**USHAPANA: A UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION OF AYURVEDA FOR MAINTENANCE OF HEALTH**

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**ABSTRACT**

Ayurveda, the ancient Indian medical science is believed to be the oldest repository of diagnostic, pharmaceutical preventive and therapeutic knowledge. This Vedic science draws upon an integral approach to healthcare by the knowledge of the Adhibhautika (physical, pertaining to the gross body), Adhidaivika (mental, emotional and Pranic, pertaining to the subtle body) and Adhyatmika (spiritual, pertaining to the astral body) aspects of health. Harmonious balance of all Doshas, Agnis, Dhatus and proper Mala Kriyas is regarded as the sign of state. To maintain this health Swasthavritta, recommends daily routine, seasonal routine, eating habits, sleep, codes of good conduct etc, as per one’s Prakriti. Ushapana is one of the basic and applied aspects of being healthy. Bhava Prakasha considered as Laghutriya in Ayurvedic literature despite of it, the very important concept of Ushapana for the first time contributed by it.

**KEYWORDS:** Ushapana, Nasa Jalapana, Health.

**INTRODUCTION**

In order to enjoy a long, healthy life, a person should follow Dinacharyas. Among Dinacharyas rising in the Brahma-muhurta is advocated. Ushapana in Brahma Muhurta is recommended by Bhavaprakasha. The exact time of Brahmī muhurta varies from region to region as the time of sunrise is not uniform throughout the world. It is approximately two Muhurtas i.e.96 minutes (almost 1.5hrs) before the sunrise. Brahma Muhurta is considered as Panchamrutha Vela i.e. Amrutha or essence of Vipula Vayu, Vipula Jala, Vipula Aakasha,
Vipula Desha, and Viphula Kala. Usha is a Sanskrit word, Means "aurora, dawn, early morning (sun rise)". The water consumed at this time named Ushapana. Usha kala time is described differently by different Shastras, a brief review in Jyothisha Shastra considers 26 Muhurtha in a day, so 3 am is consider as Bharma muhurtha. According to the Bhoja Pashchima Yama of Ratri i.e. last 3 hours of night. Some other reference,

Ratreschaturdasha mahuurto bramha mhuurtal|arunadatta)
Ratre pashchine yaame mhuurtho yastritiyaka ||vachaspati

In applied way, Last Muhurta of Ratri that is 4:24am to 5:12am (if 6am taken as the time of sunrise) same as Brahma Muhurtha can be consider as Ushakala.[1]

**Udaka (water) and its varieties mentioned in Ayurveda for Ushapana.**

1. **Hamsodaka:** Purified water by exposure to sun rays and moon rays in Ashwini Kala eliminates diseases.

2. **Arogyodaka:** Heating the water and keeping it more than half, filtering and storing. It is useful for cough, bronchitis, indigestion etc.

3. **Ushapana:** Storing the clean water in metal containers like silver, copper, gold etc. it refreshes mind, energizes body, cures mouth and tooth disorders etc.

4. **Nasapana:** Taking water through nose, clears nostril and weakness of sense organs, improves eyesight.

Main objective of Ushapana is to hydrate thirsty body in the morning with water. In this therapy one should take at least 1 Prasriti approx. 1.4 liters of water (stored at night) before sunrise. It should be taken without cleansing the mouth, brushing or even taking anything. Luke warm water can be taken during the winter season. It is advised that water stored in the Copper vessel during the night should be taken for better results. People suffering from cold and cough related disorders should use water boiled at night or luke warm water. One should not drink or eat anything immediately after taking the water.

The following quote in "Bhavaprakasha" highlights the importance of Ushapana:

Savituh Samudaya Kale Prasriti Salilasya Pibedashtau | Roga Jara Parimukto Jivedvatsarashatatam Sagram (B. P. Pu. 5/317).

