

**THERAPEUTIC RATIONALE OF PATRA PINDA SWEDA IN THE
MANAGEMENT OF GRIDHRASI (SCIATICA)****¹Dr. Nada Yasha, ²Dr. Manir Uddin Dewan, ³Dr. Jayanta Sarmah**

¹PG Scholar, Department of Kayachikitsa, Government Ayurvedic College and Hospital,
Guwahati, Assam, India.

²Assistant Professor, Department of Kayachikitsa, Government Ayurvedic College and
Hospital, Guwahati, Assam, India.

³Assistant Professor, Department of Panchakarma, Government Ayurvedic College and
Hospital, Guwahati, Assam, India.

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Corresponding Author*Dr. Nada Yasha**

PG Scholar, Department of
Kayachikitsa, Government
Ayurvedic College and Hospital,
Guwahati, Assam, India.



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ABSTRACT

Gridhrasi, described in Ayurveda and commonly correlated with sciatica, is a condition mainly associated with aggravated Vata, sometimes along with Kapha, leading to radiating pain, stiffness, and difficulty in movement of the lower limb. In current clinical practice, such conditions are increasingly seen due to sedentary habits and poor posture. Ayurveda offers a different perspective by focusing not only on symptoms but also on the underlying functional disturbances. Among the various treatment approaches, Patra Pinda Sweda is widely used in managing pain and stiffness, yet its mode of action needs clearer understanding. The present conceptual study reviews classical Ayurvedic texts along with modern scientific explanations to understand its therapeutic role in Gridhrasi. The combined effect of heat, oil, and medicated leaves used in this

procedure helps in relieving stiffness, improving circulation, and reducing pain. It also supports muscle relaxation and better mobility. From a modern viewpoint, these effects can be related to thermotherapy, improved blood flow, and possible anti-inflammatory action of the herbal components. Based on this understanding, Patra Pinda Sweda appears to be a practical and effective therapy in the management of Gridhrasi, helping to improve both symptoms and functional ability.

KEYWORDS: ayurveda, gridhrasi, sciatica, swedan, patrapinda sweda.

INTRODUCTION

In the present scenario, changing work patterns characterized by prolonged sitting, reduced physical activity, and poor ergonomic practices have contributed significantly to the rising incidence of low back pain. Continuous mechanical stress on the lumbar spine, along with muscular imbalance and postural strain, predisposes individuals to degenerative and compressive spinal conditions. As a result, radiating lower limb pain, clinically recognized as sciatica, is increasingly encountered in practice. It is estimated that a considerable proportion of the adult population experiences low back pain during their lifetime, with a notable percentage progressing to sciatica, thereby contributing substantially to functional disability and reduced quality of life. In Ayurveda, a condition that closely resembles Sciatica is described as Gridhrasi under 80 types of Nanatmaja Vata Vyadhi in Charaka Samhita.^[1]

With the rising burden of such conditions in modern society, there is a growing need for therapeutic approaches that not only provide symptomatic relief but also address the underlying functional disturbances. Conventional management of Sciatica mainly focuses on analgesics, physiotherapy, and, in severe cases, surgical intervention. While these approaches may provide temporary relief, they often fail to address the root cause of the disorder.

Ayurveda, on the other hand, offers a holistic understanding of disease based on doshic imbalance and functional pathology. In Gridhrasi, Vata plays a primary role, often associated with Kapha, which contributes to stiffness and obstruction. Swedana therapy is specifically indicated in such conditions, as it helps relieve stiffness, improve circulation, and restore normal function.

Among the different types of Swedana, Patra Pinda Sweda has gained particular importance due to its combined Snigdha and Ushna properties. Despite its widespread clinical use, a clear understanding of its therapeutic rationale is essential. Therefore, the present study is undertaken to explore and explain the scientific and conceptual basis of Patra Pinda Sweda in the management of Gridhrasi.

AIM

Conceptual evaluation of the therapeutic rationale of Patra Pinda Sweda in the management of Gridhrasi (sciatica).

