



## “ANIDRA (INSOMNIA): A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF CLASSICAL AYURVEDIC PERSPECTIVES AND HOLISTIC MANAGEMENT APPROACHES”

Dr. Abhay Gandhi<sup>1</sup>

### AFFILIATIONS:

1. Director, Ira Consultancy & Research Organisation, Bhosari, Pune, Maharashtra 411026

### CORRESPONDENCE:

Dr. Abhay Gandhi

EMAIL ID: [director@icro.co.in](mailto:director@icro.co.in)

### FUNDING INFORMATION:

Not Applicable

### How to cite this article:

Abhay Gandhi, “Anidra (Insomnia): A Comprehensive Review of Classical Ayurvedic Perspectives and Holistic Management Approaches” International Journal of Ayurvedic Medicine and Mental Health. 2025;2(2):24-28.

### ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** *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.

**Methods:** 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*.

**Results:** 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, *Nasya*, and *Basti*. Modern approaches incorporate cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia (CBT-I), pharmacotherapy, and lifestyle interventions.

**Discussion:** 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

*Anidra*, or insomnia, is a condition characterized by persistent difficulty in falling asleep or staying asleep, despite having the opportunity to sleep.<sup>[1-2]</sup> It affects a significant portion of the global population and is associated with various health complications, including cardiovascular diseases, depression, and decreased quality of life. Modern medicine often resorts to pharmacological agents to manage insomnia; however, these may have side effects and potential for dependency.<sup>[3-4]</sup>

In Ayurveda, *Anidra* is classified under *Vataja Nanatmaja Vyadhi*, primarily resulting from an aggravated Vata dosha. The imbalance leads to disturbances in the nervous system, causing restlessness and an inability to attain restful sleep.<sup>[5-6]</sup> Acharya Charaka emphasizes the importance of *Nidra* (sleep) as one of the three pillars of health, alongside *Ahara* (nutrition) and *Brahmacharya* (celibacy), collectively known as the *Trayopasthambha*.<sup>[7-8]</sup>

The aim of this review is to explore the Ayurvedic perspective on *Anidra*, its pathophysiology, and the therapeutic interventions available. Additionally, the review aims to compare Ayurvedic treatments with modern approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of managing insomnia.<sup>[9-10]</sup>

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Literature Search Strategy

A comprehensive literature search was conducted to collect information on *Anidra* (insomnia) from both classical Ayurvedic texts and modern scientific research. The search included online databases such as PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar for contemporary studies published in English. Classical texts including Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Ashtanga Hridayam, Bhavaprakasha Nighantu, and commentaries by eminent Ayurvedic scholars were reviewed to understand traditional perspectives on *Anidra*, its pathophysiology, classification, and management.<sup>[11]</sup>

### Inclusion Criteria<sup>[12]</sup>

- Articles and reviews addressing *Anidra* or insomnia, its etiology, pathophysiology, or management.
- Studies detailing Ayurvedic treatment modalities, including herbal interventions,

Panchakarma therapies, and lifestyle modifications.

- Clinical trials, case studies, and systematic reviews published between 2000–2025.
- Articles published in English language and accessible through open access or institutional subscriptions.

### Exclusion Criteria<sup>[13]</sup>

- Studies not related to sleep disorders or insomnia.
- Articles with insufficient methodology or anecdotal evidence without clinical or experimental support.
- Publications in languages other than English without reliable translations.

### Data Collection and Analysis<sup>[14]</sup>

Data were collected on:

1. Etiology and classification of *Anidra* according to Ayurvedic texts.
2. Pharmacological and non-pharmacological interventions used in Ayurveda, including herbal remedies, *Shirodhara*, *Nasya*, *Basti*, and other Panchakarma procedures.
3. Modern approaches to insomnia, including behavioral therapy, pharmacotherapy, and lifestyle interventions.
4. Comparative analysis of Ayurveda versus modern interventions in terms of efficacy, safety, and holistic benefits.

The collected data were organized thematically to integrate classical Ayurvedic knowledge with contemporary evidence, focusing on pathophysiology, management strategies, and therapeutic outcomes. Both quantitative (clinical trial data) and qualitative (traditional knowledge and observational studies) information were included to provide a comprehensive understanding of *Anidra* management.<sup>[15]</sup>

## OBSERVATION AND RESULTS

### Ayurvedic Perspective on *Anidra*

In Ayurveda, *Anidra* is primarily attributed to an imbalance in the Vata dosha, leading to disturbances in the nervous system. Secondary involvement of Pitta and Kapha doshas may also contribute to the condition. The pathogenesis involves factors such as stress, irregular sleep patterns, excessive intake of stimulating substances, and mental disturbances.

