

Role of Shirodhara in the Management of Madatyayajanya Anidra

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ABSTRACT:

Insomnia (*anidra*) is the complaint of inadequate sleep. Alcohol can interfere with sleep, despite the fact that many patients use it to relax and promote sleep. Although alcohol can increase drowsiness and shorten sleep latency, even moderate amounts of alcohol increases awakenings in the second half of the night most of times. *Acharya* Charak also describes the symptom *nidranash* or *Prajagrana* in *madatyaya* (Alcoholism). *Shirodhara* is a classical and a well-established Ayurveda procedure of slowly and steadily dripping medicated oil or other liquids on the forehead. This procedure promotes the release of sleep inducing neurotransmitters which causes a dynamic psycho-somatic balance results in quite sleep. This article reveals the effect of *shirodhara* procedure in insomnia associated with *madatyaya* (Alcoholism).

Keywords: Insomnia, *madatyaya*, neurotransmitters.

INTRODUCTION:

Ayurveda considered *Nidra*, among the three *Upastambhas* for the maintenance of the living organism¹. While discussing about *nidra* and *nidranasha* in the context of *Astaunindaniya Adhyaya*, Charaka has stated that happiness & sorrow, growth & wasting, strength & weakness, virility & impotence, the knowledge & ignorance as well as existence of life and its cessation depend on the sleep. Moreover, *Nidra* is *Pushtida* and *Jagarana* or *Nidranasha* does the *Karshana* of the body². Charaka has included the *Asvapna* (Insomnia) in *Nanatmaja Vata Vikaras*³. *Acharya* Sushruta explained the *Vaikariki Nidra*⁴ which can be correlated to sleep disorders like *madatyayajanya anidra* in case of alcoholism.

The term *shirodhara* is derived from two Sanskrit words: *shiro* means head and *dhara* means to flow. It involves the rhythmic and consistent flow of lukewarm medicated oils on the forehead. This stimulates the chakra point just above and between the eyebrows and creates a blissful sensation.

Shirodhara improves blood circulation to the brain and stimulates the pituitary and pineal glands thus improving their functions. *Shirodhara* cures insomnia, stress, depression and memory loss. The procedure is also said to synchronize alpha brain waves. This procedure reduces fatigue and initiates a soothing effect on brain cells. It might be working due to the effect of a soothing sensation of poured liquids through peripheral nerves of the skin of the forehead and then they go to the brain with calming and soothing energies, which help to reduce stress and induce sleep. Due to constant flow of liquids over the head, *shirodhara* tranquilizes and stabilizes the mind, so the mind becomes serene and calmed. It is a form of

restorative therapy for stress, anxiety and insomnia.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVE:

- To discuss, evaluate & elaboration of Insomnia with special references to *madatyayajanya anidra*.
- To discuss, evaluate & elaboration of effects of *shirodhara* procedure on *madatyayajanya anidra*.

MATERIAL AND METHODS:

This article is based on personal experiences & textual review. Material related to *madatyayajanya anidra* and effect of *shirodhara* procedure was collected from the *Brihatrayi*, *Laghutrayi*, *Nighantu* and available commentaries of those have reviewed. Modern Texts & various websites to collect information on the relevant topics were referred.

CONCEPTUAL STUDY:

Shirodhara is a titillating form of *snehana* treatment, whereby the oil or therapeutic substance methodically drips along a course thread onto the forehead. A metal or clay vessel, the *dhara patra*, is suspended directly above the forehead. This treatment involves pouring a stream of oil over the guest's forehead. Most commonly medicated sesame oil is used for this treatment. Traditionally, specifically prepared herbal medicated oils, milk, or buttermilk are used. The oil or other fluid is poured into the pot, and then seeps through a hole in the bottom of the pot and slides down a 4-inch-long thread, half of which hangs through the hole. The drops of oil from the thread drip directly onto the subject's third eye, or centre of the forehead. An ancient technique, *shirodhara* is meant to be maintained at a certain rhythmic speed while awakening the third eye. Vast and miraculous healing occurs when this technique is performed to perfection. The rhythm of the oil trickling onto the third eye or *Sthapani Marma*, which is the seat of our cognitive vision, evokes deep cognitive memories. Through the arousal of these memories, bodily tissues are transformed and good health is restored. Before *shirodhara* is administered, the preliminary procedure of *abhyanga* massage is performed. A soporific treat, *shirodhara* soothes and strengthen the senses as well as the mind. A total state of wellness is induced in the process.

Types of *shirodhara*:

Due to variation in liquids, its types are decided as follows:

1. **Taila Dhara** : Medicated oils are used in this type of *dhara* eg *Brahmi taila* , *Ksheerbala taila* .
2. **Takra Dhara** : *takra* that is prepared with the curd of cow's milk is used as the main ingredient of pouring liquid.
3. **Kwatha Dhara**: Decoctions made from various herbs as per condition and bodily defect or *dosha* of the person are used in *kwatha dhara* eg *Dashmool kwatha*, *brahmi kwatha* etc.
4. **Dugadha Dhara / Ksheer Dhara**) : Cow's milk mixed with some medicinal herbs such as *Sida cordifolia* or *Asparagus rasemosus* is used as the main ingredient in *shirodhara* is called *dugadha dhara*. *shirodhara* with luke-warm milk have potent effect on the management of *Anidra* (Insomnia). The milk used for the *shirodhara* has *madhura rasa*, *snigdha guna*, *sheeta veerya* and *madhura vipaka* which subside *Vata* and *Pitta doshas* and increases the *Kapha dosha*. It also increases *Tamoguna* in the *Shirah pradesha*. Hence it helps to induce sleep.
5. **Jala Dhara**: Coconut water or plain water is used in cases of ailments due to excess heat in the body or *Pitta* diseases.

