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A Critical Review on Concept of Shodhana in Rasashastra

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda, the science of life is in practice since the *Vedic* period. *Rasashastra* deals with mercury and other mineral drugs which are having high therapeutic value over the herbal drugs. *Rasaushadhis* (herbo-mineral preparations) are a treasure in *Ayurveda* therapeutics. The raw drugs generally possess lot of toxic impurities in its natural form and unwanted heterogenous qualities which are harmful for therapeutic use. To overcome these adverse effects of raw drugs and to make it suitable for therapeutic administration, the drugs are subjected initially to *Shodhana* process. *Shodhana* helps in removing all the impurities and potentiates its efficacy, which inturn reduces the side effects of the drug. The purified *Rasaushadhis* are either administered directly or may be subjected to further process like *Marana*, *Satwapatana*, *Amrutikarana, Lohitikarana* etc. The concept of *Shodhana* depends upon the structure of the drug, composition of the drug, impurities of the drug, qualities of the drug and actions of the drug. The changes in the raw material after purification are also established scientifically by modern analytical parameters.

KEYWORDS: *Purification, Impurities, Shodhana, Rasa Dravya.*

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INTRODUCTION

The raw ingredients used in *Rasashastra* are obtained from earth and hence there is every chance of impurities or toxicities due to mixing with different substances. To neutralize the possible toxins when used by humans, drugs are subjected to specific purificatory procedures called *Shodhana*. It is one of the steps for converting raw substances into dosage form. According to *Ayurveda*[1], *Shodhana* is not only the process of detoxification, but also a process of *Samaskara* (potentiating the therapeutic efficacy) of drugs which reduces the side effects. Though references regarding the *Shodhana* procedures are available since the *Vedic* time in Ayurvedic classics, the details about procedures could be traced only after the development of *Rasashastra* or *Rasachikitsa* during medieval period in which mineral or poisonous drugs acquired prominence over herbal drugs in therapy[2]. *Shodhana* process fulfills the objectives like removal of impurities, elimination of harmful materials, modification of undesired properties, reduction of the toxicity, potentiating therapeutic efficacy and renders the drug fit for further subsequent processing.

Definition

Shodhana is enumerated as *Shuddhikarana* in *Charaka Samhita*[3] meaning the process through which unwanted or toxic properties of a substance is removed. Classical *Rasashastra* texts also mentioned *Shodhana* as the processes which is done to remove the impurities from a *Dravya*[4]. In Ayurvedic Formulary of India, *Shodhana* is defines as the process of removal of impurities and potentiating of drugs. It is a process in which *Kshalana* (Washing), *Mardana* (Pounding), *Bhavana* (Levigation), *Swedana* (Boiling), *Bharjana* (Frying), *Nirvapa* (Heating & Dipping in specified liquids) which are carried out on mineral drugs with a view to eliminate impurities[5].

Types [6]

A. ***Samanya Shodhana***- it is a general procedure mentioned for all drugs of a particular group. Common method for purification of metals. Eg. *Samanya Shodhana* of *Dhatus*.

B. ***Vishesha Shodhana***- it is a specific procedure for a particular drug individually and not for a group. It should be done after *Samanya Shodhana*.

Both the above procedures are further classified into S*aagni* and *Niragni*.

1. ***Saagni*** (with fire): *Nirvapa, Dhalana, Bharjana, Puta, Swedana, Patana*
2. ***Niragni*** (without fire): *Bhavana, Prakshalana, Shoshana, Sinchana, Nimajjana, Gharshana*

Sources of *Shodhana Dravya* [7]

A. **Plant Origin*:*** *Swarasa, Kashaya, Kshira, Taila, Sukta, Kanji, Arka, Madya*

B. **Animal Origin**: *Ksheera, Madhu, Mutra, Rakta, Artava, Dadhi, Takra, Dadhimastu, Mamsa Rasa, Kukkutanda Taila, Hastidanta Kwatha.*

C. **Mineral Origin**: *Jala, Drava, Churnodaka, Nimbu Swarasa.*

Objectives of *Shodhana* [8]

When we analyze various methods of *Shodhana* described in different texts of *Rasashastra*, we can easily understand that they are advised with specific intentions which are:

