



Case Study

UNLOCKING THE SECRET TO A RESTFUL NIGHT'S SLEEP: UNDERSTANDING INSOMNIA (ANIDRA) AND OVERCOMING IT WITH AYURVEDA

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ABSTRACT

Sleep is a naturally occurring state of both mind and body. The challenge of insomnia disorder arise when an individual subjectively perceives or subpar sleep quality. This can manifest in various ways, including difficulty initiating sleep, frequent nighttime awakenings with subsequent struggles to return to slumber, premature morning awakenings. Insomnia is intimately linked to various medical and psychiatric conditions and can have profound repercussions on an individual's overall quality of life and emotional well-being. Regrettably, in our contemporary world, a growing number of individuals have become reliant on sleep-inducing medications, forming habitual dependencies on them. Within the framework of holistic well-being, three essential pillars support a healthy life: *Aahar* (nutrition), *Nidra* (sleep), and *Brahmcharya* (celibacy or responsible sexual conduct). *Nidra*, plays a crucial role in nourishing the living body. *Anidra*, the absence of sound sleep, has been meticulously described by ancient scholars in various contexts, such as its connection to *Vata Nanatmaja Vikara* and *Vataja Jwara*. Traditional Ayurvedic therapies, known as *Panchkarma*, offer effective approaches to address *Anidra*. These therapies include *Shirodhara* (a continuous stream of warm oil on the forehead), *Shirobasti* (retaining oil on the head), *Shiroabhyang* (head massage), *Shiropicchu* (warm oil application in the ear canal), and *Padaabhyang* (foot massage). These techniques have proven to be valuable in the treatment of insomnia. In light of recent research findings, it is our aim to delve into the underlying causes, consequences, and potential management strategies for insomnia, all through the unique lens of Ayurvedic wisdom.

INTRODUCTION

In the realm of Ayurveda, *Aahar*, *Nidra*, and *Bramchrya* stand as the essential pillars supporting the tapestry of life. These pillars, like the foundation of a grand edifice, bestow upon the body strength, a radiant complexion, and harmonious growth [1,2]. Among these pillars, sleep reigns as an unequivocal cornerstone of a healthy existence. *Nidra*, akin to Lord Vishnu nurturing and safeguarding the world, provides nourishment to the living body, thereby maintaining its vitality[3].

Nidra, in its essence, is a natural phenomenon, a *Swabhavik Rog* provoked by the very rhythms of nature.

As elucidated by the venerable *Acharya Charak*, the balance between happiness and sorrow, proper and improper development, strength and weakness, potency and impotency, intellect and non-intellect, life and death of an individual all hinge upon the quality of sleep they receive[4]. *Nidra*, as it turns out, is subject to the influences of both *Sharirik Dosha Kapha* and *Mansik Dosha tama*. Any circumstance that leads to a decrease in *Kapha* and *Tamo Gunas* within the body can set the stage for *Anidra*, or sleeplessness[5].

Delving further into the annals of Ayurvedic wisdom, *Acharya Vagbhatt* and *Sushruta* have documented the role of *Vata* and *Pitta Doshas* in

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Nidranaash, underscoring the intricate connection between the body and its restful repose^[6].

Insomnia, a modern affliction, finds its definition in the challenge of slumber. It's a common sleep disorder that affects a significant portion of the adult population in the United States, with approximately 30% to 40% reporting insomnia symptoms within a given year. Short-term insomnia, experienced by around 9.5% of the population, can sometimes evolve into chronic insomnia, an enduring malady that persists for years. Lifestyle factors such as excessive caffeine consumption, alcohol and drug misuse, smoking, overexertion, and poor sleep habits all conspire to play a significant role in the development of insomnia.

In the holistic world of Ayurveda, *Anidra* is not merely a sleep disorder but is regarded as a disease that resides within the category of *Nanatmaja Vatvyadhi*, a testament to the profound interconnectedness of body, mind, and restful reprieve^[7].

Etiopathogenesis and Factors Leading to Sleep Disorders

- **Dietary Habits (*Aharaj Nidan*):** Excessive consumption of food, including dry, heavy, nighttime, fasting, incompatible, and overindulgence, as well as the direct effects of substances like alcohol and withdrawal from drugs, can all contribute to the disruption of sleep^[8].
- **Lifestyle Factors (*Viharaj Nidan*):** Excessive smoking, staying awake at night, excessive physical exertion, overworking, daytime sleep, excessive physical discomfort during sleep (uncomfortable bedding), and irregular eating habits are key factors responsible for insomnia.
- **Psychological Factors (*Mansik Nidan*):** Mental disturbances such as disturbances in *Satva* (clarity of mind) and *Tamas* (mental inertia), as well as emotional states like anxiety, anger, and mania, can lead to sleeplessness^[9].
- **Inadequate Treatment (*Asmyak Chikitsa*):** Overuse of purgation, emesis, smoking, excessive physical exercise, and excessive blood-letting can lead to an imbalance in *Vata Dosh*, a major contributor to insomnia^[10].
- **Other Influences**
 - a. **Workload (*Karya*):** High mental or physical workload can preoccupy the mind, making it difficult to sleep.
 - b. **Time of Day (*Kala*):** The circadian rhythm plays a role in sleep patterns, with a natural inclination to sleep at night.
 - c. **Health Conditions (*Vikara*):** Certain illnesses disrupt sleep or are linked to insomnia.

