



“Impact of Shat-karma and Mitahara on Immune System: A Descriptive study”

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Abstract

It's that time of year again – the weather is getting colder and the days are getting shorter. The threat of colds and flu is being talked up on the evening news– Covid 19 has been declared a world pandemic, and the government is recommending that people get vaccinated. Instead of rushing off to get injected with a vaccine that may or may not be safe or even prevent you from getting sick, try using Shat karma and mitahara to boost your immune system naturally.

A strong immune system can wipe out a virus within a few days, preventing more extreme manifestations of the illness and in turn the immune system is reinforced. When the immune system isn't functioning optimally, the body becomes subject to illness, infections and health problems. Yogic shatkarma and mitahara techniques can help relax the nervous system and boost an immune response. Both have been shown to directly impact the health of the immune system.

Yoga postures that open the chest and throat are good for stimulating the thymus, and inversion poses can help improve the flow of lymph and immune cells through the body. Twisting poses and hip openers can help to activate the secondary organs of the immune system, including the spleen and the lymph nodes. Modified versions of forward bends; backbends can also lend a hand in supporting and strengthening the body's natural defenses.

In recent past, the modernization of cultures, industrialization have greatly influenced our way of living and we have tended to drastically deviate from these well established ancient principles practices and professed by our sages. The growth of knowledge gained by the human society in this age of information explosion is truly remarkable. However, the complexity of life, its deep roots and eternal linkage with nature yet remain far beyond the reach of human intellect. All normal people wish to live to peace and happiness

.Health is essential to happiness sit includes full development of physical,

mental and spiritual power of an individual. Good health is valuable assets to an individual and balance is the essence of health.

MY VIEW FOR THIS STUDY

The immune system is a network of glands, nodes, and organs that work to protect the body from bacteria, viruses, fungi, and other harmful organisms. The immune system requires a constant supply of energy and nutrients to maintain optimum function and performance. Toxins in the environment and in food, poor diet, lack of or excessive exercise, and stress canal adversely affect the functions of the immune system.

Why Yogic shat karma and mitahara strengthens the Immune System

A strong immune system can wipe out a virus within a few days, preventing more extreme manifestations often illness and in turn the immune system is reinforced. When the immune system isn't functioning optimally, the body becomes subject illness, infections and health problems.

Shatkarma and Mitahar can help relax the nervous system and boost an immune response. Both have been shown to directly impact the health of the immune system.

Shatkarmas and kriyas are cleansing process. Every day we clean ourselves by brushing the teeth, washing the face, bathing the body, clearing the bowels. But internal way of cleansing to remove the toxins accumulated by wrong ways nonliving is more important.

SHAT KARMA AND MITAHARA IN DIFFERENT YOGIC TEXT

'Shatkarma' (sometimes known as Shatkriya) is a compound word consisting of two components: 'shat' meaning 'six' and 'karma' meaning 'art' or 'process'. The word 'kriya' or 'karma' is used in Hatha Yoga in a special technical sense regarding the techniques of cleaning.

Although we have grouped them into six here, the 'Gherand Samhita' and 'Hatha Yoga Samhita' enumerate as many as twenty-one such practices, albeit under six broad headings. The 'Shatkarma Samgraha' describes no less than forty-six such processes, such as svamana, vireehana, gandusha, udgara, andraktasrava. The 'Hatha Yoga Pradipika' however is the only authentic work which tends to limit itself exactly to six cleansing practice, 'Pranatoshani' refer to only five purificatory practices. Besides these works, a vernacular treatise, 'Bhakti Sagram' of Charana Das describes in detail the shatkarmas and in addition mentions four more which it does not describe. Dhauti, basti, neti, trataka, nauli and kapalbhati are the six traditionally known processes.

