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Shatkarma in view of Ayurveda; a review

Dr. Sunil Sahebrao Kapase

Professor,

Swasthavritta & Yoga Department,

Matoshri Ayurved College, Hospital & Research Centre,

Karjule Harya, Tal. Parner, Dist. Ahmednagar (Maharashtra, India)

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Abstract:

Indigenous sciences like *Yoga* and *Ayurved* complement each other in gaining the physical as well as mental wellbeing. *Acharya* of respective science had elaborated various techniques to maintain the health and keep diseases at the bay. The *Shatkarma* in *Hata Yoga* explained by *Maharshi Gherand* in *Gherand Samhita* are the pre procedures for the yogic practices. As like in *Ayurveda*, *Acharya* had mentioned *Panchakarma* prior to commencement of other therapeutics. *Dhauti, Basti, Neti, Tratak, Nauli* and *Kapalbhati* are the six procedures which are discussed in the light of *Ayurved* basics.

Keyword: *Hata Yoga, Panchakarma, Maharshi Gherand, Shatkarma*

Introduction:

Yoga in its literally sense means “Union”. Here the science of *Yoga* offers number of definitions in their respective context. One such classification of *Yoga* is *Hata Yoga*. It is one of the path described to achieve the state of *Yoga*. This is the most practiced *Yoga* in vogue. *Gherand Samhita* is one such *Yoga* classics which emphasis on forceful, willful active practices of various techniques to attain the *Yoga*. In word *Hata*, the ‘*Ha*’ resembles the *Surya Swara* while ‘*Ta*’ resembles the *Chandra Swara*. The practices to balance this *Swara* in order to circulate *Parana* in *Sushumna Nadiis Hata Yoga*. *Acharya Gherand* had described *Hata Yoga* in seven limbs one of which is *Shat Karma*.

Shatkarma:

As the name indicates, this are the six special activities meant for cleansing the *Malayatana* – body orifices and in result balance the body humors – *Vata, Pitta* and *Kapha*. One can gain physical purification, mental calmness and the needed energy – *Prana Urja* to move forward in spiritual

practices or to attain *Yoga*.

धौतिर्बस्तिस्तथानेतिस्त्राटकनौलिकंतथा।

कपालभातिश्चैतानिषटकर्मणिप्रचक्षते।।

Dhauti - internal cleaning or purification

Basti– yogic enema

Neti- nasal cleansing

Trataka – concentrated gazing

Nauli – abdominal massaging activity

Kapalbhati – forceful exhalations

Each procedure includes unique cleansing technique with due benefits.

Dhauti –

The name implies the cleansing meaning of internal body. Here *Gherandsamhita* had illustrated four major forms of *Dhauti*. These types are, *Antar Dhauti*, *Danta Dhauti*, *Hrid Dhauti* and *Mool Dhauti*. The *Antar Dhauti* includes *Kunjali Kriya* and *Vastra Dhauti*. In *Kunjali Kriya* one has to drink warm saline water and then voluntarily induce vomiting to clear the stomach. Where as in *Vastra Dhauti*, one has to swallow the cotton cloth – *Vastra* of 2 meter length and 4 – 5 cm in breadth and then remove the same enabling the cleansing of gastric region with the help of that *Vastra*.

Neti –

It is the nasal cleansing activity. Here one has to perform the *Neti Kriya* with *Jala* or *Sutra* under the guidance. *Acharya* describes two types of *Neti* viz; *Jala Neti* and *Sutra Neti*. In *Jalaneti* lukewarm saline water is used. In this process a teapot like *Neti Patra* is used to pour this water from one nostril in a specific posture in order to evacuate the water from other nostril. In *Sutra Neti*, a thread or presently a sterile simple rubber catheter is used for the procedure. In it the catheter is inserted from one nostril and pulled out gently on other nostril. *Neti* helps to clean the nasal passage and also helps to clean sinuses connected to nasal orifice.

Basti –

This is *yogic* enema. This type differ from *Ayurveda Basti* which is one of the *Karma* mentioned in *Pancha Karma*. In this procedure. One has to sit in water full of tank till *Kati Pradesh*, then by application of *Udiyana Bandha* one has to draw water through the rectum and then expel out. This is repeated for cleansing of rectum and large intestine.

Trataka –

The concentrated gazing on a small object – usually a flame is termed as *Trataka*. In this procedure one has to gaze at the flame without blinking of eyes and by placing the flame at proper height and distance. This is done till tears roll out of eyes. It improves the cognitive functions and

also is useful exercise for the muscles of eyes.

Nauli –

It is the practice of contracting and churning of abdominal muscles in such a way that it gives massage to abdominal organs and strengthen the digestive system. It is one of the advance process which is to be practiced under guidance. This helps in optimizing digestive fire and thus paves the basement of sound mind and body health.

Kapalbhati –

Kapalbhati is derived from two words i.e. *Kapala*– forehead and *Bhati*– shining. The process which dawns the shine one face is expected. This is a breathing technique in which a forceful breathing strokes are made in order to exhale through the nostrils. This enables body to detoxify through the medium of breath. It strengthens respiratory system and increases *Prana Shakti* in body.

Shatkriya in light of Ayurveda –

As mentioned in *Gherand Samhita*, this is the *Shuddhi Kriya* which are meant for *Dosha* balancing and *Mala Shodhana*. Each procedure helps to serve the purpose. The *Dhauti Kriya* has positive effects on one's bowel health. It helps to cleanse the bowels by the virtue of vomiting and thus expels the toxins out which are termed as *Amain Ayurveda*. The *Neti Kriya* mainly has its effects on nasal cavities and the sinuses. The inner lining of sinuses are made healthy and maintaining open spaces in the sinuses it balances the *Akasha Mahabhuta* of the body. Thus it gives the feeling of cleanliness and stability. Also the inflammatory change at the site are checked and problems like rhinitis, sinusitis are prevented. The *Trataka Kriya* helps to improve the cognitive functions by the virtue of balancing *Pitta Dosha*. As eyes are the site of *Pitta Dosha* it boosts the health of *Majja Dhatu* in turn nurturing brain health. In *Kapalbhati Kriya* the air is expelled out forcefully through nostrils, this creates a pressure on sinuses and brain. It helps to stabilize the anxiety, reduce the stress and also detoxify the body through breath. *Nauli Kriya* is the advance *Shudhi Kriya*. One has to practice it under proper guidance. The churning of abdominal muscles gives a gentle massage to the internal organs. This helps to pacify *Pitta Dosha* and also act on *Samana Vayu*. This results in optimizing the *Kayagni* – the digestive fire. By virtue of this, the metabolism of body is maintained and the body is nourished as it strengthens all *Dhatu*. And lastly the *Basti Kriya* is also the advance technique to be done under guidance. This helps in regulating *Apana Vayu*. The organs and functions related to lower part of body are governed by this *Vayu* and by undertaking this practice one can see healthy effects on this organs and their functions too.

Inference –

Thus we can state that, the *Shatkarma* are very useful for body cleansing and also *Dosha* balancing according to the *Ayurveda* perspective. This proves to be an essential pre step prior to the *Hata Yoga* practices in order to attain the self which is also the moto of Ayurveda.

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