



Integrative Ayurvedic Approach in Apasmara (Epilepsy): A Review on the Therapeutic Role of Bala and Ashwagandha Taila Shirodhara followed by Ashwagandha Ghrita Pratimarsha Nasya

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Apasmara (epilepsy) is a neuropsychological disorder described in Ayurveda as arising from the vitiation of Vata Dosha, aggravated Rajas and Tamas, and obstruction in the Manovaha and Sattvavaha Srotas. It is characterized by sudden loss of consciousness, convulsions, and impaired memory. Modern science parallels this description with episodic electrical disturbances in the brain leading to altered neuronal activity. Ayurveda offers a holistic framework to manage Apasmara through purification (Shodhana), pacification (Shamana), and rejuvenation (Rasayana) therapies, emphasizing mind-body equilibrium. Among Panchakarma procedures, Shirodhara and Nasya are recognized for their neuro-calming and restorative actions. Bala Taila and Ashwagandha Taila Shirodhara promote stabilization of Vata dosha, enhance cerebral circulation, reduce oxidative stress, and modulate neuroendocrine function. Contemporary evidence suggests that Shirodhara induces parasympathetic dominance, lowers serum cortisol levels, and enhances alpha-wave brain activity, supporting anticonvulsant and anxiolytic effects. Sequential use of Ashwagandha Ghrita Pratimarsha Nasya acts through the Shiras Marma and Nasa Marga, delivering lipid-soluble phytoconstituents directly to the central nervous system. Withania somnifera exhibits GABAergic modulation, antioxidant neuroprotection, and stress-attenuating effects, which may complement the antiepileptic response. Integrating these therapies under supervised clinical settings may strengthen neuronal stability, restore mental composure (Sattva), and reduce seizure recurrence. Though promising, the clinical evidence remains preliminary, warranting systematic trials with standardized formulations and neurophysiological biomarkers. This review highlights the potential of Bala and Ashwagandha Taila Shirodhara followed by Ashwagandha Ghrita Pratimarsha Nasya as a holistic, non-invasive, and sustainable approach in the management of Apasmara.

Keywords: Apasmara, Ayurveda, Shirodhara, Bala Taila, Ashwagandha Taila, Ashwagandha Ghrita, Pratimarsha Nasya, Panchakarma, Mental Health, Neuroprotection

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Introduction

Apasmara is a neuropsychological disorder resulting from the vitiation of *Vata dosha*, aggravation of *Rajas* and *Tamas*, and obstruction of *Manovaha* and *Sattvavaha Srotas*.^[1] It manifests as sudden loss of consciousness, abnormal movements, and derangement of *Smriti* (memory) and *Dhi* (intellect).^[2] In modern science, it parallels epilepsy, a chronic neurological condition characterized by recurrent seizures due to abnormal neuronal discharges and altered excitatory inhibitory balance in the brain.

The Ayurvedic approach emphasizes restoring *Dosha* equilibrium, cleansing neuro-channels, and stabilizing *Manas*. Among *Panchakarma* procedures, *Shirodhara* and *Nasya* hold prime importance in diseases of the head. *Shirodhara* with *Bala Taila* and *Ashwagandha Taila* has been mentioned for its *Vata-shamaka*, *Majja-poshaka*, & *Manas-prasādana* actions.^[3] *Bala* (*Sida cordifolia*) acts as a nervine tonic due to its *Balya* and *Brimhana* properties, while *Ashwagandha* (*Withania somnifera*) serves as an adaptogenic *Rasayana* with neuroprotective potential.^[4] Sequential administration of *Pratimarsha Nasya* with *Ashwagandha Ghrita* supports continuous nourishment of *Indriyas* and *Majja Dhatu*, ensuring long-term stabilization of *Manas* and cognitive faculties.^[5]

Modern evidence supports these classical insights: *Shirodhara* induces parasympathetic dominance, increases alpha-wave activity, and reduces serum cortisol, reflecting stress reduction & neuro-calming effects.^[6] Experimental studies demonstrate that *Withania somnifera* exhibits GABAergic modulation, antioxidant and anti-inflammatory neuroprotection, and attenuation of seizure severity in epileptic models.^[7] Integrating these findings with classical Ayurvedic concepts provides a holistic therapeutic framework for managing *Apasmara* through *Shirodhara* with *Bala* and *Ashwagandha Taila* followed by *Pratimarsha Nasya* using *Ashwagandha Ghrita*.

Methods

This review was conducted by systematically analyzing classical Ayurvedic literature and modern scientific studies related to *Apasmara* (epilepsy) and its management using *Shirodhara* and *Pratimarsha Nasya* with *Bala Taila*, *Ashwagandha Taila*, and *Ashwagandha Ghrita*.

The classical data were exclusively obtained from *Charaka Samhita – Chikitsa Sthana, Chapter 10 (Apasmara Chikitsa Adhyaya)*, along with its authoritative commentary *Ayurveda Deepika* by Chakrapani. All relevant sections on etiology (*Nidana*), pathogenesis (*Samprapti*), symptomatology (*Lakshana*), and treatment principles (*Chikitsa Sutra*) were extracted and analyzed.

