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An appraisal of methods to protect and preserve eye health in āyurveda

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Statement of Problem: Ayurveda, India's ancient holistic science of life, proclaims that the eyes are most important among the sense organs. Through a set of intricately related parts, the eyes enable perception of the world through vision. Any affliction of the eye invariably results in improper function of these parts and impaired vision in the long run. Hence, ocular health needs to be constantly maintained. ayurveda defines health as the equilibrium of dosa (humors), Agni (gastric fire), dhātu (tissue), and mala (excretory products); and pleasantness of atma (soul), indriya (sensory organs), and mana (mind). Different methods to preserve and protect health are explained by ayurveda, viz., dinacarya (daily regime), rātricarya (nocturnal regime), rtucarya (seasonal regime), and pathyāpathya (wholesome and unwholesome habits). The purpose of this study is to analyze these methods in the light of ocular health.

Methodology: A comprehensive review of available literature, including Samhitās (Ayurvedic texts) and published material was undertaken.

Findings: Aspects such as abhyanga (massage) with oil over the head and feet, snāna (bath), añjana (collyrium), nasya (nasal medication), regular śodhana (purification), śarat rtucarya (autumnal regime), consuming triphala (fruits of Terminalia chebula Retz., Terminalia bellerica Linn., and Emblica officinalis Gaertn.), ghee (clarified butter), and honey at night, regular intake of foods such as pomegranate, old barley and wheat, green gram, and other foods that pacify kapha and pitta and a pleasant and calm mind are useful to promote and preserve eye health.

Conclusion and Significance: Proper eye health ensures good vision. The aspects of promoting health described by ayurveda that have a role in eye health perform such actions as increase circulation, remove excess Dosas from the body, provide requisite nutrients to the eye, and eventually cool the body down. The delicate balance of heat and cold in the body enables the eye to function effectively and allows for more nutrition to reach the eye. Intraocular pressure can be maintained and the refractive media can be clear. In the end, the eye enables proper vision to see the world and its myriad of colors.

Biography

Aravind Kumar completed his Postgraduation (M S (Ay)) in Salakya Tantra (Ayurvedic Ophthalmology) at Amrita School of Ayurveda, Kerala, India. His Postgraduate dissertation was on analysing the prevalence of age-related cataract in different Prakṛti (body constitution) populations. Currently, he works as a Research Coordinator with Sreedhareeyam Ayurvedic Research and Development Institute, a premier Ayurvedic institution in India specializing in Ophthalmology. He is interested in Research on Preventive Ophthalmology and applying Ayurvedic principles to promote eye health.

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