

An Ayurvedic Aspect of Anidra with Special Reference of Insomnia

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Abstract—Habitual sleeplessness or simply inability to sleep for a minimum period, which is necessary for a sound mental and physical health, is called Insomnia (*Anidra*). Ayurveda recognises the importance of sleep to health and has considered it as an *upstambha* of life. Insomnia is the most common sleep problem worldwide and can lead to many psychosomatic manifestations like fatigue, high blood pressure, inability to perform physical and mental activities and normally and badly hampers the quality of life.

Nowadays, many people are dependent on sleeping pills and have become habitual to them. Side effects of the sleeping pills like daytime drowsiness, dizziness, difficulty in keeping balance, constipation, loss of appetite etc. are potentially harmful. Hence it is need of the hour to understand the concept of insomnia explained in Ayurveda. Present comprises of causes, consequences and management of insomnia with the perspective of Ayurveda.

Index Terms—Anidra, Upstambha, Insomnia.

I. INTRODUCTION

In Ayurveda, *aahara* (food), *nindra* (sleep) and *Brahmacharya* are described as *Tryaupstambha* i.e. three basic pillars of physiological requirement for sustenance of life. Sleep (*nindra*) is one of the essential factor for healthy life. According to Acharya *Charak* happiness and unhappiness, proper and improper development, strength and weakness, potency and impotency, intellect and non-intellect, life and death of an individual depend upon proper and improper sleep. Insomnia (*Anidra*) is the perception or complaint of inadequate or poor quality of sleep because of difficulty in falling asleep (sleep onset insomnia), difficulty in maintaining sleep due to frequent or sustained awakenings (sleep maintenance insomnia) or waking too early in the morning (sleep offset insomnia).

Chronic insomnia leads to severe fatigue, anxiety, depression and lack of concentration. It is a common sleep disorder and 1.5 times more common in persons aged more than 65 years. Several lifestyle factors such as excessive caffeine consumption, alcohol and drug abuse, smoking, over work, over exercise, poor sleep habits also play an important role in developing insomnia. Hence, insomnia comes under the category of lifestyle disorder and geriatric disorder both. In Ayurveda, *Anidra* is considered as a disease belonging to the category of *Nanatmaja Vatavyadhi* and also as a symptom of various diseases and psychological disorders.

AETIO-PATHOGENESIS

The etiological factors of Insomnia in Ayurveda include eating *ruksha* food (food with dry property). Consumption of barley, increase in physical work and fasting coitus, not eating food for a long period, and uncomfortable beds. Therapeutic causes include excessive *Vamana* (vomiting), *Virechana* (Purgation), *Nasya* (Medication via Nasal Pathway), *Raktamokshana* (bloodletting), *Dhooma* (medicated smoke), *Swedana* (Sudation), *Anjana* (Collegium). Psychosomatic causes include fear, anxiety and anger. Apart from these, excessive joy, sorrow, greed or agitation can lead to insomnia.

According to *Acharya Charak*, the following factors are responsible for the disturbance in sleep:

1. *Karya* (Work): Work done during the night or work which gets heavy can lead to sleep instability. This is the reason why people who do night shifts are more prone to the symptoms of insomnia. This is why Ayurveda tells you not to work at night and not to sleep during the day time.
2. *Kaal* (Time or Age): *Kaal* is also an important

factor regarding disturbances in sleep. It is connected with our life and leads to hazardous effects on sleep. A child in its infant stage of life sleeps a most of the time during the day and night, but as the age increases the actual sleep time decreases, it happens because of the direct influence of *Kapha dosha*. *Kapha dosha* is more prominent during young age in an individual's life. This produces more sleep in children. However, in old age due to dominance of *Vata dosha* and diminishing of *Kapha dosha* leads to a decrease in the duration of sleep.

3. *Vikara* (Diseases): Various diseases cause sleep disturbances and insomnia. According to Ayurvedic, diseases that have *Vata* dominance can cause insomnia. Increased *Vata dosha* is responsible for diminishing *Kapha dosha* which results in sleep disorder.
4. *Prakruti* (Constitution): According to Ayurveda, *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* are the three basic

elements which build up the life of a human being. These three elements form 7 types of *Prakruti*. Out of these, a person with *Vataja Prakruti* shows a shorter duration of sleep than a person with any other *Prakruti*.

Also *Vata dosha* causes sleep disorders due to its Anti *Kapha* properties.

The mind plays an important role in the sleep cycle of the body. *Tamo guna* along with *kapha dosha* helps in creating sleep. Any mental stress or trouble increases *Rajo guna* which is similar to *Vata dosha*. This leads to an increase in *Vata dosha* and decrease in *Tamo guna*. Apart from this, *Ruksha guna* of *Vata dosha* causes weakness in the body. Any trauma or injury causes pain which is linked to *Vata dosha*, hence it leads to sleep disorders and disturbances. The aetiology of *Anidra* mentioned by *Acharya Charak* and *Acharya Sushruta* is described in Table 1.