Shatkarma are cleansing techniques (shuddhi kriyas). They are recommended to be done to prepare the body for yoga practices. They are named shat karma because they are six (shat in Sanskrit) in number. These techniques are done to clean ingestion, digestion and excretory system of our body. These systems mean eyes, respiratory system, digestive system & excretory system. Just like when we take bath, we remove dead skin cells and other pollutants from our skin, shat karma works on cleaning inside of our body.

In yogic view, the process of shat karma is done to remove unnecessary particulates from our body and make it light & energetic. Moreover, when our body is light help to practice asana and pranayama in the better way, making them more effective.

Shatkarma are discussed both in Gheranda Samhita & Hatha Pradipika. The prominently mentioned in Gheranda Samhita as first step. In Gherand Samhita, the human body (including mind) is mentioned as Ghata. And thus the process of cleansing the body and mind is mentioned as ghata shuddhi. To bring balance to tri-dosh Vata, Pitta & Kapha. Bring balance to mind & body processes. Balance prana flow in Ida and Pingala Nadi. From there to stimulate the flow through Sushumna Nadi. To remove/excrete toxins from our body. To cleanse our body from inside & keep our body healthy. Providing strength to our internal systems like blood circulation, digestion, respiratory system & immunity. The shatkarma affect and activate almost all of the vital systems in the body, especially the digestive, respiratory, circulatory and nervous systems. Every individual organ of importance, like the food pipe, stomach, colon, lungs, eyes and ears, receives equal attention. These purificatory processes are both preventive and curative. The shat karma are very powerful practices that can never be learned from books or taught by inexperienced people. Only those instructed by the guru can teach others. One may think that he has the capacity to teach but actually he may not have adequate experience or

knowledge to guide others proficiently. This applies to the shat karma in particular. If unqualified people teach them they are likely to make serious mistakes. Also, one can make mistakes if one practices the mind independently without the aid figure.

INGERAND SAMHITA SHAT KARMA DEFINEDAS

The sequence of Shat karma in Gheranda Samhita:

“Dhautirvastitatha aneti hlaul keetra atakam tatha;

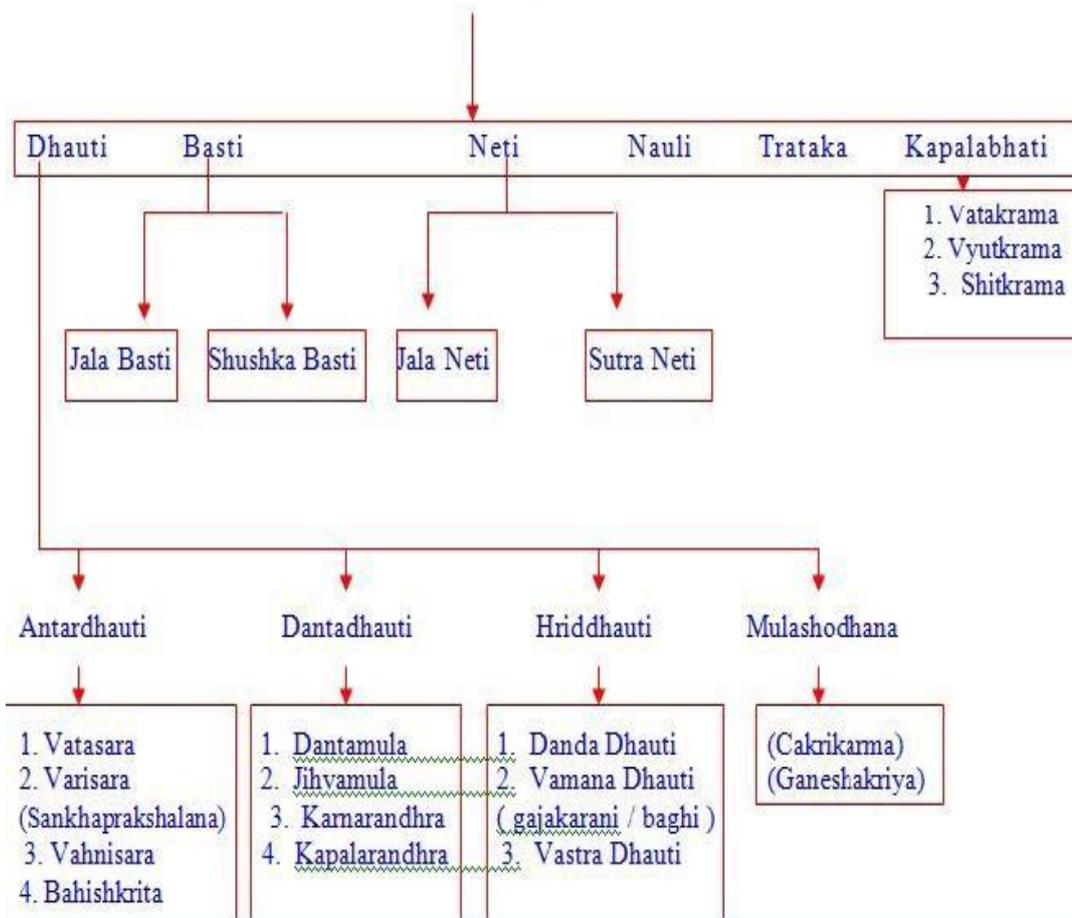
Kapaalabhaatishchaitaanishatkarmaan isamaacharet.”\G.S.(1\12)