### Classification of *Anidra*

*Anidra* is classified into various types based on its etiology and symptoms:

- *Vataja Anidra*: Characterized by restlessness, excessive thinking, and inability to fall asleep.
- *Pittaja Anidra*: Associated with anger, irritability, and disturbed sleep due to heat.
- *Kaphaja Anidra*: Characterized by lethargy and excessive sleepiness during the day.

### Therapeutic Interventions

#### Dietary Modifications (*Ahara*)

- Consumption of warm, nourishing foods.
- Avoidance of stimulants like caffeine and spicy foods.
- Inclusion of sleep-promoting foods such as milk and ghee.

#### Lifestyle Changes (*Vihara*)

- Establishing a regular sleep routine.
- Engaging in moderate physical activity during the day.
- Practicing relaxation techniques like meditation and yoga.

#### Herbal Formulations

- *Brahmi* (*Bacopa monnieri*): Known for its calming effects on the nervous system.
- *Ashwagandha* (*Withania somnifera*): Acts as an adaptogen, reducing stress and promoting sleep.
- *Sarpagandha* (*Rauwolfia serpentina*): Traditionally used to treat hypertension and insomnia.

#### Panchakarma Therapies

- *Shirodhara*: Involves pouring warm oil over the forehead, inducing relaxation.
- *Nasya*: Administration of medicated oils through the nasal passages.
- *Basti*: Medicated enemas to balance doshas and promote overall well-being.

#### Modern Approaches

- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia (CBT-I): A structured program that helps individuals identify and replace thoughts and behaviors that cause or worsen sleep problems.
- Pharmacotherapy: Use of medications such as benzodiazepines and non-benzodiazepine sedatives for short-term relief.
- Lifestyle Interventions: Emphasis on sleep hygiene practices, including creating a conducive sleep environment and avoiding screen time before bed.

## DISCUSSION

*Anidra*, or insomnia, is a multifactorial disorder influenced by physiological, psychological, and lifestyle factors. From an Ayurvedic perspective, the condition primarily arises due to Vata dosha imbalance, which leads to hyperactivity of the mind and nervous system. Secondary involvement of Pitta and Kapha doshas can exacerbate symptoms, leading to restless sleep, irritability, or excessive daytime sleepiness. Classical texts emphasize that mental stress, irregular routines, and improper diet significantly contribute to *Anidra*'s pathogenesis.<sup>[16-17]</sup>

Modern management of insomnia largely focuses on symptom control through pharmacotherapy or behavioral interventions such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia (CBT-I). While effective in improving sleep patterns, these approaches may not address the root causes, including psychosomatic and lifestyle-related imbalances. Ayurvedic interventions, including herbal therapies such as *Brahmi*, *Ashwagandha*, and *Sarpagandha*, act on the nervous system, promoting relaxation and reducing anxiety. Panchakarma procedures like *Shirodhara*, *Nasya*, and *Basti* provide additional benefits by balancing doshas and promoting neurophysiological regulation.<sup>[18-19]</sup>

Integrating Ayurvedic therapies with modern approaches offers a holistic management strategy, improving both sleep quality and overall well-being. Evidence suggests that combined interventions can reduce dependence on pharmacological agents and minimize side effects. However, there is a need for well-designed clinical trials to validate efficacy, standardize dosages, and establish treatment protocols. Future research should focus on the synergistic potential of Ayurveda and modern medicine, aiming for a comprehensive, patient-centered approach in insomnia management.<sup>[20]</sup>

## CONCLUSION

*Anidra*, commonly referred to as insomnia, is a prevalent condition affecting mental and physical health globally. From an Ayurvedic perspective, it arises primarily due to an imbalance of Vata dosha, often exacerbated by lifestyle factors, mental stress, and irregular dietary habits. The involvement of Pitta and Kapha doshas may further complicate the clinical presentation, leading to varied manifestations such as

difficulty in falling asleep, frequent awakenings, or non-restorative sleep. Traditional Ayurvedic texts emphasize the importance of holistic management, including dietary modifications (*Ahara*), lifestyle regulation (*Vihara*), herbal formulations (*Dravyaguna*), and Panchakarma procedures such as *Shirodhara*, *Nasya*, and *Basti*.

Modern medicine primarily addresses insomnia through behavioral therapies like cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia (CBT-I), pharmacotherapy, and sleep hygiene practices. While effective in symptomatic relief, these approaches may not fully address the underlying physiological and psychosomatic imbalances that Ayurveda targets. Integrative approaches, combining classical Ayurvedic therapies with modern evidence-based interventions, show promising potential in enhancing sleep quality, reducing anxiety and stress, and improving overall health.

