

REVIEW ARTICLE

Conceptual Insights on *Shodhanartha Snehapana* and its Effect on Lipid Homeostasis – Review Article

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: *Snehapana*, the oral administration of medicated ghee or oil, is a preparatory procedure before *Shodhana Karma* (purification), which facilitate the elimination of toxin from the body. The influence of *Agni*, *Koshtha* plays a major role in *Shodhanartha Snehapana*, but still the concerns remain regarding possible lipid fluctuations during therapy.

Methods: This conceptual review analyzes classical Ayurvedic texts and available scientific studies to elucidate the role of *Agni* and *Koshtha* in determining the suitability, dose, and duration of *Shodhanartha Snehapana*. Parameters, such as *Ruchi*, *Jarana shakti*, and *Abhyavaharana shakti*, were reviewed for assessing *Agni*. The probable mode of action of *Snehapana* elucidates the lipid metabolism and the significance of *Shodhana Karma* in maintaining the lipid balance.

Results and Discussion: The Duration of *Snehapana* varies from individual by the action of *Agni* and *Koshtha*, that is. 3 days for *Mridu*, 5 days for *Madhyama*, and 7 days for *Krura Koshtha*. By understanding, *Snehapana* mobilizes doshas from peripheral tissues to the gastrointestinal tract for elimination. Evidence suggests that while plasma lipid levels may transiently rise during therapy, they return to normal after proper *Shodhana*. The effect of *Snehapana* on lipid metabolism is regulatory rather than pathological. Individualized assessment of *Agni*, *Koshtha*, and metabolic status is crucial before administration. *Purva Karma*, such as *Rukshana Karma* in obesity and hyperlipidemia, prevents undesirable lipid fluctuations. Properly conducted *Samyak Snehapana*, followed by *Shodhana*, supports metabolic balance and avoids long-term dyslipidemia.

Conclusion: *Shodhananga Snehapana*, if properly administrated with due consideration of *Agni*, *Koshtha*, and *Prakriti* it does not disturb the lipid balance. Instead, it aids in restoring elevated lipid levels to normal after proper suitable *Shodhana Karma*. Further clinical studies are needed to validate these conceptual findings with biochemical evidence.

1. INTRODUCTION

Snehapana refers to the unique process of administering medicated ghee or oils to a patient, which is believed to prepare the body suitable for the upcoming procedures (*Pradhana Karma*) and facilitate to eliminate toxins from the body. In the context of lipid metabolism, there is limited scientific research article available on pre-therapeutic oil or ghee administration. The administration of medicated ghee or oils may influence the metabolic processes in the body. Duration for administration

of *Sneha Dravya* may vary from person to person,^[1] that is, minimum 3–7 days or till getting *Samyak Siddhi Lakshana*.^[2] To understand the effects more comprehensively, rigorous scientific studies and clinical trials would be necessary. The conceptual study elucidates the role of *Agni* in assessing the *Koshtha* before administering *Shodhanartha Snehapana* and to rule out whether *Shodhanartha Snehapana* having a role in fluctuating metabolism by changing the lipid levels.

2. METHODS

2.1. Role of *Agni*

Agni is used in the sense of the digestion of food and metabolic products. This *Agni* is not in the form of flame as the terrestrial fire,

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but is in the form of liquid, which is called as *Pitta*. In classics, there is no *Agni* apart from *Pitta* and *Pitta* itself is *Agni*, asserts Caraka.^[3] Consumption of food undergoes metabolic transformation by the effect of *Jatharagni*, *Bhutagni*, and *Dhatvagni*. Initially, *Jatharagni* gives stimulation to *Bhutagni* because the consumed food is *Panchabhautika*, it has to undergo transformation by the respective *Bhutagni* then only it becomes easy for tissue metabolism by *Dhatvagni*.^[4] *Jatharagni* is the main principal substance responsible for disease and health. *Jatharagni* is considered to be the most important because each and every nutrient that one ingests first comes to the *Jathara* and is subjected to the action of *Jatharagni*. *Jatharagni* digests the food materials that consist of the five basic elements and transforms it for utilization by the respective *Dhatus Paramanus* (tissues). It is also responsible for the separation of the food material into the essence portion and the waste products in our body.^[5]

2.2. Assessment of *Agni*

The *Agni* can be assessed with three factors, which are *Ruchi* (appetite), *Jaran shakti* (ability to digest), and *Abhyavaharana shakti* (capacity to consume).^[6]

