



Conceptual Review: Ushapaana And Its Clinical Significance

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ABSTRACT

In the realm of wellness and health, the significance of hydration cannot be overstated. Ushapaana(drink at dawn), a concept rooted in ancient Ayurvedic principles, offers a holistic approach to hydration that goes beyond mere fluid intake. It encompasses the idea of mindful consumption, balancing elements, and promoting overall well-being. In Ayurveda the root cause of all diseases is “Ama” (undigested form)which can be mainly correlated as the accumulation of toxic metabolic by products of poor digestion, therefore drinking water in morning can help prevent the diseases which are caused by Ama. So, it is very important to review about the benefits of Ushapaana and its role in the prevention of the diseases. In this article, we delve into the conceptual reviews of Ushapaana, exploring its essence, principles, and potential benefits

Keywords: Ushapaana, Brahma muhurta(auspicious time), Rasayana(essence)

Introduction

Ayurveda imparts the proper maintenance of health by prevention of diseases and curative management. Proper balance of all Doshas(body humors) Agni(digestive fire), Dhatus(body tissues) and proper Mala Kriyas(elimination processes) is regarded as the sign of state of Health. To maintain this health, recommends the procedures of daily routine, seasonal routine, eating habits, sleep, codes of good conduct etc, as per one's Prakriti(natural states). Ushapaana is one of the basic and applied aspects of being healthy. Bhava Prakasha, which is considered as Laghutrayi in Ayurvedic literature proposed the concept of Ushapaana for the first time. Water is the cradle of life¹. In Ayurveda it is explained first because of its importance in Susruta Samhitha. It is considered to be shreshta Anupana(special after drink)because of its Sarva rasa yonitvaat,(origin of all rasa)Sarvabhuta satmyatvaat(similarity in components), Jeevanadi gana yoga²(enriching formulation group). And becomes yoni(orgin) for all Dravyas. It is shresta for Ashwasana(soothing), Stambhana(to stop) and kledana³ (moistening)

Among Dinacharya(daily regimens), the first regimen is “Brahmi Muhurte uttishte”⁴ Or to wake up early in the morning before sunrise. 1 Muhurta (time)refers to 48minutes. A day consists of 30 Muhurtas i.e., 15 Muhurta in a day and 15 Muhurtas in the night. The 14th Muhurta of the night is called “Brahmi Muhurta”. This period is approximately one and half hours before sunrise. According to Ayurveda this is the ideal time for a person to wake up in the morning. This is the time in which Ushapaana is to be done.

Ushapaana

Usha is a Sanskrit word, means "aurora, dawn, early morning (sun rise)" and Paana means to drink. The water consumed at this time named Ushapaana. This has been explained as a part of daily regimen in Ayurveda. However, its scope extends beyond just the timing of water consumption. According to Ayurveda, the ancient Indian system of medicine, water is not merely a substance for quenching thirst but a vital element that influences bodily functions, energy levels, and mental clarity.

In Bhavaprakasha, the importance of water and its role in maintaining health is acknowledged, aligning with the principles underlying Ushapaana. The text emphasizes the quality, timing, and mindful consumption of water for promoting overall well-being, which are key aspects of Ushapaana.

Ushapan kaala

Usha kala time is described differently by different Shastras, a brief review in Jyothisha Shastra considers 26 Muhurtha in a day, so 3 am is consider as Brahma muhurtha. The exact time of Brahma muhurta varies from region to region as the time of sunrise is not uniform throughout the world. It is approximately two Muhurtas i.e. 96 minutes (almost 1.5hrs) before the sunrise. According to the Bhoja, Pashchima Yama of Ratri i.e. last 3 hours of night⁵. Other references mention as,

In applied way, Last Muhurta of Ratri that is 4:24am to 5:12am (if 6am taken as the time of sunrise) same as Brahma Muhurtha can be consider as Ushakala⁶.

Here water is advised to drink in the early morning, at this Ushakala.

Ushapaana Maatra

One should take atleast 8 Prasriti (measurement) approximately 1.4 litres of water which is stored at night before sunrise in this therapy of Ushapaana. Person who drinks this amount of water everyday at the sunrise time, becomes free from all diseases. Acharya Bhoja considers water which is kept overnight⁷.

सवितुः समुदयकाले प्रसृतीः पिबेदष्टौ ।

रोगजरा परिमुक्तो जीवेद्वत्सरशतं साग्रम् ॥ (भा.प्र.पू. 5/317)

Ushapaana Yoga

Practise of drinking Ushapaana eliminates problems due to Vata, Pitta, Kapha (body humors) and Kshataja/accidental factors. It also helps in haemorrhoids, edema, Grahani, fever, abdominal discomforts, old age, skin disorders, lipid disorders, urinary problems, bleeding disorders, pain of ear, throat, head and back, problems related to eyesight. A natural cure can be attained by the regular and consistant practise of the same⁸.

