

A ROLE OF PATHYA AAHARA AND VIHARA IN THE MANAGEMENT OF GRIDHRASI W.S.R. TO SCIATICA

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ABSTRACT

A long healthy life is wish of every being since antiquity. Ayurveda is the science of life with the aim of attaining health and curing disease of ill. Ayurveda categorized *Gridhrasi* as one of diseases caused by vitiation of *Vata* (one of the principle *Dosha* in the body, responsible for the movement and functionality of the body). Sometimes even *Kapha* vitiation along with *Vata* (*Vata Kaphaj*) also causes *Gridhrasi*. Diet is one of the important parts of any individual's day-to-day life which helps in maintaining a good health and physical strength. Since majority of the nutrients in human body is gained through the food, appropriate diet becomes important in prevention of various kinds of diseases. *Arunadatta* in his commentary gives the definition as the regimens done daily. And these regimens are performed to prolong life span. **Material and Methods:** Various *Ayurvedic*, modern literature, text books, articles, journals and internet sources are studied for this review work. **Result:** This review study describes significant information of *Pathya Aahara* and *Vihara* in the management of *Gridhrasi*.

Keywords: *Gridhrasi*, *Sciatica*, *Pathya Aahara*, *Vihara*, *Vata*, *Kapha*.

INTRODUCTION

Gridhrasi is the most obstinate, prominent and one amongst the 80 types of *Vataj Nanatmaja* disorders. It is caused by aggravated *Vata Dosha*¹ which affects the daily routine of patients. *Gridhrasi* is a painful condition in which the person can't sit and walk properly that hampers his normal activity. As in this disease the patient walks like the bird *Gridhra* and his legs become tense and slightly curved, so due to the resemblance with the gait of a vulture, *Gridhrasi* term might have been given to this disease.²

Almost all signs and symptoms of *Gridhrasi* resemble with the condition of *Sciatica*, as described by the modern texts. The sciatic nerve is the largest single

nerve in the human body; it runs from each side of the lower spine through in the buttock into the back of the thigh and all the way down to the foot. It serves vital role in connecting the spinal cord with the leg and foot muscles. Any type of pain and /or neurological symptoms that are felt along the sciatic nerve is referred to as *Sciatica*.³

Pathya management is the most remedial measure for any disease & health maintenance. The *Pathya* should be well balanced one. In which carbohydrates, fats, proteins, vitamins & minerals are kept in correct proportion to meet all the requirements of the body having minimum calories to build health naturally and to

cure Sciatica. A good and proper *Pathya* in disease is worth giving a hundred medicines and no amount of medication can do well to a patient who does not follow a strict regimen of *Pathya*. The *Pathya* word which is taken from “Path” or “Panth” itself denotes that “it’s a proper way which helps for the maintenance of good health”.

Vihara is defined as the second most important pillar of the Ayurveda. It means activity which highly influences the daily scheduled life that is full of stress and confusions. Just like the pillar of *Aahara*, this second pillar also plays a significant role in the proper functioning of the health.⁴

So, Present study has been undertaken to have the clear understanding of the concept of *Gridhrasi* and role of the *Pathya Aahara* and *Vihara* in the management of the *Gridhrasi* w.s.r. to Sciatica.

Aim & objectives:

1. To study the *Ayurvedic* concept of *Gridhrasi* w.s.r. to Sciatica.
2. To study the importance of *Pathaya Aahara* and *Vihara* in the management of *Gridhrasi* w.s.r. to Sciatica.

Material and Methods:

Various *Ayurvedic*, modern literature, text books, articles, journals and internet sources are studied for this work.

Definition of *Gridhrasi*

The heels or the big tendons of the toes being invaded by *Maruta (Vata)* cause inability for lifting (rising) of the leg. This is called is *Gridhrasi*.⁵

Nidana (Etiology) of *Gridhrasi*

In case of *Gridhrasi* specific *Nidana* has not been mentioned. So the causative factors mentioned producing *Vata Vyadhis* are considered as *Nidana* and it has been tried to understand the manner in which they produce the disease. Actually there is not much difference in the case of *Nidana* in *Vatavyadhis*. Mainly the difference is only in *Samprapti* in all *Vatavyadhis*. *Vata Prakopaka karanas* are almost same and the dif-

ference like *Gridhrasi*, *Pakshaghata* etc. are only due to the *Samprapti vishesa* of vitiated *Dosha*.

