



“Correlation of *Sutra Neti* with Ayurvedic Concepts of *Urdhvajatrugata Roga*: A Review”

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ABSTRACT

Sutra Neti is a classical *Yogic* purification technique described under *Shatkarma*, involving the gentle passage of a lubricated cotton thread or soft rubber catheter through the nasal cavity and nasopharynx. Unlike *Jala Neti*, which primarily cleanses the nasal passages using saline water, *Sutra Neti* provides deeper mechanical stimulation and cleansing of the upper respiratory tract. This practice plays a significant therapeutic role in maintaining nasal, sinus, and respiratory health. Physiologically, *Sutra Neti* facilitates the removal of adhered mucus, crusts, and pathological secretions from the nasal passages, thereby reducing nasal obstruction, inflammation, and microbial load. It is particularly beneficial in chronic sinusitis, allergic rhinitis, deviated nasal septum-associated congestion, and recurrent upper respiratory tract infections.

Regular practice of *Sutra Neti* enhances nasal patency, improves airflow, and strengthens the functional integrity of the nasal mucosa. By stimulating the sensory nerve endings of the nasal cavity, especially branches of the trigeminal and olfactory nerves, *Sutra Neti* exerts a regulatory influence on the autonomic nervous system. This neurophysiological stimulation is believed to affect the limbic system, contributing to improved mental clarity, reduced stress, and emotional balance. From a *Yogic* perspective, *Sutra Neti* is associated with purification of *Praṇavaha Srotas* and facilitation of balanced *Praṇa* flow, thereby supporting both physical and psychological well-being.

Sutra Neti is commonly incorporated into *Yogic* and meditative practices to prepare the practitioner for higher breathing techniques (*Pranayama*) and concentration. Thus, *Sutra Neti* serves as an effective holistic intervention bridging yogic wisdom with contemporary understanding of nasal physiology.

Key words: *Sutra Neti*; *Shatkarma*; *Yogic* cleansing techniques; Upper respiratory tract; Nasal physiology; Chronic sinusitis; Allergic rhinitis; *Praṇavaha Srotas*; *Yogic* therapy.

INTRODUCTION

The classical Ayurvedic dictum “*Nasa Hi Shiraso Dwaram*” emphasizes that the nose serves as the gateway to the head (*Siras*). According to *Ayurveda*, diseases affecting the organs located above the clavicle (*Urdhvajatrugata Roga*)—such as disorders of the nose, sinuses, eyes, ears, throat, and head—are closely connected with nasal pathways. Hence, therapeutic interventions administered through the nasal route are considered highly effective in both preventive and curative management of these conditions.

Sutra Neti, a *Yogic* purification practice described under *Shatkarma*, directly aligns with this principle. Nasal hygiene plays a critical role in respiratory health. *Shot* means 'six' and *Karma* means 'action', the *Shatkarmas* consist of six groups of purification practices. The aim of *Hatha Yoga* and, therefore, of the *Shatkarmas* is to create harmony between the two major Pranic flows, *Ida* and *Pingala*, thereby attaining physical and mental purification and balance¹. The *Shatkarmas* are also used to balance the three *Doshas* or humours in the body: *Kapha*, *Pitta*, and *Vata*. Among the six *Yogic* purification practices, or *Shatkarmas*, *Sutra Neti* is a specialized method of nasal cleansing that complements *Jala Neti* (saline nasal irrigation).

The controlled passage of a lubricated thread or catheter through the nasal cavity mechanically cleanses the nasal passages and nasopharynx, facilitating removal of obstructive mucus (*Kapha Sancaya*), allergens, and pathological secretions. By ensuring patency of the nasal channels, *Sutra Neti* supports the free flow of *Prana* toward the cranial region, thereby reinforcing the concept of *Nasa* as the primary access point to the head.

The statement “*Urdhvajatrugata Rogahara*”—referring to the alleviation of diseases above the neck—can be explained through the physiological and neurological effects of *Sutra Neti*. The practice stimulates the nasal mucosa, olfactory region, and trigeminal nerve endings, which have direct connections with intracranial structures and the autonomic nervous system. This stimulation helps reduce congestion, inflammation, and functional disturbances in conditions such as sinusitis, allergic rhinitis, headache, anosmia, hoarseness, and recurrent upper respiratory tract infections.

SUTRA NETI

The term “*Sutra*” refers to a thread or thin tube, while “*Neti*” signifies nasal cleansing. *Sutra Neti*, a classical *Yogic* cleansing practice (*Shatkarmas*), involves the insertion of a soft thread or catheter through the nasal passages to remove mucus, debris, and impurities. This practice, described in *Hatha Yoga* and *Ayurvedic* texts, is reported to improve sinus health, respiratory function, and overall well-being.

