

CONCEPT OF SHODHANA - A REVIEW WITH REFERENCE TO RASASHASTRA

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ABSTRACT

Shodhana, which literally means purification and converting drug fit for further procedure. Shodhana is procedure necessary for every drug before taking it for adding in any compound or subjecting it for further processes. In Ayurvedic system the name shodhana occurs in different contexts. In Kayachikitsa the word shodhana signifies the treatment aspect by which doshas are eliminated from the body. In Rasa Shastra, it is purification or washing out the unwanted or undesired impurities of the substance and is the basic procedure. Shodhana is a swatantravidhi and also is the very first step of aushadha samskara. Shodhana in Ayurvedic Rasashastra plays a major and powerful role through which increases the therapeutic efficacy of a drug. Though the concept of shodhana is in practice since ancient times, its importance has enhanced after the development and incorporation of Rasa Shastra in Ayurvedic system of medicine. The process of shodhana to be adopted depends upon the material for which shodhana to be done. This depends upon the source of material, its chemical composition, impurities and its physical properties. By shodhana process many material changes are elicited both physically and chemically.

KEYWORDS: Shodhana, Samskara, Rasa-dravya, Purification, Detoxification

INTRODUCTION

Shodhana is an essential intermediary pharmaceutical process used for purification of metals and minerals during their conversion and usage into different dosage forms and purposes. It is processes of detoxification by which physical and chemical blemishes and toxic materials are eliminated thus making the material suitable for further processing. Purified drug in the lines of modern science is different from that of Ayurveda as the former is absolutely the main drug and latter

may contain other particles also. Most of the raw materials used in Rasa Shastra are obtained from earth and hence there is every chance of impurities, toxicities, heterogeneous qualities due to mixing with different substances is a common factor. When the drugs are used by the humans then they are subjected to shodhana process to eliminate their doshas and also to increase the potency. Thus shodhana is a process where the toxic or unwanted properties of a drug are removed and additional properties

or alteration in the properties is seen along with changes in Physical, Chemical or Biological properties.

In Ayurvedic Medicine the concept of shodhana treatment was in practice since the times of Charaka Samhita and it also included the measures claimed to be responsible for the alteration or addition of the properties of the drugs while subjected to various pharmaceutical operations and treatments. Though references regarding the shodhana treatment are available since the time of Ayurvedic classics but the details about procedure could be traced only after the development of Rasashastra/Rasachikitsa (Mineral therapy) in Ayurvedic medicine during medieval period in which mineral/ poisonous and sub poisonous drugs acquired prominence over other types of drugs in the therapy. These drugs acquired prominence because of many superior qualities these possess, than their counterparts.

It is with this view mind the shodhana method of Ayurvedic pharmaceutical science has been developed to the extent that, when applied properly render these drugs either completely free from toxic/undesired side effects or minimize them to the desired extent. Scholars of Rasa shastra developed shodhana treatment not only to remove their toxic materials completely or minimize them to the least possible level, but to convert them to the pharmaceutically suitable forms in which these may be absorbed into the system if used internally or may be treated further.

DEFINITION

Charaka Samhita has mentioned Shodhana as *Shauchakarana* (*Shuddhikarana*)

meaning the process through which unwanted or toxic properties are removed¹.

The same concept has been adopted by Acharyas of Rasashastra from 8th century A.D., onwards for drugs of herbal, animal, metal or mineral origin. The texts also explained separate shodhana process for individual drugs along with certain common procedures for group of drugs².

According to texts of Rasashastra, Shodhana process is carried out by subjecting a drug to different procedures like Bhavana, Nirvapana, Dhalana and Swedana etc³. The process by which purification is done is called as Shodhana. Pearls and other Ratnas are purified not for actual detoxification or to remove impurities, to intensify the potency of them⁴.

In case of mercury also it has been mentioned that when it is mixed with doshas like Kanchuka, Naisargika, Yougika, Prayogika it is not used in rasa preparations. In this stage it is said to be poison or Visha. If it is processed with herbal decoctions or subjected to Ashtadasha or Ashtavidha samskara it is ready to use in any rasayoga and is considered to be nectar.

Though the literal meaning of word shodhana is purification, it has wider implications. The collective definition of shodhana is that Shodhana is a process where it removes unwanted part from the drug or its ill effects, which enhances the properties of the drug suitable for desired actions.

OBJECTIVES OF SHODHANA:

1. Removal of impurities
2. Elimination of harmful material
3. Modification of un-desired properties
4. Augment the qualities

5. Potentiate therapeutic efficacy
6. Conversion of some of the characteristics of the drug
7. Render the drug fit for further / subsequent processing.

CLASSIFICATION:

a) Samanya Shodhana:

It is a common procedure used for drugs of a particular group where the drugs of a particular group are subjected to the similar procedure though individually⁵.

b) Vishesh Shodhana:

It is a specialized technique or procedure employed for a single particular drug individually⁶.

Both the above procedures are further classified into Saagni and Niragni.

