



A CLINICAL STUDY ON THE EFFICACY OF VARISARA DHAUTI (SHANKHA PRAKSHALANA) IN IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE AMONG APPARENTLY HEALTHY INDIVIDUALS

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<https://doi.org/10.46607/iamj0813012025>

(Published Online: January 2025)

Open Access

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Article Received: 08/12/2024 - Peer Reviewed: 29/12/2024 - Accepted for Publication: 09/01/2025.



ABSTRACT

Relevance: In this modern era, faulty dietary habits such as increased intake of processed food, low-fibre diet, and sedentary lifestyle, along with increasing stress and anxiety, can lead to a harmful impact on quality of life. Thus, *Varisara Dhauti (Shankha Prakshalana)* may be helpful because it helps in the natural cleansing of the gastrointestinal tract. Also, it is a costless procedure because only warm saline water is required. **Aim:** To study the efficacy of *Varisara Dhauti* or *Shankhaprakshalana* in improving the quality of life of apparently healthy individuals. **Materials and Methods:** The WHOQOL-BREF questionnaire was adopted to evaluate the effectiveness of *Varisara Dhauti (Shankha Prakshalana)* in improving the Quality of life among 100 healthy individuals. One hundred healthy individuals were equally divided into two groups, 50 in each. In Group I, *Varisara Dhauti (Shankha Prakshalana)* was performed, and the procedure was repeated every 4 weeks for 8 weeks. In Group II, study subjects were observed for general health profiles. **Results:** In Group I, improvement in Domain 1(Physical Health) and Domain 2 (Psychological) was highly significant ($p<0.001$), improvement in Domain 3 (Social relationships) was moderately significant ($p=0.001$), and the quality of life of all the three domains improved from

moderate to good. Improvement in Domain 4 (Environment) was insignificant ($p=0.080$), and there was no change in quality of life. **Discussion:** It was found that after the procedure, an excellent response was found in Domain 2 (Psychological).

Keywords: *Varisara Dhauti*, Quality of Life, WHOQOL-BREF.

INTRODUCTION

Background:

Ayurveda emphasises prevention and health promotion, with the primary aim being the restoration of health in healthy individuals¹. *Swasthya Rakshana* holds remarkable importance in *Ayurveda*. This can be achieved by balancing three *Dosha*, i.e., *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*, where any imbalance may lead to a disease state or *Roga*. W.H.O (World Health Organization) defines health as a “state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely an absence of disease or infirmity”. For the restoration of health, various *Ayurvedic* texts have detailed descriptions of *Dincharya*, *Ratricharya*, *Sadvritta*, *Rasayana*, and *Ritu-Samshodhana*. *Samshodhana* has an essential place in *Ayurvedic* literature. It has been mentioned that the *Dosha* pacified by *Shamana Chikitsa* can re-aggravate, but the *Dosha* removed by *Samshodhana* can never be re-aggravated. In *Ayurvedic* Texts, *Panchakarma* is mentioned for *Samshodhana Karma*. Similarly, in *Yogic* Classics, *Shatkarma* has been explained as a tool for the elimination of vitiated *Kapha* and *Meda* as it is mentioned in *Hatha Yoga Pradeepika*² that if there is an excess of *Kapha dosha* and *Meda dhatu*, *shatkarma* (six types of *kriya*) should be performed first.

Yoga and *Ayurveda* are distinct sciences yet share the same Vedic roots and objectives. Cleansing practices are part of most Indigenous health systems, including *Yoga*, Naturopathy, or *Ayurveda*. In *Yogic* texts, six cleansing practices are described, which are called *Shatkarma*.

Dhauti, *Basti*, *Neti*, *Trataka*, *Nauli*, and *Kapaalbhati* are the six cleansing practices mentioned in *Hatha Yoga Pradipika (Ha.Y.P 2/22)*³ and *Gheranda Samhita (Gh.S.1/12)*⁴. These Practices help the body cleanse itself, which prevents various diseases and maintains Health.