OBJECTIVE

1. To study the concept of Gridhrasi in Ayurveda with its clinical relation to Sciatica.
2. To analyze the procedure and properties of Patra Pinda Sweda
3. To understand the mode of action of Patra Pinda Sweda in Gridhrasi.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

The present study is a conceptual review based on classical Ayurvedic texts and contemporary medical literature. Data related to Gridhrasi were collected from Brihatrayee, Laghutrayee along with their commentaries and other classical texts. Information on Patra Pinda Sweda was compiled from classical references and relevant published literature, while Data on sciatica were obtained from modern medical sources. The collected information was analyzed using a comparative approach to establish the therapeutic rationale of Patra Pinda Sweda in the management of gridhrasi.

GRIDHRASI

Gridhrasi is a disease entity described under 80 types of Nanatmaja Vatavyadhi. The term Gridhrasi is derived from “Gridhra” indicating a vulture-like gait due to pain and restriction of movement in the affected limb.

Acharya Charaka presents Gridhrasi as pain radiating from Sphik to Pada along with Stambha, Toda and Spandana.^[2] Sushruta opines that Gridhrasi results from the vitiation of Vata dosha affecting two Kandaras, one extending distally from the Parshni to the toes, while the other extending proximally from the Parshni to the Vitap, leading to restriction of leg movement, particularly limiting its extension.^[3] Vaghbata describe it as a condition caused by vitiation of vata affecting The Kandaras extending from the Parshni to the toes, resulting in restriction of upward movement of the leg.^[4]

Based on the Doshic predominance, gridhrasi is classified as Vataja Gridhrasi and Vata-Kaphaja Gridhrasi.

Samprapti

Vata aggravating nidana Sevan results in vata prakopa, either alone or in association with Kapha and ama. The vitiated vata follows the two classical pathways of vatavyadhi. In the Dhatukshaya marga, depletion of tissues leads to khavaigunya in the kati-Sphik-Uru Pradesh, enabling localization of aggravated vata in Snayu, Kandra and Sira. In the Margavarana

marga, Kapha and ama produce srotorodha, interfering with the normal course of Vata.

The disturbed Vata thus localised spreads along the course of the lower limb, giving rise to radiating pain, restriction of movement and altered gait, corresponding to the classical presentation of Gridhrasi.

In essence, Gridhrasi represents vitiation of Vata in the Kati-Sphik-Uru region, precipitated by tissue depletion or obstruction within the channels, leading to involvement of the lower limb.

Lakshana

Gridhrasi presents with pain extending along the lower limb pathway, accompanied by ruk, Toda, stambha, spandana and limitation in movement with characteristic gait disturbance, as described by various Acharyas. While these constitute the general clinical features, the Vata–Kaphaja type is distinctly identified by the presence of Gourava (heaviness), Tandra (drowsiness) and features like Arochaka reflecting impaired digestion, indicating Kapha association with Vata.^[5]

Table 1: Vihesha lakshana in other classical texts.^{[6],[7],[8],[9]}

Vihesha lakshana		B.P	M.N	Y.R	H.S
Vataj Gridhrasi	Dehasya pravakrata	+	+	+	-
	Janu Sandhu sphuran and stabdhata	+	+	+	-
	Urusandhi Sphuran and stabdhata	+	+	+	-
	Katisandhi sphuran and stabdhata	+	+	+	-
	Jangha sphurana	+	-	+	-
	Suptata	-	-	+	-
Vata – Kaphaj Gridhrasi	Tandra	-	+	+	-
	Gourav	+	+	+	-
	Raichak	+	+	-	-
	Bhaktadvesa	+	+	+	-
	Mukhapraseka	+	+	+	-
	Staimitya	-	-	+	-
	Vahni Mardav	-	-	+	-
	Prasweda Kara pada	-	-	-	+

Chikitsa

Classical Ayurvedic texts describe multiple therapeutic approaches for Gridhrasi. Charaka Samhita includes Basti, Siravyadha, and Swedana: Sushruta Samhita emphasizes Siravyadha

and Asthanga Hridaya describes Siravyadha along with Snehana and Upanaha.

