

## A CRITICAL REVIEW ON DIFFERENTIAL DIAGNOSIS OF SHIRASHULA (HEADACHE) FROM CHARAK SAMHITA

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### ABSTRACT

*Rupa* (symptoms) is one of the important tools for understanding of any disease. In Ayurveda, *Shirashula* involves all the aches and discomforts located in *shira* (head). It may occur as a symptom of some underlying disease or as a problem in itself. One symptom might be common to many diseases. So, to make a diagnosis your provider will follow a careful step by step process of ruling out condition that share your symptoms until its clear which condition is most likely the cause of your illness i.e., differential diagnosis. An important step in making differential diagnosis is to make a list of all possible conditions that you might have. *Shirashula* is the most common reason for seeking medical help. So, it is important to enlist the causes of *Shirashula* from Ayurveda perspective which will help in differential

diagnosis. So, the present article focusses on to study the differential diagnosis of *Shirashula* from Charak samhita.

**KEYWORDS:** *Shirashula*, headache, differential diagnosis, Charak samhita.

### INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is based on many principles for treatment protocols. One of the principles is that a physician should first diagnose the disease and then select the proper medicine. Thereafter he should administer the therapy applying the knowledge of the science of medicine.<sup>[1]</sup> The physician who is well versed in diagnosing the disease, who knows about modalities to be used in therapy(that varies from place to place and season to season) is sure to accomplish the

desired outcome without any doubt.<sup>[2]</sup> Any disease can be diagnosed with the help of 5 things called as *Nidanpanchak* which includes *Nidan/Hetu* (causative factor), *Purvarupa* (premonitory symptoms), *Rupa* (symptoms), *Upashay* (relieving factors) and *Samprapti* (pathophysiology).<sup>[3]</sup>

Out of these 5 things, *Rupa* is one of the important thing. The signs and symptoms which are fully manifested are called as *Rupa or Linga*.<sup>[4]</sup> The presentation of manifested disease along with peculiar *dosha*, peculiar unripe and ripe state of *dosha* depicting specific symptoms can be easily understood with the help of *Rupa*.<sup>[5]</sup> The Tri aphorismic of Ayurveda described for both healthy and sick includes *Linga* i.e., symptomatology.<sup>[6]</sup> In *Nidan sthana* of *Charak samhita*, a compendium of symptomatology has been provided as a reckoner for an ayurveda practitioner to gain adequate knowledge of some of the major classes of diseases and diagnose them effectively.<sup>[7]</sup>

One symptom may be common to many diseases, one symptom may be related to only one disease, many symptoms may be associated with only one disease and many symptoms may be common to many diseases.<sup>[8]</sup> For example irregular onset (and similar other symptoms) appear in case of *Jwara* while similar symptom also occur in *Shwas*, *Hikka* and other similar diseases.<sup>[9]</sup> Hence, process of differential diagnosis which includes making a list of possible conditions that could be causing symptoms to patient.<sup>[10]</sup> It helps to narrow down the working diagnosis, guide medical evaluation and treatment, rule out life threatening or time critical condition and enable the doctor to have correct diagnosis.<sup>[11]</sup>

In Ayurveda, head is considered as *uttamanga*, as it is the seat of *Prana*, *indriya* (senses) and is one of the important 3 *marma* (vital points).<sup>[12,13,14,15,16,17]</sup> So, *Shirashula* also known as *Shiroroga* which involves all the aches and discomforts located in head holds an important place among *urdhvajatrugat vikara*.<sup>[18]</sup> In India, headache is as much as a problem as elsewhere in world with rising trend in young, which negatively affects quality of life. Survey shows that it has prevalence of 63.9% in female and 30.7% in males.<sup>[19]</sup>

Being an alarming problem, it needs effective and safe treatment. Though, modern therapeutics has a broad spectrum of drugs for its management, but these are having serious side effects and are habit forming.<sup>[20]</sup> Finding the cause of disease and treating it accordingly is the first step in solving any disease condition.<sup>[21]</sup> So, the present article focuses to study the probable different causes of headache which will help in its precise diagnosis and treatment.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

Charak samhita along with Chakrapani commentary, articles from reputed journals, websites and books were studied regarding the differential diagnosis of headache. The related references were collected, studied and analysed critically to get upto a conclusion.

