

A REVIEW OF CLASSICAL CONCEPTS AND CLINICAL EVIDENCE ON AYURVEDIC MANAGEMENT & PANCHAKARMA MODALITIES IN ANIDRA

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ABSTRACT

Anidra, or insomnia, is a prevalent sleep disorder characterized by difficulty in initiating or maintaining sleep. In Ayurveda, *Anidra* is considered a *Vataja Nanatmaja Vyadhi*, primarily resulting from imbalances in the Vata dosha, with secondary involvement of Pitta and Kapha. Disturbed sleep is believed to lead to various health issues, including fatigue, cognitive disturbances, and compromised immunity. A systematic review was conducted by analyzing classical Ayurvedic texts such as Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, and Ashtanga Hridayam, alongside contemporary research articles indexed in PubMed, Scopus, and Web of Science. The focus was on understanding the pathophysiology, classification, and therapeutic interventions for *Anidra*. Ayurvedic management of *Anidra* encompasses dietary modifications (*Ahara*), lifestyle changes (*Vihara*), herbal formulations, and Panchakarma therapies. Key interventions include the use of *Medhya Rasayanas* like *Brahmi* (*Bacopa monnieri*),

Shirodhara therapy, Talam, and *bahyaupchaara*. Modern approaches incorporate cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia (CBT-I), pharmacotherapy, and lifestyle interventions.

Integrating Ayurvedic and modern therapeutic modalities offers a holistic approach to managing *Anidra*. While modern medicine provides symptomatic relief, Ayurveda addresses the root cause by balancing *doshic* imbalances. Collaborative research is essential to validate the efficacy and safety of Ayurvedic interventions in the context of *Anidra*.

KEYWORDS: *Anidra*, Ayurveda, Insomnia, *Medhya Rasayana*, *Shirodhara*.

INTRODUCTION

Insomnia is characterized by dissatisfaction about sleep quality or duration. Subjective complaints include difficulty falling asleep at bedtime, waking up at night and having difficulty going back to sleep, waking up too early in the morning with an inability to return to sleep, or a complaint of non-restorative sleep. These nocturnal symptoms routinely lead to daytime fatigue, decreased energy, problems with cognitive functions (attention, memory), and mood disturbances (irritability), which can produce significant distress and functional impairments at home, work or in social endeavors. Daytime impairment is often the main reason individuals with insomnia seek treatment.^[1]

Insomnia is among the most prevalent complaints brought to the attention of primary-care physicians. Approximately 20% of patients seen by primary-care physicians report significant sleep disturbances.^[2] Insomnia affects all segments of the population, including children and the elderly. While precise estimates vary as a function of definitions and methodology, approximately 40% of adults (≥ 18 years of age) report at least 1 symptom of insomnia 3 times per week, 20% are dissatisfied with their sleep, and about 10%-13% meet criteria for an insomnia disorder.^[3]

Approximately 40% of adults with insomnia have stressful life, job pattern, and family issues along with depression. Consequently, patients worry and ruminate about their symptoms at night and are concerned about the negative consequences during daytime. The cause of insomnia includes medical illness, such as fibromyalgia, hyperthyroidism, old age, sleep, apnoea, psychological conditions such as delirium, psychiatric disorders such as mania, major depression, anxiety disorders, stressed life situation, alcohol, and drugs use, medications such as corticosteroids, disruption in circadian rhythm, poor sleep habits, etc.

In Ayurveda the condition we call insomnia today is known as *Anidra*. It is seen as a pathological state where a person has insufficient sleep or disturbed sleep. The way ayurvedic

looks at Anidra lines up closely with how modern medicine understands insomnia. The approach to managing *anidra* includes focusing on diet, daily routine, and medications. But beyond just taking medicine, counselling and relaxation techniques play an equally important role in treating this condition.

Management of Anidra

In Ayurveda, managing *anidra* takes a very well-rounded approach. It is not just about giving a person medication, but about making sure their entire lifestyle supports good sleep. Two of the most important aspects of this are diet and daily routine.

Dietary Recommendations

The food we eat can have a big impact on our sleep. In Ayurvedic practice, certain foods are recommended because they help soothe the mind and promote restfulness. These include milk and milk products like curd and ghee.

Other calming and nourishing options are sugarcane juice, grape juice, and preparations made with jaggery and sugar. All these foods are known to have "soma-enhancing" qualities, meaning they help calm the mind and body. From an Ayurvedic perspective, insomnia is often linked to an imbalance in the vata and pitta doshas. The above foods are believed to help pacify these doshas, making it easier for the body and mind to relax and prepare for sleep.

