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SAMSKARA: THE AYURVEDIC SCIENCE OF IMPARTING TRANSFORMATION

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Abstract

Background: Samskara is one of the Paradi Gunas described in the Charak Samhita and is considered a key factor for successful treatment. It is a basic principle for transforming qualities as needed through different methods. Samskara is involved in pharmaceutical processing, changes in food quality, and ritual refinement, but its broader role across biological, dietary, therapeutic, toxicological, educational, and psycho-spiritual domains has not been fully reviewed. **Objective**: This review analyzes Samskara as a broad Ayurvedic principle, with a focus on its classical roots. **Methods:** Reviewed classical Ayurvedic texts, commentaries, dictionaries, and current literature to identify references to Samskara and Gunantaradhana. An integrated framework for Samskara was created after conceptual analysis of the data. **Results:** The primary characteristic of Samskara is gunantaradhana, or the alteration of qualities. Classical sources indicate that Samskara operates through factors such as contact with water and fire, cleansing, churning, grinding, storage, time, place, medium, and container. Its uses include food processing, drug detoxification, formulation preparation, preconception and conception conditioning, text editing, teaching, and intellectual development. Samskara makes things safer, more effective, easier to digest, better absorbed by the body, more suitable, and more valuable, while doing it the wrong way can lead to harmful effects, as shown in Samskara Viruddha Ahara.

Keywords: Samskara, Gunantaradhana, Paradi Guna, Ayurvedic pharmaceutics, food processing.

1. Introduction

Among the Paradi Gunas outlined by Acharya Charaka, Samskara has a unique place since it describes how the qualities of a substance might alter after processing. The term "samskara" broadly refers to refinement or purposeful modification that brings about a desired change. [1] Classical Ayurvedic literature recognizes Samskara as a factor that can modify the properties of substances, consequently influencing their actions and therapeutic utility. Commentators have particularly accentuated its role in Gunantaradhana, the transformation of existing attributes into new or altered qualities through appropriate processing. [2]

Samskara is applied across multiple domains within Ayurveda, including food preparation, pharmaceutical formulation, drug detoxification, therapeutic development, reproductive health, education, and textual editing. Classic examples show that a substance's effects depend on its inherent qualities and how it is processed, administered, stored, or combined with other substances.

Although Samskara is well recognized in Ayurvedic medicine and rituals, its function as a unifying principle underlying transformation across biology, pharmacy, education, and therapy remains insufficiently explored in the scholarly literature.

This review takes a close look at the concept of Samskara, centering on its classical roots, synonyms, types, and its many uses in biology, diet, therapy, pharmacy, toxicology, and academics. It also aims to show why Samskara is an important principle of transformation in Ayurveda.

2. Methodology

This study is a conceptual review of the Ayurvedic idea of "samskara" in classical Ayurvedic texts such as the Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Ashtanga Hridaya and Ashtanga Sangraha, along with their main commentaries, were examined to identify references to Samskara, Gunantaradhana, pharmaceutical processing, dietary changes, detoxification, reproductive health, educational improvement, and knowledge transformation. Modern literature was searched from different electronic databases in PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and the AYUSH Research Portal, employing keywords such as “Samskara,” “Gunantaradhana,” “Ayurvedic pharmaceutics,” "food processing," “Shodhana,” “Pumsavana,” and related terms. Relevant articles, reviews, book chapters, and trusted English-language sources were searched. The data were grouped and analyzed by concept, meaning, synonyms, and application in different themes of biology, diet, therapy, pharmacy, education, and psychospiritual topics.

3. Conceptual Foundation of Samskara

Samskara is one of the Paradi Guna described by Acharya Charaka and is also recognized as a Guna in Nyaya-Vaisheshika philosophy. The etymological origin of the term is found in the verbal root "kri" combined with the prefix "sam," which denotes the acts of refinement, appropriate preparation, or transformative processing. [3]

In Ayurveda, samskara is considered a principle of transformation, not just a physical action. It is the way a substance’s natural qualities are altered, which is important in clinical practice, therapy, the production of medicines, and diet. This processing helps decide how suitable, strong, digestible, effective, and safe a substance is.

