



BASTI KARMA OR ENEMA THERAPY – A CRITICAL REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda, the science of life, which maintains the health and cures the diseased, indicates with every treatment that there is a need of *Bheshaja*, and the route of intake of *Bheshaja* is also highly significant to consider. *Basti* is the one of the *Pradhana Karma* of *Panchakarma* which is commonly administered by anal route, having multi-faceted actions, serves as *Pradhana Chikitsa* for *Vatavyadhis* and also known as *Ardhachikitsa*, but worldwide it is seen that the *Ayurveda* practitioners use the term Enema Therapy to explain the *Basti Karma*. All the texts related to enema only deals with cleaning of bowl and as the pre-procedure for commencing several examinations. The real questions arises is spreading the word *Basti Karma* with the translation as Enema Therapy is valid or just another mistake practitioners are doing. So an attempt is made to describe whether *Basti* should be termed as Enema Therapy or the word Enema Therapy is unable to give its true meaning as a translation.

KEYWORDS: *Basti Karma*, Enema Therapy, *Panchakarma*, Translation.

INTRODUCTION

Basti Karma is a very important therapeutic procedure and also been considered as *Ardhachikitsa* as it has some unique characteristics dealing with the most important *Dosha* of *Sharira* i.e. *Vata*. It has multifaceted actions in treating a diseased as well as for maintaining the health. The usual route of administration is anal canal, one of the natural orifices from where a *Panchakarma* procedure should be administered. It is termed as Enema Therapy world wide as a translations to explain among common people. *Basti* having its huge variety of classifications on the basis of *Karma*, routes of administration and *Adhithana* which makes it superior in all the regimens described by the *Acharyas* where as Enema Therapy, the commonly translation word used for it have a limited actions and therapeutic effects. So an attempt is made to describe whether the *Basti* should be termed as Enema Therapy as a translation or it should be spread just as the word *Basti* as the word Enema Therapy is unable to give its true meaning as a translation.

DEFINITION

The Word “Enema” entered the English Language in 1675 (in the 15th century) from Latin in which it was first used in the sense of a rectal injection. Enema is used as a bowel stimulant, to relieve constipation, to treat fecal impaction, to empty the colon prior to a medical procedure such as a colonoscopy; enemas are

employed for the same purpose as orally administered laxatives. Whereas the word *Basti* means drugs which are administered by the use of *Basti* or *Mutradhara* and the drug also stays for a period of time in the body.^[1] Here are some quotations which gives the etymology of *Basti* i.e. “*Vas Nivase*” – Which means to stay, to dwell and to reside, “*Vas Aachadane*” - Which means to cover, “*Vas - Vaasane Surabhikarane*” - to give fragrance or to give pleasing effect, “*Bastae Avrunoti Mutram*” - that which covers the urine, “*Aushadha Daanarthe Dravya Bhede Basti*” - an instrument used to administer *basti dravyas*, “*Nabhir Adho Bhaage Mutradhare Sthane*” - It denotes an organ situated below the umbilicus which holds the urine. *Basti* is termed as *Niruha Basti* or *Asthapana Basti* by *Charaka* and commentaries by *Chakarapani*.^[2] The word *Basti* is also found to be used in *Murdhani Taila* as *Shirobasti*. By the Word *Basti Acharyas* have told to give the drugs not only by Anal Route but also by *Mutramarga* and *Yonimarga*. *Acharya Sushruta* also describes about the *Vrana Basti*³ but *Shranghar* describes as it is given by *Basti* or bladders of animals by the mean of pressure, hence termed as *Basti* and classified according to the route of administration, *Karmas* and many more.

CLASSIFICATIONS

Basti has been classified in many types and an attempt is made to show all possibilities in **Table: 1**. It can be

classified first on the basis of the *Adhithana* as, ***Pakvashyagata Basti** – Which is administered through the Anal canal and its *Adhithana* is *Pakvashya*, ***Mutrashyagata Basti** – which is administered through *Mutrarmarga* and its *Adhithana* is *Mutrashya* and also known as *Uttar Basti*, ***Garbhashyagata Basti** – its *Adhithana* is *Garbhashya* and administered through *Yoni* in females for the *Chikitsa* of *Garbhashyagata Roga*, ***Vranagata Basti** – Which is administered in the *Vrana* through *Vnamukha*. It is again Classified on the basis of *Dravya* used as, ***Niruha Basti** in which *Kashaya* is in *Pradhana Matra* and also known as *Asthapana Basti*. It is called *Niruha Basti* because of the action of taking out the *Doshas* out of *Sharira* and *Rogashanti Karma* and due to action of *Vayasthapana* it is named as *Asthapana Basti*. The other type is ***Anuvasana Basti** which has dominance of *Sneha* as a

