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RETRO STUDY OF VEDIC AND ANCIENT LITERATURES WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO NETRA VIGYAN IN AYURVED

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ABSTRACT

In present era, there are so many new technology and advanced techniques are available in ophthalmic treatment and diagnosis. But in ancient era before the modern surgery was born in the world, the oldest texts Vedas have already mentioned the treatment of eyes and its origin as well. So present topic is been focused to know about the various descriptions given in Veda, Upanishad, Samhitas and commentaries etc. So, one can understand the richness of intellect and knowledge of old Indian philosopher or scientists. In context of the topic here attempt made to explore the chakshu, the eyes related references specially in Rigveda, Atharvaveda and Yajurveda in vedas, Brihadaranyaka, Chandogya, Aitreyaupnishad in various Upanishads. Here explained about the special contexts in Charaksamhita, Shusratasmhita, Astangahridayam, Astangasamgraha, Haritasamhita, Kashyap and Bhelsamhita as well. Apart from these other collective literatures explored in Madhava nidana, Sharangdhara samhita, Vangsen, Bhavprakash, Yogratinakar and Chakradatta as well. So, this all matter will give a thorough look over the precious contribution in field of eye of ancient India.

Keywords: Ayurveda, Netra, Samhitas, Netra Vigyan, ancient literatures.

INTRODUCTION

Indian ophthalmic tradition began much before Susruta's time and references to structure and working of eyes, eye diseases and their cure are found in Vedic literature. While planning any research, foremost step is to study sequential evolution, the origin of the present knowledge and basic ideas given by scientists. Hence, for the complete knowledge of the subject, it is necessary to trace out its historical background, which gives a tangible form in the development of stages from time to time. Here is an attempt is made to trace the references regarding Netra in Ayurvedic literature.

In Shalakya tantra, Netra is given the prime importance. Various references about Netra are available in Vedas, Upanishads and the other literatures. Aswini Kumaras, Nimi, Videha, Bhoja, Sathyaki, Pooyapada, Shivi, Krishnathreya, Karala, Bhadra Sonaka, Janaka Garghya, Galava, Chakhushya etc. has stood as the testimonies in the development of this science.

Aim and Objective

The purpose of the study to bring all the reference about the shalakya tantra which is whole study of origin cause symptoms and treatment of eye. This will
make a complete picture to understand the developed science of Ayurveda in India with special attraction to eye.

**Methodology**

1. Study through all the reference books i.e. *Veda, Upnishad, Samhitas, Samgrahgrantha* and commentaries to find texts about eyes in all.
2. Collect all the reference texts which evaluate the prime era of Ayurved in ophthalmic section
3. Describe chronological references with their importance.

**Vedic Period**

*Vedas* are considered as the oldest and first available literature of the world. They are four in number i.e. *Rigveda, Yajurveda, Atharvaveda* and *Samaveda*. *Ayurveda* is the *Upaveda* of *Atharvaveda*.

**In Rigveda**

- *Rajaswa, Paravrija, Kakasivit, KaviPuru* and *Kanwawere* treated for the blindness by *Ashwini kurmaras*.
- *Bharadvaja* was treated for the blindness by *Indra*. References are available about the replacement of the injured eye with artificial eye.

**In Atharvaveda**

*Atharvaveda*, composed by seventh -eighth century B.C, contains verses referring to eye diseases. Exact natures of these are not clear and the cure suggested consists both of magical spells and plant preparations. *Mantra chikitsa* is explained to invoke the blessings of the sun for the preservation of sight, like *Gayatri Mantra, Sooryanamaskara* etc, *Mantrachikitsa* and other *Sprintual* treatments. *Vedic* physicians have invited the disease producing organisms to come out the head through the eyes and cured blindness. ‘oh serpent, I will stop the glow of your eyes through the vision of my glowing eyes’.

**In Yajurveda**

There are several prayers for normal functioning of sense organs. *Yajurveda* has identified the relationship of sense organs with universal phenomenon, like two eyeballs and tears etc. were compared with cosmic bodies, the divine influence of eye is described as:

- **Parts of the eye**  : **Governors**
- **Blood and blood vessels**  : **Rudra**

**Diseases of eyes** find place in various hymns. *Sisa* (lead) is explained as *Anjana* which is beneficial to eyes.

**Upnishat Kala**

*Upinisadas* from a part of *Vedanta* text that were traditionally supposed to be composed in the post-vedic period and are described as, date between 1000 BC to 200AD. The very first attempt to hypothesize relation between morphological components of the eye and natural and mythological forces expressed in terms of primary elements is seen in the *Upnisad* literature. In fact, it’s an attempt to explain anatomy and working of the eye.

**Chandogya Upnishad** has explained the internal features of eye with its reflection as *Suklabha, Neelabha* and *Krishnabha*. The space between *Krishna* and *Shukla* is called as *Antariksha*. These details are comparable with:

- **Suklam**: Sclera and conjunctiva
- **Lohinam**: Choroid
- **Hiranyakasesha**: Optic nerves
- **Suklabha**: Conjunctiva
- **Kaninaka**: Pupil, iris and lens
- **Loka**: A region of retina (macula)
- **Antariksha**: A space inside eyeball.

