

AN AYURVEDIC APPROACH TO PROMOTIVE AND PREVENTIVE EYE CARE: A REVIEWS.P. Molligoda¹,R.L.Y.U. Rathnayaka²,B.S.M.M. Sooriyaarachchi³

¹Senior Lecturer, Department of Moulika Siddhanta, Institute of Indigenous Medicine, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka.

²Medical Officer, Provincial Ayurveda General Hospital, Rathnapura.

³P.G. Scholar, Department of Shalaky Tantra, Institute of Teaching and Research in Ayurveda, Ministry of AYUSH, Government of India

ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is a system of medicine which aims not solely in cure of the disease but also prevent the humanity from all categories of physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual miseries. There are five sense organs such as eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin in human, among these, *Ayurveda* gives prime importance to the eye. Hence, one has to take necessary efforts to take care of the methods for prevention of eye diseases. A faulty life style has been linked to many human illnesses and much has been emphasized about life style disorders like cardiovascular disorders, diabetes mellitus, kidney diseases and their preventive methods. But unlikely the preventive aspects of ocular health and eye diseases not been given due importance in daily life. Vision is also affected as a result of faulty lifestyle. For preventing these type of eye diseases and for maintain ocular health much has been described in texts of *Ayurveda*, in the form of *Dinacharya* (daily regimen), *Ritucharya* (seasonal regimen) and specific therapies like *Kriya Kalpa* are useful to restore eye health and proper vision. The eye diseases can be prevented and proper vision can be restored for long time by following certain points in daily life like *Dinacharya*, *Ritucharya*, *Sadvritta* and *Swasthavritta* and taking *Chakshyushya Rasayana* drugs described in Ayurvedic texts. Along with a few positive life style modifications may help considerably reducing the impact of ocular diseases in general population.

Keywords *Pathya Apathya, Dina Charya, Netra Roga, Life style*

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is a system of medicine in which objective is not only curing of the disease but also prevent the human race from physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual miseries.¹ There are five sense organs namely eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin are seen in human, among these sense organs, *Ayurveda* gives prime importance to the eye. As it says “*Sarvendriyaanam Nayanam Pradhanam*”, eyes are considered to be vital because vision is crucial for social and intellectual development of a

person. Eyes allow to understanding and navigating the world around you.²

The importance of preserving eye health and vision is rightly quoted by *Acharya Vagbhata* that “Once the vision is lost, the different kind of things of the world will all become one kind only that of darkness”³. It is also emphasized that “an eye can perceive forms; it adorns the face”. It is a source of direct knowledge and it is a guide to avoid wrong deeds. It was showed that about 80% of the knowledge we gain was through the eye. So the

existence and status of a person in this universe is directly influence by the eye.

In *Sushruta Samhita* a wide description is available pertaining to eye diseases and its management. *Acharya Sushruta* has given more importance to eye as it is evident from the fact that the *Uttaratantra* of *Sushruta Samhita* start with eye disease and out of which 19 chapters are devoted only to eye diseases. So one has to take necessary efforts to take care of the methods for prevention of eye diseases. A faulty life style has been linked to many human illness and much has been emphasized about life style disorders like cardiovascular disorders, diabetes mellitus, kidney diseases and their preventive methods. But unlikely the preventive aspects of ocular health and eye diseases not been given due importance in daily life. Vision is also affected as consequence of faulty lifestyle. Smoking cigarette, tobacco, alcohol consumption, high fat diet and junk food, chronic stress, prolonged exposure to bright light, working in computer for long time etc. are few example which exerts damage to the eye. Clinical conditions which may occur due to faulty life style are Age Related Macular Degeneration (ARMD), Diabetic/Hypertensive retinopathy, computer vision syndrome and many more. For preventing these type of eye diseases and for maintaining ocular health much has been described in texts of *Ayurveda*, in the form of *Dinacharya* (daily regimen), *Ritucharya* (seasonal regimen) and specific therapies like *Kriya Kalpa* are useful to restore eye health and proper vision. The eye diseases can be prevented and proper vision can be restored for long time by following certain points in daily life like *Dinacharya*, *Ritucharya*, *Sadvritta*, *Swasthavritta* and

taking *Chakshushya Rasayana* drugs described in Ayurvedic texts.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This review study was done on descriptions related to various promotive and preventive eye care mentioned in *Ayurveda Samhita* and research papers on the role of *Ayurveda* in visual health.

RESULTS

Basic Doshas in eyes:

The basic principle of *Ayurveda* is based on *Tridosha* (*Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*) which is responsible for normal functions of body and when vitiated lead to disease. The role of *Dosha* is different from organ to organ, so etiological factors for vitiation of *Dosha* are also different for different organs. In the eye *Alochaka Pitta* is considered as responsible factor for visual perception i.e. of all the *Mahabhoota*, *Tejas*⁴ dominates (in composition of eyes) so the eyes are especially susceptible to *Kapha*⁵, as a result the factors which are vitiating *Pitta* or *Kapha* will lead to eye diseases.