Table 2: Other Classical Chikitsa modalities in Gridhrasi. ^{[10],[11],[12]}

CHIKITSA		C.D	Y.R	B.P
Panchkarma and Para-surgical Measures	Vamana	+	-	+
	Virechana	+	-	+
	Basti	+	+	+
	Siravyadha	+	+	-
	Agnikarma	+	+	-
External Therapeutic Measures	Snehana	+	-	-
	Swedana	+	-	-
	Upanaha		-	-
	Lepa	+	-	-
Supportive Measures	Deepana-Pachana	+	-	-

Classical texts describe numerous formulations (Kalpa Yogas) for the management of Gridhrasi, primarily aimed at Vata shamana and Shoolahara action. Important preparations include Panchamoola Kwatha, Maharasnadi Kwatha, Erandadi Kwatha, and Shefali Patra Kwatha, which are widely indicated for alleviating Vata-related symptoms. Among *Guggulu preparations*, Trayodashanga Guggulu, Yogaraja Guggulu, and Mahayogaraja Guggulu are frequently mentioned. Medicated oils such as Eranda Taila, Saindhavadi Taila, Prasarini Taila, and Bala Taila are advised for both internal administration and external therapies.

SCIATICA

Sciatica is a clinical condition characterized by pain radiating from the lower back or buttock down the course of the sciatic nerve into the leg, usually due to irritation or compression of the lumbosacral nerve roots, most commonly at L4–L5 or L5–S1 levels.^[13] It is most often associated with intervertebral disc herniation along with inflammatory changes around the affected nerve root. Patients typically present with unilateral, shooting or burning pain in the leg following a dermatomal pattern, often accompanied by numbness, tingling, muscle weakness, and reduced reflexes. On physical examination, findings such as a positive Straight Leg Raising test, dermatomal sensory loss, motor weakness, and diminished reflexes help localize the affected root. Recent investigations rely primarily on MRI as the gold standard, with advanced modalities like MR neurography and inflammatory biomarkers offering additional insights in selected cases.^[14] Management is largely conservative, including rest, analgesics, anti-inflammatory drugs, and physiotherapy focused on lumbar stabilization and leg-stretching exercises, with interventional or surgical options reserved for refractory or severe cases.

SWEDANA

Swedana (sudation therapy), described in Charaka Samhita, is used to relieve stiffness, heaviness, and pain by promoting sweating and pacifying Vata and Kapha. It is broadly classified into **Sagni** (with heat) and **Niragni** (without heat) types. Among Sagni Sweda, Sankara Sweda is an important category, under which Patrapinda Sweda is included. Acharya Charaka has mentioned Gridhrasi as Sweda sadhya Vyadhi.^[15]

PATRA PINDA SWEDANA^[16]

Table 3: Requirements for Patra Pinda Sweda.

Requirements	Quantity
Fresh leaves of Vatahara properties (Eranda, Arka, nirgundi etc)	375 g each
Grated coconut	150 gm
Lemon	04
Prescribed oil	100 ml
Saindhava lavan, Rasna, Methika, shatapushpa	10 gm each
Vessel for frying leaves (frying pan)	01
Spoon	01
Cotton cloth (45 cm x 45 cm)	2 pieces
Tags	02
Heating device	01

Preparation of Pottali

- Fresh leaves should be thoroughly cleaned and finely chopped before use.
- About 50 ml of the prescribed oil is heated in a frying pan.
- Grated Coconut and sliced lemon are added to the oil and fried until they turn light brown in colour.
- The chopped leaves are then added gradually followed by Saindhava Lavana, Rasna, Methika and Shatapushpa.
- The mixture is stirred well and fried together till coconut scrapings attain brown colour.
- The final mixture is divided into two equal portions and shaped into pottalis.

PROCEDURE

Poorva karma

- The patient is seated facing east with leg extended over the droni.
- Abhyanga should be performed using the prescribed oil over the entire body for about 20 minutes. Talam should be applied with suitable oil.

Pradhan karma

- The prepared pottali is heated in vessel with suitable oil until it reaches a temperature between 42- 46° C.
- Check the temperature on the back of hand to ensure safety.
- Apply the pottali evenly across the body with mild pressure. Ensure to maintain the temperature throughout the procedure by reheating the pottalis.
- Duration – 45 minutes.

Paschat Karma

- Wipe off the excess oil from the body using a clean dry towel. Remove talam and apply Rasnadi Choorna.
- Patient should be advised to take hot water bath.

PROBABLE MODE OF ACTION OF PATRA PINDA SWEDA (Ayurvedic Perspective)^[17]**Induction of Swedana (sudation)**

Patra Pinda Sweda induces localized sweating through the application of heated boluses, which helps in relieving stiffness, heaviness and coldness-key features of gridhrasi.