Classical lexicons describe Samskara as a compound concept encompassing refinement, purification, preparation, modification, perfection, and transformation. [4] The term conveys the process of making an entity suitable for a desired purpose through deliberate intervention. Its semantic range extends from physical processing, such as cooking and food preparation, to intellectual refinement education, memory formation, and behavioral conditioning. Samskara also denotes the impressions produced by previous experiences, the effects of actions, and an entity's capacity to undergo modification and improvement. [4]

Samskara is recognized as one of the twenty- four Gunas and is classified into three forms: Bhavana (mental impression or memory trace), Vega (momentum or force), and Sthitisthapakatva (the tendency to regain a previous state). Beyond philosophical discussion, the concept also encompasses purification rites, consecration, sanctification, and cultural refinement, expressing itself in

intellectual traditions. [5] In Ayurveda, all these meanings come together around one idea: purposely changing something to make it more useful, effective, pure, or functional. Samskara is a dynamic process of transformation that enables substances, living systems, therapies, and even knowledge to acquire new or better qualities.

Table 1: Synonyms of Samskara and their conceptual implications in Ayurveda

S. No.	Synonym	Conceptual Significance	Textual Verse	reference
1	Abhi Samskara	Intensive or specialized processing	Ch. Vi. 1/22–2; Ch. Su. 26/104	[6, 7]
2	Gunantaradhana	Transformation or alteration of properties	Ch. Vi. 1/22–2	[6]
3	Kalpa	Prepared formulation or processing technique	Ch. Ka. 7/6 (Chakrapani)	[8]
4	Kalpana	Processing and formulation of substances	Ch. Sha. 4/19 (Chakrapani)	[9]
5	Kalpanam	Pharmaceutical preparation or formulation	Ch. Su. 4/17 (Chakrapani)	[10]
6	Kalpanavidhi	Method of formulation and preparation	Ch. Chi. 30/331	[11]
7	Karana	Means or instrument of transformation	Ch. Su. 26/34; Ch. Su. 11/35 (Chakrapani)	[12,13]
8	Karma	Operative procedure or action	Su. Su. 20/14 (Dalhana)	[14]
9	Kriya	Action, operation, or therapeutic procedure	Ch. Su. 16/33, 25/32, 25/46; Ch. Vi. 8/130	[15,16,17]
10	Kriyavidhi	Methodology of action or application	Ch. Ka. 1/3	[18]
11	Prakalpanam	Planned preparation or formulation	Ch. Su. 4/7 (Chakrapani)	[19]
12	Prayoga	Practical application or administration	Ch. Ka. 1/6 (Chakrapani)	[18]
13	Sadhana	Means of accomplishing transformation	Ch. Chi. 26/175 (Chakrapani)	[20]
14	Samskaranam	Processing, refinement, or modification	Ch. Su. 4/7	[19]
15	Upakalpana	Auxiliary preparation or subsidiary processing	Ch. Su. 30/32 (Chakrapani)	[21]
16	Upaya	Method, strategy, or practical approach	Su. Su. 41/5 (Dalhana)	[22]
17	Vidhi	Prescribed method or procedure	Ch. Su. 27/232, 30/32; Ch. Sha. 8/17; Ch. Chi. 1–2/17	[23, 24, 25, 26]

Proper processing can change the qualities of substances and living systems, making them better suited for certain bodily needs.

Samskara plays a crucial role in reproductive health and progeny care. Charaka advocates preconception purification for both partners through Snehana (oleation), Swedana (sudation), and Shodhana procedures such as Vamana and Virechana. Such interventions are considered forms of bodily Samskara intended to eliminate vitiated Doshas and optimize the physiological environment for the formation of a healthy embryo. [27] Conception occurring after appropriate bodily purification results in the development of an unimpaired fetus.

During pregnancy, healthcare providers administer medicated preparations to support fetal growth and the mother's health where procedures utilize milk processed with Jivaka, Risabhaka, Apamarga, and Sahachara. Medicated milk, ghee, and specially prepared diets are also recommended to improve Shukra quality and help produce healthy children. [28] These examples show that Samskara serves to improve reproductive outcomes.

4. Dietary Applications

4.1. Food Processing and nutritional modification

Processing food is one of the main ways Samskara is used in daily life. Ayurveda always stresses eating food that is properly processed, freshly made, and carefully cooked. Methods like boiling, seasoning, roasting, frying, fermenting, and adding fats (Sneha) are known to alter how easily food is to digest, how it tastes, its nutritional value, and its healing effects. [29, 30]. Vegetables processed with fatty media become more wholesome, while meat soups prepared with pomegranate, spices, or ghee acquire enhanced nutritional and therapeutic properties. [31] Similarly, the addition of milk products, sour substances, fats, or specific condiments can alter the heaviness, digestibility, and physiological effects of food preparations. [32] These observations show that food's properties depend on how its ingredients are processed, not just on the ingredients themselves.

