



Review Article

ROLE OF SHIRODHARA IN THE MANAGEMENT OF ANIDRA (INSOMNIA)

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Article info

Article History:

Received: 28-11-2025

Accepted: 23-12-2025

Published: 20-01-2026

KEYWORDS:

Anidra, Shirodhara, Murdhni tail, Udwartan, Abhyang, Sanwahan.

ABSTRACT

Nidra, which literally translates to "sleep," is one of the "Traya Upastambha" of existence, according to Ayurvedic literature. It is equally crucial for maintaining life as diet. Since the beginning of civilization, researchers from all over the world have tried to understand nature and causes of sleep. Today's experts understand the value of sleep because of its calming and rejuvenating effects on living things. Over one-third of our lives are spent sleeping. The era of the rat race is upon us. Intense competition has caused several psychological illnesses in humans. Today's workload and competition contribute to chronic stress, which results in Anidra or sleeplessness. Insomnia is the term for inadequate sleep, either in terms of quantity or quality. The most common complaint is difficulty falling asleep, which is followed by difficulty remaining asleep and waking up early. Insomnia can be a symptom of depression, anxiety disorders, and other mental health conditions. It happens more often during times of high stress in life; some people then develop an obsession with their lack of sleep and feel anxious when they try to fall asleep. This starts a vicious loop that perpetuates the problem. As a result, the general strategy used by the allopathic medical system to treat insomnia seems to be insufficient. For the treatment of Anidra (insomnia), it was therefore appropriate and pertinent to consider several indigenous remedies. Anidra is regarded as Abhyang, Murdhni tail, Udwartan, and Sanwahan, according to Acharya Sushruta. Shirodhara, a Murdhni tail method, is tried in addition to the previously mentioned treatment. One popular alternative Ayurvedic treatment is Shirodhara, which involves continuously dropping oil on the forehead in a stream or flow. It is usually advised for the treatment of nervous system relaxation, anxiety, tension, and insomnia.

INTRODUCTION

According to Maharishi Charaka's "Trya Upastambha" (three sub tripods of the body), harmony is necessary to preserve a healthy person's well-being. Sleep has been accorded equal weight with "Aahara" (diet) and "Bramhacharya" (celibacy). To ensure healthy health, all three measures should be used sparingly. Maharishi Charak has also explained how (judicious and injudicious) sleep determines happiness and misery, development and waste, strength and weakness, virility and sterility, knowledge and ignorance, and life and death^[1].

Nidra, which means "sleep," is one of the "Traya Upastambha" (three sub tripods) of life, according to Ayurvedic texts^[2]. It is just as important as diet for maintaining life. It falls under the category of four human instincts. Since the dawn of civilization, scholars from all over the world have attempted to investigate the nature and causes of sleep. Yogis in India have explored yogic phenomena related to different levels of Atma since the Vedic and Upanishad eras. These phases, which have varying degrees of detachment from the outside world, are referred to as Jagritavastha (awake phase), Swapnavastha (dream phase), Susuptavastha (sleep phase), and Samadhi Avastha (conscious sleep phase)^[3].

In his book Patanjali Yoga Sutra, renowned yogic Patanjali explains the physiology of Nidra as the involuntary absence of information or thinking waves^[4].

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<https://doi.org/10.47070/ayushdhara.v12i6.2341>

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Modern medical science defines insomnia as insufficient sleep, either in terms of quantity or quality. It could be a sign of anxiety disorders, depression, stressful lifestyles, mental illnesses, or other pathological diseases^[5].

Despite not being a life-threatening illness, it degrades quality of life and requires quick attention. Untreated insomnia can lower a person's mental ability, decrease efficacy, raise the risk of numerous accidents, and eventually lead to several serious psychosomatic problems. To treat insomnia, doctors nowadays recommend a variety of tranquilizers^[6].

Although tranquilizers initially provide significant relief from insomnia, prolonged and regular usage may result in several harmful adverse effects, such as drug dependency^[7].

In such a situation, effective natural management of insomnia is urgently needed. This can be achieved by appropriate counselling, the use of herbal remedies, leading a healthy lifestyle, and solving the issues at their source. For the treatment of *Anidra* (insomnia), there has always been a need to establish specific Ayurvedic therapy modalities that may be readily available, safe, effective, affordable, and free of side effects.

