



A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF ATATVABHINIVESHA AS MAHAGADA, AND ITS MODERN INTERPRETATION

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ABSTRACT

Atatvabhinivesha is a disease explained only in Charaka Samhita and considered it as a difficult to treat mental disorder (*Mahagada*). *Budhi Vibhramsha* (loss of intellect) is the predominant symptom of *Atatvabhinivesha*. Because of complete derangement of intellectual capacity person loses his insight towards disease, and self. Modern interpretation for *Atatvabhinivesha* can be done to the symptoms of Psychosis, where person loses insight and develops psychotic symptoms predominantly delusions and hallucinations.

Keywords: *Atatvabhinivesha*, *Mahagada*, Psychosis

INTRODUCTION

Atatvabhinivesha is a disease only explained in Charaka Samhita, while explaining classification of different diseases, and mentioned it as only one *Mahagada*¹(difficult to cure disease). Acharya Chakrapa-

ni commented on it as a mental illness, and it leads to misery in all living being². The word *Atatvabhinivesha* is the combination of *Atatva* and *Abhinivesh*. *Atatva* is the false, or *ayatartha*, and *Abinivesha* is interpreta-

tion. Where there is interpretation of false perceptions by a person, he is not able to recognise truth, and considers false interpretation itself truth, termed as *Atatvabhinivesha*.

As there is false interpretation over truth in *Atatvabhinivesha*, and considered it as *Mahagada*, several major mental diseases which has been associated with symptoms of Psychosis can be interpreted with *Atavabhinivesha*. Psychosis is seen in many mental disorders, and considered it as severe form of such disease, and needs treatment for longer duration. Psychosis is characterised by loss of contact with reality and relationship with other people causing social maladaptation. Psychosis affects personality, the contact with reality is completely lost, hallucinations and delusions are present and higher risk of self harm³.

Some of the different types of psychosis include

1. Schizophrenia
2. Schizoaffective disorders
3. Delusional disorder
4. Substance induced psychosis
5. Dementia and Delirium
6. Bipolar disorder
7. Major Depressive disorder
8. Postpartum psychosis
9. Psychosis due to general medical condition.

Aetiology of *Atatvabhinivesha* are indulging in regular intake of impure food, suppression of the manifested natural urges, excessive indulging in diet which are opposite qualities each other such as cold – hot, unctuous – ununctuous⁴.

Impure food like unprocessed meat is the cause for increased Dopamine hormone in post synaptic receptors, and which leads to psychotic disorders⁵.

Suppression of natural urges aggravates *vatadaosha*, and *vata* and *manas* are interrelated⁶. Aggravation of *vata* also aggravates *mano dosha rajas* and *tamas*.

Excessive indulge in diet which are opposite qualities can be correlated with substance abuse like alcohol or cannabis which are the cause for psychosis⁷.

The patho - physiology of *Atatvabhinivesha* is occlusion of aggravated dosha to mind and intellect leading to derangement of intellect⁸. There will be damage to the most important aspect of mind, and because of

this, person is unable to identify eternal thing as eternal, and wholesome as wholesome. Rather considers eternal as ephemeral, and wholesome as unwholesome. Complete derangement of intellect, which is superior aspect of mind leading to abnormal functioning of it. Hence *Atatvabhinivesha* is considered as *Mahagada* by Acharya Charaka.

The modern interpretation to *Atatvabhinivesha* is Psychotic disorders, where person loses the insight and suffers from hallucinations and delusions. Hallucination is a perception experienced in the absence of external stimulus. The hallucination can be auditory, visual, olfactory, gustatory, or tactile domains⁹.

The symptoms of *Atatvabhinivesha* can be observed in the following disorders in detail.

Schizophrenia: Characterized by disturbance in thought and verbal behaviour, perception. Affect, motor behaviour, and relationship to the external world. All these symptoms are beyond truth. Hallucination is common here, and most frequently auditory hallucinations like,

- Hearing simple sounds
- Audible thought (Thought echo)
- Third person hallucination (voices heard arguing, discussing patients in 3rd person)

Bizarre type of delusions is also observed along with hallucinations, where patient's day to day activities completely disturbed¹⁰

Schizoaffective Disorder: Characterized by the symptoms of both Schizophrenia, and Mood disorders are prominently present within the same episode. Schizoaffective disorder lies on the borderland between Schizophrenia and Mood Disorder. Psychotic symptoms which were discussed in Schizophrenia are also observed here, along with psychotic symptoms coming under Mood disorder can also observed in this disease¹¹.

