

VARISARA DHAUTI/ SHANKHAPRAKSHALANA

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ABSTRACT

Varisara Dhauti is one of the major *Hatha yoga* practices, it is also known as *Shankhaprakshalana*. “*Dhauti*” refers to ‘internal washing’ and “*Vari*” means ‘water’. Generally the term *Shankhaprakshalana* is applied, *Shankha* means ‘conch’, because of its resemblance to the stomach and intestines; *Prakshalana* means ‘cleaning’. *Shankhaprakshalana* is modified to suit the fast paced life and persons with weak constitutions. It is a technique by which all the toxic materials accumulated in the gastrointestinal canal are washed out. In *Shankhaprakshalana*, intake of plain salty water and some yogic *Aasanas* are the only requirements for the process. No drugs are required. All the deleterious effects of purgatives are totally absent. *Hatha Yoga* has six basic steps of *Moksha*, i.e., *Aasana*, *Pranayama*, *Mudra*, *Pratyahara*, *Dhyana* and *Mukti*. For proper *Aasana* and *Pranayama* body should be devoid of any obstruction like diseases, *Meda*, *Shlesma* etc. Provisions for removal of these are explained in the six *Shodhana Kriya/ Shatkarma*. *Shatkarma* is not mentioned in the *Patanjali Yoga Sutra*. Description of *Shatkarma* is available in the text of *Hatha Yoga*.

KEYWORDS: *Varisara Dhauti/ Shankhaprakshalana, Aasana, Moksha, Pranayama, Mudra, Pratyahara, Dhyana, Mukti, Meda, Shlesma.*

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Hatha Yoga has six basic steps of *Moksha*, i.e., *Aasana*, *Pranayama*, *Mudra*, *Pratyahara*, *Dhyana* and *Mukti*. For proper *Aasana* and *Pranayama* body should be devoid of any obstruction like diseases, *Meda*, *Shlesma* etc. Provisions for removal of these are explained in the six *Shodhana Kriya/ Shatkarma*.

Shatkarma is not mentioned in the *Patanjali Yoga Sutra*. Description of *Shatkarma* is available in the text of *Hatha Yoga*. *Shatkarma* has six procedures:

1. *Dhauti*- A series of cleansing techniques for digestive system.
2. *Basti* – Washing and toning the large intestine.
3. *Neti* – A process of cleansing and purifying the nasal passage.
4. *Nauli* – Massaging and strengthening the abdominal organs.
5. *Trataka* -Intense gazing at one point or object to develop power of concentration.
6. *Kapalbhati* – Breathing technique for purifying the respiratory tract.

Objective of the *Varisara Dhauti/ Shankhaprakshalana* is to cleanse the gastrointestinal tract.

Varisara Dhauti is drinking water up to throat, then move the abdomen so that to pass the water through the lower passage (rectum). Process of *Varisara Dhauti* cleans the body. By practicing it carefully, one gets shining body.

Though there are a lot of techniques in present era which are adopted by different *Yoga* schools, but in the present article we choose the method advocated by **Bihar School of Yoga- Munger**. In this technique, the person drinks lukewarm saline water and perform the series of five simple *Aasanas* (*Tadaasana, Tiryaka Tadaasana, Kati Chakraasana, Tiryaka Bhujangaasana and Udankarshanaasana*). Due to all these *Aasanas*, water easily go down from stomach to rectum and clean the tract. All these steps are repeated until passing of clear water starts from anus.

Before undertaking the *Kriya/ Purva Karma*

- Before undertaking *Shankhaprakshalana Kriya*, five *Aasanas* should be practiced regularly for at least one week so that during *Prakshalana* the *Aasanas* are exercised conveniently with ease.
- *Jala Neti* and *Kunjala Kriya* should be learned. Three days before undertaking *Shankhaprakshalana*, *Kunjala* and *Jala Neti Kriya* should be practiced every morning before breakfast. This practice helps

in drinking enough water during *Prakshalana* and there will not be any vomiting sensation.

- It is advised to take light, semi-liquid meal the night before undertaking the practice.
- Those who are unable to follow these restrictions should not practice *Shankhaprakshalana*.
- This practice should only be attempted under expert guidance.
- All guidelines and restrictions must be followed strictly to avoid harmful side effects.

Requirements for *Varisara Dhauti/Shankhaprakshalana*

- Clean distilled water
- Vessel for water
- Tumbler
- *Khichari*
- Lemon
- Salt (*Saindhava*)
- Hand Towel
- Soap
- Toilet

Preparation for *Varisara Dhauti/Shankhaprakshalana*

- Gently warm plenty of water to 34-40°C (Lukewarm) and also extra hot water in case the temperature of the water cools. Add 2 teaspoon of salt (*Saindhava*) per liter of water (with high blood pressure use salt with caution). The temperature of the water should be kept constant throughout the whole practice and add 4-5lemons in it.
- Weight assessment is important before starting the procedure. As weight is the basic tool to assess the purification of the individual.
- Vitals should be checked to avoid any complication.
- Start the practice early morning in empty stomach.

