

Welcome to Retina India.

All about Retina, for those with an interest in Retina & Retinal Ailments.

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Honorary Editor: **Giridhar Khasnis**

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*“It is because of my blindness that I am where I am... Blindness led me to discover the sitar and it led me to music.”*

*~ Baluji Shrivastav ~*

*Founder of “The Inner Vision Orchestra*

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## LIGHTING TIPS FOR PEOPLE WITH LOW VISION

*By Bill Takeshita, Los Angeles*

Proper lighting is extremely important for people with low vision. Many people with low vision will be able to read, walk, cook and perform daily tasks if they have the correct illumination. Unfortunately, too often people with low vision use incorrect lighting. Here are some lighting tips for people with low vision.

1. Many people with low vision are able to read best under natural sunlight. However, too much exposure to sunlight or staring at the sun can cause permanent vision loss; it will be beneficial to wear sunglasses and protect the eyes from the intense rays of the sun.
2. For areas where the sun does not provide sufficient light, artificial sources of light are used. Light bulbs are the most popular source of artificial light and today there are many styles of light bulbs to choose from. People with low vision will greatly benefit from using the proper type of light bulb for specific tasks. For example, fluorescent light tubes can provide a high amount of light for use in the kitchen while a low voltage halogen bulb can be used for reading in your favorite chair.
3. People with low vision should consult with their eye doctors to determine whether additional protection is needed in the form of glasses. In some cases, the doctor may recommend that the glasses are treated and worn at all times. In other cases, the doctor may recommend the use of specially tinted glasses when outdoors.
4. It is also important to understand that the level of brightness is dependent on the distance between the light bulb and the object being illuminated. Many people with low vision make the mistake of using a light bulb with 1200 lumens and they install the light in the ceiling fixture. When they turn the light on and try to read, they realize that there is not enough light to read. A better option is to use that same light bulb and insert it into a desk lamp that is positioned 1 to 2-feet away from the reading material. In this set up, the amount of brightness on the book will be much higher simply because the light is closer to the book and all the light from the bulb is directed towards the page.
5. One of the problems of artificial light is that colors do not appear natural when viewed under artificial lights. A person who sews, draws, or paints will need to use a light that will show the colors accurately. The first step is to select the color bulb that is most comfortable to use. Next, it is important to determine which type or brand of bulb at that temperature is best for rendering colors.
6. The ideal way of modifying the lighting for people with low vision is to utilize a variety of different types of artificial lights. For some areas, compact fluorescent lights may be best while in other areas low voltage halogen is recommended. Unfortunately, light fixtures are not universal in that each light fixture will not accept each type of light bulb. Thus, it is important to determine which type of light bulb is best for seeing and then the appropriate light fixture can then be purchased.
7. The main purpose of general lighting is to provide sufficient illumination to allow people to orient themselves in a room, walk from one location to another, and to find objects in the room. The amount of general lighting that is best for people with low vision varies tremendously. People with macular degeneration and diabetic retinopathy generally prefer the general lighting to be moderate or slightly on the dimmer range while people with retinitis pigmentosa and glaucoma will prefer the room to be very bright.

8. During the day, sunlight is an excellent way to obtain general lighting to illuminate the room. If the room has windows, simply opening the drapes and blinds will illuminate the room. Painting the walls a light color with flat, satin, or semi-gloss latex paint can brighten the room significantly. For people who do not want as much light, a darker paint on the walls, window coverings, or drapes can reduce the general lighting.
9. During the evening or dark winter days, you may need more general lighting. When using light bulbs to provide general lighting, there are multiple ways to achieve this goal depending on your own taste and visual needs. It is better to avoid having areas of dark and light because dark and light areas on a floor can be confusing for people with low vision.
10. Accent lighting is used to illuminate specific areas of the home. Night lights can also be strategically placed along hallways to help people with low vision to see where to walk during the middle of the night while low voltage recessed can lights also work well in hallways.
11. Reading, writing, drawing, sewing, knitting, and cooking are tasks that require more specialized lighting to provide functional vision. Most people with low vision are able to read, write, and see details better when they have the proper brightness, color, and light fixture. For these tasks, many people with low vision will require higher levels of light than what can be provided using general or accent lighting. People with glaucoma, retinitis pigmentosa, and optic nerve atrophy often prefer a very bright light while others with cataracts, macular degeneration and albinism prefer a softer and more subdued light for reading.
12. The most effective desk task lamps for reading consist of a housing that will shield the user from seeing the light bulb. Many desk lamps can be used with compact fluorescent light bulbs of varying colors without producing the heat of a conventional incandescent bulb.

