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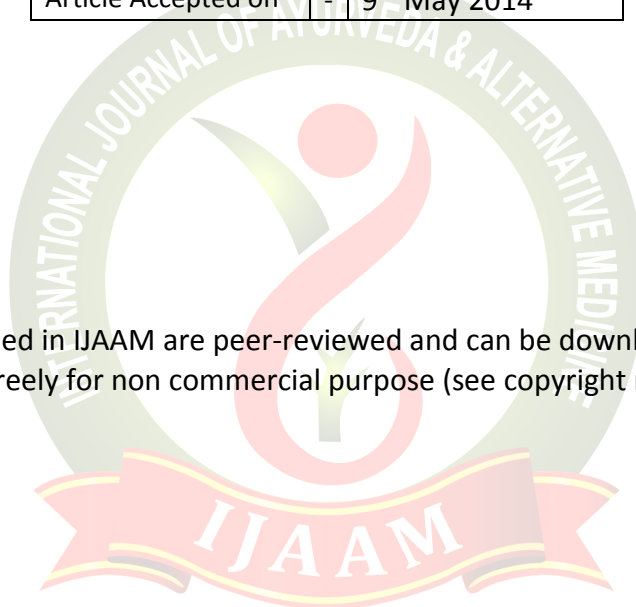
## **UNDERSTANDING SHATKRIYAS OF YOGA THROUGH AYURVEDA**

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## UNDERSTANDING SHATKRIYAS OF YOGA THROUGH AYURVEDA

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## 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*, *Bhanda*, 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 biopurificatory 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 vitiated kapha dosha (*Prakrutha kapha* – Humor responsible for immune function) present all over the body.
2. *Virechana* – removes vitiated *Pitta dosha* (*Prakrutha Pitta* – Humor responsible for metabolic activities) present all over the body.
3. *Basthi* – removes vitiated *Vata dosha* (*Prakrutha Vata* – Humor responsible for nervous function) present all over the body.
4. *Nasya* – removes vitiated *Kapha dosha* present in the head.
5. *Raktha Mokshana* – removes vitiated *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*.

धौतिर्बस्ति तथा नौतिलीलिकी ऋटकं तथा।

कपालभातिश्चैतानि षट्कर्माणि समाचरेत्॥

According to *Hatha yoga Pradipika* and *Gheranda Samhitha*, there are six cleansing techniques called as *Shat Kriyas*. [3], [4]. They are *Dhouthi*, *Basthi*, *Nethi*, *Trataka*, *Nouli* and *Kapala bhathi*. '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.

### DHOUTH

*Dhouthi* is cleansing procedure of gastro intestinal tract, this is of 3 types. [5].

1. *Vamana Dhouthi*
2. *Danda Dhouthi*
3. *Vastra Dhouthi*

### VAMANA DHOUTH

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 decoction 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 Dhouthi* 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. *Dhouthi* removes impurities that can cause diseases, and enhances general health by permitting best possible assimilation of nutrients.

### DANDA DHOUTH

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 increase the secretion of stomach by which corrects indigestion and helps as appetizer as it effect on *Samana Vata* and *Pachaka Pitta*.

### VASTRA DHOUTH

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 canal 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 *Veerasana* 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.<sup>[12]</sup>

It is beneficial for constipation, Irritable 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.<sup>[13]</sup> 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 navel 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.<sup>[14]</sup> 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<sup>[15]</sup>, 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.<sup>[16]</sup>

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 नसा हि शिरसो द्वारम्<sup>[17]</sup>. I.e. nose is the gate way for brain. This principle is adopted in one of the *Panchakarma* called *Nasya*, in which the vitiated *dosha* (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 (*Jyothisthtrataka*), *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.<sup>[18]</sup>

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*<sup>[19]</sup> 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.<sup>[20]</sup>

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 improve blood circulation to whole trunk and internal organs, cures Constipation, Indigestion and controls Diabetes.

This part of abdomen is the main site of *Vata* as explained in *Ayurvedic* classics, If it is corrected many of the physiological functions of the body will be in equilibrium [21], because *Vata* carries other biological entities to their destination. Regular practice of *Nouli* will control the *Vata* and balance other physiological functions.

#### KAPALA BHATHI:

One of the *Kapala bhathi* is *Vata karma Kapala bhathi*, in which one should perform the flopping of the abdomen by active exhalation and passive inhalation, the benefits are [22].

- It provides nice massage to abdominal organs
- Corrects the digestion
- Cleans the whole respiratory tract
- Brain gets stimulated

By looking towards its benefits, it can be assumed that, this *Kriya* acts on *Agni* and *Vata*, this *Agni* is of three types: [23].

- *Jataragni* – present in stomach, responsible for digestion
- *Bhutagni* – present in liver, responsible for metabolic activities
- *Dhatvagni* – present in their specific *dhatu*s (Bodily tissues)

As this *Kriya* acts on *Vata*, this will stimulate *Vata* and *Nadis* there by curing mental disorders.

#### RESULTS

The *Shatkarmas* are yogic cleansing techniques which cleanse the subtle channels as well as remove the impurities and restore the proper functioning of physiology of the body. These are the preparatory procedures in the most part which prepare the body for the process of next level. Using the knowledge given in *Ayurveda* these procedures can more deeply understood as when and how to balance the body and mind.

There are two classes of students in *Yoga* one who study theoretically and others who combine theory and practical, *Shatkriyas* 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

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 *Kapalabhathi* 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 constricted upper airways and increasing the flow of breath, it should be routinely performed in the cases of Asthma. (Especially of allergic origin) [26].

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 (*षट्कर्माणां 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 [25].

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

**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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