

Kunjla Kriya: A magical procedure used in GIT disorders wsr to Amlapitta- A review study

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Abstract - *Ama* or undigested food molecules which are generated from *Ajirna* & *Annavisha*, are absorbed and deposited in different organs of the body & thus produces the metabolic diseases like *Amlapitta*. *Kunjla Kriya* and its clinical and practical elicitation were quite prevalent in medieval period. The alimentary system is the primary source of nutrition provider of the body and thus plays an important contribution for health and disease. The mode of operation of *Kunjla* is directly concerned with the digestive system by purifying the stomach and cleans the entire body. Till now, modern medical science has not invented any permanent curative medicine for this disease. But unfortunately there is no any successful treatment available in modern science. Ayurveda, the line of treatment consists of mainly *Shodhan karma* for the disease. An effort has been done to review the efficacy of cleansing procedure i.e; *Kunjla Kriya* based on the *Ayurvedic* principle.

Key words- *Amlapitta*, *Kunjla Kriya*, *Annavisha*, *Shodhan*, alimentary system

INTRODUCTION

In recent years health levels are decreasing due to changing of life style like diet pattern behavioral pattern and mental stress and strain. Due to unhealthy life style everyone is prone to various disease due to the against of our normal physiology of digestion .There have been an extraordinary increases disorder incidence related to *Annavastrorasor* gastrointestinal system related disorders.

Since the evolution of life on earth, mankind has been suffering from various ailments and has always been in the pursuit of perfect cure, which has resulted into evolution of various systems of medicine. Amongst these systems, *Ayurveda* is the most indigenous system of medicine which has propagated treatment of various illnesses. The main aim of *Ayurveda* is to maintain the health of the healthy person and to cure the illness of the diseased personⁱ.

More than a medical system, *Ayurveda* is a way of life, a way of co- operating with nature and living in harmony with her. According to *Ayurveda*, to maintain the health, one has to follow the basic principles like *Dinacharya* and *Ritucharya* which balances the *Tridosha* viz. *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*.ⁱⁱ

Acharya Charaka has described *Ahara Vidhi Vidhana* which conveys the method of consumption of food. According to him, man under psychological problem cannot digest the food properly even if it is delicious, adequate and with appropriate food value.ⁱⁱⁱ Thus, undigested food disturbs the physiology of *Annava srotasa*.^{iv}

In 21st century, man is unable to follow *Dinacharya* and *Ritucharya*; because fast-track life style has made man restless to achieve his unlimited desires in a very short period of time. These desires produce different types of anxiety, worry, anger, fear and depression which directly or indirectly lead to various types of gastro- intestinal tract disorders. Nowadays, he is also attracted towards fast food, junk food, instant & processed food which disturbs the gastrointestinal physiology. Even in *Varsha Ritu* which aggravates the *Pitta Dosha* naturally, he consumes aforesaid food which disturbs the balance of *Tridosha*.

In addition to these, addiction to various vices such as smoking & alcohol as a part of status symbol, personality changes and competitive environment in each & every aspect of life has a great impact in disturbing the gastrointestinal physiology which leads to gastrointestinal disorders. Also, some predisposing factors like Endocrinal diseases; infection of GIT disturbs gastrointestinal physiology and thus produces gastrointestinal disorders. In short, we can say that “Work, Worry & Weather” are the main causes of gastrointestinal disorders.

All the above factors disturb the *Pitta Dosha* which causes disturbance in *Annava srotasa* (GIT) causing *Amlapitta*. *Acharya Kashyapa* and *Madhavakara* have mentioned psychological problems and bad food habits as the causative factors of *Amlapitta*.^{v,vi} According to *Acharya Charaka*, the *Ama* or undigested food molecules which are generated from *Ajirna* &

Annavaisha, are absorbed and deposited in different organs of the body & thus produces the metabolic diseases like *Amlapitta*.

Amlapitta can be correlated with Acid peptic disease which comprises of various types of Gastro-esophageal reflux diseases like Gastritis, Dyspepsia, Heartburn, Hyperacidity etc. described in modern sciences. A survey of people suffering from acid peptic diseases in India revealed that over 25% of the people are suffering from acid peptic diseases. So, an inference on this aspect can be drawn that *Amlapitta* is a burning problem of this era.

