



AYURVEDIC INSIGHTS INTO THE HEALTH- ENHANCING POWER OF SIGHT

Dr Athira Vijayan¹, Dr Muhammed Nissam²

¹PG Scholar, Department of Shalakyatantra, Govt. Ayurveda College, Kannur

²Assistant Professor, Department of Shalakyatantra, Govt. Ayurveda College, Kannur

ABSTRACT

"*Indriya*," rooted in the concept of "Indra" symbolizing Prana or life force, refers to the vital sensory organs within the body. Ayurveda recognizes these sensory gateways as the primary tools for knowledge acquisition. Among them, the eye stands as the premium sense organ with the aphorism "*Sarvendriyanam Nayanam Pradhanam*". Visual stimulation, an essential part of daily life, plays a pivotal role in inducing both physiological and psychological relaxation. It exerts a substantial influence on homeostasis and lifespan by modulating hormonal signaling pathways. Additionally, visual stimuli synchronize with our circadian rhythm, the internal clock governing alertness and sleep patterns based on environmental light changes. This interaction between visual stimuli and the body extends to various aspects of health, including eating habits, digestion, body temperature, hormone release, and overall bodily functions. Safety perceptions, emergency preparedness, and the ability to cope with potentially traumatic events are integral aspects of human existence. Vision plays a critical role in these aspects. This could be the underlying reason why Ayurveda emphasizes the normal functioning of *Indriyas* as a criterion for "*Swastha Lakshana*". This paper aims to elucidate the crucial role of visual stimulus in maintaining health from an Ayurvedic perspective.

Keywords: *Indriya*, Visual stimulus, Circadian rhythm, Homeostasis

INTRODUCTION

The *Indriyas* are the channels through which we connect with and interpret the external world, crucial for gathering information and shaping our physical and mental experiences. In Ayurveda, the saying *Sarvendriyanam Nayanam Pradhanam*, emphasizes the unique importance of sight, often regarded as the foremost sense, providing a direct and rich perception of the world. Eyes, often referred to as the "windows to the soul," not only reveal the world around us but also reflect our inner experiences.

Immune privilege is a unique feature in some parts of the body, like the eye, brain, testes, placenta, and foetus¹. Among these, the brain is crucial for an individual's thoughts and actions, while the testes, placenta, and foetus are vital for the existence of a whole population. The eye's ability to connect us with the world elevates it to a similar level of importance. This privileged relationship with the immune system further highlights the eye's integral role in health and life quality.

In our interconnected, fast-paced world, clear vision is no longer merely a luxury, it's an essential asset that enables us to navigate life's complexities. Vision serves as a "master key," enhancing our understanding, supporting personal growth, fostering communication, aiding in career advancement, promoting health, and adding vibrancy to our lives.

Ayurveda emphasizes the harmonious functioning of the *Indriyas* as a key indicator of well-being, encapsulated in the concept of *Swastha Lakshana*². Within this framework, vision stands out as a vital aspect of health.

DISCUSSION

Good health and balance in the body are signified by well-functioning senses like the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and skin. Within these senses, the eye holds a prominent position, and Ayurvedic principles highlight its significant influence on overall health.

Visual Stimuli and Circadian Rhythm

Ayurvedic classics underscore the essential role of the *Indriyas* in sustaining health, as seen in *Dinacharya Adhyaya*, which outlines daily routines from morning to night, aligning seamlessly with the body's circadian rhythm, a 24-hour internal clock governed by light and dark cycles. This rhythm supports homeostasis, promoting balance and well-being. The *Ashtanga Hridaya* emphasizes lifelong eye care, as sight allows us to perceive the beauty of the world; without it, life would feel like unending darkness³. Daytime exposure to blue light helps regulate our circadian rhythm by suppressing melatonin, enhancing alertness and cognition, yet excessive blue light before bedtime can disturb sleep quality and cycle balance⁴. Thus, maintaining eye health is not only vital for optimal vision but also for preserving overall quality of life.

