AN IN-DEPTH REVIEW OF AYURVEDIC BASTI KARMA (MEDICATED ENEMA)

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ABSTRACT

Ayurvedic science deals with treating the diseases and maintaining the health of the healthy. Panchakarma therapies are usually employed to eradicate the vitiated Doshas and aid in maintaining the equilibrium of these Doshas, which is the fundamental basis of health. Any one of the five Panchakarma therapies can be utilized, either singly or in combination to prevent or cure a disease.

One such therapy is Basti Karma (Medicated Enema), which is an important treatment modality and it is thought to be Ardhachikitsa (50% of all the treatments required) by some Acharyas of Ayurveda. Classically, Basti is advocated to be administered in diseases of Vata Dosha predominance. Although Basti is administered in the Pakvashaya (rectum and Colon) its active ingredients spread throughout the entire body, giving the desired outcome. Its action is multidimensional, though some consider it as a simple enema procedure. The therapeutic effect of Basti Karma can only be inferred through the efficacy of the procedure. In this article, an attempt is made to explain Basti Karma and its utility.

INTRODUCTION

Basti is defined by Acharya Charaka as “The Karma wherein the drugs administered through the anal canal reaches up to the Nabhipradesha, Kati, Parshwa and Kukshi region, churns the vitiated Dosha and Purisha (Morbid humors and fecal matter), spreads the oleation all over the body and is easily eliminated along with the churned Purisha and Doshas is known as Basti.”

Panchakarma therapies are very unique therapeutically because of its preventive, promotive, prophylactic and rejuvenative properties, as well as providing radical cure in some cases. Basti Karma is a procedure that is applicable to all Vataj Vyadhis (Diseases of Vata predominance). Acharya Charaka has compared the action of Basti with the watering of plants at their roots. When the roots are watered, then the whole plant, from the roots to the leaves, flowers and fruits receives the water[1]. In the same way, Basti (Medicated enema) when administered through the anus in the rectum and colon, reaches the entire body and eliminates the diseases of Vata Dosha.

Among the three Doshas, Vata has the property to move from one location to another, and is responsible for moving Pitta and Kapha Dosha around the body as well[2]. Therefore, it is responsible for all the diseases whether it be Shakhagata, Kosthagata, Marmagata, Urdhwagata, Adhogata or Sarva Ayavayagata. As such, there is no other treatment that is suitable for the pacification of Vata Dosha, other than Basti Karma. Hence, it has been mentioned that Basti Karma is Ardhachikitsa by some Acharyas[3]. When Basti is administered, it reaches the Nabhipradesha, Kati, Parshwa and Kukshi region, then due to the Veerya of the Basti dravyas, it spreads all over the body and churns the Doshas, removes them from their location and then the vitiated Dosha is eventually eliminated along with Purisha.

Basti Karma has the prime function of Srotoshodhana (Cleansing of the channels) of the whole body. The rationale behind this is the concept of auto-intoxication or the idea that food enters the intestine to rot[4]. Basti has two main types Niruha and Anuvasana[5]. Niruha Basti contains a mixture of Madhu (Honey), Saindhava Lavana (Rock salt), Sneha (Oils), Kalka (Powder of Dravya) and Kwatha
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(Decoction). These ingredients if just randomly added together forms an immiscible mixture, hence it must be carefully prepared in the following manner.

**Materials and Methods**

The materials and methods required varies according to the requirements of the patient, disease being treated and the type of Basti planned i.e., Basti Yantra (Enema Bag), Basti Dravyas, rubber catheter, plastic syringes etc. The method usually consists of Purva Karma, Pradhana Karma and Paschat Karma.

**Preparation of Niruha Basti**

According to Acharya Kashyapa, Acharya Vagbhatta and Acharya Charaka, Madhu is added firstly since it is a Mangalakaari Dravya. Firstly, Madhu and Saindhava Lavana is mixed together, carefully stirring in one direction to maintain polarity. When this is properly done, the Madhu and Saindhava Lavana looks somewhat frothy in appearance, then the Sneha is added and again stirred. Next the Kalka is added and stirred. Lastly the Kwatha is added slowly and stirred slowly to achieve a homogenous mixture. Thus the mixture achieves a physical state of an emulsion.

**Properties and Action of Basti Ingredients**

It is mentioned in Ayurvedic classics that hot honey (Madhu) is harmful and should never be used. However, in Charaka Samhita, Kalpa Sthana, it is stated that hot Madhu can be used in Yamana Karma, as well as in Basti Kalpana honey along with hot Kwatha is administered. Madhu is considered as the best Anupana (Vehicle), as it contains various substances that aids in its drug carrying capacity. Its main property is Yogavaahitwa, which means it enhances the properties of substances with which it is processed. Madhu also helps form a homogenous mixture with Saindhava Lavana, and it has predigesteds sugars in it which makes it easy to digest and ready for absorption by the body.

Saindhava Lavana (Rock salt) has properties like Vishyandi, Sukshma, Tikshna and Vataghna, thus, it stimulates the evacuation of the bladder and rectum. Due to its Sukshma Guna it reaches the micro channels of the body, Tikshna Guna aids in breaking down the morbid matter in Mala and Doshा Sangha and by its irritant property helps eliminate the Basti.

