



Suppression of Urge to Sneeze (*Kshavathu-Vegadharan*): Consequences and Management

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Abstract

Ayurveda repeatedly emphasizes on not to control natural urges. Controlling the natural urges reduces the immunity level of the body. Ayurveda *Acharyas* has mentioned since ancient time that suppression of *Vegas* (urges) is the main cause of all type of diseases. So, these natural urges should not be suppressed at any cost. Ayurveda has mentioned 13 such *Vegas* of the body, which are not supposed to hold. Out of these 13 *Vegas*, *Kshavathu Vega* (sneezing reflex) also should not be retained as others. Sneezing reflex is the response of the body to some external stimulus that aids in maintaining the homeostasis of the bio-humors (*Tridoshas*). Controlling urge of sneeze (*Kshavathu*) may lead to untoward effects in the body. Vitiating *Vayu* is thrown-out from the body by *Kshavathu*. Suppression of same causes more vitiation of the *PranaVayu*. This vitiated *PranaVayu* moves haphazardly in undesired directions and damages to the *Marmas* (vital points in the nose) and this can result in serious complications like facial paralysis, cervical spondylitis, migraine etc. Therefore, the *Kshavathu Vega* should neither be suppressed nor forcibly controlled. Now a day's people are not much aware of consequences of holding sneezing reflex, illustrated in *Ayurvedic* literature. Therefore, this review article attempts to explain various consequences of *Kshavathu Vega Dharana* mentioned in Ayurveda texts and also enlists the management of the complications occurred by suppressing the urge to sneeze.

Keywords

Kshavathu Vega, Sneezing reflex, Vegadharan, Natural urges



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INTRODUCTION

The natural urges or reflexes of the body and mind are extremely important aspects of the human body and it basically determines the health or diseased state of an individual. These natural urges are the alarming signs which are given by the body periodically indicating the need to let out some particles from the body to maintain the homeostasis. When the body wants to throw something out of the system and to protect itself on a long run, an individual should allow the body to express itself naturally. Sneezing is common defence mechanism of the body, to eliminate irritant particles or foreign body present in nose. It is also known as 'sternutation'. The process of sneezing is very complicated, that involves muscles of abdomen, chest, diaphragm, vocal chords and throat. Irritant particles like dust, cold air, pollen grains, virus etc. stimulate the mechanism of sneezing. Through sneezing body expels the irritants and brings comfort to the body. Various studies have revealed that suppressing the urge of sneezing can fracture nasal cartilage, which may lead to bleeding through nose, additionally also it can rupture ear drums and can cause hearing loss. Further it can lead to vertigo, retinal damage and haemorrhage. Body tries to

throw something out of the system and parcel of its regular self-induced and self-governed detoxification mechanism. The self-maintaining act of the body is the basic intelligence of the body-mind system. The body is trying to get rid of these elements, which can diminish their function. Ayurveda is the science of life, this can be applied at any phase, and so if an individual is worried about his health, he should follow the rules of life style mentioned in Ayurveda. So if these urges are not suppressed, we can keep away a wide array of diseases. This also indicates that we can hire or prevent the diseases by ignoring or addressing small expressions of the body respectively.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Concept of Sneeze(*Kshavathu*) in Ayurveda-

According to *AcharyaCharaka*, vitiated *Vayu* traversing through all the channels of the head, on touching the *Marmas*(vital points) which are present in nostrils, produce *Kshavathu* or sneeze¹. *AcharyaSushruta* has also explained the pathogenesis of *Kshavathu* as *AcharyaCharakas* described, but additionally *AcharyaSushruta* told that when the vitiated *Vayu* in the head rushes into the



nose along with *KaphaDosh*a and disturbs already debilitated *Marmas* it produce discharge with sound and the whole mechanism is known as *Kshavathu*². Additionally *AcharyaSushrut* again stated about mechanism of sternutation as ‘*Pranoadanosamonastapravartateshabda*’ that means both *Prana* and *UdanaVayu* move towards head (upward direction) and thrown via nose with sound and that is known as sternutation (*Kshavathu*)³.

Regulation of *Kshavathu* –

While mentioning the function of *PranaVayu*, *AcharyaCharaka* told *PranaVayu* as a regulator of *Kshavathu*. *PranaVayu* resides at *Shirah*, *Nasikapradeshi* and it controls Sneezing, swallowing of food, belching and respiration etc.⁴.

Mechanism of sneezing-

Sneezing can be defined as a spasmodic expiration preceded by one or more spasmodic inspirations. The expiration is temporarily opposed by the closure of the nasopharynx and a more or less complete closure of the buccal cavity. With the onset of the expiration there's early rise of intra-pulmonic pressure and, when the certain value is attained, suddenly forces open the nasopharyngeal partition. Therefore

consequently, a blast of air is driven into and through the nasal chambers; at the constant time, however, the buccal cavity, not infrequently, is partially opened, thus allowing a portion of the blast to be driven through the buccal orifice.

The object of the sneezing spasm is the dislodgment of mucus or other fluid from the surface of the nasal mucosal membrane.

