



ISSN 2456-3110

Vol 6 · Issue 6

Nov-Dec 2021

Journal of
**Ayurveda and Integrated
Medical Sciences**

www.jaims.in

JAIMS

An International Journal for Researches in Ayurveda and Allied Sciences



Maharshi Charaka
Ayurveda

Indexed

Conceptual Review on *Gridhrasi* (Sciatica)

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ABSTRACT

Now a day's most common disorder which effects the movements of leg particular in middle age is low backache pain which effects daily routine work. *Gridhrasi* is one among *Vataja Nanatmaja Vyadhi*. It is pain dominant lifestyle disorder in which the pain starts from *Sphik Pradesh* & radiates down to foot, here piercing type of pain which restricts the movement of the affected leg, make his walking pattern-like bird vulture and put him in disgraceful condition. On the basis of the symptoms sciatica can be correlated with *Gridhrasi* in *Ayurveda*. About 80–90% of people get affected by low back pain and 5% of those become victims of sciatica. It is common between 30-40 yrs. of age & affects both the sex. It is a pain dominant disease and reduces human activity in terms of personal as well as social and professional life. *Ayurveda* categorized *Gridhrasi* as one of diseases caused by vitiation of *Vata* which is responsible for the movement and functions of the body, even *Kapha* vitiation along with *Vata* also causes *Vata-Kaphaja Gridhrasi*. As far as treatment of the disease sciatica is concerned, use of analgesics and physiotherapy will help to certain extent but are not the ultimate cure. Surgery is moreover expensive, and again there are chances of recurrence as well. *Ayurveda* gives better options in the management of this painful disorder.

Key words: *Gridhrasi, Sciatica, Snehana, Swedana, Basti.*

INTRODUCTION

At present, the lifestyle is gradually shifting away from healthy living, and therefore people fall victim of various diseases. Sedentary lifestyle, stress, improper posture, continuous jerky movements, long traveling, etc, put maximum pressure on the spine and lower portion of the pelvis. Low back pain (LBP) is the most frequently reported musculoskeletal problem in

elderly adults.

Sciatica is characterized by Pain radiating from the back into the buttock & into the lower extremities along its posterior or lateral aspect & most commonly caused by prolapsed Inter Vertebral Disc, the term is also used to refer, pain anywhere along the course of Sciatic Nerve. Sciatica is one such disease which is gaining Prevalence in the present scenario. The Prevalence of Sciatica symptoms reported in literature varies considerably ranging from 1.6% in general population to 43% in selected working population. Lifetime Incidence of low back pain is 50-70% with Lifetime Incidence of Sciatica more than 40%. However clinically significant Sciatica occurs in 4-6% of population.^[1]

In modern medicine Sciatica pain is generally managed by using Anti-inflammatory drugs, Muscle-Relaxants & Traction but the Anti-inflammatory drugs are having many side effects like Upper Gastro-Intestinal Ulcerations, Perforation, Bleeding, Liver / Kidney Problems, Allergic Reactions such as Rashes etc. If does

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Submission Date: 09/11/2021 Accepted Date: 13/12/2021

Access this article online

Quick Response Code



Website: www.jaims.in

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Ayurveda Organization, Vijayapur,
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not get relief, Surgery is advised. Surgery is very much Costly & it is having its own Post-Operative Complications. Hence our Ayurveda offers better options in the management of this painful disorder.

Gridhrasi means the pain experienced by the patient is identical to the pain felt when the vulture pierces its beak deep into the prey to feed.^[2]

Gridhrasi is a *Vata Vyadhi* characterized by *Stambha* (stiffness), *Toda* (pricking pain), *Ruk* (pain) and *Spandana* (frequent tingling). These above mentioned *Lakshana's* initially affect *Sphik* (buttock) as well as posterior aspect of *Kati* (waist) and then gradually radiates to posterior aspects of *Uru* (thigh), *Janu* (knee), *Jangha* (calf) and *Pada* (foot).^[3]

Nidana (etiology) of Gridhrasi

In case of *Gridhrasi* specific *Nidana* has not been mentioned. So causative factors mentioned in producing *Vata Vyadhi's* are considered as *Nidana* of *Gridhrasi* also. Since *Gridhrasi* is considered as *Nanatmaja* type of *Vata Vyadhi*, the provocative factors of *Vata* can also be taken as the causes of *Gridhrasi*.

