

LITERARY REVIEW OF VATAJA ABHISHYANDA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ALLERGIC CONJUNCTIVITIS

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ABSTRACT

This study explores *Vataja Abhishyanda*, an eye disorder described in Ayurveda, and compares it with Allergic Conjunctivitis as understood in modern medicine. By analyzing classical Ayurvedic concepts alongside current medical knowledge, the paper highlights similarities in symptoms and diagnosis. It also suggests an integrative treatment approach combining Ayurvedic therapies such as *Shamana* (palliative), *Shodhana* (purification), and *Kriyakalpa* (local eye procedures) with conventional methods. The findings support the potential of Ayurvedic treatments in effectively managing allergic eye conditions, especially when used alongside modern ophthalmic care.

KEYWORDS: *Vatajaabhishyanda*, Allergic conjunctivitis, *Ayurveda*, *Shalakyatantra*.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, the traditional Indian system of medicine, is divided into eight main branches, known as *Ashtanga Ayurveda*. One of these branches, *Shalakyatantra*, focuses on diagnosing and treating diseases affecting the organs above the collarbone, particularly the eyes, ears, nose, and throat. Among the various eye conditions in Ayurveda, *Abhishyanda* is an important one. It is classified into different types based on which *Dosha* is primarily involved: *Vataja*, *Pittaja*, *Kaphaja*, and *Raktaja Abhishyanda*. *Vataja Abhishyanda* is

specifically linked to *Vata* symptoms such as eye pain, dryness, irritation, a pricking sensation, and sensitivity to light.

In modern medicine, Allergic Conjunctivitis is a common eye condition caused by allergic reactions. It typically presents with symptoms like itching, redness, and watery discharge from the eyes. While the underlying causes of the two conditions differ, the symptoms of *Vataja Abhishyanda* and Allergic Conjunctivitis closely resemble each other.

This article aims to explore *Vataja Abhishyanda* in detail and draw comparisons with Allergic Conjunctivitis, while also discussing Ayurvedic treatment options for managing these conditions.

***Nidana* (Etiology)**

Abhishyanda, or conjunctivitis, does not have a specific cause outlined in Ayurvedic texts, but general factors contributing to eye diseases are applicable. *Sushruta*^[1] mentions it under "*Aupsargikaroga*" (communicable diseases), describing it as being caused by factors like

- Contact with an infected person
- Inhalation of exhaled air from a diseased person
- Sharing food, sleep, clothing, or cosmetics with an infected individual.

In terms of Ayurveda, *Vataja Abhishyanda* occurs due to the aggravation of *Vata dosha*. Contributing factors include

- Cold wind exposure (*Sheeta Vata*)
- Irregular and dry lifestyle habits (*Vata*-predominating diet and routines)
- Excessive physical exertion and lack of sleep
- Suppression of natural urges (e.g., not urinating or defecating when needed).

In modern medical terms, Allergic Conjunctivitis is primarily caused by immune system overreaction, with triggers such as

- Exposure to allergens like pollen or dust mites
- Hypersensitivity reactions (Type I allergic response)
- Seasonal or perennial environmental factor.

Samprapti (Pathogenesis)

In *Vataja Abhishyanda*, the imbalance of *Vata dosha* disturbs the *Rasa* and *Rakta dhatus* in the eye. *Vata's* qualities—dryness, lightness, coldness, and movement—affect the eye tissues, leading to symptoms like dryness, pain, and discomfort. In Allergic Conjunctivitis, exposure to allergens triggers the release of histamine from mast cells. This causes blood vessels to dilate, resulting in itching, increased tear production, and irritation. These immune responses resemble the symptoms of *Vataja Abhishyanda*, such as irritation, a sensation of something in the eye, and sensitivity to light.

Lakshana (Clinical Features)

The clinical features (*Lakshanas*) of *Abhishyanda* vary depending on the *Dosha* that is dominant—*Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha*, or *Rakta*.^[2] In *Vataja Abhishyanda*, the symptoms described by *Acharya Sushruta* include

- Pricking sensation (*Nistodana*)
- Stiffness or restricted movement (*Stambhana*)
- Goosebumps (*Romaharsha*)
- Feeling of something in the eye (*Sangharsha*)
- Roughness or hardness (*Parushya*)
- Headache (*Shi-ro-abhitapa*)
- Dryness (*Vishushkabhava*) – Not due to a lack of tears but because of the absence of normal discharge.
- Cold or watery discharge from the eyes (*Shishirashruta*).

