



Review Article

A CONCEPTUAL REVIEW ON MODE OF ACTION OF *GREEVA BASTI* IN *GREEVA SANDHIGATA VATA*

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ABSTRACT

Greeva Basti is a *Snigdha* type of *Swedana* therapy administered under the principles of *Bahiparimarjan Chikitsa*. Although classical Ayurvedic texts do not directly mention *Greeva Basti*, its methodology is derived from *Shiro Basti*, as described by various *Acharyas*, and is extensively practiced in *Keraliya Panchakarma*. Cervical Spondylosis, characterized by osteoarthritic changes in cervical vertebrae and intervertebral discs, often presents with neck pain radiating to the shoulders and arms, accompanied by posterior occipital headache. In Ayurvedic terminology, degenerative disorders are classified under *Vatavyadhi*, with *Greeva Sandhigata Vata* identified as one of its eighty subtypes. Clinical features include pain during flexion and extension, stiffness, crepitus, and restricted cervical mobility. *Greeva Basti* exerts its effects through the combined action of *Snehana* and *Swedana*. The unctuous (*Snigdha*) and warm (*Ushna*) properties of medicated oil counteract the cold and dry qualities of aggravated *Vata Dosha*, nourish local *Kapha*, improve cervical flexibility, reduce stiffness (*Stambha*), and alleviate heaviness (*Gaurava*). Modern physiological interpretation suggests that local heat application enhances blood circulation, promotes phagocytic activity, and reduces inflammation. This study aims to elucidate the probable mechanism of *Greeva Basti* in managing *Greeva Sandhigata Vata*, highlighting its integration of classical Ayurvedic principles with contemporary physiological understanding, offering a safe, effective, and non-invasive therapeutic approach for degenerative cervical disorders.

INTRODUCTION

Cervical Spondylosis refers to degenerative changes in the cervical vertebrae, intervertebral discs, and ligaments, often causing narrowing of the spinal canal due to osteophytes, ossification of the posterior longitudinal ligament, or herniated disc fragments. This may lead to compression of the cervical spinal cord. Commonly referred to as arthritis of the neck or degenerative cervical osteoarthritis, the condition is influenced by age, gender, and occupational stress^[1].

Typical clinical features include morning stiffness (worsened in cold weather), tingling and numbness in the arms, vertigo, and, in chronic stages, worsening pain during the night or with neck movement.

Cervical spondylosis is prevalent, accounting for approximately 2% of hospital admissions and representing a leading cause of spinal cord dysfunction in individuals over 55 years. Radiological studies reveal degenerative changes in 90% of men over 50 and 90% of women over 60. A 2009 report indicated that cervical spondylotic myelopathy was the primary diagnosis in 36% of elderly patients, with surgical interventions for degenerative cervical spine disorders rising between 1992 and 2005^[2]. The most commonly affected vertebral levels are C5–C6, C6–C7, and C4–C5, involving the corresponding C5, C6, and C7 nerve roots^[3].

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From an Ayurvedic perspective, *Greeva Sandhigata Vata* is one of the eighty types of *Vatavyadhi*, characterized by degenerative changes, pain, stiffness, swelling, and coarse crepitus during joint movement- clinical features similar to *Sandhivata*^[4].

Greeva Basti is classified as a *Snigdha Swedana* therapy under *Bahiparimarjan Chikitsa*. It is derived from the classical concept of *Shiro Basti* described by various *Acharyas* and is widely applied in *Keraliya Panchakarma*. The combination of *Snehana* and *Swedana* in *Greeva Basti* alleviates *Rukshata* and *Stambha* induced by aggravated *Vata Dosha*, restoring cervical function and mobility.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The primary aim of this study is to evaluate the probable mechanism of action of *Greeva Basti* in managing *Greeva Sandhigata Vata*, focusing on its effects on pain relief, joint flexibility, and mitigation of degenerative symptoms from both Ayurvedic and modern perspectives.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Therapy Review

In Ayurveda, *Snehana* is the first-line therapy for *Nirama Vata*, while *Basti* is considered the most effective treatment for all types of *Vata Vyadhi*. *Greeva Basti* is a localized oil pooling therapy for cervical pain, incorporating principles of *Snehana* and *Swedana*. Medicated warm oils are retained over the cervical region for 30–45 minutes using a containment structure prepared from black gram flour, ensuring proper pooling and insulation.

