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## **AYURVEDIC MANAGEMENT OF GRIDHRASI (SCIATICA)**

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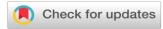
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#### **ABSTRACT**

In the contemporary era, human society is leading a mechanical life with a sedentary lifestyle, precariously busy schedule, constant work without rest, night shift, alarming anxiety and stress in the work field, drastic changes in the environment etc. All these cause prevalence of *Vatavyadhi*(disorders due to *Vata dosha*) in this modern era. Among the different *Vatavyadhi* (disorders due to *Vata*), the most affected one is *Gridhrasi* (sciatica) which is characterized by low backache radiating to one or both the lower limbs. In addition to the above-mentioned causes, constant work schedule in an improper sitting posture, travelling long distances by vehicles, lifting of heavy objects, trauma to the low back region are the precipitating factors of *Gridhrasi*. The causes, signs and symptoms explained by different *Acharyas* have more relevance to the present situation. The presentation of *Gridhrasi* varies from person to person due to changes in *Nidana*(causative factors), and *Samprapti* (pathogenesis). Close observation and thorough knowledge of our classics make the diagnosis and treatment of *Gridhrasi* easier. So, the present article tries to explain the *Lakshana* (symptoms) and treatment of *Gridhrasi* which will ensure a simpler and more effective treatment of the cases.

**Keywords**: VataVyadhi; Gridhrasi; Nidana; Samprapti; Lakshana; Treatment.

#### INTRODUCTION

Gridhrasi is a frequently encountered problem in the present era produced commonly due to the changed lifestyle. Sciatica is characterized by severe pain which starts in the back and radiates down to one or both lower limbs. It is prevalent all over the world. Gridhrasi (sciatica) is also a pain dominant lifestyle disorder, in which the pain starts from Sphik Pradesh (back region) and radiates towards the foot. Based on the symptoms, Sciatica can be correlated with Gridhrasi in Ayurveda. Gridhrasi is included in Vataja Nanatmaja Vyadhi and is considered as a Maharoga by Acharya Charaka. In all Ayurveda classics, the description of the diseases is available. But Sushruta, the father of surgery has described all the details about the disease changing lifestyle of modern human beings has created several disharmonies in his biological system as the advancement of busy, professional and social life, improper sitting posture in office, factories continuous and overexertion jerky movements during travelling and sports – all these factors create undue pressure to the spinal cord and play a chief role in producing lower backache and sciatica. Similar progressive disorders affecting the pelvis and nearer structure are also precipitating in this condition. In this way, this disease is now becoming a significant threat to the working population, improper sitting posture, jerky movement during travelling &sports may worsen the disease condition. Nowadays's a most common disorder which affects the movements of the leg particular in middle age is low backache out of which 40% are radiating pain which comes under Sciatica syndrome which affects daily routine work. 2 Sciatica is characterized by constant aching pain felt in the lumbar region that may radiate to the buttock, thigh, calf and foot. 3Sciatic pain radiates along the course of the sciatic nerve. It is common between 30-40 years of age and affects both the sexes (male and female) equally. The word Gridhrasi originated from the root Gridhra which means the bird vulture. Due to pain, the gait of the patient will be similar to that of the vulture. The cardinal signs and symptoms of *Gridhrasi* are *Ruk* (persistent pain), Toda (pricking pain), Stambha (stiffness), and Muhu Muhu Spandana (intermittent twitching) in the regions of Sphik (waist), Kati prishta (low back), Uru (thigh), Janu (knee), Jamgha (calf) and Pada (foot) in the order<sup>4</sup> and there will be a restriction in the lifting of the leg. There are two types of Gridhrasi -Vataja and Vatakaphaja. 5In Vatakaphaja Gridhrasi, along with these symptoms, additional symptoms like Tandra (drowsiness), Gourava (heaviness), Arochaka (anorexia) will be there. In Vataja Gridhrasi, there will be more Toda (pricking pain), Dehasya Ativakrata (increase in the normal curvature of the spine), Sphurana (throbbing pain) and Stabdhata (stiffness) of Janu (knee), Jangha (calf), Uru (thigh), Sandhi (joints) and Suptata (numbness). In the case of Vata Kaphaja type, Gourava (heaviness), Vahnimardava (loss of appetite), Tandra (drowsiness) Mukhapraseka (excessive salivation), Bhaktadwesha (aversion to food) will be more.6

#### **AIM AND OBJECTIVES:**

To understand the ancient knowledge of the disease *Gridhrasi* in respect of etiology, clinical feature, prognosis, and management in current practice.

