

“SHANKHA PRAKSHALANA” (GASTROINTESTINAL LAVAGE) IN HEALTH AND DISEASE

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ABSTRACT: *Shankha Prakshalana is an easy and effective technique for cleansing the gastrointestinal canal, thereby removing all the autointoxicants present in the alimentary canal. Moreover, it is a very economical procedure which can be performed by the patients at his own residence. The role of Shankha Prakshalana from our own experience is very effective in overcoming the irritable bowel syndrome. Shankha Prakshalana may also be given to the patients of anxiety neurosis with satisfactory results. Its role in the treatment of renal disorder is encouraging in early cases only. However, in the second and third degree chronic renal failure cases its role is yet to be established and needs further investigation. Similarly, in the case of thyrotoxicosis no conclusive evidence could be observed due to very limited number of cases.*

INTRODUCTION

Shankha Prakshalana literally means cleansing of the crouch. It is a technique by which all the toxic materials accumulated in the gastrointestinal canal are washed in the gastrointestinal canal are washed out. It is well established fact that our intestines are the carriers of many of the substances capable of causing the diseases. If by a natural process they are cleaned regularly one can maintain a good health over a long period of time. There are a number of laxatives and purgatives in use which may resemble Shankha Prakshalana. But there are some basic differences between the two. In Shankha Prakshalana, in take of plain saline water and some yogic assanas are the only requirements for the process. No drugs are required. All the deleterious effects or after effects of purgatives are totally absent. The effect of Shankha Prakshalana on bowel is more effective than purgatives which take much more time to work out. Further, Laxatives may also produce habituating

tendency to the digestive system. But, after doing Shankha Prakshalana one feels very light and also a sense of rejuvenation in the body, whereas after taking the purgatives a feeling of heaviness, weakness and dullness in the body occurs. The objective of the Shankha Prakshalana is not only to cleanse the gastrointestinal tract but also to bring about a conditioning effect on the psychophysiological plane.

Ancient Texts

In ancient text of Yoga it has been given a very high place. The “Gheranda Samhita”, one of the most authentic and ancient text on Yogas has described it in some detail. It says

Varisaram Param Gopyam
Dehe Nirmalakarakam
Sadhayet Prayatnena Deva Deham
Prapadyate 1 : 1811

That, this process is very secret. It cleanse the whole body and by practicing it with (ease and) care one gets a luminous body. It has been placed at the top of all the cleansing processes.

Varisaram Param Dhouti
Sadhayedyah Prayatanatah
Maladeham Sodhayitva
Devadeham Prapadyate 1 : 1911

One who practices it, purifies his filthy body, removes all the toxins and gets a shining body.

Such is the lure of Shankha Prakshalana.

Procedure

Shankha Prakshalana should be performed on an empty stomach putting on a light and comfortable clothing. Bed tea or coffee should also be avoided. Slightly warm

(36°C) saline solution (1% concentration) is used in the procedure. Accordingly two glasses of warm saline water is given to drink quickly (see Fig. 1). Thereafter without wasting any time the following asanas should be performed.

Tadasana – Standing pose with raised arms (see Fig. 2).

Tiryak Tadasana – Raised arms with side tilting (see Fig. 3).

Katichakrasana - Turning right and left by giving a rotational movement to the spine (see Fig. 4).

Tiryak Bhujangasana – Serpent pose looking at the heels alter-natively from right and left side (see Fig. 5).

Udarakarasan – Giving a twisting pressure on the abdomen from both sides (see Fig. 6).