Use of Salt for *Varisara Dhauti/ Shankhaprakshalana*

- Salt used in *Shankhaprakshalana* process reacts in the stomach where it mixes with acids and enzymes and forms a more diluted and less potent acid solution.
- Salt acts as a very potent and efficient means to dissolve the mucous and thus helps cleanse the intestinal linings.
- In small quantities it has soothing effects on inflamed linings.

NOTE: Scientifically, hypertonic or isotonic saline water is absorbed only in minor quantities in the intestines. On the contrary, it may even help extract osmotically, the fluids from the local areas.

- Warm salty solution produces stimulation and peristalsis of the entire gastro-intestinal canal leading to a free and quick discharge of all the residual materials from the body.
- Thus, the salty water if taken through the alimentary canal in sufficient quantity, causes a watery diarrhea

until eventually a clear water solution is expelled through the rectum.

- While passing through the intestinal tract the solution takes up waste substances which diffuse from the blood through the intestinal wall.

Use of Lemon for *Varisara Dhauti/Shankhaprakshalana*

- Lemon is considered as a cleanser, alkalizing agent and container of vitamin C.
- Lemonated salty water, taken first thing in the morning, is considered as a preventive measure against constipation.

Pradhana Karma of *Varisara Dhauti/Shankhaprakshalana*

First Round

- Start the process in the early morning.
- Individual will be advised to drink two glasses of lukewarm salty lime water as quick as possible.
- Series of five specific *Aasanas* are performed dynamically, **eight times each**, in the correct sequence i.e., *Tadaasana*, *Tiryaka Tadaasana*, *KatiChakraasana*, *Tiryaka Bhujangaasana* and *Udarakarshanaasana*.
- After completion of first round, he/she will be asked for urge of defecation. Guidelines will be given to not use force to produce a bowel movement.
- This completed one round. Then second round will be started.

Second and Third Rounds

- All the rounds are same as first.
- Do not rest between the rounds. He/She will be advised to drink 2 glasses of water and advised to perform 5 specific *Aasanas*, eight times each.
- After the fifth or sixth glass, individual will be asked to go to the toilet and perform *Ashvini Mudra* (rapid contraction and release of the anal muscles). This *Mudra* stimulates peristalsis of the intestines.
- He/She will be advised to spend little time as much as possible in the toilet.
- The aim is to build up the internal cleansing pressure.
- In between the *Aasanas*, if there were an urge of defecation, he/she will be advised to do not ignore, and go to the toilet. After Returning from toilet, he/she will be asked to complete the round before finishing off.

All other rounds

- After a few rounds of this procedure, individual will notice that only liquid begins to come out. Initially the liquid is yellowish in color but gradually it begins to get clearer.
- Generally on an average 14 to 20 glasses of water is sufficient for getting the clean water to come out from the rectum. After 3-4 motions drinking of

water will be stopped and *Kunjla Kriya* will be performed.

Sequence of evacuation

- At first, Solid stool
- Followed by mixture of stool and water
- Then more water and less solid stool
- As practice progresses cloudy yellow water
- Finally almost clear water

Assessment criteria of weight

- Weight Increases - *Adham Shuddhi*
- Weight remains constant - *Madhyam Shuddhi*
- Weight decreases - *Uttam Shuddhi*

Five Special Aasanas

The five *Aasanas* which form the core of the practice are related directly to the 4 alimentary valves. They help to stretch, massage and relax all parts of the alimentary canal and enhance the cleansing process.

1. Tadaasana (The Tree pose)

- Keep the feet apart 16-18 inches from each other.
- Lift both the arms in front, bring it to shoulder level and interlock the fingers.
- Take interlocked hands up and face the palms up, straighten the arms,
- Inhale, Lift the heels up and stretch the body in upward direction, stay for a while and then release it.
- Exhale, bring the heels down on the floor and hands on top of the head.
- This is one round.
- **Repeat 8 times.** All 8 rounds should take no more than about **40-60 seconds.**
- *Tadaasana* acts mainly on the stomach.

Physiological explanation

It opens the pyloric valve between stomach and small intestine, and then water enters into small intestine.

