



A HOLISTIC AYURVEDA APPROACH IN THE MANAGEMENT OF INSOMNIA: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Sleep (*Nidra*) is one of the best elixirs of life. It is a natural rejuvenator to refresh every living being on the earth, during which many processes vital to health and well-being takes place. Any alterations in the quantity, quality, and sleep patterns contribute to various sleep disorders like insomnia. Insomnia causes many problems in day-to-day life, such as tiredness, a lack of energy, concentration difficulties, and irritability. Modern science has no permanent cure for insomnia because they use only hypnotics and sedatives as their treatment. Also, there are chances that the patient may get addicted to these particular drugs. In *Ayurveda*, difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep, or both are considered under the heading of *Nidranash*. In *Nidranash*, the main *Doshas* involved are *Vata* and *Pitta Prakopa*. Therefore, the treatment of *Nidranash* is mainly *Vata-Pitta Shamak Chikitsa*. In *Ayurveda*, there are a variety of treatments for insomnia. Based on the *Ayurvedic* approaches, single herbs like *Aswagandha*, *Jatamansi*, etc., compound formulations, therapies, *Pathya* (wholesome) & *Apathya* (unwholesome) *Ahara* (diet), and *Vihara* (lifestyle) have been discussed in this article.

Keywords: *Anidra*, *Nidranash*, Insomnia, *Ahara*, *Vihara*.

INTRODUCTION

Sleep is a vital component in maintaining the health and well-being of human life. Absence of which causes a lot of neuro-psycho-physiological disorders in the body. In other words, sleep disturbance for a shorter period can be managed. If it continues for a prolonged period, the condition is developed into a disease, which can be termed based on its characteristics like sleep disorder, insomnia (*Anidra*), etc. The definition of health has been modified in the present time; it is not just confined to physical health, but mental health is also given a lot of importance [1]. A person's physical and psychological health must be in good condition for a good quality of life. However, people succumb to unhealthy lifestyles even after knowing the importance of mental health due to their busy lifestyles. A stressful lifestyle generally causes insomnia, or medicines, trauma can cause it.

Types of Insomnia [1]:

Insomnia can be classified on various grounds. Based on duration, it is of two types:

1. Acute Insomnia: It is also called transient insomnia. It is a short-term ailment that can last up to a few days to a few weeks. Acute insomnia often happens because of certain stressful life circumstances like the death of a loved one, divorce, etc. It can also be caused due to underlying unresolved issues.

2. Chronic Insomnia: When insomnia prevails for long periods, it is regarded as chronic insomnia. This ailment can last for months or years. Chronic insomnia is diagnosed when there is a disruption in sleep for at least three nights per week and lasts for a minimum of three months. It can be caused by sudden changes in the environment, unhealthy sleep habits, and certain medications. Chronic insomnia can also be co-morbid and linked to another medical or psychiatric issue.

Ayurveda Description of Insomnia:

The natural phenomenon of giving adequate rest to the body (*Sharir*) and mind (*Man*) is sleep, and *Anidra* (insomnia) is a condition in which the patient is unable to sleep properly, which adversely affects his daily activities [2]. *Ayurveda* is a holistic and evidence-based medicine that states that disease is main-

ly caused by *Dushti of Shareerika* or *Manasika Dosh*. Presently, most people are suffering from one or other psychosomatic disorders due to stress. *Ahara* (food), *Nidra* (sleep), and *Bramhacharya* (abstinence) are described to be the *Trayopasthamba*. Therefore, sleep is one of the essential things to lead a healthy life. *Acharya Charaka* has rightly stated that happiness & misery, proper & improper growth, good strength & weakness, potency & sterility, knowledge & ignorance, and life & death of an individual mainly depend on adequate and inadequate sleep respectively [3]. The concept of sleep disorder has also been enriched with descriptions in classical texts like *Nidranash*, *Anidra*, etc. Similar terms are also found in *Ayurvedic* texts like *Aswapana*, *Akalanidra*, *AvyavahitAnidra*, *Prajagran*, *Nidraghat*, *Nidra-viparay*, etc [4]. *Anidra* is considered a solo disease in *Vata Nanatmaja Vyadhi* and a symptom of various physical and psychological ailments. Loss of sleep or *Vaikariki Nidra* occurs in patients whose *Kapha* diminishes, *Vata* increases, or who suffer from physical or mental illnesses. *Acharya Sushruta* says that *Anidra* occurs due to vitiations of *Vata* and *Pitta*, psychological ailments, extreme weakness or ill health, and physical trauma [5]. Therefore, to stay away from such problems, *Nidra* is most important. Such a condition results from the aggravation of the *Vata* and *Pitta* and depletion of the *Kapha*.

