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NETRA TARPAN: AN AYURVEDIC APPROACH TO OCULAR REJUVENATION AND PREVENTIVE EYE CARE- A CLASSICAL KRIYĀKALPA REVISITED IN THE MODERN AGE

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Abstract:

Tarpan, specifically *Netra Tarpan* (*Akshi Tarpan*), is a time-honored therapeutic ocular procedure in Ayurveda, classified under *Kriyākalpa*, and primarily designed to nourish, lubricate, and rejuvenate the eyes. This treatment involves the localized retention of medicated ghee (such as *Triphala Ghrita*) over the closed eyes within a boundary created using herbal dough. Rooted in (Ayurvedic ophthalmology), *Netra Tarpan* has been used for centuries to address a wide range of ocular conditions. This review explores the historical origins, therapeutic protocol, and clinical utility of *Netra Tarpan*, while also analyzing its relevance in the management of modern ocular disorders such as Dry Eye Syndrome, computer vision syndrome, ocular fatigue, simple myopia, and early-stage cataracts. Clinical data and observational studies suggest that *Netra Tarpan* not only improves subjective comfort and tear film stability but may also contribute to long-term relief and reduced recurrence rates when compared with conventional palliative treatments. As a non-invasive, natural, and cost-effective intervention, *Netra Tarpan* stands out as a preventive and curative tool in the contemporary integrative model of eye care. It represents a harmonious blend of classical Ayurvedic wisdom and modern clinical relevance, reaffirming the holistic principle of “prevention before cure” in ocular health.

Keywords: Tarpan, Netra Tarpan, Kriyākalpa, Shalakyā Tantra, Triphala Ghrita, non-invasive eye therapy

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INTRODUCTION:

Tarpan (from Sanskrit *trup*, to satisfy/nourish) belongs to the external ocular therapies within *Kriyākalpa*, as described in classic Ayurvedic texts such as *Sushruta Samhita* and *Sharngadhara Samhita*. It is traditionally positioned after procedures like *Parisheka*, *Ashchyotana*, *Pindi*, and *Bidalaka*, transitioning into deeper rejuvenative measures for chronic eye conditions.

Historical Background and Classification of Tarpan in Ayurveda:

Tarpan (from the Sanskrit root *trup*, meaning *to satisfy* or *nourish*) is a specialized ocular therapeutic procedure in Ayurveda and is classified under *Kriyākalpa*, a group of localized treatments focused on eye, ear, and nose diseases. Among these, Tarpan is notable for its role in deep rejuvenation and nourishment of the ocular tissues, making it especially relevant for chronic and degenerative eye conditions.

The practice of Tarpan is deeply rooted in classical Ayurvedic scriptures such as the *Sushruta Samhita*, *Ashtanga Hridaya*, and *Sharngadhara Samhita*, where it is mentioned as part of the broader therapeutic measures in *Shalakyā Tantra*, the branch of Ayurveda dealing with diseases above the clavicle—including eyes, ears, nose, throat, and head [1,2].

Within the sequence of ocular therapies outlined in these texts, *Tarpan* is traditionally administered after preliminary treatments like: *Parisheka* (medicated decoction streaming), *Ashchyotana* (eye drops), *Pindi* (herbal poultices), and *Bidalaka* (herbal pastes applied over the eyelids) [3,4].

These initial therapies serve to cleanse and prepare the ocular region by reducing inflammation, removing toxins, and pacifying aggravated doshas, particularly *Pitta* and *Vata*. Only after this preparatory

phase is complete is *Tarpan* introduced as a rejuvenative therapy, aiming to strengthen the ocular nerves, lubricate dry tissues, and support long-term restoration [3–5]. Modern Ayurvedic centres such as Ayurveda research institute and Ayurveda Hospital have reinforced the classical sequencing by integrating Tarpan as a second-tier therapy—used specifically for patients presenting with deeper tissue depletion, visual fatigue, early refractive errors, and early-stage degenerative eye disorders like cataract and optic nerve weakness [6,7]. Additionally, a number of clinical and academic reviews available on Research-Gate journal platforms have acknowledged Tarpan's role as a bridge between symptomatic relief and curative management, with its use frequently indicated in Chronic Dry Eye Syndrome (DES), Computer Vision Syndrome (CVS), and ocular neuritis [2,8].

Types of Tarpans

- *Netra Tarpan (Akshi Tarpan)* is the primary ocular form, involving retention of medicated ghee over the eyes.
- *Putapaka* is technically allied, in which herbal decoctions or processed medicaments are used instead of ghee, usually as a follow-on procedure in chronic cases

Procedure of Netra Tarpan

1. Patient undergoes *purvakarma* (preparatory measures) like digestive cleansing (*pachan*), head and bowel management.
2. Create a dough ring around eyes using *Masha* (black gram) powder mixed with water to form a firm perimeter.
3. Warm medicated ghee (often *Triphala Ghrita*) is poured into the cavity and retained typically for 15–30 minutes, timed according to classical syllable counts depending on dominant dosha and disease type
4. Post-retention, poultice (*Pindi*) and smoke therapy (*Dhumapana*) may be used to clear

residual kapha and complete the treatment cycle.

