

Unit 33. Karnaroga-1

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A) Karṇasūla (Otalgia) • B) Karṇa-śopha (Swelling of the Ear)

Learning objectives

By the end, you should be able to: define and classify Karṇa-roga; explain the nidāna (etiology), samprāpti (pathogenesis), lakṣaṇa (clinical features), bheda (types), and sādhyāsādhyatā (prognosis) of **Karṇasūla** and **Karṇa-śopha**; and plan yukti-based **sthānika upakrama** (local procedures) and śamana/śodhana where appropriate.

Classical foundation (Saṃhitā basis)

Suśruta enumerates 28 ear disorders and explicitly lists **Karṇasūla** (ear-ache) and **Śopha** (swelling) among them:

“कर्णशूलं प्रणादश्च बाधिर्यं क्ष्वेड एव च ।
कर्णस्रावः कर्णकण्डूः कर्णवर्चस्तथैव च ॥३॥” — **Suśruta Saṃhitā, Uttara-tantra 20/3.**

“कर्णाबुद्धं सप्तविधं शोफश्चापि चतुर्विधः ।
एते कर्णगता रोगा अष्टाविंशतिरिक्ताः ॥५॥” — **Suśruta Saṃhitā, Uttara-tantra 20/5.**

Karṇasūla is defined as Vāta deranged in the śrotra-mārga causing intense pain:

“समीरणः श्रोत्रगतोऽन्यथाचरः समन्ततः शूलमतीव कर्णयोः... स कर्णशूलः” — **Suśruta Saṃhitā, Uttara-tantra 20/6.**

General regimen (sāmānya cikitsā) for ear diseases is also stated:

“सामान्यं कर्णरोधेषु धृतपानं रसायनम् ।
अव्यायामोऽशिरःस्नानं ब्रह्मचर्यमकथनम् ॥३॥” — **Suśruta Saṃhitā, Uttara-tantra 21/3.**

And for Vāta-Kapha-provoked ear pain, **nāḍī-sveda** with drugs boiled in **āraṇāla** is indicated:

“आरनालशुतैरभिर्नाडीस्वेदः प्रयोजितः ।
कफवातसमुत्थानं कर्णशूलं निरस्यति ॥७॥” — **Suśruta Saṃhitā, Uttara-tantra 21/7.**

A) Karṇasūla (Otalgia)

Definition (paribhāṣā)

Acute or chronic pain perceived in the ear, arising due to **Vāta-prakopa** in the śabda-vāha srotas (auditory pathway),



often **āvaraṇa** by Kapha/Pitta aggravates the pain quality. (Uttara-tantra 20/6).

Nidāna (etiology)

- **Doṣa-prakopaka**: rūkṣa/śīta āhāra, atyvihāra/ativyāyāma, rūkṣa-upavāsa, vāta-vṛddhikara vega-dharana; exposure to cold wind/water (head immersion), trauma to head/ear; secondary to **karṇa-srāva/vidradhi** maturation. (Synthesised from Karṇa-roga adhyāya; see causes of srāva & vidradhi 20/9–10, 20/14–15).
- **Contemporary correlates**: primary otalgia (otitis externa/media) or **referred otalgia** (TMJ, dental, tonsillar, cervical spine). Recognise both during history.

Samprāpti (pathogenesis)

1. **Hetu sevana** → **Doṣa prakopa** (predominantly Vāta; sometimes with Kapha/Pitta).
2. **Sañcaya-prakopa** in **śabda-vāha srotas**; Kapha āvaraṇa or Pitta uṣṇatā alters local milieu → **śūla** (colicky/pricking), **dāha** (if Pitta), **gaurava/stambha** (if Kapha).
3. Untreated: progression to **pranāda/śabda** (tinnitus-like, 20/7–9), **srāva** (20/10), **bādhīrya** (20/8).

Lakṣaṇa (clinical features)

- **Vātaja**: tivrā tīkṣṇa vedanā (pricking/colicky), viṣama vṛddhi with cold, relief with warmth/oil.
- **Pittaja**: daha-rāga-sphūrti, ushnatā, possible **pāka** tendency.
- **Kaphaja**: guru-mṛdu śūla, kandu/āvaraṇa-bhāva, śīta-priyatā.
- **Upadrava**: śabda-śravaṇa (pranāda/ kṣveḍa), srāva, bādhīrya. (Cross-refer 20/7–10).

