

Akshi Tarpana A Unique Eye Care Treatment in Ayurveda

Abhinaya R, Sadanandam Ch



Abstract:

Eyes are very important for Human body. It is proved that 80% of knowledge was gained through vision. In Ayurveda eye related disease is not restricted to eye itself, but it is considered as result of imbalance of *Doshas* in human body. Vision problem are more common once we grow older and older, hence preventive measures should be taken right from the young age. Today whole world is looking at Ayurveda as the ultimate healer for new millennium. Ayurveda emphasizes both on prevention and as well as cure. In Ayurveda *Panchakarma* is one of the detoxification and purification treatment. *Akshi Tarpana* (Eye Care Treatment) is a specialized *Upa Karma* of *Panchakarma* treatment used to strengthen the orbital muscles and thus improves the functioning of eye. *Akshi Tarpana* splits into two words *Akshi* means eye and *Tarpana* means nourishment, in healthy people Eye Care Treatment is carried out to protect the eyes from degeneration due to ageing process and to improve the eye sight. The therapeutic effect is advocated for patients suffering from diseases of eye. Thus *Akshi Tarpana* is an excellent soothing, relaxing eye treatment to rejuvenate eyes and surrounding tissues.

Key words: Akshi Tarpana, Upa Karma, Rejuvenation, Pancha Karma, Purification, Detoxification

Introduction:

Eye is an important organ for *Indriya Janya Gnanam* (Sensory Knowledge), which is considered as a source of *Prathyaksha gnanam* (Direct Perception). Human acquire doubtless knowledge with the help of *Indriya* and out of five *Indriya*, the most important is eye. Eye is part of head. It is included in the *Bahirmukha Srotas* (External apertures). These *Bahirmukha Srotas* are used as a root of drug administration. *Akshi Tarpana*, *Anjana* (collyrium), *Aschotana* (eye drops), *Seka* (Irrigation), *Putapaka* (Medicated herbal juice extract is used), *Bidalaka* (herbal paste application on eye lids)[1] etc are different types of treatments used in eye diseases. Now a day's most of the younger and growing generation is acquainted to use of computers, smart phones etc. The major share of work is being carried out with the help of computers. Constant watching of computer screen / mobile devices / Televisions causes spasm of ciliary muscles which control the lens and gradually causes strain, headache, besides dry eyes. Due to non closure of eye lids while staring into screen, thus drying up the cornea, which needs constant lubrication to function.

Akshi Tarpana is a specialized *Upa Karma* of *Pancha Karma* treatment, through which eyes are bathed in a medicated ghee for a specific period. This procedure strengthens the optical nerves, reduces pain and

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burning sensation in eyes. This cures dry eye syndrome and strengthens the eye muscle it gives soothing and cooling effect to eyes and improves vision.

Indications for Tarpana Karma:

When a patient sees darkness in front of eyes
Dryness of the eyes
Roughness of the eyes
Stiffness of eyelids
Falling of eyelashes
Dirtiness of the eyes
Deviated eyeball or squint
In extreme aggravation of the diseases of the eye
Injury/traumatic condition of eye
Vata Pitta predominant diseases]

Vaghbhata has further added a list of diseases specifically selected for *Tarpana Karma*. They are *Kricchernmilana* (difficulty in opening eyes), *Siraharsha* (congestion of conjunctival blood vessel), *Sirotpata* (episcleritis), *Tama* (blackout), *Arjuna* (subconjunctival haemorrhage), *Syanda* (conjunctivitis), *Adhimantha* (glaucoma), *AnayatoVata* (referred pain in the eye or sphenoidal sinusitis), *Vataparyaya*, *Avrana shukra* (corneal opacity) [2].

Contraindications for Tarpana Karma:

According to Acharya Sushruta *Tarpana* is not indicated:

On a cloudy day
Extreme hot or cold seasons
In conditions of worries and anxiety
In conditions of tiredness and giddiness of eyes
In complications of eyes
In the condition of acute pain, inflammation, redness etc.[3]

Procedure[4]

Poorva Karma:

Tarpana therapy should be done to the patients who have been purified both in their head (by nasal medications) and the body (by emesis, purgation and enema therapies). Later *Sthanika Abhyangam* (Local Massage) and *Mridu Swedanam* (Mild Sedation) is done.

Pradhana Karma:

Akshi Tarpana is performed during temperature seasons, both in the morning or evening. Patient is made to lay in supine position with his face upwards, in a room devoid of wind, sun and dust. A wall is constructed with the paste prepared from *Yava* (barley) and *Masa* (blackgram) around the eye socket (resembling a well) to height of 2 fingers breadth keeping the eye lids closed. *GoGhrita Manda* (The superman or upper layer of *Ghrita* (Cow ghee), which is above the *Ghanibhuta Bhaga*) liquefied by hot water should be poured in to the well up to the level of tips of eye lashes. The patient should then be asked to open his eyes slowly and retain the drug. Then *Matrakala* should be counted.