The person who drinks eight 'Prasriti' (deep cup made by joining the two hands) water every day at the sunrise time, becomes free from all ailments. He lives for hundred years and the
weakness and other problems of old-age do not even touch him. Indeed, people used to have hundreds of years of youthful life in the ancient age. Acharya Bhoja considers here water which is kept overnight. Its practice eliminates problems due to Vata, Pitta, Kapha and Kshataja /accidental factors. It also aid in hemorrhoids (Arsha), edema (Shotha), intestinal sprue (Grahani), Jwara (fever), Jathara (abdominal discomfort), Jara (old age), Kustha (skindisorders), Medovikara (lipid disorders), Mutraghata (urinary problem), Raktapitta (bleeding disorder), pain of ear, throat, head and back, problems pertaining to eyesight are also found to be naturally cured by regularity and consistency in this simple exercise. Greater benefits of Ushapana are obtained if one can drink about 250 ml of water through the nose instead of mouth. (Note: one should practice "Jala-Neti" before practicing Ushapana, Nasapana etc.). Its positive effects are cited in the Ayurvedic scriptures as.

The person, who consumes water through the nose, soon after the darkness of the night gains bright intellect and sharp eyesight; his hair do not become gray or white and he remains free from all diseases. The water used in Ushapana may be kept at a lukewarm temperature in the winter seasons to avoid irritation in the nose and throat. 3 Prasriti of water intake through nostril is advocated. This also aids in prevention of Vali (wrinkles), Palita (gray hair), Pinasah (rhinitis), Swarabhanga (hoarseness of voice), Kasa (Cough), Shotha (edema) and acts as Rasayana and improves eyesight. Neti kriya was first mentioned in Gheranda Samhita which can be traced back to century.

Contra-indications for Nasajalapaana
Person who has consumed Sneha, undergone Panchakarma, individual suffering from injury, Adhmana (abdominal distension), Mandagni, hiccoughs and Kaphavata Vyadhi. Ushapana is a simple process with many benefits. The brain and the central nervous system are invigorated. The brain becomes active, keen and calm. The facial muscles are stimulated. The wrinkles will vanish gradually and youth will dawn on the face. While drinking the lachrymal glands that secrete tears pour out their contents. So there is proper cleansing of eyes. Thus the eyes become lusturous and calm. Eye diseases are also cured. Long practice improves ‘Doora Drishti’ or distant vision. The air passage in the nose is kept clean and clear, thus cold and headache will disappear. Practitioners of Pranayama will have better success in their practices
after Ushapana, Nauli Kriya could be done with advantage after Ushapana. Vigorous peristalsis of the bowels is set up and constipation is relieved; chronic coryza, vascular rhinitis and other diseases are also cured. Since saliva contains antibacterial properties by taking water in the morning without cleansing the mouth, saliva helps in treating many diseases.

**DISCUSSION**

The classical references can be explained also on the basis of modern researches. In 2003, a study was conducted to test the hypothesis that ‘the sympathetic stimulus which was provided by drinking water could increase the metabolic rate’ (Thermo-genesis), which was published in ‘The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism’. The novel finding of this study reveals that drinking 500 ml of water increases metabolic rate by 30% in both men and women. Further this increase in metabolic rate was observed within 10 minutes of drinking water and it reached a maximum, 30-40 minutes after water drinking. The effect was sustained for more than an hour. Based on these measurements, it was estimated that increasing water ingestion by 1.5 liters, over and above the normal water intake, would augment daily energy expenditure by approximately 200 KJ. Over one year, energy expenditure would increase by 73,000 KJ (17,400 Kcal), which is the energy content of 2.4 kg adipose tissue. [2] This shows that Ushapana can be beneficial in obesity and other diseases also. A similar study was done in 2011 on overweight children to check the effect of drinking water on the Resting Energy Expenditure (REE). This study demonstrated an increase of up to 25% in REE, following the drinking of 10 ml kg\(^{-1}\) of cold water in overweight children, which lasted for over 40 min. [3] The proposed hypothesis for explaining the role of water drinking in weight loss are as follows: Water drinking was shown to increase energy expenditure. The acute changes in cardiovascular regulation and in energy expenditure with drinking water appear to be mediated through activation of the sympathetic nervous system. The acute water pressor response has been exploited in the treatment of patients with impaired orthostatic tolerances. [4] Thus, water drinking provides a sympathetic stimulus, which increases the metabolic rate, i.e, thermo-genesis, which in turn augments the daily energy expenditure.

