



ISSN 2456-3110

Vol 8 · Issue 4

April 2023

Journal of
**Ayurveda and Integrated
Medical Sciences**

www.jaims.in

JAIMS

An International Journal for Researches in Ayurveda and Allied Sciences



Maharshi Charaka
Ayurveda

Indexed

Importance, techniques, benefits, safety and adverse effect associated with *Shatkarma* mentioned in traditional *Hatha Yoga* texts (HYP & GS) along with comparison: A Review on *Shatkarma*

Pankaj Patidar¹, Kanchan Yadav²

¹Research Scholar, Department of Yoga and Natural Health Science, Shri Jit University, Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan, India.

²Research Scholar, Department of Yoga Science, University of Patanjali, Haridwar, Uttarakhand, India.

ABSTRACT

Shatkarma has contained six cleansing techniques mentioned in *Hathayoga* texts. These are the most effective techniques to cure and prevent disease. The *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (HYP) and *Gherand Samhita* (GS) (written between the 15th and 17th centuries) are the two most prominent and relevant foundational literature on *Shatkarma*, and are still relevant now. Previously published literature on *Hatha Yoga* covers book review, overview and comparative study on *Hathayoga* texts, comparative study on *Asanas*, concept of *Kundalini* and concept of *Ghata* and *Ghata Sudhhi*. The purpose of this review was to systematically review: (1) the importance of *Shatkarma* practises; (2) the types of *Shatkarma* practises; (3) techniques of *Shatkarma*; (4) the benefits of *Shatkarma* practises; (5) the safety and adverse effects associated with *Shatkarma* practises mentioned in HYP and GS; and (6) a comparison of *Shatkarma* between HYP and GS. The verses on *Shatkarma* are systematically reviewed, collected, and presented under the six specified aspects in this review.

Key words: *Shatkarma*, *Shatkriyas*, *cleansing techniques*, *purification techniques*, *Gheranda Samhita*, *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, *Hatha Pradipika*

INTRODUCTION

Shatkarma is comprised of six purification techniques mentioned in *Hathayoga* texts. In *Sanskrit*, “*Shat*” means six, and “*Karma*” implies action. *Shatkarma* purifies the body and frees it from disease.^{[1],[2]} In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (Hyp), Swami Swatmaram described first purifying the entire body with the help of *Shatkarma*, then practising asana and *Pranayama*. *Shatkarma* includes six cleansing/purification techniques: *Dhauti*, *Basti*, *Neti*, *Trataka*, *Nauli*, and

Kapalbhati (chapter 2, verses 22 HYP).^[1] The primary objective of *Shatkarma* is to balance the body’s three humours (*Tridoshas*), which are the three types of wind (*Kapha*), bile (*Pitta*), and mucus (*Vata*).^[3] One of the best methods for addressing a range of physical and psychological ailments is *Hatha Yoga*.^[4] The four major scriptures of the *Hatha Yoga Tradition* are *The Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (HYP), *Gherand Samhita* (Gs), *Shiva Samhita* (SS), And *Hatharatnavali* (HR). The two most influential and useful foundational texts on *Shatkarma* are Hyp and Gs. Six different cleaning techniques are used to describe body purification in these texts.^[3] The most important literature on *Hatha Yoga*, sometimes referred to as the “*Hathayoga Pradipika*,” was authored by Swami Swatmaram in the 15th century. It contains information on *Chaturanga Yoga* in four chapters. Swami Swatmaram collected the whole body of information about *Hatha Yoga* in *Sanskrit*.^[5] The *Gherand Samhita* is a meticulously composed *Yoga* text. It takes the form of a conversation between *Gherand*, the preceptor, and *Candakapali*, the disciple. *Ghatasthaya* is the term used to describe the *Yoga*

Address for correspondence:

Kanchan Yadav

Research Scholar, Department of Yoga Science, University of Patanjali, Haridwar, Uttarakhand, India.

