

SHODHANI VARTI IN SHLESHMALA YONIVYAPAT: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Yoni Vyapat is a compilation of various disorders of the genital tract ranging from vulva till the uterus. Local infectious conditions like vulvovaginitis have also been described. Among the various treatment modalities described for *Yoni Vyapat*, the emphasis given to *Sthanika Chikitsa* is noteworthy. The mode of approach through local route (with or without oral treatment) is with the aim to give instantaneous relief to the suffering woman. *Varti Prayoga* is one such intervention among which “*Shodhani*” *Varti* has been specifically mentioned in the context of *Sleshmala Yoni Vyapat*. *Varaha Pitta Varti*, *Arka Varti*, *Pippalyadi Yoni Varti* have been explained under the same. The symptoms which are seen in the stubborn vulvovaginitis conditions need effective treatment procedures. They have *Teekshna Ushna* properties and are also *Kaphahara* in nature. All of these drugs have potent antimicrobial actions and are used in the treatment of *Charma* and *Kushta Roga*. The use of a topical medicine like *Varti* will act directly on the vaginal mucosa and enable easier and target specific action. Therefore it helps to combat the local disease causing agent and simultaneously strengthen the vagina as well as prevent recurrence.

Keywords: *Shleshmala Yoni Vyapat*, *Shodhani Varti*, Intra vaginal drugs

INTRODUCTION

A healthy woman is a promise of a healthy family and a woman's health status is a complex arrangement controlled by a wide range of factors headed by her reproductive system. The significance of a healthy *Yoni* has been asserted in various phases of a woman's life from puberty to marriage to child birth and thereafter.¹ The word *Yoni* has been mentioned with reference to female reproductive system at various levels especially with reference to the vagina, uterus and sometimes the reproductive tract as a whole.² It has been observed that the reproductive tract infections among females visiting Gynaecological Out-Patient departments are as high as 82%. Some are identified and treated whereas most are overlooked.³ Infections pertaining to the *Yoni* are a distressing

problem for women irrespective of age or socio-economic status. It hampers their day to day chores and most importantly makes them go through the mental trauma of fear, guilt and depression disturbing their interpersonal relationship, most importantly marital life. Most women gradually go into isolation and the entire family is put to stress. An instant relief of symptoms is required for such women along with an overall improvement in the general condition of the *Yoni*.

Sleshmala Yoni Vyapat

Pittala Yoni Vyapat, *Sleshmala Yoni Vyapat*, *Sannipataja Yoni Vyapat*, *Paripluta*, *Acharana Yoni Vyapat* along with certain other conditions like *Pittaja Rajodushti*, *Pittaja Raktapradara*, *Yoni Kanda*, *Upadamsha* are some of the disease conditions explained in *Ayurveda*⁴

which are symptomatically close to the infectious conditions of the vagina. Among them, *Sleshmala Yoni Vyapat* is described as a condition where symptoms of *Picchila* (slimy) and *Sheetala Srava* (cold discharge) from the vagina is seen associated with *Kandu* (pruritis) and *Mandaruja* (dull pain) along with *Artava-Dushti* (menstrual disturbances) and *Pandu* (pallor). It is one of the twenty *Yonivyapat* (disorders of the reproductive tract), which is caused by vitiation of *Kapha Dosha*.^{5,6,7,8} *Sleshmala* generally refers to *Sleshmayukta*.⁹ The word *Shleshma* can be understood as something that which covers or embraces¹⁰ referring to the degree of coating that may be created. *Pichila* is defined by *Hemadri* as that which has the ability to coat.¹¹ *Kandu* is defined as a pathological condition that causes pain and distress to the person.¹² *Pandura* refers to a colour which is almost white or resembling yellowish white.¹³ There might be great individual variations in these clinical features as some may have pain and tenderness, or/and itching, one may exhibit watery discharges, while others may have thick curdy white discharge or all the symptoms might appear at once. These features can be correlated to infective leucorrhoea caused by various pathogens like *candida*, *trichomonas* and *gardenerella*, which constitute the majority of vaginal infections in female.³ Excessive or abnormal vaginal discharge associated with vulvar pruritis and pain in the vulva or lower abdomen is seen in these conditions. The pathogen can be differentiated by certain clinical criteria as well as microscopy.¹⁴

