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Yoga and Ayurveda based conceptual study on role of *Neti Karma* in Eye Diseases

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ABSTRACT

Yoga and Ayurveda are the unique sciences of antiquity. Both were developed and practiced in similar circumstances with similar objectives in the same land. Both are based on similar concept of human existence. Currently there is an emerging trend towards the holistic approach to the health related problems. The study focuses on the role of *Netikarma* in eye diseases based on Yoga and Ayurveda concepts. The study aims to reveal the facts on the benefits of *Netikarma* w.s.r to eye diseases based on the concepts explained in Yoga and Ayurveda Shastra. Ayurveda and Yoga both accepts *Panchajnanendriyas* i.e., sense organs. Eye is considered to be superior amongst the sense organs. In *Astanga Hridaya* it is said that "All efforts should be made to protect our eyes because for the blind man day and night are the same." Yoga shastra describes six purificatory measures (*Shat Karma*) as the means of *Nadi Shodhana*. Among the *Shatkarmas*, *Trataka* and *Neti* are said to bring clear vision. Therefore this study is taken up to understand the mode of action of *Netikarma* in eye disorders.

Key words: Yoga, Ayurveda, Neti Karma, Eye disorders.

INTRODUCTION

Yoga and Ayurveda are the unique sciences of antiquity. Both were developed and practiced in similar circumstances with similar objectives in the same land. Both are based on similar concept of human existence. Currently there is an emerging trend towards the holistic approach to the health related problems.

OBJECTIVES

The study aims to reveal the facts on the benefits of *Neti Karma* (Yogic purificatory procedure) w.s.r to eye diseases based on the concepts explained in Yoga and

Ayurveda Shastra. Yoga Shastra describes six purificatory measures i.e., *Dhauti*, *Basti*, *Neti*, *Lauliki*, *Tratak* and *Kapalabhati*.^[1] Purification of the body is acquired by the regular practice of *Shatkriyas*.

Indications for *Shatkarma*

Medah Shleshmadhikah Poorva Shatkarmani Samacharet |

Anyastu Naacharet Tani Doshanam Samabhavatah ||
(H.Y.P. 2/21)^[2]

Shatkarmas are indicated in persons with excess of *Medas* (Fat) and vitiation of *Kapha Dosha*. *Gheranda Samhita* describes *Shatkriya* as means of *Nadi Shodhana* (purification of channels). *Nadi Shodhana* is essential as *Pranavayu* does not enter the *Nadis* as long as they are filled with impurities.^[3]

Concept of *Nadi Shodhana* is very much evident in *Ayurveda Shastra* also. *Acharya Charaka* describes *Nadi*, *Srotas*, *Panta*, *Dhamani* as synonymous terms. *Srotas* are meant for carrying the *Dhatu*s from one place to another. As long as *Srotas* are devoid of impurities, so long health will be maintained.^[4]

Among the *Shatkriyas*, *Trataka* and *Neti* are said to bring clear vision.

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Neti Karma Procedure

Take a thin thread and insert it into the nostrils and passing it through, pull it out by mouth. This is called *Netikriya*.^[5]

Benefits of Neti

Kapala Shodhani Chaiva Divyadrusti Pradayini Jatrurdhvajata Rogaugham Netirashu Nihanti Cha | (H.Y.P. 2/28-30).^[6]

By practicing *Netikriya*, one obtains *Khechari Siddhi*. It is indicated in all the disorder of the organs which lie above the clavicle. It is beneficial in the disorders of *Kapha Dosh* and produces clear vision. Yoga therapy intervention through nasal cavity is called *Neti*. Similarly administration of medicine through nasal cavity is known as *Nasya* in Ayurveda.

Nasya

According to Ayurveda, *Nasya Karma* is one among the five purificatory procedures (*Panchakarma*). "*Nasaya Praneeyamanam Aushadham Nasyam.*" (A.S.Su. 29/3) Medicine administered through the nasal cavity is *Nasya*.^[7]

Indication and mode of action of Nasya Karma

"*Nasa Hi Shiraso Dwaram*" (A.S.SU. 29/3). Nose is said to be the gateway to head; medicine administered through nose reaches *Shringataka Marma* (a vital point) and reaches all the organs which lie above the clavicle. Hence *Nasya Karma* is indicated in all the diseases of head, eyes, ears, nose and throat. References with regard to *Neti Kriya* (Yoga) and *Nasya Karma* (Ayurveda) are strongly evident supporting the management of above said diseases through nasal root.

Importance of Eyes

Acharya Vagbhata opines that "as long as there is a desire for living, so long all efforts should be made always by men to protect the eyes, because for the blind man, day and night are the same, all the things of this world are useless though he might have lot of wealth".^[8]

Physiology of vision according to Ayurveda

Visual perception like all other sensory phenomena is dependent upon the state of mind and soul. *Charaka* has described this process as the conjuncture of soul, mind and the sensory organ with the object.^[9]

Kashyapa classifies senses into *Sannikrista* and *Viprakrista Indriya*. Eye has developed sufficient skills to perceive the object from a sufficiently long distance.^[10] The role of *Alochaka Pitta* is of considerable importance in the visual perception. *Bhela* has envisaged two aspects of *Alochaka Pitta*; among which *Chakshu Vaisheshika* produces the knowledge of the characteristics of the form and colors of things. *Buddhi Vaisheshika* enables concentration, response and cognition as it recalls the objects.^[11]

Eye diseases according to Ayurveda

Brihatrayes (classical Ayurvedic texts) have elaborately described the diseases of the eyes. Yoga and Ayurveda both accept *Panchamahabhuta* and *Tridosha* concept. *Chakshu Tejomayam Tasya Visheshat Shleshmato Bhayam Tatah Shlesmahara Karma Hitam Druste Prasadnam.* (Ch.Su.5/16-17) *Netra* (eye) is *Tejomahabhuta* (fire element) predominant organ. It is very prone for *Kaphaja* (*Jala Mahabhuta* i.e., water element) disorders. Therefore *Kaphahara Chikitsa* is beneficial for the eyes.^[12]

DISCUSSION

Netikriya is one of the purificatory measures explained in Yoga classics. *Neti Karma* is indicated in all the diseases of the organs which lie above the clavicle. Therefore *Neti Kriya* will be beneficial in eye disorders. *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* and *Gheranda Samhita* have described that *Neti* is indicated in *Kaphaja* disorders and is said to provide clear vision. Similar to this *Nasya Karma* has been explained in Ayurvedic text as a purificatory process indicated in the diseases of organs above the clavicle. Ayurveda clearly opines that nose is the gateway to the *Shiras* (head). *Acharya Charaka* explains that eye is on organ of *Tejomahabhuta* predominancy. Hence it is prone for the *Kaphaja* disorders. Intervention through nasal

cavity stimulates the olfactory nerves which are connected with the higher centers of brain i.e., Limbic system which contains amygdaloidal complex, hypothalamus, basal ganglia etc. So the drugs administered through the nose stimulate the higher centers of brain which in turn affects the endocrine and nervous system functions by controlling the *Doshas*.

CONCLUSION

Most of the studies on *Netikriya* are focused on nasal disorders. But if we go through the classical literature, we get sufficient evidence in support of benefit of *Netikriya* in eye disorders. Eye is a sense organ and is likely to be affected by the vitiation of *Kapha Dosha*. Among all the sense organs, eye is said to be superior i.e., "*Sarvendriyanam Nayanam Pradhanam*." Nose is said to be the gateway to head and hence *Netikriya* will definitely be beneficial in eye disorders.

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