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Svarṇa Mākṣika Śodhana - A review through Rasa classics

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Rasa Śāstra is a branch of science exclusively dealing with different aspects of metals and minerals including their origin, varieties, characteristics, processing techniques, properties, therapeutic applications etc. in a comprehensive way. These metals and minerals are to be processed before their internal administration. The processes include Śodhana, Māraṇa etc. that are essential in making the raw material suitable for therapeutics. Svarṇa Mākṣika is one such mineral that after proper processing become highly potent and useful in Prameha (Diabetes), Pāṇḍu (Anemia), Kuṣṭha (Skin diseases), Jwara (Fever), Anidrā (Insomnia) etc. Classics mention different treatment procedures for Svarṇa Mākṣika that are scattered throughout the texts of Rasa Śāstra. Here an attempt has been made to compile all such references pertaining to Śodhana. **Methods:** Śodhana processes of Svarṇa Mākṣika were compiled from classical texts and analysed by segregating type of basic procedure, media and principle used in the procedure etc. **Results:** At least 34 (Plant origin-24, Animal origin- 05, Mineral origin-05) varieties of liquids are used as Śodhana dravya in classics. Twenty six methods of Śodhana were described in various texts that can be categorized into five basic methods like Swedana, Bharjana, Nirovāpa, Mardana and Puṭapāka. **Conclusion:** This work may prove a torch bearer for future research works on Svarṇa Mākṣika.

KEYWORDS

Ayurveda, Chalcopyrite, Rasa Śāstra, Śodhana, Svarṇa Mākṣika

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Rasa Śāstra is a well-established branch of Ayurveda serving humanity with its unique heritage of drugs derived from mineral, metal and animal origin combined with certain herbs. Metals and minerals are extracted from the earth crust, so the drugs come in contact with impurities, heterogeneous materials, toxic substance and unwanted qualities. To remove all such unwanted material and to increase the potency; an exclusive procedure - Śodhana is indicated in classics. Wide range of Śodhana methods are prescribed for metals, minerals and other substances in different classics of Rasa Śāstra. These methods not only eliminate unwanted principles from the raw material, make the material feasible for further processing but also help in enhancing their therapeutic potentials.^[1] These processes are individualized in term of material media, method etc.^[2]

Svarṇa Mākṣika (SM) is an important mineral used for medicinal purposes since *samhitā* period in many diseases in the form of Bhasma. It is one of the major ingredients in popular formulations like Candraprabhā vaṭi,^[3] Vātagajāṅkuśa rasa,^[4] Śvāsakāsa cintāmani rasa,^[5] prabhākara vaṭi^[6] etc. Ancient Rasa Scholars have developed number of processing methods for a single substance by which crude form of drug can convert into highly potent therapeutic agent. Till date no published review work is found on the different Śodhana procedures of Svarṇa Mākṣika. This work may prove a torch bearer for future research work on Svarṇa Mākṣika.

In this review, information from various texts belonging from 7th AD to 20th AD has been compiled. The books referred in this attempt are Rasendramangala,^[7] Rasahridayatantra,^[8] Rasarnāva,^[9] Rasendra cuḍāmani,^[10] Ayurveda prakāśa,^[11] Śārangadhara *samhitā*,^[12] Rasa ratnākara,^[13] Rasaprakāśa sudhākara,^[14] Rasa ratna sammuchaya,^[15] Rasapaddhati,^[16] Ānanda kanda,^[17] Rasa cintāmani,^[18] Rasamanjari,^[19] Rasa sanketa kalikā,^[20] Rasendra cintāmani,^[21] Rasendra sāra saṅgraha,^[22] Rasa kaumudi,^[23] Rasa kāmadhenu,^[24] Yoga tarangiṇi,^[25] Yogaratnākara,^[26] Arka prakāśa,^[27] Brihat rasa rāja suaṁdara,^[28] Rasarāja mahodadhi,^[29] Rasāyanasāra,^[30] Rasa jalandhi,^[31] Siddha bheṣaja maṇimālā,^[32] Raṣopaniśata,^[33] Rasāmitram^[34] Sahasrayogam,^[35] Rasatarangiṇi,^[36] Rasendra sambhava,^[37] Anupāna maṇjari,^[38] Abhinava navajeevaniyama,^[39] Rasa dipikā,^[40] Rasa tantrasāra and siddha yoga saṅgraha,^[41] Rasāyana sāra.^[42] Svarṇa Mākṣika Śodhana in the above mentioned texts of Rasa Śāstra are analyzed with respect to liquid media and involved principles etc.

