

# International Journal of Research in AYUSH and Pharmaceutical Sciences

## Review Article

### STUDY OF TRATAKA YOGA KRIYA ON HEALTH IN TRISUTRA AYURVEDA

Shilpa Shankarrao Walkikar<sup>1\*</sup>, Ekta<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>HOD & Associate Professor, Dept. of Swasthavritta & Yoga, A & U Tibbia College and Hospital, Karol Bagh, New Delhi.

<sup>2</sup>Research Officer (Ayu), Central Ayurveda Research Institute, Guwahati, Assam.

#### ARTICLE INFO

##### Article history:

Received: 11-09-2023

Accepted: 22-09-2023

Published: 08-10-2023

##### Keywords:

*Shatkarma,*  
*Trataka, Smriti,*  
*Medha, Mana.*

#### ABSTRACT

We have come a long way in almost every field of life. Things that were once thought to be impossible for us are now possible for us. Scientists and researchers have changed the way we live. But pollution of air and water, body and mind are also a result of science. With the progress of civilization, mankind is getting weaker every day. Industrialization, diet, exercise, and the nature of work sitting for hours in front of the computer, always in the car, and lack of exercise have led to many diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, obesity, etc. Routine health issues like constipation, stomach issues, gas, eye burning, sinus issues, headaches, and so on, need to be treated in a way that works for them. You can't just take medicines for these things every day. You need to give your body some physical training to show it how effective it is. This is done through the practice of something called 'Shatkarma', which can bring good results if you do it forever. It's all about body cleansing, and the six purification techniques are really important for both physical and mental health. These simple techniques are also really useful for treating internal disorders, which is what this paper is all about.

#### INTRODUCTION

Yoga affects all aspects of a person: physical, mental, emotional, mental, and spiritual. It combines movement, breathing, eating, relaxation, and meditation. It is a combination of physical and mental disciplines that makes the body stronger and healthier and the mind calmer and more controlled. Practicing yoga allows participants to focus on mental resources, process information faster and more accurately, and may improve their ability to learn, retain, and update information effectively.<sup>[1]</sup>

Traditional Yoga practices include *Shatkarma*, which is a set of six practices that help you cleanse your body, mind, and spirit. These practices have been around for ages and are based on the idea that having a clean and healthy body is key to achieving higher levels of awareness and overall health.

*Shatkarma* is made up of six different practices: *Dhauti* (cleanse your body), *Basti* (clean your body), *Neti* (clean your mind), *Trataka* (clean up your body), *Nauli* (clean up your mind), and *Kapalabati* (clean up your spirit).<sup>[2,3]</sup> Each of these practices focuses on different aspects of purification.

**One term best describes the consequences of *Shatkarma*:** cleansing. When the various body systems are cleared, the overall result is that energy can flow freely through the body. The ability to work, think, digest, taste, feel, and experience increases and creates greater awareness. *Trataka* (yogic visual concentration) is one of the most researched purification techniques in *Shodhana Kriya* and is believed to enhance vision and positively affect cognitive processes.<sup>[4]</sup> *Trataka* is a traditional Ayurvedic practice that involves concentrated gazing at a specific object, typically a candle flame, in order to improve mental focus, clarity, and overall well-being. While Ayurveda primarily focuses on holistic health, including diet, lifestyle, and herbal remedies, *Trataka* is a specific technique that falls under the broader umbrella of Ayurvedic practices.

#### Access this article online

Quick Response Code



<https://doi.org/10.47070/ijraps.v7i9.151>

Published by Mahadev Publications (Regd.)  
publication licensed under a Creative  
Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-  
ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)

**REVIEW****Definition**

The Sanskrit word *Trataka* literally means "to gaze steadily". Staring at a small point with an unwavering gaze until tears flow is known as *Trataka*.<sup>[5]</sup>

निमेषोन्मेषकं तयक्त्वद सूक्ष्मलक्ष्यं निरीक्षयेत्।

पतन्ति जावदश्रूनि त्रातकं प्रोच्यते बुधैः॥

एवमभ्यासयोगेन शाम्भवी जायते ध्रुवं।

नेत्ररोगा विनश्यन्ति दिव्यदृष्टिः प्रजायतेः ॥<sup>[6]</sup>

Staring at subtle objects without blinking until tears begin to flow is known as *Trataka*. Consistent practice of *Trataka*, *Shambhavi mudra* is achieved, removes eye defects, and gives divine vision.<sup>[7]</sup>

Theoretically, there are three elements in *Trataka*-

- The first is the viewer seated in the place of practice.
- The second is the view of the object in front of the viewer.
- The third is the process of gazing. When attention is continuously aware of these three elements, it is considered a state of inner awareness or one-pointed inner awareness.

