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Role of *Dinacharya* in Eye Care - A Preventive Approach

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda, the traditional system of medicine indeed emphasizes a holistic approach to health that includes both prevention and cure. In ophthalmology, the preventive measures play a crucial role in maintaining eye health and reducing the risk of developing various eye diseases that can lead to vision impairment. The ability to see clearly and perceive the world around us is crucial for various activities, from navigating our environment to appreciating the beauty of the world. The term *Swasthavritta* refers to a lifestyle or regimen followed to maintain health and prevent the occurrence of diseases. It encompasses a set of practices and principles that are aimed at promoting overall well-being and preventing imbalances in the body and mind. All the *Acharyas* have mentioned the mandatory practice of *Dinacharya* for health maintenance. Hence here an attempt has been made to compile the procedures to improve the health of the eye through which the various diseases of eye can be prevented. The daily regimens like *Anjana*, *Nasya*, *Dhumapana*, *Kavala*, *Gandusha*, *Abyanga*, *Padatra dharana*, *Snana* etc are included for maintaining eye health. The eyes should be always protected from the external factors like dust, heat, radiations, excessive screen time, over straining the eyes like in dim light reading, gadget use in dim light etc. Most of the *Netraroga* in the current scenario can be prevented by healthy *Dinacharya* and by avoiding negligence.

Key words: *Dinacharya*, *Shalakyatantra*, *Netraroga*, *Life style changes*, *Anjana*

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, the traditional system of medicine indeed emphasizes a holistic approach to health that includes both prevention and cure. It focuses on maintaining a balance in various aspects of life, including diet, lifestyle, and mental well-being, to prevent diseases and promote overall health. Prevention is often considered the most effective and cost-efficient approach to healthcare. In ophthalmology, the

preventive measures play a crucial role in maintaining eye health and reducing the risk of developing various eye diseases that can lead to vision impairment. The leading causes of blindness and low vision are primarily age-related eye diseases such as age-related macular degeneration, cataract, diabetic retinopathy, and glaucoma.^[1] Eyesight is indeed a fundamental and invaluable sense that significantly impacts our daily lives. The ability to see clearly and perceive the world around us is crucial for various activities, from navigating our environment to appreciating the beauty of the world. In *Ayurveda*, the human sensory organs are classified into two categories: *Jnanendriyas* (organs of perception) and *Karmendriyas* (organs of action). *Chakshurindriya*, associated with the eyes and vision, is one of the five *Jnanendriyas* and *Chakshurindriya* (sense of sight) is given prime importance in *Ayurveda*. The eyes are considered to be not only windows to the external world but also windows to the inner workings of the body.

The definition of a *Swastha* (healthy individual) in *Ayurveda* is based on the balance of three *Doshas*

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(biological energies), proper *Agni* (digestive fire), balanced *dhatu*s (body tissues), and a harmonious state of mind, senses, and soul.^[2] The term *Swasthavritta* refers to a lifestyle or regimen followed to maintain health and prevent the occurrence of diseases. It encompasses a set of practices and principles that are aimed at promoting overall well-being and preventing imbalances in the body and mind. *Swasthavritta* involves adopting *Dinacharya* (daily routines), dietary habits, and lifestyle practices that align with an individual's constitution (*Prakriti*) and help maintain the balance of *Doshas*, *Agni*, *Dhatu*s, and other physiological components. Hence creating awareness among the people regarding these concepts is necessary in this era of excessive and improper use of sense organs especially the eyes.

Acharya Vagbhata, says efforts must be taken by an individual to protect his eyes as for a blind person the day and night are equal and indistinguishable.^[3] Wisdom encourages us to appreciate the significance of eyesight and take proactive measures to protect this invaluable sense. It is the responsibility of every individual to take necessary actions to maintain its health.

Eye is a *Tejo-Maya Indriya*, emphasizing the transformative and illuminating nature of vision associated with *Agni Mahabhuta*. The location of the eyes in the head region, which is *Kapha-Pradhana Sthana*, highlights the role of *Kapha* in providing structural and nourishing support to the eyes.^[4] It always has the tendency to get *Kapha Dushti*. While explaining the *Nidana* of eye diseases, *Acharya Vagbhata* is explaining that the indulgence in general causative factors of diseases (*Sarvaroganidana*) along with improper use or abuse of the eyes (*Achakshushyasevana*) can lead to an imbalance, with *Pitta Dosha* being predominant, affecting the five layers or regions of the eye (*Five Mandalas of Netra*). This imbalance could contribute to various eye disorders. Hence the predominant *Dosha* which get vitiated in *Netra* are *Pitta* and *Kapha* and also *Vata* is the *dosha* which Controls movement, blinking, and other dynamic functions of the eyes. The *Indriya Artha Asamyoga* of *Netra* causes *Vata Pradhana*

Tridoshadushti. Hence all the three *dosha* along with *Rakta* are to be addressed to maintain the health of eye.

