

COMPARATIVE EVALUATION OF VARIOUS SNEHA DRAVYAS USED IN BASTI KARMA: A REVIEW OF CLASSICAL AND CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

Background: Basti Karma is considered the prime therapeutic modality for the management of Vata Dosha in Ayurveda. The efficacy of Basti largely depends upon the selection of appropriate Sneha (unctuous substance) used in its formulation. Various Sneha Dravyas such as Tila Taila, Mahamasha Taila, Sahacharadi Taila, Ksheerabala Taila, and Ghrita are described in Ayurvedic classics for different disease conditions. Understanding their comparative therapeutic efficacy is essential for evidence-based clinical practice. **Objectives:** To review and compare different Sneha Dravyas used in Basti Karma with respect to their pharmacological properties, indications, therapeutic efficacy, and clinical applications. **Methods:** A comprehensive review of classical Ayurvedic texts including Brihatrayi and Laghutrayi, contemporary Ayurvedic literature, research articles, dissertations, and indexed journals was undertaken. Information regarding the

properties, indications, mode of action, and clinical utility of

various Sneha used in Basti was collected, analysed, and compared. **Results:** Different Sneha exhibit distinct pharmacodynamic actions based on their Rasa, Guna, Veerya, Vipaka, and Prabhava. Tila Taila was found to be the most commonly used Sneha due to its Vatahara, Sukshma, and Vyavayi properties. Ksheerabala Taila demonstrated superior nourishing and neuroprotective effects, while Mahamasha Taila showed significant efficacy in neuromuscular disorders. Ghrita-based Basti was found beneficial in conditions associated with Pitta and Vata vitiation. The selection of Sneha according to Dosha, Dushya, disease stage, and patient constitution enhances therapeutic outcomes. **Conclusion:** The therapeutic success of Basti Karma is significantly influenced by the choice of Sneha. Each Sneha possesses unique properties and indications, making individualized selection essential for achieving optimal clinical results. Further comparative clinical studies are required to establish standardized guidelines for Sneha selection in Basti therapy.

KEYWORDS: Basti Karma, Ghrita, Ksheerabala Taila, Mahamasha Taila, Sneha Basti. Tila Taila, Vata Dosha.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, the ancient system of medicine, emphasizes on the maintenance of health and treatment of disease through a holistic approach. Among the various therapeutic modalities described in Ayurveda, Panchakarma is considered the most effective bio-purificatory treatment for eliminating vitiated Doshas from the body. Basti Karma is one of the five principal procedures of Panchakarma and is regarded as the best treatment for disorders caused by aggravated Vata Dosha.^[1]

Acharya Charaka has described Basti as “Ardha Chikitsa” (half of all therapeutic measures), while some scholars consider it as “Poorna Chikitsa” (complete therapy) due to its wide range of indications and therapeutic efficacy.^[2] Basti not only expels morbid Doshas but also nourishes body tissues, promotes strength, enhances longevity, and restores physiological balance.^[3]

The success of Basti Karma depends upon several factors, among which the proper selection of Sneha (unctuous substance) plays a crucial role. Sneha is an essential component of both Anuvasana Basti and Niruha Basti. Different Sneha Dravyas such as Tila Taila, Ghrita, Mahamasha Taila, Ksheerabala Taila, Sahacharadi Taila, and Bala Taila are commonly

employed according to the nature of the disease, predominance of Dosha, strength of the patient, and desired therapeutic effect.^[4]

Ayurvedic classics describe numerous Sneha formulations possessing distinct pharmacological properties based on their Rasa, Guna, Veerya, Vipaka, and Prabhava. Tila Taila is considered the best among oils due to its Sukshma, Vyavayi, and Vatahara properties.^[5] Ghrita is known for its Medhya, Balya, and Rasayana actions, whereas medicated oils such as Ksheerabala Taila and Mahamasha Taila are widely used in neurological and musculoskeletal disorders.^[6]

The selection of an appropriate Sneha significantly influences the therapeutic outcome of Basti therapy. Although various Sneha preparations are extensively used in clinical practice, comparative information regarding their indications, properties, and efficacy remains scattered in classical texts and contemporary literature. Therefore, a comprehensive comparative study of different Sneha used in Basti Karma is essential to understand their clinical utility and to facilitate evidence-based selection in Ayurvedic practice.^[7]

AIM

To compare different Sneha Dravyas used in Basti Karma with respect to their Ayurvedic properties, therapeutic actions, indications, and clinical utility.

