

EFFECT OF SHIRODHARA IN STRESS INDUCED INSOMNIA

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ABSTRACT

Background: “Health is wealth”, we know this phrase very well but to follow this as we said is not possible in today’s era. Because people nowadays busy with their own schedule. Everyone here runs behind their dreams for betterment of their lives. With all of these consequences how can we ignore ‘Stress’, which is common factor that hampers our day to day life. In *Ayurveda*, ‘*Nidra*’ is considered as one of the ‘*Trayopstambha*’ i.e. tripod of life. ‘*Shirodhara*’ therapy acts as a natural stress buster. Insomnia is a sleep disorder in which an individual has trouble falling or staying asleep. This is what is tried to explain in this present study. **Objective:** To study the effect of

Shirodhara in stress induced insomnia. **Material and Methods:** *Ayurvedic* and modern texts.

Conclusion: ‘Stress’ is a main factor responsible for many lifestyle and psychosomatic disorders including Insomnia. Here is an attempt to explain the efficacy of ‘*Shirodhara*’ in stress induced insomnia, with its mode of action and how it helps to improve the sleep quality of an individual by reducing all the symptoms of Insomnia.

KEYWORDS: *Shirodhara*, Stress, Insomnia, *Nidra*, *Trayopstambha*, *Ajnya chakra*.

INTRODUCTION

“A sound mind in a sound body”, is a well-known motto to live life which is much easier for hearing but difficult to digest and seems like quite impossible in this materialistic world. Every single person here is struggling hard to follow their dreams by doing their job and to earn more and more money for betterment of their lives. With all of these consequences how can we ignore ‘stress’? ‘Stress’ is a main factor responsible for many lifestyles, psychosomatic disorders and other health issues including Insomnia.

Stress is a normal physical response to certain events that make us feel threatened or upset our balance in some way. The stress response is the body's reaction to protect us against all the stress induced disorders. When working properly, it helps us to stay focused, energetic & alert. But beyond a certain point, it starts causing major damage to our health, productivity & quality of life. So, it's important to learn the role of stress in the etiology of several diseases including Insomnia. Insomnia is a sleep disorder in which an individual has trouble falling or staying asleep. The condition can be short term (Acute) or can last for long term (Chronic). Insomnia is classified in two types i.e. primary & secondary. Primary insomnia is mainly caused by stress while secondary caused due to pain or any systemic factors.

In present time, due to covid-19 pandemic stress is excessively increasing among the individuals. As the no. of population is influenced by OTP media so, seeing the no. of media channels which are readily available there by staying awake late night is again the cause of Insomnia. In IT professions people have their night shifts at workplace or late night meetings which are ultimately affecting physical and mental health.

According to *Ayurveda*, our health is like a building, supported by 3 pillars i.e. *Trayopstambha* – *Aahar*, *Nidra* and *Bramhacharya* which keep our body in a state of homeostasis. However, disturbance in even one of these can be hazardous to health as a whole which in the long run can prove fatal. To stay healthy is every individual's necessity, whether this necessity is fulfilled or not is completely in hands of that individual. *Shirodhara* therapy acts as a natural stress buster. *Ayurveda* has explained it very well that the treatment like "*Shirodhara*" can not only help to reduce the stress but also improves sleep quality of an individual by reducing all the symptoms of Insomnia.

AIM

To elaborate the effect of *Shirodhara* in stress induced insomnia.

OBJECTIVE

To study the effect of *Shirodhara* with its mode of action as per reference given by *Ayurveda* and modern text.

MATERIAL

- Literature review
- Literature review from *Samhita's*

- Literature review from modern text.
- Journals and website.

METHODS

- Conceptual study
- Brief introduction of insomnia including stress
- *Nidra* (Sleep pattern) as per *Ayurvedic* perspective
- Definition of *Shirodhara*
- Mode of action of *Shirodhara* as per *Ayurveda* and modern point of view