Through appropriate processing, dietary substances can be modified to obtain enhanced health benefits and improved physiological outcomes.

4.2. Samskara Viruddha Ahara

Samskara Viruddha Ahara is one of the eighteen types of incompatible diets. While Samskara usually improves the quality, safety, and healing value of a substance, improper processing can have the opposite effect, turning healthy food into something harmful. [33]

The concept of Samskara Viruddha Ahara illustrates the transformational power of processing and provides evidence for the Ayurvedic principle of Gunantaradhana, which holds that processing alters a substance's attributes and biological effects. Improper heating, cooking, fermentation, storage, or a combination during preparation may generate undesirable properties that can disturb Dosha equilibrium and contribute to disease development.

Acharya Vagbhata, however, provides an important clinical perspective by stating that the harmful effects of Viruddha Ahara may not manifest in individuals whose bodies have been adequately strengthened and adapted. Commenting on this principle, Hemadri explains that regular use of substances possessing properties opposite to the aggravated Doshas has the ability to enhance bodily tolerance to the adverse effects of incompatible food. For example, when Viruddha Ahara is likely to aggravate Kapha and Pitta, the habitual use of Kapha-Pitta- alleviating substances such as honey and Haritaki may help counteract these effects. [34] This concept reflects an early understanding of physiological adaptation and resistance, developed through repeated exposure to protective measures.

From today’s perspective, Samskara Viruddha Ahara demonstrates the importance of food processing for health. It shows that food safety and healing value depend on how food is prepared and processed, as well as on each person's body. This idea serves as a reminder that proper processing is essential to maximize the benefits and minimize the risks associated with our food.

5. Clinical applications of Samskara

Samskara is important in Ayurveda for both causing and managing disease. Because processing changes a substance’s qualities, it can either help health or cause problems, depending on how it’s done.

5.1. Etiological Perspective

Roasted meat combined with milk products and processed with aromatic ingredients is described as aggravating Pitta and Kapha. [35] It emphasizes that disease causation is not determined solely by the intrinsic nature of food substances but also by the manner in which they are processed, combined, and consumed.

5.2. Therapeutic Applications

Table 2: Therapeutic Applications of Samskara in Classical Ayurvedic Literature

Clinical Application	Processing (Samskara) Method	Standard Traditional Illustrations	Source Texts
Enhancement of Digestion (Agni Deepana)	Preparation using specific cereals, broths, lipids, and flavorings	Aged barley served with meat or plant-based broths; specialized diets to sustain metabolic fire	Ch. Su. 6/38[36]
Brimhana and Nutritional Therapy	Processing with meat, milk, ghee, fats, and nourishing ingredients	Well-prepared meat; processed meat soups; nourishing diets for emaciation and debility	Ch. Su. 21/30; Su. Chi. 11/4; Su. Utt. 51/54 [37, 38, 39]
Pitta Disorders	Processing with medicated milk and ghee	Purgation using medicated milk and ghee in Pitta disorders	Ch. Chi. 3/294 [40]
Swedana and Upanaha	Processing of meat and fats for external application	Jivanti Upanaha: aquatic animal meat processed with four snehas	Ch. Chi. 8/76; Ah. Chi. 5/66 [41, 42].
Rajayakshma	Processed barley, milk, meat soups, and medicated preparations	Boiled barley with milk varieties; processed meat soups	Ch. Chi. 11/83; Ah. Chi. 5/9 [43, 44]
Constipation and Flatulence	Soured and processed meat soups	Peacock, quail, and other processed meat soups	Ch. Chi. 14/121; Ah. Chi. 8/79 [45, 46]
Arshas (Piles)	Processed food and medicinal preparations	Processed curd preparations, powders, Asavas, and Arishtas after purification	Ch. Chi. 14/125; Ch. Si. 6/70 [47, 48].
Grahani	Sour and unctuous processing with Dadima, Takra, and Sneha	Processed meat soups and dietary preparations	Ch. Chi. 15/116 [49]
Kasa (Cough)	Medicated soups processed with herbal decoctions	Mudga soup with Kantakari and Amalaka	Ch. Chi. 18/184; Ah. Chi. 3/176 [50, 51]

