

A REVIEW ON SIGNIFICANCE OF NIDRA (SLEEP) TOWARDS MAINTAINING THE HUMAN HEALTH

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Nidra (Sleep)

The second factor helpful to replenish depleted body constituents is sleep. The body is continuously being bombarded by various sensory stimuli, which have to be accepted, analyzed, acted upon stored in memory for further use etc. This results in the fatigue of the sensory motor apparatus. This fatigue results in inability to perceive their respective stimuli. The bonds between sensory organs and the mind by *Prana Vayu, Udana Vayu, Vyana Vayu, Sadhaka Pitta, Tarpaka Kapha* and *Rasa Dhatu* get depleted. This leads to a state in which mind, retracts itself, known as sleep. This total retraction of mind helps the body to replenish the vitality of the body and depleted functional capacity of the mind. The depth of sleep is directly proportional to the retraction of the mind.

When the *Doshas* are vitiated, they are circulating in the body, through the medium of *rasa*. Hence, though the mind is retracted from external stimuli it remains agitated resulting in dreams. Dreams have been associated with various physical as well as mental diseases. Therefore adequate amount of sound and deep sleep ensures happiness, nourishment, power, virility and acuity of knowledge. Similarly, lack of sleep is responsible for misery, wasting of body tissues, weakness, lack of libido and lack of concentration.

Ayurveda has classified sleep according to the effect it brings about. Normal night sleep is nourishing, replenishing the lost potential of the body senses mind complex

Abnormal sleep patterns arise out of

- 1) Heightened *Kapha* activity
- 2) Disease processes
- 3) A disease that becomes terminal, non-curable, fatal
- 4) Heightened *Tamas* activity
- 5) *Paapa sambhava* (caused due to sin)

Adequate sleep taken at the proper time is responsible for vigour, knowledge, tolerance, valour, good digestive power, happiness, good physique etc. Untimely and inadequate sleep makes one unhappy, timid, ignorant, weak, impotent, emaciated etc.

Indications for day sleep	Diseases occurrence due to inadequate sleep
Singers	<i>Haaleemaka</i>
Teachers	<i>Staimitya</i>
Alcohol consuming	<i>Gurugaatrataa</i>
After sexual intercourse	<i>Kapha Pitta vriddhi</i>
After <i>Sams`hoshana karma</i>	<i>Angamarda</i>
Weight lifters ,porters	<i>Agnimaandya</i>
Stressed due to excessive walking	<i>Hridyaopalepa</i>
<i>Ajeerna</i>	<i>Shotha</i>
<i>Rasasheshajeerna</i>	<i>Arochaka</i>
Small Children	<i>Hrilaasa</i>
Old people	<i>Peenasa</i>
<i>Ksheena Due to Dhaatu Kshaya</i>	<i>Aardhaavabhedaka</i>
<i>Trishna</i>	<i>Kooha</i>
<i>Diarrhoea (Atisara)</i>	<i>Pidakaa</i>
<i>Shoola</i>	<i>Kando</i>
<i>Shvaasa</i>	<i>Kaasa</i>
<i>Krishatva (Kaarshya)</i>	<i>Galaroga</i>
<i>Hikkaa</i>	<i>Buddhi Smriti moha</i>
<i>Krodha, Shoka, Bhaya Pidita, Unmatta rogee</i>	<i>Strotas avarodha</i>
<i>Uchha shtaanena Patita</i>	<i>Jvara</i>
<i>Divasvaapa Abhaayasita</i>	<i>Indreya karma Asmarthataa</i>
<i>Greeshma Ritu</i>	<i>Visha vega pravartam</i>

Nidra and Ayurveda^[1]

In *Ayurveda*, the *nidra* (sleep) has been said to be due to *Ratriswabhava Prabhava*. *Acharya Charaka* has rightly told that the sleep caused by the nature of the night is the sleep par excellence and is called as *Bhutadhatri* and it nurses all the living beings.

The evolution took place when the *Sruti* Karta Brahma was in awakened state, and the destruction or *pralaya*, when he was asleep. Hence sleep of Brahma was a destructive state for living beings. But for the living beings in the world including plants, the sleep is an essential phenomenon like food and water and also it restores the energy like them.

From the Vedic and Upanishad period it self, the yogis studied about the yogic phenomenon pertaining to various stages associated with Atma. They have termed these stages as 1. *Jagrataavastha* (Waking phase), 2. *Swapnavastha* (Dream phase), 3. *Susuptavastha* (Sleep phase) and 4. *Samadhi avastha* (the conscious sleep phase), having detachment from the eternal world in different degrees.

