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CONCEPT OF INSOMNIA AND ITS MANAGEMENT IN GRECO-ARAB MEDICINE

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ABSTRACT

Insomnia is a condition in which there is excess of awakening (manifold than normal) and inadequate sleep in terms of duration and quality. The condition of insomnia is called *Sehar* or *Bekhaabi* in Greco-Arab medicine. According to Greco-Arab Medicine, there are six essential factors (*Asbab-e-Sitta Zarooriyah*) which are necessary at its optimum to maintain the healthy life. Fifth one of them is *Naum wa Yaqza* which means 'sleep and awakening'. Imbalance between these two conditions leads to disease state Viz. *Sehar* (Insomnia). While treating the Insomnia, dryness is an important factor in the etiology of the disease which should be addressed first and rest of the management depends on the *Mahiyate Marzi* (pathogenesis) and should be treated accordingly.

Greco- Arab Perspective of Insomnia

According to Greco-Arab Medicine, there are six essential factors (*Asbab-e-Sitta Zarooriyah*) which are necessary at its optimum to maintain the healthy life. Fifth one of them is *Naum wa Yaqza* which means ‘sleep and awakening’. *Yaqza* (awakening) is a condition in which *rooh-e-nafsani* (neural pathway) enables the *badan-e-insani* (human body) to perform physical activity and make the sensory organs functional to perceive and be aware. During this phase, due to physical activities energy is utilized, as a result of this *hararat-e-gharizia* (innate heat) and *ratubat-e-badania* (body fluid) get exhausted leading to fatigue, lethargy and dryness.

Naum (sleep) is a condition in which *rooh-e-nafsani* (neural pathway) as well as *badan-e-insani* (human body) remains at rest thus restore as well as strengthens *quwwat-e-haiwania* (physical power). During sleep, free radicals are being scavenged from the body, which are produced during awakening by physical and mental exertion, moreover *ratubat* and *barudat* is regained, hence sleep rejuvenates the body and refreshes it. Therefore, both *Naum* and *Yaqza* have their own significance and are necessary for the healthy body, but at its optimum. Excess of anything of them may lead to disease condition; hence if a person remains awake more often and sleep for a shorter period; it becomes a state of disease. Insomnia is a condition in which there is excess of awakening (manifold than normal) and inadequate sleep in terms of duration and quality. The condition of insomnia is called *Sehar* or *Bekhaabi* in Greco-Arab medicine¹⁻⁷.

According to Ibn-e-Hubul Baghdadi, *sehar* is that excess of awakening which produces dryness in the body³.

Causes (*Asbab*)¹⁻⁹

There are different ways to describe the causes of Insomnia but for the sake of ease it is classified as: *Akhtyari Asbab* (voluntary causes), *Aarzi Asbab* (temporary causes) and *Marzi Asbab* (pathological causes)

Akhtayari Asbab (voluntary causes)

- Being excessively busy in work,
- Taking diet in very little amount,
- Using flatulent eatables like lentils, cauliflower etc.,
- Using such eatables which are gastric irritant,
- Using excessive drinks like tea, coffee, qahwa etc.,
- Excess light in the room or noise pollution

Aarzi Asbab (temporary causes) which may develop in health like

Excess of thinking or worrying, as seen in anxiety disorders

Excess of fear or pessimistic thoughts as seen in depression

Excess of sadness or happiness

Nightmares

Indigestion

Marzi Asbab (pathological causes)

Su-e-mizaj barid dimaghi (ill dry temperament of brain)

Su-e-mizaj barid yabis dimaghi (ill cold and dry temperament of brain)

Ghalba-e-sauda (excess of black bile)

Su-e-mizaj har yabis (ill hot and dry temperament of brain)

Ghalba-e-safra (excess of bile)

Ghalba-e-balgham-e-shor (excess of acrid phlegm in brain)

Ghalba-e-akhlat-e-fasida (excess of bad/ morbid humours) in the body

Fasad-e-dam (impurity of blood)

Istifragh qawi (post excessive evacuation)

Shiddat-e-hararat (Post pyrexia) may also lead to *sehar*

Most of the chronic sufferers are the elderly people; there are two important causes of insomnia in these patients viz. dryness of brain and presence of excess boric matter^{4, 10}. In old age when dryness dominates, the overall fluid in the body gets depleted which is also enhanced by the process of ageing.

Sleep is reduced to that extent which is insufficient to relax the body and refresh the subject. The patient may have heaviness on eyelids & eyeballs, heaviness & uneasiness in the head, salty taste in the mouth and an intense urge to sleep that could not be met out. The condition of insomnia is associated with the signs and symptoms of dryness. In case of excessive dryness, the patient's perception of heat and cold is also reduced along with all the sensory perceptions. There is dryness and burning sensation in eyes, nostrils and tongue also.

Insomnia may lead to abnormality in thought process, hence excess of worry, feeling of unknown fear and nightmares etc. are common complaints in these patients.

Presence of evidences of circumstances that disturb sleep will also be there.

Excess of insomnia may lead to convulsive disorders and mental irritative disorders (Hippocrates). A case history of insomnia is quoted by *Jalinoos* (Galen) that a person use to keep awaking whole night to watch the vineyard, and this excess of awakening led the person into a state of confusion and Mania¹¹.

Management:

The mainstay of the management is to find out the cause of insomnia and to treat that accordingly.

