



## **SHIRAH – SHOOLA W.S.R. HEADACHE – AN AETIOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING**

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### **ABSTRACT:**

In Ayurveda prime importance has been given to *Shirah* (Head). Thus, all the Acharya have described various diseased conditions as *Shiro-roga*. They can be co-related with Headache. It is the most common disorder of the nervous system. It is most troublesome in the productive years (late teens to 50s), estimates of their financial cost to society – principally from lost working hours and reduced productivity – are massive. Though, most of the sufferers are not receiving effective treatment due to lack of proper knowledge of the disease. In Ayurveda headache can be correlated with *Shirah-shoola*. It is the cardinal symptom as well as synonym of *Shiro-roga* described in detail by various Acharya. By understanding Nidana and avoiding them can lead to prevention of Headache. “*Nidana Parivarjana*” is described as first line of treatment. By understanding the Nidana of *Shiro-roga* it can be preventable and can be effectively managed.

**Keywords:** *Shiro-roga*, *Shirah-shoola*, Headache, Aetiological factors, *Nidana*

**INTRODUCTION:** Ayurveda is the science of life aimed to maintain the health of a healthy person and cure the diseased of the sufferer.<sup>i</sup> Our ancient sages have described vital organs and have given prime importance to three vital organs, as the existence of body depends upon the vital organs. *Shirah* is one of them where life along with sense faculties resides.<sup>ii</sup> In Ayurveda, different opinions are available regarding *Shiro-roga*. Among them especially Acharya Charaka and Acharya Sushruta have considered *Shiro-roga*, where *Shoola* is the main symptom. Headache disorders, characterized by recurrent headache, are among the most common disorders of the nervous system. Globally, it has been estimated that prevalence among adults of current headache disorder (symptomatic at least

once within the last year) is about 50%. Half to three quarters of adults aged 18 – 65 years in the world have had headache in the last year. Headache disorders are a public-health concern given the associated disability and financial costs to society. As headache disorders are most troublesome in the productive years (late teens to 50s), estimates of their financial cost to society – principally from lost working hours and reduced productivity – are massive.<sup>iii</sup> Headache is high among causes of consulting medical practitioners: one-third of all neurological consultations were for headache, in one survey. Yet, many of those troubled by headache do not receive effective care. Main barrier to effective care is lack of knowledge about Headache.<sup>iv</sup>

Present study focuses on aetiological factors described in Ayurveda for *Shiro-roga* and how it can be interpreted in present era to better understanding of *Shiro-roga* as well as Headache.

**DEFINITION:** The word Headache can be understood by “*Shirah-shoola*” as per Ayurveda. In Ayurveda *Shirah-shoola* is the main symptom as well as synonyms of various *shiro-roga* (disorders of Head).<sup>v</sup> Headaches are a type of pain referred to the surface of the head from deep head structures. Some headaches result from pain stimuli arising inside the cranium, but others result from pain arising outside the cranium, such as from the nasal sinuses.<sup>vi</sup>

**NIDANA:** *Nidana* means causative factors.<sup>vii</sup> Acharya Charaka has given *Nidana* of *Shiro-roga* in *Sutra sthana*<sup>viii</sup> and Acharya Vaghbhatta has given in *Uttar Sthana*<sup>ix</sup>. Among these *nidana* few of them are discussed in present study as follow

- *Guru Ahara*
- *Amla – Harita Ahara, Madhya sevana*
- *Atisheeta Jala sevana*
- *Vegsandharana*
- *Ratrijagarna*
- *Diwaswapna*
- *Gandha asatmya, Rajo – dhuma samsparsha*
- *Shiro – Abhigat*
- *Ati Bhashya*

**DISCUSSION:** *Nidana* can be divided into main 3 groups for better understanding. It is

1. *Aharaja Nidana* can be understood as dietary factors.
2. *Viharaja Nidana* can be understood as factors related to a person's day to day life style or habits.
3. *Mansika Nidana* can be taken as factors related to a person's mental status.

