

AYURVEDIC PERSPECTIVE ON ALLERGIC CONJUNCTIVITIS: EXPLORING THE CORRELATION WITH VATAJABHISHYANDA AND TREATMENT APPROACHES

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ABSTRACT

Allergic conjunctivitis is a prevalent eye condition affecting individuals across all ages and can be associated with *Vataj abhishyanda* (Allergic Conjunctivitis) in Ayurvedic medicine, given the similarity in their signs and symptoms. *Abhishyanda* (Conjunctivitis) is often the underlying cause of many eye disorders and requires prompt and effective treatment to prevent serious complications that could endanger vision. If *Abhishyanda* (Conjunctivitis) becomes chronic, it can result in severe complications that make the condition difficult to control. In modern medicine, treatment typically involves eye drops and anti-allergic medications, which may come with potential side effects. However, Ayurvedic approaches to managing allergic conjunctivitis have demonstrated effective results in treating the condition without adverse effects and reducing the risk of recurrence. The objective of this literary paper is to establish relation between Allergic conjunctivitis and *Vataj abhishyanda*.

KEYWORDS: *Vataj abhishyanda*, Allergic conjunctivitis, *chikitsa*, *Parisheka*, *mahatriphaladi ghrita*.

INTRODUCTION

Generally, it is estimated that ocular allergies impact between 5% and 22% of people. The condition known as *Vataj Abhishyanda* (Allergic Conjunctivitis), which arises from the imbalance of the *Vata*-dominant *Tridosha*, can be compared to allergic conjunctivitis. While modern ophthalmological treatments for simple allergic conjunctivitis can be costly and require prolonged use, *Ayurveda* offers potentially more effective relief for this condition. If *Abhishyanda* progresses to a chronic stage, it can result in complications such as *Vataj Adhimantha* (Glaucoma), *Hatadimantha* (Atrophy of the eyeball), *Akshipakatyaya* (Hypopyon or Keratomalacia), and *Avranashukla* (Corneal Opacity), among others.

In the Ayurvedic system of medicine, Shalakya Tantra is one of the eight primary branches, focusing on diseases of the eyes, ears, nose, throat, and head. Among these, ophthalmology was particularly prominent, with practitioners known as *Netra Visharada* or *Shalaki*. The Vedas also address eye disorders; for example, the Rigveda recounts the story of Rishi Ravrija's restored vision through the Ashwini Kumaras. The Kenasutra of the Atharvaveda provides details on sensory organs and the positioning of the eyes within the skull, and it mentions the use of Anjana (a medicinal eye application) for treating eye disorders.

Additionally, the Atharvaveda refers to the Sun as the supreme deity of the eyes (Surya Chakshumam Adhipati).

Etymology: The term "*Abhishyanda*" is derived from the root "*Syanda*," which is prefixed by the term "*Abhi*" and suffixed with "*Ghan*." "*Abhi*" suggests notions of direction, intensity, or excess, while "*Syanda*" refers to discharge, tremor, or shaking. Therefore, "*Abhishyanda*" can be interpreted as "towards shaking" or, more generally, as oozing, flowing, or trickling. It describes a condition characterized by excessive discharge in the upper part of the body, leading to increased moisture in *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, and *Mala*, and resulting in profuse discharge from the eyes. In this context, *Abhishyanda* refers to excessive eye discharge, or conjunctivitis, with *Vataja Abhishyanda* specifically indicating allergic conjunctivitis. Given the limited research on *Vataj Abhishyanda* in relation to allergic conjunctivitis, this study was designed to offer comprehensive information on the subject.

NIDAN (Causes) Causative factors for *Abhishyanda* are classified into internal (*nija*) and external (*agantuja*) categories.

- Internal: *Vataj*, *Pittaj*, *Kaphaj*, *Raktaj*.

- External: Acharya Vagbhata and Sushruta describe *Abhishyanda* as a contagious condition that can spread through contact with infected individuals, shared items, and physical closeness.

Any Special *Nidanas* for *Abhishyanda* are not mentioned in any classical texts so general *Nidana* for *Netra Rogas* can be considered as the *Nidanas* of *Abhishyanda*.

