



Evaluating the Clinical Utility of *Basti* in *Gridhrasi*: An Integrative Ayurvedic Review

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Abstract

Gridhrasi, one of the prominent *Vata Vyadhi* described in Ayurvedic classics, closely resembles sciatica in contemporary medicine due to its characteristic radiating pain extending from the lumbar region to the lower limb. The increasing prevalence of sedentary lifestyle, occupational stress, and degenerative spinal disorders has contributed to a significant rise in sciatica-related morbidity, adversely affecting functional ability and quality of life. Ayurveda offers a multidimensional therapeutic approach for *Gridhrasi*, among which *Basti* is considered the most effective intervention owing to its specific action on aggravated *Vata Dosha*. The present review aims to critically evaluate the clinical utility of *Basti* in the management of *Gridhrasi* through an integrative Ayurvedic perspective. Classical Ayurvedic literature, contemporary research articles, and available clinical studies related to *Basti Chikitsa* were analyzed to understand its therapeutic relevance, probable mechanisms, and clinical outcomes. The review highlights the role of various forms of *Basti*, including *Niruha Basti* and *Anuvasana Basti*, in alleviating pain, stiffness, restricted movement, and neurological symptoms associated with *Gridhrasi*. Additionally, the probable mechanisms of action are discussed in relation to *Vata Shamana*, anti-inflammatory effects, neuromuscular modulation, and systemic therapeutic influence. The available evidence suggests that *Basti* may provide substantial symptomatic relief and functional improvement in patients suffering from *Gridhrasi* when administered with appropriate therapeutic planning. However, further well-designed clinical trials and standardized treatment protocols are required to strengthen the evidence base and enhance the integration of Ayurvedic therapeutics into contemporary musculoskeletal care.

Keywords:- *Gridhrasi, Basti, Panchakarma, Vata Vyadhi, Sciatica, Integrative Ayurveda*

Introduction

Gridhrasi is one of the major disorders described under *Vata Vyadhi* in Ayurvedic classics and is characterized by radiating pain originating from the *Sphik* region and extending towards the lower limb. The disease significantly affects physical mobility, occupational efficiency, and overall quality of life. In contemporary medicine, *Gridhrasi* is commonly correlated with sciatica or lumbosacral radiculopathy because of similarities in clinical presentation such as radiating pain, stiffness, numbness, and difficulty in walking. Sedentary lifestyle, prolonged sitting, improper posture, obesity, and degenerative spinal changes have contributed to the increasing prevalence of sciatica-related disorders worldwide. The chronic and recurrent nature of the disease often poses therapeutic challenges in modern clinical practice.[1] According to Ayurvedic literature, aggravated *Vata Dosha* plays a predominant role in the pathogenesis of *Gridhrasi*. In some cases, the involvement of *Kapha Dosha* produces additional symptoms such as heaviness, stiffness, and lethargy. Classical texts including *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Ashtanga Hridaya* have described the etiopathogenesis, symptomatology, and management principles of *Gridhrasi* in detail. The characteristic gait of the patient resembling that of a vulture is considered responsible for the nomenclature of the disease. The disease is associated with severe pain and restriction of movement, making early and effective intervention essential for preventing disability and chronicity.[2] Among various therapeutic approaches in Ayurveda, *Basti Chikitsa* occupies a prime position in the management of *Vata* dominant disorders. *Basti* is regarded as “Ardha Chikitsa” due to its extensive therapeutic efficacy and systemic action. It not only alleviates aggravated *Vata Dosha* but also nourishes body tissues, improves neuromuscular functions, and promotes functional recovery. Different forms of *Basti*, including *Niruha Basti* and *Anuvasana Basti*, have been advocated in the treatment of *Gridhrasi* depending upon the *Dosha* predominance and clinical condition of the patient. The administration of medicated decoctions and oils through the rectal route is believed to exert both local and systemic therapeutic effects.[3] Recent years have witnessed growing scientific interest in validating traditional Ayurvedic interventions through evidence-based approaches. Several clinical studies and case reports have demonstrated encouraging outcomes of *Basti* therapy in reducing pain, improving range of movement, and enhancing quality of life in patients suffering from sciatica-like conditions. Integrative understanding of *Basti* in relation to neurophysiology, anti-inflammatory mechanisms, and gut-mediated systemic effects has further strengthened its clinical relevance. Despite increasing research activity, comprehensive reviews evaluating the clinical utility of *Basti* in *Gridhrasi* remain limited.[4] Therefore, the present review aims to critically analyze the classical Ayurvedic concepts and contemporary clinical evidence related to the role of *Basti* in the management of *Gridhrasi*. The review also attempts to explore the probable therapeutic mechanisms, integrative clinical applicability, and future research perspectives associated with *Basti Chikitsa*. Such an evidence-oriented approach may help in strengthening the scientific acceptance of Ayurvedic interventions and facilitate their integration into modern musculoskeletal healthcare practices.[5]