Performing the shat karmas: Dhauti, Basti, Neti, Nauli, Trataka, Kapalbhata is essential.

In gherand samhita maharshi gherand describe different types of shat karmas such like, dhauti, basti, neti, nauli, trataka and kapal bhata .They are useful outer cleansing as well as inner cleansing. In such case maharshi gherand defined twenty-one shatkarmas process. In neti maharshi gherand define only sutra neti, but jalneti is also very famous type of dhauti. In trataka there are also three types of trataka are famous in yoga like bahirang trataka (external trataka), antarang trataka (internal trataka) and adho trataka (practiced with eyes half open and half close). This is the chart of shatkarmas In gherand samhita by maharshi gherand given below:



**Table of
Shuddhi Kriyas**



1. Dhauti-cleansing of Digestive Track

Dhauti is the first Shat karma that literally translates as ‘washing’. In this kriya, **different techniques** are used to flush out toxic & undigested food particles from internal organs.

Some common types of Dhauti are:



Vaman dhauti



Vast

2. Basti–Cleansing of Large Intestine

Basti is second in these quence of shatkarma that treats almost 50% of abdominal diseases.

It directly works on the purification of the central organ of the body called **colon (large intestine)** that nourishes almost all tissues of body.

Unlike enema which cleans only lower 8 to 10 inches of colon, Basti purifies the whole colon system to the rectum (attached to the anus). The colon is a long tube-like organ in the lower belly that removes water from digested food and is mostly disturbed by solid waste (feces).

3. Neti-Cleansing of Nasal Passages

Neti is the third Shatkarma that deals with purifying nasal cavities from accumulate dimpurities. it's very important to clear the nasal cavities as it's the path way to Prana we take through breathing. Breathing works like fuel to charge up the human body. If the fuel (breathing) is dirty by any reasons it can make us sick. Uncle an no strils are could be one of the main reasons for irregular breathing.

Neti Shatkarma is the exercise it ended for purification of nostrils by the various techniques.

Types of Neti

Neti is basically of 2 types, based on their procedure.