2. Tiryaka Tadaasana (The tree in the wind)

- Take the same position as *Tadaasana* without lifting the heels.
- Stretch the body up and bend towards left from waist and hold the position for some time.
- Come back to pre-position and relax.
- Similarly repeat the process on the right side.
- This is one round.
- Repeat total 8 times (each side 4 times).
- All 8 rounds should take not more than 60 seconds.
- *Tiryaka Tadaasana* acts on the small intestine.

Physiological explanation

Contracts both sides of the intestinal layers repeatedly, then salty water enters into intestinal layers.

3. Kati Chakraasana (The waist twist pose)

- Stand straight with feet about two feet apart and the arms by the sides.
- Make fist of the right hand with thumb inside, place it in the center of the lower back, press it nicely.
- Inhale; bring the left hand on the right shoulder.
- Exhale, as you twist the upper body to the right side and turn your head fully to your right to look behind towards the left heel.
- Keep the feet firmly on the ground while twisting.
- Hold the position for a few seconds.
- Inhale and return to the starting position.
- Similarly repeat the process on the left side.
- Inhale and return to the starting position.
- This is one round.
- Repeat total 8 times (each side 4 times). All 8 rounds should take no more than 30 seconds.
- *Kati Chakraasana* massages the small intestine.

Physiological explanation

Twisting of this *Aasana* passes salty water downwards into small intestine.

4. Tiryaka Bhujangaasana (The twisted cobra pose)

- Lie with forehead down on the stomach with feet about half a meter apart, heels should be on top and toes are curled under, hands directly under the chest.
- Now inhale and raise the head forward.
- Exhale, twist the head and upper portion of the body to the right shoulder and look over the shoulder at the left heel.
- Try to feel a diagonal stretch of the abdomen.
- Relax the back and keep the navel as close to the floor as possible.
- Stay in the final position for few seconds.
- Inhale; bring the face forward again.
- Exhale; twist to the other side without coming back to the floor.
- Inhale and return to the centre and exhale as you lower the body to the floor.
- This is one round.
- Repeat total 8 times (each side 4 times). All 8 rounds should take no more than 60 seconds.

Physiological explanation

Tiryaka Bhujangaasana opens ileocecal valve between small intestine and large intestine then water enters into large intestine.

5. Udarakarshan Aasana (Abdominal massage)

- Sit in squatting position with feet apart and hands on the knees.
- Inhale; bring the right knee to the floor near the left foot, pressing the stomach with the left thigh.
- While doing so push the left knee towards the right.
- Exhale, turn the head towards the left side and look over the shoulder.
- Stay in the final position for a few seconds.

- Inhale and come back to the starting position.
- Similarly repeat on the right side.
- Inhale and come back to the starting position.
- This is one round.
- Repeat total 8 times (each side 4 times). All 8 rounds should take no more than 60 seconds.

Physiological explanation

Udarakarshan Aasana squeeze and massage the Caecum, sigmoid colon and rectum, and also stimulate the Rectosphincteric reflex (Reflex characterized by a transient involuntary relaxation of the internal anal sphincter in response to distention of the rectum) or the urge to defecate.

After the Procedure/ Pashchata Karma

- One should lie down in *Shavasana* for 5-10 minutes and relax.
- After completion of cleansing of the intestines, *Kunjla Kriya* and *Neti Kriya* was performed, followed by a mandatory 30-45 minutes rest. *Kunjla* is necessary to empty the stomach of any remaining saline water and to balance the upward and downward force as well as to balance the downward movement of intestine.
- The practitioner must try to avoid sleep, so that complete cessation of intestinal activity can be avoided.
- After a break of 30-45 minutes a liquid type *Khichari* of rice, *Mung Dal*, little bit of rock salt and little *Haldi (Turmeric)* must be taken as a meal, along with 1-2 teaspoons of *Ghrita* (Clarified butter), this will relin the walls of the intestines and reenergize gastric motility.
- The practitioner must try to avoid milk and milk products, as they may cause diarrhea in some cases.
- On that day any such movements that have the potential to create excitement, tension or change of temperature must be avoided as the body, being in a sensitive state, is susceptible to cough, cold or fever.
- In order that peristalsis of the intestines is stimulated, it is advisable to practice *Agnisara Kriya*.
- It is perfectly normal that no bowel movement takes place for two or three days following the practice. On the early morning of the next five days, one may choose to drink warm, unsalted water (four to five glasses), and after each glass perform the same exercises as with *Shankhaprakshalana*.

Food Restrictions

- For at least one week after the practice, all chemically processed, synthetic, pungent, spicy, acidic, rich and non-vegetarian foods must be strictly avoided.
- No pickles, sweets, chocolates, ice cream or soft drinks should be taken.

- Cigarettes, tea, coffee, betel nut preparations such as pan and other type of intoxicant or drug should also not be taken.