Conceptual Understanding of *Gridhrasi*

The term *Gridhrasi* is derived from the word “Gridhra,” meaning vulture, which denotes the peculiar gait adopted by the patient due to severe pain and stiffness affecting the lower extremities. *Gridhrasi* is described under the spectrum of *Vata Vyadhi* in Ayurvedic classics and is considered one of the most debilitating neuromuscular disorders. The disease predominantly affects the *Kati*, *Sphik*, *Uru*, *Janu*, *Jangha*, and *Pada* regions, producing radiating pain along the course of the lower limb. Classical Ayurvedic texts have emphasized the progressive and distressing nature of the disorder. Owing to the dominance of aggravated *Vata Dosha*, symptoms such as pain, pricking sensation, twitching, and restricted movement become clinically evident.[6] According to *Charaka Samhita*, the characteristic

feature of *Gridhrasi* is radiating pain beginning from the *Sphik Pradesha* and extending sequentially towards the posterior aspect of the thigh, knee, calf, and foot. *Sushruta* and *Vagbhata* have also elaborated the symptom complex and therapeutic principles of the disease. The pathogenesis mainly involves vitiation of *Vata Dosha* either independently or in association with *Kapha Dosha*. The aggravated *Doshas* affect the *Snayu*, *Kandara*, and *Mamsa Dhatu*, resulting in impaired locomotor functions. In chronic conditions, stiffness and heaviness further aggravate functional disability and compromise quality of life.[7] The etiological factors responsible for *Gridhrasi* include excessive physical exertion, prolonged standing, improper sitting posture, trauma, suppression of natural urges, excessive fasting, intake of dry and cold food, and other activities leading to aggravation of *Vata Dosha*. Sedentary habits and occupational stress are also considered important contributing factors in contemporary settings. Ayurvedic literature explains that these causative factors disturb the normal physiological state of *Vata*, resulting in obstruction within the body channels and subsequent manifestation of disease. The involvement of *Kapha Dosha* produces symptoms such as *Tandra*, heaviness, anorexia, and stiffness, which are more evident in *Vata-Kaphaja Gridhrasi*. [8] The *Samprapti* of *Gridhrasi* mainly revolves around *Vata Prakopa* and obstruction in the pathways of normal movement of *Vata*. Vitiated *Vata* localizes in the *Kati* and lower limb regions and affects the neuromuscular structures responsible for movement and sensation. The disease process leads to pain, stiffness, twitching, and restriction of gait. In Ayurvedic understanding, derangement of *Snayu* and *Kandara* plays a major role in the manifestation of symptoms. The chronicity of the condition may further result in muscle wasting, reduced flexibility, and persistent neurological discomfort if timely intervention is not instituted. [9]

Ayurveda classifies *Gridhrasi* mainly into two types, namely *Vataja Gridhrasi* and *Vata-Kaphaja Gridhrasi*. In *Vataja Gridhrasi*, symptoms such as severe pain, pricking sensation, stiffness, and tremors predominate due to aggravated *Vata Dosha*. Conversely, *Vata-Kaphaja Gridhrasi* is associated with additional manifestations including heaviness, lethargy, anorexia, and excessive stiffness owing to the association of *Kapha Dosha*. This classification is clinically important because it determines the therapeutic approach, selection of medicines, and type of *Panchakarma* intervention required for management. [10] The classical symptomatology of *Gridhrasi* bears close resemblance with sciatica described in modern medicine. Radiating pain along the sciatic nerve pathway, numbness, tingling sensation, restricted straight leg raising, and difficulty in walking are common features observed in both conditions. Due to similarities in symptomatology and disease progression, many contemporary Ayurvedic scholars correlate *Gridhrasi* with sciatic neuropathy or lumbosacral radiculopathy. Nevertheless, Ayurveda approaches the disease from a holistic perspective by considering *Dosha*, *Dushya*, *Agni*, and patient constitution while planning treatment. This comprehensive understanding forms the basis for selecting therapies such as *Basti Chikitsa* in the management of *Gridhrasi*. [11]