d. Individual Constitution (*Prakriti*): *Vata Prakriti* individuals tend to be sleepless, while those with *Satvika Prakriti* may sleep less, and those with *Tamasika Prakriti* may sleep excessively.

e. *Vata Dosh*: *Vata* is known for its mobile and restless qualities, making it a primary disruptor of sleep^[11].

f. Modern Insights: Insomnia can also be caused by factors like stress, anxiety, lifestyle choices, mental health conditions, and various physical health conditions such as COPD, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, overactive thyroid, and arthritis.

Classification of Insomnia (*Anidra*)

1. **Primary Insomnia:** Not associated with any underlying health conditions.
2. **Secondary Insomnia:** Linked to other health issues, medications, substances (like alcohol), or pain^[12].

Based on Duration

1. **Transient Insomnia:** Lasting up to a week, often due to disruptions in sleep patterns.
2. **Short-Term Insomnia:** Lasting a few weeks, typically related to emotional stressors.
3. **Chronic Insomnia:** Occurs frequently and lasts for a month or longer^[13].

Preliminary Symptoms (*Purvarupa*)

In Ayurveda, specific preliminary symptoms of insomnia (*Purvarupa*) are not mentioned. However, it is primarily a *Vata*-dominant disorder, with unmanifested symptoms (*Avyakt*) preceding the condition.

Characteristic Features (*Rupa*)

The hallmark of insomnia is the inability to obtain adequate sleep. Due to lack of sleep symptoms usually appear are^[14,15] *Jambha*, *Angmard*, *Tandra*, *Siroroga*, *Akshigauravta*, *Glani*, *Bhrama*, *Vata Roga* etc.

Samprapti

Anidra, often referred to as *Vata Nanatamaj Rog* in Ayurveda, is a condition where sleep eludes individuals due to various factors, both physical and mental. When an individual experiences exhaustion of the mind, including sensory and motor functions, leading to a detachment from their surroundings, it can trigger the onset of insomnia. *Mansik Dosh Raja*, or mental disturbances, play a significant role in the development of this condition. *Vata* vitiation can occur due to both physical and mental factors.

Here are some key points on the pathogenesis and management of *Anidra*

- **Impairment of Mind-Body-Functions:** The disruption of the psychosomatic functions of the mind prevents detachment of the *Mann* (mind) from *Gyanendriya* (sensory organs) and

Karmendriya (motor organs) [16]. This disruption ultimately leads to the pathological stage of *Anidra*.

- **Treatment Approach:** Managing *Anidra* involves measures that have *Vatashamaka* (calming *Vata*), *Vedanashamaka* (pain-relieving), and *Roga Nivaraka* (disease-alleviating) effects, along with promoting mental tranquility. Ayurvedic treatments for *Anidra* are commonly categorized into *Ahara* (diet), *Vihara* (lifestyle), *Aushadh* (medications), and *Panchakarma* therapies^[15-18].
- **Nidan Parivarjan:** Before commencing treatment for insomnia, it is essential to rule out any underlying pathological conditions, such as psychiatric or neurological disorders or chronic illnesses, and address them accordingly.
- **Dietary Guidelines**
 - Include *Mamsa* (meat) from *Anoop Deshiya* animals and birds, *Shali* rice, curd, milk, and wheat, while avoiding foods that promote *Kapha Vriddhi* (increase of *Kapha Dosha*).
 - Consume foods like *Ikshu*, *Pishta*, *Draksh*, and *Mishri*.
 - Avoid incompatible, indigestible, spicy, and excessive caffeine-containing foods and beverages like coffee, tea, soft drinks, alcohol, and smoking.

1. Lifestyle Management

- Ensure a comfortable sleeping environment, including a comfortable bed and room.
- Encourage light physical activities before bedtime.
- Sleep regularly at night and do not sleep during the day
- Maintain an active lifestyle, engage in yoga, meditation, and pranayama exercises like *Surya Namaskar*, *Tadasana*, *Shavasan*, and *Padamasana* to reduce stress and calm the mind.