**In ChakshushyaUpnishatis** devoted for the protection of eyesight and cure its diseases; *Chaksusopanisad* is a short summary of prayers to sun, chanting of which is said to promote eyesight and their better health, 40-45 mantras have been explained for the improvement of vision.

**Aithareya Upnisad** quotes the origin of eye.

**Purana Kala**

There are innumerable references to eye as one of the five sense organs in Sanskrit historical classics like *Mahabharat*. The fundamental concept of contribution of primary elements in the construction of human
body and also relation of eye to the primary element in the construction of human body and also relation of eye to the primary element ‘fire’ is time and again expressed in it. The idea that manas or mind controls all perceptions and its separation from bodily organs. Moreover, it’s not corporeal as expressed in Mahabharat. The references about Akhisula and Aandhya are available in Mahabharat.12

Samhitha Kala
Charakasamhita: Charakasamhita was the earliest complete work on Kayachikitsha or internal medicine. Along with Shusrutasamhita and Astangahrdayasamhita, it is one of the three major treatises of ayurvedic medicine. It is described in between 100 BC to 100AD. Charaka defined various terms used in the formulation of basic concepts of Ayurveda in its first chapter viz. Sutrasthana. He gave considerable thought to five senses, senses organs and their locations in the body. Charaka thus defined five groups or pancapancaka, five Jnanendriyas or sense organs viz. eyes, ears, nose, organs of taste and touch; Indriyadravyas that each organ made of as five primary elements, bhu- earth, jyoti- fire, apa-water, vayu-wind, and kha-empty space.13

Sushrutha Samhita
Sushruta’s compendium Sushruta samhita was made some two thousand years ago. Sushruta Samhita has devoted first nineteen chapters in Uttaratantra. The beginning of the Uttaratantra with vivid description of Netra, its anatomy, classification of its diseases and their management shows the importance of this organ of sight. Classification and description of Netraroga along with details of rogas affecting Varthma, Shukla, Krishna and Drishti were explained. The Shastra karmaas for Netra like small incision extra capsular cataract extraction, excision of pterygium, incision of style, scrapping the follicles and concretion, surgery for entropion, trichiasis and glaucoma were explained. Anusastraw karmaas like Kshara, Agni, Raktamokskha, for eye diseases were mentioned. Several oral drugs as well as Kriyakalpas like Tarpana, Putapaka Seka, Aschyotana and Anjana were mentioned for the management of Netrarogas.14

Ashtanga Hridaya: The next important authority in Ayurved after Charaka and Sushruta is Vagbhatta of sindha, who flourished about the seventh century AD. In the Uttaratantra of Ashtanga Hridaya, Vagbhatta has described ninety four eye diseases and classified 18 chronic inflammatory conditions as Pilla and provided special line of treatment for them.15The Kriyakalpa including Tarpana and Putapaka were mentioned in sutra sthana, where Putapaka is mentioned as the follow up procedure of Tarpana. The complications of Linganasa are explained in detail.16

Ashtangasamgrah: In the Uttaratantra of Ashtangasamgrah, Vagbhata has described ninety-four eye diseases, Vagbhata has simply discussed essential of contents of Suushruta in its ophthalmic section. He did not describe the structural aspects at all but only disease.17

Harita Samhita: Haritasamhita is a rare tenth to twelfth century AD. In HaritasamhitauttartaTrityasthana chapter 45 netrarogachikitsa devoted for ophthalmic section. Netraroganidana, 7 types of netrarogas and Diseases like Netrapushpa and Netra Patala are mentioned along with their treatment.18

Kasyapa Samhita: Kasyapasamhita is a rare 1-2 BC, Under the Kalpasthana chapter four Sadakalpa adhyaya, various therapeutic measures for eye diseases of children and pancabhautikata are mentioned.19 Under the chapter vedanadhyaya symptoms of Kukoonaka eye disease are mentioned.