Correlation of *Gridhrasi* with Modern Perspective

Sciatica is a clinical condition characterized by pain radiating along the distribution of the sciatic nerve, usually extending from the lower back to the buttock and lower limb. It commonly results from compression or irritation of the lumbosacral nerve roots, particularly involving the L4, L5, and S1 spinal segments. The condition is widely prevalent among adults and significantly affects mobility, productivity, and quality of life. Modern sedentary lifestyle, prolonged sitting, obesity, spinal degeneration, and occupational strain are considered major predisposing factors. The symptom complex of sciatica demonstrates considerable resemblance with *Gridhrasi* described in Ayurvedic literature. [12]

The sciatic nerve is the largest peripheral nerve in the human body and originates from the lumbosacral plexus. It passes through the gluteal region and descends along the posterior aspect of the thigh before dividing into the tibial and common peroneal nerves. Compression or inflammation affecting the nerve roots may produce symptoms such as radiating pain, numbness, tingling sensation, muscular weakness, and restricted movement. Intervertebral disc prolapse, lumbar canal stenosis, degenerative disc disease, spondylolisthesis, and piriformis syndrome are among the most common pathological causes associated with sciatica. Persistent nerve compression may eventually result in neurological deficits and impaired locomotor function.[13]The pathophysiology of sciatica primarily involves mechanical compression and inflammatory irritation of nerve roots. Herniation of the intervertebral disc leads to displacement of the nucleus pulposus, causing pressure on adjacent neural structures. Inflammatory mediators released around the affected nerve roots contribute to pain hypersensitivity, edema, and neuromuscular dysfunction. Modern medicine also recognizes the role of oxidative stress, altered nerve conduction, and muscle spasm in the progression of chronic sciatica. These pathological mechanisms can be conceptually correlated with *Vata Prakopa*, obstruction of channels, and involvement of *Snayu* and *Kandara* described in Ayurveda.[14]Clinically, sciatica presents with unilateral radiating pain extending from the lumbar region to the posterior thigh and leg. The pain is frequently associated with stiffness, burning sensation, tingling, numbness, and difficulty in standing or walking. Symptoms are often aggravated by coughing, sneezing, prolonged sitting, and forward bending. In severe cases, muscle weakness and altered reflexes may also be observed. Similarly, Ayurvedic texts describe *Ruk*, *Toda*, *Stambha*, and restricted gait in *Gridhrasi*, establishing a strong symptomatic resemblance between the two conditions.[15]Diagnosis of sciatica is generally based on clinical examination and radiological investigations. Straight Leg Raising (SLR) test is one of the most commonly used clinical methods to assess sciatic nerve irritation. Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI), Computed Tomography (CT), and nerve conduction studies are utilized to identify the site and extent of nerve compression. These investigations help determine the severity of pathology and guide therapeutic planning. However, despite advances in modern diagnostic modalities, management of chronic sciatica remains challenging because of recurrence, adverse effects of long-term medications, and limitations of surgical interventions.[16]Ayurveda approaches *Gridhrasi* through a holistic framework involving *Dosha*, *Dushya*, *Agni*, and *Srotas*. Unlike symptomatic management alone, Ayurvedic therapeutics aim at correcting the underlying imbalance responsible for disease manifestation. Therapies such as *Basti Chikitsa* are believed to act systemically by pacifying aggravated *Vata Dosha*, nourishing tissues, and restoring neuromuscular balance. Therefore, correlating *Gridhrasi* with sciatica provides an integrative perspective that may facilitate the development of comprehensive and patient-centered treatment strategies combining traditional wisdom with contemporary clinical understanding.[17]

