

**BENEFITS OF SHIRODHARA IN MANAGEMENT OF INSOMNIA (ANIDRA)**Dr. Prerna Sarode\*<sup>1</sup> and Dr. Anil Pansambal<sup>2</sup><sup>1</sup>PG Scholar. Kayachikitsa Dept. SVNHTs Ayurved College, Rahuri, Ahmednagar, Maharashtra, India.<sup>2</sup>Guide and Prof. of Kayachikitsa Dept. SVNHTs Ayurved College, Rahuri, Ahmednagar, Maharashtra, India.**\*Corresponding Author: Dr. Prerna Sarode**

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**ABSTRACT**

In present era, change in lifestyle and several environmental and social distress are significantly influencing stress levels. Chronic stress leads to lack of sleep that is called Insomnia. It can be correlated as Anidra. If Insomnia not treated properly in early stage it may lead to other psychosomatic disorders. *Ayurveda* has a light of hope for this condition by correcting the basic pathology in the form of Shirodhara therapy. It is a process of gentle pouring of medicated liquids upon the forehead. Shirodhara rejuvenates the nervous system, promotes deep relaxation, relieves fatigue and reinvigorates the body and mind. It relieves stress, worry and excessive thought and enhances proper sleep. This paper focuses review on Shirodhara, an ayurvedic therapy and its role in the management of Insomnia (Anidra)

**KEYWORDS:** *Shirodhara, Insomnia, Anidra.***INTRODUCTION**

In present era, change in lifestyle and several environmental and social distress are significantly influencing stress levels. It disturbs our physical as well as mental equilibrium. Chronic stress leads to lack of sleep that is called Insomnia. It can be correlated as *Anidra*. Mainly *Vata Vaigunyata* (vitiation of *vata dosha*) is responsible for *Anidra* (Insomnia). According to *Ayurveda*, *Anidra* (lack of sleep) causes *Dukha* (pain), *Karshyata* (physical weakness), *Balahani* (loss of power), *Kleibya* (infertility), *Agyanata* (lack of consciousness) sometimes even *Mrityu* (death).<sup>[1]</sup> In *Ayurveda*, *Nidra* is considered as one of the Tripods of life.<sup>[2]</sup> If Insomnia not treated properly in early stage it may lead to other psychosomatic disorders. Hence, it is a need of time to bring some treatment options which can give positive results in managing *Anidra*. *Ayurveda* has a light of hope for this condition by correcting the basic pathology particularly through *Panckarma* like external treatment in the form of *Shirodhara*.<sup>[3]</sup> *Shirodhara* is a union of two words – *Shiro* which means Head and *Dhara* represents Pouring medicines (in liquid form). It is a process of gentle pouring of medicated liquids upon the forehead. It re-establishes the functional integrity between three *doshic* subtypes and thus helps to achieve a good sound sleep.

**INSOMNIA**

Insomnia is the complaint of inadequate sleep; it can be classified according to the nature of sleep disruption and duration of the complaint. Insomnia is subdivided into difficulty in falling asleep (sleep onset insomnia),

frequent or sustained awakenings (sleep maintenance insomnia), or early morning awakenings (sleep offset insomnia), though most insomnia patients present with two or more of these symptoms. Short-term insomnia lasts from few days to 3 weeks. Long-term insomnia, or chronic insomnia, lasts for months or years. Insomnia can be grouped into Primary and secondary Insomnia. Primary Insomnia is a sleep disorder not attributable to a medical, psychiatric, or environmental cause and Secondary insomnia also known as co morbid insomnia which is associated with psychiatric disorder.<sup>[4]</sup>

**SHIRODHARA*****Shiro Dhara Types***<sup>[5]</sup>*Kshiradhara- Dhara* with milk infused with suitable herbs.*Takradhara- Dhara* with buttermilk infused with suitable herbs.*Snehadhara- Dhara* with oil.*Jaladhara- Dhara* with water.*Kwathadhara- Dhara* with *Kwatha* (decoction)*Shiro Dhara Apparatus*<sup>[6]</sup>

***Dhara Droni (Dhara Table):*** It is a special table designed for conducting the treatment of *Dhara*. Its dimensions are that which can accommodate the body of an average individual. The table is generally made out of oil proof wood so that the oil doesn't percolate through the wood.