E-mail: yadavkanchany@gmail.com

Submission Date: 13/02/2023 Accepted Date: 20/03/2023

Access this article online

Quick Response Code



Website: www.jaims.in

DOI: 10.21760/jaims.8.4.9

that is covered in the *Gherand Samhita*. Yoga that is practised through the body is referred to as *Ghatasthayoga*. The earliest manuscript of the *Gherand Samhita* that we have is 175 years old and is from the year 1802 AD. The story might take place in the late 17th century or the early 18th century.^[6]

The following subjects are covered in previously published *Hatha Yoga* textbook literature: (1) book review on *Hyp* and *Ghs*,^[7,8,9,10] (2) overview of *Hatha* yoga text,^[11] (3) comparative study on *Hatha* yoga texts (i.e., *Hyp*, *Gs*, and *Shiva Samhita*), as well as comparative study on *Asanas* in *Hyp* and *GS*,^{[12],[13]} (4) A comparative study on *Pranayama* in *Yoga Vasishtha*, *Pys*, and *Hyp*,^[16] (5) The Concept of *Kundalini* in *Shiva Samhita* and a Critical Review of *Shiva Samhita*,^[14,15] (6) Concept of *Ghata* and *Ghata Sudhhi* in *Gs*.^[17]

This study aims to systematically review the following topics: (1) importance of *Shatkarma* practices; (2) types of *Shatkarma* practices; (3) techniques of *Shatkarma*; (4) benefits of *Shatkarma* practices; (5) safety and adverse effects associated with *Shatkarma* practices mentioned in *Hyp* and *Gs*; and (6) a comparison of *Shatkarma* between *Hyp* and *Gs*.

METHODS

The chapter on *Shatkarma* from two traditional *Hatha Yoga* texts (i.e., *Hyp* and *Gs*) was sourced to obtain the importance, types, techniques, and benefits. In both texts, *Shatkarma* chapters were systematically reviewed, the original verses written in *Sanskrit* were translated into English, the translated verses were interpreted, and the verses were arranged into the following points: (1) the importance of *Shatkarma*; (2) types of *Shatkarma* practices; (3) techniques of *Shatkarma*; (4) the benefits of *Shatkarma* practices; (5) safety and adverse effects related to *Shatkarma* practices mentioned in *Hyp* and *Gs*; and (6) a comparison between *Hyp* and *Gs*.

In *HYP*, 15 verses are related to *Shatkarma* practises (i.e., Chapter 2, Verses 21–35).^[1] In *GS*, 48 verses are related to *Shatkarma* practises (i.e., Chapter 1, Verses 12–59).^[2] The *Shatkarmic* chapters and related verses

describing the importance, types, techniques, and benefits mentioned in *Hyp* and *Gs* are listed in Table 1.

Importance of *Shatkarma*

The body has three humours: *Kapha* (mucus), *Pitta* (bile), and *Vata* (wind). They are known as *Tridoshas* in *Yoga* and *Ayurveda*. A healthy balance of these three aids in body functions, but when there is an abundance of one and a scarcity of the other, ailments develop as a result of overheating or a lack of heat in the body. Any imbalance in the *Doshas* should be removed before beginning *Pranayama*, such as excess body fat, mucus blocking the respiratory tract, gas in the stomach and intestines, and so on. There are six specific practises in *Hatha Yoga* that were created for this purpose. They are called *Shatkarma*. There is no need to practise *Shatkarma* if the *Doshas* are already balanced (i.e., Chapter 2, Verse 21; *HYP*).^[1] According to *Gs*, the body has been given the noun “*Ghat*.” Before starting any *Yogic* practise like *Asana* or *Pranayama*, purification of the *Ghat* or body has been considered essential, hence the practise of *Shatkarma* leads to the purification of the body (i.e., Chapter 1, Verse 10; *GS*).^[2]

Table 1: The *Shatkarma* Chapter and related verses describing the types, techniques and benefits mentioned in *HYP* and *GS*

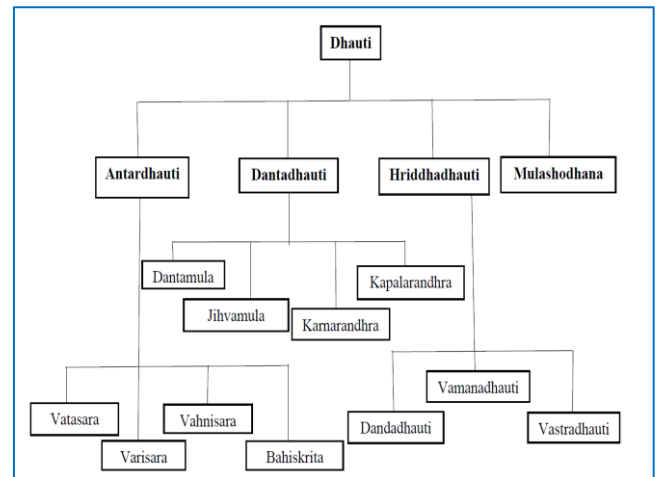
Features of <i>Shatkarma</i>	<i>Hyp</i> chapter (verses numbers)	<i>Gs</i> chapter (verses number)
Importance of <i>Shatkarma</i>	2/21	1/10
Types of <i>Shatkarma</i>	2/22	1/12
<i>Dhauti</i>:		
Types	Not mentioned	1/13, 14, 25, 35, 42
Techniques	2/24	1/15, 17, 19, 21, 26, 29, 32-34, 36, 38, 39, 42
Benefits	2/25	1/16, 18, 19, 20, 23, 27-29, 32-34, 37, 38, 40, 43

