

REVIEW ARTICLE

A Review of Lekhana Basti in the Management of Sthoulya (Obesity)

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: *Sthoulya*, or obesity, is a major metabolic disorder in *Ayurveda*, primarily resulting from the stagnation of *Meda Dhatu* (fat tissue) and the impairment of *Agni* (digestive and metabolic fire), compounded by the vitiation of *Kapha* and the subsequent obstruction-induced aggravation of *Vata Dosha*. This condition is categorized under *Santarpana-uttha Vyadhi* (diseases of over-nourishment), mandating *Apatarpana* (reduction) therapy. *Ayurveda* provides a variety of therapeutic techniques, with *Panchakarma* being a significant treatment modality. *Lekhan Basti*, a *Panchakarma* treatment that involves medicated enemas, has shown substantial potential in the management of obesity, dyslipidemia, and metabolic diseases, particularly those caused by excess *Kapha* and *Medodhatu*.

Materials and Methods: According to *Acharya Sushruta* and *Acharya Sharangdhara*, *Lekhan Basti* has *Triphala Kwatha*, *Gomutra*, *Madhu*, *Yavakshara*, and *Ushakadi Gana*. *Kapha Shamaka*, *Deepana*, *Tikshna*, and *Agni Deepana* are among the components with known medicinal potential. The process involves the use of an alkaline formulation due to components such as *Gomutra* and *Yavakshara*, which promote quick absorption and improve gut flora.

Results: *Lekhan Basti* has a wide range of therapeutic effects, including correcting metabolic imbalances and reducing excess *Kapha* and *Medodhatu*. It has been believed to include qualities such as *Vata-Kapha Shamaka*, *Deepana*, *Pachana*, *Lekhana*, *Karshana*, and *Srotoshodhaka*, which aid in fat loss, digestive fire, and detoxification.

Discussion: *Lekhan Basti* is an excellent *Samshodhana* treatment for *Sthoulya*. It is a potential strategy to enhance general metabolic health since it balances *Kapha* and reduces excess *Medodhatu*. Its detoxifying qualities, together with its effect on gut flora, make it an essential treatment for metabolic diseases.

Conclusion: *Lekhana Basti* is effective as a *Samshodhana* (cleaning) therapy for metabolic illnesses caused by high *Kapha* and *Medodhatu*, including *Sthoulya* (obesity), dyslipidemia, PCOS, and other lifestyle diseases.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the *Ayurvedic* classical texts, *Sthoulya* is more than just excessive body weight; it is a profound metabolic disorder characterized by the excessive and morbid accumulation of *Meda Dhatu* (fat tissue). This condition is categorized as a *Santarpana-uttha Vyadhi* (disease arising from over-nourishment) and is listed among the *Ashta Nindita Purusha* (eight undesirable conditions).^[1] Obesity is a medical condition in

which excess body fats are accumulated to the extent that it may have an adverse effect on health, leading to reduced life expectancy and/or increased health problems. Excess deposition of adipose tissue, a fat depot in the body, is known as obesity. The prevalence of overweight and obesity is 23.45%. In India, obesity and overweight have reached epidemic proportions, affecting 5% of countries population and worldwide 35.8 million (2.3%).^[2]

Ayurveda, an ancient Indian medical practice, focuses on balancing the body's three *doshas* (*Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*) and eliminating toxins (*Mala*). This holistic approach aims to treat sickness and maintain good health. *Panchakarma* is a key therapeutic practice that cleanses

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the body and restores balance. Basti is a significant therapy method in *Panchakarma*, particularly for *Vata dosha* Increase and Imbalance. The *Acharya Charaka* considers it “*Ardhachikitsa*” (half of all therapies).^[3] It helps regulate *Vata dosha*, which affects various physiological activities, including metabolism.

The *Lekhana Basti*, a specific kind of *Basti*, focuses on reducing extra fat and eliminating toxins, particularly in people suffering from obesity, dyslipidemia, hypothyroidism, polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), and other illnesses caused by excess *Kapha* and *Meda Dhatu*. The term “*Lekhana*” means “scraping,” referring to the treatment’s purpose of cleansing the body by removing unwanted substances. This therapy promotes fat loss, increases digestive fire, and improves general metabolic health. It also helps restore *dosha* equilibrium, particularly by lowering *Kapha*, which improves vitality and overall well-being. *Ayurvedic* medicines, such as *Ayurveda*, may provide helpful management for various illnesses.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Lekhana Basti, as described by Acharya Sushruta in the *Chikitsa Sthana*^[4] and Acharya Sharangdhara in the *Uttara Khanda of the Sharangdhara Samhita*,^[5] is composed of a set of core ingredients, including *Triphala Kwatha*, *Madhu*, *Yavakshara*, *Gomutra*, and *Ushakadigana Prativapa*. These ingredients are chosen for their specific therapeutic properties.

