



Review Article

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AYURVEDA FOR OPHTHALMIC DISORDERS: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is the science of life which describes both promotive aspects of eye health as well as the prevention of disease. 'Sarvendriyanam Nayanam Pradhanam' as because of eye has got the prime importance among Indriyas, prevention is important in case of eye diseases. Due to the changing lifestyle most of the people pay attention to their eyes only if they got any eye disorder. Hours of reading, writing, watching screen, using mobile phone, working on computer may affect the healthy eyes. Diseases like dry eye, computer vision syndrome, Age related macular degenerations (ARMD), cataract, diabetic retinopathy, hypertensive retinopathy may occur due to these lifestyle changes. Ayurvedic science has got several preventive and curative measures for eye diseases. Ahara and Vihara play a central role in preventing eye diseases. So daily regimens like Padabhyanga, Netra Prakshalana, Snana, Nasya, Anjana and Pathya Aharas along with Netra Vyayamas Yogasanas are the key for maintaining health of eyes. Review of these measures mentioned in ayurvedic classics for maintenance of eye health are explored in this article. Protection of eye is not only a necessity but also a responsibility of every individual.

Keywords: Eye health, Ayurveda, Dinacharya, Prevention

INTRODUCTION

Shalakya Tantra is one of the eight specialties of Ashtanga Ayurveda which is devoted to eye care and management. Samhitas like Sushruta Samhita has a wide description of the eye, eye disorders and its management. It is proved that 80% of knowledge we gain is through the eye. So, existence and status of a person in the universe is directly influenced by eyes. Asatmya Indriyarthasamyoga, Prajnaparadha and Ritu Viparyaya are the important factors for the causation of eye diseases¹. Changing lifestyle is a major factor for the susceptibility to many eye diseases. Some of faulty lifestyles like alcohol consumption, smoking, fat and sugar rich diet, eye strain is notably associated with risk of developing eye diseases. The overall population-based prevalence of refractive errors, myopia, hypermetropia, astigmatism in children of age < 15 years were 8.0, 5.3, 4.0 and 5.4 respectively². For preventing these type of eye diseases and for maintaining ocular health much has been described in text of Ayurveda, in the form of Dinacharya, Ritucharya and some medications.

Dinacharya and Medications

Dinacharya for maintaining health is described in different Samhitas such as Sushruta Samhita, Ashtanga Hridaya, Charaka Samhita, Yogaratnakara. Dinacharyas to be followed in daily basis in order to maintain a healthy eye are as follows.

Netra prakshalana

Shitalodaka Upachara of eyes as well as washing eyes with Lodhra Kashaya or Amalaki Kashaya helps in maintaining the clear vision. This will help the eyes free from dust particles. This must be performed after getting up from bed in the morning³.

Abhyanga

Abhyanga is one of the Dinacharya mentioned in classics. Out of different Abhyangas Shiro Abhyanga and Padabhyanga are more capable of maintaining the eye health.

As Shiras is Uttamanga Shiroabhyanga can improve the eye health. Abhyanga with Taila is Vatahamaka. Abhyanga is Drishti Prasadakrit⁴. Optic nerve is the direct extension of brainstem. When oil is applied over the scalp daily. So, the oil can indirectly act on Drishti Patala and nourish the eye.

Padabhyanga Nidrachakshurhitha Karithvam. Padabhyanga is told to be benefit in eye health. There are two Siras at Pada which is having direct influence on Netra. As foot is the end organ, nerve endings are highly sensitive. Abhyanga can stimulate these nerve endings thus favours eye.

Snana

Hot water is preferable for body bath and cold water for head bath. Pouring warm water over the head cause loss of strength of hair and eyes⁵. Daily head bath with cold water will keep the eye fresh and functioning. A thorough bath washes out all the impurities and keeps body clean. Thus, proper blood circulation and temperature mechanism of body is maintained. Even though Snana is beneficial, it is contraindicated in case of person with Netra Rogas.