उष्णाभितप्तस्य जलेप्रवेशात् दूरेक्षणात् स्वप्नविपर्ययाच्च ।
 प्रसक्तसंरोदनकोपशोकक्लेशाभिघातादतिमैथुनाच्च ॥
 शुक्तारनालाम्लकुलत्यमाषनिषेवणाद्वेगविनिग्रहाच्च ।
 स्वेदात् अथो धूमनिषेवणाच्च छर्देर्विघातात् वमनातियोगात् ॥
 वाष्पग्रहात् सूक्ष्मनिरीक्षणाच्च नेत्रे विकाराञ्जनयन्ति दोषाः ॥ ;सु०३१/२६-२७)

SAMPRAPTI (Pathogenesis) Although the specific pathogenesis of *Abhishyanda* is not explicitly detailed in Ayurvedic texts, general descriptions for eye diseases apply.

Vishishta Samprapti of Abhishyanda (Pathogenesis of Conjunctivitis)

Abhishyanda can be understood in stages based on the concepts of *Kriya Kala* (the stages of disease development): *Sanchaya*, *Prakopa*, *Prasara*, *Sthanasamshraya*, *Vyakt Avastha*, and *Bheda Avastha*.

1. *Sanchaya Avastha (Accumulation Stage)*

- The disease begins with the accumulation of *Doshas* due to improper diet and lifestyle (*Achakshushya Ahara-Vihara*), leading to *Agnimandya* (digestive impairment) and the formation of *Ama* (toxins). This results in the vitiation of *Doshas* in the *Koshtha* (digestive system), where they start to accumulate.
- As *Doshas* and *Ama* accumulate, there is obstruction in the *Srotas* (channels), primarily affecting *Vata Dosha*, causing its imbalance and increase within the *Koshtha*.

2. *Prakopa Avastha (Aggravation Stage)*

- Due to continuous exposure to causative factors (*Nidana*), the accumulated *Doshas* get aggravated, further vitiating the body systems.

3. *Prasara Avastha (Spreading Stage)*

- In this stage, the aggravated *Doshas* begin to spread throughout the body via the *Siras* (blood vessels), moving towards the *Urdhvajatrugata Srotasa* (channels in the upper body,

including the eyes).

4. *Sthanasamshraya Avastha* (Localization Stage)

- The Doshas localize in the eye tissues, leading to the combination of vitiated Doshas and Dushyas (body tissues), resulting in the manifestation of early symptoms such as redness, itching, and mild pain.

5. *Vyakt Avastha* (Manifestation Stage)

- At this stage, the disease becomes fully apparent with symptoms like profuse discharge from the eyes, severe pain (Toda), and other cardinal signs of Abhishyanda.

6. *Bheda Avastha* (Complication Stage)

- If left untreated in the Vyakt Avastha, the disease progresses to Bheda Avastha, leading to severe complications such as Adhimantha (a more serious eye condition).

Poorva Roopa (Prodromal Symptoms)

The onset of Poorva Roopa symptoms is linked to the involvement of respective Doshas and Rakta. When Vata is predominant, there will be pain. With Pitta vitiation, a burning sensation occurs. If Kapha is aggravated, there is a feeling of heaviness. Rakta involvement leads to redness of the eyes. However, these symptoms are only partially manifested at this stage, referred to as Avyakta Laksana. Complete manifestation is seen in the Vyaktavastha.

General Poorva Roopa of Netra Roga:

- *Avilam*: Eye appears to be filled with tears, causing diminished vision.
- *Samrambha*: Initial swelling.
- *Aśru*: Increase or decrease in tear production.
- *Kandū*: Itching sensation.
- *Upadeha*: Increased discharge.
- *Shoola in Varthma Kosha*: Pain in the eyelids.
- *Shooka Poornata*: Sensation of a foreign body in the eye.
- *Vihanyamana Roopa*: Visual disturbance.
- *Kriyahani*: Impairment in eye functions.
- *Gurutha*: Heaviness in the eyes.
- *Osha*: Burning sensation.
- *Toda*: Pricking pain.
- *Raga*: Redness

RUPA: The complete expression of symptoms is referred to as Roopavastha. Based on the predominance of Doshas, Abhishyanda is categorized into four types: Vataj, Pittaj, Kaphaj, and Raktaj Abhishyanda. The signs and symptoms associated with Vataj Abhishyanda are detailed in various classical texts as follows:

निस्तोदनं स्तम्भन रोमहर्ष संघर्षपारुष्यशिरोभितापाः।

विशुष्कभावः शिशिराश्रुता च वाताभिपत्रे नयने भवन्ति ॥ सु०उ० 6/6)

Symptoms of *Vataj Abhishyanda* include severe pricking pain (*Toda*), dryness (*Rukshata*), a sensation of something obstructing the nasal passages, mild swelling (*Shotha*) of the eyes, temples, eyebrows, and forehead.

