

# Special techniques for purifying internally dosas through yoga (Shatakarma)

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## Abstract

Yoga is the science of right living and, as such, is intended to be incorporated in daily life. It works on all aspects of the person; the physical, vital, mental, emotional, psychic and spiritual. The science of yoga applies itself to all aspects of life, on a more practical level, yoga is a means of balancing and harmonising the body, mind and emotions. This is done through the practice of asana, pranayama, mudra, bandha, shatkarma and meditation, and must be achieved before union can take place with the higher reality. The science of yoga begins to work on the outermost aspect of the personality, the physical body, which for most people is a practical and familiar starting point. When imbalance is experienced at this level, the organs, muscles and nerves no longer function in harmony, rather they act in opposition to each other. For instance, the endocrine system might become irregular and the efficiency of the nervous system decrease to such an extent that a disease will manifest. Yoga aims at bringing the different bodily functions into perfect co-ordination so that they work for the good of the whole body.

**Key Words:** Yogic approach, all diseases, Shatkarma, Dhauti, Basti, Neti, Trataka, Nauli, Kapalbhathi.

## Introduction

The word yoga means 'unity' or 'oneness'. The unity or joining is described in spiritual terms as the union of the individual consciousness with the universal consciousness. On a more practical level, yoga is a means of balancing and harmonising the body, mind and emotions. This is done through the practice of asanas, pranayama, mudra, bandha, Shatkarma and meditation, and must be achieved before union can take place with the higher reality.

## Aims of Yoga

The science of yoga begins to work on the outermost aspect of the personality, the physical body, which for most people is a practical and familiar starting point. When imbalance is experienced at this level, the organs, muscles and nerves no longer function in harmony, rather they act in opposition to each other. For instance, the endocrine system might become irregular and

the efficiency of the nervous system decrease to such an extent that a disease will manifest. Yoga aims at bringing the different bodily functions into perfect co-ordination so that they work for the good of the whole body. For the physical body, yoga moves on to the mental and emotional levels. Many people suffer from phobias and neuroses as a result of the stresses and interactions of everyday living. The practices of yoga, awareness develops of the interrelation between the emotional, mental and physical levels, there are many branches of yoga : raja, hatha, jnana, Karma, bhakti, mantra, Kundalini and laya. In the last half of this century, hatha yoga has become the most well known and widely practiced of the system. In the ancient text, hatha yoga consists of the shatkarmas, cleansing practices only. Yoga therapy makes the life-force stronger and gives new life to the body. It is far more effective, easier and cheaper than most other therapies. It is as much a science as an art of living a handsome life. Yogic therapeutic system is based on the principles of psychology, biology, life science, chemistry, 'panchakosha', 'panchaprana', 'up-prana', gland and other elements. Yogic therapy has certain special features of its own such as

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body cleansing activating endocrine glands, managing proper functioning of all systems nervous system, breathing, digestion, blood circulation, excretion etc. - laying more emphasis on prevention than on cure, controlling the mind, intellectual purification and spiritual purification. The shatkarmas is a very precise and systematic science. It is six groups of purification practices. The aim of the Shatkarmas is to create harmony between the two major pranic flows, Ida and Pingala, thereby attaining physical and mental purification and balance.

### **Tridhatu and Tridasa**

The shatkarmas are also used to balance the three doshas or humours in the body. Kapha, mucus, pitta, bile, and Vata, wind. It is said -

Meda shleshmaadhikaha poorvam shatkarmaanisamaa charet.

Anyastu naacharettaani doshaanaam samabhavataha.

Hatha yoga pradipika 2/2.

When fat or mucus is excessive, the shatkarmas or six cleansing techniques should be practised before pranayama. Others, in whom the doshas (i.e. phlegm, wind and bile) are balanced, need not do them.

- ibid

There are three humours in the body. Kapha, pitta and vata. In yoga and Ayurveda they are called tridosha. A balance proportion of these three facilitates body functions, but if there is an excess of one and a shortage of another, ailments develop due to over heating or not enough heat in the body. Before commencing pranayama, an imbalance in the doshas should be removed and also excess body fat, mucus blocking the respiratory tract should be removed, gas in the stomach and intestines eliminated, etc. In Hatha yoga there are six particular practices which were specifically designed for this purpose. They are called shatkarma. The techniques regulate the production of the doshas.

If the doshas are already balanced there is no need to practise the shatkarma. The shatkarmas are really only for these people who have disturbance or imbalances in the doshas.

### **Six Cleansing Techniques (Shatkarma)**

It is said -

Dhautirbastistatha netistratakam naulikam tathaa.

Kapaalabhatishchaitani sat karmani pracha ksate.

Hatha yoga pradepika 2/22.

Dhauti, basti, neti, trataka, nauli and kapalabhati, these are known as shatkarma or the six cleansing processes.

Therefore, Hatha Yoga is famous for these six cleansing techniques. Although only six in number each has a variety of practices.

### **Dhauti**

Dhauti is classified into four parts according to the Gherand Samhita they are called antar (internal) dhauti, danta (teeth) dhauti, frid (Heartry or cardiac) dhauti and moola shodhana (rectal cleaning).

### **Types of Antardhauti**

Further on, Antardhauti is divided into four parts -

(i) Vastra dhauti - expelling air through the anus.

(ii) Varisaradhauti - evacuating a large quantity of water through the bowels.

(iii) Vahnisara dhauti - rapid expansion / contraction of the abdomen.

(iv) Bahiskrita dhauti - washing the rectum in the hands.

### **Types of Hariddhayti**

It is divided into three parts

(i) danta-dhauti, inserting a soft banana stem into the stomach,

(ii) vastradhauti-swallowing a long thin strip of cloth,

(iii) vamandhauti regurgitating the contents of the stomach.

