

A Qualitative Study of Yogic & Ayurvedic Concept of Cleanliness & Bathing (Snana) for Health ((Swasthya): A Meta-Synthesis

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to scientifically discuss the different aspects of cleanliness according to yoga and bathing technique according to Ayurveda, the ancient Indian wisdom of spirituality and healing. Yoga and Ayurveda can be considered as mind body medicine. The effects of different types of snana or bathing procedures (which is considered as external cleaning) directly influence to reestablished the Tridoshas and heal our bodily illness. The internal cleaning procedure of yoga is effective for balancing sapta dhatus (seven Tissues), digestive fires, excretory process and promote sustainable disease-free life and wellbeing. The concept of bathing technique according to naturopathy is also included in the text. The present study tries to compare the different schools of thoughts on both the cleansing procedures.

Keywords: Satkarma (Six cleansing Techniques), Snana (Bathing), Naturopathy, Ayurveda and Swasthya (Health).

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda and Yoga, India's ancient holistic health systems, provide comprehensive approaches to promoting organ health and preventing chronic diseases. Rooted in shared scientific and philosophical principles, both emphasize disease prevention and enhancement of quality of life through appropriate diet, healthy lifestyle practices, and the cultivation of inner balance. Rather than focusing solely on the treatment of illness, it aims to foster overall well-being. Consequently, the synergy between Ayurveda and Yoga arises from a deep understanding of health as a dynamic balance at the physical, mental, and spiritual levels, extending beyond a simple combination of dietary guidelines and exercise practices (1).

The concept of cleanliness may be understood in a broader sense as encompassing both physical and mental purity. Ancient texts such as the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* and the *Gheranda Samhita* describe specific practical methods aimed at cultivating and preserving purity (*shaucha*), as emphasized by Patañjali. These practices are collectively known as *ṣaṭkarma* (Sanskrit: *ṣaṭ* meaning six, and *karma* meaning action). The six actions refer to six types of yogic cleansing practices designed to maintain a healthy, well-functioning body and to support psychological balance and energy regulation (2-3).

Healing methods in yogic science are founded on the principle of purification from within, working holistically on the mind, body, and soul. *Āsana*, or physical postures, help prepare the body for this purified state, while *prāṇāyāma*, or breathing practices, build and regulate vital energy within the body. These two form the main supportive techniques of yoga. Without proper cleansing, however, the body and mind remain unprepared to receive the full benefits of yogic practices, which are intended to elevate the soul toward higher states of consciousness (4).

Shatkarma (Six inner Cleansing Techniques):

Ṣhaṭkarmas (Sanskrit: षट्कर्म, *ṣhaṭkarma*, literally “six actions”), also known as *ṣaṭkriyās* (5) are a set of purificatory practices in Haṭha Yoga designed to cleanse the body in preparation for higher yogic practices associated with *mokṣa* (liberation). Svātmārāma in the *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* described it as *kriyās*, these practices include Neti, Dhauti, Nauli, Basti, Kapālabhāti, and Trāṭaka (5-8).

The *Haṭha Ratnāvalī* mentions two additional cleansing practices—Cakri and Gajakaraṇī—while criticizing the *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* for limiting its description to six purifiers (4). The primary aims of these practices are to remove accumulated impurities, alleviate various ailments, and prepare the body for *prāṇāyāma*. Through this preparation, *prāṇa* is regulated and directed into the central channel (*suṣumṇā*), enabling the awakening and ascent of *kuṇḍalinī* and ultimately leading toward *mokṣa* (9). Overall, the purpose of *ṣaṭkarmas* is to harmonize the flow of *prāṇic* energy through *idā* and *piṅgalā*, thereby achieving physical, mental, and energy balance and purity.

These practices are performed prior to *prāṇāyāma* and other advanced yogic techniques to cleanse toxins from the body. *Ṣhaṭkarmas* are intended to promote the health of yogis by channelling and regulating energy within both the body and the deeper layers of the mind (10). Svātmārāma, the author of the *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* (HYP), states that the practice of *ṣaṭkarma* is especially prescribed for individuals with excess fat, mucus, or imbalances arising from disturbed *doṣas*.

The sequence of *ṣaṭkarma* practices in the HYP is given in the following verse:

Dhautir bastis tathā netis trāṭakaṃ naulikam tathā

Kapālabhātis caitāni ṣaṭkarmāṇi pracakṣate — HYP 2.23

Meaning: Dhauti, Basti, Neti, Trāṭaka, Nauli, and Kapālabhāti are known as the six cleansing techniques.

Sage Gheraṇḍa is another prominent authority in Haṭha Yoga who emphasized the practice of *ṣhaṭkarma* as the first stage of yogic training. His system, known as *Ghaṭastha Yoga*, is organized into seven limbs, in contrast to the eight-limbed yoga described in the *Yoga Sūtras* (10-11). According to the *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā*, the body–mind complex is compared to a vessel (*ghaṭa*) that carries the soul, with the *guṇas* (fundamental qualities or attributes of nature and consciousness) functioning like water within a ship, influencing its balance and movement (12).

