



The Siddha Moongazing Techniques in Ophthalmic Care - A Literature Review

Prashanthini Vithurshan*

Intern Medical Officer, Base Ayurvedic Hospital, Kappalthurai, Trincomalee.  0009-0000-6276-5998

*Corresponding author: prashasritharan@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The visual impairment and eye diseases pose significant public health challenges worldwide, affecting approximately 2.2 billion people over the age of 50. In Sri Lanka, the prevalence of blindness and visual impairment is estimated to be around 1.9% and 8.8%, respectively. The Siddha system of medicine offers various preventive measures for eye health, including moon gazing therapy, which is mentioned in classical Siddha texts. However, scientific validation of its efficacy remains limited. This study aims to explore the effectiveness of different moon gazing techniques for ophthalmic care. Siddha literature was collected from classical texts such as Agathiyar Nayana Vidhi 500 and Pararasasekara Nayana Rogam, while relevant research articles were sourced from reputable databases, including Scopus, Medline, PubMed, and Medlar. The findings reveal that moon gazing techniques in Siddha medicine include direct observation of the moon (with or without Palagani), water application to the eyes, and eye massage. These techniques, as described in relevant Siddha texts, may have the potential to mitigate the onset of eye diseases. Scientifically validating these traditional practices could establish them as cost-effective and sustainable therapeutic options for ophthalmic care in the future.

Keywords: Nayana Rogam, Ophthalmic, Palagani, Moon gazing, Visual impairment

INTRODUCTION

The human eye is a complex organ with intricate structures, including the cornea, iris, lens, and retina. Its primary function is to perceive light and transmit visual information to the brain, a process that is crucial for daily functioning and overall quality of life (Selvam et al., 2017). In Siddha medicine, the eyes are regarded as vital for maintaining overall well-being, as they are believed to be the "windows to the soul" and play a significant role in sensory perception. The Siddha tradition emphasizes the importance of balancing the five elements within the body to achieve optimal health, with the eyes closely linked to these elements (Thulasidasan, 2015). The core principle of Siddha medicine is based on *Tridosha*, and when it comes to eye health, the Fire element (*Teyu*) plays a crucial role, with vision being maintained by the *Alochaka Pitham* (Shanmugavelu, 2003).

On a global scale, visual impairment and eye diseases present significant public health challenges. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), an estimated 2.2 billion people aged 50 and older worldwide are affected by vision impairment or blindness, with uncorrected refractive errors being the most common cause. Age-related eye diseases such as macular degeneration and diabetic retinopathy are also on the rise, primarily due to aging populations and lifestyle factors. Among individuals with distant vision impairment, 36% suffer from refractive errors, while 17% experience vision impairment due to cataracts (WHO, World Report on Vision, 2023). In Sri Lanka, as in many other countries, visual impairment is a pressing concern. A study by the Sri Lanka College of Ophthalmologists indicates that the prevalence of blindness and visual impairment in Sri Lanka is approximately 1.9% and 8.8%, respectively. Cataracts are the leading cause of blindness in the country, followed by refractive errors and glaucoma (Herath, 2022).

According to *Agatthiar Nayana Vidhi 500*, the sclera refers to the white part of the eye, while the iris and pupil form the black part. A healthy eye should possess a pure, crystal-like sclera devoid of any reddish tint, and a dark black pupil within the black part. It is also believed that the eye reflects the face of a person standing before it. The dimensions of the eye are typically two inches in length, half an inch in breadth, and one inch in depth, with the black part occupying one-third of the eye and the pupil covering one-seventh of the black part. Various diseases afflict the eye, with classifications including diseases of the lens and pupil 27, diseases of the black part of the eye 10, diseases of the white part of the eye 13, diseases of binding unions 9, diseases of the upper and lower eyelids 24, and diseases of the eyeball 13. Abnormalities in the three humours *Vatham*, *Pitham*, and *Kapam* can affect the eyes and lead to eye diseases. The *Agatthiar Nayana Vidhi 500* also categorizes 96 eye diseases according to the vitiated humours: vitiated *Vatham* 45, vitiated *Pitham* 31, and vitiated *Kapam* 20 (Thandayuthapani, 1976).

Siddha medicine identifies various factors contributing to eye diseases, with common causes including carrying heavy weights on the head, prolonged exposure to sunlight, neglecting precautions after oil or head baths, using unclean water for bath, excessive consumption of narcotics, frequent sexual activity, external injuries, and allowing flies to enter the ears. Additionally, specific causes include leaving oil residue in the hair after bathing, walking barefoot on hot surfaces, prolonged focus on objects, excessive anger, and infections during pregnancy (Uthamarayan, 1967).