Paschat Karma:

Then after the completion of stipulated time the *Ghrita* (Cow ghee) should be drained out through a hole done at the outer angle (canthus) of the eye. The *Kapha* which has already been stimulated by the potency of ghee, should be eliminated by *Shirovirechanam* (*Nasyam*), and fumigation (*Dhoomapana*) with the *Kapha* suppressive drugs. Patient is instructed to keep away from exposure to bright light, wind, sky, mirrors and luminous bodies [5]. *Snehadharanakala* or Period of retention of Ghee is depicted in table 1.

Days of Procedure:

This process is done for 1 day 3 days or 5 days as per the requirement. It should be done daily in diseases of *Vata*, alternative days in diseases of *Pitta*, with an interval of two days in *Kapha* and in *Swastha* (healthy person).

Samyak Tarpana Lakshana

Sukhaswapana - good (sound) sleep
Avbodhatva - blissful awakening
Vaishadhyya - clearness of the eyes
Varnapatava - discernment of in- dividable colours
Nivriti - feeling of comfort
Vyadhidhvasa -cure of the disease
Kriya laghvama - easiness in closing and opening the eyes
Prakash kshamta - ability to with- stand bright light [15]

Ati- Tarpita Lakshanas

<i>Atisnidhata</i>	-	excessive oiliness
<i>Ashru srava</i>	-	lacrimation
<i>Kandu</i>	-	itching
<i>Upadeha</i>	-	stickiness
<i>Dosha-samutklishta</i>	-	aggravation of <i>Dosha</i>

Heena Tarpita Lakshanas

<i>AkshiRukshata</i>	-	dryness of eye
<i>Avilta</i>	-	indistinct vision
<i>Ashrusrava</i>	-	lacrimation
<i>Asahyam roopdarshan</i> -difficulty in vision		
<i>Vyadhivridhi</i>	-	aggravation of disease

Treatment of inadequate and excessive Tarpana

Dhoomapana, Nasya, Anjana, Seka either *Ruksha* or *Snighdha* are to be done for treating both inadequate and excessive *Tarpana* conditions according to predominance of *Dosha*. *Snighdha Seka* in disease of *Vata* predominance, *Ruksha* in *Kapha* and *Sheeta Seka* in *Pitta* predominance *Dosha*.

Dry Eye Syndrome is a Prime indication of Tarpana

Dry eye disease is most frequent disorder in ophthalmology. Dry eye can be known as Kerato conjunctivitis Sicca. Due to modern lifestyle and global warming, people suffering from dry eye disease are increasing day by day. Deficiency of Vitamin A also leads to Xerophthalmia (dry eyes). It is a medical condition in which the eyes fail to produce tears. Defects of aqueous layer are the most common cause of dry eye syndrome. The most superficial layer is a very thin layer of lipids (fats or oils). These lipids are produced by Meibomian glands and glands of Zies (oil glands in the eye lids). The natural tear film is essential for good vision, Eye health and comfort. It exists out of 3 layers. Having dry eyes means that there is deficiency in atleast one of these layers.

1. Lipid layer (oil)
2. Aqueous layer (Water)
3. Mucin layer

Sushkakshipaka[11]:

In Ayurveda dry eye syndrome is correlated with *Sushkakshipaka*, one among the *Sarvagata Akshi Roga* characterized by *Kunita* (Photophobia), *Abila Darshana* (Blurred vision), *Toda* (Pricking type of pain), *Daha* (Burning sensation) and *Rakta raji*

(Congestion).

Treatment for Sushkakshipaka[12]:

In *Sushkakshipaka* in take of Cow ghee (Oleation therapy) and *Tarpana* (Nourishing the eye) with *Jivaniya Ghritam*, Nasal medication with *Anu Tailam* and *Pariseka* (Bathing the eye) with warm milk added with *Saindhava lavanam* should be done.

Role of GoGhrita (Cow ghee) in Akshi Tarpana:

Cow ghee has been used for centuries to improve physical and mental health and also in the treatment of various ailments. There are many Ayurvedic medicated Ghee containing extract of medical herbs and Cow ghee. Presence of Cow ghee makes these medicines more potent and helps in better absorption. Such medicines go to the minute channels and lubricate them.

Cow ghee is sweet in taste and cooling in energy, rejuvenating, good for eyes and vision, kindles digestion, bestows luster and beauty, enhances memory and stamina, increases intellect, promotes longevity, is an aphrodisiac and protects the body from various diseases.

Chemically Cow ghee is complex lipid of Glycerides, free Fatty acids, Phospholipids, Carotenoids, Carbonyls, Hydro carbons, Sterols, traces of Calcium, Phosphorous, Iron... etc. Ghee is a good source of fat soluble vitamins (A, D, E and K) and essential fatty acids.

