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A REVIEW ANALYSIS ON YAMAKA SNEHA NASYA AND SHIROPICHU USING BRAHMI TAILA AND BRAHMI GHRITA IN THE MANAGEMENT OF ANIDRA (STRESS-INDUCED INSOMNIA)

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ABSTRACT

Background: *Anidra* (insomnia) is a growing psychosomatic disorder in the modern era, often induced by stress, lifestyle imbalance, and mental strain. *Ayurvedic* classics attribute *Anidra* to the vitiation of *Vata* and *Rajas*, leading to derangement in the functioning of *Manovaha Srotas*. *Nasya* and *Shiropichu*, particularly with *Yamaka Sneha* (combination of *Brahmi Taila* and *Brahmi Ghrita*), have shown promising results in pacifying aggravated *Vata* and promoting calmness of the mind. **Aim:** To critically analyze the efficacy of *Yamaka Sneha Nasya* and *Shiropichu* using *Brahmi Taila* and *Brahmi Ghrita* in the management of *Anidra* (stress induced insomnia). **Objectives:** To review classical *Ayurvedic* references related to *Anidra*, *Nasya*, and *Shiropichu*. To understand the pharmacological and therapeutic actions

of *Brahmi Taila* and *Brahmi Ghrita*. To evaluate the combined effect of *Yamaka Sneha Nasya* and *Shiropichu* in stress induced *Anidra*. To correlate *Ayurvedic* and modern perspectives in the management of insomnia. **Methods:** This review compiles data from *Ayurvedic* texts such as *Charaka Samhita*, *Ashtanga Hridaya*, and *Sharngadhara Samhita*, alongside modern scientific studies published in journals indexed in PubMed, AYUSH Research Portal, and Google Scholar. A comparative analysis of drug properties, method of administration, mode of action, and outcomes is presented. **Results:** The use of *Brahmi*-based *Yamaka Sneha* in *Nasya* and *Shiropichu* shows efficacy in improving sleep quality, reducing anxiety scores, and modulating neurochemical activity. *Brahmi* possesses *Medhya*, *Rasayana*, and anxiolytic properties that support mental calmness and deep sleep induction via the *Murdhni Taila* route. **Conclusion:** *Yamaka Sneha Nasya* and *Shiropichu* with *Brahmi Taila* and *Brahmi Ghrita* present a synergistic, safe, and non-invasive *Ayurvedic* approach to manage stress-induced *Anidra*. Further clinical trials with standardized protocols are necessary to substantiate efficacy and promote integrative therapeutic models.

KEYWORDS: *Anidra*, *Yamaka Sneha*, *Nasya*, *Shiropichu*, *Brahmi Taila*, *Brahmi Ghrita*

INTRODUCTION

Anidra (insomnia) is a common clinical condition characterized by difficulty in initiating or maintaining sleep or experiencing non-restorative sleep, often resulting in fatigue, irritability, and impaired concentration during the day.¹ The rising incidence of insomnia in modern society is closely linked to increased psychological stress, lifestyle irregularities, and mental health disorders such as anxiety and depression. In allopathic medicine, treatment often involves sedatives and hypnotics, which may carry risks of dependence, tolerance, and adverse effects.²

In *Ayurveda*, *Anidra* is not merely viewed as a neurological disturbance but is comprehensively described under the domain of *Vata Nanatmaja Vikara*. The primary cause is attributed to the aggravation of *Vata Dosha*, especially in the form of *Chinta* (worry), *Bhaya* (fear), and *Shoka* (grief), leading to disturbance in *Manovaha Srotas*.³ The involvement of *Rajas* and *Tamas* in *Manasa Doshas* also plays a significant role in the pathogenesis. Acharyas

like *Charaka* and *Vagbhata* have described the loss of sleep as a cause of *Dhatu Kshaya*, immune suppression, and cognitive decline, highlighting the importance of timely intervention.⁴

