



UNDERSTANDING *NIDRA* THROUGH CLASSICAL LENSES: A REVIEW OF AYURVEDIC TEXTS

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Received on 05/02/2025

Accepted on 22/02/2025

Reviewed on 1/05/2025

Published on 15/05/2025

Abstract

Nidra is considered as one of the three pillars of life. It is called as *Bhootadhatri* by Ayurvedic texts as it is considered as an important part in our's lifestyle. Sleep is an essential aspect when it comes to growth and development of living beings; as many of the vital physiological processes occur during sleep. Quality sleep is an indicator of good health as it relives stress and refreshes the body. Adequate hours of sleeping are required for all the levels of wellbeing such as mental, physical and emotional. Ayurveda being a science of life, explains daily routine and regimens to be followed by individuals to stay healthy. *Nidra* being a day-to-day phenomenon, Ayurvedic texts have detailed information about its definition, types, and health benefits.

Key words: *Nidra*, *Upastambha*, Sleep, *Ayurveda*.

Introduction:

The word *Nidra* is obtained by adding prefix to the dhatu नी. नी dhatu means to sleep. Hence the term *Nidra* means back to sleep, into sleep, down to sleep¹.

The three supports of life are intake of food, sleep and observance of brahmacharya. These supports are designated as ‘*Upastambhas*’ which literally mean sub-posts. A house is mainly supported by posts but there are certain sub-posts which add to the supporting strength of such posts. The regimens are intake of food, sleep and brahmacharya. So, they are known as *Upastambhas*, i.e. secondary supports of life². Ayurveda has given a lot of importance to *Nidra* in our daily life for the maintenance of health. Next to Ahara, the *Nidra* is the second most important for life. According to Acharya Sushruta sleep is the enjoyment of pleasure by body and sense organs. As *Nidra* being chief

nourisher of the body, it plays an important role in promotion of health and prevention of diseases³. The people with the presence of Satva Guna had less sleep when compared to the ones with Tama Guna.

Material and Methodology

The literature review was compiled from available Ayurvedic texts such as *Samhitas* (*Charaka Samhita, Susruta Samhita, Astanga Hridaya, Astanga Sangraha*). The search for articles was also conducted on online databases including PubMed and Google Scholar.

Definition:

According to Charak Samhita sleep is nothing but a combined stage of tired mind and body. It means when the mind withdraws its attention from its work and sense organs get tired due to heavy work load then this combined stage leads to sleep⁴.

Types of *Nidra* mentioned in *Brihatrayi*

<i>Charak Samhita</i>	<i>Sushrut Samhita</i>	<i>Ashtang samgraha</i>
<i>Tamobhava</i>	<i>Tamsi</i>	<i>Tamobhava</i>
<i>Shleshmasambhava</i>	<i>Vaikariki</i>	<i>Kaphaprabhava</i>
<i>Manasharira shrama sambhava</i>	<i>Vaikariki</i>	<i>Chittakhedaprabhavaja</i> <i>Dehakedaprabhavaja</i>
<i>Agantuki</i>	<i>Vaikariki</i>	<i>Agantuki</i>
<i>Vyadhyanyartini</i>	<i>Vaikariki</i>	<i>Aamayakhedaprabhavaja</i>
<i>Ratriswabhavaprabhava</i>	<i>Vaishnvi</i>	<i>Kalavabhavaja</i>

Types of *Nidra*:

Acharya Charaka has mentioned 6 types of *Nidra*⁵

1) *Tamobhava* -

It is caused by excess of Tama Guna of Mana.

2) *Shleshma Samudbhava*

Nidra caused due to excess of *Kapha Dosh*. *Chakrapani*⁶ says, this type of *Nidra* appears in day time along with Tama Guna.

3) *Mana-Sharir Shrama Sambhava*

It appears when body and mind get tired because of heavy work load. The exertion brings about inactivity of the mind resulting in the dissociation of the mind and the sense organs from them objectives which is responsible for *Nidra*.

4) *Agantuki*

It is caused due to *Bhayagand, Pralap* and is incurable. *Chakrapani* opines that this type of *Nidra* is known as ‘*Rishtabhuta*’ i.e. *Nidra* indicating death signs.

5) *Vyadhyanuvartini*

This type of *Nidra* is caused due to other diseases. As *Tama* and *Kapha* are associated with each other, *Vyadhis* in which there is influence of *Kapha* Dosha cause this type of *Nidra*.

