

Review Article

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“AYURVEDIC MANAGEMENT OF KARNA ROGA (EAR DISORDERS): A SCIENTIFIC REVIEW”
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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Karna Roga (ear disorders) are extensively described in Ayurvedic texts under *Shalakya Tantra*. Disorders such as *Karna Nada* (tinnitus), *Badharya* (deafness), *Karnasula* (ear pain), and *Karna Srava* (ear discharge) parallel modern conditions like tinnitus, sensorineural hearing loss, otalgia, and otitis media. Rising incidence of chronic ear diseases and limitations of current otological therapies necessitate evaluation of Ayurvedic perspectives. **Methods:** This review was based on classical Ayurvedic compendia (*Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Ashtanga Hridaya*, *Madhava Nidana*), PubMed, Scopus, and Web of Science databases. Studies published between 2000 and 2025, including clinical trials, reviews, and experimental studies, were considered. Both conceptual and therapeutic aspects were critically evaluated. **Results:** Ayurveda prescribes diverse treatments: *Karna Poorana* (instillation of medicated oils), *Nasya* (nasal therapy), *Dhoopana* (fumigation), *Parisheka* (medicated pouring), and systemic *Rasayana*. Oils like *Bilva Taila*, *Nirgundi Taila*, *Eranda Taila*, *Anu Taila*, and *Dashamula Taila* show anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial, and analgesic actions. Modern studies support efficacy in otitis media, tinnitus, and otalgia. Preventive approaches such as daily *Karna Poorana* help maintain auditory health. **Discussion:** Ayurvedic management of Karna Roga emphasizes local therapy, systemic balance, and rejuvenation. While classical evidence is rich and preliminary modern studies are promising, robust randomized clinical trials and pharmacological standardization remain gaps. Integrative approaches may optimize outcomes.

KEYWORDS: Ayurveda, Ear disorders, Karna Poorana, Karna Roga, Nasya

INTRODUCTION

Karna Roga or ear disorders are elaborately discussed in Ayurveda under *Shalakya Tantra*^[1]. The sense of hearing (*Shravana*) plays a vital role in perception, communication, and cognitive functions^[2]. Classical texts classify over 28 distinct Karna Rogas, each described with their causes (*Nidana*), pathogenesis (*Samprapti*), signs and symptoms (*Lakshana*), and treatment (*Chikitsa*)^[3-4].

Pathogenesis of ear disorders is largely attributed to *Vata* vitiation, often in association with *Kapha*^[5]. Obstruction, degeneration, or imbalance of doshas in the auditory system manifest as pain, discharge, ringing sounds, or loss of hearing^[6]. Management involves a combination of local therapies such as *Karna Poorana* (instillation of oil in the ear), *Nasya*, and *Dhoopana*, supported by systemic formulations and lifestyle interventions^[7-8].

The aim of this review is to present an integrated understanding of Ayurvedic management of Karna Roga in the light of classical texts and modern research. Objectives include: (1) reviewing Ayurvedic concepts of ear disorders, (2) compiling evidence from classical literature and modern clinical studies, and (3) evaluating therapeutic relevance for present-day otological practice^[9-10].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Primary sources included *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Ashtanga Hridaya*, and *Madhava Nidana*. Commentaries of Chakrapani, Dalhana, and Arundatta were referred to for interpretations. Secondary data were sourced from PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, AYUSH Research Portal, and Google Scholar^[11].

Search strategy: Keywords “Karna Roga,” “Ayurvedic otology,” “Karna Poorana,” “Nasya ENT,” and “Ayurvedic management of ear disorders” were used^[12].

Inclusion criteria: clinical trials, experimental studies, review articles, and case reports from 2000–2025 focusing on Ayurvedic interventions for ear disorders^[13].

Exclusion criteria: non-Ayurvedic interventions and studies with poor methodological design.

The findings were synthesized thematically into (1) Ayurvedic classification and pathogenesis, (2) classical therapies, and (3) modern validation^[14-15].

OBSERVATION AND RESULTS

1. Ayurvedic Classification of Karna Roga

Ayurveda describes 28 types of *Karna Roga* in *Sushruta Samhita Uttara Tantra*. These include:

- *Karna Nada* (tinnitus)
- *Badhirya* (deafness)
- *Karnasula* (ear pain)
- *Karna Srava* (ear discharge)
- *Karna Kandu* (itching)
- *Karna Paka* (suppuration)
- *Karna Arsha* (polyps)
- *Karna Shotha* (swelling of ear)
- *Karna Shukla* (white patches)

Each is explained with its *dosha predominance*, primarily *Vata* (degenerative disorders) and *Kapha* (obstructive or infective conditions).

2. Pathogenesis (Samprapti)

- *Vata* aggravation leads to pain, tinnitus, and deafness.
- *Kapha* vitiation causes heaviness, discharge, itching, and obstruction.
- *Pitta* involvement results in burning sensation, suppuration, and inflammation.
- *Sannipataja Karna Roga* involve multiple doshas and are usually chronic or difficult to treat.

3. Classical Therapies for Karna Roga

a) Karna Poorana (Ear oil instillation):

- Considered the main therapy for ear health.
- Oils like *Bilva Taila*, *Anu Taila*, *Nirgundi Taila*, *Eranda Taila*, and *Dashamula Taila* are used.
- Indications: tinnitus, earache, dryness, hearing loss.
- Preventive use: daily *Karna Poorana* with warm sesame oil maintains auditory strength.

b) Nasya (Nasal therapy):

- As per *Uttara Tantra*, Nasya strengthens sensory organs including the ears.
- *Anu Taila* and *Shabdinu Taila* are used for tinnitus and hearing impairment.
- Clinical evidence suggests Nasya helps in Eustachian tube dysfunction and allergic rhinitis-related ear issues.

c) Dhoopana (Medicated fumigation):

- Used in infective ear conditions.
- Herbs like *Guggulu*, *Nirgundi*, *Haridra*, and *Vacha* are used.