Ayurveda has a powerful method for treating *Anidra* using both internal and exterior drugs as compared to the therapeutic practices of other medical systems. Considering these circumstances, an attempt is undertaken to assess the effectiveness of administering *Shirodhara* and a medication manufactured from herbal compounds in several insomnia sufferers^[8].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Shirodhara^[9]

For more than 5,000 years, Indians have used the age-old Ayurvedic treatment method known as *Shirodhara*. *Shirodhara* is derived from the Sanskrit terms "*shiro*" (head) and "*Dhara*" (flow).

This Ayurvedic therapeutic method is having a liquid- typically water, buttermilk, milk, or oil- poured across your forehead.

It is frequently used in conjunction with a head, scalp, or body massage. This is accomplished by applying heated oil to a patient's forehead for a prolonged amount of time as part of a calming procedure.

It is one of the *Moordhni taila* that various Acharyas have elucidated. *Tailadhara*, *Ksheeradhara*, *Takradhara*, and *Jaladhara* are specific types of *Shirodhara*.

Types of *Shirodhara* ^[10,11,12]

Tailadhara – In *Tailadhara*, Ayurvedic practitioners recommend combining herbal oils with herbal extracts or other essential oils. This helps to balance the *Vata* dosha in the body.

Takradhara – *Takra Dhara* uses buttermilk flavoured with specific plants. It helps to balance the *Pitta dosha* and preserve homeostasis, or the body's ability to maintain internal stability in the face of external disturbances.

Ksheer Dhara – *Ksheer Dhara* uses herb-infused milk. The medicated milk is poured over the head and relieves *Vata* and *Pitta* headaches, stress, and anxiety while also nourishing and relaxing the body.

Kwathdhara – *Kwathdhara* uses herbal decoctions. It balances the *Vata* and *Kapha doshas* and is also said to be beneficial for a variety of other diseases.

Jala Dhara - *Jala Dhara* uses either coconut water or regular water. It is most recommended for diseases caused by excessive heat in the body.

Procedure^[13]

The three steps of the *Shirodhara* process are *Purva* (before *Shirodhara*), *Pradhan* (during *Shirodhara*), and *Pachata Karma* (after *Shirodhara*).

Purva Karma

The following supplies are required: *Shirodhara Patra*, *Shirodhara* stand, *Shirodhara* table, gauze, cotton earplugs, containers, soft cloths, appropriate oil, milk, or any liquid.

Preparation of the Patient

Patient preparation involves a comprehensive examination to determine the patient's suitability for the treatment. Once the patient has expelled their urine and stool, their vital signs, temperature, and pulse should be noted.

It is advised that the patient lie down in a supine position with *Dhara Patra* positioned four *Angula* above the forehead. To stop fluids from getting into the eyes, the ears and attention should be covered with cotton.

Selection of *Sneha*

Sneha should be consumed in accordance with Dosha circumstances, according to *Dharakalpa*. Sesame oil is used for *Vata* and *Kapha Dosha* dominating ailments, ghee for *Pitta Dosha* and *Rakta Pradoshaja* diseases, ghee and *Tila Tail* in equal amounts for any condition that combines *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Rakta*, and ½ part ghee and 1 part sesame oil for *Vata Kapha* and *Rakta*.



Pradhana Karma

The *Shirodhara* chamber needs to be calm, well-ventilated, and clean. *Shirodhara* is done in the morning on an empty stomach following a massage. Any liquid should be kept in *Dharapatra*, including milk, water, oil, and *Kwatha*. *Dhara* should be applied to the forehead consistently, but not too quickly or too slowly. *Shirodhara* liquid shouldn't be overly hot or cold. The *Dhara* liquid stream shouldn't be overly thin or thick.

The jar moves from one lateral side to the other in a pendulum-like manner when the liquid starts to pour. Before the *Dhara patra* runs out of liquid, the liquid is gathered in another container.

The *Shirodhara* treatment is administered for at least 30 minutes in the morning for up to 14 or 21

days (it is seen in general practice). When using milk and water in *Shirodhara*, the liquid needs to be changed daily. *Dhanyamla* is frequently used for three days at a time. The oil should also be changed every third day, but as it is frequently reused, it should be used for the first three days in half, then for the next three days in the other half. On the seventh day, the first and second half should be combined before being discarded.

Paschata Karma

Following the *Shirodhara* process, the patient's head needs to be cleansed and dried. A brief period of rest, an oil massage of the head and body, and finally a warm bath come next. The patient is advised to follow a *Pathya Ahara* (light diet).