As *Vata Dosha* is *Sheeta* (cold) and *Ruksha* (dry), the warm and unctuous properties of *Sneha* combined with *Swedana* alleviate these qualities, induce sweating, remove metabolic wastes, reduce *Kleda*, and relieve *Gaurava* (heaviness) and *Stambha* (stiffness). *Greeva Basti* can be administered conveniently, without hospital admission, special diet, or lifestyle modification^[5].

Procedure of Greeva Basti

Materials and Requirements

- *Abhyanga* table
- Black gram (*Masha*) powder – 250 g
- Medicated oil – 200 ml
- Saucepan and sponge pieces

Personnel

- Ayurvedic Physician – 1
- Masseur – 1

Method of Administration

1. Prepare dough from *Masha* powder and warm water.
2. Form a circular compartment (10–15 cm length, 3 cm thickness, 5 cm height) on the patient's nape.
3. Position the patient prone with forehead resting on flexed arms. Seal the dough compartment with steel or plastic ring.
4. Warm the medicated oil to 40–48°C and pour into the compartment, maintaining temperature during therapy.
5. Retain oil for 30 minutes.

Post-Procedure Care

- Remove oil and dough.
- Massage cervical and shoulder region using circular and linear strokes.
- Apply hot fomentation with a towel; advise 15 minutes rest.

Dietary Guidelines: Normal diet; avoid heavy or oily meals.

Precautions

- Hypertensive patients should take medications before therapy.
- Ensure dough consistency to prevent leakage.
- Maintain uniform oil temperature throughout the procedure.

Benefits of Greeva Basti

1. Relieves neck pain, stiffness, and inflammation.
2. Improves cervical blood circulation.
3. Lubricates cervical joints, enhancing flexibility.
4. Strengthens cervical spine.
5. Reduces stress and promotes relaxation.
6. Supports healing in acute and chronic neck disorders.

Indications

- Cervical Spondylosis
- Neck sprains and strains
- Herniated discs
- Osteoarthritis
- Migraines and tension-type headaches
- Vertigo

Literature Review

Recent Ayurvedic clinical investigations have demonstrated that *Greeva Basti*, a localized retention therapy involving medicated oil application over the cervical region, provides significant therapeutic relief in *Greeva Sandhigata Vata*- a condition clinically comparable to cervical

spondylosis^[6,7]. Classified under *Bahya Snehana* and *Swedana* modalities, *Greeva Basti* acts primarily through *Vata shamana* (pacification of aggravated *Vata dosha*), by improving local blood circulation, reducing neuromuscular tension, and enhancing lubrication of the intervertebral and periarticular structures ^[8].

Several randomized and observational studies have reported consistent symptomatic improvement, including reduction in neck pain, stiffness, restricted range of motion, and radiating discomfort, as assessed by standardized outcome measures such as the Visual Analogue Scale (VAS), Neck Disability Index (NDI), and Cervical Range of Motion (CROM) ^[9,10,11].

Furthermore, integrated protocols combining *Greeva Basti* with other *Panchakarma* therapies- such as *Abhyanga*, *Patra Pinda Sweda*, or *Nasya Karma*- and internal formulations including *Maharasnadi Kwatha*, *Trayodashanga Guggulu*, or *Dashamoola Taila* have shown synergistic benefits in both pain relief and functional recovery^[12,13]. These findings suggest that *Greeva Basti* may play a pivotal role in managing degenerative cervical conditions through neuro-muscular modulation and *Dosha* equilibrium.

The following table summarizes key clinical studies conducted in the last decade evaluating the therapeutic potential of *Greeva Basti* in cervical spondylosis.