Amlapitta is such type of gastrointestinal disorder which is the outcome of urbanization, changed lifestyle and dietary incompatibility. *Amlapitta* has become a common disease in the society affecting to adults mostly. Incidence of GERD is found to be at least 20% in many Indian cities. This means that 250 million people in India are suffering from this disease.^{vii} It affects the quality of life and sometime though it is not life hindering but still it affects ones day to day life. Many studies have been done in this context but still it is a common prevalent problem and there is no permanent remedy for this.

Amlapitta is very common disease which is a burning problem of the present days. It is difficult to diagnose as it has multifarious clinical signs and symptoms. If it is not treated in primary stage it shall prove fatal in chronic stage. The drugs of modern system pacify the symptoms to some extent but they will manifest a set of complications.

Till now, modern medical science has not invented any permanent curative medicine for this disease. So, many medical experts and research scholars are continuously researching on this disease and had succeeded partially in controlling it. But unfortunately there is no any successful treatment available in modern science. Ayurveda, the line of treatment consists of mainly *Shodhan karma* for the disease. An effort has been done to review the efficacy of cleansing procedure i.e; *Kunjala Kriya* based on the *Ayurvedic* principle. It is cleansing technique easy to perform, cost effective, good result oriented and very effective to cure the etiological factor responsible for *AmlaPitta*.

Critical analysis of *Kunjala Kriya*-

Hatha Yoga, as described in the early *Yoga Upanishads*, was made up of the *Shatkarmas* and is very precise and systemic science. ‘*Shat*’ means ‘six’ and ‘*Karma*’ means ‘action’. The *Shatkarmas* consist of six groups of purification practices i.e; *Neti, Dhauti, Nauli, Basti, Kapalabhati* and *Trataka*. The practical application of *Kunjala* and its clinical elicitation was quite prevalent in medieval period and is first cited in *Hathayoga* as a kind of *Antardhauti* named as “*Gajakarni*”.

The alimentary system is the primary source of nutrition provider of the body and thus plays an important contribution for health and disease. The mode of operation of *Kunjala* is directly concerned with the digestive system by purifying the stomach and cleans the entire body.

ETYMOLOGY OF KUNJALA:-

The word “*Kunjala*” is derived from “*Kunjara*”. According to rule of *nirukti* “*ra*” is converted into “*la*”. The word *Kunjala* is one of the synonyms of elephant as per different classics like *Shabdikalpdruma, Amarkosh, and Sanskrit Hindi Kosh* etc.^{viii} When the water is expelled by muscular contraction of the abdomen, it is called *Kunjala Kriya* or *Gaja Karma*. Both the words *Kunjala* and *Gaja* mean “Elephant”. The word *Karma* in this context means the same as *Kriya*, namely practice or action.

As in case of elephant uses the *Kunjala Kriya* to eliminate the contents from his trunk, in the same manner humans do the *Kunjala Kriya* to eliminate the contents from their stomach.

Material: - The water will be lukewarm with or without salt. Salt water inhibits the secretion of acid in the stomach, therefore those people who are trying to alleviate hyperacidity should definitely put salt in the water.^{xi}

Posture: - The person has to sit in *Kagasana* and then only they should drink the water.^{xii} During expulsion of water it is best to stand and bend forwards keeping the trunk and head horizontal. This facilitates the free flow of water from the stomach.

Time: - The best time to do the practice is early in the morning, before Sunrise.^{xiii} After completion of the practice it is best to wait half an hour before eating. The stomach lining should have a chance to reform before the process of digestion starts pouring acids onto its sensitive surface.

Technique^{xiv}: - *Kunjala Kriya* is performed by drinking lukewarm, salty water. At least six glasses of water should be drunk, but if you can, drink more up to the point where you cannot take even one more sip. At this point you may vomit automatically, if not then put two fingers down your throat and massage the back of your tongue as far down as possible. By pressing it you will feel

the urge to vomit, which is called the 'gag reflex' in medical terminology. Water will come out of your mouth in a quick series of gushes. Continue pressing until your stomach is empty.

This practice is not as awful as people think, and is in no way similar to the experience of being sick when the stomach is rejecting food due to an illness or when you have overdosed on alcohol after a drunken party. It needs not take any more than about 5 minutes and leaves a feeling of light and empty.

The quantity of water needed to fill the stomach may vary from person to person. Six glasses are just an average. A smaller person, or someone with an anorexic temperament, may only need four where as a large, hungry person may take eight to ten glasses.