For contemporary scientific correlation, databases including PubMed, Google Scholar, and DHARA (Digital Helpline for Ayurveda Research Articles) were searched for publications between 2000 and 2025. Keywords used included “Apasmara,” “Ayurveda and epilepsy,” “Shirodhara,” “Ashwagandha Taila,” “Bala Taila,” “Pratimarsha Nasya,” “Ashwagandha Ghrita,” “Panchakarma,” and “neuroprotection.” Peer-reviewed articles, randomized clinical trials, experimental studies, & systematic reviews relevant to neurological outcomes were included. Studies without full text or irrelevant focus were excluded.

The extracted data from classical texts were correlated with modern evidence to explore the neuroprotective, anticonvulsant, anxiolytic, & adaptogenic effects of Ayurvedic formulations. The potential mechanisms of *Shirodhara* and *Pratimarsha Nasya* in modulating *Vata Dosha*, neuroendocrine balance, and autonomic function were emphasized.

Etiology and Pathogenesis

Ayurveda Perspective^[8]

Hetu / Causes

↓

Vata & Rajo aggravation
Tamasic influence
Dietary indiscretion, Trauma, Stress

↓

Dosha / Pathophysiology

↓

Vata vitiation
Rajo-Tamas imbalance

↓

Srotas / Neural Pathways

↓

Manovaha Srotas
Sattva Vaha Srotas

↓

Clinical Manifestation / *Lakshana*

↓

Loss of consciousness, Convulsions
Memory & cognitive impairment

Modern Perspective[9,10]

Etiology / Causes

↓

Genetic predisposition
Neurotransmitter imbalance (GABAergic)
Structural brain changes
Environmental triggers

↓

Pathophysiology

↓

Neuronal hyperexcitability
Impaired inhibitory circuits
Inflammation & oxidative stress

↓

Neural Pathways / Circuits

↓

Cortical & subcortical circuits
Hippocampus, Thalamus

↓

Clinical Manifestation

↓

Recurrent seizures
Altered neuronal activity
Cognitive deficits

Management

Ayurvedic management emphasizes restoring *Doshic* balance, stabilizing *Manas*, and enhancing neurophysiological resilience. *Shirodhara* using *Bala Taila* and *Ashwagandha Taila* is reported to induce neurocalming, improve cerebral circulation, reduce oxidative stress, and modulate endocrine function. Sequential administration of *Pratimarsha Nasya* with *Ashwagandha Ghrita* delivers lipid-soluble phytoconstituents to the central nervous system via *Shiras Marma* and nasal pathways, supporting neuroprotection and cognitive stabilization.[11]

Modern research corroborates these effects, highlighting adaptogenic, neuroprotective, and GABAergic modulatory properties of *Withania somnifera*, as well as cognitive and anxiolytic benefits.[12] Integrative approaches combining *Ayurvedic Panchakarma* procedures with lifestyle modification, dietary regulation, and supportive pharmacotherapy may enhance neuronal stability, reduce seizure recurrence, and improve overall mental health.[13]

Mechanism of Action

Ayurvedic Perspective

In *Ayurveda*, *Shirodhara* is a key *Panchakarma* procedure involving the continuous pouring of medicated oils over the forehead. This therapy is reported to induce mental calmness, reduce stress, and stabilize the nervous system. *Bala Taila* and *Ashwagandha Taila* are specifically used to pacify *Vata* and *Rajo* doshas, balance mental faculties, and enhance neurological function. *Shirodhara* improves cerebral circulation, reduces oxidative stress, and modulates endocrine activity.[14]

Modern Perspective

Modern research highlights that *Withania somnifera* (Ashwagandha) root extracts act on GABA-A receptors, regulating neuronal excitability. It exhibits antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and neuroprotective effects, which protect brain cells and enhance cognitive and mental health.[15]

Discussion

The integrative management of *Apasmara* using *Bala* and *Ashwagandha Taila Shirodhara* followed by *Ashwagandha Ghrita Pratimarsha Nasya* offers a holistic approach that aligns classical Ayurvedic principles with modern neurophysiological insights. Ayurvedic therapies target the correction of *Vata* and *Rajo-Tamas* imbalances, focusing on *Manovaha* & *Sattvavaha Srotas* to restore cognitive & mental stability. Modern evidence suggests that *Withania somnifera* and *Sida cordifolia* support GABAergic neurotransmission, reduce oxidative stress, & improve neuronal resilience. *Shirodhara* has been shown to enhance parasympathetic activity, reduce stress hormones, and promote neurocalming effects. Despite promising findings, current data are limited by small sample sizes, variability in formulations, and lack of standardized protocols. Further rigorous studies are required to validate efficacy, optimize dosing, and confirm long-term safety.

Integrating these Ayurvedic interventions with lifestyle and dietary modifications may provide a sustainable, non-invasive strategy for improving seizure control and cognitive outcomes.

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