METHODOLOGY

मेदः श्लेष्माधिकः पूर्व षट्कमावणि समाचरेत् ॥
अन्यस्तु नाचरेत्तानन दोषां तां समभार्तः ॥ Hatha Yoga Pradipika (2/21)

When fat or mucus is excessive, the *Shatkarmas* or six cleansing techniques should be practised before (*Pranayama*). Others, in whom the doshas (i.e. phlegm, wind and bile) are balanced, need not do them².

Preparation³: This practice involves passing a length of cotton thread through the nose. Traditionally, an especially pre-prepared cotton thread was used. Several strands were tightly wrapped together and dipped in melted beeswax. The width was about 4 mm and the length 36 to 45 cm. Nowadays; however, the practice is more conveniently performed by using a thin rubber catheter lubricated with butter or saliva so that it slides easily through the nasal passage. The size of the catheter depends on the individual nasal passage but sizes 4, 5 or 6 are generally suitable.

सूत्रां वर्तस्तस्तस्तग्रां नासानाले प्ररेशयेत् ॥
मुखास्त्रर्वमयेच्चैषा नेततः सप्तद्वैननर्द्यते ॥ Hatha Yoga Pradipika (2/29)

After mastering *Jala-Neti*, may progress to *Sutra-Neti*, an advanced nasal cleansing technique. The procedure can be performed as follows: [4,5]



- Begin by lubricating the catheter with a small amount of oil to ensure smooth insertion.
- Sit or stand in a stable and comfortable posture.
- Take a moment to relax the facial muscles and the entire body.
- Gently tilt the head slightly backward.
- Carefully guide the narrow, lubricated end of the catheter into one nostril.
- Once inside, direct the catheter downward toward the throat.
- Rotate the catheter lightly while inserting, allowing it to follow the natural curvature of the nasal passage.
- When the tip reaches the back of the throat, open the mouth and insert your index and thumb, or index and middle figure to grasp the emerging end of the catheter.
- Slowly draw the catheter out through the mouth, keeping approximately two inches of the opposite end protruding from the nostril.
- A mild gag reflex may occur in the beginning, but with repeated practice, this response gradually diminishes.
- Hold both ends of the catheter and move it gently back and forth within the nasal cavity. Beginners should limit this motion to about 10–15 cycles.
- Withdraw the catheter slowly through the nostril and repeat the procedure on the other side.
- After completing *Sutra Neti*, it is recommended to perform *Jala Neti* to thoroughly cleanse the nasal passages.
- Throughout the practice, maintain a steady breath through the mouth and focus on remaining relaxed while performing slow, controlled movements.
- If the nasal passages feel excessively dry or congested, performing *Jala Neti* both before and after *Sutra Neti* may provide additional comfort.

Time

The most suitable time for this cleansing technique is early in the morning on an empty stomach. However, if required, the practice may be performed at other times of the day. It is advisable to avoid performing *Sutra Neti* immediately after meals, as the procedure may cause discomfort when the stomach is full.

Breathing⁶: Breathing is performed through the mouth.

Duration: With a catheter the practice takes less than 5 minutes. With a sutra it takes about 10 minutes. *Sutra Neti* does not need to be practiced daily, performing it once every few days or even once a week is generally sufficient for therapeutic benefit.

Awareness: Physical - on relaxing the body and moving the catheter or thread smoothly and slowly. Spiritual -on *Ajna Chakra*.

Sequence: *Sutra Neti* should be performed before *Jala Neti* as the latter will flush out all the impurities and particles in the nose which have been dislodged by *Sutra Neti*.

Precautions:

- Do not use force under any circumstances. The interior of the nose is very delicate and any undue force could cause damage.
- It is best not to try sutra neti until *Jala Neti* has been perfected.
- Maintain strict hygiene; sterilize thread/catheter before and after use.
- Stop immediately if significant discomfort occurs.

MODE OF ACTION

Sutra Neti is a *Sodhana* (cleansing) practice described in *Yogic* and *Ayurvedic* traditions, mainly acting on the *Nasa-Urdhva Jatru* region. Its mode of action can be explained at mechanical, physiological, neurological, and Ayurvedic levels:

Sutra Neti is an advanced yogic cleansing technique (*Shatkriya*) that uses a physical "flossing" action to purify the nasal passages. Its mode of action involves several physiological and mechanical processes:

1. Mechanical Cleansing and Debridement

Physical Flossing: Unlike *Jala Neti* (which uses water), *Sutra Neti* uses a cotton thread or rubber catheter to physically "scrub" the nasal lining. This action dislodges stubborn, dried mucus and debris that water cannot reach.

