

# Revitalizing The Eyes: A Comprehensive Review Of Tarpana Therapy In Ayurveda

Dr. Sanjeev Padhan<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Shashibhusan Sahu<sup>2</sup>, Dr. Jashobanta Sahu<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Associate professor, Dept. of Shalakyatantra, S.S.N Ayurved College & R.I, Nrusinghanath, Paikmal, Odisha

<sup>2</sup>Assistant professor, Dept. of Kriya Sharir, Om Ayurvedic Medical College & Hospital, Betul (M.P)  
drsbsahu91@gmail.com

<sup>3</sup> Asst. Professor, Dept. of Panchakarma, Govt. Ayurvedic college and Hospital, Balangir, Odisha  
risingjashobanta@gmail.com

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## Abstract

**Background** Netra Roga (ocular diseases) are increasingly prevalent due to digital strain, pollution, aging, and systemic disorders. Ayurveda offers specialized therapies for ocular rejuvenation, among which Tarpana holds significant importance. Tarpana is a unique Netra Kriyakalpa involving the retention of medicated Ghrita over the eyes for a specific duration, aiming to nourish, strengthen, and revitalize ocular structures. Its relevance is emphasized in classical texts such as Ashtanga Hridaya, Sushruta Samhita, and Sharngadhara Samhita.

**Aim** To compile and critically analyze classical, contemporary, and clinical evidence on Tarpana therapy for the revitalization and management of various eye disorders.

**Objectives** To explore the classical references, indications, and Ayurvedic principles of Tarpana therapy to review the types of Tarpana and their therapeutic indications to evaluate its pharmacological rationale and clinical outcomes

**Materials and Methods** A comprehensive literature review was undertaken using Brihat Trayi, Laghu Trayi, and allied classical texts. PubMed, Google Scholar, and AYUSH Research Portal were searched for peer-reviewed articles related to Tarpana therapy. Inclusion criteria comprised classical textual descriptions, clinical studies, case reports, and review papers published in English and Sanskrit. Analysis focused on mechanism of action, indications, contraindications, and observed efficacy.

**Results** Tarpana is chiefly indicated in Vata-Pitta predominant Netra Roga, degenerative eye conditions, computer vision syndrome, and dry eye disease. Classical Ghritas like Mahatraphala Ghrita, Jivantyadi Ghrita, and Saptamrita Ghrita show significant nourishing, Rasayana, and anti-inflammatory properties. Clinical studies demonstrate improved tear film stability, visual acuity, and subjective comfort in chronic eye strain and Abhishyanda. Adverse effects are minimal when performed with proper indications, sterile preparation, and post-care protocols.

**Conclusion** Tarpana is a time-tested Ayurvedic ocular therapy that offers holistic rejuvenation of the eyes. It possesses potential in preventing and managing degenerative and lifestyle-induced eye disorders. Integration of Tarpana with modern diagnostics can establish its role in integrative ophthalmology and preventive eye care.

**Keywords:** Tarpana, Netra Kriyakalpa, Ghrita Murchana, Eye Rejuvenation, Dry Eye, Ayurvedic Ophthalmology.

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## INTRODUCTION

In Ayurveda, the eyes (Netra) are considered among the most vital sensory organs (Indriyas), and their preservation is of utmost importance for maintaining overall health and quality of life. The ancient texts emphasize that Netra is the seat of Tejas Mahabhuta and directly linked to the Pitta Dosha, especially Alochaka Pitta.<sup>1</sup> The eyes are described as delicate and easily affected by both internal imbalances and external aggressors. With the increased use of digital devices, erratic lifestyle patterns, and urban pollution, eye-related complaints such as dryness, fatigue, blurred vision, and degenerative disorders have become highly prevalent in the modern era.<sup>2</sup>

To address these visual health challenges, Ayurveda offers a unique set of ocular procedures collectively known as Netra Kriyakalpa. These include Tarpana, Aschyotana, Putapaka, Anjana, and Seka, each having its distinct role in treating and rejuvenating the eyes. Among them, Tarpana is considered highly effective for nourishing, strengthening, and revitalizing ocular tissues. It is indicated in conditions ranging from Abhishyanda

(conjunctivitis), *Timira* (refractive errors), *Shushkakshipaka* (dry eye syndrome), to degenerative disorders like early-stage *Kacha* (cataract).<sup>3</sup>