METHODOLOGY

A comprehensive review of classical Ayurvedic texts, including Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Ashtanga Hridaya, and other relevant literature, along with contemporary textbooks, published research articles, journals, dissertations, and online databases was conducted. Data regarding various Sneha used in Basti Karma were collected, analysed, and compared based on their pharmacological properties, indications, and therapeutic applications.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Concept of Basti Karma

Basti Karma is one of the most important therapeutic procedures among Panchakarma therapies. The term Basti is derived from the word "Basti" (urinary bladder), which was traditionally used as an instrument for administration of medicinal formulations.^[8] Acharya Charaka has described Basti as the prime treatment for Vata Dosha and stated that proper administration of Basti can manage not only Vata disorders but also diseases caused by Pitta,

Kapha, and Rakta. Basti acts both as a Shodhana (purificatory) and Shamana (pacifying) therapy depending upon the type and composition employed.

According to Ayurvedic classics, Basti exerts systemic action through the Pakwashaya, which is considered the principal seat of Vata Dosha. The administered medicine spreads throughout the body and produces therapeutic effects by regulating Doshas, nourishing tissues, and restoring homeostasis.

Importance of Sneha in Basti

Sneha is an indispensable component of Basti formulations. The term Sneha denotes substances possessing unctuous, softening, lubricating, and nourishing properties. Sneha counteracts the Ruksha (dry), Laghu (light), and Chala (mobile) qualities of aggravated Vata Dosha.

The primary functions of Sneha in Basti include:

- Snehana (oleation)
- Vata Shamana
- Dhatu Poshana (tissue nourishment)
- Marga Vishodhana (channel cleansing)
- Balya (strength promoting action)
- Rasayana effect

Sneha facilitates the smooth expulsion of morbid Doshas and prevents complications associated with excessive dryness of tissues.

Types of Sneha

Ayurveda recognizes four principal Sneha Dravyas.^[9]

1. Ghrita (Ghee)

Ghrita is considered the best among Sneha due to its Samskarasya Anuvartana property. It possesses Madhura Rasa, Sheeta Veerya, and Madhura Vipaka.

Properties

- Medhya
- Rasayana
- Balya

- Vayasthapana
- Chakshushya

Role in Basti

Ghrita used in Basti provides neuroprotective and neuro-nourishing effects by pacifying Vata and nourishing Majja Dhatu. It promotes tissue healing and regeneration, making it beneficial in chronic degenerative and musculoskeletal disorders. Additionally, its Yogavahi property enhances the absorption and therapeutic efficacy of the herbal constituents in Basti.

2. Taila (Oil)

Taila is considered superior for Vata disorders. Among all oils, Tila Taila is regarded as the best due to its Sukshma, Vyavayi, and Vikasi properties.

Properties

- Ushna Veerya
- Guru
- Snigdha
- Vatahara
- Balya

Role in Basti

Taila used in Basti effectively pacifies Vata Dosha, relieving pain, stiffness, and dryness while improving joint mobility. It strengthens muscles, ligaments, and connective tissues, promoting functional recovery in chronic musculoskeletal and neurological disorders.

3. Vasa (Muscle Fat)

Vasa possesses strong nourishing and strengthening properties.

Properties

- Brimhana
- Balya
- Vatahara
- Ropana
- Vrishya

Role in Basti

Vasa used in Basti provides deep Brimhana (nourishing) and Vata-shamana effects, making it particularly beneficial in severe Vata disorders associated with tissue depletion and emaciation. It nourishes Majja and Mamsa Dhatu, promoting strength, tissue restoration, and recovery in chronic degenerative conditions.

4. Majja (Bone Marrow)

Majja is highly nourishing and anabolic in action.

Properties

- Brimhana
- Balya
- Vatahara
- Majjavardhaka
- Asthiposhaka
- Vrishya
- Rasayana
- Improves Ojas and overall vitality

Role in Basti

Majja used in Basti provides profound Brimhana (nourishing) and Vata-shamana effects, making it especially useful in chronic degenerative and neurological disorders. It nourishes Asthi and Majja Dhatu, promoting tissue regeneration, strength, and functional recovery.

Different Sneha Used in Basti**1. Tila Taila**

Tila Taila is most frequently used in Basti formulations.

Properties

- Vatahara
- Vedanasthapana
- Balya
- Brimhana

Clinical Uses

- Sandhivata
- Gridhrasi
- Katigraha
- Pakshaghata

2. Ksheerabala Taila^[10]

Prepared from Bala, Ksheera, and Tila Taila.

