

PANCHAKARMA: NEED OF THE HOUR FOR HEALTHY LIVING

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda recognizes the principle of three basic constituents which govern and represent the varied and vital mechanisms at the micro and macro levels in the body. These are *Doshas*, *Dhatus* and *Malas*. During the incessant activities of living systems throughout the span of the life, several by products are continuously formed, some of which are recycled and those which are in excess or which are rendered irreversible must be excreted in the process. *Ayurveda* advocates two kinds of measures which represent the end phase of all the treatment processes, namely *Samshodhana* (Purificatory) and *Samshamana* (Pacificatory) of which the former is given a first place. *Panchakarma* (*Vamana*, *Virechana*, *Basti*, *Nasya* and *Raktamokshan*) primarily represents the *Samshodhana* part which offers the internal purification of the body which permits the biological system to return to normalcy and to rejuvenate spontaneously. It eliminates the toxins and stagnated *Malas* and metabolites from the body, cleans the macro and micro channels and maintains internal homeostasis and health of the body. The full paper reveals the need of *Panchakarma* in healthy livings.

Keywords: *Ayurveda*, *Samshodhana*, *Panchakarma*, *Purification*, *Healthy living*.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is an ancient science of indigenous medicine, which is special in respect that, it is not only a medical science but it is an art of

living in human beings. The main intention of *Ayurveda* is as quoted below –

*Swasthasya Swasthya Rakshanam, Aaturasya Vikaarprashamanam Cha.*¹

i.e. to maintain positive health in the healthy individuals as well as to treat the diseased person.

Maintenance of health by itself is an inbuilt mechanism of the systems that works within a living body. Nature imposes the duty on a composite and holistic unit (the individual) to Endeavour to maintain the regulating mechanisms with utmost care to ensure prevention and promotion of health. Any lapse by the individual may give rise to a sustained disturbance in the equilibrium, internal and external, which may be reversible or irreversible and may result in the manifestation of the disease.

Ayurveda recognizes the principle of three basic constituents which govern and represent the varied and vital mechanisms at the micro and macro levels in the body. These are *Doshas, Dhatus and Malas*. During the incessant activities of living systems throughout the span of the life several by-products are continuously formed, some of which are recycled and those which are in excess or which are rendered irreversible must be excreted in the process. Nature provides an inbuilt mechanism for such disposal but it also imposes compulsion on an individual to assist and take care of the natural processes to ensure maintenance of the equilibrium. Such involvement of the maintenance of the equilibrium is an unavoidable function of the living being for its healthy existence and survival. Keeping this law of nature in view, a healthy person is defined in *Ayurveda* as –

*Samdosah Samagnischa Samadhuatu Malakriyaha*²

Prasanna Atmendriya Manah Swastha Ity abhidheeyate ||

Ayurveda advocates two kinds of measures which represent the end phase of all the treatment processes, namely *Samshodhana*, (purificatory) and *Samshamana* (pacificatory) of which the former is given a first place.

Strict observance of *Swasthavritta* and *Sadavritta* ensures gaining of the benefits of these measures in health, while in disease a well-planned regimen (*Aushadha yojana*) skilfully incorporating these measures is administered to remove the disease and renovate the health. In both these situations *Panchakarma* primarily represents the *Samshodhana* part and includes five measures, namely –

1. *Vamana* (Emesis)
2. *Virechana* (Purgation)
3. *Basti* (Enema)
4. *Nasya / Shirovirechana* (Nasal instillation)
5. *Raktamokshan* (Blood letting)

***Vamana* (Emesis):**

Vamana karma is considered as the first major procedure (*Pradhana karma*) of *Panchakarma* therapy. Literally *Vamana karma* means to induce therapeutic vomiting or to expel out the vitiated *Doshas* through oral route, which is indicated for the purification of *Urdhwabhaga* of the body³. It is the process by which the contents of the stomach including *Kapha* and *Pitta* are expelled out of body through oral route. It is important to note that *Vamana karma* is indicated to eliminate *Kapha Doshas* not only in diseased state but also in healthy individuals in different states where *Kapha Dosh* is aggravated within normal limits e.g.

