



ISSN 2456-3110

Vol 2 · Issue 6

Nov-Dec 2017

Journal of  
**Ayurveda and Integrated  
Medical Sciences**

*www.jaims.in*

JAIMS



**Charaka**  
Publications

Indexed

# Pathya Apathya and role of Dinacharya in Nethra Swasthya

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## ABSTRACT

The word *Chakshu* means, that which illuminates the objects and enlightens the mind about its details. It is seated in the two eye balls. When we talk about *Pathya* and *Apathya*, the importance of the word *Chakshushya* is impressed upon. The *Pathyas* have been explained by different authors in the heading of *Chakshushya Vargas* and the *Apathyas* have been explained as *Achakshushya*. Different *Acharyas* have also explained about the various daily regimen to be followed for maintaining *Nethra Swasthya* as Ayurveda gives much importance in maintaining of health and prevention of diseases along with the treatment of diseases. These *Dinacharyas* can be adopted in our day to day lives to protect the eye from diseases and improve the vision, by implementing improvised techniques tailor-made for day to day activities of present era. The *Acharyas* have armed us with proper knowledge to prevent and treat life style disorders related to eye diseases through explanation of *Pathya Apathya* and *Dinacharyas* which are practices of *Kriyakalpas*. Most of these practices are not being followed these days which leads to many *Nethra Rogas*. This can be corrected by re-implementing improvised versions of such practices in our daily life.

**Key words:** *Nethra Swasthya, Pathya, Kriyakalpa, Eye health, Dinacharya, Chakshushya.*

## INTRODUCTION

*Swasthya* is one of the most important concepts of Ayurveda and the science of *Shalaky Tantra* explains the maintainance of health of the *Indriyas*. The eye is explained as the most important among all the *Indriyas*, thus *Acharyas* have given utmost importance to eye health. *Nethra Swasthya* or eye health can be maintained by pertaining to the *Chakshushya Vargas* mentioned in the texts like *Sushruta Samhitha*<sup>[1]</sup> and

and *Ashtanga Hrudaya*<sup>[2]</sup> as well as following the *Dinacharyas* mentioned.

The word *Chakshushya* symbolises promotion of eye health “*Chakshushe Hitam Chakshushyam*” mentioned by *Dalhana* as part of a commentary to *Sushruta Samhitha*.<sup>[3]</sup> The *Nethra* is the *Sthana* of *Alochaka Pitta*<sup>[4]</sup> but it is unique because it is situated in the *Uttamanga* which is the *Sthana* of *Kapha*.<sup>[5]</sup> Today's world is affected with lifestyle disorders all of which can be seen manifesting in the eyes as eye is the window of health.

## Statistics

Asia being the world's largest continent, upto 20 million people in Asia are blind. The Andhra Pradesh eye study conducted in 2001 among 10,293 subjects of all ages showed a significant prevalence of 1.84% having visual efficiency lesser than 20% in the better eye due to cataract, Diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma and refractive errors. The Aravind eye study conducted in 2003 in India among 5,150 subjects of age greater than 40 years revealed a stupefying

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Submission Date : 31/08/2017 Accepted Date: 20/12/2017

Access this article online

Quick Response Code



Website: [www.jaims.in](http://www.jaims.in)

DOI: 10.21760/jaims.v2i06.10934

prevalence of 11.4% with visual efficiency lesser than 20% due to life style disorders. The Chennai Urban Rural Epidemiology Study conducted in 2005 among a population of 26,000 subjects above 20 years of age showed a staggering percentage of 17.6% people affected.

#### Maintainance of Eye health with Dinacharya

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

#### Abhyanga (Oil massage)

**Sarva Daihika Abhyanga** - Whole body oil massage: The word *Drushti Prasasada* is mentioned in *Ashtanga Hrudaya* stating that daily oil massage to the body before taking bath is essential in maintaining and improving the vision.

**Padabhyanga** - The body massage with special importance to the head ears and feet have been given much importance by the mention of the two *Drushti Gata Nadis; Gandhari* and *Hastijihwa* by the *Acharyas*.<sup>[6]</sup>

The *Abhyanga* can be followed on a daily basis with special importance to foot massage before taking bath.

#### Anjana - Collyrium (application of kohl)

There are basically 2 types of *Anjanas* mentioned in the classics. Them being *Sauviranjana* and *Rasanjana*.

*Sauviranjana* is a special collyrium, which is to be applied on a daily basis which makes the eyelids look unctuous and beautiful. It gives clarity of vision and the three colours of the eye are maintained properly, i.e., the health of the eye ball is maintained properly. As these actions indicate that this particular collyrium might increase the *Kapha Dasha*, eye being a *Pitta Sthana*, the *Acharyas* have mentioned about another collyrium.

**Rasanjana** - This is to be applied on a weekly basis to reduce the *Kapha* increased in the eye due to daily usage of *Sauviranjana*.

In our day to day life, we can practice the *Anjana Karma* which is a part of the *Kriyakalpa* by application of natural *Kajal* made from the soot of the lamp on a daily basis and application of *Daruharidra Anjana* on a weekly basis.