Basti:		
Types		1/44
Techniques	2/26	1/45, 47
Benefits	2/27-28	1/46, 48
Neti:		
Types	Not mentioned	Not mentioned
Techniques	2/29	1/49
Benefits	2/30	1/50
Nauli (Lauliki):		
Types	Not mentioned	Not mentioned
Techniques	2/33	1/51
Benefits	2/34	1/51
Trataka:		
Types	Not mentioned	Not mentioned
Techniques	2/31	1/52
Benefits	2/32	1/53
Kapalbhati:		
Types	Not mentioned	1/54
Techniques	2/35	1/55-58
Benefits	2/35	1/56-59

Types of Shatkarma practices

There are six types of cleansing techniques mentioned in the text HYP: (i) Dhauti, (ii) Basti, (iii) Neti, (iv) Trataka, (v) Nauli, and (vi) Kapalbhati (Verses 21-35; HYP).^[1] According to GS, there are six cleansing practises: (i) Dhauti, (ii) Basti, (iii) Neti, (iv) Lauliki (Nauli), (v) Trataka, and (vi) Kapalbhati (Verses 12-59; GS).^[2] In GS, there are four types of Dhauti: Antardhauti, Dantadhauti, Hridhdhauti, and Moolashodhana (figure 1), two types of Basti: Jalabasti (water) and Sthala or Shushka Basti (dry), and three types of Kapalbhati: Vatakrama, Vyutkrama, and Shitkrama.

Figure 1: Types and sub types of Dhauti mentioned in Gherand Samhita



Techniques of Shatkarma

There are six cleansing practices; Dhauti, Basti, Neti, Nauli/Lauliki, Trataka, and Kapalbhati. The techniques/procedure of these practises explained in table 2.

Table 2: The techniques of Shatkarma mentioned in the HYP and GS

Shatkarma	HYP (verses 2/24-35 HYP)	GS (verses 1/13-59 GS)
Dhauti	Wet a cloth four fingers (Angulas) wide and fifteen hands long, as per the guidance of the guru, swallow it slowly and slowly come out.	Four kinds of Dhauti; Antardhauti, Dantadhauti, Hridhdhauti and Moolashodhana mentioned in Gs (Table 4)
Basti	When the navel deep in water, by inserting a tube into the anus, while doing Utkatasana. Contract the anus and wash the inner part.	Jalabasti - Doing the Utkatasana posture and remaining in navel-deep water with a tube inserted into the rectum, perform Jala Basti by relaxing and contracting of rectum Suskabasti - By Ashvini Mudra, one should dilate and contract the anus by raising the lower part of the back (in the supine

		position and moving the pelvic region of the abdomen)
<i>Neti</i>	Insert smooth and about 9 inches long thread in the nostril and taking it out of the mouth.	A nine-inch-long thread should be inserted into a nostril and pulled out through the mouth
<i>Trataka</i>	With a steady vision, one should concentrate on a subtle target until the tears come out of the eye	One should gaze at an object for a minute without blinking until tears begin to fall from the eyes
<i>Nauli/Lauliki</i>	The abdomen should be rotated from right to left and left to right by tilting the shoulder slightly forward like a vortex of motion	Move the abdomen from side to side quickly
<i>Kapalbhati</i>	Quickly perform exhalation and inhalation like a blacksmith bellows	<p>Vatakrama - Air should be drawn in through the left nostril and expelled through the right. After drawing air in through the right nostril, expel it through the left nostril. One should not hold their breath after rapidly inhaling and exhaling.</p> <p>Vyutkram - After drawing water through both nostrils, expel it through the mouth. Repeatedly taking in water in this way.</p> <p>Shitkrama - After sucking water through the mouth and making a hissing sound, expel it through the nostrils.</p>