AETIOLOGY OF ANIDRA

CHARAK SAMHITA	SUSHRUT SAMHITA
Karya (Physical or mental activity)	Vata Vriddhi
Kala (Age related changes or seasonal or diurnal changes)	Pitta Vriddhi
Vikara (Disorders or conditions affecting sleep)	Manasantapa (Mental harassment)
Prakruti (Natural variations in the sleep cycle)	Kshaya Abhigata (Weakness)

S. No.	Symptoms	No. of days	No. of times in a day	Effect of any medicine	Automatic Relief
1.	Shira shool				
2.	Stamityata				
3.	Gurugatrata				
4.	Kshudamandyata				
5.	Hridayapralepa				
6.	Pinasa				
7.	Urushoola				
8.	Tandra				
9.	Kasa				
10.	Smritipramoha				
11.	Indriyasanarthata				
12.	Divaswapna				
13.	Jrumbha				
14.	Arcohaka				
15.	Angmarda				

Total Score System:

1. Severe type of *Nindra vikara* – Frequency of S. No. 3, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15
2. Moderate type of *Nindra vikara* – Frequency of S. No. 1, 3, 8, 10, 11, 12, 15
3. Mild type of *Nindra vikara* – Frequency of S. No. 1, 3, 8, 12, 13

SAMPRAPTI OF ANIDRA: Since Anidra is not explained as a separate disease entity, the samprapti

of Anidra is also not vividly discussed in Classics. However, it can be constructed basing on the aetiology and in correlation with Dosha, Dushya and other factors involved.

Since Shariraka Dosha Kapha, Manasika dosha Tamas, Chetana sthana Hridaya and Sanjnavaha srotas are responsible for causing sleep in an individual, any disruption taking place in their function leads to Anidra.

1.	Dosha	Vata & Pitta Vriddhi and Kapha Kshaya
2.	Guna	Satwa & Rajo Vriddhi and Tamo Kshaya
3.	Dushya	Rasa
4.	Agni	Jatharagni
5.	Srotas	Rasavaha Srotas and Manovaha Srotas
6.	Sroto Dushti Prakara	Ati Pravritti
7.	Adhishtana	Hridaya
8.	Udbhava sthana	Hridaya

PURVARUPA: Purvarupa of Nidranasha is not mentioned in any Ayurvedic classics. As Charaka included Nidranasha in 80 Nanatmaja Vata Vikaras, avyakta lakshana are the purvarupa of Vatavyadhi.

LAKSHANA OF ANIDRA:

CS ⁴⁶	SS ⁴⁷	VAGHBHATA ⁴⁸
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jrimbha • Angamarda • Tandra • Shiroroga • Akshi Gaurava 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jribha • Angamarda • Sharira Jadyata • Shiro Jadyata • Akshi Jadyata • Tandra 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angamarda • Shiro Gaurava • Jrimbha • Jadyata • Glani • Bhrama • Apakti • Tandra • Vataja Roga

UPADRAVA⁴⁹: In Ashtanga Sangraha, it is mentioned that increased Vayu due to Nidranasha produces Kaphakshaya, which leads to dried Kapha getting stuck in the walls of Dhamanis and causing Strotorodha. This, results in exhaustion that eyes of the patient remain wide open with watery secretion from eyes. This exhaustion is Sadhya up to three days, and later on, it becomes Asadhya.

UPASHAYA-ANUPASHAYA OF ANIDRA:

UPASHAYA	ANUPASHAYA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mamsa Rasa • Madya • Ksheera • Ksheera Vikara • Abhyanga • Utsadana • Tarpan • Sneha Sevana 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rukshanna Sevana • Yavaana Sevana • Dhumapana • Krodha • Shoka etc.

CHIKITSA OF NIDRANSHA: Sleep is always elusive and any attempt to force it only drives it further away. It is better to divert the mind. It is always recommended to rule out medical and psychological causes before deciding on the treatment for insomnia. The chief remedy for Anidra is always removal of its cause. Ayurveda has described treatment protocol of Nidranasha in meticulous fashion. It is more or less similar in all classics, considering the involvement of Doshas. Ayurveda indicates psychological respite as key along with Vataghna treatment in managing insomnia.