The mechanism of sneezing is, in its entirety, quite complex, and it can be subdivided for convenience of presentation into two phases, first nasal and second respiratory. Each mechanism consists of afferent nerve and responsive organ⁵.

*Consequently, Sneeze is defined as the involuntary expulsion of air containing irritants from nose*⁶.

Causes of sneeze:

- Irritation of nasal mucosa
- Excess fluid in the airway

Components of sneeze reflex:

1. Sneezing receptors
2. Afferent nerve
3. Sneezing centre.
4. Efferent nerve
5. Effector muscle

Mechanism for sneeze:

1. Deep inspiration
2. Opened glottis
3. Expulsion of irritants from both nose and buccal cavity.



Pathway for sneeze reflex:

1. Irritation of nasal mucosa
2. Olfactory receptors or V cranial nerve endings
3. Stimulus pass via I and V cranial nerve
4. Sneeze centre in the medulla – present in nucleus solitarius and reticular formation
5. Efferent nerves from V, VII, IX, X cranial nerves and intercostal muscles
6. Activation of pharyngeal muscle, tracheal muscle and respiratory muscles.

Effect of *Kshavathu Vegadharan* (holding urge to sneeze)-

Kshavathu means sneezing and *Vegadharan* word has two components- 'Vega' and 'Dharan'; *Vega* means natural urge and *Dharan* means suppression. Thus, *Vegadharan* means suppression of natural urges. Here *Acharya Charaka* has stated the symptoms of forcible suppression of urge to sneeze which are as below:⁷

- *Manyastambha* – stiffness of the nape of neck
- *Shirah Shoola*- Headache
- *Ardita* – Facial paralysis or facial palsy
- *Ardhava Bhedaka*- Migraine
- *Indriya dourbalya* – feeling of weakness in the sense organs, weak perception by sense organs.

While *Acharya Sushruta* has mentioned as:⁸

- *Shiro-akshi-nasa-shravaneshuroga*- Disease of head, eye, nose and ear
- *Kanthasya Purnatvam*- Fullness of throat and mouth
- *Shabda Apravrutti*- Difficulty in speech
- *Ativa Toda*- Excessive pain

And *Acharya Vagbhata* has mentioned the symptoms of suppression of urge to sneeze as *Acharya Charaka* has stated. Additionally he stated *shiro-arti* (severe headache)⁹.

Effect of suppression of sneezing-

Study show that the plugging the nose and closing the buccal cavity during sternutation can generate the pressures up to 176 mm of hg in the nose. The suppression of urge to sneeze causes a massive build-up of pressure in our head, which may lead to injuries such as a burst eardrum, tearing the blood vessels and muscles in the head, damaging the sinuses and even, in rare cases, brain haemorrhages¹⁰.

Following are the manifestation of suppressing urge to sneeze:

1. Ruptured Eardrums-

The nose is connected to the Eustachian tube, which connects to the middle-ear. Attributes to holding back a sneeze causes force air up the Eustachian tubes within the



ears and cause a ruptured ear drum or an injury to the inner ear that could lead to giddiness or hearing impairment.

Fractured larynx-

After holding a sneeze, there may be constant pain in the throat. It is often attributable to fracture in voice box, and the larynx.

According to a research study, Laryngeal trauma mechanisms are also classified as blunt or penetrating and as external or internal. Internal trauma is usually iatrogenic, typically following intubation, or is also seldom caused by sneezing with a closed mouth, so called “closed airway sneeze”.

2. Back injuries, cracked ribs

Holding a sneeze will cause injury to the diaphragm. This might conjointly cause a neck injury from a unexpected extension of the neck.

3. Other complications-

A violent sneeze (after holding urge to sneeze) by some who had sinus surgery, will push air into the area around the eye and cause it to bulge, or push air into the brain cavity and cause an intense headache or even stroke. Additionally a violent sneeze can cause momentary incontinence.

Management-

Forcibly obstructed or suppressed urge for sternutation leads to vitiation of *Vata* especially *PranaVayu*. This vitiated *Vayu* moves haphazardly in undesired directions. So the main criteria will be to control *Vata*, regularize its normal movements and bring about its balance. Thus, controlling ‘*Vayu*’ is the key remedy for preventing complications which are caused by *Kshavathuvegadharan*. Ayurveda *Acharyas* has given the management of disorders arising due to forcible suppression of sneezing (*kshavathuvega*) as:¹¹⁻¹³

1. Abhyanga- *Abhyanga* involves massage of the body with large amount of warm medicated oil. This is very important therapy in managing vitiated *Vayu*. There is vitiation of *Vayu* after holding urge to sneeze; vitiated *Vayu* can be managed by this therapy because they are antagonistic to the nature of *Vayu* due to its *Snigdha* (oily) and *Ushna* (hot in nature) property. *Abhyanga* should be done with Sesame oil¹⁴ on all over the head for 15 to 20 minutes.

2. Svedana- It is a process of including sweat with the help of steam, generated from medicated herbal decoctions. *NadiSveda* can be given to the patient of *Ardita* (Facial palsy) or in *Manyastambha* (neck stiffness)



occurred as complications of holding sternutation.