Visual Stimuli and Nervous System

In the context of *dinacharya*, the sight of ghee in a golden vessel is mentioned⁵. This sight is not just about ghee; it signifies how what people see impacts health. It's like a reminder that good health isn't solely about actions but also about what individuals see and how it can contribute to feelings of well-being and happiness. This is a small yet meaningful part of Ayurveda's wisdom for a healthier life. *Trataka*, is similar procedure explained in yoga, which forms a part of shad karma, the six purification techniques. It involves gazing steadily at a tiny point until tears form in the eyes. This yogic practice helps in soothing the nervous system, reducing

mental tensions and promoting peace and calm⁶. It can quickly correct sleep patterns. It can be a valuable tool for managing the impact of excessive visual media usage on the quality of life.

Visual Stimuli and Food Intake

Food is a crucial part of life because it provides the energy and nutrients needed for growth, development, physical activity, work, mental functioning, and learning. In the context of life's three fundamental pillars (known as "*trayopastambha*"), "*ahara*" represents one of these pillars, emphasizing the significance of nourishment in our existence⁷. Visual cues play a significant role in our daily food choices, impacting our overall health and well-being. Charaka Acharya, emphasizes *Ahara-vidhi-vidhana*, which outlines the practice of mindful eating⁸. It involves *Ishta desha* (right place) and *Ishta sarva upakaranam*, which can only be achieved through proper visual cues. In *Susruta Samhita*, *sootra sthana*, *annapana vidhi adhyayam*, suggests that after a meal, one should engage with favourite sights, tastes, sounds, smells, and tactile sensations for a more satisfying and balanced eating experience⁹. This, in turn, influences our mental well-being during meals. Visual stimuli can act through conditioned reflexes, ultimately boosting food intake and aiding digestion by promoting the release of digestive juices¹⁰.

Visual Stimuli and Occupation

After describing the daily routines outlined in the *Ashtanga Sangraha*, the concept of practicing a righteous profession, known as "*dhaarmika vrtti*," is elucidated¹¹. This practice not only brings happiness in this life but also holds the potential to grant liberation or moksha. Visual stimuli are vital in both work and daily life. They facilitate effective communication through charts and presentations, aid creative professions like design and fashion, play a central role in marketing, enhance safety and training, assist problem-solving for engineers and architects, enable data-driven decision-making, support healthcare diagnoses, create immersive entertainment experiences, aid architectural and urban planning, and improve education by simplifying complex concepts.

Visual Stimuli and Fight or Flight Response

In the concept of *manokarma*, the sense organs and mind collaborate to receive information from the external world¹². The mind assesses sensory data, categorizing it as positive or negative, and then passes this information to the intellect, which significantly impacts actions and responses to the environment. Similarly, during the fight-or-flight response, which is essential for the survival of the organism in potential threat situations, visual perception plays a vital role. Information gathered from all *indriyas*, especially through visual perception is analysed by the brain to find out a potential threat, based on which decision-making regarding fight or flight is done (*Nishchayathmika budhi*), based on which the organism acts to ensure its existence. Moreover, under the influence of sympathetic stimulation, pupils dilate to allow more light, aiding in the detection of potential threats.

Susruta Acharya mentioned the concept of trividha dukham, which encompasses three types of suffering or discomfort¹³. These sufferings can lead to the manifestation of "sapta vidha vyadhi," or seven types of diseases. Among these, sangatabala pravrtta and svabhavabala pravrtta vyadhis, or diseases arising from external factors and inherent imbalances, can be effectively prevented through the role of visual stimuli in the body's fight and flight response, as well as in maintaining homeostasis.

Visual Stimuli and Sleep Pattern

Sleep is crucial for overall health, impacting mental clarity, stress, weight, and the immune system. Studies show that using screens before sleep disrupts our body's natural clock and affects our endocrine system. Charaka Acharya's "Trividha Hetu" identifies causes of ailments. "Asatmendriyartham Samyoga" is linked to sense organ imbalance, particularly Hina Mithya and Atiyoga¹⁴. Excessive nighttime screen use is "Atiyoga," and using screens at the wrong time is "Mithya Yoga." These habits can imbalance the Vata dosha, leading to "Nidranasha," compromising sleep quality and health. To stay healthy, we should use screens at bedtime carefully and mindfully for a balanced life.

