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## Vasti Karma (Enema Therapy) in Agada Tantra – A Review

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### ABSTRACT

*Agada tantra* uses *shodhana karma* in management of all poisons. *Shodhanakarma* includes all *panchakarma* but in *agada tantra* usage of *vasti karma* is restricted or limited. Objective of this research work is to find out the causes for the restriction of *vasti karma* in management of poisoning in *samhitas*. Thorough review of literature was done on *vastikarma*, mode of action, relation with *marma*, indication, side effects, contraindication etc. All *agada tantra* references in *vuddhatrayas* were reviewed for any indication of *vasti* related to *agada tantra*. Possible mode of action was discussed in this article with the correlation of modern medical views and possible interaction of poisonous substances with *vasti* medicines are discussed in this article. Relation of *marma* and *vasti* is and effects of poison with *vasti* to *marma* especially *sadyapranahara marma* is elaborated in the discussion. Contraindications of *anuvāsana vasti* and *niruha vasti* according to *vuddhatrayas* are analysed to probe the relation with poisonous substances. It was found that most of contraindicated symptoms are elicited in poisoning cases. After thorough review of literature in *agada tantra* sections of *Charaka*, *Susruta* and *Ashtanga Hridayasamhitas*, only one indication of *vasti* was found in relation to *agada tantra*. Which is indicated by *vagbhata acharya* in 36<sup>th</sup> chapter of *uttara stana*. With the analysis of all reference it is concluded that *vasti* is not indicated in *agada tantra* by *acharyas* with the knowledge of adverse reactions and interactions with poisons.

### KEYWORDS

*Vasti Karma, Basti, Agada Tantra, Enema Therapy*



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## INTRODUCTION

*Agada tantra* is the science which deals with *jangama visha stavara visha and krithima or garavisha*<sup>1</sup>. In treatment modalities used in *agada tantra* include most of *shodana* therapies as well as *shamana* therapies. *Vastikarma* (both *anuvasana* and *niruha*) is indicated rarely. Comparing with the other *panchakarma chikitsa* indicated in *agada tantra*. *Charaka acharya* has described twenty four treatment modalities in management of poison. In those *chathurvinshathi upakrama* all other *panchakarmas* are included apart from *vasti karmas*<sup>2</sup>. *Vasti karma* is designated as *ardhachikitsa*. Even though it is an important *chikitsa*, it is not indicated widely in *agada tantra*. Objective of this study is to find out the possible factors for the restriction or limitation of use of *vasti* in *agada tantra*.

*Vasti* is the *karma* in which the medicine prepared is administered through rectal canal. It has the action up to the *nabhipradesha, kati, parshva and kukshi*. (They are the anatomical landmarks on the abdomen denoting intestines). *Vasti* churns the accumulated *dosha* and *purisha* (morbid humours and fecal matter). It spreads the unctuousness (potency of drug) all over the body and easily comes out along with the churned *purisha* and *dosha* (impurity)<sup>3</sup>. The

term *vasti* denotes *niruha* and *anuvasana*, both as it do elimination of *purisha and dosha*.

### Importance of *vasti*

#### *Relation of vasti and vata*

*Vata* is said to be lord of Ayurveda because it not only causes diseases but it is also the one which destines the fate of *pitta and kapha doshas*. It has supreme powers to assimilate things on the one hand and at the same time disintegrate them too. Considering *dhatus, malas, poshana karmas* all are at the mercy of *vata*. As *vata* is responsible in the various disease pathogenesis (*samprapti*), we need to pacify it. In classics there is no remedy other than *vasti* for pacification of diseases caused by aggravated *vata*<sup>4</sup>.

#### *Marmas and vasti*

*Marmas* are *chetanani bandha vaishyayath* (seats of *chetana* in our body). The vital points are situated in *skandha* (middle body) and are more importance to us than *shakas* (extremities) due to two reasons

1. Middle body *marmas* provide nutrition to the extremity *marmas*.
2. The *marmas* located in middle part of body are *sadyapranahara*<sup>5</sup>.

