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"Ayurvedic Approaches to Allergic Conjunctivitis: A Comprehensive Review"

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ABSTRACT

Ocular allergy is a condition affecting the external structures of the eyes, impacting approximately 15-20% of the global population. *Abhishyanda* is type of *Sarvagata Netra Roga* as having clinical feature like watery discharge, itching, and redness, which closely align with modern descriptions of allergic conjunctivitis. Ocular allergies are caused by the body's immune response to allergens. The treatment of Ocular allergy in modern ophthalmology encompasses a range of treatments, and this range of treatment are effective in providing symptomatic relief from allergic reactions. However, their long-term can cause severe, long-lasting, and in some cases, irreversible damage. The recurrence of allergic eye conditions is still not fully controlled. In *Ayurveda*, the management of diseases is approached broadly through two methods either *Sodhana* or *Shamana*. The *Ayurvedic* management of ocular allergy integrates both *Sodhana* and *Shamana* approaches. Present study is aimed to highlight effect of *Ayurvedic* Treatment.

Keywords : *Abhishyanda, Akshirog, Kriyakalp and Shodhan-Shaman Chikitsa*, Allergic Conjunctivitis

INTRODUCTION

Allergic conjunctivitis is the most common type of eye allergy and is widely experienced by the global population. It is distributed fairly evenly across the world, affecting both developed and developing countries. *Abhishyanda*, or *Netra Abhishyanda*, is classified as an eye disease that affects all parts of the eye. The severity of *Abhishyanda* is such that it is often considered the root cause of all eye disorders¹. The treatment of Ocular allergy in modern ophthalmology encompasses a range of treatments, including mast cell stabilizers, antihistamines, NSAIDs, corticosteroids, and immunosuppressive agents. These therapies are effective in providing symptomatic relief from allergic reactions. However, their long-term can cause severe, long-lasting,

and in some cases, irreversible damage. Corticosteroids therapy leads to cataract formation and glaucoma. The recurrence of allergic eye conditions is still not fully controlled.

Given the scale of the problem, the discomfort it causes to patients, and the cost of treatment, there is a need to develop a therapy that is free from side effects, more affordable, and effectively alleviates the symptoms experienced by patients.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Certain diseases have been selected from the classical Ayurvedic texts, the *Sushruta Samhita* and *Ashtanga Hridaya*, which bear similarities to ocular allergic conditions. Research studies were identified through databases such as PubMed, Scopus, and various *Ayurveda* journals.

ANALYSIS

Abhishyanda is type of *Sarvagata Netra Roga* as having clinical feature like watery discharge, itching, and redness, which closely align with modern descriptions of allergic conjunctivitis.

In *Ayurvedic* classical texts, the management of ocular allergies is approached through two primary methods: *Sodhana* and *Shaman*.

SHAMAN CHIKITSA

In the treatment of ocular allergy using *Shaman Chikitsa*, we employ the following topical therapies: , *Sekha* (eye wash), *Aschyotan* (eye drops), *Vidalak* (eye pack) and *Anjana* (collyrium).

For oral medication, we use *Triphala*, *Guduchi*, and *Haridra*.

SODHANA CHIKITSA

In the treatment of ocular allergy using *Sodhana Chikitsa*, we include *Raktavisravan* (bloodletting)² and *Nasya* (nasal administration of medication)

Aschyotan (eye drops)

Ashchyotana is considered the first line of treatment for all eye diseases. It provides relief from symptoms such as *Toda* (tingling), *Kandu* (itching), *Sangharsha* (grittiness), *Ashru* (tearing), *Daha* (burning), and others.³ According to our *Acharyas*, when *Ashchyotana* (topical eye drops) is instilled into the eye, it passes through the *Netra Sandhi* (ocular junction), *Sira* (blood vessels), *Nasika* (nose), and *Mukha Srotas* (oral cavity), expelling the waste (*Mala*) from the *Urdwajatru* (the area above the clavicle).⁴

SEKHA (EYE WASH)

The *Kriyakalpa* Procedure known as *Seka* is the most important ocular therapeutic procedure described exclusively by *Sharangadhara*. It is also referred to as *Netra Parisheka*, which involves ocular irrigation on closed eyes.

Acharya Charaka states that *Drava Sweda* is the most effective treatment for alleviating *Pitta*-associated diseases, which is indirectly referred to as *Seka*.⁵

The main goal of *Seka* is to achieve effective absorption at the site of action for a sufficient period of time to elicit a therapeutic response. This method helps attain a therapeutic drug concentration within the eye and

surrounding structures. It can also be considered a first-line treatment for inflammatory changes in the eye and its adnexa.

VIDALAK (EYE PACK)

Vidalaka is an *Ayurvedic* ocular therapy in which drugs are prepared in a paste form and applied to the outer surface of the eyelids, avoiding the eyelashes. The paste is left in place until it begins to dry, usually for 20-25 minutes.⁶ The skin on the eyelids is extremely thin, with very little subcutaneous fat, and the stratum corneum layer, which serves as a barrier, consists of a single layer. As a result, drug absorption through the eyelid skin occurs rapidly. The drugs that will be used for *Vidalaka* will have anti-Histamin and anti-inflammatory properties. *Vidalaka* will provide quick absorption of the drugs along with soothing effects, making it highly useful in overcoming this clinical condition.