*This piece has been summarized from a detailed article written by Dr. Takeshita on the subject. Full article can be accessed [here](#).*

*Dr Bill Takeshita is a low vision optometrist who serves as the consulting director of low vision at [Braille Institute](#) in Los Angeles, USA. He is also the Chief of Optometry at the [Center for the Partially Sighted](#) and an Adjunct Professor at the [Southern California College of Optometry](#). In 2004, Dr. Takeshita founded the [Dr. Bill Takeshita Foundation](#), which he established after he ironically lost his own sight but gained a new perspective on vision impairment.*

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A CALL CENTER MANAGED BY VISUALLY IMPAIRED

A call centre managed by tech-savvy visually impaired persons, has recently started functioning at Hadapsar, Pune. It has been assisted by a UK-based cellular phone company.

The initiative comes as part of the activities carried out by the Technical Training Institute (TTI) of the [Poona Blind Men's Association](#) (PBMA), a non-profit organization working for the rehabilitation of under-privileged

visually challenged persons from across the country.

A total of 17 visually impaired persons have been put on the job at the call centre following their training in Mumbai. Earlier, there was an attempt at the National Association for the Blind in Mumbai where they used Braille files to read data. However, in the current project, the Braille interface has been completely eliminated and everything is done digitally. The positive results of this project have prompted the institute to plan a course in call centre training shortly.

TTI has been in the forefront of helping visually challenged youth in the age group of 18 to 35 to become self sufficient through innovative training programmes, which are affiliated to the Maharashtra State Technical Board and the [University of Pune](#). The Institute not only provides free training, lodging and boarding to all the students during their training period, but also supports them in finding work after completion of the course.

PBMA was founded in 1952 by Tukaram Sahadev Bamankar, a blind person, in a tiny room at 82, Rasta Peth, Pune. [H.V. Desai Eye Hospital](#), a project of PBMA, provides comprehensive and quality eye care without discrimination between free and paying patients. As on March 2012, it has examined 14.54 lakh cases and operated 2.66 lakh cases. Nearly 50% of eye surgeries are performed free of cost. The hospital has 200 beds and 3 operation theater complexes which can operate 16 patients simultaneously. It has been registered under ISO 9001:2008 certification from International Certifications Services (Asia) Pvt. Ltd.

The hospital provides high quality, high volume eye care service in general ophthalmology as well as super specialty eye care such as: Paediatric Ophthalmology (Childhood Blindness), Medical & surgical retina, Glaucoma, community ophthalmology, orbit and oculoplasty.

The hospital is also involved in several outreach programs carried outside the base hospital. All the services under outreach program are provided free of cost including transport, treatment, surgery, food and one month's medicine.

PBMA's Kantalaxmi Shah Eye Hospital at Nandurbar has been set up specifically to serve the tribal people in remote areas. The Shirdi Sai Baba Home for Aged Blind Women, Dhairi houses 65 old, blind women who are taken care of during the sunset years.

This year, Shri N. P. Pandya, President of H.V. Desai Eye Hospital received the Padma Shri Award for his dedicated and exemplary social work in rehabilitation and prevention of blindness. Dr. Col.(Retd) Madan Deshpande, Chief Medical Director of the Hospital was awarded "Outstanding Service in Prevention of Blindness Award by [Asia Pacific Academy of Ophthalmology](#) (APAO) on 15th April 2012.

For more information, please click on the [source](#).

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## INDIAN SITARIST HEADS ORCHESTRA OF BLIND MUSICIANS IN UK

[The Inner Vision Orchestra](#), the brainchild of [Baluji Shrivastav](#), a blind Indian sitar player was established to give its members the opportunity to be respected as musicians and to boost the confidence of those who had never performed in front of an audience.