Thus one should always protect *marmas* from *abhighata* and *vatadi doshas*. *Marmas* need to be protected from aggravated by means of *doshic* vitiation, injuries, mental anxiety, over exercise, etc. It is widely



established that for *vata*, there is no other treatment than *vasti*. Therefore, it is believed that *vasti* therapy alone can safeguard the vital points of our body<sup>6</sup>.

#### ***Vasti and its relation to dhatus and doshas***

*Susruta* has a different classification of giving *snehavastis* for respective *dathus*. The first *vasti* produces *snigdghata* (unctuousness) in *vasti* (urinary bladder) and in *vankshna pradesha*. The second one wins over the *shiroghata vata*. Third *vasti* gives *varna* (colour) and *bala* (strength) to the body. Fourth produces *snigdghata* in *rasa dhatu*; fifth to *rakta* (blood). Sixth to *mamsa* (muscle tissue). Seventh bestows nourishment to *medas* (fat); eight to *asthi* (bone tissue) and ninth to *majja* (bone marrow)<sup>7</sup>.

#### ***Side effects of vasti***

If *niruhavasti* is not administered properly, it turns toxic<sup>8</sup>.

#### ***Modern view of vasti***

Doctors consider colon as the third lung because it has the ability to absorb 70% of the oxygen. It strengthens the immune system to combat allergies. Prevents colon cancers, IBS and colitis and improve mineral absorption. *Vasti* is having cholesterol lowering effect with lowering hypertension. Reduces inflammation and prevents infections via harmful bacterial growth. It is a detoxifying technique. It irrigates the large intestine with water and

cleans out the toxins and accumulated waste along the lining of its walls. Removal of waste improves colon function, digestion and nutrient absorption function. High colonic irrigation kills harmful bacteria, parasites, yeast infections, and virus<sup>9</sup>.

#### ***Indication of vasti karma in agada tantra In charaka Samhita***

In *Charaka samhita* 23<sup>rd</sup> chapter of *chikitsa stana* is dedicated for *agada tantra* or *visha chikitsa*. In this chapter twenty four therapeutic measures are given in order to cure the patients afflicted with poison, *vasti karma* is not indicated among these 24 therapeutic measures. Throughout the whole chapter *vasti* is not indicated anywhere.

#### ***In Ashtanga Hridaya samhita***

Four chapters 35<sup>th</sup>, 36<sup>th</sup>, 37<sup>th</sup> & 38<sup>th</sup> of *uttara stana* are dedicated for *agada tantra*. In *sarpa visha pratisheda adyaya* while describing the treatment for *pitta kopa* after elimination of *visha vagbhata acharya* indicate *sneha vasti*<sup>10</sup>. Usual indication of *vasti* is for mitigating *vata*, but here it is indicated for *pitta* rather than *vata dosha*. In the same reference for mitigating *vata dosha* he stated “*snehadibhir upachareth*” which means *vata* mitigating therapies including *vasti karma*. Major *vata* mitigation therapy is considered as *vasti* by all *acharyas* therefore we can consider this reference as a indication of *vasti*. No other



indication of *vasti* found in *Ashtanga hridaya samhita* related to *agada tantra* <sup>10</sup>.

### ***In Susrutasamhita***

Entire *Kalpastana* of *susrutasamhita* with eight chapters dedicated for *agada tantra*. In first chapter of *Kalpastana* “*anna panarakshakalpa*” while describing general treatments, he indicated all *panchakarma* except *vasti karma*. In all 8 chapters of *kalpastana* no any single indication of *vasti* except in fifth chapter of *kalpastana* (*sarpadashta visha chikitsa kalpa*). Same as in *ashtanga hridaya* , *anuvāsana* and *niruha* was indicated in conditions of aggravation of *pitta dosha*.

## **DISCUSSION**

Major characteristic action of *vasti* is rapid spreading over the body . In cases of poisoning this is a disadvantage, because it might spread poison over the body quickly causing high morbidity and mortality. This may be a one cause for not indicating *vasti* in *agada tantra*.

