REVIEW ARTICLE

UNDERSTANDING SHATKRIYAS OF YOGA THROUGH AYURVEDA

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UNDERSTANDING SHATKRIYAS OF YOGA THROUGH AYURVEDA

ABSTRACT:
Yoga is an ancient scientific method which is recognized globally and is getting much popularity for its non pharmacological methods. On the observation many of practitioners and teachers of yoga were given much importance for Asana, Pranayama and Dhyana, ignored basic techniques of yoga like Mudra, Bhand, and Shatkriyas. Shatkriyas are a unique therapy explained as a part of Hatha Yoga, the purpose of Hatha yoga is to establish perfect harmony between two Pranic flows those are Ida and Pingala. When they are perfectly balanced, Prana will begins to flow in Sushumna Nadi, the most important Nadi in Psychic body, understanding this concept is very difficult for beginners so better understanding purpose humble trial has been made to explain by taking help of Ayurveda. Ayurveda is one of the ancient medical systems, which explains preventive and curative aspects of diseases, describes Panchakarma (Penta bio purificatory method) for purification of body and prevention of diseases which mimics Shatkriyas of Yoga hence the present study is selected to make easy understanding the techniques of Shatkriyas through concept of Ayurveda. This review article shows that by applying concept of Ayurveda one can easily understand practicality of Shatkarma.

Key Words: Dhouthi, Basthi, Nethi, Trataka, Nouli, Kapala bhathi.

INTRODUCTION
Ayurveda is one of the oldest scientific medical systems in the world, with a long record of clinical experiences to validate it. It is not only a system of medicine in the conventional sense of curing disease, it is also a way of life that teaches us how to maintain and protect health. Yoga is known ancient system which has many principles to protect health and to overcome diseases by following non pharmacological measures like Asana, Pranayama, and Shatkriyas. The aim of yoga is to achieve Moksha, which is one of the four Purusharthas as explained in yoga and Ayurveda. To achieve the Moksha, maintenance of health is much important, which can only obtained by following the principles as explained in the particular health sciences.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES
Aim of this study is to make easy understanding of Shatkarma by collecting all available literature regarding six purificatory procedures from classical texts of yoga and compare with Penta bio purificatory procedures which are explained in Ayurvedic classics. To analyze whether there would be a significance difference in both purificatory procedures in curing and preventing diseases.

MATERIALS AND METHODS
This article is conceptual, all the available references from yoga literature have been collected and compiled also available websites for yoga have been searched for this article and compared with Ayurvedic shodhana karma for better understanding of Shatkriyas. To conclude the study, all available Ayurvedic literature referred, and a humble attempt has been made to draw conclusion.

CONCEPT OF SHATKRIYAS
Ayurveda and yoga have impact over each other. We find lot of similarities between yoga and Ayurveda as follows:

- Ayurveda and Yoga are taken origin of Vedic sciences.
- Both have accepted the basic principles of Sankhya philosophy.
- Both have accepted the theory of Omni substances, Trigunas, as the primary qualities from which the entire universe is created.
- Both have accepted the theory of Panchamahabhutas (five primordial elements).
- Both have belief in Psycho-somatic-spiritual health.
- Importance of Vayu explained in both the sciences.
- Both have bio purificatory methods (Panchakarma and Shatkriyas).

For both yoga and Ayurveda, the purification at different levels is of primary importance. It is
purification by which one can get physical and mental strength.
The following are the Penta bio purificatory procedures as explained in Ayurveda:[1],[2]
1. Vamana – removes vitiating kapha dosha
   (Prakrutha kapha – Humor responsible for
   immune function) present all over the body.
2. Virechana – removes vitiating Pitta dosha
   (Prakrutha Pitta – Humor responsible for
   metabolic activities) present all over the body.
3. Basthi – removes vitiating Vata dosha
   (Prakrutha Vata – Humor responsible for
   nervous function) present all over the body.
4. Nasya – removes vitiating Kapha dosha present
   in the head.
5. Raktha Mokshana – removes vitiating Pitta
   dosha present in the Raktha and other local
   regions.

These procedures on careful observation will mimic some of the purificatory process as
explained in the classical text of yoga.

According to Hatha yoga Pradipika and Gheranda Samhitha, there are six cleansing techniques called
as Shat Kriyas. [3] [4]. They are Dhouthis, Basthi, Nethi, Trataka, Nouli and Kapala bhati. ‘Shat’
means six and ‘Kriya’ means therapy (Shodhanam/cleansing), these are yogic Kriyas which
removes waste material of our internal organs which are not expelled normally. Therefore
the aim of Hatha yoga and of the ShatKriyas are to cleanse the internal organs and there by create
harmony between the major Pranic flows, Ida - Pingala and attaining a physical and mental
purification.

