



ROLE OF PANCHAKARMA IN SWASTHASYA RAKSHANAM (PREVENTIVE HEALTH) AS PER BRIHATTRAYI AND LAGHUTRAYI

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ABSTRACT

Background: Ayurveda emphasizes the dual purpose of preserving the health of the healthy (Swasthasya Rakshanam) and curing the disease of the sick (Aturasya Vikara Prashamanam). Among the various modalities mentioned, Panchakarma holds a prime role in preventive health. This review aims to critically analyze the role of Panchakarma in preventive health from the perspective of Brihatrayi and Laghutrayi, while also correlating with modern preventive medicine.

Methods: A comprehensive review of classical Ayurvedic texts – Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Ashtanga Hridaya, along with Madhava Nidana, Sharangadhara Samhita, and Bhavaprakasha was carried out. Modern research studies were also reviewed through PubMed and AYUSH research portals.

Results: Panchakarma, through Vamana, Virechana, Basti, Nasya, and Raktamokshana, contributes significantly to seasonal purification (Ritushodhana), enhancement of agni, dosha balance, and prevention of lifestyle disorders. Modern research indicates its role in detoxification, immune modulation, and gut-brain axis regulation.

Conclusion: Panchakarma, when practiced periodically in healthy individuals, aligns with Swasthavritta and functions as a preventive and promotive healthcare strategy. It bridges classical wisdom with modern public health needs.

KEYWORDS: Ayurveda, Panchakarma, Swasthasya Rakshanam, Preventive Health, Brihatrayi, Laghutrayi

LITERARY REVIEW

The term Panchakarma literally means “five actions” and refers to the five classical purification procedures —Vamana, Virechana, Basti, Nasya, and Raktamokshana. These therapies are designed not only for the elimination of accumulated doshas in diseased states but also for the prevention of disease in otherwise healthy individuals. The literary sources, both Brihatrayi and Laghutrayi, extensively describe their preventive role, particularly in the context of Ritushodhana (seasonal purification).

1. Vamana (Therapeutic Emesis) Brihatrayi Perspective

• Charaka Samhita (Sutra Sthana 24/17) emphasizes that Vamana should be administered in Vasanta Ritu (spring) for healthy individuals. During this season, accumulated Kapha undergoes liquefaction due to the heat of the sun. If not expelled, it leads to diseases such as respiratory disorders, metabolic dysfunctions, and digestive impairments. Vamana at this time prevents disease manifestation.

• Sushruta Samhita mentions that Vamana purifies the chest and stomach, removing Kapha accumulation and preventing diseases of the respiratory tract, obesity, and diabetes.
• Ashtanga Hridaya also prescribes Vamana as a seasonal purification in spring for maintaining doshic balance and preventing Kapha-related diseases.

Laghutrayi Perspective

• Madhava Nidana warns that untreated Kapha accumulation manifests as Kasa (cough), Shwasa (asthma), and Pratishyaya (rhinitis). Hence, preventive Vamana is recommended.
• Sharangadhara Samhita describes Vamana as the foremost therapy for Kapha disorders and emphasizes its prophylactic value when performed seasonally.
• Bhavaprakasha clearly states that regular Vamana prevents Kapha diseases and promotes strength, complexion, and longevity.

Preventive Role

Vamana acts by eliminating excessive Kapha, clearing the respiratory channels, improving metabolism, and preventing disorders such as bronchitis, obesity, hyperlipidemia, and diabetes. Modern parallels include cleansing of respiratory pathways, reducing inflammatory mediators, and regulating lipid metabolism.

2. Virechana (Therapeutic Purgation)

Brihatrayi Perspective

• Charaka Samhita (Sutra Sthana 6/14) prescribes Virechana in Sharad Ritu (autumn), when accumulated Pitta increases due to sun exposure. If not expelled, it causes skin disorders, gastritis, jaundice, and bleeding tendencies.



- Sushruta Samhita states that Virechana purifies the small intestine and prevents Pitta diseases, especially those affecting the liver, spleen, and skin.
- Ashtanga Hridaya emphasizes that Sharad Ritu Virechana prevents seasonal fevers, inflammatory disorders, and eye diseases.