6. *Ratri Swabhavprabhava-*

This is considered as normal. *Nidra* which appears at the time of night is called *Ratri Swabhavprabhava Nidra*. By nature, night serves as a causative factor for *Nidra*. *Nidra* during day time is caused by *Tamas* and is considered abnormal. *Ratri Swabhavprabhava Nidra* is also called as 'Bhoothatri' as it helps in maintaining the life of the human being. It keeps the human being healthy and happy. The word 'Dhatri' indicates to hold or to take care and 'Bhoota' means all living beings. Hence collectively the word *Bhutadhatri* indicates human being.

Acharya Sushrut has mentioned 3 types of *Nidra*⁷.

1) *Vaishnavi*

This type of *Nidra* is said to be normal which helps in maintaining the life of beings. It can be correlated to *Ratri Swabhavprabhava Nidra* explained by Charak.

2) *Vaikariki* –

The person with the deprived condition of the *Kapha* Dosha and aggravated condition of *Vata* Dosha or suffering from any type of troubles get very little or no *Nidra*. This type is called *Vaikariki Nidra*.

3) *Tamasi*

The kind of *Nidra* which gets in when the sensation carrying channels (*Srotasa*) of the body are choked by *Kapha* Dosha, which bounds the quantity of *Tama* Guna is known as *Tamasi Nidra*.

This type of *Nidra* produces unconsciousness at the time of death.

Vridha Vagbhatacharya has mentioned 7 types of *Nidra*⁸⁹.

1. *Kalawabhavaja Nidra* –

it is considered as *Swabhavaja* i.e. normal type of *Nidra*.

2. *Aamayakheda Prabhava* –

The *Nidra* caused due to diseases in *Sharira* is called as *Aamaya Kheda Nidra*. The word *Ama* is used for the factor which generates in the *Sharira* due to the undigested food. According to *Ayurveda* the *Ama* is responsible for creating the various diseases.

3. *Chittakhedaprabhava Nidra* –

The *Nidra* which caused by disturbances or fatigue of the mind, called as *Chitta Kheda Prabhava Nidra*.

4. *Dehakhedaprabhava Nidra* –

The *Nidra* which appears due to tiredness of the body called as *Deha Kheda Prabhava Nidra*.

5. *Kaphaprabhava Nidra* –

Nidra which appears due to aggravated *Kapha* Dosha called as *Kapha Prabhava Nidra*. *Kapha* Dosha closely resembles with the *Tama* Guna of the mind and combinedly they cause the *Nidra* in the night. But when there is increase in the *Kapha* Dosha of the body, then the *Nidra* also appears at daytime or may persist for longer time than the normal. In such condition the *Nidra* is called as *Kapha Prabhava Nidra*.

6. *Agantuki Nidra* –

Agantuki Nidra is caused by the external factors like accidents, injuries etc. Hence this type of *Nidra* is considered as abnormal.

7. *Tamobhava Nidra* –

This type of *Nidra* appears due to the aggravated stage of *Tama* Guna of mind. It results into the sinful behavior. Therefore, Acharya Sushruta and Acharya Charaka mentioned it as *Papamula* (root of the bad works).

IMPORTANCE

Happiness, misery, nourishment, emaciation, strength, weakness, virility, sterility, knowledge, ignorance, life and death – all these occur depending on the proper or improper sleep. Like the night of destructions, untimely and excessive sleep and prolonged vigil take away both

happiness and longevity¹⁰. Sleep, if properly enjoyed brings about happiness and longevity in human beings. During the summer in the day time, one should sleep in an air-cooled apartment. In the night, after having besmeared the body with sandal paste, one should sleep on the open airy roof of the house which is cooled by the rays of the moon¹¹. Sleep used in the management of emaciation¹².

Indications of day sleep

Sleeping during the day time in all seasons is prescribed for those who are exhausted by singing, study, alcoholic drinks, sexual acts, elimination therapy, carrying heavy weight, walking long distance; those suffering from phthisis, wasting, thirst, diarrhea, colic pain, dyspnea, hiccup, insanity, those who are too old, too young, weak and emaciated; those injured by fall and assault, those exhausted by journey by a vehicle, vigil, anger, grief and fear and those who are accustomed to day sleep. By this the equilibrium of Dhatus and strength are maintained and the Kapha nourishes the organs and ensures longevity. In summer season nights become shorter and Vata gets aggravated in the body due to Adana Kala. Therefore, during this season, day time sleep is prescribed for all¹³.