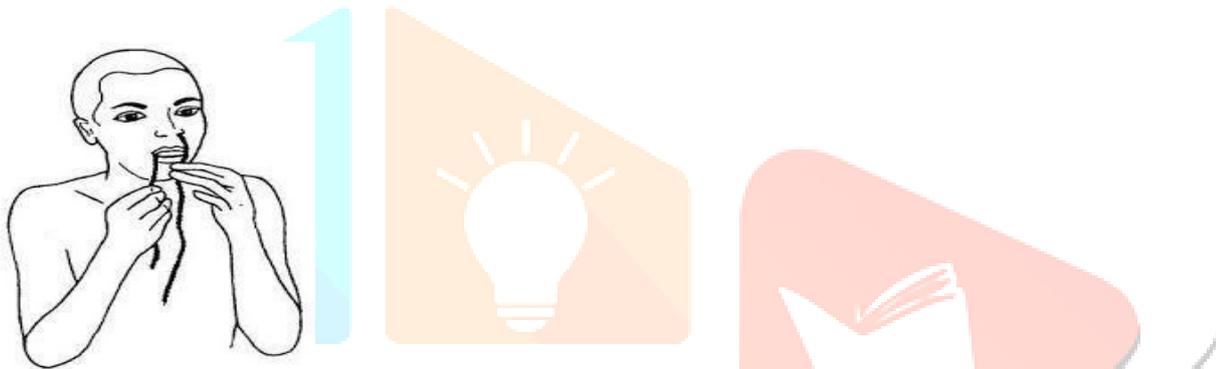
- **Jala Neti**– In this neti, Jala (water) is used as a cleaning tool to remove the impurities of nostrils. Using the neti pot, water is poured in through one nostril & the nunder the effect of gravity, it's expelled out another nostril. Water that comes out from other nostril removes impurities from nasal pathways.



Jalaneti

□ SutraNeti–

- In this neti, a rubber thread (sutra) is used to massage the nasal pathways in such a manner that it opens any blockages present in nostrils



4.Nauli–Cleansing of Abdominal Organs

In Nauli Shatkarma, the movement of the lower abdominal muscle is ensured that stimulates the digestive fire. It is a necessary yogic kriya that maintains and moves mental muscles of the body. Like flowing water is a sign of its purity, in the same way, Nauli practice purifies the liver, spleen, urinary bladder, pancreas, gallbladder, and the intestines by its massaging effect. When all these internal organs regularly move, the practitioner's digestion system and appetite improve.

In Nauli kriya, rectus abdominis **abs muscles** are isolated either left or right or at middle of the line alb a (anterior wall in the abdomen).

5. Trataka–Cleansing of Eyes



Trataka Shat karma is an eye exercise that involves steady and continuous gazing of eyes at any reference point. The reference point in the trataka practice could be any external object. The most common object used in Trataka for reference point is an Illuminated Candle.

Among 6 shat karma, trataka is known for its simple procedure. Consistent & correct practice of trataka increases concentration power and purifies the mind from fluctuated thought patterns.

6 . Kapalbhāti–Cleansing of Frontal Lobes

Meaning-

It is also called bhal bhati.

Kapal means forehead, bhal means forehead. The literal meaning of bhati means bellows. Vatkarma, vyutkarma and sheetkarma are the three types of bhalbhati. Practising them eliminates phlegm and mucus from the body

Types

There are mainly three types of kapalbhāti. Vatkarma, Vyutkarma and Sheetkarma kapalbhāti. The first is vatkarma which uses air. The second is vyutkrama and the third is sheetkrama which both use water.

Vatakarmakapalbhāti

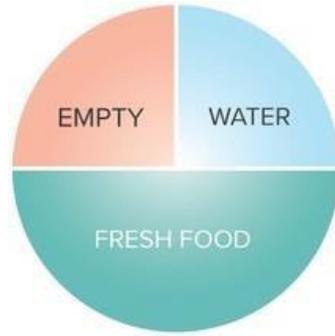
Vat means air. This is kapal bhati with the use of air.

The breath is to be inhaled through idanadi and exhaled through pingalanadi. Then the breath is inhaled through suryanadi and exhaled through chandranadi

MITAHARA

(Sanskrit: Mitāhāra) literally means the habit of moderate food. Mitahara is also a concept in

Indian philosophy, particularly Yoga, that integrates awareness about food, drink, balanced diet and consumption habits and its effect on one's body and mind. It is one of the ten yam in ancient Indian



texts.