Rest is advised to the patients (physical as well as mental), therefore, patients are kept away from physical or mental exertion and worries⁶.

If insomnia is caused by dryness only or led to dryness, the use of fluid rich diet along with *motadil hammam* is advised in an attempt to restore *ratubat* in the body, whereas physical exertion and coitus is discouraged^{4,8}.

If insomnia is caused by dry with hot ill temperament then *barid ratab* (cold and wet) drugs/ diets are advised viz. *kaddoo* (pumpkin), *khurfa* (common purslane), *luab-e-asapghol* (mucilage of isapgol husk) etc.⁴⁻⁶.

If the cause is depression or fear of something caused by excess of *sauda* (black bile), like in *malekhoolia* (melancholia) the best treatment is use of euphorics and listening music, along with *munzij-e-sauda* (concoctive for black bile) drugs viz. *bisfaij fistaqi* (polypody), *baadrnjboya* (catwort), *maweez munaqqa* (seedless dried grapes) *aftimoon* (dodder), *injeer zard* (yellow fig) etc., followed by *mushil-e-sauda* (melanagogue) i.e. addition of *ghariqoon mugharbal* (processed larch agaric), *barg-e-sana makki* (senna leaves), *sibr* (aloe vera) etc, in ongoing *munzij* (concoctive) and finally prescribing *mufarreh* (exhilarants) viz. *mufarreh Shaikhur-Raees*, *mufarreh azam* etc. and *muqawwi dimagh* (brain tonic) viz. *hareera maghz badam wala*, *dawaul misk motadil*, *majoon muqawwi dimagh* etc.) drugs^{4,6}.

Insomnia post fever is managed by the following regimen:

Diyaqooza is given orally twice a day with local application of *Roghan-e-Khashkhash*, *Roghan-e-Kahu* on the temporal area^{9,10,12}. *Tukhm-e-khashkhash* (poppy seeds) and *kahu* (garden lettuce) are added in the diet⁹.

Like-wise *Khameera Khashkhash* and *Sharbat-e-Khashkhash* are useful to induce sound sleep in patients of insomnia¹²⁻¹⁴.

In case of excess of *balgham-e-shor* (acid phlegm) in the body causing insomnia following prescription is suitable:

Decoction of *badyan* (fennel seeds), *bekh badyan* (root of fennel), *aslus soos muqasshar* (peeled licorice), *gauzaban* (borage leaves), *tukhm-e-khatmi* (marshmallow seeds), *banafsha* (sweet violet), *bekh kasni* (chicory root) is prepared and given to the patient twice daily with *gulqand*. Thereafter *mushil-e-balgham* (phlegmagogue) is advised using *habb-e-shabyar* or *Habb-e-Iyarij*^{5, 6, 9, 15}.

After evacuation of the morbid matter from the body *Roghan-e-Babuna* (chamomile oil) is applied on the scalp. Patients are advised to avoid bitter and astringent eatables.

If the insomnia is due to ageing (elderly) it is less likely to be cured, but managed accordingly for life-long. *Sheera Tukhm-e-Khashkhash* (poppy seeds), *Sheera Tukhm-e-Kahu* (garden lettuce) prepared with sugar is given to these patients. In diet *Kaddoo* (pumpkin), *Barg-e-Khurfa* *Siyah* (common purslane), *Kahu* (garden lettuce), *Palak* (spinach) etc. are advised^{4-6, 9}.

According to *Razi* eating vegetable of Soya is useful to induce good sleep, whereas *Jalinoos* himself use to eat *Barg-e-Khas* (vetiver leaves) and advice its use to induce sleep for elderly¹⁰.

Topical use of drugs:

Roghan-e-Nilofar (water lily oil) or *Roghan-e-Banafsha* (sweet violet oil) or *Roghan-e-Kaddoo* (pumpkin seed oil) or *Roghan-e-Khashkhash* (poppy seed oil) or *Roghan Luboob Sab'a* is applied on the scalp, temporal areas, in the nostrils and massage of palms and soles is done with these oils^{1, 2, 4-7, 14-15}.

Tila-e-Nafe: paste of *Post Khashkhash* (poppy seeds), *Bekh Luffah* (deadly nightshade root), *Afyoon* (opium), *Misri* (sugar crystals) in equal quantity and *Zafran* (saffron) in little quantity be made with *Aab-e-Khas* (vetiver water) or *Aab-e-Khurfa* (garden lettuce water) and should be applied on temporal area or the tip of the nose³.

Tila-e-Nafe: Paste of *Post Khashkhash* (poppy epicarp) and *Bekh Yabrooj* (deadly nightshade root) applied on the temporal area is much beneficial and to smell these is also helpful¹.

Zimad-e-Nafe: Paste of *Post Khashkhash* (poppy epicarp), *Barg-e-Nilofar* (water lily leaves), *Banafsha* (sweet violet), *Nakhoona* (king's crown) be prepared with *Aab-e-Bed Mushk* (goat willow water) and applied over the forehead³.

In case of headache: *Taskeen-e-Alam* is done and *Diyaqoza* is given for the purpose, and *Roghan-e-Khashkhash* (poppy seeds oil) is applied on the scalp and forehead⁹.

Hakeem Ali says, application of the paste made with *Barg-e-Bhang* (marijuana leaves) and Goat's milk on the soles like Henna is extremely beneficial for the management of insomnia. Likewise application of paste of *Shahdana* (marijuana seeds) and milk on the soles is also useful¹⁶.

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