## 1. AHARAJA NIDANA

### a) *Guru Ahara* –

- i) *Guru Ahara* is indicated under the *Nidana* of *Rakta dusti, Tridosha prakopa* as well as in the *nidana* of *Ama*.<sup>x</sup> This *Ama* leads to development of *Ajirna* which is a primary cause of *Shiro-roga*.
- ii) Eating indigestible food or difficult to digest food like chocolates, cheese, wheat flour etc. acts as a trigger leading to gastro-intestinal disturbance. Gastro - intestinal disturbance is known to cause headaches. There is a higher prevalence of headaches among people who regularly experience GI symptoms.<sup>xi</sup>

### b) *Amla – Harita Ahara, Ati Madya Sevana* –

- i) Acharya Charaka has mentioned that intake of excessive of *Amla rasa, Harita Aahara, Madya, Krodh* (~anger) as the causes for *rakta dushti*<sup>xii</sup> and *Shiro-roga* occurs due to *dushta rakta*.<sup>xiii</sup>
- ii) Aspartame has conflicting evidence with two positive and two negative provocation studies. Observational studies provide modest evidence that gluten - and histamine - containing foods as well as alcohol may precipitate headaches in subgroups of patients. Two of three randomized controlled trials reported that an elimination diet of IgG positive foods significantly decreased frequency of headache/migraine during the treatment as compared to baseline time period.<sup>xiv</sup>

### c) *Atisheeta jala sevana*

- i) Consuming extreme cold food or water is one of the *nidana* of aggravation of *Vata* and *Kapha* in body as they also possess *Sheeta Guna*. This aggravated *Vata* and *Kapha* can be the one of the cause to generate *Shirah-Shoola* specially *Ardhavabhedaka*.<sup>xv</sup>
- ii) The cold food or drink may temporarily alter blood flow in the nervous system, causing a brief

headache. Blood vessels constrict to prevent the loss of body heat and then relax again to let blood flow rise. This results in a burst of pain that subsides once the body adapts to the temperature change.<sup>xvi</sup>

## 2. VIHARAJA NIDANA

### a) Sandharana

- i) Suppressing natural urges is given in *Nidana* of *Shirah-shoola*. In Charak Samhita Sutra Sthana Chapter 9 there are some direct reference related to *Shirah-shoola* occurring due to *dharana* of these 4 *vega* like *Mutravega dharana*, *Purisha vega dharana*, *Kshavathu vega dharana* and *Nindra vega dharana*.
- ii) When a person suppresses the natural urges of *Mutra* (urine), *Mala* (Stool), *Kshudha* (Hunger) or even *Ashru* (Crying) due to any reason, the *Vata* gets aggravated. The *Vega* are the involuntary actions of the body. Trying to withhold it will cause *Vata prakopa* as well as *Vimargagamana* of *Vata* because *Vegapravartan* is the function of *Vata*<sup>xvii</sup>.

### b) Ratiagrana

- *Nidra* is considered to be one among the three pillars which support the body. Awakening for a long time in the night vitiates *Vata* and can produce *Shirah-shoola*.
- An average adult needs between 7.5 and 8 hours of sleep per night<sup>xviii</sup> for the total rest of physical and mental functions. During night sleep brain minimizes the work of body system as well as itself. If a person wakes till late in night, his brain cannot rest properly and that can hamper the function of brain and can cause headache.

### c) Diwaswapa

- Sleeping in daytime can vitiate *Tridosha*<sup>xix</sup>. This vitiated *tridosha* reside

in *Shirah* (~head) and may cause *Tridoshaja Shiro-roga*<sup>xx</sup>.

