

A REVIEW OF ACHARYA SUSHRUTA'S APPROACH IN DISSECTION FOR THE STUDY OF NETRA SHAREERAM

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ABSTRACT

Recent literature suggests that the dissected cadaver remains the most powerful means of delivering fundamental regional, relational and topographical anatomical knowledge to medical students, which is indispensable to ensure safe and efficient clinical practice. *Acharya Sushruta* is best known for his surgical wisdom, practices and tools. He described a systematic method for the dissection of the human cadaver. *Netra* is one of the most briefly described anatomical structure by *Sushruta*. Anatomically, eye is divided into five *Mandalas*, six *Sandhis* and six *Patalas*. Selection of appropriate cadaver was very necessary for the detailed study of human anatomy; hence *Acharya Sushruta* had described various conditions for the selection and preservation of the cadaver. In this paper the potentially possible scientific reason for such selection criteria, as well as an attempt to understand the anatomy of eye in prospect to the ancient text by our *acharyas* is made. In addition, an approach is made to study importance of eyes with respect to knowledge about *Dirghayu*, *Madhyamayyu* & *Heenayyu* of a person, to know about the *Arishta Suchaka Lakshana* in patient, to know the *Sadhyaasadhyata* of a *Vyadhi*, & to decide the *Sara* of a person.

Keywords: *Shavavicchadana, Netra Shareer, Mandala, Patala, Sandhi, Dirghayu, Madhyamayu, Heenayu, ArishtasuchakaLakshana, SadhyaAsadhyata, Sara*

INTRODUCTION

Human cadaveric dissection has been used as the core teaching tool in anatomy for centuries¹. The introduction of systemic human cadaveric dissection is a remarkable moment in the history of science. Two sets of texts form the foundation of Ayurvedic medicine, the *SushrutaSamhita* and the *CharakaSamhita*. The *SushrutaSamhita* gives knowledge about important surgical and anatomical information of human anatomy. *AcharyaSushruta* is best known for his surgical wisdom, practices and tools. He described a systematic method for the dissection of the human cadaver. In 5th chapter of *Sharirsthana* in *Sushrutasamhita*, importance of *Shavavicchadana*(dissection), method of selection of dead body, method of preservation of dead body is described.²

Importance of *Shavavicchadan-* *Susruta Samhita* mentions the role of a student in the dissection: 'A pupil, otherwise well-read, but uninitiated, in the practice (of medicine or surgery) is not competent to take in hand the medical and surgical treatment of disease.³ Therefore one who intends to acquire definite knowledge of surgery should study the anatomy practically by dissecting the dead body properly. Whatever is practically seen and whatever is known from scriptures both combined develops the knowledge further. According to *Acharya Charak*, knowledge of *Sukshma* and *Sthulashareer* is very necessary for *Shareer-Rachna*. Even so, recent literature suggests that the dissected cadaver remains the most powerful means of delivering fundamental regional, relational and topographical anatomical knowledge to medical students, which is indispensable to ensure safe and efficient clinical practice⁴ Evidence suggests that learning anatomy by active exploration through cadaveric dissection actually contributes to improvement of anatomic knowledge⁵ There is also compelling evidence suggesting that the knowledge of human anatomy was revealed by both inspection of the surface of the human body and through human dissection, as he believed that students aspiring to be surgeons should

acquire a good knowledge of the structure of the human body.

