

## VISION CARE THROUGH AYURVEDA – A REVIEW

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### ABSTRACT

Eyes are the finest gift of God to mankind; the world appears beautiful through the vision which they perceive through their eyes, without eyes the whole world appears dark, however rich or sophisticated they may be. For a blind man the day and night makes no difference. As per the quotation- **Prevention is better than cure - Swastasya swastya rakshanam & aaturasya roga Prashamana** is the main objective of Ayurveda. It is only science which gives maximum importance for the prevention of diseases. Ayurvedic classical texts such as Charaka Samhitha, Sushruta Samhitha & Astanga Sangraha/Hrudaya has elaborative description about prevention of eye diseases and also explained many vision care techniques such as *dinacharya*, *nidana parivarjana*, administration of *chakshushya Rasayanas* and *Netra kriya kalpas*. As these information's are scattered, an effort has been made to compile all these measures, which helps to prevent diseases of Eyes.

**Keywords:** *Dinacharya, chakshushya Rasayanas, Netra Kriya Kalpas.*

### INTRODUCTION

Eyes are the most important sense organ of our body. More than 80% of knowledge gained by us is by visual perception. Eyes are the finest gift of God to mankind; the world appears beautiful through the vision which he perceives through his eyes. Without eyes the whole world appears dark, however rich or sophisticated he may be. For a blind man the day and night makes no difference<sup>1</sup>. Due to the globalization and changing trends in life style and food habits,

the mankind is **facing various eye diseases**, especially the urban population. In this present scenario, the man's life style and food habits have been replaced with fast food, fast transportation, and exposure to audio-visuals, electronic gadgets, stressful working atmosphere and sedentary life style with malnourishment. In children the outdoor games are replaced by video games and mobile games for which the children's are addicted. These factors have contrib-

uted for the development of various eye problems in our country.

Ayurveda being the oldest medical science has an answer for these issues, it says *sarvendriyanam nayanam pradhanam*. That is eyes are the most important organ in our body and so care should be taken to protect them<sup>2</sup>. Our great Acharyas have given an elaborative description about both curative and preventive aspects of eye diseases which the present generation has neglected. Due to busy modern lifestyle various eye diseases such as Dry eye syndrome, ARMD, Diabetic Retinopathy, Refractive errors, Hypertensive Retinopathy, Eale's disease, childhood blindness, cataract, glaucoma, are increasing day by day.

About 90% of world's blind live in developing countries and around 60% of them are from India & China. In India 9 blind people /1000 population is the present statistics<sup>3</sup>. Among these, blindness largely is preventable or curable with early detection and management. Many of these eye diseases are because of the defective lifestyles and can be avoided by following the appropriate daily regimen and following simple procedures that are mentioned in Ayurveda.

#### **Aims and Objectives:**

To bring together all the classical preventive measures for vision care.

**Dinacharya (Daily Regimen):** Our Acharyas have specified daily regimen i.e the do's everyone should follow from waking up in the morning till going to bed at night. Health depends on how one spends his day. One who wants to keep himself fit should follow this daily regimen. To maintain the health of the eyes our Acharyas have mentioned the following daily regimen<sup>4</sup>.

**Netra prakshalana-** Sushruta in his books has quoted *netra prakshalana* i.e washing the Eyes with medicated kashayas like Triphala kashaya; lodra kashaya daily will increase the efficacy of eyes<sup>5</sup>. This clears the Lacrimal passage and rejuvenates the tear film over the conjunctiva and cornea.

**Anjana proyoga-** Daily after snana, one has to apply anjana to eyes. It is a method of applying medicated paste to lid margin from *kaninika to apanga*. *Rasanjana and Souveeranjana* with honey are used regularly as anjana. By this the accumulated kapha dosha can be taken out and helps to increase the blood circulation in the eyes and prevent the eye diseases<sup>6</sup>.

**Shiro abhyanga-** This is a procedure where oil is applied to head. This helps to improve the blood circulation to brain & scalp and thereby nourishes the cranial nerves & improves the visual perception. *Shiro abhyanga* nourishes all sense organs and also it is *Drusti prasadhana*<sup>7</sup>.

**Padaabhyanga-** *Pada* refers to foot, foot are the end organs of the body so the nerve endings are highly sensitive. If *abhyanga* is done, there will be stimulation of nerve endings and effects are seen in the eyes through sympathetic and parasympathetic supply. So *padaabhyanga, padaprakshalana and padatra dharana* (using footwear) helps to improve vision<sup>8</sup>.

