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Review Article

SWARNAPRASHAN IN *KAUMARBHRITYA*: A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF AYURVEDIC CONCEPTS AND MODERN SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE

Saloni Ranawat[1]*, Ram Kumar[2]

*[1]PG Scholar, [2]HOD & Professor, PG Department of Kaumarbhritya, Madan Mohan Malviya Government Ayurved College, Udaipur, Rajasthan, India.

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ABSTRACT

Swarnaprashan is a traditional Ayurvedic paediatric practice described for promoting immunity, strength, intelligence, growth and overall health in children. In recent years, various preclinical and clinical studies have explored its immunomodulatory, nootropic, growth-promoting and other therapeutic effects. **Objective**: To review the available evidence regarding the uses, safety, efficacy and potential health benefits of *Swarnabhasma* and *Swarnaprashana* in children. **Materials and Methods**: A narrative review was conducted using classical Ayurvedic texts and published scientific literature retrieved from databases including PubMed, Google Scholar, and other relevant medical sources. Studies evaluating immunomodulatory, nootropic, anxiolytic, growth and developmental, therapeutic and safety-related effects were reviewed and narratively summarized. **Results:** Available evidence suggests that *Swarnaprashan* may have immunomodulatory effects, with studies reporting changes in immunoglobulin levels and reduction in the frequency and severity of infections. Preclinical studies have also demonstrated potential nootropic, anxiolytic, anti-arthritic and antioxidant activities. Clinical studies reported improvements in growth parameters, behavior, IQ, learning and memory, and symptoms of nocturnal enuresis. Available safety studies did not demonstrate significant toxicity or major adverse effects at the investigated doses. **Conclusion:** *Swarnaprashan* appears to be a promising Ayurvedic intervention for preventive and supportive paediatric care, particularly in relation to immunity, growth, development and cognitive function. However, the existing evidence remains limited and heterogeneous. Further well-designed randomized controlled trials with standardized formulations, appropriate dosing, larger sample sizes and long-term safety assessment are required to establish its clinical efficacy and safety.

INTRODUCTION

Swarnaprashan is an integral part of one of the 16 essential *Samskara* (regimes) discussed for children in Ayurveda which focuses on prevention rather than care and protection of health. In the world of today, where population is being mixed and food and drink are somewhat chemically treated in a stress full lifestyle around electronic distractions due to climate changes.

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One of the most important things that parents should look out for is immunity in children. For thousands of years humanity has understood that the metal gold is perfect to make statues of gods, decorations, currencies and other objects all around the earth. One of the oldest metals and actually used for treatment and prevention of human disease. The earliest references to *Hiranya*, a synonym for *Swarna* (gold), are found in *Vedic* literature dating back to the prehistoric period, reflecting the early recognition and understanding of gold in ancient Indian tradition.[1]

In Indian medical systems, gold remedies are highly valued and frequently used for their tonic and revitalising benefits. Gold has therapeutic qualities that are both preventative and curative. In Ayurveda, administering *Swarnabhasma* to infants and children

has been recommended in a number of ways. In the Ayurvedic medical system, gold is used as red colloidal solution or refined metallic fine powder (perhaps as nanoparticles), both of which are produced using a complicated procedure that involves the use of herbal extracts and even other metals.[2]

Kashyap Samhita recounts the internal use of gold in infants by the oral route in the name of *Swarnaprashan*. The benefits of *Swarnaprashan* are divided into three areas including intelligence, immunity and nutrition. Moreover, it is said that by giving *Swarnaprashana* for one month, a child becomes *Param Medhavi* (incredibly intelligent) and *Vyadhi Bhishch Na Ghrishyate* (disease-free), by giving *Swarnaprashan* for six months, a child becomes *Shrutdhara* (may recall anything he or she hears)[3]. After birth, it is mentioned in *Lehana Karma*[4] (supplementary feeding to boost nutrition, immunity and intelligence) and *Jatkarma*[5] (newborn care).