Dravya^[4], *Anuvasana Basti* is a type of *Sneha Basti* where *Anuvasana* means to stay, hence the administered *Dravya* stay for a longer duration inside the intestine without causing any *Vyapas*^[5,6] and again further classified in three types according to the dose given. *Basti* has further numerous classifications on the basis of actions like *Shodhana*, *Lekhana*, *Snehana*, *Brumhana*, *Utkleshana*, *Doshahara*, *Shamana* and some of gets again further classified according to the action they serve. Again a special classification on the basis of the number of *Basti* given in a pattern of *Yoga*, *Kala* and *Karma* can be found.^[7] Whereas Enema Classification which is shown in **Table: 2** includes mainly two i.e. Evacuant Enema and Retained Enema having further sub classifications named according to the action they serve and ingredients. All have mode of administration through anal route.

Table 1: Showing classification of Basti.

Table: 1 showing classification of Basti											
Pakvashyagata		Mutrashyagata			Garbhashyagata		Vranagata				
Niruha Basti	Sneha	Niruha		Sneha	Niruha	Sneha	Shodhana (Kashaya)		Ropana (Sneha)		
	Sneha Basti	Anuvasana Basti		Matra Basti							
Shodhana	Lekhana	Utkleshana	Shamana	Brumhana	Karshana	Rasyana	Vajikarna	Snehan	Chakshusya	Sangrahi	Varnapradana
	Mridu										
Acc. To Numbers of Basti		Yoga (8)			Kala (16)		Karma (30)				

Table 2: Showing classification of Enema.

Evacuant	Simple		Medicated	Cold	
	Oil	Purgative	Astringent	Antihelminitic	Carminitive
Retained	Stimulant	Nutrient	Emollient	Sedative	Anesthetic

INSTRUMENTS

Instruments and their modifications are found to be same through the course of history of both the therapies starting from *bladders* of animal and gold *Netra* to currently widely used enema pots and syringes. The development of the instrumentation also found to be on the same course for both. In enema there is a mentioning of self enema instrument used around 18th century but *Basti* from its starting of origins is given by a skilled physician by taking proper precautions and taking the instruments according to the age group with different length, diameter and *Dravya* volume.

INGREDIENTS

Almost every *Basti* formation follows the mixing pattern as *Madhu*, *Lavana*, *Sneha*, *Kalka*, *Kwatha* and *Avapa* in

sequential order to get a homogenous mixture^[8] to facilitate the easy absorption. Among ingredients *Madhu* is added first because of having *Pichhilavawa*, *Bahulatwa* and also have ability to go *Sukshma*. *Saindhava Lavana* by its *Teekshna Guna* will break the *Sanghata* of *Madhu* and then added *Taila* will bring *Ekabhavata*. *Kalka* will spread quickly (*Samsrajyate Cha Ashu*) and thickens the *Basti*; lastly added *Kwatha* will bring *Samata* (homogeneity). These Ingredients are advisable according to the diseases following a deep text on every disease and *Basti* role therein. The *Basti Dravya* includes parts of medicinal plants, animal products like milk, meat soup, urine and many more and makes it difficult to mention the things which are not included in *Basti Dravya*, it would be too elaborate to enlist or explain the properties of all the *Basti*

Ingredients. So *Acharya Charaka* has classified *Asthapana* in 6 groups according to taste known as *Shad Asthapana Skanda*^[9], thus it will not provide whole list but does a justice in providing a layout of working and combining to prepare the *Basti* as per *Yukti* of physician. In Enema, the ingredients are water, glycerin, magnesium sulphate, tannic acid, quassia, brandy etc. according to the classifications mentioned in Table: 2 having different drugs with water in common, to serve different actions.