## RESULT

**Table no. 1: Differential diagnosis of Shirashula.**

Sr. no	Term used for headache	Differential diagnosis of headache	Reference
1.	<i>Shiroruja</i>	<i>Mutra vega nigraha</i>	Ch. Su. 7/6
2.	<i>Shirashula</i>	<i>Purish veg nigraha</i>	Ch. Su.7/8
3.	<i>Shiroroga</i>	<i>Kshavathu veg nigraha</i>	Ch. Su. 7/16
4.	<i>Shiroroga</i>	<i>Jrumbha veg nigraha</i>	Ch. Su. 7/23
5.	<i>Shirashula</i>	Consequence of improper day time sleep	Ch. Su. 21/45
6.	<i>Shiroruk</i>	<i>Shonitaj roga</i>	Ch. Su. 24/13
7.	<i>Shankhanistoda</i>	<i>Vataj jwara</i>	Ch. Ni. 1/21
8.	<i>Shirashula</i>	<i>Vataj Gulma</i>	Ch. Ni. 3/7
9.	<i>Shiroabhitap</i>	<i>Kaphaj Gulma</i>	Ch. Ni. 3/11
10.	<i>Shira upahanyate</i>	<i>Sahasaj shosha</i>	Ch. Ni. 6/4
11.	<i>Shira upahanti</i>	<i>Sandhranaj shosha</i>	Ch. Ni. 6/6
12.	<i>Shiroruk</i>	<i>Vata pittaj jwara</i>	Ch.Chi.3/85
13.	<i>Shiras atiruk</i>	<i>Vata pitta ulban manda Kapha jwara</i>	Ch. Chi.3/91
14.	<i>Shirashul</i>	<i>Vata ulban sannipataj jwara</i>	Ch.Chi.3/94
15.	<i>Shiroruk</i>	<i>Vatolban, Kapha Madhya, alpa pitta jwara</i>	Ch. Chi. 3/95
16.	<i>Shiroruk</i>	<i>Kapholban, Madhya vata, alpa pitta jwara</i>	Ch. Chi. 3/100
17.	<i>Shiroruja</i>	<i>Sannipataj jwara</i>	Ch.Chi.3/103
18.	<i>Shiroruja</i>	<i>Vataj Gulma</i>	Ch. Chi. 5/10
19.	<i>Shirashul</i>	<i>Sahasaj yakshma</i>	Ch. Chi. 8/16
20.	<i>Shirashul</i>	<i>Vegavrodhaj yakshma</i>	Ch. Chi.8/22
21.	<i>Shirashul</i>	<i>Dhatukshayaj yakshma</i>	Ch. Chi.8/25
22.	<i>Shirashul</i>	<i>Vishamashanaj yakshma</i>	Ch. Chi. 8/31
23.	<i>Shiroruja</i>	<i>Ekadash rajyakshma</i>	Ch. Chi. 8/45
24.	<i>Shirashul</i>	<i>Pratishyay rupa</i>	Ch.Chi.8/49
25.	<i>Shirashul</i>	<i>Yakshma rupa</i>	Ch. Chi. 8/56
26.	<i>Shirashul</i>	<i>Baddhagudodara</i>	Ch. Chi.13/40
27.	<i>Shirashul</i>	<i>Sahaj arsha</i>	Ch. Chi. 14/8
28.	<i>Shirashul</i>	<i>Vataj arsha</i>	Ch. Chi. 14/11
29.	<i>Shiroruja</i>	Consequence of stopping PR bleeding at early stage	Ch. Chi. 14/79
30.	<i>Shiroruja</i>	<i>Ajeerna</i>	Ch. Chi. 15/45
31.	<i>Shiroruja</i>	<i>Vataj Pandu</i>	Ch. Chi. 16/ 10
32.	<i>Shirashul</i>	<i>Vataj Kasa</i>	Ch. Chi. 18/10
33.	<i>Murdhatoda</i>	<i>Vataj chardi</i>	Ch. Chi. 20/8
34.	<i>Shiroruk</i>	<i>Pittaj visarpa</i>	Ch. Chi. 21/22
35.	<i>Shiroruk</i>	<i>Pana anna savisha gandha</i>	Ch. Chi. 23/113

