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

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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*, *Sapta Dhatus* (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 *Udvardhana*. Its prime role is to maintain health. Its importance in maintaining health is discussed in various ayurvedic texts. But still, its whole importance and practical utility do not fully recognize. Hence efforts are made to explain *Snana* & its benefits in detail as described in Ayurvedic literature.

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 are *Mana*, *Karma*, *Kala*, *Sharir* and *Vaka Saucha*. *Gita* and *Vasistha Samhita* also mentioned two types of *Saucha* as *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 *Dinacharya*.

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Snana should be done every day as explained in *manusm-
ruti* (*Snanam Samachareth Nithyam*).⁴ *Acharya Charaka*
says that *Snana* is the best way to remove fatigue (*Snanam
Shramaharaanam Shreshtam*).⁵ 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 stimu-
lant and gives longevity as explained by *charak*.⁶ It removes
fatigue, sweat and dirt from the body. Taking bath is aus-
picious, enhances virility, longevity, strength, compactness
and *Ojas*.

Matra of Snana⁷

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 el-
ephant) 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 pur-
pose and it include bathing.⁷

Time of Snana

Acharyas have mentioned that one should take bath early in
the morning⁸. 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), *Sarhasu*, *Garta* and *Prastravana*.

Classes of Snana - There are 3 classes of *Snana*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 under-
taken like in a temple tank etc.

Types of Snana⁹

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 *AgneyaS-
nana*
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 *Divy-
aSnana*
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, libi-
do stimulant and prolongs life. It helps relieving fatigue, re-
moves sweating and dirt from the body. It promotes strength
and endurance in our body.¹⁰ Taking bath regularly is auspi-
cious, increases virility, longevity, strength, compactness and
Ojas of the body. It helps in curing tiredness, sweat and im-
purities of the body.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 re-
lieve 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 miti-
gates stupor and sins. It provides satisfaction, enhances viril-
ity, purifies the blood and improves our digestive power.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 som-
nolence, fatigue, sweating, dirt and bodily heat. It removes
itching, increases the appetizing power, allays thirst and de-
stroys drowsiness and sin.¹³

According to *Yogratnakara*, properties of regular *Snana* are
like - relieves one from all types of unwholesome and of sin-
ful 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. Im-
proves the digestive fire. Improves sexual vigour and libido
of an individual, relieves one from fatigue.¹⁴

According to *Bhavprakash*, even rubbing the entire body
with a cloth just after bathing improves colour and com-
plexion of the skin, removes itching and various illness of
skin.^{15,16}

According to *Kalyanakaraka*, a bath enhances satisfaction,
strength, Luster, health, long life, the normalcy of the hu-
mours 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)^{17,18}

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 *Kapha dosha*.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* (distension of abdomen), *Pinasa* (rhinitis), *Ajeerna* (indigestion), *Bhuktavat* (immediately after taking food), *Jwara* (fever), *Karna Shoola* (earache), *Anila* (Vata), *Arochak* (anorexia) and also persons suffering from *Netra* (eye), *Aasya* (oral), *Karna* (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 should not be done naked. While taking bath in a well or pond built by others, bathing should not be done without taking out a handful of mud from the floor five times (taking out 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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