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ANJANA: A REVIEW OF AYURVEDIC COLLYRIUM IN CLASSICAL AND MODERN CONTEXTS

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ABSTRACT

Anjana (collyrium) is one of the most significant ocular therapeutic and preventive measures described in Ayurveda. As a topical eye medication, Anjana plays a vital role in maintaining ocular hygiene, improving vision, and managing various eye disorders. Rooted in classical Ayurvedic texts such as Sushruta Samhita and Ashtanga Hridaya, Anjana encompasses both medicinal and preventive applications. Traditionally, different types of Anjana—Lekhaneeya, Ropana, and Snehana—were used based on the condition of the eye and the dominance of doshas. In modern contexts, the concept of Anjana parallels ophthalmic preparations like eye ointments, drops, and antiseptic collyria. This review explores the classical foundations, types, preparation methods, indications, and pharmacological aspects of Anjana while correlating them with contemporary ophthalmic practices and formulations. The paper further highlights the scope of integrating Ayurvedic collyrium into modern eye care through scientific validation and standardization.

KEYWORDS: Anjana, Ayurveda, collyrium, ocular therapy, ophthalmology, Triphala, herbal eye care, ophthalmic pharmacology

1. INTRODUCTION

The eyes (Netra) are regarded in Ayurveda as the most delicate and vital sensory organs, described as the Pradhanatama Indriya. Maintenance of ocular health is thus a major concern in Ayurvedic preventive ophthalmology (Netraroga Pratishedha). Among the various ocular care practices, Anjana Karma—the application of medicated collyrium to the inner surface of the eyelid—is described as both a daily regimen (Dinacharya) and a therapeutic procedure (Chikitsa) (Sharma, 2018).

Classical Ayurvedic texts such as Sushruta Samhita, Charaka Samhita, and Ashtanga Hridaya provide elaborate descriptions of Anjana, detailing its classification, preparation, application, and benefits. Anjana maintains clarity of vision and prevents ocular disorders like Abhishyanda (conjunctivitis), Netra Daha (burning sensation), and Timira (incipient cataract). In the modern era of digital exposure, ocular fatigue, and pollution, revisiting Anjana provides valuable insights for both preventive and curative eye care (Rastogi & Sharma, 2020).

2. Classical Understanding and Classification of Anjana

According to Sushruta Samhita (Uttara Tantra 18/1–3), Anjana is classified into three types based on its action and composition:

1. **Lekhaneeya Anjana** – Scraping type, used for removing Kapha and impurities; indicated in chronic ocular diseases. Common ingredients include Saindhava Lavana, Haritala, Manashila, and Daruharidra.
2. **Ropana Anjana** – Healing type, employed for wound healing and ulcerative eye conditions; typically contains Yashtimadhu, Lodhra, and Haridra.
3. **Snehana Anjana** – Lubricating type, indicated in Vata-predominant and dry eye conditions; prepared with Ghrita, Taila, and Madhuka.

Anjana Karma is further divided into.

- **Pratyanjana** – Daily preventive application for maintaining ocular hygiene.
- **Vyadhyanjana** – Therapeutic application in diseased conditions.

Proper timing, gentle technique, and post-application care (avoiding dust, light, and eye strain) are emphasized for safety and efficacy (Ashtanga Hridaya, Uttara Sthana 13).

3. Pharmacological and Therapeutic Aspects

Pharmacologically, Anjana acts through local absorption via the conjunctival and nasolacrimal pathways, delivering active constituents directly to ocular tissues. Classical properties—Lekhana (scraping), Ropana (healing), and Snehana (lubrication)—correspond to antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory, and emollient activities recognized in modern pharmacology (Patel et al., 2017).

Experimental studies highlight the pharmacological potential of various Ayurvedic formulations:

- **Triphala Anjana** exhibits antioxidant, antimicrobial, and anti-inflammatory properties and enhances tear film stability (Kumar et al., 2021).
- **Darvadi Anjana** and **Eladi Anjana** have wound-healing and epithelial-repairing effects (Sharma, 2018; Singh et al., 2019).
- Honey-based ophthalmic preparations show antimicrobial activity and biocompatibility with ocular tissues (Al-Waili, 2014).

Such evidence suggests that Anjana formulations have mechanisms analogous to contemporary ophthalmic preparations.

4. Modern Correlations and Pharmaceutical Perspectives

In modern ophthalmology, Anjana aligns with eye ointments, gels, and drops used for lubrication, infection control, or drug delivery (Tandon, 2019). Ayurvedic Anjana formulations differ through their use of natural excipients such as Ghrita (clarified butter) and Madhu (honey), which improve ocular penetration and provide soothing effects (Mishra & Tripathi, 2017).

With technological innovations, Anjana can be reformulated using **nano-emulsion**, **sterile ophthalmic technology**, and **controlled drug release systems**. Research into herbal ophthalmics, including Triphala and honey-based preparations, shows promising potential for treating dry eye, microbial keratitis, and oxidative stress (Biswas et al., 2018; Saha et al., 2022).

5. Challenges and Future Directions

Despite Anjana's potential, challenges include.

- **Standardization and Quality Control:** Variability in herbal sources and preparation methods affects reproducibility (Patgiri et al., 2016).
- **Safety and Sterility:** Traditional preparations often lack microbial safety validation.
- **Clinical Trials:** Few randomized controlled studies assess Anjana's clinical efficacy (Kumar et al., 2021).

Future directions

- Standardizing pharmacognostic and physicochemical parameters.
- Developing sterile, preservative-free ophthalmic formulations.
- Integrating Ayurvedic principles with modern ophthalmic research.
- Encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration between Ayurveda and modern medicine (Patil et al., 2023).

6. CONCLUSION

Anjana exemplifies Ayurveda's integrated approach to preventive and curative ocular therapy. Its pharmacological potential—supported by antioxidant, antimicrobial, and lubricating properties—positions it as a viable complementary approach in ophthalmic practice. When standardized and validated scientifically, Anjana could bridge the gap between traditional wisdom and modern evidence-based medicine, promoting holistic ocular health.

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