

**A HOLISTIC AYURVEDIC APPROACH TO ANIDRA (INSOMNIA)****Dr. T. Lakshmi Soujanya<sup>1</sup>, M.D., Dr. K. J. Lavanya Lakshmi<sup>2</sup>, M.D., Ph.D.**<sup>1</sup>Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Kayachikitsa, Dr. N.R.S. Govt. Ayurvedic college, Vijayawada, A.P.<sup>2</sup>Professor and H. O. D, Dr. N.R.S. Govt Ayurvedic college, Vijayawada, A.P.DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.24327/ijrsr.20251604.0039>**ARTICLE INFO****Article History:**Received 14<sup>th</sup> March 2025Received in revised form 26<sup>th</sup> March 2025Accepted 15<sup>th</sup> April 2025Published online 28<sup>th</sup> April 2025**Key words:**Ayurveda, Anidra, *Upastambhas*,  
*Nanatmajavyadhis*, Insomnia**ABSTRACT**

Anidra, referred to as Insomnia in contemporary medicine, is recognized in Ayurveda as a consequence of doshic imbalances, primarily involving Vata, with secondary disturbances in Pitta and Kapha. These doshas, considered *Tristhuna* (the three pillars of health), are vital for maintaining physiological harmony. Anidra is classified under *Vataja Nanatmaja Vyadhis* and emphasizes the essentiality of Nidra (sleep) as one of the three *Upastambhas* (pillars of life), along with *Aahara* (nutrition) and *Brahmacharya* (celibacy or self-discipline). Sleep disturbances, if left untreated, severely impact mental and physical health, leading to psychosomatic disorders. This study revisits classical Ayurvedic texts to comprehensively analyze the etiology, symptomatology, pathophysiology, and therapeutic measures for Anidra, while contextualizing its relevance to modern lifestyle-induced sleep disorders.

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**INTRODUCTION**

Ayurveda, the ancient science of life, advocates for a holistic approach to health, emphasizing the importance of balance in the body, mind, and spirit for the prevention and management of diseases. Among the essential elements of health, Nidra (sleep) holds paramount importance, along with food (*Aahara*) and regulated behaviour (*Brahmacharya*). These are collectively termed *Trayopastambhas* or the three sub-pillars of life. Proper sleep rejuvenates both body and mind, ensuring the efficient functioning of the physiological and psychological systems.

Conversely, Anidra, or improper sleep, leads to a cascade of health issues, ranging from reduced cognitive performance and emotional instability to chronic psychosomatic illnesses. Despite its grave implications, Anidra is not discussed as an independent disease in Ayurveda but rather is embedded across various contexts. Its understanding and management draw insights from *Vataja Nanatmaja Vyadhis*<sup>1</sup> (diseases arising from Vata imbalance). This paper aims to explore the Ayurvedic perspective on Anidra, addressing its pathogenesis, symptomatology, and therapeutic approaches.

\*Corresponding author: **Dr. T. Lakshmi Soujanya, M.D**Professor and H.O.D, Dr. N.R.S. Govt Ayurvedic college,  
Vijayawada, A.P.**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This article is based on an analytical study of the following authoritative Ayurvedic texts:

- *Charaka Samhita*: Identification of Anidra within *Vataja Nanatmaja Vyadhi*.
- *Susruta Samhita*: Importance of Nidra in fetal nutrition and sleep disorders<sup>2</sup>.
- *Astanga Sangraha* and *Astanga Hridaya*: Detailed description of *Nidra Vikaras* (sleep disorders) and their management.
- *Bhavaprakasha*: Sleep as a rejuvenator for the growth of body tissues and mental faculties.
- *Sarangadhara Samhita*: Differentiation of *Vataja*, *Pittaja*, and *Kaphaja* variants of Anidra.

The methodology includes identifying references for Anidra, compiling symptoms and synonyms, analyzing pathophysiology, and collating therapeutic protocols with practical applications for contemporary conditions like insomnia.

**Observations****Pathogenesis and Mechanism (Samprapti)**

The Ayurvedic understanding of Anidra involves an intricate interplay of *Doshas*:

- *Vata*: Aggravation of Vata leads to restlessness and over-activity of the nervous system.