36.	<i>Shirashul</i>	<i>Vataj madatyay</i>	Ch. Chi. 24/91
37.	<i>Shirovedana</i>	<i>Madatyaya rupa</i>	Ch. Chi. 24/102
38.	<i>Shirashul</i>	<i>Vikshaya rupa</i>	Ch. Chi. 24/202
39.	<i>Shiro abhitap</i>	<i>Udavarta</i>	Ch. Chi. 26/9
40.	<i>Murdharoga</i>	<i>Vataj pratishyay</i>	Ch. Chi. 26/105
41.	<i>Shirsharoga</i>	If <i>dushta Pratishyay</i> is ignored	Ch. Chi. 26/109
42.	<i>Shirohundan</i>	Vitiated <i>Vayu</i>	Ch. Chi. 28/23
43.	<i>Shankharuk</i>	<i>Ardit</i>	Ch. Chi. 28/42
44.	<i>Shiroroga</i>	<i>Arishta lakshana</i>	Ch. In. 10/20
45.	<i>Shiroruk</i>	<i>Ayoga of Niruha</i>	Ch. Si. 1/42
46.	<i>Shiro toda</i>	<i>Atiyoga of Shirovirechana</i>	Ch. Si. 1/52
47.	<i>Shirashula ativruddhi</i>	If <i>Vaman</i> is given to patient of headache	Ch. Si. 2/9
48.	<i>Shiroroga</i>	<i>Peeta Sneha madya toya patu kamanam</i>	Ch. Si. 2/21
49.	<i>Shirapeedana</i>	<i>Vyavay Vyayam pana klantanam</i>	Ch. Si. 2/21
50.	<i>Shiroarti</i>	<i>Peedyamane antara antara</i>	Ch. Si. 5/13
51.	<i>Shiroruja</i>	When medicine given for purification is remaining	Ch. Si. 6/27
52.	<i>Shiroruja</i>	<i>Adhman basti vyapat</i>	Ch. Si. 6/59
53.	<i>Shiroarti</i>	<i>Basti vyapat</i>	Ch. Si. 7/5
54.	<i>Shira peedayan</i>	<i>Apatantrak</i>	Ch. Si. 9/12
55.	<i>Shiroruk</i>	<i>Shankhak</i>	Ch. Si. 9/71
56.	<i>Shankhavedana</i>	<i>Ardhavbhedak</i>	Ch. Si. 9/75
57.	<i>Shirashula</i>	<i>Suryavarta</i>	Ch. Si. 9/80
58.	<i>Shiratapa</i>	Complication of talking loudly after purification	Ch. Si. 12/13(1)
59.	<i>Shirashul</i>	Jolting after purification	Ch. Si. 12/13(2)
60.	<i>Shirashul</i>	Complication of doing sex after purification	Ch. Si. 12/13(8)

## DISCUSSION

Acharya Charaka has quoted the symptoms of headache in various *Shiroroga* as well as other systemic diseases. *Shiroruja*, *Shiroroga*, *Shiroruk*, *shirnistoda*, *shiroabhitap*, *shira upahanti*, *murdhatoda*, *shirovedana*, *murdharoga*, *shiroarti*, *shankha Vedana*, *shirapedana*, *shankha Vedana*, *shiratapa*, *shirapidana*, *shankha ruk* are the synonyms used for headache in Charak samhita. From the above data it is observed that following are the main causative factors for headache –

A. *Shiroroga* – Diseases of head like *Ardhavabhedak*,<sup>[22]</sup> *Suryavarta*,<sup>[23]</sup> *Shankhak*,<sup>[24]</sup> *Ardit*<sup>[25]</sup> have the complaint of *shirashula*.<sup>[26]</sup>

