

## A Review of Avabahuk

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### Abstract

*Avabahuka is a disease of amsa sandhi (shoulder joint) and it has been defined under eighty types of vata vyadhi by Acharya Sushruta. Being a disease of shoulder joint, which has greatest range of motion, is of vital importance to the activities of daily routine and work, this disease is a hindrance in one's productivity. Clinical presentation and pathogenesis of Avabahuka is almost similar to Frozen Shoulder. It is one of the commonest musculoskeletal disorder visited in orthopedic clinics, often annoyed both patients as well as doctors. This article aims to provide an overview on prognosis(samprapati) and management according to Ayurveda.*

**Keywords:**, Avabahuka Samprapati,.

### Introduction

**A**vabahuka, a term coined by Acharya Sushrut in 600BC- 400BC is a disease of skanda (shoulder) commonly encountered in general practice. Human body has six parts (shadanga<sup>[1]</sup>) and shakha (upper limb) is one among them, where as skanda is the root of shakha. He used this term in his treatise "Sushruta Samhita" to describe a condition with symptoms<sup>[2,3]</sup> of "Ansadeshasthitovayu shoshayitvam ansabandhanam, shiracha aakunchaya tatrasto janayatava avabahukam," where as in Astanga Hridya<sup>[4]</sup> (5th century) and Astanga Sangrah<sup>[5]</sup> it is described as "Ansamulasthito vaayu sira sankochaya tatraga, bahupraspanditaharam janayatvam avabahukam" means the condition in which the vata gets lodged at the root of the shoulder, subsequently constricting the veins and producing the loss of movements of the shoulder has been identified as Avabahuka. In Madhava Nidana<sup>[6]</sup> two conditions of the disease has been mentioned, Ansashosha and Avabahuka, as former can be considered as preliminary stage of later. Charaka Samhita (200BC-300BC) in Sutra Sthana<sup>[7nd]</sup> Chikitsa Sthana<sup>[8]</sup> bahushosh and bahuвата respectively has been mentioned. In Chakradutta<sup>[9]</sup> only bahushosha has mentioned in vatavyadhi Chikitsa. According to Acharya Sushruta<sup>[10]</sup> vitiated vata in and around

shoulder causes shosha (dryness) of ansabandhan (shoulder ligaments, tendons and connective tissue or capsule leading to pain and stiffness) and constriction of blood vessels (reduced blood supply) resulting in avabahuka.

### Etymology of Avabahuka

- It is made up of two words ava + bahuka, the prefix ava means away, down<sup>[11]</sup>, vikrita<sup>[12]</sup> off, away<sup>[13]</sup> All that means like dysfunction or physiological separation not anatomical resulting in movement restriction hampering one's all activities of that particular part, as if there is real
- Separation. Therefore avabahuka means immobile shoulder.
- Etiology (Nidana) Cause of Avabahuka is mainly vata dosh as it is described under vatavyadhi and in later stage kapha dosha is also associated with vata dosha.[6] The causes of avabahuk may be classified in to three groups:
  - 1) **Abhigataj** (trauma) or marma bhigata:<sup>[14,15]</sup> injury to ansa marm (shoulder region) leads to stiffness of shoulder.
  - 2) **Aaharaj**[16] (unwholesome food): tikta (bitter), ushana, kashaya (astringent), alpa, ruksha, pramita bhojanae (food) cause vitiation of the vata.

3) **Viharaja** (activities or improper life style): due to over indulgence in things like excessive physical exercise, sudden fear, grief etc lead to depletion or loss of tissues and vata gets aggravated, other few factors are as below:

- i) Plavana (swimming more than 40minutes).
- ii) Bharavahan (carrying heavy loads).
- iii) Balvat vighraha (wrestling with a more powerful person).
- iv) Dukha shayya (improper posture in bed).

**Pathogenesis (Samprapti) of Avabahuka**

According to Acharya Sushruta vitiated vata around the shoulder joint depletes (shosh of shleshamaka kapha) structures or tissues in and around it and vasoconstriction of vessels leading to pain and stiffness of the joint ultimately resulting in restricted shoulder movement. Prodromal Symptoms (Purva Roopa) Avayakta (minimal or no prodromal symptoms) in vatavyadhi.

