



MODERN-DAY DETOX THROUGH ANCIENT WISDOM: THE ROLE OF VARISARA DHAUTI

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ABSTRACT

The increasing prevalence of lifestyle-related non-communicable diseases (NCDs), particularly gastrointestinal disorders, metabolic imbalances, and stress-induced conditions, necessitates the exploration of safe and effective non-pharmacological interventions. Within the classical framework of Hatha Yoga, Shatkarma practices are described as essential purification techniques aimed at maintaining physiological balance and enhancing systemic health. Among these, Varisara Dhauti, also known as Shankhaprakshalana, is a significant cleansing procedure focused on the gastrointestinal tract. Shankhaprakshalana is a yogic technique involving the controlled intake of lukewarm saline water, followed by a sequence of specific asanas that facilitate the movement of water through the entire digestive system. This process results in the thorough cleansing of the alimentary canal, helping to eliminate accumulated waste materials and toxins. Unlike conventional purgatives, this method does not rely on pharmacological agents and is considered to be free from their associated side effects. This paper explores the preventive and therapeutic potential of Varisara Dhauti by integrating insights from traditional yogic texts with contemporary scientific perspectives. The practice is believed to improve digestive efficiency, regulate bowel function, and enhance metabolic activity. Additionally, it may positively influence the gut-brain axis, contributing to improved mental clarity and emotional stability. Modified adaptations of Shankhaprakshalana have further increased its applicability in modern contexts, making it suitable for individuals with varying physical capacities. The study highlights its potential as an adjunctive approach in integrative healthcare, emphasizing its relevance in promoting holistic well-being and resilience in the face of modern lifestyle disorders.

KEYWORDS : Varisara Dhauti, Shankhaprakshalana**INTRODUCTION**

Yoga and Ayurveda, though distinct disciplines, originate from a shared Vedic tradition and are unified in their fundamental objective of promoting holistic health and self-realization. Both systems emphasize preventive care and internal purification as essential components of maintaining physiological balance and preventing disease. Cleansing practices are therefore integral to traditional health systems, where they serve to eliminate accumulated toxins and restore systemic harmony.

In classical Hatha Yoga literature, particularly the Hatha Yoga Pradipika and Gheranda Samhita, six fundamental purification techniques known as Shatkarma are described: Dhauti, Basti, Neti, Trataka, Nauli, and Kapalabhati. These practices are designed to cleanse different systems of the body, thereby facilitating optimal functioning and preparing the practitioner for higher yogic practices such as Asana and Pranayama. Among these, Dhauti encompasses a group of cleansing procedures primarily targeting the digestive tract.

According to the Gheranda Samhita, Dhauti is further classified into Antara (internal), Danta, Hrida, and Moola Shodhana, with Antara Dhauti subdivided into Vatasara, Varisara, Agnisara, and Bahishkrita. Varisara Dhauti, commonly known as Shankhaprakshalana, is a specialized internal cleansing technique that involves flushing the entire gastrointestinal tract. The term Shankha (conch) symbolically represents the alimentary canal, while Prakshalana means thorough cleansing.

This practice involves the intake of lukewarm saline water followed by a sequence of specific asanas—such as Tadasana, Tiryaka Tadasana, Kati Chakrasana, Tiryaka Bhujangasana, and Uddharakarshanasana—which facilitate the movement of water through the digestive tract until complete evacuation occurs. By effectively eliminating accumulated waste and toxins, Varisara Dhauti plays a significant role in maintaining digestive health, enhancing metabolic efficiency, and supporting overall well-being in the context of modern lifestyle challenges.

