

## **An Overview of Nadi Shodhan Technique as Prerequisite for Practice of Pranayam with special reference to Vashishtha Samhita**

**Priyanka Kumari<sup>1</sup> & Prof. J. S. Tripathi<sup>2</sup>**

1. Research Scholar, Department of Kaya Chikitsa,

2. Department of Kaya Chikitsa, Faculty of Ayurveda,

Institute of Medical Sciences, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi

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### **Abstract**

The principles and practice of Nadi shodhan technique is of fundamental importance among all Yogic practices but there is big controversy even among the scholars specially after the introduction of popular practice of the Anuloma Viloma Pranayam. Whether the Nadi shodhan and the Anuloma Viloma Pranayam are the same or different Practices, if different then what is the procedural difference. These questions need authentic answer based on the authentic references.

The present article is basically an attempt to understand the fundamentals of Nadi shodhan technique, so that the related questions are automatically answered. Nadi shodhan technique has been explained in the basic quote and the verses of Vashishtha Samhita, Yoga Chudamani Upanishad, Gherand Samhita and other ancient yogic texts. The present article describes it by quoting and explaining the original verses from these classical texts so that different types of misconceptions related to Nadi Shodhan can be rectified. Further by practicing the Nadi Shodhan Pranayam following the classical procedure, suitable results can be obtained.

**Key words:** Nadi Shodhan, Breathing Technique, Pranayam.

### **Introduction:**

#### **Description in Vashishtha Samhita**

The Vashishtha Samhita is the compendium which is based on the dialogue between Rishi Vasishtha and his son Shakti, in which Shakti asks his father to explain the solution for the salvation of living beings, and the solution given by Rishi Vasishtha during conversation while answering his son's questions has been collected and presented in this legendary book.

Rishi Vasishtha writes in detail about Nadi Shodhan (purification of nerve

channels) which is described in the second chapter of Vashishtha Samhita. Acharya Vasishtha says that before doing the special practice of Pranayama, the practice of Nadi Shodhan (Nerve purification) must be done (V.S. 2.23-24).

Without the practice of Nadi Shodhan (purification of nerve channels), the practice of Pranayama is futile.

Vasishtha has described it as an experiment of breathing, in which there is only combination of Purak and Rechak without the use of Kumbhak

component. Nadi Shodhan Pranayama has been designed for the purification of 72,000 nadis in the body. There is a description of the 14 major nadis along with their place of origin and function. It has been mentioned that one should keep practicing Nadi Shodhan Pranayama until he feels lightness of the body, radiance, increase in digestive fire and expression of the inner sound called antarnaad .

. Maharshi Vasishtha does not consider Nadi Shodhan as Pranayama, rather it meant for purification of the Nadis in the body . That's why they differ from the Yoga texts.

Fourteen Important Nadis

Before the purification of Nadis , it is necessary to have knowledge of different nadis.

Nadinamati Sarvasam Mukhya:  
Putra Chaturdash //20//

*Sushumna tatah Pashchat  
Pingla Cha Saraswati //21//*

O son, among all the channels, the fourteen channels are the main ones.

They are- Sushumna, Ida followed by Pingala and Saraswati-

Kuhushcha Varna Chaiv Saptami Ch  
Yashaswini/

Pusha Payaswini Chaiv  
Shankhini Dashami Tatha//22//

*Gandhari Hastijihva cha Tatha  
Vishvodara Smrita/*

*Alambusha cha Sarvasam  
Mukhyaastvetaschatturdash//23//*

Kuhu, Varna, seventh Yashaswini, Pusha, Payaswini and tenth shankhini, Gandhari, Hastijihva, Vishvodara and Alambusha are the fourteen (nadis) main ones.

Tasu.....st  
hita (2/24-27)

Among them also ,three are the most prominent ones and one of the three is considered best for the path of salvation.

That the Tejaswini Sushumna exists in the basic form of the world (body).

O son, the Sushumna is well established among the mastishka kanda. It always exists along with the bone of the back (vertebral column and spinal cord ) up to the head.

That Sushumna located in Brahmarandhra is said to lead to the path of salvation. That Sushumna has been called subtle ,unmanifest and Vaishnavi (the recipient of Vishnu tattva). On its left and right sides are the two nadis named Ida and Pingala. Ida is located in the left part and Pingala (Nadi) is located in the right part.

