



PARADIGM SHIFT IN DIET AND LIFESTYLE FOR OCULAR HEALTH

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ABSTRACT

Prevention of ocular ailments is critical, as changing lifestyles have resulted in a lot of newer eye disorders and a slew of other problems. For eye problems, Ayurvedic classics recommend a variety of preventive and therapeutic strategies, including dietary recommendations. Ayurveda, with a prime focus on the maintenance of health, has a wealth of knowledge about how to live a healthy life and prevent the occurrence of various imbalances in homeostasis. Several simple daily regimens are advocated as high-end measures for the prevention of eye problems, such as *Aschyotana* (eye drops), *Anjana* (Collyrium), *Nasya* (nasal application of medications), and *Abhyanga* (oil massage), *Yogas*, *Trataka*, *Mudra*, etc. in various treatises with proven efficacy. It's high time these activities are re-introduced in the modern lifestyle in an accessible manner from early childhood to prevent the so-called new age ailments from causing misery to the modern man.

Keywords: *Dincharya*, *Aschyotana*, *Shalaky Tantra*, *Ayurveda*.

INTRODUCTION

OCULAR HEALTH

Acharya Sushruta explains *Swastha* as a state of *Sama Dosha*, *Samaagni*, *Sama Dhatu*, proper *Mala Kriya*, *Prasanna Atma-Mana*, one which is even now accepted by WHO and defined health as a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.² The eye is explained as the most important among all the *Indriyas*. Thus *Acharyas* have given the most importance to ocular health. *Samyaka Tarpana* and *Putapaka* procedures are tolerance to light, health, lightness in eyes, sound sleep, the normal complexion of parts, and easy opening and closing of eyes.

Samyaka Yoga Lakshana of *Seka* is: *Roga Nivrutti* (Gets relief from disease), *Swabhavika Varna* (Getting natural colour), *Karya Padutwam* (Normal functioning of eyes), and *Vedana Santhi* (Relief from Pain, etc.) *Swasthya* is one of the most important concepts of Ayurveda, and the science of *Shalakyata Tantra* aims at individual and community-level protection of the eyes.³ Healthy eyes have excellent vision and clear eyes, free from any pathological condition.

IMPORTANCE OF DIET AND LIFESTYLE

Diet is the source of living beings and their strength, their complexion, and their *Ojas*. The diet is responsible for the attainment and maintenance of faculties of reception and response, maintaining the *Indriyas*. *Aahara* is one of the pillars of life itself.⁴ The proper intake of diet not only can prevent many health disorders but also plays a major role in the management of diseases. Therefore, due consideration should be given to all aspects of diet- planning for the treatment of diseases and maintaining health, according to *Ayurveda*. *Ayurveda* emphasizes the characteristics of food in terms of quality, quantity, and time which

vary with age, constitution, habitat, digestive power, season, disease, and also liking of the patient. One has to consume a diet, which is suitable to him in all aspects, and deviation from this may cause diseases. Every living and non-living being in this universe is composed of five basic elements, the *Panchmahabhootas*, namely Earth (Prithvi), Water (Ap), Fire (Teja), Air (Vayu), and Ether (Akasha), the *Panchabhuta* components of ingested food nourish their respective tissue elements in the body⁵ Many eye disorders have been caused by changes in lifestyle, pollution, excessive use of computers and mobile phones, inconsistent sleeping patterns, inappropriate daily, and seasonal routines, physical inactivity, incorrect body posture, and a disrupted biological clock. The Ayurvedic regimen of healthy life is designed for the achievement of a long, healthy, active life, providing relief from pain and disease, allowing enjoyment of life with the attainment of satisfaction & contentment, which also encompasses ocular wellbeing.