MATERIALS AND METHOD**➤ PURVAKARMA****Requirements for Varisara Dhauti (Shankhaprakshalana)**

- Clean, preferably distilled or purified lukewarm water
- Suitable vessel for storing and preparing saline water

- Tumbler or glass for drinking
- Rock salt (Saindhava) for preparing saline solution
- Freshly prepared khichari (for post-practice diet)
- Hand towel for personal hygiene
- Soap for cleansing after the procedure
- Access to a clean and hygienic toilet facility

Preparation for Varisara Dhauti (Shankhaprakshalana)

- Adequately warm a sufficient quantity of clean water to approximately 34–40°C (lukewarm). Maintain this temperature throughout the procedure; additional hot water may be kept ready to ensure consistency.
- Prepare a saline solution by adding 2 teaspoons of rock salt (Saindhava) per liter of water. Individuals with hypertension should use salt cautiously and under supervision.
- A thorough pre-procedural assessment, including body weight and vital parameters, is essential to evaluate baseline health status and ensure safety.
- The practice should be performed early in the morning on an empty stomach to facilitate effective cleansing and minimize discomfort.

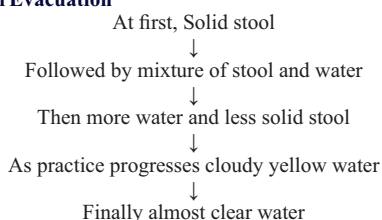
Role of Salt in Shankhaprakshalana

- Salt plays a crucial role in the cleansing process by interacting with gastric secretions, forming a diluted solution that minimizes irritation while enhancing efficacy.
- It aids in loosening and dissolving mucus deposits adhered to the intestinal walls, thereby facilitating deeper cleansing of the gastrointestinal lining.
- In appropriate concentrations, saline water exerts a mild soothing effect on inflamed mucosa, supporting intestinal health.
- From a physiological perspective, the intake of isotonic or mildly hypertonic saline solution results in minimal absorption in the intestines. Instead, it promotes an osmotic effect, drawing fluids into the intestinal lumen. This, combined with the warmth of the solution, stimulates peristaltic activity, accelerating the movement of contents through the digestive tract.
- As the process continues, repeated intake and evacuation lead to the elimination of residual waste materials, ultimately resulting in the passage of clear water. During transit, the saline solution facilitates the removal of accumulated toxins and metabolic by-products from the intestinal walls, thereby contributing to comprehensive gastrointestinal purification.

➤ PRADHAN KARMA

- The practice begins by drinking two glasses of lukewarm saline water rapidly, without pauses. Slow sipping or taking breaks between glasses reduces the effectiveness of the process and should be avoided. Immediately after intake, perform the following five asanas dynamically, eight repetitions each in sequence: Tadasana, Tiryaka Tadasana, Kati Chakrasana, Tiryaka Bhujangasana, and Udarakarshanasana. This sequence constitutes one complete round, and no rest should be taken between rounds.
- Following this, consume two more glasses of saline water and repeat the same sequence of asanas. After completing the third round, proceed to the toilet. Straining should be avoided; natural evacuation is encouraged. If bowel movement does not occur within a few minutes, perform an additional round and revisit the toilet. The process should be carried out at a steady and continuous pace to prevent absorption of water into the bloodstream and to maintain adequate intra-abdominal pressure.
- The cycle of water intake and asana practice is repeated until clear water is expelled, signifying thorough cleansing of the alimentary canal. Typically, this requires 16–20 glasses of saline water, though the exact quantity may vary among individuals. The practice should be discontinued once clear evacuation is achieved, ensuring safe and complete purification.

Sequence of Evacuation



Asana Sequence in Varisara Dhauti (Shankhaprakshalana)

Each round consists of five dynamic asanas performed eight times in sequence, facilitating the smooth movement of saline water through the gastrointestinal tract.

1. Tadasana (Tree Pose)

- Stand with feet 16–18 inches apart.
- Interlock fingers, raise arms overhead, and stretch upward while lifting the heels.
- Hold briefly, then return to the starting position.
- Perform 8 repetitions within 40–60 seconds.

Effect: Opens the pyloric valve, allowing water to pass from the stomach into the small intestine.