Chhardi (Vomiting)	Properly processed meat soups	Tittiri, Barhi, and Lava meat preparations	Ch. Chi. 20/23 [52]
Dietetic Rehabilitation	Well-prepared vegetables, syrups, pickles, and linctus	Processed vegetables and food products	Ch. Chi. 20/42 [52]
Toxicology	Processing with antidotal ingredients	Soups fortified with anti-poisonous substances	Ch. Chi. 23/227 [53]
Madatyaya (Alcoholism)	Processed meat and rice preparations	Marinated animal meat with Shali rice	Ch. Chi. 24/124 [54]
Vrana (Ulcer)	Hot-processed poultices	Vesavara preparations for fomentation	Ch. Chi. 25/73 [55]
Vatavyadhi	Soups processed with Sneha, Trikatu, Dadhi, and Vatahara drugs	Bala, Panchamula, Kulattha, and Jivaniya processed preparations.	Ch. Chi. 28/107; Ch. Chi. 29/137; Su. Utt. 42/54–55 [56, 57, 58]
Vegetable Therapeutics	Processing with fats and medicated media	Bamboo shoots, Vetra, and Malayan preparations	Ch. Chi. 30/258 [59]
Mutravikara	Drug-processed douche preparations	Painful micturition and bladder disorders	Ch. Si. 9/65 [60]
Basti Chikitsa	Warm processing with honey, Sneha, and appropriate drugs	Rasnadi Basti and Niruha Basti formulations	Su. Chi. 38/74; Su. Chi. 38/45 [61, 62]
Nidranasha	Processed cakes and pastries	Shali and wheat preparations with sugar derivatives	Su. Sha. 4/44 [63]
Garbhini Chikitsa	Processed diets and digestive formulations	Appetizer-processed diets and post-abortion management	Su. Sha. 10/3, 57 [64]
Pharmaceutical Fermentation	Properly processed fermented preparations	Loharishta preparation	Su. Chi. 12/14 [65]
Panchakarma Preparation	Samskara of the body before therapy	Shodhana, Snehana, and Swedana before the administration of medicines	Su. Chi. 10/15; Su. Chi. 34/10; Ah. Utt. 39/140 [66, 67, 68]
Mudha Garbha	Medicated water processing	Shirisa-Arjuna processed water.	Su. Chi. 15/24 [69]
Ophthalmology	Processed ghee and refined pharmaceutical products	Timira treatment and Anjana preservation	Su. Utt. 17/34; Su. Utt. 18/92 [70, 71].
Shiroroga	Milk and meat soups processed with Vatahara drugs	Vataja Shiroroga management	Su. Utt. 26/11 [72]

Atisara	Drug-processed soups	Masha, kolarasa, dadima, and other medicated soups	Su. Utt. 40/60, 136 [73, 74]
Gulma and Vatashula	Soured and medicated gruels, soups, and Ghrtapura	Kulattha, Panchamula, and quail soup preparations	Su. Utt. 42/54–55, 93, 102 [75]
Raktapitta	Processed soups and vegetables with aromatics and sneha.	Meat and vegetable preparations with Amalaka and Dadima	Su. Utt. 45/14–17 [76]
Shvasa	Medicated ghee, milk, and soups	Sauvarcala-Haritaki ghee, Panchamula milk, meat soups	Su. Utt. 51/17, 31–32 [77]
Garbha Vikara	Processed milk, ghee, and meat soups	Upavishtaka and Nagodara management	Ah. Sha. 2/17 [78]
Jirna Jvara	Drug-processed milk preparations	Hot, cold, and processed milk regimens	Ah. Chi. 1/108 [79]