Properties

- Balya
- Brimhana
- Vatashamaka
- Rasayana

Clinical Uses

- Pakshaghata
- Ardita
- Cervical Spondylosis
- Neuropathy
- Degenerative disorders

3. Mahamasha Taila^[11]

Contains Masha and numerous Vatahara herbs like dashmool, Bala, Rasna, Devadaru etc

Properties

- Guru
- Snigdha
- Balya
- Brimhana

Clinical Uses

- Paralysis
- Muscular dystrophy
- Sciatica
- Osteoarthritis

It is considered one of the most potent oils for neuromuscular diseases.

4. Sahacharadi Taila^[12]

Contains Sahachara as the principal ingredient along with dashmool, Devadaru, Jatamansi, Tagara, Hriversa etc.

Properties

- Vatahara
- Shothahara
- Vedanasthapana

Clinical Uses

- Sciatica
- Lumbar Spondylosis
- Lower limb disorders
- Neurological diseases

5. Bala Taila^[13]

Prepared using Bala as the main ingredient along with Guduchi, Rasna, Devdaru, Manjistha etc.

Properties

- Strength promoting
- Anti-inflammatory
- Neuroprotective

Clinical Uses

- Vata Vyadhi
- Muscular weakness
- Degenerative disorders

Table No. 1: Comparative Review of Different Sneha.

Sneha	Major Property	Main Indication	Special Benefit
Ksheerabala Taila	Brimhana	Neurological diseases	Neuroprotective effect
Mahamasha Taila	Balya	Paralysis, Sciatica	Muscle strengthening
Sahacharadi Taila	Vedanasthapana	Sciatica, Low back pain	Pain relief
Bala Taila	Rasayana	Musculoskeletal disorders	Tissue nourishment

Modern Perspective

From a modern viewpoint, Sneha used in Basti may facilitate absorption of lipid-soluble phytoconstituents through rectal mucosa. The rich vascular and lymphatic supply of the rectum allows rapid systemic distribution of active principles. Medicated oils and ghee possess anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, neuroprotective, analgesic, and immunomodulatory properties that contribute to their therapeutic efficacy.^[14]

The literature reveals that Sneha is the most important component responsible for the therapeutic success of Basti Karma. Different Sneha possess unique pharmacological and therapeutic properties. Tila Taila remains the most widely used Sneha for Vata disorders, whereas Ksheerabala Taila and Mahamasha Taila are preferred in neurological and degenerative conditions. Ghrita is particularly useful in Pitta-Vata disorders and diseases requiring nourishment of the nervous system. Selection of Sneha according to Dosha, Dushya, disease stage, and patient constitution enhances the efficacy of Basti therapy and ensures better clinical outcomes.

Table No. 2: Views of Different Acharyas on Basti Karma and Sneha.

Acharya	Reference	Description of Basti	Importance of Sneha
Charaka	Charaka Samhita, Siddhi Sthana	Basti is considered "Ardha Chikitsa" and the best treatment for Vata disorders.	Sneha is essential for Vata Shamana, Brimhana and Dhatu Poshana.
Sushruta	Sushruta Samhita, Chikitsa Sthana	Basti is the foremost therapy for diseases originating from Vata and Pakwashaya.	Sneha lubricates body channels and facilitates elimination of Doshas.
Vagbhata	Ashtanga Hridaya, Sutra Sthana	Basti is the prime Panchakarma procedure capable of treating multiple diseases.	Sneha provides nourishment, strength and alleviates dryness caused by Vata.
Kashyapa	Kashyapa Samhita	Basti is beneficial in children and debilitated individuals when administered properly.	Ghrita and Taila nourish growing tissues and improve Bala.
Sharangadhara	Sharangadhara Samhita	Detailed pharmaceutical preparation of Sneha for therapeutic use.	Emphasized medicated oils and ghrita preparations for Basti administration.
Bhavamishra	Bhavaprakasha	Basti is useful in chronic Vata disorders and degenerative conditions.	Different Sneha should be selected according to Dosha and disease condition.

Table No. 3: Comparison of Four Principal Sneha According to Ayurvedic Classics.

Sneha	Charaka	Sushruta	Vagbhata
Ghrita	Best for Pitta disorders, Medhya and Rasayana	Promotes strength and longevity	Excellent for memory and nourishment
Taila	Best for Vata disorders	Improves flexibility and lubrication	Most suitable for Vata Shamana
Vasa	Useful in tissue depletion and trauma	Indicated in severe Vata and injuries	Brimhana and strengthening
Majja	Beneficial in Asthi-Majja disorders	Useful in chronic degenerative diseases	Deep tissue nourishment

Table No. 4: Acharya-wise Importance of Basti.