Delusional Disorders: Most significant symptoms, resembles with *Atatvabhinivesha* are observed in Delusional Disorder. Previously called by name "Paranoid Disorder", where patient strongly believes untruth as truth. It is not at all possible to change his belief. That is unshakable belief in something untrue¹². Different types of delusions are as follow,

- Erotomaniac delusions (Delusions of love or Claerambautt's syndrome or Erotomania): Observed most often in women. There is an erotic conviction that a person with higher status in love with the patient.
- Delusions of Grandiose: The patient usually has delusions with religious or political content and may believe self to be a leader with higher aims of spreading peace, making war, or spreading a message in the world.
- Delusions of Jealousy (Othello syndrome or conjugal paranoia): The content of delusions is predominantly jealousy (infidelity) involving spouse, in which a person is preoccupied with the thought of their spouse or sexual partner is being unfaithful without having any proof.
- Delusions of Persecution: The most commonly seen delusional disorder. Affected patient believe they are being persecuted despite being lack of evidence.
- Somatic Delusion (Hypochondrical): Common delusions include infections by worms or foreign bodies emitting foul odor (Delusional Halitosis), body being ugly or misshapen (Delusional dysmorphophobia).
- Nihilistic Delusions: Delusional belief of being dead, having lost one's own internal organs, not existing entirely as a human being.

All the above types of delusions are of non – bizarre type, where the person completely normal outside the delusion. The person can lead near normal life without arousing suspicion regarding their delusional disorder. Substance Induced Psychosis: Alcohol dependence, Cannabis dependence, or withdrawal of any substance, patient develops delusions or hallucinations. For example, Cannabis Psychosis (Hemp insanity), Delirium tremens in Alcoholic withdrawal. Patient develops visual hallucination and illusions, which are often vivid and frightening, Tactile hallucinations of insects crawling over body are the symptoms observed in Alcoholic induced psychosis¹³.

Delirium and Dementia: Two organic mental disorders with the symptoms of psychosis like hallucina-

tions, and delusions are observed in Delirium, and in the chronic phase of Dementia¹⁴.

Bipolar Mood Disorder: Delusions of Grandiose, and delusions of control are usually observed in Manic episode. 15 to 20 % of Depressive patients have psychotic symptoms such as

- Nihilistic delusions
- Delusions of guilt
- Delusions of poverty
- Delusions of control¹⁵.

Postpartum Psychosis: Postpartum blues, postpartum depression, postpartum psychosis are different conditions a mother experiences after giving birth to child. Hallucinations and delusions are common in the postpartum psychosis¹⁶.

Psychosis due to general medical condition: Brain tumours, Seizure disorders, Huntington's disease, Multiple Sclerosis, Cushing's syndrome, Vitamin deficiencies, electrolyte abnormalities, Thyroid disorders, Uraemia, SLE, HIV, Anabolic steroids, Corticosteroids, Anti-malarial drugs are some of the causes for onset of psychotic symptoms.

Treatment for *Atatvabhinivesha*: *Kramavat Shodana* is advised by Punarvasu Athreya, including *Snehana*, *Swedana*, *Vamana*, *Virechana*, *Basti*, *Nasya*. Due to proper purification person's heart, faculties of senses, head, and throat are cleansed. Person attains clarity in the mind and there by regains memory and orientation. After purificatory procedures *Medhya* food and liquid like *Brahmi swarasa* with *Panchagavya Gritha*, and *Shankapushpi* is administered. *MedyaRasayana* is explained specially in the treatment of *Atatvabhinivesha*, which acts directly on the *Budhi*, which was deranged completely in the patient suffering from *Atatvabhinivesha*. At the end Acharya Charaka mentioned *SatvavajayaChikithsa* by the preceptors and close friends with having sympathy towards patient to teach *dharma* (right way of living) and *artha*(right way to earn)¹⁷.

Even in the contemporary science the first line of treatment for Psychotic symptoms are Antipsychotics. Once patient regains insight about his illness counseling or psychotherapy is done to prevent further relapse of episodes¹⁸.

Prognosis of Psychotic Disorders: Depends on several factor, but proper treatment is required for almost life-time. This factor is also similar in case of *Atatvabhinivesha*, though the prognosis is not explained in the literature, as it is *Mahagada*, needs treatment for longer duration.

DISCUSSION

Atatvabhinivesha is explained by Punarvasu Athreya at the end of the *Apasmara Chikithsa*. Derangement of intellect leading to symptoms like unable identify eternal and non-eternal, and also unable identify wholesome and unwholesome. Complete derangement of intellect is considered as difficult to treat, hence *Atatvabhinivesha* is considered as *Mahagada* (difficult to treat disease). The aetiology, symptoms, management of Psychotic symptom, which are seen in many major mental disorders are almost similar to *Atatvabhinivesha*.

CONCLUSION

Atatvabhinivesha explained by Punarvasu Athreya as *Mahagada* cannot be interpreted with any single modern mental disorder, rather it can be interpreted with the features of Psychosis which are observed in many mental disorders on the basis of aetiology, pathophysiology, symptoms, management, and prognosis. Psychosis is needed much more care for lifelong, when compared with management of Neurosis.

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