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Effect of *Shirodhara* and *Yoga Nidra* in Generalised Anxiety Disorder: A Single Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: There is tremendous increase in the psychological disorders like anxiety, depression and stress due to various factors like social distancing, lockdowns, poor socioeconomic conditions. Among these, generalised anxiety disorder (GAD) has become an alarming situation in the country. The present study was undertaken to assess the efficacy of *Shirodhara* and *Yognidra*. **Aims and Objectives:** To assess the effect of *Jatamansi Siddha Taila Shirodhara* and *Yognidra* in Anxiety. **Material and Methods:** The patient was provided with the *Jatamansi Siddha Taila Shirodhara* as well as *Yog Nidra* in Anxiety. The assessment criteria used for the evaluation was Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale (HARS) with a global score of 56. **Result:** During the 14 days of treatment patient reported relief in his symptoms. After 2 month here was a significant reduction in all the symptoms and the score reduced drastically from 35 to 19. **Discussion:** Warm liquids used in the *Shirodhara* procedure cause increased infiltration of blood in scalp region thus relaxing muscle and nerve endings. *Shirodhara* causes tranquility of mind and induces natural sleep by prolonged and continuous pressure. *Yoga Nidra* is the science of relaxation which enables to enter into the realms of the subconscious mind, thereby releasing and relaxing mental tensions and establishing harmony in all facts of life. **Conclusion:** In the present case, the treatment showed significant relief and was found very effective in Anxiety.

Key words: *Shirodhara*, *Yoga Nidra*, *Generalised Anxiety Disorder*, *Ayurveda*, *Case Report*

INTRODUCTION

Anxiety is understood as the state of apprehension or uneasiness arising due to the anticipation of insecurity or assault. It is pathological when it is unreasonable, exaggerated, recurrent, and causing significant psychophysiological distress. Generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), a common variant of anxiety disorders, has a 2 - 5% prevalence in the general population (Baxter et al.,

2013).^[1] Generalized Anxiety Disorder is characterized by excessive or unrealistic anxiety about two or more aspects of life (work, social relationships, financial matters, etc.), often accompanied by symptoms such as palpitations, shortness of breath, or other somatic symptoms. About 5.8% in India and 4% globally are said to be suffering from GAD at some point in their life.^[2] Anxiety is an extremely common problem, affecting approximately 23.4 percent of females and 14.3 percent of males. In fact, it is the most common mental disorder worldwide. Data from the National Institute of Mental Health suggest that around 31 percent of adults can expect to experience some type of anxiety disorder in their lifetime.^[3]

A balanced state of *Dosha*, *Agni*, *Dhatu*, *Mala*, *Manas*, *Atma*, and *Indriya* is considered to be healthy.^[4] From an *Ayurvedic* perspective, anxiety is an imbalance in the *Vata Dosha*. *Vata* is the "air" principle. It is light, dry, and mobile. An imbalance of *Vata*, mentally, is associated with an overabundance of lightness or

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movement, erratic thoughts, worries, obsession, confusion, and difficulty focusing. *Vata* imbalance is also associated with a hyper-excitability nervous system and trouble sleeping. If you've ever heard someone say they feel "ungrounded," that's a classic description of *Vata* imbalance. It's too much energy in the mind, not enough at the feet.

Thus, when *Vata* is disturbed, you feel ungrounded, disconnected from the earth. To treat anxiety/*Vata* imbalance, you have to stabilize your energy, calm the nervous system, relax the mind, release obsessive thoughts, connect to your body and to the earth, and ultimately surrender to the flow of the Universe.^[5]

Shirodhara (*Shiro* means head and *Dhara* means flow) involves gentle pouring of a medicated liquid upon the forehead. It is traditionally used to treat variety of conditions related to cognition, sleep and anxiety. Continuous pouring of *Shirodhara* on fore-head for a specific period has tranquilizing effect & regulates rhythm *Mana & Prana Vayu* it also induces Sleep.

A process of *Murdhni Taila*, in which a suitable *Taila* and other substances such as *Ghritas, Takra, Ikshu Rasa, Kashaya, Ksheera* etc. is continuously poured on the forehead and then allowed to flow over the scalp in a specific rhythm, is called *Shirodhara*.^[6,7]

The author of *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, great *Yogi Swatmarama*, classifies *Yog Nidra* as the state of *Turiya*; means the all expansive and encompassing 'fourth dimension', in which *Shakti* neither contracts nor expands, but is in union with *Shiva* or supreme consciousness.^[8]

Yoga Nidra, or *Yogic* sleep as it is commonly known, is an immensely powerful meditation technique, and one of the easiest *Yoga* practices to develop and maintain. While the practitioner rests comfortably in *Savasana* (corpse pose), this systematic meditation takes you through the *Pancha Maya Kosha* (five layers of self), leaving you with a sense of wholeness.

