

The Heart-Mind Connection: Exploring Ashru Vega Vidharna and Its Impact on Emotional Well-Being

Review Article

Manisha Kumawat^{1*}, Sumit Nathani²

1. PG Scholar, 2. Associate Professor, Department of Dravyaguna Vigyan,
National Institute of Ayurveda, Deemed to be University (De Novo), Jaipur, Rajasthan. India.

Abstract

This study explores the concept of *Ashru Vega Vidharna*, which refers to the suppression of tears and emotions, and its effects on emotional well-being. By examining the heart-mind connection, we investigate how emotional repression can impact mental health and overall emotional resilience. Findings suggest that allowing emotional expression through tears can enhance emotional regulation, reduce stress, and improve psychological health. This research underscores the importance of emotional expression for well-being and offers insights for therapeutic practices. In Ayurveda, there are natural urges, known as *Adharniya vega*, that can cause health problems if not expressed. One such urge is the tear reflex, or ashru vega. Prolonged suppression of tears may contribute to heart issues. However, traditional Ayurvedic texts provide limited insight into tear formation but the concept of *vegaavrodh*, or the suppression of these natural urges explained in detail. When health issues arise from *Ashru Vegaavrodh*, certain activities can be beneficial. These include sleeping, intake alcohol in medical dose (such as *Asava*, *Arista*, *Sidhu*, or brandy), sharing uplifting stories, and engaging in calming conversations with close friends and family members.

Keywords: *Adharniya Vega*, *Vyana Vayu*, Stress, Heart Disease, *Ashru*, *Vegaavrodha*.

Introduction

The idea of separating body and mind, often referred to as "the head and the heart," has a long history. However, science increasingly shows that physical and mental health are closely linked. Recent research highlights a reciprocal relationship:

1. Mental health issues can increase the risk of heart disease.
2. Conversely, heart disease can elevate the risk of mental health problems.

This emphasizes the importance of addressing both physical and mental well-being together.

In Ayurveda, The term "Vega" means natural urge, and "Dharana" means suppression, so collectively, the word Vega Dharana means forceful suppression of natural urge. Vegas are naturally created in the body in order to maintain bodily equilibrium. Initiation of urges is a normal body activity through which unwanted and waste body products are expelled from the body (1). In order to facilitate the elimination of these substances, the body is equipped with Adharniya Vegas, which appears naturally.

Humans naturally express their feelings through bodily reflexes. In Ayurveda, these reflexes are called Vegas. There are two types of Vegas (2):

1. Dharniya Vegas: Urges that can be controlled.
2. Aadharniya Vegas: Urges that should not be suppressed

Ashru vega dharana refers to the practice of consciously controlling tears. While this might seem harmless, over time, it can lead to various health issues such as colds, eye problems, heart conditions, loss of appetite, and dizziness (3).

Fortunately, individuals affected by this practice can find relief through simple methods. Engaging in storytelling, particularly tales that involve rest and spending quality time with loved ones, can be beneficial. These activities promote emotional well-being and help restore balance

Vega dharana, or the suppression of urges, can put a significant amount of stress on the brain. This stress can lead to worsening mental health conditions. Over time, it can also impact the heart, resulting in noticeable changes in cardiovascular function.

Method

This study drew from traditional Ayurvedic texts, including Brihat Trayi and Laghu Trayi, as well as modern scientific literature. Additional sources included peer-reviewed research journals and published studies.

Results

Ashru vega" refers to the reflex that causes tears in response to strong emotions like sadness, happiness, or even yawning. Tears are produced by the lacrimal glands and are controlled by nerves in the brain.

* Corresponding Author:

Manisha Kumawat

PG Scholar, Department of Dravyaguna Vigyan,
National Institute of Ayurveda, Deemed to be
University (De Novo), Jaipur, Rajasthan, India.

Email Id: manisha.nia.24@gmail.com

Origin of Ashru

In Ayurveda, the concept of Ashru is linked to several physiological components and processes, though specific structures for their release are not explicitly defined in ancient texts. Here are the key points that clarify the origin and function of Ashru:

Role of Dosha

KaphaDosha: Ashru originates from the *Kaphadosha*, which contributes to its lubricating and immune-boosting properties, providing “Bala” (strength).

Vyana Vayu: According to *Acharya Bhavamishra*, *Vyana Vayu* helps transport the “*Akshivita*” (waste from the *Majja* or bone marrow) to the eyes via blood vessels (4). This suggests a role in the distribution of tear components.

Blinking Mechanism: The act of blinking, which is also controlled by *Vyana Vayu*, helps spread *Ashru* over the surface of the eye, ensuring even distribution (5).

