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# RESEARCH ARTICLE

## **GRIDHRASI: A CRITICAL REVIEW**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

Gridhrasi is one of the most common disorders, described as one among the Vata Nanatmaja Vyadhi (diseases caused by vitiation of Vata Dosha only) where the vitiated Vata Dosha (one of the principle dosha in the body, responsible for the movement and functionality of the body), manifests as low back pain which radiates to the lower limbs, accompanied by stiffness and a pricking type of pain. Sometimes even Kapha vitiation along with Vata (vata kaphaj) also causes Gridhrasi. It closely resembles with Sciatica, characterized by pain or discomfort associated with sciatic nerve. Contemporary medicine has limitations giving short-term relief in pain, or surgical intervention often accompanied with side effect. In present scenario, no single definite treatment for Sciatica is available. Thus, an attempt has been made in this article to highlight the best possible modalities mentioned in Ayurvedic classics for management of Gridhrasi (Sciatica). Treatment in Ayurveda is aimed at restoring equilibrium through correcting underlying functional inequilibrium. Ayurvedic treatments for Gridhrasi concentrate on normalizing the aggravated Vata or Vata Kapha doshas to the state of equilibrium and thereby restoring the state of health.

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# INTRODUCTION

In most age groups, low back pain is a frequent musculoskeletal problem in today's fast-paced, modern world. It mostly affects working-age people and affects men slightly more than women. Some aggravating factors that contribute to this are improper sitting positions, over-exertion, sedentary lifestyle, jerky movements while travelling, sudden falls, and lifting heavy objects with the wrong posture. In addition to causing discomfort, sciatica also makes walking difficult and has a negative impact on quality of life. This condition is extremely severe, with pain radiating from the lumbar region all the way down to the toes along the posterior lateral part of the thigh region. Depending on how severe the illness is, it may be unilateral or bilateral. This is the reason why walking is difficult. While not all lower back pain is sciatica, improper or delayed management will certainly result in the condition.

Acharya Charaka has also defined Gridhrasi in Chikitsa Sthan as:

स्फिक्पूर्वी कटिपृष्ठोरुजानुजङ्घापदं क्रमात् गृधसी स्तम्भरुक्तोदैर्गृहणाति स्पन्दते मुहुः वाताद्वातकफात्तन्द्रागौरवारोचकान्विता |

(च.चि.28/56)

Shula of Gridhrasi emerges from Sphik and radiates towards Kati, Prishtha, Uru, Jaanu, Jangha, and Paad.<sup>[1]</sup>

पाणिप्रत्यङ्गुलीनां तु कण्डरा या अनिलार्दिता । सक्थनः क्षेपं निगृह्ययाद गृधसीति हि सा स्मृता ।। (स्.नि. 1/7)

According to *Acharya Sushruta*, the disease wherein *Kandara* which passes through *Parshni* (the region below *Gulpha bhaaga*) towards the *Pratyanguli* gets affected by *Vata dosha* resulting in difficulty in *Prasarana* of *Sakthi* (region starting from *Gulpha* and ending in *Vitapa*), is called as Gridhrasi.<sup>[2]</sup>

It is most prevalent in people during their 40s and 50s. Low back pain has been enumerated as fifth most common cause for hospitalization and the third most frequent reason for a surgical procedure [3] The signs and symptoms of "Sciatica" found in allopathic treatment quietly mimic with those of *Gridhrasi* mentioned in Ayurveda. *Gridhrasi* comes under *Nanatamja Vata vyadhi*. [4] *Gridhrasi*, the name itself indicates the way of gait shown by the patient due to extreme pain, that is, *Griddha* or Vulture. The cardinal signs and symptoms of *Gridhrasi* are *Ruk* (pain), *Toda* (pricking sensation), *Muhuspandan* (Tingling senation), *Stambha* (stiffness) in the *Sphik, Kati, Uru, Janu, Jangha*, and *Pada* in order [5] and *Sakthikshepanigraha* (i.e., restriction in upward lifting of

lower limbs).<sup>[6]</sup> In *Gridhrasi*, *Tandra* (Drowsiness), *Gaurava* (Heaviness), and *Aruchi* (Anorexia) may be present if *Kapha* is associated with *Vata*.<sup>[7]</sup>

# 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. *Vata prakopaka* factors are almost same and the difference like Gridhrasi, *Pakshaghata* etc. are only due to the *samprapti vishesa* of vitiated dosha.<sup>[8]</sup>

Since Gridhrasi is considered as *Vata Nanatmaja Vyadhi*, the provocative factors of *Vata* can also be taken as the causes of Gridhrasi.

