

INTRODUCTION TO SWARNA PRASHANA

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ABSTRACT

Swarna –Prashana is now-days hot topic of discussion and is being made popularized. *Kashyapa Samhita Lehana Adhyaya* explains this procedure and its benefits. Although the procedure was practiced routinely, in ancient times, later same has been disappeared from the clinical practice due to various causes. Although Indian mothers silently practices the same in many altered form since then, recently efforts are made to provide the same in more modified, convenient form, and made more acceptable to general public. *Swarna Prashana* is one of the health- prompting measures adopted by Ayurveda especially aiming the pediatric population which yields long standing benefits. It also helps to enhance the quality of rapidly growing brain and attain higher levels of cognition due its *Medhya* property. It modulates the body immune system in childhood to develop resistance against common virulent infection, due to its special combination of drugs. The procedure has got multi dimensional health benefits and successfully prevents from common health hazards. Although it is a alternative to vaccination, it increase the non specific immunity of the body due to *Purva Abhi-Samskara* of the body, by incompatibility of the drugs used along with Swarna. Procedure is preferably done on the day of *Pushya Nakshatra* of every month.

Keywords: Immunization, *PushyaNakshatra*, *PurvaAbhiSamskara*, *SwarnaPrashana*, *KashyapaSamhita*.

INTRODUCTION

Swarna –Prashana has been formulated based on the original reference of *Kashyapa SamhitaSutra stana, Lehan Adhyaya*¹, where he mention it as accrued method by rubbing the Ashudda Swarna against a hard surface and mixed with Madhu and Ghrita and given for licking. This crude method has been recently popularized, to bring back this procedure into the main stream of treatment, and for the benefits of the general public. Further, this procedure has been modified and formulated as per need &convenience of the public without altering the basic principles of this procedure. The altered form of

same has been practiced in India since long like *SwarnaVacha*, *SwarnaBindu*, *Rathakalpas* (in Srilanka), *Vacha* and *Madhu* etc. ordering *Jathakarma* or *Namakarana samskara*² with traditional importance

Description of the topic

In the procedure of Swarna *Kashyapa* told that Swarna mixed with Madhu & Ghrita should be given after rubbing with hard surface¹ This not only increases the cognition power of the child but also prevent the baby from disorders by increasing the body immunity. Mean time it also ensures the optimal metabolism of the body

by correcting the *Agni*. This is especially effective against the infective disorders (Graha). It imparts many physical properties like strength, complexion, and luster etc¹.

Contextually *Swarna Prashana* is considered as *Lehan* procedure, as *Kashyapa* explains the same in *LehanaAdhyaya*. *Swarna* is mixed with *madhu* and *Ghrita* along with other drugs which are predominantly *Medhya* (Brain tonics) *Balya* (Strength promoting) and *Rasayana* (Rejuvenating) by action. This also gives us lot of scope for modification by adding different drugs to enhance the quality. Further selection of drugs is aimed to both physical and mental wellbeing of the child. This is one of the long term procedure which influences the all round development of the child. *Medhya* drugs may help to produce the high quality of neurons as physical growth is directly proportional to growth of CNS. The body building, bulk promotions and enhancing immune status of child will be done by *Balya*, *Jeevaneeya* and *Bhrihmana* drugs. Continuous uninterrupted growth will be maintained by *Rasayana* drugs. Thus the modulation done through this procedure during the phase of cellular and tissue differentiation i.e. during early childhood brings the positive growth. Thus *Swarna Prashana*¹ with multi dimensional benefits may prove as an effective health and immune modulation procedure which imparts happy and disease free life in future of the child with high levels of cognition. Even in *Jatakarma Samskara* which is performed immediately after the birth, *Swarna* mixed with *Madhu* and *Gritha* is indicated as part of stimulating the feeding reflexes of the newborn and to induce effects of tropic feed². *Swarna* has been referred as *Ananta* in this context although other interpretations like *Sariva*, *Shweta dhoorva*

etc. can be made for the same. But *Jatakarma Samskara* and *Lehana* are two different procedures. *Lehana* is long term procedure explained for the growing kids while *Jatakarma samskara* is one time procedure for newborn.

Further transparency of the procedure should be maintained during the procedure. All the myths and misunderstanding existing in the general public should be cleared and should be advertised as health promoting technique for the kids. It definitely helps to increase the cognitions power but exaggeration present in the words like *ParamaMedhavi*¹, *Shruthadhara* etc should be made realized. Procedure cannot yield the similar effect in all the children due much individual variation in life style, genetic traits, diet and nutrition, etc.

It is often matter of curiosity that whether *Swarna – Prashana* is an alternative to vaccination. Concept of *Swarna – Prashana* aims to induce immunization especially of non-specific type by various methods. But vaccination is one of the methods of immunization by administration of vaccines against a target disease.³ Hence obviously it is unique procedure and its comparison with vaccination should be better avoided.