- **Pitta:** Aggravated Pitta intensifies mental activity and emotional instability.
- **Kapha:** Diminished Kapha disrupts the body's grounding and stability.

Key contributors include improper lifestyle, excessive mental strain, emotional disturbances, and dietary irregularities. *Manovaha* and *Rasavaha Srotas* (channels of mental and nutritional essence) are primarily affected, culminating in insufficient nourishment of the heart (*Hrudaya*) and brain (*Masthiska*)<sup>3</sup>

### Symptomatology (Rupa)

Classical texts highlight diverse symptoms of Anidra:

- **Common:** Yawning (*Jrumbha*), body aches (*Angamarda*), drowsiness (*Tandra*), and headaches (*Siro-roga*).
- **Specific:** Heaviness in the eyes (*Akshi Gaurava*), fatigue (*Glani*), dizziness (*Bhrama*), and indigestion (*Apakti*).

Symptoms get progressively worse if untreated, potentially resulting in irreversible mental and physical exhaustion.

### Synonyms and Subtypes

Anidra has been synonymously referred to as *Alpanidra* (insufficient sleep), *Nidra Kshaya* (deprivation), *Jagarana* (prolonged wakefulness), and *Vigata Nidra* (loss of sleep)<sup>4</sup>. These terms emphasize the qualitative and quantitative dimensions of sleep disorders.

### Treatment Modalities (Chikitsa)

Ayurveda employs a comprehensive approach integrating dietary adjustments (*Ahara*), lifestyle interventions (*Vihara*), and medicinal therapies (*Aushadha*):

1. **Dietary Interventions:** Inclusion of easily digestible, nourishing foods like milk (*Ksheera*), clarified butter (*Ghrita*), and meat soups (*Mamsa Rasa*)<sup>5</sup>.
2. **Therapeutic Practices:** Therapies like *Shirodhara*<sup>6</sup> (medicated oil dripping on the forehead), *Abhyanga* (oil massages), and *Sneha Sevana* (oleation therapy) balance doshas and induce calmness.
3. **Herbal Remedies:** Potent herbs like *Ashwagandha*, *Jatamansi*<sup>7</sup>, *Brahmi*, *Tagara*, and formulations from *Nidrajanana Dasaimani*.
4. **Behavioral Counselling** (*Achara Rasayana*)<sup>8</sup>: Promotes emotional stability by addressing anger (*Krodha*), fear (*Bhaya*), and grief (*Shoka*).

## DISCUSSION

The Ayurvedic approach to Anidra resonates with modern principles of health. By addressing root causes such as poor lifestyle choices, emotional disturbances and imbalances in the proportion of Doshas, we can achieve sustainable solutions for Insomnia. Unlike other medications that may cause dependency or side effects, Ayurvedic remedies emphasize the restoration of balance and long-term health benefits, with no dependency or side effects.

Sleep or Nidra is most essential for:

1. **Physical Health:** Nidra plays a pivotal role in nourishing and rejuvenating the body. Proper sleep is said to help in the restoration of body tissues (*Dhatu Pushti*), strengthen the immune system, and promote optimal organ functioning.
2. **Mental Equilibrium:** In Ayurvedic philosophy, sleep impacts the mind (*Manas*) positively. It is essential for maintaining mental clarity, emotional stability, and cognitive function. Disorders of sleep such as *Anidra* (insomnia), can lead to *Manovaha Sroto Dushti* (disruption in mental channels), causing anxiety, irritability, and other psychological disturbances.
3. **Doshic Balance:** Sleep aids in balancing the *Doshas* (Vata, Pitta, Kapha), which are the fundamental bioenergies, governing physiological processes that happen in the body. Proper sleep restores the Kapha, calms the aggravated Vata, and stabilizes the Pitta, fostering harmony in the body.
4. **Quality of Life:** Acharya Charaka emphasized that sleep influences key aspects of life, including happiness, misery, strength, weakness, lifespan, and vitality. He stated that proper Nidra leads to a state of *Sukha* (happiness) and well-being, whereas improper sleep results in *Dukha* (suffering) and ill-being.
5. **Holistic Vitality:** Beyond physical and mental aspects, Nidra is very important for spiritual and emotional vitality. In Ayurveda, it is said that good-quality sleep nurtures the heart (*Hrudaya*), which is considered the seat of consciousness.

