

Nasya – An Ayurvedic Therapeutic

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Abstract

Nasya is a kind of *Panchkarna* treatment for body cleansing used in *Ayurvedic* medicine. Administration of drugs by the route of nasal cavity is termed as *nasya*, *nāvana*, *nasya karma* are synonymous to *nasya*. The nose is the gateway into the head, the sinuses and deeper into the lungs. Different types of *nasya* come under two main categories, which are *Shamana* and *Shodana*. *Shamana nasya* helps to pacify an imbalance and is generally more calming and nourishing to nervous system. On the other hand, *Shodana Nasya* helps to remove the imbalanced excess from the body, therefore more detoxifying and clearing for the channels of the head. In present review article, we have tried to understand the mode of action i.e. pharmacodynamics of *Nasya karma*.

Keywords *Nasya*, *Nasya kriya*, *Nasa*, Gateway, *Shiras*, Olfactory nerve.

INTRODUCTION

Nasya or *nasya karma* is the therapeutic procedure used in *Ayurveda* to cure many local and systemic diseases. In this procedure, medicine or medicated oil is administered in a specific manner in the nose¹. *Ayurveda* considers two type of *Indriyas*, one *Gyanendriyas* and other one is *Karmendriyas*. *Nasa* is one among the five type of *Gyanendriya*. The function of *Nasa* is not only olfaction and respiration but also included as a route of drug administration. *Nasa* is described as a gateway for *Shiras* i.e. head. *Ayurveda* had given the prime importance to the *Shiras*, considering it as one among the three vital organ of body. *Shiras* is called as *Uttamanga* due to the centre of *prana* i.e. life and seat of *indriyas*².

Hence drug given via the nose directly reaches to head.

TYPES OF NASYA

Acharya Charaka classified *Nasya karma* in five types³-

Naavan- medicated oil is used

Avapidha- extract of medicine is used

Dhamapan- medicated fine powder is used with the help of a hollow tube

Dhoom- medicated fume is used

Pratimarsha- medicated oil is used with the help of finger in the form of drop

Acharya Sushruta also divide *Nasyakama* into five type⁴-

Nasya- also called *Tarpan* or *Vrahan nasya*. Oily or lipid medicines are used.

Shirovirechan- pungent or astringent medicines are used to pull out vitiated *doshas*

Pratimarsha- medicated oil is used with the help of finger in the form of drop

Avapidha- extract of medicine is used

Pradhmana- medicated fine powder is used with the help of a hollow tube

MODE OF ACTION

According to *Acharya Charaka*, *nasa* is the gateway or portal of the *Shiras*. The medicine administered via nose in form of *nasya*, directly reaches to the brain and eliminate the vitiated *doshas* just as the *ishika* is taken out after removing the fibrous coating of *munja* (a type of grass) adherent to it⁵.

Acharya Vagbatta had told in *Astanga Samgraha* that *Nasa* being the entry of *Shiras*, the drug given via it reaches to *Shrighataka Marma* and spread into the *Murdha* i.e. brain reaches at a junctional area of *Netra*(eye), *Shrota*(ear) and *Kantha* (throat) *shiramukhas* i.e. opening of vessels and remove the vitiated i.e. disease causing

doshas present above supraclavicular region and expel them out from *uttamanga*⁶.

Acharya Sushruta, the great ancient surgeon, has written about the type and position of *Shrighatak marma* in brief. It is a *sira marma* present in the middle of confluence of *siras* supplying nourishment to the nose, ear, eyes and tongue fatal point inside the head⁷. If *Nasya kama* especially *Shodana Nasya*, is done in excess amount, it will lead to *Mastulingh* (C.S.F.) to flow out. This is the best example to proof *Nasa* as a portal to the *Shiras*⁸.

Nose is richly supplied by blood vessels and and nerve plexus of olfactory nerve along with ophthalmic and maxillary branch of trigeminal nerve. So drugs given via this route do function by direct diffusion (from high concentration to low concentration), by vascular system and by neurological stimulation or neurological pathway.

Direct diffusion of drug- Lipid soluble substances have great affinity for passive diffusion from the nasal mucosa. Therefore, medicated oil i.e. *Snehik Nasya* will get absorbed easily and elicit rapid action, according to their properties. The cilia of the olfactory cells and perhaps the body of olfactory cells contain relatively large quantities of lipid materials⁹. This concludes

that to get the desired action, the drugs for *nasya karma* should be lipid soluble.

Vascular pathway- The venous drainage of nose occurs in facial vein along with inferior ophthalmic vein. The facial vein has no valve it communicates freely with the intracranial circulation at its commencement and by the supraorbital veins, which are connected with the ophthalmic vein, a tributary of the deep facial vein, which communicates with pterygoid plexus with the cavernous venous sinus¹⁰. Therefore, drugs which absorb into nasal vasculature will also show the effect on intracranial organ along with meninges due to common venous drainage.

Neurological pathway- The olfactory nerve differs from the other cranial nerves in its close relation with the brain. It is connected with the higher centres of the brain, hypothalamus, epithalamus, limbic system

along with parts of basal ganglia. Therefore, drugs administered through nose will also stimulate higher centres of brain will directly influence their function, for example, control of hormone secretion, regulation of state of consciousness along with behavioural and emotional patterns. It also regulates the Autonomic nervous system which is the major regulator of visceral activities such as heart rate, movement of food through G.I.T. and contraction of bladder.

CONCLUSION

On the bases of above description, it is clear that *nasya* has both local and systemic effect. Systemic effect is due to the neurological, vascular and diffusion pathway. With the use of *nasya kriya*, endocrinal, neurological and vascular activities can be control, which can be used in prevention and cure of several diseases.

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