



## ROLE OF SHIRODHARA IN MANAGEMENT OF ANIDRA (INSOMNIA)

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### ABSTRACT

Sleep is one of the most important physiological process responsible for the maintainance of health. Sleep is defined as unconsciousness from which the person can be aroused by external stimulus or other. Insomnia is the most common sleep problem worldwide. It can lead to many psychosomatic manifestations like fatigue, high blood pressure, lack of concentration and ultimately reduce the productivity and badly hampers the quality of life. Nidra is one among the primary tripod of life.<sup>[1]</sup> according to Ayurveda, Lack of Nidra(Anidra) causes many signs and symptoms like Dukha, karshyata, Balahani, Agnyanata even mrityu. Anidra can be clinically correlated with Insomnia. Ayurveda advocates some fruitful panchkarma therapies like Nasya, Shirodhara and Murdhni chikitsa for mana and Indriya vikaras.

**KEYWORDS:** Anidra, shirodhara, chikitsa.

### INTRODUCTION

Insomnia is the perception or complaint of inadequate or poor sleep quality of sleep because of difficulty in falling asleep, difficulty in maintaining sleep or waking too early in the morning .chronic insomnia can lead to severe fatigue, anxiety, depression and lack of concentration.

Stress is one of the commonest causes attributed to insomnia .sleep disturbances associated with stress has not been well documented due to its transients nature. Anidra is seen in many diseases as a lakshana and it may be Updrava or Arishta lakshana also, hence the Nidra, samprapti and chikitsa of Aswapna are explained with manifestation as a disease.

#### Insomnia can be classified as

- 1) **Transient Insomnia**- lasting from night to a week, and is usually caused by events which alters normal sleep pattern, such as travelling or sleeping in an unusual environment.
- 2) **Short term insomnia**- Lasts about two three weeks and is usually attributed to emotional factors as worry of stress.
- 3) **Chronic insomnia**- occurs most nights and lasts a month or more.

#### Aetiology

Insomnia is occasionally a symptom of an underlying medical or psychological condition but it may be caused by stress or life style changes. About half of Insomnia cases have no identifiable cause. Some conditions or situations that commonly lead to insomnia include-

- 1) Substance abuse, such as smoking, excessive consumption of caffeine, alcohol and recreational drugs.
- 2) Disruption of circadian Rhythms, such as shift work, change in work schedule
- 3) Uncomfortable and unusual sleeping environment
- 4) Psychiatric and neurological conditions such as depression, manic depressive disorders, restless leg syndrome. Post- traumatic stress disorders.
- 5) Biological factors- Due to advancement in age the internal biological clock that regulate sleep creeps slightly forward, compelling most senior citizens.
- 6) Sleep disordered breathing- sleep apnea
- 7) Chronic illness- such as congestive heart failure, Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, heart burn, prostatic problems, menopause, diabetes, arthritis and hyperthyroidism.
- 8) Use of certain medicines- long term use of decongestants, bronchodilators, beta blockers and sleep producing medication.
- 9) Excessive computer work or watching Television.

**Clinical features**

- 1) Not feeling refreshed
- 2) Inability to sleep despite being tired.
- 3) Day time drowsiness, irritability.
- 4) Impaired ability to perform normal.
- 5) Bodyache and heaviness of the body

Ayurveda considered Nidra among three upstambha<sup>[5]</sup> and discussed about Nidra and Nidranasha in the context of Ashtauninditiya Adhyaya.

Nidra is pushtida and Nidranasha does the Karshana of the body. Untimely excessive sleep and prolonged vigil take away both happiness and longevity<sup>6</sup>. In modern medical science for the management of Insomnia includes administration of Antipsychotics and Sedatives, each of them is having its own limitations due to wide range of adverse effect. On the other hand Ayurveda having a light of hope for this condition by correction of basic pathology particularly through Panchkarma, like external treatment in the form of Shirodhara.

**What is Shirodhara**

Shirodhara is a word comprising of 2 terms i.e. Shiro and Dhara. Shiro meaning head and Dhara meaning pouring in stream or sprinkling.

Thus Shirodhara means pouring the medicinal liquids in stream over the head of patient or in healthy person for stipulated amount of time.

**Synonyms:** sirodhar, shirodhar, shirodharam, siroseka, sirosechana.

**Role of shirodhara**

Ayurveda considers the human body as an inverted tree where in the roots are the top and branches pointing downwards.

If the human body is considered to be a tree, the head of human body will be considered to be the roots of this tree. The central portion of the body made up of thorax and abdomen is said to be the trunk of this tree and the limbs are considered to be the branches of this tree.

Just like the root nurture and controls all the activities and well-being of the tree, the head is the operational centre of the entire body. Head is central station for all our life activities. When we take care of the central station properly the whole body factor will function smoothly.