Śodhana is a procedure to be adopted to remove possible impurities from Rasa Dravya and other material of such manner. Besides this, the procedure is aimed to change the nature of the substance (Physical as well as pharmacological aspects). It is a pre-requisite procedure for all substances (Rasa and Viṣa Dravya etc.) that may have a bad effect in their raw form over body. As per Ayurvedic texts; all metals, minerals, poisonous herbs are to be processed through this specific procedure.^[49] General procedures, drugs used for Śodhana process and their probable impacts are well explored in Ayurvedic classics. Selection of particular method and media for Śodhana has been left on physician with application of Yukti (Rationale – logical reasoning).^[50] The changes made by Śodhana in nature of drug can be preliminarily and easily perceived at pharmacognostic as well as chemical levels, however its utility will be majorly dependent on therapeutic actions. Different methods of Śodhana also play an

important role in altering pharmaceutical^[51,52] analytical^[53,54] toxicological^[55] pharmacological^[56,57] and therapeutic aspects of a metal/mineral or its formulations. There is a separate book named “*Āyurvediya auśadhi dravya Śodhana Vidhi*” exploring logical selection of various methods of *Dravya Śodhana*, with details of changes after *Śodhana*.^[58]

Need of *Svarṇa Mākṣika Śodhana*

A drug can be panacea or poison. A drug fulfilling the criterion of a standard drug will always become panacea provided, if it is used properly. On the other hand, a poorly prepared or manufactured drug however used skillfully, will always prove to be a poison.^[59] *Svarṇa Mākṣika* (SM) is the most abundant copper containing mineral with nearly equal part of copper (34.5%), Iron (30%), Sulphur (35%)^[60] along with trace elements like Ag, Au, As, Se, Sn, Zn etc. As per API, SM in ore form should contain not less than 5 % Copper, 20 % Iron and 12% Sulphur^[61] which matches with several analytical reports.^[47,62] If raw SM is used without *Śodhana*, it will cause untoward effects like *Agnimāndya* (dyspepsia), *Vāamti* (vomiting), *Viṣṭhambha* (failure to pass flatus), *Vibandha* (constipation), *Vātaprakopa in koṣṭha*, *Krimi* (worm infestation), *Halimaka* (fulminant hepatic failure), *Gaṇḍamālā* (hypo or hyperthyroidism), *Vraṇa* (ulcers), *Kuṣṭha* (skin disorders), *Netraroga* (eye diseases), *Daurbalya* (generalized weakness), *Kṣaya* (emaciation), *Balanāśa* (loss of strength) and even *Maraṇa* (death).^[11,36] Most of the symptoms mentioned in classics resembles with acute or chronic copper toxicity.^[63] To avoid these manifestations, one need to process it before its application in therapeutics.

The media used in the process of *Śodhana* has very important role in either breaking down or destroying the chemical constituents that are not required. The heat treatment through constant boiling of the drug in a particular media for a particular duration has a role in modification of the chemical constituents etc. Studies have shown that the toxic constituents are transferred into media rendering the drug non-toxic. Media has definitely an important role in making a drug to act without causing any side effects.^[64]

Careful review of available classical texts to compile *Śodhana* procedures of SM revealed multiple methods that were categorized according to the involved individual and multiple media used. Twenty six methods of SM *Śodhana* are described in classics on Rasashastra that can be categorized into five basic methods like *Swedana*, *Bharjana*, *Nirvāpa*, *Mardana* and *Putapāka* among which *Swedana* method is found most frequently mentioned (Table 1).

