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Scientific Revolution in Ayurveda!

Sarpi Sarvasnehottamam Matam

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Abstract:

Ayurveda in spite of being one of the oldest sciences in the world, has given concepts and therapies which are relevant and effective even in the present era. Use of *Sneha dravyas* (oleaginous substances) internally as well as externally is one of such concepts. *Sneha Kalpana* is processing a drug with a *snehadravya* to increase its potency. *Ayurveda* considers *ghruta, taila, vasa, majja* as main *Sneha dravyas* amongst which *ghruta* is considered as the best. *Ghruta*, is one of those few substances which act on all the three *doshas* i.e. *vaat, pitta, kapha*. Action of *ghruta* on *vaat* and *pitta* is understandable because of the *viruddhagunas* of *ghruta* and *vaat-pitt doshas*. But a confusion is created while understanding the action of *ghruta* in *Kapha-doshaj* condition as both these have similar properties. Action of *ghruta* on *kaphadosha* is explained with the help of unique feature of *ghruta* which is known as *sanskaranuvartana*.

This article deals with the action of *ghruta* on *tridosha* and the concept of its *sanskaranuvartan* property.

Key words: *sarpi ghruta, tridosha, Sneha, Samskara*

Introduction:

Sneha dravya (oleaginous substances) can be used internally as well as externally (local application or message).

Internal use of *Sneha* are of two types:

1. *Achhhapan*: oral intake of *snehadravya* alone (not mixed or processed with any drug or food product)

2. *Vicharana / Sneha kalpana*: *Sneha Kalpana* can be defined as a pharmaceutical process to prepare oleaginous medicaments from substances like *kalka*, *kwatha*, *drava dravya* etc.

In *sutrasthana* of *Charak Samhita* the group of chapters which deals with medicine and preparations i.e. *Kalpanachatushka* starts with *snehadhaya*. This tells the importance of *snehadravya*.

Amongst all *Sneha dravyas* *ghrita*, *taila*, *vasa* and *majja* are considered to be *uttamsnehas*¹. (rest of the *Sneha dravyas* include *dugdha*, *dadhi* etc). Further it is stated that *ghrita* is the best one among four of these².

Objectives:

1. To review the literature regarding *Ghrita* as a *Sneha dravya*.
2. To understand the action of *ghrita* on *tridosha*.
3. To understand the *sanskaranuvartan* property of *ghrita*

Methodology:

A manual search was done from the classical texts of *Ayurveda* i.e. *Brihatrayi* (*Charak Samhita*, *Sushrut Samhita* and *ashtang Hridaya*) to review the literature.

Discussion:

There are two sources of *Sneha dravyas*³ as mentioned in *Charak Samhita*.

1. *Sthavar* i.e. plant origin -

Eg. *Teela*, *Priyal*, *Bibhitaki*, *Erand*, *Madhuk*, *Sarshap*, *Kusumbha*, *Bilwa*,

Aksh etc.

2. *Jangam* i.e. animal origin –

Eg. *Matsya* (fishes), *Mrug* (animals), *Pakshi* (birds) and their products like milk, curd, fats etc.

Definition of *Snehadravyas*

According to *Charakachrya*, *Dravyas* having following *gunas* are said to be *snehandravya*⁴.

Drava (liquid)

Sukshma (subtle)

Sara (moving)

Snigdha (oily)

Pichhil (sliminess)

Guru (heavy)

Sheetal (cold)

Manda (dull)

Mridu (soft)

There are four main *sheha dravyas*⁵.

1. *Sarpi/ghrita* (Ghee)

2. *Taila* (Oil)

3. *Vasa* (Animal fats)

4. *Majja* (Bone marrow)

Ghrita

According to *Charakacharya*, *Ghrita* has following properties⁶

-reduces *pitta* and *kaphadosha*

-is beneficial for *Rasa dhatu*, *Shukra dhatu* and *Oja*.

-decreases heat in the body.

-enhances *swara*(voice) and *varna* complexion.

-brings *mardav* (softness) to body.

According to *Sushrutacharya*, *Ghrita* is⁷

Madhur, mridu (soft)sheetaveerya, anabhishyandi, shehan, decreases Udavarta-Unmad-Apasmara-Shool-Jwar-Anaha-Vatadosha-Pittadosha, Agnideepak, Nourishes Smriti, Mati. Medha, Kanti, Swara, Lavanya, Soukumarya, Oja, Teja, Bala, Ayushya, Vrushya, Medhya, Vayasthapak, Guru, Chakshushya, increases Kaphadosha, Vishahara, Rakshoghna.