# **MATERIAL AND METHODS:**

SOURCE OF DATA:

**LITERARY REVIEW:** Classical textbooks of Ayurveda Textbooks of contemporary science Textbooks of Yoga Published articles from periodicals, journals and other magazines Authenticated websites *INDIAN (ETIOLOGY)*.

**Dietetic factor**: Excessive use of *Ruksha*, *Guru*, *Sheeta* diet, fasting, constipated diet, improper & irregular diet habits.

**Behavioral factor**: Excessive physical exertion, improper sitting/ gesture, excessive walking/ running/ swimming/ exercise/ sexual intercourse, weightlifting, excessive travelling/ bike riding, suppression of natural urges *Exogenous* (*Agantuja*): *Abhighata* (*Trauma*) Other cause: *Ama, Dhatukshaya* 

**CLINICAL FEATURES**:  ${}^8Ruk$  — Dull aching pain and radiating type started from hip joint, later affect waist, back, thigh, knee, calf and feet.  $Toda^9$  — Pricking pain felt along with the distribution of the *Sciatic nerve*. *Sthambha*<sup>10</sup> — Stiffness or feeling of tightness

and rigidity in the legs, and so patient developed restricted movement of legs. *Spandana*<sup>11</sup> – Sensation of pulsation or throbbing *Sakti Kshepana Nigrahnat*<sup>12</sup> – Patient unable to do leg extension because extension increases the pain. *Deha pra vakrata*<sup>13</sup> – The patient of *Gridhrasi* walk by keeping his/ her legs in flex posture, thus the whole body is tilted on the affected side giving a special gait<sup>14</sup>, i.e., *limping gait*.

# As per Modern Medical Science Symptoms of Sciatica is:

1. Pain in the back increases by spinal movement<sup>15</sup> 2. Pain in the buttock and thigh<sup>16</sup>. 3. Pain radiating up to the legs and feet.<sup>17</sup>

**INVESTIGATIONS**<sup>18</sup>: X-Ray/CT scan/MRI *Lumbo-sacral area* Electromyogram (EMG)/ Doppler study Blood – CBC, Sugar, Serum Calcium. CSF analysis

**PROGNOSIS**: According to *Charaka*, *Gridhrasi* occurs in a strong person and is of recent origin is easily curable<sup>19</sup>. On other hand, if it is associated with muscle wasting & stiffness along with restricted movement is difficult to cure (*Kastasadhya*) or incurable (*Asadhya*)<sup>20</sup>. In most cases of *Sciatica* spontaneous recovery occurs, in mild cases, the pain usually remains for 2 to 3 weeks, and the patient recovers in a month but may feel pain for some time. However, in severe cases, patients use to suffer for months to years. *Surgery* gives a good result in 90% of cases, relapse may find in 10% cases<sup>21</sup>. *Gridhrasi* is a *Vata Vyadhi* and all the *Vata Vyadhis* become *Asadhya* (incurable) or *Duroopakrama* (complicated) if neglected after a certain period of time.<sup>22</sup>