- B. Vitiated *Vayu* – As the vitiated *Vayu* is responsible for splitting, pricking or aching type of pain. So, headache is symptom of vitiated *Vayu*.<sup>[27]</sup> There are 5 types of *Vayu* namely *Prana*, *Udana*, *Vyana*, *Samana* and *Apana*.<sup>[28]</sup> Out of which –
- a) Vitiating of *Prana* –
    - 1. Suppression of natural urge of sneezing leads to vitiating of *Prana*,<sup>[29]</sup> as sneezing is the function of *Prana*.<sup>[30]</sup>
    - 2. *Pratishyay* especially *Vataj Pratishyay* where the *Kapha* or blood or *Pitta* located at the root of nasal passage and head is afflicted with *Vayu* has headache as a symptom.<sup>[31,32]</sup>
  - b) Vitiating of *Udana* –
    - 1. *Vataj Kasa* – in which *Vata* is being obstructed in lower region of body, moves upwards, afflicts the channels of circulation in upper part of body, takes over function of *Udana* and gets localized in throat and chest results in headache.<sup>[33]</sup>
    - 2. *Vataj Chardi* – *Vayu* gets excessively aggravated in GIT vitiates local *dosha* and push them upwards leading to vitiating of *Udana* and so results in headache.<sup>[34]</sup>
    - 3. Due to speaking loudly or in excess before attaining the normal state of health after purification therapy results in vitiating of *Udana* which in turn leads to headache.<sup>[35]</sup>
  - c) Vitiating of *Samana* – *Ajeerna* where *Saman vayu* is vitiating results in headache.<sup>[36]</sup>
  - d) Vitiating of *Vyana* – The *rathakshobha* (jolting) after purification leads to *Vayu* vitiating which leads to headache.<sup>[37]</sup>
  - e) Vitiating of *Apana* – The suppression of natural urges of urine<sup>[38]</sup> and faeces<sup>[39]</sup> results in headache as they come under control of *Apana*.<sup>[40]</sup> Similarly *Sandharanaj shosha* also results in headache.<sup>[41]</sup> Copulation after purification results in *Apana* vitiating and cause headache.<sup>[42]</sup> Obliteration of passage of colon leads to morbidity of *Apana vata* which in turn impairs the functioning of the *agni* as well as obstructs the excretion of stools and obliterates the movement of *Pitta* and *Kapha* which in turn results in headache.<sup>[43]</sup> *Arsha* where *Apana vayu* gets obstructed by haemorrhoid mass and moves upwards leading to aggravation of *Samana*, *Vyana*, *Prana*, *Udana*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* results in headache.<sup>[44]</sup> *Udavarta* where vitiating of *Apana* obstructs movement of stool, urine and flatus and results in headache.<sup>[45]</sup>
- C. Vitiating blood – the vitiating *dosha* further vitiates blood at head which results in diseases of head having various symptoms.<sup>[46]</sup> Hence, all disorders of headache are having vitiating of blood.<sup>[47]</sup>

- D. *Santarpanottha vyadhi* – *vishamashana* ( improper dietary habits) and improper day time sleeping which are the causative factors for *santarpanottha vyadhi* leads to headache.<sup>[48,49,50]</sup>
- E. *Apatarpanottha vyadhi* – Diseases like *Vataj jwara*,<sup>[51]</sup> *Vataj Gulma*,<sup>[52]</sup> *Sahasaj shosha*,<sup>[53]</sup> *Dhatukshaya yakshma*,<sup>[54]</sup> *Yakshma*,<sup>[55]</sup> *Sannipataj jwara*,<sup>[56]</sup> *Vata pittaj jwara*,<sup>[57]</sup> *Vata ulban Pitta Madhya Kapha alpa jwara*,<sup>[58]</sup> *Vataj Pandu*,<sup>[59]</sup> *Vataj Madatyaya*,<sup>[60]</sup> *Vikshaya*<sup>[61]</sup> which cause *apatarpana* and lead to vitiation of *Vayu* and thus cause headache.<sup>[62]</sup>
- F. Other – *Ayoga of Niruha basti*,<sup>[63]</sup> *Atiyoga of Shirovirechana*,<sup>[64]</sup> improper squeezing of *basti putaka*,<sup>[65]</sup> abdominal distension as complication of *basti*,<sup>[66]</sup> *basti vyapat*,<sup>[67]</sup> signs of undigested medicine of purification,<sup>[68]</sup> if emesis is given to patient of headache,<sup>[69]</sup> if *shirovirechana* is given to those who have taken fatty substances or desirous of taking wine or water or take after head evacuation, if *Niruha basti* is given to exhausted by sexual intercourse, physical exercise and intake of alcohol.<sup>[70]</sup> ignorance of *dushta pratishyaya*,<sup>[71]</sup> intake of poisonous smell, food or water<sup>[72]</sup> results in headache.
- G. *Arishta lakshana* (probable signs of death)<sup>[73]</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Headache is one of the most common symptoms where patients seek medical help. Acharya Charaka has given the importance to *shirashula* as is the symptom related to one of the most vital part in body i.e., head. It occurs as a symptom in both *Shiropoga* as well as other systemic diseases. So, to reach at precise diagnosis the physician should know the list of probable causes manifesting the same symptoms. *Shirashula* occurs mainly as a result of *Vayu prakar* vitiation, impure blood, *Santarpanottha* or *apatarpanottha* condition, other causes related to improper purification and may appear as *arishta lakshana* apart from various *Shiropoga*. So, in the patients presenting with headache following probabilities should be ruled out to reach at diagnosis precisely. An observational study should be carried out to analyse most prevalent cause of headache in patients out of all these.

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