*Tarpana* is a therapeutic procedure wherein medicated *Ghrita* (clarified butter) is retained over the eyes within a chamber constructed from *Masha* or *Urad* flour paste. The duration of retention varies depending on the disease condition, age, *Rogabala*, and *Rogibala*. The *Ghrita* used in *Tarpana* is often processed with *Chakshushya Dravyas* (eye-benefiting herbs) such as *Triphaladi*, *Jivantyadi*, or *Saptamrita* groups. The unctuous nature of *Ghrita* facilitates deeper tissue penetration, nourishment of ocular nerves and muscles, and improvement in visual acuity.<sup>4</sup>

Modern research has begun to explore the scientific validity of *Tarpana* therapy. Preliminary clinical studies have reported its efficacy in enhancing tear film stability, reducing ocular surface inflammation, and offering symptomatic relief in dry eye syndromes and computer vision syndrome. The pharmacological action of *Ghrita* as an anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, and neuroprotective medium further substantiates its role in ocular health. In the context of rising lifestyle-induced eye disorders, *Tarpana* offers a non-invasive, drug-based, rejuvenative option rooted in time-tested *Ayurvedic* wisdom.<sup>5</sup>

Despite its mention in classical literature and recent interest, a consolidated and critical review of *Tarpana* therapy—covering classical principles, drug formulations, mechanisms, indications, safety, and clinical outcomes—is lacking. This article aims to bridge that gap by systematically analyzing *Tarpana* from both classical and contemporary perspectives. Through this review, we seek to revitalize awareness about this unique ocular therapy and promote its integration into modern preventive and therapeutic ophthalmological care.<sup>6</sup>

## AIM AND OBJECTIVES

### Aim

To critically review and consolidate classical references, pharmacological rationale, and clinical applications of *Tarpana* therapy in the management and revitalization of ocular health.

### Objectives

- To explore classical *Ayurvedic* texts describing *Tarpana* and its indications
- To analyze the types of *Tarpana* and commonly used *Ghrita* formulations
- To evaluate the therapeutic role and pharmacological actions of *Tarpana*
- To assess clinical evidence supporting the efficacy and safety of *Tarpana* therapy
- To highlight the relevance of *Tarpana* in modern ocular disorders and preventive eye care

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This review was conducted through an extensive analysis of classical *Ayurvedic* texts including *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Ashtanga Hridaya*, *Sharangadhara Samhita*, and other relevant *Nighantu* and *Kriyakalpa Granthas* to extract original references related to *Tarpana* therapy. Alongside textual exploration, modern scientific databases such as PubMed, AYUSH Research Portal, Google Scholar, and Scopus were searched using keywords like “*Tarpana*,” “*Netra Kriyakalpa*,” “*Ghrita ocular therapy*,” and “*Ayurveda and eye diseases*.” Clinical trials, observational studies, review articles, and case reports published in English and Sanskrit were included. The collected data were analyzed to interpret therapeutic indications, drug selection, pharmacological actions, clinical efficacy, and safety profile of *Tarpana* therapy, aiming to integrate traditional knowledge with contemporary clinical relevance.

## CONCEPTUAL STUDY

In *Ayurveda*, the eye (*Netra*) is regarded as a precious organ governed primarily by *Alochaka Pitta*, a subtype of *Pitta Dosha*, responsible for vision and perception. It is also supported by *Vata* (especially *Prana Vata* and *Vyana Vata*) for movement and coordination, and *Kapha* (*Tarpaka Kapha*) for nourishment and lubrication. The eyes are described as the seat of *Tejas* (inner light), and any disturbance in this balance leads to visual impairment. The *Netra* is also considered one of the vital *Marma Sthanas*, whose damage can lead to blindness

or even death. Thus, maintaining ocular health is of primary importance in *Ayurvedic* preventive and curative approaches.<sup>7</sup>

The term *Tarpana* is derived from the root “*Ṭṛp*” which means “to satisfy or nourish.” In *Ayurveda*, *Tarpana* specifically refers to the therapeutic procedure in which medicated *Ghrita* is retained over the eyes for a prescribed duration. It is one of the five primary procedures under *Netra Kriyakalpa*, aimed at rejuvenating, strengthening, and revitalizing the ocular tissues. *Tarpana* not only improves vision but also helps in preventing degeneration and dryness, thereby delaying ocular aging.<sup>8</sup>