According to the classics *Trataka Kriya* is said to be comprised of three steps.

- i. *Darshakya* means the person who is performing *Trataka Kriya*.
- ii. *Drashya* means the object or the place where *Trataka Kriya* is going to be performed.
- iii. *Drashya Prakriya* means the whole procedure to perform *Trataka Kriya*.

**Types of Trataka**

*Trataka Kriya* is practiced widely in two forms according to *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*:

- i. *Bahiranga Trataka* (external *Trataka*)
- ii. *Antaranga Trataka* (internal *Trataka*)

In Yoga, three types of *Trataka* are acknowledged.<sup>[8]</sup>

- i. *Bahiranga Trataka* or *Bahir Trataka*, external *Trataka*.
- ii. *Antar Trataka* or *Antaranga Trataka*, inner or internal *Trataka*.
- iii. *Adho Trataka*, which is practiced with the eyes half open and half closed.

**Different methods of Trataka**

*Trataka* consists of three modes of practice:<sup>[9]</sup>

1. Outer (*Bahir*) *Trataka* only
2. Outer and inner (*Antar*) *Trataka* combined.
3. Inner *Trataka* only

**Pre-Trataka Karma**<sup>[10]</sup>- The subject should remove contact lenses or spectacles before performing all these exercises.

**1. Eye Rotation**

Here, a thumb sign is utilized to fix the subject's focus in a specific direction, making the eye exercise technique simple. The subject should start rotating his hand in a clockwise direction by keeping the thumb sign intact and focusing on the thumb with his/her eyes. Subject should start rotating both of his eyeballs simultaneously with the rotation of his hand i.e., when the hand rotates in a clockwise direction the movement of the eyes will also be in the same direction. The subject should perform this rotation exercise three to four times with one hand. After this keep the hand in a relaxed position, close both eyes, and relax for some time. The subject should stretch his/her left hand in the thumb sign and should start the same exercise but the rotation of the hand should be in the anticlockwise direction this time simultaneously with the hand eyes will also rotate in an anti-clockwise direction. Repeat it three to four times.

**2. Eye Marching**

Begin slowly sliding both of your hands apart while focusing on the right thumb first, followed by the left, and continue to focus on both of these thumbs simultaneously as they move apart. The focus should continue uninterrupted. After advancing to a point where thumbs are clearly visible, slowly return to the starting position while maintaining uninterrupted ocular movement. After returning to your starting posture, relax the hands and eyes and take some time to unwind. Again, stretch both hands and make a sign of thumb start moving both hands in the opposite direction to each other but this time eye movement should be in the opposite direction focus on the left thumb and then on the right thumb keep this movement continuing with the movement of thumbs. Once the thumb can be seen clearly from a distance, one should begin moving the thumb back toward the starting position while maintaining uninterrupted ocular movement. After returning to start the posture, relax the hand, shut the eyes, and unwind for a while. Repeat it three to four times.

**3. Eye Up and Down**

Start moving your right hand in the upward direction and your left hand in the downward direction. Focus on the right thumb and then on the left thumb keep focusing on both these thumbs simultaneously one after the other as the thumbs move away from each other but the process of focusing should be continued without interruption. After reaching a distance up to which thumbs can be seen without any difficulty one

should start moving the thumb toward each other but the movement of eyeballs should go without interruption. After returning to start the posture, relax your hand, close the eyes, and take some time to unwind. Again, make the thumb sign this time move the left hand in the upward direction and the right hand in the downward direction. But this time eye movement should be in the opposite direction focusing on the left thumb rather than on the right thumb keep this movement continuous with the movement of thumbs. After returning to start the posture, relax the hands, close the eyes, and take some time to unwind. Repeat it three to four times.

#### 4. Eyes far & near

By keeping your left hand at its original position move your right hand towards your body. Focus on the right thumb first and then on the left thumb keep focusing on both these thumbs simultaneously one after the other as the thumb moves away from each other but the focusing should go on without interruption. Move the thumb as much as it is visible to our eyes easily, after that bring it back to its original position but the movement of the eyeball should remain constant from right to left. After regaining the original position, relax the hand, close the eyes, and relax for a certain time duration. By keeping one's right hand at its original position move the left hand towards your body. Now focus on the left thumb first and then on the right thumb keep focusing on both these thumbs simultaneously one after the other as the thumb moves away from each other but the focusing should go on without interruption. Move the thumb so that it is visible to the eyes easily, after bringing it back to its original position but the movement of the eyeball should be constant from left to right. Repeat it three to four times. After this, hands should be kept in a relaxed position, eyes should be closed and relaxed for some time.

