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Review Article

MADHUMEHA JANYA TIMIR W.S.R. TO DIABETIC RETINOPATHY: AN AYURVEDIC REVIEW WITH MODERN CORRELATIONS

Jaideep[1]*, Ashu[2], Manoj Kumar[2]

*[1]PG Scholar, [2]Professor, Department of Shalakya Tantra, Institute for Ayurved Studies and Research, Shri Krishna AYUSH University, Kurukshetra, India.

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ABSTRACT

Diabetic Retinopathy (DR) is one of the most common microvascular complications of Diabetes Mellitus and is the leading cause of preventable blindness worldwide. In Ayurveda, diabetes is described under *Madhumeha*, a subtype of *Prameha*, characterized by deranged metabolism, tissue depletion, and vitiation of *Doshas* and *Dhatus*. Visual disturbances arising from *Madhumeha* are classified as *Madhumeha Janya Timir*, a progressive ocular disorder involving the *Netra* (eye) and ultimately leading to *Kacha* and *Linganasha* (vision loss). Pathological parallels exist between the Ayurvedic concept of *Timir* due to *Dhatu kshaya* and *Dosha dushti*, and the microvascular damage, ischemia, and neovascularization seen in DR. Management in modern medicine relies on glycemic control, laser photocoagulation, anti-VEGF injections, and vitrectomy, but these approaches are often limited by recurrence, side effects, and cost. Ayurveda offers holistic management through *Rasayana* drugs, *Chakshushya dravyas*, and *Netra Kriyakalpas* such as *Tarpana* and *Nasya*, which aim to prevent progression and improve ocular health. This review article explores the Ayurvedic understanding of *Madhumeha Janya Timir*, correlates it with diabetic retinopathy, and evaluates evidence-based approaches from both systems.

INTRODUCTION

Diabetes Mellitus is a chronic metabolic disorder with rising global prevalence. According to the International Diabetes Federation (IDF), an estimated 537 million adults worldwide were living with diabetes in 2021, and this number is expected to rise to 783 million by 2045 [1]. Diabetic Retinopathy (DR) is one of the most feared complications, affecting nearly one-third of diabetic individuals, and remains a leading cause of vision loss among working-age adults [2]. The disease imposes a significant economic and social burden due to its chronicity, irreversible vision loss, and impact on quality of life.

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Ayurveda describes diabetes under the broad category of *Prameha*, and *Madhumeha* is the most severe and advanced stage characterized by chronicity, *Dhatu* depletion, and systemic complications [3]. The eye (*Netra*) is considered a vital organ, and ocular complications of *Madhumeha* are described as *Timir*, which progresses gradually from mild blurring to total blindness. The descriptions of *Madhumeha Janya Timir* in Ayurveda bear remarkable resemblance to diabetic retinopathy as understood in modern medicine.

While modern medicine provides advanced diagnostic and therapeutic options, including laser therapy, intravitreal anti-VEGF injections, and surgical interventions, these methods are not always curative and may be associated with complications or financial constraints [4]. Ayurveda emphasizes prevention, early intervention, and systemic balance through diet, lifestyle, *Panchakarma*, and *Rasayana* therapies. Thus, there is a strong need to integrate Ayurvedic wisdom with modern ophthalmological advances for better prevention and management of DR.

This article aims to review the Ayurvedic concept of *Madhumeha Janya Timir*, correlate it with diabetic retinopathy, and critically evaluate evidence from classical texts and modern research to propose integrative approaches.

Ayurvedic Concept of *Madhumeha Janya Timir*

Madhumeha and *Prameha*

Madhumeha is one of the 20 types of *Prameha*, a metabolic disorder characterized by excessive and abnormal urinary output with sweet taste and odor. It is caused by deranged *Kapha* and *Vata dosha*, impaired *Agni* (digestive fire), and depletion of *Ojas* [5]. Chronic *Madhumeha* leads to progressive *Dhatu kshaya* (tissue depletion), making the body susceptible to complications including ocular disorders.

Timir as a *Netra Roga*

Timir is described as one of the important eye disorders in Ayurveda. It is characterized by diminished vision, blurring, and difficulty in perceiving objects. Timir is staged progressively:

1. *Timira* – Initial blurring of vision.
2. *Kacha* – Intermediate opacity in visual perception.
3. *Linganasha* – Advanced stage leading to blindness.

Madhumeha Janya Timir arises due to *Vata–Kapha* vitiation, *Dhatu kshaya* (particularly of *Rasa* and *Rakta* dhatus), and *Srotorodha* (microvascular obstruction), leading to gradual impairment of retinal function.

Samprapti (Pathogenesis)

- *Dosha*: Predominantly *Vata* with *Kapha* association.
- *Dushya: Rasa, Rakta*, and *Meda dhatus*.
- *Srotas: Rasavaha, Raktavaha, Medovaha srotas*.
- *Adhisthana: Netra*, particularly *Drishti mandala* (retina).
- *Samprapti ghatakas: Dhatu kshaya, Dosha dushti*, *Srotorodha*, leading to progressive vision loss.

Thus, *Madhumeha*-induced derangements in *Dhatus* and *Srotas* reflect closely the pathogenesis of microvascular complications like DR.

Modern Perspective of Diabetic Retinopathy

Definition

Diabetic Retinopathy is a microvascular complication of diabetes characterized by progressive retinal damage due to chronic hyperglycemia, resulting in visual impairment and blindness if untreated.