Table 1. Frequency of procedures indicated for *Svarṇa Mākṣika Śodhana*

Sr. No.	Procedure	Frequency
1	<i>Swedana</i> (boiling)	11
2	<i>Bharjana</i> (frying in pan)	5
3	<i>Nirvāpa</i> (quenching)	4
4	<i>Putā</i> (incineration)	4
5	<i>Bhavana / Mardana</i> (grinding)	2

More than 19 classics of *Rasa Śāstra* have described details about SM *Śodhana*. Seven individual liquids are found utilized for *Śodhana*. Among them the frequency of use of *Kadali kanda Svarasa* in *Rasa* classics is found highest (5 times) followed by *Triphalā Kvātha* (4 times). Compiled data also revealed that, total 19 multiple liquid media are used for SM *Śodhana* (Table 2).

Daḍīma (*Punica granatum* Linn) *tvak* or *Kulatha* (*Dolichos biflorus* Linn.) *Kvātha* are mentioned as an antidote of *Svarṇa Mākṣika* toxicity due to over-dosage or usage without purification procedure.^[38] Among them *Kulatha Kvātha* frequently used by many seers in *Śodhana* procedure of SM. *Nimbu Svarasa* as liquid media by *Bharjana* method advised in Rasatarangiṇi is recommended by Ayurvedic Formulary of India (AFI),^[65] which is followed by most of the research scholars.^[66-68] Majority of the texts prefers using *Lohapātra* (Iron vessel) in the *Śodhana* procedure that was emphasized in AFI too. SM *Śodhana* by *Nirvāpa* procedure is advised to be repeated for 21 times, while in *Putapāka* method 1 to 6 repeated *Putā* are given. One hour to three days *Swedana* procedure whereas one to three days *Bharjana* procedure are also advised for SM *Śodhana* (Table 2). Media advocate for SM *Śodhana* by *Nirvāpa* method is nothing but the *Samanya Śodhana* procedure of metals and minerals.^[12] *Putapāka* method is used by various Acharya for SM *Śodhana* but text *Ānandakanda* admits this as *Māraṇa* of SM.^[17] *Ānandakanda* also mentioned use of metal i.e. *Nāga* (lead) as a *Śodhana* media for *Śodhana* of another mineral i.e. SM. Three parts of SM and one part of each *Nāga* and *Ṭankaṇa* are taken in an iron vessel and roasted in *Mātulunga* or *Jambiri svarasa* till SM achieves *Tāmra varṇa* (reddish brown). SM *Bhasma* preceded with this method of *Śodhana* will contain whole of the added *Nāga* and roasted *Ṭankaṇa* too. Although not mentioned but it is advisable to use *Śodhita* or *Jārīta Nāga* in this process. *Āsuddha* SM and *Saindhava lavaṇa* are taken in powdered form and subjected to *tikṣṇāgni* (intense heat) in an iron pan with *Nimbu Svarasa* for *Śodhana*. This method is mentioned by majority of *Rasācārya* that is commonly used.^[69] In classics, it is clearly mentioned that after completion of *Śodhana* the colour of SM will be changed to *Tāmra varṇa* ^[17] or *Śodhana* procedure should be carried till SM turns to *Lohita varṇa* (red colour).^[11] Multiple physicochemical, structural changes in different common categories of *Śodhana* processes of *Svarṇa Mākṣika* (Chalcopyrite) may take place which are summarized in Table 3.