Indications of shirodhara: *Shirodhara* is beneficial in all diseases of forehead, head or nervous system.

It is mainly indicated medically in following cases:

1. Headache
2. Insomnia (sleeplessness /difficulties in sleeping)
3. Eye diseases
4. Anxiety or neurosis
5. Depression
6. Memory loss

Effect of *Shirodhara* on Neuro Transmitters: *Shirodhara* may have sedative effect on hyperactive limbic system, caused by stress. It leads to facilitate the inhibitory pre-synaptic action of GABA and also reduces high level of nor-adrenaline, which are found high in anxious state of mind⁵.

Effect of *Shirodhara* on *Tridosha*: Stress and tension causes imbalance of *Prana*, *Udana* and *Vyana Vayu*; *Sadhaka Pitta* and *Tarpaka Kapha*. *Shirodhara* reestablishes the functional integrity between these three subtypes of *dosha* through its positive effect⁶.

Therapeutic effect of the medicament used for *Shirodhara*:

The maximum absorption of drug is in the skin of scalp and oil is better absorbed compare water⁷. It suggests that the medicament used for *dhara* is definitely absorbed.

Effect of *Shirodhara* as per *Yogic science*:

Shirodhara is performed in *Savasana* position, which is used for relaxation in *Yogic science*. During *Shirodhara* patients concentrate where *dhara* is poured on the forehead. As the Patient concentrates on a particular place, the thought process decreases and thus entire psycho-physiology relaxes⁸.

Effect of *Shirodhara* on *Shada Chakra*:

Dhara poured on *Agyaa Chakra* (space between two eyebrows), is the seat of pituitary and pineal gland. *Shirodhara* regulates their stimulation and helps to bring hormonal balance⁹. It also normalised elevated cortisone & adrenaline, synchronizes the brain wave (alpha waves), strengthens the mind and this continues even after the relaxation¹⁰.

Effect of *Shirodhara* as per *Marma science*:

In forehead region, mainly *Sthapani*, *Utkshep* and *Avarta Marma* are located. As mentioned earlier it is also a place of *Agyaa Chakra*. According to *Acharya Bhela*, the location of *Chitta (Mana)* is *Bhru madhya* and same is place of *Sthapani Marma*¹¹. *Shirodhara* makes the patient concentrate on this area by which the stability arrives in the functions of mind.

DISCUSSION:

Most of the classics have mentioned role of *Tama*, *Shleshma*, and inactivity of mind in the initiation of sleep. According to *Acharya Charaka* when *mana* (mind) as well as *indriyan* gets exhausted or becomes inactive and the sensory and motor organs become inactive then the individual gets sleep¹². Heart is the

seat of the *mana* and *indriyan*, while *madya* having entered into the heart counteracts the ten properties of *ojas* with its corresponding ten properties and thus upsets the *mana* and *indriyan* results to *anidra*¹³ (Insomnia). *Shirodhara* is a well-established *upakarma* procedure for centuries. It is widely practiced in India and also in *Panchakarma* centers abroad. Besides its therapeutic usage and its *shamana karma*, its general relaxing and calming effects are well-known and worth exploring with modern tools. To explain how *shirodhara* affects *madatyajanya anidra*, *shirodhara* re-establishes the functional integrity between *doshas* subtypes like *prana vayu*, and *tarpaka kapha* both having seat of *shirha Pradesh* and helps to induce sleep. *Shirodhara* procedure stimulate the *Agyachakra* - seat of vital part (*Marma*) also and thus help in regulating the neuro-endocrine system to maintain the hormones, neurotransmitters etc. related to Hypothalamus, Pituitary, Pineal gland etc, to have proper relaxation & tranquility. Moreover, supine position in *shirodhara* also helps in providing further relaxation. In the procedure of *shirodhara*, particular pressure and vibration is created over the forehead. The vibration is amplified by the hollow sinus present in the frontal bone. The vibration is then transmitted inwards through the fluid medium of cerebrospinal fluid (CSF). This vibration along with little temperature may activate the functions of thalamus and the basal fore- brain which then brings the amount of serotonin and catecholamine to the normal stage inducing the sleep.

CONCLUSION:

Modern sedatives, hypnotics, tranquillizers and psychotropic drugs which are generally used for sleep related disorders have their own limitation due to its hazardous & withdrawal effects. *Shirodhara* is very effective procedure for *madatyajanya anidra* by the action of soothes, nourishes and pacifies the *doshas* through the application of the liquid to the forehead, scalp and nervous system.

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