

Effect of Cupping Therapy in *Gridhrasi* (Sciatica)

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Abstract

The symptoms of *Gridhrasi* are *Toda* (pricking pain), *spandana* (pulsating movement), *graham* (heaviness), *stambha* (stiffness) and *vedana* (pain) from *Kati-Pradesha* to *Padanguli*. Sciatica is a severe painful condition where back pain which is radiating to entire leg with or without tingling numbness. Various methods used for *Gridhrasi* treatment but para-surgical methods i.e. *Agnikarma* & *Raktamokshana* are more beneficial. *Raktamokshana* is one of the fascinating subject and satisfactory answer for *Gridhrasi*. In this case report, a female patient of 44 years having radiating pain from back to foot since 7 years consulted to OPD of Shalya Tantra. She had taken medication for sciatic pain with unsatisfactory results. So she consulted to *Ayurveda* hospital and was treated with *Raktamokshana* by cupping therapy in two sittings at 15 days interval. Result suggests that by using cupping therapy (Wet Cupping) compared to baseline treatment pain was decreased more efficiently. Hence study concluded that sciatic pain can be managed with cupping therapy.

Keywords: *Ayurveda*; Cupping Therapy; *Gridhrasi*; Sciatica; *Raktamokshana*.

Introduction

Gridhrasi (Sciatica) is one of the most common disorders of the back where the compression of the sciatic nerve causes pain in the back and radiates to the posterior aspect of the lower limbs. It causes impairment of the daily activities also [1]. 80% of population in modern industrial society experience back pain at sometime during their life. The disease *Gridhrasi* is characterized by *ruk* (Severe pain) from *Kati* (Lumbar region) *pradesha* which will be radiating towards *Padanguli* (Foot) with cardinal symptoms like *sakthanskhepan nigruhat* (Straight Leg Raising test) [2]. In initial stage of disease anti-inflammatory treatment helps to reduce the pain. If the compression of the nerve causes disability, then the surgical procedures are required to relieve the compression. *Ayurveda* mentions *Gridhrasi* as a disease where the patient similar to the gait of the *Gridhra* (Eagle). This change in the gait is because

of the pain in the back and the lower limbs and the patient starts limping towards the affected side. In *Ayurveda*, treatment options like *Bheshaja*, *Snehana*, *Swedana*, *Raktamokshana*, *Agnikarma* and *Basti* are available which are simple, safe and cost effective [3]. In case of surgical disorders, para-surgical methods i.e. *Agnikarma* & *Raktamokshana* are more beneficial. *Raktamokshana* is accepted as half of the therapeutic measure in *Shalya Tantra* like *Basti* in *Kayachikitsa* [4]. *Raktamokshana* is one of the fascinating subject and satisfactory answer for *Gridhrasi roga*. The site for *Raktamokshana* is four *angulas* above or below of *janu pradesh* (Knee joint) and at *antra kandra gulpha sthana* [5-6]. *Shringa avcharana* is one of the method of *Raktamokshana* and this can be correlated with Chinese cupping method [7]. The suction through specific cupped instrument was used since prehistoric time for the treatment of disease [8-10].

There are two types of cupping therapy which are dry and wet cupping. In dry cupping, the suctioning cups simply pulls the local skin to create vacuum into the cup and in wet cupping same technique was used but the difference is that pricking on skin so that blood is drawn into cups. [1] Reports indicated that cupping has frequently used to relief back pain and also it helps to release harmful toxins by stimulating lymphatic system and clearing the blood vessels [12].

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Case Report

A 44 years-old female patient visited to out-patient department (OPD) of *Shalya Tantra*, presented with the symptoms of low back pain radiating to left leg, severe morning stiffness, burning sensation in left foot, reduced appetite since 7 years. History revealed that patient is non-hypertensive, non-diabetic and did not have any symptoms of endocrinal disorders and no operative history and no any other systemic disease. On examination, *Vata-kaphaja* dominated *Prakriti* was revealed. Patient reported history of taking allopathic medicine which gives temporary pain relief so she consulted to IPGT&RA, Ayurved Research Hospital.

Patient was diagnosed mainly on the basis of signs and symptoms as mentioned in the texts of *Ayurveda* and modern medical signs like *Ruka*, *Toda*, *Stambha*, *Spandana*, *Sakthanakshepananigrahaniyat*. On examination the restricted movement of leg painful forward bending was observed. Straight leg raising (S.L.R.) test /Lasegue sign was noted and was found 35° in the left leg. The laboratory investigation for blood was done before and after the treatment and was found within normal limits. Special investigations for HIV, HBsAg was done. X-Ray of lumbosacral spine, AP and Lateral view, was done before and after treatment and no deformity was noted.