Gheraṇḍa, the author of the *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā*, described the purificatory practices themselves as a form of *nāḍī śodhana* (*channel purification or nerve cleansing*) (Gh. S. V/36–37). From an analytical perspective, however, all yogic practices may be understood as forms of purification in one way or another, as the fundamental concept of cleansing and refinement is inherent throughout the entire system of yoga (13).

The *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā* describes the six cleansing practices of Haṭha Yoga in the following verse:

Dhautir-vastis tathā netir, trāṭakaṃ naulikam tathā; Kapālabhātis caitāni, ṣaṭkarmāṇi samācaret

(Sloka 12, Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā, Part I) (14).

According to this text, the body is purified through six procedures:

(I) Dhauti, (II) Basti, (III) Neti, (IV) Loukikī (Nauli), (V) Trāṭaka, and (VI) Kapālabhāti. These *ṣhaṭkarma* practices produce profound cleansing effects and are highly esteemed by eminent yogis for their therapeutic and preparatory value (14-15).

Purpose of Ṣhaṭkarma:

The primary objectives of *ṣaṭkarma* practices are to:

- Restore balance among the three *doṣas* (fundamental bio-energetic forces)— air/space (*Vāta*), fire/water (*Pitta*), and earth/water (*Kapha*)—and represent movement, metabolism, and structure, respectively.
- Harmonize mental and physiological processes.
- Regulate the flow of *prāṇa* (vital energy) through the *Idā* and *Piṅgalā* *nāḍīs* (the left side of the spinal cord and right side of the spinal cord), thereby facilitating its movement into the *Suṣumṇā* *nāḍī* (central, balanced, neutral channel).
- Eliminate toxins from the body.
- Cleanse the internal systems and maintain overall physical health.
- Strengthen vital internal systems such as blood circulation, digestion, respiration, and the body’s defence mechanisms.

Shatkarma (Yogic Cleansing Procedures) and Panchakarma (Ayurveda):

Yogic cleansing procedures (*śhaṭkarma*) primarily act at a deeper physical level; however, it is important to recognize that these practices also confer significant mental and spiritual benefits in addition to their physical effects. Thus, their influence extends beyond bodily purification to the refinement of the mind and consciousness. Nevertheless, as noted, the scope of yogic cleansing procedures is considered more limited when compared with the comprehensive detoxification system of *pañcakarma* in Ayurveda. According to Ayurveda, *pañcakarma* consists of the following five therapeutic procedures (14):

Vamana (therapeutic emesis), Virechana (purgation therapy), Basti (medicated enema), Nasya (nasal administration of medicines), Raktamokṣaṇa (bloodletting).

Together, these Ayurvedic practices aim at systematic elimination of toxins, restoration of *doṣic* balance, and promotion of holistic health. Comparison of cleansing techniques *hatayoga pradīpika* (HYP), *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā* (GS) and *Hatharatnāvalī* (HR) are shown in table-1.

Table-1. Comparison of Shatkarma between Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā (HYP), Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā (GS) and Haṭha Ratnāvalī (HR)

Satkarma	HYP	GS	HR
Dhauti	Mentioned (HYP 2.22–2.24)	Mentioned (HYP 2.22–2.24)	Mentioned
Basti	Mentioned (HYP 2.26–2.28)	Mentioned (HYP 2.26–2.28)	Mentioned
Neti	Mentioned (HYP 2.29–2.30)	Mentioned (HYP 2.29–2.30)	Mentioned
Nauli (Laukikī)	Mentioned (HYP 2.33–2.34)	Mentioned (HYP 2.33–2.34)	Mentioned
Trataka	Mentioned (HYP 2.31–2.32)	Mentioned (HYP 2.31–2.32)	Mentioned
Kapalbhati	Mentioned (HYP 2.35–2.36)	Mentioned (HYP 2.35–2.36)	Mentioned

Cakri (Chakri)	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Mentioned
Gajakaraṇī	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Mentioned

- Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā (Svātmārāma) describes six purificatory practices and explicitly limits *ṣaṭkarma* to these six (HYP 2.23).
- Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā also accepts six purificatory practices, but elaborates them in greater detail and places them as the first limb of *Ghaṭastha Yoga*.
- Haṭharatnāvalī expands the list to eight cleansing practices, adding Cakri and Gajakaraṇī, and criticizes earlier texts for incompleteness (15-19).

