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Management of *gridhrasi* (sciatica) with *agnikarma* and *raktamokshana*: A review

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Abstract:

Pain is known as *ruja* which is synonyms of disease. It is the cardinal symptom in most of the *Vatvyadhi*'s. *Gridhrasi* is such a *ruja pradhan* vatvyadhi. In *gridhrasi* intense shooting pain characteristically radiates from *sphika* (gluteal region) to *pada* (foot)¹. It disturbs daily routine & overall life of the patients because of continuous & stretching pain. It is one amongst the 80 types of *nanatmaja* disorders². As in this disease the patient walks like the bird *gridhra* and his legs become tense & slightly curved, so due to the resemblance with the gait of a vulture, *gridhrasi* term might has been given to this disease. On the basis of symptoms of *gridhrasi* , it can be equated with the disease sciatica in modern science. In reference to sciatica treatment , medical science has only symptomatic management with analgesics like non - steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs. In some cases if nerve compression is more,

surgical procedures like laminectomy, discectomy is indicated but these surgical procedures are expensive with their limitations. In *Ayurveda*, various methods used in the treatment of *gridhrasi* are *Bheshaja*, *Snehana*, *Swedana*, *Raktamokshana*, *Agnikarma* & *Basti*, out of which *Raktamokshana* and *Agnikarma* work effectively and gives immediate relief in the pain of sciatica.

Keywords: *gridhrasi*, *Bheshaja*, *Snehana*, *Swedana*, *Raktamokshana*, *Agnikarma* & *Basti*, *Raktamokshan*, *Agnikarma*

Introduction: Pain can be described as any physical suffering or discomfort caused by illness or injury. No matter whether the pain is anywhere in the body, it lands you in a state of discomfort and affects your day to day activities. It is probably the commonest problem in human beings so the treatment for relief of pain has been major focus. Pain is known as *ruja* which is synonyms of disease. It is

cardinal symptom in most of the *Vatvyadhi's*. *Gridhrasi* is such a *ruja pradhan* *vatvyadhi*. In *gridhrasi* intense shooting pain characteristically radiates from *sphika* (gluteal region) to *pada* (foot)¹. It disturbs daily routine & overall life of the patients because of continuous & stretching pain. It is one amongst the 80 types of *nanatmaja* disorders². As in this disease the patient walks like the bird *gridhra* and his legs becomes tense & slightly curved, so due to the resemblance with the gait of a vulture, *gridhrasi* term might has been given to this disease. On the basis of symptoms of *gridhrasi*, it can be equated with the disease sciatica in modern science. In reference to sciatica treatment, medical science has only symptomatic management with analgesics like non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs. In some cases if nerve compression is more, surgical procedures like laminectomy, disectomy are indicated but these surgical procedures are expensive with their limitations. In *Ayurveda*, various methods used in treatment of *gridhrasi* are *Bheshaja*, *Snehana*, *Swedana*, *Raktamokshana*, *Agnikarma* & *Basti*, out of which *Raktamokshana* and *Agnikarma* works effectively and gives immediate relief in pain of sciatica.³

Aim: To evaluate management of *Gridhrasi* / Sciatica with *Agnikarma* and *Raktamokshana*.

Objectives: To avoid the consequences of pain using *ayurvedic* treatment modalities like *Agnikarma* and *Raktamokshana*.

Method: 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 and frequent travelling, etc. put maximum pressure on the spine and lower portion of the pelvis. About 80 - 90% of people get affected by low back pain and most of those become victims of sciatica.

Nidana: Sciatica is a crippling disease causes pain in the hip and to the whole path of sciatica nerve; it referred down back of the leg and sometimes to the foot. *Abhighat* (Trauma on lumbosacral spine), *Vishamacheshta* (postural defects), *Bharavahana* (overloading), *Aticheshta* (abrupt unbalanced movements), continuous jerky movements, sedentary lifestyle as well as psychological factors (*chinta*, *shoka*, etc.) are considered as causative factors of the disease.

