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Review Article

CONCEPT OF INSOMNIA IN AYURVEDA

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ABSTRACT

Sleep occupies a greater portion of our life and is considered as one among the three upasthambha of existence. Sleep disturbance have been a major concern of physicians, psychologists and social scientists especially since last few decades because of the rising trend of different sleep disorders. Although the exact functions of sleep are still unknown, it is clearly necessary for survival. Prolonged sleep deprivation leads to physical and cognitive impairment. Hence it is need of the hour to understand the concept of insomnia explained in Ayurveda so as to form an effective management protocol. Thus in this review article an effort has been made to understand the concept of Anidra explained in the classics in terms of Primary and Secondary insomnia.

Keywords: Anidra, Upasthambha, Insomnia

INTRODUCTION

Sleep is a universal behaviour that is demonstrated in every animal species studied, from insects to mammals. It is one of the most significant human behaviour occupying roughly one third of human life.¹

It is well established that the phenomenon of sleep is one of the vital signs of good health. Without adequate and good sleep one's ability to function is impaired, yet inadequate sleep is one of the most underrated risk factors today.² Significance of nidra is emphasized in Ayurvedic literature by considering it as one of the traya upasthambha i.e one of the 3 basic physiological requirement for sustenance of life. While nidra or sleep is an essential physiological requirement of ayu, the deprivation of sleep which is termed as Anidra impacts the normalcy of life.

Anidra is considered as an independent disease entity in the context of vata nanatmaja vyadhi³ and also as a symptom in various physical⁴ and psychological⁵ disorders. Anidra as a symptom represents insomnia of varied etiology including the primary and secondary insomnia.

In this article an effort has been made to understand Anidra in terms of primary and secondary insomnia. Anidra enumerated in the context of vata nanatmaja vyadhi can be considered as primary insomnia caused by vata which is also termed as Psychophysiological insomnia; and Anidra seen as a symptom secondary to various physical and psychological disorders can be compared to secondary insomnia.

Review of literature

Anidra is a term formed when a prefix "A" which means "lack of" is added to the term nidra. Hence Anidra means

less or lack of sleep.⁶ It is defined as a pathological condition in which the patient is devoid of sleep.

Anidra is explained as an independent pathological entity and it has also been described as a symptom secondary to many pain predominant diseases and other medical conditions.

- In Charaka samhita and Ashtanga sangraha, Anidra is mentioned as a disease belonging to the category of nanatmaja vatavyadhi and also as a pitta vrudhhi lakshna.
- In Sushruta samhita the causative factors of Anidra are mentioned as vitiated vata and pitta but it has not been described as a separate disease.⁷

Explanation regarding the causative factors of Anidra and its treatment modalities are available in all the bruhatrayeres and laghutrayees.

Aetiopathogenesis of anidra

Causes of Anidra

Anidra may be the effect of multiple causative factors such as Ahara (food habits), Vihara (activities), Chikitsa atiyoga (improper treatment induced) Manasika (emotional factors) and Anya nidanas (other non specified causative factors). Most of the times the cause of Anidra is multifactorial.

Aharaja nidana (Food habits): Specific references regarding the relation of nidra with ahara are available in the classical texts of Ayurveda. Consumption of ahita ahara is considered as a cause of Anidra. Specifically excessive consumption of yavanna and rukshanna are explained as the cause of Anidra. However multiple references are available regarding the food materials which cause atinidra and all the food materials which contain antagonist qualities to them should result in

Anidra. Hence it can be inferred that Anidra, which is an opposite condition of atnidra is caused by excessive consumption of food materials having qualities such as ruksha, laghu, teekshna guna. This set of causative factors cause imbalance in both shareerika and manasika dosha. At the physical level these food mainly cause vata vrudhhi and kapha kshaya and at the psychological level they cause derangement of rajo guna.

Viharaja Nidana (Activities): Excessive indulgence in various activities is explained as the causes of Anidra. They are as follows;

- Excessive dhooma sevana by the virtue of its teekshna ushna, ruksha guna causes vitiation of vata and pitta thus induces Anidra.
- Over indulgence in vyayama (physical activities), vyavaya (sexual activity) and upavasa (fasting) causes vrudhhi of vata dosha. Concurrently vata dosha by the virtue of its gunas causes kapha kshaya.
- Asukha shayya is a term which represents improper sleep environment including improper bedding and bed room where there will be a problem in following generally accepted practices to sleep leading to insomnia.
- Karya: When an individual excessively indulges in any work either mental or physical, there will be deviation of mind from sleep. This can be seen in individual who work vigorously. Thus over indulgence in any work takes away the focus of manas from sleep. These set of factors causes imbalance in both shareerika and mano doshas.

