

# Role of Maastishkya in Netra Rogas

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## Abstract

Shiras or the head is considered as the uttamangai.e a very vital part which shelters all the sense organs and also the seat of prana or life. Ayurveda advocates various therapeutic procedures in name of maastishkya in order to protect the head and sense organs. Maastishkya is a mode of oleating/nourishing the head in order to obtain the above aims. These therapeutic modalities, if practiced regularly, improve and sustain the sense organs, facilitate smooth facial skin, improve the strength of the skull, promote hair growth and avoid the incidence of headache.

**Keywords:** Maastishkya, Shiroabhyanga, Shiroseka, Shiropichu, Shirobasti, Indriyaprasannata

## Introduction

Netra rogas are considered the most vital part of shalakya tantra – one among the Ashtanga Ayurveda. It deals with the prevention, diagnosis and management of various eye disorders.<sup>1</sup>

It is the most coveted branch of Shalakya, for amongst all the jnanendriyas (sensory organs), eyes are the most cherished as they are responsible for attaining about 80% of knowledge from the external environment.

The above fact makes it highly susceptible to and exposed to factors which disturb its equilibrium, augmenting the manifestation of new as well as existing diseases.<sup>2</sup> This creates a challenge among the Ayurveda netra chikitsakas (ophthalmologists) in managing these problems through the resources available in Ayurveda.

It is high time that all the treatment protocols mentioned in our treatises for eye diseases are compiled and meticulously, judiciously used in the management of eye diseases, thus making the Ayurvedic ophthalmologists well equipped to face the enigmatic eye diseases of the modern world.

Every aspect of eye care should be expounded in detail, be it swasthya rakshana (protection and maintenance of eye health), nidanaparivarjana (avoidance of causative factors), shareera shodhana (body cleansing) (like virechana – purgation, basti – enema, rakthamokshana – blood letting), shiroshodhana (head cleansing) (like nasya – errhines), netra kriyakalpas (ocular therapies), shastra and anushastra karma (surgeries), maastishkya (treatment to the head) and others should be effectively administered on the patient after having diagnosed the diseases properly according to the classics.

One of the most neglected and less utilized therapies in eye diseases is maastishkya (treatment to the head). Though it is widely used in kaya rogas (diseases of the body) and mano rogas (psychiatric disorders), somehow it is often not given importance and is less utilized in eye diseases. Very few Ayurvedic ophthalmologists recognize the importance and efficacy of it in treating many of the eye diseases.

Maastishkya is application of medicines like fat, medicinal paste mixed with fat, decoctions, etc., in the form of massage,

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poultice, etc., on to the head.<sup>3</sup>The term *maastishkya* can mean that which is beneficial to the head.

Maastishkya is called as *murdha/murdhni taila* by Vagbhata, and he has classified it into four types. Holding oil/ medicated liquids for a specific time on the head is called as *murdha taila*. The four types of Maastishkya are: (1) *Shiroabhyanga* (head massage), (2) *Shiroseka* (pouring of medicinal fluids over the head), (3) *Shiropichu* (poultice over the head), and (4) *Shirobasti* (holding of medicaments in a bag over the head). These are subsequently more potent. The main purpose is to keep the medicines on the head for maximum time.<sup>4</sup>

In general, Charaka says *maastishkya/murdhataila* results in *indriya prasannata*<sup>5</sup> (relaxation, nourishment and rejuvenation of sense organs) as *mastishka* (head) is the seat for all the *indriyas*, *netrendriya* (sense of vision) being one among them.

- *Shiroabhyanga* – Massaging the head with medicated oil helps in *tarpana*, i.e., nourishment of sense organs which includes eye also.<sup>6</sup>
- *Shiroseka* or *Shirodhara* – Pouring medicated fluid on the forehead in continuous stream with oil, buttermilk, milk, decoction, etc., is called *shirodhara*. *Takradhara* (with buttermilk) specifically is told to be beneficial in eye diseases. Practically it is used in diabetic retinopathy, hypertensive retinopathy, etc., *taila* and *ghrithadhara* (with oil and ghee) is indicated in *timira* (refractory and retinal diseases) and other diseases of eye (*dharakalpa*)
- *Shiropichu* – Cotton pad dipped in fat and kept on *brahmarandhra* is specifically indicated in *netra stambha*, i.e., stiffness of the eyes.<sup>7</sup>
- *Shirobasti* – Holding medicated fluids in a well made of leather cap on the head is indicated classically in *timira roga* (refractory and retinal diseases).<sup>8</sup>

A clear-cut indication of all the four types of *maastishkya/murdhni taila* is specifically seen in *timiradi netra rogas* in the classics, which depicts that it is one of the most important line of treatment of *netra rogas*.

Moreover, basics of Ayurveda clearly say that generally the supreme medicines for *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha* are *taila*, *ghritha* and *madhu*.<sup>9</sup>

According to Vagbhata, *taila* (oil) is excluded from the list of *chakshushya* drugs<sup>10</sup> (beneficial to the eye), 77 and instead *ghritha* (ghee) is added as the supreme medicine for *vata*.<sup>11</sup> *Taila* is considered a *chakshushya* (non-beneficial to the eye). Other Acharyas like Sushruta consider *taila* as *chakshushya*, but it cannot be used extensively in the eye as it is practically very irritant to the eye.<sup>12</sup>

Since the seat of *vata* concerned with vision, i.e., *prana vayu*

is in the *shiropradesha* (region of the head), *doshashamana* (pacification) line of treatment – especially *vatashamana* treatment should be done in this place, which means in a *vata*-predominant eye disease, the supreme medicine for *vata*, i.e., *taila* (oil) should be used in the form of *maastishkya*.<sup>13</sup> This does not restrict *maastishkya* being used for other *dosha* vitiation.

*Triphaladi keram*, *brahmi taila*, *himasagara taila*, *ashwagandha balalakshadi taila*, *balaguduchyadi taila*, and *balahatadi taila* are extensively used in various eye diseases.

Utility of *murdhni taila* in the practice of *netra chikitsa* not only helps in augmenting the efficacy of the treatment but also improves the chances of providing better eye care and thus results in successful practice of *netra rogas*.

## Note

- The word *maastishkya* is used more extensively here as compared to *murdhni taila*, as *murdhni taila* becomes symbolic to usage of oil on head whereas under the word *maastishkya*, other forms of medicines like *kwatha* (decoction), *takra* (buttermilk), etc., can also be incorporated
- *Thala potichil*, *thalam*, etc., which came into existence in this era can also be included under this. Since only classical treatises were referred, these were not included in this article

**Conflict of Interest:** None

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