UTILITY OF SWARNA IN AYURVEDA-A LITERARY REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Swarna is used for ornamental purposes in general, but wisely utilized in Ayurveda for treating various ailments. The most important aspect of swarna explained in terms of its health promotion utility is found in KasyapaSamhita as SwarnaPrashana, where he explained use of swarnadhatu directly by treating it with madhu and ghrita. In contrary to this AcharyaSushruta and Charaka mention to use it after preparing bhasma. Sharangadhara and other Rasavaidyas mention shodhana and marana for swarna compulsorily before administration. Irrespective of its clinical practice since olden days, in the modern era question has been raised on the safety aspect of swarna as it is a metal considered to be toxic. So it is necessary to recollect the information regarding utility of swarna explained by our acharyas and the experimental works which are done recently to prove that it is safe and effective.

Keywords: Swarna, Swarnaprashana, Therapeutic benefits, Safety

INTRODUCTION

Kanaka or Swarna is the most attractive, famous and useful substance in the world since ancient period. Its use was known since the period of Rigveda as in the shreesukta of Rigveda only swarna is explained1. Other three vedas and upanishat have also explained relevance of swarna. During Mahabharatha period it was used in manufacturing crown, vehicle, utensils, chair etc of King. Later on during Kautilya Arthashastra even artificial method of manufacturing of swarna is mentioned2. In rasashastra which is an integral part of Ayurveda, swarna is been utilized initially in the name of lohavada, dehavada and later chikitsavada. So in this regard we find a wise and wide range of utility of swarna during the period of various acharyas, which are as discussed further in the article.

During the period of Bhrihatrayee:

The use of swarnaprashanais mentioned from the time of birth till the sthanya utpatti3. It is also an integral part of medhya rasayana4. Properties of swarnaare told as swadu andti kta rasa, hrudya, bruhamaniya andrasayana5. Method of administration of swarna is being told in the context of Jaathakarma where it is being mentioned that Swarnachurna is to be treated with madhu and ghritha, licked with anamika anguli6. We also get reference of spoon made of Swarna being used for the administration of Swarna in Jaathakarma7. Swarna proves to be beneficial as far as preservation aspect is concerned. Anjana done with swarnashalakais considered being best and it is even told to be stored in swarna patra8. It is advised to drink water

which is kept in swarnapatra, parishushka and pradigdhadravya are also advised to be preserved in swarna patra9. Swarna is also highlighted in the context of pumsavana vidhi10,11. In folklore practices also swarna is taken into use.

Swarnasevana in a person affected with visha has got great role. i.e. after doing shodhan 3gms of swarna is given which is believed to protect body from visha by preventing its absorption. The same is been advised in case of garavisha12. Swarnadhatu is to be made red hot and dipped in water, allowed to cool later the same is used for bathing of new born after the jatha karma13. Swarna in the form of varka administered with drugs like arkapushpi, vacha etc with madhu and ghrita enhances medha,varna and bala of the child14. AcharyaCharaka was the first person to mention the quantity of swarna as 2 yava to be added for Aindri rasayana15. For the first time among brihatrayee Astanga Sangrahakara mentioned to use swarna after converting into bhasma form16. During the period of Laghutraya:

Acharya Sharangadhara has also given due importance to swarna. He mentions to use swarna after subjecting to nirvapa in dravadrayyas like taila,takra, kanji,gomutra, kulathakashaya for three times each. Later it is to be subjected for marana by treating with double quantity of parada, triturated with bijapuraswarasa and later a gola is to be prepared,to which equal quantity of gandhaka is to be added and puta is given with 30 vanopala and bhasma is obtained. Along with this 4 more methods are explained for swarna marana17. According to Bhavaprakasha it is medha and smruthikara; sthavara and jangamavishanashaka and shoshahara etc18.

Other References -

AcharyaKashyapa has broadly highlighted the method of preparation and administration of swarna in the name of swarnaprasana. He mentions the utility of swarna in different doses having different actions. One should face towards purvadik, and then rub kanaka over washed stone with little quantity of ambu, churned with madhu and sarpi and this is used for lehana in shishu. It is said to increase medhaagni and bala, acts as ayushya, mangalakara,punya, vrushya, varnya, grahaapaha. By one month itself baby becomes paramamedhavi and by 6 months he becomesshrutadhar19. If food is consumed in swarnabhojanapatra it becomes pathya & capable to cure diseases & increases eye sight. Wearing gold ornaments are suchi & fortunate & satisfactory. Swarna is considered in one of asthamanglika dravya20.