Madhu (Honey): Has moisturizing and soothing characteristics, as well as the ability to increase the retention duration of *Basti* in the colon by counteracting the irritating effects of rock salt.

Saindhava (Rock Salt): A crucial element that initiates Basti absorption by creating an osmotic gradient within the colon, which leads to the absorption of water and other soluble substances.

Yavakshara: An alkaline material that aids in the quick absorption and thorough cleansing of the enema.

Tila Taila (Sesame Oil): Provides nourishing and warming properties, facilitating the absorption of the medication’s fat-soluble components

Triphala’s benefits include balancing *Kapha* and *Pitta*, stimulating the digestive fire (*Agni Deepana*), and improving overall health. *Ruksha*’s drying qualities make it a good treatment for obesity.^[6]

Gomutra, or cow urine, has pungent, sharp, and fiery properties, making it effective for fat removal and metabolic stimulation. *Lekhana Basti*’s *Laghu* (light) and *Kapha-Vata Shamaka* (elimination of *Kapha* and *Vata*) qualities contribute to its overall therapeutic effectiveness.^[7]

According to *Acharya Sushruta*, *Ushakadi Gana*, a combination of herbs and minerals such as *Ushaka*, *Saindhav*, *Shilajit*, and *Tuttha*, helps reduce *Kapha* and promote fat removal.^[8] This combination enhances the cleaning and scraping powers of *Lekhana Basti*. *Acharya Charaka* suggests using *Ushna* and *Tikshna Basti* to treat obesity, as they have comparable methods of action. *Lekhana Basti*’s scraping action supports *Acharya Charaka*’s observations of reducing fat and restoring equilibrium in metabolism.^[9]

2.1. Lekhana Basti Dose

The dosage of *Niruha Basti* (or *Asthapana Basti*) according to *Acharya Sushruta*^[10] is primarily defined by the *Dvadasha Prasnuta Basti* (12 *Prasnuta* Enema), which is considered the maximal dose (*Uttama Matra*). The ingredients are *Madhu*, *Saindhava*, *Sneha*,

Kalka, *Kwatha*, and *Avapadrava*. According to *Acharya Charaka*, dose should vary depending on aspects such as *Dosha*, medicinal type (*Ausadha*), location, season (*Kala*), and patient strength (*Bala*).^[11] Due to decreased individual strength, *Avara Matra* (lower dosage) is commonly used today. According to *Acharya Sharangdhara*’s *Uttara Khanda*, those with inferior strength (*Heena Bala*) should take a reduced dose of 3 *Kudava*.^[12]

2.2. Preparation of Lekhana Basti

Lekhana Basti is prepared using traditional methods as detailed by *Acharya Charaka*. To create a consistent mixture, *Madhu*, *Saindhava*, *Sneha*, *Kalka*, and *Kwatha* are metered and blended in a *Khalva Yantra* (grinding vessel). To ensure effective absorption during administration, the mixture should be at *Sukhoshna*, or slightly above body temperature.^[13]

2.3. Administration of Lekhana Basti

To administer, the patient is positioned on a specific table (*Droni*) in the left lateral position, with the right leg flexed. Lubrication is applied to the anal region and *Basti Netra* (enema pipe) to ensure smooth insertion. The enema is gently pushed into the rectum, following the spinal column to reach the first *Karnika* (marker). To release the *Basti* fluid, apply pressure evenly and steadily, ensuring it is not too quick or too slow. Fluid is kept in the *Basti Putaka* to prevent air movement inside the patient. According to *Sushruta*,^[14] the *Basti* should be expelled within 48 min. After the *Basti* procedure, patients are recommended to avoid eating till the *Basti* is expelled. Following the post-procedure, it is advisable to take a warm bath and eat a light, liquid meal.

2.4. Role of Lekhana Basti in Sthoulya (Obesity)

Obesity, known as *Sthoulya* in *Ayurveda*, is classified as a *Santarpana-uttha Vyadhi*^[15] (disease arising from over-nourishment) and is primarily characterized by the excessive accumulation of *Meda Dhatu* (fat tissue) and the vitiation of *Kapha* and *Vata Doshas*. The core pathology involves *Margaavarana* (obstruction of channels), where sticky fat and toxins (*Ama*) block the *Medovaha Srotas* (fat-carrying channels), leading to disturbed metabolism and increased appetite. To counter this pathology, *Ayurveda* advocates *Apatarpana*^[16] (reduction) therapy, and one of the most effective purifying procedures (*Shodhana Chikitsa*) is *Lekhana Basti* (Scraping Enema). *Lekhana Basti* removes accumulated *Meda* and *Ama* from the colon, the main site of *Vata*. By administering potent metabolic correctives through the highly absorptive rectal route, *Lekhana Basti* achieves multi-level benefits: it performs *Srotoshodhana* (channel cleansing), kindles the *Agni* (digestive fire), pacifies the *doshas* involved in overeating, and significantly reduces excessive body fat, thus offering a powerful and sustainable treatment for *Sthoulya*.

