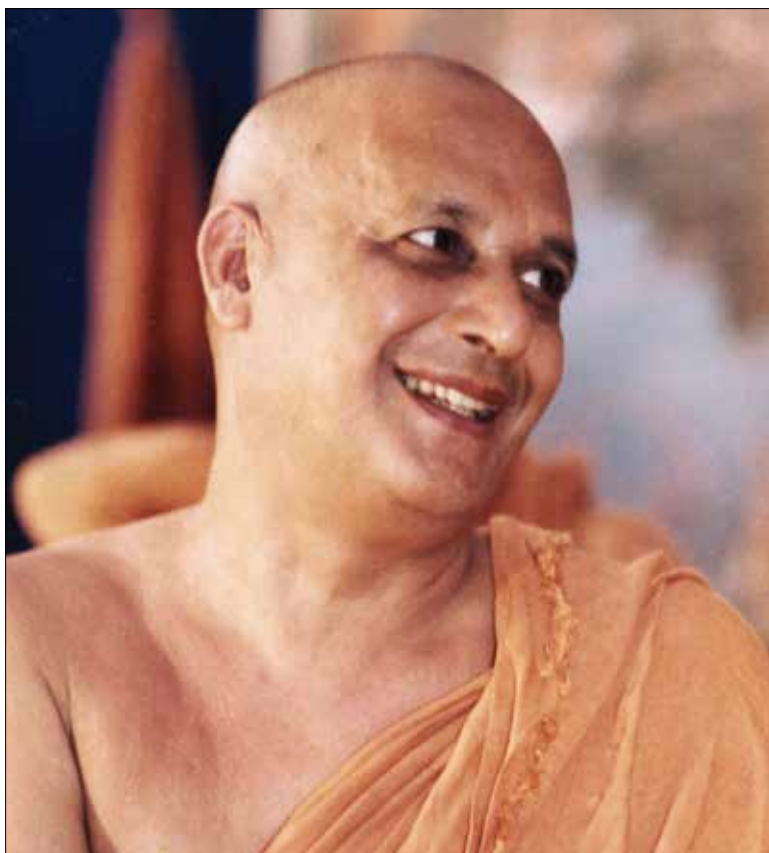


Satyam Speaks Shankhaprakshalana



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

Satyam Speaks
Shankhaprakshalana



SWAMI SATYANANDA SARASWATI

1923~2023

CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

Satyam Speaks

Shankhaprakshalana



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

Satyam Speaks **Shankhaprakshalana**

Swami Satyananda Saraswati

© Bihar School of Yoga 2023

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, transmitted or stored in a retrieval system, in any form or by any means, without permission in writing from Yoga Publications Trust.

The terms Satyananda Yoga® and Bihar Yoga® are registered trademarks owned by International Yoga Fellowship Movement (IYFM). The use of the same in this book is with permission.

The purpose of this book is to provide relevant information regarding yoga practice; it is not a practice book and it is not to be used for teaching oneself or others. All yoga training is to be learned and practised under the competent guidance of a person well versed in the practice. It is the responsibility of the practitioner to choose the teacher and the manner in which the classes are being conducted. Bihar School of Yoga is not responsible in any way for the individual's choice.

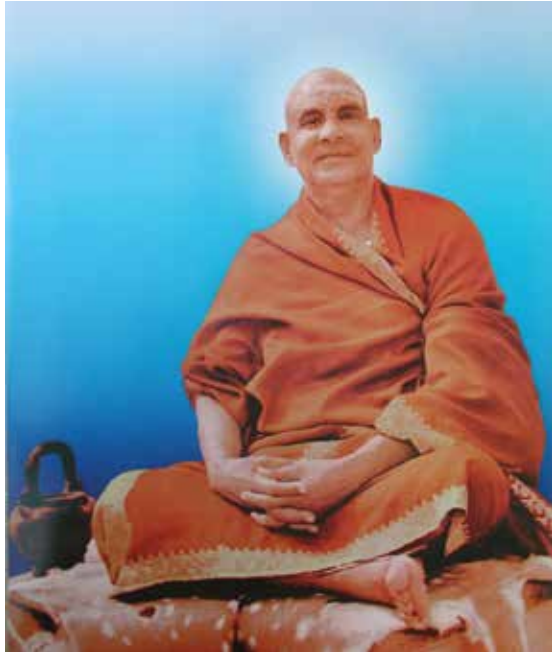
Published by Yoga Publications Trust
First edition 2023

ISBN: 978-93-94604-38-4

Publisher and distributor: Yoga Publications Trust, Ganga Darshan,
Munger, Bihar, India.

Website: www.biharyoga.net
www.sannyasapeeth.net
www.satyamyogaprasad.net

Printed at Thomson Press (India) Limited, New Delhi, 110001



Dedication

*In humility we offer this dedication to
Swami Sivananda Saraswati, who initiated
Swami Satyananda Saraswati into the secrets of yoga.*



Dedication

*To our guru Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati
who continues to inspire and guide us
on our yogic and spiritual journey.*

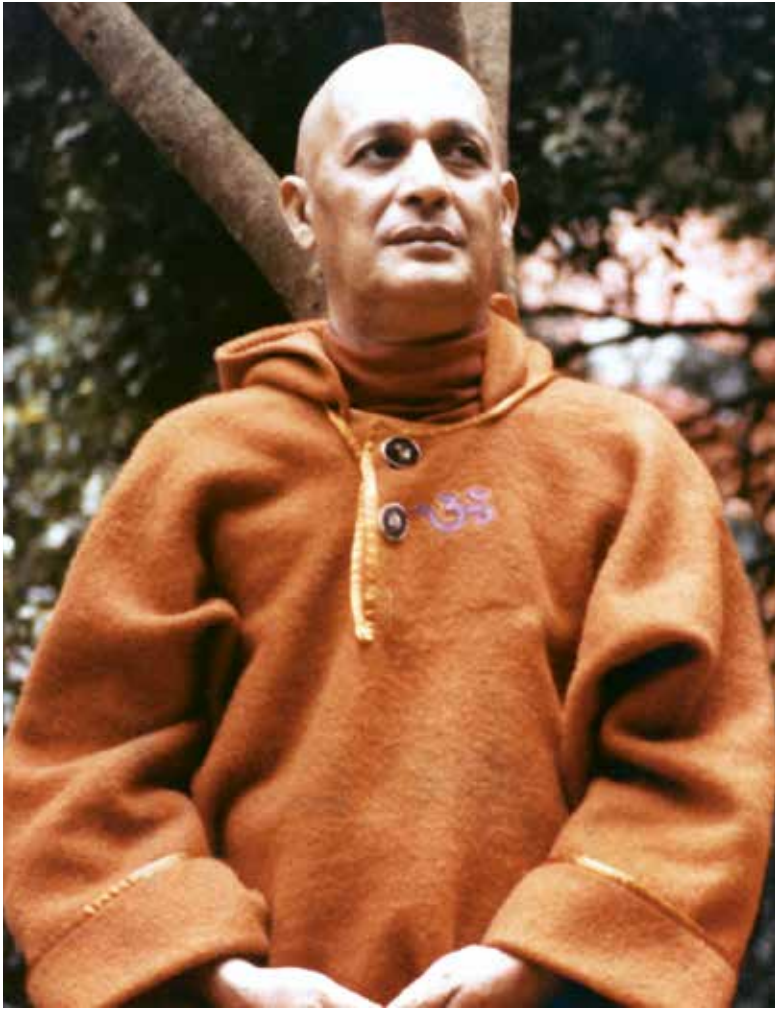
Contents

Preface	<i>ix</i>
1. Introducing Shankhaprakshalana	1
2. Dimensions of Shankhaprakshalana	6
3. Types of Shankhaprakshalana	11
4. Methodology for Shankhaprakshalana	14
5. Guidelines for Practice	27
6. Precautions	40
7. Benefits of Shankhaprakshalana	44
8. Applications of Shankhaprakshalana	49
9. Scriptural References	55
10. Conclusion	57
11. Quotations	60

Preface

Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati dedicated twenty years of his life to the propagation of yoga, and thus fulfilled the mandate given by his guru, Swami Sivananda Saraswati, 'to spread yoga from door to door and shore to shore'. He travelled around the globe many times bringing the message of yoga to people of all walks of life, regardless of caste or creed. Master of yoga vidya and creator of the Yoga Chakra, he adapted his knowledge and understanding of yoga to the needs and abilities of people. Swami Satyananda simplified valuable techniques and complex processes by giving systematic and clearly defined sequences. Everyone could understand and progress following the theoretical explanation and practical instructions. Everyone was able to benefit from yoga.

Satyam Speaks Series presents compilations of Sri Swami Satyananda's teachings on yoga. Each book explores a specific topic, concept or practice. The aim is to provide an easy way to understand and incorporate various components of the immense science of yoga vidya into one's daily life. For some titles, more information is provided of specific conditions or applications, which are for the information of the aspirant only and not for practice. These have been included to show the depth of understanding and experience Sri Swami Satyananda had of yoga vidya.

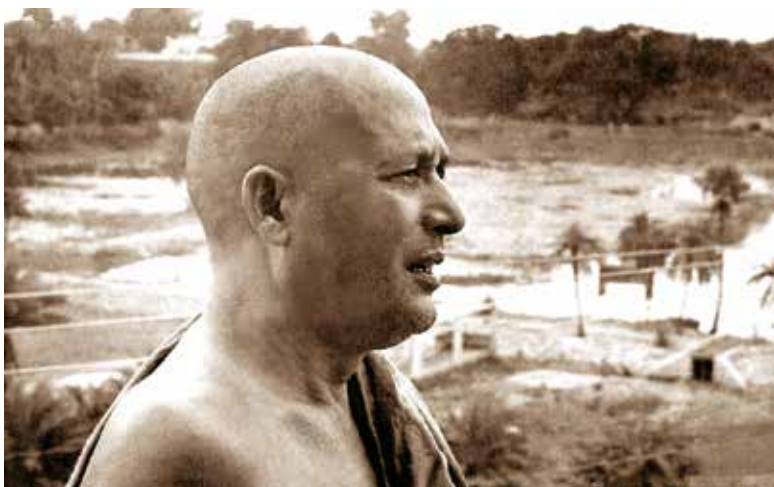


Satyam Speaks Series is a tribute to Sri Swami Satyananda, his teaching and to yoga vidya. *Satyam Speaks Series* is an invitation to all sincere aspirants to live yoga and thereby make the world a better place.

Learn from an accomplished yoga master, not from a book. This series is a knowledge guide and a yoga master is a practical guide.

1

Introducing Shankhaprakshalana



Asana, pranayama, mudra and bandha are parts of hatha yoga, but what it really refers to is the coming together of the two forces of ida and pingala. The word hatha has its origin from two bija mantras: *Ham* and *Tham*. *Ham* represents the pranic or solar force in the human body, and *Tham* denotes the psychic or lunar energy, or consciousness. The parallel terms in modern medical science are sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems. The main purpose of hatha yoga is to balance these two systems and establish perfect harmony between the psychic and pranic forces in

the body. Thus complete equilibrium in the body and mind is achieved, resulting in higher spiritual realization.

Asana, pranayama, mudra and bandha are all aimed at this. Asana is not the main component of hatha yoga. When you practise asanas you are only practising one part of hatha yoga, and the easiest part at that. Guru Gorakhnath, Sage Gheranda, Yajnavalkya – all describe hatha yoga as *shatkarma*, the six cleansing kriyas. Hatha yoga principally means neti, dhauti, basti, kapalbhati, nauli and trataka, which are termed the shatkarmas.

Shatkarmas – kriyas for elimination

Our body functions along very simple lines. Just as a machine produces wastes, likewise our body continuously produces wastes. These wastes are of three types: mucus, gas and acidity. If we cleanse the body internally from time to time, the excesses of these three metabolic products are removed, and their formation is regulated and balanced. Then perfect health can be maintained. It is in this sense that the practices of the six hatha yoga shatkarmas are of very great importance. Cleaning the body of the three types of wastages accumulated in the system is an important aspect of hatha yoga therapy. These techniques can be easily taught to and practised by everybody. For instance, there is jala dhauti (kunjali kriya) in which you drink three or four glasses of lukewarm water then vomit it out. This cleans out all the fermented acidic substances that accumulate in the stomach at night.