In the present modern lifestyle, where Psychological and Psychosomatic problems are on the rise, the technique of *Yog Nidra* may serve as a real boon for mankind.^[9] The present case study is aimed to see the

positive effects of *Shirodhara* and *Yog Nidra* in an anxiety-diagnosed patient.

CASE REPORT

A 51 years old married woman with middle socioeconomic background residing in Nagpur, Maharashtra presented in the *Swasthavritta* and *Yog* outpatient department (OPD no.-11098) on 18/08/2021 with the following complaints since last 1 year:

1. Increase in worrying tendencies and negative thoughts
2. Irritability and restlessness
3. Fear of being left alone
4. Feeling of weakness
5. Tremors of hand
6. Insomnia
7. Loss of interest in work and social gathering

Personal history

General condition (G.C) - moderate, Appetite - decreased, Diet - only veg, Bowel - normal but sometimes constipation, Urine - normal, Thirst - normal, Sleep - insomnia, Habits - 5-6 times tea in a day and Occupation - housewife.

General examination

The patient was conscious, well-oriented, and spoke normally. There was the absence of pallor, icterus, clubbing, and cyanosis. Bp - 120/70 mm hg, PR - 70/min, Height - 162 cm, Weight - 62 kg, and BMI - 23.6 kg/m².

Diagnosis and Evaluation

The evaluation of the patient's condition was done by the following psychological test:

Hamilton anxiety rating scale HARS (Hamilton, 1959).^[10] – the patient denoted major anxiety with a score of 35 out of 56.

Interventions

After the written informed consent, the patient was treated with the proper *Shirodhara* technique and *Yognidra*.

SN	Intervention	Time	Duration of treatment
1.	<i>Shirodhara</i>	45 minutes	21 days
2.	<i>Yoga Nidra</i>	30 minutes (2 times/day)	60 days

The assessment was done using HARS, before treatment and follow-ups were taken on the 30th and 60th day to check for relapse if any.

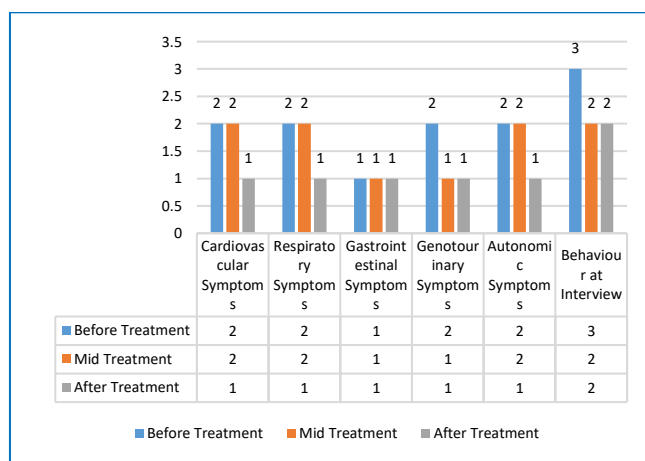
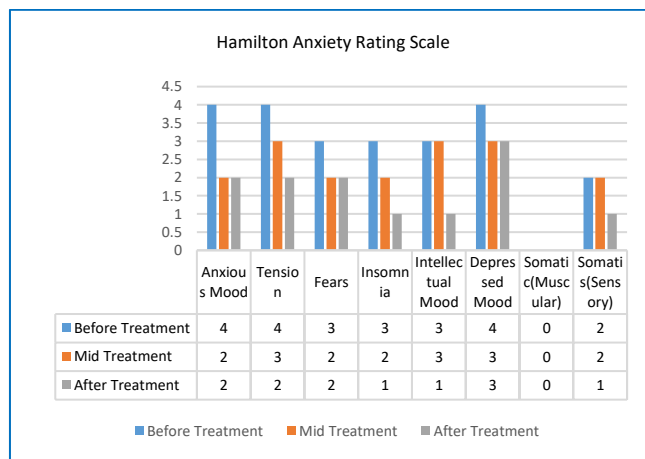
OBSERVATION