Anjana

Anjana is the procedure in which the medicine is applied along the inner surface of the eye lid. Souviranjana is good for eyes, hence it should be applied daily⁶. The eye is predominant of Tejomahabhuta and has a risk of troubles especially from Kapha Dosha. Hence Rasanjana which is prepared from Kashaya of Daruharidra should be used once a week, to drain the Kapha out. Honey is the best medium for Anjana. It can penetrate the walls

and layers of Krishnamandala and reaches all parts of the eye. As honey is having a particular action of Chedana and Lekhana becomes especially Kapha Shodhaka.

Anjana dilates the blood vessels and normalizes the blood flow. It can produce more lacrimation and removes the impurities up to an extent. Anjana also stimulates the nerve endings and increases the functional capacity of the eye.

Nasya

It is the procedure by which medicines are instilled through the nasal cavity to nourish organs above the clavicle. Nasal cavity is considered as the opening of head. Medicines introduced through the nasal cavity reaches 'Sringataka marma', which is the junctional area of Sira which does Santarpana to Indriyas like Ghrana, Karna, Akshi and Jihva⁷. Nasya cleanses the Shirostrotas due to its action on Srotas. It has a sudden action because there is no time delay for digestion of medicine and are directly absorbed through the mucous membrane. So, by daily administration of Nasya in the form of Pratimarsha can prevent the accumulation of vitiated Kapha Dosha in the Srotas.

Kavala And Gandusha

Kavala and Gandusha are methods of medication in which the medicine is applied in the form of Drava or Kalka. Gandusha is holding of medicated fluid in the mouth in full quantity for a specific time and then expel it out. In case of Kavalagraha medicated fluids are kept in the mouth in less quantity and asked to rotate in mouth for specific time and expelled out. Absorption of medicine will take place through the mucous membrane. Ophthalmic branch of facial artery absorbs this, and it reaches the ophthalmic tissues. Action of Kavala depends on medicinal value of drugs used. By using drugs having Brahmana property the structure of eye may get stimulated and nourished.

Tarpana

Tarpana is a special procedure in which unctuous (Sneha) substance is kept in the eye for a specific time by special

arrangements. It gives nourishment to the eyes and cures the Vata Pitta Vikara⁸. For a Swastha person Matra of Tarpana has been mentioned as 500 Matras. Through Tarpana we can prevent diseases and reduce the magnitude of refractive errors.

Mukhalepa

It is the procedure of application of medicinal paste on the face. It is of three types named Vishaghna, Doshaghna and Varnya. After applying the paste, it should be removed before it is completely dried. As because of presence of the facial nerve, facial artery, trigeminal nerve, effect of medicine in turn affects the eye also⁹.

Dhumapana

Dhumapana is a special procedure in which the medicine is taken through the nose in the form of smoke. It has Ushna and Teekshna Guna. Vitiated Kapha of head which is not easily eliminated by Anjana is instantaneously evacuated by Dhuma.

Padaprakshalana and Padatra Dharana

In the Centre of the two feet are situated two Siras which are greatly connected to the eyes. These transmits the effects of Prakshalana and Padatra Dharana to the eyes. So, foot should be kept clean, and footwear should be used to avoid injuries to the foot to improve the vision¹⁰.

Chhatra Dharana

Umbrella helps to protect the eyes from external factors such as sunshine, excess heat, dust, smoke and rain¹¹.

Nidra

It is one among the Trayopastambha of life. Sleep rejuvenates mind and body. A sound sleep is necessary for the protection of eyes. Normally 6-8 hours of sleep is necessary for normal adult. During this time eyes are at complete rest, which is necessary for the restoration of its functional capacity. Acharya Vagbhata mentioned suppression of sleep may lead to heaviness of head and eyes.