Another practice is shankhaprakshalana (varisara dhauti) during which you drink sixteen glasses of warm saline water and perform certain asanas. This technique washes all the old, pungent and rotting mucus from the whole alimentary canal, and may be practised once a year or even every three months.

The third practice is trataka. You fix the eyes on a steady point, internal or external, so that the pupils don't move or flicker for one to ten minutes. When the eyes become

motionless, the mind follows suit and movement of prana also ceases. This brings rest and tranquillity.

A great challenge is open to us. If matter in its ultimate form is energy, then this physical body can be transformed into solid energy through systematic practice of the six cleansing techniques of hatha yoga: neti, dhauti, basti, nauli, kapalbhati and trataka. After this, asana and pranayama should be practised.

Shankhaprakshalana

Shankhaprakshalana means washing the whole of the alimentary canal with the help of sixteen glasses or about four seers of brine or salt water. Drink sixteen glasses and clean yourself completely. The water you drink is the water you pass, in the toilet of course.

Shankhaprakshalana is a wonderful technique for making the body and mind healthy and sound which is a compulsory condition for higher yogic practices. In the hatha yoga of six bodily purification techniques, it comes under one of the dhautis named varisara dhauti, *vari* means 'water' and *sara* means 'essence'. This practice is also a part of kaya kalpa, which is an ayurvedic technique for physical purification and transformation, *kaya* meaning 'body' and *kalpa*, 'transformation'.

Shankhaprakshalana eliminates toxins from the stomach and cleans the whole alimentary canal. The stomach is completely cleaned and the body becomes light and free from tension. It is a method of evacuating and cleansing the entire alimentary canal from mouth to anus. The word *shankha* means 'conch' or 'shell' and *prakshalana* means 'to wash' or 'to clean thoroughly'. The word shankha is intended to represent and describe the intestine with its cavernous and coiled shape.

Laghoo and poorna shankhaprakshalana have slightly different purposes: poorna shankhaprakshalana is intended to completely empty and clean the whole digestive system, whereas laghoo shankhaprakshalana is only intended

to encourage normal functioning of the intestines. The Sanskrit word *laghoo* means 'short', 'condensed' or 'concise'. Therefore, the term *laghoo shankhaprakshalana* means the short intestinal wash.

In *laghoo shankhaprakshalana*, the salt water acts as a lubricant and loosens the stool. Here is an analogy; when there is ingrained crust, stains or coating on the inside of a pot, the first treatment is to soak it for some time in hot water. This loosens up the encrustation, eventually allowing it to be removed easily. The salt water acts in a similar way within the intestines, leaving them clean and free from obstruction.

Salt is used for *shankhaprakshalana* because of its reaction in the stomach when it mixes with acids and enzymes. It creates a more dilute and less potent acid solution. Salt is also a very efficient means to dissolve mucus and cleanse the intestinal linings. In small quantities it has a soothing effect on inflamed linings and it also has a mild relationship with the liver. Actually, the amount of salt assimilated in *shankhaprakshalana* is quite small. Very little is absorbed as most is excreted per rectum. Therefore, the salt should not cause any problems in terms of high blood pressure.

The salt water does not directly stimulate the nerves. Normally, it is movement and bulk of stool that acts as a trigger, stimulating the nerves which activate peristalsis. The salt water encourages the hardened or blocked stool to move, prompting the nerves to carry out their normal functions. No direct nerve stimulation is involved as it is with laxatives. A further point worth noting is that the salt water does not in itself lead to complete evacuation of the bowels, which is one of the major drawbacks associated with laxatives.

Likewise, there is a mental *shankhaprakshalana* which frees the mind from unnecessary thoughts and provides mental equilibrium. Our minds are constipated with foul conceptions, tensions, old *samskaras* and many unfulfilled desires. As long as there are unnecessary worries and inhibitions the mind cannot relax. When one cleans the physical body, salt water is drunk and then one goes to

the toilet a number of times. This creates tiredness but afterwards one feels much better. In the same way, mental shankhaprakshalana is tiring in the beginning due to the tremendous amount of thoughts, but ultimately, when one is able to evacuate the mind of thoughts, real happiness can be enjoyed.

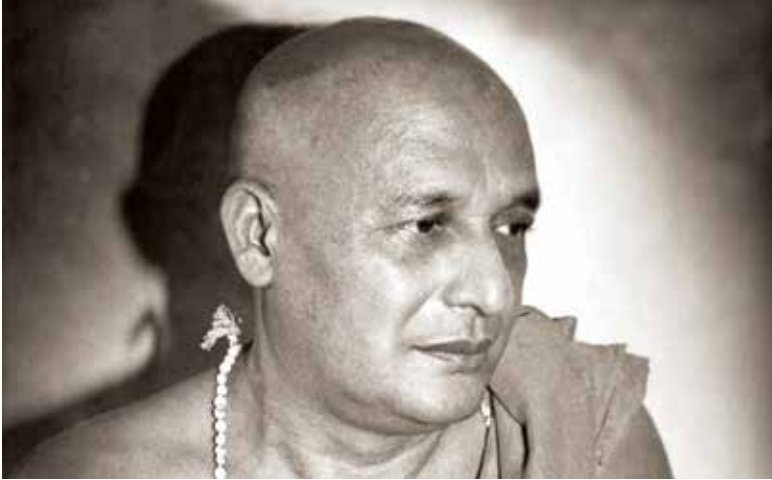
Yoga cleaning techniques such as kunjla kriya and shankhaprakshalana help to eliminate harmful bacteria that might have accumulated in the digestive tract. Furthermore, yoga practices in general will increase the body's resistance to bacteria, and so reduce the tendency of bacterial diseases to occur. This is a potent practice and it must be performed carefully and correctly, so as not to further upset the balance of one's system. But it has to be learned.

Shankhaprakshalana is a practice in hatha yoga which will give great relief, especially to the people of the western world who are meat eaters. Completely clean the whole system and you will feel the greatest relief you ever had in your life. It is surprising that it has not been adopted more widely throughout the world. To the best of our knowledge, it is the only systematic, sure and gentle method of thoroughly cleaning the entire digestive system.



2

Dimensions of Shankhaprakashalana



Physical purification

In order to purify the mind, it is necessary for the body as a whole to undergo a process of absolute purification. Hatha yoga is also known as the science of purification, not one type of purification, but six types. The body has to be cleansed in six different ways for six different impurities. When you clear the body of these impurities, the nadis function and the energy blocks are released. Then the energies move like wave frequencies along the physical structure of the channel and go right up to the brain. If you take an enema, this is one type

of purification; shankhaprakshalana is another. Purification of the whole nervous system is also a part of hatha yoga.

When the rishis discovered the science of hatha yoga, they did not have yoga therapy in mind. Although yoga has proved to be very effective in the treatment of many impossible and incurable diseases, I consider the therapeutic effect of yoga as a by-product and incidental. The main objective of hatha yoga is to create an absolute balance of the interacting activities and processes of the pranic and mental force. When this balance is created, the impulses generated give a call of awakening to sushumna nadi – the central force which is responsible for illumining the higher centres of human consciousness. So the real purpose of hatha yoga is not to build the body or improve the health, but to energize and awaken the higher centres responsible for the evolution of human consciousness. If hatha yoga is not used for this purpose, then its true objective is lost. Therefore, we consider hatha yoga as the preliminary practice of tantra, kundalini yoga and kriya yoga.

Need for shankhaprakshalana

The techniques of shankhaprakshalana eliminate the toxins from the stomach and clean the whole alimentary canal. In a healthy intestinal system there is always a residue of stool in the bowels. It is here that water is reabsorbed into the body to prevent dehydration. This residual stool contains myriads of bacteria, which help to protect the body from infection and also help to produce certain vitamins of the B complex.

Colic constipation is caused by delay in the movement of the faeces to the rectum. This is often the result of a diet that contains little or no indigestible residue. In other words, it is necessary to eat food that contains a sufficient amount of roughage or material which the digestive system is unable to digest. It is this waste product that partly stimulates movement within the large intestine. Without this, the relevant muscles become lazy. Another common cause of colic constipation is obstruction within the large intestine, which

slows down the rate of movement of the faeces. This is often caused by masses of hard, dry faeces.

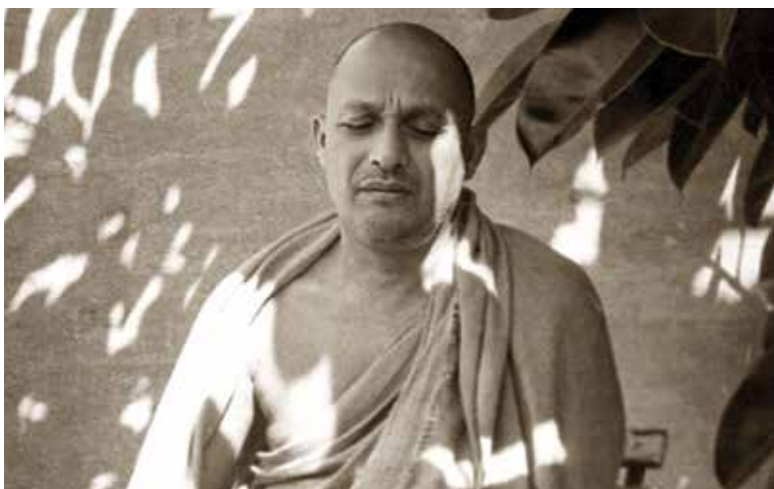
If one is constipated, there will be either diarrhoea or piles or some other disease. If one willingly accepts doing the practice of shankhaprakshalana, it will be an arduous job for an hour or two, but it will relieve one of all the consequences of the karma of constipation. Otherwise there may be suffering for months or years instead of one and a half hours.

Though laxatives empty the system, they do so forcibly and cause excessive irritation. Laxatives artificially stimulate the nerves of the intestines, so that peristalsis (the wave-like motion in the intestines) is prompted to rapidly propel the stool through the intestines to the bowels for expulsion. Although this does empty out the bowels, at the same time it leads to gradual weakening of the nerve reflexes.

Strong laxatives sweep out all the stool, thereby preventing reabsorption of water and preventing the bacteria from performing its normal function. Therefore, though laxatives give short-term benefits, they can lead to gradual deleterious effects in the body. Furthermore, laxatives tend to completely empty the bowels and this is not nature's intention. Laghoo shankhaprakshalana is not intended to act in the same way as laxatives. Moreover, laxatives do not scrub the whole digestive tract as thoroughly as the moderate method of shankhaprakshalana, which improves the condition and health of the entire organism.

Mental purification

When you transcend the conscious plane and go to the subconscious plane, or what is called semi-samadhi, deep meditation, then the images that come cannot be controlled because the ego is not present. You do not know how to eliminate them. For example, if you are sitting somewhere and an unhappy idea comes, you can just eliminate it by willpower, but if you are dreaming at night that somebody is coming with a revolver to shoot you, you can do nothing



because the ego is not there. Whatever is happening in the dream has to happen. In the same way, in the stages of deep meditation there are experiences so compelling that you cannot get rid of them. So during the practice of dharana, when you are concentrating on the object, you must allow the purging to take place. A lot of ideas, images, memories, good and bad experiences, unhappiness, guilt, conflict, obsessions and complexes will come up and you must look at them. That is called witnessing the mind. It is not just a few thoughts. The deeper you go, the greater the crowd.

There could be moments during your mantra chanting or in ordinary meditation when there is confusion in the realm of thinking. So many thoughts come up at the same time that you cannot even distinguish them. That is purging, shankhaprakshalana of the psychic body. At that time, do not be discouraged or affected adversely. It has to happen. Sometimes when a thought emerges on the conscious plane, it immediately releases a particular disease from the body. There are many cases where the most deadly diseases have just gone away miraculously overnight due to the witnessing and expansion of one thought. Witnessing the thoughts and images, everything that is taking place in the mind

during mantra meditation or any type of meditation is a very powerful sadhana known as antar mouna. Meditation is the practice of mindfulness, and when it is perfected and mindfulness becomes constant and unbroken, it culminates in samadhi.