Contra-indications of day sleep¹⁴

Sleeping during the day time in the seasons other than summer is not advisable as it causes vitiation of Kapha and Pitta. Persons with excessive fat, those who are addicted to taking unctuous (flattering, oily, groveling, creepy) substance, those with Slaismika constitution, those suffering from diseases due to the vitiation of Kapha and those suffering from Dusivisa (artificial poisoning) should never sleep during day time. If one violates the prescription regarding day sleep, he should subject himself to Halimaka (serious type of jaundice), headache, timidness, heaviness of the body, malaise, loss of digestive power, Hṛdayopralepa (a feeling as if phlegm adhered to the heart), oedema, anorexia, nausea, rhinitis, hemicrania, urticaria, eruption, abscess, pruritis,

drowsiness, coughing, diseases of the throat, impairment of the memory and intelligence, obstruction of the circulating channels of the body, fever, weakness of sensory and motor organs and enhancement of the toxic effects of artificial poisons. So, one should keep in view, merits and demerits of sleep-in various seasons and situations, in order that it may bring happiness to him.

Effect of night awakening

Vigil during night causes dryness in the body; sleep during day time causes unctuousness and dozing in sitting posture does neither cause dryness nor unctuousness¹⁵. Vigil during night and day-sleep both are responsible for causing *Kasa Vyadhi*¹⁶.

Time suitable to wake¹⁷:

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* i.e. one should wake up in the *Brahmamuhurta* i.e. 48minutes before the Sunrise following the proper digestion of food taken at night.

Suitable place to Sleep:

In *Yogaratanakara*, effect of different kinds of beds used for sleeping on health has been described

in details as follows –

1. Sleeping on a cot is *Tridosha nashaka* and is conducive to good health.
2. Sleeping on the bed on ground neutralizes Vata and Kapha.
3. Sleeping on the ground results in obesity, increases virility, increases Vata and dryness in the body and neutralizes Rakta-pitta.
4. Sleeping on a plank of wood increases Vata.
5. Sleeping on a comfortable bed in general increases happiness, sleep, sexual desire and virility and helps in getting rid of excess of Vata and exhaustion (*Brahmashankar Shashtri,1999*).

View of Modern science regarding sleep:

Definition of Sleep:

1. The natural, easily reversible periodic state of many living things that is marked by the absence of wakefulness and by the loss of consciousness of one's surroundings, is accompanied by a typical body posture (such as lying down with the eyes closed), the occurrence of dreaming, and changes in brain activity and physiological functioning, is made up of cycles of non-REM sleep and REM sleep, and is usually considered essential to the restoration and recovery of vital bodily and mental functions.

2. A condition of body and mind which typically recurs for several hours every night, in which the nervous system is inactive, the eyes closed, the postural muscles relaxed, and consciousness practically suspended.

Types or Phases of Sleep

1. REM (Rapid Eye Movement) REM is characterized by the presence of rapid eye movements during sleep. It is seen in 4th stage of sleep cycle. This type of sleep is less restful than slow-wave sleep and is associated with dreaming and bodily muscle movements. During REM sleep a person's threshold to be aroused by external stimuli is higher than during slow wave sleep. Heart rate and breathing become irregular during REM sleep, a feature of the dream state.

2. NREM (Non-Rapid Eye Movement) Non-REM sleep is characterized by deep sleep. During non-rem sleeps the blood pressure, breathing and metabolic rate are all depressed significantly.

Bodily movements do not occur during non-REM sleep. Non-REM sleep is also referred to as slow wave sleep as during this period the brain waves are very strong and of a very low frequency (i.e. slow). While non-REM sleep is sometimes referred to as dreamless sleep, dreams and even nightmares can occur during non-REM sleep. These are not associated with movement and are not remembered as they are not consolidated to memory during this sleep phase, mainly seen in 1st and 3rd stage of sleep. There is switching between activation and inhibition of these neurons result in a characteristic cycling of NREM and REM phase during the Sleep period.

Quality and Quantity of sleep

Counting hours is important, but so is measuring soundness in sleep. The National Sleep Foundation has recently released the key indicators of good quality sleep Health report which includes

1. Sleeping more time while in bed (at least 85% of total sleep)
2. Falling asleep in 30 mins or less.
3. Waking up no more than once per night

Age and condition	Sleep Needs
New born (0–3 months)	14 to 17 hours
Infants (4–11 months)	12 to 15 hours
Toddlers (1–2 years)	11 to 14 hours
Preschoolers (3–4 years)	10 to 13 hours
School-age children (5–12 years)	9 to 11 hours
Teenagers (13–17 years)	8 to 10 hours
Adults (18–64 years)	7 to 9 hours
Older Adults (65 years and over)	7 to 8 hours

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, quality of life and safety. To

combat the lifestyle disorders and lead a healthy life, ideal *Nidra* plays important role

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Source of support: Nil

Conflict of interest: None Declared