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Review Article

A CONCEPT OF AAHAR IN AYURVEDA FOR EYE NOURISHMENT

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ABSTRACT

Eyes are the most important sense organ in the human body. What we perceive comes through our sense of sight only. By protecting our eyes, we will reduce the eye diseases.

The eyes are the window to the body. They are the only place where our blood vessels can be viewed in their natural state without a surgical procedure. With this visual inspection of the blood supply, optometrists can stop many health conditions just by taking a place into your eyes. In Ayurveda, *Netra* are considered as site of *Alochaka pitta*. *Pachaka pitta* due to its strength, obliges all other types of *Pitta* by nourishing them. It is must to keep the status of *Pachak pitta* in proper balance to keep *Alochaka pitta* healthy. For this the diet should be taken light, easily digestible and following all principles of diet intake. The concept of balanced diet was also mentioned in *Charak Samhita*, the things which are always conducive for health and should be consumed regularly for the maintenance of health. Food has been given the prime importance since Vedic period. It is one among the three sub-pillars supporting life. *Aahara* (diet) plays major role in keeping eyes healthy. *Virudha Aahara* (incompatible foods) may leads to poor vision or even blindness. Clinical conditions which may occur due to faulty lifestyle are Diabetic Retinopathy, age related macular degeneration, Computer Vision Syndrome etc. For preventing these types of eye diseases and for maintaining ocular health much has been described in *Ayurvedic Samhitas*, in the form of *Ritucharya*, *Sadvritta*, *Chakshushya Rasayana*. The food products and dietary habits regarding proper eye health will be in explained in paper.

INTRODUCTION

“Eyes are the most important sense organ in the human body. By keeping our eyes healthy, we can improve our overall quality of life. Good vision contributes to improved better driving skills, improved learning and better quality of life. Eye health is important at all stages of life no matter what age. It is a fact that the health of our eyes does change over time. In Samhitas eyes are given prime importance.

As per Chanakya,

“*Sarvaindriyanam nayanam pradhanam*”.

The eye is the chief among all senseorgans^[1].

Chakshu is the anatomical eye. It is the place for *Chakshu indriya* which serves the function of *Rupa graham* i.e., perception of vision^[2].

According to Acharya Vagbhata, all efforts should be made by men to protect the eyes, throughout the period of life, for the man who is blind this world is useless, the day and night are the same even though he may have wealth^[3].

In Ayurveda *Netra* are considered as site of *Alochaka pitta*. *Pachaka pitta* due to its strength, obliges all other types of *Pitta* by nourishing them. It is must to keep the status of *Pachaka pitta* in proper balance to keep *Alochaka pitta* healthy. For this the diet should be taken light easily digestible and following all principles of diet intake.

As per Kashyapa, *Aahar* is also named as *Mahabhaisajya*^[4]. No medicine is equivalent to food. It is possible to make a person disease free with just proper diet. Even the disease can be cured without any

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medicine by just following *Pathya aahar*, whereas even hundreds of medicines can't cure a disease by taking *Apathya aahar*^[5].

As per Acharya Sushruta: Various dietary factors responsible for eye diseases are mentioned in the general etiology of eye diseases like- sour and salty food substances, alcoholic beverages and having extremely hot or cold (horsegram or blackgram)^[6].

As per Yogaratnakara: Excessive liquid intake leads to eye diseases⁷.

As per Videha: Excessive fasting causes eye diseases.

According to Yogaratnakara- Pathya for eyes are:

- Food prepared with *Mudga, Yava, Rakta Shali*, soup of *Kulattha, Peya*, and *Vilepi*, prepared with *Kaumbha* (hundred years old) *Ghrita*; vegetables of *Surana, Patola, Vartaka, Karkotaka, Karvella*, unripe *Mocha*, tender *Moolaka, Punarnava, Markava, Kakmachi* and *Pattura*; *Kumarika, Draksha, Kustumburu*, rock salt, *Rodhra, Triphala*, honey, breast milk, *Chandana, Karpura* and all the pungent and light substances are salutary.
- *Shali* rice, *Godhuma, Mudga*, rock salt, cow-*Ghrita*, cow-milk, white sugar and honey are salutary for the patients of eye diseases^[8].

As per Vagbhata- Leafy vegetables (*Jeevanti*), *Jangal-mamsa, Dadima*, and *Antriksha-jala* are *Pathya aahar* for eye diseases^[9].