Bhelasamhita: Bhelasamhita is a rare seventh century AD treatise that is chiefly devoted to Kayacikitsa or internal medicine Although it largely depicted Charaka’s tradition it is also like Sushruta samhita in many ways. In Bhelasamhita, sharirasthana described two types of alocakapitta, one is caksurvasisesika and the other, buddhirvaisesika (exclusively for intelligence or mental perception). They were supposed to be located between the eyebrows and were operational in visual perception.20
Sangraha Kala
Madhava Nidana: Madhava Nidana is a six to seventh century AD; Madhava has described ophthalmic portion in uttarardhha, Netraroganidanas along with Seventy-six Netrarogas like that of Shusruta. sama and nirama condition of eye disease is unique contribution of madhava.21
Sarangadhara Samhita: Sarangadhara Samhita is a Thirteenth century AD; In this Sarangadhara has mentioned the ninety four eye diseases in purva khand122 and treatment portion is mentioned in uttarakhanda; Netralepa along with the Kriyakalpas like Seka, Aschhyotana, Pindi, Bidalaka, Anjana, Putapaka and Tarpana are mentioned in netraprasadana chapter.23 Sarangdhara samhita merely listed eye diseases on the basis of their location and added few common methods of treatment.
Vangasena Samhita: Netrarogas including Upapakashma and Pilla are explained along with their treatment. Symptoms of Shalya in the eye, Sama and Niramalakshanas of eye and its treatments are mentioned. Akshipurana is mentioned for Vataja rogas.24 Bhavaprakasa: Bhavaprakasa is a sixteenth century AD. Bhavamishra has explained Seventy-eight Netrarogas in uttarardhha, Netrarogadhikar chapter is explained under Varthmagatarogas. Pakshmagatarogas are included in which Pakhmakopa and Pakshmashatana is mentioned.25 Yogaratnakar: Yogaratnakar is a sixteenth to Eighteenth century AD. Yogaratnakar has explained seventy-eight Netrarogas and their treatment in uttarardhha.26Dristipariksha is unique explanation of yoga ratnakar described in purvardha.27 Chakradatta: Chakradatta is a Twelth century AD. In Fififty nine chapter described only Treatment of netra roga and various uses of Tripalha, Chaksusya Varga etc.28

DISCUSSION
VEDAS there are references to structure and working of eye, eye diseases and their cure are found in vedic literature. Exact nature of these diseases is not clear, and the cure suggested consists both of magical spell and plant preparations.

Upnisads the very first attempts to hypothesize relationship between morphological components of the eye and natural and mythological forces expressed in terms of primary element is seen in the upnusad literature, in fact it is an attempt to explain anatomy and working of the eye.

Purana Kala references to eye, eye diseases and their treatment and visual perception that appear in Sanskrit literature express their presuppositions that were based on natural as well as supernatural and non-corporeal phenomena.

Samhita Kala
Charaka Samhita charaka mentioned in the cikitsasthana, the chapter on diagnosis, that ninety-six eye diseases were differentiated by them. Carakar refined from elaborating the topic since he considered it to be a privilege only of the specialist of the field (which he was not).

Shusruta Samhita defines fine wheels or mandalas of the eye, five parts of the eyes viz. muscles ,blood, black and white parts and empty channels and relates them to five elements , defines four patalas in the eye viz. tejojala, pista, meda and asthi, and states Liganasa (cataract) to be the outcome of disorder advancing to the fourth layer. states that the lens is surdalamatram signifying curvatures of two sides of the lens. States that the eyeball is supported by an arrangement of blood vessels, muscles etc. aalocaka pitta is one of the five pittas, and it is the vision giving fire.

Astangahsangrah/Astangahridaya: like Sushruta samhita the last chapters called uttarasthana of both Astangasamgraha and Astangahridaya samhita are devoted to Shalakya tantra that included ophthalmology. Vaghbatta simply discussed the essentials of contents of uttara tantra of suhruta in its ophthalmic section. He did not describe the structural aspects at all but only symptoms for diagnosis of disease and their treatment.

Haritasa samhita netra patala and netra pusa is unique contribution.

Kasyapasa samhita it is mainly devoted for children eye diseases.
**Bhelasamhita** described two types of **alocakapitta** is unique contribution. The **Dosas** situated between the skull and palate successively affects the **manas**, **chitta** and **buddhi**, (thus suggesting the location of brain).

**Samgraha Kala**

**Madhava Nidaan** and **Bhavaprakash** are selective and discussed only a fraction of **Sushruta's** extensive material viz. diagnosis and therapeutics respectively.

**Sarangdhara samhita** mereley listed eye diseases based on their location and added few common methods of treatment.

**Vangasena Samhita** and **Yogaratnakar**, dealt with almost all topics of Sushruta's ophthalmology, including surgical treatments which are less elaborate.

**Cakradatta** dealt only treatment of **netrarogas**.

Now days since 19th century same attempt was made by modern science (advance technique or gradual upgradation of Vedas to Samhita etc) related to anatomy, physiology, diseases of eye, signs and symptoms of eye disorders, examination of eye, advanced diagnostic instruments, equipments, medicinal line of treatments (topical and systemic), parasurgical procedures related to eye disorders, surgical procedures (even with advanced technology equipments viz. phacoemulsification, LASIK etc) related to intraocular and extraocular eye disorders and preventive measures for eye disorders as well as eye donation.

**CONCLUSION**

After thorough study of ancient **vedic** and **samhita** etc references which have been mentioned about the origin, cause, prevalence of diseases and their treatment for the eyes, we can admit that the medical science was developed more in those periods. All the common diseases of eyes have been explained with their etiology, diagnosis, prognosis and treatment comprehensively. We can explore more choices and option by understanding and research trail on ophthalmology from these references in the future on regular basis. With the help of modern science technology and equipments the **Ayurveda** treatment in ophthalmology can make a significant role as **Panchkarma** therapy and **Kriyakalpa** is expanding so effectively in all over the world.

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