- Poor sleep quality was the strongest correlate of both migraine and non-migraine headache. Poor sleep quality also was found to mediate the effect of sensitivity to headaches triggered by lack of sleep, in the order of 10% of the effect.<sup>xxi</sup>

### d) Uchche Bhashya

- i) Talking much loudly and for a long time causes *Vata vridhdhi*.<sup>xxii xxiii</sup>

### e) Meghagamana (~ cloudy atmosphere), Avashayay (~ dew), Pragvat (~ facing direct wind or eastern wind), Hima (~ cold weather/climate)

- i) *Sheeta* is one of the *Guna* of *Vata* and *Kapha*. Affection with cold wind, walking in cold weather without covering the head etc. will cause *Vata – Kapha prakopa* and decreases the body temperature. Decreased body temperature leads to constriction of the blood vessels<sup>xxiv</sup> causing headache.<sup>xxv</sup>

### f) Atimaithuna

- i) Excessive sexual indulgence is described as one of the *nidana* for aggravation of the *Vata*<sup>xvi</sup>. This can also produce degeneration of *dhatu* in reverse order which can further aggravate the *Vata*<sup>xxvii</sup>.

- ii) There are three kinds of headache associated with Sexual activity. Among them the second type of headache, more severe and explosive in onset, appears immediately before or at the moment of orgasm, presumably caused by the increase in blood pressure at that time.<sup>xxviii</sup>

### g) Gandh Asatmya, Ghrata Rajo – Dhuma

- i) Having exposure to *Asatmya gandha* (smell which is intolerable to a person), *Dhum samsparsa* (exposure to

smoke) and *Dhuli* (exposure to dust) can vitiate directly *Vata – Rakta* and cause headache. As these types of *nidana* comes under *Agantuja* and *Abhigatajana* *nidana*. It does directly *Rakta Dhatus dushti* which may cause *Shiro-roga*.<sup>xxix</sup>

#### **h) Atapa**

i) Working under extreme heat of sun can cause vitiation of *Rakta Dhatus*<sup>xxx</sup> Vitiating *Rakta Dhatus* is one of the factors of *Samprapti* of *Shiro-roga*.

#### **i) Shiro Abhigata**

i) Injury to *Shirah* may lead to direct vitiation of *Rakta Dhatus* and also provocation of *Vata Dosha*.<sup>xxxi</sup>  
ii) Headaches occurring due to other condition like any injury to head consider under Secondary Headaches.

### **3. MANSIKA NIDANA**

#### **a) Manstapa**

Acharya Charaka has described *Manasa Santapa* as one of the cause of *Shirah-shoola*.<sup>xxxii</sup>

Stress is the factor listed most often by migraine sufferers as a trigger for their attacks, but in addition there is evidence that stress can help initiate migraine in those predisposed to the disorder, and may also contribute to migraine chronification. Migraine attacks themselves can act as a stressor, thereby potentially leading to a vicious circle of increasing migraine frequency.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

By analysing above *Nidana*, it is seen that most of the *Nidana* are *Vata* vitiating it also said that no pain can occur without involvement of *Vata*. *Vata* is main *dosh*a in manifestation of *Shirah-shoola*, analyses of *Nidana* supports this fact. These *Nidana* also indicates faulty life style which are very much common in present days as such late night sleep, day time sleep, excessive alcohol indulgence, to eat without hunger or to suppress the

natural urges of body due to social or personal problems or having excessive intake of cold food or over use of Air conditioner which can create cold climate, Stress etc.

**CONCLUSION:** Treatment is which eliminate the disease from body without developing any complications.<sup>xxxiv</sup> For this purpose it is necessary to understand *Nidana*. “*Nidana Parivarjana*”<sup>xxxv</sup> is given as the first line of treatment. Here, *Nidana* mentioned for *Shiro-roga* are easily avoidable.

It is observed that *Nidana* of *Shiro-roga* mentioned in ancient times plays very important role in manifestation of *Shiro-roga* in present days as well. By understanding and avoiding the *Nidana* of *Shiro-roga* not only no recurrence can be achieved but also it can be preventable. Even for proper treatment avoidance of *Nidana* is must. A proper disciplined life style and balanced dietary habits can be the best way not only to prevent but also to cure *Shiro-roga* (Headache).

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