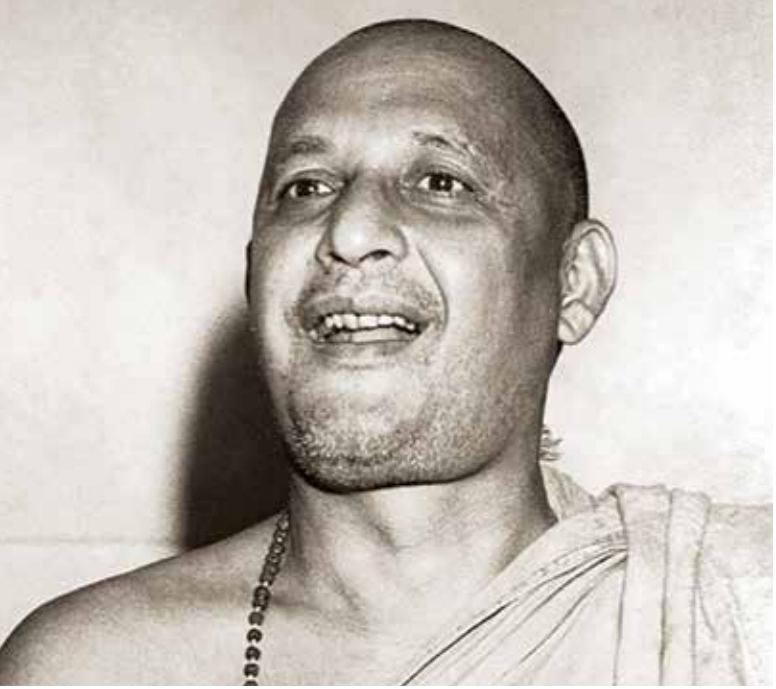
In order to understand your mind, you have to practise *antar mouna*, inner silence. When you practise this yogic process, the suppressed samskaras are driven out from the deeper levels of the mind. While doing shankhprakashalana you drink so much water; in the same way you have to do japa during the japa practice. The mantra goes into the mind and scratches out the samskaras and tensions. According to the quality of your samskaras, sometimes you may see many insignificant thoughts, sometimes you will visualize terrifying ghosts or very beautiful scenes and landscapes. When the aspirant finds bad ideas or frightening figures coming out from the mind he becomes nervous. This is because he has never seen or experienced these things during the ordinary course of his life.

Especially when sitting for meditation, japa or prayer, a bundle of thoughts starts coming out. Why? The reason is that while meditating, you forget the outside world. The consciousness is withdrawn inside where you come across innumerable samskaras in various forms. These are the root cause of mental and physical ailments. When the aspirant looks at these petty and boring thoughts, he becomes desperate and stops his spiritual practices. He thinks that this process of sadhana is not suitable for him. Actually he should not stop, because this mental cleansing is necessary, it must happen.

Whatever you experience is rising from your deeper consciousness. It is mental shankhprakashalana, part of the purging process. On the spiritual path an aspirant is involuntarily subjected to a purging process. Just as shankhprakashalana is practised to cleanse the physical body, in the same way consciousness has to be purged of its animal tendencies, the experiences of instinctive life.

3

Types of Shankhaprakshalana



Dhautis are a series of cleansing techniques which are divided into three main groups: *antar dhauti* or internal cleansing, *sirsha dhauti* or head cleansing, and *hrid dhauti* or thoracic cleansing.

The major dhautis for cleansing the alimentary canal are:

- Vaman dhauti, also known as kunjal, is washing the stomach by means of vomiting;
- Vyaghra dhauti is the technique for a loaded stomach;
- Varisara dhauti, popularly known as shankhaprakshalana, is a method of cleaning the entire alimentary canal from mouth to anus;
- Vatsara or vayu dhauti is a process of cleaning the stomach by air;
- Agnisara dhauti is a technique to stimulate the spiritual heat of the body by stimulating the digestive fire and the serpent fire. *Agni* means fire.

Dhauti is a very important system of auto-cleansing which includes two main techniques:

1. *Kunjal* or vomiting,
2. Varisara dhauti (shankhaprakshalana) – drinking saline water and allowing it to pass through the alimentary canal. All of these practices require the guidance of a competent teacher.

Much is known about kunjal, in which you drink saline water and vomit it out. This is a very important practice for eliminating acidity in gastric complaints. Many diseases are caused by hyperacidity, and this practice of vomiting is an antidote for it. For those who have a bad stomach, or what you call a sour taste from belching up the stomach acids, this is the best practice. Vomiting is very important for improving the digestion and balancing hyperacidity. But if there is hypoacidity, this practice does not help. In cases of hypoacidity we use another practice called *vyaghra dhauti* or tiger wash. Hypoacidity causes chronic dyspepsia or indigestion. Due to lack of acidity, the food is not properly digested. When this type of indigestion occurs, we wait for three hours after taking food, and then vomit all the remaining contents so that the stomach is clean.

Varisara dhauti

Ancient yogis, such as Sage Gheranda, named this technique of stomach and intestinal wash, varisara. Varisara dhauti is a method of cleaning the entire alimentary canal from the mouth to the anus with warm saline water. It is popularly known as shankhaprakshalana. Five litres or more of water are drunk and evacuated through the anus. It is a process that must be learned under an expert. Laghoo shankhaprakshalana is a shortened form of shankhaprakshalana. *Laghoo* means 'short'. In this practice only six glasses of warm saline water are taken. The two practices have slightly different purposes: poorna shankhaprakshalana is intended to completely empty and clean the whole digestive system, whereas laghoo shankhaprakshalana is only intended to encourage normal functioning of the intestines. Therefore, the term laghoo shankhaprakshalana means the short intestinal wash.

On the intestinal walls there is hard mucus which food sticks to. As this mucus decomposes, it should be expelled. You must remember that when the intestines are loaded with decomposed mucus, intestinal peristalsis slows down and the temperature in the colon and the small intestine also falls. When this occurs decomposition and fermentation of food stuff takes place inside the intestines. This means that during the process of assimilation, the body absorbs toxins and the whole body becomes toxic. When shankhaprakshalana is practised, the large and small intestines are washed clean of this decomposed mucus. When this mucus is completely expelled, a state of cleanliness and health is created in the whole system.

Unfortunately, modern thinking says that when mucus passes there is a disease, and medicine is immediately taken to stop the process, instead of allowing this decomposed mucus to be thrown out by nature's method. For elimination problems, experience has shown that the best form of dhauti is shankhaprakshalana. Within a period of only one and a half hours, one can be rid of all the fermenting, decomposed mucus in the intestines.

4

Methodology for Shankhaprakshalana



For the practice of shankhaprakshalana five litres of saline water must be prepared. The water must be slightly warmer than body temperature; if it is the same or

slightly lower than body temperature, nausea may result. It is necessary to drink two glasses of water at a time, and this is followed by five asanas which are done eight times each, one after the other.

The asanas are *tadasana*, palm tree pose, *tiryak tadasana*, swaying palm tree pose, *kati chakrasana*, waist rotation pose, *tiryak bhujangasana*, twisting cobra pose, and *udarakarshan-asana*, abdominal stretch pose. This process is repeated until sixteen glasses have been drunk. As more water is drunk, the process of evacuation becomes very free. In the beginning formed stool will be passed, then liquid stool, then coloured water and finally clear water.

After this vigorous cleansing, one rests for ten minutes and then practises kunjal kriya and neti. After that, there must be complete rest without sleeping for forty-five minutes, then a preparation of thin khichari made with fine rice, mung dal and an ounce of ghee is eaten.

In the tradition of hatha yoga and also in ayurveda, different methods of shankhaprakshalana are prescribed for rejuvenation of the body. Almost all ancient texts refer to shankhaprakshalana. A few of the varieties of recommended liquids are as follows:

1. Pure cold water
2. Water and salt
3. Water and asafoetida
4. Water and garlic essence
5. Water and onion essence
6. Water and bhang (ganja preparation)
7. Water and almond essence
8. Water and lime.

Aside from the above-mentioned variations, there is a mixture of different herbs, numbering seventy-one in all, which may be used for shankhaprakshalana, but only in the presence of an expert teacher. These techniques should never be learned from books only; they must always be done in the presence of an adept. For general purposes, salt water is ideal and should be used.

Technique 1: Poorna Shankhaprakshalana

Fill a clean bucket with lukewarm water and add some salt to it. Drink two glasses of this salty water and practise the following asanas eight times each.

1. **Tadasana:** Stand erect, feet a little apart. Raise arms overhead, palms up, look up at the intertwined fingers, lift the heels and stretch the whole body.
2. **Tiryak tadasana:** Stand erect, raise both arms, then bend to the right and left from the waist.
3. **Kati chakrasana:** Stand up. Keep the legs two and a half feet apart. Now twist the upper body, bring the left hand to the right shoulder and the right arm around the back. Turn the head to the right and look over the right shoulder. Do the same towards the left side, changing the hands.
4. **Tiryak bhujangasana:** Lie down on the stomach. Put both palms on the floor near the chest. Now raise your chest and head. Keep the waist near the ground and from the left side look at the right heel, and from the right side look at the left heel, thus twisting the waist.
5. **Udarakarshanasana:** Squat and keep both palms on the knees throughout. Bend the right knee to the ground and turn the trunk as far as possible to the left, looking behind the body. Repeat in the opposite direction.

Then drink two more glasses of salty water and practise these asanas again. Go on drinking up to six glasses and do asanas for each two glasses. Those who feel the urge for toilet before six glasses should try to control it and hold out, but if the urge is very strong they can go. Otherwise, go only after six glasses. Don't strain at the toilet, let the stool come out automatically. Then go on drinking salty water and follow the same procedure of asanas after each two glasses. Go to the toilet whenever it becomes necessary.

You will find that your discharge gradually becomes more diluted, containing more and more water, then only

yellow water will come out and finally only clear water. This shows that your intestines are now clear. The total number of glasses required may be from sixteen to twenty-five, sometimes more. Then drink quickly several glasses of salty water in order to do kunjla kriya and vomit the water out from the stomach voluntarily. Bend from the waist and rub or press the back of the tongue with the second and third finger. The water will come out in quick gushes. Then practise jala neti. Rest for forty-five minutes to one hour. Then take khichari, prepared from rice and dal with ghee.

Take enough to fill the stomach fully and thus facilitate complete lubrication. Don't take water, vegetables, fruit, curd, milk or spices. It is better to rest for the whole day. In the evening again take khichari with ghee.

Technique 2: Laghoo Shankhaprakshalana (short intestinal wash)

This is a shortened form of shankhaprakshalana. In this practice only six glasses of warm saline water are taken. After every two glasses the same series of asanas are to be performed as in poorna or full shankhaprakshalana.

The *Hatharatnavali* mentions the use of jaggery water or milk water (1:5) instead of salt water. Laghoo shankhaprakshalana could be done with carrot or celery juice. Though not compulsory, we recommend that the practices of first kunjla kriya, and then jala neti be done immediately after completing shankhaprakshalana. This gives the best possible cleansing to the entire digestive tract.

Technique

Two litres of warm salted water should be prepared as for poorna shankhaprakshalana.

Quickly drink two glasses of the prepared water. Perform the following five asanas eight times each:

1. Tadasana
2. Tiryak tadasana

3. Kati chakrasana
4. Tiryak bhujangasana
5. Udarakarshanasana.

Drink two more glasses of water and repeat the asanas eight times each. Repeat the process for a third and last time. Go to the toilet, but do not strain, whether there is a bowel movement or not. If there is no motion immediately, it will come later on.

Additional practices: Kunjal kriya and jala neti may be performed immediately after completing the practice.

Sequence of asanas

This series of asanas has a special role to perform in these practices, for they systematically open the various intestinal valves between the stomach and the bowels. Therefore, the prescribed sequence of asanas is important, and they should be done in the order listed. In this way, the salt water is encouraged to flow from the beginning of the intestines to the rectum. It is for this reason that these asanas are especially incorporated into the two cleansing practices. Other asanas can also be used, but our experience in the ashram, and that of yogis throughout the ages, has shown that these five particular asanas are the most suitable.

These asanas also give benefits in their own right, apart from association with these cleansing processes.

Technique 3: TTK solution

One litre of warm salted water should be prepared as for shankhaprakshalana, or pure unsalted water at room temperature can be used if the weather is not too cold.

The first three asanas of the shankhaprakshalana series are used:

1. Tadasana
2. Tiryak tadasana
3. Kati chakrasana

Quickly drink one glass of the prepared water.