USES

Enema is used to stimulate defecation and to treat constipation e.g. simple evacuant enema; soften hard fecal matter, oil enema; administer medication, sedative enema; protect and soothe the mucus membrane of intestine and to check diarrhea, emollient enema; destroy intestinal parasites, antihelminthic enema; relieve gaseous distention, carminative enema administer the nutrients and fluids, nutritive enema; relief inflammation, astringent enema; induce peristalsis, purgative enema; stimulant a person in shock and collapse, stimulant enema; reduce the temperature, cold enema; clean the bowel prior to x-ray studies, visualization of the bowel, surgery on the bowel or delivery of a baby, saline enema; make diagnosis, barium enema; establish regular bowel functions during a bowel training programme and to induce anesthesia. On other hand *Basti* have a multifaceted actions among which some are listed here, it is used in treating disease due *Vitiated Vata*; Disease of musculoskeletal system like muscle atrophy, dystrophy; *Sarvanga Rogas* (disease affecting whole body), RA, *Ekanga Roga* (localized disease); GIT disease like constipation, ulcerative colitis, retention of flatus, urine or stool; neurological disorders like *Pakashaghata* (paralysis), parkinsonism, sciatica, motor neuron disease; disorders of *Udanvayu* like dry bronchial asthma, dry cough, hiccough; disorders of *Apanvayu* like menstrual disorders, infertility, oligozoospermia; *Vayasthapana*; increase digestive fire; soothing of the voice; provide glowing skin; if administered according to *Yukti* can cure every disease; does *Shodhana* of *Mala*, *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*; make body strong; can treat *Vrana*; increase fertility and strength,^[10] it travels to minute channels and nourishes every *Dhatu* in the body. The actions of both *Niruha* and *Anuvasana Basti* are so vast that it will be too elaborated if we go inside every disease and health maintenance aspects.

MODE OF ACTION

The mechanism behind enemas consist of the volume of the liquid causing irritation of the intestinal mucosa in the case of certain solutions, rapid expansion of the intestinal tract, resulting in powerful peristalsis and a feeling of extreme urgency to defecate at which time the recipient may expel any fecal matter loosened by the instilled solution together with the solution itself. Others types of enema containing medicine only act as a mode of absorption of that medicine in the disease bypassing GIT tract. A drug that is administered rectally will in

general (depending on the drug) have a faster onset, higher bioavailability, shorter peak, and shorter duration than oral. *Basti* have a quality to go further in minute channels through *Pakvashya*, it also travels to *Kati Parshwa*, *Kukshi* and *Nabhi Pradesha*^[11] and its *Veerya* gets further travel to whole body by minutes channels in the same way as the water poured at the root of the plant reaches up to the leaves and while returning it takes all the *Sanchita Doshas* from all over body and expel out along with *Mala*. Also *Anuvasana* as given in number of days will have the ability to reach all the *Dhatus*. Mode of action of *Basti Karma* varies in different Rogavastha and ingredients used.

DISCUSSION

Basti is one among the important Chikitsa in *Ayurveda* and also been included as *Pradhana Karma* in *Panchakarma* and by the virtue of the word itself it contains a lot of meaning inside it from medicinal administration in *Guda*, *Yoni* and *Mutramarga* to pooling of oil in *Shirobasti*. It also called *Basti* as it is given by *Basti's* (Urinary Bladders) of animals, but if we look at the word Enema clearly describes the meaning of rectal injections and that's how the *Basti* and Enema got correlates as a translation but the word *Basti* with a versatility of meaning in the classical texts makes this comparison deceitful. Enema has a variety of sub classification but in compare to *Basti* it looks like limited. Enema fully concentrates to administer the drugs through anal canal whereas *Basti* don't limit there, instead it is described to give *Basti* in *Garbhashya*, *Vrana*, and *Mutrashya* also. Its classifications go from according to *Karma* of *Basti*, Numbers of *Basti* given and *Adhithana* of the *Basti* to a lager extent. Enema classifications also have some common like for oil enema, evacuant enema to evacuate the *Mala* while on other hand retained enemas are also there like *Basti* retention for Nutrient purpose, Sedative and for a way to administer the drugs to the body. But *Basti* here have an upper hand for the versatility of the classifications which includes all the classification of enema itself. If we see to the ingredients, *Niruha Basti* is a uniform mixture in which *Makshika* and *Lavana* will help in *Kaphachedana* and *Vilayana*^[12] by its *Sukshma*, *Teekshna* and *Vyavyi Guna* will reach to minute channels of the body. The different *Dravyas* which are used to make *Basti* have different properties and actions some are water soluble and some are fat soluble, hence absorbed accordingly. The *Kalka* used help the *Basti* to attain a consistency which may help in retaining of the same. *Dosha Vishyandana* and *Sneha* will cause *Srothomukha Vishodhana* which helps in easily elimination of the imbalance *Doshas*. *Sukhoshnata* also plays important role in action of *Basti*. Its actions are also upon *Majjavaha* and *Asthivaha Srotas*. *Tikta Rasa Yukta Basti* is advisable in *Asthigatavikaras* as *Vayu* and *Akash Mahabhuta* in *Tikta Rasa* has ability to go in *Sukshma Srotas* and act on *Vata Dosha* and *Tikta Rasa* along with *Ksheera* helps in managing *Asthi* or *Asthigata Roga*. After *Asthi*, it also nourishes *Majja Dhatu* which is