Though based in UK, its blind or partially sighted members hail from India, Iran, Japan, Nigeria and Lebanon. Driven by the intensity of an inner vision the musicians celebrate the power of music to transform lives.

Last month, the Orchestra played in London at three venues including Dans Le Noir, a restaurant where diners eat in darkness and are served by blind waiters.

Shrivastav, who was born in a small village of Usmanpur in North India, became blind aged eight months after an eye infection was medically mistreated. “It is because of my blindness that I am where I am,” he says. “If I wasn’t blind I would be in India working as a clerk. Blindness led me to discover the sitar and it led me to music.”

Shrivastav was Professor of Music in a college in Agra when he was invited to France to teach. Later on, he moved to UK and established himself successfully as a musician as also an ambassador for South Asian music.

In an interview, Shrivastav revealed that he would like to set up an agency to find work for people who are visually impaired and local venues that might have a regular spot for a musician who happens to be blind. “Ironically the world may be invisible to partially sighted people, but they shouldn’t be invisible to the world.”

For further information, please click [here](#).

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NEW FORMAT HALL TICKETS FOR DISABLED STUDENTS

How many people know students with disabilities are entitled to an extra 20 minutes per hour of the duration of exams? H. Anitha’s invigilators didn’t. Completing the Class 10 final exam in the stipulated time limit proved to be a daunting task for the Davangere student with partial vision. Subsequently, she failed and now awaits another turn to clear the exam.

Listening to her case during a public hearing on child rights violations, Karnataka State Commissioner for Disabilities K.V. Rajanna advised the Education Department to create awareness about the provisions for persons with disabilities.

To do this, from this academic year, admission tickets in all educational institutions — government and private,

primary, secondary and institutions of higher learning — will have a new format.

According to a recent decision, along with general instructions for regular students, the rules applicable for students with disabilities will also have to be included in the hall tickets. Among these are the additional time that such students enjoy and the right to have a scribe (in case of students with cerebral palsy, for instance). The primary intention is to educate the invigilators about the rights, Mr. Rajanna said.

Further, he said, directions have been issued to ensure that the answer scripts of students with disabilities have a green sticker. “This will ensure that the evaluators will show some consideration while correcting the papers.”

[Source](#)

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## **LEGALLY BLIND ARCHER TAKES A SHOT AT LONDON OLYMPICS**

With vision of 20/100 in his right eye and 20/200 in his left, South Korean archer [Im Dong-hyun](#) (born May 12, 1986) is legally blind. The former world No. 1 and double Olympic gold medalist has compensated for his poor vision with an amazing consistency, reproducing the same drawing action over and over again in training to imprint it into his muscle memory.

The soft spoken 26-year-old Korean, who won gold in the team event in Athens and Beijing, has learned to “feel” the shot to such an extent he spurned offers of laser surgery to correct his vision.

Im suffers from strong myopia, but refuses to wear corrective lenses when he shoots as they make him uncomfortable. He broke his own 72-arrow world record at the Olympic test event at Lord’s by shooting 693 in October last year, then improved that mark again to 696 at a World Cup event in Turkey in May. Even if he fails to win the gold in London, he has no plans to hang up his bow.

“I have never thought about retiring. I will keep being an archer for as long as I can until I achieve my goals. I have no plan to retire at all,” Im said.

Im whose father is a travel agent and mother, a restaurateur, wears a wooden Buddhist bracelet on his right wrist that his mother bought at a temple to give him luck.

Source: agency reports

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HELPING THE BLIND “SEE” WITH MUSIC

Researchers at the [Hebrew University of Jerusalem](#) have developed a new device that converts images into music to help individuals without vision reach for objects in space.

Sensory substitution devices (SSDs) use sound or touch to help the visually impaired perceive the visual scene surrounding them. The ideal SSD would assist not only in sensing the environment but also in performing daily activities based on this input. For example, accurately reaching for a coffee cup, or shaking a friend’s hand.

In a new study, Hebrew scientists trained blindfolded sighted participants to perform fast and accurate movements using their new SSD, called EyeMusic.

The EyeMusic employs pleasant musical tones and scales to help the visually impaired “see” using music.