1. Elimination of Physical & Chemical impurities.
2. Neutralization of toxins.
3. To Induce & Enhance therapeutic qualities.
4. To Impart Organic qualities.
5. To make Metals & Minerals suitable for administration.
6. To facilitate further process like *Marana, Satwapatana, Lohitikarana,* etc

Table 1: Methods of *Shodhana* [9]

Si No	Procedure	Meaning	Examples	Effects
1	*Nirvapa*	Heating the drug & dipping in specified liquid	*Abhraka Shodhana*	Brings brittleness & softness
2	*Dhalana/ Avapa*	Melting the drug & pouring into the specified liquid	*Gandhaka Shodhana*	Separation of fat soluble impurities
3	*Bharjana*	To fry or to dehydrate	*Kankshi Shodhana*	Water molecules will be evaporated
4	*Puta*	Exposing the drug for fire	*Swarna Shodhana*	Brings brittleness & softness
5	*Swedana*	Boiling the drug in specified liquid for a stipulated time	*Haratala Shodhana*	Toxicity will be reduced
6	*Patana*	Subjecting the drug to distillation	*Parada Shodhana*	Lead & Tin will be reduced
7	*Bhavana*	Grinding the drug with specified liquid medium for a stipulated time	*Sasyaka Shodhana*	Particle size will be reduced
8	*Prakshalana*	Process of washing	*Shilajatu Shodhana*	It removes Spurious substance
9	*Nimaajjana*	Soaking in specified liquid medium for a prescribed time	*Vatsanabha Shodhana*	Brings down the amount of Toxicity
10	*Gharshana*	Rubbing	*Bhallataka Shodhana*	Brings down the amount of Toxicity

Table 2: *Samanya Shodhana* of *Dravya Varga* [10]

Dravya Varga	Method of *Samanya Shodhana*
Maharasa	Bhavana in swarasa or kwatha of Suryavartaka/Kadali/Shigru/ Kakamachi with Kshara, Lavana and Amla Dravyas (RRS 3/113-14)
Uparasa	Bhavana in swarasa or kwatha of Suryavartaka/Kadali/Shigru/ Kakamachi with Kshara, Lavana and Amla Dravyas (RRS 3/113-14)
Sadharana Rasa	Bhavana with Matulunga Swarasa and Ardraka Swarasa for 3 days (RRS 3/141)
Ratna Varga	Swedana in dola yantra for 3 hours by keeping different liquid medias [manikya-amla dravya, muktaphala- jayanti swarasa, pravala- kshariya drava, Tarksya- godugda, vajra- tandulodaka, Indranila- Nili vrksa swarasa, Gomeda- Gorocana jala, Vaidurya- triphala kwatha] (RRS 4/57-58)
Dhatu Varga	Nirvapa in 1)Taila, 2)Takra, 3)Gomutra, 4) Aaranala, 5) Kulathakwatha –in that order, for seven times, in each of the liquid (RRS 5/13)

Sudha Varga	Shankha, Sambuka, Godanti- Swedana with jambira Nimbu Swarasa for 1 yama (RT), Khatika- Prakshalana (RT), Samudraphena- Bhavana with Nimbu swarasa (RT) [11]
Kshara Varga	Tankana Nirjalikarana. In an iron vessel, Tankana is heated till the moisture content completely evaporates (RT) [11]
Visha/Upavisha	Swedana with Godugha (RT) Nimajjana with Gomutra for 3 days (Ay. Pr. 5/49-50) [12]

Changes after *Shodhana* Process [13]

1. **Physical changes-**

- Elimination of physical impurities: Eg.- *Kampillaka* is separated from brick powder. *Guggulu* is separated from physical mixture. *Shilajatu* is separated from insoluble physical impurities.
- Reduction in hardness: Eg.- By repeated heating and quenching, hardness of the metal and minerals become less.
- Increase brittleness: Eg.- By repeated heating and quenching in liquid media, cracks are seen on the surface of metals and minerals and they become brittle.
- Reduction in particle size: Eg.- During *Nirvapa* process, cracks are seen on the surface of metals and minerals and these are broken into coarse powder. Reduction of particle size is also achieved by *Bhavana* process.