Adhithana of *Vata* according to *Kashyapa*.^[13] One of its *Adhithana* is *Pakvashya* it also kills the *Purishaja Krimi* and *Kaphaja Krimi*. It also helps in increasing the *Prakrita Krimi* (gastrointestinal microbiota). It also has a function of *Lekhana* (scraping), *Brumhana* (nutritive), *Ropana* (healing), *Shodhana* (purification). It is not only limited to the *Guda* but also have role in treating various diseases in *Yoni* and *Mutrashya*. The number of *Basti* is also stated in treating various conditions like starting from 1st to 9th *Anuvasana Basti* it will nourish till *Majja Dhatu* and after 18th *Basti* the person will get a strength like elephant and agility like a horse and for *Vata Vikaras* 9-11 *Anuvasana Basti*, for *Pitta Vikaras* 5-7 *Anuvasana Basti* and for *Kapha Vikaras* 1-3 *Anuvasana Basti* is advisable to give.^[14] The actions of *Basti* are so vast that it will be too elaborated if we go inside the disease and *Swasthya* aspect. The mechanism behind enemas consist of the volume of the liquid causing irritation of the intestinal mucosa in the case of certain solutions, rapid expansion of the intestinal tract, resulting in powerful peristalsis and a feeling of extreme urgency to defecate. Others types of enema containing medicine only act as a mode of absorption of that medicine in the disease bypassing GIT tract. Its actions are localized to rectum or colon only, in some types it circulates to whole body by the means of drug transport mechanism. The actions of *Basti* is not limited but is vast like ocean therefore it is also considered as *Ardhachikitsa*. The two therapies have different roles and some common actions wherein all enemas actions are just a little part of *Basti Karma* if we review the Mode of Actions, Ingredients and other aspects.

CONCLUSION

The use of Enema Therapy for the translation of *Basti Karma* for the understanding of the common people is not valid at all as *Basti* and Enema are different words if we look into all the aspects from meaning to the actions they serve. Enema Therapy is used for *Basti Karma* barely on due to both are given through rectal route but it is described that *Basti* don't limit itself to the anal route and have separate classifications on the basis of route of administration of *Basti Dravya* which is not to be found in enema. Though some classifications of enema coincides with *Basti*, yet *Basti* have a lot more and variant actions and it can be told that all enemas come under *Basti* but all *Basti* cannot come under enema which clearly shows the bigger group of treatment. One more reason should be included as *Ayurveda* gets globalized; it is found that foreigners are finding difficulty in pronouncing the Sanskrit names such as *Basti*, so the *Basti* has translated in the word Enema Therapy and later Medicated Enema Therapy which becomes a blunder as the English word is unable to give the true meaning of the word. In our Samhitas if you look deeply each and every word is given with a great meaning according to the word used after applying *Yukti*, therefore by translating the *Pradhana Karma Basti* to other languages is not able to serve the actual meaning. Therefore the term *Basti Karma* should be spread as

Basti Karma and should be adopted by the world as the word *Basti Karma* not by enema therapy. We *Ayurveda* practitioner should not change the *Pradhana Karma* words just to make it understandable to the world, instead there is a need to explain the *Basti Karma* and put these words in the elementary schools textbooks so there is no need to define the words and translating them to something familiar as comparison for the better understanding.

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