

A REVIEW ON AYURVEDIC MANAGEMENT OF PRIMARY INSOMNIA

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ABSTRACT

Sleep is very important phenomenon to organisms without which life is not possible. Good sleep is the best indicator of good health. It affects adversely if not enjoyed in a rightful manner leading to sleep disorders. Psychological factors play a major role in the causation of the disease. Primary insomnia is the difficulty in initiating or maintaining sleep, which is the most common sleep complaint seen. *Anidra* is the term used for sleep disturbances in Ayurvedic treatises. The management of *Anidra* is been dealt in the form of diet, routine and medicament forms. Along with medication, proper counseling and relaxation is very essential in the management. If one follows proper sleep hygiene with a fresh, calm mind then he/she can attain good sleep.

Keywords: Sleep, Primary insomnia, *Anidra*, *Ayurveda*

INTRODUCTION

Insomnia is the difficulty in initiating or maintaining sleep, waking up too early and unable to sleep again, or waking up with a feeling of lassitude and lethargy. Insomnia is the most common sleep problem. Chronic insomnia is when a person has sleep disturbance for minimum of three nights a week for a month or longer. It is present in either the primary or secondary forms. Primary insomnia is not directly associated with any other health conditions.

Primary insomnia

Primary insomnia is estimated to occur in 25% of all chronic insomnia patients.¹ Although insomnia is highly prevalent; it is not commonly viewed as a significant threat to health. They are rare in childhood and adolescence but become more prevalent as age advances. Females are the more affected gender. Symptoms of primary insomnia are difficulty in initiating sleep (more common in young adults), difficulty

in maintaining sleep (common in elderly), not related to any mental disorders or physical conditions. Individual worries excessively during the day about not being able to fall asleep and even at night the person is unable to sleep even though taking conscious and intense efforts. Person complains of lethargy, fatigue, lack of concentration and easy irritability. He/ she may resort to hypnotics or alcohol to reduce tension or coffee or other stimulants to overcome the lassitude. The more the individual tries to sleep, the greater the sense of frustration and distress and even worse is the sleeplessness that follows.

Anidra

In Ayurvedic texts, the term "*Anidra*²" is used to indicate a pathological condition in which the patient is devoid of sleep. *Ayurveda* considered sleep as one of the basic instincts of life, a very essential factor for all the living beings. When both the quantity and quality of sleep are opti-

It leads to proper physical health and mental well being. If any of the components of sleep is disturbed, it leads to various problems like unpleasantness, emaciation, weakness, impotency, ignorance and finally culminating into death.³ Sleep and its disorders are described in the texts of *Charaka*,⁴ *Sushruta*,⁵ *Vagbhata*,⁶ *Bhavaprakasha*,⁷ *Harita*,⁸ *Bhela*,⁹ and *Yogaratanakara*.¹⁰ Sleep disturbances are seen as symptoms and also as complications of many diseases.

Causes

The causative factors mentioned can be described under following headings: Dietary causes- intake of dry foods,¹¹ barley.¹² Routine causes - excessive indulgence in exercise, fasting,¹³ sexual intercourse, hunger, uncomfortable bed.¹⁴ Iatrogenic causes – excessive or abnormal use of emesis, purgation, nasal errhines, bloodletting, medicated form of smoke,¹¹ sudation, collyrium, fasting. Psychological causes- fear, anxiety, anger,¹³ joy, sorrow,¹² greed,⁸ agitation.¹⁵

Signs and symptoms

Anidra is described as a symptom, a disorder and even as a complication of many diseases. In Ayurvedic authoritative text books, we get explanations regarding symptoms produced due to holding up of sleep like yawning, body ache, lassitude, headache, heaviness in the head and eyes, inactivity, exhaustion, giddiness, indigestion and diseases caused by vata.¹⁶ Disturbed sleep also causes unpleasantness, emaciation, weakness, impotency, ignorance and finally culminating into death.³

Treatment of *Anidra*

The treatments described for *Anidra* in Ayurvedic *Samhitas* are in form of diet, routine and medicine.

Dietary forms

Intake of soup of domestic, marshy and aquatic animals, meat of buffalo, buffalo milk,¹³ fish, eatables of wheat, black gram, milk products like curd, ghee,¹⁷ early and late colostrums and various kinds of cream like cheese, edible vegetables like brinjal, onion, juice of sugarcane,¹⁷ grape fruit, preparations of jaggery and sugar, wine.¹⁸

Routine forms

Bath, oil massage on the head, pleasant smell and sound,³ listen to good music and news, sleep induced by the moving wind with the help of cloth, Bamboo-chip (fan) or use of bronze vessel and the use of banana leaf, viewing dance and hearing humorous voice, tying of the root of drugs like *Kakamachi* or *Kakajangha* or *Apamarga* or *Kokilaksha* or *Suparnika (Bakuchi)* with hair, embracing a beautiful lady like creeper,⁸ to keep the mind in a calm and happy state, always content with everything in life, leading a life without worry, thoughts and greed.¹⁸