All the etiological factors of *Vata Vyadhi* as well as *Vata Prakopa* are taken as *Nidana* of *Gridhrasi*^[4] & same is elaborated in following subtitles

- A) *Aharaja Nidana*
- B) *Viharaja Nidana*
- C) *Manasika Nidana*
- D) *Anya Hetuja*

Aharaja Nidana

Ruksha, *Sheeta*, *Laghu Anna*, *Alpa Anna*, *Katu*, *Tikta*, *Kashaya Rasa*, *Langhana*, *Abhojana*.

Viharaja Nidana

Ativyayama, *Ativyavaya*, *Atiprajagara*, *Vishama Upachara*, *Plavana*, *Atiadhava*, *Diwaswapna*, *Vegadharana* etc.

Manasika Nidana

Chinta, *Shoka*, *Krodha & Bhaya*

AnyaNidana

Ati Asruk, *Sravana*, *Dhatukshaya*, *Varshartu*, *Marmabhighata*, *Margavarana*, *Rogatikarshana* etc.

Purvarupa

In classics the description regarding the *Purvarupa* of *Gridhrasi* is not available. *Acharya's* has mentioned that *Avyakta Lakshana* are the *Poorvarooopa* of *Vata Vyadhi*.^[5] *Chakrapanidatta* commenting on the word *Avyakta* mentions that few mild symptoms are to be taken as the *Poorvarooopa*.^[6] So, symptoms of *Gridhrasi* like *Ruk*, *Toda*, *Stambha* & *Spandhana* are seen in mild form.

Rupa

Ruk, *Toda*, *Stambha* and *Muhuspandana* are the cardinal symptoms. To be more precise about the track of pain, the pain starts at *Sphik Pradesha* and then radiates to *Kati*, *Pristha*, *Uru*, *Janu*, *Jangha* and *Pada* in order.^[7] In *Vata-Kaphaja Gridhrasi* there is *Tandra*, *Gaurava*, *Arochaka*.

'*Sakthikshepanigraha*' is also one of the predominant sign seen in *Gridhrasi* told by our *Acharya*.^[8,9]

Samprapti of Gridhrasi

Role of Vata in Gridhrasi

Gridhrasi is one of 80 *Nanatmaja Vata Vyadhi* i.e., it is caused only because of vitiated *Vata*. Hence, *Vataprakopaka Lakshanas* like *Shoola*, *Supti*, *Stambha* etc. are found as the cardinal symptoms in the disease. Depending on the *Karma & Sthana* we can assume that *Apana* and *Vyana Vayu Dusti* can be assessed in *Gridhrasi*. *Gati*, *Prasarana* (extension) *Akunchana* (flexion), *Utkshepana* (lifting) etc. are the functions of *Prakrut Vyana Vata*.^[10] The hampered *Sakthikshepa Karma* indicates *Vyana Vayu Dusti*. In *Gridhrasi*, the *Sthanasamshraya* takes place in *Sphika*, *Kati*, *Pristha* affecting the *Kandara* of leg which are the *Ashraya Sthana* of *Apna Vayu*.^[11]

There are two main reasons by which *Vata* get vitiated. They are *Dhatukshaya* and *Margavarodha*.^[12] Because of the *Samprapti Visheshha*, the same *Nidanans* produce different *Vata Vyadhis*. This is because the presentation of the disease changes according to the

Sthana where *Dosha-Dushya Sammurchhana* takes place. *Khavaigunya* plays an important role in the disease process. In *Gridhrasi*, because of improper posture, travelling in jerky vehicles, carrying heavy loads, etc. or sometimes spinal cord injury are responsible for producing *Sthanaigunya* at *Kati*, *Sphika*, *Prishta* etc. They may not be able to produce the disease at the instance, but after acquiring some *Vyanjaka Hetu* (exciting cause), the disease may be produced.