Bheda (types)

Prayāḥ doṣa-bala-anupāta → **Vātaja/Pittaja/Kaphaja/Sannipātaja** Karṇaśūla (yukti-based classification within Suśruta's doṣika framework).

Sādhyāsādhyatā (prognosis)

- **Sādhyā**: nava, doṣa-pradhāna without structural damage; responds to snehana-sveda-karṇa-pūraṇa.
- **Kṛcchra**: chronic with recurrent srāva, post-traumatic neuralgic patterns.
- **Asādhyā-liṅga**: dīrgha-kāla bādhīrya, śoṣa with severe structural damage (20/8).

Cikitsā-sūtra (treatment principles)

1) Sāmānya upakrama (Uttara-tantra 21/3–5):

- **Ghṛta-pāna, rasāyana; avyāyāma, aśīras-snāna, brahmacarya, alpa-kathanam.**
- **Snehana-sveda** with **Vātahara** measures; **nāḍī-sveda, piṇḍa-sveda.**

2) Sthānika upakrama (Karṇa-kriyākālpa)

- **Nāḍī-sveda** with drugs boiled in **āraṇāla** (bilva, eraṇḍa-mūla, arka, varṣābhū, dhattūra, śigru etc.) for **Vāta-Kaphaja** Karṇaśūla (21/6–7).
- **Piṇḍa-sveda** using māṃsa-piṇḍa or kṣīra piṇḍa (21/8).
- **Karṇa-pūraṇa** (instillation) with **Bala-taila (śatapāka), kṣīra-siddha sneha,** or warm ghṛta; **śiro-basti, nasya, mūrdhni taila** adjuvants (21/11–13).
- **Patra-puta taila-sveda/dravana** using heated **aśvattha-patra-khalla** to drip warm oil on the meatus for immediate pain relief (21/9–10).

Karṇa-pūraṇa — concise OSCE-style steps

1. **Prakārśa**: select Vātahara sneha (e.g., Bala-taila) warmed to **su-saha** temperature.
2. **Position**: lateral decubitus, affected ear upward; gentle **pramārjana** (wax/crust removal) first.
3. **Instillation**: 8–10 drops slowly; maintain for **5–10 minutes**; gentle tragal pump.
4. **After-care**: cotton plug briefly; avoid wind/water exposure for 12–24 h; repeat as advised.



3) Anubandha according to doṣa

- **Vātaja:** snehapāna (mṛdu), mūrdhni taila, svedana predominates.
- **Pittaja:** tikta-kaṣāya siddha-kṣīra-sneha, śīta-upakrama; avoid over-heat.
- **Kaphaja:** dhoopana, lekhana-pravṛtti; gentle karṇa-prakṣālaṇa after softening.

4) When to consider śodhana

- Associated **āmāvasthā**, kapha-āvaraṇa, or repeated srāva → mṛdu **virecana**; in vāta-kapha prakopa with gambhīra vedanā, course-correct after deepana-pācana.

Contemporary correlation & safety

- **Red flags:** severe pain with fever, post-auricular tenderness/swelling, vertigo, facial weakness, diabetes/immunosuppression → urgent ENT evaluation.
- Avoid forceful syringing in suspected perforation/active otitis media.

B) Karṇa-śoṣha (Otitis/perichondrial swelling spectrum)

Definition & classification

Localized or diffuse swelling of the auricle/external auditory canal due to doṣa-pradhānya or secondary to trauma/infection. Suśruta counts **four types of śoṣha** in the ear (Uttara-tantra 20/5), reflecting the standard doṣika quadri-grouping.

Suśruta also notes that the **liṅga** (signs) of **śoṣha** and **arbuda** are to be understood as described elsewhere, instructing the physician to examine and treat appropriately:

“...प्रदिष्टलिङ्गान्यरशासि तत्त्वतस्तथैव शोफार्बुदलिङ्गमीरितम्... योजयेदिहैव... भिषग्वरः ॥१६ ॥” — **Uttara-tantra 20/16**.

Nidāna

- **Doṣa-prakopaka:** trauma (piḍana/cheda), insect bite, immersion/soaking, exposure to cold wind; underlying **karṇa-pāka/vidradhi** evolution (20/14–15).
- **Anubandhi hetu:** hygiene lapses, scratching (kṛmi-karṇa risk, 20/13), dermatitis.