- i) **Saagni:** Nirvapa, Dhalana, Bharjana, Puta, Swedana, Patana
- ii) **Niragni:** Bhavana, Prakshalana, Shoshana, Sinchana, Nimajjana, Gharshana

ROLE OF MEDIA (SHODHANA VARGA) IN SHODHANA⁷:

In the course of Shodhana method the drugs of mineral origin are subjected to various grinding, heating, fomenting, subliming, and distilling etc. processes which in turn remove soluble, evaporable and washable impurities from these drugs. For this purpose these drugs are either treated with acidic, alkaline and neutral types of vegetable extractives/ liquids or with oily materials in the presence or absence of heat for specified period. In some cases only heat treatment is given in a specified apparatus so as to remove their volatile or thermo-stable impurities. Grinding in hot & cold condition is also done to reduce and disperse the particles of

the materials and thus exposing maximum portion of the drug to the purifying material. By subjecting to different processes, the drugs are made homologous to the cells, their toxicity gets reduced and acceptability by the cells is increased.

The media used in the process of shodhana has an important role in breaking down or altering the chemical constituent that is not required. It is very interesting that specific media is used for specific substance. The media acts like a solvent to dissolve the material for easy separation from the insoluble impurities to eradicate toxic chemical substances from the drugs and also helps in physical transformation of some of metals and minerals

Various physico-chemical changes occur depending upon the selection of the media during the shodhana such as reduction in particle size, variation in density and granular size, variation in elemental composition of major elements and addition as well as deletion of minor elements from the raw material.

Various techniques along with different media are referred in Ayurvedic texts for the shodhana, knowing different nature of impurities; ancient scholars have suggested different types of media for their purification as were considered necessary. There are abundant examples of ancient scholars of Rasa Shastra using different media and material of different sources in the process of shodhana depending on the Drug and purpose.

SOURCE:

- i) **Plant Origin-** Swarasa, Kashaya, Kshira, Taila, Sukta, Kanji, Arka, Madya, Drava kalpa

ii) **Animal Origin** - Ksheera, Madhu, Mutra, Rakta, Artava, Dadhi, Takra, Dadhimastu, Mamsa Rasa, Kukkutanda Taila, Hastidanta kwatha.

iii) **Mineral origin** - Jala, Drava, Churnodaka, Nimbukamla

TYPES OF MEDIA USED IN SHODHANA:

Table No. 1: DIFFERENT MEDIA USED IN SHODHANA PROCEDURE

S.NO	MEDIA	EXAMPLE	UTILITY
1.	Sneha Varga	Taila, Ghrita, Dugdha	Softening of Hard material ⁸
2.	Amla Varga	Takra, Kanji, Nimbu, Amalaki	Mass breaking and disintegration ⁹
3.	KsharaVarga	Mutra, Kulattha Kwatha, Kadali Kanda	Makes the material soft and brittle ¹⁰
4.	KatuVarga	Nirgundi, Hariraki, Bhringaraja	Disintegration and breaking the cohesion ¹¹
5.	TiktaVarga	Vasa, Swarna Ksheeri, Shireesha	Absorption of Moisture ¹²
6.	Kashaya Varga	Kanchanara, Haritaki, Vibhitaki	Eliminates external impurities ¹³
7.	Visha Varga	Shringataka, Kalakuta, Vtsanabha, Saktuka, Peeta Visha	Removes inertia in the substance ¹⁴
8.	Vitgana / varga	Paravata, Chasha, Kapota, Kalapina, Gridhra, Kukkuta	Sarva Loha shodhana ¹⁵
9.	MridukaraVarga	Mahishasringi, Indrayava	Softening of hard metals ¹⁶
10.	DravakaVarga	Guda, Guggulu, Gunja, Ghrita, Madhu, Tankana,	Soften and liquefies metals ¹⁷
11.	Lavana Varga	Samudra, Saindhava, Kacha, Bida, Sauvarchala, Romaka, Chullika, Audbhida Lavana	SarvalohaDravana And Shodhana ¹⁸

SHODHANA GANA:

- a) Kacha Lavana b) Tankana
c) Shipra (Mukta Shukti / Navasadara / Mahisha Mutra)¹⁹

According to Rasarnava:

- i) Kacha Lavana ii) Tankana iii) Sauveera²⁰

Useful in extracting sattva from Maharasa and also in removing dosha from Baddha Parada, Loha and also Kapalika doshas from Parada.

It has been mentioned in Rasarnava that the drugs of Ksharavarga eradicate all mala Doshas. Amla Varga drugs are useful in Shodhana and Jarana where as Visha Varga removes inertia from the drugs and Sneha varga impart softness and remove roughness in the drugs²¹.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF SHODHANA PROCEDURES:

In Rasashastra literature, varieties of Shodhana methods for substances are

described. There are variations in medicinal substances, instruments and also duration. The process of shodhana to be adopted depends upon the material for which shodhana to be done. This depends upon the

source of material, its chemical composition, impurities and its physical properties. By shodhana process many material changes are elicited both physically and chemically.

