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 Shalakya 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 Sushrutha Samhitha[1] and Ashtanga Hrudaya[2] 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 Sushrutha Samhitha.[3] The Nethra is the Sthana of Alochaka Pitta[4] but it is unique because it is situated in the Uttamanga which is the Sthana of Kapha.[5] 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
prevalence of 11.4% with visual efficiency lesser than 20% due to lifestyle 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.

**Maintenance of Eye health with Dinacharya**

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.

**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.[6]

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 Dosha, 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 maintenance of health.

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

**Pathyas**

**Chakshushya Vargas**

Acharya Sushrutha have given specific mention of milk and other dairy 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 maintenance. 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 maintenance.[7]

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)[16]
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.\[8\]

He has exclusively mentioned five vegetables - Shakha Panchaka as Chakhushya
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.\[9\]

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.\[10\]

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 officanale) paste to the forehead increases vision according to Acharya Yogaratnakara.\[11\]

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.\[12\]

Haritaki is Anti Cancerous, Anti diabetic, Antimitageneic in nature

Vibhitaki fruit extract showed anti oxidative properties.\[13\]

Clinical trial in senile cataract with instillation of honey in varying doses proved benificial.\[14\]

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.

References


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