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Concept of Medicated oil and Ghrita in Ayurvedic Pharmaceutics –“A Literary Review”

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Abstract

Ayurveda the ancient Indian system of medicine, which has its roots in Vedas, is serving man kind since long back. In ancient time, man survived on roots, fruits etc. raw materials which are obtained from nature. As the complexity of diseases increased, his knowledge of plants and their properties increased gradually. According to the severity of disease and condition of patients' different modes of administration are discussed in Ayurveda. To achieve this, many processes were invented in a sense of manufacturing process and they are termed as Kalpanas. Sneha kalpana is widely described in Ayurvedic pharmaceutics under which medicated Oil and Ghrita are prepared. In this paper an attempt has been done to review the concept regarding medicated oil and ghrita discussed in literature of Ayurvedic Pharmaceutics.

Key- Words: Ayurvedic, Pharmaceutics, Oil, Ghrita, Medicated, Sneha Kalpana

Introduction

Ayurveda is one of the oldest scientific medical systems in the world. Its history of origin started almost from vedic period.¹ Acharya Charaka had stated that the main aim of Ayurveda is the maintenance of homeostasis in the functioning of the body tissues². To fulfill the aforesaid aim, many dosages forms are described in Ayurveda. Swarasa (juice), kalka (paste), kwatha (decoction), hima (cold infusion) & phanta (hot infusion), are the basic pharmaceutical preparation coming down since antiquity in some or other form. Acharya Charaka mentioned them as Panchvidhakasayakalpana first time³. Acharya Charaka was of the opinion that the drug having quality to produce arogya⁴ is the best drug. Keeping this view in the mind a number of preparations have been derived from these five basic preparations eg. Asavarishta (fermentation), lepa (paste), churna (powder), sneha kalpana (fatty preparation), vati (pills) etc.

Sneha Kalpana is sum of two words sneha and kalpana. According to the etymology of Sneha its means: *tailadi rasa bheda* denoting fat or fatty material. Kalpana is derived as *kripu Samarthyaya, samarthyarthak krip dhatu + ach evam dhrich pratyay*, which means “to generate power in any desired matter.

Sources of sneha dravya (Materials):⁵

Sneha is obtained from two yonies i.e. sthavar (plant origin) and jangam (fish, quadruped animals and birds come under this group).

Types of Sneha⁶ : Four types of snehas are described in ayurvedic literature. These are ghrīt, taila, vasa & majja. Among them Ghrita and Taila are used in Ayurvedic Pharmaceutics for the preparation of medicines. Cow's Ghrit⁷ is considered as best Ghrita and Sesame⁸ oil (Til Taila) in Taila is considered as best for preparations.

Murchana⁹

It is a process adopted for enhancing the potency of ghrīt or oil and to remove the bad odour and amadosa. Because of murchana sneha will get such a capability to receive more active principles while the veerya of sneha is enhanced. Bhaishajjaya Ratnavali has mentioned about murchana first time. Researches shows¹⁰ that murchana decreases the acid value and increases saponification value. Reduced acid value indicates less percentage of free fatty acids and increased saponification value indicates higher content of low molecular weight fatty acids. Medicated ghrīt/oil preparations containing low molecular fatty acids are absorbed fast.

General Method of Preparation of Sneha¹¹

To prepare any medicated ghrita or Taila, 1 part of kalka dravya (paste of herbs), 4 parts of ghrīt/oil and 16 parts of drava (liquid) are to be mixed together & heat

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by mandagani. Then it is filtered and stored for medicinal uses.

Agni used for sneha paka: Mridu and mdhyamagni (gentle to medium heat) only.

Vessel used for sneha paka: Copper or Iron pan or earthen vessel is taken

Usually wide mouthed and less depth having tin coated, copper vessel is used in many places,

Duration of Sneha paka: ¹²The preparation of medicated oils and ghrita should not be complete within a day in order to increase the absorption of fat soluble constituents of the drugs and to increase potency of the sneha. Its duration also depends on the nature of the liquid substances added to sneha.

