

Ophthalmic Health Through Ayurveda

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Abstract—Eyes are the most precious gift of God to the living beings. As per *Ayurveda*, ‘*Sarvendriyanam Nayanam Pradhanam*’ i.e. eye is the most important among all the sense organs of the body. Promotion of the visual acuity was considered as one of the priorities in the branch of *Shalakya Tantra* of *Ayurveda*. Incidence of eye disease in India is higher in male than in female. Nowadays changed work expectations requiring prolonged working hours in front of computers, pollution, stress, nutritional deficiency and some faulty lifestyle exposure like irregular pattern of sleep, consumption of fat and carbohydrate rich diet leads to *Netra Rogas*. *Kriyakalpa*, the main therapeutic procedure for *Netra Rogas* were described by many *Acharyas* for eye diseases also *Dinacharya* (daily regimens) like *Anjana* (collyrium), *Nasya* (nasal medication), *Padabhyanga* (foot massage with oil), *Snana* (bath) and *Ritucharya* (seasonal regimen) etc. are promoted as good measures for the maintenance of eye health.

Index Terms—Ayurveda, Netraroga, Kriyakalpa, Dinacharya, Ritucharya

I. INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, the most ancient system of medicine primarily aims at maintenance of health and cure from disease¹. *Shalakya Tantra* is one among the eight branches of *Astanga Ayurveda*² which includes the diseases of *Urdhwanga* (supra clavicular region). Eyes are considered as prime sense organs so utmost care should be taken to protect them. *Kriyakalpas* are one of the speciality of *Shalakya Tantra*. *Acharya Sushruta*³ has mentioned various *Kriyakalpas* for the maintenance of eye health and for the diseases of eye. Some of faulty lifestyles like inappropriate daily and seasonal regimens, sedentary habits, irregular sleep pattern, excessive screen time, incorrect body posture, consumption of sugar, carbohydrate rich diet and junk food etc. are responsible for many eye diseases. Dry eye syndrome, computer vision

syndrome, age related macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, hypertensive retinopathy, glaucoma and many other diseases develop due to faulty lifestyle exposure. *Dinacharya*, *Ritucharya*, *Sadvritta*, *Kriyakalpa*, *Chakshusya Rasayana*, *Yogasanas*, *Pathya Ahara-vihara* are some of the *Ayurvedic* remedies to prevent eye diseases. Aim of this article is how to maintain our *Pradhan Indriya* healthy and prevents *Netra Roga* by various *Ayurvedic* methods.

Netraprakshalana

Eye wash helps in cleansing of the eyes by removing dust particles and foreign bodies. It provides cooling and soothing effect, reduces inflammation and strengthen the ocular tissues. Decoction of drugs like *Triphala*, *Amalaki*⁴, *Lodhra*, *Yastimadhu* are used for washing of eyes. It is useful in various refractive errors, redness, itching, burning sensation of eyes etc.

Anjana

Anjanais valued for its nourishing, protective, soothing and vision enhancing properties. It is applied from the inner to the outer canthus. To remove the *Kapha* dosha from the eyes in the form of tears, *Anjana* is helpful⁵. It keeps the eyes clean and makes the eyes shine like bright moon in clear sky. *Anjana* dissolves the stored vitiated *Kapha*, dilates blood vessels, enhances blood flow and helps in *Netra Srotas Suddhi*. Regular use of *Anjana* as one among the *Dinacharyais* helpful in preventing eye diseases and also beneficial for overall eye health.

Tarpana

Tarpana is a restorative treatment in which the entire eye socket baths in a pool of lukewarm *Ghrta*.⁶ It provides nourishment and lubrication to ocular tissues, increase blood circulation, strengthens the ocular muscles, get rid of *Doshic* imbalance, improves eyesight and helps in relaxation and stress reduction. It is indicated in refractive errors, eye

strain, degenerative conditions, macular degeneration, drooping of eyelids, falling of eyelashes, xerophthalmia. *Tarpana* acts as a comprehensive therapy that not only provides immediate relief but also strengthens the eyes and prevents eye diseases.

Nasya

According to *Ayurveda*, nose is the route to head.⁷ *Nasya* stimulates *Sringataka Marma* which nourishes all sense organs. It removes the *Ama* at the cellular level, pacifies the vitiated doshas and provides nourishment. Drugs in the form of *Nasya* has probable mode of entry in circulation hence plays a vital role in the prevention of eye health. In some degenerative eye disease like cataract, refractive errors, retinopathy, age-related macular degeneration (ARMD) etc. *Nasya* is done to eliminate vitiated doshas. *Anu taila*⁸, *Jeevantiyadi taila*, *Puranaghruta* can be used as *Pratimarsha Nasya*. *Acharya Vagbhata*⁹ has rightly quoted that for *Urdhwajatrugata Vikaras*, *Nasya* is beneficial. *Nasya* plays a significant role by promoting the health of head and sensory organs including the eyes.

Shiro-abhyanga

Regular application of medicated oil on the head strengthens the eyes, acts as *Drishti Prasadana*¹⁰. The medicated oil applied on the scalp reaches the brain. The optic nerve which terminates in the retina is a direct extension of the brain stem. *Shiro-abhyanga* acts by increasing blood circulation to the head and eyes, relaxing the muscles around the eyes, reducing stress level, improving sleep quality and balancing the vitiated doshas. To prevent eye diseases medicated oil should be used on head.