According to *Gheranda Samhita*, *Dhauti* is divided into four parts: *Antara* (internal) *Dhauti*, *Danta*(Teeth) *Dhauti*, *Hrida Dhauti*(cardiac or chest region) and *Moola Shodhana* (rectal cleansing). *Antara Dhauti* (Internal cleansing) is divided into four parts: *Vatasara*, *Varisara*, *Agnisara*, and *Bahishkrita*⁵.

Varisara Dhauti is a type of *Antara Dhauti*. *Dhauti* refers to “Internal washing”, and *Vari* means “water”. Generally, the term *Shankha Prakshalana* is applied to it nowadays. *Shankha* means “conch”, and *Prakshalana* means “To wash completely”. The word *Shankha* is used to represent the entire alimentary canal from mouth to anus. It is a technique by which all the toxic materials accumulated in the gastrointestinal canal are washed out.

Significance: Nowadays, we have faulty dietary habits such as increased intake of processed food, low fibre diet (which may stick in the intestines and decrease the absorption of nutrients), and a sedentary lifestyle along with increasing stress and anxiety can lead to harmful impacts on quality of life. Thus, *Varisara Dhauti (Shankha Prakshalana)* may be helpful because it helps in the natural cleansing of the gastrointestinal tract. Also, it is a costless procedure because only warm saline water and the practice of some *Yogic Asana* are required in this procedure, as we know that our intestines are the carriers of many of the substances capable of causing diseases. If cleaned regularly by a natural process, one can maintain good health over time. The objective of *Varisara Dhauti (Shankha Prakshalana)* is to cleanse the gastrointestinal tract and to bring about a conditioning effect on the psychophysiological plane.

Review of Literature: Classical *Yogic* textbooks such as *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* and *Gheranda Samhita*, as well as other *Yogic* textbooks like *Asana Pranayama* and *Mudra Bandha*, were reviewed to

analyse the procedure of *Varisara Dhauti (Shankha Prakshalana)*.

Materials and Methods

Plan of the study:-

a) Conceptual Study-Detailed study of available descriptions from various classics on *Varisara Dhauti* or *Shankhaprakshalana* was done.

b) Clinical Study- 100 healthy study subjects were registered for clinical study. They were randomly divided into two groups:

Group I (Trial group) - *Varisara Dhauti (Shankha Prakshalana)* was performed in the study subjects under this group, and the procedure was repeated every four weeks for 8 weeks. Before undertaking *Varisara Dhauti (Shankha Prakshalana)*, five *Asana (Tadasana, Tiryak Tadasana, Kati Chakrasana, Tiryak Bhujangasana, Udarakarshana Asana)* were practised regularly for one week so that during the procedure, the *Asana* could be performed with ease.

Group II (Observational group) – Study subjects under this group were observed for general health profiles.

• Inclusion Criteria:

- i. Individuals are willing for trial.
- ii. Apparently, healthy individuals in the age group of 18-50 years.

• Exclusion Criteria :

- i. Those who were not willing to the trial.
- ii. Individuals below 18 years and above 50 years of age.
- iii. Those who had any associated chronic ailments like Diabetes Mellitus, Hypertension, Cardiac disorder, Renal disorder, Alcoholic liver disease, Chronic Peptic Ulcer, etc.
- iv. Pregnant and Lactating women.
- v. Menstruating women.

Laboratory Investigations: Routine laboratory investigations were done before and after the clinical trial to rule out any other pathological condition and improvement, if any.

Blood- Hb gm%, SGOT, SGPT, Lipid Profile, S. creatinine, Blood urea.

Assessment criteria: The assessment was based on changes in the WHOQOL-BREF score before and after the trial.

THE WHOQOL-BREF

		Very poor	Poor	Neither poor nor good	Good	Very good
1(G1)	How would you rate your quality of life?	1	2	3	4	5

		Very satisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
2(G4)	How satisfied are you with your health?	1	2	3	4	5

The following questions ask about **how much** you have experienced certain things in the last two weeks.