5.3. Samskara in Drug Preparation and Pharmaceutical Processing

Ayurveda acknowledges that appropriate processing can significantly alter the medicinal effectiveness, safety, stability, bioavailability, and usability of a drug. Consequently, Samskara forms the foundation of Ayurvedic pharmaceutics (Bhaishajya Kalpana) and acts as an essential determinant of drug quality and therapeutic performance. Classical texts describe numerous pharmaceutical operations under the wider concept of Samskara. These procedures include Toya Sannikarsha (contact with water), Agni Sannikarsha (application of heat), Shauca (washing and purification), Manthana (churning), and Bhavana (trituration with liquids), as well as factors such as Desha (geographical influence), Kala (time), and Vasana (storage or impregnation). Additionally, several specialized pharmaceutical techniques, including Paka (cooking), Dhavana (washing), Nimajjana (immersion), Avapa (addition of substances during processing), Nirvapana (quenching), Patana (distillation or sublimation), Shoshana (drying), Sinchana (sprinkling), Sthapana (preservation), and Mardana (trituration), are considered manifestations of Samskara. [80, 6] Ashtanga Samgraha provides a significant contribution to the understanding of Samskara, detailing numerous examples of transformation through processing. Commentator Indu classified these examples into several categories, including Samskara Vishesha, Svabhava Vishesha, Samskara- Svabhava Vishesha, Avastha Vishesha, Patra Vishesha, Kriya Vishesha, Kriya-Svabhava Vishesha, Kriya-Prayoga Vishesha, Kriya- Samyoga Vishesha, Samyoga-Samskara Vishesha, and Samskara-Kala Vishesha. These classifications demonstrate that the final therapeutic outcome of a drug depends not only upon the substance itself but also upon the method, medium, duration, sequence, and environment of processing. [81]

The preparation of therapeutic enemas is one area where Samskara is particularly evident (Basti). Depending on the Dosha preponderance, drugs from various flavor groups undergo particular processing before being administered. For Vata issues, sour pharmaceuticals are chopped, boiled, and processed; for Kapha disorders, pungent substances are used; for Kapha circumstances, bitter drugs are recommended; and for Pitta predominance, astringent formulations may be given after cooling. These examples demonstrate how formulations can be modified to meet certain pathological requirements through processing. [82]

The concept also explains the unique pharmaceutical importance of ghee (Ghrita), which is regarded as the superior unctuous substance because of its exceptional ability to

assimilate and carry the properties of other drugs. This principle underlies the extensive use of medicated ghee throughout Ayurvedic therapeutics. [83] Fermentation technology constitutes another sophisticated application of Samskara. Classical texts describe innumerable varieties of alcoholic preparations arising from variations in processing methods, fermentation duration, environmental conditions, and storage practices. The final therapeutic attributes of these preparations are therefore determined not only by ingredients but also by specific Samskara employed during their manufacture. [84]

Similarly, dietary formulations such as medicated gruels (Peya, Yavagu) are processed with substances like Dhanyaka and Pippali to enhance digestibility and suitability for children, elderly individuals, debilitated patients, and those suffering from impaired digestion. Emetic and purgative drugs are likewise subjected to specific processing methods to ensure safety, efficacy, and patient suitability. Classical texts repeatedly caution that improperly processed drugs used in purification therapies may produce adverse effects, stressing the critical importance of appropriate pharmaceutical Samskara. [85]

Table 3 : Samskara Based Detoxification Methods for Selected Ayurvedic Medicinal Substance

Medicinal Substance	**Scientific Nomenclature**	**Purification Method**	**Liquid Interface**
Vatsanabha [86]	Aconitum ferox Wall. ex Ser.	Boiling for one Yama (≈3 h)	Goat's milk (Aja-dugdha)
		Soaking for 3 days and drying in the sunlight	Gomutra
		Boiling for one Yama	Cow's milk (Go-dugdha)
		Trituration	Tankana (Borax)
Vacha [87]	Acorus calamus Linn.	Processing with Panchapallava decoction	Panchapallava Kvatha
Bhanga [88]	Cannabis sativa Linn.	Bhavana	Babbula Tvak Kvatha and cow milk
		Frying after trituration	Babbula Tvak Kvatha and cow ghee
Ahiphena [89]	Papaver somniferum Linn. latex	Trituration 21 times	Fresh ginger juice
Gunja [90]	Abrus precatorius Linn.	Boiling for one Yama	Kanji
		Boiling for two yams	Cow milk
		Boiling for three days with Tankana	Cow milk and Tankana
		Boiling	Kumari Mula Kvatha
Langa	Gloriosa superba Linn.	Soaking for one day	Gomutra

li [91]			
Snuhi Kshira [92]	Euphorbia neriifolia Linn. latex	Addition of Cinca Drava, followed by drying.	Tamarind extract
Bhallataka [93]	Semecarpus anacardium Linn.	Rubbing and washing	Istika churna and water
		Washing	Narikelodaka
		Washing	Hot water
Karavira [94]	Nerium indicum Mill.	Boiling	Cow milk