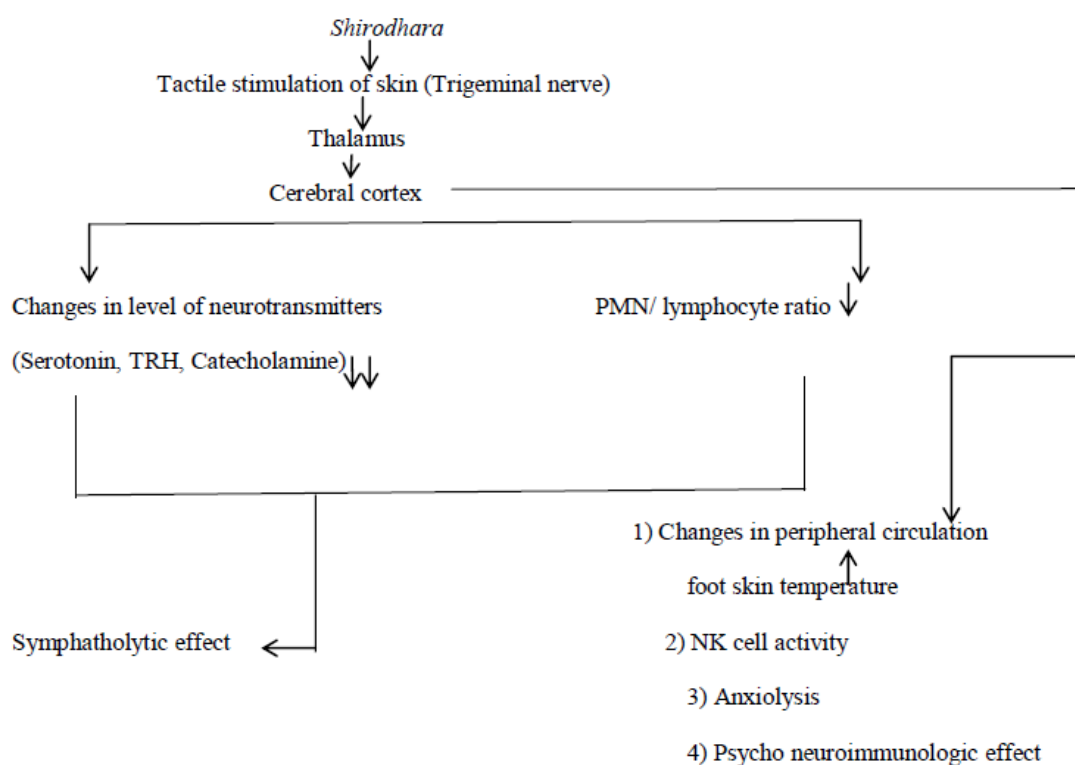
Insomnia is a sleep disorder in which an individual has trouble falling or staying asleep. The condition can be short term (Acute) or can last for long term (Chronic). Insomnia is classified in two types i.e. Acute & Chronic. Acute insomnia lasts from 1 night to few weeks and while chronic happens at least 3 nights a week for 3 months or more. Primary causes of insomnia happens mainly when sleep pattern of a particular individual aren't linked with any other health conditions and it is mostly caused by stress related to big life events or genetic factors. Secondary causes of insomnia include mental health conditions like depression, anxiety. Other factors for this includes prolonged use of certain medications for any allergic conditions like cold, hypertension, asthma, cancer or due to any systemic pain and also with an excess intake of alcohol, caffeine, tobacco or use of an illicit drugs.

Stress is so commonplace that it has become a way of life. Stress isn't always bad. In small doses, it can help us to perform under pressure and motivate us to do our best. But when we are constantly running in an emergency mode, our mind and body may pay the price. In an emergency situation, stress can save our life by giving extra strength to defend our self. But beyond certain point, stress stops being helpful and start causing major damage to our health. The stress is known as '*Sahasa*' in *Ayurveda*. '*sahas*' by causing "*Ojakshaya*" (Loss of immunity) increases the susceptibility of the human body to various diseases such as anxiety, depression, insomnia and other psychosomatic disorders which may affect daily lifestyle.

As per *Ayurvedic* perspective, our health is supported by 3 pillars i.e. '*Trayopstambha*' (*Aahar*, *Nidra* and *Bramhacharya*), they play similar role just like three biological humours- *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* and *Triguna* -*Satva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*. Food is the 1st and foremost pillar of *Ayurveda* and the important constituent of all living beings. The state when the body and mind undergo rest, it is known as living body is asleep. When the

mind is affected by *Tamoguna* in night, the *Kapha dosha* predominates and natural sleep is induced. Good sleep can improve concentration, productivity and helps in healing and repairing of body tissues. Adequate sleep reduces the risk of heart disease, diabetes, stroke, high blood pressure. Sleeping for long times or imbalances in sleep has bad impact on health. According to *Ayurveda* proper sleep offers many advantages such as *Sukhs* (happiness), *Pushti* (nourishment), *Bala* (strength), *Vrushata* (fertility), *Dnyana* (cognition), *Jiveeta* (life) and vice versa.

‘*Shirodhara*’ is a form of *Ayurvedic* therapy that involves pouring of warm liquids gently over the forehead. The name comes from the Sanskrit words *Shiro* means head (although in this case it is forehead) and *Dhara* means flow. The liquids includes mainly oils (*Tailadhara*), milk (*Ksheeradhara*), buttermilk (*Takradhara*) or *Ayurvedic* conctions (*Kashayadhara*) made up of various medicinal drugs. The liquid is poured in an alternating pattern from a particular height for a specific amount of time in a continuous stream onto the forehead, and then allowed to run over the scalp and through the hair in rhythmic way.