		Not at all	A little	A moderate amount	Very much	At extreme amount
3(F1.4)	To what extent do you feel that (physical) pain prevents you from doing what you need to do?	1	2	3	4	5
4(F11.3)	How much do you need any medical treatment to func-	1	2	3	4	5

	tion in your daily life?					
5(F4.1)	How much do you enjoy life?	1	2	3	4	5
6(F24.2)	To what extent do you feel your life to be meaningful?	1	2	3	4	5

		Not at all	A little	A moderate amount	Very much	Extremely
7(F5.3)	How well are you able to concentrate?	1	2	3	4	5
8(F16.1)	How safe do you feel in your daily life?	1	2	3	4	5
9(F22.1)	How healthy is your physical environment?	1	2	3	4	5

The following questions ask about **how** you experienced or were able to do certain things in the last two weeks.

		Not at all	A Little	Moderately	Mostly	Completely
10(F2.1)	Do you have enough energy for everyday life?	1	2	3	4	5
11(F7.1)	Are you able to accept your bodily appearance?	1	2	3	4	5
12(F18.1)	Do you have enough money to meet your needs?	1	2	3	4	5
13(F20.1)	How much information do you need in your day-to-day life?	1	2	3	4	5
14(F21.1)	To what extent do you have the opportunity for leisure activities?	1	2	3	4	5

		Very poor	Poor	Neither poor nor good	Good	Very good
15(F9.1)	How well are you able to get around?	1	2	3	4	5

The following questions ask you to say how **good or satisfied** you have felt about various aspects of your life over the last two weeks

		Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied
16(F3.3)	How satisfied are you with your sleep?	1	2	3	4	5
17(F10.3)	How satisfied are you with your ability to perform your daily living activities?	1	2	3	4	5
18(F12.4)	How satisfied are you with your work	1	2	3	4	5

	capacity?					
19(F6.3)	How satisfied are you with yourself?	1	2	3	4	5
20(F13.3)	How satisfied are you with your relationships?	1	2	3	4	5
21(F15.3)	How satisfied are you with your sex life?	1	2	3	4	5
22(F14.4)	How satisfied are you with the support you get from your friends?	1	2	3	4	5
23(F17.3)	How satisfied are you with the conditions of your living place?	1	2	3	4	5
24(F19.3)	How satisfied are you with your access to health services?	1	2	3	4	5
25(F23.3)	How satisfied are you with your transport?	1	2	3	4	5

The following question refers to **how often** you have felt or experienced certain things in the last two weeks.

		Never	Seldom	Quite often	Very often	Always
26(F8.1)	How often do you have negative feelings such as blue mood, despair, anxiety, and depression?	1	2	3	4	5

Scoring of WHOQOL-BREF

The WHOQOL-BREF produces four domain scores. Two items are examined separately. Domain scores are scaled positively (i.e. higher scores denote higher quality of life). The mean score of items within each domain is used to calculate the domain score. Mean scores are then multiplied by 4 to make domain scores comparable with those used in the WHOQOL-100 and subsequently transformed to a 0 to 100 scale using the formula below. A method for the manual calculation of individual scores is below:

Physical domain= $(6-Q3)+(6-Q4)+Q10+Q15+Q16+Q17+Q18) \times 4$

Psychological domain= $(Q5+Q6+Q7+Q11+Q19+(6-Q26)) \times 4$

Social Relationships Domain= $(Q20+Q21+Q22) \times 4$

Environment domain= $(Q8+Q9+Q12+Q13+Q14+Q23+Q24+Q25) \times 4$

Domain scores can be transformed to a 0-100 scale using the following formula:

TRANSFORMED SCORE= $(SCORE-4) \times (100/16)$

Procedure review:

Though there are a lot of techniques in the present day adopted by different *Yoga* and naturopathy schools, in this study, the method advocated by the Bihar School of *Yoga-Munger* was used. The procedure was divided into *Purva Karma*, *Pradhana Karma*, and *Pashchat Karma*.⁶ They are as follows:

1. Purva Karma

It was advised to follow a light and semi-liquid diet the night before undertaking this practice and avoid junk food and heavy fried food on the previous day of the procedure. Study subjects were advised to eat dinner between 7 p.m. and 8 p.m. and sleep at about 10:00 p.m. They were advised to pass their stool in the morning and take a bath before starting the process.