2. Panchkarma Therapies

Consider therapies such as *Nasya* (nasal treatment), *Abhyang* (oil massage), *Padabhyang* (foot massage), *Utsadan* (powder massage), *Chakshu Tarpana* (eye treatment), *Shiro Lepa* (head pack), *Vadana Lepa* (facial pack), *Murdha Taila* (head oil application), *Karna Purana* (ear treatment), *Shiro Basti*, and *Shirodhara*.

3. Medication

Single herbs and formulations can be beneficial, such as:

- *Sarpagandha churna* (tranquilizer)^[17,18,19].
- *Ashvagandha churna* (improves memory and relaxes nerves).
- *Jatamansi churna* (sedative and memory-enhancing).
- *Vacha churna* (calms the mind and relieves tension).

- *Brahmi*, *Mandukparni*, and *Shankhapushpi churna* or *Svarasa* (brain tonics with calming properties).

These Ayurvedic approaches aim to restore balance in the body and mind, alleviate *Vata* imbalance, and promote restful sleep for individuals suffering from *Anidra*.

4. **Compound formulations:** *Mansyadi Kvatha*, *Nidrodya Rasa*, *Brahmi Ghrita*, *Brahmi Vati*, *Vatkulantsk Rasa*, *Himsagar Taila*, *Sarpagandhadi Vati*, *Saras Vatarishta*, *Ashvagandharishta*, *Mahakalyanak Ghrita*, *Smritisagar Rasa*, *Brahm Rasyana*.

DISCUSSION

In the realm of well-being, sleep emerges as a paramount indicator of one's overall health. It plays a pivotal role in restoring equilibrium within the body and offers respite to the weary soul. Ayurveda, the ancient system of holistic healing, regards both the mental and physical aspects of health with equal importance. It posits that ailments of the mind should be addressed through the channels of wisdom (*Gyanam*), knowledge (*Vigyanam*), patience (*Dhairya*), memory (*Smriti*), and meditation (*Samadhi*).

Anidra, a condition characterized by insomnia and often associated with *Vata* disturbances, disrupts the daily routine and can be particularly distressing when it strikes relentlessly. However, when the patient possesses a resilient spirit and robust physique, Ayurveda offers a path to manage this malady. The treatment regimen encompasses *Nidanparivarjan* (eliminating causative factors), *Panchakarma* therapies (purification procedures), medication, *Satwavjaya Chikitsa* (mind therapy), and lifestyle management.

Recognizing that *Anidra* stems from an imbalance of *Kapha* and *Tama*, Ayurveda recommends a dietary regimen that balances these *Doshas*. Additionally, therapeutic practices like *Abhyanga*, which involves a thorough oil massage, can penetrate deep within the body's tissues, pacifying *Vata Dosha* and fostering restful sleep.

Nasya, the instillation of herbal preparations into the nostrils, is another technique employed in Ayurveda to address *Anidra*. This treatment targets critical *Marma* points, such as *Shringataka Marma*, which have connections to the nasal passages, eyes, ears, and throat. The introduction of herbal remedies in this manner stimulates the olfactory neurons, expelling vitiated *Doshas* and promoting a sense of relief.

Shirodhara, a practice involving the continuous pouring of medicated liquids onto the forehead, exerts prolonged pressure that induces tranquility of the mind and reduces stress. *Samvahana*, the gentle caressing of the lower limbs, holds therapeutic value as

it promotes relaxation, alleviates fatigue, and enhances skin softness.

Ayurveda doesn't merely focus on physical treatments; it also delves into the realm of internal medicine. Herbs like *Sarpagandha*, *Jatamansi*, and *Brahmi*, known for their calming properties, offer respite to the nervous system by elevating neurotransmitter levels like serotonin and melatonin, which are instrumental in combating *Anidra* and improving memory. Complementary mental therapies, adherence to *Sadvritta* (codes of conduct), and Yoga meditation can further contribute to addressing the psychological aspects of this condition.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, prevention plays a pivotal role in managing *Anidra*. Patients should be educated on embracing Ayurvedic lifestyle recommendations to avoid falling prey to this condition. Insomnia is often prevalent in middle-aged individuals, especially women during menopause, and it is closely linked to negative emotions like anger (*Krodha*), fear (*Bhaya*), grief (*Shoka*), and worry (*Chinta*). Ayurvedic remedies, whether in the form of single herbs or compound formulations, possess the potential to rejuvenate brain cells and provide relief from insomnia. *Panchakarma* procedures also offer a promising path to combat this ailment. Herbal formulations with anti-anxiety and anti-stress properties, coupled with muscle relaxant effects, can pave the way for anxiety-free, stress-free, and restorative sleep, thereby contributing to a healthier and happier life. Ayurveda stands as a potent force in addressing the challenges of insomnia and promoting overall well-being.

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