

ASHRU VEGADHARANA: AN AYURVEDIC PERSPECTIVE ON TEAR SUPPRESSION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR HRIDROGA

*Dr. Rashmi Nailwal

C-416, 417 New Avas Vikas Colony Kashipur, Kashipur Uttarakhand India.

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*Corresponding Author

Dr. Rashmi Nailwal

C-416, 417 New Avas Vikas Colony
Kashipur, Kashipur Uttarakhand India.



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ABSTRACT

Ashru (tears) holds significant etymological and physiological importance in Ayurveda. Suppression of the natural urge to cry (*Ashru Vega* or *Vaashpa Vega*) is cautioned against in classical texts like Charaka Samhita and Ashtanga Sangraha, as it predisposes to *Hridroga* (heart diseases) alongside other disorders. This article explores the literary meaning of *Ashru*, its lacrimation physiology, and the cardiovascular consequences of suppression, bridging Ayurvedic wisdom with contemporary neuroscience.

KEYWORDS: *Ashru Vega*, tear, lacrimation, natural urge, *Hridroga*, Sympathetic activation etc.

INTRODUCTION

Etymology and Literary Meaning of *Ashru- Ashru*, as

delineated in classical Sanskrit lexicons, denotes the watery fluid or tears from the eyes. The Shabdakalpadruma derives it from the root *Asha - ruk* (to pervade or flow), defining it as *Chakshur-jalam* (eye fluid), with synonyms like *Nelambu*, *Rodanam*, *Ashu*, *Vashpa*, and *Lochana-jala*.^[1]

Amarakosha lists *Ashru* synonymously with *Netrambu*, *Rodana*, *Asra*, *Vashpa*, *Dravyam*, and *Jalam*, all referring to ocular watery discharge.^[2] The V.S. Apte Sanskrit-English Dictionary succinctly defines it as "a tear," extending to usages like *Upahata* (tear-affected) and *Kala* (teardrop).^[3] In Ayurvedic parlance, *Ashru* embodies both reflexive and emotional expression, underscoring its role in natural urges (*Vega*).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This literary-conceptual study systematically compiles and analyzes *Adharaneeya Vegas* from classical Ayurvedic texts including Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Ashtanga Hridayam etc. along with commentaries like Ayurveda Dipika, Nibandha Sangraha, and Sarvangasundara, accessed via institutional libraries. Contemporary biomedical correlates on cardiovascular implications were surveyed from online medical journals and Google Scholar, employing a meta-analytical approach to integrate Ayurvedic pathophysiology of urge suppression with modern neurocardiology and autonomic dysfunction evidence.

Classical Ayurvedic View on *Ashru Vegadharana*

When the food is consumed appropriately, it nourishes the seven body tissues (*Dhatus*) through a sequential process. The waste or unassimilated part of the food is expelled from the body in the form of *Mala-Mutra* (excretions). When the urge for their elimination arises, a specific type of pressure is experienced. This natural pressure or urge (*Vega*) should not be suppressed.^[4] The concept of *Adharneeya Vegas* is described in all three major *Samhitas*. According to the teachings of Acharya Charaka, Acharya Sushruta and Acharya Vaghbata, the forces and factors which are not to be suppressed (*Adharneeya Vegas*) are responsible for health as well as various disorders, including heart diseases.

Acharya Charaka explicitly warns against suppressing the urge of tears (*Vaashpa*), linking it to *Pratishyaya* (coryza), *Akshi Roga* (eye diseases), *Hridroga* (heart diseases), *Aruchi* (anorexia), and *Bhrama* (giddiness).^[5] Acharya Vaghbata in Ashtanga Sangraha elaborates further, stating suppression causes nasal congestion, eye disorders, headache, heart ailments, neck stiffness, anorexia, dizziness, mental confusion, and gaseous tumors. Remedies include sleep, moderate medicated alcohol, and pleasant conversations.^[6]

These texts emphasize *Vega Dharana* as a pathogenic factor in *Hridroga*, aligning with Ayurveda's holistic view of psychosomatic health.

Physiology of Lacrimation (Ashru Vega)

The lacrimal apparatus—comprising the lacrimal gland, ducts, canaliculi, sac, and nasolacrimal duct—produces, distributes, and drains tears. The lacrimal gland, in the superolateral orbit, secretes the aqueous tear component for ocular lubrication and protection.

Tear production follows a neural reflex arc. Parasympathetic innervation via cranial nerve VII (facial nerve, greater petrosal branch) stimulates secretion, triggered by corneal/conjunctival nociceptors relaying via trigeminal nerve (CN V) to the brainstem. Emotional centers integrate for reflexive or affective crying. Sympathetic inputs modulate vascular tone.

Basal tears maintain moisture; irritants or emotions provoke reflex tears, distributed by blinking and drained via nasolacrimal duct to the nasal cavity.^[7] This mirrors Ayurveda's *Ashru Vega* as a regulated, parasympathetically driven urge.

Cardiovascular Impact of *Ashru (Vaashpa) Vegadharana*

Suppressing tears activates sympathetic dominance, elevating heart rate, contractility, and blood pressure, straining the cardiovascular system. Chronic repression fosters hypertension and heart disease, with studies linking emotional suppression to increased cardiac mortality.

Conversely, crying enhances parasympathetic tone, regulates breathing/heart rate, and releases stress hormones, promoting recovery and emotional equilibrium. This validates Charaka's caution: *Vega Dharana* disrupts *Hridroga* etiology by inverting autonomic balance, akin to modern stress cardiomyopathy.

Discussion and Clinical Implications

The suppression of tears (*Ashru Vega Dharana*) impedes a vital excretory pathway for stress-related toxins. Emotional tears contain hormones like prolactin, adrenocorticotropic hormone, and leucine enkephalin (a natural painkiller), which are produced during stress. Inhibiting tear release has been associated with increased vulnerability to various psychological and physical ailments, including hypertension, gastric ulcers, rheumatic diseases, cardiovascular disorders, renal conditions, and depression.^[8]

Ashru Vegadharana exemplifies Ayurveda's foresight into mind-body linkages, where unchecked sympathetic surge precipitates *Hridroga*. Integrating *Sadvritta* (ethical conduct) with remedies like *Nidra* and *Hridya Dravyas* offers preventive strategies. According to Ayurved Samhitas, suppression of tears (*Ashru Vega*) causes heart diseases, treated by promoting sound sleep (*Swapno*), moderate alcohol (*Madya*) intake, and listening to pleasant stories (*Priyah Katha*).^[9]

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