Moreover, sleep is regulated by the *Dosha's* performance concerning the functioning of *Manas*, i.e., *rajas*. Hence it may be Manifested both in physical as well as psychiatric disorders. The initiation of sleep is promoted by *Vata*, and the maintenance of sleep is enhanced by *Pitta* [6]. According to *Acharya Charaka: Karya, Kala, Vikara, and Prakruti* are the hiatus of *Nidranash*.

Causes of Insomnia:

Insomnia may be a symptom of a stressful lifestyle, depressive illness, anxiety disorders, psychiatric diseases, or other pathological conditions. The disturbance in *Nidra* might be related to the faulty lifestyle, mental tension, changed food habits, and stress. *Acharya Charak* discusses that *Anidra* (insomnia)

may be caused due to excess purgation, emesis or quarrel, increased physical exertion, overworking, weakness because of old age or diseases, excess fasting, and uncomfortable bed. He also opined that psychological factor like fear, anger, anxiety and predominance of *Satva Guna* along with *Vata Prakriti* causes insomnia^[5]. An improper diet and irregular lifestyle (*Ahara* and *Vihara*) develop the cause of *Vata Prakopa* that travels through *Manovahi Srotas*, causing sleeplessness (*Anidra*)^[2]. Anxiety, stress, and depression are some of the most common causes of chronic insomnia. Grief and trauma are also causes of insomnia.

Symptoms of Insomnia^[1]:

Insomnia is both a symptom as well as a disorder. The common symptoms are as follows:

- Sleeplessness.
- Abrupt/ disturbed sleeping pattern.
- Waking up too early or difficulty in staying asleep.
- Waking up tired.
- Tiredness and sleepiness in the daytime.
- Irritability, headache, and depression or anxiety.
- Poor memory, trouble with attention, and inability to focus on work.
- Prone to accidents and mishaps.
- Hindrances in carrying out a day-to-day activity.

Effect of Insomnia:

Insomnia increases the risk of developing medical conditions such as

- Stroke
- Asthma
- Seizures
- Weak immune system
- Sensitivity to pain
- Inflammation
- Obesity
- Diabetes
- High blood pressure
- Heart disease

Also, insomnia increases the risk for mental health disorders such as

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Confusion and frustration

Severe insomnia is sleeping less than 3.5 hours in females and 4.5 hours in males, which may lead to a reduced life span.

Prevalence:

Around 9% of the general population are suffering from insomnia, and approximately 28% of people are suffering from initiation and maintenance of sleep. It is affecting nearly one-third of the population (especially youth) in western countries, and the incidences are increasing day by day. As per the international data, 30-40% of American adults have insomnia, out of which 10-15% of adults have chronic insomnia. A higher prevalence of sleep disorders related to initiation and maintenance of sleep (28%) is reported in India's urban population. Insomnia is the most common clinical presentation among sleep disorders, 40% more common in women than men^[3]. Several studies have shown that 75-90% of insomnia people are also at risk of developing various pain conditions like headaches, cervical issues, and migraine pain in the neck. About 10-30% of adults have insomnia at any given point^[7].

MANAGEMENT OF INSOMNIA:

At present, the medical Management of insomnia includes different variety of benzodiazepines which causes various toxic effects and drug dependency. One can find out the best remedies in the *Ayurvedic* system of medicine to treat this disease. The holistic *Ayurvedic* approach to the Management of insomnia can be categorized into four parts.