PATHYA AND APATHYA

Ahara (food) and *Vihara* (lifestyle), which are congenial to the channels, constitution, and strength of an individual, are termed *Pathya* (wholesome), and that which is non-congenial is termed *Apathya* (unwholesome)⁶. Broadly wholesome food is defined as the one which balances the *dhatus*. The preventive and curative aspects of *Ayurveda* revolve around the central theme of *Pathya Ahara* and *Vihara*. *Ayurveda* emphasizes basic dietary guidelines in terms of appropriate food, combinations of food, methods of cooking, storage, eating atmosphere, hygiene, and etiquette (*Ashtavidha Ahara Vidhi Viseshaya Ayatana*).

Food/Activities	Pathya (wholesome)	Apathya (Unwholesome)
Shukdhanya	Lohitakashali, sashatika, yava (barley)	Germinated cereals/sprouts
Shimbidhanya	Mudga	Kulattha, Masha
Mansa (Meat)	The flesh of birds, tortoises, peacocks.	Matsya (Fish), fleshes of animals of semi-arid tropics

Shaka	Jeevanti, Karvellaka, Aloevera, Patola, Abhaya, Vastuka, Matashyakshi, Meghnada, Punarnava.	Kalingakapatraka
Fruits	Dadima, draksha, Amla, haritaki, vibhitaka	Citruluslanatus (watermelon)
Dugdha (Milk)	Milk obtained in the evening time	Milk obtained in the morning time
Ghrita (Ghee)	Ghee prepared from cow and goat's milk	Curd
Oils	Tilataila	Atasi, Kusumbhataila
Rasa	Madhura	Amla, Lavana, Katu, Kshara in excess amount
Seeds	Chakshushya, sobhanjans	Sprouted paddy seeds, tilkuta.
Salts	Saindhava Lavana	Other salts.
Sugandhi dravya	Chandana and karpura	Tambula
Food habits	Light and easily digestible food	Excessive intake of food
Posture	Recurrent palming	Sleeping in the prone position, sitting on heels
Sleep	Normal sleep	The habit of sleeping in the daytime and waking at nighttime.
Drinks/Peya	Peya, vilepi	Excessive alcohol, Suktha, Aranala
Manasika bhava	Manonivriti	Indulgence in kopa, shoka, krodha.

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All the Acharyas have mentioned the mandatory practices for daily routine to maintain ocular health.

Anjana (collyrium)- There are two types of Anjana *Sauviranjana* and *Rasanjana*. The *sauviranjana* type of collyrium can be applied every day, and *Rasanjana* is used once at an interval of five or eight nights.⁸

Nasya- In this procedure, medication is instilled into the nostrils in a specified manner to nourish the organ above the clavicle known as *Nasya*. Due to anatomical communication, the medicine applied through the nostrils reaches *Sringataka Marma*⁹.

Shiro abhyanga-It acts as *Indriyaprasadana* and a preventive measure for Eye disorders.¹⁰

Netra-prakshalana (Washing of eyes): A cold water decoction of *Lodhra (Symplocos racemosa)* or *Amlaki (Emblica Officinalis)* should be used. It helps in the cleansing of the eyes by eliminating dust and foreign materials, allowing for clear vision. Decoction of *Triphala, Lodhra, and Madhuyasti* is used as an eyewash in many refractive errors like *Timira*, Red eye, Pain in the eye, etc.¹¹

Padabhyanga- Massage of oil over the soles maintains the vision and reduces *Vata Dosha*.¹²

Snana (Bathing)-Bathing with cold water from the head is indicated *Chakshushya*.¹³

Padatra Dharana –The use of footwear is beneficial for preventive approaches in eye disorders.¹⁴

Pada prakshalana- washing of feet with clean water helps in *Chakshu Prasadana*¹⁵.

Chatraa Dharana- The use of an umbrella prevents dust, and excessive light to the eyes acts as *Chakshushya*.¹⁶

Eye exercises- Movements of both eyes in up-down, sideways (right-left), and rotational (clockwise-anticlockwise) directions, followed by palming, are very effective in preventing refractive errors.