MANAGEMENT: The Ayurvedic therapeutic approach in Gridhrasi, as it is a Vatavyadhi is avoidance of all *Vataprakopahetus* including Vataprakopak ahar and Vihar. Charak Samhita mentions recommendation of *Upakrama* like *Snehan*, Swedan and Vastikarma against Vataviyadhi<sup>23</sup>. It has also mentioned Dravyas having Amla, Lavan, Snigdha, Ushna properties to treat Vataviyadhi. In Sushrutasamhita, Snehabhyanga, Upanahswed, Mardan and Raktamokshana is mentioned in Vatavyadhichikitsa. Sushruta has mentioned Siravvedh specifically for Gridhrasi treatment<sup>24</sup>. Vagabhatta has also mentioned *Siravyedh* for treating *Gridhrasi*. Additionally, several oral medicinal preparations have also been mentioned in the treatment of *Gridhrasi* in *Ayurvedic texts* is described below<sup>25</sup>. Since *Gridhrasi* is *vatavyadhi* and *vatahara* treatment like *Abhyanga* is beneficial. and the *Yogasanas* may stretch, stimulate nerves, and tone up the back muscles in turn increase the blood supply. *Asanas* may also release pressure and compression on the *Sciatic nerve*<sup>26</sup>. Thus, yoga may help to relieve the pain and discomforts of *Sciatica*. *Yoga* and *Abhyanga* offer natural and effective remedies.

#### **Immobilization & traction Medicines:**

a) Kwath/ Kasaya/ Asava-Arista Preparations<sup>27</sup> -Maha Rasnadi Kasaya, Balarista, Aswagandharista, Dasamularista, b) Guggulu Preparation<sup>28</sup> – Traydasanga Guggulu, Mahayogaraj Guggulu, Rasnadi Guggulu, Kaishore Guggulu c) Rasa Oushadhi<sup>29</sup> – Ekangavir Rasa, Vatagajankusha Rasa, Mahavata Vidhamsa Rasa, Brihat Vata Chintamoni Rasa d) **Vati Preparation**<sup>30</sup> – SanjivaniVati, VisatindukVati, e) Sodhan Chikitsa - Snehana<sup>31</sup>: Both Bahya and Abhyanta Snehan are useful this disease. Following oils are very useful Abhangya – NirgundiTaila, Maha Narayan/Narayan Taila, Kottamchukadi Taila, Saindhabadi Taila, Bala Taila. Swedana<sup>32</sup>: Nadi Swedana with Dasamula & Eranda Kwath, Nirgundi Patra Pinda Sweda, KatiBasti with various Taila mentioned above Mridu Virechan for 3 - 7 days (once daily - bedtime): Eranda Taila with Triphala Kwath or Milk Panchasakar Churna **Basti Karma**<sup>33</sup>: Basti Chikitsa is considered as the best treatment for Vata Vyadhi. Following Basti are effective in Gridhrasi – Matra Vasti Siddha Basti Anuvasan Basti

### Other treatment procedures:

According to Charaka – Sirabhedan between Gulfa and Kandara Madhya Agni Karma between Gulfa and Kandara Madhya<sup>34</sup>. According to Sushruta – Sirabhedan in Janu Sandhi after JanuSankocha<sup>35</sup>. According to Vagabhatta – Sirabhedan 4 anguli above and below Janu Sandhi AgniKarma following Yogasana/ exercise is useful – Bhujangasana, Dhanurasana, Leg raising exercise.<sup>36</sup>

#### Non-conservative management<sup>37</sup>

About 70% of cases respond satisfactorily to conservative treatment, if not respond and the pain continued and neurological problems persist, surgical intervention is required.