- Evaluation of *Jarana Sakti* (Digestive capacity): If the digestive process is carried out properly, *Jeerana Ahara Lakshana* will be seen at the end of the procedure. The *Lakshana's* are *Utsaha* (enthusiasm), *Laghuta* (lightness), *Udgara shudhi* (Clear eructation), *Kshudha* (hunger), *Trishna* (thirst), and *Yathochita Malotsarga* (bowel movements)
- Assessment for *Abhyavaharana Shakti* (Capacity to eat): The amount and type of food consumed, which varies from person to person, determines *Abhyavaharana Shakti*
- Evaluation for *Ruchi* factor (Appetite): This depends upon the willingness or unwillingness for food or toward some specific tastes.

2.3. Assessment of *Agnideepti*

An increase in digestive activity is anticipated during *Snehapana*. *Sneha* has the opposite nature from *Agni*, yet when it is digested, it acts as “fuel” and stokes the fire even more. The Digestion period is bound to decrease, with an increase in *Agnibala*, when the same dose is administered, and when the dose is increased, it is expected that the duration for its digestion will also increase in the same proportion. *Abhyavaharana Shakti* and the time required for the digestion of *Sneha* both should be considered for assessment of *Agni* (digestive function) and *Matra* of *sneha* (dose).^[7]

2.4. Index of *Abhyavaharana Shakti*

{A.I. (Abhyavaharana Index) = Test dose/Given dose} (i.e., TD/GD)

For the 1st day, A.I = 30/30 (i.e., TD/GD = 1) (i.e., TD = GD)

If A.I. >1 denotes a decline in *Abhyavaharana Shakti*. If A.I. is <1, it indicates that *Abhyavaharana Shakti* is improving.

Agni Bala Index (ABI)

Test dose/Given dose * Time taken for the Digestion of ghee}

For example – in a person, 30 mL *Sneha* digest in 3 h on the 1st day, then the ABI = 30/30 * 3=3. In the same person, 300 mL digests in 6 h on the last day, the ABI = 30/300*6 = 0.6. On the 1st day, ABI is 3, which is reduced to 0.6 on the last day in the same person. However, according to mathematics, it will take 30 h for a person to digest 300 mL of *Sneha*. However, as *Agni Bala* rises, it digests in just 6 h, resulting

in substantially lower ABI than anticipated. Interpretation: The Lesser the ABI, more will be the *Agnideepti*.^[8]

2.5. Assessment of *Koshtha*

Koshtha is the expression of bowel habit, which depends on *Prakriti* (constitution). The assessment can be used to evaluate bowel habits. When evaluating *Koshtha*, the *Malapravritti* points should be taken into account. Types of *koshta* is shown in Table 1.^[9]

The knowledge of *Koshta* aids in estimating the duration of *Snehapana*:

- 7 days - *Krura Koshtha*
- 3 days - *Mridu Koshtha*
- 5 days - *Madhyama Koshtha*.

3. RESULTS

3.1. *Snehana*

Sneha is broadly classified into two types: *Bahya Snehana* and *Abhyantara Snehana*. *Bahya Snehana*: Application of *Sneha* externally for the purpose of *Snehana* is known as *Bahya Snehana*. It is practiced as a part of *Dincharya* and *Rutucharya* in a healthy person. *Bahya Snehana* can be *Sthanika* and *Sarvadehika* various type of *Bahya Snehana* are explained in classics. *Abhyantara Snehana*: The Administration of *Sneha* internally through the oral route for the purpose of *Snehana* based on the action. *Abhyantara Snehapana*, which is of three types: *Shodhananga Snehapana*, *Shamananga Snehapana*, *Brumhana Snehapana*.^[10]

4. DISCUSSION

4.1. Probable Mode of Action of *Shodhananga Snehapana*

Shodhananga Snehanapana is followed in the platform for *Shodhana Karma* which helps in achieving the *Utkleshavastha* of *Dosha*. The characteristics from *Shodhananga Snehanapana* result in loosening of morbid *Doshas* that were causing obstruction to the *Srotas*. *Shodhananga Snehanapana* is carried out according to a timetable for daily increasing doses that took into account *Agni*, *Koshta*, *Bala Avastha*, etc. The process is carried till the *Samyak Sneha Lakshana* attained, but not crossing more than 7 days to avoid *Sneha Satmyam*. *Shodhananga Snehanapana* results in the transfer of *dosha* from *Sakha* into the *Koshtha*. The *Doshas* are propelled to the *Koshtha*, are expelled out through the nearest route by appropriate purificatory therapies (*Shodhana Karma*). This is caused by the combined effects of *Snehapana* and *Svedana*, which results in an apparent increase in the *Dosha Gati*.^[11]

