

CONCEPT AND CLINICAL APPLICATIONS OF KATI VASTI

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda has solutions to a limitless number of clinical conditions achievable through a combination of internal medicines, external therapies, Shodhana (de-toxification) through Panchakarma, diet and lifestyle modifications and Yoga. The external therapeutic measures are a confluence of the four pillars - pressure, temperature, technique and topical formulations; where herbal or herbo-mineral formulations is the most important of the four components. Sneha Kalpana - Lipid soluble extracts with minerals and salts / electrolytes with a good potential for transdermal route, are fine tuned for this therapeutic modality known as Kati Vasti. Most clinical conditions affecting the spinal column and specifically the lumbo-sacral and sacroiliac areas can be treated well with Kati Vasti.

Key Words : Kati Vasti, lipid soluble extracts, degenerative spinal conditions.

INTRODUCTION

Among the array of external therapeutic measures, Kati Vasti – a therapeutic modality, occupies a special place and has generated renewed interest globally because of its simple yet therapeutically powerful and efficacious nature. Of the four components of external therapeutics (pressure, temperature, technique, medicine), here, in Kati Vasti, the most important is the choice of medicated oils (lipid based topical media) and next comes the adjustment of temperature to suit the condition to be treated.

About 2 to 3 inches column of warm medicated oils are retained on the lumbar or lumbosacral region for a specified amount of time varying from 30 minutes to an hour. A program of daily hourly sessions for about 1 to 2 weeks is recommended in both, acute and chronic conditions affecting the spine.

PATHOPHYSIOLOGY of Spinal Conditions

- Spinal conditions of *Vāta* type are generally degenerative in nature, lack of nourishment to the deeper tissues due to nutritional factors, circulation issues, bad ergonomics or excessive physical repetitive stress due to sports or trauma leads to *kupita* or deranged Vata which gets lodged in *māmsa dhātu* and results in paraspinal muscle spasms at different levels and different layers, these pathological changes in the structural and functional aspects of muscles can be localized to axial skeleton or intercompartmental. Secondary to the muscles spasms is the distortion of normal spinal alignment that leads to compression of spinal nerves and impingement due to IVDP etc.
- Other genetic / gestational period conditions, again due to *Vāta*, that are extremely difficult to manage are the likes of SpinoCerebellar ataxia (most types), Spina Bifida etc.
- Spinal conditions of *Pitta* type are generally inflammatory in nature like Sacroiliitis, Ankylosing spondylitis etc

- Spinal conditions of *Kapha* type are generally autoimmune in nature, there is a confluence of Kapha, ama and Vāta and subsequently Pitta in conditions like Rheumatoid arthritis etc.
- Other conditions like caries spine as a sequel to TB, trauma, etc, have specific pathologies according the nature of the causative factors.

GRIDHRASI

Gridhrasi is one among the 80 nanatmaja *Vātavyādhis* enumerated in the classics, and it affects the anatomical areas of lower spine, hip, gluteal regions, hamstrings, calf and downwards corresponding to the origins and path of the sciatic nerve. The condition *Gridhrasi* can be translated as Sciatica affecting the muscles, tendons, ligaments, and nerves and results in structural and functional abnormalities of the said areas; paresthesia and alteration of gait (like a *gridhra* / vulture's gait) depending on chronicity and intensity of the condition.

KATI VASTI PROCEDURE :

- Poorvakarma - The preparatory phase and conditioning
- Pradhana Karma – The main therapeutic process
- Paschat Karma – Securing and boosting the therapeutic values of the procedure

PoorvaKarma : The preparatory phase and conditioning

The patient advised for Kati Vasti is explained the process and duration. The therapy is preferably done when on an empty stomach or at least 3 hours after a meal,

General preparatory procedures involve the patient to sit upright and look at eye level. Massaging the low back with the choice of oil suitable for the condition to be treated, followed by localized jet of steam or warm compress for about 10 minutes. Then the area is completely wiped clean with a tissue or warm water.

These techniques ensure the wide opening of skin pores and softening to facilitate better absorption of the medicated oils.

Next, laying down comfortably in prone position (face down), for up to one hour is necessary, all the arrangements like a semi hard foam bed and positioning with pillows or towels is to be done.

Pradhana Karma – main therapeutic process

After the patient lays down in face down (prone position) he is asked to relax as much so that the paraspinal muscles are not tense, relaxation also helps in normal breathing effortlessly. After ensuring that the patient may not need any further adjustments in posture and is comfortable, the procedure begins.