Idayam Pidgalayam Ch  
Charatshchandrabhaskarau/

Idayam Chandrama Gyeyah Pinglayam  
Ravih Smritah//28//

Moon element and Sun element are present in mobile form in the Ida and Pingala respectively. Ida has been termed as the moon and Pingala has been considered as representation of the sun.

Chandrastasam ityukuta: Suryo  
Rajas Uchyate/

Tavet Sakalam Dhattah Kalam  
Ratrindivatamak//29//

The moon is called Tamas and the Sun is called Rajas and both of them are the regulators of the entire time factor (time) in the form of day and night.

Methodology of Nadi Shodhan Practice  
According to Maharshi Vasishtha ,the method of Nadi Shodhan Pranayam is as follows-

In this way, doing scripture-based (daily) work, being free from all desires, being full of qualities like Yama-Niyama etc., leaving all kinds of associations. then go to Tapovan filled with fruits, original water etc. in a beautiful and holy place on the bank of a river or in a temple.

By building a beautiful monastery safe in all respects, by taking holy bath in Trikala, having a steady mind- Stabilize the body with the recitation of mantras, always applying white ash, laying on soft cushions or deer skin-

Vinayakam Susampujya Falmulodkadibhi/  
Ishtadevam gurum natva tatra prarambh  
chasanam//60//

After properly worshipping Ganapati, the  
remover of obstacles, with fruits, roots,  
water etc., after verifying the presiding  
deity and the Guru, one should start sitting  
there.

Prangmukhodanmukho Wa Syat  
Padmasanagatah swayam/  
Samagrivashirah Kayah Samvrtasyam  
Sunishchalah//61//

*Nasayam Tu Sada Samyak  
Nyasya savyetaram karam/*

*Nasagre Shashbhriddimbam  
Jyotsnajalvitanitam//62//*

By yourself facing east or north, by  
applying padmasana, keeping the neck,  
head and whole body in the same position,  
close your mouth and sit quietly.

Keeping the right hand always in the  
nostril, imagine the moon image filled  
with jyotsna-jaal on the nasal part-

Saptamasya Tu Vargasya Chaturtha  
Bindusamyutam/  
Bindumadhyasthamalokya Netrabyam  
Mansa//63//

7th (Y, R, D, L, V) after making the fourth  
and fifth of the square anuswaryukt (Vam),  
looking in the middle of the point with the  
minded (inner) eyes-

Idya pooryedwayum bahyad  
Dwadashmatrakaih/

Tatoghanig poorvdadhyayet  
Sphurjjawalavliutam//64//

The external air should be filled with  
twelve quantities through the Ida (left)  
pulse, after that the meditation of the fire  
with flames should be done as before.

Renf Cha  
Bindusamyuktammagnimandasansthitam/  
Dhyayan Virechyat Pashchanmandam  
Pingalaya Punah //65//

Connecting R with Bindu (R) while  
meditating in the middle of the fire circle,  
then exhalation should be done slowly  
through it .

Pingala Pingalayapuye Praanam Dakshitah  
Sudhih/

Mamo Virechyeeddhimanidya Tu Shanai  
Shanai//66//

Wise yogis should then do rechana slowly  
through the ida nadi after filling the prana  
through the right nadipingala.

Trichaturvatsaram Chath  
Trichaturmasamev va/  
Shatkrimschdachredevam Trishu Kaleshu  
Yamattah//67//

Indicative signs of Nadi Shuddhi-

For three to four years and three to four  
months, one should practice diligently in  
this way thirty-six times a day.

Nadishuddhimavapnoti Prithak  
Chihnopakshitam/  
Shrirlaghuta

deeptirjathragnivivarnnam//68//

Nadabhavyakritityetachchhinchanam

Tachuddhisutkam/

Yadevtani Sampashyettavdevam  
Samachret//69//

From this, different signs indicating  
purification of pulse are obtained, such as  
lightness of the body, palpitations, increase  
in gastric fire and manifestation of sound,  
all these signs are indicative of purification  
of pulse. One should keep practicing in  
this way till all these signs appear.