Types- According to Acharya *Charaka* two types of *Gridhrasi* has been mentioned in *Astodariya Adhyaya* i.e. *Vataja & Vatakaphaja*

Symptoms

Gridhrasi starts from hip and gradually comes down to waist, back, thigh, knee, shak & foot & affects these parts with stiffness, distress & piercing pain also frequent quivering. These symptoms are of *Vata* but when the disorder is caused by *Vata & Kapha* it is associated with drowsiness, heaviness & anorexia.⁶ severe pain along the root of the sciatic nerve that may travel down the back of the leg to knee. The person has lot of difficulty while walking insomnia may also be present.⁷

Modern view

Sciatica describes the condition in which patients have pain along the sensory distribution of the sciatic nerve. Thus, the pain is experienced in the posterior aspect of the thigh, the posterior and laterals sides of the leg, and the lateral part of the foot.

Sciatica can be caused by prolapse of an intervertebral disc, with pressure on one or more roots of the lower lumbar and sacral spinal nerves, pressure on the sacral spinal nerves, pressure on the sacral plexus or sciatic nerve by an intrapelvic tumor, or inflammation of the sciatic nerve or its terminal branches.⁸

Pathya Aahara and Vihara in the management of *Gridhrasi*

Pathya (wholesome) is that which is not harmful to the body and is according to desirability. Whereas one which is harmful to the body and are incompatible to health is considered as *Apathya* (unwholesome). The effect of *Pathya* and *Apathya* depends upon various factors such as *Matra, Kala, Kriya, Bhumi, Deha* etc.⁹ A diet determines our strength. Unhealthy food weakens our body and mind. Today, most of our lifestyle includes a lot of junk food rather than a balanced diet. This can cause many life-style diseases including obe-

sity, high blood cholesterol, diabetes, skin problems (eczema, allergy, psoriasis etc.). We can control our diseases to an extent by scheduling our diet into a balanced form. Ayurveda clearly lays down the fundamentals of what, how, when, how much and which type of food to eat.

Ayurveda says a healthy diet is very important in maintaining a healthy lifestyle. One should eat food to gain strength, provide nutrients to the body, gain mental strength, and increase energy level. Our food should include *Shadrasas* (sweet, sour, salt, astringent, bitter, pungent), fruits and vegetables in a balanced form.¹⁰

The modern world is currently facing an epidemic of lifestyle related diseases like diabetes, obesity, heart diseases, etc., which primarily result from stress, improper diet and irregular or sedentary lifestyle (lack of discipline and physical activity). Ayurveda believes that in order to achieve and maintain healthy living (*Aarogya*), it is essential to practice a healthy *Vihara*. Due to this, certain healthy practices to gain a *Swasthivritti* or a healthy lifestyle are recommended by Ayurveda.

Ayurvedic Aahara and *Vihara*, if practiced daily, can produce excellent results in the prevention or cure of diseases. It can help manage stress in daily life and reduce the use of modern medicine and their side effects that give rise to untoward complications.¹¹

Pathya Aahara and *Vihara* of *Vata Vyadhi* can be considered as that of *Gridhrasi* also because there is no separate description of *Pathya Aahara* and *Vihara* of *Gridhrasi*.

Caraka emphasizes on food which are wholesome to the body like rice, green gram, rock salt, goose berry, barley, rain water, milk, ghee, meat and honey. These should be consumed regularly for maintenance of health and prevention of diseases.

The above reference can be taken as definition of balanced diet in Ayurveda, rice and barley as carbohydrate sources, green gram, meat as source of protein, ghee as fats, honey as source of sugar, rock salt as source of mineral, milk and goose berries as vitamin and mineral source which make the components of balanced diet.¹² Because of variations in faulty diet,

innate pathogenic factors and the condition of the body the disease become mild or severe, acute or chronic.¹³

The diseases also are produced by the food, drunk, licked and devoured. Wholesome and unwholesome food produces good and bad effects respectively.¹⁴

Generally, all anti *Vata*, food stuffs, *Viharas* and *Aacharas* are indicated in all *Vata Vyadhis*. The following items are recommended in the *Vata Vyadhis* by various *Acharyas*.