Role of *Basti Chikitsa* in *Gridhrasi*

Basti Chikitsa is considered one of the most important therapeutic modalities among all procedures of *Panchakarma*. Ayurveda regards *Basti* as the prime treatment for disorders caused by aggravated *Vata Dosha*, which is the principal pathogenic factor in *Gridhrasi*. Classical Ayurvedic texts describe *Basti* as “Ardha Chikitsa” due to its broad-spectrum therapeutic utility and systemic mode of action. The therapy involves administration of medicated oils, decoctions, milk preparations, or herbal formulations through the rectal route to achieve both cleansing and nourishing effects. Because *Gridhrasi* predominantly manifests as a *Vata Vyadhi*, *Basti Chikitsa* is considered highly beneficial in alleviating pain, stiffness, restricted movement, and neuromuscular dysfunction.[18]According to Ayurvedic principles, *Vata Dosha* is the chief regulator of all physiological movements and neurological functions within the body. Any disturbance in *Vata* leads to pain, degeneration, dryness, and impairment of locomotor activity. *Basti* therapy directly targets the seat of *Vata*, namely the *Pakwashaya*, thereby restoring normal physiological

functioning and promoting systemic balance. Classical scholars have emphasized that no other therapy is as effective as *Basti* in controlling aggravated *Vata*. In the context of *Gridhrasi*, the therapy helps in reducing radiating pain, muscular stiffness, and gait abnormalities by pacifying the vitiated *Doshas* and nourishing affected tissues.[19] Different forms of *Basti* have been described for the management of *Gridhrasi* depending upon the clinical presentation and *Dosha* predominance. *Niruha Basti*, also known as *Asthapana Basti*, primarily possesses cleansing and *Dosha Shodhana* properties. It contains medicated decoctions along with herbal pastes, oils, honey, and salts that help in eliminating aggravated *Doshas* from the body. *Anuvasana Basti* is predominantly oil-based and provides *Snehana* and nourishment to body tissues, particularly in conditions associated with dryness and degeneration. Combined administration of *Niruha* and *Anuvasana Basti* is often recommended in chronic *Gridhrasi* for achieving both purification and rejuvenation effects.[20] Other specialized forms such as *Ksheera Basti* and *Yapana Basti* are also considered useful in chronic and degenerative presentations of *Gridhrasi*. *Ksheera Basti* contains medicated milk preparations that provide nourishment, lubrication, and strengthening effects on nerves and musculoskeletal tissues. *Yapana Basti* possesses both nutritive and restorative properties and is often advocated in debilitated individuals or chronic neurological conditions. The selection of *Basti* type depends upon factors such as chronicity of disease, patient strength, associated *Dosha*, and tissue involvement. This individualized therapeutic approach reflects the holistic nature of Ayurvedic management.[21] The therapeutic efficacy of *Basti* in *Gridhrasi* is also attributed to the pharmacological properties of the medicinal substances used in the formulations. Commonly utilized ingredients such as *Dashamoola*, *Eranda*, *Rasna*, *Guduchi*, and *Bala* possess anti-inflammatory, analgesic, *Vatahara*, and rejuvenating properties. These drugs help in reducing inflammation around affected nerves, improving circulation, relieving muscle spasm, and restoring functional mobility. From an integrative perspective, rectal administration may facilitate rapid systemic absorption of bioactive compounds, thereby contributing to neurological and musculoskeletal benefits.[22] In recent years, clinical studies evaluating the efficacy of *Basti Chikitsa* in *Gridhrasi* have demonstrated encouraging outcomes in terms of pain reduction, improvement in gait, increased flexibility, and enhancement of quality of life. Compared with prolonged use of analgesics and invasive surgical procedures, *Basti* offers a relatively safer and holistic therapeutic option with minimal adverse effects. Furthermore, *Basti* therapy not only addresses symptomatic relief but also aims at correcting the underlying *Dosha* imbalance responsible for disease manifestation. Therefore, *Basti Chikitsa* holds significant potential as an integrative therapeutic modality in the comprehensive management of *Gridhrasi*. [23]