Selection of Cadaver-A cadaver should be selected which has all the parts of the body present, of a person who had not died due to poisoning, but not suffered from a chronic disease, had not attained a 100 years of age and from which the fecal contents of the intestines have been removed.⁶The probable reason of such selection criteria must be because all the above condition can hinder with the observations made from the study. It is important to have all the parts of body to cover each organ for the study. Various poisons cause ocular effect which can alter the anatomical points of the eye and affect the study. For example, Carbon monoxide can cause retinal haemorrhage, venous tortuosity, engorgement or papilloedema.⁷ Pesticide exposure has been associated with retinopathy in agricultural workers & abnormal ocular movements. *Saku* disease, an optic autonomic peripheral neuropathy has been described in people living in area where organophosphates are used⁸. There may be drug induced ocular toxicity such as systemic cytarabine can cause keratitis, corneal opacity, corneal oedema.⁸ Opium, Carbolic acid & Chloral hydrate causes pupil constriction. *Dhatura*, *Belladonna* & *Chloroform* dilates the pupil. In *kalpasthana* of *Sushruta Samhita*, he has described ocular features in certain poisoning, such as vapours coming from poisonous food causes *Vibhranta Netrata*⁹, *Amashayagata* & *Pakwashayagata Visha* causes *Indriya Vikrata*¹⁰, *Savishaanjana* when applied can cause *Ashru*, *Upadeha*, *Daha*, *Drishtivibhrama* & even *Andhyatva*¹¹. Poisoning from *Vatsanabh*¹² & *Kadarma*¹³ causes *Peetanetrata*, that from *Pundarika* can cause *Rakta Netrata*.¹⁴ Just like this, many chronic systemic or ocular diseases can enhance ocular damages. Retinopathy or maculopathy caused by Hypertension, collagen vascular disorders, Giant cell arteritis causes ocular damage. Sole Diabetes can cause cataract, background retinopathy, neovascularisation, ocular motor nerve palsy, papillary

anomalies & refractive errors. The effect of systemic disease and toxin can also be understood by this that according to *Acharya Dalhana, Uttartantra* which contain major part of *Shalakyatantra*, is started after *kalpasthana* that deals with toxicology. So, the poison or infected wound can produce complication anywhere in the body. He may be of the view that most of the disease of eye, ear etc., are the complication of systemic disease and toxins. *Acharya dalhan* has also said “*Sarveendriyanaam madhye nayanasya pradhantvata*” i.e. eye is present in between all *Indriya* and is prime so foremost anatomy of eye has been described in detailed. Age of the cadaver should not be more than 100 years as degeneration of organ starts at elderly age like changes in skin, fall down of teeth, bones become weak, muscles get shrink, and ligaments get flaccid which causes problem in studying the parts. Intestine should be emptied- because many bacteria are present in there that causes early decomposition, also after cleaning the intestine it will be prepared as a specimen for the study.

Preservation of cadaver- Such a cadaver, whose all parts are wrapped by any one of “*Munja*” (bush or grass), *Valkal*, “*Kusha*” and *Shana* and kept inside a cage, should be put in a slowly flowing river and allowed to decompose in an unlighted area for seven days. Stagnant water is home for many microorganisms which can damage the body, that’s why it should be kept in slowly flowing river and the water keeps the skin moist and free from odour. To protect from other animals & prevent the body from drowning, it was kept in a cage. Wrapping the body with *Munja*, *Valkala*, *Kusha* and *Shana* protects the body from animals. *Valkala* has properties like Antiseptic, Anti-inflammatory, Antioxidant, Antibacterial, Antimicrobial, Wound purifying & Healing and Astringent¹⁵, also in *Ayurveda Panchavalakala* is said to has *Shothahara* & *Vranopaka* property. *Kusha* has antibacterial¹⁶, astringent, antiseptic & toning property¹⁷ *Shana* is a source of natural fibre¹⁸, Astringent¹⁹, Antimicrobial activity²⁰ All this method kept the cadaver safe from harm, destruction or decomposition.

Netra Shareer Rachna in Sushruta Samhita-

The only authentic source of *Shalaky Tantra* knowledge is *Uttartantra* of *Sushruta Samhita* which has been written as per teachings of *Acharya Nimi*. *Acharya Sushruta* has given prime importance to *Netra* and described in detailed about the various anatomical content in term of their embryology, situation, size, shape & relation.