Swarna – Prashana and Cognition capacity.-When we analyze different combinations mentioned for *Lehana* by different authors most of the drugs are *Medhya* or promoters of cognition capacity. Rightly it is told that *Swarna Prashana* given continuously for one month makes the child *Parama Medhavi* (Extra brilliant) and same for six month leads to *Shrutadara* (excellent retaining and recalling capacity). These explanations suggest its possible role in enhancing the cognition capacity although classical explanation is quite exaggerating. Introduction of *Medhya* drugs during the stage of brain cell differentia-

tion, leads to production of high quality neuronal and as well as brain parenchyma cells. First 2 years of childhood witness maximum brain growth as evidenced by maximum increase in head circumference⁴, and positive intervention during this phase may produce high quality neuronal cells which is responsible for excellent cognition, memory, intelligence in future life. *Dhallana*, commentator of *Shusrutha* also opines that *Lehana*⁵ is best indicated during first two years of childhood. Further *Ghrita* is best for enhancing the higher mental functions due to supplementation of essential fatty acids.

Principle of Swarna Prashana- It has been well explained by Charaka in the context of *Viruddha Ahara* that any external substance which has got opposite quality to the bodily *Dosha and Dhatus* when access inside the body, will encounter resistance by the body. Meanwhile such an administration in small quantity daily can result in prior sensitization of body tissues and *Dosha*, and can be effectively used to prevent hazards of such noxious substances when accessed inside the body in large quantity. Hence a disease producing agent when judiciously used can be a disease preventing agent⁶. *Swarna Prashana* also works on same principle.

Swarna –Prashana looks like a method of immune – modulation by which works on the theory of *Viruddha Ahara*. *Viruddha Ahara* when taken in which dose the vitiation of *Dosha* at subclinical level and doesn't cause the disease even if it is taken daily in minute quantity. But as it is a material which is against the bodily biological factors, body resist these materials due its antigenic nature with subclinical presentation which is sufficient cause fluctuation of *Doshas*. Repeated administration of such materials slowly causes modulation in

immune cells during its stages of differentiation and preparation of the body against any antigenic substances, hence reduces the severity and complication in future. This is referred as *Purva Abhi Samskara* of by Charaka⁷. In *Swarna– Prashana* procedure too, aims is to attain the immunity by a similar approach. When *Madhu and Ghrita* mixed in equal quantity (As dose has been not mentioned) and mixed with impure crude form of *Swarna*, the amalgam produce a incompatible combination of *Matra* and *Samyoga Viruddha*⁸ induce a antigenic nature against the body. Repeated administration of the same leads to modulation of differentiating immune cells and tissues which impart immune protection against such antigenicity. Further *Swarna* is known for its immune modulator action and honey is antigenic substance which helps to attain the same.

Some of the substances are *Satmya* to our body in all given circumstances which are also called *Hita* substances like milk, ghee rice etc. while certain substances exert the poisonous effect after its administration, as inbuilt nature, which are called as *Asatmya* or *Ahita substances* like *Kshara, Visha* or *Viriddha Ahara*⁷ etc. These *Ahita substances*⁸ never undergo complete digestion and proper metabolism, remain in the body as a toxin un-metabolized water insoluble substance, behaves like a antigenic foreign body which further stimulate the body immune system. *Swarna Prashana* is also one such procedure where an amalgam of *Ahita* substances will be artificially prepared and administered. In the procedure, *Ashudda Swarna* is used and there is no indication of *Swarna Bhasma*. Crude *Swarna* is mixed with a combination of *Viruddha Ahara (Madhu+Ghrita)* and administered in small quantity daily, left un-metabolized and exerting continuous sti-

mulatory effect over immune system in the phase of tissue differentiation.

As we know body resistance can be increased by two methods i.e. *Ojaskara* and *Rasayana* method. First one is aimed to increase the *Shukra Dhatu* and *Ojus*,⁹ which in turn increase the body immunity, while *Rasayana* is doing the same by administration of drugs and modulating the life style. While explaining the *Bala*, *Yuktikrita Bala* has been mentioned with which this the above can be included. Hence *Swarna –Prashana* is a method of increasing the *Kshamatwa* of the body by administration *Rasayana* Drugs. This increase the *Yukikrita bala* and tone up the body immune cells and also impart the anti oxidant properties⁹, or resists the oxidative injury. Rightly different combination explained in the context of *Lehana* contains lot of bulk promoting, life promoting, nourishing drugs.

Any foreign substance or antigenic material administered in small quantity during rapid stage of growth and development, before the differentiation of the bodily tissues to bring certain positive changes in the body is called as *ViruddhaPurvaAbhi-Samskara*^{7,8}. So exposing the baby to smaller doses of *Viruddha* substance, bring the modification and adoptability of the tissues without complications, as in snakes, scorpion which remain unaffected in spite of poison within it. Concept of *Visha kanya* explained by *Chanakya* is also the best example.