In *Patanjali yogasutra* the physiology and importance of *nidra* was described as: A state of deliberate absence of thought waves or knowledge. Dreamless sleep is an inert state of consciousness in which the sense of existence is not felt. In sleep, the senses of perception rest in the mind, the mind in the consciousness and the consciousness in the being in deep sleep. The senses of perception cease of function because their supreme, the mind is at rest. This *Abhava*, a state of void or a feeling of emptiness.

Lord Krishna has explained the importance of proper sleep for *adhyana yogi* in *Bhagavatgeeta*. He also mentions to *Arjuna* that the excessive sleep or awaking is not good.

meaning of Word *NIDRA*

The prefix “*Ni*” is the Sanskrit root of our English word “Nether” or down as in “nether world” (under world).

While the suffix “*dra*” may be cognate with the English “drowsy”, to be half asleep, to be inactive or present an appearance of peaceful inactivity or isolation.

The word *nidra* is a feminine gender, the root “*dra*” means undesired and “*gatau*” to lead; it is a state which is hated, there for turned as “*Nidra*”. The different interpretations about the phenomenon of *nidra* may be classified under following groups.

* **Upanishad Concept.**

* **Ayurvedic Concept.**

* **Yogic Concept.**

Upanishad Concept

The ancient theories discussed here are based on the available Indian literature and *Ayurvedic* literature at present. The discussion about the sleep is one of the important topics of the *Upanishad*.

a. The fatigue theory of sleep is just in the pattern of the modern physiology; concept of sleep has been explained with an example of a bird. A Falcon or any other bird. A falcon or any other bird after having flown in the sky when gets tired returns in the nest by folding wings.

b. According to some others, sleep is caused by the sense of being absorbed in the highest sensation or the mind, just similar as the rays of sun become collected in the bright disc at the time of sunset. So do all senses become collected in the mind. This is the reason why man is not able to hear, to see or to smell in deep sleep.

c. This statement can be further exemplified according the reason of sleep is that the mind is merged into the ocean of light, when he is overpowered by light, then does the soul see no dreams and at that time great happiness arises in the body.

d. Another theory says that sleep is caused by the soul getting lodgment in the arteries. When a man is fast asleep, being happy, come across no dreams as the soul has moved in the arteries during that state.

e. The sleep is found to be explained in other ways also. According to the sages, the sleep occurs in the mind is merged in *prana*.

f. *Nidra* occurs when the soul goes to rest in the space inside the heart (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*).

Ayurvedic Concept

More elaborate description regarding the sleep, its role in the maintenance of health is found in *Ayurvedic* classics and the later literature of *Upanishads*, *Charaka* and *Vagbhata* have considered the *nidra* as one of the *Upastambha*.

Acharya Kashyapa also highlighted the importance of *nidra* as; the timely implemented sleep is an indicator of good health as it brings the normalcy in body tissues and relaxes the person.

Yogaratanakara says that a person who is enjoying sleep does not easily become a victim of diseases. His life will be with health, vigor and longevity.

Sushruta states that if one remains in a locality that is contributed to the aggravated *dosha*, the person need not fear, provided his diet, sleep and regimen are of such nature as are necessary for the pacification of *doshas* concerned.

As such in Ayurveda the *nidra* has been said to be due to *Ratnswabhava Prabhava*. Acharya Charaka has rightly told that the sleep caused by the nature of the night is the sleep par excellence and is called as *Bhutadhatri* and it nurses all the living beings. Though the role and importance of sleep are very widely accepted, if the sleep is not appropriately implemented in quantum and time, it may have adverse effects on the body.

Four theories for explaining mechanism of sleep

- * **Tamoguna Theory.**
- * **Kapha Dosha Theory.**
- * **Depression Theory**
- * **Svabhava Theory Tamoguna Theory**

Tamoguna Theory

This is the *darshanika* theory of sleep. In *darshanas*, *Tamas* has been held responsible for ignorance, less of consciousness, inattention and sleep. The theory concept that, at night since the *Tamas* being powerful, the higher psychic centers gets overpowered by it and sleep manifests. The *Hridaya* is the seat of consciousness when that is covered by *Tamas*, the person goes to sleep. *Tamas* is hence cause for sleep and the *satva* for consciousness.

Kapha Dosha Theory

This is the ancient medical theory of sleep, in fact it is a modification of the *Tamoguna* Theory. *Kapha* is supposed to be composed mostly of *Tamas*. Therefore, the increased *kapha* has been related with more or less the qualities of *kapha*.