Position- Head is the supreme part of the human body, when compared to all other parts. It is the site of life for living beings. All the senses and their organs are situated in and supported by the head.²¹

Shape -In *SushrutaSamhita Uttartantra*, *Acharya* has described *Netra* as *Suvrittam*, *Gostanakaram* and *Nayana Budbudam*, which denotes the shape and consistency of the *Netra*.²²

- Suvrittam*: By the word *Suvrittam* means, that eye is spherical from all sides.
- Gostanakaram*: eye is shaped like that teat of the cow i.e. oblong shaped or oval shaped. Eyeball seen along with extra-ocular muscles and optic nerve is very much similar to Cow’s teat.
- Nayana Budbudam*: It is round in shape and soft in consistency and glistening in character, this term is suggestive of external appearance of the eye in the eye orbit

Dimensions of netra²³- The measurements of the eyeball were described by *Sushruta* in terms of *Anguli*, like any other organ but, *Anguli* in context to measurement of *Netra* is equal to *Swangushthodara*- one’s own thumb in the words of *Sushruta*, which has been supported and clearly written by the commentator *Dalhana*. While describing the dimensions of eye, *Sushruta* had given two dimensions – 2 *Angulas Bahulya* and 2 ½ *Angulas Sarvatah*. According to *Dalhana* and some scholars, the word *Bahulya* means antero-posterior diameter or thickness of the eyeball and it is 2 *Angulas*. As per their view, the word *Sarvatah* can be considered as the side-to-side measurement i.e. circumference of the eyeball; and it is 2 ½ *Angulas*. But the exact measurement of 2 ½ *Angulas* is better applicable to the side to side distance of the eye. i.e. the distance from inner canthus to outer canthus. There is some different interpretation for the word,

Dvyangulam Sardham. According to *Dalhana*, the word *DvyangulamSardhama* means *ArdhaTriteeyangula*. This was commented by some scholars as $3 \frac{1}{2}$ *Angula*, and they apply it as the circumference of the eyeball.

Anatomical parts of the netra:²⁴The anatomical parts of the eye were described by *Sushruta* as five *Mandalas*, six *Sandhis* and six *Patalas*.

Table 1: Mandala- The consecutive circular layers of the eyes are termed as *Mandalas*.

Sr. No.	Name	Probable structure of eye according to modern
1	<i>Pakshma Mandala</i>	Eye lashes when eyes are open
2	<i>Vartma Mandala</i>	Eye lids when eyes are closed
3	<i>Shukla Mandala</i>	Sclera covered with conjunctiva
4	<i>Krishna Mandala</i>	Cornea and Iris
5	<i>Drishhti Mandala</i>	Central part of cornea/Lens cortex/Pupil/visual axis

Table 2: Sandhi-Sandhis are the Junctional Areas' between two *Mandalas*

Sr. No	Name of the Sandhi	Probable structure of eye according to modern
1.	<i>Pakshma – Vartmagata</i>	Eye lid margin
2.	<i>Vartma – Shukla gata</i>	Fornices
3.	<i>Shukla – Krishna gata</i>	Limbus/ Corneo-Scleral junction
4.	<i>Krishna - Drishhti gata</i>	Pupillary margin
5.	<i>Kaneenaka Sandhi</i>	Medial canthus
6.	<i>Apanga Sandhi</i>	Lateral canthus

Table 3: Patalas- Which means a layer, veil, covering chest, membrane especially of the eyes, a film over the eyes. There are 6 *Patalas* in the eyeball – 2 *Vartma Patalas* (Upper and Lower) and 4 *Akshi Patalas* (Layers in the eyeball)

Name	Anatomical Structure
<i>Bahya\1stPatala</i>	Sclera & Cornea
<i>2ndPatala</i>	Uveal Tract
<i>3rdPatala</i>	Lens Cortex with peripheral Retina
<i>Last\4thPatala</i>	Lens Nucleus with Central Retina

