

Therapy procedures of ‘Les Nga’ practised at National Traditional Medicine Hospital

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Abstract

The Traditional primary purification and detoxification treatment is known as *Les Nga*. It means the "five therapies". The five therapeutic means of eliminating toxins from the body are Emesis, Purgation, Nasal irrigation, Enema and Bloodletting. These series of five therapies help remove deep rooted stress and illness causing toxins from the body while balancing the three somatic humors. The *Les Nga* procedures along with its pre-treatments as specified in gSo-ba rig-pa, when provided in the right time and season can help an individual to lead a better life even at an old age. It is suggested that when one undergoes *Les Nga* therapy for three times annually, in the right seasons, it expels the toxins, revitalizes the body tissues and prevents the body from falling prey to various diseases and keeps an individual healthy during old age. There is a tendency for the rLung to get aggravated in old age and all therapies that are administered should be to prevent the rLung. *Les Nga* offers one of the most comprehensive methods of removing toxins from the body. They seek to reverse the direction of the diseases. This cleansing process is achieved through several protocols such as special diets, oilation therapy, steam therapy and cleansing therapies. Towards the therapy's end, special attention is given to purgation, blood donating, or enema therapy. These therapies can help alleviate pain and diseases in human beings and hence may be established in NTMH for the benefit of all citizens.

Keywords: Therapy procedures; *Les Nga*; Emesis; Purgation; Nasal irrigation; Enema; Bloodletting; National Traditional Medicine Hospital.

1. Introduction

Les Nga is a primary purification and detoxification treatment. *Les Nga* means the "five therapies". These 5 therapeutic means of eliminating toxins from the body are Emesis, Purgation, Nasal irrigation, Enema and Bloodletting. These five therapies help remove deep rooted stress and illness causing toxins from the body while balancing the three somatic humors (energies that govern all biological functions). These procedures are used in various conditions in the Traditional Medicine Hospital at Thimphu to get immediate effects and to remove all the unwanted waste substances in the body. At the moment we mostly administer the Nasal Cleaning and bloodletting therapies as the most effective methods of eliminating toxins and other unhygienic substances from the human body. Most of the patients referred to these treatment therapies have acknowledged that symptoms never tend to relapse once they undergo these therapies. This is a proof that these procedures are effective in promoting their longevity and wellbeing. After the patients' feedback I was motivated to develop this paper in order to educate

on these effective methods of treatment available at the Traditional Medicines Hospital at Thimphu.

2. Origin, principles and physio-pathology of *Les Nga*

2.1 Origin

The mythological origin of *gso-ba-rig-pa* is associated with a story about Brahma, the lord of creation. Lord Brahma, who sought to ease the sufferings of man created this medical system from his memory as the secondary texts of sacred science of collection of formulas and taught this skills to other gods. One of those deities of Hindu mythology during the churning of the ocean transmitted the knowledge to the mortal sages. These sages, who were renowned for their empathy to the sufferings of the living beings, handed over their knowledge to their followers. They later made their own studies and developed treatises including that of *Les Nga*. This *Les Nga* was then integrated with the *gso-ba-rig-pa* medical system.

2.2 Principles and pysio-pathology

As per *gso-ba-rigpa*, body is made up of seven different types of tissues (Lue zhung duen). These body tissues are nourished through food materials that get digested by action of digestive fire (mey). The digested materials are carried to different tissues through body channels ('jug sgo'). At each tissue level, there is a digestive fire that works on food materials to activate absorption of nutrients into the corresponding tissues. As a by product of this process, dri ma (waste material) is formed which is eventually eliminated. If there is any block in body channels or impairment in the function of any digestive fire, nourishment of body tissues does not happen and this results in indigestion of food. These undigested materials or waste materials (ma shu wa) clog the body channels and manifests in different disease conditions. When oleation and sudation are done, waste materials clogged in the body channels become digested and disintegrated and they move into the main channel. During *les nga* procedure these are expelled through natural orifices. As it is a mechanism to eliminate the waste materials from the body, *les* procedure is not only used as a curative but also as preventive and promotive treatment.