A study was done in 2005, in Germany, which was published in the journal, ‘Neurology’, in which the possible mechanism for the sympathetically mediated pressor response to drinking water was studied. It was reasoned that gastro intestinal distension, hypo-osmotic solution, or
both contributed to the water induced pressor response. [5] Water is essential to metabolize stored fat into energy, so much so that the body’s metabolism can be slowed down by relatively mild levels of dehydration. Water is a natural appetite suppressant. The decrease in body weight, body mass index and body composition scores of overweight subjects due to water intake established the role of water induced thermo-ogenesis in weight reduction of overweight subjects. Pre-meal water consumption reduced meal energy intake in overweight and obese older adults, suggesting that this may be an effective weight-control strategy. [6] Drinking water prior to each meal may help in appetite suppression. Generally cold (normal temperature below lukewarm) water is supposed to give best effects. Normally cold water is good for our teeth and it also strengthens our digestive system. Our metabolic system has the capacity to heat up the chilled things entering the stomach, but there is no process to cool down the hot things up to the healthy or normal temperature. Consumption of hot tea, coffee, other drinks or eatables damages the delicate tissues in our tongue, food pipe and the stomach; these give rise to ulcers at times, which might become cancerous, if neglected. Ushapana in the morning is also useful as it helps curing the indigestion, if any, due to the food consumed during the previous night. Ushapana is practiced by drinking 4-6 glasses of lukewarm water early in the morning upon rising from sleep even before brushing the teeth. Large amount of the water can be due to the average length of the human intestine which is anywhere from 6 to 8.5 meters in length depending on size and age of the person it occupies, amplifies the need to drink this large volume.

A large quantity of water taken after an overnight fast of nearly 8 hours (sleeping hours) rehydrates the body as well as exerts high pressure on the rectum softening the faeces and completely expelling the faeces from the body. This aids in natural cleaning of the enzymes, mucous secreted during the previous day plus restoring the balance of the body. It purifies the colon makes nutrient absorption easier Ushapana purifies the colon; excrete out toxins or Ama from body through faeces and urine. Hence it is beneficial in curing haemorrhoids (Arsha), oedema (Shotha), grahani, Jwara (fever), Jathara (abdominal discomfort), Jara (old age ), Kustha (skin disorders). Water intake is proved to increase thermo-ogenesis and decrease weight hence effective in Medovikara (lipid disorders).

It also stimulate kidney to produce more erthropoietin, hence in turn increases blood formation. As it also removes toxins from blood it prevents of Vali (wrinkles), Palita (gray hair) and enhances the glow of the skin and delays aging. It helps in relieving and delaying the onset of
diabetes, hypertension, arthritis and other diseases caused by water imbalances. It is especially useful for skin disorders. Ushapana removes all the dirt and bacteria filled mucus from within the gut. Nasapana helps to drain the sinus cavities, so it provides immunity against nasal infection like hay fever, allergies, sinusitis and other upper respiratory complaints. Ushapana including Nasapana improves breathing capacity as it clears in gastrointestinal and nasal passages which in turn help in easy diaphragmatic movements of breathing. It has a cooling and soothing effect on the brain by drawing out excessive heat, and is therefore beneficial for headaches, migraine, epilepsy, temper tantrums, hysteria, depression and general mental tension. Nasapana is of great beneficial for eye disorder, because it drains the tear ducts, encouraging clear vision and gives a sparkle to the eyes. It also cleans the pharynx (opening of ear, eye, mouth, lymphatic glands), thus beneficial for ear, eye problem and increases immunity to fight against infections.

CONCLUSION

We are starving our bodies of the most vital ingredient, namely water and rely on drugs to restore our health. It will be prudent to relook into the vitals of existence and restore the past glory of human kind by reinstating the missing links rather than looking for newer therapies. It is a pity to note that even in India the land of the genesis and practice of Ayurveda, many people mostly the so-called educated ones, who are supposed to be more aware of health are now getting used to ‘bed tea’ or ‘bed coffee’ which is harmful for our body in all respects. Morning intake of water is the greatest cleanser, neutralizer, diuretic and anti-bacterial in nature. It balances the three Doshas, maintains fluid balance in the body, required for proper output of urine, thus cleansing the system. Ushapana which can be called as water therapy does not burden the pocket of the poor masses, which are unable to spend even for their basic necessities like bread and butter.

REFERENCES