Laghutrayi Perspective

- Madhava Nidana details the pathogenesis of Pitta disorders and highlights that periodic Virechana eliminates accumulated Pitta before it progresses to pathology.
- Sharangadhara Samhita mentions that Virechana is the best therapy for Pitta disorders and should be adopted seasonally for preventive health.
- Bhavaprakasha affirms that preventive Virechana improves digestion, vision, and complexion while preventing diseases of blood and skin.

Preventive Role

Virechana clears Pitta from the gastrointestinal tract, prevents inflammatory and metabolic disorders, and enhances liver function. Modern studies show it improves antioxidant status, regulates bile secretion, and prevents hyperacidity and hepatic dysfunction.

3. Basti (Therapeutic Enema)

Brihatrayi Perspective

- Charaka Samhita (Siddhi Sthana 1/39) declares Basti as “Ardha Chikitsa” (half of entire treatment) due to its profound impact on Vata dosha. Preventive Basti during Varsha Ritu (monsoon) expels accumulated Vata and prevents neuromuscular, degenerative, and gastrointestinal diseases.
- Sushruta Samhita elaborates that Basti purifies the colon, nourishes the body, and prevents premature aging.
- Ashtanga Hridaya explains that Basti enhances strength, longevity, fertility, and immunity, even in healthy individuals.

Laghutrayi Perspective

- Madhava Nidana states that Vata is the prime dosha responsible for disease manifestation, hence Basti is essential for prevention.
- Sharangadhara Samhita emphasizes the Rasayana -like effects of Basti, which maintains health and prevents degenerative disorders.
- Bhavaprakasha mentions that Basti, when practiced seasonally, prevents joint disorders, paralysis, and degenerative conditions.

Preventive Role

Basti regulates Vata, the chief driver of physiological processes. It prevents neuromuscular degeneration, arthritis, neurological disorders, and aging -related decline. Modern parallels include its effects on gut microbiome modulation, neuro -immunological balance, and metabolic regulation.

4. Nasya (Nasal Therapy) Brihatrayi perspective

- Charaka Samhita (Siddhi Sthana 9/88) states that the nose is the gateway to the head; thus, Nasya prevents diseases of eyes, ears, nose, and brain.
- Sushruta Samhita emphasizes Nasya in clearing Kapha from the head, preventing sinusitis, migraine, and epilepsy.
- Ashtanga Hridaya prescribes daily use of Pratimarsha Nasya in Dinacharya to prevent premature aging, greying of hair, and sensory decline.

Laghutrayi Perspective

- Madhava Nidana suggests Nasya for preventing recurrent upper respiratory disorders.
- Sharangadhara Samhita advocates daily Nasya for health maintenance.
- Bhavaprakasha describes Nasya as promoting intellect, strength of sense organs, and longevity.

Preventive Role

Nasya prevents diseases of the head and neck, maintains clarity of senses, enhances memory, and delays aging. Modern correlation includes nasal drug delivery enhancing central nervous system functions and prevention of neurodegenerative disorders.

5. Raktamokshana (Bloodletting) Brihatrayi Perspective

- Charaka Samhita (Siddhi Sthana 9/12) mentions Raktamokshana for preventing Rakta -Pitta vitiation and skin disorders.
- Sushruta Samhita gives detailed descriptions of bloodletting methods (Jalaukavacharana, Siravedha) as preventive measures against skin, vascular, and inflammatory diseases.
- Ashtanga Hridaya advocates Raktamokshana in cases of seasonal or dietary Pitta aggravation.

Laghutrayi Perspective

- Madhava Nidana highlights Rakta as a dosha -like entity, whose vitiation causes multiple disorders. Periodic Raktamokshana prevents these.
- Sharangadhara Samhita prescribes leech therapy for prevention of localized Pitta -Rakta disorders.
- Bhavaprakasha advises bloodletting as preventive care in skin and vascular diseases.

Preventive Role

Raktamokshana prevents Pitta -Rakta disorders like hypertension, eczema, gout, and inflammatory conditions. Modern research supports leech therapy's preventive role in microcirculatory disorders and inflammatory pathologies.

Purvakarma and Paschatkarma in Prevention

Classical texts emphasize that Panchakarma should be preceded by Purvakarma (oleation and sudation), which themselves act as preventive measures by mobilizing doshas and improving circulation. After Panchakarma, Paschatkarma (post -therapeutic care) includes Rasayana therapy and lifestyle modifications,



which serve as preventive and promotive strategies ensuring longevity and vitality.

