

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 *Kashyapa Samhita* as *Swarna Prashana*, where he explained use of swarnadhatu directly by treating it with madhu and ghrita. In contrary to this Acharya Sushruta 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 *swarnaprashana* is mentioned from the time of birth till the sthanya utpatti³. It is also an integral part of *medhya rasayana*⁴. Properties of swarna are told as *swadu* and *tikta rasa*, *hrudya*, *bruhmaniya* and *andrasayana*⁵. 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 ghrita, licked with *anamika anguli*⁶. We also get reference of spoon made of Swarna being used for the administration of Swarna in *Jaathakarma*⁷. Swarna proves to be beneficial as far as preservation aspect is concerned. Anjana done with *swarnashalaka* is considered being best and it is even told to be stored in *swarna patra*⁸. 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 vidhi*^{10,11}. In folklore practices also swarna is taken into use.

Swarnasevana in a person affected with visha has got great role. i.e. after doing shodhana 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. *Acharya Charaka* was the first person to mention the quantity of swarna as 2 *yava* to be added for *Aindri rasayana*¹⁵. For the first time among *brihatrayee* *Astanga Sangrahakara* mentioned to use swarna after converting into *bhasma* form¹⁶.

During the period of Laghutrayee:

Acharya Sharangadhara has also given due importance to swarna. He mentions to use swarna after subjecting to *nirvapa* in *dravadra* *vyas* 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 *bijapurawarasa* 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 marana*¹⁷.

According to *Bhavaprakasha* it is *medha* and *smruthikara*; *sthavara* and *jangamavishanashaka* and *shoshahara* etc¹⁸.

Other References -

Acharya Kashyapa has broadly highlighted the method of preparation and adminis-

tration of swarna in the name of *swarnaprashana*. 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 *medha* and *bala*, acts as *ayushya*, *mangalakra*, *punya*, *vrushya*, *varnya*, *grahaapaha*. By one month itself baby becomes *paramamedhavi* and by 6 months he becomes *shrutadhara*¹⁹.

If food is consumed in *swarnabhajanapatra* it becomes *pathya* & capable to cure diseases & increases eye sight. Wearing gold ornaments are *suchi* & fortunate & satisfactory. *Swarna* is considered in one of *asthamanglika dravya*²⁰.

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 *kesar* coloured 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 *ayurvedhka*, *prabha*, *dhisruthikara*, *ajaraakaari*, *viryavruddhikara*, *vishagadhahara* etc²⁴.

While in Rasatarangini we get reference of *swarnavarka/swarnapatala* which is *sakshepakana-shaka*, *netrya*, *hrudya*, *amlapittahara* etc²⁵. Even we find reference regarding *swarna-lavana* (gold chloride) said to be used as injection. It is having properties like *vrushya*, *tridoshshamaka*, useful in *pushpaavarodha*, *phirangaroga*, *apasmara* etc²⁶. Swarnabhasma helps in enhancing *saundarya*, *mukhalavanya* of a stree. It is *chinta*, *shoka*, *bhaya*, *krodhanashana*, *kshaya-kasaghna* and *tridoshajwara nashaka*²⁷.

Swarna is used in the process of *jaarana*²⁸. Swarna is told to be related with *guru graha*²⁹.

Swarna is widely used in different dosage forms, which are used in both acute and chronic diseases. There are pottalikalpas like *Hemagarbhapottali*, *Ratnagarbhapottali*, *Lokeshwarpottali*, *parpatikalpas* like *Swarnaparpati*, *kupipakvarasayana* like *Makaradhwaja*, *Swarnasindura*, *vatis* like *Sutashekhara rasa*, *Rasaraja rasa*, *Vasantakusumakara rasa*, *Vasanthamalati rasa*, *Swasakasachinthamani rasa*, *Swarna-Lakshmi vilasa rasa*, *Kumara kalyana rasa*, *arishtas* like *Saraswatharishta*, *avalehya* like *Kesarikalpa*, *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 swarna 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 *pumsavanasamskara*. 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 yogas 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 swarnachurnato 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 *pathyapathya*, *bilwaphala* told to be contraindicated while administering *swarnabhasma*. Importance of swarnabhasma is highlighted like when any kind of *shodhan* and *shamana* 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 nervine 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 *swarna prashana* is considered to be important, which has been proved by scientific studies that it boosts the immunity of children.

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