The last practice of dhauti, moolshodhana can be performed in two ways. It is done either by inserting a turmeric root or the middle finger into the anus.

### **Basti**

The second karma, basti is divided into

two parts

(i) Jal basti and (ii) sthala (dry) basti.

(1) Jalbasti

In jalbasti you suck water into the large intestine through the anus and then expel it.

(2) Sthal basti -

In sthal basti you suck air into the large intestine.

(3) Netikarma -

It has four practices

(1) Jal (Water) neti (2) Sutraneti (3) Ghrita neti (4) Dugdha netic

(1) Jal (water) neti - passing warm saline water through the nose,

(2) Sutra (Thread) neti - passing a soft thread through the nose,

(3) Ghrita (ghee) neti - passing clarified butter through the nose.

### **Trataka Karma**

It is steady and continuous gazing at a point of concentration. It has two types of practices -

(1) Antar (Internal) and (2) bahir (external) trataka

### **Naulikarma**

In Which you isolate and churn the abdominal muscles. It has three practices. When the muscles are isolated to the right it is dakshina nauli, to the left vama nauli and in the middle, it is madhyama nauli.

### **Kapalbhati karma**

Which has three practices

(1) Vatkrama kapalabhati, which is similar to bhastrika pranayama,

(2) Vyutkrama kapalabhati, sucking water in through the nose and expelling it through the mouth,

(3) Sheetkrama kapalabhati, sucking water in through the nose.

These six fundamental cleansing techniques are the most important aspects of hatha yoga and are the original Hatha Yoga. However, today asana and pranayama are more widely known and few people are new

proficient in the shatakarma.

The shatakarma specifically increase the vital capacity of the practitioner. They were never designed for therapy alone, but to create harmony in the body and mind and to prepare one for further practices. As they bring about smooth and perfect functioning of the bodily systems, it is inevitable that through their practice the mind will become free from turbulence and disturbances and thus be better able to concentrate and to move towards dhyana.

The effects of Shatkarma can be summed up in one word-purification. When the different systems of the body have been purified, the overall result is that energy can flow through the body freely. One's capacity to work, think, digest, taste, feel, experience, etc. increases, and greater awareness develops. (ibid - p. 188-189).

According to both Ayurveda and Hathayoga, an imbalance of the doshas will result in illness. These practices are also used before pranayama and other higher yoga practices in order to purify the body of toxins and to ensure safe and successful progression along the spiritual path the (six) shatkarmas are as follows.

(1) Neti - A process of cleansing and purifying the nasal passages. Practices included in this category are: Jala neti and Sutraneti.

(2) Dhauti - A series of cleansing techniques which are divided into three main groups: Antar dhauti (Internal Cleansing), Sirshadhauti (Head cleansing - traditionally called danta dhauti) and

(3) Hrid-dhauti - It is known by the name of thoracic cleansing. The internal techniques clean the entire alimentary canal from the mouth to the anus. They are divided into four practices.

(i) Shankhapraksalan (Varisar dhauti) and laghu shankha prakshalan cleansing of the intestines.

(ii) Agnisarkriya (Vahnisar dhauti) - activating the digestive fire.

(iii) Kunjal (Vaman dhauti) - Cleansing the stomach with watery.

(iv) Vastra dhauti - cleansing the intestine with air.

(3) Nauli - A method massaging and strengthening the abdominal organs.

(4) Basti - Techniques for washing and toning the large intestine.

(v) Kapalabhati - A breathing technique for purifying the frontal region of the brain.

(vi) Trataka - The practice of intense gazing at one point or object which develops the power of concentration. Although there are only six shatkarmas (Asana pranayama mudra Bandha p. 475-476)

Yoga is a complete science of life and, although ancient, it has become popular only in recent past. It is a scientific method for exercising and relaxing to ease the tensions and stress of modern day living. There many types of yoga. However, here we are concerned with physical exercises only. Yogic Kriyas like kunjla, Shankhaprakshalan, Neti, Dhauti, Kapalabhati, Nauli etc; are processes of purification of the body which precede yoga and help in eliminating toxic accumulations from the body.

Disease is the consequence of disorder. Disorder is the outcome of indiscipline. When discipline goes, disorder and misery follow. Most of us do not eat to live but live to eat. Human body, like, like nature, can not tolerate undue external interferences. When one becomes sick one tries to find instant remedies which very often cause further damage to the system. The more drastic the remedy is, the greater is the damage and it becomes a vicious cycle.

### Discussion

Health is not something that can be purchased in a bottle from a drug store, but is a condition built over the years from within by our own vital processes through conscientious efforts and self-control or will power. The old adage "A sound mind in a sound body" underlines the importance of a healthy body. It is a source of happiness as it helps create an atmosphere of

amicable interaction with our near and dear ones. Good health is Nature's gift to man, but man, being preoccupied with a mechanical life style, has alienated himself from Nature. Naturopathy and yoga help man gain health from natural resources ensuring a long and high quality life. Then heart diseases, strokes, cancer, diabetes, arthritis, abdominal diseases and other diseases of modern civilisation that cripple and kill mankind will be controlled and may not occur at all. Naturopathy attempts to bring the human body close to the Nature and Yoga tries to keep it there.

Yoga is drug-less and natural science. It is a complete science of life and, although ancient, it has become popular only in the recent past. It is a scientific method for exercising and relaxing to ease the tensions and stress of modern day living. There are many types of yoga. Here, we are concerned with yogic kriyas only i.e. - Kunjal, Shankhaprakshalan, Neti, Dhauti, kapalabhati and Nauli etc. They are processes of purification of the body which precede yoga and help in eliminating toxic accumulations from the body. (cont. Next. Volume)

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