As per Acharya Charak, Proper quantity of food is necessary for nourishment of sense organs^[10]. Acharya Charak has explained *Aahar varga* in Sutra Sthana 27th chapter and Bhavamishra also explained in Bhavaprakash. From that part I am explaining the product beneficial for eyes as below.

Haritakadi Varga (Drugs beginning from Haritaki)¹¹

- *Triphala (Haritaki, Vibhitaki, Amalaki)* reduces *Kapha* and *Pitta*, laxative, appetizer and good for eyes.
- *Haritaki (Terminalia chebula)* is opted for ophthalmic condition. It is capable of reducing *Tridoshas* because of *Pancharasa* property. Its fruits contain phenols and tannins, gallic acid, tannic acid anthraquinone glycosides and chebulinic acid. It has antioxidant, antimicrobial, antibacterial, antifungal, antiviral, antihyperglycemic effect and immunomodulatory activity etc.
- *Vibhitaki (Terminellia bellirica)* is sweet in post digestive effect, astringent taste and reduces *Kapha* and *Pitta*. It is good for eyes. Its fruit contains hexahydroxy diphenic acid ester, gallic acid, chebulagic acid, mannitol, glucose, galactose, fructose and rhamnose. It has anti-oxidant and antiproliferative properties. It plays an important

role in malignant diseases.

- *Amalaki (Emblica officinalis)* is very good aphrodisiac and revitalizer. Therapeutic and pharmacological properties of this fruits are similar to *Haritaki*. It contains water soluble tannins like Emblicannin-A & B, punigluconin, phyllembic acid etc. It has potent antioxidant, anti-ageing property.
- *Yastimadhu (Glycyrrhiza glabra)* is sweet in taste, good for eyes, provides strength, improves voice and reduces the problem of *Pitta, Vata* and *Rakta*. It cures the inflammatory edema.
- *Lodhra (Symplocos racemosa)* is light to digest, cooling, good for vision and alleviates *Kapha* and *Pitta*. Its bark contains triterpenoids, alkaloids like-loturine, glycosides etc. It has anti-bacterial, anti-oxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. It cures haemorrhages and *Rakta* diseases.
- *Saindhava Lavan (Rock Salt)* is a slightly sweet in taste, cold in potency, light in nature and good for eyes. It mitigates all the three *Doshas*.

Karpuradi Varga (Aromatic and fragrant drugs)^[12]

- *Karpura (Dryobalanops camphora)* is cooling, good for eyes and light in action. It contains camphor, terpineol etc. It has antiseptic action.
- *Rakta Chandana (Pterocarpus santalinus)* is cooling, heavy, sweet and bitter in taste. It is useful in burning sensations. It is good for vision.

Guduchyadi Varga (Climbers and shrubs)¹³

- *Jivanti (Leptadenia reticulata)* is cold in potency, palatable, promotes oily secretions and reduces all the three *Doshas*. It is vitalizer, strength giving, good for eyes, absorbent and is light in action. Its stem contains aliphatic esters, sterols like stigmaterols. Its leaves are cooked in ghee and given in Night Blindness.
- *Shobhanjana (Moringa pterygosperma) - Shigru* i.e., black variety of its pungent, bitter and sweet in taste, pungent in post digestive effect, penetrating, hot in potency, light in action, appetizer, has the capacity as a mucolytic, irritant, absorbent, aphrodisiac and it is beneficial for eyes. Its seeds are beneficial for vision. Its seeds contain glycoside moringine. It acts as anti-inflammatory, antiviral, antifungal & antibacterial.
- *Nirgundi (Vitex negundo)* is bitter, astringent and pungent in taste, light in action, beneficial for vision. It contains camphene, citrol, glucoside, phenolic acids etc.
- *Shatavari (Asparagus racemosus)* is heavy, cold in potency, bitter and sweet in taste, tissue vitalizer, appetizer and good for vision. It improves muscles tone, and cures aggravated *Vata, Pitta, Rakta* and

edema. *Mahashatavari* also cures eye diseases.