#### **DISCUSSION**

Gridhrasi is VataNanatmaja Vyadhi. Vata is playing the main role in Gridhrasi. Pakwashaya is the Udbhavasthana of the disease. Among the five types of Vata, Apana and Vyana Vayu are essential factors of Gridhrasi. Apana resides in the lower part of the body especially Kati, Basti etc. Because of various Hetu Apana vayu is vitiated. In Gridhrasi, Sakthiutkshepanigrahat is the main sign i.e., lifting of the lower limb is affected. This clearly explains the involvement of Vyana Vayu in the Samprapti as these movements are governed by Vyana Vayu. Also, sometimes Kapha is the Anubandhi Dosha producing Vata-Kaphaj Gridhrasi. The Samprapti of Gridhrasi takes place either by Dhatukshaya or Margavarana or due to Agantuja causes like Abhighata. In Dhatukshayaja Samprapti, due to improper nourishment of Rasadi Dhatu, these Dhatu land into Kshaya avastha. Dhatukshaya further vitiates Vata causing Gridhasi. When Vayu is obstructed by Kapha, Ama etc. it gets vitiated leading to Margavaranajanya Samprapti of Gridhrasi. Agantuja factors are mentioned as a cause of Gridhrasi by both the systems of medicine. All these vitiated Dosha affect the Kandara of the leg. Movements of the leg are the function of Kandara when this Kandara is affected, there is a pain in the leg radiating from Nitamba (gluteal region), Kati (lumber), Prushtha (posterior of thigh), Uru (knee), Jangha (calf) and Pada (foot) etc. The pain is accompanied by Toda, MuhuSphandanam, Stambha. Due to pain, the upward lifting of the leg is painful. Acharya Sushruta mentioned the involvement of Kandara in Gridhrasi. 38 According to Sushruta, Vayu in its normal state, while coursing through its specific Sira helps the unobstructed performance of its specific functions viz. Prasarana and Akunchana and produces clearness and nonillusiveness of Buddhi and the sense organs. When

vitiated Vayu enters the Sira, it causes a variety of diseases<sup>39</sup>. Sushruta has quoted a special variety of Sira called Vatavaha Sira, which are the channels of movement of Vata, in the senses. Charaka mentions Siravedha between the Kandara & Gulfa, Basti (Anuvasana & Niruha) and Agnikarma as the line of treatment for Gridhrasi. Ayurveda takes a unique approach to the management of the above-mentioned neuropathies with a special emphasis on eliminating their cause by Panchkarma, physiotherapy and medicinal treatment with help of a wide range of herbal and herbal- mineral drugs. Panchkarma therapy is especially advocated in the treatment of neurological diseases. Different types of Snehana, Swedana are efficacious. Besides special treatments like Shirobasti, Shirodhara and Basti therapy are indicated in such diseases. Basti is the best therapy for mitigating Vata. Ayurvedic philosophy teaches us that the individual with a purely Sattvik nature does not experience disease. Likewise, one who is sick cultivates a Sattvik mind brings rapid healing to their body. Hence all patients should be encouraged to reduce stress and cultivate practices such as meditation which bring peace of mind. Modern science has so many treatments like Conservative treatment Epidural steroid Injection, Peri-radicular infiltration, Surgical treatment which are used in Sciatica, but the complication is more in modern science. So, the Ayurvedic approach of treatment is much better as compared with allopathic treatment. Nidana Parivarjana, Sodhana Chikitsa & Shamana Chikitsa are the main routes of treatment for any disease. Sodhana may be recommended for Bahu-dosha, but Shamana is also essential for removing the remained Dosha after the Shodhana process.

#### CONCLUSION

The disease *Gridhrasi* is a *Vataja Nanatmaja Vyadhi* described by almost all the ancient Ayurvedic Scholars as nothing but *Sciatica Syndrome* in *Modern Medical science*. This disease results from irritation of the *greater Sciatic nerve* commonly due to prolapsed intravertebral disc, other changes may be osteophytes, secondary fibrosis, tumour, or injury. Im-

proper sitting posture, jerking movement during travelling and sports may worsen the disease condition; hence, it becomes a significant threat to the working population. In contemporary science, both conservative treatment and surgical treatment are followed. The conservatives like analgesics, NSAID`S are a present line of treatments which provides only temporary relief, and its persistent use requires caution due to habit-forming and harmful side effects and surgical treatments that are available help to calm down the Sciatica discomfort and pain are not providing cure of the disease satisfactorily. If it is not treated in time, it may lead to serious complications like alteration in bowel and bladder function, loss of sensation in lower limbs etc. So, in this condition easy and effective treatment is required. As Gridhrasi is a Vatavyadhi and so Vatahara Medicine & Panchakarma (Abhyanga, Nadi Sweda, and Kati Basti) is beneficial. Yoga Asanas helps in relieving pressure and compression on the sciatic nerve. Thus, this disease can be successful manage by Ayurvedic medicines along with Panchakarma therapy and Yoga.

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