From Ashtanga Samgraha, (A.S.Utt.Tantra 18/1)

वातेन नेत्रेऽभिष्यण्णे नासानाहोऽल्पशोफता।

शङ्खाक्षिभ्रूललाटस्य तोदस्फुरण भेदनम् ॥

शुष्काल्पदृषिका शीतमच्छं चाश्रुचलारुजः।

निमेषोन्मेषणं कृच्छ्राज्जन्तूनामिव सर्पणाम्॥

अक्ष्याध्मातमिवाभाति सूक्ष्मैः शल्यैरिवाचितम्।

स्निग्धोष्णौश्चोपशमनंसोभिष्यन्दः ॥

This can be summarized as:

- *Vataj Abhishyanda* causes symptoms like mild nasal congestion, swelling of the eye, temple, and forehead regions, and pain characterized by throbbing, pricking, and bursting sensations.
- Dryness of the eyes and diminished vision occur, with the sensation of cold tears.
- The difficulty in blinking is compared to the sensation of insects crawling over the eyes.
- The eyes appear swollen, as if pierced by fine foreign objects, and relief is achieved through unctuous and warm therapies.

Upashaya and Anupashaya

Acharya Vagbhata has stated that the signs and symptoms of *Vataj Abhishyanda* can be alleviated through treatments that are *Snigdha* (unctuous) and *Ushna* (warm).

Sadhyasadyata (Prognosis)

A detailed description of the prognosis of *Abhishyanda* is provided, classifying it as a *Sadhya Vyadhi* (curable disease). All types of *Abhishyanda* are considered *Vyadhana Sadhya Vyadhi*

(diseases that can be cured with appropriate treatment).

Upadrava of *Abhishyanda* (Complications)

Upadrava refers to complications arising from the further progression of the disease. These may occur if *Abhishyanda* is not treated properly or in a timely manner. Acharya Sushruta mentions *Adhimantha* as a complication resulting from untreated *Abhishyanda*. Additionally, he describes *Hatadhimantha* as a condition that may arise from neglected *Vatadhimantha*.

TREATMENT

Since *Abhishyanda* is considered a root cause of many eye diseases, its treatment principles apply broadly to various ocular conditions. For *Vataj Abhishyanda*, treatments are focused on using unctuous and hot therapies (*Snigdha* and *Ushna*). *Vataj Abhishyanda* is classified as a *Sarvagata Vedhya Sadhya Vyadhi*. Dietary adjustments, purification therapies (*Sodhana*), pacifying treatments (*Shamana*), and other treatment modalities are extensively detailed by

Acharya Sushruta.

पुराण सर्पिषा सिग्धी स्यन्दाधिमन्यपीडितौ। तर्पणैः पुटपाकैश्च धूमैराश्रोतनैस्तथा ॥
स्वेदयित्वा यथा न्यायं सिरामोक्षेण योजयेत् ॥ संपादयेद्वास्तिभिस्तु सम्यक् स्नेह विरेचितौ।
नस्य स्नेह परीषेकैः शिरोबस्तिभिरेव च। ;सु०उ० १३-४)

Treatment of *Vataj Abhishyanda*

The treatment for *Vataj Abhishyanda* includes the following methods:

1. *Snehana* (application of medicated unctuous substances) with old preserved ghee and *Swedana* (sudation therapy).
2. *Sira Moksha* (bloodletting) after proper sudation.
3. *Sneha Virecana* (medicated purgation).
4. *Basti* (medicated enema).
5. *Tarpana* (nourishing eye therapy).
6. *Patapāka* (medicated poultice application).
7. *Dhumapana* (medicated smoke inhalation).
8. *Ashchyotana* (application of medicated eye drops).
9. *Snehana Nasya* (medicated nasal therapy).
10. *Snigadha Parisheka* (application of oily or unctuous substances).
11. *Sirobasti* (medicated head bath).

Yogas Described by Acharyas for the Treatment of Vataj Abhishyanda

1. Snehana Yoga

- Snehana can be done using *Purana Sarpi* (old ghee).

