A Review on Importance of Snana (Bathing) in Dinacharya According to Ayurveda

Sonali Bhoyar¹, Arshiya Khan², Saroj Tirpude³, Nikhil Dhande⁴

¹Assistant Professor, Department of Samhita Siddhant, Datta Meghe Ayurvedic Medical College Hospital and Research Center Wanadongri, Nagpur, Maharashtra, India; ²Assistant Professor Department of Swasthavrutta and yoga, Datta Meghe Ayurved Medical College & Research Centre, Wanadongri, Nagpur, Maharashtra, India; ³Assistant Professor Department of Samhita Siddhant, Mahatma Gandhi Ayurved College Hospital and research centre Sawangi Meghe, Wardha, Maharashtra, India; ⁴Associate Professor, Community Medicine, Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College, Datta Meghe Institute of Medical Sciences Sawangi, Wardha, Maharashtra, India.

ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is the basic science of life. The goal of Ayurveda is to maintain the health and cure of the illness. To achieve one such goal of maintaining health one should adopt to follow the procedure of daily regimen as described in Ayurveda. These daily routine regimens have good physiological effects on appropriate functioning of the body system thereby maintaining a normal equilibrium of three doshas i.e., Vata, Pitta and Kapha (seven tissues), Mala(waste products of the body) and the Agni (power of digestion) and prime importance of daily routine is to keep away diseases. In ayurvedic daily routine includes Snana (bath) as one of the important regimen which is to be performed every day in the morning after Abhyanga, Vyayama, Mardana and Udvartana. Its prime role is to maintain health. Its importance in maintaining health is discussed in various ayurvedic texts.

Key Words: Dinacharya, Snana, Health, Bath

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is the very important basic science of life to maintain the health of healthy persons and curing diseases of ill.¹ A long healthy life is a demand as well as a wish of every being since antiquity. Therefore everyone should always follow those procedures which keep them healthy always. Dinacharya is known as a daily routine and should be followed as mentioned in ayurvedic texts to maintain health. Dinacharya explains various duties which should be followed systematically and scientifically from one day to the next. Dinacharya helps to establish balance in one’s body constitution. It also regularizes a person’s biological clock, aids digestion, absorption and assimilation and generates self-esteem, discipline, peace, happiness and longevity.² In Mahabharat, five types of Saucha (cleanliness) are mentioned. They areas Mana, Karma, Kala, Sharir and Vaka Saucha. Gita and Vaishista Samhita also mentioned two types of Sauchaas Bahya Saucha (External cleanliness)and Abhyantara Saucha (Internal cleanliness). Here external cleanliness is to keep the body clean by Snana, etc while internal cleanliness is to keep the mind free.³ The cleanliness is necessary for the health, growth and development of the body.

Snana is one of the important regimens described in Dinacharya & mentioned by various Acharyas of Ayurveda and other ancient literature of India. Snana (Bathing) is one of the forms of cleaning our body. If done in the proper manner, it will be a therapeutic preventive and rejuvenating ritual for the body, mind and soul. There is no doubt that good baths clean and rejuvenate our body like Rasayana. Bathing helps you and makes you ready for the whole day activities. As per Ayurveda, regular bathing keeps the body and mind healthy, fresh, energetic and rejuvenated for the day to day activities. We take bath daily as a formality and as a routine part of our daily schedules.

The method, benefits & duration of Snana along with different types of Snana have been perfectly mentioned in our samhita-granthas. By considering the explanation which is described in our classics regarding Snana in our Dinacharya, we can surely say that Snana is an important and unique concept explained amongst the various regimens of Dinacarya.
Snana should be done every day as explained in manusmruti (Snanam Samachareth Nithyam).\textsuperscript{3} Acharya Charaka says that Snana is the best way to remove fatigue (Snanam Shramaharaanam Shreshtham).\textsuperscript{4} cleanliness is necessary and beneficial for the health, growth and development of the body. Snana is the best form of cleaning explained.

Snana is one of the regimens that is to be done daily and which removes Mala, Sweda, and helps the individuals to attain health & wealth. Snana is purifying, libidinal stimulant and gives longevity as explained by charak.\textsuperscript{5} It removes fatigue, sweat and dirt from the body. Taking bath is auspicious, enhances virility, longevity, strength, compactness and Ojas.

**Matra of Snana\textsuperscript{7}**

Matra of Snana is not mentioned anywhere but from one of the classical reference, we get the information that Snana should be performed like Gajavata Snana (bath like an elephant) which means that amount of water used to take bath should be more enough to clean the whole body. According to modern science, 140-150 litres per person for daily purpose and it include bathing.\textsuperscript{7}

**Time of Snana**

Acharyas have mentioned that one should take bath early in the morning.\textsuperscript{8} Among Dinacharyas, Snana is explained after the procedure of Vyayama as there will be Ayasa (tiredness) after Vyayama and Snana helps to relieve the Ayasa.

**Ideal place for Snana**

According to manusmruti, one should perform Snanadaily in Nadi (river) near the temple, Tirthasthan (sacred places), Tadaga (ponds), Sarahasus, Garta and Prastravana.

**Classes of Snana -** There are 3 classes of Snana\textsuperscript{8}

1. NityaSnana – Normal bathing when at home on a daily routine.
2. NaimittakaSnana – Special occasional snana like the death of a relative, hair cut etc.
3. KamyaSnana – Bath has taken for special vows undertaken like in a temple tank etc.