Table 1: Assessment of symptoms - HARS (Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale)

Note: 0 = Not present, 1 = Mild, 2 = Moderate, 3 = Severe, 4 = Very severe

SN	Parameter	Before Treatment	After 1 Month of follow-up	After 2 Month of follow-up
1.	Anxious Mood	4	2	2
2.	Tension	4	3	2
3.	Fears	3	2	2
4.	Insomnia	3	2	1
5.	Intellectual	3	3	1
6.	Depressed Mood	4	3	3
7.	Somatic (Muscular)	0	0	0
8.	Somatic (Sensory)	2	2	1
9.	Cardiovascular Symptoms	2	2	1

10.	Respiratory Symptoms	2	2	1
11.	Gastrointestinal Symptoms	1	1	1
12.	Genitourinary Symptoms	2	1	1
13.	Autonomic Symptoms	2	2	1
14.	Behavior at Interview	3	2	2
	Total	35	27	19



RESULT

After 21 days of *Shirodhara*, significant improvement was observed in the clinical condition of the patient. Psychological symptoms like negative thoughts, irritability, and insomnia were drastically reduced by

21 days. There was a marked reduction in the score of the HARS scale (table 1) after one month. After about 2 months of intervention, most of the symptoms subsided.

DISCUSSION

Anxiety disorder is a common morbidity found as an independent or secondary condition. GAD has anxiety as the predominant feature reflecting through various physical and psychological domains.

Vayu is the driving force of all the activities of the body and mind. *Vayu* is said to be a *Tantra* (formula) which runs the *Yantra* (machine) called as *Shareera* (body). *Pitta's*, *Kapha*, the tissues of the body, the waste excreta of the body, all are dependent on *Vata (Vayu)*. If *Vayu* is functioning properly all these elements are in equilibrium and if *Vayu* is disturbed, it further disturbs other elements of the body and causes wide array of diseases. The key for well being is in having the *Vayu* (life force and energy) in our body in control.

Shirodhara will have the *Vayu* in our body in control. *Shiridhara* by *Jatamnasi Siddha Taila* have a tremendous effect on controlling *Vayu*. It controls, pacifies and expels the morbid *Vayu*. *Chakrapani* has already clarified that *Prana* located in the *Shiras* is nothing but different types of *Vayu*. *Shirodhara* has a relaxing effect on brain and the whole nervous system and hence releases the stress and anxiety stagnant in the chief controlling station of our body. *Shiro Dhara* procedures relaxes & revitalizes the central nervous system, balances the brain and hormonal functions and thus regularizes and relaxes all the functions of the body. The stress in each and every cell and passage of the body is removed. It has a soothing effect on the endocrine system.

Shirodhara has shown its anti-anxiety, antihypertensive and sleep inducing effects in few studies (Vinjamury et al., 2014; Nakanekar et al., 2015; Sriranjni, 2009).^[11] Physiological responses of shirodhara procedure are found to reduce the sympathetic tone thereby decreasing the cardiac activity and increasing α and θ wave activity in brain (Uebaba et al., 2008; Xu et al., 2008).^[12]

Mode of action of Shirodhara

SN	Intervention	Karmukta
1.	Taila Dhara	Mana - Sthairyakar, Balya, Nidra, Medhya
2.	Jatamansi	Tikta, Madhur, Kashaya Rasa, Sheet Virya, Katu Vipaka, Medhya, Bhutaghna (Manasdosahar), Tridoshaghna. ^[13]

Yoga Nidra is the science of relaxation which enables to enter into the realms of the subconscious mind, thereby releasing and relaxing mental tensions and establishing harmony in all facts of life. Thus, it is found that *Yog Nidra* increases the parasympathetic activity thereby resulting in increase in the vagal tone and alteration in neurotransmission and helps in release anxiety, stress.^[14]

One important observation made in the study is about the sustainable effects of *Shirodhara* and *Yognidra* upon the symptoms of anxiety. As it was observed through the changes in the HAR-Scale.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that the *Shirodhara* by *Jatamnasi Siddha Taila* and *Yog Nidra* can significantly improve the mental condition of patients with Generalized Anxiety Disorder. No serious adverse effects were noted. Further studies need to be conducted on larger population using advanced assessment tools to reproduce similar results so that it can be prescribed as a scientifically approved modality in GAD and related mental disorders.

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