Routine-Based Practices

Establishing a good daily routine is just as important as diet. Small lifestyle changes can make a big difference in helping the body naturally shift into a restful state at night. Some helpful habits include taking a warm bath before bed and applying oil to the head a practice called shiro abhyanga). Listening to calm and soothing music can also be helpful.

Another good habit is to reduce screen time in the evenings. Bright screens from phones, computers, and TV's can overstimulate the brain and make it harder to fall asleep. Eating an early dinner and going to bed at the same time every night is also highly recommended.

It is equally important to avoid things that stimulate the mind at night, such as caffeine or heavy, emotionally charged media. Including practices like yoga, pranayama (breathing exercises), and meditation in your daily life can also be very effective. These activities help settle the mind, lower stress levels, and encourage natural sleep.

When these lifestyle and dietary changes are followed together, they form a complete and supportive strategy for dealing with *anidra* Herbal Support.

In addition to diet and lifestyle, Ayurvedic medicine offers a number of herbs that can help improve sleep. Several single herbs have shown strong potential in helping patients with sleep problems. Some of the most commonly used herbs for sleep include:

- * Ashwagandha
- * Somalatha
- * Tagara
- * Jatamansi
- * Shankhpushpi

These herbs can be used individually or as part of combination formulas, depending on the specific needs of the patient and the particular dosha imbalance they are experiencing.

Role of Ghrita (Medicated Ghee)

Medicated ghee, or Grita, plays an important role in the Ayurvedic treatment of psychiatric conditions, including *andra*. Ghrita preparations are highly nourishing and have a calming effect on the mind. Some of the most effective ghrithas for *anidra* include:

- * Maha Paishachika Ghrita
- * Kalyanaka Ghrita
- * Maha Kalyanaka Ghrita

Other Medicines and Formulations

There are several other Ayurvedic medicines that are commonly used in moderate to severe cases of insomnia or when the condition is linked to mental health disturbances. These include:

- * Drakshadi Kashaya
- * Vidaryadi Kashaya
- * Ashwagandharishta
- * Draksharishta
- * Manasa Mitra Vatakam

These treatments are usually not the first line of care but are reserved for more difficult cases where deeper support is needed.

External Therapies

External applications, known as *bahyopacara*, also play a vital role in Ayurvedic management of *anidra*. Applying medicated oil to the head (*murdha taila*) is one of the most traditional and highly effective therapies. Techniques such as:

- * *Shiro abhyanga* (head massage)
- * *Shiro dhara* (continuous stream of oil poured on the forehead)
- * *Shiro-pichu* (placing medicated oil-soaked cotton on the head) can all be highly beneficial.

Commonly used oils for these therapies include

- * *Chandanadi Taila*
- * *Ksheerabala Taila*
- * *Himasagara Taila*
- * *Shankhpushpi Taila*

Another helpful therapy is *Kashaya dhara*, where a warm decoction is poured on the body. Using herbs like *yashti*, *amalaki* and *guduchi* in this treatment can bring additional benefits.

Talapothichil, a therapy where an herbal paste is applied to the scalp, can also help. A combination of *amalaki*, *guduchi*, *yashti* and *Musta* is commonly used for this.

For daily support, applying *talam* (an herbal paste applied on the centre of scalp) with *Ksheerabala*(101) mixed with powders like *Kachuradi Churna* or *Panchagandha Churna* and *padabhyanga* with *Ksheerabala taila* can further help relieve the symptoms of *anidra*.^[4]

CONCLUSION

Treating *Anidra* through Ayurveda is not about using one single remedy. It is about creating a complete and balanced approach that supports the body and mind in returning to their natural state of restfulness. A combination of proper diet (*ahara*), daily routine (*dinacharya*), and carefully selected medicinal preparations forms the heart of this approach.

Six hours sleep in the middle of the night and keeping awake during the first and last quarters as well as as day time can be generally considered as regulated sleep and wakefulness.

Beyond herbal or therapeutic treatments, psychological counselling, stress management, yoga, and relaxation practices are highly recommended. These practices help the mind calm down and allow the body to follow its natural sleep rhythm. Simple steps like keeping a regular bedtime, creating a peaceful and clean sleep environment, and avoiding overstimulation in the evening all contribute to better sleep.

In the Ayurvedic texts and the later literatures the usefulness and value of sleep and its essential role in the maintenance of health is elaborately discussed. From the above review we observe that *Anidra* has been described by different Acharyas in ayurveda and their treatment vary. Together, these approaches support the Ayurvedic view that true health comes from harmony between the body, mind, and environment. Through these time-tested practices, it is possible to manage *anidra* effectively and improve both sleep quality and overall well-being.

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