Practise tadasana 10 times and drink a second glass of water.

Practise tiryak tadasana 10 times and drink a third glass of water. Practise kati chakrasana 10 times and drink a fourth glass of water.

Go to the toilet, but do not strain, whether there is a bowel movement or not. If there is no motion immediately, it will come later on.

Vatsara dhauti

Vatsara dhauti is performed by breathing in slowly through the mouth in kaki mudra and then swallowing the air into the stomach while expanding the abdomen. It can be done up to ten times or until the stomach is fully expanded. Then the air should be passed through the large intestine. To do this it is helpful to assume an inverted posture. Pashinee mudra is best. The air should then pass out of the anus easily.

Preparation for laghoo shankhaprakshalana

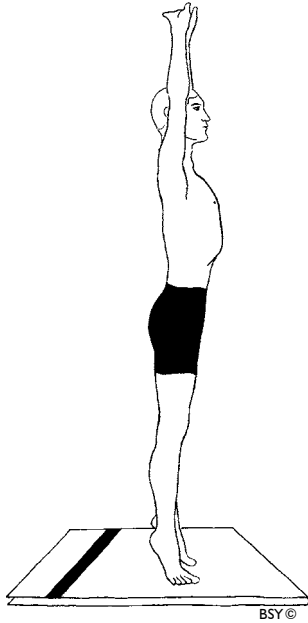
All that is required is a pitcher of lukewarm salt water and a glass. In the practice you will be required to drink about six glasses of water. Therefore, about two litres of warm water should be sufficient, though you can use your discretion as to the amount of water required. The salt should be added in the proportion two teaspoonfuls per litre of water. Make sure the salt is clean, and fully dissolved in the water.

It is important that you use salt water, so that the water is not absorbed through the intestinal walls into the body. The aim is to ensure that the water passes from the stomach throughout the length of the intestines without any absorption whatsoever. If you use water without salt, then all the water will be quickly absorbed in the early part of the intestines, without ever reaching the bowels. The salt water creates a high osmotic pressure, much higher than pure water, preventing absorption and allowing the salt water to flush through the system.

Tadasana (palm tree pose)

The Sanskrit word tada means 'palm tree' and therefore, not surprisingly, the English translation of this pose is the 'palm tree pose'. It is also often known as the heavenly stretch pose, because this is exactly what you do in this asana: stretch the body upwards towards the heavens.

Technique



Stand with the feet together or about 10 cm apart, and the arms by the sides.

Steady the body and distribute the weight equally on both feet.

Raise the arms over the head.

Interlock the fingers and turn the palms upward.

Place the hands on top of the head.

Fix the eyes at a point on the wall slightly above the level of the head.

The eyes should remain fixed on this point throughout the practice.

Inhale and stretch the arms, shoulders and chest upward.

Raise the heels, coming up on to the toes.

Stretch the whole body from top to bottom, without losing balance or moving the feet.

Hold the breath and the position for a few seconds.

At first it may be difficult to maintain balance, but with practice it becomes easier.

Lower the heels while breathing out and bring the hands to the top of the head.

This is one round.

Relax for a few seconds before performing the next round.

Practise 8 rounds.

Breathing and awareness: Breathe in deeply as you raise the body. Hold your breath in the final raised position, and breathe out as you lower your body. The breathing should also be coordinated with the raising and lowering of the hands.

Direct your attention to any fixed point. Some people prefer to look at a point in front of the body, either at a distance or a near point, while others prefer to watch their raised hands. Choose for yourself. However, we have found that it is easier to maintain balance if you look at a fixed point in front of you.

Number of rounds: For shankhaprakshalana and laghoo shankhaprakshalana do eight rounds. Otherwise, for general health purposes, you can practise as many rounds as you wish. Tadasana should be done after sirshasana (the headstand pose) as a counterpose. In this case, one should stay in the final position for as long as possible, breathing slowly and deeply.

Benefits: This asana develops a sense of balance. The whole body is stretched, which loosens up the entire spinal column from top to bottom. Furthermore, the abdominal organs and muscles are toned up.

Tiryak Tadasana (swaying palm tree pose)

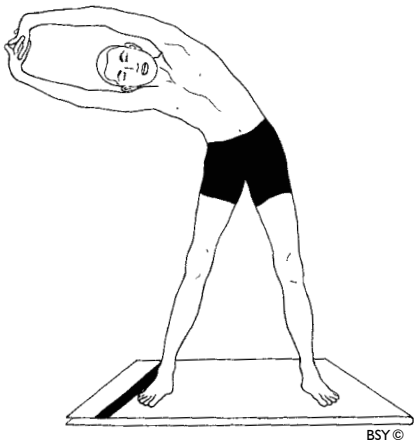
Stand with the feet more than shoulder width apart.

Fix the gaze on a point directly in front.

Interlock the fingers and turn the palms outward.

Raise the arms over the head, stretching upwards.

Bend to the right side from the waist.



BSY ©

Do not bend forward or backward or twist the trunk.
Hold the position for a few seconds, then slowly come back to the upright position.

Repeat on the left side. This completes one round.

Practise 8 rounds.

To end the practice, return to the upright position, release the hands, bringing the arms down to the sides.

Breathing: The breathing pattern should be normal.

Mistakes to avoid: In this asana keep your body and head facing forwards.

Awareness, number of rounds and benefits: These are as given for *tadasana*.

Kati Chakrasana (waist rotating pose)

The Sanskrit word *kati* means 'waist' and *chakra* means 'circle', 'wheel' or 'rotation'. Therefore, in English this asana is the 'waist rotating pose'.

Technique

Stand with the feet about shoulder width apart and the arms by the sides.

Raise the arms to shoulder level, then twist the body to the right.

Bring the left hand to the right shoulder and wrap the right arm around the back, bringing the right hand around the left side of the waist. Look over the right shoulder as far as is comfortable.

Keep the back of the neck straight and imagine the top of the spine is the fixed point around which the head turns.

Hold for two seconds, accentuate the twist, gently stretching the abdomen.



Return to the starting position.

Repeat on the other side to complete one round.

Keep the feet firmly on the ground while twisting.

Relax the arms and back as much as possible throughout the practice. Do not strain. The movement should be relaxed and spontaneous.

Perform the rotation smoothly, without jerking or stiffness.

Practise 8 rounds.

Breathing and awareness: The breathing pattern should be normal.

Keep your awareness on totally relaxing your arms, and on the sense of swing as you rotate your body.

Number of rounds: Practise eight times for shankha-prakshalana and laghoo shankhaprakshalana; otherwise, as many times as you wish.

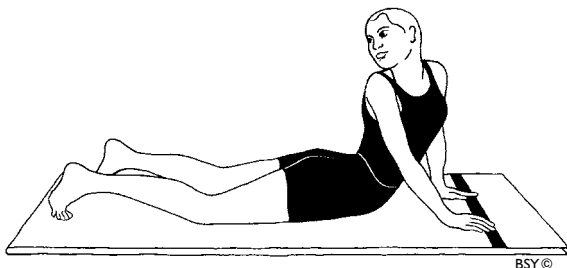
Benefits: This asana tones up the waist, back and hip joints. It is particularly useful for removing spinal stiffness. Though it is a simple asana, the mere relaxation and swinging movement of the upper part of the body induces a wonderful feeling of lightness. In fact, we feel this asana can be used to remove physical and mental tension when you have little time to spare. Also, if you have been sitting or standing in one position for a long period of time, you will more than likely feel very stiff. This is an excellent asana for quickly and effectively removing this stiffness.

Tiryak Bhujangasana (twisting cobra pose)

The word *tiryak* means 'triangular' or 'diagonal', and *bhujanga* means 'cobra'. The word *tiryak* is used here for two good reasons. Firstly, because in the final pose one gazes over the shoulder diagonally across the back of the body at the heel on the opposite side. Secondly, because one gazes over each shoulder in turn at the heels, the direction of the gaze from each shoulder forms two sides of a triangle, while the width between the shoulders forms the base or third side of the triangle. However, this is a bit complicated for translation,

especially if you try to associate it with a cobra. One English name of this asana is the 'twisting cobra pose'.

Technique



Lie flat on the stomach with the legs separated about half a metre. The toes should be tucked under and the heels raised so that the foot rests on the ball of the foot.

Place the palms of the hands flat on the floor, below and slightly to the side of the shoulders. The fingers should be together and pointing forward.

The arms should be positioned so that the elbows point backward and are close to the sides of the body.

Rest the forehead on the floor and close the eyes.

Relax the whole body, especially the lower back.

Slowly raise the head, neck and shoulders.

Straightening the elbows, raise the trunk as high as comfortable. Use the back muscles more than the arm muscles.

The head should be facing forward, instead of bending backward as in bhujangasana.

Twist the head and upper portion of the trunk, and look over the left shoulder.

Gaze at the heel of the right foot.

In the final position, the arms remain straight or slightly bent as the shoulders and trunk are twisted.

Relax the back and keep the navel close to the floor.

Stay in the final position for a few seconds.

Face forward again and repeat the twist on the other side without lowering the trunk.

Return to the centre and lower the body to the floor.

This is one round. Practise 8 rounds.

Breathing and awareness: Breathe normally in the starting position. Breathe in as you raise your body. While in the final raised position hold your breath and as you lower the body to the ground breathe out.

While raising and lowering the body, be aware of breathing and relaxation of the back, together with movement of the body. Try to synchronize the breathing with the body movement. In the final position direct your attention to the opposite heel.

Mistakes to avoid: Many people stiffen their backs and raise the abdomen off the ground when they move into the final position. This is wrong. Allow your back to relax, so that it sags towards the ground in the final pose. This relaxation enables greater movement of the trunk.

Number of rounds: Refer to kati chakrasana.

Limitations: Those people who suffer from peptic or duodenal ulcers, or hernia, should not do this asana.

Udarakarshanasana (abdominal stretch pose)

The word *udara* means the ‘stomach’ and ‘abdomen’, and *akarshan* means ‘to stretch’ or ‘massage’. Therefore this is known as the ‘abdominal massage pose’.

Technique

Squat with the feet apart and the hands on the knees.

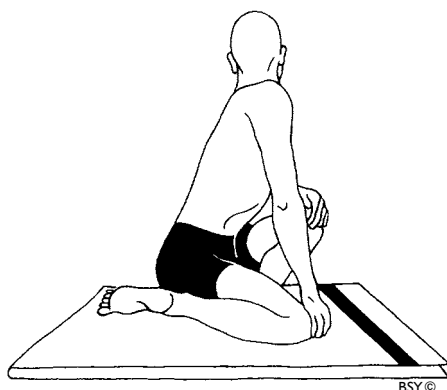
Inhale deeply.

Exhale, bringing the right knee to the floor near the left foot.

Using the left hand as a lever, push the left knee towards the right, simultaneously twisting to the left.

Keep the inside of the right foot on the floor.

Try to squeeze the lower abdomen with the combined pressure of both thighs.



Look over the left shoulder.

Hold the breath out for 3 to 5 seconds in the final position.

Inhale when returning to the starting position.

Repeat on the other side of the body to complete one round.

Practise 8 rounds

Note for beginners: Beginners and those people who have a stiff back, may find difficulty maintaining balance. Under these circumstances lean against a wall when you take the squatting position. Your heels should be about twenty centimetres or so from the wall. This will give you support, but at the same time allow you to twist your body in the way described for the asana.

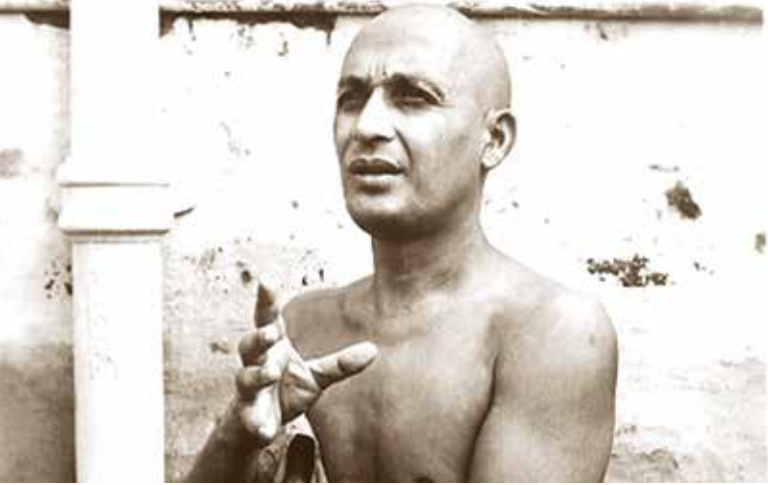
Breathing and awareness: The breathing should be normal. Maintain awareness of the movement.

