

WATER AND UṢAHPĀNA IN ĀYURVEDIC LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

Uṣaḥpāna is a term used to denote the practice of drinking water in the early morning immediately after getting up. This is believed to bestow good health and longevity.

This practice is not mentioned in earlier classics. However, water of various sources is described in all classics. Bath is very important as a physical and religious purificatory agent for which water is necessary. Suśrutasaṃhitā mentions that the best time for collection of bhauma water (water from earthly sources like tanks etc) is early morning. Only medieval works describe uṣaḥpāna. Anandakanda, Bhāvaprakāśa describe it in detail. It is found in medieval siddha and yoga works also; but yoga works mention the taking in of water through nostrils.

Uṣaḥpāna is a term used to denote the practice of drinking small quantity of water immediately after getting up in the early hours before sunrise. It is believed to bestow good health and longevity.

Dinacaryā (daily regimen) is dealt with in almost all medical classics of ancient and medieval periods. Under this title, the regimen from getting up in the early morning to going to bed in the night are discussed in detail. Sleep, sexual enjoyment and uṣaḥpāna, if included, are dealt with under rātrīcaryā (regimen of night). But uṣaḥpāna does not find place in any of the available āyurvedic ancient classics.

Water is described in all classics under dravyaguṇa (materia medica); guṇas (qualities or effects) of water of different sources are described.

It is well known that water has an important place in Indian tradition as a physical and religious purificatory agent. Water is praised very much in several ways in Indian tradition. In Vedic rites and later religious practices water attracted great importance as a physical, spiritual and religious purificatory agent.

Taking bath daily twice or at least once is compulsory. The qualities attributed to bath naturally apply to water also, when it is used for bath.

According to Carakasāmhita, snāna (bath) is pure (causes purification) removes tiredness, sweat and dirt from the body and has aphrodisiac and life-prolonging effects; giving strength to the body and ojas is also attributed. Aṣṭāṅgahr̥daya and Aṣṭāṅgasāṅgraha also describe snāna as dīpana (increasing the gastric fire), vṛṣya (aphrodisiac) and āyusya (life prolonging). Such qualities of bath are found mentioned at other places also.

The qualities or effects (guṇas) of water are mentioned in different medical classics. In Carakasāmhita all water is said to be originating from aindra (coming from Indra i. e. from the rain); this rain water, while falling and after falling on earth, is to be known according to the effects or influence of the region and time. Divya water-water collected directly from rain before dropping on the earth-is śuci (pure) and śiva (wholesome or auspicious). While commenting this, Cakrapāṇi quotes from the previous chapter as śivāḥ khalvāpaḥ.¹ In Carakasāmhita water of different seasons and different rivers is described. In Suśrutasaṁhitā also water of atmosphere is mentioned as having unmanifest taste, and as amṛta and jīvana. Amṛta is interpreted by Dalhaṇa as 'nectar-like', because it does not provoke humours. Increasing ojas and sustaining the life are meant by jīvana. After this water of different sources and different regions etc. is described. Similar qualities are mentioned by other classics and later nighaṇṭu works.

Hamsodaka is water of śarat season (period of two months between rainy and winter seasons) after the appearance of the star agastya.

After Varṣartu follows śarat, when the sky is clear and the sun and the moon appear clearly due to cloudless sky. Water in different sources settles down and is heated by the rays of the sun during day and cooled by the rays of the moon during night. This water after the appearance of agastya star, coinciding with śarat season is praised as very good and is equated to nectar. The word hamsa denotes both the sun and the moon. Water purified by the rays of the sun and moon is termed hamsodaka.

1. However, in the text, in place of śiva, saumya is found and it means water is cold or related to moon.

Hamsodaka is also referred to as effective and useful in many places in medical and non-medical literature. It is common to describe hamsodaka when the śarat season is described. In all these references water is praised as nectar-like and very wholesome to health; but uṣaḥpāna is not mentioned.

In Suśrutasamhitā, first the qualities of atmospheric water are described which are interesting. This water has no manifest taste, is nectar-like, jīvana (sustains the prāṇas-life), tarpaṇa (creates satisfaction) and is āśvāsajana (produces soothing effect). It also removes śrama (tiresomeness), pipāsa (thirst), drowsiness and (excessive) sleep. It is the best among the wholesome substances. This last quality is supported by the commentators because it can be given without any hesitation during all times, in all regions, and to all persons as well as in all diseases. These qualities which refer to the uncontaminated pure natural water do suggest that water has life-prolonging and health-improving qualities.

In Suśrutasamhitā, it is mentioned that the best time for the collection of bhauma water (water from earthly sources like tanks, rivers etc) is pratyuṣas i.e. early morning. This may be taken to suggest that it is better to drink water in the early morning.

Cārucaryā, a compilation from the works on nīti, vaidya and dharma by King Bhoja describes the daily regimen in a detailed manner. This work, supposed to belong to 11th century A. D. indicates uṣaḥpāna in only two verses.

Only two medieval works appear to have mentioned uṣaḥpāna in detail. These are Ānandakanda and Bhāvaprakāśa. This suggests that uṣaḥpāna was prevalent and popular prior to 16th century AD. No direct references are available in either medical or non-medical literature to prove the existence of the practice of uṣaḥpāna before this period. The detailed description of uṣaḥpāna in these two treatises suggests that it is a gradual development probably evolved by the influence of yoga or siddha.