One of the classical texts (*rbyud-zhi*) says that *les nga* must be applied to remove the waste materials accumulated in the different seasons for prevention of diseases caused by seasonal changes. It is mentioned that waste materials accumulated in the body during winter should be eliminated in spring, those accumulated in summer should be eliminated in rainy season and those accumulated in rainy season must be cleared in autumn. During the month of July-August oil treatment is most effective as it alleviates the rLung accumulated in the body during summer and aggravated in the rainy season

Therefore, the objectives of *Les Nga* applications are to:

- Strengthen the system and rebuild the body's cells and tissues after the toxins have been expelled.
- Healing and restoration of the tissues, channels, digestion, and mental functions.

- Strengthen the body part or organ system affected by the illness so that it will be more resistant to further illnesses.
- Loosen the toxins where ever they exist and release toxins through sweating and returning them to their origin sites (Stomach for bad kan; Small Intestine for mkhtris pa; Colon for rlung).

3. Classification of *Les Nga*

Les Nga is broadly classified in to two types: a) pre-operative procedures and b) main operative procedures.

3.1 *Pre-operative procedures*

The pre-operative procedures are further classified into two as i) Application of oily substance internally or externally and b) Therapeutic procedures in which oil substance is being applied orally and externally over the body thoroughly. Further, this procedure is being used in two ways; evacuative and subsidiser. Types of fomentation includes: *Lang Lums* (whole body massage and fomentation) and *Lang Dugs* (local application with the help of tube). These two treatment procedures are specifically good for bone disorders, joint disorders, neurological problems, musculo-skeletal disorders, mainly for arthritis, myositis, spondylitis, loss of body movement, inflammation, degeneration, pain, stiffness and for delay aging. However, it is contra-indicated for a patient with mkhris-pa disorders, blood related diseases, extreme hot climate, obesity, diabetes and jaundice and are not recommended for pregnant mother, children, and an old-aged people.

3.2 *Main operative therapy*

The classical therapy procedures are classified into five groups as described below.

i. Emesis: It is a therapeutic procedure where medicines are administered orally to evacuate diseases through oral route and can be done only in the spring season. Materials such as powders of pipla, po-so- cha, dan-roq, shi- ri- khanda, hDray-sum- pChey- Ma, lan-tsa (rock salt), honey, oil, milk 3-4 litres, warm water are used in this method. This treatment is recommended for acute fever, diarrhoea, urethra vaginal bleeding, tuberculosis, skin diseases, diabetes, cough, asthma, oedema, indigestion, inflammation, and anaemia. However, it is contra- indicated for pregnancy, patient with dry nature, in hunger stage, depression, childhood stage, old age condition, cardiac patient, chest injury, and spleen disorders.

ii. Purgation: The therapeutic procedure by which the vitiated humors (diseases) in general and mkhris-pa in particular are eliminated from the anal route. This therapy gives lightness to the body. Materials such as Castor oil, Warm water and milk are used here. It is recommended for blood disorders, liver and spleen disorders, vascular diseases, bleeding problems, fever, jaundice, constipation, asthma, allergic, skin diseases, rheumatoid arthritis, sexual dysfunction, and hair falling. However, it is contra-indicated for all bad kan dominant condition, dehydration, unhealthy, pregnancy, old age condition, extreme hot, and cold climate.

iii. *Enema*: Enema predominate the “five course treatment” (*Les nga*). This is prescribed for rlung-dominated patients. It overcomes all diseases, revives nutrition and rejuvenates the body. Experts claim that no disease is incurable by enema. Enema is of two types: i) with decoctions and ii) with oil. Further, enema can be divided into two categories as mild enema (‘Jam rtsi) and strong enema (Dragpo Neruha). Mild enema (‘Jam rtsi) is the process of administration of oil both through the rectum and oral track. The strong Enema (Dragpo Neruha) is the most important procedure amongst the five therapeutic procedures that can eradicate any type of vitiated rLung disorders and bowel obstructions in the body. Site of administration is colon (through rectum), urinary bladder (through urethra) and uterus (through vagina). Materials required for carrying out this treatment are: honey, rock salt, sesame oil, paste of drug, herbal decoction, plastic bag, thread, cotton, gloves, vessels, and hot water. It is recommended for skin disorders, bone disorders, constipation, infertility, arthritis, low backache, neurological problems, and sexual disorders. However, it is contra-indicated for hypertension, heart disease, fear, anxiety, and weak patient.