Number of rounds: Refer to kati chakrasana.

Benefits: This is a very useful asana for people with abdominal ailments, because it alternately compresses and stretches the digestive organs, nerves and muscles. If you suffer from constipation, we recommend that you practise this regularly, as it helps to encourage the normal functioning of the large intestine and the anal sphincter.

5

Guidelines for Practice



The practice of shankhaprakshalana involves the use of water, salt, asana, khichari and ghee. The rules and regulations laid down for the practice are simple and straightforward. They are designed to give maximum results with minimum fuss and problems so that the sadhaka can get on with higher work. It is unfortunate that today many yogic aspirants have lost sight of the essential and simple practice of shankhaprakshalana. They are experimenting with many new variations on the original theme, however, sometimes with unpleasant results.

Preparation for shankhaprakshalana

Shankhaprakshalana, if it is properly done, is the easiest of practices. Nevertheless, preparation is important. Before doing shankhaprakshalana the yoga postures should be practised for some time, and also kunjla and neti kriyas.

Practices such as shankhaprakshalana exert a profound cleansing and purifying effect upon the subtle body and demand dietary regulation if the states of awareness generated are to be preserved and consolidated. What is the point in doing shankhaprakshalana if after a week, one again begins to eat greasy and tamasic foods, starts smoking and so on? Unhealthy habits only maintain blockages in the nadis. The practices of hatha yoga are powerful and they demand responsibility and self-discipline. Otherwise, it is not only a waste of time, but also foolhardy and dangerous. Never practise shankhaprakshalana alone. Along with the initial practices of hatha yoga, a conducive lifestyle must gradually emerge.

It is advisable to take a light, semi-liquid meal the night before undertaking this practice. Plenty of clean, lukewarm water should be available and also extra hot water in case the temperature of the water cools. Add two teaspoons of salt per litre to the water, so that it tastes mildly salty.

Don't do any asanas early in the morning before commencing and also do not take any food, tea, coffee, etc. before the practice.

Wear light and comfortable clothes. In fact, the clothing in which you normally practise asanas would be the most suitable.

Place of practice

The best place to practise shankhaprakshalana is in an ashram, garden or on a veranda in an open area where there is plenty of fresh air. Ensure that adequate toilet facilities are nearby. In the later stages of shankhaprakshalana it becomes a little difficult, to say the least, if you have to run a hundred yards to the nearest toilet. It is not necessary to practise in the toilet, or immediately outside the toilet, but the toilet should

be situated reasonably near, within a few seconds walk, so that you can reach it quickly when circumstances demand it.

Another point to note is that it is most ill-advised for large numbers of people to practise together when there is only one toilet available. This is a catastrophic situation, for you will have twenty people fighting each other to use the same toilet. A good ratio is that there should be one toilet for every two or three people.

The place of practice also depends on circumstances and climatic conditions. If you live in a warm country, you can practise in your backyard or on the lawn. Otherwise, practise in your bathroom or in the room where you normally practise your asanas.

The practice is best undertaken with a group of people. The atmosphere should be relaxed, friendly and light-hearted, with no apprehension concerning the practice, as this can create tension and prevent free bowel movement. Do not treat shankhaprakshalana as a gravely serious affair. Don't start the practice with an attitude of grim determination, for this is a sure way to create tension and prevent free bowel movement. Approach the practice with a feeling of fun and light-heartedness, for this is the way to finish the practice quickly and enjoyably.

We have found in the ashram that the practice seems to take much longer, to drag like a long boring speech, if the people involved are cheerless and gloomy. It becomes a chore, a burden to be endured rather than a pleasant, refreshing experience. It is for this reason that we advise that shankhaprakshalana be practised in a jovial and friendly group atmosphere, for it is this setting that makes the practice fun and easy to carry out.

Time of practice – climate

Shankhaprakshalana should not be performed when the weather conditions are extreme. Those who live in cold climates should practise in the summer when the days are warm and dry. This is important, as it is easy for the stomach

and intestines to become chilled. On the other hand, do not practise when it is very hot as this would produce too much sweat and the experience would be exhausting. Remember, that you will be performing five asanas eight times each, and probably this procedure will be repeated more than eight times (that is, $5 \times 8 \times 8 = 320$ movements). This requires a lot of energy. Therefore, practising in hot conditions will be a most uncomfortable experience. If you live in a hot country, we suggest you practise in the morning.

Very cloudy, windy or rainy weather is also to be avoided. Never allow the body to be exposed to contrasting weather or temperatures below that of the body on the day of practising shankhaprakshalana. The best time to practise is at the changeover of seasons.

Cleansing of the body through shankhaprakshalana should take place according to the seasons prevailing in the country. When the season changes from hot to cold, there is a corresponding change in the whole body. The heating and cooling system, like a thermostat, shifts as the seasons change. At this time shankhaprakshalana should be practised. It should be practised in warm weather; chill must be avoided. The temperature of the atmosphere should be a little above that of the body. It can be performed twice a year at the change of seasons. Shankhaprakshalana should be practised in the early morning on an empty stomach.

Fans and air-conditioning should not be used until the evening as the body must be kept warm to prevent chills and fever. If the room is cool, the body should be covered with a blanket to maintain the inner body temperature. Sitting in the hot sun, near a fire or doing physical exercise should be avoided. Rest periods should be maintained very carefully. Mental strain and stressful situations should be avoided.

Duration and frequency

Poorna shankhaprakshalana: This is quite a long and complex practice. Therefore, normally, you should not practise more than twice a year. That is, you should allow six months to

elapse before doing shankhaprakshalana for a second time. Under special circumstances however, it may be necessary to repeat the practice after a short time has elapsed, perhaps in the case of a person who has chronic constipation. But do not do it without seeking expert guidance.

The whole day should be put aside for this practice and the following day for rest. The complete practice of shankhaprakshalana takes two days. This includes about three or four hours for the actual cleansing process, and the remainder of the time for rest. If you cannot spare two days, we suggest that you do not practise, but wait until you have the time available, perhaps during your holidays or do laghoo shankhaprakshalana instead. However, if you have a weekend free, without any duties or commitments, we suggest that you practise during this time. Generally, the best time of the day to begin is about seven o'clock in the morning, but this will depend on the weather.

Laghoo shankhaprakshalana: It can be practised once a week for general purposes. In cases of constipation, however, it may be practised daily until the condition improves. Allow an hour for this practice.

Diet and rest

Some people believe that fasting after shankhaprakshalana will aid elimination. They are missing the whole point of rebalancing the energies and will debilitate the whole manipura chakra system by straining it in this way.

Laghoo shankhaprakshalana: There are no special food restrictions and no special food has to be taken following this practice, although a light vegetarian diet is preferable for that day. On completion of the practice, one must rest for half an hour before taking any food or drink. Greater benefits are derived by combining this practice with a light diet.

Poorna shankhaprakshalana: Prepare a special khichari of good quality white rice and mung dal, cooked with ghee, clarified butter. The rice and lentils should be cooked together in water until soft. A little haldi, turmeric, may be added, but

no salt. Finally, the clarified butter should be liberally mixed in so that the final preparation is semi-liquid. The khichari should be eaten at the end of the practice, after a 45-minute rest period, and again later in the day. No asana or physical work should be performed, and no food or beverages should be taken before commencing the practice. Not evacuating the bowels prior to the practice helps stimulate the peristaltic movement. Light and comfortable clothing should be worn.

When to eat

The khichari preparation should be taken exactly 45 minutes after completing shankhaprakshalana and after rest. Do not allow more than one hour to elapse after finishing shankhaprakshalana before eating your food. The same diet of khichari should be taken in the evening. Make sure that you eat sufficient food to fill your stomach. You may not feel like eating, but you must take food, for this is necessary to quickly reline and fill your intestines. Without its natural lining, the intestines are very vulnerable to infection, so make sure that you take plenty of ghee.

Eating this meal at the correct time is essential. The rhythm of the body has been temporarily disturbed; however, 45 minutes after completion of the practice the digestive functions resume. The three components of khichari are helpful in the restoration of correct digestive function. The clarified butter is necessary to coat the intestinal walls until the body produces a new lining. The purpose of this is to coat the intestines with a protective, soothing and nourishing layer, afforded by the ghee. Without this coating of ghee, the intestinal linings are prey to the corrosive power of acids and alkalis as well as drying out and cracking, which set the scene for future disease such as ulcers or parasitic infestations. Salt alone allows the ghee to coat the intestines; lemon will not. Therefore, the use of lemon is prohibited, as is the use of other fruit juices or even vegetable soup.

The rice provides a simple, easily digestible packing material in the form of carbohydrate and creates mucus,

which also protects the inner lining of the alimentary canal. The lentils supplement the diet by giving the body an easily digestible source of protein and make for an all-round nutritious meal. A sufficient quantity of khichari must be eaten to reline the intestines and keep the walls of the gut stretched, otherwise they may cramp due to the absence of the bulk to which they are accustomed. This bulk not only maintains the tone, but aids the intestines to resume peristalsis. It is also important in order to prevent indigestion, diarrhoea and constipation.

No water or other fluids should be taken until at least two hours after the first special meal. Drinking or eating anything before the prescribed period will dilute and wash away the new protective layer which is being reproduced by the body on the stomach and intestinal wall. Cold liquid will chill the digestive system.

It is for the above reasons that we recommend the full course of shankhaprakshalana be performed in an ashram setting where expert guidance is given and strict controls can be exercised over the saline water, the practice itself and the diet following it. If you attempt the practice outside of an ashram, do it under guidance and remember, follow the guidelines written in the texts carefully. The ancient yogis, following the instructions of their gurus, knew what they were talking about, from experience.

Preparation of special food

The food must be prepared from rice (white or brown), pulses (mung dal) or lentils, cooked with ghee (clarified butter). This is known as khichari. The rice should be of high quality and easily digestible. In some countries, pulses or lentils, and ghee may be difficult to obtain, but they are available in a well-stocked health food shop. Make sure that the pulses or lentils are also good quality and easily digestible. A sufficient amount should be eaten to replace the volume of food that has been removed from the digestive system by the salt water.

This special food is absolutely necessary to gently and effectively relubricate the whole digestive tract. Remember, shankhaprakshalana does not only remove all waste matter from the digestive system, but it also removes all the natural mucus layers from the intestinal walls. Therefore, after the cleansing practice, the walls of the digestive tract are completely bare. The ghee, in reasonable quantities (hence the mushy food preparation), is essential to replace the natural film on the intestinal walls with a temporary coating. Of course, the body will eventually produce a new layer but this takes a little time. It is a completely abnormal condition for the intestines to be without this protective coating and also to be empty. Therefore, it is essential to eat a reasonable amount of khichari. Khichari must also be prepared for the evening meal.

Second meal

Khichari should also be prepared for the late afternoon or evening meal, about six hours after the first special meal. The stomach must be filled to capacity at both meals, even if there is no feeling of hunger.

Subsequent rest

Having eaten your food, you should take further rest. However, it is important that you do not sleep for at least three hours. You will be tempted to sleep, but try not to. If you do sleep you will pay the penalty. Sleep during this period may lead to physical lethargy and headache. Complete rest should be taken for the remainder of the day. During this period, it is advisable to keep silence, *mouna*, and avoid physical or mental work. Rest the following day also. It is essential that one has a complete day of rest when doing shankhaprakshalana.

One practitioner, when he first did shankhaprakshalana was fast asleep within five minutes after taking food. Even though he was advised otherwise, he could not resist the overwhelming temptation to sleep. He did not sleep for a

few hours, or even eight hours. He slept from about midday on the day of the practice throughout the whole afternoon, the whole night, until noon the following day, and when he woke up, it was because someone woke him. He felt very groggy and wanted to continue sleeping; even for the rest of the day, he wanted to do nothing but lie down and sleep. Of course, this is only one experience, there are many other different ones. We have known of some people who, contrary to advice, have gone to sleep too early, and who have felt grogginess and lethargy for the next few days. For some reason or another, premature sleep seems to lead to a long period of physical lethargy.