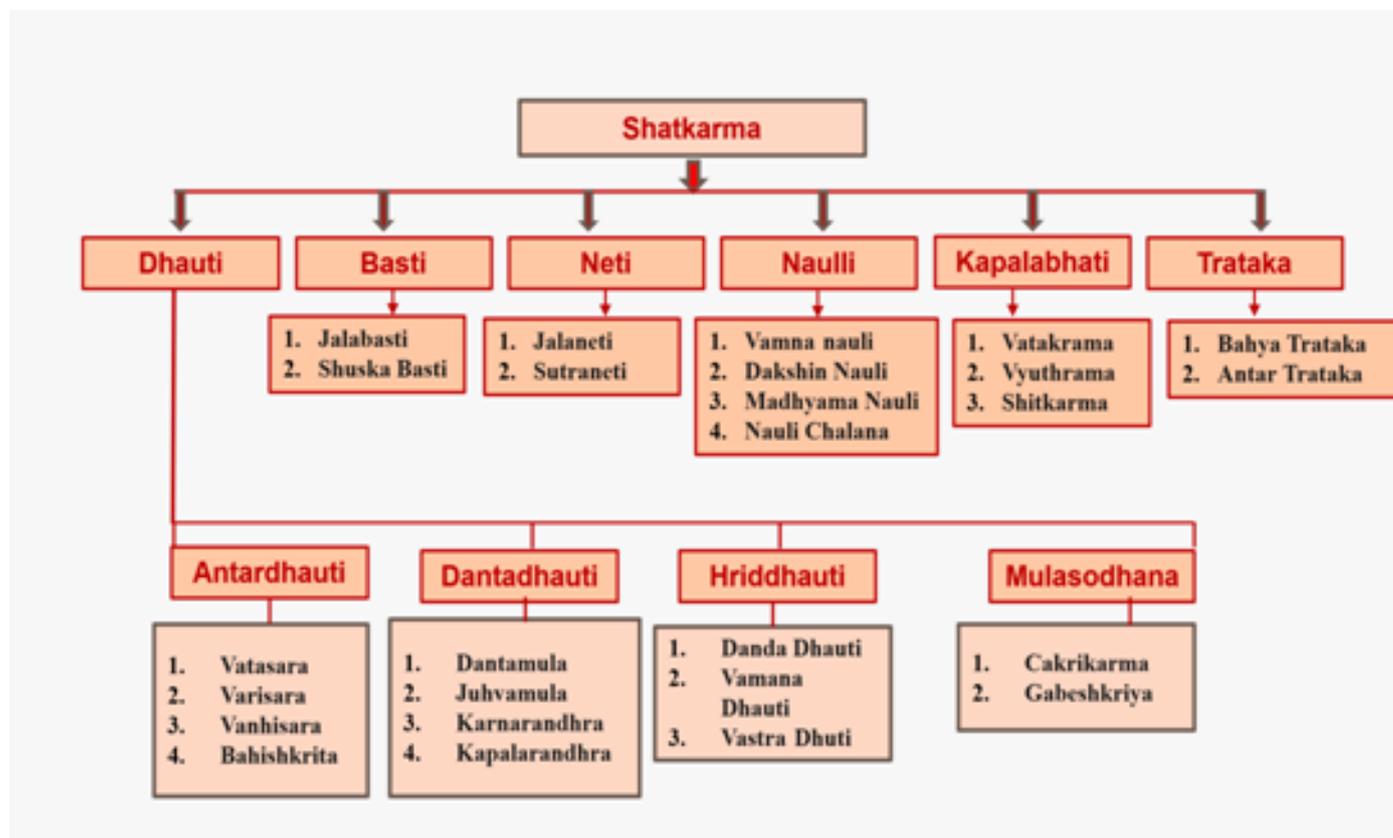


Figure -1. Represents different Satkrarma Procedures

Table -2. Represents function and meaning of Sathkarmas

Sathkarmas	Description	Function
Dhauti	focused on purifying the digestive tract, and related areas using various methods)	These practices help eliminate excess mucus from the respiratory tract, benefiting conditions such stimulate the functioning of the stomach, intestines, biliary system, gallbladder, and pancreas by enhancing gastric and pancreatic secretions.
Neti	It is intended specially to clean the air passageways inside the head	Neti helps to recover the body’s natural mechanisms towards respiratory problems which include sore throats, coughs, and postnasal drips.

Basti	A yogic purification, intended to smooth the lower stomach, specifically the colon.	Replenishes the bowels and acts as Therapies for digestive disorders.
Nauli	The meaning of Nauli is abdominal massaging.	Improvement of venous outflow, stimulation of a large intestine, strengthening of respiratory muscles.
Trataka	Cleaning of eyes and improve concentration and focusing.	Strength of mind and selfconfidence, emotions and remedies for insomnia, headache, and sleepassociated disorder.
Kapalbhati	It is intended specifically for cleaning the sinuses	This respiration workout is particularly for cleansing the facial sinuses. Bloodstream and oxygenation of the entire face is improved.

Table-2 and Figure-1 describe the various internal cleansing techniques which are essential for purifying the yogic animas. To purify their inner body organs from time to time so as to make sure the proper working of yogic practices on the body. Shatkarma removes impurities of the internal body, organs which got accumulated by regular intake of external matter through different sensory organs. To make sure the proper flow of Prana (life force) shatkarma ensures there is not any physical/mental knot present in nadis. The present article discussed in detail the various aspects of cleaning techniques (shatkarma) and their implication of disease-free life (20).