**The *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 6 to 7 feet in height with a tripod or circular base.

**The Dhara Pot:** This is a vessel usually made up of metal or earthen material. A small hole is made at the bottom of the vessel so as to accommodate a cotton wick or a cloth. A sterile cloth or wick is passed through the hole such that a portion of it lies within the vessel and a couple of inches of its length lie outside the vessel. The portion within the vessel is knotted such that it almost blocks the hole. The idea is that the liquid should drip down slowly through the cloth instead of falling in a big stream through the hole. The vessel is suspended from the stand with the help of the hook such that the wick comes to lie a few inches above the mid part of the forehead of the lying patient.

**The collection pot/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 and the attendant placed for collection keeps refilling the Dhara pot in the collection pot. Thus the liquid medicine collected in the collection vessel is recycled until the procedure is completed. When one collection pot is removed another pot is kept in place.

#### Other materials required

**A stove:** To warm the medicine if needed during the treatment procedure.

**Steel vessels:** For preparation of the medicines needed for Dhara. 2 small vessels. Sterile cotton pads and bandage cloth: To keep on patient's eye during the procedure.

Large 2 Spoons –To mix the medicaments during preparation and subsequently during treatment.

**Sterile clothes:** (For wiping after treatment) Sterile clothes, sponges, napkins or tissue papers for wiping etc.

**Chair:** For the Doctor / attendants to be seated.

**Small Pillow:** To patient for neck support.

#### Shiro Dhara Procedure<sup>[7]</sup>

On the day of the treatment vital parameters should be examined viz., pulse reading, BP recording, conjunctiva, temperature etc. interrogation regarding the recently developed complaints if any should be done. A treatment protocol should be maintained. Important findings and changes should be noted on a daily basis throughout the length of the treatment procedure. Placement of patient, attendants and Dhara vessel. The patient should be made to lie on the Dhara table with his head resting on the elevation at the head end. A small pillow is placed as a neck support beneath the neck of the patient. The head end of the table shall be facing east or north direction (According to *Ayurveda*, the direction in which a treatment or medicine is administered will also add to the effect of the results). Massage with medicated oils can be given to the whole body (optional) before Dhara. Cotton pads are placed on the eyes of the patient to avoid the

medicament's entering the eyes. The pads can also be tied lightly in position around the eyes as an alternative. The doctor conducting the treatment or the chief attendant should stand or be seated at the head end. One more attendant should be seated near the collecting vessel. The Dhara stand should be placed vertically near the head end. The Dhara vessel fitted with the cotton wick or sterile cloth in the opening at the bottom should be suspended from the hook with the help of a chain or thick rope such that the wick is at a height of at least 2 feet above the midpoint of the centre of the patient's forehead. The Dhara vessel should be filled with the medicine (medicated liquid).

#### Duration of Shirodhara<sup>[8]</sup>

Shirodhara can be done for a period of 45 minutes to 60 minutes at a schedule depending on the nature and severity of the disease or depending on the individual's constitution or *Prakruti*. Shirodhara is usually done for a period of 7 to 14 days or as recommended by the practitioner. The relief of complaints is taken as a parameter for fixing and limiting the number of days of treatment to be done at a stretch. It can also be done for 7, 14, 21 or 28 days or longer period of time in chronic and stubborn cases. Generally a small time gap is provided between 2 schedules and often not continued beyond 3 weeks time. Time: Shirodhara is usually done in the early hours of the morning (preferably between 6am and 10am). In high *Pitta* conditions, it can be done in the afternoon also.