Transformationand Educational Refinement

Samskara functions as a process of intellectual transformation through which knowledge is revised, organized, communicated, and transmitted among generations. The most notable academic example of Samskara is the evolution of the Charaka Samhita. The earliest Agnivesha Tantra, based on the teachings of Atreya, underwent refinement, revision, expansion, and reorganization by Acharya Charaka, resulting in the redacted text known as the Charaka Samhita. Nagarjuna and later scholars revised and refined the Sushruta Samhita, demonstrating similar processes in its historical development. [95]

The editorial evolution of the Charaka Samhita and the Sushruta Samhita illustrates an intellectual form of Samskara, in which knowledge undergoes correction (pathasuddhi), completion (sampurana), and contextual updating(samskarana). [96] This demonstrates that Samskara in Ayurveda operates not only on substances and the body but also on scientific knowledge, ensuring its preservation, refinement, and relevance over the generations.

Shishyopanayana Samskara, the ceremonial initiation of a student into formal learning, serves as another significant educational application. Before entering the field of education, the student undergoes intellectual, ethical, and disciplinary preparation. This educational Samskara symbolizes the transformation of an ordinary individual into a worthy recipient of knowledge and reflects the Ayurvedic view that learning requires both cognitive and moral refinement.

Looking more broadly, academic Samskara can be seen as a means to improve knowledge through editing texts, refining teaching, training scholars, supporting intellectual growth, and preserving knowledge traditions. Today, these ideas match with peer review, editing, curriculum development, quality checks, professional training, skill-based education, and ongoing learning. Thus, Samskara provides us a way to understand how knowledge grows and changes over time while keeping its core values.

6. Pumsavana Samskara: A Biological and Psycho-Spiritual Application of Samskara

Pumsavana Samskara represents one of the most significant prenatal applications of the concept of samskara in Ayurveda. Performed during the early stages of pregnancy, particularly around the third month of gestation, it intends to improve fetal development through the combined influence of dietary, medicinal, behavioral, psychological, and spiritual interventions. Classical Ayurvedic texts describe Pumsavana as a measure to eliminate defects associated with the reproductive elements and to promote the development of a healthy, strong, intelligent, and virtuous progeny. [97] Pumsavana involves the administration of medicated preparations, dietary regimens, and maternal health-promoting measures intended to

enhance fetal growth and immunity. The use of medicinal plants such as Vata (Ficus benghalensis), Guduchi (Tinospora cordifolia), and Pippala (Ficus religiosa) reflects an early understanding of prenatal nourishment and maternal-fetal well-being. [98] These interventions are intended to strengthen both maternal physiology and fetal development, thus contributing to the concept of Supraja Janana (healthy progeny generation). Pumsavana embodies the psycho-spiritual dimension of samskara. The ritual incorporates mantra recitation, positive affirmations, family support, ethical conduct, and cultivation of a spiritually helpful environment for the expectant mother. Traditional descriptions emphasize that maternal thoughts, emotions, behavior, and surroundings influence fetal development. [98] Contemporary evidence suggests conceptual parallels between the Ayurvedic understanding of maternal influences on fetal development and modern observations regarding prenatal environmental and psychosocial determinants of health. [99] Pumsavana can be considered a prenatal practice that integrates reproductive health, fetal development, mental well-being, and spiritual growth. It shows the wider Ayurvedic view that samskara is a process that can change and improve both the body and the mind.