*Vasti* is the main treatment for *vata dosha* predominance. By *vasti* it mitigates the action of *vata dosha* specially *apana vata*. In cases of acute poisoning treatment is aimed at elimination of poison by excessive action of *vata*. In this context *vasti* is a disadvantage for excessive elimination.

*Vasti karma* is have strong relation with *marma* (vital points).It stimulate vital points. Administration of *vasti* in poisoning can stimulate the vital points, which increases the action of poisoning in vital points specially situated in middle part of the body which are *sadyapranahara* in nature. Augmented action of poison in these vital points can cause sudden death. Oil or *thila thaila* is a main ingredient in *anuvāsana vasti* as well as in *niruha vasti*. *Thaila* is a main contraindication for *visha*. Use of *vasti* can cause more poisonous effects due to *thaila*.

*Kashyapa Acharya* in *chikitsastana* while describing the side effects of *niruhavasti* he clearly stated that improper administration of *niruha vasti* can be act as a toxic substance. It may be a another cause for limited use of *vasti* in poisoning.

*Vamana or chardi* (vomiting) is stated as a contraindication for *vasti* by all three *acharyas*. On the other hand vomiting is a one major symptom in poisoning specially vegetative poisoning. This may be one reason to prohibit *vasti* in poison cases.

*Nishtivana* is also common symptom in poisoning. *Charaka and Vagbhata* both consider *nishtivana* as a contraindication for *vasti*. Furthermore they stated that complication of abdominal distention which can leads to death can be happen if *vasti* is given in condition of *nishtivana*.



*Charaka acharya* contraindicated *vasti* in condition of *bhita* (fearful). Fearfulness is common in Almost all the cases of poisoning, therefore it also proves that *vasti* cannot be used in poisoning cases.

*Matta* (intoxicated), *murchita* (unconscious) are considered as contraindication for *vasti* by both *acharyas charaka and susruta*. *Samgnanasa* and *hrdyopagata* are the complications of *vasti* if it is used in foresaid contraindications. These two symptoms are also considered as cardinal symptoms of poisoning. Therefore the condition of the patient may be worsen by using of *vasti karma*.

If *vasti* is given for patients with *svasapraskta* (dyspnoea), *hikkaprasakta* (hiccup) death by distension may occur according to all *acharyas*. These symptoms are very common with inhaled poison.

*Dakodara* (ascitis type) is a main complication of most type of poisoning. *charaka* and *vagbhata acharyas* contraindicate *dakodara* for *vasti*. If *vasti* is given to such patients death may occur by distension. *Charaka acharya* stated *bhrama* (giddiness) as a contraindication for *vasti* which is a main symptom of poisoning cases.

*Unamada* (insanity) and *shokagrasta* (sorrowful) are very common with poisoning conditions with psychological

effects. These symptoms are considered as contraindication for *vasti*.

*Kanthatosha* (dry throat) is a common symptom of ingested poison, which is contraindicated in *vasti* by *Charaka acharya*. *Shopa payu* (oedema in anus) may be present in cases when route of administration of poison is rectal. In that condition also *vasti* is contraindicated by *Vagbhata acharya*.

Considering the contraindications of *anuvasana vasti* of *Charaka and Vagbhata acharyas* It is clearly mentioned *vishapita* (poisoned) and *Garapita* (toxicosis) as contraindications.

Summarising the contraindications of both *niruha and anuvasana vasti* it is understood that most of contraindications are directly related to poisoning conditions therefore all *acharyas* very rarely indicated *vasti* in *agada tantra*. On the other hand when we consider the types of poisoning, ingested, inhaled, contact, injected etc. most of symptoms caused by all types of poisoning are contraindicated for *niruha and anuvasana vasti*<sup>11-15</sup>.

## CONCLUSION

*Anuvasana vasti* is directly contraindicated in *visha pita and gara pita* (toxicosis). Most of clinical conditions contraindicated in *vasti* are related to poisoning. Therefore



restriction of *vasti* in *agada tantra* by *acharya* was based on scientific basis of interaction of poison with *vasti* and considering the adverse effects of *vasti*. Non-indication of *vasti* in *agada tantra* can be considered as safety precaution to prevent complications.





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