Some people do *Kunjala* very easily first off and others may have a bit of trouble when they first begin. Those who have trouble getting the water down, or getting the water to come out, have nothing but a mental problem with it. Based on past experiences they believe it is an extremely horrible thing to be sick and vomit. They may have nasty childhood memories of being ill with a stomach bug or drunken binges where the stomach has had to vomit to protect itself from overload and these fears and memories come flooding back when approaching this practice. They simply have a psychological resistance to the practice yet once they get used to the idea or see other going about it easily, they loosen up and it happens much more easily. It may take a few attempts but eventually it is never as bad as they thought.

Anatomy and Physiology of *Kunjala Kriya*^{xv} :-

The pyloric sphincter, which is a muscle located at the bottom or outgoing end of the stomach, normally remains closed except for when food is sent in waves down into the G.I.T.(Gastro-intestinal tract) for further digestion. But when it receives a message from brain that body needs to expel the contents of the stomach, perhaps if there is bad food in there, or when the stomach has nausea due to illness and doesn't want to digest the food which was fed, that sphincter and the surrounding muscles make strong contraction in the reverse direction, forcing the contents of the stomach up and out. The pyloric sphincter is something that one can learn to control consciously firstly by using the fingers to create the vomiting reflex, but later on simply by stomach control.

Like any organ in the body, there is a buildup of deposits and breakdown through wear and tear. Material builds up on the stomach walls and over time it begins to work less efficiently. It is the job of *Kunjala* to remove this build up and help restore proper function to the stomach lining.

The lungs and trachea too, have mucus linings which can get a buildup of toxic wastes through air pollution or activities like mouth breathing, smoking and poor diet which can inhibit their correct function. When flushing out the stomach with *Kunjala* there is a connected nerve reflex in the lungs which helps expel excessive mucus as well as releasing nervous tension.

Precautions:-

It is contraindicated in hiatus hernia, high blood pressure and ulcer. Do not use too cold water or too hot water. People with stomach ailments such as ulcer, hernia, heart problems, high blood pressure, cancers and asthma should seek guidance from a qualified *Yoga* therapist before learning this technique.

***Kunjala* and Vomiting:-**

Kunjala has none of the unpleasant sensations usually associated with vomiting, like nausea and bad smell. The water brought up is usually clean and without smell. The added salt removes the acid by naturalizing it, which removes the burning feeling. The water contains nothing solid, thus it comes out quickly and easily. After the first few times, *Kunjala Kriya* becomes a pleasure.

EFFECTS OF KUNJALA KRIYA^{xvi}**Direct Effects:-**

At the physical level *Kunjala* can aid the maintenance of good health as well as help in the cure of some diseases like Acidity and gas in the stomach, Biliousness, Nausea, Food poisoning and auto-poisoning, Indigestion, Inflamed esophageal mucosa, Cough, asthma, bronchitis and respiratory ailments, Headaches, (both tension and migraine) and diseases of the nervous system.

At the *Pranic* level, *Kunjala* gives the whole body a flushing, untying knots and unblocking *Nadis* (psychic nerves which conduct *Prana*) so that the whole body feels revived and alive.

On the mental level, *Kunjala* can help with many types of mental diseases and problems, acting as a kind of shock therapy to recharge the brain and mind. It especially helps with depression, lethargy, apathy, tensions, anxiety, neuroses and phobias.

Indirect Effects:-

The indirect effects of *Kunjala* are that it tones up and helps to rebalance the nervous system, thus helping to rejuvenate the whole body. The energy released by the *Pranic* flush helps tone up the circulatory system, the respiratory system, the urinogenital system and the musculoskeletal system. This is because each system of the body depends upon every other system for its correct balance and smooth functioning. When one system, in this case the digestive system, starts to overflow with energy, this energy spills into the other body compartments and gives them a recharge. The mind and body function as one unit; there is no separating line between them. So when the body is recharged, the mind is also recharged. This explains how mental diseases can be cured through physical techniques. This principle can be applied to all *Yogic* techniques and methods which bring positive energy into our lives.

Physical Effects:-

When we do *Kunjala Kriya*, we stimulate the sensory channels of our nervous system, which sends it signal to the brain. This in turn sends a signal down the motor system to make the body vomit: the diaphragm, stomach and glottis contract, causing the water to move in the reverse direction.

There are three processes of the body which totally paralyze the brain and mind for one moment, leaving you in a 'selfless' state, reminiscent of states of meditation. These are orgasm, sneezing and vomiting. If we think about it and reflect upon your own experiences, you will remember that at the moment of experiencing one of these three states, you felt a wave of energy rush through your body and mind which momentarily stopped all thought and action.