Mucus Extraction: The moving thread traps and pulls out thick phlegm and foreign particles directly through the mouth or nostrils.

2. Physiological Stimulation

Nerve Stimulation: The friction of the thread stimulates the nerve endings in the nasal mucosa, which is thought to enhance the function of the olfactory zone and improve the sense of smell.

Vagus Nerve Activation: It indirectly exercises the Vagus nerve, which helps soothe the nervous system and reduce stress.

Vascular Effects: The practice increases blood circulation to the nasal area, helping to reduce inflammation and rejuvenate the ENT (Ear, Nose, Throat) region.

3. Biological and Reflexive Actions

Desensitization: Regular practice desensitizes the sensitive inner tissues of the nose, making them less reactive to allergens like pollen and dust.

Ciliary Maintenance: It helps maintain the efficiency of the cilia (small hair-like projections), which are the body's natural defense mechanism for filtering air.

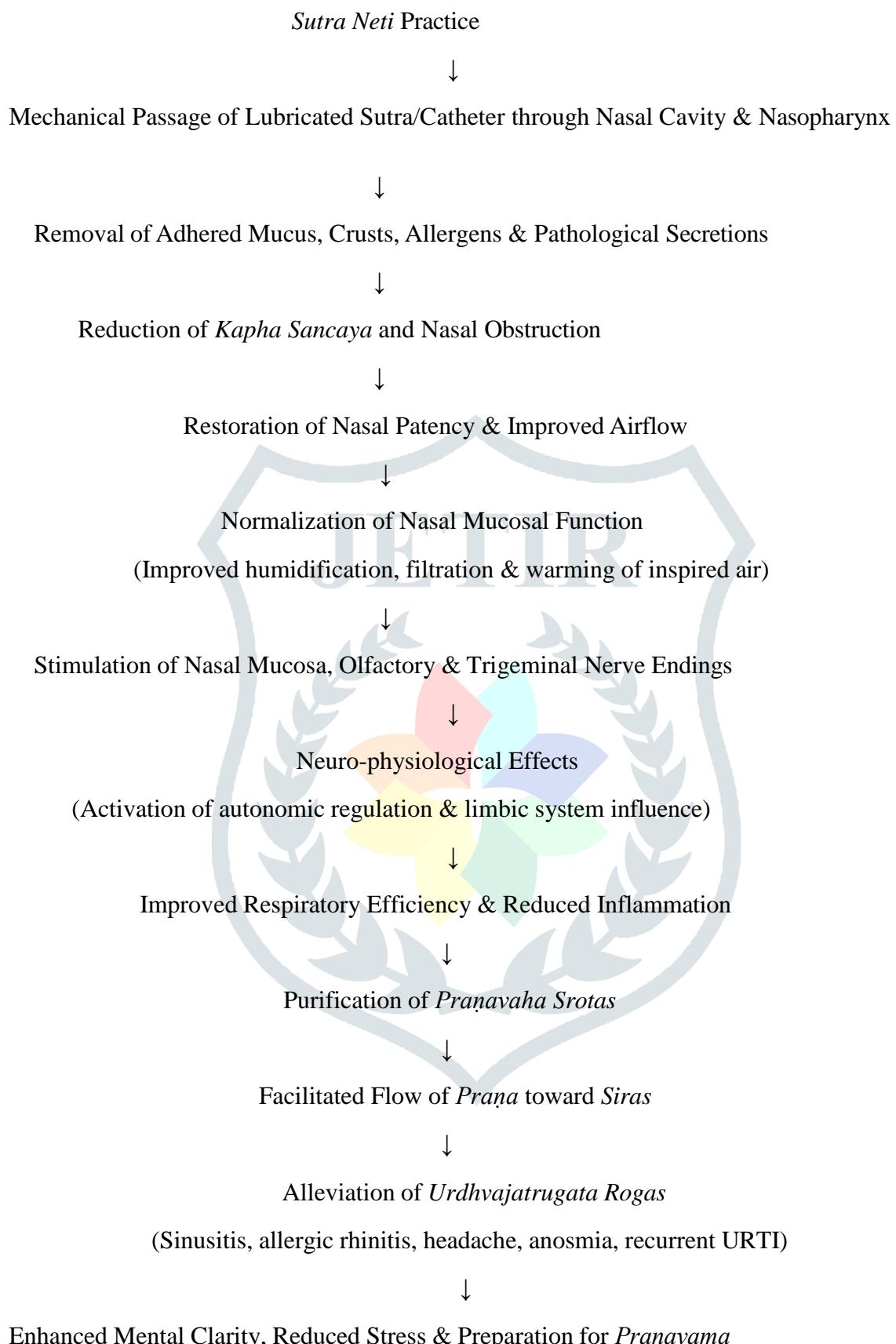
Reflex Control: It helps in controlling involuntary reflexes such as sneezing and coughing.