Sadhyasadhya of Gridhrasi

It is explained that if *Vata Vyadhi* more than one year or chronic is difficult to cure or considered as incurable for treatment (*Asadhya*).^[13]

Acharya consider *Vata Vyadhi* as *Mahagada*^[14] due to its tendency to be fatal or incurable. He also says that if the patient of *Vatavyadhi* develops the complications like *Shunam* (edema/inflammation), *Suptatvacha* (tactile senselessness), *Bhagna* (Fracture), *Kampa* (tremors), *Adhmana* (distention of abdomen with tenderness) and pain in internal organs, then it's *Asadhya*.^[15]

Chikitsa of Gridhrasi

Samanya Chikitsa

Gridhrasi being one among the *Vata Nanatamaja Vyadhi* all the *Vataprakopaka Hetus* should be avoided, the general line of treatment of *Vata Vyadhi* can applied to it. *Dravya* having *Madhura*, *Amla*, *Lavana*, *Snigdha*, *Ushna Guna Dravya* & *Snehana*, *Swedana*, *Asthapana* & *Anuvasana Basti*, *Nasya*, *Abhyanga*, *Utsadhana*, *Parisheka* can be given.^[16]

Table 1: Vishesha Chikitsa of Gridhrasi

Type of treatment	C.S ¹⁷	S.S ¹⁸	A.H ¹⁹
<i>Snehana</i>	-	-	-
<i>Swedana</i>	-	-	-
<i>Vamana</i>	-	-	-
<i>Virecana</i>	-	-	-
<i>Basti</i>	+	-	+

<i>Siravedha</i>	+	+	+
<i>Agnikarma</i>	+	-	+
<i>Sastrakarma</i>	-	-	-

Pathya Apathya^[20]

Table 2: Pathya

Pathya	Yogaratnakar
<i>Rasa</i>	<i>Lavana</i>
<i>Shuka Dhanya</i>	<i>Godhuma, Raktha Shali</i>
<i>Simbi Dhanya</i>	<i>Masha, Kulattha</i>
<i>Mamsa Varga</i>	<i>Kukkuta, Chataka, Jangala Mamsa</i>
<i>Shaka Varga</i>	<i>Patola, Kushamanda, Shigru, Mulaka</i>
<i>Phala Varga</i>	<i>Dadima, Badara, Draksha</i>
<i>Any Dravya</i>	<i>Lashuna, Punarnava, Jeeraka</i>
<i>Karma</i>	<i>Abhyanga</i>

Table 3: Apathya

Apathya	Yogaratnakar
<i>Rasa</i>	<i>Kashaya, Tikta, Katu</i>
<i>Simbi Dhanya</i>	<i>Mudga, Kalaya, Chanaka</i>
<i>Shaka Varga</i>	<i>Bimba, Kareera</i>
<i>Vihara</i>	<i>Chinta, Prajagara, Vegadharana, Shrama</i>
<i>Karma</i>	<i>Chardi, Langhana</i>

DISCUSSION

About 80-90% of people get affected by low back pain and 5% of those become victims of sciatica. It is common between 30-40yrs of age & affects both the sex. Because at present, the lifestyle is gradually shifting away from healthy living, and therefore people fall victim of various diseases. Sedentary lifestyle, stress, improper posture, continuous jerky

movements, long traveling, etc., put maximum pressure on the spine and lower portion of the pelvis which are the main causative factor for sciatica. In modern medicine Sciatica pain is generally managed by using Anti-inflammatory drugs, Muscle-Relaxants & Traction but the Anti-inflammatory drugs are having many side effects like Upper Gastro-Intestinal Ulcerations, Perforation, Bleeding, Liver / Kidney Problems, Allergic Reactions such as Rashes etc. If does not get relief, Surgery is advised. Surgery is very much Costly & it is having its own Post Operative Complications.

