

# International Journal of Research in AYUSH and Pharmaceutical Sciences

## Review Article

### EXPLORING THE EFFICACY OF NASYA THERAPY IN THE MANAGEMENT OF NIDRANASH (INSOMNIA): AN AYURVEDIC PERSPECTIVE

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#### ARTICLE INFO

##### Article history:

Received: 21-07-2024

Accepted: 19-08-2024

Published: 01-09-2024

##### Keywords:

Nasya therapy, Nidranash, Insomnia, Sleep disorders, Ayurvedic medicine, Holistic health, Herbal formulations, Nervous system, Stress reduction, Sleep quality.

#### ABSTRACT

This study explores the efficacy of *Nasya* therapy in the management of *Nidranash* (insomnia) from an Ayurvedic perspective. Insomnia, a prevalent sleep disorder, significantly impacts the quality of life and overall health. Conventional treatments often involve pharmacological interventions that can lead to dependency and adverse effects. Ayurveda, the traditional Indian system of medicine, offers alternative approaches, with *Nasya* therapy being one of the prominent treatments for *Nidranash*. *Nasya* involves the administration of herbal oils or medicinal substances through the nasal passages, targeting the central nervous system and promoting relaxation and sleep. This paper reviews the principles of *Nasya* therapy, the herbal formulations used, and the underlying mechanisms contributing to its effectiveness. Clinical evidence and case studies are examined to assess the outcomes and benefits of *Nasya* in treating insomnia. The findings suggest that *Nasya* therapy, with its holistic approach and minimal side effects, presents a viable and effective treatment for insomnia, aligning with the Ayurvedic philosophy of restoring balance and harmony within the body. Further research and clinical trials are recommended to substantiate these findings and integrate *Nasya* therapy into mainstream insomnia management protocols.

#### INTRODUCTION

The primary focus of Ayurveda, a holistic life science, is the preservation of an individual's health and the cure of illness. Similar to food, clothing, and shelter, *Aahara*, *Nidra*, and *Bramhacharya* are crucial for maintaining health. In daily life, humans encounter numerous health-related issues. He needs to maintain a robust and healthy body and mind in order to overcome these issues. The science of life, Ayurveda, proposed numerous *Siddhantas*, or principles, that one must follow in order to have a good life. The three factors- diet, sleep, and celibacy- are regarded as three *Upastambha* (sub-supporting pillars) that play a significant part in maintaining one's health.<sup>[1]</sup>

*Aahara*, or diet, is the first factor that has a direct impact on life, causing a variety of mental and physical health issues. Modifications to eating habits, scheduling of meals, etc., can result in digestive tract issues.<sup>[2]</sup> A pillar called *Bramhacharya* (celibacy) has an impact on the body's overall health. I refer to controlled sex, which either saves the body if done at the right age and time or harms the body if done incorrectly or outside of scientific guidelines.<sup>[3]</sup> *Nidra*, or sleep, is equally vital to a healthy existence. Sleeping well and receiving plenty of it helps one prepare for new tasks. A good night's sleep preserves health, proficiency, and emotional well-being while regenerating the body and mind to take on new tasks.<sup>[4]</sup> A person who is busy with everyday tasks finds it difficult to focus on getting enough sleep at the right time, which leads to a number of health and mental issues. Studies reveal that getting too little sleep raises the risk of obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease.<sup>[5]</sup> It significantly impacts the quality of life, leading to various health issues

#### Access this article online

Quick Response Code



<https://doi.org/10.47070/ijraps.v8i8.174>

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including cognitive impairment, mood disorders, and a weakened immune system (World Health Organization, 2020)<sup>[6]</sup>. Conventional treatments often involve pharmacological interventions, which can lead to dependency and adverse side effects. Ayurveda, the ancient Indian system of medicine, offers alternative treatments with fewer side effects, one of which is *Nasya* therapy.