- 1. Sign and Symptoms (Roopa) Avabahuka
- 2. Pain (as main feature of vitiated vata) in shoulder region.
- 3. Shoulder stiffness
- 4. Restriction in shoulder joint range of motion.
- 5. Sosha (muscular atrophy).
- 6. Treatment
- 7. The general line of treatment mentioned for vatavyadhi (avabahuka) in Ayurvedic texts includes:
- 8. Snehana (oleation both internal and external with medicated oils).
- 9. Swedana (sudation with steam made from vatashamaka drugs).
- 10. Basti (decoction or oil given through anal route like enema).
- 11. Agnikarma and oral medications (in the form of guggul, decoctions etc.)
- 12. Nasya (medication given through nasal route) as Acharya Vagbhata has mentioned nasyakarma in the udarvajatrugata roga.

Astanga sangraha mentioned<sup>[17]</sup> Navana nasaya and snehapana for avabahuk where as Acharya Sushruta<sup>[18]</sup> advises vatavyadhi chikitsa except siravyadha, in Astanga Hridayam<sup>[19]</sup> first nasya then basti, Baladi or dashmooladi kwath<sup>[20,21]</sup> by Chakradatta for avabahuka and in Yoga Ratnakar<sup>[22]</sup>

bahuparivartana (movements of shoulder joint as “Masha tail rasonabhyam bahuvoch parivartanam, dashangim masha kwathaena jayata avabahukam”. Sahasrayoga mentions Prasaraniyadi Kashaya in treatment of Avabahuka<sup>[23]</sup>

**A broad over view of some of the well-recognized methods today is provided below:**

- 1) Nidana parivarjana (avoidance of the causes) and pathya ahar-vihar (wholesome diet and activities).
- 2) Abyanga (massage, applying pressure with warm medicated oil) like stretching.
- 3) Sweden (sudation with dosha shamak steam) is deep heating and Upnaha<sup>[24]</sup>
- 4) Pizhichil: streaming of hot oil along with simultaneous massage.
- 5) Elakizhi: herbal poultice prepared with vata balancing herbs tied in a cloth and is dipped in hot medicated oil, this is applied over the local affected part.
- 6) Njavarakizhi: useful in degenerative conditions and this is like shastikashali pinda sweda, first abhyanga is done and rice pack dipped in certain decoction is applied over the affected part.
- 7) Podikizhi]: in this herbal powder taken in a linen bag, dipped in oil and applied over.
- 8) Pichu<sup>[25]</sup>: cotton swab soaked in hot medicated oil applied to the part affected.
- 9) Nasaya karma<sup>[26,27]</sup>: as this comes under udravajatrugat roga.
- 10) Sanshamana aushadhi: vatashamak drugs, kwath and oils like Yograj Guggul, Rasna Erandadikshayaya, Mahanarayanadi oil etc.
- 11) Yoga and aasana<sup>[25]</sup> like surya namaskara etc.
- 12) Bahu parivartanam (shoulder exercise or physiotherapy).
- 13) Agnikarma.<sup>[28]</sup>
- 12) Marma therapy: stimulating marma points near by ansa sandhi gives promising results and even it can be practiced life long without any side effects.

**Discussion**

This article aims to provide an view of the nature and the widely accepted management of this condition based on other studies. As described in

Sushruta Samhita and Madhav Nidan Avabahuk and Bahu Shosh can be considered as continuum not as separate diseases or two different conditions. It is extremely important to consider the patient's symptoms and condition when selecting a treatment method as each patient's treatment should be individualized. Marma therapy stimulating marma points nearby ansa-sandhi gives promising results and even it can be practiced life long without any side effects. Marma therapy can be used along with oral vatashamaka medicines and medicated oils to further enhance the results. Bahuparivartan (shoulder exercises) can be used in all stages of avabahuka. There is limited evidence to show that marma therapy will truly change the natural course of this disease, the key area for future research in particular, with regard to marma therapy as a treatment comparing it with an adequately powered high quality randomized controlled trial.

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