The *Samprapti* of *Gridhrasi* takes place either by *Dhatukshaya* or *Margavarana*. In *Dhatukshaya* *Samprapti*, due to *Nidana Sevana* there is *Prakopa* of *Vata Dosha* leading to improper nourishment of *Rasadi Dhatu*, & there is *Uttarotara Dhatu Kshaya Avastha* causing *Sroto Rikatata* & there is *Vata Prokopa* causing *Gridhrasi*. When *Vayu* is obstructed by *Kapha*, *Ama* due to *Mandagni* leading to *Amarasa Utpatti* & there is no proper nourishment of other *dhatu*s leading to *Margavarana* *Samprapti* of *Gridhrasi*.

In *Gridhrasi Saktikshepanigraha* is the main sign i.e., lifting of the lower limb is affected. In today's era it can be compared to Straight Leg Rising test which is one of the diagnostic tool in *Gridhrasi*.

Ayurveda takes unique approach to the management of above symptoms with *Panchakarma* like *Snehana*, *Swedhana*, *Basti*.

Snehana (oleation) - *Taila* is supposed to be the best for *Vata* as *Vata* is *Ruksha*, *Sheeta*, *Laghu*, *Khara* and *Taila* has just opposite qualities like *Snigdha*, *Usna*, *Guru*, *Pichila*. Thus, *Taila* alleviates *Vata* and at the same time does not increase *Kapha* as it is *Ushna*. By *Snehana Karma* it brings *Mruduta* in the *Shareera*, *Agni Dipana* & removes *Mala Sanghata*.^[21]

Swedana (Sudation) - Even dry wood can be made soft and flexible with *Snehana* and *Swedana*. *Swedana* also helps in the liquefaction of the *Dosha* there by clearing the *Srotas*, removes *Margavarana*, removes stiffness, heaviness & coldness from the body.^[22]

Bastikarma and concept of selection of the *Basti Karma*. *Basti* is the important *Karma* in the treatment of *Vata Vyadhi's*. It is indicated in almost all *Vata Vyadhi's*. Further it is described that *Basti Chikitsa* as '*Ardha Chikitsa*' or '*Purna Chikitsa*' of *Vata*. No other *Chikitsa* has the capacity to pacify and regulate the force of *Vata* apart from *Basti*. Any type of *Basti* can be adopted but, initially one should purify the body by *Shodhana Karma* to get the desired effect. It does *Vaya Sthapana*, brings *Dhrudata in Dhatus*, increases *Ayu*, *Agni* & *Medha*, brings *Swara* & *Varna Prasadhana*, increases *Shukra* & *Bala*, removes vitiated *Dosha* from the body.^[23] The *Basti Dravya* when enters the *Pakvashaya* by its *Virya* removes the vitiated *Doshas* present in the entire body from foot to the head just as the sun situated in the sky dries of the moisture from the earth.^[24]

CONCLUSION

Sciatica is a major clinical problem involving the locomotor system. This condition causes great discomfort to the patient & affects his daily routine as it is directly related to the locomotor system. Prevalence of Sciatica is on the rise and it demands different approach while treating. Pain, disability, dissatisfaction with existing treatment modalities. It would be great achievement if we are able to treat such an agonizing condition with principles laid by our ancient *Acharyas*. A detailed explanation about *Gridhrasi* is found in *Ayurvedic* classical texts, viz. *Nidana* (causative factors), *Samprapti* (pathogenesis), *Lakshana* (clinical features) and *Chikitsa* (conservative management, *Agnikarma*, *Siraveda* and *Panchakrama*). *Ayurveda* management seems to promising and a ray of hope in patients of *Gridhrasi* (Sciatica). Quality research in the field may provide global acceptance of *Ayurveda* management in Sciatica.

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How to cite this article: Priyanka K, Savita Sajjan. Conceptual Review on Gridhrasi (Sciatica). J Ayurveda Integr Med Sci 2021;6:175-180.

Source of Support: Nil, **Conflict of Interest:** None declared.