When the brain feels this rush of energy it is in a state of extreme stimulation. Many of its circuits are temporarily cut, leaving only the few most necessary circuits in action. This situation is analogous, but much more gentle, subtle and effective than ECT (electric shock therapy) as used in hospitals for the treatment of depressed patients. Energy floods into every nerve of the brain, but in the case of *Kunjala*, not ECT, it is *Pranic* energy which floods through, giving life and rejuvenating every cell. Then when the energy subsides, these circuits start up again in a more harmonious fashion.

The brain then pours out this energy to the rest of the body via the nerves. This extra energy cleans and purifies by stimulating the cells of the waste-disposal system, and then travels on to the organs of the body. As a result there is a direct increase in body efficiency.

The autonomic nervous system is especially important to our understanding of how physical disease is reduced. It is divided into two parts: the parasympathetic system, concerned with relaxed states of mind, and the sympathetic system, concerned with stress and active times. These two systems constantly balance each other.

For example, when we get into a tense situation or state of mind, the sympathetic system becomes predominant, bringing the adrenals into action. Of course, the parasympathetic system still functions as an undertone, maintaining just enough relaxation in the physical body (reflected down from the mind) so that there is no extreme, and the body can function at its peak.

When we do *Kunjala*, the action of the energy flush moving from the stomach on the physical level, and *Manipura Chakra* on the psychic level, stimulates the vagus nerve both in its sensory and motor functions. The vagus is sensory to the heart, lungs, bronchi, trachea, pharynx and digestive tract; and motor to the heart, lungs, bronchi and digestive tract. It feeds directly

into the hypothalamus of the brain via its parasympathetic fibers. The hypothalamus controls the whole autonomic nervous system. The vagus is responsible for the gag reflex and vomiting.

The extra energy from *Kunjala* spills into both sympathetic and parasympathetic systems, but as the mind is prepared for vomiting, a stressful situation, the sympathetic predominates. The following results occur: Digestive system: decreased peristalsis and increased glucose into the blood from the liver. Lungs: dilation of the bronchi; stops acute asthma. Salivary glands start secreting and therefore are flushed out and cleaned.

Heart beats faster and the blood vessels dilate giving more oxygen to the heart muscle. The lungs are exercised by the action of the diaphragm and abdomen, which helps breathing and *Pranayama*. Mucus secretions from the mouth, sinuses and lower respiratory tract are stimulated, rinsing out these areas. There is temporary blood rush to the brain which increases oxygen and performance.

Pranic Effects:-

The stomach and digestion are governed by *Manipura Chakra*, the psychic centre in which *Prana*, the life-giving force of man, is stored. This force has been called bioplasma by the scientists investigating Kirlian photography and parapsychology, and is a proven and documented entity.

It is in the psychic and more subtle bodies that many effects are in progress, but we are unaware of them. *Kunjala* helps to liberate *Prana* which energizes the body. In fact, *Prana* is the basis for all the body energies and thus is vital to our well-being.

When the *Prana* flows, so does the energy in the nerves. In this way every cell in the body and mind becomes energized by *Prana*. We feel alive and happier. We experience a sort of catharsis after doing *Kunjala*, a cleansed, purified and relaxed feeling, which also invigorates us. *Prana*, this golden life-giving substance, is the cause and *Kunjala*, along with many other *Yogic* techniques, is a means to liberate and control it.

The Gag Reflex:-

The gag reflex that initiates vomiting is in itself a powerful and valuable tool. Even if you haven't time to do *Kunjala* every morning, then you can use the gag reflex to awaken *Prana* easily and simply.

This can be done when you brush your teeth in the morning. Use your first two fingers to clean your tongue by rubbing it backwards and forwards. When you come to the back of your tongue, do not be frightened, but rather continue to massage it even though you may feel you are going to vomit. If something comes up, this is good as it means there was obviously something undigested in the stomach which needed to come out.

Mental Effects:-

The stomach is extremely responsive to emotional changes. Depression produces anorexia, or loss of appetite accompanied by a heavy sinking feeling in the pit of the stomach, which actually drops an inch or so as the supporting muscles and ligaments let go. Constant worry can create copious gas in the stomach which results in distension and pressure on the heart. This may mimic heart disease.

