the aim of modification and therefore *Sanskara* is the utmost important factor in Ayurvedic pharmacology. *Sneha Kalpana* has got a unique role in Ayurvedic pharmaceuticals. It is

only with the help of *Sanskaras* like *Bhajana*, *Peshana*, *Dhavana*, *Paka*, *Murchana*, *Desha*, *Kala* etc. that a medicated oil or ghee is able to do innumerable actions and give wonderful results.

Future scope of study:

Entire world is today looking forward towards Ayurveda, the ancient Indian health science as the only hope for holistic and complete health. Demand of Ayurvedic products is increasing day by day and this high expectation can only be fulfilled with efficient and quality products. To achieve this, *Sanskara* is the only key word. If and when all the *Sanskaras* explained in ancient Ayurvedic texts will be applied in the manufacturing process, the medicine can accomplish all the expectations and help to attain the complete health.

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