**Vyayama-** Acc to Ayurveda one has to practice vyayama and yoga to maintain the health of the body by *yogasanas*. The blood circulation to the organs can be increased and efficacy of organs can be achieved by *Dhyana, pranayama, Trataka*, the health of eyes can be achieved<sup>9</sup>.

**Snana-** Generally all the sense organs get stimulated by *snana*. Hot water is advised for body wash and cold water is indicated for *shirah snana*. If hot water is used for headbath it is ad-

versely affects the hair & eyes and cold water to *shirah snana* is considered as *chakshushya*<sup>10</sup>.

**Nasya karma**-It is a procedure in which medicated *dravyas* are installed through the nasal cavity. It nourishes all the sense organs as nose is the gate way to head (Brain) & strengthens the nerves, vessels and *Marmas*. Mainly *srungataka marma* which is situated at the joining point of vessels from *nasa, akshi, karna & mukha*. It clears all the *srotas* from *siras &* helps to keep all *srothas* intact. It is of 2 types – *Marsha, pratimarsha nasya*<sup>11</sup>.

**Mukhalepa**- Application of medicines to face in the form of paste is called *mukhalepa*. The facial artery, facial nerve and trigeminal nerve are passing along the cheeks having branches to eyes and even lepa will have an effect over *brajaka* and *alochaka pitta* and thus improve the vision<sup>12</sup>.

**Ahara**-*Ahara, nidra* and *bramhacharya* are considered as *triyopasthambha* in *Ayurveda*. If these are taken care properly then one can maintain and protect himself from any diseases. *Ahara* plays a major role in maintaining the health of the eyes. Many of our classics have explained *chakshushya aharas* which can be taken regularly to maintain the vision. Susruta has quoted that one who takes *puran ghrta, shatavari, amalaki, patola, mudga, yava, shastika shali* will not suffer from *Timira vyadi*. *Shakha* like *shigru, fenugreek and fruits like Triphala, papaya*, are advised as *Patya ahara*. All food items which are sweet and bitter in taste are considered as *chakshushya*<sup>13</sup>. When analyzed in modern aspect these food items are rich in either vit –A, VIT-C, VIT-E, some are having antioxidant properties and rich in minerals. Thus helps to improve the vision.

**Nidra**- Sleep is one of the *adharaneeya Vega*, it should not be suppressed. If suppressed will

lead to *indriya vibramsha* and becomes one of the *nidana* (etiological factor for eye diseases). Susruta has mentioned “*swapnaviparyaya*”-irregular sleeping habits (day sleep, excessive sleep. Loss of sleep, untimely sleep) are one of the main cause for eye disorders<sup>14</sup>.

Sleep rejuvenates mind and body. Normally 6-8hrs of good sleep is necessary for the normal function of the body. During sleep, the eyes are completely at rest and retain functional capacity. Disturbed sleep for more than 2-3days leads to many eye problems like burning of eyes, dry eyes, blurring of vision, change in perception of colour.

**Rasayana**: Eye diseases due to ageing process like cataract, ARMD, are inevitable but can be delayed by taking *chakshushya rasayana*. According to *Ayurveda Samhitha*, some of the drugs like *Triphala, Amalaki, Yastimadhu, Swarnabhasma*, etc with *grutha and madhu* are regularly administered in proper dosage to maintain the health of eyes. These drugs will slow down the process of ocular degenerations and improves the visual acuity<sup>15</sup>.

These are some of the daily regimen (do's) which should be followed by every individual to maintain the general health and also to protect our vision.

Our *Acharyas* also highlighted to avoid some of the habits/behaviors, which are responsible for causing eye diseases. These habits are called as *nidanas* (causative factors of eye diseases).

*Ushnaabhitaptasya jala pravesha* –alternate use of hot and cold temperature i.e immersing/bathing in cold water immediately after exposing to sun/heat, Excessive crying, always in anger or anxiety or in depression, any external injury to head /eyes, excessive intake of sour, fermented foods, *kulatha*, food items prepared

from *masha*, *Vegadharana* (suppressing natural urges), inhalation of smoke or smoking habits, excessive *Swedan* to eyes, *atiyoga of vamanadi shodhana* therapies, observing very near or very far- distant objects for longer time<sup>16</sup>, Bhavaprakasha opines that excessive intake of water and riding animals or vehicles fastly or for longer distance will Leads to eye diseases<sup>17</sup>.