Procedure of Wet Cupping

Puroakarma

1. Written inform consent of the patient was taken having the information regarding the procedure to the patient and relatives.
2. The required materials that are modified *Shringa Yantra* (Figure 1), Disposable sterile needle no. 24 G, Kidney tray, *Madhu* (Honey), *Tila taila* (Sesame oil), *Dashamula Kwatha* were kept ready.



Fig. 1: Modified *Shringa Yantra*

3. Temperature, pulse, respiration and blood pressure was noted prior to procedure.
4. *Mudga Yusha* was advised to patient one hour before procedure.
5. Local *Snehan* was done with *Tila Taila* followed by *Nadi Swedana* with *Dashmool kwath* was done on the lower back region and four angula above the *Janu sandhi* (knee joint) of the affected leg.



Fig. 2: Applied cups for demarcation

Pradhankarma

1. Patient was given prone position, then lower back region and four *angula* above *Janu sandhi* (knee joint) was painted with betadine solution.
2. Draping was done with sterile cut sheet. Modified *Shringa Yantra* (MSY), four cups was applied on lower back region and two at four *angula* above *Jaanu sandhi* (knee joint) to demarcate the sites (Figure 2).
3. After one minute all MSY will be removed.
4. Pricking of skin was done with help of disposable needle in demarcated area (Figure 3).
5. Again Modified *Shringa Yantra* was applied after pricking for complete oozing (Figure 4).
6. The observation were done for proper oozing of blood in the respective cups at back and knee region (Figure 5-6)
7. Then all Modified *Shringa Yantra* were removed and impure blood was wiped off with sterile gauze piece.



Fig. 3: Pricking of skin



Fig. 4: Again Modified *Shringa Yantra*



Fig. 5: Proper bleeding at Back cups



Fig. 6: Proper bleeding at Back & Knee cups

Pashchatkarma

1. Dusting of turmeric powder was done after the procedure.
2. Water mixed with honey was given for oral intake.
3. Follow up was done after 15 days.
4. Patient was advised to avoid water contact to pricking area for 24 hours.
5. Dos: Patient was advised to take light diet, milk and milk products, warm to normal water, yoga, brisk walking and light work.
6. Don'ts: Spicy and oily Foods, junk foods, lemon and all sour eatables, Brinjal, products made from

Besan and *maida*, cold drinks, curd, heavy exercise, forward bending and excessive walking.

Result and Discussion

After 1st sitting, patient got 50 % relief in *Ruka, Toda, Stambha,, Sakthanakshepananigrahaniyat*. S.L.R was increased up to 50°. After 2nd sitting she got 90% relief in above symptoms. S.L.R. raised to 70°. She has no pain during walking, less burning sensation in foot. She can bend forward and can perform her daily routine work without pain and comfortably. In *pitta, rakta* and *kaphaja vyadhies* or when *pitta* or *kapha* is in *anubandha* to *vata dosha*, *Raktamokshana* is predominantly indicated [13]. In such conditions of *vata prakopa* due to *kapha* and *pitta avarana*, *Raktamokshana* helps to remove the *avarana* of *pitta* and *kapha dosha* giving way for *anuloma gati* of vitiated *vata* that indirectly cures the *vatika* symptoms along with symptoms produced by *kapha dosha*.. So hypothetically it can be said that the *Raktamokshana* is useful in patients when there is *avarana janya samprapti* in *vata kaphaja Gridhrasi*. *Raktmokshana* by *Shringa avcharana* is also indicated in *vaat dushit rakt vyadhies* in *Sushrut Samhita* [14].

Chinese cupping therapy can be equated with the *Shringa*. It works on the principle of vacuum extraction. Cupping targets soft tissue by applying local pressure to pain points and areas of swelling. It helps to extract blood from the body which may be harmful and in turn, overcome the potential adverse effects, leading to physiological well-being. It is thought to act mainly by increasing local blood circulation and relieving the painful muscle tension. It mainly involves improving microcirculation, promoting capillary endothelial cell repair, accelerating granulation, and angiogenesis in the regional tissues. This helps in normalizing the patient's functional state and progressive muscle relaxation. Cupping is the best deep tissue massage.

Snehan with *Tila taila* and *swedana* with *Dashmool kwath* together bring about *vatashamaka, balya*, effect in the body. The turmeric (*Curcuma longa*) powder helped for healing of small prick points wound.

Conclusion

Present case report concluded that *Raktmokshana* by cupping therapy is one of the parasurgicals option for management of *Gridhrasi*. Further studies are needed in more patients for its scientific validation.

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