Manasika Nidanas (Emotional factors): Psychological factors are the other set of etiological factors involved in the manifestation of Anidra. Either the emotional factors such as bhaya, krodha and shoka cause vitiation of doshas both at physical and psychological level leading to the manifestation of the disease or the disease manifests itself during the various stages of other mano rogas such as apasmara, vishada and chittodvega as a secondary manifestation. Emotional disturbances such as bhaya, shoka, krodha play an important role in causing Anidra. These factors primarily cause derangement of manodoshas. These emotional factors even cause shareerika dosha prakopa (bhaya, shoka causes vata vrudhhi, krodha causes pitta prakopa).⁸ Thus this set of causative factors primarily cause derangement of mano doshas, leading to imbalance in shareerika dosha in the later stage.

Chikitsa Apachara (Improper treatment modalities): Atiyoga of vamaana, virechana, nasya and raktamokshana can induce Anidra by vitiating vata dosha.⁹

Any nidanas (other non specified causes)

- **Kala or kala sheela Kshaya:** Kala is considered as time factor. Night being the period of rest is considered as the normal time for sleep. As the night proceeds, people feel the desire for sleep. When this usual period is lapsed, person will not be able to get sleep. Insomnia develops as a result of persistent or recurrent disruption in the normal sleep pattern. Kala can also be considered as age factor. In old age,

people are more prone to suffer from Anidra. In elderly individual vata vrudhhi occurs as a natural tendency. Even vata prakruti is considered as having increased vulnerability towards Anidra.

- **Vikara:** Vikara represents a pathological state. Various pain predominant diseases like grudrasi, asthi majja gata vata and also discomfort predominant diseases like sannipataja jwara and tamaka shwasa cause Anidra because of pain and discomfort, wherein the lack of sleep can be attributed to these complaints. Anidra in such condition represents secondary insomnia.
- **Abhigata:** The term abhigata represents an external injury. It causes vitiation of vata dosha which leads to Anidra. Even in abhigata there will be pain which is also responsible for Anidra.
- **Kshaya:** It specially refers to Kapha kshaya.

Thus at the physical level indulgence in causative factors which increase the ruksha, chala and laghu guna of vata and at manasika level there will be rajo guna vrudhhi (as rajas and vata doshas share same qualities) which subdues the effect of tamas.

Pathogenesis of Anidra

Detail explanation regarding the disease Anidra is not available in the classical texts of Ayurveda. Based on the physiology of swabhavika nidra, nidanas, lakshanas and chikitsa of Anidra, its pathogenesis can be hypothesized.

Etiological factors of Anidra can be considered under two headings i.e, Predisposing factors and triggering factors. The vulnerability in terms of vata prakruti and kala (age factor) and absence of prakruti vighata bhava such as having beeja dosha (genetic vulnerability)¹⁰ act as a predisposing factor (pradhanika hetu). The etiological factors such as food, activity and stress act as a triggering factor (vyanjaka hetu).

Thus the pathogenesis of Anidra can be elaborated under two broad headings based on its causative factors;

Swatantra Anidra (Primary insomnia)

Anidra having its own set of causative factors and which is independent of other diseases is known as swatantra Anidra.

Anidra described under the context of vata nanatmaja vyadhi, has an independent set of causative factors and matches well with the description of Primary insomnia and Psycho-physiological insomnia in particular. Chronic Psycho-physiological insomnia, also called as primary insomnia refers to difficulty in initiating and maintaining sleep, not related to other mental disorder or physical condition. It is a behavioural disorder in which patients are preoccupied with a perceived inability to sleep adequately at night.¹¹

Samprapti of Primary insomnia can be explained with the help of Prakruti vighata bhava and Prakruti vighata abhava concept of Charaka samhita.¹²

When an individual with the predisposing factors such as vata prakruti or genetic susceptibility is exposed to other causative factors (triggering factors) such as food and activities even minimally there will be precipitation of the disease. Hence in the manifestation of Anidra -vata nanatmaja vyadhi, vulnerability plays a primary role and

other causative factors such as food, activity and stress play a secondary role.