### Understanding *Nidra* and *Nidranash* in Ayurveda

In Ayurveda, *Nidranash* is attributed to an imbalance in the body's *Doshas*, particularly *Vata* and *Pitta*.<sup>[7]</sup> The condition is believed to arise from lifestyle factors, stress, and dietary habits that disturb these *Doshas*. Treatment in Ayurveda focuses on restoring balance through diet, lifestyle changes, and specific therapies, with *Nasya* being a significant treatment modality for insomnia.<sup>[8]</sup> Ayurveda explained the significance of *Nidra* by saying that it prevents life, enhances strength, promotes happiness in life, preserves bodily consistency, and increases mental and cerebral capacity. Despite these advantages, some people are unable to obtain the regular sleep patterns recommended by Ayurveda for a variety of reasons. These symptoms could result in insomnia, or *Nidranasha*. A small portion of the population in the society is afflicted with this illness. Insomnia is caused by a variety of circumstances, including mental stress, disease, the type of work one does, ageing, changing lifestyles, and dietary changes. Individuals experiencing *Naranasha* or insomnia may also have other mental and physical health issues.<sup>[9]</sup> The inability to fall asleep, stay asleep, wake up early and find it difficult to go back to sleep, or wake up feeling exhausted and drained are all examples of *Nidranasha* or *Anidra* (insomnia).<sup>[10,11,12]</sup>

In conventional medical science, insomnia is defined using many ideas. The phrase "unsatisfactory sleep" was coined in 1979 by The American Medical Institute.<sup>[13]</sup> It states that insomnia is associated with the complaint of nearly never getting enough sleep at night or of feeling exhausted after going to bed at your regular time.<sup>[14]</sup>

### Etiology of *Nidranasa* (Insomnia)

In Ayurveda, the causes of insomnia, or *Nidranasa*, are varied and multifaceted. They encompass dietary, lifestyle, therapeutic, and psychological factors.

1. **Dietary Factors:** Consumption of foods which are predominantly dry, such as barley, along with excessive exercise and fasting, can contribute to insomnia. Additionally, factors like engaging in intercourse, experiencing hunger, or sleeping on an uncomfortable bed can also lead to disturbed sleep patterns.

2. **Therapeutic Factors:** Certain Ayurvedic treatments, when overdone, can cause insomnia. These include:

- ***Vamana* (Induced Emesis):** Excessive therapeutic vomiting.
- ***Virechana* (Purgation):** Overuse of purgative therapies.
- ***Nasya* (Nasal Medications):** Overuse of nasal treatments.
- ***Raktamokshana* (Bloodletting):** Excessive bloodletting procedures.
- ***Dhooma* (Medicated Smoke Inhalation):** Overuse of medicated smoke.
- ***Swedana* (Sudation Therapy):** Excessive sweating treatments.
- ***Anjana* (Collyrium):** Overuse of eye treatments.

3. **Psychological Factors:** Mental and emotional states play a significant role in insomnia.

According to Charakacharya, a revered ancient Ayurvedic scholar, these diverse factors collectively contribute to disturbances in sleep, highlighting the complex interplay between physical, therapeutic, and psychological elements in the etiology of *Nidranasa*.<sup>[15]</sup>

### Factors Contributing to *Nidranasa* (Insomnia)

1. **Work:** Engaging in work during night time or performing tasks that are physically demanding can disrupt sleep patterns. Night shift workers are particularly susceptible to insomnia due to their altered sleep-wake cycles. Ayurvedic guidelines advise against working or sleeping during the night to maintain a healthy sleep regimen.

2. **Time/Age (*Kaal*):** The influence of time and age significantly affects sleep quality and duration. In infancy, children tend to sleep for most of the day and night, which is attributed to the dominance of *Kapha Dosh*, promoting longer sleep durations. As individuals age, their sleep duration naturally decreases. During middle age, an average of 6 to 8 hours of sleep is typical. In old age, the predominance of *Vata Dosh* and a reduction in *Kapha Dosh* lead to a further decrease in sleep duration, often resulting in sleeplessness.