Diet

- The diet should be as pure and simple as possible.
- It includes foods such as rice, wheat bread, vegetables with low acidic content, nuts, lentils, soya beans and other pulses.
- Drink only warm water on the same day after the procedure.
- After *Shankhaprakshalana* the digestive system is very vulnerable and extra care should be taken to protect the body.

Anatomy of Varisara Dhauti/Shankhaprakshalana

There are 4 valves in our food passage.

They are

1. Lower esophageal sphincter/ Valve
2. Pyloric sphincter / Valve
3. Ileocecal valve
4. Anal valve or valve of Ball.

The complexity of the G.I.T (Gastrointestinal tract) and its sensitivity to day to day tensions are common causes to restrict the flow in the system.

They lose their natural function and become inefficient and gradually the system starts to pack up. This causes **auto-toxemia**, a state where the body's own wastes begin to poison itself.

Common reasons that the digestive system becomes inefficient at assimilating and eliminating are-

- Poor food habits
- Sedentary lifestyles
- Late eating hours
- Habitual snacking
- Dehydration etc., causes stomach ailments.

Shankhaprakshalana practice reconditions the function of the valves and eliminates all types of toxins out of the bloodstream.

Physiology of Varisara Dhauti/Shankhaprakshalana

- First and second *Aasanas (Tadaasana & Tiryaka Tadaasana)* create some strain and unfolding of extra fold of stomach and duodenum, due to this this condition water can easily move downward with remnant matter of the intestine.
- Third *Aasana* is the *Kati Chakraasana*, which slightly twists small intestine. Due to twisting, mixing of water and matter of the intestine occurs. When matter is mixed with the water it becomes soft and moves downwards easily.
- Fourth *Aasana* is *Tiryaka Bhujangaasana*, due to this *Aasana* straightening and twisting of small and

large intestine occurs at a time, so further movement of water becomes easy.

- Fifth & last *Aasana* is *Udarakarsan Aasana*, *Udarakarshan Aasana* squeeze and massage the caecum, sigmoid colon and rectum, and also stimulate the Rectosphincteric reflex. (Reflex characterized by a transient involuntary relaxation of the internal anal sphincter in response to distention of the rectum or the urge to defecate.)
- Process completes after cleaning of intestines i.e., passing of clear fluid.

Advantages

- Cleanses and tones up the entire intestinal tract.
- Removes the toxic waste accumulated product from the body cells, thus it relieves acidity, indigestion, flatulence, constipation etc.
- Also cures gynecological problems.
- Cleans the whole body.
- Intestine is the site of *Agni* and *Mandagni* is the root cause of any *Nija Roga*. After cleansing of the intestine, every cell functions properly and removes the root cause of disease.
- Physically *Shankhaprakshalakriya* alleviates digestive problems such as indigestion, acidity and constipation. It generally tones the liver and other digestive organs and glands. It has been used in the cure of diabetes mellitus, hypoglycemia, obesity, high blood cholesterol and high lipid levels. It strengthens the immune system, alleviating allergies and immunological problems. It helps relieve the symptoms of arthritis and chronic inflammatory diseases. Excessive mucus is reduced relieving asthma, chronic colds and sinusitis. It purifies the blood and alleviates skin problems such as pimples, boils and eczema.
- *Pranically*, *Shankhaprakshalana* recharges the entire pranic body, removes blockages from the *Nadis* and purifies all the *Chakras*. The harmony of the five *Pranas* is restored and the energy level is raised. It prepares the way for higher states of consciousness. Any *Sadhana* performed after this cleansing practice gives manifold results.

Contraindications

- Hypertension
- Chronic Peptic Ulcer,
- Pregnant and menstruating woman,
- Heart patients, persons with renal failure (End stage), hernia should also be avoided.
- Person with mental disorders and children under the age of 10.
- It should also be avoided in weak and debilitated patients.

DISCUSSION

Mode of Action: *Varisara Dhauti/ Shankhaprakshalana*

Samshodhana Chikitsa/ Shatkarma is one of the prime purificatory procedures employed in treating a constellation of symptoms and stubborn disorders. By this mode of therapy vitiated *Doshas* are evacuated from the body. *Shodhana* procedures/ detoxification procedures are essential components of the management in various metabolic disorders.



Helps to correct vitiation of *Vata* in various metabolic disorders & restore overall health

CONCLUSION

In *Varisara Dhauti/ Shankha Prakshalana*, intake of plain salty water and some yogic *Aasanas* are the only requirements for the process. No drugs are required. All the deleterious effects of purgatives are totally absent.

So, from this article it can be concluded that *Varisara Dhauti/ Shankhaprakshalana* is a simple purificatory yogic procedure which can be given to each and every individual to prevent any kind of metabolic disorder and for restoration of their health.

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