Many diseases can be prevented by following the above daily regimen properly and also by avoiding the causative factors. These are another set of diseases which affects the individual but early detection and management of such disease with the *kriya kalpas* will help to prevent the further progression of the diseases.

To maintain the health of eyes, our Acharyas have explained some tropical treatment to eyes called as *Netra kriya kalpas* like *seka*, *Aschotana*<sup>18</sup> etc.

**Seka-** Medicated liquids are poured on closed eyelids in a thin & continuous stream from 4 inch height for a specific time.

**Aschotana** is the instillation of few drops of medicines to the open eye from a height of 2 *angula*. It is commonly known as eye drops.

**Bidalaka** is the application of medicated paste to the outer surface of the eye lids.

**Pindi** is the modification of *bidalaka*. Instead of directly applying the pastes to the eyelid, they are packed in thick cotton cloth & are kept tightly over the eyelids.

**Netra Tarpana** is the procedure of holding the medicated ghee in the eyes for a speculated time. This nourishes the eyes and improves visual acuity.

*Kriya kalpas* have a major role as a remedy for lifestyle induced diseases like Dry eye syndrome, Diabetic Retinopathy etc...

## DISCUSSION

Due to the globalization and competitive world, man is facing many health issues. The sedentary lifestyle, unhealthy food habits, irregular sleeping patterns, stressful work environment has contributed significantly to the development of various metabolic disorders such as diabetes, hypertension etc these systemic diseases in due course will have an adverse effect on eyes and other sense organs. The causative factors of *netra rogas* that are explained in our classics exactly fit the present day life style of individuals. The first *nidana* of *netra roga*- *ushnaanbhitapta jala pravesha*-exposing to cold(AC Rooms) immediately after exposure to sun/heat, *swapna viparyaya*(irregular sleeping habits- nightshift duties, day sleeping habits), *atidravapana* (excessive intake of cold drinks & beverages) ,*pratatekshana*, *ati sameepa darshana* (watching electronic gadgets like mobiles, TV, computer very closely- for longer time), excessive intake of *shukta*, *aranala*, *amla*, *kulatta*, *masha*.....which resembles the spicy & junk food which was prepared long back, added with preservatives. The present generation people are consuming this type of food regularly without knowing their undesirable effects. This type of spicy, sour food Leads to disturbance in digestion and in turn will have an adverse effect over the eyes. *Manasika doshas* like *krodha*, *bhaya*, *shoka* i.e stress related anxiety & depression in long term disturbs the normal functions of the brain and causes hormonal variations and in turn affects the health of the eyes. So these factors should be corrected and the *dinacharya* mentioned in Ayurveda, should be followed properly to maintain the health of eyes. The *Netra Kriya kalpas* like *Seka*, *Aschotana*, and *Bidalaka* are mainly used in anterior segmental & acute conditions of eyes. *Tarpana Anjana* & *Putapaka* are used in

posterior segmental and chronic eye diseases. *Kriya kalpas* are more effective in treating the eye diseases than oral medicines because the oral medicines cannot cross the 3 major anatomical barriers in the eye such as blood-aqueous, blood-vitreous and blood-retinal barriers to reach the target tissues of the eye. The topical drugs can cross and reach the target tissue and achieve higher bio-availability and desired action very quickly. So *Netra Kriya kalpas* are more effective than oral medicines. By practicing *dinacharya*, *Netra kriya kalpas* and by avoiding the causative factors of eye diseases (*Nidana parivarjana*) one can prevent the eye diseases and can enhance the perception of vision.

## CONCLUSION

Due to the globalization and changing trends in life style and food habits, the mankind is facing various health problems. This has an adverse effect on eyes also. Among all the sense organs, eyes are considered to be most important as the vision is necessary for social and intellectual development of a person. Prevention of ocular diseases and protection of vision has become the need of the hour. Ayurveda being a life science has an answer for these issues. Prevention modalities that are mentioned in Ayurveda such as *Dinacharya*, *nidana parivarjana* and *kriya kalpas* should be practiced regularly with few positive modifications in lifestyle can reduce the incidence of ocular diseases and improves the health of the eyes.

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