Requirements for *Shankhaprakshalana*:

- Clean and hot water
- *Saindhava lavana*
- *Khichari* (rice, moong daal, go ghrita)
- Vessel for drinking water
- Blanket
- Toilet
- Preparation of saline water (add 5gm salt/lit of lukewarm water and squeeze one lemon in it)

(Luke, warm saline water without lemon juice can induce vomiting, and lemon has cleansing properties.)

- Extra Hot water 2-3 litres/person.

2. Pradhana Karma

The process started early in the morning. Study subjects were advised to drink 500 ml (2 glasses) of lukewarm saline water in the Utkatasana position at a time. They were instructed not to drink the water too fast, as it could cause nausea and vomiting. After taking water, they were advised to perform five Asanas, i.e., *Tadasana*, *Tiryak-Tadasana*, *Kati-Chakrasana*, *Tiryak-Bhujangasana*, and *Udarakarshanasana* eight times each.

This completed the first round. It was advised not to rest between the rounds, to drink two glasses of lukewarm saline water again, and to repeat all five *Asanas* eight times each. (If no individual could drink 500ml (2 glasses) of water at once, then they were advised to drink 250ml (one glass) of water only.) It was advised to repeat this process until the feeling of urge to defecate comes. Study subjects were advised to leave the particular *Asana* and go to the toilet when urged to pass the stool. Then, after coming back again, they were advised to drink saline water and start from *Tadasana*. I was advised to continue drinking lukewarm saline water, performing *Asana*, and going to the toilet. Study subjects were advised to spend as little time in the toilet as possible; a minute or so is enough. The aim is to build up the internal cleansing pressure.

First, a solid stool is evacuated, followed by a mixture of stools and water. As the practice progresses, more water, and less solid stool are excreted. Eventually, Cloudy yellow water and almost clear water were evacuated. An average of 12-16 glasses was generally required before clear water had evacuated, but it varied from person to person.

Average time required for the procedure: The procedure took an average of 1.5 to 3 hours to complete, depending on a person's *Kostha*.

3. Pashchat Karma

a) *Kunjla kriya* – It was advised to perform *Kunjla Kriya* after 5-10 minutes of complete internal wash. The following are the steps to perform *Kunjla Kriya*:-

- ❖ After 5-10 min of complete internal wash, drink 500 ml (2 glasses) of lukewarm saline water.
- ❖ Stand and bend forward to vomit. Use two fingers to rub the tongue as deep as possible.
- ❖ Then all the excess water in the stomach comes out through the mouth (This step is essential. Otherwise, there could be repeated motions even after a long time of completion of the procedure).

b) *Shavasana*

Complete rest for about 45 minutes to 1 hour is essential after the *Shankha—Prakshalana* in *Shavasana*, with the body covered with a blanket to maintain the body temperature. Maintaining the mountain (silence) was advised. During this time, the whole digestive system is given a chance to revitalise itself. Passing urine at this time is perfectly normal.

c) *Special Meal*

After resting, specially prepared food, *Khichari* (rice and Moong lentils, no or a pinch of salt) with *Ghee*, was given. Eating this meal at the correct time is essential. It should not be delayed more than one hour after the procedure. The three components of the *Khichari* help restore correct digestive function.

- The cow's *Ghee* is necessary to coat the intestinal wall until the body produces a new lining.
- Rice provides easily digestible carbohydrates and occupies the space of the stomach. It also produces mucous, which protects the inner lining of the alimentary canal.
- *Moong Dal* is easily digestible and a source of protein. Protein is necessary for repairing the intestinal wall.
- The proper amount of *Khichari* must be eaten to relax the intestines and stretch the gut walls. Otherwise, they may cramp due to the absence of the bulk to which they are accustomed. This bulk maintains the tone and aids the intestine in resumed peristalsis. It is also important to prevent indigestion, diarrhoea, and constipation.
- After the procedure, complete rest is essential for the whole day. It is important not to sleep for at

least 3-4 hours after the first meal; it could cause lethargy and headaches. Silence should be maintained during this period, and physical and mental work should be avoided.