3. DISCUSSION

Lekhana Basti has various therapeutic properties, such as *Vata-Kapha Shamaka*, *Ushna*, *Tikshna*, *Deepana*, *Pachana*, *Lekhana*, *Karshana*, and *Srotoshodhana*, that are crucial for controlling metabolic disorders. *Lekhana Basti*’s ingredients, including *Madhu*, *Saindhava*, *Yavakshara*, *Tila Taila*, *Triphala Kwatha*, *Gomutra*, and *Ushakadigana*, work together to reduce excess *Kapha* and *Medodhatu*.

Acharya Sushruta describes *Madhu* (Honey) as *Yogavahi*, which means it serves as a vehicle to enhance the therapeutic efficacy of the other elements. It works through its *Lekhan*, *Chhedana*, and *Srotoshodhana*

characteristics to eliminate obstructions and cleanse the channels, making it an important part of *Basti* therapy.

Saindhava (Rock Salt) is noted for its *Sukshma* (fine) and *Vyavayi* (penetrating) qualities, which allow it to permeate into the body's minute channels, allowing medication molecules' entry into circulation. It aids in *Kaphavilayan* (lowering *Kapha*), *Chhedana* (scraping), *Deepana* (stimulating digestion), and *Pachana* (promoting digestion).

Tila Taila (Sesame Oil) is *Kapha* and *Vata Shamaka* (balancing) by nature. Its *Madhura* (sweet) and *Snigdha* (unctuous) qualities nourish and soften the channels. This promotes detoxification by clearing blockages and removing toxins.

Triphala, a popular *Rasayana* (rejuvenative) formula, balances the *Tridosha* and enhances digestive fire. The ingredients include *Katu*, *Amla*, and *Madhura Rasa* (tastes) and *Ushna Veerya* (powerful energy), which function as a mild laxative and promote lipid metabolism. Its antioxidant qualities enhance intestinal motility and promote digestive health.

It rejuvenates and creates balance in the body's systems.

Gomutra (Cow Urine) is effective as a *Vata-Kapha Shamaka*, *Kriminashaka* (antimicrobial), *Vishagna* (detoxifying), *Deepana*, and *Pachana* (digestive enhancer). Its therapeutic characteristics, including anti-obesity, anti-diabetic, wound healing, anti-inflammatory, and anti-cancer capabilities, make it a valuable element in this treatment.

Acharya Sushruta characterized *Ushakadi Gana*, a group of plants and minerals, as having *Kapha Shamaka* and *Meda Shoshaka* qualities (fat-reducing). *Lekhana Basti* has an alkaline pH due to the presence of *Gomutra* (pH = 8.5–9.5) and *Yavakshara* (alkaline material), which improves the absorption of *Basti Dravya* in the colon. This alkaline nature reduces pathogenic microbiomes in the stomach, promoting overall gut health. *Triphala* and *Gomutra* have antibacterial properties that promote healthy gut flora, vital for digestive health.

4. CONCLUSION

Lekhana Basti is effective as a *Samshodhana* (cleaning) therapy for metabolic illnesses caused by high *Kapha* and *Medodhatu*, including *Sthoulya* (obesity), dyslipidemia, PCOS, and other lifestyle diseases. *Triphala Kwatha*, *Gmutra*, *Madhu*, *Yavakshara*, and *Ushakadi Gana* work synergistically to provide therapeutic benefits such as *Vata-Kapha Shamana* (balancing), *Deepana* (enhancing digestive fire), *Pachana* (promoting digestion), and *Srotoshodhana* (channel-cleansing).

The ingredients' *Lekhana karma* (scraping action) break down fat, reduce channel obstructions, and improve *Agni* (digestive fire) and *Vata* (energy) flow. *Lekhana Basti*'s alkaline nature boosts absorption and promotes healthy gut flora, leading to improved digestion and less metabolic dysfunction. *Lekhana Basti* is a sustainable way to improve metabolic health and general well-being, especially in today's era of lifestyle problems. *Ayurvedic* medicine uses classical preparation and delivery techniques to achieve the best therapeutic effects, making it a valuable tool for addressing chronic metabolic problems.

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6. AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

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9. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Nil.

10. DATA AVAILABILITY

This is an original manuscript, and all data are available for only review purposes from the principal investigators.

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