Table 2. Media used for *Svarṇa Mākṣika Śodhana*

Media	List of Media	Principle	Duration	Reference
1 Individual	1 <i>Triphalā Kvātha</i>	Nirvāpa	-	RJN, RRS, RCh, BRRS
	2 <i>Nimbu svarasa</i>		21 times	RT
	3 <i>Kadali kanda svarasa</i>	Swedana	1 Day or 2 <i>Ghaṭikā</i> (1 hour)	RJN, RRS, RCh, RT, BRRS
	4 <i>Kalamārśa (Tanduliyaka)</i>		1 Day	RT
	5 <i>Nimbu Svarasa</i>	Bharjana	2-3 Days	RT
	6 <i>Saindhava lavaṇa</i>		-	RMan
	7 <i>Eraṇḍa taila</i>	Putā	1 <i>Yāma</i> (3 hours)	RJN, BRRS
2 Multiple	1 <i>Saindhava, Mātulunga or Jambiri Svarasa</i>	Bharjana	1 Day	RJN, ShS, AP, RSS, RChi, AK, RMri, R Rat, RTS & SPS, BRRS
	2 <i>Saindhava, Eraṇḍa taila, Triphalā Kvātha, Nimbu Svarasa, Kadali kanda Svarasa</i>		-	RS
	3 <i>Nāga, Ṭankaṇa, Mātulunga Svarasa or Jambiri Svarasa</i>		-	AK
	4 <i>Agasti Puṣpa Niriyāsa, Śīgru Mūla, Pāṣāṇabheda</i>	Putā	6 Putā	RJN, BRRS, RRat
	5 <i>Agastipatra Niriyāsa, Śīgru, Nimbu Svarasa</i>		1 Putā	RJN, RChi
	6 <i>Kṣāra, Amla, Lavaṇa, Eraṇḍa Taila, Goghrita</i>		3 Putā	RN
	7 <i>Meghanāda, Pāṣāṇabheda, Kulatha Kvātha, Jala</i>		1 Day	RJN, RRat
	8 <i>Tanduliya, Śāli Kvātha</i>		-	RJN, RSS
	9 <i>Kānji, Nimbu Svarasa, Gomutra, Jayanti Svarasa</i>		3 Days	RJN, BRRS
	10 <i>Eraṇḍa, Mātulunga Svarasa</i>		-	RJN, RP, RRS, RCh, BRRS
	11 <i>Surāṇa kanda, Gomutra, Kānji, Tilataila, Godugdha, Kadali Svarasa, Kulatha, Kodrava Kvātha</i>		-	RJN, RN
	12 <i>Kadali kanda Svarasa, Kakoṭi kanda Svarasa</i>	Swedana	2 <i>Ghatika</i> (1 hour)	RP
	13 <i>Jālini, Tanduliya, Kulatha</i>		3 hours	AK
	14 <i>Punarvanā, Kulatha</i>		-	AK
	15 <i>Nara mutra, Kulatha Kvātha, Amlavetasa Kvātha, Ṭankaṇa, Trikatu</i>		1 Day	RJN, AK, RRat
	16 <i>Tila taila, Takra, Gomutra, Kulatha Kvātha, Triphalā Kvātha</i>	Nirvāpa	-	RJN
	17 <i>Tila taila, Takra, Gomutra, Kulatha, Kānji</i>		-	AK
	18 <i>Meṣāśrunḡi, Karkaṭaśrunḡi Svarasa</i>	Mardana	-	YT
	19 <i>Mutra, Takra, Kulatha Kvātha</i>		-	RPS

AK - Ānanda kanda, AP - Ayurveda prakāśa, BRRS - Brihat rasa rāja suamdara, RCh - Rasendra cuḍāmani, RChi - Rasendra cintāmani, RJN - Rasa jalanidhi, RMan - Rasamanjari, RMri - Rasāmitram, RN - Rasarṇava, RP - Rasa Paddhati, RPS - Rasa prakāśa sudhākara, RRat- Rasa ratnākara, RRS- Rasa ratnasamuchaya, RS - Rasāyana sāra, RSS - Rasendra sāra saṁgraha, RT - Rasatarangiṇi, RTS & SPS - Rasa tantrasāra and siddha yoga saṁgraha, ShS - Śārangadhara *samhitā*, YT - Yoga tarangiṇi.

Table 3. Evidence based and probable physicochemical changes in different common categories of *Śodhana* processes of *Swarnamakshika (Chalcopyrite)*

Procedure	General Method	Probable physicochemical changes ^[43-48]
<i>Swedana</i> (boiling)	In this process, SM is boiled in prescribed liquid media through <i>Dola Yantra</i> method for at least three hours. The impurities which are soluble only in boiling hot acidic or alkaline liquids could be removed through this process.	Formation of organo-inorganic compounds. Leaching of metal contents in liquid media.
<i>Bharjana</i> (frying in pan)	Here the SM is place into the iron pan and subjected to heating with or without adding any material/ liquid while heating. In this process constant stirring of the material is done till the	Sulphation. Sulphatizing (formation of metallic sulphates).