Acharya Harita further concluded that taila paka should be completed in 15 days, ghrita paka should be completed in 7 days and kashaya paka should be prepared in 1 prahara.

Precautions:

During the preparation of sneha kalpana precautions should be taken according to different stage of preparation

(i) **Before processing:** Snehas (taila/ghrita) should be pure, clear and without slurry. Old ghrīt & new taila should be taken and should be properly murcchit(refined).

(ii) **During the process:** Maintain the intensity of fire throughout the observation in order to get desirable grade of temperature. Gentle boiling of sneha is to be maintained continuously. The mixture is stirred constantly and carefully to ensure that the kalka does not stick to the bottom of the vessel. Proper care should be taken to determine the proper stages of snehapaka.

(iii) After Sneha Paka Process:

In order to obtain optimum quantity of oil, the kalka should be squeezed at hot state. Preserving Container should be free from moisture and perfuming drugs should be added gently with stirring when the oil is luke warm.

Doses ¹³: 1 pala / 4 tola (48g) in general.

Shelf Life Period of Taila / Ghrita : According to Gov. of India notification 2009, shelf life period of Ghrita is 2 year and Taila 3 years..

Types of Sneha Paka ^{14, 15, 16} In Ayurvedic literature various types of sneha paka(Stages) are mentioned. Total five types of Sneha Paka are described i.e. Ama Paka, Mridu paka, Madhyama paka, Khara paka. And Dagdha Paka in different texts.

Out of them formulations of of Mridu paka, Madhyama paka and Khara paka are therapeutically important. Whereas Ama Paka and dagdha Paka have no therapeutic importance.

Characteristics features of stages of medicated Oil / Ghrita during pharmaceutical processing's having therapeutic importance: ^{17, 18, 19}

Mridu:

According to Acharya Charaka Kalka become like niryasa (gum)

According to Acharya Sushruta sneha and ausadhi (kalka) are separate from each other

According to Acharya Sharangdhar kalka with some liquid part.

Madhya Paka :

According to Acharya Charaka Kalka become like halua & non sticky to vessel

According to Acharya Sushruta kalka became like bees wax

According to Acharya Sharangdhar kalka without liquid but Soft

Khara Paka:

According to Acharya Charaka if pressed in between finger kalka breaks into pieces.

According to Acharya Sushruta black & hard.

According to Acharya Sharangdhar hard kalka.

Sign of Completion of Sneha Pak /Sneha Siddhi Lakshana

^{20,21}

Following features can be seen in the sneha at the time of completion of snehapaka.

Taila /ghrita : Taila should yield good amount of foam, in ghrīt foam should disappear. The taila /ghrita should emerge colour, smell, taste of the drug.

Taila /ghrita should be free from water. Prepared taila or ghrita should not produce any crackling sound if dropped on fire.

From the above reviews Sneha kalpana may be defined as a process, where various things like-Sneha, Kalka, Kwatha Ksheera and Gandha dravyas are employed for the preparation of Oleagenous medicaments (oil/Ghrīt. Fat / water soluble active principles of drugs are extracted in this method. During the preparation extra benefits of Ghrita and Taila are added in formulations as their qualities are also mixed in drugs. Cooking should be done on medium temperature. Special emphasis should be given on Styage detection. Medicated Oil / Ghrītas are having more extra power and shelf life.

Conclusion

1. Snehas enhance jivana (life), varnya (complexion), bala (strength) and does sharira upachaya (anabolism).
2. The water soluble as well as fat soluble active principles can be transformed into sneha (fatty) media and this addition of properties of material made the snehas potent and effective

3. Cooking should be done on mild to moderate temperature.
4. Expiry of potency of Medicated Taila is 3 years and of Medicated Ghrita is 2 Years.
5. Sneha kalpanas has different mode of administration that makes it more suitable for therapeutic purposes. These all are described systematically in Ayurvedic classical literature.
6. Due to all this factors the sneha kalpanas has got a unique role among all kalpanas as well as upkalpana of Ayurvedic pharmaceuticals.

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