Vaginal flora

The vagina is a delicate system characterized by changes throughout life. The vaginal wall is lined by stratified squamous epithelium. This epithelium

does not contain any glands but the secretion is formed as a result of constant desquamation of superficial epithelial cells which liberates the contained glycogen. It is acted upon by the *doderlein's* bacilli to produce lactic acid which maintains the pH of the vagina. The acidity keeps varying with the estrogen response, glycogen formation and breakdown process by the *doderlein* bacilli as well as certain enzymatic reactions. Any undue change in this pH, physiological or pathological favours the growth of pathogens thereby causing infective leucorrhoea. The vagina is usually self sterilizing.¹⁵ In women, unhygienic practices, variation in the dietary activities or systemic variations, delivery or coitus may disturb this vaginal flora leading to vaginitis. The *Kaphakara Ahara* (food that increases *Kapha*) which is mainly *Abhishyandi* (oozing or watery), *Madhura-Amla -Lavana Rasa Pradhana*¹⁶ (sweet, sour and salty taste dominated) favours the starch or carbohydrate production which further elevates the acidity and favours the growth of *candida*, an organism that survives in acidic pH.¹⁷ The *candida* cells which are present in 20% of the vagina, undergoes pathological intensification causing symptomatic vulvovaginal candidiasis. This condition is characterized by intense pruritis and curdy white discharge. It has the tendency to reoccur and if left unattended may disturb the vaginal flora to a greater extent thereby causing other pathogens to thrive which may further pave way for ascending infections.¹⁸

Sthanika chikitsa

The vagina is a potential space that connects the lower portion of the uterus (cervix) to the outside environment. It has been explained under *Bahirkarmendriya* and is one of the *Bahya Srotas* in women.¹⁹ As with other mucosal drug delivery routes, drug transport across the

vaginal membrane may occur by a number of different mechanisms:

- a) Diffusion through the cell due to a concentration gradient (transcellular route),
- b) Vesicular or receptor-mediated transport mechanism, or
- c) Diffusion between cells through the tight junctions (intercellular route)

In some cases, drugs given by the intravaginal route have a higher bioavailability compared to the oral route as it bypasses the liver. The vaginal wall is very well suited for the absorption of drugs for systemic use, since it contains a vast network of blood vessels.^{20,21} Moreover the anatomically backward position of the vagina²² may help in self containing of the drug thereby holding it in situ for a longer duration. In *Ayurveda*, the concept of *Sthanika Chikitsa* (local treatment procedures) has been mentioned in the context of *Yoni Vyapat Chikitsa* under various instances thereby highlighting the significance of a local route of approach to the local vaginal pathology apart from the routine treatment options. In the types of *Sthanika Chikitsa*, commonly used are *Yoni Dhavana/Prakshalana* (vulval & perineal toileting), *Pichu* (tampon), *Varti* (wick), *Lepa* (paste), *Dhoopana* (fumigation), *Yoni Purana* (filling), *Uttara Vasti and Kshara Karma*.²³ Among them *Varti Kalpana* does not need any special precautionary measures or intense supervision during its administration and the patient can administer it herself without any aid, thus making it an acceptable treatment modality both for the physician as well as the patient. Unfortunately, it is not widely practised owing to lack of availability of these *Varti* in a ready to use form and also the fear of patient compliance as well as probable side effects. This validates the need to initiate further research work on

this medicine form in the field of *Stri Roga* (Gynaecology).

Shodhani Yoni Varti

Yoni Varti has been indicated as the first line of treatment in the context of *Sleshmala Yoni Vyapat*. The term *Samshodhini Varti* has been specifically used to refer to these wicks. The *Varti* that have been described are *Varaha Pitta Varti*, *Arka Varti* and *Pippalyadi Varti*.²⁴ *Yoni Varti Kalpana* has been explained under the category of *Phala Varti*. The method of preparation has been explained differently in each *Varti* depending on the binding materials used. Repeated *Bhavana* followed by rolling it into a wick form is the common description available. The *Varti* has to be prepared in *Tarjani Pramana* i.e. the circumference and length should be that of the index finger of the subject. It is later sun dried and inserted preferably with the help of *Ghrta/Taila* (ghee/oil). Drug preparation uses certain *Aushadhi* (drug) or a cloth to hold it in place. *Varti* can be of 2 types- those that dissolve and those that don't. Those that don't are bound tight and a part of it projects outside with the help of which it can be removed. Recent pharmacological advancements include vaginal pessaries and ovules.²⁵ *Varaha Pitta Varti*: A sterile cloth should be subjected to repeated *Bhavana* with *Varaha Pitta* (bile of *Sus salvanius*). This cloth has to be rolled into a wick. *Arka Varti*: *Arka Ksheera* (*Calotropis gigantea*), *Yava* (*Hordeum vulgare*) *Churna* and *Saindhava* (rock salt) have to be done *Bhavana* and made into *Varti* form. *Pippalyadi Varti*: *Pippali* (*Piper longum*), *Maricha* (*Piper nigrum*), *Kushta* (*Saussurea lappa*), *Shatahva* (*Anethum sowa*), *Masha* (*Vigna mungo*) and *Saindhava* (rock salt) should be given repeated *Bhavana* and made into *Varti*.²⁴