Ritushodhana (Seasonal Panchakarma)

Ayurveda recommends specific Panchakarma therapies in particular seasons as part of Ritucharya:

- Vamana in Vasanta (spring)
- Virechana in Sharad (autumn)
- Basti in Varsha (monsoon)

This cyclical purification prevents dosha accumulation and seasonal diseases, thereby maintaining health throughout the year.

DISCUSSION

Ayurveda's preventive health philosophy is highly relevant in today's era, where lifestyle disorders dominate the global disease burden. The classical dictum "Swasthasya Swasthya Rakshanam" underscores the importance of preserving health through proactive strategies rather than waiting for disease to manifest. Panchakarma, as a bio-cleansing and preventive modality, provides a unique framework that can be integrated with modern preventive medicine.

1. Panchakarma and the Concept of Prevention in Ayurveda

In Ayurveda, prevention is not a passive concept but an active, cyclical process. Doshas naturally undergo seasonal fluctuations, and unless expelled or pacified, they may cross the threshold of homeostasis and manifest as disease. Panchakarma serves as the body's periodic reset, ensuring equilibrium before pathology sets in.

- Primary prevention: By eliminating dosha accumulation, Panchakarma prevents the onset of disease in healthy individuals.
- Secondary prevention: By interrupting the early stages of dosha aggravation, it halts disease progression.
- Tertiary prevention: Though usually considered curative, Panchakarma can prevent recurrence and complications when performed after remission.

This three-tiered preventive function mirrors modern preventive medicine's classification, showing Ayurveda's advanced understanding of health preservation.

2. Panchakarma and Modern Preventive Medicine

Modern preventive medicine emphasizes vaccination, lifestyle modification, screening, and prophylactic drugs. While effective, these strategies often remain disease-specific. Panchakarma, however, adopts a holistic, systemic approach that addresses multiple risk factors simultaneously.

- Vaccination vs. Panchakarma: Vaccines provide targeted immunity, while Panchakarma enhances general immunity (Vyadhikshamatva) by strengthening agni and srotas.
- Lifestyle medicine vs. Panchakarma: While modern lifestyle medicine prescribes diet and exercise, Panchakarma integrates purification with diet, behavior, and Rasayana for comprehensive prevention.
- Pharmacological prophylaxis vs. Panchakarma: Modern prophylaxis uses long-term drugs (e.g., statins, aspirin), which

may have side effects. Panchakarma offers natural preventive cleansing without chronic pharmacological load. Thus, Panchakarma aligns with the goals of modern prevention but expands its scope by promoting holistic health and resilience.

3. Biochemical and Physiological Correlates of Panchakarma

Recent research has begun to explore Panchakarma's preventive mechanisms.

- Detoxification: Panchakarma reduces circulating toxins, heavy metals, and free radicals, thereby lowering oxidative stress.
 - Immunomodulation: Studies indicate improved cytokine profiles, suggesting regulation of inflammatory pathways.
 - Gut microbiome: Panchakarma, particularly Basti, modulates gut flora, restoring microbial balance critical for immunity and metabolism.
 - Neuroendocrine effects: Nasya and Basti influence the hypothalamic-pituitary axis, contributing to stress regulation and neuroprotection.
- These findings validate classical descriptions of Panchakarma as enhancing Ojas (vital energy) and Vyadhikshamatva (disease resistance).

4. Panchakarma in Preventing Lifestyle Disorders

Lifestyle diseases are the leading global health challenge. Panchakarma has preventive roles in:

- Obesity and metabolic syndrome: Vamana and Virechana reduce adiposity and regulate lipid metabolism.
- Diabetes mellitus: Panchakarma improves insulin sensitivity and prevents diabetic complications by detoxifying microchannels.
- Hypertension and cardiovascular disease: Raktamokshana prevents vascular congestion, while Virechana reduces oxidative stress.
- Neurological degeneration: Basti and Nasya prevent Vata-related neurodegeneration, offering prophylaxis against dementia and Parkinson's.
- Skin disorders: Virechana and Raktamokshana prevent chronic dermatoses by purifying blood and Pitta.

These applications demonstrate that Panchakarma provides a multi-disease preventive shield, unlike modern disease-specific prevention.