Ayurvedic Snana (Bathing):

Bathing has traditionally held a sacred position in Indian life. In ancient India, it was regarded not merely as a routine act but as a formal ritual. Archaeological findings from Mohenjo-daro reveal large, well-planned, poollike structures with elaborate stairways, believed to have functioned as public baths. According to Ayurveda, bathing is a therapeutic and restorative practice that revitalizes the body, removes accumulated toxins, sweat, and impurities from the skin, and soothes the mind by promoting emotional balance (21).

Bathing also plays a vital role in the socio-religious traditions of India, where it is viewed as a means of purifying both the body and the mind, as well as facilitating inner cleansing. Even today, a common practice among orthodox, deeply religious, and tradition-oriented individuals is to wake before sunrise and bathe in cold water, continuing an age-old tradition (22). Ayurveda is the very important basic science of life to maintain the health of healthy persons and curing diseases of ill (23). Ayurvedic “bathing” emphasis on nurturing the body inside and out by balancing the five inner forces of the elements: water, air, earth, fire, and space (which encompasses all of the others). One more important aspect of Ayurvedic bathing associate with three doshas—bata (air), pitta (fire), and kapha (earth)—which are related with all mental and physical aspects. Everyone has a predominant dosha, and one has to follow a certain lifestyle, including diet and exercise in order to balance the dosha (24).

Dinacharya (Biological Clock):

Ayurveda is a fundamental life science that focuses on preserving the health of healthy individuals as well as treating diseases in the ill (25). Since ancient times, the desire for a long and healthy life has been a universal aspiration. Therefore, individuals are encouraged to consistently follow practices that promote and sustain good health. *Dinacharya*, or daily regimen, as prescribed in Ayurvedic literature, is essential for maintaining physical and mental well-being. It outlines a systematic and scientific sequence of daily activities to be practiced regularly. Observance of *Dinacharya* helps maintain balance in the body’s constitution, regulates the biological clock, supports proper digestion, absorption, and assimilation, and fosters discipline, selfconfidence, mental peace, happiness, and longevity (26).

The *Mahabharata* describes five forms of cleanliness (*Saucha*): mental (*Mana*), behavioral (*Karma*), temporal (*Kala*), physical (*Sharira*), and verbal (*Vaka*). Similarly, the *Bhagavad Gita* and *Vasistha Samhita* classify *Saucha* into two categories—external (*Bahya Saucha*) and internal (*Abhyantara Saucha*). External cleanliness involves maintaining bodily hygiene through practices such as bathing, while internal cleanliness emphasizes mental purity (27).

Cleanliness in all its forms is essential for health, growth, and overall development of the body. *Snana* (bathing) is an essential practice of *Dinacharya* described by various Ayurvedic acharyas and other ancient Indian texts. It represents a fundamental method of bodily purification. When performed correctly, bathing serves not only as a hygienic practice but also as a preventive, therapeutic, and rejuvenating ritual that benefits the body, mind, and soul. In Ayurveda bathing is considered as therapy.

Bathing Therapy:

Ancient Ayurvedic literature describes the practice of medicinal bathing using substances such as rose flowers, milk, honey, and turmeric. This ritual was traditionally preceded by the application of warm medicated oils over the entire body and followed by cleansing with water infused with sandalwood paste and floral essences. Such Ayurvedic bathing practices were intended to restore harmony among the mind, body, and soul. Classical texts highlight several therapeutic benefits of *Snana* (bathing), including increased physical vitality, enhanced mental clarity, effective removal of sweat, impurities, and environmental toxins from the skin, and relaxation of the mind with emotional balance (28). The Ayurvedic bathing procedure can be explained through the following stage;

Ayurvedic Bathing Procedure (Snāna Vidhi)

Ayurveda considers *Snāna* an important component of **Dinacharya** (daily regimen), intended for purification, rejuvenation, and maintenance of physical and mental health.

1. Abhyanga (Oil Application) – Pūrvakarma (29-30)

Before bathing, warm medicated oil is applied gently over the entire body.

- Oils are selected according to *Doṣa* predominance (e.g., sesame oil for *Vāta*).
- Benefits include nourishment of tissues, improved circulation, and relaxation of the nervous system.

2. Uṣṇa Jala Snāna (Warm Water Bath) (29-30)

Bathing is done using lukewarm water for the body.

- Warm water alleviates *Vāta* and *Kapha*, improves digestion, and removes fatigue.
- Hot water should be avoided on the head, as it weakens sense organs and hair roots.

3. Śīta Jala for Śīra Snāna (Cool Water for Head) (29-30)

Cool or normal-temperature water is advised for the head.

- Enhances eyesight, strengthens hair, and maintains mental calmness.