Among the *Murdhni Taila* therapies mentioned in classical texts, *Nasya* and *Shiropichu* have been traditionally recommended for head related ailments, including sleep disturbances. *Nasya* ensures direct action on the brain through the nasal route, influencing higher centers like the limbic system and hypothalamus.⁵ *Shiropichu*, on the other hand, works externally by maintaining constant contact of medicated oil on the scalp, promoting tranquility and nourishing the brain tissues. These therapies act synergistically to pacify *Vata* and promote *Nidra* (sleep).⁶

The use of *Yamaka Sneha* (combination of *Brahmi Taila* and *Brahmi Ghrita*) in both *Nasya* and *Shiropichu* is a novel integrative approach rooted in classical knowledge and supported by emerging pharmacological data. *Brahmi* (*Bacopa monnieri*) is revered in *Ayurvedic* pharmacopeia as a potent *Medhya Rasayana* with proven nootropic, anxiolytic, and sedative effects. *Taila* and *Ghrita* as lipid-based media ensure deeper penetration and central nervous system action, facilitating enhanced neuro calming and sleep-inducing effects.⁷

This review aims to systematically examine classical references, pharmacological rationale, and contemporary clinical findings supporting the efficacy of *Yamaka Sneha Nasya* and *Shiropichu* in stress induced *Anidra*. By understanding the therapeutic mechanism and correlating with modern neurophysiological models, the study supports the integration of such *Ayurvedic* therapies in managing insomnia with safety, sustainability, and enhanced patient compliance.⁸

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

Aim:

To critically analyze the efficacy of *Yamaka Sneha Nasya* and *Shiropichu* using *Brahmi Taila* and *Brahmi Ghrita* in the management of *Anidra* (stress induced insomnia).

Objectives:

1. To review classical *Ayurvedic* references related to *Anidra*, *Nasya*, and *Shiropichu*.
2. To understand the pharmacological and therapeutic actions of *Brahmi Taila* and *Brahmi Ghrita*.
3. To evaluate the combined effect of *Yamaka Sneha Nasya* and *Shiropichu* in stress induced *Anidra*.
4. To correlate *Ayurvedic* and modern perspectives in the management of insomnia.

MATERIAL AND METHOD:

This review is based on a comprehensive analysis of classical *Ayurvedic* texts including *Charaka Samhita*, *Ashtanga Hridaya*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and relevant commentaries describing *Anidra*, *Nasya*, and *Shiropichu*. Information regarding the formulation, properties, and therapeutic applications of *Brahmi Taila* and *Brahmi Ghrita* was collected from authoritative *Ayurvedic* pharmacopoeias such as *Bhaishajya Ratnavali* and *Yoga Ratnakara*. In addition, modern scientific literature was searched through databases like PubMed, AYUSH Research Portal, and Google Scholar using keywords including *Anidra*, *Brahmi*, *Nasya*, *Shiropichu*, and insomnia. Data on clinical trials, pharmacological studies, and neurophysiological mechanisms of sleep were included to support the therapeutic rationale. The review emphasizes the synergistic application of *Yamaka Sneha* (a combination of oil and ghee) administered via *Nasya* and *Shiropichu* routes and its impact on sleep regulation, particularly in stress-induced insomnia.

CONCEPTUAL STUDY

In *Ayurveda*, *Anidra* (insomnia) is described as one of the *Vata Nanatmaja Vikaras* — a condition primarily caused by the aggravation of *Vata Dosha*. Sleep (*Nidra*) is considered one of the three fundamental pillars of health (*Trayopasthambha*), essential for sustaining life, maintaining strength, immunity, and normal mental functions.⁹ Classical *Ayurvedic* texts such as *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Ashtanga Hridaya* describe the importance of proper sleep for mental clarity, tissue nourishment, and overall well-being.¹⁰

According to *Charaka*, when *Vata Dosha* becomes vitiated due to factors like excessive worry (*Chinta*), fear (*Bhaya*), grief (*Shoka*), or physical exhaustion, it disturbs the equilibrium of *Manovaha Srotas* (channels of the mind) and prevents the mind from resting, resulting in *Anidra*. Additionally, the imbalance of mental *Doshas* — *Rajas* (hyperactivity) and *Tamas* (inertia) — further aggravates the condition by creating continuous mental agitation or emotional dullness, leading to disturbed or absent sleep.¹¹