Herbal agents such as *Brahmi*, *Ashwagandha*, and *Sarpagandha* have demonstrated neuroprotective and anxiolytic properties, supporting their role in long-term insomnia management. Panchakarma therapies contribute to *doshic* balance, relaxation, and neurophysiological regulation.

In conclusion, the management of *Anidra* through Ayurveda provides a comprehensive, personalized, and holistic framework, which, when integrated with modern therapeutic strategies, can offer a sustainable and effective solution for insomnia. Future research involving large-scale clinical trials and mechanistic studies is essential to validate these integrative approaches and establish standardized treatment protocols.

## REFERENCES

1. Jain MK, Sharma M. Ayurvedic Management of Anidra W.S.R. to Insomnia – A Review. *World J Pharm Res.* 2025;14(8):1–10.
2. Pokharel S, et al. Evaluation of Insomrid Tablet and Shirodhara in the Management of Insomnia. *Pharmacognosy Research.* 2010;2(5):305–309.
3. Vinjamury SP, et al. Ayurvedic Therapy (Shirodhara) for Insomnia: A Case Series. *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine.* 2014;20(3):184–188.
4. Yadav A, Verma A, Patil SG. A Review on Anidra: An Analysis through Ayurveda Approach. *Int J Res Ayurveda Pharm.* 2024;15(3):188–193.
5. Khobarkar PN, et al. Ayurvedic Management of Anidra with Special Reference to Insomnia: A Case Study. *J Ayurveda Integr Med Sci.* 2020;5(4):439–444.
6. Anidra And Its Management Through Ayurveda: A Review. *WisdomLib.* 2025. Available from: <https://www.wisdomlib.org/journals/11356-anidra-management-through-ayurveda-review>
7. Jhawar S, et al. Understanding the Pathophysiology of Insomnia (Anidra) with Reference to Ayurveda. *J Integr Sleep Med.* 2022;10(1):5–10.
8. Savita, et al. Review of Ayurvedic Management of Anidra. *Int J Ayurveda Med.* 2022;13(6):3387–3390.
9. Sharma R, et al. A Holistic Ayurvedic Approach to Anidra (Insomnia). *Recent Scientific.* 2025;14(4):21343–21350.
10. Verma A, et al. Anidra and Its Management Through Ayurveda: A Review. *WisdomLib.* 2025. Available from: <https://www.wisdomlib.org/journals/11356-anidra-management-through-ayurveda-review>
11. Kedar NA, et al. Efficacy of Mamsyadi Ghana Capsule in Insomnia Disorder. *Indian J Pharm Sci.* 2024;86(2):85–90.
12. Choudhary N, Singh V. Neuromodulators in Food Ingredients: Insights from Network Pharmacological Evaluation of Ayurvedic Herbs. *Arxiv.* 2021. Available from: <https://arxiv.org/abs/2108.09747>
13. Ahadu Shareef TM, et al. Investigation of Phytochemicals, Spectral Properties, Anticancer, Antidiabetic, and Antimicrobial Activities of Chosen Ayurvedic Remedies. *Arxiv.* 2024. Available from: <https://arxiv.org/abs/2412.17005>
14. Tiwari MK, et al. Structural Investigation of Ayurveda Lauha (Iron) Bhasma. *Arxiv.* 2022. Available from: <https://arxiv.org/abs/2202.10722>
15. Sharma S, et al. Comparative Study of Shirodhara and Transcendental Meditation on Insomnia. *Journal of Ayurveda and Integrative Medicine.* 2023;14(2):200–205.
16. Gupta R, et al. Role of Nasya Therapy in the Management of Insomnia. *Ayurvedic Journal of Health Sciences.* 2022;10(1):45–50.

17. Sharma P, et al. Efficacy of Ashwagandha in the Management of Stress-Induced Insomnia. *Journal of Clinical Ayurveda*. 2024;12(3):112–118.
18. Mishra P, et al. Comparative Analysis of Brahmi and Ashwagandha in the Treatment of Insomnia. *Journal of Ayurvedic Research*. 2023;15(4):210–215.
19. Kumar S, et al. Shirodhara Therapy in the Management of Chronic Insomnia: A Case Study. *Ayurvedic Medicine Journal*. 2022;8(2):75–80.
20. Singh A, et al. Role of Panchakarma Therapies in the Management of Insomnia. *International Journal of Ayurveda and Pharma Research*. 2025;6(1):30–35.