Benefits of Shatkarma practices

Shatkarmic practises regulate the functioning of the internal organs and make them free from disease. The first practise is *Dhauti*, or cleansing of the stomach and alimentary canal, or digestive tract. The second practise is *Basti*, or yogic enema. The only difference is that in an enema, a tube is used, while in a *Basti*, water is sucked up through the *Antrum* and kept in the large intestine for some time. *Basti* is more natural and more appropriate. The third practise is *Neti*, or nasal cleansing. *Neti* works like an ENT specialist, cleansing the nose, ears, and throat. The fourth practise in GS or fifth in HYP is *Lauliki* or *Nauli*, a powerful technique that massages and strengthens all the abdominal organs. The fifth practise in GS and the fourth in HYP is *Trataka*, or steady gazing, which is useful for removing eye defects and balancing the nervous system. The sixth and last practise is *Kapalbhati*. This is a breathing technique that clears the head and can help remove defects in the lungs.^[18] The benefits of *Shatkarmic* practises are explained in Table 3.

Table 3: The benefits of Shatkarma mentioned in the HYP and GS

<i>Shatkarma</i>	HYP (verses 2/24-35 HYP)	Gs (verses 1/13-59 GS)
<i>Dhauti</i>	Coughs, asthma, diseases of spleen, leprosy and 20 types of diseases caused by mucus are destroyed through the <i>Dhauti Karma</i>	Removed toxins from the body by practicing the four kinds of <i>Dhauti</i> (Table 4)
<i>Basti</i>	Through the practicing of <i>Basti</i> eliminated enlargement of the glands and spleen and diseases arising from wind, bile and mucus. The <i>Dhatu</i> , senses and mind are purified, appetite	<p><i>Jalabasti</i>- Get rid of urinary diseases, diseases of the bowels and flatulence and body looks like <i>Kamadev</i> (God of love)</p> <p><i>Suskabasti</i>- no constipation, stimulated gastric</p>

	increases, glowness of the body and excess <i>Doshas</i> are destroyed by practicing of <i>Jala Basti Kriya</i>	heat and cures indigestion
<i>Neti</i>	Clean cranium and bestows clairvoyance. Destroys all diseases above the throat	Helps the <i>Khecari</i> process, removes disorders of phlegm and gives a sharp vision
<i>Trataka</i>	All eye disorder is cured, laziness and sloth and closing the doorways creating these issues	Helps the <i>Sambhavi Mudra</i> process, cures eye diseases, and acquires acute vision
<i>Nauli/Lauliki</i>	Luminated the slow gastritis and accelerates the digestion process, destroys various <i>Doshas</i> and diseases	Destroys all diseases and increases the heat of the body
<i>Kapalbhati</i>	Destroys of mucus diseases	<i>Vatakrama</i> - Cures diseases of phlegm <i>Vyutkrama</i> - Cures diseases of phlegm <i>Shitkrama</i> - The body is brought under control and free of phlegm disorders, and the body becomes <i>Kamadeva</i>

a. <i>Vatasara</i>	Take inhale slowly from mouth forming it like the beak of a crow, move the abdomen and evacuate through lower tube	Purified of the body, destroys all diseases and increases the gastric heat
b. <i>Varisara</i>	Water should be sipped slowly via the mouth to fill upto the throat completely. Next move the abdomen to push it and the expel it down the lower route.	Purifies the body, should be kept very secret and the body becomes radiant
c. <i>Vahnisara</i>	Hundred times, push the nevel against the spine	Got rid of abdominal diseases, one increases gestic heat, brings aspirants success in yoga, this should be kept a secret and never revealed
d. <i>Bahiskrita</i>	Take inhale from mouth forming the <i>Kaki-Mudra</i> , after that hold the air in stomach for 11/2 hours and forcefully puch air along the lower route	Having washed the <i>Nadi</i> clean, it is not easily accessible even to God and should be kept secret
2. <i>Dantdhauti</i>	Cleaning of five – the root of the teeth and tongue, openings of the two ears and the frontal sinus are called dantdhauti	
a. <i>Dantamula</i>	Rub the root of the teeth with <i>Khadira</i> plant extract or clean earth until the impurity is cleared	Clean impurities of teeth, every morning one who know yoga should do it to preserve his teeth