Acharya	Statement
Charaka	Basti is Ardha Chikitsa and controls Vata, Pitta, Kapha, and Rakta disorders.
Sushruta	Basti is the most effective therapy for diseases originating in Pakwashaya.
Vagbhata	Basti is capable of curing numerous diseases and preserving health.
Kashyapa	Basti can be safely used in children and elderly with proper indications.
Bhavamishra	Basti is highly useful in chronic and degenerative diseases.

DISCUSSION

Basti Karma is considered the most important therapeutic procedure among all Panchakarma therapies and is widely recognized as the prime treatment for Vata disorders. The success of Basti therapy depends upon the proper selection of its ingredients, among which Sneha plays a vital role. Sneha not only acts as a carrier for medicinal substances but also contributes significantly to the therapeutic action of Basti.^[15]

Vata Dosha is characterized by dryness, roughness, lightness, mobility, and coldness. Sneha possesses qualities opposite to Vata, such as unctuousness, heaviness, softness, and smoothness. Due to these properties, Sneha effectively pacifies aggravated Vata and helps restore normal physiological functions. Administration of Sneha through Basti provides lubrication to tissues, enhances flexibility of joints, nourishes body structures, and facilitates the elimination of morbid Doshas.^[16]

Among the various Sneha used in Basti Karma, Tila Taila is considered the most commonly employed and therapeutically effective oil. It possesses excellent penetrating and spreading properties that enable it to reach deeper tissues. Tila Taila effectively reduces pain, stiffness, and dryness associated with Vata disorders. Its widespread use in conditions such as osteoarthritis, sciatica, paralysis, and low back pain demonstrates its significance in Ayurvedic clinical practice.^[17]

Ghrita occupies a unique position among Sneha Dravyas because of its nourishing, rejuvenating, and Medhya properties. It is particularly useful in conditions involving both Vata and Pitta vitiation. Ghrita-based Basti provides nourishment to the nervous system and supports tissue regeneration. Its cooling nature makes it suitable in disorders associated with inflammation, burning sensation, and degenerative changes.^[18]

Ksheerabala Taila, Mahamasha Taila, and Sahacharadi Taila are important medicated Sneha formulations used according to disease condition and Dosha predominance. Their Brimhana, Balya, Vatashamaka, analgesic, and neuroprotective actions make them valuable in neurological and musculoskeletal disorders.^[19]

The comparative evaluation of different Sneha reveals that each possesses specific therapeutic advantages. Tila Taila is more suitable for general Vata disorders, Ghrita for nourishment and rejuvenation, Ksheerabala Taila for degenerative neurological conditions, Mahamasha Taila for severe neuromuscular disorders, and Sahacharadi Taila for painful conditions affecting the lower extremities. Appropriate selection of Sneha according to Dosha, disease stage, affected tissues, age, strength, and digestive capacity of the patient enhances therapeutic outcomes.^[20]

The therapeutic efficacy of Sneha in Basti Karma can also be explained from a modern perspective. The rectal mucosa possesses a rich blood supply that facilitates rapid absorption of lipid-soluble substances. Medicated oils and ghee contain bioactive compounds with anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, analgesic, and neuroprotective properties that contribute to symptom relief and functional improvement.^[21]

Overall, the review demonstrates that Sneha is not merely an adjuvant component of Basti but serves as an active therapeutic agent. Different Sneha possess unique pharmacological properties and therapeutic indications. Therefore, understanding the comparative utility of various Sneha is essential for achieving optimal clinical results and promoting evidence-based Ayurvedic practice.^[22]

CONCLUSION

Basti Karma is the most effective Panchakarma therapy for the management of Vata disorders, and the selection of appropriate Sneha plays a crucial role in its therapeutic success. Different Sneha Dravyas such as Tila Taila, Ghrita, Ksheerabala Taila, Mahamasha

Taila, and Sahacharadi Taila possess distinct properties and indications. Tila Taila is highly effective for general Vata disorders, Ghrita provides nourishment and rejuvenation, while medicated oils like Ksheerabala Taila and Mahamasha Taila are particularly beneficial in neurological and degenerative conditions. Therefore, the selection of Sneha should be individualized according to Dosha, disease condition, and patient characteristics to achieve optimal therapeutic outcomes through Basti Karma.

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