Mechanism of Action of *Basti* in *Gridhrasi*

According to Ayurvedic principles, *Basti Chikitsa* acts primarily by pacifying aggravated *Vata Dosha*, which is considered the principal pathogenic factor in *Gridhrasi*. Since the *Pakwashaya* is regarded as the main seat of *Vata*, administration of medicated formulations through the rectal route directly influences the disturbed physiological functions of *Vata*. Classical Ayurvedic texts describe that *Basti* not only eliminates morbid *Doshas* but also nourishes tissues and restores systemic balance. The therapy is believed to regulate the movement of *Vata*, improve tissue nutrition, and facilitate normal neuromuscular activity. This multidimensional mode of action explains the wide therapeutic applicability of *Basti* in disorders involving pain, stiffness, and restricted movement.[24]

The therapeutic action of *Basti* also involves *Srotoshodhana* or purification of body channels. Obstruction within the channels caused by aggravated *Doshas* is considered an important factor in the pathogenesis of *Gridhrasi*. By clearing these obstructions, *Basti* helps restore normal circulation of nutrients, *Doshas*, and vital energy throughout the body. The combined action of medicated oils, decoctions, salts, and herbal

pastes used in *Basti* facilitates lubrication, detoxification, and rejuvenation of tissues. Consequently, symptoms such as pain, numbness, heaviness, and muscular stiffness gradually subside following properly administered therapy.[25]

Ayurveda explains that *Gridhrasi* involves pathological changes in *Snayu*, *Kandara*, *Mamsa*, and *Asthi-Majja Dhatu*. *Basti* therapy is believed to nourish these affected structures through its *Brimhana* and *Rasayana* effects. Medicated oils utilized in *Anuvasana Basti* provide unctuousness and strengthen neuromuscular tissues weakened due to aggravated *Vata*. Similarly, decoction-based *Niruha Basti* helps remove accumulated toxins and inflammatory factors responsible for pain and restricted mobility. Through these actions, *Basti* supports tissue repair, enhances flexibility, and improves locomotor function in patients suffering from *Gridhrasi*.[26]

From a modern biomedical perspective, the therapeutic efficacy of *Basti* may be associated with rectal absorption of active phytoconstituents present in medicated formulations. The rectal mucosa possesses rich vascular and lymphatic supply that facilitates rapid systemic absorption of drugs while partially bypassing hepatic first-pass metabolism. Herbal ingredients commonly used in *Basti* formulations exhibit anti-inflammatory, analgesic, antioxidant, and neuroprotective properties. These pharmacological actions may help reduce nerve root inflammation, muscular spasm, and oxidative stress associated with sciatica-like disorders. Such integrative interpretations provide scientific support for the clinical utility of *Basti Chikitsa*.[27]

Recent scientific understanding also highlights the possible involvement of the gut–brain axis in mediating the therapeutic effects of *Basti*. The enteric nervous system maintains close communication with the central nervous system through neural, endocrine, and immunological pathways. Administration of medicated substances through the rectal route may influence autonomic regulation, inflammatory mediators, and neurotransmitter activity, thereby modulating pain perception and neuromuscular coordination. This perspective supports the systemic and holistic action of *Basti* beyond local bowel effects and may explain its beneficial role in chronic neurological and musculoskeletal disorders.[28]

Pain modulation is another important mechanism through which *Basti* exerts therapeutic benefits in *Gridhrasi*. The anti-inflammatory and lubricating properties of medicated formulations help reduce nerve irritation and muscular tension. Improvement in circulation and tissue nourishment contributes to restoration of normal mobility and functional activity. Furthermore, *Basti* promotes relaxation of muscles and improves flexibility of the lumbosacral region, thereby facilitating better gait and posture. The cumulative effects of detoxification, tissue nourishment, neuromodulation, and *Vata Shamana* make *Basti Chikitsa* a comprehensive therapeutic approach for the management of *Gridhrasi*.[29]

Discussion

Gridhrasi is a debilitating neuromuscular disorder predominantly caused by aggravated *Vata Dosha* and clinically correlated with sciatica in modern medicine. The disease significantly affects locomotor functions, daily activities, occupational performance, and overall quality of life. Contemporary management of sciatica mainly focuses on symptomatic relief through analgesics, physiotherapy, and surgical interventions in severe cases. However, recurrence, adverse drug reactions, and incomplete functional recovery remain major challenges in conventional treatment approaches. In this context, Ayurveda provides a holistic and individualized management strategy emphasizing correction of the underlying pathological imbalance rather than symptomatic suppression alone.