4. Udvartana or Mild Cleansing

Gentle rubbing with herbal powders or natural substances may be done to remove dirt, sweat, and toxins. There are two primary types of Udvartana, each tailored to specific body needs and *dosha* imbalances:

- A. Ruksha Udvartana:** A dry massage using herbal powders without oil, mainly for Kapha imbalance, obesity, excess fat, and water retention.
- B. Snigdha Udvartana:** A gentle massage using herbal powders mixed with oil or ghee, suitable for dry or sensitive skin, Vata imbalance, and for improving skin nourishment and complexion (31).

5. Sugandhadravya Prayoga (Use of Fragrant Substances)

Application of sandalwood paste, floral water, or herbal perfumes after bathing.

- Produces cooling, calming, and *Sattvika* effects on the mind. **6. Vastra Dharana (Clean Clothing) – Paścātkarma**

After bathing, clean and dry clothes should be worn.

- Maintains hygiene and prevents diseases.

Table 3: Snāna in Charaka Saṁhitā vs Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya

Aspect	Charaka Saṁhitā	Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya
Context of Snāna	Described under <i>Dinacharya</i> (Sūtrasthāna, Chapter 5) (35)	Elaborately discussed under <i>Dinacharya</i> (Sūtrasthāna, Chapter 2) (43)
Importance of Snāna	Emphasizes bathing as essential for cleanliness, strength, and health maintenance	Highlights bathing as promotive of physical, mental, and sensory wellbeing
Abhyanga before Snāna	Strongly recommends oil massage prior to bathing for nourishment and balance of <i>Doṣas</i>	Clearly states Abhyanga as a prerequisite for Snāna, especially for <i>Vāta</i> pacification
Type of Water	Advises warm water for the body; cautions against hot water for the head	Specifies warm water for the body and cool/normal water for the head
Effect of Hot Water on Head	States that hot water on the head weakens hair and sense organs	Explicitly mentions damage to eyesight and hair when hot water is used on the head
Removal of Fatigue & Dirt	Bathing removes sweat, dirt, tiredness, and impurities	Bathing relieves fatigue, heaviness, and promotes freshness
Mental Effects	Indirect reference to clarity and lightness through cleanliness	Clearly mentions calmness of mind, pleasure, and mental clarity
Post-bath Practices	Advises wearing clean clothes after bathing	Recommends application of sandalwood, fragrances, and clean attire
Overall Emphasis	Preventive and hygienic role of Snāna	Holistic role—physical, sensory, and psychological rejuvenation

Bathing in Naturopathy:

According to Naturopathy Snana or Bathing techniques can be classified in the following ways (32-34)

A. Water Bath:

Water bath therapy uses water at different temperatures (cold, warm, hot) to stimulate circulation, cleanse the skin, regulate body temperature, and relax muscles. It is widely used in naturopathy for detoxification and improving physiological functions.

B. Sun Bath:

Sun bath involves controlled exposure to sunlight, especially in the morning hours. It helps in vitamin D synthesis, boosts immunity, improves metabolism, and supports mental well-being when practiced safely.

C. Mud Bath:

Mud bath therapy uses clean, mineral-rich mud applied to the body. It absorbs toxins, cools the body, improves skin health, and is beneficial in inflammatory conditions and stress-related disorders.

D. Air Bath:

Air bath refers to exposing the body to fresh air, often with minimal clothing. It enhances oxygenation, improves skin respiration, strengthens nerves, and promotes overall vitality.

Bathing Practices in Ayurveda (Snāna Cikitsā) (35-38)

1. Immersion Bath (Avagāhaṇa / Abagahan):

Avagāhaṇa Snāna refers to immersing the body (partially or fully) in warm or medicated water. Ayurveda recommends it for relieving fatigue, stiffness, pain, vāta disorders, and mental stress. Medicated decoctions (kaṣāya) or oils may be added to enhance therapeutic effects, especially in musculoskeletal and neurological conditions.

2. Foot Bath (Pāda Prakṣāḷana / Pāda Snāna):

Foot bath involves washing or soaking the feet in warm or medicated water. It is advised daily for reducing tiredness, calming the mind, improving sleep, and promoting eye health. Ayurveda considers the feet rich in nerve endings; hence foot bathing pacifies vāta and promotes relaxation.

3. Natural Snāna (Āhita / Sādhāraṇa Snāna):

Natural bathing refers to bathing in clean natural water sources such as rivers, lakes, or rainwater. It is considered purifying (śodhana), refreshing, and beneficial for physical cleanliness, mental clarity, and spiritual well-being. Snāna is also described as enhancing strength, complexion, appetite, and longevity when done properly.

According to the Yājñavalkya Smṛti, bathing (snāna) (39) is classified into seven forms:

1. **Mantra Snana** - Snana did by pronouncing Auponisha- di Mantra is called as Mantra Snana,
2. **Bhouma Snana**- Snana by smearing & rubbing the whole body with mud is called BhoumaSnana
3. **Agneya Snana**- Snana did by applying bhasma (ash) i.e. burnt powder of cow dung is called as AgneyaS-nana
4. **Vayavya Snana**- Snana with dust which arises while the cow is walking is called as VayavyaSnana
5. **Divya Snana**- Snana which is done in sun rays or the glare of the sun combined with rain is called as Divya-Snana
6. **Varuna Snana**- Snana performed in river water is called as VarunaSnana
7. **Manasa Snana**- Only thinking about the sacred soul is called as ManasaSnana. Together, these seven types highlight that *snāna* in the Dharmasāstra tradition extends beyond bodily cleanliness to encompass ritual, mental, and moral purification.