So don't sleep for at least three hours after taking food, if you don't want to be sluggish during the rest of the day and the following day. For three hours you should rest without doing any physical or mental work. After this time has elapsed, you may sleep if you wish. In this way you will avoid any side effects.

When you have completed shankhaprakshalana and the two supplementary practices, you should take complete rest for forty-five minutes. Don't sleep; merely sit quietly. If you wish you may lie down, but we emphasize that you take care not to fall asleep. If you do sleep you may get a thumping headache. This short period of time is important for your whole digestive system to take a well-earned rest. Rarely does your digestive system take total rest, for it is almost continually digesting food. Even when it is not digesting food, it does not completely rest, for then it takes the opportunity to clean out the digestive tract of debris, impurities and waste particles of food. This forty-five minutes is a time for the digestive system to revitalize itself.

During this period of rest, you might find that you need to excrete more water from the bowels. Don't worry this is normal.

Food restrictions

For at least one month after the practice, all chemically processed, synthetic, pungent, spicy, acidic, rich and non-vegetarian foods must be strictly avoided. No pickles, sweets, chocolates, ice cream or soft drinks should be taken. Milk, buttermilk, yoghurt and all fruits, especially acidic fruits such as lemons, grapefruit, oranges or pineapples are restricted. Alcohol, cigarettes, tea, coffee, betel nut preparations such as paan and any type of intoxicant or drug should not be taken. The diet should be as pure, simple and neutral as possible. It may include foods such as rice, wheat, bread, vegetables with a low acidic content, nuts, lentils and other pulses.

Common sense must be used in this regard. After shankhaprakshalana the digestive system is very vulnerable and extra care should be taken to protect it. Remember you have cleansed the whole digestive system. If you eat the wrong food it may have adverse reactions on the digestive tract, so make sure that you follow closely the diet we have indicated. Furthermore, make sure the food is clean, well cooked and not poisonous.

To further emphasize this important point, here is an example of a person who did not follow these regulations. He did shankhaprakshalana under guidance, and was warned not to take unsuitable food for one week. But he was very fond of richly cooked pancakes, so the day after the practice, he passed by a pancake shop with a rich display of tasty pancakes in the window. They looked so nice covered in a thick coating of syrup. He knew it was not advisable to eat even one pancake, but he shrugged his shoulders and thought, 'I did the practice yesterday, today is another day; one, two or perhaps three pancakes won't do any harm.' And he went ahead and ate the pancakes enjoying them very much. For the following month his whole digestive system was completely out of balance. He found it difficult to eat any type of food, and when he did, he merely suffered from diarrhoea and nausea. It was a distressing month, caused by indulgence at the wrong time. Eventually he had to resort to fasting to bring his body back to normal.

There is one more factor that we would like to point out: the whole aim of doing shankhaprakshalana is to clean out the poisons and accumulated waste from the digestive system. Therefore, if you start to load the digestive system with the wrong food after doing the practice, you have defeated the whole purpose of this cleansing technique. You have wasted your time. So if you do shankhaprakshalana and you want to gain the most benefits from the practice, then take great care to follow the diet restrictions.

Thirst

After completing shankhaprakshalana and the supplementary practices, you may feel thirsty. You must not drink any water for at least three hours; all other drinks are also prohibited. This is important for various reasons. If you drink cold water then this will tend to chill the digestive system, especially since the digestive system has been scrubbed super clean. Furthermore, immediately after completing the practice, the body sets to work reproducing a new protective layer on the stomach and intestinal wall; this is supplemented by the ghee from the food you will shortly eat. If you drink water, then you will tend to dilute and further scrub away the new protective film.

Importance of the shankhaprakshalana asanas

The five asanas which form the core of the practice activate intestinal peristalsis and enhance the cleansing process. When performed in the correct sequence, they progressively open the pyloric valve at the outlet of the stomach, then the ileocaecal valve at the exit of the small intestine and finally the sphincter which forms the anus. Tadasana acts mainly on the stomach and stretches the colon; tiryak tadasana acts on the small intestine and colon; kati chakrasana massages the small intestine; tiryak bhujangasana and udarakarshanasana squeeze and massage the caecum, sigmoid colon and rectum, and also stimulate the urge to defecate. Those who have difficulty drinking rapidly or develop a feeling of nausea should reduce

the quantity of water from two glasses to one glass before each round. The quantity of salt may also be reduced.

Asana practice and other physical activities

You should not do your regular asana program on the day you perform shankhaprakshalana, or the following day. A lot of energy must be expended to practise shankhaprakshalana asanas, so it is important to give your body a rest. That is, you may continue your asanas on the second day after doing the practice. For two days also avoid excessive mental and physical activities.

Shatkarmas and pranayama

There are two differing opinions about the necessity of practising the shatkarmas prior to pranayama. Some hatha yoga teachers say that one should first clean the nadis through shatkarmas so that pranayama will be effective. Others believe that pranayama alone will remove the blockages in the nadis and balance all elements of the body. Both opinions are correct, but which to follow? In the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (2:37) it says:

Praanaayaamaireva sarve prashushyanti malaa iti.

Aachaaryaanaam tu keshanchidanyatkarma na sammatam.

According to some teachers, pranayama alone removes impurities and therefore they hold pranayama in esteem and not the other techniques.

If one has excess mucus, bile or wind and practises pranayama only, the energy generated through pranayama will all be spent in rectifying the state of imbalance. Excess mucus is the major obstacle which prevents pranayama practice. When the nose or respiratory tract is completely blocked, pranayama is impossible, so one will definitely have to resort to neti, kunjla or even laghoo shankhaprakshalana. For nasal congestion, neti and kunjla are sufficient, but for respiratory congestion, asthma or bronchitis, the three karmas will be necessary.

Although the shatkarmas are powerful and effective purifiers and harmonizers, pranayama has to be practised afterwards to maintain the balance they have created. Otherwise impurities will again accumulate and the body will fall back into its old patterns.

Importance of a teacher

The teacher must be a joker. This means he makes jokes, he makes people laugh so that for some time, perhaps up to the first six or seven or eight glasses, the mind will be diverted. Otherwise, drinking sixteen glasses and doing all the asanas creates a lot of fear. There is nothing to fear. It's easy, and it's being practised in many naturopathy institutes in India as well as abroad. Unless there is a medical reason, everyone can do it.



6

Precautions



The rules of shankhaprakshalana are extensive. There is a valid reason, however, for each rule and they should be carried out without fail. If you disregard even one rule, you

may experience harmful or disagreeable consequences, which is a great pity, for this technique can give so many benefits.

Do not try to force a bowel movement; it should be completely natural. This is the easiest way to develop piles.

This practice should only be attempted in an ashram or yoga centre under the guidance of a competent teacher. All guidelines and restrictions must be followed strictly to avoid experiencing harmful side effects. Those who are unable to follow these restrictions should not practise shankhaprakshalana. They will find the simplified version, laghoo shankhaprakshalana, more appropriate to their needs.

It is important not to exceed the point beyond which almost clear water without specks of solid matter is being passed, as the system may start producing bile, indicated by bright yellow water. It is better to stop when the water is still slightly cloudy.

Significance of salt

It is unfortunate that some yogic aspirants have lost sight of the essential and simple practice of shankhaprakshalana. Some groups of people are substituting lemon water, fruit juice, vegetable soup, and various herbs for salty water. Salt has gained a bad reputation by being associated with high blood pressure and people are afraid to overuse it. The taste of salty water is also deemed undesirable. The purpose of shankhaprakshalana is to break the old mucus linings. When salt water is introduced into the body there is a certain chemical reaction with the hydrochloric acid and other enzymes. It has been found, even by medical scientists, that salt water is the mildest and safest solution. Salt water cleans the old mucus completely. As a result, the intestines are exposed. One hour later some fat, in the form of ghee, is taken with the first meal to create a temporary lining on the exposed intestines. Salt makes this lining possible. Lemon will not allow it. If there is lemon, fat cannot survive. If one wants to clean a cup which has a lot of fat, soap may fail, but lemon will not fail. Any fruit juice is acidic.

It has also been found that salt has a soothing effect on any inflamed areas of the linings of the intestines. Within twenty-four hours of totally cleaning the intestines, new mucus must form on the exposed intestines, otherwise ulcers may develop. Salt is so mild that it does not interfere with the fat that has to stay for the next twenty-four hours. These points must be kept in mind and no mistakes made.

Also, when one is purging twenty to twenty-five times, there is the possibility of dehydration. It does not happen to everybody, but it can happen. Can lemon stop dehydration? Is there any scientific theory behind it? People confuse things. In naturopathy they give lemon as it reacts with hydrochloric acid and produces alkalinity, but that is not the purpose of shankhaprakshalana. If one thinks carefully about what is happening in shankhaprakshalana it becomes clear that anything other than mildly saline water taken in such large quantities is an intense dose. It is easy to overdo things and cause injury.

It must be remembered that for each round of the practice two glasses of warm, mildly salty water have to be drunk and five asanas performed eight times each. That is forty movements. This is repeated at least eight to ten times. Therefore, this is a potent practice and we must be careful to perform it correctly, so as not to further upset the balance of our system.

Some people prefer the taste of lemon in their shankhaprakshalana 'juice'. Lemon has a good reputation as a cleanser, alkalizing agent and container of vitamin C. Lemon added to salty water is taken first thing in the morning by many people as a prevention against constipation and disease. It is useful to push a sluggish liver into activity and is helpful during colds, flu or seasonal fever. However, these practices use one or two glasses at the most, and never sixteen to twenty glasses at one time as in shankhaprakshalana. Lemon can be used in laghoo shankhaprakshalana, but never in the long form, poorna shankhaprakshalana.

For those on medication

Strong medication such as antibiotics should be avoided for one month. Regular medication can be discontinued during the practice and recommenced two or three days after the practice. When the cleansing kriyas are practised, all medications should be given up under the guidance of an experienced yoga therapist.

For cardiac patients

Sometimes, we find that chronic constipation and overtaxing of the digestive organs has been a major predisposing factor in genesis of the patient's present cardiac condition, and then it may be necessary to practise laghoo shankhaprakshalana. In this situation we use warm water with very little salt added and we supervise the patient very closely to avoid adverse reactions.

For people with duodenal ulcers

This practice is not to be done by people who suffer from peptic or duodenal ulcers.

Contra-indications

The contra-indications are the same for both practices. People with heart or kidney problems, or high blood pressure should not do these practices. Those suffering from any medical condition should seek guidance from their doctor before attempting either form, especially if taking medication, as the medication may need to be suspended after poorna shankhaprakshalana. If this is not medically advisable, poorna shankhaprakshalana should not be practised. Laghoo can be practised instead. These practices should also be avoided during pregnancy.

7

Benefits of Shankhaprakshalana



Shankhaprakshalana is the best practice of hatha yoga. Those who practise it have an aura that shines brilliantly. It purifies the body, eliminates all toxins from the stomach and cleans the whole alimentary canal. It also dispels the three types of worms from the intestine. Constipation is cleared and diabetes can be cured by this practice. It helps to cure almost all stomach troubles by regulating the vitiated bile, wind and mucus.

Laghoo shankhaprakshalana is an excellent method of purifying the body, and of preventing or helping to remove a diverse number of ailments. Expert guidance should be sought to find out whether it will help to remove particular ailments. The laghoo or short method is intended to encourage normal functioning of the intestines. It is an excellent method of encouraging good bowel movement and is ideal for regular use and for those who are unable to practise the full version.

Physically, shankhaprakshalana alleviates digestive problems and tones the liver and other digestive organs and glands. People with digestive problems such as constipation, flatulence, acidity, indigestion and other digestive maladies are advised to practise this technique. Laghoo is recommended to flush out the kidneys. It strengthens the immune system, reduces excessive mucus and purifies the blood. Shankhaprakshalana recharges the entire pranic body, removes blockages from the nadis and purifies all the chakras. The harmony of the five pranas is restored and the energy level is raised. Mentally, it calms the mind and prepares the way for higher states of consciousness. Any sadhana performed after this cleansing practice gives manifold results.