In addition to these, *Acharya Vagbhata*^[3] adds more general symptoms, such as

- Nasal congestion and swelling
- Pain in the temples, eyebrows, and forehead, often sharp or piercing in nature
- Dryness and coldness in the eyes
- A foreign body sensation in the eye (either stationary like a stone or moving like an insect)
- Painful movements of the eyelids and eyeballs due to swelling.

These symptoms highlight discomfort and irritation in the eyes, along with associated issues in the nasal and forehead areas.

Ayurveda classifies *Abhishyanda* into four primary types

In Ayurveda, *Abhishyanda* is categorized into four main types based on the dominant Dosha

- 1) *Vataja*: Characterized by dryness, pain, and minimal discharge.
- 2) *Pittaja*: Marked by a burning sensation, yellow discharge, and redness.
- 3) *Kaphaja*: Involves heaviness, thick white discharge, and itching.
- 4) *Raktaja*: Presents with redness, bleeding, burning sensations, and sensitivity to light (photophobia).

Allergic Conjunctivitis shares similarities with *Vataja* and *Kaphaja Abhishyanda*, depending on the duration and dominant symptoms. However, in acute allergic reactions, symptoms such as dryness, pricking pain, and photophobia are more closely aligned with *Vataja Abhishyanda*.

Classification^[4]

- 1) Vernal Keratoconjunctivitis (VKC)
- 2) Atopic Keratoconjunctivitis (AKC)
- 3) Giant Papillary Conjunctivitis (GPC)
- 4) Phlyctenular Keratoconjunctivitis (PKC)
- 5) Contact Dermatoconjunctivitis (CDC)
- 6) Simple Allergic Conjunctivitis
 - i. Seasonal Allergic Conjunctivitis (SAC)
 - ii. Perennial Allergic Conjunctivitis (PAC).

***Chikitsa* (Management)**

Ayurvedic Management

The treatment for *Vataja Abhishyanda* focuses on balancing the *Vata Dosha* using a variety of *Ayurvedic* therapies, including external applications, herbal remedies, and specific lifestyle practices. Here is a simplified version of the treatment protocols described by *Acharyas*.

1. *Snehana* (Oil Therapy)

Purana Sarpit^[5] (Old Ghee) is used for *Snehana*, which nourishes and soothes the affected areas.

2. *Swedana* (Fomentation)

A poultice made from meat, *Vesavara*, *Mahasneha*, *Yavachoorna*, and salt is applied to the forehead and cheeks.

Alternatively, steam from goat's milk mixed with herbal decoctions (e.g., *Rasna*, *Dashamula*, *Bala*)^[5] can be used for *Swedana*.

3. *Nasya* (Nasal Therapy) and *Shirovirechana* (Head Cleansing)

Nasya is done with decoctions prepared from milk and medicinal herbs such as *Kasmarya*, *Madhuka*, *Kumuda*, and others.

Shirovirechana can be performed with ghee mixed with *Ajaksheera* and other healing herbs.

4. *Siramokshana* (Bloodletting)

Raktamokshana (bloodletting) is performed to remove *doshas* from the *Netrasrotas* (eye channels), starting with *Snehapana* (oil consumption) followed by *Virechana* and *Basti*.

Siravedhana (venesection) is done on specific areas like the *Lalata* (forehead) and *Shankha* (temple).

5. *Seka* (Irrigation)

Kwatha (decoctions) made from *Aanoopajalamamsa*^[6], *Vata*-reducing herbs, and other ingredients like *Vasa*, *Taila*, and *Ghrita* are used to irrigate the eyes.

6. *Bidalaka* (Eye Application)

Paste made from herbs such as *Kustha*, *Pippali*, and *Chandana*^[5] is applied to the eyes to reduce irritation and inflammation.