2. Tiryaka Tadasana (Swaying Tree Pose)

- From Tadasana position, bend laterally to the left and right alternately.
- Perform 8 repetitions (4 each side) within ~60 seconds.

Effect: Alternating compression helps move water through the small intestine.

3. Kati Chakrasana (Waist Twisting Pose)

- Stand with feet apart, twist the torso to each side while keeping feet grounded.
- Perform 8 repetitions (4 each side) within ~30 seconds.

Effect: Enhances intestinal motility, pushing water further along the digestive tract.

4. Tiryaka Bhujangasana (Twisted Cobra Pose)

- From prone position, raise the upper body and twist to look at opposite heel.
- Perform 8 repetitions (4 each side) within ~60 seconds.

Effect: Opens the ileocecal valve, enabling water to move into the large intestine.

5. Udarakarshanasana (Abdominal Compression Pose)

- In squatting position, alternately press thighs into the abdomen while twisting.
- Perform 8 repetitions (4 each side) within ~60 seconds.

Effect: Massages the colon and stimulates the defecation reflex, promoting elimination.

This structured sequence ensures progressive propulsion of water through the entire alimentary canal, making the cleansing process efficient and systematic.

➤ PASCHAT KARMA

1. Kunjal Kriya (Gastric Evacuation):

- After 5–10 minutes of internal cleansing, drink 500 ml (2 glasses)

of lukewarm saline water.

- Stand, bend forward, and gently induce vomiting using two fingers to cleanse the tongue deeply.
- This step ensures complete evacuation of residual saline water from the stomach, preventing delayed or repeated intestinal movements.

2. Shavasana (Rest and Recovery):

- Lie down in Shavasana for 45–60 minutes, covered with a blanket to maintain warmth.
- Maintain silence and minimal movement, allowing the digestive system to stabilize and rejuvenate. Passing urine during this period is normal.

3. Special Meals:

- After resting, consume Khichari made of rice, moong dal, a pinch of salt, and 1–2 teaspoons of cow's ghee within one hour of the procedure.
 - Ghee coats the intestinal walls and supports regeneration.
 - Rice provides easily digestible carbohydrates and mucilage to protect the intestinal lining.
 - Moong dal supplies protein essential for repairing the gut wall.
- Eat an adequate quantity to stretch the gut walls and promote gentle peristalsis, preventing cramping, indigestion, diarrhoea, or constipation.
- After the first meal, avoid sleeping for 3–4 hours to prevent lethargy or headaches.
- Second meal: Khichari after 6 hours, ensuring the stomach is properly filled.
- Night meal: Light food such as dal, rice, or chapati with minimal salt and 1–2 teaspoons of ghee.

4. Special Precautions:

- Avoid junk, heavy, fried, or spicy foods the day before and for at least one week after the procedure.
- Dinner on the previous day should be finished by 7–8 pm.
- On the day of the practice, avoid milk and milk products, citrus fruits, and consume only warm water. Avoid drinking water for 2 hours after completion.
- Do not bathe, expose the body to direct air, fans, coolers, or go outside before evening.
- Avoid long journeys or strenuous activity for 2–3 days.
- Avoid activities that may create excitement, tension, or sudden temperature changes, as the body is in a sensitive state and susceptible to minor illnesses like cough or cold.

Mode of Action of Varisara Dhauti (Shankhaprakshalana)

Varisara Dhauti/Shankhaprakshalana is a principal Shatkarma (purificatory therapy) aimed at internal cleansing and detoxification. It is particularly effective in managing a spectrum of chronic symptoms and resistant disorders by eliminating vitiated Doshas and accumulated toxins from the body.

The therapeutic mechanism can be understood as follows:

1. Srotoshodhana (Channel Cleansing):

- Purifies the body's micro and macro channels (Rasa, Rakta, and other Srotas), ensuring unobstructed flow of nutrients and waste.

2. Apana Vayu Regulation:

- Facilitates the downward movement of Apana Vayu, enhancing the evacuation of intestinal contents and promoting healthy bowel function.