Ayurvedic Concept of Health:

According to Ayurveda, *swasthya* (health) is understood as a state of harmony among the body, mind, and spirit, as described in the classical definition found in the ancient Ayurvedic text *Suśruta Samhitā*.

"Samadosha samagnischa samadhatu malakriya, Prasanna atma indriya manaha swastha iti abhidheeyate." (40)

This means:

- Proper balance of doshas (vata, pitta, kapha) i.e the body's three regulatory principles must remain in a state of balance.
- Balanced digestive fire (agni) i.e all digestive and metabolic activities, including the thirteen types of *agni*, should operate efficiently.
- Balanced body tissues (dhatus) i.e the seven tissues—*rasa* (plasma), *rakta* (blood), *māmsa* (muscle), *meda* (fat), *asthi* (bone), *majjā* (marrow/nervous tissue), and *śukra/artava* (reproductive tissue)—must be well nourished and function normally.
- Proper elimination of wastes (malas) i.e elimination of urine, feces, and sweat should occur regularly and appropriately.
- Pleasant state of soul (atma), senses (indriyas), and mind (mana) i.e the soul, sense organs (both sensory and motor), and mind should experience clarity, contentment, and inner calm.

Health is not just the absence of disease; it is a state of overall well-being—physical, mental, social, and spiritual (41). Ayurveda defines health as *Swasthya*, which actually means “being contented in ones’ natural state of inner harmony.” According to Ayurveda, one is considered as healthy when body, mind, and spirit are in the state of equilibrium, comfort, and bliss (42).

Health Benefits of Internal Cleansing (Shatkarma):

A. Nati or nasal Cleansing:

All four forms of Neti effectively cleanse the nasal passages, which also purifies the frontal, ethmoid, maxillary, and sphenoid sinuses. This practice provides immediate relief from respiratory issues such as sinusitis, asthma, allergies, and hay fever. Neti supports the body's natural defence mechanisms against respiratory problems, including sore throats, coughs, and postnasal drip.

It also benefits the eyes and ears, addressing conditions like certain types of deafness, tinnitus, and myopia. Regular and advanced practice of Neti can prevent and alleviate throat infections, further enhancing the body's ability to handle respiratory discomfort.

Additionally, Neti enhances concentration and visualization skills, promoting a sense of mental clarity and mindfulness. It can aid in quitting smoking, reduce mouth breathing, restore sensitivity in the nasal passages to smoke irritants, and even help prevent snoring during sleep (20, 44-47).

B. Dhauti or Elementary cannal Cleansing:

Dhauti is mainly related with the cleaning of the digestive tract but it affects also the breathing tract, outside ears, and eyes.

Helps remove excessive mucus from the respiratory passages, benefiting conditions such as advanced-stage catarrhal disorders, bronchial asthma, chronic bronchitis, chronic sinusitis, and allergic reactions.

Enhances the functioning of the stomach and intestines by promoting the secretion of gastric juices and pancreatic enzymes, especially in cases of weak digestive activity. Regulates the activity of the biliary system, gallbladder, and pancreas, supporting conditions like bile duct dyskinesia and reduced gallbladder function.

Dhauti practices improve pulmonary function indicators (like vital capacity and decreased airway resistance). Dhauti may be useful in managing phlegm-related respiratory disorders. Evidence on internal cleansing effects

is limited but supportive of digestive and respiratory improvements (20, 47-51). Table-4 represents the effects of Dhauti on human health.

Table-4 Effects of Dhauti

System	Effects
Respiratory	Better lung function, reduced phlegm, improved muscle strength
Digestive	Cleanses gut, improves digestion and motility, reduces acidity
Nervous	Activates parasympathetic system, supports calmness
Muscular & Circulatory	Core muscle engagement, enhanced circulation

C. Basti Kriya or cleansing of lower abdominal Track:

In traditional texts such as the *Hatha Yoga Pradīpika* and classical yoga manuals, Basti is described as a powerful practice that cleanses the colon and lower digestive tract and has broad health effects (20, 52-54).

Table -5 represents the effects of basti kriyas on health.