in *Vasanta ritu* for preservation of health and prevention of disease. *Vamana karma* is the best for the treatment of *Kaphaja* disorders.⁴

Virechana (Purgation):

The act of expelling *Doshas* through "*Adhobhaga*" is known as *Virechana*. Here the meaning of "*Adhobhaga*" is "*Guda*" commented by *Cakrapani*.⁵ *Virechana karma* is the second therapy in the sequence of *Panchakarma* most widely used purificatory procedure specially for *Paittika* diseases because of its simplicity, eliminating the *Dosha* in more quantity with less stress and having lesser complications, *Virechana karma* is the best treatment of *Pittaja* disorders.⁶ *Virechana karma* is practiced for preservation of health and prevention of diseases arises due to aggravated *Pittaja Dosh* in *Sharad ritu*.

Basti (Enema):

Basti means the urinary bladder. Earlier the bladder taken from dead animals was used for the procedure and hence the name *Basti karma*.⁷ In this procedure the medicine is administered through anus, vagina or urethra. *Basti karma* has been given the highest place in *Panchakarma* for its highest level of effectiveness in treating diseases. It is said to be *Ardha Chikitsa* and for some it is *Sampurna Chikitsa*.⁸ *Basti karma* is the best treatment of *Vataja* disorders⁹ and practiced as preventive measure for prevention of diseases arises due to aggravated *Vata Dosh* in *Varsha ritu*.¹⁰

Nasya/ Shirovirechana (Nasal instillation):

The medicine or medicated oil which is administered through nostrils is termed as *Nasya karma*.¹¹ It is also known as *Shiro virechana*

or *Murdha virechana*. It is the most important therapy used for treatment of *Urdhwa jatrugata* diseases. According to *Acharya Vagbhatta* nose is the gateway of head.¹² The drug administered through nose as *Nasya* reaches to brain and eliminates only the morbid *Dosha* responsible for producing the disease.

Raktamokshan (Blood-letting):

Raktamokshan is a technical term employed to denote a para-surgical procedure to expel vitiated blood from selected areas of the body by specific methods. Vitiated *Pitta* causes vitiation of *Rakta* because of *Ashraya-Ashrayi bhava*. Vitiated *Rakta* leads to the manifestation of various diseases hence the *Shodhana of Rakta Dosh* will make the person disease free and its elimination may be carried out in the form of *Raktamokshana karma in Sharad ritu*.¹³

Panchakarma offers the internal purification of the body which permits the biological system to return to normalcy and to rejuvenate spontaneously. It eliminates the toxins and stagnated *Malas* and metabolites from the body, cleans the macro and micro channels, and maximizes the absorption and metabolism of nutrients and medicines. The major contemporary specific areas of application of *Panchakarma* therapy are: –

- 1.) Promotive and Preventive Health care as a part of *Swastha Vritta* regimen.
- 2.) As an integral prerequisite of *Rasayana* and *Vajikarana*.
- 3.) Curative treatment of diseases.

1.) Promotive and Preventive Health care as a part of Swastha Vritta regimen:

A) *Dincharya* : As a part of *Swasthavritta* regimen, *Panchakarma* and allied procedures

like *Anjana, Pratimarsha Nasya, Dhumapana, Kavala, Gandusha, Karna Purana* (Oiling of ear) , *Nasa Purana, Abhyanga, Udvartana, Murdhni Tail* etc can be used for preventing different diseases which may occur in future and for promoting and maintaining health.

Abhyanga (Oil massage) is advised to prevent ageing, activating the sense organs and improving overall quality of life.¹⁴ *Udvartana* (powder massage) especially indicated in obese persons for reducing fat and in others, it helps to improve color and complexion by stimulating *Bhrajaka Pitta* situated in the skin. This therapy will strengthen the body parts and suppresses the *Meda* and *Kapha*.¹⁵ *Shirobasti* (retaining oil over head) is one of the *Murdhni taila* advocated in a healthy person which helps to prevent *Urdhva Jatru Gata Vikara*¹⁶. (diseases of head and neck).