Indulgence in causative factors primarily cause vata vrudhhi i, e., ruksha, laghu and chala guna vrudhhi of vata takes place. By the virtue of these gunas there will be snigdha, guru and manda guna kshaya of kapha dosha. This variation in doshas takes place at the physical level. At the psychological level, there will be derangement of rajo guna (as both vata and rajas share similar qualities) which subdues the effect of tamas on the manas. The kapha dosha and tamo guna are responsible to induce sleep, when kapha dosha and tamo guna does avarana in the sanjna vaha srotas, sleep is induced. Due to kapha kshaya and subduing of tamas by rajas, in sanjnavaha srotas there will be predominance of vata dosha. Vitiated vata dosha along with rajo guna keeps the mind in active stage thus leading to loss of sleep.

Once the disorder manifests it become chronic by indulging in the causative factors further. One another important factor which makes the disease chronic is the preoccupation about not getting sleep. This preoccupation further deteriorates the quantity and quality of sleep and the vicious cycle continues making the disease chronic and enduring.

Thus in Swatantra Anidra, vulnerability along with other causative factor primarily causes vata vrudhhi without which the disease manifestation does not take place.

Paratantra Anidra (Secondary insomnia)

This variety of Anidra manifests secondary to other physical or psychological diseases or when the person who is not having high vulnerability towards the disease exposes to the other causative factors in terms of food, activity and stress. Though there is an involvement of vata dosha in secondary insomnia, vata dosha prakopa is primarily resulted because of the above mentioned etiological factors.

In shareerika vyadhi, due to the effect of the primary disease (vyadhi karshana) there will be vata prakopa which in turn causes derangement of rajas leading to Anidra. This condition matches well with the insomnia secondary to physical diseases. There will be vata predominant rajo vrudhhi.

When an individual exposes to emotional factors such as bhaya, krodha and shoka, there will be derangement of mano gunas especially rajas which inturn causes vata vrudhhi leading to the manifestation of the disease. Anidra may also manifests as a secondary complaint during the various stages of psychological diseases. This condition matches well with the insomnia secondary to psychological conditions. There will be rajo guna predominant vata vrudhhi.

Signs and symptoms

Loss of sleep is the only cardinal feature of 'Anidra'. However, effect of sleep deprivation can also be considered as the roopa of Anidra.

Sleep deprivation can produce immediate effect on the body in the form of clinical features such as angamarda, shirogaurava, akshi gaurava, jrumbha, bhrama, apakti. It also produces cumulative effect on the body in the form of jadya (jnana bhransha), tandra (stupor) and many other vata rogas including akshepaka.

Classification of anidra

- After observing the nidana, lakshana and samprapti, Anidra can be classified as below;
- Swatantra Anidra (Primary insomnia): This type of Anidra is caused by its own set of causative factors described earlier, wherein vata dosha takes a primary role in the manifestation of the disease. Though there is involvement of other doshas in the manifestation of the disease without the primary involvement of the vata dosha this disease does not occur. Thus Anidra explained under vata nanatmatmaja vyadhi can be considered as Primary insomnia.
- Paratantra Anidra (Secondary insomnia): In this condition Anidra manifests as a result of various physical and psychiatric disorders. Anidra seen in tamaka shwasa, different types of jwara and in many pain predominant conditions and also Anidra seen in the psychological diseases such as apasmara, unamada and chittodvega can be considered as secondary insomnia.
- Insomnia specifically caused by Panchakarma apachara
- Physiological insomnia: Mainly seen in vata prakruti persons. Also seen in the individuals who are having satva guna predominance (satva oudarya and tamo jaya). The predominant satva guna subdues the effect of tamas leading to sleeplessness. Attainment of high satva is possible only by achievement (siddhi), and the physiological sleep requirement of the individual itself is minimized. Hence sleeplessness in such individuals is considered as non-pathological.

Other sleep disorders:

Caused by

- Improper sleep hygiene (Asukha shayya)
- Circadian rhythm variation (kala or kala sheela kshaya)

CONCLUSION

As a diagnostic entity 'Anidra' represents disorder of sleep deprivation or insomnia. Anidra enumerated in the context of vata nanatmaja vyadhi effectively represents the Chronic Psycho-physiological insomnia which is a primary insomnia and Anidra explained as a symptom in various physical and psychological disorders represents secondary insomnia listed in the diagnostic criteria of DSM IV TR. Involvement of vata dosha plays a predominant role in the manifestation of the disease which concurrently causes kapha kshaya. Mutual relationship between vata and rajas causes rajo guna vrudhhi, which inturn causes suppression of effect of tamas at the psychological level leading to loss of sleep.

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