Rasa- Pathya- *Madhura Rasa, Amla Rasa, Lavana Rasa* containing *Dravyas*

Apathya- *Katu Rasa, Tikta Rasa, Kashaya Rasa* containing *Dravyas*

Dhanya- Pathya- *Purana Rakta Shali, Masha, Godhuma* (wheat).

Apathya- chana, maize, *Yava*,

Gunas- Pathya- *Mruda, Snigdha, Ushna, Sthira, Vrushya* And *Poustika Guna* Containing Food Stuff.

Apathya- *Rooksha, Sheeta, Guru, Abhisyandikara Aahara*

Vegetables- Pathya-Vastukam. *Kasamard, Punarnava, Mundi*

Apathya- *Mrunala*

Fruit Vegetables- Pathya- *Kushmanda*, brinjal,

Apathya- *Bimbi*,

Fruits-Pathya- *Dadima, Draksha*, mango, apple etc.

Apathya- Beteal nut.

Non-vegetable items- Pathya- Chicken, goat mutton etc.

Apathya- Fish and all other water-born animals.

Drinks- Pathya- Coconut water, milk, warm water

Apathya- Cold water, cool drinks etc.

Vihara- Pathya- Warm atmosphere, climate, living in warm house, wearing warm-clothes etc.

Apathya- Cold climate, exposure to cold/air cooling etc.

Manasika- Pathya- Free from all worries, fear, angry etc.

Apathya- Excessive thinking, weeping etc.¹⁵

DISCUSSION

With the life style changes, sciatica pain is very common complaint nowadays in every age group in India and abroad, and it's increasing day by day.

Gridhrasi (Sciatica) is one among *Vata-vyadhi* caused by aggravated *Vata Doshas*. It is characterized by sharp shooting pain running down back of thigh. Burning, stinging or numbing pain that is felt in the buttock, thigh, leg or foot. It may or may not be associated with low back pain. Movement of limb generally intensifies the suffering. Sciatica arises to compression or trauma of the sciatic nerve or its roots, especially that resulting from ruptured intervertebral disc or osteoarthritis of lumbo sacral vertebrae. Sciatic nerve is the thickest nerve in the body. Sciatic nerve is composed by primary rami of L4, L5, S1, S2 & S3 nerves. Due to compression of the nerves or nerve roots, the symptoms of sciatica appear.

Ayurveda is the science of life having holistic approach that considers the importance of physical, mental, social as well as spiritual aspects in the prevention and management of diseases. Diseases result from the disturbance in homeostasis of *Tridosha* (*Vata, Pitta, Kapha*) which are affected by dietetic factors, lifestyle as well as environmental factors. Chronic and non-communicable diseases such as sciatica are preventable with changes in diet, lifestyle and performing regular exercise (*Vyayam*). *Ayurveda* emphasizes regulation of *Pathya Aahara -Vihara* in the form of *Ashtaharvidhi Visheshayatanani, Dwadasha Ashanapravicharana, Ritucharya, Ratricharya* and *Dinacharya*.

According to *Ayurveda*, there are three important factors for maintenance of health called as *Trayopstambha* (three sub pillars of life) viz. (i) *Aahara*, i.e. food habits (ii) *Vihara*, i.e. appropriate lifestyle and (iii) *Brahmacharya*, i.e. control of sexual desire

CONCLUSION

Ayurveda considers *Aahara* and *Vihara* as the basic factors responsible for health and disease. Wholesome diet is the chief factor for the growth of the body, while unwholesome food or *Vihara* causes the *Roga*.

“*Pathya*” means the food and *Vihara* which are good for the body that is these maintains the equipoise of *Doshas, Dhatus* and *Malas*. And *Apathya* or *Anupashaya* are quite opposite to these qualities. Further these disturb the equipoise of the *Doshas/Dhatus*. Therefore, *Ayurveda* gave the top most importance to these concepts, especially in the pathological conditions. Keeping in view the involvement of *Dosha, Dushya, Agni, Ama* and the state of *Agni Vyapara*. These *Pathya-Apathya* items differ from the disease to disease and patient to patient. In other words, these are to be ‘individualized’ bearing in mind the following factors in a diseased person.

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