Samprapti of Netra Roga:

In *Ayurveda*, the *Acharya* described a generalized *Samprapti* for all eye diseases. The *Dosha* vitiated by indulgence in foods and habits particularly harmful to the eyes (*Achakshusya Aahara- Vihara*) propagate through the channels (*Sira*) towards *Uttamanga* (the head) and enter the parts of the eye to produce diseases. In traumatic lesions, vitiation of *Dosha* succeed the disease.⁶

Causes (Nidana) and preventive measures:

According to *Acharya Sushruta*, measures calculated for the removal of the causative factors of the disease is *Chikitsa*⁷. On recognizing the possibility of development

of disease, a proper course of prophylactic treatment should be given according to the affection of *Dosha*. Despite the avoidance of the etiological factors, if the disease reaches its *Vyakta* (manifestation of disease) stage, then it should be treated by counteracting the increased *Vata* and other *Dosha* and restoration of equilibrium of *Dosha*.

For preventing these type of eye diseases and for maintain ocular health much has been described in texts of *Ayurveda*, in form of these factors ancient texts prescribed *Ahara* (specific diet), *Aushadha* (drugs), and *Vihara* (daily regimen). Out of these three, *Ahara* and *Vihara* play a major role in the prevention of eye diseases. *Dinacharya* (daily regimen), *Ritucharya* (seasonal regimen) and specific therapies like *Kriya Kalpa* are useful to restore eye health and proper vision. The eye diseases can be prevented and proper vision can be restored for long time by following certain points in daily life like *Dinacharya*, *Ritucharya*, *Sadvritta*, *Swasthavritta* and taking *Chakshushya Rasayana* drugs described in Ayurvedic texts.

Modalities for promotion of ocular health and prevention of eye diseases:

Acharya have described the daily regimen of preventive healthcare and maintenance of health of body and mind. They specially emphasized on eye healthcare and defined the slaves for betterment of eyes, and they say inadequate prophylaxis of the ocular diseases may even lead to blindness. Therefore, the first step in treating a disease should be aimed towards withdrawal of the disease contributing factors. In form of these factors ancient texts prescribed *Ahara* (specific diet), *Aushadha* (drugs), and *Vihara* (daily regimen). Out of these three, *Ahara* and

Vihara play a major role in the prevention of eye diseases.⁸

Avoiding the causes and mitigation of involved *Dosha* are prevention in brief.⁹

- Avoidance of exposure to water, immediately after getting heated from exposure to sun heat or fire.
- Avoiding practices of watching very far objects.
- Circumventing practices of observing very minute objects.
- Escaping untimely sleeping habits.
- Avoidance of indulging in anger, sorrow, fear and exertion.
- Suppression of natural urges like controlling of tear should not be followed.

***Dinacharya* (Daily Regimen):**

Dinacharya and *Pathya Apathya*¹⁰ regarding the maintaining of eye health are vividly described in *Ayurveda*. The daily regimen can be summarized in more realistic manner as follows

***Pathya Ahara* (Dietary Consideration):**

The persons who are fond of their eyes healthy should always adhere to the following dietary products like grains such as *Yava* (barley), *Godhuma* (wheat), *Raktasali* (red rice), *Shastika*, *Mudga* (green gram) etc. which are old and which mitigate *Kapha* and *Pitta* mixed with more of *Ghrita* (butter fat), vegetables, meat of animals of *Jangala Desha* (meat of animals dwelling in forests), *Dadima* (pomegranate), *Sita* (sugar), *Saindhava* (rock salt), *Triphala* (*Terminalia chebula*, *Terminalia bellirica* and *Emblica officinalis*), *Draksha* (grapes), rain water (i.e. pure cold water) for drinking.

***Vihara*:**

- Avoidance of exposure to water, immediately after getting heated from exposure to sun heat or fire.
- Avoiding practices of watching very far objects and very minute objects.

- Escaping untimely sleeping habits.
- Avoidance of indulging in anger, sorrow, fear and exertion.
- Suppression of natural urges like controlling of tear should not be followed.
- Avoid Day time sleep and night awakening

Anjana (collyrium):

There are two types of *Anjana*, mainly practiced in daily regimen- (A). Medically processed antimony sulphide (*Sauveeraanjana*) and (B). Solid extract of *Barberis aristata* (*Rasananjana*). The *Sauveeraanjana* type of collyrium is applied to eyelashes every day and *Rasananjana* is used once at interval of five or eight nights for stimulation and secretion. The eye vision is predominantly associated with *Tejasguna* and as such especially susceptible to *Kaphadosha*. Hence, the measures alleviating *Kapha* are beneficial for clear vision. *Anjana* removes the *Dosha* and *Mala* in the form of tears and provide cleanness to eyes. As a result, all the objects seen easily and clearly¹¹. It also useful for good appearance of eyes, removes burning sensation, itching, dirt (excretion), moistness and pain of eyes, accommodation to high and low light and prevent diseases development. Action of *Anjana* can be attributed for dissolving the accumulated vitiated *Kapha* and draining it out. It dilates the blood vessels, increases the blood flow and maintains the integrity of *Netrasrotas*.