Role of Dhatus

Rasa Dhatu: The watery nature of Ashru suggests it may derive from *Rasa dhatu* (plasma) (6), which nourishes and lubricates the eye. Conditions like *Vataja Jwara*, (fever) (7) and *Vataja Pandu* (anemia) (8) that cause dryness can indicate a deficiency in *Rasa dhatu*.

MedaDhatu: *Medadhatu* (fat) may contribute to the nourishment of the eyeball (9), as indicated by changes in eye appearance when *Meda* is depleted.

MajjaDhatu: The presence of “*Tarun-asthis*” (young bones) in the eyelids may serve as a source for *Majjamala*, further indicating a connection between the *Majjadhatu* and tear production (10).

These *dhatu*s—*Rasa*, *Meda*, and *Majja*—play critical roles in the formation and function of *Ashru*, which is layered in composition:

Lipid Layer: Corresponds to the lipoidal secretions of *Medadhatu*.

Aqueous Layer: Represents the water secretions of *Rasadhatu*.

Mucous Layer: Composed of secretions from the *Majjadhatu*, known as *Akshivita*.

Role of Panchmahabhoota

Tears also play a crucial role in maintaining the health of the cornea and conjunctiva, forming a high-quality refractive surface. Ashru is believed to be influenced by *JalaMahabhuta* (water element) (11), aligning with its watery composition.

Anatomical Structures Related to Ashru

AshruVahini Dhamanis: These channels carry Ashru, although their exact function in secretion versus excretion remains unclear (12).

Ashrumargas: Associated with the drainage of tears, these passages are linked to the space element (*Akasha mahabhoota*) (13) and are anatomically positioned in the eye’s structures.

According to *Acharya Charak*, holding back tears over a long time can lead to various health issues, including heart disease (*Hridayarog*), eye problems

(*Akshirog*), and digestive issues (*Aruchi*), Dizziness (*Bhram*) and Cold (*Pratishyaya*) (14).

Treatment Approaches

The Ayurvedic treatment for *Ashru Vegavrodh* includes (15):

Swapan: Sleep-inducing agents that help improve rest and recovery.

Madya: Mind-calming agents to alleviate stress and anxiety.

Priya Katha: Behavioural therapies aimed at promoting emotional expression and coping.

Emotions and Body Reflexes

Emotional suppression, particularly of sadness and grief, can lead to (16):

1. Cardiovascular Stress: Chronic suppression of emotions increases stress hormones, blood pressure, and heart rate, contributing to cardiovascular disease.

2. Mental Health Implications: Bottling up emotions can lead to anxiety, depression, and emotional numbness.

3. Physiological Response: Suppressed emotions trigger the release of cortisol and adrenaline, affecting the body's "fight or flight" response and potentially harming the heart.

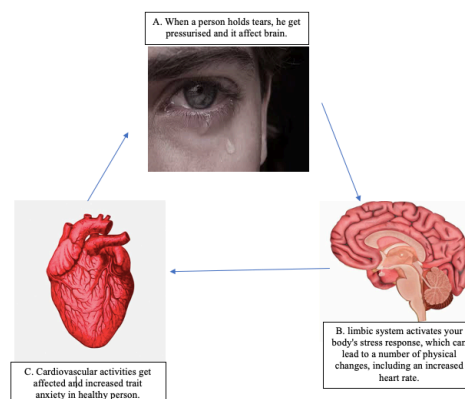
Key Findings

- Emotional suppression increases the risk of cardiovascular disease by 30-40%¹⁷.
- Chronic tear suppression is linked to decreased parasympathetic activity, affecting heart rate variability.
- Ayurveda interventions, such as emotional expression and mindfulness, can mitigate these effects.

Discussion

The given schematic representation shows the side-effects of holding back tears on various organ.

Fig. 1 (A, B & C): Pictures showing how tear holding affect brain and heart



Vyaana Vayu plays a crucial role in regulating dynamic bodily functions. Originating from the heart (*Hridye*) (18), it facilitates expansion and contraction, which are essential for the movement of metabolites, controlled by *Vata*. When tears (*ashru*) are suppressed, it

can disrupt Vyaana Vayu's functions, leading to serious heart conditions like stress-induced cardiovascular diseases (CVDs).

This can be understood in two ways:

1. Tears and Nutrition:

Tears have properties similar to Kapha, helping to lubricate the eyes. They are likely derived from the Rasa dhatu (nutritional fluid) and serve a similar role in the eyes as Rasa does in the body, providing nourishment and restoring tissue. The Rasa samvahan (circulation) process transports these nutrients through the body, starting from the heart and the brain (Dhimaya) (19). Habitually suppressing tears can disrupt this process, negatively affecting heart health and leading to heart diseases.