#### Precautions<sup>[9]</sup>

Precautions to be taken while conducting Shirodhara The masseur or person conducting the head massage should have cut his nails and trimmed them They should not have any infectious diseases, inflammatory or degenerative diseases in their hands of fingers The hands of the masseur should be devoid of cracks and fissures. The Dhara liquid should not be too hot or too cold. The Dhara liquid shall not fall from a great height or from very near to head. The stream of Dhara liquid should not be too thick or thin.

#### Probable Mode of Action of Shirodhara

Effects on *Dosha*- Shirodhara is a type of *moordhana taila*, in which suitable *taila* is to be continuously poured on the fore head and the oil is to be allowed to flow over the scalp.<sup>[10]</sup> It is a relaxation therapy which relieves mental exhaustion as well as pacifies the vitiated *Vata Dosha* in head. According to *Ayurveda*, there are three sub *doshas* that govern the mind. The integrity of the functioning of these *subdoshas* is the key for a perfect body-mind health. *Vata dosha* is the driving force of all the activities of the body and mind. *Prana vata* is the *subdosha* of *vata* that governs the brain, sensory perception and the mind. *Tarpaka Kapha subdosha* of *kapha* governs the Cerebrospinal Fluid. *Sadhaka pitta* emotions effects on heart. Imbalance or vitiation of one or more of these 3 factors will lead to many psychosomatic diseases. The soothing of Shirodhara on

the *Marma's* and Nervous system and endocrine system relaxes *Prana Vayu*, *Sadhaka Pitta* and *Tarpaka Kapha* in the brain (head).

**Effects on Marmas-** *Marmas* like *Apanga*, *Avarta*, *Shanka*, *Utkshepa*, *Seemantha* and *Sthapani Marma* are related to the eye and blood circulation to the brain. *Shirodhara* stimulates these *marmas* and improves the circulation, as oil used for *shirodhara* is always warm causes vasodilatation of all the channels and thereby their circulation which in turn improves blood circulation of the brain.<sup>[11]</sup>

*Moordhataila* (application of oil to the head) is highly beneficial for the brain, sense organs, nerves and hairs. *Moordha Taila* controls vitiated *Vata* and *Pitta dosha* in the head. *Vitiated Vata* and *Pitta* would lead to many diseases of the brain, nerves and sense organs by producing degenerative and inflammatory changes respectively. Thus *Moordha Taila* is both a prophylactic (preventive) and curative measure. Since the brain and the nervous system controls the entire body functions, soothing them with *Moordhataila* procedures will keep the body fit and healthy.

Pituitary gland, located in the head is the master gland which controls functions of the glands that produce important chemicals which are needed for many body functions and discharge it into the blood stream directly. *Moordha Taila*, controls the pituitary functions by helping in the discharge of happy chemicals which ultimately leads to psychosomatic harmony.

#### DISCUSSION

*Shirodhara* helps to normalize the function of central nervous system by relaxing the nervous system and balancing the circulation of blood in the head. According to modern medical science stress or anxiety is main cause for Insomnia. In the condition of *Anidra* (insomnia) 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*, which counteracts the *Raja Guna*. Ultimately this process nourishes the essential components of body and helps to get ride from the problem like insomnia.

#### CONCLUSION

Patients with predominance of *Vata Pitta prakruti* are more prone to Primary Insomnia. *Shirodhara* promotes deep relaxation, relieves fatigue and reinvigorates the body and mind. In *dhara* therapy, prolonged and continuous pressure due to pouring of the medicated liquid may cause tranquility of mind and induce natural sleep. It relieves stress, worry and excessive thought. *Shirodhara* is done directly on the head, so it may be considered as good for relieving the diseases caused by stress as well as other mental factors. Hence, it can be concluded that *Shirodhara* is not only a curative remedy

but also is a wonderful preventive measure in management of Insomnia (*Anidra*).

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