Table 1: Pathya and Apathya

Ahara / Vihara	Pathya	Apathya
Shuka dhanya	Yava (barley), Shashtika, Lohitashali (red rice)	Virudha Dhanya (Germinated cereals /sprouts)
Simbi Dhanya	Mudga, Vanya Kulatha and other pulses	Masha (Horse gram)
Mamsa	Mayura, Kurma Mamsa	Matsya and Ajangala Mamsa
Shaka Varga	Jeevanti (<i>Leptadenia reticulata</i>), Punarnava (<i>Boerhavia procumbens</i>), Kakmachi (<i>Solanum nigrum</i>), Kumari (<i>Aloe vera</i>), Karavella (Bitter Gourd), Matsyakshi (<i>Hincha repens</i>).	Kalingapatrasaka (<i>Holarrhena antidysenterica</i>)
Phala Varga	Draksha (grapes), Dadima (Pomegranate), Amalaki (<i>Embolia officinalis</i>), Vibhitaki (<i>Terminalia bellirica</i>), Abhaya (<i>Terminalia chebula</i>).	----
Dugdha	Nari Paya, Go Paya, Milk obtained in evening time	Milk obtained in morning time
Ghruta	Go Ghruta, Aja Ghruta	---
Dadhi		Go Dadhi
Takra	Ksheerotha Takra (Butter milk)	---
Ahara	Peya, Vilepi, Yusha	---
Madya	---	Ati Madyapana (Excessive alcohol consumption)
Sandhana Kalpana	---	Sura, Sukta, Aranala
Taila	---	Katu Taila, Pinyaka (Oil cake)
Ikshu Varga	Sita	Phanita ¹³⁻¹⁶

Vegadharana (Suppression of natural urges)

Ashru Vega is one among the 13 types of Adharaniya Vegas mentioned by Acharya Vagbhata. Suppression of this can lead to Running nose, pain in eyes etc. Acharya Sushruta specifically mentioned Vegabinigraha (suppression of natural urges) and Bashpagraha (suppression of tears) in the context of Netra Roga Nidana. So due to busy work schedule, modern lifestyle and

stress, suppression of the natural urges is frequent. Natural urges should not be suppressed in order to maintain a healthy life¹².

DISCUSSION

Aim of Ayurveda is to maintain the health of healthy person and curing the diseased. Human eyes are extremely delicate organs. Due to change in lifestyle of people and pollutant environment

caused many risk factors for the development of eye diseases. Busy time schedule and more stressful works made the eye over strain. As a result, people suffer from refractive errors like myopia, hypermetropia and astigmatism. The causative factors for eye diseases explained in the classical texts exactly fit the present-day lifestyle practices which in turn generate eye diseases. Food habits like Shukta, Aranala, Amla, Kulatha, Masha, Ushna, Kshara, Katu Rasa predominant diet resembles spicy and junk food of modern lifestyle. Viharas like Swapna Viparyaya, Ati Madyapana, Atidravannapana, Pratata Ekshana, Atideepta Darshana, Ati Sameepa Darshana, Kopa, Soka, Klesha are same as modern lifestyle like night duty, different kinds of jobs which needs concentration and frequent eye strain. Other activity like reading while travelling produces difficulty in accommodation and thus causes eye related problems. Preventive measures are important as well as curative measures. This promotive regimen delays the degenerative process in the ocular structures. Eyeball grow rapidly and increases in size after birth and during puberty until age 20 or 21. After that they stop growing. Once a permanent mechanical change develops in the shape of eyeball, then it is not possible to reverse the changes. So, if a person starts following the ayurvedic principles of Dinacharya and other methods from the early stages of life, can prevent most of the diseases and maintain eye health.

CONCLUSION

Ayurveda explains Dinacharya, Ritucharya, medications and Pathyapathyas for maintaining the healthy eye. Dinacharyas are those to be practiced in daily life as a preventive measure against diseases and for promotion of health. By adopting the Ayurvedic principles of Dinacharya like Abhyanga, Anjana, Nasya, Netra Prakshalana and following Pathyapathyas one can maintain the eye health.

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