DHOUTHIS
Dhouthis is cleansing procedure of gastro intestinal
tract, this is of 3 types. [5]
1. Vamana Dhouthis
2. Danda Dhouthis
3. Vastra Dhouthis

VAMANA DHOUTHIS
It is the process in which the person drinks saline
water and induces the vomiting. [6] The same
procedure is performed in Ayurveda called as
Vamana, but vomiting is induced by using herbal
medicines called as Vamana karma. It is done to
flush out the vitiated Doshas from all the parts of
the body. Here the person drinks medicated
decotion with milk etc and induces vomiting after
giving gap of few minutes. [7][8][9] The action of
Vamana may not be same as Vamana Dhouthis but
procedure is same. Before the commencement of
Vamana the patient will be undergoing some of the
preoperative procedures like oil massage, swedana
etc, and duration of whole of treatment being 7
days (varies from person and disease) to complete
the Vamana course.

Vamana Dhouthi cannot produce same results like
Vamana karma, but it will bring out all morbid
matter (Toxins) present in the stomach by the
process of voluntary vomiting, initially it seems
unnatural but this practice cleanses both upper
elementary canal and respiratory systems, it may
be observed as both stimulates, Samana Vata,
Pachaka Pitta and Kledaka kapha of the stomach.
Dhouthis removes impurities that can cause
diseases, and enhances general health by
permitting best possible assimilation of nutrients.

DANDA DHOUTHIS
This is the method of cleansing Esophagus, throat
and stomach, in which soft core of banana stem
about half inch in diameter and two feet long is
used to insert in to the stomach through mouth. [10]
It is a unique therapy in Shatkarma which cannot
be correlated with any of the therapies under
Panchakarma, but looking to the procedure it may
increases the secretion of stomach by which
corrects indigestion and helps as appetizer as it
effect on Samana Vata and Pachaka Pitta.

VASTRA DHOUTHIS
In this procedure a specially prepared white cotton
cloth approximately two inches in wide and twenty
feet length soaked in saline water, is swallowed to
the stomach and removed carefully with in twenty
minutes of insertion when small portion of cloth
remains outside. [11]. By doing so, the excess
Kledaka kapha and Aama (Auto toxins) present in
the stomach due to their pichhila (Sticky) property
will get adherent to cloth and comes out with cloth
by this it will alleviate Ama and corrects Kledaka
kapha.

In Ayurveda, seat of Kapha dosha is in the mucus
element of chest and stomach, in this practice the
excess mucus from the chest is removed. It
thoroughly scrubs walls of the stomach and
stimulates the peristalsis and digestive juices, it
brings both Pitta and kapha dosha back to balance,
 improving all conditions related to upper gastro
intestinal tract.

LAGHU SHANKA PRAKSHALANA:
Laghu shanka prakshalana is also called Varisara
Dhouthi, the word Shanka means conch and
prakshalana means wash completely. The technique
washes the conch shaped intestine and entire alimentary
channel from mouth to the anus hence is rightly called Shankha prakshalana.
In this procedure person is advised to drink saline water stomach full when sitting in Veerarasa and then advised to perform particular indicated Asanas after that he will get urge of passing stools, same procedure on and off repeated until water is free of stool.[12]

It is beneficial for constipation, Irritavel Bowel Syndrome, Diabetes, and all Gastro Intestinal Tract disorders, Relieves Flatulence, constipation. It counteracts the bowel malfunctioning that cause a decrease in the natural cleansing of the intestine due to low grade food, a sedentary life style, and gradual organic brake down.

If this is grossly observed it mimics Virechana karma, in this the medicated drugs will be given in the early morning, after which person passes loose stools for few times.[13]This is better treatment for vitiated Pitta and Vata dosha hence by performing Laghu shanka prakshalana will get control over Vata and Pitta.

**BASTHI:**

It is a procedure in which yogi will stand in flowing water up to the level of novel region, by bending forward expanding sphincter muscles and simultaneously perform Uddiyana Bandha and Nouli such that water will be drawn inside the intestine through anal region.

After storing the water for some time and performing Nouli it will be passed out, by doing so, the toxins present in the lower gastro intestinal tract will get flushed out. [14] Practically it is difficult now a day's, yogis are using rubber catheter to perform Basthi. It will generate energy, removes heat from the systems, and develops the strength, control abdominal muscles, massages and tones organs and nerves.

This procedure will mimics Basthi karma of Ayurveda in which either decoction (in Niruha Basthi) or oils (in Anuvasana Basthi) will be administered through anal route [15] by this one can get rid of the diseases in which Vata is predominant. Same way, Basthi karma may controls the Vata.