3. **Diseases (*Vikara*):** Various health conditions can contribute to sleep disturbances. Ayurveda highlights that diseases with a *Vataja* origin, in particular, can lead to insomnia. Insufficient sleep is often linked to a decrease in *Kapha Dosh*, exacerbated by an increase in *Vata Dosh*.

4. **Constitution (*Prakruti*):** According to Ayurveda, every individual is born with a unique constitution

determined by three fundamental components: *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*. These components combine to form seven different types of constitutions. Individuals with a predominantly *Vataja Prakruti* (constitution) tend to have shorter sleep durations compared to others. The anti-*Kapha* properties of *Vata Dosha* contribute to insomnia.

Acharya Susruta, another esteemed Ayurvedic scholar, identified several causes of sleep deprivation:

- Elevated *Vayu* (air) levels.
- Increased *Pitta* (fire) levels.
- Mental stress or heightened mental activity.
- Physical weakness.
- Injuries, accidents, or any form of physical trauma.

These factors collectively underscore the complex interplay between lifestyle, age, health conditions, and inherent constitution in the development of *Nidranasa*:<sup>[16]</sup>

### The Role of the Mind in *Nidranasa* (Insomnia)

The mind is a significant factor in the onset of insomnia. In Ayurveda, the concept of *Tamo Guna* is closely linked with the *Kapha Dosha* and plays a crucial role in inducing sleep. *Tamo Guna* promotes rest and relaxation, facilitating a natural sleep cycle. However, when the mind is agitated or preoccupied with thoughts, *Rajo Guna* becomes dominant. This state is akin to the characteristics of *Vata Dosha*, which leads to increased mental activity and agitation.

As *Rajo Guna* intensifies, it elevates the *Vata Dosha* and suppresses the calming influence of *Tamo Guna*. This imbalance disrupts the sleep-inducing qualities of *Tamo Guna*, resulting in insomnia. Moreover, physical weakness can also contribute to sleep disturbances. According to Ayurveda, dominance of *Vata Dosha* is often responsible for frailty. The dry nature (*Ruksha Guna*) of *Vata Dosha* weakens the body, which can further impair sleep quality.

Injuries and physical trauma, referred to as "*Abhighataja Vyadhi*" in Ayurveda, are also recognized as potential causes of sleep disturbances. Physical pain from accidents or injuries can prevent restful sleep, compounding the effects of insomnia. This highlights the intricate relationship between physical well-being, mental state, and sleep quality in the Ayurvedic understanding of *Nidranasa*.<sup>[17]</sup> In Ayurveda, pain is termed "*Shula*" and is closely associated with the *Vata Dosha*. An increase in *Shula* leads to an elevation in *Vata Dosha*, which directly affects sleep quality. Acharya Vagbhata, in his works

*Bruhad* and *Laggu*, identified five key factors that contribute to sleep disturbances or insomnia.<sup>[18]</sup>

### *Nasya* Therapy: An Overview

The application of medicinal oils or herbal preparations through the nasal passages is known as *Nasya* treatment. The idea that the nose serves as a portal to the brain and psyche is the basis for this therapy.<sup>[19]</sup> By delivering medicinal substances directly to the central nervous system, *Nasya* therapy aims to calm the mind, reduce stress, and promote restful sleep.

### OBJECTIVE

- To evaluate the efficacy of *Nasya* on *Nidranash*.
- To study *Nidranash* in detail.

### Mechanism of Action

"*Nasea hi Shiraso Dvaram*" is a nasal passageway that leads straight to the central nervous system. Drugs administered to the nasal cavity are quickly transported into the central nervous system (CNS) by olfactory neurons, who then support the surrounding capillary bed and cells. This process occurs through the cribriform plate. Because drugs administered through the nasal cavity have both local and systemic effects, very little medication is needed. *Sneha Pradhan Navan* drug is absorbed in the *Shringatak* region, according to Acharya Charaka. Lipid-soluble medications are absorbed by the nasal mucosa more faster. The medicine acts more quickly and efficiently. *Mersha Nasya*, or *Sneha Pradhan Nasya*, would be utilised for *Nasya*.