Rupa: The disease is listed under the heading where disease develops due to vitiation of *vata* only i.e. *nanatmaja vyadhi*. Still while enumerating the diseases, the disease *gridhrasi* has been mentioned of two types viz. *vata* dominant and *vatkaphaj* dominant. The common symptom of *gridhrasi* are pain starts from *sphika* and then radiates to *kati*, *prishtha*, *uru*, *janu*, *jangha* and *pada* along with *stambha* (stiffness), *toda* (pricking pain), *spandana* (twitching)⁴, and causes the *sakthiutkshepa nigraha* (restricted movements of lifting the leg). Whereas in *vatkaphaja* type of *gridhrasi arochaka* (anorexia), *tandra*(nap) and *gaurava*(heaviness) are found additionally.

Samprapti : Specific *samprapti* of *gridhrasi* is not described in the classics but being a *vata vyadhi* its *samprapti* is on the similar way of *vatvyadhi*. *Gridhrasi* is *shoolapradhan vatavyadhi*

and *shoola* cannot be produced without involvement of *vata dosha*. *Vyana* and *Apana* are especially vitiated. *Gati*(*prasarana, akunchana, utkshepana* etc.) are the functions of *prakrit vyana vata*. The hamperd *Sakthiutkshepa karma* indicates *vyana dusti*. Causes and *adhishthana of gridhrasi* resemble to *adhishthana* and cause of *apana dusti*; hence *apana* vitiation is prominent. Though *vata* is prominent *dosha*, sometimes *kapha* is *anubandh dosha*, but independently cannot produce *gridhrasi*. According to *Sushruta* in this disease, the vitiated *dosha* affects the *kandara* (ligaments) and thus, the manifestation. *Charaka* explains that *kandaras* (ligaments) are the *updhatu* of *raktadhatu*. *Chakrapani* mentions that *kandara* (ligaments) may also be taken as *sthula snayu*, *snayu* is *mulsthana* of *mamsa* as well as *updhatu* of *meda*. So *rakta, mamsa, and meda* taken as *dushya* in the disease *gridhrasi*. As *gridhrasi nadi* (nerve) is involved in this disease, so *majja dhatu* may naturally also be involved. On the basis of *ashraya ashrayi bhava*, with the vitiation of *vata* and above mentioned *duhyas*, their *srotas* are also known to be involved. Hence *rasawaha, raktawaha, mamsawaha, medowaha, asthiwaha* and *majjawaha srotas* may be involved in this disease. The main *udbhav sthana* of this disease is *pakwashaya* because it is *nanatmaja vatavyadhi*. *Amashaya* may also be considered as an *udbhavsthana* in the case of *vata kaphaj* type of *gridhrasi*.

Chikitsa siddhant:

In *Ayurveda* various methods used in the treatment of *gridhrasi* are ; *Bheshaja, Snehana, Swedana, Basti, Agnikarma, Raktamokshana* and *Basti*.

In today's era quick prime importance to resume normal activities. Hence *Agnikarma* and *Raktamokshana* are considered as instant healers of pain. *Agnikarma* and *Siravedha* have been proved to be effective in *ruja pradhan vatavyadhi's*. *Sushruta* has mentioned *agnikarma* and *siravedha* as para - surgical procedures in *gridhrasi* as superior to other treatment modalities.⁵

Agnikarma and *raktamokshana* advocated in the *Ayurvedic Classics* :

Treatment	C h.	S u.	A. H.	B. P.	Y. R.	H. S.	B. S.	C. D.
<i>Agnikarma</i>	+	-	+	-	+	+	-	+
<i>Raktamokshana</i>	-	-	-	-	-	+	+	-

(Ch. - *Charaka*; Su. - *Sushruta*; AH - *Ashtanga Hridaya*; BP - *Bhavaprakasha*; YR - *Yogratnakara*; HS - *Harita Samhita*; BS - *Bhela Samhita*; CD - *Chakradatta*)

Agnikarma: *Agnikarma* is very effective in treating the chief complaint of pain in patient suffering from sciatica. According to *Sushruta* and *Vagbhata*, in the management of *sira, snayu, asthi, and sandhigata vyadhi*, *Agnikarma* is indicated and *gridhrasi* is one of the disease of these *samprapti*.