Among various Ayurvedic interventions, *Basti Chikitsa* occupies a central position in the management of *Gridhrasi* due to its specific action on aggravated *Vata Dosha*. Classical Ayurvedic texts have consistently highlighted the therapeutic superiority of *Basti* in *Vata Vyadhi*, indicating its systemic and multidimensional effects. The therapy not only alleviates pain and stiffness but also improves neuromuscular coordination, flexibility, and functional mobility. The combined actions of *Shodhana*, *Snehana*, and tissue nourishment contribute to restoration of physiological balance and reduction of disease chronicity.

The probable mechanism of *Basti* can be interpreted from both Ayurvedic and modern biomedical perspectives. Ayurvedically, the therapy acts through *Vata Shamana*, *Srotoshodhana*, and nourishment of *Snayu*, *Kandara*, and *Asthi-Majja Dhatu*. From an integrative viewpoint, rectal administration facilitates systemic absorption of bioactive compounds possessing anti-inflammatory, analgesic, antioxidant, and neuroprotective properties. The possible influence of the gut–brain axis and autonomic nervous system further supports the systemic action of *Basti* in neurological and musculoskeletal disorders.

Clinical observations and available studies indicate that *Basti Chikitsa* may provide substantial improvement in pain intensity, gait, range of movement, stiffness, and quality of life among patients suffering from *Gridhrasi*. Different forms of *Basti*, including *Niruha Basti*, *Anuvasana Basti*, and *Ksheera Basti*, appear beneficial depending upon disease chronicity and *Dosha* predominance. Moreover, the therapy demonstrates a comparatively safer profile and may reduce dependency on long-term analgesic medications.

Despite encouraging outcomes, existing studies are often limited by small sample size, lack of standardization, short follow-up duration, and methodological variations. Therefore, there is a strong need for well-designed multicentric clinical trials employing standardized *Basti* protocols, validated assessment parameters, and interdisciplinary research methodologies. Such scientific exploration may help establish stronger evidence regarding the clinical efficacy of *Basti Chikitsa* and facilitate its wider integration into contemporary management of sciatica-related disorders.

Overall, the integrative understanding of *Basti* in *Gridhrasi* reflects the potential of Ayurvedic therapeutics in addressing chronic musculoskeletal and neurological conditions through a holistic, patient-centered, and evidence-oriented approach.

Conclusion

Gridhrasi is a significant *Vata Vyadhi* that closely resembles sciatica in terms of clinical manifestations, disease progression, and functional impairment. The condition adversely affects physical mobility, occupational efficiency, and quality of life, thereby necessitating an effective and holistic therapeutic approach. Ayurveda offers comprehensive management strategies for *Gridhrasi*, among which *Basti Chikitsa* is regarded as one of the most effective interventions because of its targeted action on aggravated *Vata Dosha*.

The present review highlights that *Basti* possesses multidimensional therapeutic potential in the management of *Gridhrasi* through mechanisms involving *Vata Shamana*, *Srotoshodhana*, tissue nourishment, and restoration of neuromuscular functions. Various forms of *Basti*, including *Niruha Basti*, *Anuvasana Basti*, and *Ksheera Basti*, contribute to pain reduction, improvement in stiffness, enhancement of gait, and better functional recovery. From an integrative perspective, the anti-inflammatory, analgesic,

and neuroprotective properties of medicated formulations further support the clinical utility of *Basti* in sciatica-like disorders.

Available clinical evidence suggests encouraging outcomes of *Basti Chikitsa* in reducing disease severity and improving quality of life with comparatively minimal adverse effects. In contrast to symptomatic management alone, Ayurvedic treatment aims at correcting the underlying pathological imbalance responsible for disease manifestation, thereby offering a more sustainable therapeutic approach.

Nevertheless, further scientific validation through large-scale, multicentric, and methodologically robust clinical trials is essential to strengthen the evidence base of *Basti* in *Gridhrasi*. Standardization of treatment protocols and interdisciplinary research may facilitate greater integration of Ayurvedic therapeutics into contemporary musculoskeletal healthcare. Overall, *Basti Chikitsa* appears to be a promising, holistic, and clinically relevant modality in the comprehensive management of *Gridhrasi*.

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