	added liquid is evaporated and the material is converted into red.	Cloridizing (Formation of flux with salts). Desulphuration (reduction in sulphur content and resulting in increase of copper, iron and other trace elemental content). Sulphation followed by desulphuration, formation of CuSO ₄ . Formation of ferrites. Oxidation of metals (increase in oxygen content). Removal of undesirable elements like Arsenic, Antimony.
<i>Nirvapa</i> (quenching)	In this process, small crystals of <i>Svarṇa Mākṣika</i> are heated up to red hot and dipped into the various types of cold liquids (oily, acidic or alkaline types). This heating and dipping is repeated till complete cessation of sulphur fumes.	Desulphuration, Annealing of Iron, copper (Isothermal decomposition and Phase interchange) Removal of undesirable elements like Arsenic, Antimony. Formation of little quantity of oxides, sulphides, sulphates of metals.
<i>Putā</i> (incineration)	<i>Svarṇa Mākṣika</i> is ground with prescribed liquid media till it attains semisolid paste like consistency. Then <i>chakrikas</i> (small round pellets) are made and dried. After drying these <i>chakrikas</i> are kept in <i>sharava samputa</i> (earthen plate) and sealed with the help of cloth smeared with <i>multani matti</i> . This is subjected to <i>putapaka</i> .	Desulphuration, Oxidation of metals (Copper oxide, Fe ₂ O ₃ , SiO ₂), Formation of new polysulfides in lesser amount (CuS, FeS). Formation of sulphates. Reduction of particle size. Physical/structural changes (Regularization of loss of crystallinity). Uniform arrangement of particles). Removal of undesirable elements like Arsenic, Antimony, Carburising.
<i>Bhavāna /</i> <i>Mardana</i> (grinding)	In this process SM is triturated with the paste of certain herbs and other drugs such as salts, alkalies, carths and some vegetable extractives having acidic/ alkaline reactions or with acidic juices and/or fluids for a specified period.	Reduction of particle size Formation of organo-inorganic compounds.

Maximum *Śodhana* methods i.e. 13 were described by Ācharya Bhudeva Mukharji in *Rasajalanidhi*. Compiled data revealed that, at least 34 (Plant origin - 24, Animal origin - 5, Mineral origin - 5) varieties of liquid media as *Śodhana dravya* are mentioned in classics (Table 4).

Table 4. Types of various liquids used in *Svarṇa Mākṣika Śodhana*

Category of Liquid	Varieties of Media	Number	
Plant Origin	<i>Svarasa</i> (fresh juice)	<i>Nimbu</i> (<i>Citrus limon</i> Linn.), <i>Kadali Kanda</i> (<i>Musa paradisiaca</i> Linn.), <i>Matulunga</i> (<i>Citrus medica</i> Linn.), <i>Jambira</i> (<i>Citrus aurantifolia</i> (Christm.) Swingle), <i>Agasti pushpa</i> (<i>Sesbania grandiflora</i> Linn.), <i>Jayanti</i> (<i>Sesbania sesban</i> Linn.), <i>Karkoti</i> (<i>Momordica dioica</i> Roxb.).	7
	<i>Kvātha</i> (decoction)	<i>Triphala</i> (Fruits of <i>Terminalia chebula</i> Retz., <i>Terminalia bellirica</i> Roxb., and <i>Phyllanthus emblica</i> Linn.), <i>Kulatha</i> (<i>Dolichos biflorus</i> Linn.), <i>Amlavetasa</i> (<i>Garcinia pedunculata</i> Roxb.), <i>Trikatu</i> (Fruits of <i>Zingiber officinale</i> Roscoe, <i>Piper longum</i> , Linn. and <i>Piper nigrum</i> Linn.), <i>Shigrumula</i> (Root of <i>Moringa oleifera</i> Lam.), <i>Pashnabheda</i> (<i>Bergenia lingulata</i> Wall.), <i>Shali</i> (<i>Oryza sativa</i> Linn.), <i>Tanduliya</i> , (<i>Amaranthus viridis</i> Linn.), <i>Surana Kanda</i> (Rhizome of <i>Amorphophallus campanulatus</i> Roxb.), <i>Kodrava</i> (<i>Paspalum scrobiculatum</i> Linn.), <i>Devadali</i> (<i>Luffa echinata</i> Roxb.), <i>Meshashringi</i> (<i>Gymnema sylvestre</i> R.Br.), <i>Karkata Shringi</i> (<i>Pistacia integerrima</i> J.L.Stewart).	13
	<i>Kalka</i> (paste)	<i>Punarnava</i> (<i>Boerhavia diffusa</i> Linn.)	1
	<i>Taila</i> (oil)	<i>Eranda</i> (<i>Ricinus communis</i> Linn.), <i>Tila</i> (<i>Sesamum indicum</i> Linn.)	2