Sites For Agnikarma:

For the treatment of *gridhrasi*, different site for *Agnikarma* are as mentioned below,

- *Charaka* : *Antara Kandara Gulpha*⁶
- *Harita* : Four *angula* above the *gulpha* in *tiryak gati*

- *Chakradatta* : Pada kanishthika Anguli (little toe of the affected leg)

Mode Of Action Of Agnikarma:

According to *Ayurveda*, basic dosha responsible for causation of *ruka* is *Vata* & pain is cardinal symptom of *gridhrasi*. *Vata dosha* is predominantly having *sheeta guna* which is exactly opposite to *ushna guna* of *agni*. So *agni* is capable of producing relief in pain by virtue of its *ushna guna*. *Stambha* is chiefly due to *sheeta* and *ruksha guna* of *vata dosha*.⁷ *Agnikarma* having *ushna guna* acts as antagonist to *vata* properties indirectly providing relief in *stambha*. The exact cause of muscle stiffness is still unknown, but occurs most commonly due to altered neuromuscular control. In *agnikarma* the temperature at the applied site is increased which reduces nerve reflexes resulting in relaxation of muscle.

Raktamokshana:

Raktamokshana is one of the fascinating subjects and satisfactory answers for *gridhrasi roga*. *Acharya Sushruta* mentioned that the disease in which *snehana*, *swedana*, *lepadi kriya* are ineffective, *raktamokshana* give quick relief. *Raktamokshana* is the only *shodhana* procedure where the vitiated *dosha's* are taken out from the *shakha's* by creating an artificial route. *Rakta* takes important role in spreading the disease from one part to the other part of the body by carrying the toxins or *vikrita dosha's*.

Sites for Raktamokshana: For the treatment of *gridhrasi*, different site for *raktamokshana* are as mentioned below,

- *Charaka* – Antara kandara of Gulpha sthana
- *Sushruta* – Four *angula* above or below *Janu paradesha*
- *Ashtanga Hridaya* - Four *angula* above or below *Janu paradesha*⁸
- *Yogratnakara* – In the area of four *angula* around *Basti* and *Mutrendriya*

Mode Of Action Of Raktamokshana :

Raktamokshana by *siravedh* is considered to be the supreme as it drains out the vitiated *rakta* and cures the disease. Mainly *Siravedha* is done in an acute condition of diseases having pain as prominent feature. *Raktamokshana* is predominantly indicated in *rakta*, *pitta* and *kapha's* vyadhis or when *pitta* or *kapha* is in *anubandha* to *vata dosha*. In such conditions of *vata prakopa* due to *kapha avrana*, *raktamokshana* can help to remove the *avrana* of *kapha dosha* giving way for *anulomana gati* of vitiated *vata* that directly cures the *vatika* symptoms along with symptoms produced by *kapha dosha*.

Discussion:

Sciatica is major cause of morbidity throughout the world. There is only conservative treatment giving short term relief in pain or surgical intervention with side effect. There is need to find out quick relief from pain in today's era as it affects physical as well as mental & social life of patients. In *Ayurveda*, various modalities are given but *agnikarma* and *siravedhana* are supposed to give instant relief from pain.

Conclusion:

The prevalence of sciatica is on the rise and it demands multimodal approach while treating. A detailed

explanation about *gridhrasi* is found in *Ayurveda* classical texts viz. *nidana, samprapti, chikitsa. Ayurveda* management seems to promising and a ray of hope in patients of *gridhrasi*. In today's era quick relief is of prime importance to resume normal activities. Hence *agnikarma* and *siravedhana* are considered as instant healer of pain.

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