Tarjani Pramana

The definitive size of the *Varti* has not been specified, but it has been mentioned that the wick must of *Tarjani Pramana*. *Tarjani* is referred to as the index finger.²⁶ An observational study was carried out to assess the average size of the index finger at the SDM College of Ayurveda, Hassan. The study was conducted on 100 females of reproductive age with average BMI (Body Mass Index), by measuring the length and the circumference of the left index finger. The circumference was measured at the proximal inter-phalangeal joint with a thin thread and then the same was noted in the measuring scale. An average of the length and circumference was taken. It was seen that the Average length was 7.18cm and Average Circumference was 5.7cm. This indicates that the *Varti* is designed so as to make maximum contact with the area of the vagina both in terms of length and surface area. The vagina being elastic accommodates the *Varti* snugly allowing it to exert utmost action locally.

Dosage

It can be understood from the commentaries of *Charaka* and *Ashtanga Sangraha* that the drug has to be administered *Muhurdharya/Kshanam Dharya*. *Muhu Dharya* has been mentioned in the context of the *Arka Shodhani Varti*. The commentator says that the *Varti* should not be kept in the vagina for a longer time as the drug has *Teekshna* (sharp) properties which can cause undue complications. Removal and washing of the area with lukewarm water has been mentioned for similar reasons. Therefore *Varti* has to be kept in the vagina for maximum one hour. Likewise certain authors opine that the *Varti* can be used for 2-3 times in a day and each time it has to be washed with hot water.²⁷ Certain others have not specified regarding the re-

peated administration.²⁸ The dosage can be decided by the physician depending on the chronicity of the disease and the co-operation of the patient to the therapy.

DISCUSSION

Shodhani Varti has been mentioned as one of the prime treatment procedures of *Sleshmala Yoni Vyapat*. The drugs are *Katu Pradhana* which causes *Sroto Shodhana* (clearing of the channels) and also are *Kaphapaham* (reducing *Kapha*).²⁹ *Varaha Pitta* i.e. bile has *Kaphahara* (mitigates phlegm) action. It is chiefly used in *Charma Roga* and *Kushta* (skin disorders) thereby proving its effectiveness in local diseases.^{30,31} *Arka Ksheera* is known to have antimicrobial activity useful in cutaneous diseases.³² Extract and essential oils of *Pippali* (*Piper longum*) is said to have known antifungal and antibacterial activity.³³ *Maricha* (*Piper nigrum*) has antifungal, antimicrobial and lipolytic actions.³⁴ *Kushta* (*Saussurea lappa*) has pharmacological activities like antimycotic and anti-inflammatory.³⁵ *Shatahva* (*Antheum sowa*) has anti-inflammatory, anti hyperlipidemic actions.³⁶ *Masha* (*Vigna mungo*) has antifungal, antibacterial and hypolipidemic actions.³⁷ *Saindhava Lavana* has *Sukshma* properties which will help the easier absorption of the drug.^{38,39} The absence of any other binding agents required repeated *Bhavana* to attain the *Samyak Lakshana*. Therefore the *Sukshmata* is attained which provides quick absorption with more bio availability. The local application of dried *Varti* acts as a hygroscopic substance thereby providing quick relief in symptoms of vaginitis when compared to oral treatment.

Tarjani Pramana provides more area of effect taking into consideration the anatomy of the vagina. This also indicates that the action concentrates more on extent of the contact area of the drug. The *Krimi*

(pathogen) present needs to be removed, which is done by the *Prakrti Vighata Chikitsa* (creating unfavorable environment) of these *Teekshna* drugs.⁴⁰ *Candida* being a stubborn organism requires such effective intervention.⁴¹ Therefore in the vaginal route of medicine administration of *Ayurveda*, it is not just a topical application what is intended, but a method of medication that clears and restores the vaginal flora, thereby rightly giving it the name *Shodhani Varti*. It also helps to sustain the relief for a longer duration by improving the sterilizing ability of the vagina thereby providing a *Shodhana* (purificatory) effect.

CONCLUSION

Yoni Varti can be considered as a safe and convenient option in conditions of vaginitis especially in conditions dominated by *Kapha Dosha*. It can help in providing spontaneous relief to the patients which becomes the need of the hour. Though oral medications can help to accelerate the treatment, the intense pruritis and irritating discharge needs to be tackled effectively as it hampers the everyday life of the woman. *Yoni Varti* helps to clear the vagina and also provides the opportunity to re-create the optimum vaginal health.

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