1. Using *Ayurvedic* Medicines/Herbs:

The primary treatment protocol for insomnia is *Vata Pitta Shamak Chikitsa*. There are several singles as well as compound formulations. Table 1 shows the single drug, and table 2 shows compound medicine in *Ayurveda* to treat insomnia.

Table 1: Ayurvedic single drugs for insomnia ^[8]

S. No.	Drug Name	Pharmacological Action
1.	<i>Sankhapushpi</i>	<i>Medhya, TriDoshahar, Nidra janan</i>
2.	<i>KushManda</i>	<i>Medhya, Vata-Pitta Shamak, Nidra janan effect</i>
3.	<i>Bhanga</i>	<i>Madak, Nidrajanan effect</i>
4.	<i>JataMansi</i>	<i>TriDoshahar, Medhya, Nidrajanan effect</i>
5.	<i>Sarpagandha</i>	<i>Prabhav - Nidrajanan</i>
6.	<i>Draksha</i>	<i>Vata-Pitta Shamak, Medhya</i>
7.	<i>Ashwagandha</i>	<i>Rasayan, Nidrajanan effect</i>
8.	<i>Madyantika</i>	<i>Medhya, Nidrajanan effect, Pitta Shamak</i>

Table 2: Ayurvedic compound drugs for insomnia ^[8]

S.No.	Drug Name	Pharmacological Action
1.	<i>Sarpagandha churana yoga</i>	Effective in high BP-related insomnia.
2.	<i>Smiriti sagar Rasa</i>	Increases memory. Effective in fatigue, loss of appetite, and insomnia.
3.	<i>Brahmi Vati</i>	Increases intelligence and memory, Improves insomnia and hysteria.
4.	<i>Sarpagandha Ghan vati</i>	Increases sleep and lower high BP.
5.	<i>Narikela khand pak</i>	Increases sleep and strengthen the body.
6.	<i>Ashwagandhadi churna</i>	Strengthen the body. Increases body weight and sleep.
7.	<i>Draksharishtha</i>	The appetizer, <i>Vayasthapana</i> , improves sleep.
8.	<i>Saraswatarista</i>	<i>Hridya Rasayan</i> , effective in insomnia.
9.	<i>Ashwagandhadi ghrit</i>	Effective in backache, vertigo, and insomnia.
10.	<i>Mansayadi kwath</i>	Effective in <i>Nidranasha</i> .

Saraswatharista is one of the best *Shamana* medicines with *Brahmi Panchanga* as the main ingredient, having *Rasayana* effect and properties that can cure diseases like *Unmada*, *Mada*, and *Apasmara* as both *Shareerika* and *Manasika Vyadhi* are inter-related ^[3]. *Ashwagandha Churna*, *Brahmi Churna*, *Shankhpushpi SwaRasa*, *Rudrakshabeeja Churna*, *JataMansi Churna*, *Guduchisatva*, *Mandukparnichurn*, *Guduchi Kwath* are essential preparations that are to be given with sugar, honey and as per the required dose. Apart from this, compound formulations like *Loknath Rasa*, *Nidrodaya Rasa*, *Kalyanakguda*, *Ashwagandha Ghrit*, *Salmalipaka*, and *Satavariguda* are also to be prescribed judiciously ^[4].

2. Ayurvedic Therapy:

As per *Ayurveda*, specific *Panchkarma* therapies are applied for *Anidra*, such as ^[9]:

- *Akshitarpana* (eye treatment).
- *Abhyanga* – especially *Savanga Abhyanga* (full body oil massage).

- *Udvartana* (rubbing medicated paste and powder).
- *Shirodhara* by medicated oil.
- *Karnapurana* (*Ayurvedic* ear oiling).