Padabhyanga

Oil massage on feet should be done regularly. According to *Ayurveda*, feet are the vital area where the *Marmas* and nerves converge. It is assumed that two *Siras* are located in the centre of sole which are connected to eyes. By stimulating these vital points through *Padabhyanga*, the eyes experience therapeutic benefits. It acts by stimulating *Marma* points, improvement in blood circulation, stress reduction and relaxation, balance of doshas, detoxification and removal of *Ama*. Incorporating *Padabhyanga* into daily routine can contribute significantly to maintain overall eye health and improve vision and act as *Drishti Prasadana*.¹¹

Pada-prakshalana

According to *Ayurveda* washing of feet is considered as *Chakshu Prasadana*¹². It is recommended as one of the daily regimes as it helps to maintain cleanliness, balance *Doshas*, support circulation and uphold the interconnectedness of bodily system through *Marma* points and *Nadis*.

*Sheetodaka shira snana*¹³

Washing of head should be done with cold water as it refreshes all sense organs and improves eyesight. It provides cooling effect, moisturizing properties and cleansing action. Hot water bath adversely affects the eyes and hair.

Nidra

Sleep is a key part of healthy lifestyle. Sound sleep is necessary for eyes as it allows the eyes to rest and rejuvenate which is essential for maintaining their health and functionality. During sleep eye is at complete rest and retains functional capacity. Deep sleep facilitates the repair and regeneration of cells throughout the body, including the eyes. This process is crucial for the maintenance of ocular tissues and can help to prevent conditions like cataract, glaucoma and age-related macular degeneration. Irregular sleep and suppression of urge of sleep leads to heaviness and fatigue of eyes i.e. *Akshigouravam*¹⁴. *Maharshi Sushrut* has also mentioned that *Swapnaviparyaya*¹⁵ as one of the etiological factors for eye diseases. Sleep deprivation leads to many eye disorders like dry eye, floppy eye lid syndrome, blurred vision, change in colour perception, swelling of optic nerve, sudden loss of vision after awakening becomes permanent anterior ischemic optic neuropathy (AION). Sleep not only gives the eyes a break from constant visual stimulation but also supports their overall health by facilitating repair, moisture retention and immune function. Therefore, prioritizing sufficient and restful sleep is integral to prevent *Netra Rogas* and maintaining optimal eye health.

*Kavala, gandoosha*¹⁶

In *Kavala* and *Gandoosha* the medicines are hold in the mouth in the form of liquid and semisolid. In *Kavala*, liquid medicine is filled in the mouth and shaken so that the medicine reaches all part of oral cavity. The ophthalmic branch of facial artery lies along the cheek, medicine get absorbed through the mucous membrane due to pressure effect of liquid medicine. In *Gandoosha* due to increased

permeability of vessels there is absorption of medicines as well as the nerve endings of the oral cavity is stimulated and brings reflex action in the eyes.

Padatradharana

Use of shoes is considered as *Chakshushya*.¹⁷

Chhatradharana

Use of umbrella protect eyes from heat, bright light, dust, smoke etc. and it is considered as *Chakshushya*.¹⁸

Eye exercises

Upward-downward, sideways and rotational eye movements followed by palming are helpful in reducing refractive errors.

Rasayana

Rasayana is rejuvenator, provides nutritional supplement and possess strong antioxidant property. Use of some *Chakshushya Rasayana* helps in the maintenance of eye health. It also helps to delay the degeneration process in the retina and the lens, nourishes the ocular structures and hence helps to get rid of degenerative conditions like cataract and macular degeneration. It is beneficial in nutritional deficiency disorders like xerophthalmia, nutritional optic neuropathy and diseases which require immunomodulatory action like uveitis, keratitis etc. *Triphala* is *Chakshushya* according to *Maharshi Sushrut*¹⁹. Regular use of *Triphala Ghrita* is beneficial for all diseases of eyes²⁰.

II. DISCUSSION

Various lifestyle exposures and ageing factors are found closely associated with eye diseases. Eyes should be free from stress, near watching activities for a long time and polluted environment. Apart from treatment modalities Ayurveda is based on *Dinacharya*, *Ritucharya*, *Pathya-apathya Ahara-vihara* and *Yogasanas* as a supportive measure for the wellbeing of eyes. *Kriyakalpas* (*Tarpana*, *Ashchyotana*, *Anjana* etc.) improve the vision by strengthening of the ciliary muscles, maintaining unctuousness of the eye ball, proper accommodation of the lens, delays the senile opacity of the lens etc. On the other hand, these procedures are helpful in dealing with inflammatory conditions like conjunctivitis, hordeolum, corneal ulcer, staphyloma etc. *Kriyakalpa* can be done in healthy as well as

diseased eye conditions to improve ophthalmic health. Ayurveda believes in enhancing the *Vyadhikshamatwa* by daily and seasonal regimens, *Pathya-apathya Ahara* and *Vihara*, *Yogasanas* etc. Eye diseases due to ageing process are inevitable but can be delayed by taking *Chakshushya Rasayana*.

III. CONCLUSION

It is well known that prevention is better than cure. Many procedures and formulations have been described *Ayurvedic* classics to maintain the ophthalmic health and to cure the ophthalmic disorders. Everyone should follow a healthy lifestyle involving good daily routine and seasonal regime, dietary habit, eye exercise, avoidance of causative factor. Here in this review article, some *Ayurvedic* approaches are described to maintain the *Netra* healthy and to prevent *Netra Rogas*.

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