	Kanji (fermented sour gruel)	1
Total liquids from herbal origin		24
Animal Origin	Godugdha (cow's milk), Goghrita (cow's ghee), Gomutra (cow's urine), Takra (Butter milk), Naramutra (Human urine)	5
Mineral Origin	Jala (water), Kshara (Alkali), Naga (Lead), Saindhava lavana (Rock salt), Tankana Kshara (Borax).	5

CONCLUSION

Sodhana is unique and distinct pharmaceutical procedure in Ayurvedic Pharmaceuticals, with potential to influence physicochemical, toxicological, pharmacological and therapeutic profile of *Svarna Mākṣika* and thereby useful in increasing safety and optimizing desirable efficacy of *Svarna Mākṣika*. Physicochemical changes may occur depending upon the selection of the *Sodhana* media such as particle size reduction, variation in elemental composition and addition as well as deletion of minor elements from the raw material.

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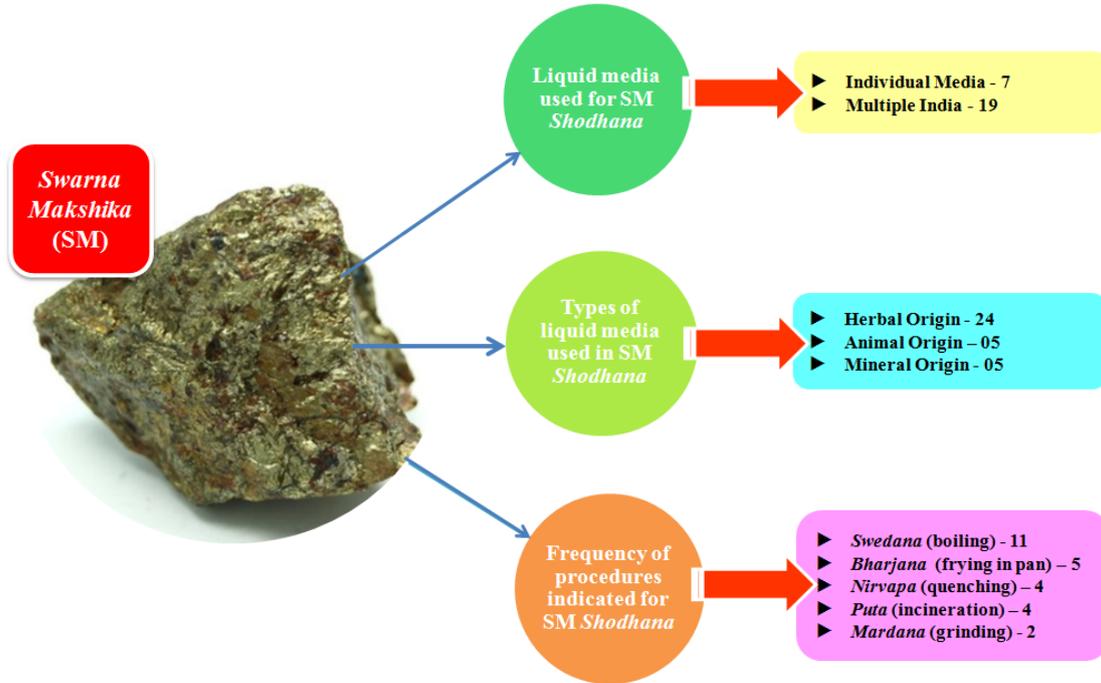
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