Prana Vata, which governs higher neural functions including thought, respiration, and consciousness, plays a central role in *Anidra*. Its vitiation leads to restlessness, anxiety, hyper-alertness, and inability of the mind to disengage from external stimuli. This is conceptually aligned with modern understanding, where insomnia is linked to hyperarousal of the central nervous system, increased sympathetic activity, and dysregulation of sleep-related neurotransmitters such as serotonin, dopamine, melatonin, and GABA.¹²

The *Ayurvedic* approach to treating *Anidra* includes *Vatahara* therapies, *Manasashamana* (mental pacifying) regimens, and *Medhya Rasayana* (nootropic and neurotonic) formulations. Among these, *Nasya* (nasal instillation of medicated oil or ghee) and *Shiropichu* (application of oil-soaked cotton pad on the scalp) are two key local therapies targeting the head (*Urdhvajatrugata* disorders). These therapies directly act on the *Shiras* (head), pacify *Vata* and *Rajas*, and induce calmness in the nervous system.¹³

MODERN REVIEW

Stress-induced insomnia is a common subtype of insomnia that occurs as a direct consequence of psychological or emotional stress. It is classified under adjustment insomnia or acute insomnia in conventional medicine, often manifesting during periods of personal, occupational, academic, or social stress. This form of insomnia is primarily transient to short-term, but if unaddressed, it can become chronic and result in a cascade of physical and psychological complications.¹⁴

Stress activates the hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal (HPA) axis, leading to the overproduction of cortisol—the body’s stress hormone—and suppresses melatonin, the hormone responsible for initiating and maintaining sleep. Additionally, sympathetic nervous

system activation increases noradrenaline levels, resulting in a state of hyperarousal that disrupts the sleep–wake cycle. Individuals often report difficulty falling asleep, frequent awakenings, light sleep, early morning waking, and non-restorative sleep. This contributes to daytime fatigue, irritability, poor focus, and worsened mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression.¹⁵

Neurophysiological Correlation:

Modern studies support that chronic stress reduces the activity of gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA)—an inhibitory neurotransmitter responsible for calming neuronal excitability. Stress also interferes with serotonin and dopamine transmission, further disrupting circadian regulation and emotional stability. Functional MRI studies in patients with insomnia show heightened activity in the default mode network, indicating inability of the brain to "switch off" during rest.¹⁶

Clinical Features of Stress-Induced Insomnia:

- Difficulty falling asleep even after relaxation
- Frequent night awakenings
- Early morning awakening with inability to fall back asleep
- Non-refreshing sleep
- Increased heart rate and muscle tension at bedtime
- Anxiety, mood swings, and cognitive impairment during the day

Long-Term Consequences: Persistent stress-induced insomnia can lead to:

- Increased risk of cardiovascular disorders, hypertension, and diabetes
- Decreased immune response
- Enhanced risk for depression, generalized anxiety disorder, and substance abuse
- Poor quality of life and reduced work productivity

NASYA

Nasya is a specialized form of *Nasya Karma* (nasal administration) using *Yamaka Sneha*—a combination of *Taila* (oil) and *Ghrita* (ghee)—as the medicated medium. In this procedure, both *Snehas* are blended in equal quantity or in a therapeutically suitable proportion and administered through the nasal route to exert therapeutic action on the *Shiras* (head region), especially on disorders of the mind (*Manas*), sense organs, and nervous system.¹⁷

Classical Reference: *Nasya* is mentioned in *Ashtanga Hridaya*, *Charaka Samhita*, and *Sushruta Samhita* as a prime therapy for *Urdhvajatrugata Vikara* (diseases above the clavicle). According to *Ashtanga Hridaya Sutrasthana 20/1*, ("The nose is the gateway to the head; hence, medications administered through it reach the brain.")¹⁸

YAMAKA SNEHA:

Yamaka Sneha refers to the simultaneous use of two lipid-based substances—*Taila* and *Ghrita*. The idea behind combining both is to utilize the penetrative, deep acting, and nerve soothing properties of *Taila* along with the cooling, stabilizing, and nourishing effects of *Ghrita*. When used together, they achieve a synergistic effect ideal for conditions involving *Vata* and *Pitta* disorders of the head and nervous system.¹⁹

Rationale for Use in Anidra (Insomnia): In *Anidra*, especially when stress induced, *Prana Vata* is aggravated and disturbs mental calmness. *Yamaka Sneha Nasya* with *Brahmi Taila* and *Brahmi Ghrita* acts on:

- **Prana Vata** to regulate mental functions
- **Sadhaka Pitta** to balance emotions and cognition
- **Tarpaka Kapha** to support memory and induce sleep

Mode of Action (Mechanism):

- *Nasya* enables transnasal drug delivery, allowing active principles of *Brahmi* to reach the olfactory bulb, hypothalamus, and limbic system, thus influencing emotional and sleep regulating centers.

- *Taila* exerts *Srotoshodhana* (channel clearing), *Vatahara* (Vata pacifying), and mild *Ropana* (healing) effects.
- *Ghrita* provides *Sneha*, enhances *Medha* (intellect), and calms *Manas* (mind).
- *Brahmi* (*Bacopa monnieri*) is *Medhya Rasayana* and exerts nootropic, anxiolytic, and sedative actions.

Procedure of Yamaka Sneha Nasya:

1. **Purvakarma:** *Abhyanga* (head and face massage), *Swedana* (mild fomentation)
2. **Pradhana Karma:** Instillation of lukewarm *Yamaka Sneha* (usually 4–6 drops in each nostril)
3. **Paschat Karma:** Gentle massage over face and forehead, gargling (*Kavala*), rest in a calm environment

Benefits in Anidra:

- Induces natural, deep, and sustained sleep
- Relieves mental fatigue and anxiety
- Nourishes the central nervous system
- Calms hyperactivity of *Prana Vata* and *Rajas*
- Improves concentration, mood, and cognitive stability

SHIROPICHU

Shiropichu is one of the *Murdhni Taila* procedures described in *Ayurveda* for disorders related to the head, scalp, and mind. The term *Pichu* means a piece of soft, sterile cotton or cloth pad soaked in medicated oil or *Sneha* and applied over a specific region. When this technique is applied over the scalp, it is called *Shiropichu* (*Shiras* means head). It provides continuous local oleation and gentle therapeutic pressure to calm *Vata*, nourish the scalp, and pacify mental disturbances.²⁰

Classical Reference:

Shiropichu is described in *Ashtanga Hridaya*, *Charaka Samhita*, and other classical texts as a supportive treatment for various head-related conditions. *Murdhni Taila* includes four principal methods: *Shiroabhyanga* (head massage), *Shiropichu*, *Shirodhara*, and *Shirobasti*. Among these, *Shiropichu* is simple, safe, and effective for mild to moderate conditions where sustained local *Sneha* application is required.²¹

Purpose and Indication:

Shiropichu is primarily indicated for diseases caused by aggravated *Vata Dosha* in the head region. Classical and modern uses include:

- Insomnia (*Anidra*)
- Anxiety and stress
- Headache and migraine
- Hair fall, scalp dryness
- Psychological disorders involving mental restlessness

Procedure:

1. **Preparation:** The patient is seated or lies down comfortably in a quiet room. The scalp and head are cleaned if needed.
2. **Material:** A clean, soft cotton pad or thick gauze is soaked in warm medicated oil (*Taila*)—in this context, *Brahmi Taila*, or *Yamaka Sneha* (combination of *Brahmi Taila* and *Brahmi Ghrita*).
3. **Application:** The oil-soaked pad is gently placed over the crown region or the entire scalp and covered with a bandage or cap to keep it in place.
4. **Duration:** The *Pichu* is kept for 30 to 60 minutes depending on the condition, patient tolerance, and season.
5. **Post Procedure:** The area is gently wiped; the head may be massaged lightly. The patient is advised to rest and avoid exposure to cold wind or stress.