**Snana** - Bathing, special mention has been given to the usage of hot and cold water for bathing. The *Acharyas* have specifically mentioned that the usage of hot water is for the trunk and not for the head. Hot water over the head can prove detrimental to the eye health. This is clinically seen as most of the people in cold territories have a practice of pouring hot water for head wash. These particular people also end with poor eye sight.

On a daily basis this is a simple practice which can be adhered to.

**Eye wash** - The *Acharyas* have given particular reference to eye wash during the daily regimen of brushing the teeth. Also the practice of *Kavala Gandusha* with cold water has been mentioned for better maintainance of health.

All these practices can be easily adhered to, for the prevention of eye diseases and the maintainance of eye health.

#### Pathyas

#### Chakshushya Vargas

*Acharya Sushruta* have given specific mention of milk and other diary products, stating that Cow's milk is the healthiest for the eye. The ghee and butter made out of cow's milk is imperative in eye health maintainance. The milk is to be taken at night before bed time for best results.

*Vanga Sena Samhitha* mentions *Triphala, Madhu, Ghritha, Yava* and *Shatavari* along with the practice of *Pada Abhyanga* for eye health maintainance.<sup>[7]</sup>

Even particular mineral drugs have been mentioned as *Chakshushya*, if taken after *Shodhana* along with a combination of other herbal drugs in the form of *Rasayana*.

*Swarna* (gold), *Abhraka* (Mica), *Tamra* (Copper), *Loha* (Iron)<sup>[16]</sup>

Acharya Yogaratnakara has given a detailed list of *Chakshushya Varga* as follows;

Food prepared with *Mudga*, *Yava*, *Rakta Sali*, soup of *Kulattha*, *Peya* and *Vilepi* prepared with *Purana Ghritha*, vegetables like *Surana*, *Patola*, *Karkotaka*, *Karavella*, *Punarnava*, *Markava*, *Kakamachi*, *Lodhra*, *Kumari*, *Draksha*, *Vara*, *Madhu*, *Chandana* and *Karpura*.<sup>[8]</sup>

He has exclusively mentioned five vegetables - *Shakha Panchaka* as *Chakshushya*

1. *Jeevanti*
2. *Vastuka*
3. *Matsyakshi*
4. *Meghanada*
5. *Punarnava*

Among other food the following are the most beneficial for the eye *Rakta Sali*, *Godhuma*, *Mudga*, *Saindhava*, *Go-ghrutha*, *Go-Ksheera*, *Sita* and *Kshudra* mentioned as *Pathya* for the eyes.<sup>[9]</sup>

### Apathya

Acharya Yogaratnakara has cautioned the use of food and regimen detrimental for the eyes; Intake of *Masha*, *Aranala* (sour gruel), *Katu Taila* (mustard oil), Immersion of head excessively in water, Staying awake at night, Intake of *Madhya*, Excessive usage of curd, Excessive sexual acts, looking at bright objects like the sun for a long time, sour substances, fish.<sup>[10]</sup>

He cautions the people suffering from eye diseases against excessive anger, grief, suppression of natural urges, looking at minute objects, excessive use of *Tambula*.

Application of *Amalaki* (*embelica officinale*) paste to the forehead increases vision according to Acharya Yogaratnakara.<sup>[11]</sup>

The *Gada Nigraha* has given specific importance to the usage of *Triphala* (combination of *emblica officinale*, *terminalia chebula* and *terminalia bellarica*) for eye health.

The licking of *Triphala* powder on a daily basis mixed with *Ghritha* is beneficial for alleviating eye diseases like *Timira*.

### Researches

Modern research has proved the effectiveness of *Triphala*, *Madhu* and *Ghritha* having significant role in the promotion of eye health.

Pyruvate and Vit-C found in *Amalaki* helps in inhibiting lens sorbitol levels thus reducing the formation of cataract.<sup>[12]</sup>

*Haritaki* is Anti Cancerous, Anti diabetic, Antimutagenic in nature

*Vibhitaki* fruit extract showed anti oxidative properties.<sup>[13]</sup>

Clinical trial in senile cataract with instillation of honey in varying doses proved beneficial.<sup>[14]</sup>

### DISCUSSION

The above mentioned practices and foods can be incorporated in our modern life to avoid lifestyle diseases as well as improve eye health. The practice of *Padabhyanga* has clinically proven to be effective in promoting eye health. The practice of *Anjana Karma* on a daily basis has been proven to show improvement in vision. The practice of *Kriyakalpas* have shown statistically and clinically significant results in promotion of eye health and as treatment for various eye diseases.

### CONCLUSION

The *Pathyas* and *Apathyas* mentioned are significantly accurate and can be practiced along with the daily regimen for promotion of eye health. Only slight changes have to be adopted to adapt these practices in our day to day activities. The prevention is greater than cure so all the practices need to be applied in today's world as the prevalence of life style based eye diseases is on the rise.

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**How to cite this article:** Girish S. Varrier, Ashwini M. J. Pathya Apathya and role of Dinacharya in Nethra Swasthya. J Ayurveda Integr Med Sci 2017;6:113-116. <http://dx.doi.org/10.21760/jaims.v2i06.10934>

**Source of Support:** Nil, **Conflict of Interest:** None declared.

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