2. Swedana Yoga

- A poultice prepared from meat, *Vesavara*, *Mahasneha*, *Yava Choorna*, and salt can be applied to the forehead and cheeks for Swedana.
- Swedana can also be performed with the steam from *Aja Ksheera* (goat's milk) combined with a decoction (*Kwatha*) of *Rasna*, *Dashamula*, *Bala*, *Kola*, *Kulattha*, and *Yava*.

3. Snigdha Virechana Yoga

- Snigdha Virechana (gentle purgation) can be administered using *Draksha Kwatha* (decoction of grapes).

4. Nasya

- Nasya can be done with a decoction prepared in milk with medicinal herbs such as *Kasmarya*, *Madhuka*, *Kumuda*, *Utpala*, *Urupaga*, *Kustha*, *Brihati*, *Tamala*, *Mamsi*, *Sariva*, *Prapaundarika*, *Darbhamula*, and *Kasheru*.
- Another option is Nasya with *Ghrita* prepared using a decoction of *Aja Ksheera* and herbs like *Rasna*, *Dashamula*, *Bala*, *Kola*, *Kulattha*, and *Yava*.

5. Shirobasti Yoga

- Tila seeds are soaked in a decoction of *Bilva* overnight and dried during the day for five days. The oil extracted from the seeds is mixed with pig fat and cooked in milk with a paste of *Bilva* and *Madhuyasti*. This medicated oil is used in Shirobasti.

6. Dhooma Yoga

- A medicated oil prepared using a decoction of fragrant herbs like *Paundrika*, along with *Madhuka* paste and milk, is used for Snaihika Dhooma (unctuous smoke inhalation).

7. Siramokshana (Bloodletting)

- Bloodletting is advised to eliminate aggravated *Doshas* from the ocular channels. Before bloodletting, the patient can undergo *Snehapana* (internal oleation) with *Ghrita* and *Tilvaka*, followed by purgation and *Basti*.

Siramokshana is done in areas such as the forehead, temples, and nasal area.

8. Tailas for Shirobhaynga (Head Massage)

- *Manjishthadi Taila*
- *Asanabilvadi Taila*
- *Chandanadi Taila*

9. Ashchyotana Yoga (Eye Drops)

- A decoction prepared using milk and herbs such as *Saindhava Lavana*, *Udichya*, *Yashtimadhu*, and *Pippali* can be used.
- Other options include decoctions of herbs like *Tagar*, *Hribera*, *Vakra*, *Manjishtha*, and the bark of *Udumbara* in *Aja Ksheera* (goat's milk) and water.

10. Seka Yoga (Irrigation)

- Seka (eye irrigation) can be performed using *Putapaka* Rasa prepared from herbs such as *Pathya*, *Aksha*, *Amalaki*, and the bark of *Khakhasa*.
- Seka with *Aja Ksheera* and *Saindhava Lavana* is also beneficial.

11. Vidalaka (Topical Application of Pastes)

- A paste made from *Kustha*, *Misi*, *Pippali*, *Chandana*, and *Utpala* can be applied.
- Another option includes a paste of *Musta*, *Agaru*, and *Chandana* with *Madhu*.

12. Pindi (Poultice)

- *Triphala* and *Khakhasa Valkala* mixed with *Ahiphena Dravya* can be used as a poultice.
- Alternatively, the bark and root of *Eranda* with *Ghrita* can be applied.

13. Mukha Lepa (Face Application)

- A paste made from *Sarala*, *Surabhi*, *Devadaru*, *Himsra*, *Karanja*, *Bilva*, and *Sarshapa* fried in oil, prepared with milk, can be applied to the face.

14. Anjana (Collyrium Application)

- Anjana can be done with preparations using herbs like *Madhuka*, *Rajani*, *Pathya*, and *Devadaru*, macerated in *Aja Ksheera*.

15. Tarpana (Eye Nourishment Therapy)

- A medicated *Ghrita* prepared using a decoction of herbs such as *Kashmarya*, *Madhuka*, *Kumuda*, *Utpala*, *Urupaga*, *Kustha*, *Brihati*, *Tamala*, *Mamsi*, *Sariva*, *Prapaundarika*, *Darbhamula*, and *Kasheru* in milk can be used for Tarpana.

16. Putapaka (Medicated Eye Drops)

- Putapaka prepared from *Nimba Patra* and *Lodhra* with water can be used.

PATHYA

- Another option is juice from cooked goat liver, camel, or pig, combined with *Pippali*, *Saindhava*, *Madhu*, and *Ghrita* as part of the Putapaka method.