In addition to this, in *Charaka Samhita*, *Astanga Sangraha* and *Ashtanga Hridaya*, specific causes of *Vata Vyadhi* i.e. *dhatukshaya* and *avarana* have also been mentioned. <sup>[9]</sup>

Samprapti of Gridhrasi: Vataja Gridhrasi is produced by Vata prakopa or Vata vriddhi due to dhatu kshaya having symptoms of Stambha, Ruka, Toda and Muhu Spandana. Vata prakopa ahara vihara gives rise to aggravation of Vata and at the same time Ruksha, Khara, Laghu, Sheeta, Chala guna of Vata suppresses the Snigdha, Guru, Mrudu, Pichhila and Sangha guna of Kapha which reduces the Sleshma. Reduced Sleshma in Prustha, Kati, Sakthi, and Kandara is occupied by vitiated Vata. Thus vitiated Vata gets located in kandara and produces the symptoms like Stambha, Ruka, Toda, and Spandana in Kati, Prustha, Uru, Janu, Jangha and Pada in respective order.

Agantuja factors like abhighata, etc also produce dhatu kshaya instaneously causing vata prakopa without attaining the chayadi avastha and leading to Gridhrasi. Avarana is another pathology which causes vataprakopa. When Kapha gets anubandhatva, its symptoms like aruchi, tandra and gaurava are added to the features of Vataja Gridhrasi and is termed as Vatakaphaja Gridhrasi.

Acharya Sushruta has mentioned the involvement of *kandara* in *Gridhrasi*. *Sushruta* has quoted special variety of *siras* called as *vatavaha siras*, which are the channels of movement of *vata*, in the senses.

### Samprapti Ghataka

Nidana: Vataprakopaka nidana Dosha: Vata and Kapha.

Dushya: Sira, Snayu, Kandara, Asthisandhi,

Agni: Jatharagni

Ama: Nirama (vata pradhana), Ama (kapha pradhana)

Udbhavasthana: Pakwashaya Sancharasthana: Sarvashareera

Srotas: Rasavaha, Asthivaha, Majjavaha, and Purishavaha

**Srotodushti**: Sanga **Rogamarga**: Madhyama

Vyaktasthana: Sphik, Kati, Prishtha, Uru, Janu, Jangha,

Pada.

Bheda: Vataja and Vatakaphaja

Swabhava: Chirakari

Rupa of Gridhrasi: Pain starting from *Sphik* and radiating towards *Kati*, *Pristha*, *Uru*. *Janu*, *Jangha* and *Pada* in order, is the cardinal symptoms of *Gridhrasi*. *Ruk* and *Toda* are the two main words used for the descriptions of the pain. *Charak* has also described *Stambha* and *Muhuspandana*. <sup>[10]</sup> *Shusruta* and *Vagbhatta* have given *sakthikshepa nigraha* as the cardinal sign. <sup>[11],[12]</sup> Some signs and symptoms like *Dehasyapi Pravakrata*, *Janu* and *Uru sandhi spurana* etc. have defined specially as *Vatik lakshanas* by *Bhavaprakash*, *Madhavnidan* and *Yogaratnakara*. <sup>[13],[14],[15]</sup>. Some *lakshanas* like *Tandra*, *Gaurava Arochaka*, *Mukhapraseka*, *Bhaktdwesha* etc. have been defined as *Vatakaphaja* by *Charka*, *Madhavnidan*, *Bhavapraksha* and *Yogaratnakara*.

### Symptoms of Vataja Gridhrasi

**Ruk** (Pain): This is an important symptom of *Gridhrasi* and in fact this typical pain readily starts at *Sphik* (hip) and later on it affects *Kati* (Waist), Pristha (back) *Uru* (Thigh), *Janu* (Knee), *Jangha* (calf) and *Pada* (foot) respectively. This pain is present along with the area distributed by Sciatic nerve.

**Toda** (Pricking pain): Charaka and Madhava have mentioned this symptom. Toda is pricking like pain felt along the distribution of Sciatic nerve.

**Stambha** (Stiffness): Charaka has mentioned the stambha felt in the affected part of the patient of Gridhrasi. This is a feeling of lightness or rigidity throughout the leg. On account of the pain in the distribution of nerve the person tries to make as little movement as he can. As a result the muscles of the leg become rigid and the stambha is experienced.