Stomach ulcers are the end result of a long period of emotional or mental tension, combined with a genetic predisposition to the constant over secretion of gastric juices, which eventually break down the lining of the stomach and start to eat into you, auto-digestion. This is a case of 'what's eating you' on a mental level. *Kunjala* is one of the *Yogic* techniques that remove the mental roots of many diseases: hate, jealousy, fear and insecurity. The release of nervous tension after *Kunjala* is what does it. But the effect is not instantaneous; rather it takes a slow and steady course.

BENEFITS^{xvii} :-

In addition to flushing out the stomach and esophagus, *Kunjala* is also an excellent cleansing for the lungs and hence it is very beneficial for asthmatics. The strong contractions made by the pyloric sphincter and a shock wave along the vagus nerve which can release the spasm within the bronchial tree. *Kunjala* is in fact recommended as instant relief for anyone feeling the onset of an asthma attack. If an asthmatic performs *Kunjala* every morning, over several months their attacks will get less and less frequent. The contractions of *Kunjala* help with openness of the breathing mechanisms and improve blood supply to the whole

abdominal and thoracic. Salt is known to be a great cleanser for the body. Everyone knows the feeling after a good swim in the Ocean. The head feels clear, the nose is clear, the lungs feel alive. The same mucus clearing benefits can be attained at home, on a daily basis, through this method. By cleansing the lungs and the blood within the stomach area it also helps with removing bad breath.

Kunjala helps those with under-active digestion and stimulates the digestive fire. Regular practice of *Kunjala* will increase the circulation in this area and assimilation of food in the gut, and therefore will raise the internal body temperature. It is a good technique for those with perpetually cold extremities and under active digestion. It can help to remove indigestion, gas and acidity. It tones the abdominal muscles and other internal organs.

Discussion-

Probable Mode of Action-

Majority of diseases are caused by *Mandagni*. Weakening of *Agni (Mandagni)* causes improper digestion of ingested food which forms *Ama*. *Ama* originated from the stomach then mixed with *Dhatu* spreads all over the body. Due to overconsumption of the described etiological factors, *Kapha* and *Pitta Dosha* are aggravated which gradually vitiate *Dhatu* mainly *Rasa-Rakta* and ultimately abnormality of *Rasa* and *Rakta Dhatvagni* occurs. The *Ama Dosha* formed due to all this process became main cause in the pathogenesis of *Amlapitta*.

Kunjala Kriya mainly acts on *Amashaya* and *Annavaha Srotas*. *Amashaya* is the prime site of *Pitta* and *Annavahasrotas* where *Ama* is originated from *Annarasa* due to improper digestive fire. This process expels out the vitiated *Pitta Dosha* in the state of *Acchadita* and *Avalipta* from the *Amashaya* and as a result *Jatharagni* becomes normal. As a result *Dhatavagnimandya* homeostasis rectified, resulting in proper metabolism process. The *Ama* formation and other sequential events thus are restricted by the *Kunjala Kriya* and ultimately stop further pathogenesis of disease.

The functional state of *Pitta* in the body is ensured with the haemostatic state of *Jatharagni* and *Anulomanadi Karma*. The *Kunjala Kriya* by confining the formation of *Ama*, improving the physiological commotion of *Pachaka Pitta* and thus ensures the proper action of *Dhatvagni*.

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Stomach ulcers are the end result of a long period of emotional or mental tension combined with a genetic predisposition to the constant over secretion of gastric juices, which eventually breakdown the lining of the stomach and start to eat into you, auto digestion. *Kunjala Kriya* is one of the *Yogic* techniques that removes the mental roots of many disease; hate, jealousy, fear, insecurity. The release of nervous tension after *Kunjala Kriya* is what does it. But the effect is not instantaneous; rather it takes a slow and steady course.^{xviii}

As a result of above described underline facts the pathogenesis of *Amlapitta* is arrested by the process of *Kunjala Kriya*.

Conclusion- After a detail review study on *Kunjala Kriya* and *Amlapitta*; following conclusion can be drawn-

- *Amlapitta* is a psychosomatic disease means mental factor play major role with physiological factors. When diet, lifestyle and mental condition get disturbed due to hurries and worries in life, they leads to *Agnivaishamy* which causes *Ama*-formation and finally disease *Amlapitta* originates.
- In *Amlapitta*, *Dushya Rasa & Rakta*, *Srotasa- Rasa, Rakta, Annavaha* and *Purishavaha* are involved.
- The process *Kunjala Kriya* directly acts on vitiated *Pitta*, *Agni* and *Ama* formation and thus uproot the main causes of the disease thereby helps in breaking the pathogenesis of *Amlapitta*.

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