Therapeutic Uses of *Shirodhara*^[14,15]

- Anxiety and stress disorders
- Insomnia
- Chronic headaches and migraines
- Hypertension
- Depression
- Hair and scalp disorders
- Promotes relaxation and reduces stress
- Improves sleep quality
- Enhances mental clarity and concentration.
- Alleviates headaches and migraines.
- Nourished hair and scalp
- Balances the doshas in the body.
- Helps to rejuvenate and invigorate the entire body.

Indications

- Headaches like cluster headaches, migraines, tension headaches.
- Burning sensation in the head and other consequences of head injuries.
- Paralysis and Alzheimer's disease (Loss of memory).
- Inflammatory diseases of *Pitta* origin.
- Certain disorders of the ears and eyes.
- Skin diseases and allergies.
- Diabetic neuropathy and for proper neuromuscular coordination.
- To delay age effect.
- The head region dryness and itching of the scalp.
- Low level of vitality or *Ojas*.
- Heart disease
- Cracked lips, damages and thin hair.
- To control vitiated *Vata dosha*.
- Degenerative diseases of *Vata* origin

Contraindications of *Shirodhara*^[16]

Shirodhara is appropriate for all *Dosha*, but there are some contraindications:

Pregnancy: It should not be given to women in their third trimester of pregnancy. It is uncomfortable and painful for pregnant women to lie on the back for 40-60 minutes at a time. The treatment known as Dhara is contraindicated in pregnancy where warm oil is poured all over the body

Head problems: *Shirodhara* should not be given to those with a rash or sunburn on the forehead or scalp. Brain tumor, recent neck injury, abrasions or cuts on the head also make this treatment difficult.

Fever or chills causing acute illness: Fever of recent origin known as *Akma* stage. It also includes nausea, vomiting, severe weakness, exhaustion, dizziness and fainting

Excess *Kapha* and Excess *Ama*: This should be balanced and maintained in the body with morbid obesity and the problem of indigestion.

Ascites: It is the accumulation of fluid causes swelling of the abdominal region. It is most often related to liver disease.

Edema: Due to excess fluid trapped in the body's tissues puffiness is caused known as edema.

Septicaemia: Blood poisoning. It usually occurs when a bacterial infection enters the bloodstream from elsewhere in the body, such as the lungs or skin.

Dehydration or thirst: This can be caused as after effect of vomiting or diarrhoea.

DISCUSSION

Ayurveda holds that all a living being's sense faculties, or *Indriyas* (sensory organs), are based on the head, also known as *Uttamanga*. As a result, *Shirodhara* increases the Prana and, consequently, the *Indriyas*, which are usually weakened in psychological disorders. Because the mind and *Indriyas* are closely related, when *Indriyas* are in good health, the mind follows suit. *Shirodhara* preserves both physical and mental health. An imbalance of *Prana*, *Udana* and *Vyana Vayu*, *Sadhaka Pitta*, and *Tarpak Kapha* frequently results in stress and anxiety. *Shirodhara* preserves the functional integrity between different *Dosha* subtypes through its mechanical impact.

According to the theory of drug absorption, the absorption of substances through the skin depends on several elements, the most significant of which are the concentration, duration of contact, solubility of the treatment, and fitness of the skin and exposed body part. The oil form used in *Shirodhara* has a good thick concentration and a longer contact time. Additionally, the scalp absorbs more and faster than other parts of the body since it is thinner. According to the concept of drug absorption, the scalp region is where the most absorption occurs, and oil absorbs drugs more effectively than water.

CONCLUSION

Shirodhara is an essential therapeutic method in the Ayurvedic medical system, which has become well-known worldwide because of its simplicity and efficacy in treating a variety of diseases and lifestyle issues. It is a rejuvenating and purifying treatment that reduces pollutants, mental exhaustion, tension, and any detrimental effects on the central nervous system.

Based on the above description, it is evident that *Shirodhara* has both a procedural effect and a pharmacological therapeutic advantage. These can be comprehended in terms of Ayurvedic, *Marma*, and mechanical science. Conditions affecting the scalp, hair, and psyche can be treated using *Shirodhara*.

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Cite this article as:

Chitranjan Das, Arvind Chaurasia. Role of Shirodhara in the Management of Anidra (Insomnia). AYUSHDHARA, 2025;12(6):162-166.
<https://doi.org/10.47070/ayushdhara.v12i6.2341>

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

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