

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF NASYA KARMA IN SHALAKYA TANTRA: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda, an ancient Indian system of medicine, emphasizes prevention of bodily ailments rather than solely treating symptoms. It is divided into eight branches collectively known as Ashtanga Ayurveda. Shalaky tantra is one of these branches, focusing on diseases affecting body parts above the clavicle bone, including the eyes, ears, mouth, nose, and head as described by Acharya Sushruta. The nose, or Nasa, serves not only as a respiratory organ but also as a pathway for drug administration. Nasya, a specialized procedure in Ayurveda, holds significant importance as a Shodhana method in treating Urdhwajatrugata Roga. The nose acts as a gateway to the head, facilitating the Nasya karma which helps in alleviating diseases of the upper parts of the body. This article explores the role of Nasya karma in Shalaky tantra.

KEYWORDS: Shalakyatantra, Nasya karma, Karna roga, Nasa roga, Mukha roga, Shirah roga and Netra roga

INTRODUCTION

In Ayurveda, treatment is approached through two main therapies: Shodhana (purification therapy) and Shamana (pacification therapy). Acharya Charaka emphasized the significance of Shodhana therapy, noting that ailments treated with Shodhana do not recur [1]. Within Shodhana Chikitsa, Acharya described the Panchakarma procedures, among which Nasya Karma is prominent for treating Urdhwajatrugata Roga, diseases affecting the upper body parts.

Nasya Karma is specifically designed to expel Doshas from the head region, as stated in the ancient texts[2]: "Aushadham Aushadha sidhho va Sneho Nasikabhyam diyate Iti Nasyam" (Su Chi 40/21). This procedure involves administering medicated drugs or oils through the nostrils [3]. The term "Nasya" derives from "Nasa," meaning "path" or "route," indicating its function as a therapeutic pathway to internal structures such as the eyes, head, throat, and mouth [4].

In Ayurveda, various routes are utilized for administering medicine, but reaching the head (Shirah) via other routes is challenging, leading to the development of Nasya therapy. The nose, being integral to the Urdhwajatrugata (upper body), serves as both the gateway to the cranial cavity and a vital part of the respiratory system. This holistic approach makes Nasya therapy preventive, preservative, promotive, curative, and rehabilitative [5].

MATERIALS & METHODS

The materials related to Nasya karma in Shalakyta tantra were collected from Ayurvedic textbooks, modern texts, Samhitas, indexed medical journals, and websites. In classical texts, synonyms for Nasya include Navana, Shirovinechana, Shirovireka, Murdhavirechan, Nastakarma, prachhardana, among others [6].

Nasya dravya functions by reaching the Shringataka Marma, a vital point on the surface of the brain associated with nerve centers responsible for functions such as speech (Broca's center), vision, hearing, taste, and smell. This point is connected to four siras (arteries) associated with the nose, ears, eyes, and tongue, through which the Nasya dravya spreads into various strotasas (vessels and nerves), facilitating the removal of vitiated Doshas from the head.

Classification of Nasya Karma:

All the Acharyas have classified Nasyain different way. According to Prayogbheda (method of administration)

Table 1: Classification of Nasya Karma

Sr. No. / Acharyas	Charaka Ch.Si 9/89-91 ⁸	Sushruta Su.Chi. 40/21 ³	Vagbhata A.H.Su.20/7 ⁹	Sharangadhara Sha.U.8/11 ¹⁰
1.	Navana (Snehana, Shodhana)	Nasya	Snehana (Marsha, Pratimarsha)	Avapida
2.	Avapida (Shodhana, stambhan)	Avapida	Avapida (Kalka)	Pradhmana
3.	Dhumpana (Rechana)	Pradhmana	Dhmapana (Virechana, Churna)	-
4.	Dhuma (Prayogika, Snehika, Vairechanika)	Shirovirechana	-	-
5.	Pratimarsha (Snehana, shodhana)	Pratimarsha	-	-

According to Ashrayabheda (various parts of drug utilised): Acharya Charaka 11:-

1) Mula 2) Twaka 3) Patra 4) Pushpa 5) Phala 6) Kanda 7) Niryasa

According to Karmabheda (Mode of action):

Table 2: Karmabheda (Mode of action)

Sr. No. / Acharya	Charaka Ch.Si. 9/92 ¹²	Sushruta Su.Chi. 40/21 ³	Asthang Hrudaya A.H.Su. 20/2 ¹³	Sharangdhar Sha.U.8/2 ¹⁴
1.	Rechana	Nasya (Pratimarsha)	Virechana	Brihmana
2.	Tarpana	Shirovirechana (Pradhmana, Avapida)	Brihmana	Rechana (Pradhmana, Avapida)
3.	Shaman	-	Shaman	-

Nasya Pranidhana Kala:

According to the ancient texts, Nasya karma is scheduled based on the seasonal variations and the predominance of Doshas in the body (Doshavastha). The timing (kala) of Nasya administration is adjusted according to the specific doshic conditions and the severity of the ailment. Generally, Nasya is recommended during the pravritti, Vasanta (spring), and Sharada (autumn) seasons as per Acharya Charaka's teachings. However, Nasya can also be administered during any season in cases of emergency[7].

Nasya Matra:

Acharya Sushruta and Vagbhata have prescribed the dosage of Nasya in the form of Bindu (drops). One Bindu refers to the drop that forms after dipping the tips of the index finger's two phalanges (Pradeshini)[8].