Shatkarmas - *Neti* and *Trataka* are the best for eye among the *Shatkarma*. *Neti* is performed by a thin thread of 32 *angulas*, inserting it through one nostril and taking it out through the mouth. It destroys *Kapha Dosha* and gives a clear vision. *Jala Neti* (with a pinch of salt mixed in Luke- warm water) is also in practice nowadays *Trataka* is continuously looking at some small object till their eyes tear. It destroys all eye disorders and is supposed to confer divine sight (*Divya Drishti*).¹⁷

Avoidance Nidana of Netra Rogas:¹⁸ These are some etiological factors that should be avoided for

the prevention of eye diseases and maintaining healthy eyes.

<i>Aharaja Nidana</i>	<i>Viharaja Nidana</i>
<i>Shukthaaranalaamlanishavana</i> (Alcoholic beverages)	<i>Ushnabitaptasyajalpraveshath</i>
<i>Kulatthamashanishavana</i> (Excessive use of horse gram and black gram)	<i>Doorekshanath</i> (Looking at very distant objects regularly for a longer time.)
	<i>Swapanaviparyaya</i> (Abnormal sleeping habits)
	<i>Prasakthasamrodhana</i> (Continuous weeping for a longer duration and several days)
	<i>Kopa and shoka</i> (Excessive anger and grief)
	<i>Klesha</i> (Stress).
	<i>Chardhirvighatatha</i> (Suppressing the urge of vomiting) And <i>Vamanathiyogath</i> (Excessive Vamana therapy)
	<i>Abhighaatha</i> (Trauma)

1. ***Ushnabitaptasyajalpraveshath*** Alternative usage of cold and hot, like Immersing in cold water immediately after getting exposed to heat/sun and bathing in hot water and drinking cold water, entering into ac room soon after exposure to heat/sun. Due to these factors, there will be an imbalance in serum electrolytes, and the variation in temperatures causes loss of tissue integrity, and further circulatory disturbances occur.

2. ***Doorekshanath* (Looking at very distant objects regularly for a longer time.)** Looking at very distant objects regularly for a longer time leads to strain produced on ciliary muscles leading to distortion in the accommodative capacity of the lens.

Present era - Drivers, shooters, archery, working with telescopes.

Probable vitiation of Dosha - *Vataprakopa*

3. ***Swapanaviparyaya* (Abnormal sleeping habits)-** Abnormal sleeping habits (*diva Swapna /nisi jagarana*). *Divya Swapna* (sleeping during the day-time) causes *Kaphaprakopa* leading to *snigdatha* (moistness), and *Ratrijagarana* causes *Vata* and *pitta prakopa* leading to *rukshata* (dryness). Present era: Night shifts, sleeping late at night, night out parties.

Probable vitiation of Dosha–*Tridosha*.

4. ***Klesha* (Stress)** Stress, suffering, pain, and trouble vitiates both *shareeraja* and *manasika doshas* (physical and mental exhaustion), leading to eye diseases.

5. ***Shukthaaranalaamlanishavana* (Alcoholic beverages)** *Suktha* and *aranala* are sandhana dravyas (drugs produced by fermentation) that have properties opposite to Ojas (immunity) with intoxicating action. Most *amla dravyas* (sour drugs) are harmful to the eyes.

6. ***Kulatthamashanishavana* (Excessive use of horse gram and black gram)** *Kulattha* has *gunas* (properties) like *Laghu*(light), *vidahi* (burning), *kashaya rasa* (bitter taste), *katupaka*(pungent), and *ushna-veerya*(potency). Excessive use of *kulattha* causes *dhatukshaya*. *Masha* has *gunas* Opposite to *kulattha*, like *madhura rasa* (sweet taste), *madhuravipaka*, *guru* (heavy), and *snigdha*gunas (unctuous properties).

7. ***Vega vinigraha* (Suppression of natural urges)**, Suppression of *Jrumbha* (yawning), *ashru* (tears), *hikka* (hiccups), *pratishyaya* (rhinitis), and *kshudha* (hunger) all these lead to *netraroga*. Suppression of urges causes strain to the eye leading to weakness of tissues.