**Types of Snana\textsuperscript{9}**

According to YagnavalkyaSmrti, there are seven types of Snana. They are as follows;

1. MantraSnana - Snana did by pronouncing Auponisha-di Mantra is called as Mantra Snana
2. BhoumaSnana- Snana by smearing & rubbing the whole body with mud is called BhoumaSnana
3. AgneyaSnana- Snana did by applying bhasma (ash) i.e. burnt powder of cow dung is called as AgneyaSnana
4. VayavyaSnana- Snana with dust which arises while the cow is walking is called as VayavyaSnana
5. DivyaSnana - Snana which is done in sun rays or the glare of the sun combined with rain is called as DivyaSnana
6. VarunaSnana- Snana performed in river water is called as VarunaSnana
7. ManasaSnana- Only thinking about the sacred soul is called as ManasaSnana

**Benefits of Snana**

According to Acharya Charak Snana acts as a purifying, libido stimulant and prolongs life. It helps relieving fatigue, removes sweating and dirt from the body. It promotes strength and endurance in our body.\textsuperscript{10} Taking bath regularly is auspicious, increases virility, longevity, strength, compactness and Ojas of the body. It helps in curing tiredness, sweat and impurities of the body.\textsuperscript{11} It takes away sleep, burning sensation, tiredness, sweat, itching, thirst and impurities. It’s also good for the heart and purifying all organs and gives satisfaction.

According to Sushrut acharya, regular Snana helps to relieve burning sensation, exertion, and perspiration removes itching and thirst. Snana is acting as a Hridya (good for the heart), removes dirt, stimulates all the sense organs and mitigates stupor and sins. It provides satisfaction, enhances virility, purifies the blood and improves our digestive power.\textsuperscript{12} According to Acharya Vagbhata, regular Snana enhances digestive power, libido stimulant and life promoter. It also brings an increase in strength of the body. It removes somnolence, fatigue, sweating, dirt and bodily heat. It removes itching, increases the appetizing power, allays thirst and destroys drowsiness and sin.\textsuperscript{13}

According to Yogratnakara, properties of regular Snana are like - relieves one from all types of unwholesome and of sinful acts, destroys the effects of bad dreams and nightmares, helps too remove all dirt and dust of the body), enhancement of colour and complexion of skin helps in beautification of body, brings pleasant or gives freshness to the body. Improves the digestive fire. Improves sexual vigour and libido of an individual, relieves one from fatigue.\textsuperscript{14}

According to Bhavprakasha, even rubbing the entire body with a cloth just after bathing improves colour and complexion of the skin, removes itching and various illness of skin.\textsuperscript{15,16}

According to Kalyanakaraka, a bath enhances satisfaction, strength, Luster, health, long life, the normalcy of the humours and smoothness and also increases gastric fire. It also develops the interest to eat i.e. creates appetite.

**Health Benefits of having sheeta Jala Snana (Bath with cold water)\textsuperscript{7,18}**

Bathing with Sheeta Jala (cold water) improves eyesight and also stimulate agni that helps in the process of digestion if it will be taken in proper time. Bathing with cold water cures
Raktapitta (bleeding disorders). Bathing with extremely cold water, especially during the winter season, leads to the aggravation of Kapha and Vatadosha. The sight of a person is rejuvenated by taking cold water to the head at the time of bathing.

Health Benefits of having Ushna Jala Snana (Bath with warm water)-

A bath with Ushna Jala (warm water) increases the strength of an individual and lowers the increased Vata and Kaphadosha.\(^{19}\) Ushna Jala Snana increases the strength of the body except for the head. It indicates that hot water should not be used for a head bath. It should use for bath only the portion down the clavicle level. If it is done then it decreases the strength and also leads to harmful effect on eyes, hairs and heart.\(^{20}\) According to Sushruta, during aggravation of Kapha and Vata dosha, one can use a lukewarm water bath for the head as medicine.\(^{21}\) Warm water bath should be avoided during summer since they imbalances Pitta dosha. The warm bath has stimulation action on the skin and reflex, it also excites the heart and circulation.

Contraindications of Snana

Bathing is contraindicated for persons suffering from Arditha (facial palsy), Atisara (diarrhoea), Aadmana (dysfunction of abdomen), Pisana (rhinitis), Ajeerna (indigestion), Bhuktavat (immediately after taking food), Jwara (fever), Karnashoola (earache), Anila(Vata), Arochak (anorexia) and also persons suffering from Netra(eye), Aasa (oral), Karnas (ear) Rogas (diseases).\(^{21}\)

Rules for taking a bath

A bath should be taken in the morning and should be before the morning meal. Bathing should be done with Luke warm water except the head, rubbing the entire body with cloth early after bathing helps Improves lustre, removes itching and disorders of the skin. Always changed the dress after bath, sleep, while going out of the house and for worshipping gods. Bathing entering into reservoirs of water and sleeping with mud signifies digging the well for ourselves and making the well by own. This was another ancient custom).\(^{22-24}\)

Baths fixed on special occasions

Many peoples on the country side use a paste consisting of gram flour, mustard oil and turmeric powder and rub it on the body before bath. One who baths with Amlaka water in which Amlaka fruits are soaked always will surely get free from wrinkled skin and grey hairs and lives hundreds years.\(^{22}\) Few of the related studies were reviewed.\(^{25}\)

CONCLUSION

Snana plays an important role in maintaining health. It’s also a part of customs and rituals in Indian tradition. It is an act of purification not only for physical body but also for the mind. It is also necessary for internal purification. Bathing is not only required for the cleanliness of skin but also for its action on the internal organs as it helps to regulate proper circulation. It is one of the preventive modality for maintaining the overall health of the individual. When Vata and Kapha doshas are get vitiated lukewarm water can be used for head bath. Otherwise taking a head bath with hot water is injurious to the eyes and cold water is good for the eyes. Hot water applied to the head weakens the strength of sense organs. Snana has a promotive, protective and curative and positive effect on the body. Hence we can say that it must be practised as a prophylactic measure to attain its benefits and maintaining health.

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