According to Ayurveda most of our diseases occur due to disturbed mind or exacerbated by a disturbed mind. So taking care of head and its components is mandatory for maintaining a healthy life.

Shirodhara treatment is advised for prevention of many psychosomatic disorders. Prevention of disease

pertaining to body, mind and sense organs is the first Indication.

Below mentioned are the indications of shirodhara, Aroonshika siraha Toda daha paaka vranushu Tu parisheka- (Ashtang hridaya su.22/24)  
 Aroonshika- Boils in the head  
 Shirotoda- Pricking pain in the head.  
 Shirodaha- Burning sensation in the head.  
 Shiropaaka- Suppuration in the head.  
 Shiroyrana- Boils or ulcers in the head.

**Shirodhara procedures**

Purvakarma (pretreatment) includes- the patient is thoroughly examined using Ayurvedic tools and methods of examination. The prakriti and vikriti (details of morbidity) are documented in detail.

The pt. is advised to shave the head or make it short as possible. Shirodhara done after removal of hairs will yield better results than done with hair intact.

**Preparation for the treatment**

Materials needed for the treatment are collected before. There are variety of medicinal fluids used for shirodhara. Taila is commonly used, so here we are discussing about Taila shirodhara.

Taila shirodhara- The basic material needed for Taila shirodhara (stream pouring of herbal oils) is oil. The oil shall be sesame oil, coconut oil or any herbal oil

**Shirodhara Apparatus**

- 1) Dhara Droni (Dhara table)- It is special table designed for conducting the treatment of Dhara. The table is generally made out of oil proof wood so that the oil doesn't percolate through the wood. This caution is taken because the table is used for multipurpose.
- 2) Dhara stand- This is a stand made up of wood or metal and is placed exactly behind the head end of the table. The stand has a hook at the top whose height can be adjusted to varying lengths the stand is roughly 0-7 feet in height with a tripod or circular base.
- 3) The Dhara Pot- This is a pot vessel usually made up of metal or earthen material. A small hole is made at the bottom vessel so as to accommodate a cotton wick or cloth. A sterile cloth or wick is passed through the hole such that a portion it lies within the vessel and a couple of inches of its length lie outside the vessel, by this the liquid drip down slowly through the cloth.
- 4) The collection pot or vessel- This vessel is placed at the bottom of the drain at the head end of the table. It collects the fluid coming down from the head compartment.

**Pradhana karma (Shirodhara procedure)**

- 1) Swasthi wachana(welfare prayer)
- 2) Patient examination on the day of Procedure(vital parameters should be examined viz pulse, BP, Conjunctiva, temp etc.)
- 3) Placement of patient and attendants and dhara vessels.- the patient shall be made to lie on the dhara table with his head resting on the elevation at the head end.
- 4) Conducting the procedure of dhara- the vessel is filled with medicated liquid.  
-the medicine oozes through wick /cloth slowly across the patient head so that medicines fall all over the scalp uniformly.  
-simultaneously the head is lightly massaged for better effect.
- 5) Duration of Shirodhara- Shirodhara can be done for a period of 45-60 minutes. Shirodhara is usually done for 7-14 days.

Mode of action of Shirodhara-It is difficult to prove with scientific measures how shirodhara works but hypothetical explanation can be given as follows-

- 1) Controlling Vayu
- 2) Relaxing and Coolant effect on the brain
- 3) Balancing Pitta and Rakta
- 4) Revitalizing the nervous system
- 5) Enhancing blood supply and nutrition to brain
- 6) Pressure and Temperature effect
- 7) Reversing Chitta Nasha and Bhaya
- 8) Control of Governing Doshas.

**CONCLUSION**

Shirodhara with Tiltaila oil may be beneficial for moderate to severe insomnia. It is feasible to recruit and retain participants for such therapies in India.

**DISCUSSION**

Shirodhara is an external application of oil used as a relaxation therapy which reduces stress and anxiety. It is used for neuromuscular relaxation, nourishment and relieves mental exhaustion. It helps to balance the circulation of blood in the head and relaxes the nervous system according to modern science stress or anxiety is the main cause for insomnia and in the condition of Anidra the main vitiated Dosha is vata. So balance of vata dosha is an important thing to treat insomnia by the application of oil over the head, the dryness of skin subsides and in turn kapha dosha increases. The increment of kapha dosha enhances the tama, counteracts the raja dosha. Ultimately this process nourishes the essential components of the body and helps to get rid of the problem like insomnia. Shirodhara with tiltaila is very beneficial due to its procedural effect as well as due to its drug effect also.

Continuous pouring of liquid over a particular point increases local circulation and helps to the absorption of active principles. Til taila is mainly contained having vatashamak properties due to virya which regulates.

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