Yogic karma trataka in eye disorders – a review

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ABSTRACT
Trataka is one of the important karmas prescribed in Ayurveda. It can be described as Yogic gazing which aims at purification of eyes and mind. In this procedure one has to focus on an object without blinking or flickering of eyes till tears roll down. It can be categorized as internal or external as well as near or far depending upon the focus. This type of yogic gazing train and strengthen upward, downward and lateral movement of eye muscles. It also makes eye to get accustomed to influence of light and environment. Thus enabling mind to concentrate on one point. Hence the practice of Trataka can play an important therapeutic role in various eye disorders like nystagmus, strabismus and vision disorders. As it relaxes the nervous system, it enhances concentration and willpower.

Key words: Trataka, Yogic gazing, Eye disorders, Refractive errors, Eye muscles.

Introduction
According to WHO, 153 million people worldwide live with visual impairment due to uncorrected refractive errors [¹]. 1.49% of population in India is blind out of which 7-35% is due to refractive errors. In India uncorrected refractive errors are the most common cause of visual impairment and second major cause of avoidable blindness [²]. Avoidable blindness can be defined as blindness which could be either treated or prevented by known cost effective means [³]. Vision 2020 launched in the year 1999 is a goal initiative aimed to eliminate avoidable blindness by the year 2020. The mission of vision 2020 is to eliminate the main cause of all preventable and treatable blindness by treating them as a public health issue. The core strategies of vision 2020 include implementation of specific
program to control and treat major causes of blindness. Others are development of human resources and infrastructure and technology in the field of eye care.\(^4\)

The imperfections in the focusing power of eye are called as refractive errors. Common refractive errors are myopia, hyperopia and astigmatism.\(^5\) Strabismus is another common vision problem. They may result in lost education and employment opportunities, lower productivity and impaired qualities of life. The global action plan targets 25% reduction of avoidable blindness and visual impairment by 2019.\(^6\) Thus the task of meeting the need of people with refractive error is a monumental one. Thus the present scenario urges the need of a cost effective as well as patient eye care. Here comes the role of yogic gazing which aims at strengthening eye muscles and improvement in focusing of image.

**Aim and objectives**

To study the role of Trataka karma as an alternative therapy in correction of avoidable vision problem and eye disorders.

**Materials and methods**

Definition of Trataka-

In Gherandsamhita, Trataka is defined as gazing at a minute object without moving eyelids till tears roll down.\(^7\)

Types of Trataka\(^8\)

Basically Trataka is divided in following types

1. **Bahya**- it indicates gazing at an external object.

   It again divided into two types-

   a) **Sudoor**- in this vision is focused on distant objects like things visible through a window or sun, moon or stars etc.

   b) **Sameep**- in this the distance between the eye and objects is about 45-60 cm. In this type the object could be a dot of ¼ inch size or flame of a candle or eye of a status of worshipped deity or mirror image of one’s eye. Trataka done with a flame is known as JyotiTrataka.

2. **Abhyantar**- in this eyes are to be focused on nose tip or in between eyebrows.

**Procedure**-

Preparation- here flame of a candle is selected as an object to be observed. This flame should be stable so that the observer do not get diverted due to its movement. For this, room without direct air entry and with dim lights can be selected. The flame should be at eye level of the observer. Other objects should not be visible behind
the flame. Therefore background of a plain wall should be preferred.

Methods- The observer has to sit in a comfortable position preferably in swastikasana, padmasana or vajrasana. After the observer is seated comfortably he/she should start gazing at the flame without flickering of eyelids. This will strain eyes and tears will roll down from the eyes. Then close the eye and be still.

Duration- Initially the time required for rolling down of tears is the ideal duration for rolling down of tears is the ideal duration for practice of trataka with regular practice this duration goes on increasing.

Post procedure- After closing of eyes the image of the flame is perceived for a while, when this image disappears, gently press the eyes with palms and then slowly open the eyes. Now splash eyes with cold water.

Precaution –
- During the practice of trataka eyes should not be stretched.
- It should be done without spectacles.
- The light arrangements should neither be dark nor bright.
- The process should not be repeated as cycles.

Benefits –
- This can help to improve your power of concentration.
- It can relief in eye strain, myopia, astigmatism and even early stages of Cataract.
- Trataka improves your willpower and decision making abilities.
- Trataka can calm the wavering mind to peace.
- It can help you to be more focused and improves memory if practice regularly.
- It can increase your awareness and connect you to live at a higher spiritual and soul level.

Observations- The practice of Tratak is very simple to perform. It do not take much time of the observer. It does not require too many preparation which make it very cost effective. It has got duel benefits of eye strengthening and increasing concentration.

Discussion- Accommodation of human eye refers to adjustment of eye for seeing objects at various distance which is achieved by changing the curvature of lens due to contraction and relaxation of ciliary muscles. Binocular accommodation is the coordinated movement of both the eyes jointly. In ordinary use eye muscles generally act asymmetrically which may aggravate or produce eye strain or weariness or vision problems [9]. The
increase in prevalence of myopia lead to increasing in related problems like retinal detachment, posterior staphyloma, CNVM and amblyopia \[10\].

The gaze in *Trataka* train and strengthen four types of eye muscles controlling upward, downward, right and left movement of eyeballs. *Trataka* helps in vitalization of vision by accelerating blood transfusion in and around areas of the eye. It may also help in cleansing of eyes through tears \[11\].

*Tratakakriya* enhances the metabolism of rods and cones through the mechanism of dark and light adaptation \[12\]. The *Trataka* candle flame meditation had significant contributing change over the concentration and the memory level of the subjects \[13\].

**Conclusion**- Eye disorders have emerged as a major health problem. Hence preventive aspects need to be considered and explored to protect the normal ocular health. *Trataka* could be a nonpharmacological and economic option for this purpose. As *Ayurveda* aims for prevention first and treatment later, the habit of practicing *Tratakam*ay be the key to fulfil the need of preventing eye disorders. It will prove to be a great contribution to integrate primary eye care at root level with least infrastructure in developing as well as developed countries.

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   ISSN- 2250-1991 373, PARIPEX
   INDIAN JOURNAL OF

RESEARCH Effect of Trataka candle flame meditation on concentration and memory level of the college athletics team. DR. Binod Chowdhary Assistant Professor, Seva Bharati Mahavidyalaya, Kapgari.

Conflict of Interest: Non
Source of funding: Nil

Cite this article:

Yogic karma trataka in eye disorders – a review
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