Fig. 1

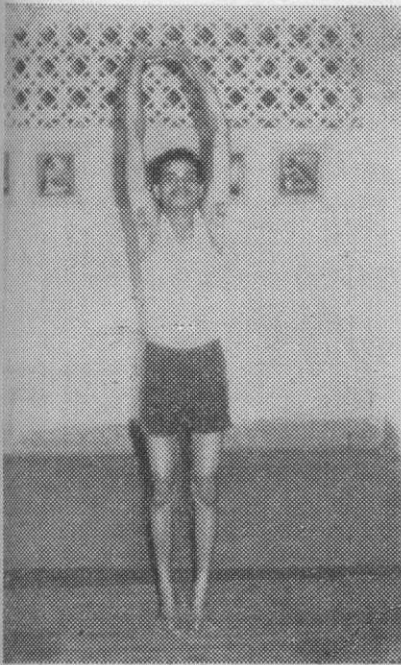


Fig. 2

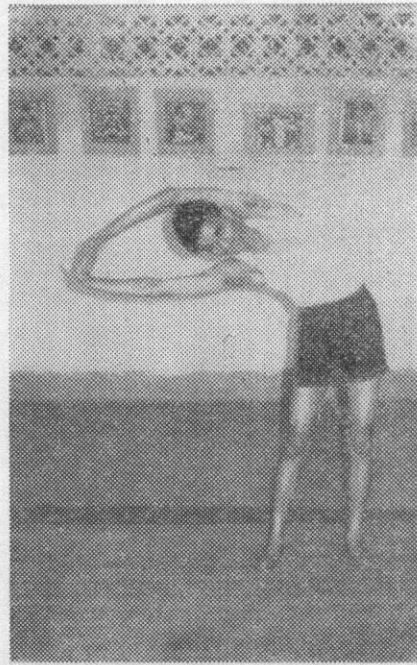


Fig. 3

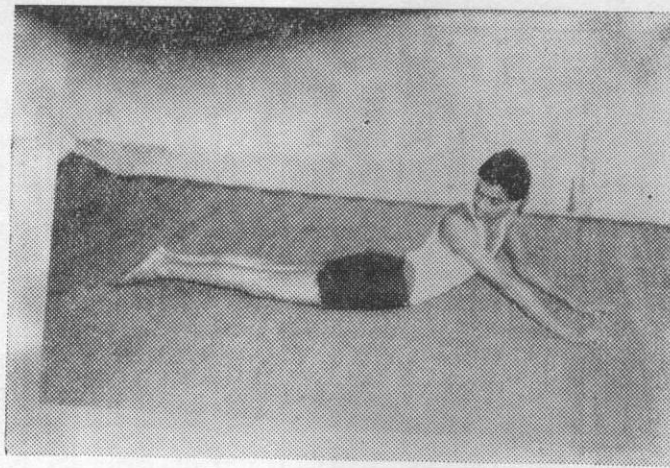


Fig. 5



Fig. 4

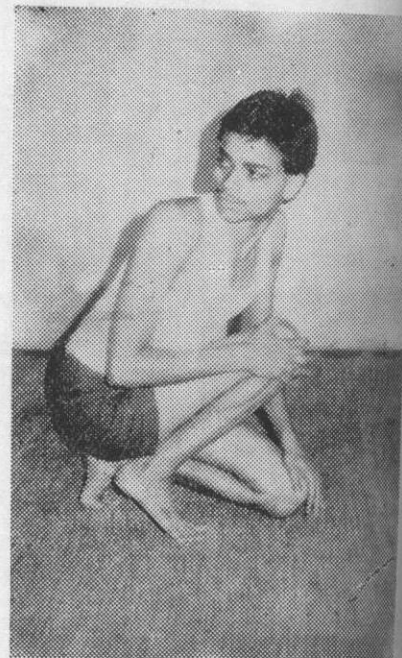


Fig. 6

All the above five asanas should be performed 6 times each, thus the procedure forms one round. After the first round is over, another 2 glasses of warm saline water should be taken and all the asanas are repeated in the same order and number. After the third round is over it is advisable to go to the toilet whether one feels the necessity or not. Many a times the subject feels an urge to pass stools. Thereafter he again take 2 glasses of water and repeats the same procedure from beginning to end. This process of drinking water, doing the asanas and going to the toilet should be continued till a perfectly clear water is evacuated from the rectum. Generally on an average 12 to 16 glasses of water is sufficient for getting the clean water to come out from the rectum. However, from the time of first evacuation till the procedure is completed total intake of water greatly varies from individual to individual depending upon the constitution of each person.

In short this process is very much effective and should be performed with ease. The above asanas along with sufficient quantity of saline water are very much effective in opening the sphincters of alimentary canal. Moreover, warm saline solution produces stimulation and peristalsis of the entire gastro-intestinal canal leading to a free and quick discharge of all the residual materials from the body. Shankha Prakshalana thus opens up all the channels of flow such as, the sphincture of oddi, where the bile duct from the liver opens into the duodenum, or the glands of mucus membrane engaged in the secretion of gastric juices, enzymes and gut hormones, or the mucus substances which prevents from digesting itself by its own secretions. The Shankha Prakshalana not only cleans up the alimentary canal but also very favourably acts on several organs like liver, pancreas and kidneys by inducing a sort of internal massage to them. It also

cleanses the circulatory system by bringing down the urea, creatinine and other toxic materials through its osmotic effect.

After Shankha Prakshalana is over, it is better to relax, preferably in Shavasana, or sit quietly for at least half an hour. During this period, sleep should be avoided. At this juncture whole of the alimentary canal, from mouth to anus, is totally at rest and all the systems of the body are quite relaxed. This procedure is contraindicated in cases of Chronic Peptic Ulcer, Ischaemic Heart Disease, and Severe Hypertension and Advanced cases of Chronic Renal Failure. It should also be avoided in weak and debilitated patients.

Diet Restrictions after Shankha Prakshalana

A special food (Khicheri) is cooked with equal quantity of rice and Kidney Beans (Mung) by mixing sufficient quantity of ghee (clarified butter). It is taken in about one hour after whole process of Shankha Prakshalana is over. This food provides as an active lubricant in a gentler way to the bare walls of digestive tract.