#### **Pradhan Trataka Karma** <sup>[11,12]</sup>

##### **Bahiranga Trataka (external concentrated gazing)**

Practice in a dark room that is free from draughts and insects. Place a candle two to three feet in front of you with the flame at eye level. It is essential that the flame remains stationary and does not flare. Sit in a comfortable meditative pose, preferably *Siddhasana/Siddha Yoni Asana*, and place your hands on the knees in either *Jnana* or *Chin Mudra*. Relax the whole body, close your eyes, and prepare for the meditative practice. Make calm and quiet and be prepared to keep your body perfectly still throughout the whole practice. Practice *Deha Sthairyam* (steadiness of the body) prior to the procedure for a few minutes. Then

open your eyes and gaze at the middle portion of the candle flame, just above the wick. Try to keep the eyes perfectly steady. Do not blink. Lower the eyelids if the eyes become sore or tired. Stare as long as possible, five or ten minutes, or if one can gaze longer without closing the eyes, do so. Only when you really need to, should you close the eyes. Try to keep the mind empty. If any thoughts occur, one should be put out of the mind immediately. Remain the silent witness, *Sakshi*, throughout the whole practice. When finally, the eyes are closed, they should be fixed on the impression of the flame in front, in *Chidakasha*. If it moves bring it back to the center and continue gazing until the impression disappears. Once one can stabilize the image, study it and look intently at the colour. Sometimes anybody may not see light, but an impression that is blacker than *Chidakasha* itself. Keep the mind completely devoid of thought. Only be aware of the object of concentration. When thoughts come, let them pass and remain uninvolved. Practice for fifteen to twenty minutes unless the *Guru* has advised to do it for a longer period.

##### **Antaranga Trataka (internal concentrated gazing)**

Prepare self in the same way as for *Bahiranga Trataka*. Keep the eyes closed through the intervention and concentrate on the symbol. If one has no symbol, then try to visualize a point of light, like a twinkling star or a crescent/full moon. Try to see the object clearly and steadily in the dark space in front of the closed eyes. Practice for five to twenty minutes.

**Post-Trataka Karma** <sup>[13]</sup>- Volunteers are advised to close their eyes, relax, breathe naturally, and try not to think about anything else. Remain in this position for at least five minutes.

**Time of practice:** The ideal time for practice of this procedure is early morning or night.<sup>[14]</sup>

**Duration:** It is recommended that *Trataka* is practiced for no longer than five minutes if your focus is on anything physical, like a flame. The time frame actually varies on the individual. Still, if planning to practice for a longer period of time, it is imperative to have instructions from the supervision of a guide.<sup>[15]</sup>

**Precautions:** Do not practice *Trataka* with an unstable flame. People with vision problems should ensure that symbols are positioned, and if this is not possible, use professional guidance.<sup>[16]</sup>

#### **DISCUSSION**

The pineal gland is a small pea-sized gland above the top of the spine, in the center of the head between the two ears (technically it is located between the two cerebral hemispheres and above the cerebellum).<sup>[17]</sup> The eye is directly connected to the pineal gland through the sympathetic nervous system.<sup>[18]</sup> Like the

parasympathetic nervous system, the center of the sympathetic nervous system is the hypothalamus.<sup>[19]</sup> The hypothalamus is also the center of consciousness and pleasure along with sleep and pain.<sup>[20]</sup> Thus, the eye, the pineal gland, the sympathetic nervous system, the hypothalamus, and individual arousal are all directly or indirectly related.<sup>[21]</sup> With *Trataka*, focusing through the eyes stimulates and awakens the entire system. This increases the pineal gland's reception through the sympathetic nervous system, resulting in increased arousal in the individual.<sup>[22]</sup> This is why *Trataka* is such a powerful technique. It directly affects the pineal gland. In addition, all other disturbing thoughts that reduce acceptance are silenced, at least temporarily, by intense concentration.<sup>[23]</sup> It can be discussed below:

- **Mental Clarity and Concentration:** *Trataka* is believed to enhance mental clarity and concentration. By training the mind to focus on a single point, individuals may experience improved attention and reduced mental distractions.
- **Stress Reduction:** Engaging in *Trataka* may help reduce stress and anxiety. The practice encourages relaxation and can serve as a form of meditation, which has been shown to have positive effects on mental well-being.
- **Eye Health:** While gazing at a candle flame or another object for extended periods, *Trataka* may also help improve eye health and vision by exercising the eye muscles and reducing eye strain.
- **Spiritual Benefits:** Some practitioners believe that *Trataka* can facilitate spiritual growth and self-realization by quieting the mind and allowing individuals to explore their inner consciousness. It is often used as a preparatory practice for deeper forms of meditation and self-discovery.
- **Individual Experience:** The effectiveness of *Trataka* can vary from person to person. Some individuals may find it highly beneficial, while others may not experience significant changes. The benefits and outcomes are often influenced by one's dedication, consistency, and individual constitution in Ayurvedic terms.
- **Integration with Ayurveda:** *Trataka* can be integrated into an Ayurvedic lifestyle alongside other practices, such as Yoga, Pranayama, and dietary guidelines, to promote overall well-being and balance. Ayurveda emphasizes a holistic approach to health, and *Trataka* can be a valuable tool in achieving that balance.

‘A clinical study to evaluate the efficacy of *Trataka Yoga Kriya* and eye exercises (non-pharmacological methods) in the management of

*Timira* (Ammetropia and Presbyopia)’ by G. Gopinathan, Kartar Singh Dhiman, and R. Manjusha in AYU journal (2012). The outcome of this study is as follows: In Snellen's chart reading one line improvement was noted. There was moderate improvement in clarity of vision, contrast sensitivity and fineness of objects. Though the degree of this improvement was almost similar in both groups, a better relief was appreciated by patients of the *Trataka Yoga Kriya* group. It is an encouraging finding that a non-pharmacological, low-cost, relaxation technique can improve the quality of vision, by which it indirectly checks the progression of the disease condition. Both these techniques act as adjuvant therapy hence one should adopt pharmacological interventions (medical management), lifestyle, and diet modifications to get a better result.<sup>[24]</sup>

‘Effect of Isolated and Combined Practice of Yoga Therapy and Ayurveda on Distant Vision among Myopia’ by Vijayalaxmi N. Harnoorkar and Rukmani in Journal of Ayurveda and Integrated Medical Sciences (2016). The outcome of this study is as follows: Myopia or shortsightedness is the most common refractive error of the eye. A recent study conducted at the National Eye Institute shows the prevalence of myopia from 25% in 1971 to a whopping 41.6% in 1999 -2004. The present study was done to analyze the efficacy of Yoga Therapy and Ayurvedic Medicine on distant vision among myopics. 30 subjects were randomly selected for the study from SHES Ayurvedic Medical College OPD, Kalaburagi. 30 subjects were grouped into 3 experimental groups. The first group was administered Ayurvedic medicines, the second group was selected for Yoga therapy, and the third group was advised Yogasana and Ayurvedic therapy. The first group was given Triphala Ghrita and Pratimarsha Nasya with Abhijeeta Taila for a period of 8 weeks. The second group was selected for *Trataka* for a period of 8 weeks. Training was given for 6 days a week, 15 minutes per day. The third group received combined Ayurveda and Yoga therapy. Snellen's chart was the scale used to record the distant vision before and after the treatment. Good Response was seen in Group C (Yoga + Ayurveda) as compared to Group A (Ayurveda) and Group B (Yoga).<sup>[25]</sup>

## CONCLUSION

*Trataka* is a traditional Ayurvedic practice that holds the potential to improve mental focus, reduce stress, and offer various benefits, although its efficacy may vary among individuals. When integrated into a broader Ayurvedic lifestyle, it can be

a valuable component of a holistic approach to health and well-being.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My special thanks to Dr. Shivakumar Harti, Associate Professor, Department of Swasthavritta, All India Institute of Ayurveda, New Delhi-76 for his great cooperation, immense help, and encouragement.