Table 1: Summary of Recent Clinical Studies on *Greeva Basti* in *Greeva Sandhigata Vata* (Cervical Spondylosis)

Study (Year)	Design/ Sample	Intervention	Outcome Measures	Results	Reference
Kumar (2018)	Single-arm case series, n = 10	<i>Greeva Basti</i> with <i>Mahavishgarbha Taila</i> and <i>Mahanarayan Taila</i> following <i>Dashamoola Kvatha</i> sudation; 45 min daily × 15 days.	Pain, stiffness (pre-post)	Marked improvement in pain and stiffness; reported better tolerance than NSAIDs in this small cohort.	[14]
Bansal (2020)	Comparative study, n = 30 (15 per group)	Group A: <i>Nasya</i> with <i>Prasarini Taila</i> ; Group B: <i>Greeva Basti</i> with <i>Prasarini Taila</i> for 7 days	Subjective symptom grading (marked/moderate/mild).	<i>Greeva Basti</i> group showed higher rate (~80%) of moderate-to-marked improvement.	[15]
Kumar A et al. (2022)	Open-label randomized clinical trial, n=40 (20 per group)	Group A: <i>Trayodashanga Guggulu</i> + <i>Sahacharadi Kwatha</i> ; Group B: same regimen + <i>Greeva Basti</i> (<i>Prasarini Taila</i>) daily × 15 days	Pain (% relief), Neck Disability Index (NDI)	Group B achieved ~56.47% pain relief and ~64.33% NDI improvement; statistically superior to Group A.	[16]
Rajpurohit et al. (2024)	Randomized parallel-group study, n = 40	<i>Greeva Basti</i> with <i>Laghu Vishgarbha Taila</i> + manual cervical traction vs. traction alone.	Pain intensity, functional improvement.	Combination therapy produced clinically and statistically greater relief than traction alone.	[17]

References correspond to the numbered citations in the reference section.

Interpretation

Most studies show consistent short term symptom relief, but data on long term outcomes or radiological improvement are lacking. Study sizes are generally small (n ≤ 50), often single center and open label without blinding or placebo control. Protocols vary (oil type, duration, retention time), limiting reproducibility and meta comparison.

Despite limitations, the evidence supports *Greeva Basti* as a valuable adjunct therapy in Ayurvedic management of cervical spondylosis, warranting larger standardized RCTs.

DISCUSSION

Greeva Basti, a *Bahya Shamana Chikitsa*, acts through *Snehana* and *Swedana*. *Sneha* is used as a media in case of *Greeva Basti*, facilitates its action in alleviating *Vata*. *Sneha dravya* have predominance of *Drava*, *Sara*, *Snigdha*, *Picchila*, *Guru*, *Sheeta*, *Mridhu*

and *Manda guna*.^[18] The *Sneha* neutralizes *Vata Dosha* by counteracting its cold and dry qualities, while nourishing local *Kapha*, which is depleted due to *Vata Vriddhi*. This dual action supports *Samprapti Vighatana* (pathogenesis reversal).

Swedana has the properties of neutralising *Stambha* and *Sheetata*^[19]. Warm, medicated oil relaxes cervical muscles, reducing pain and improving mobility. Physiologically, local heat increases metabolism, enhances tissue perfusion, promotes vasodilation, and stimulates phagocytic activity, contributing to anti-inflammatory effects. Pain reduction also arises from counter-irritant and sedative properties of the oil and heat. The therapy enables deep penetration of active constituents (*Guna*) of the oils, promoting tissue regeneration. Overall, *Greeva Basti* addresses both symptoms and underlying degenerative mechanisms of *Greeva Sandhigata Vata*, offering an effective, non-invasive intervention for cervical disorders.

CONCLUSION

Vata Dosha is central in degenerative cervical disorders, manifesting as pain and stiffness, the cardinal symptoms of *Greeva Sandhigata Vata*. *Greeva Basti* is highly effective due to the *Snigdha* properties of *Sneha*, which nourish tissues and slow degeneration. *Swedana*, characterized by *Ushna*, *Teekshna*, *Laghu*, and *Sara* qualities, relieves stiffness and rigidity. Modern interpretation highlights that local heat promotes sedation, vasodilation, improved blood circulation, and phagocytosis, collectively reducing inflammation. Thus, *Greeva Basti* combines classical Ayurvedic principles with modern physiological effects, providing a safe, effective therapeutic approach for both acute and chronic cervical conditions.

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