- **Kumari (*Aloe barbadensis*)** is cold in potency, bitter and sweet in taste. It acts as tonic, nourishing and good for vision. It contains hydroxy anthraquinone derivatives etc. It has anti-oxidation, anti-cancer, anti-inflammatory and anti-depression.
- **Punarnava (*Boerhaavia diffusa*)** is a good appetizer, pungent in taste followed by astringent. Its root contains alkaloid punarnavine, amino acids, fatty acids, C- methyl flavone etc it acts as anti-inflammatory.
- **Bhrngaraja (*Eclipta alba*)** is pungent in taste, penetrating, drying and hot in potency. It is beneficial for aching of eyes.

Phala Varga (Medicinal fruits)^[14]

- **Kadali (*Musa sapientum*)** – Its ripe fruit is sweet in taste, nourishing and controls eye diseases. Its fruit contain- serotonin, norepinephrine, dopamine etc. like factors.
- **Dadima (*Punica granatum*)** is a sweet fruit which pacifies all the three *Doshas*. Its fruit contains punicalagin and punicalin and seeds contain cyanidin-3 glucoside. Pomegranate constituents having anti-inflammatory and anti-obesity effects. punicalagin and punicalin are able to increase the bacterial production of short chain fatty acids by inducing the growth and metabolism of commensal bacteria.
- **Draksha (*Vitis vinifera*)** is sweet and astringent taste, sweet in post-digestive effect, laxative, beneficial for eyes, nourishing, helps in the excretion of the urine and stools and enhances flatus. It contains Sucrose, fructose, vitamins, phenolic compounds and arsenic. It has Anti-oxidant property.

Dhatu Varga (Metals)^[15]

- **Vanga (Tin)**- is light in action, laxative, drying, hot in potency. It is beneficial for eyes.
- **Yashada (Zinc)**- is astringent and bitter in taste, cooling, pacifies *Kapha* and *Pitta*, good for vision.
- **Loha (Iron)**- is bitter, sweet and astringent in taste, laxative, cold in potency, heavy & drying in nature. It is good for eyes.
- **Suvarna Makshikam (Copper pyrites)**- is sweet and bitter in taste, aphrodisiac, tissue vitalizer, beneficial for vision.
- **Kapardaka (Cowries)**- is cooling, alleviates *Pitta*, *Rakta* and *Kapha* and beneficial for eyes.
- **Shankha (Conch)**- is good for vision, cooling, light in action and pacifies vitiated *Pitta*, *Kapha* and *Rakta*.

- **Properties of Ratna**- All *Ratnas* if taken internally are sweet in taste, laxative, good for eyes, cooling and anti-poisonous.

Dhanya Varga (Cereals & Pulses)^[16]

- **Shukadhanya Varga - Rakta Shali (Red rice)** is best among all the variety of rice. It strengthens the body, pacifies all the three *Doshas*, diuretics, boost the digestive capacity and beneficial for vision.
- **Shimbi Dhanyam- Mudga (*Vigna radiata*)** light to digest, absorbent, cooling, reduces *Pitta* and *Kapha*, doesn't enhances *Vata* and beneficial for Vision.

According to Acharya Sushruta the green variety is considered the best. It contains moisture, carbohydrates, calcium, phosphorous and iron.

Shaka Varga (Potherbs)^[17]

- **Mulaka (*Raphanus sativas*)** is pungent in taste, promotes taste perception, light to digest, pacifies *tridoshas* and alleviates the diseases of eyes. Its roots contain vitamin-A and C, proteins etc.

Mamsa Varga (Animal meat)^[18]

- **Jangala Mamsa- Guhasaya** (Animals lives in caves) in one among the eight varieties of land animal meat. Meat of these animals pacifies *Vatadosha*, sweet in taste and nourishing. Its regular use is useful for those suffering from eye problems. The person who used *Mamsa Rasa* regularly, gets good vision.

Krittana Varga (Food preparation)^[19]

- **Purika (Kachouri)** - If *Purika* is fried in ghee, it is beneficial to vision and controls haemorrhages.
- **Mamsa Rasa (Mutton soup)**- It is nutritious, pacifies *Vata* and *Pitta* and is beneficial for those, who are suffering from emaciation, who have under-developed voice and who wish cute vision, prolonged life and proper functioning of ear.
- **Mudga Modaka**- These balls are light to digest, absorbent, pacify *Tridosha*, promotse taste, good for vision.

Vari Varga (Water & its qualities)^[20]

- **Antriksha Jala (Rain Water)** pacifies all the three *Doshas*, light to digest, vitalizer, strengthening, digestant and tiredness of motor and sensory organs. This water is particularly suitable during rainy season.