Lakṣaṇa (doṣa-wise features)

Doṣa	Likely features in śoṣha
Vātaja	śūla-adhika, śīta-sparśa-sukha, tanvatā; less redness
Pittaja	daha-rāga-śoṣha, uṣṇatā, paka-pravṛtti (20/15)
Kaphaja	gaurava-staimitya, manda-rāga, kandu/āvaraṇa
Raktaja	raktima-śoṣha, sparśāsahiṣṇutā (by inference from general śoṣha-lakṣaṇa tradition)

Bheda

- **Doṣaja śoṣhāḥ** (caturvidha).
- **Pūyāyana/pāka-sañjā** when Pitta dominates (karṇa-pāka sequence 20/15).

Upadrava

- **Karṇa-srāva, vidradhi**, canal stenosis; secondary **bādhirya** if chronic fibrosis.



Sādhyāsādhyatā

- **Sādhyā**: recent, doṣaja without necrosis.
- **Kṛcchra**: recurrent perichondrial involvement.
- **Asādhyā**: cartilage necrosis/auricular deformity.

Cikitsā-sūtra

1) Sāmānya

Adopt the regimen in **Uttara-tantra 21** (ghṛta-pāna, rest, aśiras-snāna) during acute pain phases; protect from wind/wetness.

2) Sthānika upakrama

- **Sveda** (mild-moderate) tailored to doṣa: Vātaja/Kaphaja benefit from **nāḍī-/piṇḍa-sveda**; avoid excessive heat in Pittaja. (21/5-8).
- **Karṇa-pūraṇa** with **Bala-taila (śatapāka)** or suitable kṣīra-sneha when pain predominates; consider **śiro-basti, nasya** for head-doṣa kṣobha (21/11-13).
- **Dhoopana** (guggulu-sa-ghṛta, 21/11) for Kapha-prādhānya; gentle **prakṣālana** after softening crusts.

3) Pāka/Vidradhi stage

- Follow principles from 20/14-15: manage paka with Pitta-śamana; if **paripakva vidradhi**, surgical drainage under asepsis by an adept śalya-tantrī (location-safe incision lines), then **vṛṇa-karma** with suitable lepa/prakṣālana—protecting cartilage.

4) Pathya-apathya (concise)

- **Pathya**: warm, unctuous, easy-to-digest food; adequate rest; head protection from wind/water.
- **Apathya**: exposure to cold water (head immersion), loud shouting, night-outs, rūkṣa/kaṭu-tikta in excess during acute pain (20/3, 21/3).

Clinical pearls (exam-friendly)

- **Acute diffuse canal swelling + severe pain** → think external otitis; in Ayurveda, **Kaphaja/Vātānubandha śopha**—start with snehana-sveda, dhoopana, then karṇa-pūraṇa once tenderness reduces.
- **Warm oil drops** provide rapid analgesia (21/9-10)—quote and justify in viva.
- Never syringe if perforation is suspected; avoid aggressive instrumentation.

Quick differentials table (for viva)

Presentation	Ayurvedic lens	Modern correlate (for correlation only)
Sudden severe ear pain after cold exposure	Vātaja Karṇaśūla (20/6)	Eustachian spasm / barotrauma
Pain + itching, canal swelling	Kaphaja śopha ± kandu	Otitis externa
Burning pain + redness, early discharge	Pittānubandha śopha/pāka (20/15)	Furunculosis/acute OE
Chronic dull pain + intermittent discharge	Doṣa-sāma with srāva (20/10, 20/16)	CSOM/eczema of canal

Self-check (1-minute revision)

- **Define Karṇaśūla** in Suśruta's words (20/6).
- **List four sāmānya measures** from 21/3.



- Name two sthānika procedures with one classical reference each (e.g., nāḍī-sveda 21/7, karṇa-pūraṇa/śatapāka Bala-taila 21/13).

