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## Review Article

### 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 Dosh* predominance. Although *Basti* is administered in the *Pakvashaya* (rectum and Colon) its active ingredients spreads 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<sup>[1]</sup>. 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 Dosh*.

Among the three *Doshas*, *Vata* has the property to move from one location to another, and is responsible for moving *Pitta* and *Kapha Dosh* around the body as well<sup>[2]</sup>. Therefore, it is responsible for all the diseases whether it be *Shakhagata*, *Kosthagata*, *Marmagata*, *Urdhwagata*, *Adhogata* or *Sarva Avayavagata*. As such, there is no other treatment that is suitable for the pacification of *Vata Dosh*, other than *Basti Karma*. Hence, it has been mentioned that *Basti Karma* is *Ardhachikitsa* by some *Acharyas*<sup>[3]</sup>. 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<sup>[4]</sup>. *Basti* has two main types *Niruha* and *Anuvasana*<sup>[5]</sup>. *Niruha Basti* contains a mixture of *Madhu* (Honey), *Saindhava Lavana* (Rock salt), *Sneha* (Oils), *Kalka* (Powder of *Dravya*) and *Kwatha*

(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 *NiruhaBasti*

According to *Acharya Kashyapa*<sup>[6]</sup>, *Acharya Vagbhatta*<sup>[7]</sup> and *Acharya Charaka*<sup>[8]</sup>, *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<sup>[9]</sup>. 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 *Vamana 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<sup>[10]</sup>. 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 predigested 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<sup>[11]</sup>. 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 *Dosha Sanghaa* 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 *Snigdha-guna*, 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 *Dosha*, *Dushya* and *Srotas*. Their main function here is the action of *Samprapti Vighatna* of the *Roga* being treated<sup>[12]</sup>.

### *Basti* Classifications

#### 1. On the basis of *Adhithana* (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) *Pradhana Karma* and (3) *Paschat Karma*.

### 1. *Poorva Karma*

- Preparation of *Basti Dravyas*
- Snehana*
- Swedana*

### 2. *Pradhana Karma*

- Patient is asked to lie down in *Vama Parshva* (Left lateral) position.
- 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. *Pradhana Karma*

- Patient is allowed to rest in a supine position for a few minutes.
- Snana* (Bath)
- Rasadi Samsarjana Krama*<sup>[13]</sup>

### Importance of Left Lateral<sup>[14]</sup> Position for *Basti Administration*

As the *Grahani* (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*, *Pradhana* and *Paschat 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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