Milk and its preparation should be avoided at least two days, for it may cause diarrhoea effect in some individuals. Lemon or fruit juice should not be taken on the very day of Shankha Prakshalana. Spicy food and non-vegetarian preparations should also be avoided for about 4 days. Alcohol, sodawater or such other drinks are also to be avoided.

Our Experiences with Shankha Prakshalana

(A) Healthy Volunteers

In all 12 normal persons underwent this procedure showed by satisfactory results.

Their biochemical changes are being studied and would be reported elsewhere.

(B) (i) *Irritable Bowel Syndrome* : Out of a total of 27 cases of Irritable bowel syndrome who underwent Shankha Prakshalana, 21 patients were males and six females. The average age was 42 years ranging between 20 – 45 years. For evaluating the overall effect of Shankha Prakshalana, seven variables were taken in to consideration and each variable was assessed before and after treatment. These were – (i) constipation, (ii) vague abdominal pain, (iii) loss of appetite, (iv) vomiting tendency, (v) diarrhoea, (vi) irregular bowel habits and (vii) drugs. From the precipitation of the final score value it became obvious that there is significant percentage of relief in patients complaining of constipation and vague abdominal pain 85.71 and 87.37% respectively. Irregular bowel habits and diarrhoeal cases showed a noticeable improvement by 42.85% and 50.00% respectively. 40% of the patients, complaining of the loss of appetite were satisfied with an increase in their hunger. As far as vomiting tendency is concerned, only 33% of the cases were relieved and the rest remained status quo. Drug dependency was drastically cut-off, either totally or partially in 57.14% of the cases, thus reducing many of its side effects and ultimately help developing a drug free life style. Moreover, these patients of irritable bowel syndrome were given Shankha Prakshalana within an interval of 5 days and then 4 Shankha Prakshalana within an interval of 7 days. After this they were advised short form of Shankha Prakshalana every fortnightly or weekly according to their need.

Anxiety Neurosis The present material includes 17 diagnosed cases of anxiety neurosis who were given repeated course of Shankha Prakshalana as an additional part of their usual treatment regime of Yogic postures and Shavasana. In these patients there was a significant symptomatic relief and a subjective feeling of well being. Whereas side by side another group of 29 patients were tried on similar lines but with out of addition of Shankha Prakshalana. The percentage relief in this latter group was much lower than that of former one. This marked differences in their results may be the effect of Shankha Prakshalana.

Chronic Renal Failure

Only six patients suffering from chronic renal failure underwent repeated course of Shankha Prakshalana within an interval of 10 days. Out of the six, three were male and three females. They all had blood urea level very high ranging from 80 to 200 mg%. Three patients were having vomiting tendency and oedema. Two were known cases of hypertension and one was having breathlessness off and on and the other one had undergone bilateral operation for multiple renal calculi. However, in all the above six patients who were given five courses of Shankha Prakshalana, not much change was noticed in their blood urea and creatinine. The earlier work done by Young and Lee and CK Tang, et al by adding manitol to saline solution was also tried but the results were not very encouraging. However, later on two early cases of renal failure were tried by giving a more vigorous and frequent courses of Shankha Prakshalana. Every third day they were given the course of 5 – 6 litres of prepared saline solution without adding manitol. In these cases the results were very much encouraging. Blood urea level was drastically reduced in three weeks from 175

mg% and 215 mg% to 32 mg% and 38 mg% respectively. Patients were then asked to continue the treatment at their home every fourth day and to report to our Clinic periodically for a check up.

Thus, the patients of chronic renal failure who have financial constraints for haemodialysis or peritoneal dialysis, this method of Shankha Prakshalana may be considered as an alternative strategy for the management of renal disorders. Moreover, it needs no technical know-how or equipments and can be easily carried out by the patients themselves at their home. The selection of patients for Shankha Prakshalana is very important. However, in

view of the limited number of case studies, further investigations are required to establish the lasting role of Shankha Prakshalana in the management of renal disorders.

Thyrotoxicosis

Out of a total number of five cases of thyrotoxicosis, Shankha Prakshalana yielded very satisfactory result in all of them. The number of case studies being limited, no definite conclusion can be arrived at.

However all the subjects felt a general feeling of well being and lightness after the Shankha Prakshalana.

TABLE – I

S. No.	Diseases	No. of Cases	Result
1	Irritable Bowel Syndrome	27	Encouraging
2	Anxiety Neuroses	17	Satisfactory
3	Chronic Renal Failure	08	Encouraging in early cases only
4	Thyrotoxicosis	05	Yet to establish

Annotations, References / Further Readings

1. The statement ‘feels very light and also a sense of rejuvenation in the body’ is based on the personal experience of 57 patients of varying disorders and 12 healthy volunteers who practiced Shankha Prakshalan.
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