Table-5. Basti kriya and Health

Aspect	Benefits of Basti Kriya (Haṭha Yoga)
Digestive system	Cleanses the colon; removes accumulated faecal matter, toxins, and impurities
Bowel function	Relieves constipation; improves regular and natural evacuation
Agni (digestive fire)	Stimulates digestive power; supports proper metabolism
Doṣa balance	Helps regulate Vāta doṣa, especially disorders of the large intestine
Abdominal organs	Strengthens intestines, rectum, and lower abdominal organs
Urinary system	Supports normal functioning of urinary bladder and pelvic organs
Energy & vitality	Reduces lethargy; promotes lightness and vitality in the body
Yogic preparedness	Purifies the body, making it fit for prāṇāyāma and higher yogic practices
Mental clarity	Indirectly promotes clarity and calmness by removing bodily impurities

Nauli or Abdominal massaging:

Nauli is an advanced Śaṭkarma practice involving isolation and churning of the rectus abdominis muscles. This practice produces deep mechanical massage of the abdominal viscera, enhances visceral circulation, and stimulates the autonomic nervous system. It activates digestive fire (jatharāgni), improves gastrointestinal motility, and supports endocrine regulation, particularly of the pancreas, adrenal glands, and gonads. The rhythmic abdominal movements also improve venous return, lymphatic drainage, and neuromuscular coordination of the core musculature (20,55-60).

Regular and properly guided practice of Nauli is reported to:

- Improve digestion, appetite, and assimilation
- Relieve constipation, dyspepsia, and abdominal bloating

- Support metabolic balance and help regulate blood sugar levels
- Strengthen abdominal muscles and pelvic organs
- Alleviate menstrual irregularities and reproductive disorders
- Reduce lethargy, anxiety, and stress by balancing the autonomic nervous system
- Aid in weight management by stimulating metabolism.

In yogic physiology, Nauli is especially effective in balancing Kapha and Vāta doṣas and purifying the Maṇipūra Cakra, thereby enhancing vitality and mental clarity.

Trataka or Eye Cleansing:

The phrase trataka is coined from the text of Sanskrit (त्राटक). This means that gaze, or to look, or set your gaze to a selected item (like a candle, black dot, sky, moon).

Trāṭaka is an effective preparatory practice for mantra meditation, enhancing cognitive functions such as intelligence, concentration, and memory. Health benefits of trataka are listed below (20, 60-65).

- It is a powerful yogic technique that strengthens visual capacity, improves eyesight, and helps correct various eye-related disorders, while also stimulating imagination and intuitive perception.
- Mental strength and self-confidence are essential qualities in an individual, and regular practice of Trāṭaka promotes self-discipline and self-confidence.
- Trāṭaka serves as an effective method for anger management by calming the mind and fostering inner silence and peace.
- Yogic gazing is beneficial in conditions such as insomnia, headaches, and other sleep-related disorders.
- By relaxing the mind, yogic observation enhances productivity and efficiency in professional activities.
- It promotes mental clarity, thereby improving decision-making ability.
- Trāṭaka helps in overcoming emotional and behavioral disturbances and supports the management of psychological problems.
- By stabilizing the mind, Trāṭaka helps in anger management, improves self-control, and enhances emotional resilience. It supports the management of behavioral and psychosomatic disorders.
- Trāṭaka is beneficial in conditions such as insomnia, tension headaches, and fatigue. It promotes better sleep quality by inducing mental relaxation and reducing excessive sensory stimulation.
- The sustained practice of focused gazing cultivates mental discipline, will power, self-confidence, and decisiveness, which positively influence personal and professional efficiency.

Kapalbhati or shining of Skull:

Kapālabhāti is an important Śaṭkarma practice of Haṭha Yoga characterized by forceful expiration and passive inspiration. It primarily acts on the respiratory, digestive, metabolic, and nervous systems, producing cleansing and revitalizing effects (20,47, 66-70).

- This breathing practice is especially effective for cleansing the facial and paranasal sinuses.
- It enhances blood circulation and oxygen supply to the entire facial region.

- Long-term practice helps slow the ageing process by calming facial nerves, relaxing facial muscles, and rejuvenating fatigued cells, thereby reducing wrinkles and other signs of ageing.
- Regular practice promotes a healthy, natural glow of the facial skin.
- It reduces the frequency and intensity of sinusitis and migraine episodes.
- The practice acts as a supportive therapeutic measure in the management of anemia.
- It helps cleanse the lacrimal ducts and enhances visual clarity and intuitive perception.
- Olfactory sensitivity is improved, which in turn supports better digestion.
- The lymphatic system and thyroid gland functions are positively influenced.

Health Benefits of External Cleansing (Snana):

While the obvious benefits include making you look fresh like a morning daisy, here are some of the other incredible advantages of *snana* recommended by renowned scholars (71-75) like Acharya Charaka, Sushruta, Vagbhata, and others. The key benefits of *snana* are listed below and table-6 indicate the different types of bathing with related text and benefits of different types of *snana* (bathing).

Acharya Charaka (74) says that when *snana* is performed correctly, it not only removes *mala* (waste products), *sweda* (sweat), and *shrama* (fatigue) from our bodies, but it also stimulates the libido enhancing our vigor thus contributing to longevity and nurturing the vital essence of life known as *ojas* (immunity).