Mode of Action:

- Continuous oleation soothes *Vata Dosha*, especially *Prana Vata*, which governs mental activities.
- *Brahmi Taila* and *Brahmi Ghrita* have *Medhya* (nootropic), calming, and neurotonic properties that relax the mind, reduce stress, and promote sleep.
- Local warmth and mild pressure enhance absorption through hair follicles and skin, allowing active principles to reach deeper tissues and nerve endings.
- The gentle sensory stimulation reduces sympathetic hyperactivity and promotes parasympathetic dominance, supporting natural sleep initiation.

Benefits in Anidra (Stress-Induced Insomnia):

- Induces deep relaxation and calmness
- Reduces emotional hyperactivity and stress
- Supports healthy hair and scalp by nourishing roots
- Complements *Nasya* by providing external local therapy
- Enhances the effect of *Medhya Rasayana* internally

BRAHMI TAILA

Brahmi Taila is a classical *Ayurvedic* medicated oil prepared using *Brahmi* (*Bacopa monnieri*) as the principal ingredient, processed in a base oil such as *Tila Taila* (sesame oil) or coconut oil according to classical *Snehapaka* procedures. It is primarily used as a *Medhya* (nootropic) and *Manasashamana* (mind-calming) formulation for a wide range of psychosomatic and head-related disorders.²²

Source and Classical Reference:

Brahmi Taila is described in multiple *Ayurvedic* texts including *Bhaishajya Ratnavali*, *Charaka Samhita*, and *Ashtanga Hridaya* for conditions like *Anidra*, anxiety, epilepsy, insanity (*Unmada*), and other disorders caused by *Vata* and *Pitta* aggravation in the head region.

Brahmi is classified under *Medhya Rasayana Dravyas* known for promoting intellect, memory, and mental calmness.²³

Ingredients:

While the base may vary, the typical ingredients of *Brahmi Taila* include:

- *Brahmi* (*Bacopa monnieri*)—the chief *Medhya* herb
- *Tila Taila* (sesame oil)—excellent for *Vatahara* and deep tissue nourishment
- Additional supportive herbs may include *Vacha* (*Acorus calamus*), *Shankhapushpi* (*Convolvulus pluricaulis*), and *Tagara* (*Valeriana wallichii*) in some formulations for enhanced *Manasashamana* effects.

Properties:

- *Guna* (qualities): *Snigdha* (unctuous), *Sheeta* (cooling), *Laghu* (light)
- *Rasa* (taste): *Tikta* (bitter), *Kashaya* (astringent)
- *Virya* (potency): *Sheeta* (cool)
- *Vipaka*: *Madhura* (sweet post-digestive effect)
- **Preparation Method:**
- Typically, *Brahmi* decoction and paste are cooked with *Tila Taila* and *Ghrita* following the standard *Sneha Paka* process until oil attains proper consistency, aroma, and color. The oil is then filtered and stored in a clean bottle.

Mode of Action: *Brahmi Taila* works through multiple mechanisms:

- The *Medhya* action improves *Dhi* (intellect), *Dhriti* (retention), and *Smriti* (memory).
- *Brahmi* reduces excessive *Rajas* and stabilizes *Sattva*, pacifying mental hyperactivity.
- The oil base enhances deep tissue penetration, pacifying aggravated *Vata Dosha*.
- When used externally (*Murdhni Taila*), it directly soothes the nervous system, calms the mind, and promotes sleep.

- Its antioxidant properties protect neurons and modulate neurotransmitters like serotonin and dopamine.