For general health

Shankhaprakshalana purifies the whole body. There is no medicine or method (apart from a prolonged fast) that can clean the small and large intestines so thoroughly as this practice. Many diseases are directly or indirectly caused by accumulation of toxic waste matter in the intestines. This practice expels all impurities from the digestive tract and thereby helps to purify the blood system. This can result in a wonderful and noticeable improvement in general health as well as helping to remove specific ailments. In particular, it has been found useful for the treatment of diabetes, hyperacidity, constipation, dysentery and many other ailments connected with impure blood such as bad complexion and excessive occurrence of boils or pimples.

It purifies the body of impurities, alleviates abnormalities of the digestive functions and thus renews and vitalizes all functions of the body. Rishi Gheranda says in his book *Gheranda Samhita* that by shankhaprakshalana the body becomes spiritualized and divine. It cures many chronic disorders as a side effect.

Our body is composed of about seventy percent water; our kidneys filter between fifteen and twenty gallons of water every day. Most of this purified water is circulated into the bloodstream, while the waste materials of our body are eliminated in the urine. The structure and health of our body is wholly dependent on a plentiful supply of water – not merely water, but clean, fresh water. Shankhaprakshalana makes the body feel light and ensures a healthy intake of water first thing in the morning. Greater benefits may be derived by combining this practice with light food. Medication may be safely continued.

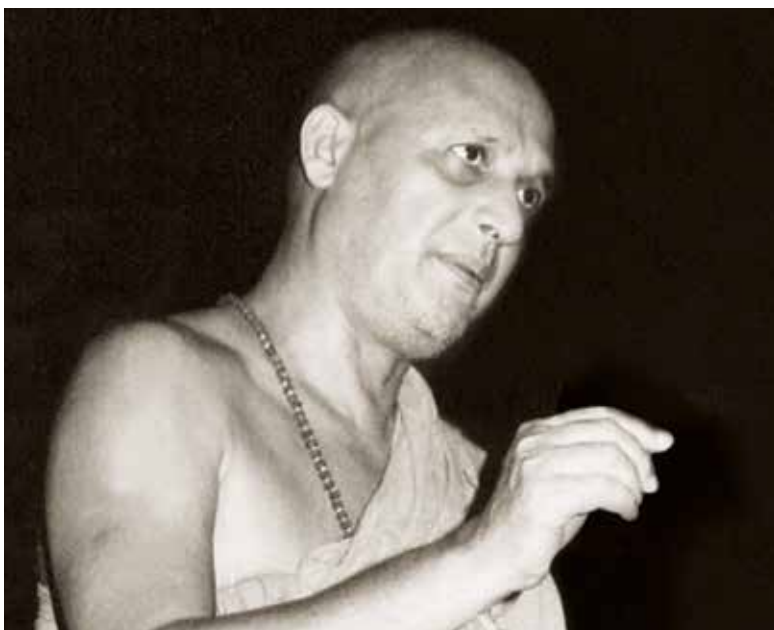
Therefore, if you want to take positive steps to keep your body in the cleanest, healthiest condition, or remove existing impurities, there is no better way than to drink plenty of water every day. Try to make this a habit.

For diabetes

The combination of a few asanas, pranayamas and shatkarmas helps in the treatment of many diseases. In diabetes the practice of paschimottanasana and shankhaprakshalana is useful.

For migraines

First thing in the morning, the moment one gets out of bed and before making too much physical movement, two or three glasses of tepid water should be drunk and then regurgitated. Do this for a few weeks, if not daily, every third day. That is the first thing. Next, practise jala neti followed by bhastrika pranayama. And finally, to be rid of migraine, take three or four days off and have a nice time at an ashram where shankhaprakshalana, total cleansing of the digestive



system, from top to bottom, from one end to the other, can be practised.

For kidney stones

If the stones are in the form of sediments they can easily be erased; simple shankhaprakshalana can manage them. But if the stones are hard, homeopathic drugs will have to be used to break them. Anyone who has stones in the kidney should not take spinach or tomato. They are rich sources of organic acid: tomato and spinach are the worst enemies of the kidneys. One should drink plenty of water. If one has stones in the kidney, flushing has to be done regularly.

As a preparation for spiritual practices

Those people who feel healthy can also do the practice, for they can improve their health, making them feel lighter, more cheerful and exhilarated with life. Furthermore, it will help to make their minds sharper.

This is also a very important practice for those people who intend to perform intensive yogic techniques for higher awareness. For example, we always insist that people who come to the ashram to do a concentrated course of spiritual practices for a fixed length of time, anushtana, should first of all do shankhaprakshalana. We have found that in this way they gain the most benefits from the course and their practices. Shankhaprakshalana, by purifying the body, helps greatly to make the mind and body more receptive to higher vibrations.

Benefits of the dhautis

The *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* states, 'There is no doubt that cough, asthma, diseases of the spleen, leprosy and twenty kinds of diseases caused by excess mucus are destroyed through the effect of dhauti karma.' The combination of all the practices of dhauti cleans the entire digestive tract and respiratory tract. It removes excess and old bile, mucus and toxins, and restores the natural balance of the body's chemical composition, thus alleviating ailments caused by such imbalances.

The various practices help remove infectious bacteria from the mouth, nose, eyes, ears, throat, stomach, intestines and anus. The results are a reduction of excess fatty tissue and relief from flatulence, constipation, poor digestion and loss of appetite. Dhauti is even said to cure leprosy. Although this disease is not prevalent in many countries today, the point is that even such insidious diseases can be alleviated through this powerful practice.

The *Gherand Samhita* states that dhauti can cure abdominal ailments and fever, of course it is not advisable to practise dhauti during a fever or acute visceral infection. However, if it is practised after recuperation it will prevent recurrence of the problem. There are certain conditions such as stomach or intestinal ulcers, hernia, heart disease, and high blood pressure in which antar dhauti must not be practised.

8

Applications of Shankhaprakshalana



As a precursor to asana and pranayama

The asanas of hatha yoga should not be regarded as physical exercises. They are postures or positions of the body which, by their very nature, quality, processes and influences, bring about a change in the electrical circuits of the nadis. In order to practise the asanas without difficulty, you should first practise the *shatkarmas*, the six methods of physical purification.

One should make the body strong by regular practice of asanas and ensure that the body is purified. Pranayama itself will do this, but the shatkarmas, such as shankhaprakshalana and neti, are perfectly suited for removing gross impurities. The importance of physical purity is indicated in the scriptures. In the *Yoga Chudamani Upanishad* (v. 94) it is said:

*Shuddhimeti yadaa sarva naadeechakram malaakulam;
Tadaiva jaayate yogee praanasangrahanakshamah.*

When all the nadis and chakras become free from their accumulation of impurities, then only the yogi becomes capable of controlling the breath.

Next comes pranayama, the science of the breathing process. When the physical body is purified through the practices of the shatkarmas and you have perfected the asanas, you can begin pranayama. By the practice of pranayama, the energy in the physical body is recharged and conducted by ida and pingala nadis in the form of electrical impulses to all parts of the body, including the brain.

As preparation for pranayama

First the practitioner must rid himself of excess mucus and bile and eliminate the toxins from his system. Proper assimilation and excretion need to be established.

Pranayama is more effective in a healthy body. By practising pranayama correctly the mind is automatically conquered. However, the effects of pranayama are not so simple to manage. It creates extra heat in the body, it awakens some of the dormant centres in the brain, it can alter the production of sperm and testosterone. It lowers the respiratory rate and changes the brainwave patterns. When these changes take place the aspirant may not be able to handle it. For this reason, hatha yoga says first purify the body by the practice of shatkarmas.

Shatkarma provides a quick method of rebalancing mucus, bile and wind. If the body is cleansed through shatkarma first, pranayama will maintain the state of cleanliness.

However, if the body is already healthy, nadis clean and the whole system is functioning in harmony, then pranayama can be practised without any need for shatkarma. If there is a slight imbalance, pranayama alone will be sufficient to rectify any problems.

As one advances in the practice of pranayama, precautions have to be taken. 'Advances' here means one begins practising for durations of longer than twenty minutes and with extended breath retentions of more than thirty seconds. Steps to establish good health must be taken before commencing serious pranayama sadhana.

For tackling disease

In hatha yoga we consider that every disease is both psychic and somatic. Therefore, yoga tackles diseases in the following manner:

- Massages and improves the efficiency of the internal organs through asanas
- Tones up the nerve connections by asanas
- Improves the blood circulation through asanas
- Improves respiration and the general vitality of the body through pranayama
- Cleans the body of impurities through asanas, pranayama and the shatkarmas such as jala neti, shankhaprakshalana, kunjla kriya
- Relaxes the mind and body through scientific relaxation techniques such as shavasana and yoga nidra
- Removes mental suppressions, phobias, neuroses, and all other negative aspects of the mind, bringing about greater happiness in life and removing many diseases.

For cleansing the mind

The mental energy is cleansed by the karmic forces. For example, if a person is constipated and keeps on eating, he will need some outlet, maybe through vomiting, purging or diarrhoea. He may take some medicine to help cure the diarrhoea, which gives him a headache, so he takes a bit of

aspirin. When he has another pain like backache, he takes another kind of medicine. The toxin is travelling through the body. If shankhaprakshalana, cleansing the alimentary canal with saline water, is done, there will be no vomiting, diarrhoea, headache, pain in the chest, acidity, gastric ulcer, peptic ulcer, duodenal ulcer or any kind of disease. The toxic substances in the system need an outlet, either natural or unnatural.

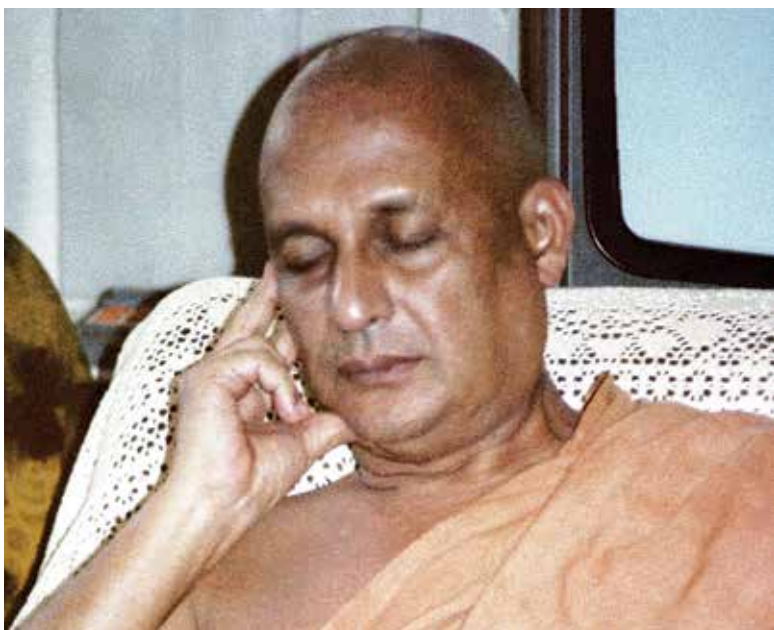
In the same way, the mental energy needs an outlet, and karma is the natural outlet. When karma is done for a selfish purpose, it is an outlet. When it is done with selfless motives, it is also an outlet. Both karma with self-intent and karma with selflessness are outlets. The mind cannot be cleansed without undergoing a process of purging.

As a preparation for meditation

Concentration and meditation come under raja yoga, and before you practise raja yoga, you must purify the physical body by the techniques of hatha yoga. In yoga, we believe that as far as possible, the causes of thought processes should be cleared up first through the physical medium. For example, sometimes a thought can be the outcome of a bad stomach or the effect of a thyroid malfunction. Therefore, we recommend the purifying techniques of hatha yoga. With the guidance of an experienced teacher, you do these practices according to your requirements and capacity.

After you have practised the shatkarmas for one to two years, harmony is attained within the nervous system, the parasympathetic and sympathetic, the ida and pingala nadis. If either of these nadis is disturbed, you have diseases born of manas or prana shakti.

By hatha yoga, therefore, we are actually purifying all the flows so that they are homogeneous and uninterrupted. When this has been accomplished you should start concentration for which a strong nervous system is imperative. When the flows in ida and pingala are correctly energized and balanced with respect to each other, the third flow, sushumna, is auto-



matically activated. When this happens, meditation becomes spontaneous.