2. The Heart's Connection:

The heart (Hridaye) is linked to various elements, including Vyana Vata, Sadak Pitta, and Kapha (20,21). Disruption in any of these can harm heart health. The mind (Mana) plays a role in regulating the senses, particularly vision. Tears keep the eyes moist and protect against infections. Continually resisting the urge to cry due to stress and emotions can strain the eyes and contribute to stress-related heart diseases.

Tears are also important for emotional release, as they trigger the release of hormones like oxytocin, which can alleviate both emotional and physical pain. The act of crying is facilitated by Udaana Vayu, with support from Vyaana Vayu (21). Suppressing tears due to anxiety and sorrow can disrupt nutrient balance and Vyaana Vayu in the heart, leading to heart diseases over time.

Conclusion

The factors discussed highlight the serious impact of mental health stress on overall well-being. Suppressing natural urges, such as the need to cry, can lead to significant health issues, including stress-related heart diseases. It's crucial to avoid vega dharana, or the suppression of bodily urges, as it disrupts essential functions in the body and contributes to mental and emotional strain. Promoting healthy emotional expression and managing stress are vital for maintaining good mental health. Encouraging individuals to acknowledge and release their emotions can lead to a more balanced and peaceful life (22). By fostering an environment where emotional well-being is prioritized, we can improve overall health and enhance the quality of life for everyone.

References

1. Vagbhata, Ashtangahridaya, 2022 edition, Varanasi; Chaukhamba Surbharti prakashan, 2022; page no 58
2. Agnivesa, Caraka-Samhita, 2022 edition, Varanasi, Chaumkhamba Surbharati Prakashan, 2022, page no 49.

3. Agnivesa, Caraka-Samhita, 2022 edition, Varanasi, Chaumkhamba Surbharati Prakashan, 2022, page no 49.
4. Bhavamisra, Bhavaprakash nighantu, 2022 reprint, Varanasi: Chaukhambha Bharati Academy, 2022, page no 57.
5. Agnivesa, Caraka-Samhita, 2022 edition, Varanasi, Chaumkhamba Surbharati Prakashan, 2022, page no 616.
6. Sushruta, Sushruta Samhita, 2019 reprint editon, Varanasi: Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan, 2019, page no 525.
7. Agnivesa, Caraka-Samhita, 2022 edition, Varanasi, Chaumkhamba Surbharati Prakashan, 2022, page no 235.
8. Vagbhata, Ashtangahridaya, 2022 edition, Varanasi; Chaukhamba Surbharti prakashan, 2022; page no 528.
9. Sushruta, Sushruta Samhita, 2019 reprint editon, Varanasi: Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan, 2019, page no 2.
10. Sushruta, Sushruta Samhita, 2019 reprint editon, Varanasi: Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan, 2019, page no 60.
11. Sushruta, Sushruta Samhita, 2019 reprint editon, Varanasi: Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan, 2019, page no 6.
12. Sushruta, Sushruta Samhita, 2019 reprint editon, Varanasi: Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan, 2019, page no 50.
13. Sushruta, Sushruta Samhita, 2019 reprint editon, Varanasi: Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan, 2019, page no 6.
14. Agnivesa, Caraka-Samhita, 2022 edition, Varanasi, Chaumkhamba Surbharati Prakashan, 2022, page no 49.
15. Agnivesa, Caraka-Samhita, 2022 edition, Varanasi, Chaumkhamba Surbharati Prakashan, 2022, page no 49.
16. Vaudev, S., 'Vata dynamics w.s.r to cardiac disorders-A cross-disciplinary approach'. Journal of Ayurveda and Integrative Medicine, 2020,11(4), pp. 432-439.
17. Tophy, J.M. and Glass, R.M., 'Chronic stress and the heart'. JAMA, 2007.
18. Agnivesa, Caraka-Samhita, 2022 edition, Varanasi, Chaumkhamba Surbharati Prakashan, 2022, page no 636.
19. Vaudev, S., 'Vata dynamics w.s.r to cardiac disorders-A cross-disciplinary approach'. Journal of Ayurveda and Integrative Medicine, 2020,11(4), pp. 432-439.
20. Vagbhata, Ashtangahridaya, 2022 edition, Varanasi; Chaukhamba Surbharti Prakashan, 2022, page no 194.
21. Vagbhata, Ashtangahridaya, 2022 edition, Varanasi; Chaukhamba Surbharti Prakashan, 2022, page no 193.
22. Tophy, J.M. and Glass, R.M., 'Chronic stress and the heart'. JAMA, 2007.