- Acts as antiseptic, antimicrobial, and reduces foul discharge.

d) **Parisheka (Medicated pouring):**

- Lukewarm decoctions poured over the ear for pain and swelling.

e) **Internal Medicines and Rasayana:**

- *Dashamula Kwatha, Guggulu preparations, Brahmi Ghrita, and Rasayana Chikitsa* are advised for chronic cases.
- Improve auditory function, reduce degeneration, and prevent recurrence.

4. Modern Pharmacological Correlation

- **Nirgundi (Vitex negundo):** Anti-inflammatory, analgesic, and antimicrobial.
- **Bilva (Aegle marmelos):** Astringent, anti-bacterial, reduces ear discharge.
- **Eranda (Ricinus communis):** Analgesic, anti-inflammatory, softens ear wax.
- **Anu Taila:** Shows mucolytic, anti-allergic, and neuroprotective effects.
- **Guggulu (Commiphora mukul):** Antimicrobial and wound healing properties.

5. Clinical Evidence from Modern Studies

- A clinical trial on *Anu Taila Karna Poorana* reported significant improvement in tinnitus and mild sensorineural hearing loss.
- *Nirgundi Taila* showed reduction in pain and discharge in otitis externa.
- *Bilva Taila* proved effective in *Karna Srava* with reduction in purulent discharge and inflammation.
- *Nasya* with *Shadbhanda Taila* improved auditory thresholds in early age-related hearing loss.
- Preventive *Karna Poorana* in children reduced incidence of recurrent otitis media.

6. Preventive Aspect of Karna Roga

Ayurveda emphasizes daily regimen (*Dinacharya*):

- Daily *Karna Poorana* with warm sesame oil.
- Avoiding excess exposure to cold winds, loud sounds, and water entry in ears.
- Proper diet and *Rasayana* support auditory longevity.

7. Integrative Relevance

- Ayurvedic interventions complement modern ENT care.
- Can be used as adjuvant in chronic otitis media, tinnitus, and age-related hearing loss.

- Holistic approach provides preventive, curative, and rehabilitative benefits.

DISCUSSION

The Ayurvedic concept of Karna Roga provides a comprehensive framework that encompasses structural, functional, and systemic perspectives. Unlike modern otology, which primarily focuses on pathology within the ear canal, middle ear, or cochlea, Ayurveda views ear health in relation to the systemic balance of *doshas*. This integrative perspective explains why therapies extend beyond local ear treatments to include *Nasya* and *Rasayana*^[16].

Karna Poorana stands out as a unique therapeutic intervention. Modern pharmacology validates the analgesic, antimicrobial, and anti-inflammatory actions of medicated oils like *Nirgundi Taila* and *Bilva Taila*, supporting their use in conditions such as otitis externa and otitis media. Preventive daily Karna Poorana, as advised in Ayurveda, aligns with modern preventive otology practices such as maintaining ear hygiene and reducing recurrent infections^[17].

Nasya therapy highlights the Ayurvedic understanding of ENT interconnections. Modern evidence suggests that nasal therapies can improve Eustachian tube function, indirectly benefiting middle ear health. Similarly, *Dhoopana* demonstrates antimicrobial fumigation effects that may be beneficial in recurrent infective ear conditions^[18].

However, challenges remain. Most Ayurvedic clinical trials are small-scale with heterogeneous designs, lacking randomization and blinding. Pharmacological studies often use crude extracts without standardization of formulations. These gaps hinder global acceptance and integration into mainstream otology^[19].

Future research should focus on large-scale randomized controlled trials with standardized oils and protocols. Pharmacognostic and phytochemical studies of formulations like *Bilva Taila* and *Anu Taila* are needed to establish active principles. Integrative studies combining Ayurvedic interventions with antibiotics or surgical management could provide evidence for complementary roles in reducing recurrence, enhancing recovery, and improving quality of life.

Thus, Ayurveda offers not only curative measures but also preventive and rejuvenative strategies for ear health. Its holistic principles, if validated and

standardized, can substantially enrich modern ENT practices^[20].

CONCLUSION

Ayurveda describes a rich repertoire of therapies for Karna Roga, reflecting a deep understanding of ear health. Disorders such as tinnitus, deafness, otitis media, and otalgia are well correlated with *Karna Nada*, *Badharya*, *Karna Srava*, and *Karnasula*. The cornerstone therapy, *Karna Poorana*, supported by *Nasya*, *Dhoopana*, and *Rasayana*, provides both preventive and curative benefits. Modern pharmacological studies validate the antimicrobial, analgesic, and neuroprotective actions of herbs and oils mentioned in Ayurveda.

Clinical evidence, though limited, supports symptomatic improvement in tinnitus, otitis media, and early hearing loss with Ayurvedic therapies. Preventive aspects such as daily *Karna Poorana* align with modern public health principles. However, challenges such as lack of large-scale clinical trials, standardization of formulations, and integration with conventional protocols remain.

The review concludes that Ayurvedic management of Karna Roga offers a holistic and promising approach to ear disorders, with potential to complement modern otology. Strengthening evidence through systematic research, standardization, and integrative clinical trials will ensure wider acceptance and practical applicability.

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