In *Akshi Tarpana*, the cow ghee we are using acts as a lubricant. *Vata Dosha* is the main reason for dry eyes, Ghee has opposite qualities of *Vata* which is main reason for its effectiveness in dry eyes syndrome. Ghee has the properties of *Snigdha*, *Guru* and *Mridu*. Due to *Snigdha* (Oilness and Unctuousness) property it is smooth, lubricating and nurturing. Due to its *Guru* (Heavy) property it increases the qualities of *Kapha* and decreases *Vata* and *Pitta*. Due to its *Mridu* (Soft) property it gives to soothing and cooling effect to eyes. Vitamin-A present in Cow ghee cures dry eye syndrome.

Mechanism of Cow ghee in *Akshi Tarpana*

In Cornea the Epithelium and Endothelium is lipid permeable i.e Lipophilic.

Hence Lipophilic drugs are effectively delivered to Cornea.

The ghee is used in *Tarpana* procedure is Lipophilic.

Hence the ghee can easily cross the corneal epithelium and endothelium.

The ghee has quality of passing into minute channels of body.

Intra ocular drug absorption to anterior lens capsule, ciliary muscles and other tissues.

Due to more contact time of ghee in *Tarpana* procedure, the absorption will be more to cure diseases.

Desired therapeutic action

Relief in symptoms.

Table 1: *Snehadharanakala* according to *Adhishtana* of diseases:

<i>Adhishtana</i>	<i>Sushruta Samhita</i> [6]	<i>Ashtanga Hridya</i> [7]	<i>Sharangdhar Samhita</i> [8]	<i>Bhav Prakash</i> [9]	<i>Yoga Ratnakara</i> [10]
<i>Sandhigata</i>	300	300	500	500	500
<i>Vartamagata</i>	100	100	100	100	100
<i>Shuklagata</i>	500	500	600		600
<i>Krishnagata</i>	700	700	700	700	700
<i>Dishtigata</i>	800	800	800	800	800
<i>Sarvagata</i>	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000

Table 2: *Snehadharanakala* according to *Dosha prakopa*:

<i>Doshabhedha</i>	<i>Sushruta Samhita</i>	<i>Ashtanga Hridya</i>	<i>Sharangdhar Samhita</i>	<i>Bhav Prakash</i>	<i>Yoga Ratnakara</i>
Healthy eye	500	500	500	500	-
Kapha predominance	600	500	500	500	500
Pitta predominance	800	600	-	600	-
Vata predominance	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000

Pathya and Apathya (Do's and Don't's) in *Akshi Rogas*[10]

Pathya (Do's)

Persons who are fond of their eyes, though healthy, should always adhere to the following, grains such as *Yava* (Barley), *Godhuma* (Wheat), *Sali* (Rice Variant), *Sastika* (Rice Variant), *Kodrava* (Kodo millet), *Mudga* (Green gram), Cow ghee, Milk, Honey[13] etc which are old and which mitigate *Kapha* and *Pitta* mixed with more of ghee should be taken.

Vegetables, *Jangala mamsa* (Flesh of Animals habituating dry lands), *Dadima* (Pomegranate), *Sita* (Sugar), *Saindhava* (Rock salt), *Triphala*, *Draksha* are good for eyes. The use of umbrella, footwear and

resorting to Therapies to eliminate the *Doshas* in proper way.

Apathya (Dont's)

One should avoid suppression of urges, over eating, anger, grief, sleeping during day time, keeping awake at night, exposure to sunlight, foods and medicines which cause heart burn and constipation.

Discussion:

Stress and strain related disorders of Eye are common in present era of computers and gadgets. We are now-a-days witnessing school going kids wearing spectacles at a tender age because of technology addiction, wrong choices of food and sleep preferences. Cow ghee's wide spread prevalence in Ayurvedic medicines and treatments is due to its

beneficial effects on digestion, absorption and delivery of Ayurvedic herbs as well as its own healing properties. When the digestive capacity (*Agni*) and Life essence (*Ojas*) are weakened, the *Doshas* (Humors) are distributed causing disease. Cow ghee's action on both digestive capacity and life essence, hence Cow ghee is the heart of all Ayurvedic treatments.

Here Cow ghee is the main substance used for treatment (*Tarpana*), it acts as lubricant and helps the functioning of extra ocular muscles, eye lids and tear. It has the power to prevent much kind of eye diseases. This Eye care treatment promises the stoppage of strain to the eyes and irritation...etc.

Conclusion

Eye is considered to be the most important and noblest sense organ of Human body, so sincere efforts should be made by every individual to preserve his/ her vision till the last breath of life. It is known fact that prevention is better than cure. Ayurveda is found to possess vivid information about the life style leading to healthy life and also preventive strategies in general. Eye is considered to be a local route of drug administration. Systematic absorption from this route is minimal or absent in contrast to this high concentration of drug can be achieved locally by applying the medicines to eye. Thus *Akshi Tarpana* and other procedures are promoted as High-end measures for maintenance of eye health.

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