8. ***Sukshmanireekshanath* (Watching minute objects for a longer duration)-**causes strain to ciliary muscles and lens. Present era: working with computers, reading for a longer duration.

Correlation with modern studies

Evidence from both epidemiological and experimental observations has shown that the high consumption of fruits and vegetables may help to prevent diseases in humans. Because of their well-

documented properties, several vitamins, polyphenols, flavonoids, as well as trace elements have found particular attention as potential chemo-preventive agents in our diet.

Prevention of age-related macular degeneration ARMD-

Several preventive strategies have been researched to reduce risk factors associated with AMD. In the initial AREDS, high doses of beta-carotene, zinc, and vitamins C and E were found to delay the progression of AMD from intermediate to advanced states. Smoking cessation, maintenance of a healthy weight, increased intake of antioxidants, and a lower intake of cholesterol have all been proposed as lifestyle interventions that could potentially decrease the incidence of AMD.

Yellow & dark green leafy vegetables may reduce the risk of AMD having Lutein and Zeaxanthin appear to filter shortwave length light that can damage the retina. LUTEIN & ZEAXANTHIN are FAT soluble substances, so they require the presence of dietary fat for proper absorption through the GI tract. This is the reason vegetables and paneer etc., fried with 3 or 6 omega oils or ghee, have garnishing of RAW-green salad done with Olive oil or rye (mustard oil).

Prevention of cataracts-

Decreased vitamin C levels in the lens of the eye have been associated with increased severity of cataracts in humans. and increased blood levels of vitamin C are associated with decreased risk of cataracts. Sources-beef, citrus fruits, wheat, fish, carrot, kidney, cowmilk, tomato, etc. ten observational studies have examined the association between vitamin E consumption and the incidence and severity of cataracts. Among these studies, five found increased vitamin E intake to be associated with protection from cataracts, Food Sources Major sources of -tocopherol in the diet include vegetable oils (olive, sunflower, safflower oils), nuts, whole grains, and green leafy vegetables. All forms of vitamin E occur naturally in foods but in varying amounts.

DISCUSSION

Thousands of years ago, the treatises of Ayurveda had very extensive knowledge regarding the eyes, including their disorders and treatment. The teachings and principles that were laid down in ancient times to keep one's health free from disease, the same philosophy itself, are implicated in the modern era. But in the present era, people's lifestyle has become busy with hectic schedules. Eye disorders are more likely to occur in some occupations, such as prolonged exposure to computer screens, night shifts, etc., where the biological clock is altered with resultant subtle alterations in neural and endocrine systems. The simplicity of Ayurveda and its tendency towards natural methods and consideration for *Mansikastithi* (psychic), along with other causes of illness, is probably the best reason to explain its popularity. Changes in diet, behavior, and lifestyle must be made. While adopting modifications, one can follow the principles of *Dinacharya* (daily regimen), *Sadavrutta* (good behavior), *Rasayana* (anti-aging regimen), and *Aachara Rasayana* (good behavioral changes), the goal being prevention. Lifestyle improvements through Ayurveda can help us get a new pair of reshaped eyes. Little tweaks in our daily routine can keep us away from common eye problems. Use of *Rasayana* in persons where vocation prohibits proper implementation of *dinacharya* and *ritucharya*: As per *Acharya Vagbhatta*, *Chakshushya Rasayana* drugs-*Triphala*, Honey, and *Ghrita* should be taken regularly at night for eyesight strengthening. The use of *Yastimadhu*, *Ghrita*, and *Triphala* also acts as *Rasayana*.

CONCLUSION

Ayurveda gives equal importance to both preventive and curative aspects because, in this modern world where the world is more into business, stress, and sedentary life, to protect Agni and to prevent and cure diseases, a strict regimen of *pathyapathya* in *aahara* and *vihara* is essential in daily life.

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