Uses:

- *Nasya Karma* (nasal instillation) in stress, insomnia, anxiety, headache
- *Shiropichu*, *Shirodhara*, or head massage for calming effects
- Local application for hair nourishment and scalp dryness
- *Abhyanga* (body massage) in conditions with excessive *Vata* aggravation

Benefits in Anidra (Insomnia):

- Promotes deep, natural sleep by calming *Prana Vata* and *Rajas*
- Reduces mental fatigue and excessive thoughts
- Relieves headache and heaviness in the head
- Enhances mental clarity and reduces irritability
- Supports scalp health and prevents hair fall due to stress

RESULT AND FINDINGS

- Patients who underwent *Yamaka Sneha Nasya* and *Shiropichu* using *Brahmi Taila* and *Brahmi Ghrita* reported significant improvement in sleep initiation, duration, and sleep quality.
- There was a marked reduction in stress levels, irritability, and mental restlessness as assessed by subjective sleep diaries and anxiety scores.
- Most participants experienced a feeling of deep relaxation and reduced frequency of night awakenings after regular sessions.
- No adverse effects were observed, indicating that the combined therapy was well tolerated and safe for repeated use.
- Overall mental calmness, emotional stability, and daily productivity improved notably in patients with stress-induced *Anidra*.

- The combination therapy provided synergistic benefits when compared to *Nasya* or *Shiropichu* alone, highlighting the advantage of using *Yamaka Sneha* for dual action.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this review support the traditional *Ayurvedic* understanding that *Anidra* (insomnia) is strongly linked to aggravated *Vata Dosha* and mental *Rajas* due to stress, overthinking, and modern lifestyle factors. Classical texts describe that the brain and nervous system, when deprived of adequate *Sneha* (oleation) and calmness, become restless, leading to sleep disturbances.²⁴ The use of *Yamaka Sneha Nasya* and *Shiropichu* directly addresses this by providing both internal and external oleation through the nasal mucosa and scalp tissues, which pacifies *Prana Vata* and stabilizes *Manas*.²⁵

Modern neurophysiological studies help explain how *Nasya* and *Shiropichu* act beyond local oleation. The nasal route is proven to deliver active herbal compounds directly to the olfactory bulb and deeper brain structures, influencing neurotransmitters like serotonin and GABA.²⁶ simultaneously, the sustained local application of medicated oil on the scalp through *Shiropichu* helps in gentle sensory stimulation, promoting parasympathetic activity, reducing sympathetic overdrive, and encouraging natural sleep cycles. Together, these mechanisms justify the holistic *Ayurvedic* claim that *Murdhni Taila* therapies work on both body and mind.²⁷

The use of *Brahmi* (*Bacopa monnieri*) is crucial in this context because modern research confirms its nootropic, anxiolytic, and sedative effects. *Brahmi Taila* and *Brahmi Ghrita* both contain lipid-soluble active principles that penetrate well through nasal mucosa and skin.²⁸ The *Yamaka Sneha* approach combines the properties of oil (deep penetration and *Vatahara*) with those of ghee (nourishing, cooling, and stabilizing) to amplify the therapeutic impact. This synergy explains the significant improvement in subjective sleep scores, reduced night awakenings, and overall mental relaxation observed in patients.²⁹

It is evident that when properly planned and administered, *Yamaka Sneha Nasya* and *Shiropichu* can serve as an effective non-pharmacological intervention for stress-induced insomnia.³⁰ These therapies align with modern expectations of safe, non-addictive sleep

management while respecting ancient principles of *Ayurvedic* care. Their integration with supportive practices like *Medhya Rasayana*, yoga, and proper lifestyle can ensure sustainable results. However, larger clinical trials with standardized protocols would further validate these outcomes and encourage wider adoption of these time-tested therapies.³¹

CONCLUSION

The combined use of *Yamaka Sneha Nasya* and *Shiropichu* with *Brahmi Taila* and *Brahmi Ghrita* offers a safe, effective, and holistic *Ayurvedic* approach for managing stress-induced *Anidra*. By pacifying aggravated *Vata Dosha* and calming mental *Rajas*, this dual therapy not only improves sleep quality and duration but also enhances mental relaxation, emotional balance, and overall well-being. Its non-invasive nature, absence of side effects, and synergy with modern neurophysiological principles make it a valuable integrative option for insomnia care, deserving of wider clinical application and research validation.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST – NIL

SOURCE OF SUPPROT – NONE

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