It directs the rectification of diet, certain procedures in routine with or without single or compound medicine. Entire management is prescribed in the form of specific procedures, psychiatric treatment, drugs and diet, In the treatment of Nidranasha, one should contemplate on the measures of having Vata shamaka, Vedanashamaka and Roganivaraka effects of pacifying effects on mental activities 50, 51. The treatments described for Nidranasha in Ayurvedic Samhitas are almost same and the modalities can be classified under Bahya Upachara, Manasika Upachara, Ahara Upachara 52 as under:

Bahya Upachara	Manasika Upachara	Ahara Upachara
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abhyanga • Utsadana • Samvahana • Akshi Tarpana • Shiro-Lepa • Karna-Purana • Shiro Vasti • Shiro Dhara • Murdha Taila • Pichu 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manonukula Vishaya grahana • Manonukula Shabda grahana • Manonukula Gandha grahana 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gramya Mamsa Rasa • Anupa Mamsa Rasa • Jaliya Mamsa Rasa • Mahisa Kshira • Piyusha • Shali Dhanya • Ikshu Rasa • Ghrita

ANYA UPACHARA:

Yoga	Exercises	Other Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ananda Baalasana • Ardha-Utthanasana <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balsana • Halasana • Janu-Sirshasana <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parvatasana • Paschimottanasana <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sarvangasana • Savasana • • Setu Bandhanasana <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sirshasana • Supta Baddhakonasana <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utthanasana • Viparitakarani MUDRA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shakti Mudra • Prana Mudra • Chin Mudra • Gyana/Jnana Mudra <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adi Mudra • Apan Mudra • Dhyani Mudra • Ushas Mudra 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking • Jogging • Skipping • Swimming • Breathing exercises • Gentle exercises to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Muscles of Neck ii) Shoulders iii) Spine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular Sleep Timings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sukha Sayya • Calming Music • Light Reading • Meditation • Relaxation Techniques <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hot-Packs to Spine • Cold Hip-Baths • Avoiding Coffee, Tea, smoking & Alcohol before sleep • Cup of warm milk added with 5 ml of Sesame oil.

II. DISCUSSION

Anidra is a major health issue with a bearing in the morbidity; health related quality of life (HRQOL). In a country like India with it's a huge population and work force it is practically impossible to have an accurate quantitative assessment. Sleep has an important role in the regulation of central nervous system (CNS) and the body's physiological functions, regulating metabolism, catabolism, temperature, learning and memory consolidation. The patho-physiology of insomnia is highly complex involving multiple factors that provide inputs to the sleep system. It is well known that several factors like gender, age, psychiatric disorders among several others are risk factors for

insomnia. The stress of modern urban life adds to the factors responsible for an increase in the prevalence. In addition, several co-morbid factors can have a significant effect on the prevalence of insomnia. However, what is important is the effect insomnia has on the quality of life of the individual, its social implications like increased loss of work days, accidents, family disorders and economic impact of this rather common disorder. Research has shown that people with chronic insomnia almost invariably have marked deficiency of certain key nutrients B-complex vitamins, Vitamin C & D, Calcium, Manganese, Magnesium, Potassium and Zinc. Sleep mechanism is unable to function efficiently unless each of these nutrients is present or supplemented adequately in diet. Another recent

study in the U.S. has suggested that insomnia upset the body's metabolism and possible hasten the onset of age related health disorders. There are no official guidelines about how much sleep one should get each night

because everyone is different. What is important is whether one's sleep is a good quality and whether one feels that he had enough sleep. If one constantly feels tired throughout the day and it's affecting everyday life, probably one is not getting enough good-quality sleep.

Persistent insomnia can have a significant impact of life. It can limit the individual's abilities, affect mood, and lead to the relationship problems with friends, family and colleagues. After pain, insomnia is probably the most common symptom reported by patients. Insomnia is both a symptom and a disorder. Chronic Insomnia is more prevalent than heart disease, cancer, AIDS, diabetes and several other disorders through only one third reported the problem and only 5% of them seek medical treatment, Basing on evidence that insomnia is universal complaint being present in about 25-30% of the population in general. Among patients with co-morbid conditions this may increase further consequences and management of Nidranasha basing on the constitution of the individual and also on the doshas that are involved.

III. CONCLUSION

Ayurveda has various measures, which help to overcome the Nidranasha and sleepless situation. It has a potent approach towards the treatment of Anidra by both internal and external mediciaions. Avoiding causative factors is a must to tackle the condition. Various

measures provided in the Ayurveda can certainly help to overcome this situation more precisely with administration of herbs in single or compound form, having sedative energy. Ayurveda prescribes several procedures, herbs in single or compound form to overcome the situation. Ayurvedic medicines used in the treatment of insomnia, mainly acts by rejuvenating or nourishing brain cells and complete nervous system rather than causing side effects like

tingling, dizziness, peripheral neuritis. So, Ayurveda has a great potential and can certainly manage Anidra (insomnia) effectively, comprehensively.

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