iv. *Errhines or nasal irrigation*: This is a procedure in which a medicated oil substance is administered through the route of nostrils. It is a very useful treatment and essential in all ailments above the neck. The nostril is the easiest and closest opening for conveying the potency of the medicines to the cranial cavity. It is doubtful if there is any other treatment as efficacious as Nasal irrigation, not only for immediate symptomatic cure but even as a permanent cure for terrible diseases of the head. Materials required are: herbal nasal drop, dropper, oil for massage, hot water, and ‘dras gsum thang. Nasal irrigation is usually done at 7.30 – 8.30 in the morning or at 5-6P.M. in the evening with empty stomach. It is recommended for swooning, delirious fever, hemiplegia, facial paralysis, headache, neurological problems, heaviness in the head, dullness of brain, throat diseases, swelling affecting all parts above shoulder, mumps, tumours, skin diseases, epilepsy and chronic catarrh. However, it not recommended to use immediately after and before consuming water, liquors, poisons or fatty items and for those who have some poison in their system. This should not be done on those who have just had their food and those who have bathed their head or are about to bath and also one who has come to the normal diet after blood letting. This is also not advised in post- natal cases and fresh cases of cough and asthma and for those who have had emesis, purgation or enema. This is to be avoided when it is cloudy and when the sky is not clear during rainy seasons.

iv. *Blood letting therapy*: This is one of the most important therapies to cure any kind of blood related diseases and wounds. This therapy is practiced very effectively in our department. While minor surgical equipments like small sharp blades are being used for this method, Leeching method (using Leeches) is also sometimes followed. It is a simple procedure to cure blood impurities and skin diseases. For Leeching method, materials required are: Leeches, turmeric powder, kidney tray, cotton, surgical blade, rock salt and bandage cloth. Place the leech over the wound in the region, if not, a small wound is created using a surgical blade. When it starts sucking blood, place a wet cloth over it. Withdraw the leech when itching starts in the region. If it is not leaving by itself apply salt on the area. After removing the leech, wash the surface with ‘dras gsum thang and apply with anti-septic drugs to prevent infection, and then cover the area with a bandage.

4. Post treatment of *Les Nga*

Dietary and regimens should be restricted. The bodily exertion and the intake of herbs believed to promote health come under the post-treatment procedures. Post-treatment is ensuring required food for the body after the purification to intensify the digestion power that will subside after the procedure. During the treatment, food is given according to the degree of purification intended for the body.

The patient must be under complete care of a doctor to avoid the path of unwholesome food and regimen, the consequences of the violation of rules may not be instantaneous in their conditions. Pre and post care of patient include the diet, habits and strict instructions in taking bath. Food must be preferably vegetarian and fat free. A good relationship with patient, soft-spoken words and assurances should be offered in each and every part of the treatment. A strict follow-up and observation is very important to take care of the patient.

5. Current treatment status of *Les-Nga* at NTMH

Table 1: Total number of patients treated by *Les Nga* (Therapy) procedures in the year 2008.

Type of therapy procedures	No. of patient referred	No. of patient recovered	No. of patient under recovery
Purgative Therapy	73	52	13
Emetic Therapy	41	27	9
Nasal Cleansing	803	473	152
Enema Therapy	53	21	7
Bloodletting	134	129	5

6. Conclusion and recommendation

Les Nga therapies are found to be very effective therapy procedures mentioned in the text of *gso-ba-rig-pa* and practiced at National Traditional Medicine Hospital for so many decades. But the terminology used in other countries may differ from what we use here. For further improvement and development of public services through this system of treatment we need to have facilities like separate room for various therapy with well equipped instruments to conduct any procedure in an easy and effective way. At the current stage we lack many facilities that hamper the delivery of our services to the users.

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