Dinacharya for Netra Rakshana

All the *Acharyas* have mentioned the mandatory practice of *Dinacharya* for health maintenance. Among these, Special mention of certain daily regimen is important. These are practices which can be done easily on a daily basis.

According to *Ayurveda*, one should wake up early in the morning in *Brahma Muhurta* which is beneficial for overall health and well-being. *Ratri Jagarana* (Staying Awake at Night) which causes *Vata Pitta Dushti* and *Diva Swapna* (Daytime Sleep) which causes *Kapha Dushti*. These practises potentially contribute to health issues, including those related to the eyes. This may lead to various life style disorders gradually.

The regimens to be practised for maintaining the health of eye are:

Anjana (Collyrium)

The procedure of application of collyrium on the lower eye lids from inner canthus to outer canthus and vice versa is called as *Anjana*.^[5] *Acharya* mentions the daily use of *Sauviranjana* for *Sleshma Sravanartham* (drainage or elimination of excess *Kapha*). The purpose of *Anjana Karma* is *Kapha Nirharana* however, while explaining the *Timira Chikitsa*, use of *Snigdha Anjana* like *Vasanjana* is also mentioned. For a healthy person, *Anjana Karma* maintains a disease free eye and it glows just like a bright moon in the clear sky.^[6] The application of medicines in the eyes dilates the blood vessels and this can enhance local blood circulation, providing nourishment to the eye tissues. *Anjana* should not be done in ocular conditions like redness of eyes, pain, excessive lacrimation and swelling.

Nasya (Nasal administration of medicine)

Nasya, one among *Panchakarma* is a procedure in which the medicated oils or herbal juices are instilled in to the nostrils. In *Pratimarsa Nasya*, medicament is dripped in to the nose in lesser quantity and it never causes complications and can be practiced daily.

According to *Acharya Vagbata*, it is advisable and good to practice daily from birth to death of a person.^[7] It prevents the disease of eyes, nose, ears and also causes *Indriya Prasadana*.^[8] Nose is the gate way to the *Shira* and medicines used in various forms cure the diseases of *Shira*. It causes *Srotomukha Visodhana* and *Akshilaghuta* and found to be effective in *Madhyama Margaroga*. This highlights the preventive aspect of nasal administration to maintain overall health in these sensory organs. The administration of drugs through *Nasya* (nasal drops), with potential absorption through mucus membranes, may facilitate entry of therapeutic compounds into general blood circulation. Antioxidants properties may help protect the eyes from oxidative damage, potentially reducing the risk of age-related eye conditions. By mitigating oxidative stress, these drugs may support overall tissue health, including structures related to the eyes and surrounding areas.^[9]

***Dhumapana* (inhalation of smoke)**

The inhalation and exhalation of medicated fumes from the medicated *Dhumavarti* is called *Dhumapana*. The fumes from the ignited medicines have *Ushna* and *Tikshna Guna* and *Vata Kapha Shamana* property. It helps in the evacuation of excessive *Kapha Dushti* in *Shiras*. It helps to get lightness of head and clarity of sense organs (*Indriya Samsuddhi*). *Prayogika Dhoompna* is advised for daily use and it prevents disorders of head and neck region caused by imbalances in *Vata* and *Kapha*. This daily practice is said to cure *Netrasula* (eye ache) and discharge i.e., *Kapha* from the *Sirah Pradesha*, contributing to overall health of eye.^[10]

But this procedure is contraindicated in *Timira Netraroga*. The excessive *Dhumapana* practice causes complications like blindness, deafness etc. *Tikshna Gandusha*, *Nasya* and *Dhumapana* are advised in the prodromal phase of *Abishyanda Roga* where the aim of *Dhumapana* is nothing but the *Kaphashamana*.