4. Pranic and Neurological Balance

Nadi Balancing: In yogic theory, it balances the *Ida* and *Pingala Nadis* (energy channels), which corresponds to balancing the left and right hemispheres of the brain.

Frontal Brain Activation: It is believed to stimulate "dormant" cells in the frontal lobes of the brain, potentially improving memory and mental clarity.

Flow Chart



CORRELATION TABLE

<i>Pranavaha Srotas Vikara</i>	Action of Sutra Neti	Effect
<i>Kapha</i> Accumulation	Mechanical Removal	<i>Kapha Saman</i>
<i>Srotorodha</i>	Clearing nasal Passages	<i>Srotoshodhana</i>
<i>Prana Vayu</i> Dysfunction	Improved Airflow	<i>Vata Anulomana</i>
Recurrent infection	Nasal Hygiene	Preventive Action
Poor <i>Pranayama</i>	Clear Nostrils	Enhanced <i>Prana</i> Flow

BENEFITS

कपालशोधिनी चैर ददव्यदस्थिप्रदानयनी ॥
जन्मर्धर्वजातरोरूपैः नेनतराशु सलहानंत च॥ Hatha Yoga Pradipika (2/30)

The benefits are the same as for *Jala Neti*. In addition, however, *Sutra Neti* can rectify the problem of deviated nasal septum. If one or both nostrils are not flowing freely due either to deformed bone or fleshy outgrowths, the regular friction of *sutra neti* causes these obstructions to disappear within a few months.

Classical texts and modern observations report the following benefits:^[7,8,9]

- Nasal cleansing also improves memory and concentration, reduces stress and anxiety, and relieves depression⁷.
- Nasal and sinus cleansing: Clears mucus, debris, and allergens, improving airflow and preventing congestion.
- Respiratory health: Reduces chronic sinusitis, allergic rhinitis, and other upper respiratory tract issues.
- Enhanced *Pranayama* and *Yoga* practice: Improves airflow, enabling deeper, controlled breathing.
- Support for connected structures: Improves drainage and health of eyes, ears, and throat.
- Mental clarity and energy: Promotes relaxation, concentration, and balanced *Prana* flow
- Helps to achieve harmony and balance in body and mind.
- Stimulates the immune system
- Stimulates the *Ajna Chakra*
- *Marma* stimulation:
 - a. Indirect activation of *Sringataka Marma*
Improves circulation and nerve conduction in *Urdhvajatrugata* region
 - b. *Phana Marma*- Situated near the nostrils.

CONTRAINDICATIONS¹⁰:

- Those people who suffer from chronic bleeding in the nose should not do *Sutra Neti*.
- Avoid if there is severe nasal structural abnormality (e.g., septal deviation, polyps) or recent nasal surgery.
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DISCUSSION

Sutra Neti, though less commonly practiced than *Jala Neti*, offers deeper cleansing due to its direct mechanical action. It not only clears physical blockages but also facilitates proper pranic flow and prepares the respiratory system for advanced *Yoga* practices. Modern clinical studies suggest potential utility in chronic sinusitis and nasal obstruction management, complementing conventional therapies.

CONCLUSION

Sutra Neti is an effective *Yogic* nasal cleansing technique with significant physiological and potential therapeutic benefits. With proper guidance, regular practice can improve nasal patency, respiratory function, and mental clarity. However, practitioners must observe hygiene, follow correct technique, and consider individual anatomical variations to prevent complications. From an *Ayurvedic* perspective, *Sutra Neti* contributes to the purification of *Pranavaha* and *Udakavaha Srotas*, balances *Kapha Doṣa*, and prevents stagnation in the *Urdhvabhaga* of the body. It facilitates the unobstructed movement of *Praṇa* through *Ida* and *Pingala Nāḍi*, preparing the practitioner for *Pranayama* and higher meditative practices. Thus, *Sutra Neti* functions as a practical application of the classical concepts of *Nasa Hi Sirso Dvaram* and *Urdhvajatrugata Rogahara*, offering a holistic approach to both structural and functional disorders of the head and neck region.

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