Other references of eye anatomy in Sushruta-

Sushruta has used *Vartma Mandala* and *Vartma-Patala* to suggest eyelids. *Vartma Mandala* refers to both eyelids when closed whereas *VartmaPatala* refers to upper & lower eyelid. *Vartma Mandal Tarunasthi* in *Sushruta* suggest the tarsal plate where as *Vartma Sandhi* suggests as inner and another canthus. The term '*Netrakosha*' is used by *Sushruta* in *Tarpan Kriya* chapter²⁵. While describing sites of oblique incision *Sushruta* used the term '*AkshiPutra*' where as *Dalhana* refers as *Akshivartma*. *Charaka* used the term as '*AkshiVartma*' in *Pratyanga Shareer*. The term *Vartma Kosha* is coined in *Sushruta Uttartantra* to

describe inflammatory conditions of eyelid. This implies palpebral part of conjunctiva. *Vartma-Shukla Sandhi* refers to the junctions of palpebral and bulbar conjunctiva. *Shuklataraka*, *Tejojalashrita Bahya Patala* - These terms refer to cornea as it is described during surgical procedure of *Linganasha* (cataract). The description of *Savrana Shukla*, *Avrana Shukla* and *Akshki-Pakatyaya* refers to corneal injuries. Hence '*Shukla taraka*' term was used to denote cornea. *Nimeshini* and *Unmeshini Sira-* *Sushruta* and *Dalhana* refer to a disease *Vartma Nimesha* in which a symptom of winking of eyes is evident. Both explain that this phenomenon occurs due to defect in *Un-*

meshini and Nimeshini Sira. This disease is also described in modern ophthalmology as blepharospasm. It is said to be caused by spasm of muscles due to stimulation of ocular branch of facial nerve and oculomotor nerve. As facial nerve (ocular branch) regulates closing of eyelids, we can correlate it with *NimeshiniSira*, and oculomotor nerve regulates opening of eyelid we can correlate with *Unmeshini Sira*.

DISCUSSION

While talking about *Drishti Acharya Sushruta* has described the *Drishti* to be the size of *Masuradala, prasada* of *Pancha-Mahabhootas*, gleaming like a glow worm or covered by the external *patala* of the eye and appearing like a hole having a natural tolerance to cold. *Sushruta* has given the measurement of *Drishti* as 1/7th of *Krishna Mandala* in *Uttartantra*. But in *Sutrasthana*, it is described as 1/9th of *Taraka*. Here the meaning of *Taraka* was given as *Krishna Mandala*. So different measurements for the same structure given by the same author points that *Drishti* is a constricting and dilating structure and this also points to the pupil. So, 1/7th of *Krishna Mandala* is probably the measurement when the iris is dilated, while 1/9th of *Krishna Mandala* is the measurement when the iris is constricted. Going through the description, we can see that *Sushruta* has dealt with *Patala* in brief but without mentioning their exact anatomical position in the eye. Moreover, the concept of *Patala* in context to *Savranashukla*, can be taken as three layers of cornea, i.e. Epithelium, Stroma & Descemet membrane including endothelium. Whereas, in context to *Nayanabhigata*, *Patalas* can be taken as the three tunics of the eyeball. While describing *Timira, Kaanch, Nilika, & Linganasha Sushruta & Vagbhata* have classified its stages in relation to its involving different *Patalas* of *Drishti Mandala*. The outer fibrous coat, i.e. cornea & sclera which gives shape, size & protection to the eyeball is the first *Patala*. Axial length & curvature as causes of refractive errors are due to the anomalies in this coat of eyeball. Second *Patala* can be considered as the uveal tract. Uveal tract has most sensitive tissues & develop an inflammatory response following innumerable ex-