Action of *Ghrita* on *Tridosha*

1. *Vaat-dosha*

Snighdhaguna (oiliness) is the foremost property of *Ghrita* and *rukshaguna* (dryness) is the foremost property of *vaat-dosha*. *Snighdha* and *ruksha* being *vishesh* to each other, *Ghrita* does the action of *vaat-shaman* according to *amanyavishesh siddhanta*.⁸

Though *sheetaguna* is common between *Ghrita* and *vaat-dosha*, according to *anshansha Kalpana*; *rukshaguna* is more dominant than *sheetaguna* in *vaat-dosha* thus makes *Ghrita* one of the leading *dravyas* for *vaat-doshashamana*. *Ghrita* when processed with other *vaat shamak dravyas*, gives better results.

Charakacharya in 25th *adhyaya* of *sutrasthana* states that *ghrita* is 'agrya' i.e. The best for *prashaman* of *vaat* and *pitta dosha*.⁹

Sushrutacharya in 4th *adhyaya* of *chikitsasthana*¹⁰ and *vagbhatacharya* in 13th *adhyaya* of *ashtanga hridaya*¹¹ mention *snehan* as a *upakram* for *vaatadosha*.

2. *Pitta-dosha*

According to *charakacharya* *pitta-dosha* is of *Katu rasa, Ushnaveerya* and *Teekshnaguna*; *Ghrita* being exactly opposite of this i.e. *Madhur rasa, Sheet virya* and *Manda guna* does the action of *pitta-shaman*.¹²

Vagbhatacharya states that *Ghrita* being *sheeta* in *veerya* wins over the *pitta-dosha* which is *Ushna veerya*.¹³

Therefore, in *vyadhi* like *Jeerna jwara* where *snighdha guna* of *pitta* is reduced and *Rukshata* in the body is increased due to *Ushnaguna* dominance *Ghrita* is advised as treatment¹⁴.

Vagbhatacharya in *jwara chikitsa* advises licking of *Ghruta* in *piitadhikya*¹⁵. This causes *pitta shaman* without affecting the *agni* because of the quantity being low.

As stated earlier *Charakacharya* in 25th *adhyaya* of *Sutrasthana* states that *ghrita* is ‘*agrya*’ i.e. The best for *prashaman* of *vaat* and *pitta dosha*.

3.Kapha-dosha

An obvious doubt arises about action of *Ghruta* on raised *kaphadosha* as both *Ghruta* and *Kapha-dosha* are ‘*tulyaguna*’ i.e. similar in properties. The action of *Ghruta* on *kaph-dosha* is explained with a unique property of *Ghruta* known as “sanskaranuvartan”

Sanskaranuvartan property of Ghruta

The word *Sanskaranuvartan* is made of two words viz. *Sanskar* and *Anuvartana*.

Sanskar - *sanskar* is defined exchange and enhancement of *gunas*¹⁶.

Anukaranam-Anuvartanam/ Anukaran is to follow or to copy.

Ghruta when treated with other drugs adapt their properties (*gunas*) without giving away its own properties.

For Eg. When *Ghruta* is treated with drugs like *Chitrak* which are *Ushna-Teekshnaguna*, *Ghruta* adapts their *gunas* without giving away its own *sheeta* and *mandaguna*. Here one may doubt that “how opposite *Gunas* like *ushna-sheeta* stay together?” To which *Acharya Chakrapani* answers that though *Ghruta* is treated with drugs the *Ushna* and *Sheetagunas* do not stay in same *dravyas*¹⁷.

This property of *Ghruta* is known as Sanskaranuvartan. With this property *Ghruta* acts on *Kaphadosha*.

Other *snehadravyas* when treated with drugs give away their own properties and adapt the new properties of the respective drug.

For eg *taila*. *Chandanadi taila* is used for *daha-prashamana* because *taila* gives away its *ushnaguna* and behaves like a *sheet dravya* after being treated with *chandanadi sheeta dravyas*.

Ghrita on the other hand adapts the *gunas* of other drug and maintains its own *gunas* at the same time.

Therefore, *charakacharya* states that *Ghrita* wins over *kaphadosha* with the help of *samskara* even if it is '*tulyaguna*' (similar in properties) to *kapha dosha*¹⁸.

Vagbhatacharya also says that *Ghrita* wins over *Kaphadosha* after proper *samskara*¹⁹.

Conclusion:

Ghrita is one of those ingredients which are being used in Indian cuisine from centuries; Hence is familiar to the culture.

It satisfies all the *gunas* of *Sneha dravya* viz. *Sukshma, Sara, Snigdha,*

Pichhil, Guru, Sheetal, Manda, Mridu.

It acts upon all the three *doshas*.

Ghrita shows unique property of '*Sanskaranuvartanam*'

It is said that *Ghrita* can bring about thousands of actions and be miraculous as treatment when processed with correct drugs and used properly²⁰.

All these make *Ghrita* the best *Sneha Dravya*.

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