3. Sneha-Svedou- The combined use of medicated massage and sudation therapy can also be beneficial for treating these symptoms.

4. Dhumpana- It is an *Ayurvedic* herbal smoking therapy. Its inhalation rectifies vitiation of *Kapha* and *Vata* for treating and preventing the disease¹⁵. So *Vairechanicdhumpana* (for elimination of vitiated *Doshas*) should be done in such patients. *Acharya Vagabhatta* has emphasized for strong or intense medical fumigation.

5. VataghnaChikitsa- All the complications by holding sneeze are occurred due to vitiated *VataDosha* so subsiding *Vata* is main line of treatment for disorders arising from holding urge for sternutation. So *Vata* alleviating diet and herbal medicines should be prescribed.

6. Ghritapana- Consumption of medicated ghee after food should be advised to the patient. It is having property of *Vata Shaman*. It is known as the best in oleation therapy¹⁶. Ghee also alleviate the headache and earache occurred in consequence of holding sternutation.

7. Anjana- Aggravated *Vata* and *KaphaDosha* due to suppression of urge can damage the retina or other structures of eye. Eyes are always dominant in *Tejo-Mahabhuta* so there is fear of being afflicted with *KaphaDosha* due to aggravated *Vayu*¹⁷. Hence, strong or intense *Anjana* (collyriums) should be applied in the eye.

8. TeekshnaNasya- Nasal instillation of medicines which are *Teekshna* or irritant in nature is known as *TeekshnaNasya* therapy. It facilitates the cleansing process, soothes and protects the nasal passage. Nose is the direct route to the brain. When an excess of body fluids accumulates in the sinus, throat or head areas, it is the best route to eliminate. While holding urge to sneeze specially *Vata* and *KaphaDosha* are obstructed and moves in another route. It is a best way to eliminate these aggravated *Doshas* with strong *Nasya* or *PradhamaNasya* which is a Type of *Shodhan* (detoxification).

9. Navana- *Navana* is nasal medication. It is *Nasya* followed by instillation of medicated oil into the nose. *Nasya* with *Anutaila* is much helpful in treating *Shirahshula* (headache), *Ardita* (facial paralysis), and *Ardhava-bhedaka* (hemiparesis or migraine)¹⁸ as they all are



main manifestations after suppressing urge to sneeze (*Kshavathu Vega-dharan*).

10. Arkavilokanam- Standing and seeing the sun can also help in eliminating obstructed or retained sternutation. Vitiating *KaphaDosh* is melted due to heat of direct sunlight. Stimulation from the sunlight can help the process of sternutation, so the vitiating *Doshas* can be expelled out of the body easily.

DISCUSSION

The *Vegas* described in Ayurveda plays a very important role in protecting the health. Body knows how to function without any interference of an individual. Thus, allow the body to perform its duty without any interruption. Any suppression or over exertion of any urge over a period of time tells upon the health of an individual. *Kshavathu Vega Dharan* (holding urge to sneeze) is directly proportional to the untoward consequences, which may lead to severe illness. These consequences are beautifully explained in Ayurveda texts, which have also been proved in modern medical sciences. While explaining the mechanism of *Kshavathu Acharyas* has shown the relationship with the *Marmas*. *Marmas* are the vital points of the body.

Disturbing or interrupting these *Marmas* can lead to various neuro-muscular disorders as well as the disorders arising in the head region. *PranaVayu*, which regulates the mechanism of sneeze, is vitiating due to suppression for sternutation. Vitiating *Vayu* affects the *Marmas* and any disruption to these *Marmas* may lead to life threatening conditions. Basic pathophysiology seems moving around the Vitiating *Vayu*. So, the medication or the procedures like *Abhyanga*, *Navana*, *Svedana* etc. which alleviate the *Vata* can control the complications occurred due to suppressing for sternutation. *Dhumpana*, *Anjana*, *TeeksnaNasya* etc. are process of detoxification. It is another method in Ayurveda to eliminate the vitiating *Doshas* from the body. Although Ayurveda has explained the management of complications occurred due to *Kshavathu Vega dharan*, but before that, it has already emphasized on not to hold the *Vega*(urge). It will be better to prevent from such consequences by not suppressing the sternutation. So, allowing the urge as sternutation will maintain the health and also prevent the diseases.

CONCLUSION



In today's life so called civilized world, there is tremendous social pressure of obeying manners and etiquettes of life style. Sternutation in front of people is considered as an out of manner thing. But this article significantly illustrates the mechanism involved behind suppression of a single sneeze. Though sneezing seems a very common mechanism of body, still the consequences of it are hazardous in nature. The suppression for sternutation can generate 176 mm of Hg pressure, which is dangerous enough for damaging the internal systems of body. Ayurveda has long back stated the importance of obeying the lifestyle rules such as *Dinacharya-Rutucharya*(daily and seasonal regimens), *Vega-vichara*(concept of natural urges) etc. which consequently renders a healthy life (*Swasthya*). So, implementation of these concepts about the healthy lifestyle should be practised as a mandatory thing for maintaining the health (*Swasthyarakshana*) of an individual. Whether to approach health from a preventive point of view or to go for an intervention remains the choice of an individual.



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