Swarna in Rasashastra

The origin of swarna is told from the Shiva virya. It is being told that when Agnideva swallowed the Shiva virya and spitted it out, it got converted into swarna21. Swarna is known by different names like kalyana, mangalya, kanaka, kanchana, hiranya, hema etc22. Grahyaswarnalakshanas are, on heating on fire it glows like morning sun and when it is rubbed over nikash it produces kesarcoloured lines, snigdha, guru compared to other metals. Swarna not having these properties should not be used for any process23.

The use of swarna started with dehavada and lohavada where either the body is made strong enough to achieve the salvation or to convert the lower metals into higher metals. Later when chikitsavada evolved swarna was utilized for various ailments effectively.

The conversion of swarna in the most suitable form of the body was evolved during the period of rasashastra only, where it is being told to convert it into bhasma form, which is having property like ayurvardhika, prabha, dhi-smruthikara, ajaraakaari, viryavruddhikara, vishagadhahara etc24.
While in Rasatarangini we get reference of swarnavarka/swarnapatala which isakshepakashashamaka, netrya, hrudy, amlapittahara etc. Even we find reference regarding swarnalavana (gold chloride) said to be used as injection. It is having properties like vrushya, tridoshashamaka, useful in pushpaavrodha, phirangaroga, apasmara etc. Swarnabhasma helps in enhancing saundarya, mukhalavanya of a stree. It is chinta, shoka, bhaya, krodhanasha, kshaya-kasaghna and tridoshajwara nasha-ka. Swarna is used in the process of jaarana. Swarna is told to be related with guru graha.

Swarna is widely used in different dosage forms, which are used in both acute and chronic diseases. There are pottalikalpas like Hemagarbhapottali, Ratnagarbhapottali, Lokeshwarpottali, parpatik alpas like Swarnaparpati, kupipakarasayana like Makaradhwaja, Swarnasindura, vatis like Sutashekharara, Rasaraja rasa, Vasantakusumakara rasa, Vasanthamalati rasa, Swasakasachinthamani rasa, Swarna-Lakshmivilasa rasa, Kumara kalyana rasa, arishtas like Saraswatharishta, avalehya like Kesarakalpa, Madanamodaka, rasayanas like Triphalarasayana, Aindrirasayana. Now a days different pharmacies have started to make certain changes in the preparation of the swarnabhasma by adopting various techniques because of which there will be changes in the final output and hence they market it with different names. Similarly to reduce the cost of preparation and to make it feasible for the poor people, pharmacies have started the new trend of adding or deleting swarmanavarka in some formulations and marketing it as sadharana or swarnayukta as per the requirement.

DISCUSSION

Use of swarna is indicated at each and every step of life. It is being used to get the desired progeny by pumsavanamasamskara. It is also used during the process of parturition where it is told to cut the umbilical cord with the help of a sharp knife made of swarna. Swarna administration is told in new born as well as in the old age person. In children it is firstly indicated in the name of jathakarmasamsakara. It is a chief constituent of various yogs which are used to combat different ailments prevailing at different stages of life.

As it is now clear that the use of swarna is prevalent since the Vedic period, but with the due course of time we find certain modifications done in the method and manner of administration. Initially it was used in its raw elemental form but during the period of samhita we get the reference for swarnachurna to be used. Later during the medieval period more sophisticated methods were opted and it was converted into bhasma form which is considered to be safe and suitable for the internal administration. It is told to yield better benefits when followed proper pathyapathyapathya, bilwaphalatold to be contra-indicated while administering swarnabhasma. Importance of swarnabhasma is highlighted like when any kind of shodhan and shamanam fails to cure a disease swarnabhasma alone is capable to bring back the health to an individual.

Apart from Ayurveda gold is even explained in modern medicine with a different view. Gold is a chemical element with symbol Au. In its purest form, it is bright, slightly reddish yellow, dense, soft, malleable and ductile metal with atomic number 79 included under transition metal category. It melts at a temperature of 1064°C, boils at a temperature of 2970°C having hardness of 2.5 in Mohs hardness scale.

Gold as a medicine:
Gold is considered to be a nerve tonic and helps in managing nervous disorder like depression, epilepsy and migraine etc. Some gold salts do have anti-inflammatory properties and are used in the cases of arthritis.

Toxicity of gold:
Elemental gold is non-toxic and non-irritating when ingested but soluble gold salts such as gold chloride are toxic to the liver and kidneys. According to a recent studies 13nm sized PEG coated AuNPs induced acute inflammation and apoptosis in the mouse liver. This shows that elemental gold do have some toxic effects but when it is converted into the bhasma form it proves to be non-toxic and safer for internal administration.

**CONCLUSION**

Swarna is utilized not only for commercial purpose but also having therapeutic uses since Vedic period. Various acharyas have quoted so many references regarding the clinical efficacy among which swarnaprashana is considered to be important, which has been proved by scientific studies that it boosts the immunity of children.

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