Pathya is crucial for managing and preventing diseases, including *Vataj abhishyanda*. Adhering to Pathya and avoiding Apathyaahara and Vihara are vital, particularly when dealing with the condition, whether or not treatment is being administered.

APATHYA

When it comes to *Apathya*, one should avoid foods that are *Katu* (spicy), *Amla* (sour), *Guru* (heavy), *Tikshna* (sharp), *Ushna* (hot), *Masha* (pulses), *Nishpava* (non-juicy), *Virudha Anna* (incompatible), *Vidahiannapana* (burning), *Dadhi* (curd), *Pinyaka* (unfermented foods), *Matsya* (fish), *Sura* (alcohol), *Valoor* (fish eggs), *Kalinga* (fermented products), *Phanita* (distilled liquids), and *Shashrpataila* (ghee-based dishes). Specific *Apathya* foods for *Abhishyandaroga*, as detailed in *Chikitsamanjari*, include *Dadhi* (curd), *Kadliphala* (banana), *Narikela* (coconut), and *Panasabeeja* (seeds of the *Panaasa* fruit), which should also be avoided. In terms of *Vihara* (lifestyle practices), one should refrain from activities such as holding in natural urges (*Vega Dharana*), staying up all night (*Ratri-jagarana*), anger (*Krodha*), grief (*Shoka*), excessive sexual activity (*Maithuna*), overeating (*Adhyashana*), and indulgence in royal or luxurious lifestyles (*Raja Sevana*).

DISCUSSION

In recent decades, the prevalence of allergic diseases has significantly increased, with allergic conjunctivitis becoming a major concern due to symptoms like itching, tearing, and redness, which impact quality of life.

Ancient Ayurvedic texts provide treatment guidelines for *Abhishyanda* (conjunctivitis), including *Langana* (fasting), *Tikta Anna Sewana* (bitter foods), *Alepan* (medicated paste), *Swedana* (sudation), *Siravedhana* (bloodletting), and *Aschyotana* (medicated eye drops), which is considered the first line of treatment.

Sushruta Samhita and *Ashtanga Hridaya* emphasize *Aschyotana* as first-line treatment where medicated drops like *Triphala Kashaya* or *bilwadi panchmoola* penetrate the ocular junction,

pacifying Vata, moisturizing, and reducing inflammation and redness.

Anjana (Eye Ointment): Medications like *Triphala Anjana* are applied to inner eyelids to cleanse, lubricate, and nourish, reducing pricking pain and excessive tearing.

Pindi (Herbal Poultice): Herbal poultices like *Bilwadi Pindi* soften secretions and reduce inflammation, soothing irritation and dryness associated with Vataj Abhishyanda.

Bidalaka (Medicated Paste): Pastes like *Shatadhouta Ghrita* applied to eyelids cool and soothe, relieving inflammation, itching, and burning sensations.

Tarpana (Medicated Ghee): *Mahatriphaladi Ghrita* retained over the eyes provides deep moisturization, strengthens ocular tissues, and relieves dryness, pricking pain, and recurring infections.

Parisheka (Medicated Decoctions): Continuous pouring of *Yashtimadhu Decoction* detoxifies and cools the eyes, alleviating Vata symptoms like dryness and pricking pain.

For allergic conjunctivitis, *Mahatriphaladi Ghrita* is recommended to pacify Vata, reduce inflammation, and improve immunity. It contains *Triphala*, *Yashtimadhu*, and *Ghrita*, which promote healthy vision, lubricate the eyes, and prevent recurrence of infections.

CONCLUSION

The rise in allergic conjunctivitis highlights the need for effective treatments that address both symptoms and root causes. Ayurvedic management of *Abhishyanda* (conjunctivitis), especially *Vataj Abhishyanda*, offers a holistic approach through therapies like Aschyotana,

Parisheka, *pindi*, *Anjana*, *tarpana*. These treatments work to pacify *Vata dosha*, reduce inflammation, and restore moisture to the eyes.

Mahatriphaladi Ghrita, with its *Triphala* and *Yashtimadhu* components, plays a key role in pacifying Vata, nourishing the ocular tissues, and boosting immunity to prevent recurrent allergic episodes. This comprehensive Ayurvedic approach helps alleviate symptoms while promoting overall eye health and immunity, making it a sustainable treatment for *Vataj Abhishyanda*.

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