The Siddha Text books of *Agathiar Nayana Vidhi* 500 and *Pararasasekara Nayana Vithi* mention preventive care measures for eye diseases in their stanzas, including the practice of *Anjanam* once every three days, brushing teeth with medical plants sticks of *Aal* (*Ficus benghalensis*), *Erukku* (*Calotropis gigantea*), *Vel* (*Acacia leucophloea*), *Maruthu* (*Terminalia arjuna*) and *Poola* (*Phyllanthus reticulatus*). Additionally, applying cow's ghee to the sole of feet before bedtime and covering them with *Thavidu* (Rice husk) is recommended for alleviating eye pain and burning sensations. After waking up, one should wash the feet, dry them, and apply *Santhanam* (Sandal paste) to the sole of feet. The practice of moon gazing is also mentioned as a beneficial therapy for eye health (Sivashamugaraja, 2018; Thandayuthapani, 1976).

While traditional practices like moon gazing therapy have been passed down through generations in Siddha medicine, there is limited scientific research specifically validating its efficacy for ophthalmic health. However, some studies have explored the potential benefits of light therapy, including exposure to natural light sources like the moon, for various health conditions. While more research is needed to directly assess the effects of moon gazing therapy on eye diseases, preliminary evidence suggests that light therapy may have therapeutic potential for certain conditions (Levi, et al., 1997).

Objectives:

General Objective:

This study aims to explore the effectiveness of moon gazing therapy in Siddha for Ophthalmic Care.

Specific Objectives:

- To identify the various moon gazing techniques described in classical Siddha texts.
- To analyze the therapeutic benefits of adjunctive practices such as *Palagani*, water application and eye massage in the context of eye care.
- To provide a scientific rationale for integrating traditional practices into modern ophthalmic care framework

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The siddha literary elements were collected from classical siddha texts, such as *Agatthiar Nayana Vidhi 500* and *Pararasasekara Nayana Rogam*. Research papers were referenced from reputable platforms including Scopus, Medline, Pubmed, Medlar and others.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Moon Gazing Techniques in Siddha Texts

Various Siddha schools of thought discuss eye diseases, but only limited evidence highlights the significance of moon gazing therapy for ophthalmic health. Among them, the texts *Pararasasekaram Nayana Rogam* and *Agasthi Nayana Vithi 500* play a crucial role. However, there is a lack of scientific evidence to validate their effectiveness in preventing eye diseases. Siddha texts describe various techniques for moon gazing. Table 1 provides a summary of the moon gazing techniques mentioned in the relevant Siddha texts.

Stanzas Based on *Pararasasekaram Nayana Rogam*

- 1 “ கைவிரல் தன்னை கோர்த்துக் கவிந்து பல்கணிபோல் விட்டுத்
திவ்விய மதியந் தன்னைத் திகழவே நோக்க மற்றும்
வெய்யென வுண்டு நீயம் விரவிய கையி னீரைத்
துய்யுமா கண்ணி விட்டுத் துவக்கரப் பிசைந்திடாயே ”
- 2 “ உண்டுகைத் துளிபிழி முகத்து நீரெறி
கண்டிடு மதியமுங் கருது மஞ்சனம்
விண்டிட விரவிய தந்த சுத்திசெய்
அண்டுறு கண்ணினுக் கமுத யோகமே ”

Stanzas in *Agasthi Nayana Vithi 500*

- 3 “ கைவிரல் தன்னைக் கொண்டு கலந்து பலகணி போல் விட்டு
துய்யச் சந்திரனை மெள்ள தெளியவே நோக்கிப் பாடும்
வெய்யொளி உண்டு நீயும் விரவிய கண்ணில் நீரை
துய்யமாய் விட்டலம்பித் துவளாகப் பிசைந்திடாயே ”
- 4 “ உண்டுகை கழுவிப்பின்னே உறுமைய மூன்று துள்ளி
வண்டணி குழலால் வார்த்து வளமிகும் இமையை தேய்த்து
கொண்டொரு கடிகை நேரம் குணமிகுங் கதிரைப் பார்த்து
பண்டு போலிருக்கும் போது பரிவுகண் அமிர்தயோகம்

Table 1: Summary of Moon Gazing Techniques in Stanzas

Siddha Text	Moon Gazing Techniques in Stanza
1. Pararasasekaram Nayana Rogam	<p>Stanza 1: Form a <i>Palagani</i> by shaping fingers into a window-like frame and gaze at the moon through it. Afterward, wash the eyes with water and gently massage them.</p> <p>Stanza 2: After dinner, Wash hands and face thoroughly, then gaze at the moon. This practice is considered as one of the “<i>Amirtha Yogam</i>” techniques in Siddha medicine and is believed to help prevent eye diseases.</p>
2. Agasthiyar Nayana Vithi 500	<p>Stanza 3: Use a <i>Palagani</i> by shaping fingers into a window-like frame to focus on the moon in the clear sky. After observing, wash eyes with clean water and gently massage them to improve vision.</p> <p>Stanza 4: After dinner, wash the hands thoroughly and place three drops of water into each eye using a <i>Kuzhal</i> (a small tube). Follow this with an eyebrow massage and gaze at the moon for one <i>Kadikai</i> (24 minutes). The practice is known as “<i>Amirtha Yogam</i>” and is believed to help prevent eye diseases.</p>

