SHANKA PRAKSHALANA - A YOGIC CLEANING OF THE GASTRO INTESTINAL TRACT
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Shanka Prakshalana is one of the 108 Mala Shoddhana Karmas and combines the benefits of three Shat Karmas; namely Dhauti, Nauli and Basti by cleaning the upper, middle and lower parts of the gastro-intestinal tract (GIT) respectively.

It is constituted by four Kriyas (dynamic techniques) that push the ingested lukewarm saline through the GIT in a rapid and jet like manner thus cleaning it thoroughly. The warmth of the water helps improve the local circulation of the digestive tract while the salt helps heal raw surfaces produced by forceful cleaning away of stuck-up matter.

TECHNIQUE:
You need to drink 2 cups (600ml) of warm saline and then do the first round of the four practices one after the other.

Then drink one cup (300ml) followed by each practice separately (4 cups and 4 practices) for at least 6 more rounds making a total of 26 cups of warm saline

**Kriya-1:** The first practice is the one where you stand with the legs 2 feet apart and interlock the fingers of both hands and open them **outwards**-this opens the pyloric sphincter. Bend forward to 90°. Then as you breathe in stretch up to the right without straightening the back and take your arms up to the right while looking at them. Then breathe out and come back to the centre. Then breathe in and stretch up to the left in a similar manner. Do the entire sequence on right and left for 3 rounds. This opens the pyloric sphincter and enables the duodenum to be cleaned by the jet of water. It unplugs the blocked up biliary and pancreatic openings in the 2nd part of the duodenum through which the bile and pancreatic juices come into the intestine.

**Kriya-2:** The second practice is where you stand with your feet 2 feet apart and then stretch your arms out to the side as if preparing for Trikona Asana. Then as you breathe in turn to the right with a good twist and bend the left elbow. With a Bhastrika-like out-breath perform a few jerky movements further to the right to create a greater twisting pressure as the water flows into the small intestine and passes through the bends and twists therein. Then repeat on the left side and do the entire sequence for 3 rounds. This enables the water to jet through the multifold curves of the small intestines clearing away any blockages in the villi-laden tract, thus facilitating improved absorptive capacity.
**Kriya-3:** The third practice is done from the lying down prone position. Come up into the Kokila Asana where you are balanced on the two hands and the toes of both feet with the spine erect. After attaining to the position, breathe in and twist to the right and try to look at the left heel. Then breathe out and come back to the centre and repeat on the left. Do the entire sequence 3 times and then relax on the floor for a short time. This opens the ileo-cecal valve and lets the jet of water rush into the large intestine to flow though to the sigmoid colon and rectum. This is partly facilitated by the semi-horizontal body position and the twist given when looking over the shoulder at the opposite heel.

**Kriya-4:** The fourth practice is done by sitting in the Utkat Asana, the full squat. Hold the outside of the knees and let the right knee be dominant over the left. Compress the knees against each other as you breathe in and then relax them as you breathe out. Repeat on the left with the left knee dominant to the right. Do 3 rounds of the entire sequence. This facilitates the evacuation response triggered by the intense pressure over the sigmoid colon and rectum as well as the squatting position.

Continue the set of 4 practices for 6-10 rounds with the drinking of one cup of warm saline between each of the practices. This is done until the water coming out is as clear and clean as the water being drunk!

**ADDITIONAL POINTS ON THE SHANKA:**

- The Shanka may be done on its own or on the first day of the fast.
- It is important to be well hydrated in the preparation to the Shanka and so at least 2-2.5 litres of water must be drunk per day in the preceding week.
- After completing the practice it is useful to lie down in Shavasana and place the legs on a big pillow or against the wall to have at least 30° elevation. This helps stop the continuous outflow of the bowels sooner than latter.
- Keep yourself warm after the Shanka as the body temperature may fall a couple of degrees making you feel colder than usual.
- When the Shanka is done with a fast -the first day is fruit fast, the second day is the Shanka, then another two days of water fast is done and then the last day of the 5 day Sadhana is fruit. It is important to break the fast in a proper manner by being careful of the foods one eats as they come back to the normal diet so as not to over load the system.
- When done with the Ekadasi, the 1st day of the Ekadasi is with the fruits, the 2nd with the Shanka and so on. The Ekadasi programme is best started on a new moon (Amavasa) or full moon (Poornima).