Medicated *Ghrita* used in *Tarpana* acts as a carrier (*Yogavahi*) and delivers the therapeutic principles deep into the ocular tissues. *Ghrita* possesses *Snigdha*, *Madhura*, *Sheeta*, and *Mridu* qualities, which help in pacifying *Vata* and *Pitta* doshas, commonly involved in *Netra Rogas*. Formulations like *Triphaladi Ghrita*, *Maha Triphala Ghrita*, *Jivantyadi Ghrita*, and *Saptamrita Ghrita* are rich in *Chakshushya* (eye-rejuvenating) herbs, providing anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, and *Rasayana* (rejuvenative) effects.<sup>9</sup>

Beyond its therapeutic utility, *Tarpana* is also emphasized as a preventive eye care measure (*Rasayana Karma*), especially for individuals exposed to long hours of reading, screen use, pollutants, and stress. Daily or seasonal use of *Tarpana* is recommended in classics like *Ashtanga Hridaya* for *Netra Pariksha*, *Netra Shramaja Vyadhi*, and age-related visual decline. In modern terminology, its application correlates with the management of dry eye disease, computer vision syndrome, and early degenerative changes like presbyopia and mild cataracts.<sup>10</sup>

The revitalizing potential of *Tarpana* therapy lies in its dual approach—restorative and preventive. Classical *Ayurvedic* wisdom integrates the anatomical, physiological, and pathological understanding of the eye within the broader context of *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, and *Srotas* balance. In the current era, when eye diseases are becoming increasingly common due to screen time, environmental pollution, and lifestyle stress, *Tarpana* emerges as a holistic, drug-based therapy rooted in traditional science but supported by emerging clinical evidence. It represents a powerful example of how ancient therapies can meet modern ophthalmological needs when scientifically applied.<sup>11</sup>

### TARPANA THERAPY

*Tarpana* is a unique therapeutic procedure of *Netra Kriyakalpa* (ocular therapies) in *Ayurveda*, where medicated *Ghrita* (clarified butter) is retained over the eyes within a boundary made from *Masha* (black gram) flour paste. The word *Tarpana* comes from the Sanskrit root “*Ṭṛp*”, meaning “to satisfy” or “to nourish,” indicating that this therapy is aimed at deeply nourishing and revitalizing the eyes.<sup>12</sup>

#### Classical References

*Tarpana* is elaborately described in the classical texts such as:

- *Ashtanga Hridaya* – Sutrasthana, Uttaraasthana
- *Sushruta Samhita* – Uttara Tantra (*Netra Chikitsa*)
- *Sharnagadhara Samhita* – Madhyama Khanda (*Kriyakalpa Prakarana*)

These texts describe *Tarpana* as both a **curative** and **preventive** procedure used for various *Netra Rogas*, especially those caused by *Vata* and *Pitta* aggravation.

#### Indications of Tarpana

*Tarpana* is indicated in the following ocular conditions:

- *Shushkakshipaka* (Dry Eye Syndrome)
- *Abhishyanda* (Conjunctivitis)
- *Timira* (Refractive errors/early vision loss)
- *Kacha* (Immature cataract)
- *Netra Shrama* (Eye fatigue/computer vision syndrome)
- *Akshi Daha* (Burning in the eyes)
- *Netra Bhrama* (Visual disturbances)

#### Contraindications of Tarpana<sup>13</sup>

*Tarpana* is contraindicated in:

- *Amaavastha* (Acute inflammatory conditions)
- Severe infection or eye discharge

- Ajeerna (Indigestion or systemic weakness)
- Very young children and extremely old patients
- Immediately after *Panchakarma* procedures or during fever

**Types of Tarpana (Based on purpose and duration)**

According to Sushruta	On the basis of Dosha	On the basis of Sthana	Matra
<i>Swastha</i>	500 matra	<i>Sandhi</i>	300 matra
<i>Kapha roga</i>	600 matra	<i>Vartma</i>	100 matra
<i>Pitta roga</i>	800 matra	<i>Shukla</i>	500 matra
<i>Vata roga</i>	1000 matra	<i>Krishna</i>	700 matra
		<i>Sarvagata</i>	1000 matra
		<i>Drushti</i>	800 matra

**PROCEDURE OF TARPANA THERAPY**

**A. POORVA KARMA (PRE-PROCEDURE)<sup>14</sup>**

This stage includes all the preparatory steps before the actual administration of *Tarpana* therapy:

- **Patient Counseling and Consent:**

The patient is explained the purpose, benefits, and procedural steps of *Tarpana*. Informed consent is obtained, particularly when used in clinical settings. Reassurance is given regarding the comfort and safety of the procedure.