Ushapaana as Rasayana

As per Bhairavokta Anandakandah, Ushapaana acts as Rasayana, one of the unique concepts to be known and understood. A new pot filled early in the morning with water from any sources like Rain water (Gangmbu), River (Nadi), Lake (Tadaka/saras), Well (kupi), Well with steps (Vapi) is kept on a platform so that it receives abundant sunlight by which it becomes devoid of all Doshas during day time and cooled by cool rays of moonlight during night. After that, add small amounts of Ela (Elettaria cardamom), Ushira(Vetiveria zizanoides Linn), Karpura(Cinnamomum camphora Linn.), Chandana(santanum alba), then with patali(Stereospermum suaveolens Roxb), Ketaki(Pandanus odoratissimus), mallika(Jasminum sambac), utpala(Nymphaea nouchali). After that sprinkle water on a palm leaf fan and blow air again and again⁹.

As per Agni bala(digestion capacity), the person can start with a dose of 1Prasruta(96 ml /gm measurement)for 3/5/7 days and gradually increasing the dose in the unit of 1 Prasruta/ 1 Kudava till it reaches upto 16 Prasruta¹⁰. If one drink water like this, there will be no disease and even if one gets disease, get cured easily and person lives happily for 100 years and all the senses work properly¹¹.

Maximum duration of therapy: 6months-1year¹².

Principles of Ushapaana

1. Timing: Ushapaana emphasizes drinking water upon waking, preferably at dawn or before sunrise. This practice is believed to activate the body's systems, aid in cleansing toxins accumulated overnight, and kickstart metabolism.
2. Quality: The quality of water plays a crucial role in Ushapaana. Ayurveda suggests consuming water that is pure, clean, and preferably lukewarm. This facilitates better absorption and aids in maintaining the balance of bodily doshas (bio-energies).
3. Quantity: Ayurveda advises moderation in water intake, discouraging excessive consumption that could disrupt the body's natural processes. The ideal quantity varies based on individual constitution and environmental factors
4. Temperature: The temperature of water influences its effects on the body. Warm water aids digestion and circulation, while cold water can impair digestive fire and aggravate Vata dosha
5. Mindful Consumption: Ushapaana advocates mindful drinking, where one focuses on the act of hydrating, being present in the moment, and expressing gratitude for the water's life-giving properties. This mindful approach enhances the overall experience and fosters a deeper connection with oneself and nature.
6. Balancing Doshas: According to Ayurveda, the human body is governed by three doshas – Vata, Pitta, and Kapha – representing different elemental compositions. Ushapaana aims to balance these doshas through the consumption of water infused with specific herbs or spices tailored to individual constitutions.

Benefits of Ushapaana

1. Improved Digestion: Drinking water early in the morning stimulates the gastrointestinal tract, aiding in digestion and regular bowel movements. It also helps in flushing out toxins, promoting detoxification.
2. Enhanced Energy Levels: Proper hydration is essential for maintaining optimal energy levels throughout the day. Ushapaana replenishes fluids lost during sleep, hydrating cells and tissues to support physical and mental vitality.

3. Mental Clarity: Hydration is closely linked to cognitive function and mental clarity. Ushapaana hydrates the brain, enhancing focus, concentration, and overall cognitive performance.
4. Detoxification: By initiating the elimination of toxins accumulated overnight, Ushapaana supports the body's natural detoxification processes, promoting clearer skin, improved immunity, and overall well-being.

Practical Application:

Incorporating Ushapaana into daily life involves mindfulness and adherence to its principles. Starting the day with a glass of warm water, staying hydrated throughout the day, and avoiding excessive intake during meals are simple yet impactful practices. Additionally, infusing water with Ayurvedic herbs like ginger, cumin, or mint can enhance its therapeutic properties.

Discussion

Ushapaana is one of the procedures of Dinacharya (daily regimen) which fulfills the objectives of Ayurveda in prevention and management of diseases. After long hours of fasting at night so many harmful substances are accumulated in the body, drinking water early in the morning helps to flush out harmful substances that is accumulated and will help in cleansing the body from within. Morning water is also the greatest neutralizer, diuretic and anti-bacterial in nature¹³. Ushapaana in the morning is useful as it also helps curing the indigestion, due to the food consumed during the previous night. Ushapaana is practiced by drinking 4-6 glasses of lukewarm water early in the morning upon rising from sleep even before brushing the teeth. Large amount of the water can be due to the average length of the human intestine which is anywhere from 6 to 8.5 meters in length depending on size and age of the person it occupies, amplifies the need to drink this large volume.

A large quantity of water taken after an overnight fast of nearly 8 hours (sleeping hours) rehydrates the body as well as exerts high pressure on the rectum softening the faeces and completely expelling the faeces from the body. This aids in natural cleaning of the enzymes, mucous secreted during the previous day plus restoring the balance of the body. It purifies the colon makes nutrient absorption easier Ushapaana purifies the colon; excrete out toxins or Ama from body through faeces and urine¹⁴. It also stimulates kidney to produce more erythropoietin, that in turn increases formation of blood. It helps in relieving and delaying the onset of diseases like diabetes, hypertension, arthritis caused by water imbalance. It is especially useful for skin disorders and removes all the dirt and bacteria filled mucus from within the gut.

Conclusion

Ushapaana offers a holistic approach to hydration, blending ancient wisdom with modern science. By emphasizing the importance of timing, quality, and mindful consumption, it promotes not only physical health but also mental and spiritual well-being. Incorporating Ushapaana into daily routine rituals can lead to profound benefits, nurturing harmony within the body, mind, and soul. As we continue to explore and embrace diverse wellness practices, Ushapaana stands as a timeless reminder of the intrinsic connection between hydration, vitality, and holistic health.

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