**Spandana** (Twitching): This also occurs as a sensation of something pulsating or throbbing. This is due to muscular twitching. This may be in the buttock region or in the thigh, legs or even in the small muscle of the foot and is mostly in the muscle supplied by the sciatic nerve.

**Sakthikshepana** Nigrahanti: Sushruta has mentioned this symptom. Commenting upon the above symptom Dalhana opines that the kandara that forbids the movement of the limb is called Gridhrasi. The word kshepa means prasarana or extension. The patient has to keep the leg in flexed position because in extended position the pain will be more.

### Symptoms of Vatakaphaja Gridhrasi

Tandra: Tandra is one of the symptoms of the *Gridhrasi* caused by *Vatakapha*. Acharyas states that *Tandra* is the outcome of the vitiated *Vata* and *Kapha*. In the case of *Gridhrasi* also it can be said that domination of *Vata* and *Kapha* causes *Tandra*. Charaka gives the causative factor of *tandra* like food substances having the qualities like *Madhura*, *Snigdha*, *Guru* etc. and some mental factors are *Chinta*, *Shoka* etc. and the ultimate result of the above is the vitiation of *Vata* and *Kapha Doshas*.

**Gaurava**: Gaurava is the feeling of heaviness of the body. Heaviness is the quality of Kapha Doshas. So when the Kapha is vitiated in the Vata-Kaphaja type of Gridhrasi, Gaurava occurs.

Arochaka: Charaka, Madhava and Bhavaprakasha have mentioned Arochaka as a symptom of Gridhrasi. It is a subjective symptom where patient loses the taste but appetite

remains intact. Comparing to *Vata* it seems that *Kapha* has the more roles in manifestation of *Arochaka* because the seat of *Bodhaka Kapha* is *Jiwha* (Tongue). So this symptom is due to the vitiation of *Kapha* especially *Bodhaka Kapha*.

Agnimandya: Agni is usually referred to as the state of Pachaka pitta of the body. When affected by the vitiated Kapha, the Pachaka pitta fails to perform its normal function. This may be due to the antagonist properties of the Pitta & Kapha. So in the case of Gridhrasi also where Kapha is dominant, role of Ama must be taken into consideration. Agnimandya leads to the formation of Ama which in turn produces further Agnimandya.

Mukhapraseka: Mukhapraseka is caused by the vitiated Kapha. In Madhava nidana and Bhavaprakash, mukhapraseka has been mentioned in Vatakaphaja type of Gridhrasi. Vata may have a little role to play in case of Mukhapraseka. Praseka has been mentioned due to the involvement of Ama by some Acharyas.

**Bhaktadwesha:** This symptom is also produced due to the involvement of *Kapha* and *Ama*. Here the patient shows aversion towards the food substances in general. Both *Madhava Nidana* and *Bhavaprakash* have mentioned this symptom in the type of *Vatakaphaja Gridhrasi* 

**Staimitya:** This symptom is described by *Haarit* only. *Staimitya* means timidness (frozen sensation). Due to Kapha vitiation patient feels like some wet cloth has been wrapped around the limb.

Chikitsa of Gridhrasi: In Ayurveda, various methods used for treatment of Gridhrasi, viz. Bheshaja, Snehana, Swedana, Basti, Siravedha, Agnikarma, etc. *Gridhrasi* is being a *Vata vyadhi*, general treatment is advised for that of *Vata*. The first and foremost principle to be adopted in treatment is to avoid the nidanas that cause *Gridhrasi*. In initial stages, *Shamana chikitsa*, is advised by *Acharyas*. In later stage or if shamana treatment will not give any good result, *Shodhana* should be given, After the *sodhana*, *shamana* can be used. *Agnikarma* (therapeutic intentional burn) and *Siravedha* (therapeutic blood letting by vein puncture) are considered instant healers of pain. They have been proved effective in *Ruja Pradhan Vatavyadhis*. *Acharya Sushruta* has considered them as superior to other treatment modalities.