Dugdha Varga (Different types of milk)^[21]

- **Cow's Milk** is sweet in taste and post digestive effect. It enhances mild moisture to *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, *Mala* and *Shrotas*. Continuously, constantly consumed it alleviates old age related and other diseases of eye.

- **Elephant's Milk** is sweet and astringent in taste and good for vision.
- **Human Milk** is light to digest and cures pain in the eyes, ideal for administration in the nose and eyes.

Navanita Varga (Butter and its properties)^[22]

- **Butter** extracted from milk is beneficial for Vision.

Ghrita Varga (Properties of ghee)^[23]

- **Ghrita** vitalizes the tissues, palatable, beneficial for vision, appetizer, cold in potency. It pacifies *Pitta* and *Vata*, doesn't block channels. It also promotes life span and strengthens the body. In *ghee* different varieties are beneficial for eyes in different ways as
- **Cow's Ghee** is particularly beneficial to vision, appetizer, sweet in taste, cold in potency, pacifies *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*. It is considered as best among all types of *ghee*.
- **Goat's Ghee** is appetizer, beneficial for vision and strengthens the body.
- **Sheep's Ghee** is light to digest, pacifies *Vata dosha* and beneficial for vision.
- **Woman's Ghee** is beneficial for eyes and similar to divine nectar.
- **Mare's Ghee** is said to be nutritious and cures eye diseases.
- **Haiyangavinam** - Ghee extracted from previous day's milk is beneficial for eyes, appetizer, strengthens the body, nourishing and aphrodisiac.
- **Purana Ghee** alleviates *Tridosha* and beneficial in *Timir*.
- **Naveen Ghee** should be consumed along with food, for nourishment and in eye diseases.

Mutra Varga (Urine & its properties)^[24]

- **Go-Mutra (Cow's urine)** is pungent, bitter and astringent in taste, light to digest, appetizer, pacifies *Vata* and *Kapha*. It alleviates diseases of eyes.

Taila Varga (Different oils)^[25]

- Sesame Oil is laxative, aphrodisiac, spreads quickly/absorbed fastly, sweet in taste followed by bitterness and astringency. It is beneficial for eyes.

Madhu Varga (Different kinds of honey)^[26]

- **Honey** - *Makshikam* type is considered as the best among all varieties of honey. It is light to digest and cures all types of eye diseases.

As Per Modern Aspect, we should eat foods rich in certain vitamins (A, C, E), antioxidant (omega-3 fatty acids) and minerals (Zinc), lutein etc to keep our eyes healthy.

- **Vitamin-A** is an anti-oxidant property which helps in vision. Sweet potatoes, carrots, mangoes and apricots are high in beta-carotene, a form of vitamin

A which helps in night vision. Especially carrots are good sources of vitamin A and Rhodopsin (a purple pigment) that helps us see in low light situations.

- **Vitamin-C** lowers the risk of developing cataracts and when taken in combination with other essential nutrients, it can slow the progression of visual acuity loss. We should take daily oranges, strawberries, papaya, broccoli, mustard green and tomatoes in our diet. It can also provide needed eye vitamins for macular degeneration.
- **Vitamin-E** have antioxidant property. It protects cells in the eyes. Vegetables oils, nuts, wheat germ and sweet potatoes are good food source of vitamin E.
- **Omega Fatty Acids** are important for visual development. Fish are the rich sources of omega-3 fatty acids.
- **Zinc** has important role in bringing vitamin A from the liver to the retina in order to produce melanin (eye pigments). Zinc deficiency leads to impaired vision, poor night vision etc. Red meat, nuts, seeds etc. are the natural sources of zinc.
- **Lutein** is a nutrient found in spinach. It has anti-oxidant property which helps in age-related vision problems such as cataract and macular degeneration etc.

CONCLUSION

According to Willium Shakespeare "The eyes are the window to your soul". Without eyes we cannot live a happy life. So proper care of eyes is must. Proper intake of *Aahar* (Diet) is one part of the care. *Apathya aahar* can lead to so many diseases causing vision loss. In Ayurveda different diet products are mentioned for maintenance of eye health. So take proper food containing all components of balance diet following all principles explained in Ayurveda, keep your eyes healthy and live a happy life.

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