Pratimarsha Nasya with *Anu* tail should be administered daily to promote functions of eyes, ears and nose to prevent *Khalitya* and *Palitya* and other diseases like *Manya stambha, Sirahsula, Ardita, Hanus-tambha, Ardhavabhedak, Shirokampa* etc.¹⁷

B) Ritucharya –In *Ritucharya* regime our *Acharya* said that we should go for particular *Shodhana* procedure in a particular *Ritu* to eliminate particular aggravated *Dosha* to avoid *Ritu janya Vikara* (seasonal diseases) as quoted below –

Hemantikam Doshachayam Vasante, Prava-hayan greeshmajam Abhrakale |¹⁸
Ghanaatyaye Vaarshikamaashu samyak prap-noti Rogan Ritujaan Jaatu ||

Haret Vasante Shleshmaanam Pittam Sharadi Nirharet |¹⁹

Varshaasu Shamayet Vaayu Prak Vikara Samushrayaat ||

Ritucharya (seasonal rituals) are advised in order to prevent seasonally aggravated respective *Dosha* and to maintain health.²⁰ Depending on the status of the *Dosha*, in each *Ritu*, *Nirharana Kala* (time for elimination) has been mentioned. Aggravated *Shleshma Dosha* hampers the *Kayagni*, causing metabolic disturbances. Hence, *Vamana Karma* is indicated in this *Ritu*.²¹ Due to the *Ritu Swabhava*, and indulgence in *Amla Rasa Pradhana* diet in *Sharad Ritu* there will be *Pitta Prakopa*. Hence, administration of *Ghee* prepared with *Tikta Rasa Pradhana Aushadhi* followed by *Virechana Karma* and *Rakta Mokshana* are explained²². *Vata Dosha* aggravated in *Varsha Ritu* needs to be eliminated through *Basti Karma*.²³

C) Panchakarma in Vegavarodhjanya Avasthik Vikaras –Suppression of natural urges are contraindicated as they may result in to grave complications.²⁴ Today, it is one of the major contributor in causing the diseases especially of lower gastro intestinal tract.

Complications arise due to holding natural urges like *Mutra, Purisha, Jhrimba, Nidra* etc. can be treated with the help of *Panchakarma* therapies, *Avapeedaka Snehapana* (administration of large quantity of *Sneha*), *Virechana* and *Basti* are considered best in treating the complications.

2.) As a prerequisite of Rasayana and Vajikarana chikitsa –

The importance of *Samshodhana* /*Panchakarma* as an essential pre-conditioning measure in *Rasayana* and *Vajikarana chikitsa* cannot be over emphasised. The Simile of soiled cloth and cleansed cloth with reference to dye treatment underscores the point.²⁵ *Rasayana* and *Vajikarana* are unique method of treatment which have a greater role in prevention of the disease as well as promotion of the health.²⁶ *Vajikarana Chikitsa* is essential in getting a good healthy progeny.²⁷ *Shodhana* is mandatory prior administering *Rasayana* and *Vajikarana* drugs. Effect of *Rasayana* and *Vajikarana Dravya* are enhanced if performed after *Shodhana*.

3.) Curative treatment of the diseases –

Panchakarma is the fastest growing *Ayurvedic* speciality globally due to its wider range of therapeutics and long lasting radical cure of chronic diseases. It eliminates the vitiated *Doshas* from the body, so the chances of relapse or recurrence of the disease will be less as quoted below as-

Doshah kadachit kupyanti jitah langhana Pachanaih |²⁸

Jitah Samshodhanairye tu na tesham punarudbhavah ||

CONCLUSION

So we can say from above discussion that *Panchakarma* therapy is very much important for promoting and maintaining health of a healthy individual and treating diseases in diseased person. As by means of these *Panchakarma* procedures we can correct the '*Doshik Imbalance*' of the body which are the root

cause of any abnormality in body functioning. We can more clearly understand the role of *Panchakarma* in healthy living by correlating human body with a mechanical machine, as a mechanical machine requires servicing of its parts time to time for its proper functioning. Human body also requires purification in the form of *Samshodhana* (*Panchakarma*) which essentially cleanse the macro and micro channels of the biological system and correct the *Doshik imbalance* which is required to maintain the healthy living of an individual.

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