7. Discussion:

An in-depth examination of Charaka's definition of Samskara reveals that its significance surpasses mere processing or preparation. While explaining the concept, Charaka states, "Samskarah Karanam Matam" (Cha. Su. 26/34), indicating that Samskara functions as a Karana (causal means). Chakrapani clarifies Karana as "Gunantaradhayakatva," i.e., the capacity to induce the transformation of attributes, and equates it with Samskara. The conceptual essence of Samskara is most explicitly articulated in Charaka Vimana Sthana 1/22, where Acharya Charaka states, "Karanam punah svabhavikanam dravyanam abhisamskarah. Samskaro hi gunantaradhanam ucyate" (Cha. Vi. 1/22). This statement establishes Samskara as the causal process that modifies the intrinsic qualities of substances. Charaka further clarifies that Samskara is essentially Gunantaradhana, i.e., the acquisition, induction, or transformation of qualities. Thus, the significance of Samskara does not lie in the processing procedure itself but in its capacity to alter a substance's attributes and actions. The factors through which such transformation occurs, including contact with water (toya sannikarsha), contact with fire (agni sannikarsha), cleansing (shauca), churning (manthana), place (desha), time (kala), storage conditions (vasana), impregnation (bhavana), prolonged duration (kalaprakarsha), and the nature of the container (bhajana). Collectively, these variables indicate that environmental, temporal, mechanical, thermal, and pharmaceutical interventions can modify a substance's properties, making them dynamic rather than static. The classical Ayurvedic understanding, therefore, recognizes that the therapeutic potential of a substance xclusively determined by its innate nature (svabhava) but also by the transformations it undergoes through appropriate Samskara. Modern pharmaceutical sciences similarly acknowledge that processing techniques, such as heating, extraction, fermentation, micronization, storage conditions, formulation design, and vehicle selection, can significantly alter physicochemical properties, bioavailability, stability, safety, and therapeutic effectiveness. The Ayurvedic concept of Samskara foretells these observations by noting that interventions performed on a substance can generate new qualities and modify existing ones.Importantly, the concept goes beyond pharmaceutical processing. The principle of Gunantaradhana can be observed throughout Ayurveda in food preparation, detoxification procedures, reproductive conditioning, Panchakarma, educational refinement, and textual evision. In each case, Samskara acts as a catalytic mechanism through which an entity acquires new unctional attributes while retaining its essential dentity. For example, raw food becomes more digestible aftercooking, poisonous substances

become therapeutically useful after Shodhana, medicinal formulations become more potent after Bhavana, and knowledge is further refined through editorial revision and scholarly interpretation.

Svabhavika Dravya → Samskara (Karana) → Gunantaradhana → Modified Function or Utility The Shodhana procedures described for toxic and semi-toxic substances represent one of the earliest systematic approaches to detoxification and pharmaceutical optimization. By using specific processing media, Ayurveda aims not simply to remove toxicity but also to boost therapeutic efficacy, bioavailability, stability, and clinical relevance. The eighteen Samskaras of Parada represent the pinnacle of pharmaceutical processing in Ayurveda. Unlike conventional purification procedures, the following transformations are intended not only to remove impurities but also to modify the innate properties of mercury, rendering it therapeutically active, stable, assimilable, and safe for medicinal use. From the perspective of Samskara, Parada processing provides the most elaborate example of Gunantaradhana, in which repeated, methodical interventions progressively transform a raw material into a therapeutically optimized pharmaceutical entity. Ayurveda applied Samskara not only to substances but also to texts, pedagogy, pronunciation, scholarly training, and knowledge transmission.

Pumsavana represents Samskara because it seeks to induce desirable attributes in the developing fetus through deliberate biological, psychological, and environmental interventions.

8. Conclusion

This review shows that Samskara is more than merely a step in the production of medicines. It is a broad principle that works in biology, therapy, pharmacy, education, and knowledge. The main feature of Samskara is Gunantaradhana, which means the creation of new qualities through transformation. connects to pharmaceutical science, food technology, biology, toxicology, and education. In the future, researchers can examine how Samskara matters in formulating formulas, studying systems biology, prenatal health, and knowledge management.

9. Abbreviations

AS: Ashtanga Sangraha; AYUSH: Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homoeopathy; BHU: Banaras Hindu University; IMS: Institute of Medical Sciences; NIIMH: National Institute of Indian Medical Heritage; Ch. Chi.: Charaka Samhita, Chikitsa Sthana; Ch. Ka.: Charaka Samhita, Kalpa Sthana; Ch. Sha.: Charaka Samhita, Sharira Sthana; Ch. Si.: Charaka Samhita, Siddhi Sthana; Ch. Su.: Charaka Samhita, Sutra Sthana; Ch. Vi.: Charaka Samhita, Vimana Sthana; Su. Chi.: Sushruta Samhita, Chikitsa Sthana; Su. Su.: Sushruta Samhita, Sutra Sthana; Su. Utt.: Sushruta Samhita, Uttara Tantra; Ah. Chi.: Ashtanga Hridaya, Chikitsa Sthana; Ah. Sha.: Ashtanga Hridaya, Sharira Sthana; Ah. Utt.: Ashtanga Hridaya, Uttara Sthana.

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