ogenous causes resulting into fall of vision. This causes vitreous opacity resulting into floaters in front of eyes. All these are the clinical feature of second *Patala* pathology described by *Sushruta*. Clinical feature of third *Patala* are very much similar to the cortical part of opacity of the lens. Fourth *Patala* is inner most & constituted by *Asthi*, the hard tissue. With advancement of cataract nearly complete loss of vision is there, where in pupillary colour change to dense grey, which are similar to feature of fourth *Patalagata Timira*. After reading the description on eye anatomy by *Sushruta* it is clear that he had first observed the structure from outside and wrote the details what he saw from observing. While writing about *Mandalas* he said “*Anupurvamtu Temadhya Chatvarooantyautturaram*”, i.e. from going outside to inside *Pakshma* is followed by *Varta*, *Vartma* is followed by *Shukla*, *Shukla* is followed by *Krishna & Krishna* is followed by *Drishti Mandala*. While coming from inside to outside this sequence is reversed it goes from medial to more lateral. This was observed before dissecting the eyes. While discussing about the dimension of eye *Acharya Sushruta* has taken out eye along with the extraocular muscles and optic nerve that is why it resembled *Gostanakaram*. Along with anatomy of eye *Sushruta* has also told about its relations to structures like *Sira, Kandara, Meda, Kalaka, Sleshma*, that holds the eye in position. The *Panchamahabhuta* composition of eye given by *Sushruta* also proves that he has dissected the eye very keenly and came to know about the blood supply, muscular part & lacrimal apparatus associated with the eye. Also, while describing *Puyalasa* (Dacryocystitis) *Acharya Sushruta* and *Dalhana* both have described *Ashru Marga* and *Netra Nadi*. It means that lacrimal apparatus was known to both *Acharyas*. The term *Ashru Vahini* was also coined by *Sushruta* for the lacrimal apparatus. The different size of *Drishti* suggests that he has observed the eye in living human being. Also, the description of *Drishti* which include features like *Masurdala, Khadyot-visphullingabham* is also observed on a living body. The study of *Patala* can be said that it was done on a cadaver as the *Patala* are divided into *Bahya* and *Abhyantar bhaga*. In Ayurveda, the eyes were not only

important for its anatomical aspects but also to know about *Dirghayu*, *Madhyamayu* & *Heenayu* of a person, to know about the *Arishtasuchakalakshana* in patient, to know the *Sadhyaasadhyata* of a *Vyadhi*, & to decide the *Sara* of a person. *Acharya Charak* in *Indriyasthan*, gave many *Arishtasuchakalakshanas* related to eyes to predict the death of a person for example, a person whose eyelashes are stick together without any reason, lid oedema, & unable to close his eyes or if there is sudden loss of vision, all these are *Arishtasuchakalakshanas*.²⁶ A person who sees sky as a condensed matter and earth as nothing or a space & who sees a fire in various color will die in 7 days.²⁷ While discussing about features of *Asadhyavyadhi*, *Acharya Charak* has mentioned feature like *Indriyanasha* i.e. loss of senses including vision²⁸ In *Sushruta Samhita Sutrasthana*, a person with *Dirghayu* will have *Sthira indriya*, *Madhyamayu* will have few lines below the eyes, & *Hinayu* will have *Vibhranta netrata*.²⁹ In above Chapter only, he has described *Shareerpramana*, the distance between two eyes is said to be 4 *Angulas* & distance between ear & outer canthus is 5 *Angulas*.³⁰ While describing about various features of *Sara*, *Shukra Sara Purusha* will have *Shwetanetra*, *Majjasara Purusha* will have *Mahanetra* & *Raktasara Purusha* will have *Snigdha Netra*.³¹

CONCLUSION

In this paper the potentially possible scientific reason for such selection criteria, as well as an attempt to understand the anatomy of eye in prospect to the ancient text by our *Acharyas* is made. In addition, an approach is made to study importance of eyes with respect to acquaint about *Dirghayu*, *Madhyamayu* & *Heenayu* of a person, to know about the *Arishtasuchakalakshana* in patient, to know the *Sadhyaasadhyata* of a *Vyadhi*, & to decide the *Sara* of a person. Further review of our *Ayurvedic* literature should be done to understand the *Netra* as a whole entity.

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