According to this, whenever *chetna* is overpowered by the accumulation of *Tamas*, the sensory channels of the body gets blocked or checked by the *Kapha*. When this *shleshma* is oversaturated with *tamasika* qualities then the living being gets sleep.

Depression Theory

Charaka propagated this theory, when mind and the organs of sense become so tired that they cannot be stimulated to activity, the person goes to sleep. Due to natural process or due to exhaustion etc. when the mind becomes inactive along with sensory and motor organs then the person goes to sleep.

Svabhava Theory

Even after the description of role of *Tamas* in sleep *Sushruta* told that it is the natural instinct, which forms the most powerful cause for sleep. So, he also counted it as *svabhavika* by nature and the, night serves as causative factor for sleep (Ch.Su. 21/ 58).

Natural instincts

There are four natural instincts for the human beings like

- * Desire to take the food.
- * Desire to take the water.
- * Desire to have sleep.
- * Desire for sexual pleasure.

Sleep According to Astanga Hridayakara – Four Types

- * *Akale sevitha* – *Mithyayaogaroopa* -taken in wrong manner.
- * *Atiprasgath sevitha* – *Atiyogaroopa* – excessively taken.
- * *Na cha sevitha* – *heenayogaroopa* – not adequate sleep
- * *Nishevatha* – *Niyathativenitha setitha* – properly taken

According to Sushruta – Three Types

- * *Tamasika*
- * *Swabhavika*
- * *Vaikariki Yogic* Theory

According to charaka- Eight types

- **Tamobhava Nidra:** This *Nidra* is caused by the excessive *tamasika* guna meaning lethargy and lack of initiative in the mind. Basically when lethargy dominates the person tends to fall asleep due to laziness. Even after waking up the person remains in a confused state of mind and cannot differentiate between the good and the bad. The person would like to sleep more and this type of sleep is not good. *Tamasik Nidra*, a type of deep sleep can even lead to death.
- **Shleshma samudbhava:** *Shleshma* means *kapha*. This is a kind of sleep is caused by the excessive *kapha*. Intake of heavy, oily and viscous food mostly with a sweet taste induces the vitiation of *kapha* in the body. Increased *kapha* in the body induces sleep because it obstructs the sensory organs preventing their normal functions.
- **Kaala Swabhaavaja Nidra:** Ayurveda describes this as the normal sleep that is part of the daily routine. This is a natural phenomenon that occurs generally at the end of the day. Sleeping during the night is good for health as it happens under normal health and natural conditions. It helps the person to get physically and mentally fit for the daily schedules.
- **Chitta Kheda Prabhava Nidra:** This type of sleep generally occurs due to the disturbances of the mind or from mental exhaustion.
- **Vyadhyanuvaritini or Roga Kheda Prabhava Nidra:** Basically this type of *nidra* is the result of prolonged diseases. In this type of *Nidra*, the predominance of *Kapha* causes excessive sleep. This can be corrected by proper medical intervention.
- **Agantuki:** This kind of *Nidra* is unexpected or unnatural kind. The main reason for this *nidra* is organic disturbance of the body center. However, if this kind of *nidra* repeats then it denotes the bad state of the body condition.
- **Aagantuja Nidra:** This is type of sleep that is caused by a trauma or injury involving head.
- **Paapaatmika:** Ayurveda holistic principles focus on the body and mind. The life science insists that disturbed sleep is an effect sins.
- **Peaceful and normal Sleep (Nidra):** Make the dinner time pleasant and also ensure that the bed and

surroundings are clean, comfortable and suitable for good sleep. Keep your mental state calm and avoid negative thoughts. It is advisable to keep the head in *purva* (east) or *dakshin* (south) direction. Before sleeping one should offer prayers as this will induce good sleep.

The yogic philosophers of India also gave explanation regarding sleep and also explained the Samadhi state which resembles the sleep but entirely opposite to that.

Bhagavan Sri Krishna while discussing *Dhyana yoga* or *yoga* of meditation said that the yogi should be regulated in sleep and wakefulness, and he also told that, the sleeping (*swapna*), smelling etc, are the functions of five organs and breathing points to function of five vital airs and the sleeping denotes the function of inner sense or mind.

Patanjali mentioned sleep as a state in which all activities of thought and feeling comes to an end. In sleep the senses of perception rest in the mind. In deep sleep, the senses of perception cease to function because the mind is at rest. After awakening, the consciousness or mind will be aware about its consciousness.