The device was developed by the senior author Prof. Amir Amedi and his team at the Edmond and Lily Safra Center for Brain Sciences (ELSC) and the Institute for Medical Research Israel-Canada at the Hebrew University.

“The level of accuracy reached in our study indicates that performing daily tasks with an SSD is feasible, and indicates a potential for rehabilitative use,” said the lead investigators.

[Source](#)

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## INDEPENDENT WORLD TRAVEL FOR BLIND PEOPLE

[Traveleyes](#) is said to be the world’s first and foremost commercial company specialising in opening access to independent world travel for blind and partially sighted people. It is a blind-founded, blind-led international company offering a broad range of unique multi-sensory holiday vacations to suit all tastes.

The company based in Leeds, UK says that its primary objective is to provide passengers who have a visual impairment with the same freedom of choice and ease of booking that sighted travellers have always enjoyed. Every Traveleyes holiday vacation features equal numbers of blind and sighted participants, some travelling solo, some with a partner, some as groups of friends.

With Traveleyes, blind travellers can choose a destination from its fully accessible website or audio brochure, and book holiday destinations covering Europe, Africa, Asia and the Americas, and vary from the unique and exploratory to relaxing sunshine breaks.

The idea for Traveleyes was evolved by world-award winning blind founder Amar Latif who was diagnosed with

the genetic eye condition retinitis pigmentosa when he was four years old. By the time he hit his twenties, he had lost 95 per cent of his sight. It was his quest for the freedom to go where he wanted to go and do what he wanted to do that inspired the establishment of Traveleyes.

[Source](#)

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ATM FOR BLIND

The world's first talking ATM for the blind was unveiled by the [Royal Bank of Canada](#) in October 1997 in Ottawa, Ontario. The talking ATM was a result of concerns Chris and Marie Stark, two blind customers, raised with the bank beginning in 1984. Their concerns turned into a discrimination complaint with the Canadian Human Rights Commission in 1991.

In India, the first talking ATM for visually impaired was inaugurated at the Blind People's Association (BPA) in Ahmedabad on June 6, 2012 by the [Union Bank of India](#). The ATM can also be operated by wheelchair-bound persons as well as general public.

In a first in the Middle East as well as the United Arab Emirates (UAE), a teller machine for blind and visually impaired people was recently launched by the [Sharjah Islamic Bank](#). The ATM features a large Braille keypad, high resolution screen, wide keys, headphone and external speaker to ensure the user's privacy. Though the machine is designed for the visually impaired, it can also be used by others.

The ruler of Sharjah had recently ordered banks in the emirate to offer facilities to the blind in response to a telephone call made by Manar Al Hamadi, a blind lawyer. The Sharjah Islamic Bank later opened a bank account for the lawyer. Journalists and media representatives at the press conference were asked to inaugurate the machine by closing their eyes to feel the experience and develop a greater understanding and sympathy for the service that will be offered to the blind.

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## **NATIONAL AWARDS SCHOLARSHIPS for 2012**

The Dept. of Disability Affairs, [Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment](#), Government of India has invited applications for the National Awards for the Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities under various categories. Details of the Scheme of National Awards, 2012 may be seen on the website of the Ministry URL <http://socialjustice.nic.in> Last date for submission of applications to Dept. of Disability Affairs is 31 August 2012.



The [National Handicapped Finance and Development Corporation](#) (NHFDC) has invited applications from Students with Disabilities for award of Scholarship under two Schemes: a) Scholarship Scheme (Trust Fund) and b) Scholarship Scheme (National Fund). Please click [here](#) for more information.

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Please mention your full name, address and contact details so that we can send you a receipt for your donation. If you wish to discuss donation to Retina India, you can call +91 98200 19584, or +91 89399 11897.

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We are looking for:

- People with expertise in managing projects, finance and outreach. If you are interested, please write to info@retinaindia.org.
- Volunteers to work for our National Scribes & Readers Programme, a national initiative to help connect those who need scribes (people who write answer papers in examinations for visually challenged people) & readers, to volunteers, who are willing to help, through the use of some advanced technological solutions. Please contact us at info@retinaindia.org, if you need a scribe or a reader, wish to volunteer, or are involved in such activity.

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