### Discussion on the treatment modalities:-

#### Shamana Chikitsa

**Agnitundi Vati**: As the name suggest *Agni* means digestive fire, hence the one which improves digestive fire. *Agnitundi Vati* induces *Pachana* at gastrointestinal as well as *Dhatugata* level (cellular and tissue level) and corrects *Jatharagni* as well as *Dhatvagni*. It is indicated in *Adhmana*, *Shula*, pain related to *Vata* imbalance. <sup>[16]</sup>

**Trayodashanga Guggulu:** Vatanulomana and Aampachana properties of the ingredients of Trayodashanga Guggulu [17] help in relieving Malabaddhata (Constipation). Due to Deepana and Pachana properties Tandra, Gauravta, and Aruchi are also reduced. Along with this, it has anti- inflammatory, ant-arthritis, anti-gout, analgesic, muscle relaxent and

antioxidant properties by energize the growth of bone forming cells by producing more osteoclasts and osteoblasts. It prevent the pro inflammatory cytokines, activity of xanthine oxidase, hydrogen peroxide, and renal microsomal lipid peroxidation process and also blocks the action of histamine and enhances the level of dopamine. [18]

Rasnasaptak Kwatha: Rasnasaptak kwatha<sup>[19]</sup> is having an excellent Vata Shamaka property. Along with Aampachana, these herbs are known for their anti-inflammatory activity, analgesic, and anti-arthritic activity viz. Rasna, Gokshura and Eranda. Some of them are known for their immunomodulatory activity like Guduchi, Aragvadha is having Vata-Kapha Shamaka properties and is Mridu Virechaka, so helps to remove constipation and also does antioxidant activity.<sup>[20]</sup>

**Tablet Shallaki** - With combination of *Erandamula* and *Guduchi* was used which is mainly indicated in treatment of inflammatory arthropathies, spondylitis and gout. It contains the extract of *Salai Guggulu* (Boswellia serrata), *Eraudamula* (Ricinus comamanis), and *Guduchi* (Tinospora condifolia). *Guggulu* is used to relief joint pain, stiffness, and inflammation *Erandmula* is best ayurvedic herb used to relieve inflammation, swelling, eases bowel movement, and Guduchi, which is a well known immune modulator corrects auto immune disorders. [21]

**Gandharva Haritaki Churna:** It is polyherbal classical ayurvedic medicine. The ailment reside in the *Kati Pradesh*, which is the seat of *Vata dosha*, *Mridu virechana* is line of treatment of *vaat vyadhi*<sup>[22]</sup>and this formulation has *Vatahara*, *Vrishya* and *Snigdha Virechaka* properties. It in indicated in the management of pain in *Vatavadhi*, *Sandhivata*, *Gridhrasi*, and *Ardita*. This formulation is used for *Anulomama*, *Ajeerna*, and *Aruchi* induced diseases.<sup>[23]</sup>

By taking all the above mentioned discussion into consideration, the overall regime induces *Vatashamana*, *Srotostodhana* and *Srothahara* effects. Thus ,it can be used as an excellent analgesic, anti-inflammatory, and nutritive therapy in *Gridhrasi*. <sup>[24]</sup>

**Snehana:** Taila is supposed to be the best for Vata as Vata is Ruksha, Sheeta, Laghu and Khara, and Taila has just opposite qualities like Snigdha, Ushna, Guru, Picchila etc. Thus Taila alleviates Vata and at the same time does not increase Kapha as it is Ushna. A type of internal Snehapana helps in Kledana and Vishyandana of Doshas. By its Apya, Snidha, Guru, Picchila guna, it brings the Doshas to Kostha and then further it drived out by Shodhana. It destroys the Malasanghata, does Koshthashuddhi, Agnidipti and improves vigour and complexion.

**Swedan:** Acharya Charaka has pointed that even dry wood can be made soft and flexible with Snehana and Swedana then why not be living organs. [25] Gridhrasi is clearly mentioned in the list of Swedanhara and also the cardinal and associated features of Gridhrasi like Shoola, Stambha, Sankocha, Supti have also been mentioned. Gridhrasi is a Vatavyadhi and sometimes Kaphanubandhi. Swedana is also indicated in Vatavyadhies as well as Vatavahies. [26] Gridhrasi is a Shoolapradhana Vatavyadhi and Shulavayuparama (destruction of pain) is the sign of proper swedana. Nirgundi

patra pinda sweda is effective in Gridhrasi as it act as snehana as well as swedana.

Mridu Virechana: If the vitiated Doshas are more in amount and no relief is acquired by Snehana, Swedana, then Mridu Virechana is indicated for the Dosha shodhana. They have already brought to koshtha by Snehana and Swedana, and can be easily drived out by Mridu Virechana.

As far as etiopathology of Gridhrasi is concerned 'Vata Vaigunya' is important. It essentially plays a role in the over stimulation of the nerve as experienced by severe pain in the course of affected part. In removing the 'Vata Vaigunya pertaining to the disorder, Shodhan therapy should be indicated. Among the shodhan therapy 'Sneha Virechana' with 'Nirgundi patra swarasa' has a specific indication. For the Mridu Virechana ,Eranda taila and Nirgundi Patra Swarasa should be mixed and given to Gridhrasi patients. This mixture relieves vata from kati pradesha. It clears the Apana Vata which is the main factor of Gridhrasi.