Thus, Nidra is not merely viewed as a biological necessity in Ayurveda but as a cornerstone of holistic health and a milestone that directly influences an individual's overall quality of life. Its management, whether through dietary, lifestyle, or therapeutic interventions, is seen to play an irreplaceable role in achieving *Ayush* (longevity) and *Swasthya* (health).

According to Ayurveda, the imbalances of the *doshas*—*Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*—play a significant role in the quality and quantity of sleep (*Nidra*). Proper sleep occurs when these *Doshas* are balanced, while disturbances in their equilibrium can lead to various sleep-related disorders, including *Anidra* (insomnia). Here's how the *Doshas* influence Nidra:

### 1. Kapha Dosha and Nidra

- **Role in Sleep:** Kapha dosha is associated with qualities like heaviness, stability, and calmness, which are essential for inducing restful sleep. An ample amount of Kapha provides a grounding effect, ensuring good sleep.
- **Imbalance:** A decrease in Kapha dosha can result in restlessness and difficulty in initiating or maintaining sleep. Factors like excessive physical activity, stress, or *Ruksha Ahara* (dry foods) can deplete Kapha dosha and disturb its balance.
- **Symptoms of Imbalance:**
  - Light or insufficient sleep
  - Waking up frequently
  - Reduced sense of stability and calmness

## 2. Vata Dosha and Nidra

- **Role in Sleep:** Vata dosha governs movement, activity in the body and the nervous system. It requires containment and balance for restful sleep.
- **Imbalance:** Aggravated Vata dosha leads to over activation of the mind and body, creating conditions for sleeplessness (*Anidra*) or interrupted sleep. Mental strain, irregular routines, and excessive sensory stimulation can elevate the Vata.
- **Symptoms of Imbalance:**
  - Difficulty falling asleep
  - Restlessness and tossing in bed
  - Vivid or erratic dreams
  - Fatigue all through the day

## 3. Pitta Dosha and Nidra

- **Role in Sleep:** Pitta dosha governs metabolism, heat and mental sharpness. Balanced Pitta dosha helps maintain a calm and composed state that is required for undisturbed sleep.
- **Imbalance:** When Pitta dosha increases, it leads to an overactive mind, emotional irritability, and disturbed sleep patterns. It is triggered by activities that include late-night meals, excessive mental activity or anger.
- **Symptoms of Imbalance:**
  - Waking up in the middle of the night, often feeling warm or agitated
  - Difficulty returning to sleep
  - Irritability and frustration
  - Overthinking during sleep hours

## 4. Tridoshic Influence

- In some cases, all three *Doshas* may be subjected to imbalance, leading to severe sleep disorders. The aggravation of one *Dosha* might disturb the balance of others. For instance, an increase in Vata can deplete Kapha, thereby reducing the *gurutva* necessary for sleep, while also exacerbating Pitta, leading to emotional instability.

### Restoring Doshic Balance for Better Sleep

Ayurveda emphasizes the following practices to restore the balance of the *Doshas* and improve sleep:

- **Kapha-Promoting measures:** These include a diet rich in Sneh dravyas, like milk and ghee, and calming practices like *Abhyanga* (oil massage).

- **Vata-Pacifying Practices:** Incorporating warm, grounding foods in the diet, avoiding irregular routines, and engaging in calming therapies like *Shirodhara* help in pacifying Vata dosha.
- **Pitta-Pacifying Remedies:** Activities that cool and calm the body, avoiding late-night work, and including herbs like *Brahmi* and *Jatamansi* in one's diet can help balance Pitta dosha.

The role of Nidra as one of the *Trayopasthambhas*, underscores its integral position in overall well-being. Incorporating practices like *Abhyanga* and *Shirodhara* can be particularly beneficial in modern lifestyles characterized by stress and overexertion.

## CONCLUSION

Anidra, as explained in Ayurveda, reflects an ancient yet remarkably relevant approach to managing sleep disorders. Its emphasis on personalized care, multidimensional therapies, and harmony of body and mind offers a valuable framework for tackling lifestyle-induced conditions like Insomnia. Future interdisciplinary research could pave the way for globally acknowledged, integrative health practices.

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