Thermal effect

The localized heat application results in increased tissue temperature, improved blood circulation and reduction in stiffness and pain, contributing to symptomatic relief in the affected lumbosacral and lower limb region.

Mechanical effect

The rhythmic application of boluses provides a mild massage like mechanical stimulation which relieves muscle spasm, improves flexibility and enhances local circulation.

Vata-Kapha Shamana

Patra Pinda Sweda, being a **Snigdha Swedana**, exerts a dual regulatory effect on the Doshas. It pacifies Vata through its Ushna and Snigdha properties: which help counteract dryness and rigidity. Simultaneously, it reduces Kapha through *Ushna* and *Tikshna* qualities, aiding in the breakdown of heaviness and stagnation. This combined action plays a significant role in alleviating symptoms such as pain, stiffness, and a sense of heaviness.

Srotoshodhana

The pathology of Gridhrasi involves Srotorodha (obstruction of channels).

Swedana therapy facilitates dilatation of channels thereby improving flow of nutrients and metabolites. Thus restoring normal physiological function.

Ama Pachana

Ama contributes to inflammation and obstruction in Gridhrasi. Swedana aids in Ama Pachana (metabolic transformation) by promoting metabolic activity. Additionally, it facilitates elimination through perspiration and improving overall tissue health by reducing the pathological burden.

Effect on Snayu and Mamsa

Gridhrasi primarily affects Snayu (ligaments and nerves) and Mamsa (muscle tissue). Patra Pinda Sweda provides Snigdha effect that enhances lubrication of these structures, while its Ushna property improves metabolic activity within the tissues. This leads to improved mobility and reduced stiffness.

MECHANISM OF ACTION OF PATRA PINDA SWEDA (Modern Perspective)^{[18],[19]}**Thermotherapy Mechanism**

Heat application leads to vasodilation and increased blood flow in the affected region. This enhances oxygen and nutrient supply and promotes removal of inflammatory mediators.

These effects contribute to reduction in pain and stiffness.

Neuromuscular Mechanism

Thermal stimulation reduces muscle spindle activity which decreases muscle spasm and improves flexibility. Pain relief may also occur through modulation of nociceptive signals at the spinal level, as explained by the gate control theory.

Anti-inflammatory and Analgesic Action

Medicinal leaves used in Patra Pinda Sweda (e.g., *Vitex nirgundo*) contain bioactive compounds with Anti-inflammatory and Analgesic properties. These compounds help in reducing local inflammation around the sciatic nerve.

Transdermal Drug Delivery

The combination of heat and oil enhances skin permeability, facilitating absorption of lipid-soluble phytoconstituents. This supports localized therapeutic action.

Circulatory and Lymphatic Effects

Patra Pinda Sweda improves Microcirculation and Lymphatic drainage. This reduces tissue congestion and edema, leading to decreased pressure over the sciatic nerve.

INTEGRATED THERAPEUTIC INTERPRETATION

Patra Pinda Sweda exerts its therapeutic effect through a multimodal mechanism, integrating:

Table 4: Integrated Therapeutic Interpretation.

Domain	Effect
Ayurvedic	Vata-Kapha shamana, srotoshodhana
Thermal	Vasodilation, pain relief
Mechanical	Muscle relaxation
Pharmacological	Anti-inflammatory action

CONCLUSION

Patra Pinda Sweda is not just a symptomatic therapy for gridhrasi. It provides a rationale therapeutic approach in Gridhrasi by addressing both Ayurvedic pathogenesis and modern physiological mechanisms.

The role of Patra Pinda Sweda becomes significant by its effective role in correcting the underlying doshic imbalance i.e Vata-Kapha shamana, while also aiding in srotoshodhana and ama pachana. In this way the therapy directly targets the core ayurvedic pathology of Gridhrasi. At the same time, its effects can be meaningfully explained through modern concepts such as improved blood circulation, reduction of inflammation and enhanced local metabolic activity. The combined influence of heat, oil and medicinal leaves contributes to pain relief, reduction in stiffness, and improved mobility, which are clinically important outcomes.

What emerges from this study is an integrated understanding that Patra Pinda Sweda works through both classical Ayurvedic principles and scientifically explainable physiologic mechanisms. This makes it a relevant and practical therapeutic option in current clinical settings. However, further well-designed clinical studies are needed to strengthen the evidence base and support its wider acceptance in integrative medicine.

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