Also, *Snana*, *Samvahana*, *Shirolepa* with *Brahmi*, *JataMansi* paste, and specifically *Shirovasti*, *Shirotarpan*, and *Murdhampuran* are prescribed ^[4]. These therapies help reduce the hyperactivity of nerves, reduce stress, calm the mind, and stimulate the pituitary gland. It also helps in the proper functioning of other endocrine glands and induces better and sound sleep.

In *Bhavaprakasha* and *Astanga Samgraha*, one more *Karma*, i.e., *Padabhyanga* is also mentioned for sound sleep as *Nidraprasadkar*.

3. Diet (*Ahara*) ^[9]:

Ahara Dravyas having *Vata Pitta Shamak* property like *Ksheer* are helpful in sleep induction. In *Ayurveda*, the *Pathya Ahara* (beneficial diet) is suggested for sleep Management as follows:

- Intake of *Madhura*, *Snigdha Guna Yukta Ahara* (sweet, buttery food), *Shali Dhanya* (variety of rice) with *Dahi* (curd), *Godhuma* (wheat), *Pis-thanna* (flour of grains).
- Soup of domestic marshy and aquatic animals, soup of 'Viskira' birds.
- *Dugdha* (milk), especially buffalo milk (*Mahisha Kshiram Swapna Jananam*)^[10].
- Food prepared from sugarcane juice.
- *Draksha* (grapes), *Sita* (sugar).

Similarly, the *Apathya Ahara* (unhealthy diet) is also described as follows:

- Avoid excessive *Rukshya* (rough), *Laghu* (light), *Katu* (pungent), *Tikshna Guna* (Sharp) *Yukta Ahara*.
- Avoid excessive consumption of tea, caffeine, and alcohol.

4. Lifestyle (*Vihara*)^[9]:

Insomnia is principally related to a lifestyle where worries and anxiety disturb the person's concentration. It is highly essential to maintain the proper ratio between rest and work. It is also crucial to advise the patient to follow recommended yoga and meditation. Moreover, *Pathya Vihara* (beneficial lifestyle) is also suggested as follows:

- *Manah Sukham* (keep the mind in a calm and happy state).
- Listen to pleasant music and positive lectures.
- *Snan* (bath).
- Comfortable bed and environment.
- Maintain a regular sleep/wake-up schedule.
- Keep away cellphone at least one hour before going to sleep.
- Minimize things that can interrupt sleep like bright lights, loud noises, TV, or computer.
- Fragrances of flowers, perfumes.

Similarly, the *Apathya Vihara* (unhealthy lifestyle) described below should be avoided.

- Excessive physical activities and stressful conditions.
- Irregular sleep habits.
- Day sleep.
- Excessive use of gadgets like mobile phones, laptops, video games, and watching television.

CONCLUSION

This Retrospective study is a way to learn, view and Insomnia as a significant medical condition and very much prevalent in society. It affects the quality of life and contributes to other illnesses. Modern pharmacological agents have their limitations, as per reported studies. Food, sleep, and celibacy is three sub-pillars of life. Sleep is as essential as food. Therefore, we must understand its concept and Management through *Ayurveda*. *Ayurvedic* approaches such as *Panchakarma* therapy like *Shirodhara*, *Shirobasti*, *Shirolepa*, *Padabhyanga*, *Utsadana*, and *Karnapurana* are suitable for insomnia. In diet, the patient should take sweet and unctuous food made of *Shali* rice, wheat, and rice flour processed with sugarcane products along with milk, meat soup, etc. Besides, yoga and *Pranayama* are part of the *Ayurvedic* Management of insomnia (*Anidra*). Some *Ayurvedic Herbal* medicines are also widely used, like *Ashwagandha*, *Bramhi*, *JataMansi*, *Shankhapushpi*, *Pip-palimula*, etc.

In general, control over the mind and Management prescribed for *Satvavjaya* should be followed. Living life without worry and always remaining satisfied is the prime concern for keeping the body and mind healthy. *Ayurveda* speaks very clearly with the blessings of "*Jeevamsardashatam*," which means expectancy is 100 years with complete satisfaction.

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