



Healing Eyes: Sun gazing, Spectacles, and the Nature of Vision

Varshney AS*

Optometry Department, Shree Bharatimaiya College of Optometry & Physiotherapy, India

*Corresponding author: Ankit S Varshney, Optometry Department, Shree Bharatimaiya College of Optometry & Physiotherapy, Surat, India, Tel: 9725897212; Email: ankitsvarshney@yahoo.com

Editorial

Volume 9 Issue 2

Received Date: October 01, 2024

Published Date: October 14, 2024

DOI: 10.23880/oajo-16000324

Editorial

For centuries, human beings have been fascinated with the workings of the eye and vision, seeking ways to preserve and enhance this vital sense. The ancient aphorism “*Medicus curat, Natura sanat*” [1]—translated as “the doctor treats, nature heals”—reflects the age-old belief in the body’s ability to heal itself. In the field of vision care, however, this natural healing process has often been overshadowed by the reliance on artificial aids like spectacles. This tension between natural and artificial vision correction reached its peak in the early 20th century with the controversial rise of the Bates Method and the practice of Sun gazing. As the modern world continues to rely heavily on glasses and contact lenses, it’s worth exploring these alternative methods and their place in today’s vision care landscape.

Keywords: Sun Gazing; Spectacles; Near-sightedness

Abbreviations

AMD: Age-Related Macular Degeneration.

The Bates Method and Aldous Huxley: A Revolutionary Vision

One of the most prominent advocates of natural vision correction was William Horatio Bates [2], an American ophthalmologist who developed a method to improve eyesight without the use of spectacles. In his 1920 book *Perfect Sight without Glasses*, Bates argued that most vision problems were caused by eye strain. He proposed a series of exercises designed to relax the eyes, such as palming (covering the eyes with one’s hands), visualization, movement, and Sun gazing—the practice of looking directly at the sun to stimulate the eyes [2].

Bates’ work received a significant boost when British author Huxley A [1] became an advocate after experiencing a dramatic improvement in his own vision through the method. In his 1942 book *The Art of Seeing*, Huxley described how a severe bout of keratitis had left him with poor eyesight, requiring thick glasses to read. After learning about Bates’ techniques, Huxley claimed that his vision improved substantially, which led him to question the medical community’s reliance on spectacles. Huxley’s writings highlight a philosophical tension: while doctors allow the body to heal itself in cases of broken bones or infections, the treatment for vision defects has traditionally been limited to optical aids, which he saw as a “crutch” rather than a cure [1].

Sun gazing: An Ancient Practice with Modern Controversy

Sun gazing, one of the cornerstones of the Bates Method, is rooted in ancient traditions. Throughout history, sun worship has been linked to healing, particularly for the eyes. In Greek mythology, the giant Orion was blinded after offending Queen Merope but had his eyesight restored by the rays of the morning sun. The sun god Helios was believed to have the power to heal the blind, reinforcing the connection between light and vision [3,4].

The practice of sun gazing has persisted into modern times, although it remains highly controversial. Proponents argue that it energizes the body and improves eyesight, while detractors—backed by scientific evidence—warn of the dangers of retinal damage from looking directly at the sun. Despite these warnings, figures like Hira Ratan Manek, a modern advocate of sun gazing, have claimed that they can live on solar energy, water, and buttermilk alone, with Manek himself reportedly practicing sun gazing since Manek HR [5]. Though sun gazing is considered fringe, its allure endures,

particularly among those seeking natural healing methods.

The Modern View: Science and Light-Based Therapies

A century after Bates introduced his methods, modern vision care remains dominated by spectacles and contact lenses. However, recent scientific advances have led to a re-evaluation of the role light can play in eye health. Photodynamic therapy, for example, is used to treat age-related macular degeneration (AMD) by activating medications with near-infrared light. Similarly, photo biomodulation involves exposing patients to low-level light therapy, which has shown promise in improving the vision of those suffering from retinal conditions such as AMD [6,7].

While the scientific community continues to warn against sun gazing, advances in photobiology suggest that light, when applied under controlled conditions, can indeed have therapeutic benefits. These treatments are highly targeted and far removed from the practice of staring at the sun, but they nevertheless demonstrate that Bates' idea of light playing a role in eye health may not have been entirely unfounded.

Myopia Epidemic: The Role of Nature in Prevention

One of the most pressing vision problems today is the rise of myopia (nearsightedness), particularly in East Asia, where rates among young adults are as high as 90%. Many researchers are now looking at natural solutions to combat the onset of myopia, particularly in children. Studies have shown that increased time spent outdoors can help prevent the condition, suggesting that exposure to natural light plays a protective role.

The emphasis on outdoor activity, combined with vision therapy and healthy lifestyle choices, has led to a resurgence in interest in non-invasive, nature-based approaches to maintaining eye health. In this context, the principles of the Bates Method—particularly the focus on relaxation, movement, and engagement with the natural world—are finding new relevance, albeit in a more scientifically grounded form [8].

Conclusion

As the world grapples with the rise of visual impairments, particularly among younger populations, the debate between natural and artificial vision correction remains unresolved. Spectacles and contact lenses are an essential part of modern life, providing immediate relief for those with vision defects. Yet, the growing interest in light therapies and natural prevention strategies indicates that the ideas proposed by Bates and his followers, though controversial, may still hold some value today.

The challenge for future research is to balance the benefits of modern optical technologies with a deeper understanding of how natural methods can support long-term eye health. Whether through carefully controlled light therapies or increased time outdoors, the quest for vision improvement continues to blend ancient wisdom with cutting-edge science. While the practice of sun gazing is unlikely to gain widespread acceptance, the role of natural light in vision care may offer new paths toward healing in the years to come.

References

1. Huxley A (1942) *The Art of Seeing*, Chatto & Windus.
2. Bates WH (1920) *Perfect Sight Without Glasses*, In: (Edn.), Central Fixation Publishing Co.
3. Riva MA, Arpa C, Gioco M (2014) Dante and asthenopia: a modern visual problem described during the Middle Ages. *Eye* 28(4): 498.
4. Chesterton GK (1911) *The Innocence of Father Brown*, In: (En.), Cassell & Co Ltd, London.
5. Manek HR (1995) Personal testimony on Sun gazing.
6. Alexander F (1927) *Psychoanalysis and Psychosomatics*. International Universities Press, USA.
7. Downes SM, Collin JR (2016) *Photodynamic Therapy in Ophthalmology*. Springer, Germany.
8. Xiong S, Sankaridurg P, Naduvilath T, Zang J, Zou H, et al. (2017) Time spent in outdoor activities in relation to myopia prevention and control: a meta-analysis and systematic review. *Acta Ophthalmol* 95(6): 551-566.