Other preparations like *Saindhava*, *Agaru*, *Trikatu*, and *Svarnagairika* can also be used.

7. *Anjana* (Eye Ointment)

Pratyanjana can be made from *Sphatika*, *Shankhanabhi*, *Madhuka*, and *Gairika*.^[7]

Other preparations include *Ghrita* mixed with *Saindhavalavana* or *Naga* sheets dipped in decoctions like *Triphala* and *Bhringaraja*.

8. *Aschyotana* (Eye Drops)

Kwatha of *Hriber*, *Tagar*, *Gunjamoola* mixed with goat's milk is used for eye drops.

Other decoctions like *Erandmoola* and *Shalparni* are also beneficial for *Aschyotana*.

Ashchyotana- with the help of *Triphala Kwath* is used as per *Sharangdhar Samhita*.^[8]

9. *Tarpana* (Nourishment of the Eyes)

Ghrita (clarified butter) is prepared with herbs like *Kashmarya*, *Madhuka*, and *Kumuda*. This mixture is used for *Tarpana* therapy to nourish the eyes.

10. *Putapaka* (Hot Fomentation)

Nimbapatra (neem leaves) and *Lodhra*^[9] mixed with water are used to prepare *Putapaka*, a hot fomentation that helps in relieving pain and inflammation.

Pathya and Apathya

Pathya^[10] (Recommended Diet)

Shashtikashali (rice), *Yava* (barley), *Mudga* (lentils), and lean meats like *Janglamamsarasa* are recommended.

Vegetables like *Patola* (pointed gourd), *Karavella* (bitter melon), and *Kadali* (banana) are also advised.

Aushadha (Medicinal Herbs)

Effective herbs include *Purana Ghrita*, *Triphalaghrita*, *Shigru*, *Draksha*, *Karvella*, *Chandana*, *Bhringaraja*, and *Shatavari*.

Apathya (Foods to Avoid)

Avoid spicy, sour, and heavy foods like *Masha* (beans), *Virudha Anna* (incompatible foods), *Dadhi* (curd), and methylated oils like *Shashrpataila*.

Specific fruits like *Kadliphala* (banana), *Narikel* (coconut), and *Panasabeeja* (pumpkin seeds) should be avoided.

Vihara (Lifestyle Practices to Avoid)

Avoid excessive sleep, late-night activities, mental stress, anger, and uncontrolled sexual activity.

Vega Dharana (suppression of natural urges), *Ratri-jagarana* (night waking), and *Adhyashana* (overeating) should be avoided.

MODERN MANAGEMENT

1) Allergen Avoidance

The primary step is to minimize exposure to allergens, which includes avoiding triggers such as pollen, dust, pet dander, or smoke.

2) Topical Antihistamines

Olopatadine is a commonly used antihistamine eye drop that helps to relieve itching, redness, and swelling caused by allergic reactions.

3) Mast Cell Stabilizers

These medications, such as Cromolyn sodium, work by preventing the release of histamine from mast cells, thereby reducing allergic symptoms over time.

4) Lubricating Eye Drops

Artificial tears or lubricating drops can help soothe the eyes, wash out allergens, and provide comfort from dryness and irritation.

5) Corticosteroids (Short-term)

Topical corticosteroids may be prescribed for severe inflammation, but they are generally used for short periods due to potential side effects like increased intraocular pressure.

DISCUSSION

Vataja Abhishyanda and allergic conjunctivitis share many similarities, which can lead to a shift in how we approach the management of allergic conjunctivitis. While modern medicine primarily focuses on providing symptomatic relief, Ayurveda takes a more holistic approach by addressing the root cause of the condition. It works to balance the *doshas* and provides both local and systemic therapies. This approach not only offers long-term benefits but also promotes overall well-being, in contrast to the temporary relief provided by antihistamines.

CONCLUSION

Vataja Abhishyanda closely resembles allergic conjunctivitis in terms of clinical features. Ayurvedic treatments, based on the principles of *Shamana*, *Shodhana*, and *Kriyakalpa*, offer an effective complementary or alternative therapy. An integrative approach combining Ayurveda and modern methods can improve symptom relief, reduce recurrence, and decrease the reliance on corticosteroids.

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