The exact area affected is located, and is generally between L3 to S1 identified through surface anatomy, and a circular trap column as per the contour of the lower spine is built using a paste of black gram powder and water, the same wet flour is used to seal of any leaky points. Choice of oils or oil combinations are heated on a water bath to about 40⁰ C, a cotton pad is placed on the skin (to be removed later), and the sufficiently heated oil is poured slowly into the trap area till about 2 inches or more can be held. Every few minutes, some oil is removed, reheated and

poured back to maintain the temperature at about 40°C. This is continued for up to one full hour.

Paschat Karma – securing and boosting the therapeutic values of the procedure

After the lapse of about one hour of the main procedure, the oils are removed and the flour trap is cleaned well with warm water. Again, the patient is made to sit in upright position, gently massaged and a jet of localized steam is given for a few minutes. The follow up advice is to correct seating posture, not to expose to cold and absolutely avoid any ice packs for pain management.

MODE OF ACTION

Abhyanga, Dhaara, Pichu, Vasti are the four techniques that have successively stronger therapeutic effects. Abhyanga is topical application and gentle massage, dhaara is a continuous stream, pichu means a swab placed on skin, and Vasti is retention of column of lipid based medicines locally. Pressure, temperature, technique and medicine are the basic pillars of external therapeutics; medicine plays the most vital role in Kati Vasti. *Snehakalpanas* are lipid based formulations in Ayurveda that can transdermally get absorbed into systemic circulation, these therapeutically active molecules in *Snehakalpanas* have a potential and reach the target organs bypassing the liver to show their intended action. *Bhrajaka Pitta* absorbs and *tiryag gata dhamanis* spread the compounds into the system. Improved blood circulation ensures exit of toxins from, and delivery of nutrition to, the deeper tissues, and resultant anabolic activity in bone and muscle tissue can be clinically inferred and diagnostically tracked.

Indications - Conditions fit for treatment through Kati Vasti -

- Sciatica
- Degenerative disk disease
- InterVertebral Disc Prolapse
- Disc herniation
- Lumbar Spondylosis
- Spinal stenosis due to associated conditions like radiculopathy and parasthesia in lower limbs
- Sacro-Illitis
- Auto Immune disorders like Rheumatoid Arthritis and Ankylosing Spondylitis.
- Demyelination
- Para Spinal muscle spasms and resulting loss of Lumbar Lordosis.
- Repetitive Stress injuries
- Sports injuries.
- TB Spine during or post ATT.
- Piriformis syndrome due to compression on the sciatic nerve as a result of wrong postures or keeping a thick wallet in the back pocket.

Contra Indications – conditions unfit for treatment through Kati Vasti –

- Severe Ankylosing spondylosis with bamboo spine.
- Severe kyphosis of dorsal spine.
- Avascular Necrosis of Hip joint and associated distortion in LS Spine alignment.
- COPD
- Severe GERD
- Abdominal obesity where patient is unable to lay down prone for about an hour.

Some clinical conditions and suitable Ayurvedic formulations.

1.	Lumbar Spondylitis	Balāshvagandhādi Tailam
2.	Degenerative OA of Spine	Valiya Lākshadi Tailam
3.	Spondylolisthesis	Valiya Sahacharadi Tailam
4.	General Geriatric conditions	Valiya Narayana Tailam
5.	Loss of lumbar lordosis	Maha Masha Tailam
6.	SacroIitis	BalāGudūchyādi Tailam
7.	Rheumatoid conditions	KottamChukkadi Tailam
8.	Repetitive Stress	Murivenna
9.	Sports injuries	Gandha Tailam
10.	Piriformis Syndrome	MadhuYastyadi Tailam
11.	Osteophyte formations	PrabhanjanaVimardana Kuzhambu
12.	Ankylosing Spondylitis	VachaLashunadi, GandharvaHastadi Eranda Tailam

CONCLUSION

Kati Vasti is comparatively a simple, ancient and scientific therapeutic procedure that has immensely positive results in treatment of clinical conditions affecting the Spine and path of Sciatic nerve. For neuromuscular and orthopedic degenerative conditions affecting these areas, Kati Vasti is nourishing and like “watering a plant at its roots” for rejuvenation and strengthening of neuromuscular domains discussed. The progress and efficacy of this methodology of treatment can be tracked and documented using the most modern tools of imaging like MRI and also EMG and NCV studies.