The advantages of transcutaneous drug delivery include the avoidance of the gastrointestinal tract and hepatic first-pass biotransformation and metabolism, better control of absorption, reduced local irritation and toxicity, and improved patient compliance.⁷

ANJANA (COLLYRIUM)

Anjana exists in three forms: *Gutika*, *Raskriya*, and *Choorna*. These forms can be correlated with ophthalmic suspension, aqueous solution, and ophthalmic ointment, respectively. *Anjana* contains microparticles that may be deposited in the conjunctival sac, thereby increasing bioavailability and enhancing ocular absorption.

According to *Sushruta Samhitha* *Anjana* should be performed only after *Doshas* are fully manifested and are localized in the eye and should be free from *Aam Dosa Lakshana* like severe itching sensation, sliminess of eye, thick eye discharge, and *Kapha*, *Pitta*, *Raktaja*.⁸

SODHANA CHIKITSA

NASYA

In *Ayurveda*, the term "*Nasya*" specifically refers to the method of administering drugs through the nose. *Acharya Sushruta* describes this, meaning that the medicaments administered through the nose are referred to as *Nasya*.

The nose is described as the gateway to the head. Therefore, the drug is administered through the nostrils. Once administered, the drug reaches *Shringataka* (a *Sira Marma* located in the nasal passage) and spreads to the brain (*Murda*), reaching the *Marmas* of the eyes (*Netra*), ears (*Shrotra*), throat (*Kantha*), and the openings of the vessels (*Shiramukha*), among others. The drug then, due to its potency, stimulates and removes the morbid *Doshas* from the supraclavicular region, expelling them from the upper body.

Nasya helps in removing toxins (*Ama*) and excess *Doshas* from the head area. It helps clear the sinuses, reducing congestion, which may reduce symptoms of ocular allergies such as watering, itching, and redness.

RAKTAVISRAVAN (BLOODLETTING)

Jaloukavacharan (Leech Application), as described in *Ayurvedic* classics, is considered one of the best and most effective methods of *Raktamokshana* (bloodletting) to reduce inflammation. The procedure is simple, and leeches are easily available, making it a convenient treatment option. This therapy can be safely applied to both

children and elderly patients⁹, which has contributed to its increased popularity and widespread use today. It is commonly practiced as Leech Therapy or Hirudo Therapy.

In the treatment of *Netraroga* (eye diseases), the *Acharyas* have clearly explained that *Jaloukas* are generally applied to the *Apanga Sandhi* (outer canthus), *Upanasika Siras* (inner canthus), and *Lalatapradesha* (frontal region).¹⁰

Abhishyanda condition is considered to arise due to the increased *Syandaguna* (congestion) of the blood (*Rakta*), and hence *Rakta-mokshana* (bloodletting) is considered the best treatment to reduce *Syandatva*, which in turn helps in reducing *Shishirashruta* (congestion and excessive secretion). Leech therapy is highly recommended in this case, as it works by draining congested blood vessels.

If the vitiated blood is not released, it can lead to conditions such as *Shopha* (swelling), *Daha* (burning sensation), *Raga* (redness), *Paka* (infection), and *Vedana* (pain). In *Abhishyanda* (conjunctivitis), symptoms like *Sopha* (swelling) and *Raga* (redness) also appear, which can be considered as signs of *Dushitaraktalakshana* (impure blood symptoms).

Jaloukavacharana (leech therapy) plays a pivotal role in reducing ocular allergy symptoms. The anti-inflammatory¹¹ and anesthetic factors present in the saliva of leeches inhibit inflammation, thereby reducing hyperplasia, which is the primary cause of the foreign body sensation.

RESULTS

In *Ayurveda*, ocular allergies can be understood in terms of *Dosha* imbalances, particularly with respect to *Rakta*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* *Doshas*.

Netrakriyakalpas [*Sekha*, *Aschyotan*, *Anjana*, *Vidalaka*,] & *Jalokavcharan* provide symptomatic relief, while the oral medications treat the root cause of ocular allergy by balancing the *Doshas* and buildup immunity.

DO's

- ✓ Maintain Ocular hygiene (*Triphala* eyewash, Avoid touching your eyes with unclean hands.)
- ✓ Eat fruit (Papayas, Kiwi, Orange) & Vegetable(Carrot,Spinach,corn,Brocoli) for better eye health.
- ✓ Follow daily regimen(*Netra Parkshalana* , *Anjana*, *Padhaabhyanga*.)

DON'T

- ✗ Excessive Spicy, Sour, and Salty Foods: These can aggravate Pitta dosha
- ✗ Avoid Eye rubbing
- ✗ Avoid exposure of allergen(pollen, dust, mold spores,)

DISCUSSION

Ayurvedic medicine offers a more comprehensive approach by addressing the root causes of allergies, restoring balance to the body's *Doshas*, and strengthening immune health.

Ayurveda treats ocular allergy through both preventive and curative methods. The preventive methods include daily regimens such as *Triphala Netra prakshalan* (eye wash with *Triphala*), *Pratimarsh Nasya* (daily nasal administration of medication), *Padabhyanga* (foot massage), and *Chatradharan* (using an umbrella to protect from sun). The curative methods involve treatments like *Aschyotan* (eye drops) , *Sekha* (eye wash), *Vidalaka* (eye pack), and *Anjana* (collyrium).

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