Table No. 2: DIFFERENT SHODHANA METHODS OF RASA SHASTRA

S.NO	PROCEDURE	EXAMPLE	PURPOSE
1.	Abhisheka	Not in Common Practice	Removal of external impurities ²²
2.	Bharjana	Gairika Shodhana	Removal of Moisture content ²³
3.	Bhavana	Sasyaka Shodhana	Reduction of particle size and also transfer of impurities from material to liquid media ²⁴
4.	Dhalana	Gandhaka Shodhana	Separation of fat soluble impurities ²⁵
5.	Gaalana	Gandhaka Shodhana	Separation of adulterants and heterogeneous substances ²⁶
6.	Gharshana	Bhallataka Shodhana	Brings down the toxicity and also separation of outer covering ²⁷
7.	Mardana	Kaseesa Shodhana	Reduction in particle size ²⁸
8.	Murcchana	Parada Shodhana	Reduction in particle size ²⁹
9.	Nimajjana / Stapanana	Vatsanabha Shodhana	Brings down the toxicity and Removal of outer covering ³⁰
10.	Nirjalikarana	Kankshi Shodhana	Evaporation of water molecules ³¹
11.	Nirvapa / Nisheka / Snapana	Abhraka Shodhana	To brittleness & softness ³²
12.	Pachana	Guggulu Shodhana	Reduction of stickiness & Softening the material ³³
13.	Patana	Parada Shodhana	Removal of Lead & Tin ³⁴
14.	Prakshalana	Shilajith Shodhana	Removal of dust & Spurious material ³⁵
15.	Pruthakikarana	Guggulu Shodhana	Removal of adulterants and external impurities ³⁶
16.	Putana	Swarna Shodhana	To bring brittleness & softness ³⁷
17.	Shoshana	Karpasa Beeja Shodhana	Removal of Moisture content ³⁸
18.	Sinchana	Tamra Shodhana	To make the substance brittle ³⁹
19.	Swedana	Haratala Shodhana	Reduction of Toxicity, Removal of impurities and to soften ⁴⁰
20.	Vilayana	Shilajith Shodhana	Removal of physical impurities ⁴¹

EFFECTS:

- a) Removal of Physical and Chemical Impurities
- b) Separation of undesired substances
- c) Detoxification
- d) Reduction of hardness
- e) Reduction in particle size
- f) Increased brittleness, softness and malleability
- g) Material turns from heterogeneous to homogenous
- h) Transformation of certain properties and qualities
- i) Augment the qualities
- j) Potentiate therapeutic efficacy
- k) Render the substance fit for further processing

DISCUSSION

Minerals basically are impure i.e., not fit for internal administration in crude form. They contain many impurities, toxins which may cause many untoward side effects in the body. In order to neutralize these toxins, the minerals are subjected to many purification measures in which physical & chemical impurities are removed and the drug is made safe for further processing to make it therapeutically fit. Shodhana is the first samskara and it is necessary to understand the concept of shodhana properly. The literal meaning of Shodhana may signify purification. But when we analyze from the point of alchemy it carries some scientific meaning. The term Purification indicates the state of purity. May be the drug is free from spurious substance, but as far as Alchemy is concerned, it cannot be used as a therapeutic agent. Because the concept of Purification and the concept of Shodhana are entirely different and there is a huge difference

which is being mentioned in Indian alchemy. Certainly, one can understand that there is a strong rationality between the method, duration, instruments and the drugs which are being used in the process of Shodhana.

Eventually the scholars of Rasashastra gave immense contribution to Indian Pharmaceutics, in the form of various processes, use of different drugs, different equipments, duration of each processes etc. This shows that the seers of Alchemy had immense knowledge about the purification and their mode of administration and the scholars have heavily emphasized on the process of shodhana.

CONCLUSION

It is a matter of fact that our ancient scholars of Alchemy were much aware of impurities and their adverse effects on their administration. In fact, while explaining the Metals & Minerals in classic literature, they have given a lot of importance on unpurified drugs and their side effects. Hence, the science of Alchemy strictly recommends that these drugs should be administered in purified form.

Shodhana is a prerequisite for all Rasa dravyas. It is not only to remove the Physical or chemical impurities but also to imbibe the properties of herbal drugs used in the process thereby increasing the potency of the drug. It also helps in the further processing of the drug i.e. marana. The shodhana process plays an important vital role in Ayurveda Rasa Shastra. It is not only a simple physical / chemical purification. It is a process of both addition and separation. Shodhana is a samskara visesha. It helps in sanghatabheda of a drug, removing dravya

gata and aushadhagata doshas and makes it more marana upayogi and also helps in achieving guna vriddhi of the drug. Apart from removing the impurities shodhana treatments of Rasa Shastra also impregnate organic materials and their properties in the inorganic drugs/ products to facilitate their utilization by the body tissue and organs. Hence, the concept of Shodhana (processing or purification) in Rasashastra is not merely a process of purification/detoxification but also a process resorted to enhance the potency and efficacy of the drug. That's why the shodhana plays an important role in Rasashastra.

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