Yoga Nidra: A Yogic sleep process

The Indian philosophy teaches the existence of four levels of consciousness as

- * 1. Waking consciousness (*Jagrutavasta*)
- * 2. Dreaming consciousness (*swapna*)
- * 3. Dreamless sleep (*Sushupta*)
- * 4. Conscious dreamless sleep (*turiya*)

Nidra and Prakriti: According to the individual's *prakriti* and *vayo-avastha* the sleep requirement varies. The sleep according to *prakriti* may be divided into two types.

- a. The sleep according to *Deha prakriti*.
- b. The sleep according to *Manasa prakriti*.

Sleep is produced by *tamoguna* and *slesma*, hence the quality of sleep varies according to the *prakriti* of the person. So an individual of *kapha prakriti* gets more sleep which is sound also. Similarly, the sleep also depends on age; in *balyavasta* *kapha* is predominant so sleep is comparatively more in this age than the *yuvavastha*. In *vrudhavastha* *vata* is predominant so the old aged gets very less sleep. Apart from *deha prakriti* some naturally gets less sleep.

Sleep according to Manasa prakriti

Mind is always flickering and it is governed by the *pranavayu*. The *Tamas* and *Rajas* principally maintain mood of a person. Hence the person of the *tamasika* type can sleep at any hour of the day. Those with *rajasika* type of person sleep either daytime or night time and their sleep is light and disturbed.

Nidra and Kala

Manu, the great lawmaker has described the division of time, and then has remarked that the thirty *muhurtha* period (24 hrs) is divided by sun into day and night, he described that day for activities and the night for rest.

Naturally, the night is described as a proper sleeping time. The person should not awake at night and should not sleep in day time because both cause *dosha prakopa*.

Shayya and Nidra

Sleeping on a cot is *tridosha shamaka* and is a promoter of good health. Sleeping on a bed on the ground neutralizes *vata* and *kapha*, sleeping on the ground results in obesity, increases virility, increases *vata* and dryness in the body and neutralizes *rakta pitta*. Sleeping on a plank of wood increases *vata*. Sleeping on a comfortable bed in general increases happiness, sexual desire and virility and helps in getting rid of excess of *vata* and exhaustion.

Sleeping Posture

After taking the dinner when a person goes to sleep first he should lie down in recumbent posture taking 8 times breath. He should change the posture to right lateral till taking 16 times breath and thereafter to left lateral till taking 32 times breath and then he can sleep at any posture according to his wish (Y.R. 192).

But it is always advised to sleep in the left lateral position because *agni* lies in the left side of the body above the *nabhi*, which is responsible for the proper digestion (Y.R. 193).

Relationship between Nidra and Dosha dhatu malas

As *nidra* is said to be *kapha* dominant process it also maintains the equilibrium between three *doshas*. In classics, it is mentioned that in *kaphaja vikaras nidra* and *tandra* are commonly seen and in *vataja vikaras nidranasa* (Loss of sleep) occurs and in *pittaja vikaras alpanidra* (Less sleep) manifest. By means of proper sleep the *dhatu samya*, nourishment of the body, increase of strength and the stability of *Ayu* are achieved.

By proper sleep the digestive power is properly maintained and the *agni* functions remains in normal condition. Evacuation of the bowel and emptying of urinary bladder take place properly if a person sleeps well.

Bad habits like *ratri-jagarana* (waking up during night) and *diva-swapana* (sleeping in the day) have been stated to provoke all the three *doshas*.

Karmukata of Nidra at different Dhatu Level

- * *Rasa Pusti* and *varnaprada*
- * *Rakta Varna*, *agni deepiti*
- * *Manisa Pusti* and *Bala*
- * *Meda* Attractiveness
- * *Asthi Bala*

* *Majja Vrana, Utsha*

* *Sukra Utsaha Ojus Jivnana Manas Sukha , Gnana*

Conclusion

Ancient description of *Ayurveda* and *Yoga* have given importance to sleep and described different patterns of sleep with their significance in the maintenance of positive health. It has been observed that all the living beings enjoy sleep to keep their body and mind energetic.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Sleep plays a vital role in good health and well-being throughout your life. Getting enough quality sleep at the right times can help protect your mental health, physical health, quality of life, and safety. The way you feel while you're awake depends in part on what happens while you're sleeping. During sleep, your body is working to support healthy brain function and maintain your physical health. In children and teens, sleep also helps support growth and development. It can harm you over time. For example, ongoing sleep deficiency can raise your risk for some chronic health problems. It also can affect how well you think, react, work, learn, and get along with others.

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