Role of Palagani in Ophthalmic Care

Palagani is a technique that involves creating a window-like frame with the hands to view the moon. Research findings suggest that using this hand position can help focus attention on a specific object or scene, enhancing concentration and reducing distractions (Posner, 2007). Thus, it aids in maintaining focus on the moon without external interruptions. Furthermore, engaging in mindfulness practices such as using the window hand position, has been linked to reductions in stress and anxiety. By directing attention to the present moment and observing without judgment, individuals may experience increased relaxation and improved emotional

regulation (Hofmann, 2010). This technique encourages mindfulness by providing a tangible focal point for awareness. Mindfulness practices have been associated with several psychological benefits, including enhanced self-awareness, acceptance, and resilience. The physical act of forming the hand position can serve as a grounding technique, helping individuals reconnect with their bodies and the present moment. Grounding techniques are commonly used in trauma-informed therapies to promote a sense of safety and stability (Kabat-Zinn, 1982).

Impact of Water Application in Eye Wellness

Applying water to the eyes helps maintain hydration and lubrication of the ocular surface, which is essential for overall eye health and comfort (Lemp, 2007). Water drops are commonly used to alleviate symptoms of dry eye syndrome by restoring moisture, reducing irritation, and relieving discomfort. Regular application of water drops has been shown to improve tear film stability, enhancing eye protection and reducing the risk of corneal damage. Additionally, water drops containing anti-inflammatory agents can help manage inflammation associated with conditions such as conjunctivitis and blepharitis (Baudouin, 2001; Goto, 2002).

Therapeutic Significance of Eye massage for Ophthalmic Health

Traditional eye massage with water has been practiced for centuries in various cultures and is believed to offer multiple benefits for eye health and the prevention of eye diseases. Eye massage techniques, such as gentle circular motions around the eyes, can improve blood circulation, which may help reduce eye strain and fatigue. Enhanced circulation also aids in delivering essential nutrients to the eyes. Prolonged screen time and excessive use of digital devices often lead to eye strain and discomfort. Traditional eye massage techniques, such as palming (covering closed eyes with warm hands), can provide relief by relaxing the eye muscles and reducing tension (Lee, 2016).

Siddha Varma Maruthuvam describes several *varma* points around the eye region, including *Puruva Varmam*, *Nachathirak Kaalam*, *Kaampothari Kaalam*, and *Manthira Kaalam*. Applying gentle pressure to these points is believed to stimulate vision, regulate ophthalmic nerve function, and treat eye diseases by reducing excess heat and strengthening eye muscles (Shunmugom, 2016). Traditional eye massage techniques can also complement conventional treatments for conditions such as myopia, hyperopia, and astigmatism. Integrating these

methods into a holistic eye care regimen may provide additional benefits and support overall eye health (Saxena, 2015).

Scientific Basis for Moon Gazing

A review study discussed the effects of light exposure in regulating circadian rhythms and melatonin secretion, both of which play a crucial role in eye health and sleep-wake cycles (Levi, et al., 1997). While scientific evidence on the therapeutic benefits of moonlight and moon gazing is limited, some studies suggest potential advantages. Moonlight, particularly during full moon phases, creates a serene atmosphere that promotes relaxation and reduces stress. Gazing at the moon may help relax the eyes and alleviate eye strain caused by prolonged screen time or excessive focus on nearby objects. Exposure to natural light, including moonlight, has been associated with mood enhancement and may help alleviate symptoms of depression or anxiety in some individuals. Moon watching can also contribute to a sense of well-being and emotional balance. Additionally, it serves as a form of mindfulness practice, encouraging individuals to be present in the moment and cultivate awareness of their surroundings (Gidlow, 2016; Song, 2016).

CONCLUSION

The conclusion drawn is that moon gazing techniques in Siddha, comprising observation of the moon with or without *Palagani*, watering into eyes and eye massaging possess scientifically verifiable properties that can mitigate the onset of eye diseases. While deeply rooted in Siddha tradition, its principles find resonance with modern therapeutic practices. This traditional practice, may be both non-costly and sustainable, emerges as a viable therapeutic option for ophthalmic care for future practices. However, further studies are needed to elucidate the mechanisms and efficacy of moon gazing therapy for various eye diseases and conditions.

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