3. Vatashamana (Balancing Vata Dosha):

- Restores equilibrium to Vata Dosha, which governs movement and coordination within the gastrointestinal and excretory systems.

Benefits and Contraindications of Shankhaprakshalana (Varisara Dhauti)

Benefits:

- Cleanses and tones the entire intestinal tract, promoting optimal digestive function.
- Eliminates accumulated toxic waste from the body, alleviating issues such as acidity, indigestion, flatulence, and constipation.
- Supports gynecological health and general systemic purification.
- Since the intestine is considered the seat of Agni (digestive fire), cleansing restores proper cellular function, addressing the root cause of many diseases (Nija Roga).
- Physically, it tones the liver, digestive organs, and glands, and has been applied in managing diabetes mellitus, hypoglycemia, obesity, hypercholesterolemia, and high lipid levels.
- Strengthens the immune system, alleviating allergies and

- immunological disorders.
- Provides relief from arthritis, chronic inflammation, asthma, chronic colds, and sinusitis.
- Promotes blood purification, improving skin conditions such as acne, boils, and eczema.
- On a pranic level, it recharges the body's energy, removes blockages in the Nadis, purifies the Chakras, and restores the balance of the five Pranas, raising overall vitality.
- Facilitates higher states of consciousness, enhancing the effects of any subsequent Sadhana or meditative practice.

Contraindications:

- Hypertension
- Chronic peptic ulcer
- Pregnancy and menstruation
- Heart disease and end-stage renal failure
- Hernia
- Mental disorders and children under 10 years of age
- Weak, debilitated, or severely ill individuals

DISCUSSION

Varisara Dhauti (Shankha Prakshalana) offers a natural, cost-effective, and non-pharmacological approach to address these concerns. By combining lukewarm saline water ingestion with specific dynamic yogic asanas, this practice promotes mechanical and physiological cleansing of the entire gastrointestinal tract. The technique ensures progressive movement of water through the stomach, small intestine, and large intestine, facilitating the removal of residual mucus, toxins, and long-retained fecal matter.

From a physiological perspective, the asanas employed in Shankhaprakshalana stimulate peristalsis, open pyloric and ileocecal valves, and activate rectosphincteric reflexes, ensuring thorough evacuation without strain. This systematic cleansing not only restores gastrointestinal motility but may also support psychophysiological balance, as gut health is closely linked to metabolic, immune, and neuroendocrine functions.

Moreover, Varisara Dhauti is accessible and economical, requiring only simple resources—warm saline water and asanas—making it practical for integration into daily preventive health routines. Regular practice may reduce the risk of constipation, bloating, and metabolic stagnation, while improving nutrient absorption and overall vitality.

In conclusion, Varisara Dhauti serves as a holistic intervention that aligns with classical yogic principles while addressing modern health challenges. Its potential benefits extend beyond gastrointestinal cleansing to encompass psychophysiological conditioning, highlighting its relevance as an adjunctive practice in integrative wellness programs.

CONCLUSION

Varisara Dhauti (Shankha Prakshalana) is a safe, simple, and drug-free yogic purification technique that effectively cleanses the entire gastrointestinal tract. By combining the intake of lukewarm saline water with a series of dynamic asanas, it facilitates the removal of accumulated toxins, mucus, and waste, without the adverse effects commonly associated with chemical purgatives.

The practice not only promotes optimal digestive function and intestinal motility but also supports overall psychophysiological balance. Its simplicity, accessibility, and cost-effectiveness make it suitable for a wide range of individuals, regardless of age or physical condition.

Regular practice of Varisara Dhauti can serve as a preventive measure against metabolic disorders, enhance nutrient absorption, and contribute to long-term maintenance of systemic health and vitality. This underscores its potential as a valuable adjunct in integrative wellness and preventive healthcare strategies, reaffirming the enduring relevance of classical yogic purification practices in modern lifestyles.

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