Table 3: Nasya Matra

Sr. No.	Dosha	Kala
1	Kaphaja disease	Prataha/ Purvanha
2	Pittaja disease	Madhyana
3	Vataja disease	Aparanaha/ Sayankala

Sr. no.	Bala	Acharya Sushruta ¹⁷		Acharya Vagbhata ¹⁸	
		Sneha/Nasya	Avapida/Shirovirechana	Marsh/Sneha	Avapida
1	Uttam	64(Panishukti)	8	10	8
2	Madhyam	32(1 Shukti)	6	8	6
3	Avara	8	4	6	4

Preparation of the Patient:

Before administering Nasya, the patient is instructed to relieve themselves from natural urges. Following this, the face is washed with lukewarm water, and external oleation (Bahya Snehana) is performed by applying oil (Taila) to the neck region (Manya pradesh), facial region (Mukha pradesh), and sweating over it. The patient is then positioned comfortably in a supine position on a table, with the head slightly lowered using a pillow. The head is extended between 300 to 450 as needed during the administration of Nasya drops[9].

Pradhana Karma (Main Procedure):

After the preparatory steps, the patient's eyes are covered with a four-folded cloth (Chaturguna vastra). Using the left hand's index finger (Vama pradeshini), the tip of the patient's nose is gently elevated, and the medicine is instilled into both nostrils sequentially. One nostril is closed while administering to the other, and then vice versa, using a Gokarna or dropper. The patient is advised to remain relaxed during and after the Nasya administration[10].

Paschat Karma (Post-procedure):

Following Nasya administration, the patient remains in a supine position for 100 matra kalas (about 10 minutes) and spits out any secretions that reach the mouth without swallowing them. The palms and soles of the patient are rubbed thoroughly with hands. According to Acharya Sushruta's advice, Gandush (gargling) should also be performed[11].

The Mukha roga (Oral cavity diseases) indicated for Nasya karma are:

Sr. No.	Disease Name	Sr. No.	Disease Name
1	Shitad (Gingivitis)	13	Rohini (Diphtheria)
2	Danta Puppatak (Periodontal Abscess)	14	Vataja Rohini (Faucial diphtheria)
3	Danta veshtak (Chronic Periodontitis)	15	Kaphaj Rohini (Faucial diphtheria complicatory)
4	Saushir (Periodontitis)	16	Sarvasar (Stomatitis)
5	Upakush (Inflammatory Periodontitis)	17	Vataja - Mukhpak (orolabial Herpes)
6	Danta Harsh (Hyperesthesia of tooth)	18	Khandostha (Cleft lip)
7	Krimi danta (Dental caries)	19	Vataja- Oshtaroga
8	Chala danta (Tooth mobility)	20	Kaphaja Oshtaroga
9	Shitadanta (Cracked Tooth)	21	Pittaja- Jivhakantak (Benign migratory glossitis)
10	Dantashool (Tooth ache)	22	Talushosh (Xerostomia)
11	Vaidharbha (Traumatic Periodontitis)	23	Arbuda (Carcinoma of palate)
12	Danta Nadi (Alveolar fistula)	24	Putimukha (Halitosis)

DISCUSSION

Nasya karma holds significant importance as a Shodhana procedure in Urdhwajatrugata Roga (diseases affecting the organs above the clavicle). According to Acharya Vagbhata, Nasa (nose) serves as the pathway to Shira (head). It is a crucial route for drug administration known to our ancient Acharyas (teachers). Nasya is employed both preventively and curatively for treating local and systemic diseases. Acharya Vagbhata's teachings elucidate its mode of action (A.S. Su.20/2,29): drugs administered through the nose access the Shringataka marma (vital points) of the head, which are interconnected with the siras (blood vessels) of Nasa (nose), Netra (eyes), Shrotra (ears), and Kantha (throat). The drug disperses through these vessels, expelling morbid Doshas (pathological substances) from the Uttamang (upper body).

Drugs administered via the nasal route are rapidly absorbed through the mucous membranes into the bloodstream. They then travel via the facial vein, leading to retrograde blood flow through the inferior ophthalmic vein and into the venous sinuses of the brain (Shira). After absorption, the drug follows neural (olfactory and trigeminal nerves) and circulatory (cavernous sinus) pathways to reach its site of action. Nasya karma stimulates the peripheral olfactory system. Prior to Nasya karma, Snehana (oleation therapy) and Swedana (sudation

therapy) are performed on the patient. Snehana and Swedana help to loosen adherent Doshas. The Nasya dravya (medicated substance used for Nasya) stimulates numerous nerve endings located on the mucous membrane's surface, including olfactory and trigeminal nerves. This stimulation triggers impulses transmitted to the central nervous system, promoting improved circulation and nourishment of organs, thereby alleviating diseases.

CONCLUSION

Shira (head) is revered as Uttamang (supreme body part) and safeguarding its health is paramount to prevent ailments. Nasya karma stands out as the foremost Shodhana procedure for diseases related to Urdhwajatru. By administering the Nasya dravya (medicated substance) into the nostrils, it is absorbed through the highly vascular mucous membrane of the nose. Subsequently, the drug follows neural and circulatory pathways to reach its therapeutic target. Nasya karma proves to be a cost-effective and less intricate therapy compared to other Shodhana procedures. It enhances the functioning of sense organs and is relatively straightforward to administer, making it a highly efficient treatment method.

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