Bhāvaprakāśa mentions that eight prasṛtis (handfuls) of water are to be taken in at the time of or just before the sun rise. Having done this, one lives for his full life-span of hundred years, devoid of disease

and old age. Bhāvaprakāśa also lays down that the proper time of drinking water starts from the fourth prahara (eighth part of a whole day) of the night and this is substantiated by a quotation of Bhoja. According to some other sūtra (name not quoted) the time is before the sunrise. This tantra also gives the quantity as 9 praṣṭhis. The water is qualified with the word paryuṣita (stale) which clearly shows that it is to be collected and kept in some utensil in the previous night. Bhāvaprakāśa also lists about 20 diseases which are cured by water taken at the end of the night.

The dinacaryā in Yaśastilakacampū of Somadeva of 10th century A. D. does not mention uṣaḥpāna.

Ānandakanda is a South Indian work on mainly rasa. It is said to be revealed by Mahābhairava and on this basis some scholars hold it as an ancient work but the internal evidence restricts the critics to allot it to a period later than 16th century AD. A big chapter of nine pages with 94 verses is devoted in Ānandakanda to Uṣaḥpānaraśāyana. The addition of the word rasāyana to uṣaḥpāna shows that this practice prolongs the span of life and delays the onset of old age. In this work the word rasāyana is also added to sadācāra, implying thereby that sadācāra (good conduct) also acts as rasāyāna.

In this chapter, Bhairavi, having heard several divine rasāyanas, asks Bhairava to expound a rasāyana which is easily available and easy to prepare, is divine and gives immediate results, and is useful and wholesome for children, women, impotent, old and diseased. Water of Gaṅgā, of a river, tank or well is to be filled in a new pot and kept on a mañca in the sun. Water will become cleared off of all defects by the divine sun rays; it should also be kept exposed to the rays of moon during night. Several fragrant substances like cardamom, uṣīra, camphor, sandal etc can also be added. It is also to be fanned by a fan which is made of uṣīra and on which water has been sprinkled. It is also named as hamsodaka. This is advised to be taken in before the appearance of the constellation anūrādhā in the sky.

Mānasollāsa, an encyclopaedic work by King Someśvara has a small section called 'pānīyabhoga'. The following verse praises the water "water is the life of living beings and life is dependent on water;

hence unconscious (beings) become alive (conscious) when they are sprinkled with water'. In Padārthaguṇacintāmaṇi, a siddha work, one small reference to uṣaḥpāna occurs. It mentions that a person who drinks water immediately after getting up, becomes healthy, his provoked pitta becomes normal, excretion of urine and stools goes without any obstruction i. e. normally and the deranged humours become normal. The date of this work is not known. It is possible that uṣaḥpāna might have entered āyurvedic field from siddha system.

In Yoga literature mention of this practice is made but drawing in water is through nostrils and the time is morning. This act is performed after attending to the daily excretory acts (passing of urine and stools and brushing the teeth). This may be a development of uṣaḥpāna or vice versa. The following verse in Gheraṇḍsaṃhitā is interesting : "Stand in neck deep water, draw in water through the two nostrils and throw it out through the nostrils. One should do this again and again. This is the great Mātāṅginī mudrā, the destroyer of old age and death".

One verse in Yogaratnākara also mentions drawing in water through nostrils, in the early morning after getting up at the end of the night. "A person who regularly takes in water through nose early morning at the end of the night, becomes intelligent, his sight becomes acute like eagle, his hair do not become grey, the skin does not show folds and he is freed from all the diseases".

There is a small mānuscript entitled 'uṣaḥpānīyam' in TMSSM Library, Tanjavur. The date and any other details are not known. It appears to be a compilation of late medieval period. After only one verse in praise of Lord Śiva (or moon) subject of uṣaḥpāna starts. There is no colophon. Though there are no clues to establish the identity of the compiler or date of it, it establishes the importance of uṣaḥpāna in late medieval period as it is an independent compilation in this special aspect. It states that uṣaḥpāna is rasāyana and is to be practised or followed by all, as it normalises all the three humours and gives strength to senses. This work advocates preferably the use of hamsodaka for uṣaḥpāna.

सारांश

आयुर्वेद साहित्य में जल एवं उषःपान

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प्रातःकाल शय्या त्याग के अविलम्ब बाद पानी पीने के अभ्यास का उषःपान शब्द से बोध होता है। ऐसा विश्वास है कि इससे स्वास्थ्य एवं दीर्घजीवन प्राप्त होते हैं।

प्राचीन संहिताओं में इसका कहीं उल्लेख नहीं मिलता है यद्यपि विभिन्न प्रकार के जलों का उल्लेख पाया जाता है। स्नान शारीरिक एवं धार्मिक शुचिता के साधन के रूप में अत्यधिक महत्त्वपूर्ण है जिसके लिये पानी अनिवार्य है। भौम जल के संग्रह के लिये सुश्रुतसंहिता में प्रातःकाल को उपयुक्त माना गया है। मध्ययुगीन साहित्य में ही उषःपान का जिक्र आता है। आनन्दकन्द और भावप्रकाश अधिक विस्तार पूर्वक उसका वर्णन करते हैं। मध्यकालीन सिद्ध एवं योग साहित्य में भी इसका उल्लेख मिलता है। किन्तु योग साहित्य में नासिका द्वारा जलग्रहण का विधान बताया गया है।