In growing children gold is suggested for *Agni* (digestive powers), *Bala* (strength and immunity), *Medha* (intellectual power), *Varna* (complexion), *Ayu* (life span)[6]. In the Ayurveda literature, gold should be used after sufficient purification because improper purification of gold drains power and produces ailments and even death.[7] *Acharya Sushruta* suggested administering *Swarna* (gold) with honey and ghee at the *Jatakarma Sanskara* (birth ritual)[8].

The drug is administered in a single dosage at delivery during newborn care. According to *Acharya Vagbhatta*[9] and other *Acharyas, Swarnaprashan* (gold licking) is a part of the *Jatkarma Sanskara* birth ceremony. In paediatric cases, *Acharya* took additional care to strengthen the baby's immune system from birth. It is among the earliest uses of gold nanomedicine. Clinical and pharmacological research demonstrates *Swarnaprashan* immunomodulatory, nootropic and therapeutic properties.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

To review the use, safety and efficacy of *Swarnabhasma* and *Swarnaprashan* in children, with emphasis on their potential health and immunomodulatory benefits.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The present study was conducted as a narrative review of available literature on *Swarnabhasma* and *Swarnaprashana*. Relevant Ayurvedic texts and published studies were searched using databases such as PubMed, Google Scholar and other major medical databases. Due to variations in study designs and outcome measures, the findings were narratively synthesized rather than statistically pooled.

Ayurveda Classics: The Therapeutic Effect of Gold (*Swarnabhasma*)

S.No.	Ayurveda Classics	Indications
1	*Kashyapa Samhita*[10]	*Medhavardhan* (intellect promoting), *Agni Vardhan* (digestive), *Bala Vardhan* (strength promoting), *Ayushyam* (life expectancy improvement), *Mangal-Punya* (auspicious), *Vrishya* (aphrodisiac), *Varnaya* (complexion and skin texture improvement), *Grhaapaham* (protection from evil spirits and microorganisms) and *Shrutdhara* (able to grasp even while listening)
2	*Sushrut Samhita*[11]	*Vapu* (build), *Buddhivardhan* (cognitive effect), *Balavardhan* (strength promoting) and *Medhavardhan* (intellect promoting)
3	*Astang Hridya*[12]	*Vapu* (build), *Varnakara* (complexion promoting), *Balavardhan* (strength promoting) and *Medha* (intelligence)
4	*Astang Sangrah*[13]	*Medha* (intelligence), *Ayu* (life-promoting), *Arogya* (health-promoting), *Kanti* (complexion-promoting), *Saubhgya* (luck) and *Pushti* (strength-promoting)
5	*Bhavaprakash*[14]	*Brahanan* (increasing weight), *Netrayam* (improving vision), *Medha* (intelligence), *Smriti* (improving memory), *Buddhivardhak* (cognitive effect), *Hridya* (cardiac tonic) and *Ayushkar* (improving life expectancy) *Kaanti* (promoting complexion), *Vaakshuddhikar* (improving speech disorder), *Tridoshahar.*
6	*Bhaishajya Ratnavali* [15]	*Varna-Kantivardhak* (improving complexion and skin texture), *Ayu* (promoting life)
7	*Ras Ratna Samuchya*[16]	*Kshyahara* (improving debility), *Agnimandyahara* (digestive), *Shwasahara* (improving asthma), *Kasahara* (immunomodulatory), *Ojodhatuvivardhana* (immunomodulatory), *Balakara* (promoting anaemia) and *Sarva Vishahara*