**NETHI:**

Nethi is a procedure in which substances like water (Jala Nethi), thread (Sutra Nethi), milk (Dugdha Nethi) are used. In this, substances will be inserted in one nostril and removed through another nostril, so as to purify upper respiratory tract including sinuses.[14]

The benefits of Nethi is not only restricted to upper respiratory tract, effects are also seen in some of the systemic disorders like Asthma, Bronchitis, Allergies, Epilepsy, Migraine, Anxiety, Depression, Eye diseases and Ear Nose Throat Disorders, it is also effective in sinusitis and inflammation of Adenoids. At more subtle level, the Nethi practices engage the other koshas and stimulates the Ajna chakra, the mid brain psychic center, which has a great influence of psycho-spiritual health. It is very much difficult to understand its action through contemporary sciences, but if principals of Ayurveda are applied then one may find it easier to follow.

Ayurveda explains that नमसकर्षण द्याय | [17] i.e. nose is the gate way for brain. This principle is adopted in one of the Panchakarma called Nasya, in which the vitiated dosh (especially the kapha) will be removed from head region.

The administration of substances is through nose only, in Ayurveda medicated ghee, oil, decoctions, powders are used but in yoga substances like water, thread (catheter), milk, and ghee are used, principles behind is being the same.

**TRATAKA:**

Word Trataka means -to look or to gaze, this technique can be defined as fixed gazing at one point, It is described as the Kriya for eyes in which the person is made to visualize the flame (jyothishtrataka), Trataka can also be practiced on a small dot, the full moon, a shadow, a crystal ball, at the tip of nose, Omkara etc before to which one has to perform eye exercises, by doing so, one can get concentration, increases the lacrimal secretion by which cleans the eyes.[18]

Physically Trataka cleanse the eyes, corrects weakness and certain defects of eyes, mentally it increases nervous stability, removes insomnia and relaxes even most troubled mind. Trataka calms, stills and focuses the mind by this it will develops concentration and will power it is one of the most powerful methods of controlling mind and its thought waves.

Ayurveda says eyes are the main site of Alochaka Pitta [19] as well total head, which not only stimulates eyes but also brain, by applying this concept we can easily understand Trataka will not only works on eyes and also brain.

**NOULI:**

It is an abdominal procedure in which isolated contraction and rolling manipulation of the anterior abdominal, rectal muscles are accomplished. [20].
The rolling, rotation and agitation of the entire abdomen gives deep massage and profound toning to the abdominal muscles, benefit of this procedure is that it will improves blood circulation to whole trunk and internal organs, cures Constipation, Indigestion and controls Diabetes. This part of abdomen is the main site of functioning of physiology of the body. These are remove the impurities and restore the proper balance of physiology of the body. These are very little use if studied theoretically, practical approach is also required to understand these purificatory procedures. The literatures of Yoga will give instruction and as far as possible express the methods in words but for beginners it is very difficult to follow practically, such persons require teacher who is versed in practical, it is easy to find such a teacher who will explain from the books but difficult to find Yogi.

**DISCUSSION**

A number of experiments conducted on Shatkarma will reveal that either diseases can be cured or the patient’s condition vastly improved by regular practice.

Dr Bhole MD of Lonavala institute, who has investigated the influence of yogic techniques in normal and Asthmatic individuals, has reported the following findings. Nethi and Kapalabhati directly influence the respiratory centers of the brain, by this powerful method voluntary influence on the brain activity, the patient gain the higher level of control over the movements of respiratory muscles, and the patterns of thought, feeling and general behavior. This is the fundamental in management and cure of Asthma in Yoga. Nethi Kriya cleanses nasal passages, releasing constructed upper airways and increasing the flow of breath, it should be routinely performed in the cases of Asthma. (Especially of allergic origin) [24].

The study conducted by Dr Kamathya kumar, Effect of Shatkarma practices on serum glucose and serum cholesterol level of the human subjects, an observation, the impact of the practice of Shatkarma showed a significance reduction on their serum glucose and serum cholesterol level. [27].

After referring all yogic literature, it shows that regular practice of Shatkarma makes purification of the body (षकमाणां शोधनं च) [24].

According to the ancient text Gheranda Samhitha there are seven steps which every spiritual aspirant must qualify for attainment of self realization (Moksha) in that first step is Shodhanam i.e purification of body through Shatkriyas.

Ayurveda also opines shodhana is important for maintaining Swasthya. In a context of Yoga, Acharyas explained person having excess sleshma and medas should practice Shatkarma otherwise it is not necessary when Doshas are in equilibrium [24].

After referring all available classical texts and studies conducted in the field of yoga it can stated that the regular practice of Shatkarmas will help to purify the body, and maintain perfect health.

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CONCLUSION
• The word Kriya and Karma are synonymous which shows the impact of one over the other.
• The effect of Kriyas and karmas are different but the idea behind them is same.
• It may be considered, that these Kriyas are short cut of Panchakarma or Panchakarma may be the modified form of Shatkriya.
• Further studies are required to understand Shat Kriyas through Ayurvedic perspective.

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