Significance of Sanskara in Sneha Kalpana: A Review

Garthe Limbanappa Somnath*¹, Ravikiran Ram Bhosale²

1. HOD – Professor, Streerog & Prasuti, Matostri Asarabai Darade Ayurvedic College, A/P Babhulgaon Tal-Yeola Dist-Nashik, Maharashtra.
2. Professor/HOD Prasutitantra & Stree Roga Dept., Sai Ayurved College Hospital & Research Centre, Sasure, Vairag, Dist.: Solapur, Maharashtra, dr.ravibhosale@gmail.com; Mobile no. 9552018980

*Corresponding Author: lsagarthe@gmail.com; Mobile no. 9552018980

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. Brihattrayee, 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 pharmaceutics in order to make the medicine more efficient, long lasting, palatable, easy to administer etc. Sneha Kalpana is widely described in Ayurvedic pharmaceutics 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. Significance of Sanskara can be identified even in Ahara as it is one of the Ashtau Ahar Vidhi Visheshayatanas. 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. Sanskara is explained as a ‘Gunantaradhanam’ means a change in properties of substance, thus altering the nature of a substance. 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. 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 pharmaceutics.

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 Bruhattrayi, 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 Sanskaras is given as well. Ashtanga Sangraha has also given a good contribution by mentioning various examples of Sanskara collected at one place.

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 (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. 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. 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. 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. Taila is able to cure all the diseases if proper Sanskara and Sanyog (formulation) are applied to it.

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.


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. 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. 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.

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, Madhya Paka, Khara Paka and Dagdha Paka.

Out of them, Mrudu, Madhya 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 (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); according to Acharya Sharangdhar, Kalka is soft and without any traces of moisture.

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

*Sneha Siddhi Lakshana* (Signs of completion of medicated Ghrita or Oil): 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 (Guntantaradhana), 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 pharmaceutics. 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 innumerous 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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