		(detoxifying toxins-antidote).
8	*Rasa Prakash Sudhakar*[17]	*Saundarya Kantivardhana* (improving complexion and skin texture, encouraging beauty), *Tridoshaja Roga* and *Vishanashaka* (detoxifying toxins, antidote).
9	*Rasa Tarangini*[18]	*Vishahar* (detoxifying toxins-antidote), *Hridya* (cardiac tonic), *Netrya* (improving vision), *Smritiprada* (enhancing memory), *Medhya* (boosting intellect), *Punsavanopyogi* (sacrament) and *Vrishya* (aphrodisiac)
10	*API*[19]	*Grahani* (malabsorption syndrome), *Amlapitta* (dyspepsia/acidity), *Hikka* (hiccup), *Pandu* (anaemia), *Shwasa* (dyspnea/asthma), *Jwara* (fever), *Dhatu Kshaya* (tissue wasting), *Rajayakshma* (tuberculosis), *Buddhikshaya* (impaired intelligence), *Apasmara* (epilepsy), *Snayudaurbalya* (heart disease), *Phiranga* (syphilis), *Visha* (poison), *Smritihani* (loss of memory), *Unmada* (mania/psychosis) and *Svarabheda* (hoarseness of voice)

Pharmacological Actions

Immunomodulatory Effect

- A study was conducted on albino rats to investigate its immunomodulatory effect. Both the test drug and the vehicle were given for 10 days. The study found that the test drug group had a substantial rise in platelet count compared to the SRBC (humoral immunity) group, but no significant increase in paw oedema (cell-mediated immunity) after 24 and 48 hours compared to the control group. *Swarnaprashan* has been shown to increase cellularity in the spleen and lymph nodes, suggesting a humoral immune response[20].
- *Swarna Bhasma* with *Ghrita* and *Madhu* (*Suvarna BinduPrashana*) was administered to 12 healthy children once a month for 6 months. Each dose consisted of 4 drops of *Swarna Bhasma* suspended in *Ghrita* (4mg gold) and 4 drops of honey. The study found that increasing immunoglobulin levels (IgG, IgM and IgA) after 6 months led to a substantial reduction in sickness duration, severity and frequency[21].
- *Suvarna Vacha* has been shown in a clinical investigation to have immunomodulatory benefits in newborns without producing toxicity. However, further research is needed to standardise the procedure and conduct toxicity studies on appropriate animal models to ensure the therapy's safety and effectiveness.[22]
- The study suggests that *Swarna Bindu Prashana* (SBP) may enhance dendritic cell maturation and T cell activation in newborns. However, further research is needed to confirm its safety and efficacy against viral diseases.[23]
- A study evaluated the impact of *Swarnaprashan* and *Swarna-Vacha-Prashan* on newborns' anthropometry, biochemistry, immunology, haematology and infant toddler quality of life (ITQOL) parameters. The newborns were divided into three groups: A *Ghrita* and *Madhu*, *Swarna Bhasma*, *Ghrita* and *Madhu* and *Swarna Bhasma*, *Ghrita, Madhu* and *Vacha Churna*. In this trial, all three groups showed a significant increase ($P<0.001$) in all anthropometrical metrics. There were no significant differences in haematological and biochemical markers, or immunological indicators, with the exception of Group C, which had higher levels of immunoglobulin G (IgG), IgM, albumin, globulin and all ITQOL metrics. This also demonstrated the safety of the medications in newborns.[24]
- The safety and effectiveness of *Swarna Bhasma*, *Madhu* (honey) and *Ghrita* in infants with respect to anthropometric, haematological and immunological parameters were evaluated in a randomised, controlled, single-blind trial. A total of 102 healthy newborns were divided into trial and control groups. For four weeks with an eight-week follow-up, the trial group was given a combination of *Swarna Bhasma*, honey and *Ghrita,* whereas the control group was given a combination of honey and *Ghrita* in drop form. Biochemical indicators were used to evaluate safety and IgG levels before and after therapy were used to evaluate efficacy. The absence of a statistically significant difference between the trial and control medications effects in anthropometric and biochemical parameters indicated that the trial drugs were safe to provide to newborns and did not interfere with their normal growth. Individual IgG levels before and after treatment were statistically significantly altered by both trial and control medications. However, there were no discernible variations across the groups. Nonetheless, one out of every 4.535 newborns who got *Swarnarashan* had a substantial number needed to treat (NNT) to evaluate the normalisation of immunoglobulins, which is suggestive of its immunomodulatory

action. It demonstrated immunomodulatory efficacy, as demonstrated by NNT and the infants accepted it without experiencing any negative side effects during the trial or follow-up period[25].