#### REFERENCES:

1. Behera M, Mishra A, Kulkarni M. Effect of Kunjal Kriya along with ayurveda diet on the obese volunteer-a case report. International Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine. 2022 Feb 22:05-9.
2. Saraswati SN. Gheranda Samhita. Yoga Publication Trust, Munger, Bihar, India. 2012; 32:81.
3. Muktibodhananda S. Hatha Yoga Pradipika. Yoga Publication Trust Munger, Bihar, India.2018; 22:186
4. Talwadkar S, Jagannathan A, Raghuram N. Effect of trataka on cognitive functions in the elderly. International journal of yoga. 2014 Jul;7(2):96.
5. Muktibodhananda S. Hatha Yoga Pradipika Dwitiya Adhyaya, Verses 31. Munger, India: Yoga Publications Trust; 1993: p.208
6. Saraswati SN. Gherand Samhita Pratham Adhyaya, Verses 53-54. Yoga Publications Trust, Munger. 2012: p. 141
7. Dayanidy G, Dayanidy R, Bhavanani AB. Principles and Methods of Yoga Practices. South India: International Centre for Yoga Education and Research. 2009: p. 34-35
8. Swami Muktibodhananda, Hatha Yoga Pradipika, Yoga Publication Trust, Munger, Bihar, India. p.141-145
9. Bajpai RS. The splendors and dimensions of Yoga Vol 1. Atlantic Publishers & Distributors; 2002: p.216.
10. Sharma S, Sharma MK. Trataka Karma - A Holistic Approach for Computer Vision Syndrome. International Ayurveda Publications.2022 Mar-Apr; 7(2): 2034-2039.
11. Muktibodhananda S. Hatha Yoga Pradipika. Yoga publication trust, Munger, Bihar, 2018: p.209
12. Muktibodhananda S. Hatha Yoga Pradipika. Yoga publication trust, Munger, Bihar, 2018: p.210
13. Pindipol SS. Efficacy of Trataka in Tandra Vyadhi (Doctoral dissertation, Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences (India). 2018; p.9-10
14. Thool AS. Yoga and Exercise for Eyes to Improve Vision. A Half Yearly National Peer-Reviewed Research Journal. p. 15-19
15. Talwadkar S, Jagannathan A, Raghuram N. Effect of Trataka on cognitive functions in the elderly. International journal of yoga. 2014 Jul;7(2):96.
16. Bhargav H, George S, Varambally S. Yoga and mental health: what every psychiatrist needs to know. BJPsych Advances. 2023 Jan;29(1):44-55.
17. Zhang J. Secrets of the brain: an introduction to the brain anatomical structure and biological function. arXiv preprint arXiv:1906.03314. 2019 May 31.
18. Alarma-Estrany P, Crooke A, Mediero A, Peláez T, Pintor J. Sympathetic nervous system modulates the ocular hypotensive action of MT2-melatonin receptors in normotensive rabbits. Journal of pineal research. 2008 Nov;45(4):468-75.
19. Buijs RM. The autonomic nervous system: a balancing act. Handbook of clinical neurology. 2013 Jan 1; 117:1-1.
20. Schenck CH, Arnulf I, Mahowald MW. Sleep and sex: what can go wrong? A review of the literature on sleep-related disorders and abnormal sexual behaviours and experiences. Sleep. 2007 Jun 1;30(6):683-702.
21. Jacobson S, Marcus EM, Pugsley S, Jacobson S, Marcus EM, Pugsley S. Hypothalamus, neuroendocrine system, and autonomic nervous system. Neuroanatomy for the Neuroscientist. 2018:269-95.
22. Dudeja JP. Scientific analysis of mantra-based meditation and its beneficial effects: An overview. International Journal of Advanced Scientific Technologies in Engineering and Management Sciences. 2017 Jun;3(6):21-6.
23. Yoga P. Yoga education. Educreation Publishing, Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh. 2018: p.11-12
24. Gopinathan G, Dhiman KS, Manjusha R. A clinical study to evaluate the efficacy of Trataka Yoga Kriya and eye exercises (non-pharmacological methods) in the management of Timira (Ammetropia and Presbyopia). Ayu. 2012 Oct;33(4):543.
25. Harnoorkar VN. Effect of isolated and combined practice of yoga therapy and Ayurveda on distant vision among myopia. Journal of Ayurveda and Integrated Medical Sciences. 2016 Aug 31;1(02):8-12.

#### Cite this article as:

Shilpa Shankarrao Walkikar, Ekta. Study of Trataka Yoga Kriya on Health in Trisutra Ayurveda. International Journal of Research in AYUSH and Pharmaceutical Sciences, 2023;7(9):1-5.

<https://doi.org/10.47070/ijraps.v7i9.151>

**Source of support: Nil, Conflict of interest: None Declared**

#### \*Address for correspondence

**Dr. Shilpa Shankarrao Walkikar**

HOD & Associate Professor  
Swasthavritta & Yoga Dept,  
A & U Tibbia College and Hospital,  
Karol Bagh, New Delhi-110005  
Email:

[drshilpawalkikar@gmail.com](mailto:drshilpawalkikar@gmail.com)

Contact no: 8788692572

Disclaimer: IJRAPS is solely owned by Mahadev Publications - A non-profit publications, dedicated to publish quality research, while every effort has been taken to verify the accuracy of the content published in our Journal. IJRAPS cannot accept any responsibility or liability for the articles content which are published. The views expressed in articles by our contributing authors are not necessarily those of IJRAPS editor or editorial board members.