- **Second Meal-** Study subjects were advised to prepare *Khichari* for the late afternoon meal, i.e. about 6 hours after the first special meal. The stomach must be filled at both meals. At night, they were advised to take light food, i.e. Dal, chapati or rice without any spices and less salt with 1-2 teaspoons of ghee.

Study subjects were advised to follow the special precautions before and after the procedure.

Special Precautions to be taken before and after the procedure are as follows:

- Avoid junk food and heavy, fried food items on the previous day of the procedure.
- Dinner should be taken by 7-8 pm on the previous day.
- Avoid milk and its products on the same day after the procedure.

Observations and Results:

Table No. 1: Statistical representation of the effect of Varisara Dhauti (Shankha Prakshalana) on WHOQOL-BREF in Group I (Trial group):

This table comprises the mean B.T. and mean A.T. transformed scores, interpretation of quality of life, mean difference, percentage change, W critical value, p-value, and significance of the procedure.

WHOQOL-BREF	B.T		A.T		Mean Difference (A.T-B.T)	% change	W-critical	P Value	Significance
	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation					
Domain 1 (Physical Health)	46.08	Q.O.L. Moderate	80.00	Q.O.L. Good	33.92	73.6%	1275	<0.001	Highly Significant
Domain 2 (Psychological)	41.17	Q.O.L. Moderate	77.75	Q.O.L. Good	36.58	88.85%	1275	<0.001	Highly Significant
Domain 3 (Social Relationships)	57.33	Q.O.L. Moderate	62.83	Q.O.L. Good	5.50	9.59%	94	0.001	Moderately Significant
Domain 4 (Environment)	63.87	Q.O.L. Good	64.81	Q.O.L. Good	0.94	1.47%	87	0.080	Insignificant

The results revealed that:-

- Drink only warm water on the same day after the procedure. However, avoid drinking water for 2 hours after the procedure is completed.
 - Avoid heavy, spicy, non-vegetarian foods, oily, cold & other prepared market-packed food items for at least one week after the procedure.
 - Do not take a shower or bath after the procedure.
 - Protect yourself from direct air, fan, and cooler/air-conditioning.
 - Do not go outside before evening.
 - Avoid long journeys for 2-3 days after the procedure.
 - Avoid consuming citrus fruits on the same day as the procedure.
- Precautions**
- This procedure should be done in the morning with an empty stomach.
 - Light and comfortable clothes should be worn during practice.
 - It should be practised in a relaxed mood with no tension and under the expert's guidance.

- i. Domain 1 (Physical Health) was improved by 73.6%, which was statistically highly significant

($p < 0.001$), and quality of life improved from moderate to good. The effect was stable during the follow-ups.

- ii. Domain 2 (Psychological) was improved by 88.85%, which was statistically highly significant ($p < 0.001$), and quality of life improved from moderate to good. The effect was stable during the follow-ups.
- iii. Domain 3 (Social Relationships) improved by 9.59%, which was statistically moderately signif-

icant ($p < 0.01$), and quality of life improved from moderate to good. The effect was stable during the follow-ups.

- iv. Domain 4 (Environment) improved by 1.47%, which was statistically insignificant ($p > 0.05$), and quality of life remained good. The effect remained stable during the follow-ups.

Table No. 2: Statistical representation of the effect of WHOQOL-BREF in Group II (Observational Group):

This table comprises the mean B.T. and mean A.T. transformed scores, interpretation of quality of life, mean difference, percentage change, W critical value, p-value, and significance.

WHOQOL-BREF	B.T		A.T		Mean Difference (A.T-B.T)	% change	W-critical	P Value	Significance
	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation					
Domain 1 (Physical Health)	47.14	Q.O.L. Moderate	47.57	Q.O.L. Moderate	0.43	0.91%	15	0.313	Insignificant
Domain 2 (Psychological)	41.00	Q.O.L. Moderate	41.33	Q.O.L. Moderate	0.33	0.80%	10	0.125	Insignificant
Domain 3 (Social Relationships)	56.83	Q.O.L. Moderate	56.83	Q.O.L. Moderate	0.00	0%	0	1.000	Insignificant
Domain 4 (Environment)	63.94	Q.O.L. Good	64.13	Q.O.L. Good	0.19	0.29%	6	0.375	Insignificant

Table No. 3: Statistical representation of comparative Study of the two groups (Group I and Group II) based on WHOQOL-BREF

This table compares Group I, in which Varisara Dhauti (Shankha Prakshalana) was performed, with Group II, in which the procedure was not performed.