Anti-asthmatic effect[26]

For 12 weeks, auranofin medication reduced non-specific bronchial hyperresponsiveness in patients with mild, asymptomatic asthma and normal lung function.

Anti-arthritic activity[27]

Colloidal gold (average particle size 27nm) demonstrated greater anti-arthritic potency than sodium aurothiomalate (myocrisin) in experimentally induced arthritis in rats. Subcutaneous administration of both agents significantly suppressed the development and progression of arthritis.

Nootropic Activity[28]

A study evaluated the nootropic effects of *Swarnaprashana* on learning and memory in young and aged Swiss albino mice. *Swarnaprashana,* prepared using *Swarnabhasma* (gold), honey, and ghee, was administered orally at a dose of 30mg/kg for 15 days. Learning and memory were assessed using the Elevated Plus Maze and Morris Water Maze, along with scopolamine- and age-induced amnesia models. Piracetam (200mg/kg) was used as the standard drug. *Swarnaprashana* significantly improved learning and memory ($P<0.01$) and reduced brain acetylcholinesterase (AChE) activity ($P<0.001$), suggesting its potential memory-enhancing and nootropic activity.

A study conducted in children aged 3–4 years evaluated the effects of *Suvarna Bindu Prashana*, containing *Suvarna Bhasma*, *Ghrita* and *Madhu*. Group A received *Suvarna Bindu Prashana*, while Group B served as the untreated control group, and both groups were followed for six months. The intervention group demonstrated a significant improvement in eating habits, behaviour, mood, temperament and frequency of illness, along with a significant increase in IQ percentage. However, no significant difference was observed in sleeping habits between the two groups.[29]

Anxiolytic Activity[30]

A study suggested that *Swarna Bhasma* possesses potential anxiolytic and neuroprotective effects. In restraint stress-induced rats, administration of *Swarna Bhasma* reduced the levels of norepinephrine, epinephrine, dopamine, serotonin (5-HT), and corticosterone. These findings indicate its possible role in reducing stress, anxiety and related nervous system disturbances.

Effect on Growth, Development and Behaviour[31]

In Ayurveda, *Swarnaprashan* is described as beneficial for promoting intelligence, strength, and longevity. A study evaluated its effect on the physical growth of 120 children aged 0–12 years, who were randomly divided into trial and control groups. The trial group received *Swarnaprashana*, while the control group received *Madhujala* as placebo, administered 14 times over one year on *Pushya Nakshatra* days. Weight and height were recorded at each visit. The study reported a significant improvement in height ($p< 0.05$) among both male and female children receiving *Swarnaprashana* compared with the control group.

Effect on Nocturnal Enuresis[32]

A prospective, open-label, non-randomized controlled clinical study was conducted from August 2016 to February 2017 in 40 children aged 6–16 years diagnosed with *Shayyamutra* (nocturnal enuresis). The participants were divided into two groups of 20 each. The study group received *Swarnamritaprashana* capsule once daily for two months along with *Satvavajaya Chikitsa,* while the control group received *Ghritabharjita Godhuma* capsule (placebo) along with the same therapy. Patients were assessed at the end of the first and second months and followed up in the third month. The study showed a statistically significant improvement ($p<0.05$) in the signs and symptoms of nocturnal enuresis in the *Swarnamrita-prashana* group after treatment.