Shiroabhayanga:¹²

Daily application of medicated oil on head especially *Murdha* region, is strengthening to eyes and preventive measure for sense organs disorders. It acts as *Drishti Prasadana*.

Padaprakshalana (Feet wash), Padabhyanga (Oil Massage), Padatra Dharana (Foot wearing):

As per literature, two *Sira* (vein) are situated in the center of feet (soles) which are significantly connected to eyes. These transmit the effect of medications applied over the soles in the form of oil massage and promote the eye health and prevent the diseases. These veins vitiated by the accumulation of *Mala* or over pressure bring about abnormality of eye. *Padaprakshalana*- Washing of feet with clean water confers clear vision. *Padabhyanga*- Application of oil over soles always bestows sleep comfort and maintains vision. *Padatra Dharana*¹³. Walking without foot wear on irregular surface causes harm to eye so use of footwear is beneficial for eye sight. Hence, every person should perform massage over soles with oil, washing them well and should use foot wears as simple preventive and promotive approach for eye problems.

Yoga practices and eye health:

Purifying procedure like *Netikirya* and *Trataka* help to promote clear eye vision and prevent the *Doshasanchaya*¹⁴. In yoga Asana palming, swinging and shifting movement of eyes and *Matsya Asana* may give relief to eyes and prevent the refractive errors and other problems. *Pranayama* means extension or expansion of the dimension of '*Prana*'. A good balance of mental status is essential for proper functioning of the eyes because sense organs can perceive the objects only in the presence of mind. Proper practices of *Nadishodhana* and *Bhramripranayama* increases stress tolerance, calm to mind, improve circulation and reduce the muscles tension. All these may have promotive action in the eye health.

Rasayana and eye health promotion:

The main *Rasayana* adopted in eye health promotion are *Naimitika Rasayana* and *Acharya Rasayana*. The appropriate use of

Chakshushya and *Rasayana Dravyas* will help to maintain the health of the *Netra* and prevents age related eye disorders. The use of *Yastimadhu*, *Ghrita* and *Triphala* act as *Rasayana*. *Acharya Vagbhata* has advised that *Triphala* along with honey and *Ghrita* (butter fat) should be consumed at nights, daily for strengthening of eye sight¹⁵.

DISCUSSION

Human eyes are extremely delicate organs. These are the organs which should be free from stress, near watching activities for long time and living in polluted environment. Due to the present life style changes, our eyes have to bear a lot of stress and limit resistant against eye issues. *Ayurveda* has promotive care and restoring measures that neutralize the effect of today's stressed life style over eyes, strengthening eye muscles, making lens fibre elastic. The eye promotive regimen delays the degenerative process in the retina & focal point and nourishes the visual structures. Once a permanent mechanical change develops in the shape of eye ball, then it is not possible to reverse the changes. Eye exercises and Ayurvedic measures are found to be supportive in eye care. A person can attain excellent potentiality of body and sense organs (eye) by the usage of daily regimen in their life.

In the present day Lifestyle practices which in turn generate eye diseases. To name a few- By food habits—*Shukta*, *Aranaala*, *Amla*, *Kulattha*, *Maasha*, *Ushna*, *Kshara*, *Katu Rasa* predominant diet resembles the spicy and junk foods, by Activities *Swapna Viparyayaat* (Night shifts), *Atimadyapaana* (Alcoholism), *Dhumanishevana* (Smoking), *Atidravannapaana* (cold drinks), *Pratata*

Ekshana, *Atideepta Darshana*, *Ati Sameepa Darshana* (Spending long hours in front of computer)

Prevention modalities have an equal role in fighting the emergence of diseases as that of treatment modalities. Prevention of Diseases is possible by Lifestyle regulation and adopting Ayurvedic principles. *Kriyakalpa* has a major role as a remedy for Lifestyle induced eye diseases. *Kriya Kalpas* such as *Aschyotana*, *Anjana*, and *Nasya* etc¹⁶ are both prevention as well as treatment modalities. *Aschyotana* (Eye drops) is a basic therapeutic intervention which is beneficial in wide variety of Eye diseases¹⁷. Eye diseases due to ageing process are inevitable but can be delayed by taking *Chakshushya* and *Rasayana* (Rejuvenation therapies for eyes)

CONCLUSION

Eyes play a vital role in our day to day lives and are perhaps the most precious gift we have. This world is visible to us because we are blessed with eyesight. Good eyesight is very important for our daily activities like reading, watching television, internet surfing and driving etc. The prevention modalities advocated in *Ayurveda* such as *Aschyotana*, *Anjana*, *Nasya* and *Yogasana* etc. along with a few positive life style modifications may help considerably reducing the impact of ocular diseases in general population. So those who wish to have prolonged healthy vision should keep the value of practices and daily regimen prescribed by ancient scholars because "Prevention is better than Cure."

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Corresponding Author: Dr.S.P. Molligoda, Senior Lecturer, Department of Moulika Siddhanta, Institute of Indigenous Medicine, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Email: madhushisooriyaarachchi@gmail.com

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