Table 4: The techniques and benefits of Dhauti mentioned in the Gherand Samhita

<i>Dhauti</i>	Techniques (verses 1/14-23 GS)	Benefits (verses 1/14-23 GS)
1. <i>Antardhauti</i>	For purifying the body four types of the <i>Antardhauti</i> – <i>Vatasara</i> , <i>Varisara</i> , <i>Vahnisara</i> and <i>Bahiskrita</i> .	

b. <i>Jivhamula</i>	Putting the index, middle, and ring fingers together in the throat, rub out the impurities and slowly clean the root of the tongue.	Destroys old age, death, disease, and so on, allowing one to be free of diseases caused by phlegm
c. <i>Karnaradra</i>	Rub the auditory canal with the tip of the index finger	Auditory sensation is experienced
d. <i>Kapalarandra</i>	Every day, after waking up from sleep, after meals, and at the end of the day, rub the <i>Bhalarandhra</i> with the thumb of the right hand	Ward off diseases due to phlegm, <i>Nadi</i> becomes purify and vision cleared
3. <i>Hridhdhauti</i>	The three-fold <i>Hridhdhauti</i> should be practiced—with a stalk, vomiting, and a piece of cloth	
a. <i>Dandadhauti</i>	The plantain, turmeric, or cane stalk should be inserted, moved (up and down), and then slowly drawn out of the gullet	Phlegm, bile and mucus throw out from mouth, definitely get rid of the gullet disease
b. <i>Vamanadhauti</i>	After meals, drink water until it reaches the throat, look up for a few seconds, and then throw out the water	Cured the diseases due to phlegm and bile
c. <i>Vastradhauti</i>	Slowly swallow a strip of thin cloth four fingers wide and nineteen cubits or twenty-five cubits long, and then draw it out. This is known as the <i>Vastra-Dhauti</i> process	Cures tumor, fever, enlarged spleen, skin diseases and disorders of phlegm and bile. It brings health, strength and growth day by day

4. <i>Mulashodhana</i>	Cleaning the rectum with the stem of a turmeric plant or the middle finger and watering it repeatedly is recommended	Cure constipation and indigestion, nourish the body, and stimulate the digestive organs
------------------------	--	---

Safety and adverse effect associated with *Shatkarma*

According to HYP, *Shatkarma* should be practised under the supervision of a skilled yoga guru. It is also said in this text to keep these *Shatkarma* practises confidential, so that no one should practise *Shatkarma* without correct approach, so that he is not harmed.^[1] Even before the description of *Shatkarma* in Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati’s GS, it is said that the practise of these *Kriyas* should never be done by going through a book or under the supervision of an unskilled individual, but rather under the supervision of a traditional guru or a skilled instructor.^[18]

In present era, *Shatkarma* is applied to disease prevention and cure, so it is critical to select *Shatkarma* based on the ailment; otherwise, the condition may worsen or bad effects of the practise may be acquired.

Comparison of *Shatkarma* between HYP and GS

Differences between *Hyp* and *Gs* into the following points: (1) *Hyp* and *Gs* both describe *Shatkarma*, but their order is different. In *Hyp*, *Trataka* is mentioned before *Nauli*, and in *Gs*, *Trataka* is described after *Lauliki*. (2) In *Hyp*, *Shatkarma* has not been accepted as an essential part of *Yoga*; the practise of *Shatkarma* has been said to be mandatory only for those seekers who have obesity or excess phlegm. Those who have equal *Vata*, *Pitta*, And *Kapha* do not need to do these activities. Whereas in *Gs*, *Shatkarma* is considered the first part of *Saptanga Yoga*, which is considered necessary for a *Yogi* to practice, (3) *Hyp* describes *Vastra Dhauti* as *Dhauti*, while *GS* describes *Vastra Dhauti* as a type of *Dhauti*. (4) HYP only describes *Jal Basti*, whereas *GS* describes two types of *Basti*. (5) *Hyp* does not specify any type of *Kapalbhati*, whereas *Gs* does. (6) In *Hyp*, *Shatkarma* has been described after the practise of *Asanas* and before *Pranayama*, while in *GS*, it has been asked to practise *Shatkarma* first, then

Asanas, etc. have been described, and (7) in *Hyp* and *Gs*, there is similarity in some activities and disparity in some of the benefits of *Shatkarma*.