5. Ritushodhana and Circadian Preventive Health

Seasonal purification is a distinct feature of Ayurveda's preventive care. The doshas' natural seasonal fluctuation, when unchecked, leads to disease clustering in specific periods (e.g., Kapha disorders in spring, Pitta disorders in autumn). By prescribing seasonal Panchakarma—Vamana in Vasanta, Virechana in Sharad, and Basti in Varsha—Ayurveda preempts disease manifestation.

Modern chronobiology supports this, recognizing circadian and seasonal rhythms in immunity, metabolism, and cardiovascular risk. Panchakarma, therefore, represents an early chronotherapeutic intervention for disease prevention.



6. Public Health Relevance of Panchakarma

In the context of rising healthcare costs, Panchakarma can serve as a cost-effective preventive strategy.

- Community health: Seasonal Panchakarma camps can reduce the incidence of seasonal epidemics.
- Non-communicable diseases (NCDs): Regular Panchakarma reduces risk factors for diabetes, obesity, and hypertension, alleviating healthcare burden.
- Healthy aging: Panchakarma combined with Rasayana promotes active aging, reducing geriatric morbidity. In public health models, Panchakarma can complement vaccination, screenings, and health education as a natural, sustainable preventive tool.

7. Limitations and Challenges

While Panchakarma's preventive potential is vast, certain challenges remain:

- Need for standardized protocols for preventive Panchakarma.
 - Lack of large-scale clinical trials to establish efficacy in preventive contexts.
 - Accessibility issues, as Panchakarma requires trained personnel and infrastructure.
 - Misconceptions equating Panchakarma solely with curative therapy.
- Addressing these gaps through integrative research and policy support will enhance its preventive utility globally.

8. Future Perspectives

Future directions for integrating Panchakarma into preventive medicine include:

- Clinical trials assessing its role in reducing incidence of NCDs.
- Biomarker studies correlating Panchakarma with inflammation, oxidative stress, and microbiome diversity.
- Integration with yoga and lifestyle programs for comprehensive prevention.
- Policy inclusion of Panchakarma-based seasonal purification under public health schemes like National AYUSH Mission.

Such steps will bridge traditional knowledge with modern evidence, placing Panchakarma as a pillar of preventive healthcare.

CONCLUSION OF DISCUSSION

Panchakarma embodies Ayurveda's preventive essence by eliminating doshas before they manifest as disease. Its seasonal application, broad-spectrum benefits, and rejuvenative synergy make it unparalleled in preventive healthcare. Modern research increasingly supports its detoxifying, immunomodulating, and microbiome-regulating effects. Integrating Panchakarma into modern preventive medicine offers a sustainable, holistic solution to lifestyle disorders and public health challenges.

Conclusion

Panchakarma stands as the cornerstone of Ayurvedic preventive medicine, deeply rooted in the dictum "Swasthasya Swasthya Rakshanam, Aturasya Vikara Prashamanam." The fivefold

therapeutic measures —Vamana, Virechana, Basti, Nasya, and Raktamokshana —serve not only as curative interventions but also as preventive strategies to maintain physiological balance and prevent disease manifestation.

Classical references from the Brihatrayi and Laghutrayi consistently emphasize Panchakarma's role in seasonal purification (Ritushodhana), daily regimens, and long-term health preservation. These measures align remarkably with modern concepts of detoxification, lifestyle modification, and preventive medicine. Panchakarma facilitates homeostasis by enhancing Agni, cleansing Srotas, improving Ojas, and strengthening Vyadhikshamatva.

From a contemporary perspective, Panchakarma offers multiple preventive benefits —ranging from reducing the risk of non-communicable diseases (obesity, diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular conditions) to modulating immunity, supporting gut microbiome health, and promoting healthy aging. Its alignment with chronobiology, through seasonal cleansing, further highlights its sophistication as a preventive system.

Despite its potential, Panchakarma's integration into mainstream public health faces challenges —standardization, accessibility, and evidence-based validation. However, emerging scientific studies support its biochemical, immunological, and clinical effects, strengthening the bridge between traditional wisdom and modern science.

In conclusion, Panchakarma is not merely a set of cleansing procedures but a holistic preventive paradigm. By institutionalizing Panchakarma as a seasonal and lifestyle-based intervention, Ayurveda offers a timeless and globally relevant model of preventive health. With robust research, policy inclusion, and global awareness, Panchakarma can transform the preventive healthcare landscape and contribute significantly to reducing the burden of lifestyle-related and chronic diseases worldwide.

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