Mitahara is a Sanskrit combination word, from *Mita*(मी, moderate) and *Ahara*(आहार, taking food, diet), which together mean moderate diet. In Yoga and other ancient texts, it represents a concept linking nutrition to the health of one's body and mind.

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- In practice of mitahara, yogis strive to keep the stomach one-fourth empty of food at meal time. It is believed that this allows sufficient room for healthy digestion. Those with a spiritual practice may wish to offer food to the Divine before consumption as an additional custom of mitahara.

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Ancient and medieval era Indian literature on *Mitahara* are of two categories— one relates to philosophical discussion of moderate diet and proper nutrition, the other category relate to details about *Aharatattva* (dietetics). The former category include the Upanishads and Sutras that discuss why virtuous self-restraint is appropriate in matters

Of food, while the latter include Samhitas that discuss what and when certain foods are suitable. A few texts such as Hatha yoga Pradipika combine both.

The **Bhagavad Gita** includes verses on “mitahara” in Chapter 6. It states in verse 6.16 that a yogi must nei there at too much nor too little, neither sleep too much nor too little. Understanding and regulating one’s established habits about eating, sleeping and recreation is suggested as essential other practice of yoga in verse 6.17.

Another ancient text, in a South Indian language, *Tirukkural* states moderate diet as a virtuous life style. This text, written between 200 BC and 400 AD, and sometimes called the Tamil Veda, discusses eating habits and its role in a healthy life (Mitahara), dedicating Chapter 95 of Book 7 to it. *Tirukkural* states in verses 943 through 945, “eat in moderation, when you feel hungry, foods that are agreeable to your body, refraining from foods that your body finds disagreeable”.

Tiruvalluvar also emphasizes overeating has ill effects on health, in verse 946, as “the pleasures of health abide in the man who eats moderately. The pains of diseased well with him who eats excessively.”

Medieval Sanskrit texts such as *Dasakumara Charita* and *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* discuss Mitahara. For example, *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* verse 1.57 states the importance of “mitihara”, as

A brahmachari, practicing mitahara (moderate diet) and *tyaga* (renunciation, solitude), devoted to yoga achieves success in his enquiry and effort with in half a year.

—*HathayogaPradipika, 1.57*

Conclusion

The art and science of Yoga has infinite possibilities for providing answers to most health problems troubling modern human kind. However we often misunderstand this science and want it to be a miracle pill. A pill that we take only once, and want all the problems to vanish into thin air! Yoga is a holistic science and must be learnt and practiced with a holistic view. The dedicated practice of Yogic shat karma as a way of life is no doubt panacea for problems related to immune system, stress related physical, emotional and mental disorders and helps us regain our birthright of health and happiness. It is only when we are healthy and happy that

we can fulfill our destiny. With the adoption of a proper diet (mitahara) and lifestyle through the Yogic way of life, we can rise above our own circumstances and our life can blossom as a time of variety, creativity, and fulfillment. The diet therapy; if discussed in one word is the

It self medicine for any diseases. Diseases are nothing but the disorders of diet and the research have proven it more efficiently in curing the disease. The ayurveda from the earlier/ancient time even has been placing a boon for man kind. Then also it is our misery we are not taking it in that view.

Yoga helps us regain the ease we had lost through disease (as implied by *sthira sukhamasanam-PYS*). It also produces mental equanimity (*samatvamyogauchyate-BG*) where the opposites cease to affect (*tatodwandwaanabhigatha-PYS*). This enables us to move from a state of illness and disease to one of health and well being that ultimately allows us to move from the

lower animal nature to the higher human nature and finally the highest Divine Nature that is our birth right.

Steps to Help Support a Healthy Immune System

1. Eat a balanced diet with whole fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, whole grains, and plenty of water. A Mediterranean Diet is one option that includes these types of foods.
2. Don't smoke (or stop smoking if you do).
3. Avoid Drinking alcohol.

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