Table-6. Types of Bathing (Snana) with related texts

Type of Snāna	Main Benefit	Key Text
Mārgajala	Strength, purity	Caraka Saṃhitā
Gṛhaja	Daily hygiene	Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya
Uṣṇa	Vāta–Kapha pacification	Suśruta Saṃhitā
Śīta	Pitta pacification	Aṣṭāṅga Saṅgraha
Abhyanga-Snāna	Nourishment, anti-aging	Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya
Auśadha	Therapeutic healing	Suśruta Saṃhitā
Mānasa	Mental purification	Yājñavalkya Smṛti
Divya	Spiritual upliftment	Smṛti texts

Benefits include:

1. Mārgajala Snāna (River / Natural Water Bath)

- Removes physical impurities and fatigue
- Enhances strength (*Bala*) and vitality
- Promotes mental calmness and purity

- Considered spiritually purifying

2. Gr̥haja Snāna (Domestic Water Bath)

- Maintains daily hygiene (*Dinacaryā*)
- Prevents skin diseases
- Refreshes body and mind

3. Uṣṇa Snāna (Warm Water Bath)

- Alleviates **Vāta** and **Kapha** disorders
- Reduces stiffness, pain, and heaviness
- Improves digestion and circulation

4. Śīta Snāna (Cold Water Bath)

- Pacifies **Pitta doṣa**
- Relieves burning sensation, fatigue, and thirst
- Enhances alertness and mental clarity

5. Abhyanga-Snāna (Oil Massage Followed by Bath)

- Nourishes skin and muscles
- Enhances strength and complexion
- Delays aging and reduces dryness

6. Auṣadha Snāna (Medicated Bath)

- Useful in skin disorders
- Improves complexion and healing
- Provides therapeutic effects

7. Mānasa Snāna (Mental / Symbolic Bath)

- Purifies mind and consciousness
- Promotes sattva and spiritual growth

8. Divya Snāna (Sacred / Ritual Bath)

- Spiritual purification
- Enhances discipline and devotion

Table-7 Comparative Table: Baths in Naturopathy and Ayurveda

Bath Type	Naturopathy – Key Benefits	Ayurveda – Closest Concept & Benefits
Cold Bath	Stimulates circulation, boosts immunity, reduces fatigue	<i>Śīta Snāna</i> – Pacifies Pitta, improves vitality
Hot Bath	Relaxes muscles, relieves pain, reduces stress	<i>Uṣṇa Snāna</i> – Alleviates Vāta, improves stiffness

Neutral Bath	Calms nerves, helps insomnia and anxiety	<i>Sukha Snāna</i> – Balances Doṣas, promotes mental calm
Hip Bath (Sitz)	Improves digestion, pelvic health	<i>Avagāha Snāna</i> – Useful in urinary and gynecological disorders
Spinal Bath	Strengthens nerves, relieves back pain	<i>Snāna</i> for <i>Majjā Dhātu</i> nourishment
Foot Bath	Relieves headache, improves sleep	<i>Pāda Prakṣāḷana</i> – Reduces fatigue, promotes
Bath Type	Naturopathy – Key Benefits	Ayurveda – Closest Concept & Benefits
		relaxation
Steam Bath	Detoxification, improves circulation	<i>Svedana</i> – Eliminates toxins, relieves stiffness
Sun Bath	Boosts metabolism, vitamin D synthesis	<i>Sūrya Snāna</i> – Enhances strength and vitality
Mud Bath	Absorbs toxins, reduces inflammation	<i>Mṛttikā Lepana</i> – Cooling, anti-inflammatory
Salt Bath	Relieves pain, relaxes muscles	<i>Lavaṇa Jala Snāna</i> – Reduces heaviness and stiffness

Comparison of Snana between Ayurveda and Naturopathy and their specific effects (39-43 & 76-78) are discussed in the table-7. Table-8. Indicates the contraindication of snana (bathing)

Table-8. Contraindication of Snana

Condition	Reason for Avoidance	Classical Text
Indigestion	Weakens Agni	Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya
Fever	Doṣa aggravation	Caraka
Diarrhoea	Fluid loss	Suśruta
Āma	Obstructs metabolism	Caraka
Post-Pañcakarma	Body weakness	Caraka, AH
Wounds	Delayed healing	Suśruta
Exhaustion	Vāta aggravation	Caraka
Vāta disorders	Pain & stiffness	AH
Alcohol intake	Dehydration	Caraka

CONCLUSION

Yoga is a way of life towards spirituality and is linked with body, mind and soul. Hatha yoga emphasis more on the physical body because if body is not playing the supporting role, the mental and spiritual growth is not possible. The internal cleansing techniques are very important aspect to make disease free healthy individual. Ayurveda and naturopathy on the other hand, are the therapeutic or treatment procedures of traditional Indian origin. Arurvedic and Naturopathic Snana (bathing) are not only use for external cleansing but also play a major role for healing purpose. The present narrative review discussed in details about the importance of cleaning (internal and external) for optimising swastha (health).

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