According to the Shiv Samhita, the yogi's  
body becomes balanced, fragrant, radiant,  
melodious voice, soft limbs, full chest,  
firmness and ability of the body, all these  
become complete by purification of pulse.  
In this way, the symptoms of Nadshuddhi  
of Vasistha Samhita and Shivam Samhita  
are similar in comparison. Repeated  
instructions have been given to do  
pranayama only after pulse purification.

Other Important Classical references

The other Yoga texts like Hatha Yoga  
Pradipika , Darshanopanishad,  
Shandilyopanishad and  
Yogachunamanyupanishad have also  
described the practice and methodology of  
Nadi Shodhan. The Principles and Practices  
of Nadishodhan Pranayam has been  
described in important text books with the  
following references -

Sno.	Text book	Verse No.
1.	Gherand Samhita	33-44
2.	Yogatatva Upnishad	36-44
3.	Yogchudamani Upnishad	94-99
4.	Hath Yoga Pradipika	6-10
5.	Trishikhibramahnopanishad	95-120

### *Nadi Shodhan as per Gherand Samhita*

*Nadishuddhi nadishu maruto.....  
.....dridham bhavyam  
virechayet// Gh.Sa 5/33-44//*

According to Gherand Samhita, the practice of nadishodhan should be to start inhaling from the left Nostril (Ida Nadi) then kumbhaka should be done and then return to exhale from the right nostril (Pingla Nadi). There should be a ratio of 16:64:32 in Purak, Kumbhaka and Rechak. Similarly, from Pingla Nadi(Right Nostril) purak, Kumbhaka and rechak should be done with a similar ratio i.e. 16:64:32. Beej mantra “Yam” should be chanted , while purak from Ida Nadi and beej mantra “ Ram” should be chanted while rechan from Pingla Nadi.

*Rijukayah Pranjalishcha.....  
.....syattda chihanni  
bahyatah//Yo.Tat. Upni /36-44//*

*Nadi Shodhan as per Yoga Tattva Upnishad and Yoga Chudamani Upnishad*  
In Yoga Tattva Upnishad similar breathing ratio has been followed i.e.16:64:32 for purak, kumbhak and rechak. The practice should be gradually increased to eighty kumbhakas four times in morning, noon, evening and midnight. By practicing in this way for three months, the signs of Nadi purification are obtained .

Shuddhimeti

yada.....jayate  
nadishodhnat//Yo. Chuda.Upni/94-99//

A similar process has been described by the Yoga Chudamani Upnishad without emphasizing on any beej mantra. The practitioners have to focus their attention on cow milk like white coloured rays of the moon.

### *Pranayam*

*tatam.....yaminam  
mastrayadurdhvatah//Ha.Pr/6-10//*

### *Nadi Shodhan as per Hath Yoga Pradeepika*

Hath Yoga Pradipika has described a similar practice along with internal retention of breath (Antar Kumbhak) starting from the Ida Nadi (Left Nostril ) to be practiced alternatively with Pingla Nadi (Right Nostril) for more than 3 months periods for complete purification of Nadis.

### *Chaturbhih*

*klesham.....  
.....vijaniyatkalbheda samitah// Tri.  
Bram.Upni/95-120//*

### *Nadi Shodhan as per Trishkhibramahnopanishad*

The procedure of Gherand Samhita has been exactly duplicated in Trishkhibramahnopanishad with exactly similar ratio of purak , kumbhak and rechak but instead of naming it as Nadishodhan , it mentions simply as Pranayam(Verse no. 95-97).

### *Conclusion:*

Nadi -shodhan is a very important yogic technique, which is extremely useful for the purification of the vital energy channels of the body. The whole life is operated and nourished by the life force, the life force is full of semen, prowess and intelligence, knowledge and science are accomplished.

The usefulness of Prana in the Pranayama lies in the proper transport and movement of Prana in the body is self-evident. As the first step in the process of this Pranayama, through the process of Nadi-shodhana, all the nadis are purified and the movement of

life becomes smooth in them. A clear and detailed description of Nadi-shodhana (pulse purification) in EtdarthVashishtha Samhita is very useful. All other pertinent texts like Hatha Yoga Pradipika,

Darshanopanishad, Shandilyopanishad, Gherand Samhita, Yogachunamanyupanishad, etc have described almost similar techniques with slight variation.

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