According to *Ayurveda*, the center of the forehead is said to be the ‘third eye’, this is the only part of body that has numerous sensitive nerve endings or vital points that are directly connected to the brain. Yogic tradition refers to this third eye as the ‘*Ajnya chakra*’. Focusing

on the '*Ajnya chakra*' during meditation with closed eyes leads to psychosomatic harmony. As the oil drips on the '*Ajnya chakra*', it begets a meditation like effect, which is a consequence of stillness of mind leading to the adaptive reason to the basal stress. The oil infiltrates into the nervous system after dousing the forehead and scalp. The entire procedure empowers the mind and body to experience a state of deep rest, similar to the state, a person attains right after meditation. *Shirodhara* is a process of effectively controlling or maintaining *Prana* and *Vyana Vatas*, *Tarpaka Kapha* and *Alochaka Pitta*. It increases cerebral circulation by acting on *Manomaya Kosha* which helps to restore peace of mind.

Action of *shirodhara* is supposed to be on *Marma*, *Chakra* and *Manovaha Strotas*. As per modern point of view there are no. of hypothesis regarding the action on pituitary and pineal gland. Certain studies have been conducted to find out the work of *Shirodhara* on body. The action of *Shirodhara* on body is anxiolytic, altered state of consciousness (ASC) inducing. Continuing dripping of oil on forehead exert the pressure which has impulse conduction through tactile and thermo receptors, due to prolonged pressure impulse conduction may interrupt and body may go to rest which causes tranquilizer effect on mind. The procedure may activate the function of thalamus and basal fore brain by relaxing peripheral muscles which brings the amount of serotonin at normal stage inducing a good sound sleep. *Shirodhara* also stimulates various vital points all around the head and improves blood circulation in the brain. The head massage also reduces the level of stress hormones such as adrenaline or noradrenaline by improving cognitive abilities like memory and concentration.

DISCUSSION

Today's lifestyle is full of hassels, deadlines,frustrations and demands. For many people, stress is so commonplace that it has become a way of life. Stress isn't always bad. But if we are frequently find ourself feeling frezzeled and overwhelmed, it's time to take action to bring our nervous system back into balance. We can protect ourself by learning how to recognize the sign and symptoms of stress and taking steps to reduce its harmful effects which further cause psychosomatic disorders like insomnia.

The best you eat the best you grow, but growth factor is not dependent on food only, sleep is equally responsible for healthy body growth. Getting enough sleep is essential for helping a person maintain optimal health and well-being. When it comes to our health, sleep is as vital as regular exercise and eating a balanced diet. All the muscles get repair, regenerate and recover during sleep which are damaged during daytime activities. Good sound sleep

increases the protein synthesis in the body which repairs heart and blood vessels. It also improves productivity, concentration by providing more energy for better mental functioning which ultimately lowers stress levels and prevents anxiety and depression. A lack of sleep may affect a person's desire or ability to maintain a healthy lifestyle, which causes weight gain and other risk factors responsible for many lifestyle disorders including insomnia. The covid-19 pandemic has had a major impact on our lives. Many of us are facing challenges that can be stressful. So, *Shirodhara* therapy can be really helpful in it.

Treatment of insomnia includes alleviating any physical and emotional problems that are contributing to the condition and exploring changes in lifestyle. Acute insomnia may not require treatment. If it's hard for an individual to perform daily activities then doctor may prescribe certain medications for short duration. These medicines has its own limitations, overuse of these medicine might causes dependency of that drug with some side effects. Chronic insomnia needs behavioural therapy so it can help to promote sleep. *Shirodhara* is a blissful therapy which acts as natural stress buster. The infused medicated oils or other liquids when poured over forehead produce soothing and calming sensation to the brain by relaxing peripheral muscles, improves cognitive abilities like concentration and memory by promoting sound sleep and hence relieves stress which is one of the important factors of insomnia.

CONCLUSION

In this conceptual study we came to known about brief introduction of insomnia with its types and factors responsible for it, mainly regarding the stress. The role of stress in the etiology of insomnia as per both *Ayurvedic* and modern view. *Ayurveda* describes *Nidra* (sleep) as a basic instinct of life, essential to all living beings. It is one of the important factor included in *Trayopstambha* along with *Aahar* (food) and *Bramhacharya* (abstinence). The right balance of these 3 elements required for healthy life.

According to *Ayurveda*, Proper sleep offers many advantages such as *Sukhs* (happiness), *Pushti* (nourishment), *Bala* (strength), *Vrushata* (fertility), *Dnyana* (cognition), *Jiveeta* (life) and improper sleep leads to *Dukha* (illness), *Karshya* (emaciation), *Abalam* (weakness), *Kleebata* (impotency), *Adnyan* (ignorance), *Maranam* (death). Good sleepers tend to eat fewer calories. Good sleep can improve concentration, productivity and helps in healing and repairing of body tissues. Adequate sleep reduces the risk of heart disease, hypertension, diabetes and stroke.so, the traditional therapy like *Shirodhara* is very much helpful to relieves

stress happens due to certain reasons including covid related stress. So, not only to relieve from post covid life but it also helpful to get rid of mental exhaustion caused due to insomnia related to it. The massage brings down the elevated serotonin levels, a neurotransmitter that stabilizes mood, feelings of well-being and happiness by diminishing anxiety, depression and enhances a good sound sleep.

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