Epidemiology

- DR affects about 30% of diabetic patients globally[6].
- Nearly 90 million people worldwide suffer from DR, with 28 million progressing to vision-threatening stages [7].
- Duration of diabetes and poor glycemic control are strong risk factors.

Pathophysiology

1. Chronic hyperglycemia → accumulation of advanced glycation end products (AGEs).
2. Damage to pericytes and endothelial cells in retinal capillaries.
3. Microaneurysms, hemorrhages, and capillary non-perfusion.
4. Retinal ischemia→ VEGF release→ neovascularization.
5. Macular edema due to capillary leakage.

Classification

- Non-Proliferative DR (NPDR): Microaneurysms, hemorrhages, hard exudates.
- Proliferative DR (PDR): Neovascularization, vitreous hemorrhage, tractional retinal detachment.
- Diabetic Macular Edema (DME): Thickening of central retina with fluid accumulation.

Clinical Features

- Blurred vision.
- Floaters or dark spots.
- Gradual vision loss.
- In advanced stages, sudden blindness due to vitreous hemorrhage or retinal detachment.

Management in Modern Medicine

- Strict glycemic and blood pressure control.
- Laser photocoagulation (to seal leaking vessels and regress neovascularization).
- Intravitreal injections (anti-VEGF, corticosteroids).
- Vitrectomy in advanced PDR. Despite these measures, recurrence and progressive vision loss remain challenges [8].

Correlation of *Madhumeha Janya Timir* and Diabetic Retinopathy

- Etiology: Chronic *Madhumeha* corresponds to long-standing diabetes.
- Pathogenesis: *Vata-Kapha* aggravation and *Dhatu kshaya* parallel microangiopathy, ischemia, and retinal degeneration.
- Clinical features: *Timir's* gradual blurring resembles early NPDR, *Kacha* correlates with advanced NPDR/PDR, and *Linganasha* corresponds to irreversible blindness.
- *Srotorodha*: Blockage in *Rasa-Rakta srotas* aligns with capillary occlusion in DR. Thus, Ayurveda's description of *Madhumeha Janya Timir* closely resembles the clinical course of diabetic retinopathy.

Literature Review of Ayurvedic and Modern Approaches

Ayurvedic Interventions

1. ***Chakshushya Rasayana:*** *Triphala, Yashtimadhu, Amalaki, Guduchi*, and *Shatavari* support retinal health through antioxidant and *Rasayana* actions[9].
2. ***Saptamrita Lauha* and *Dhatri Rasayana*:** Reported to improve vision and reduce retinal oxidative stress [10].
3. ***Netra Kriyakalpa*:** Procedures like *Netra Tarpana* (ghee/oil pooling over eyes), *Nasya* (nasal instillation), and *Anjana* help in nourishing ocular tissues and preventing degeneration [11].
4. ***Raktamokshana* (bloodletting):** Mentioned in chronic *Netra rogas* for removing localized vitiated blood.

Clinical Studies in Ayurveda

- A clinical study on *Triphala Ghrita Tarpana* showed improvement in visual acuity and reduction in retinal changes in early DR cases [12].
- *Guduchi*-based formulations demonstrated antioxidant and microcirculation-enhancing effects in diabetic ocular complications [13].
- Integrated protocols combining *Rasayana* drugs with *Panchakarma* showed delayed progression of *Timir* in diabetic patients [14].

Modern Evidence

- Large trials have shown that strict glycaemic and blood pressure control reduce the risk of DR progression [15].
- Anti-VEGF injections (ranibizumab, bevacizumab) are effective in reducing macular edema [16].
- Panretinal photocoagulation remains the standard for PDR, though associated with reduced peripheral vision [17].

DISCUSSION

Ayurveda and modern medicine both acknowledge the progressive nature of vision loss in diabetes. While modern medicine identifies microvascular pathology, Ayurveda emphasizes systemic imbalance, *Dhatu* depletion, and *Dosha dushti.*

Ayurvedic therapies provide:

- **Systemic benefits:** *Rasayana* therapy strengthens dhatus and prevents degeneration.
- **Local benefits:** *Netra Kriyakalpas* directly nourish ocular tissues.
- **Preventive role:** *Nidana parivarjana* and lifestyle correction help reduce risk factors.

Modern therapies are essential for vision-threatening stages but are invasive and costly. Integrative care- Ayurvedic *Rasayana* and lifestyle measures alongside modern ophthalmic interventions- could provide the most comprehensive strategy for preventing blindness in diabetic patients.

CONCLUSION

Madhumeha Janya Timir described in Ayurveda closely parallels diabetic retinopathy in modern medicine. Both recognize a gradual, progressive loss of vision due to systemic derangements. Ayurveda offers holistic preventive and supportive management with *Rasayana, Chakshushya* drugs, and *Netra Kriyakalpas*, while modern medicine provides advanced but invasive interventions for late stages. Integrating these approaches may help reduce the global burden of blindness due to DR. Future clinical trials with standardized Ayurvedic protocols are warranted to validate and globalize these strategies.

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***Address for correspondence**
Dr. Jaideep
PG Scholar,
Department of Shalakya Tantra,
Institute for Ayurved Studies and Research, Shri Krishna AYUSH University, Kurukshetra.
Email: jd.ranga786@gmail.com