**Bastikarma:** Basti is the important karma in the treatment of *Vata vyadhies*. It is indicated in almost all *vatavyadhies* and especially indicated in the patients who have disability, stiffness in the extremities, pain in the organs, and fractures in the bones. Severe constipation, loss of appetite etc. majority of the symptoms is present in the patients of Gridhrasi. As Basti stays in *Pakwashaya*, organs below umbilicus get benefitted through *virya* of the *Basti dravyas*, transmitted all over the body. It sucks out *Doshas* from head to toe, as the sun, though miles away, with its ray's sucks the water from the plants on the earth. No other *Chikitsa* is as capable as *Basti* to tolerate and regulate the force of *Vata*. [27]

Siravedha: In Charaka Samhita, Siravedha (Between Kandara and Gulpha) has been advised for management of Gridhrasi. Sushruta has advised Siravedha at Janu after flexion. [27] Astanga Sangraha and Astanga Hridaya have also advised Siravedha four Angula above the Janu. [28] Chakradutta has given the treatment of Gridhrasi in details. He has mentioned siravedha four Angula below Indrabasti Marma. Yogaratnakara has advised siravedha in the area of four Angula around Basti and Mutreendriya. In Siravedha, expulsion of vitiated Doshas accumulated due to inflammatory reaction outside body can give relief in pain.

Agnikarma: Pain is the predominant symptom of *Gridhrasi*, which disturbs the normal routine of the patient. It is a classical fact that this pain is effectively relieved by *Agnikarma*. The diseases treated with *Agnikarma* do not recurs and there is no fear of putrification and bleeding, and ultimately it produces balancing effect on vitiated *Vata Dosha*. To perform this procedure, many *Dahana Upkaranas* (devices) like *Pippali*, *Ajashakrit*, *Godant*, *Shara*, *Shalaka*, *Jambavoshtha*, *Madhu*, *Guda*, *Sneha* and different types of metals are used.

Stambha is chiefly due to Sheeta and Ruksha Guna of Vata Dosha. Agnikarma having Ushna Guna acts as antagonist to Vata properties indirectly providing relief in Stambha. According to Ayurveda, basic humor responsible for causation of Ruka is Vata and pain is cardinal symptom in most of the Vatavyadhis. 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. 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. Relief in Suptata after Agnikarma may probably be due to relaxation of the surrounding muscles and ligaments and might be due to release of pressure on sciatic nerve. Agnikarma at Kanishthika anguli of pada has been suggested. Yogaratnakara has advised Agnikarma in the little finger of the leg.

# CONCLUSION

Gridhrasi is one of painful condition which hampers the daily routine of the patient. This disease having predominancy of Vata doshas as it comes under eighty vataj nanatmaj vyadhi & may have kapha anubandh with it. Thus radiating pain from lumber region to the lower extremities may show stiffness in the lower limb & patient feels difficulty in walking, or continuous standing even for short period. Ayurveda believes that chikitsa like Shamana, Shodhan, Basti, Siravedha and Agnikarma acts against the qualities of vata and kapha doshas and hence cures all the Vataj and Kaphaj disorders. Pain occuring anywhere in the body is due to Vata, these treatment pacifies Vata, and thus the pain is relieved immediately. According to Ayurveda, every dhatu (tissue) has its own Dhatvagni (tissue Agni) which is responsible for the nourishment, increase & decrease of Dhatu. When this Dhatvagni becomes Manda diseases begin to manifest. Thus in this condition Agnikarma works by giving external heat there by increasing the Dhatvagni which helps to digest the aggravated doshas and hence cures the disease. While describing Gridhrasi, Acharva Sushrut has given more emphasis on involvement of ligament of heel & toe afflicted with Vata Dosha which obstruct the movement of leg. In the chapter of Vaatvyadhi chikitsa Adhyaay Acharya Charaka has mentioned process of Agnikarma in case of Gridhrasi. So as to discontinue the recurrence & for Samprapti Vighatan, patient should be given Oral Vatshamak medication. These therapies show remarkable relief in nearly all signs & symptoms of Gridhrasi (Sciatica), especially in case of pain as it is one of the most uncomfortable factor for patient in this disease. The procedures are simple, economical & can be done in OPD level as per derived protocal for long lasting relief to the patient of Gridhrasi (Sciatica).

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