WHOQOL-BREF	Mean Difference		% change $\left[\frac{A.T-B.T}{B.T} \times 100 \right]$		% change difference	T value	P Value	Significance
	Group I	Group II	Group I	Group II				
Domain 1 (Physical Health)	33.92	0.43	73.6%	0.91%	72.69%	3767.00	<0.001	Highly Significant

Domain 2 (Psychological)	36.58	0.33	88.85%	0.80%	88.05%	3775.00	<0.001	Highly Significant
Domain 3 (Social Relationships)	5.50	0.00	9.59%	0%	9.59%	2824.50	0.039	Significant
Domain 4 (Environment)	0.94	0.19	1.47%	0.29%	1.18%	2702.5	0.221	Insignificant

- i. Domain 1 (Physical Health) in Group I demonstrated a 72.69% greater improvement than Group II, with the difference being statistically highly significant ($p < 0.001$).
- ii. Domain 2 (Psychological) in Group I demonstrated an 88.05% greater improvement than Group II, with the difference being statistically highly significant ($p < 0.001$).
- iii. Domain 3 (Social Relationships) in Group I demonstrated a 9.59% greater improvement than Group II, with the difference being statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).
- iv. Domain 4 (Environment) in Group I demonstrated a 1.18% greater improvement than Group II, but the difference was statistically insignificant ($p > 0.05$).

DISCUSSION

During the discussion, it was found that after the procedure, an excellent response was found in Domain 2 (Psychological). It may be because *Varisara Dhauti (Shankha Prakshalana)* is a method of detoxification that cleans the whole gastrointestinal tract. A healthy gut microbiome (the community of microorganisms in the digestive tract) supports the production of neurotransmitters like serotonin, which plays a key role in regulating mood, emotional well-being and reducing stress and anxiety; a marked response was found in Domain 1 (Physical Health) as this procedure reduced the formation of free radicals which may support a stronger immune system, thus may decrease the likelihood of illness. There was a mild response in Domain 3 (Social relationships) and Domain 4 (Environment). The quality of life in all three domains, i.e.

Domain 1, Domain 2 and Domain 3, was improved from moderate to good but not in Domain 4.

Physiology of *Shankha Prakshalana Asana*:

Tadasana opens the pyloric sphincter muscle of the stomach. So, the water that has been consumed during the procedure enters into the small intestine; *Tiryaka-tadasana* contracts both sides of intestinal layers repeatedly so that water can enter into intestinal layers quickly; *Katichakrasana* twists whole smooth muscles of intestine, then due to the pressure water passes down the intestinal layers; *Tiryaka-bhujangasana* opens the ileocecal valve and saline water enters into large intestine; *Udarakarshanasana* creates tremendous pressure over caecum, colon and rectum and then the person feels motion. Finally, stagnant stools, mucus and saline water from the GI tract are eliminated.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results, it can be concluded that *Varisara Dhauti (Shankha Prakshalana)* effectively improves the quality of life among Apparently Healthy Individuals. Further research may be done to see the effect of *Varisara Dhauti (Shankha Prakshalana)* on obesity, hyperlipidemia, and anaemia, as well as improvement in skin health and sleep regulation, as promising improvement has been observed in these parameters also during the study period.

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Source of Support: Nil

Conflict of Interest: None Declared

How to cite this URL: Dhiman Sonia et al: A Clinical Study on the Efficacy of Varisara Dhauti (Shankha Prakshalana) in Improving the Quality of Life among Apparently Healthy Individuals. International Ayurvedic Medical Journal {online} 2025 {cited January 2025} Available from: http://www.iamj.in/posts/images/upload/42_51.pdf