- **Assessment of Rogabala and Rogibala:**

Before initiating *Tarpana*, the physician evaluates the strength and condition of the disease (*Rogabala*) and the patient (*Rogibala*), including age, Prakriti (constitution), chronicity of condition, and associated systemic issues. This determines the choice of *Ghrita*, duration of therapy, and type of *Tarpana* (e.g., *Shamana*, *Brimhana*, or *Rasayana*).

- **Selection and Preparation of Medicated Ghrita:**

The appropriate *Ghrita* is selected based on the clinical condition:

- *Triphala Ghrita* – for general ocular rejuvenation and degenerative conditions
- *Jivantyadi Ghrita* – for inflammatory or infectious eye disorders
- *Saptamrita Ghrita* – for dryness and visual fatigue
- *Maha Triphala Ghrita* – for long-standing *Netra Rogas*

The selected *Ghrita* is gently warmed to lukewarm temperature (*Samskara yukta*), ensuring therapeutic integrity.

- **Preparation of Dough Ring (Varti):**

A thick paste is prepared from *Masha* (black gram) flour and water. This is molded into a circular dam or wall around the orbital margins of both eyes while the patient lies supine. The height of the wall should be sufficient (at least 2 inches) to retain *Ghrita* over the open eyes without spillage.

**B. PRADHANA KARMA (MAIN PROCEDURE)<sup>15</sup>**

This is the central phase where the actual therapeutic effect is delivered:

- **Filling of the Ghrita:**

Lukewarm medicated *Ghrita* is gently poured into the eye chambers formed by the flour rings until it completely covers the eyes when open. The temperature should be slightly above body temperature but not hot enough to cause discomfort.

- **Duration and Patient Instructions:**

The patient is instructed to keep the eyes open and blink intermittently to allow proper contact of the *Ghrita* with ocular tissues. The retention duration may vary:

- 5–10 minutes for preventive or daily use (*Nitya Tarpana*)
- 15–30 minutes for therapeutic *Tarpana*, depending on the disease and drug used
- Chronic or degenerative disorders may require longer and repeated sittings

- **Monitoring During Therapy:**

The physician monitors patient comfort, signs of intolerance, spillage, and integrity of the flour boundary. If discomfort or lacrimation occurs, therapy may be paused or modified.

**C. PASHCHAT KARMA (POST-PROCEDURE)<sup>16</sup>**

This stage ensures safe closure and follow-up care after *Tarpana*:

- **Removal of *Ghrīta*:**

The medicated *Ghrīta* is slowly removed using sterile gauze or cotton. Care is taken to avoid pressure or spillage into nasal cavities.

- **Cleaning and Fomentation (*Swedana*):**

The flour ring is carefully removed. Warm fomentation around the periorbital region may be done using a soft cloth dipped in warm water to relax the tissues and enhance drug absorption.

- **Dietary and Behavioral Guidelines:**

The patient is advised to:

- Avoid exposure to cold air, direct wind, or bright screens for several hours
- Refrain from consuming cold, spicy, or heavy food for the rest of the day
- Rest the eyes and avoid reading, screen time, or excessive movement of the head

- **Follow-up Instructions:**

Depending on the condition, *Tarpana* may be repeated over a series of 5 to 7 days. The number of sittings and intervals should be decided based on *Rogabala*, *Rogibala*, and drug response.

**COMMONLY USED GHRITA FORMULATIONS IN TARPANA**

Formulation	Main Indications
<i>Triphala Ghrīta</i>	Rejuvenation, eye strain, vision loss
<i>Jivantyadi Ghrīta</i>	Inflammatory eye diseases
<i>Saptamrita Ghrīta</i>	Dryness, itching, Vata-Pitta disorders
<i>Mahatriphala Ghrīta</i>	Chronic degenerative conditions

**PHARMACOLOGICAL BASIS**

The *Snigdha*, *Sheeta*, and *Madhura* properties of *Ghrīta* help pacify *Vata* and *Pitta*, which are often responsible for ocular degeneration and dryness. Many herbs used in *Ghrīta Paka* (preparation) have anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, and neuroprotective effects. The lipophilic nature of *Ghrīta* facilitates deep tissue penetration and drug delivery across the corneal surface.<sup>17</sup>

**Modern Correlation and Clinical Evidence**

Clinical studies have shown that *Tarpana* is effective in:

- Improving tear film stability (in dry eye)
- Reducing symptoms of digital eye strain
- Enhancing visual acuity in early *Timira* and *Shushkakshipaka*
- Supporting ocular surface repair and rejuvenation

Its mechanism correlates with drug delivery via corneal and conjunctival absorption and stimulation of lacrimal and meibomian gland function.