Medicament form

External therapy: *Abhyanga*(massage)¹³ and *padabhyanga*¹¹(foot massage) with medicated oils such as *dhanvantaram taila*, *ksheera bala taila*, *mahanarayana taila*; *utsadana* (unction); *chakshustarpana*¹³ (application of soothing ointment to the eyes) with medicated ghee like *triphala ghrita*, *patoladi ghrita* and *drakshadi ghrita*, *murdhni taila*¹³ is the application of oil to the scalp. It is of four types namely *shiro abhyanga*, *shiro pichu*, *shirodhara*, *shiro basti*. *Shiro abhyanga* is anointing on the head with oil. *Shiro pichu* is a process by which a piece of cloth is dipped in specific oil and kept over the anterior frontonalle. *Shirobasti* is a procedure in which a leather cap is used to keep oil over the head. It can

be carried out with medicated oils. *Shirodhara* is the pouring of a liquid on the forehead, done with medicated oils, medicated milk, medicated butter milk, water, coconut water, decoctions like *jatamamsi*. These four procedures can be carried out using medicated oils namely like *brahmi taila*, *tungadrumadi taila*, *himasagara taila*, *asana bilwadi taila*, *dhanvantaram taila*, *himasagara taila*, *chandanadi taila*, *ksheerabala taila*, *aswagandha taila*; *samvahana* (rubbing the body by hand); *udvartana*¹³ (massaging the body with powder of herbs); *karnapoorana*¹¹ (anointing the ears); *shirolepa*¹³ (medicinal plaster over the forehead) with drugs like *brahmi*, *devadaru*; *vadana lepa*¹³ (medicinal application over the face), *mardana*⁸ (mildly pressing the body).

Internal therapy:

Single drug therapy: A good number of single drugs are described in Ayurvedic literatures which improves the sleep pattern. These single drugs are *Palandu*, *Ikshurasa*, *Potaki*, *Tila*, *Trikatu*, *Ketaki*, *Vartaka*, *Kakmachi*, *Asuri*.¹⁹ Some other single drugs include *Brahmi*, *Aswagandha*, *Draksha*, *Bhanga*, *Shankhapushpi*, *Jatamamsi*, *Ahiphena*, *Tagara*, *Kusmanda*, *Yamini*, *Pippali moola*, *Sarpagandha*, *Punarnava*, *Karpura*, *Parasika yavani*, *Katu tumbi*, *Jatiphala*, *Apamarga moola*, *Khas khas*, *Kupilu*, *Raja sarshapa*.²⁰

Compound form: *Kashayas* (decoctions) namely *vidaryadi kashaya*, *drakshadi kashaya*, *mamsyadi kashaya*; *ghrita* (medicated ghee) namely *amrutaprasha ghrita*, *vidaryadi ghrita*, *kalyanaka ghrita*; *arishta* (fermented decoction/ infusion) such as *aswagandharishta*, *draksharishta*, *chandanasava*; *vati* (tablets) like *ksheerabala*, *manasamitra vati*, *lokanatha rasa*,

nidrodaya rasa; *bhasmas* like *yashada*, *pravalala*, *mukta*; *ksheerapaka* namely *aswagandha*, *tagara*, *jatamansi*.

DISCUSSION

Anidra is explained as *Vata Nanatmaja Vikara*, in *Vata & Pitta Dosha Vriddhi Lakshanas* and as symptoms of some other diseases. It is mentioned that *Sharirika Dosha Kapha*, *Manasika Dosha Tamas*, *Chetana Sthana Hridaya* and *Samjnavaha Srotas* are responsible for the production of sleep. *Acharyas* have explained different varieties of treatment for *Anidra*. The bodily humors such as *Vata*, *Pitta* and psychic principle *Raja* may be considered as the principle causative factors for *Anidra*. The treatments mentioned by all the *Acharyas* are also based on the same principle, ie by the administration of the drugs and therapies which increases the *kapha* in the body. The first line of treatment to be adopted is the avoidance of the causative factors. More importance is given to the external therapies and psychotherapies in the management of *Anidra*. With the external therapies like *Shirodhara*, *Vata* and *Pitta Doshas* get pacified and there is elevation in the quantum of *Kapha Dosha*. When an individual lies down in a relaxed state for longer time, *Tamasika Guna* overcomes the *Rajasika Guna*. The procedure of *Shirodhara* brings the *Samjnavaha Srotas* in peaceful state of rest which helps in inducing sleep. It also increases *Tamoguna* in the *Shirah Pradesha*. Hence it helps in production of *Nidra*.

Even internal medicines are also described for the patients of *Anidra* along with specific diet and routines. The drugs selected for insomnia are mainly having *Tikta*, *Kashaya Rasa*, due to which they act as *Pitta Shamaka* and with the help of *Ushna Veerya*, they possess *Vata shamaka* prop-

erty. All the selected drugs have *Nadibalya*, *Mastishka Shamaka*, *Nidrajanaka* and *Vatahara* properties by virtue of which these drugs showed significant therapeutic results. The treatment of *Anidra* should depend upon the measures having pacifying effect on *vata* as well as calming the disturbed psyche of the person.

CONCLUSION

Sleep is considered as one of the basic instincts of life. Happiness, vigor, virility, nutrition, long life is achieved by proper sleep. Only a healthy body and sound mind can have a sound sleep. Insomnia becoming progressively a life threatening condition and it also has the tendency to damage one's daily life including his/ her personal, social, relational and occupational life. If one follows the day, night and seasonal regimens properly with control over his/her mind and deeds, then he/ she will definitely get a refreshing sound sleep.

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