CONCLUSION

Ayurvedic wisdom presents a rich and timeless repository of knowledge that aligns closely with contemporary understandings of how sensory stimuli contribute to health. The classics underscore the importance of visual stimuli as well as other sensory inputs such as auditory, tactile, gustatory, and olfactory, in fostering a balanced and healthy life. According to Ayurveda, our senses are not only the means by which we interact with the external world but are also deeply intertwined with our physical, mental, and emotional well-being. This understanding highlights the need to protect, care for, and wisely utilize our sensory organs, recognizing their significant influence on maintaining harmony within the body and mind.

REFERENCES

1. Frontiers | The privileged immunity of immune privileged organs: the case of the eye [Internet]. [cited 2024 Nov 7]. Available from: <https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/immunology/articles/10.3389/fimmu.2012.00296/full>
2. Susruta Samhita, PV Sharma, Chaukhambha viswabharati Varanasi oriental publishers and distributors, reprint year 2018, Sootrasthanam, chapter 15, sloka no:41.
3. Vagbhatas Ashtanga Hridayam, translated by Prof.K.R. Srikantha Murthy, Chaukhambha krishnadas academy, Varanasi, edition 2021, Utharasthanam, chapter -21, Timira Pratisheha, sloka -98.
4. Wahl S, Engelhardt M, Schaupp P, Lappe C, Ivanov IV. The inner clock—Blue light sets the human rhythm. J Biophotonics [Internet]. 2019 Dec [cited 2025 Jan 2];12(12):e201900102. Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7065627/>

5. Ashtangasangraha of Vagbhata, translated by Prof. K.R Srikantha Murthy, Chaukhambha orientalia, Varanasi,2005, Sootrasthanam, chapter 3.
6. Kumar N, Padmakar Dr. Effect of trataka (yogic visual concentration) on the performance of shooting players. Int J Yogic Hum Mov Sports Sci [Internet]. 2023 Jan 1 [cited 2025 Jan 2];8(1):235–8. Available from: <https://www.theyogicjournal.com/archives/2023/8/1/D/8-1-47>
7. R K Sharma and Bhagwan Dash, Agnivesa's Charaka Samhita -Text with English translation and critical exposition based on Chakrapani Datta's Ayurveda Dipika, Sootrasthanam, chowkambha Sanskrit series office, Varanasi reprint 2013, Chapter 11.
8. R K Sharma and Bhagwan Dash, Agnivesa's Charaka Samhita -Text with English translation And critical exposition based on Chakrapani Datta's Ayurveda Dipika, Vimanasthana ,chowkambha Sanskrit series office, Varanasi reprint 2013, chapter 1.
9. Susruta Samhita, PV Sharma, Chaukhambha Viswabharati Varanasi oriental publishers and distributors, reprint year 2018, Sootrasthanam, chapter 46.
10. Pavlov (1927) PI. Conditioned reflexes: An investigation of the physiological activity of the cerebral cortex. Ann Neurosci [Internet]. 2010 Jul [cited 2025 Jan 2];17(3):136–41. Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4116985/>
11. Ashtangasangraha of vaghbata, translated by Prof. K.R Srikantha Murthy, Chaukhambha orientalia, Varanasi,2005, Sootrasthanam, chapter 3.
12. R K Sharma and Bhagwan Dash, Agnivesa's Charaka Samhita -Text with English translation and critical exposition based on Chakrapani Datta's Ayurveda Dipika, Sareerasthana, Chowkambha Sanskrit series office, Varanasi reprint 2013, chapter 1.
13. Susruta Samhita, PV Sharma, Chaukhambha Viswabharati Varanasi oriental publishers and distributors, reprint year 2018, Sootrasthanam, chapter 24.
14. R K Sharma and Bhagwan Dash, Agnivesa's Charaka Samhita -Text with English translation and critical exposition based on Chakrapani Datta's Ayurveda Dipika, Sootrasthana , Chowkambha Sanskrit series office, Varanasi reprint 2013, chapter 11.