Assessment

A. MCQs (mark one best answer)

- Karṇa-roga are stated to be 28 in number in:
A. Suśruta Sūtra
B. Suśruta Uttara 20
C. Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya Uttara 17
D. Caraka Cikitsā 26
Ans: B.
- Core definition of Karṇaśūla emphasises deranged **Vāta** in śrotra-mārga in:
A. SH Uttara 21/3
B. SH Uttara 20/6
C. AH Uttara 18/5
D. SS Nidāna 1
Ans: B.
- Sāmānya upakrama “ghṛtapāna, rasāyana, aśiras-snāna” appears in:
A. Uttara 21/3
B. Uttara 20/5
C. Uttara 21/7
D. Uttara 22/1
Ans: A.
- Nāḍī-sveda with āraṇāla-śṛta dravya is specially indicated for:
A. Pitta-ja śopha only
B. Vāta-Kapha-samutthāna Karṇaśūla
C. Rakta-ja śoṭha only
D. All nasal disorders
Ans: B.
- “Śophaś cāpi caturvidhaḥ” refers to:
A. Four nasal swellings
B. Four ear swellings
C. Four head swellings
D. Four eye swellings
Ans: B.
- Rapid analgesia by warm oil dripping from heated aśvattha-patra cup is described in:
A. 21/9-10
B. 20/9-10
C. 21/3-4
D. 22/5-6
Ans: A.
- A likely upadrava of untreated Karṇaśūla, per Suśruta, is:
A. Arma
B. Pranāda/Śabda-śravaṇa
C. Netra-abhisyaṇḍa
D. Jvara
Ans: B.
- Which is **not** pathya in acute Karṇaśūla?
A. Avyāyāma
B. Aśiras-snāna
C. Head immersion in cold water



D. Ghṛtapāna

Ans: C.

9. Pāka-pravṛtti with intense burning in the ear aligns with:

- A. Vātaja śopha
- B. Pittaja involvement
- C. Kaphaja only
- D. Rakta-kṣaya

Ans: B.

10. In suspected perforation, you should:

- A. Do forceful syringing
- B. Avoid instrumentation and refer ENT
- C. Pack canal with dry cotton for 48 h
- D. Use cold water instillation

Ans: B.

B. SAQs (4-6 lines each)

1. Define Karṇaśūla and outline samprāpti (Uttara 20/6).
2. List four sāmānya measures for Karṇa-roga (21/3).
3. Explain nāḍī-sveda method and indication in Karṇaśūla (21/6-7).
4. Enumerate doṣa-wise features of Karṇa-śopha.
5. Write OSCE steps of Karṇa-pūraṇa.
6. Mention red-flag signs warranting urgent referral.

C. LAQs

1. Discuss **Karṇaśūla** under: nidāna, samprāpti, lakṣaṇa, bheda, sādhyāsādhyatā and cikitsā with classical references.
2. Write an essay on **Karṇa-śopha**: definition, doṣa-wise presentation, complications (srāva/vidradhi), and a comprehensive sthānika upakrama plan.

D. OSCE/Procedure station (Karṇa-pūraṇa)

- **Indication:** Vāta-kapha Karṇaśūla without active suppuration.
- **Contra-indications:** suspected perforation, acute high-grade otitis media.
- **Checklist:** consent → inspection/otoscopy → warming sneha → patient positioning → asepsis → gentle instillation → observation → after-care + documentation.

References

Classical

1. **Suśruta Samhitā, Uttara-tantra** 20 (Karṇagata-roga-vijñānīya) & 21 (Karṇagata-roga-pratiśedha). (Verses cited: 20/3, 20/5-6, 20/9-10, 20/14-16; 21/3-5, 21/6-10, 21/11-15).
2. **Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya, Uttara-sthāna** 17-18 (Karṇa-roga-vijñānīya / pratiśedha) — for parallel study and kriyākalpa corroboration. (Chapter indexing corroborated.)
3. **Aṣṭāṅga Samgraha, Uttara-sthāna** (Karṇa-roga adhyāyas) — kriyākalpa details and formulations (for advanced reading).

Modern & standard Shālākya/ENT texts

- Dhingra PL. **Diseases of Ear, Nose & Throat** (latest ed.).
- Logan Turner's **Diseases of the Nose, Throat and Ear**.
- Rao K. **Shalakya Tantra (Urdhva-jatrugata Vikāra)**, selected chapters on Karnaroga.



Quick practice prompts

- **Teach-back:** In two lines, tell a peer why warm **Bala-taila karṇa-pūraṇa** helps in Vātaja Karṇaśūla (cite 21/13).
- **Case-spotter:** A patient with canal edema, severe pain on tragal pressure, and itching—pick **two** sthānika upakrama and justify with references.
- **Mnemonic** for sāmānya regimen in ear disease: “**GRAAB**” = Ghṛtapāna • Rasāyana • A-vyāyāma • A-śiras-snāna • Brahmacharya (21/3).

End of Chapter — Karnaroga-1: Karṇaśūla & Karṇa-śoṣha

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