Further *Madhu* or honey which is used in this combination is also very special material collected from different flowers having different *Virya, Rasa, Vipaka* and *Guna* and collected by honey bees & stored at place for a long time¹⁰. This is added with pollens which is a highly allergic material. Classics also says that honey could cause vitiations of all three *Doshas* due to its

Viruddha nature . Hence being a highly *Viruddha* amalgam and due to pollens, it continuously stimulate cell mediated Immunity

Mean while role of *Swarna* in this procedure need to be analysed. *Kashyapa* explains that told to take crude form of *Swarna* and not the *Swarna Bhasma*.¹ Further dissolving the *Swarna* or *Swarna Bhasma* in the mixture is really challenging.. Hence probably , impure form of *Swarna* which remain un-dissolved in the amalgam and act as incompatible substance or binding material and plays significant role in the stimulation of Immune system. Gold has been already proved for its Immno modulatory effects by various research works although it not a macro or micro element of the body without any specific functions in the body

Even the concept of vaccination practiced now days also, developed on the same principle. A disease causing agent itself is used as vaccine in small quantity either live or killed form to acquire the protection against the same organism. Hence administration of emulsified mixture of *Madhu, Ghrita* in equal quantity along with *Swarna*, acts like an antigenic substance to increase the body immunity.

In the classics there is no clear mentioning of duration of *Swarna Prashana*. But as *Swarna Prashana* is *Lehana* procedure, by considering the view of *Dallana*, up to 2-3 years same can be given. As textual reference suggest long term benefits it has to given for long duration. Anyhow its effect will be maximum during early childhood which tissue differentiating phase. *Swarna Prashana* is aimed to attain long term benefits like *Balya, Rasayana, and Ayurvedhana* for which prolonged use is must¹. But to attain the Excellency of mental faculty, one month & six months of time limit has been mentioned.

As such there are no contraindications for *Swarna –Prashana*, but being a *Lehana* procedure it has its own indications and contraindications. In *Lehana* it is told that disease free state of child as main indication. Hence *Swarna –Prashana* too is better indicated in disease free condition. The aim of *Swarna – Prashana* is not to cure the disease in unhealthy person with short term benefits, rather prevention of disease in future with long term benefits.

In the modified version, *Swarna – Prashana* administered on the day of *Pushya Nakshtra* of every month. *Shusrutha in Chikitsa stana 28th chapter* explains that all *Swarna* containing combinations when administered on the day of *PushyaNakshatra* yield maximum benefits.¹¹ Further this is holy star for all auspicious procedures, and also helps maintain the periodicity of administration and even respects religious belief of the parents.

Schedule followed in modified version of *Swarna Prashana* is once in a month which is not mentioned anywhere. This is aimed for the convenience of the people so that Periodic administration with fixed gap may give the effect of the booster dose and provide enough time period for the stimulation of the Immune system. This will be given from birth to 16 years (that is till the end of *Kumara avstha*)

Modified form of the *SwarnaPrashana* which is used now days is prepared with certain modifications. Classical method explained in *Kashyapasamhita* is may be difficult for daily practice with increased chances of error. Hence same is modified and made available in the drop form by using the standard dropper. Instead of plain *Ghritha* it is fortified with *Balya, Jeevaneeya, Rasayana, Medhya, Deepana, Pachana* and immune modulatory drugs to increase the efficacy of preparation. This

Gritha is mixed with equal quantities of pure *Madhu* and calculated quantity of *Swarna Bhasma* in therapeutic doses and given drop form under strict aseptic conditions.

Launching modified version of *SwarnaPrashana* witnessed surprising response from the society. Systematic approach, maintaining the transparency of the procedure and education programmes conveys the right message to public. However this also gives the take home message to Ayurveda that it is not only richness of the science that counts but also the presentation of principles to the general public in most adoptable, simpler and modified way. Definitely public will have lot of queries about the procedures like what are the contents and method of preparation, why it is given only once in a month, how to assess the results etc. Unsatisfactory, confusing, unrealistic, unscientific answers definitely spread the bad message. So Ayurvedic physicians who practice *SwarnaPrashana* should explain the reality and educate regarding procedure in the beginning. Explain benefits of *Swarna Prashana* without exaggeration along with its variations, factors up on which effect depends, limitations in mental retarded, cerebral palsy, neuromuscular disorders in comparison with healthy children. Don't create the phobia that failure receive the same badly effect the child rather convince them to not miss a golden chance of making your kid healthy. Maintain the *Swarna Prashana* card and enter all details related to physical and mental health every month so that parents can cross check. Convince them regarding safety index of the procedure. Try to remove all myths and misunderstanding regarding the procedure.

CONCLUSION

Swarna Prashana is gift of Ayurveda to the modern world which should be well utilised to build a bright future of the kid. Children are future citizens of the nation and healthy children build healthy nation. This procedure doesn't do any miracles rather this is a scientific health promoting method explained by Ayurveda. This has been widely accepted by the general public and successfully practiced in many areas of the country and attracted the public towards *Ayurveda*. The brain promoting, strength promoting and immune benefits offered by this procedure need to be properly documented to assess the success rate.

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