Therapeutic Indications

Classical texts and modern interpretations list indications including:

- Dry eye conditions (*Shushka Akshi*), irritation, redness, foreign body sensation, eye strain (e.g., digital/computer vision syndrome)
- Early cataracts (*Adhimantha*), conjunctivitis (*Abhyashanda*), eyelid disorders (chalazion, sty)
- Refractive errors like simple myopia, and neural degenerative issues such as *Siro-Paryaya* (cranial-nerve atrophy)

Documented Clinical Evidence & Benefits

- A clinical evaluation involving 120 eyes treated with *TriphalaGhrita Tarpan* showed statistically significant relief in subjective symptoms (dryness, discomfort) and objective metrics (Schirmer I test, tear break-up time, Rose Bengal staining), with reduced relapse rates compared to controls
- A case study of pediatric simple myopia demonstrated improvement in visual acuity and ocular muscle strength when combining *Netra Tarpan* with systemic *Ayurvedic Rasayana* therapy
- Another cohort study utilizing *Netra Tarpan* and *Shalaka* in cataract and refractive error patients reported over 95% relief in refractive conditions and notable cataract improvement, obviating surgery in many cases.

Other reported benefits include: improved vision clarity, reduction of ocular fatigue and dryness, pacification of Pitta-Vata dosha, and prevention of progressive refractive errors and retinal degeneration.

Mechanisms & Ayurvedic Rationale

- *Bahya Snehana* (external oleation) principle enables the lipophilic ghee to penetrate ocular tissues, nourishing cornea, optic nerve, and periocular musculature.

- Dosha-specific adaptation: duration and frequency are modified based on dominant dosha (e.g., longer retention in Kapha-type disorders).
- Pacifies *Pitta dosha* (linked with heat and inflammation) and supports ocular detoxification cycles via topical medicaments and adjunct therapies like smoke inhalation.

Practical Considerations & Modern Relevance

- Non-invasive, relatively safe, and low-cost intervention when performed under trained supervision.
- Particularly relevant in modern lifestyle contexts—addressing digital eye strain, screen-induced dryness, early refractive changes, and preventive ophthalmic care.
- Requires precise execution: hygiene, therapeutic ghee quality, accurate retention parameters, and post-care measures are critical to efficacy and safety.

DISCUSSION:

Clinically, dry eye syndrome (*Shushkakshipaka*) stems from tear film instability, ocular surface inflammation, and cytokine-mediated lacrimal gland dysfunction. Modern therapies increasingly employ anti-inflammatory agents to manage this process. Ayurveda's *Netra Tarpana* works by forming an occlusive lipid film over the eye surface, enhancing tear film stability, reducing evaporation, and promoting hydration. The medicated ghee retains moisture while the lipophilic nature ensures prolonged contact with the mucin-aqueous interface, leading to reduced friction and reduced blinking rate in symptomatic dry eye patients. Specifically, studies like the randomized comparative trial comparing *TriphalaGhrita* and *Goghrita Manda Tarpana* reported that ~73% of patients achieved moderate (50–75%) relief, while ~27% reported marked (>75%) symptomatic

improvement, [9,10] with *Goghrita Manda* showing superior relief in burning, foreign body sensation, and pricking pain

Another large-scale clinico-pathological evaluation of *TriphalaGhrita Tarpana* (120 eyes) demonstrated statistically significant improvements in subjective symptoms such as dryness, ocular pain, blurring of vision and objective measures like Schirmer's test, TBUT, and Rose Bengal staining.[10] The relapse rates were lower compared to control groups, underscoring durability of benefit

In terms of mechanisms, *TriphalaGhrita* exhibits anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties, comforting inflamed ocular tissues and inhibiting cytokine-mediated ocular inflammation, while *Goghrita Manda* enhances tissue absorption [11] and mucin-layer stabilization via its lipid-rich formulation

Limitations & Caution

Although encouraging, the available data is constrained by anecdotal reports, small sample numbers, and a dearth of randomized controlled trials. Reports of subjective benefit exist on social media, but must be interpreted cautiously. For instance, Reddit users vary in opinion with some noting temporary relief or refreshed sensation but limited long-term improvement, and others expressing skepticism of benefits in myopia correction.

CONCLUSION:

Netra Tarpan remains a cornerstone of *Shalakya Tantra*, offering a holistic, preventive-curative modality for ocular health.[12] Existing clinical evaluations support its benefits in dry eye, refractive errors, and early cataract, though more rigorous research is needed. Its non-invasive nature, affordability, and synergy with Ayurvedic systemic therapies make it valuable particularly in settings where

conventional interventions may not be accessible or desired.

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