Just as toxins are removed from the body in shankha-prakshalana, the deeper realms of the mind require cleansing through meditation. If you suppress these subconscious toxins, surely they will be retained and surface some other time. Perhaps they will come up when you are with your family, friends, business colleagues, or when driving a car, handling a machine, sitting in parliament, or when you are holding a gun in your hand. These toxins affect people's behaviour and consequently the society in which we live becomes negative and dangerous. If we expel the poison of our mind, body and emotions through our everyday actions, we pollute the entire atmosphere and become a victim of these toxins as well. Even with yogic techniques, it will take time before the mind is purified and experiences *shoonya* or nothingness, but that state of inner tranquillity will ultimately be reflected in our outward behaviour.

For treating substance abuse

The hatha yoga shatkarmas are the most important part of a heroin addict's treatment. The whole physical body has to be thoroughly purified internally and externally. Toxins have to be removed from the intestines, liver, kidneys, spleen, etc., and the production of acid, bile and phlegm has to be regulated. Through hatha yoga this can be done. By practising certain asanas and pranayama the hormonal secretions can be regulated and the endocrinal blockages can be removed. Postural defects can be rectified and the vitality of the body can be greatly enhanced. The treatment will be quicker and more successful if the practice is regular and if a special diet is maintained. It is also recommended that this treatment be undertaken in an ashram environment.

Drug addicts can be helped by practices which enhance purification. In the first stage, asanas should be practised regularly, then shatkarmas like neti, kunjal and shankha-prakshalana, and thirdly, yoga nidra. This will help a person to get rid of alcohol and drug habits. When an individual is in a state of tension, he needs cigarettes, alcohol and such things, but if he has no tension he has no need for them. If a person smokes or drinks, there is no use fighting the habits because they may be caused by other circumstances, possibly endocrinal imbalances. By practising hatha yoga, one can purify the body and rectify all the imbalances. Then, in the course of time, alcohol, drugs and cigarettes will no longer be necessary.

For management of depression

The symptoms of nervous depression are: the body is weak, it sweats a lot, horripilation takes place from time to time, the skin burns, one cannot stand for very long, and the mind keeps thinking all the time. One sees only negativity everywhere, only inauspiciousness. These symptoms indicate nervous depression. At this time one should practise the hatha yoga shatkarmas. A few of these are purificatory and a few are relaxing. A combination of these practices will avert nervous depression.

9

Scriptural References

Shankhaprakshalana is mentioned in many of the old Yogic texts. However, it is rarely given in detail, for it was intended for practice only under the direct guidance of a teacher or guru. It is totally impossible for one to understand and practise the full technique of shankhaprakshalana by reading traditional yogic texts. For example, one of the most detailed description is given in the *Gheranda Samhita* (1:17):

*Aakantham poorayedvaari vaktrena cha pibechchhanaih;
Chaalayedudarenaiva chodaraadrechayedadhah.*

Drink water slowly up to the vocal cord. Move the water in the stomach. Then evacuate it.

The text gives no more practical information, though it does give one more verse to extol the benefits of the practice (1:18):

*Vaarisaram param gopyam dehanirmalakaarakam;
Saadhayettatprayatnena devadeham prapadyate.*

Varisar is most secret. It purifies the body. One who perfects this with great effort acquires a divine body.

The ancient yogis purposely recorded vague descriptions of this technique and many others. They wanted people to know that the technique existed, yet did not want people to

practise without the direct guidance of an expert. There is a lot of sense in this, for if shankhaprakshalana and other yogic techniques are done incorrectly, they can cause more harm than good. Therefore, the ancient yogis were careful; they encouraged people to be interested, but made it necessary that they seek and find a guru before they could practise the technique. We are breaking tradition here by publishing full details. But we do so with the explicit understanding that you practise the technique of shankhaprakshalana under expert guidance and supervision.

We have published details of this technique in order that those people who are unable to find a suitable teacher can practise by themselves. It is such a wonderful and beneficial method of cleansing the body that we would like it made available to as many people as possible and not limited to a few. But we emphasize, if you do practise alone, without tuition, that you must follow the instructions exactly as we have given them.

In the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* it is said (2:36):

*Shatkarmairigatasthaulyakaphadoshamalaadikah;
Praanaayaamam tatah kuryaadanaayaasena siddhyati.*

By the six karmas (shatkarma) one is freed from excesses of the doshas. Then pranayama is practised and success is achieved without strain.

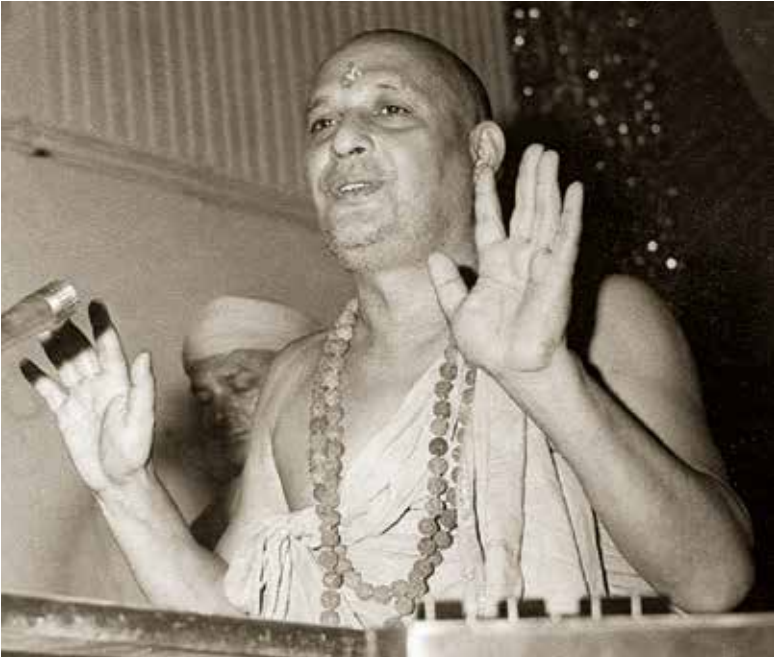
In the *Hatharatnavali* it is written (1:58):

*Karmaashtabhirgatasthaulyam kaphamedo malaadhikah.
Praanaayaamam tatah kuryaadanaayaasena sidhyati.*

The aspirant should do pranayama after getting rid of corpulence, phlegm, fat and other impurities by means of the eight purificatory processes. Then he will succeed in yoga without much difficulty.

10

Conclusion



In today's civilized society, man's complexes and neuroses have greatly increased. Centuries ago, our ancestors had a more conducive environment for the practice of yoga, but their need for the science was not as great as it is in today's confused and neurotic world.

On the physical level, we are subjected to a polluted and inharmonious environment in which the laws of nature are not respected. Our body takes in many toxins from the atmosphere and the food we eat, and we must have a process for purging these accumulated impurities. Yoga is the only science which has provided the means. In hatha yoga there are practices to purify the stomach and the whole alimentary canal. Pranayama purifies and balances the respiratory and nervous systems and asanas, mudras and bandhas release energy blocks and help to build up the body's vitality and resistance.

On the mental plane, worries, fears, anxieties and tensions that man experiences in his daily life create an accumulation of impurities in the subconscious mind. To expel these toxins and to rid himself of tension, man has to practise meditation and yogic relaxation.

So, although the yogic practices were developed centuries ago, it does not mean that they are unsuitable for modern-day man. In fact, we who are living a life of greater stress and tension will realize the benefits of yoga in a shorter time than those of the previous culture.

Thus yoga is more for people living in the world who need to improve their personality, who have to face challenges in life and have tensions to overcome. Yoga provides psychosomatic treatment for present-day ills. Depth meditation, depth psychology, is going deep within and contacting your subconscious. Remember the prayer, 'Lead kindly light amidst the encircling gloom'. It is the inner light which when contacted removes the outer sorrows.

Scientific experiments should be conducted in various yoga kriyas so that they are adapted to our present-day needs. Yoga nidra is beneficial for various neuroses. Trataka is good for insomnia. Ajapa japa reduces hypertension. In ujjayi pranayama the blood pressure gradually comes down. Kapalbhati removes impurities of the system. Jalandhara bandha improves functional as well as heart disorders. Shankhaprakshalana improves the pancreatic glands and tones up the entire system.

I am a visionary and I want these hatha yoga kriyas, which are now practised by our sadhus, to get an honoured place in every home. The science of psychotherapy was known to our yogis centuries ago before it became a cult in the West. Our yogis paid great attention to the mind. They knew that lust, anger, avarice, and so on are nothing but *chitta vrittis*, fluctuations of the mind.

An intestinal system which is permanently overloaded and blocked brings about adverse, disagreeable and dampening consequences on a person's life. If you suffer, or have previously suffered from constipation, then there is no need to convince you of its negative repercussions; you would already know from your own bitter experience. Laghoo shankhaprakshalana is an excellent, yet simple, method of encouraging a good bowel movement, and for generally washing out the intestines. It is particularly useful for people who suffer from constipation, though it can also be utilized to thoroughly flush out the digestive system. It can be done daily as part of your early morning routine, or it can be performed occasionally whenever it is justified. The practice only takes a few minutes to carry out, yet this short time is usefully spent, for the practice will help you to remove torpor and dullness from your life, and to replace it with energy, interest and optimism.

The contribution of yoga to humanity is far greater than any other system. The whole world today looks to yoga as a messenger of peace. We need yoga practices: *yoga nidra*, the science of spontaneous relaxation, *prana vidya*, the science of revitalizing the body, *neti*, *dhauti* and all the *shatkarmas* – the six kriyas. When you have achieved yoga in your life, then you can go ahead with your meditation.

11

Quotations

There are various yogic practices that are specifically designed to clean out the digestive system. As such they are very useful for relieving constipation. The most important practices are shankhaprakshalana, basti, nauli, agnisar kriya and moola shodhana.

* * *

Those who are currently using some form of laxative, are advised to adopt laghoo shankhaprakshalana in order to reduce this dependency.

* * *

Tapasya is undergoing a process of suffering spontaneously and willingly. If this process of suffering is not undergone willingly, then nature will compel one to undergo it. If one is constipated, there will be either diarrhoea or piles or some other disease. If one willingly accepts doing the practice of shankhaprakshalana, it will be an arduous job for an hour or two, but it will relieve one of all the consequences of the karma of constipation. Otherwise there may be suffering for months or years instead of one and a half hours. So tapasya is a way to

reduce the period of suffering which is due on account of one's karmas.

* * *

I have no experience of being sick or having any disease either. Sickness is of two types. One is seasonal and temporary, such as flu, diarrhoea, dysentery, headaches, insomnia. The other is long-term sickness that affects the life process or life experience, such as diabetes, liver, kidney, heart and respiratory problems. I have written many books on diabetes, asthma, high blood pressure, and can even talk about these things for hours, but I have no personal experience of these illnesses. I do not know what it is to have diabetes, but I can tell you that by practising shankhaprakshalana you will become well again.

* * *

If this body can undergo a state of metamorphosis, then what is the way? The answer is yoga. Through the processes of yoga, the body is rendered so subtle and pure, that it is transformed into a yogic body which is unaffected by old age and disease.

* * *

Hatha yoga is practised in order to initiate a process in this physical body, whereby the pranic molecules and the mental forces which interact with each other in the scheme of life and existence, may be transformed. Unless the physical molecules are transformed, it is no use to discuss compassion or unity.

* * *



Satyam Speaks Series presents compilations of Sri Swami Satyananda's teachings on yoga. Each book explores a specific topic, concept or practice. The aim is to provide an easy way to understand and incorporate various components of the immense science of yoga vidya into one's daily life. *Satyam Speaks Series* is a tribute to Sri Swami Satyananda, his teaching and to yoga vidya. *Satyam Speaks Series* is an invitation to all sincere seekers to live yoga and thereby make the world a better place to be.

The original hatha yoga consists of *shatkarmas*, the six cleansing practices. One is *shankaparakshalana* which cleanses the entire digestive tract in a systematic manner. Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati adapted it for the needs of the modern age. *Shankaparakshalana* explains the importance and wider implications of this age-old practice for physical wellbeing as well as mental clarity and lightness.

Note: This series is for knowledge only. The practices must be learnt from an accomplished yoga master.