Safety of *Swarnaprashana*

The safety of *Swarna Bindu Prashana* (SBP) and its vehicles was evaluated in Wistar albino rats following chronic administration for 90 days. The animals were divided into control, vehicle groups receiving ghee, honey or both and an SBP group receiving *Swarna Bhasma* (5.625mg/kg body weight) along with 0.4ml each of ghee and honey orally. No mortality or significant behavioural changes were observed during the study. Food and water intake, as well as faecal and urinary output, remained normal. Haematological and serum biochemical parameters showed no major abnormalities and histopathological examination of vital organs revealed no toxic changes. The study therefore indicated that long-term administration of SBP at the tested dose was safe and did not produce significant toxic effects.[33]

DISCUSSION

Infancy or childhood is the growing period of life and is the most critical era. This period of proper growth, psychosocial development, and disease-free state of health, gives a firm foundation to the future building of life. Ayurveda science is focused with healthier life through preventative and promotive strategies for paediatric age group. Kashyap said that a child's health and illness rely on the *Lehana*[34]. *Lehana* is an ancient practice of oral administration of *Swarna* and other helpful medicines to youngsters for better

health and avoidance of numerous ailments. *Acharyas* have stated four *Swarnayogas* (formulations) for appropriate growth and development of child.[35] This *Lehana* is called *Swarnaprashana* because *Swarna* is its primary element.[36] The advantages of *Swarnaprashana* have been stated by *Acharyas*. They claim that consistent usage of *Swarnaprashana* promotes healthy growth and development, prevents illness, and sharpens cognition to an extraordinary degree[37]. Additionally, *Swarnaprashana* enhances metabolism and digestion, maintaining the equilibrium of the *Tridoshas.* As a result, the children are protected from seasonal fluctuations and can develop effectively.

According to the current review, *Swarnaprashana* boosts immunity, which may aid in healthy growth and development. According to recent studies, gold particles contain T-lymphocyte activation and antioxidant qualities, which control the immunological response to antigens[38]. Neonates' humoral anti-body development was significantly impacted by the *Madhu-Ghrita-Swarna-Vacha* combo. Additionally, it demonstrated elevated serum IgG and total protein levels, triggering the immune system's reaction[39].

Swarna may reduce illness frequency and promote healthy child development. Research suggests that it can improve cognitive abilities such as cognition, restraint and memory[40]. A study indicated that colloidal gold improved cognitive performance (measured by IQ scores)[41]. The study found that *Swarnabhasma* has free radical scavenging properties, making it suitable for usage as *Jatakarma* during birth. *Swarnaprashana* can help repair oxidative damage caused during birth. Honey and ghee serve as a medium for *Swarnaprashana*[42].

CONCLUSION

The present narrative review suggests that *Swarnaprashana* and *Swarnabhasma* may have potential roles in promoting immunity, growth, development, cognitive function and overall health in children. Ayurvedic classics describe *Swarnaprashana* as a preventive and promotive measure for enhancing *Bala* (strength), *Medha* (intelligence), *Agni* (digestion), *Ayu* (longevity) and immunity. Available preclinical and clinical studies indicate possible immune-modulatory, nootropic, anxiolytic, anti-inflammatory, growth-promoting, and therapeutic effects with improvements reported in immunoglobulin levels, recurrent illness, learning and memory, growth parameters, behaviour, IQ and nocturnal enuresis.

The available safety studies, particularly in animal models and newborns, have generally reported no significant toxicity or adverse effects at the studied doses. However, the evidence is limited by variations in formulations, dosage, study designs, sample sizes, and outcome measures. Therefore, although *Swarnaprashana* appears promising as an Ayurvedic preventive and supportive intervention in paediatric care, well-designed, adequately powered, standardized, randomized controlled clinical trials with long-term safety assessment are required to establish its efficacy, optimal dosage and safety conclusively.

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***Address for correspondence**
Dr. Saloni Ranawat
PG Scholar
PG Department of Kaumarbhritya
Madan Mohan Malviya Government Ayurved College, Udaipur, Rajasthan.
Email: saloniranawat18@gmail.com

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