## RESULTS AND FINDINGS

- *Tarpana* therapy demonstrated significant improvement in ocular fatigue, dry eye symptoms, and computer vision syndrome.
- Clinical studies reported enhanced tear film stability, visual acuity, and subjective comfort after regular *Tarpana* sessions.
- Formulations like *Triphala Ghrita* and *Saptamrita Ghrita* showed notable anti-inflammatory and rejuvenative effects in conditions like *Abhishyanda*, *Shushkakshipaka*, and *Timira*.
- The cooling, lubricating, and Rasayana properties of medicated *Ghrita* effectively pacified *Vata* and *Pitta* Doshas.
- No significant adverse effects were observed when *Tarpana* was administered under proper procedural guidelines.
- Positive results were observed in preventive ophthalmology, especially in individuals exposed to prolonged screen use and environmental strain.

## DISCUSSION

*Tarpana* therapy has been a cornerstone of *Netra Kriyakalpa* in *Ayurveda*, with its strong foundation in classical texts like *Ashtanga Hridaya* and *Sushruta Samhita*. It is described not only as a curative measure but also as a preventive and *Rasayana* therapy for preserving ocular health. The principle behind *Tarpana* is based on the concept of nourishing (*Brimhana*), pacifying *Vata* and *Pitta*, and enhancing *Alochaka Pitta* for maintaining clear vision. The procedure utilizes *Ghrita* as a carrier of herbal actives, which are *Chakshushya* in nature, thereby fulfilling both *Samprapti Vighatana* and *Dhatuposhana*.<sup>18</sup>

The pharmacodynamic and pharmacokinetic properties of *Ghrita* provide a unique therapeutic advantage. Being *Snigdha*, *Sheeta*, and *Madhura*, it effectively balances *Vata* and *Pitta* Doshas, which are primarily responsible for ocular degeneration and inflammatory conditions. Herbal constituents used in *Tarpana Ghritas* such as *Triphala*, *Jivanti*, *Yashtimadhu*, and *Padmakashta* have proven antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and neuroprotective properties. Modern science supports these properties through studies on improved tear film dynamics and epithelial healing.<sup>19</sup>

Recent clinical studies and case observations suggest that *Tarpana* is highly effective in managing conditions like *Shushkakshipaka* (dry eye), *Netra Shramaja Vyadhi* (eye fatigue), and early stages of *Timira* (visual dimness). Patients undergoing *Tarpana* reported relief from symptoms such as burning sensation, dryness, foreign body sensation, and blurred vision. Objective parameters such as Schirmer's test values, tear break-up time, and visual acuity also showed marked improvement. These outcomes affirm the multidimensional therapeutic impact of *Tarpana* in both acute and chronic *Netra Rogas*.<sup>20</sup>

With the growing prevalence of digital eye strain, computer vision syndrome, and environmental stress-related ocular issues, *Tarpana* therapy emerges as a promising preventive care modality. Its application is highly beneficial for individuals with prolonged screen exposure, night shift workers, students, and professionals involved in intense visual work. Additionally, its *Rasayana* nature supports the delay of degenerative ocular changes, thus preserving vision in elderly populations. The procedure's simplicity, safety, and cost-effectiveness make it suitable for wide-scale community adoption.<sup>21</sup>

Despite its promising benefits, *Tarpana* therapy remains underutilized due to a lack of standardized protocols, limited availability of trained personnel, and inadequate clinical awareness. Variability in preparation methods of *Ghrita*, retention time, and procedural guidelines also pose challenges in replicating outcomes across studies. Therefore, future research must focus on multicentric randomized controlled trials, pharmacological standardization of *Tarpana Ghritas*, and integration with modern ophthalmic diagnostics. Bridging the gap between classical knowledge and modern evidence will further elevate *Tarpana* as a validated and integrative ocular therapy.<sup>22</sup>

## CONCLUSION

*Tarpana* therapy stands as a time-honored, holistic ocular procedure in *Ayurveda*, offering a unique blend of nourishment, rejuvenation, and therapeutic action for various *Netra Rogas*. Rooted in classical wisdom and supported by emerging clinical evidence, it effectively addresses conditions like dry eye, computer vision syndrome, visual fatigue, and early degenerative changes. The use of medicated *Ghrita* enriched with *Chakshushya* herbs ensures both functional restoration and preventive care. With its minimal adverse effects, non-invasive nature, and potential to integrate into modern eye care regimens, *Tarpana* holds significant promise as a sustainable and evidence-based therapy for revitalizing and preserving ocular health.

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