2. **Chemical changes-**

- Elimination of chemical impurities: Eg.- During *Shodhana* of native *Makshika*, impurities like arsenic gets eliminated by heating.
- Formation of chemical compounds: Eg.- *Lauha* when heated into red hot reacts with atmosphere oxygen to form ferrous-ferric oxide, which is favorable to the body. *Makshika* when fried, sulphur is eliminated, iron and copper partly converts into oxide form.
- Change into desired compound: Eg.- During *Shodhana* of *Tankana* and *Kankshi*, water portion is evaporated and desired chemical compound is formed like crystalline to amorphous form.

3. **Biological changes-**

- The ultimate objective of these physio-chemical changes of the material is to increase its biological availability. *Shodhana* procedure may potentiate its biological efficacy. Sometimes this biological change helps in absorption, smoothness which leads to non- irritability and make the material body friendly.

4. **Therapeutic changes-**

- Minimization of toxicity: Eg.- *Vatsanabha Shodhana* in cow's milk.
- Induction of wanted qualities: Eg.- Conversion of cardiac depressant *Vatsanabha* into cardiac stimulant form after *Shodhana*.
- Potentiation of therapeutic efficacy of the drug: Eg.- *Anjana* purified in the *Bhringaraja swarasa* used for improving eye sight.

Importance of Purification of Poisonous Plants [14]

The poisonous plants mentioned in ancient books of *Ayurveda* are still being used widely in therapeutic purpose. *Ayurvedic* physicians successfully employed these drugs after proper *Shodhana*. Concept of *Shodhana* is mentioned in *Charaka Samhita* in the context of *Danti Dravanti Kalpadhyaya* to reduce the *Vikasi* property of *Danti* root. *Acharya Vagbhata* also mentioned *Shodhana* of drugs of plant origin in detail, in the context of *Bhallataka Rasayana*. It is reported that *Vatsanabha* purified by cow's urine is converted to cardiac stimulant, whereas in raw form it is cardiac depressant. It is clearly mentioned in *Bhava Prakasha* that the toxic effects attributed to unpurified poisonous substances are minimized when these are used after being subjected to *Shodhana*[15]. Hence *Visha Dravyas* should be essentially subjected for *Shodhana* before being used in therapeutics.

DISCUSSION

The media used in the process of *Shodhana* has an essential role in either breaking down or destroying the chemical constituent that is not required. It reduces the particle size of the drug and also softens the drug. Different processes are adopted depending on the nature of the drug, chemical composition, impurities and physical properties. For example if *Sudha Varga Dravyas* when treated with acidic media, all the impurities get nullified. By this technique, we can infer that to purify the calcium compounds; they can be treated in acidic media.

If mineral or poisonous drugs are consumed without proper purification, it will leads to ailments like *Chardi* (vomiting), *Atisara* (diarrhoea), *Twak Vikaras* (skin disorders), *Jwara* (fever), *Ashmari* (renal calculi), and *Hridroga* (heart disease). Therefore, the *Shodhana* process is carried out to neutralize the possible toxins, to enhance the potency and efficacy of the drug.

The main advantages of the concept of *Shodhana* is to remove unwanted substances, to eradicate visible and

invisible impurities, to reduce the toxic effects, to convert heterogenous properties to homogenous one, to remove adulterants present in drug, to make hard matters brittle which helps in easy incineration enhancing the therapeutic value of the drug, to convert the material suitable for further processing. In short, *Shodhana* can be effective in enhancing required proportion and curbing unwanted properties.

CONCLUSION

Shodhana is an essential process in *Rasashastra*. It is not merely a process of separation, purification or detoxification; rather it increases the therapeutic potency and biological efficacy of the drug. Different methods like *Nirvapa, Swedana, Bhavana, Bharjana, Nimajjana* are adopted based on the properties of the drug and its impurities. These processes bring physical and chemical changes to the drugs. Without *Shodhana,* if the medicine is consumed, it will lead to worsening of the condition of illness. *Shodhana* helps in removing unwanted toxic properties of drugs and imparts desired properties. This proves the importance of concept of *Shodhana* in pharmaceutical preparation of *Rasaushadhis*.

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