Sneha includes Ghrit (Ghee), Taila (Oils), Vasa and Majja (Bone marrow) with each having its own specific property which is to be decided and administered by the attending Vaidya. Sneha is general is Vatahara and Malanam Vinihanti Sangam (Removes the obstruction of the channels in the body). It also produces unctuousness in the body due to its Snigdhaguna, which is important for easy elimination of the Doshas and Malas. Sneha also protects the mucus membrane of the intestine from any adverse effect that the Basti Dravya may contain, hence its importance here. Kalka, Kwatha and Avapa Dravya; these together serve the function of Utkleshana or Doshaharana. These are usually selected by the attending Vaidya, on the basis of Dosa, Dushya and Srotas. Their main function here is the action of Samprapti Vighatna of the Roga being treated.

**Basti Classifications**

1. On the basis of Adhisthana (Location)
   a. Pakvashayagata Basti: Medicated drugs are administered through the anal canal into the colon. It can be either Niruha or Anuvasana Basti. This article focuses primarily on Pakvashayagata Basti.

   b. Uttara Basti: In males it is Mutrashayagata Basti, the medicated drugs are administered through the penis to enter the urinary bladder. In females, it can be of two types. Mutrashayagata and Garbhashayagata Basti. The medicated drugs are administered either through the urethra to reach the urinary bladder or through the vagina to reach the uterus. This is based upon the disease condition and the attending Vaidya will prescribe the appropriate treatment accordingly.

2. On the basis of Basti Dravya
   a. Snaihika Basti: The medicated drugs administered is in the form of Sneha (Ghrita, Taila, Vasa, Majja), through the anal canal into the colon. It is further subdivided according to the dose of Sneha administered as follows:

      i. Sneha Basti: Here Six Pala (240ml) of Sneha is administered.

      ii. Anuvasana Basti: her Three Pala (120ml) of Sneha is administered.

   b. Niruha Basti: In this type of Basti, Kwatha (Decoction) is the main ingredient of the Basti Dravya, combined with Madhu, Saindhava Namak, Sneha and Kalka. Another term used for Niruha Basti is Asthapana Basti.

3. On the basis of Schedule advised
   a. Karma Basti: Here, a total of Thirty Basti are administered in which there are Eighteen Anuvasana and Twelve Niruha Basti alternately.

   b. Kala Basti: According to Acharya Chakrapani, it includes total Sixteen Basti. In this, ten are Anuvasana and Six are Niruha Basti. But
according to Acharya Vagbhatta, it is a total of fifteen Basti, six being Niruha and nine being Anuvasana. Yet, according to Acharya Kashyapa, twelve Anuvasana and three Niruha are administered.

c. **Yoga Basti**: here, a total of eight Basti are administered, five being Anuvasana and three Niruha Basti.

**Basti Chikitsa** is explained precisely under three headings as follows: (1) Poorva Karma, (2) Pradhan Karma and (3) Paschata Karma.

1. **Poorva Karma**
   a. Preparation of Basti Dravyas
   b. Snehana
   c. Swedana

2. **Pradhan Karma**
   a. Patient is asked to lie down in *Vama Parshva* (Left lateral) position.
   b. The *Basti Netra* is introduced into the *Gudamarga* (Anus) and the *Basti Dravya* is administered in a manner that is neither too fast nor too slow.

3. **Paschata Karma**
   a. Patient is allowed to rest in a supine position for a few minutes.
   b. *Snana* (Bath)
   c. *Rasadi Samsarjana Krama*[^13]

**Importance of Left Lateral**[^14] **Position for Basti Administration**

As the *Grahami* (Organs of assimilation, duodenum, upper part of small intestine) and *Guda* (Rectum) are located on the left side of the body, the administration of the *Basti Dravya* while the patient is lying in the left lateral position gives pleasant benefits and also keeps the *Valayas* (Mucosal folds) submerged into the surrounding musculature. Hence *Basti* should always be administered when the patient is lying in this position, for proper absorption and maximum effect of the *Dravya*.

**DISCUSSION**

*Basti Karma* is more than just an enema therapy as widely thought. The many aspects of it has been outlined above and can clearly be observed that it has an intricate scientific background as mentioned by various Ayurvedic Acharyas. For Anuvasana and Niruha Basti, the proper schedule of administration has been mentioned, such as *Karma*, *Kala* and *Yoga Basti*. And most importantly the properties of the ingredients used in *Niruha Basti* preparation is specifically selected to remove the morbid *Doshas* that have accumulated in the body. Due to these properties, the *Basti* stimulates the *Pakvashaya* and in doing so, removes the *Doshas* through the nearest route which is the anal canal, bringing out feces along with the morbid *Doshas*. Another important aspect mentioned is the administration of the *Basti Dravya*, which should ideally be in the *Vama Parshva* (Left lateral) position, because of the anatomical position of the intestines, this position will give maximum absorption and minimum distress to the patient during its administration. As *Basti Karma* is not a standalone procedure, the *Poorva*, *Pradhaan* and *Paschata Karma* must be strictly adhered to, to ensure maximum benefit from the *Basti Karma* procedure.

**CONCLUSION**

As outlined here, it can be observed that *Basti Karma* is a multi-spectrum treatment modality. It is not only curative in nature but it is disease preventative and health promotive as well. Still, it depends on the knowledge of the *Vaidya* to consider various factors such as its *Dravya* selection, preparation and administration schedule and method of administration is of utmost importance, according to the disease being managed. When *Basti* is properly selected and administered, the benefits will definitely be observed in the body, as the disease symptoms get relieved and the health of the healthy is maintained.

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