The therapeutic efficacy of *Nasya* is attributed to several mechanisms:

- 1. Direct Action on the Nervous System:** The olfactory region is richly supplied with blood vessels, allowing for quick absorption of the medicated substances into the bloodstream and directly affecting the brain and nervous system.<sup>[20]</sup>
- 2. Balancing *Doshas*:** *Nasya* helps in balancing *Vata* and *Pitta doshas*, which are often disturbed in cases of insomnia. The calming and grounding properties of the oils used help in stabilizing these *Doshas*.<sup>[21]</sup>
- 3. Detoxification and Rejuvenation:** *Nasya* is also believed to detoxify the head region, clearing out toxins (*Ama*) that may interfere with sleep patterns<sup>[22]</sup>.

### Herbal Formulations Used in *Nasya*

Various herbal oils and formulations are used in *Nasya* therapy, each tailored to the individual's *Doshic* imbalance. Commonly used substances include:

- ***Anu Taila*:** Known for its *Vata* and *Kapha* balancing properties, *Anu Taila* is often used for its soothing effects on the nervous system.<sup>[23]</sup>

- **Brahmi Ghrita:** *Brahmi* is renowned for its cognitive-enhancing and stress-relieving properties, making it ideal for managing insomnia.<sup>[24]</sup>
- **Ksheerabala Taila:** This medicated oil is used for its calming effects, particularly in *Vata*-related insomnia.<sup>[25]</sup>

### Clinical Evidence and Case Studies

Several studies and clinical trials have investigated the efficacy of *Nasya* therapy in managing insomnia. For instance, a study published in the Journal of Ayurveda and Integrative Medicine reported significant improvements in sleep quality and duration in patients treated with *Nasya* therapy compared to those receiving standard care.<sup>[26]</sup> Case studies also highlight the successful use of *Nasya* in reducing the symptoms of chronic insomnia, with patients reporting better sleep patterns and reduced dependency on pharmacological treatments.<sup>[27]</sup>

### DISCUSSION

The exploration of *Nasya* therapy in managing *Nidranash* (insomnia) from an Ayurvedic perspective reveals promising results. *Nasya*, the administration of medicinal substances through the nasal passage, is believed to directly influence the brain and nervous system, promoting balance in the *Doshas*, particularly *Vata* and *Pitta*, which are often implicated in sleep disorders. Clinical observations and preliminary studies suggest that *Nasya* therapy, using specific oils and herbal formulations, can enhance relaxation, reduce stress, and improve sleep quality. The therapy's efficacy is attributed to its ability to nourish and calm the mind, reduce inflammation, and enhance neural function. Furthermore, *Nasya* therapy's holistic approach, addressing both physical and psychological aspects of health, aligns well with contemporary understanding of insomnia's multifaceted nature. However, more rigorous, large-scale clinical trials are needed to substantiate these findings and establish standardized protocols for *Nasya* in the treatment of *Nidranash*.

### CONCLUSION

*Nasya* therapy presents a promising alternative to conventional insomnia treatments, with its holistic approach and minimal side effects. The therapeutic benefits, rooted in ancient Ayurvedic wisdom, provide a natural and effective means of restoring restful sleep. However, further research and well-designed clinical trials are necessary to fully integrate *Nasya* therapy into mainstream insomnia management protocols.

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**Cite this article as:**

Dayal Sitaram Bawankar, Kavita K Daulatkar. Exploring the Efficacy of Nasya Therapy in the Management of Nidranash (Insomnia): An Ayurvedic Perspective. International Journal of Research in AYUSH and Pharmaceutical Sciences, 2024;8(8):6-10.

<https://doi.org/10.47070/ijraps.v8i8.174>

**Source of support: Nil, Conflict of interest: None Declared**

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