Similarities in both texts are: (1) in both texts, *Shatkarma*, i.e., *Dhauti*, *Basti*, *Neti*, *Nauli*, *Trataka*, and *Kapalbhati*, have been described. *Shatkarma* is described in *Hyp* from 21 verses to 35 verses of Chapter 2, and in *Gs* from 12 verses of Chapter 1 to 59 verses. (2) *Sutra Neti Kriya* is described in both the *Hyp* and *Gs* texts; (3) *Nauli* or *Lauliki Kriya* is described in both the *Hyp* and *Gs* texts. In *Hyp* it is named "Nauli," and in *GS* it is named "Lauliki," but both have the same mechanism, and (4) *Trataka Kriya* is described in both *Hyp* and *Gs* texts; its procedure is the same in both.

LIMITATIONS

This study is limited to only two *Hatha Yoga* texts (i.e., *HYP* and *GS*) for reviewing the importance, types, techniques, benefits, safety and adverse effects associated with *Shatkarma*.

REFERENCES

1. Muktibodhananda S. *Hatha yoga pradipika*. 4th ed. Munger, Bihar, India: Yoga Publications Trust; 2014.
2. Bahadur R, Chandra Vasu S. *The Gheranda Samhita*. 1st ed. Varanasi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pratishthan; 2003.
3. Swathi PS, Raghavendra BR, Saoji AA. Health and therapeutic benefits of *Shatkarma*: A narrative review of scientific studies. *Journal of Ayurveda and integrative medicine* 2021 Jan 1;12(1):206-12.
4. Meera S, Rani MV, Sreedhar C, Robin DT. A review on the therapeutic effects of *Neti Kriya* with special reference to *Jala Neti*. *Journal of Ayurveda and integrative medicine* 2020 Apr 1;11(2):185-9.
5. Mishra S, Dash SC. An overview of *hatha yogic practices* in *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, *Gheranda Samhita* and *Shiva Samhita*. *Int J Humanit Soc Sci* 2017;8:354-66.
6. Digambarji S, ML G. *Gheranda Samhita*. Kaivalyadhama SMYM Samiti, Lonavla; 1997

7. Akers BD. *The Hatha Yoga Pradipika*. Motilal Banarsidas; 2005
8. Singh P. *Hatha yoga pradipika*. Рипол Классик; 1981
9. Nagasawa KH. *Gheranda Samhita (GS)*. *Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies (Indogaku Bukkyogaku Kenkyu)* 1970;18(2):875-877.
10. Mallinson J. *The Gheranda Samhita: the original Sanskrit and an English translation*; 2004
11. Mishra S, Dash SC. An overview of *hatha yogic practices* in *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, *Gheranda Samhita* and *Shiva Samhita*. *Int J Humanit Soc Sci* 2017;8:354-66
12. Sravani K, Rao US. *Yogic techniques in classical hatha yoga texts: A comparative perspective*. *Int J Creat Res J* 2018.
13. Alphonse S. *Detailing Asanas in Hathyoga Pradipika and Gheranda Samhita-A comparative study*. *Star Res J* 2018;6:1-3.
14. Mishra S. *Concept of Kundalini in Shiva Samhita: The ancient hatha yogic text*. *Int J Physiol Nutr Phys Educ* 2017;2:33-4
15. Dhruva Prasad S, Sowmya MN, Sudhakar PR. *A Critical Review of Shiva Samhita and its Contribution to Yoga. Research and Reviews: A Journal of Ayurvedic Science, Yoga and Naturopathy* 2018;5:13-18.
16. Umesh MV. *Development of a conceptual model of pranayama as in yoga vasishtha (Nirvana Prakarana) and its comparison with concept of Pranayama in Patanjali Yoga Sutra and Hatha Yoga Pradipika*. *Int J Yoga Allied Sci* 2016;5:171-9.
17. Mainali MK. *Unit-9 Gheranda Samhita (Ghatastha Yoga): Concept of Ghata and Ghata Shudhhi*. Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi 2020.
18. Saraswati SN. *Gheranda Samhita*. Munger, Bihar, India: Yoga Publications Trust; 2012.

How to cite this article: Pankaj Patidar, Kanchan Yadav. Importance, techniques, benefits, safety and adverse effect associated with *Shatkarma* mentioned in traditional *Hatha Yoga* texts (*HYP & GS*) along with comparison: A Review on *Shatkarma*. *J Ayurveda Integr Med Sci* 2023;04:55-61. <http://dx.doi.org/10.21760/jaims.8.4.9>

Source of Support: Nil, **Conflict of Interest:** None declared.
