

THE STUDY OF NIDRA IN AYURVEDIC PROSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda describes the main three pillars of life amongst that *Nidra* is said to be the very important tripod of life. It is one of the *Trayopstambha*. *Trayopstambha* (*Ahara, Nidra, Brahmacharya*) is key to health and disease on which our life and vitality is based. It focuses on daily regimen (*Dincharya*) that can avoid lifestyle disorders. *Nidra* plays an important role in physical and mental health. *Ayurveda* has prescribed certain rules, in regard to diet and sleep, called seasonal regimen (*Rutucharya*). *Nidra* means sleep, that is very important for maintaining normal physiological activities of body. A good physical and mental state merely depends upon *Nidra* thus one can acquire normal health status by following conducts of life which induces good sleep. The *Nidra* causes physical as well as mental relaxation thus offers health benefits and prevents pathological initiation of diseases associated with stress and anxiety.

This article summarizes *Nidra* and its importance in maintenance of health and well-being.

Keywords: *Ayurveda, Nidra, Trayopstambha.*

INTRODUCTION

The word *Nidra* derived from the prefix “Ni” is the Sanskrit root of our english word “Nether” or down as in “Nether world” (under world) While suffix

“dra” may be cognate with the english “drowsy” to be half asleep. According to *Ayurveda Swasthya* it depends on three pillars of life i.e., *Aahara, Nidra*

and Brahmacharya. Nidra is one of the important pillars (Upstambha) among them¹. It comes under Adharniya Vega (Unsurpassable urge)². Ayurveda explained that Nidra (asleep) is very important for the maintenance of health and prevention of disease. As per Ayurveda the Kapha and Tamas are responsible for Nidra, thus balancing state of Kapha and Tamas offers good sleep hence thereby normal health condition. According to Charak Samhita, when the Mana including Indriyas is exhausted, and they dissociate themselves from their objects then the individual sleeps³. Acharya Charaka states that adequate and proper Nidra in terms of quality and quantity gives Sukh (happiness), Pushthi (nourishment), Bala (strength), Gyana (learning capacity), Jivitam (life). Acharya Sushruta described Nidra as the state of human body in which sense organs are disconnected

from grasping of their objects⁴. According to Vagbhata Nidra is caused by Tama Guna and also influenced by Tama Guna⁵. Hence Nidra occurs at nighttime as we see that Tama Guna increases at nighttime. Types of sleep in general, classified into two types: Svabhavika (natural sleep) and Asvabhavika (abnormal sleep).

Synonyms of Nidra

In Amarkosha, four synonyms have been mentioned.

1) Shayanam 2) Svapah 3) Svapnah 4) Samvesh.

In Vaidyaka Shabda Sindhu, three synonyms are available. 1) Sambhashah 2) Suptih 3) Svapanam.

In Charaka Samhita, Bhutadhatri has been used as a synonym and in Sushruta Samhita the word.

Vaishnavi Maya is used.

CLASSIFICATION OF NIDRA ACCORDING TO ACHARYAS⁶

	Charak	Sushrut	Vagbhat
1.	Tamobhava	Vaishnvi	Tamobhava
2.	Sleshma samdbhava	Vaikariki	Aamayakledaprabhavaja
3.	Manasharira shram	Tamsi	Chittakledaprabhavaja
4.	Agantuki		Agantuki
5.	Vyadhyanuvartini		Kaphaprabhavaja
6.	Ratriswabhavaprabhava		Dekledaprabhavaja
7.			Kalavabhavaja

According to Acharya Charak –

Tamobhava- caused by Tama, Shleshmasamudbhava- caused by vitiated Kapha, Manah-Sharirshramasambhava- caused by mental and mental exertion, Agantuki- indicative of bad prognosis leading imminent death, Vyadhyanuvartini- caused as a complication of other disease like Sannipataja Jwara etc., Ratri-Swabhavaprabhava- caused by the very nature of the night.

According to Sushruta Samhita -

Tamsik- when Sangyavaha Strotas become filled with Shleshma dominated by Tamoguna, Tamsi Nidra is produced.

Swabhaviki- this type of Nidra occurs naturally and daily in all living beings.

Vaikariki- If there is any disturbance in Mana and body, Nidra does not occur. But if Nidra is occurred, it is Vaikariki Nidra.