Kavala & Gandusha

In *Gandusha* procedure, the medicated oil or *Kwatha* is completely filled in the oral cavity and retained till *Dosha* gets filled in the mouth or watering from the

eyes. Whereas the movement of the *Dravya* inside the mouth constitutes *Kavala*. These procedures are more effective in treating local inflammatory and degenerative diseases of oral cavity, nose and ears. However, the *Samyak Lakshana* of *Kavala* and *Gandusha* explains *Indriya Prasadana* which mentions the importance of these procedures. The absorption of medicines may happen through ophthalmic branches of facial artery.

***Abyanga* (oil massage)**

Acharya Vagbata mentions that oil massage on the body especially the massage over *Shira* (head), *Shravana* (ears) and *Paada* (foot) leads to *Drushti Prasadana* and is essential in maintaining and improving the vision. The regular massage of feet is said to be beneficial to the eyes. Applying oils over soles through massages can have a positive impact on eyes by influencing the *Siras* (veins) connected to the eyes. In the book *Nadi Darpana*, it is explained that there are ten *Naadis* (channels) in the head. Among these, *Gandaari* and *Hastijivha* are associated with the left and right eyes, respectively. *Gandhari* is surrounding the *Ida Naadi*, extending from *Pada*, and ending in the left *Netra* (eye). Similarly, *Hastijivha* surrounds the *Pingala Naadi*, extends from *Pada*, and ends in the *right eye*. This reflects the indicated network of *Naadis* believed to be connected to eye function in Ayurveda.^[11] *Acharya Charak* also mentions that *Drushtiprasadana* (brightens of vision) is obtained by foot massage.^[12]

Mukha-Alepa

Mukha Alepa is the procedure of application of herbal paste over the face and it help to improve the eye sight.^[13] The ophthalmic branch of facial artery, facial nerve and trigeminal nerve are lying along the cheek and neck having branches to the eye. So, the procedure and the medicinal value of the *Mukhalepa* in turn affect the eyes.

***Padatra Dharan* (use of footwear) & *Pada Prakshalana* (Washing foot)**

Maintaining the hygiene of foot by wearing footwear and washing foot are mentioned for maintaining the

health of *Netra*.^[14] The nerve endings in the sole are highly sensitive. The stimulation of these nerve endings reflects in eye through sympathetic and para sympathetic supply.

Chattra Dharana (Use of Umbrella)

Drishti is *Sheetasatmya* and exposure to sunlight (UV radiation), dry heat, wind and dust etc. alters the balance of Dosha in the eyes and causes diseases.^[15] The sun's ultraviolet rays can increase the risk of cataracts and age related macular degeneration, if the eyes are exposed for a prolonged period.^[16] Using an umbrella protects the eyes by shielding them from environmental factors like sunlight, heat, dust and it is considered as *Chakshushya*.^[17] (beneficial for eye health).

Snana

In general, taking a bath refreshes the body and sense organs. According to *Ayurveda*, Head bath with cold water is advisable for the health of eye and hot water head bath causes *Drishti Hani* (damage to the eye).^[18] Also *Acharya Vagbhata* mentions that bath is contraindicated if a person has any eye diseases.^[19]

Ratri Charya: (Night regimen)

It is advised that, after having the dinner one should wash the hands properly and then touch the eyes with moist fingertips. This may be mentioned to maintain the *Sheetatva* over the eye which is *Satmya* to the eyes. For the strengthening of vision, intake of *Triphala* with honey and ghee is explained.

CONCLUSION

The prime factor or the basic pathological change behind the eye disorders is *Abishyanda*. *Pitta* (*Alochaka*) the functional factor along with Kapha has inevitable role in *Netra Swasthya*. Hence the measures to prevent the *Pitta* and *Kaphadushti* along with the maintenance of normal function of Vayu should be adopted for proper healthy functioning of eye. *Abishyandi Ahara*, which refers to heavy and unctuous foods that can contribute to excess secretions, should be avoided from the diet to prevent eye disorders. The eyes should be always protected from the external

factors like dust, heat, radiations, excessive screen time, over straining the eyes like in dim light reading, gadget use in dim light etc. Most of the *Netraroga* in the current scenario can be prevented by healthy *Dinacharya* and by avoiding negligence. In *Neetisataka* of *Chanakya*, it mentioned that *Shiras* is important among the whole body and eyes are most important among all the sense organs. Hence by incorporating healthy diet, use of protective eyewear, taking breaks during screen time, avoidance of straining the eyes in dim light, adopting regular eye care practices, such as eye exercises and washing the eyes with clean water, ensuring sufficient and quality sleep along with practising *Dinacharya* eyes can be protected.

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