4.2. Effect of *Snehapana* on Lipid Levels

The studies conducted on oral lipid ingestion (internal olation) show it does not increase lipid levels; instead, it aids in bringing the elevated levels of lipids to normal. However, in some studies, it shows fluctuation in lipid initially and this increase is temporary and returns to normal after appropriate *Shodhana*. The medical community and patients are concerned that oral ingestion of the lipids employed in olation therapy (*Snehapana*) may result in an increase in the biochemical parameters, particularly the lipids. The plasma concentration of cholesterol increases after oral consumption. However, the most crucial enzyme endogenous production of cholesterol is inhibited when cholesterol is taken, providing an intrinsic feedback control system to prevent an excessive rise, although individual reactions vary.^[12] The medicated *Snehana* which we are administering are comes under short-chain and medium-chain fatty acids. Hence, the above does not require any intestinal enzymes to dissolve it, which can be directly absorbs in the intestinal wall without further metabolism required.^[13] Before *Snehana*

Karma, a previous treatment called *Rukshana Karma*, intended to cause the body's fluids to dry out, is advised. A physician should carefully consider *prakruti*, *vikruti*, *Dooshya*, *Srotas*, *Agni*, *Ama*, etc., before administering *Shodhananga Snehanapana*. The fat substance is then transferred through the osmosis mechanism from the cell to the extracellular fluid. Due to the liquid characteristics of lipids (*Sneha*) and liquified metabolic waste produced from the tissues (*Mala*), the levels of fatty acids and other compounds rise in the blood, increasing the plasma volume. The surplus liquid reaches the *Koshtha* to be evacuated out of the body to maintain the equilibrium of the regular plasma level. When emetics or purgatives are provided, these increasing volumes of bodily fluids are ejected along with the disease-inflicting vitiated *Dosha* and metabolic waste. *Samyak Shodhana* is necessary after the correct oral ingestion of lipids (*Samyak Snehapana*), as improper purification could cause unusually high lipid levels. To avoid an abnormal rise in the body's lipid levels, patients with obesity and hyperlipidemia should receive *Rukshana Karma* before *Snehapana*.^[14]

5. CONCLUSION

A review of studies done till date to provide evidence that *Shodhananga Snehanapana* do not cause to rise in the level of lipids, rather it facilitates in bringing the increased lipids level to normal; even if the lipid levels increase during *snehapana*, it is transient and comes to normal after *Shodhana*.

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9. ETHICAL STATEMENT

Ethical approval was not required for this study as it was a review article with data obtained through a literature search.

10. CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

11. DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data analyzed in this review were obtained from publicly available sources, including peer-reviewed articles, observational studies, and surveys accessible through databases.

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Table 1: Types of koshta***KRURA KOSHṬA***

- Doesn't frequently pass stools
- Dry, hard stools
- Requires exerting effort (straining)
- Takes a lot of time to defecate
- Unsatisfactory bowel evacuation
- Constipation occurs more commonly, while diarrhea is seldom
- Demands harsh purgatives
- No bowel changes caused by the test dose of *Sneha* (fats).

MRIDU KOSHṬA

- Routinely passes stools once or twice every day
- Easy evacuation of bowel
- Semi-formed or formed feces
- Less time is needed for defecation
- Satisfaction following defecation
- Previous experiences revealed frequent watery stools brought on by hot beverages, such as tea and milk
- Little laxatives readily cause diarrhea
- Following the 30 mL test dosage of *Ghrita* (ghee), feces may become more frequent and slightly looser.

MADHYAMA KOSHṬA

- Passes stools once every day
- Forming stools
- Requires less strain. Takes a Little while to evacuate (as compared to Mridu)
- Satisfaction following defecation
- Doesn't frequently experience constipation or diarrhea
- Needs a medium dosage of laxatives and purgatives
- Does not cause bowel movements using laxatives or milk
- After ingesting a test dosage of ghee, the patient occasionally passes one or two semi-formed or formed feces.