REQUIREMENT OF SLEEP IN SATVIK, RAJASIK, TAMASIK PERSONS⁷

Satvik person – 4-6 hrs of sleep

Rajasik person - 8 hrs of sleep

Tamasik person -10-12 hrs of sleep

SLEEPING PATTERN

it is always advisable to sleep in left lateral because the Agni (digestive fire) lies in the left side of the body above the Nabhi (umbilicus) which is responsible for the digestion⁸

SUITABLE TIME TO WAKE

Though the duration of sleep is not directly mentioned in the Ayurvedic classics but indirectly it can be understood by the verse given by Acharya Vagbhata, one should wake up in the Brahmamuhur-

ta which is 48 minutes before sunrise following the proper digestion of food taken at night.

SUITABLE PLACE TO SLEEP

Effect of different kinds of beds used for sleeping on health has been described in detail as follows:

1. *Anukula Shayya* (Comfortable bed): It is considered good for proper sleep, nourishment, pleasure, relieves tiredness, pacifies the vitiated *Vata* and aphrodisiac.
2. *Bhumi Shayya* (On ground): it can pacify the vitiated *Vata*, nourishes human body gives strength and aphrodisiac.
3. *Khatva* (Cot): Causes vitiation of *Vata*.
4. *Darupatta* (Wooden planks): it is unctuous and highly vitiates *Vata*.
5. *Andolika* (Hanging bed): It relieves tiredness, leads to long life, plumpness, aphrodisiac, alleviates vitiated *Vata*, decreases sweating, pleasing to mind.
6. *Talpa*: It helps to decrease weight. It is good for the health of skin.

PHYSIOLOGY OF SLEEP

When *Mana* is exhausted then sleeps occurs this phenomenon can be understood in this manner. According to Howell, sleep is due to cerebral ischemia. Cerebral cortex is the seat of higher centres like pre and post central gyres, association area etc., which have the correlation with mental activities described in *Ayurveda*. So due to the reduction in cerebral blood supply *Mana* becomes *Klanta* that causes sleep (*Nidra*). Further during sleep, *Indriyas* (*Jnanendriya* and *Karmendriya*) become inactive by the detachment from their sense organs or from their work.

IMPORTANCE OF NIDRA

Aahara, *Nidra* and *Brahmacharya* are the three factors which play an important role in the maintenance of a living organism. In Ayurvedic literature, these factors i.e., *Aahara*, *Nidra* and *Brahmacharya* have been compared with the three legs of sub-support and have been termed as the three *Upastambhas*. The inclusion of *Nidra* in the three *Upastambha* proves its importance.

While describing the importance of *Nidra*, *Ayurveda* mentioned that.

- The proper sleep gives nourishment to the body.
- Maintain physical and mental relaxation.
- A person who acquires good sleep having spiritual belief and synchronizes with nature.
- *Nidra* keeps away from diseases especially mental illness.
- *Nidra* helps to attain longevity, youthfulness, luster and complexion.
- *Nidra* provides memory and intelligence.
- The development and proper functioning of physique and sense organs depends upon proper state of sleep.
- *Nidra* provides immunity and resist symptoms of early aging.

DISCUSSION

We get various references of *guda* mentioned in our *ayurvedic* texts, but *Acharya Sushruta* has given the description of *guda* in an extensive way in *Sushruta Samhita*. It is considered to be the soft organ or *mridu-anga* formed from *matrija bhava* in intra-uterine life. According to *Bhadrashounak* *guda* is the *adhithan* of *maruta*¹². It is a vital point in the human body as it is one of our *sadyopranahara marmas*. Any injury to this may lead to death immediately or within seven nights. Hence, *guda* plays an important role in our *shareera*.

CONCLUSION

Nidra offers appropriate weight, better complexion, enthusiasm, and alertness of sensory organs. *Nidra* along with *Ahara* and *Brahmacharya* gives vital physiological effects and helps body and mind to remain healthy. *Ayurveda* described *Nidra* as vital pillar of life that is very important for governing normal physiological activities. The physical and mental status merely depends upon *Nidra*; it also induces physical as well as mental relaxation. *Nidra* also improves immunity thus resisting pathological initiation of common diseases. *Nidra* reduces stress and anxiety thus prevents mental illness. The hours and time of sleep are important. Ideal *Nidra* plays a significant

role in maintaining health and preventing lifestyle disorders.

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