



Exploring the Dynamics of Sleep(Nidra) in Ayurveda: A Comprehensive Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda, the ancient Indian system of medicine, recognizes sleep (*Nidra*) as one of the three sub-pillars of life, essential for maintaining health and well-being. This comprehensive review explores the dynamics of sleep in *Ayurveda*, focusing on its definition, stages, physiological effects, and sleep hygiene practices. According to *Ayurvedic* literature, sleep occurs when the mind (*Manas*) and sense organs (*Indriyas*) withdraw from their objects due to exhaustion. The two stages of sleep, *Swapana* (with dreams) and *Susupti* (deep sleep without dreams), are distinguished based on the inactiveness of the mind and sense organs. *Ayurveda* emphasizes the importance of sleep in regulating various physiological systems, including emotional well-being (*Sukha-Dukha*), growth and development (*Pushti-Karshya*), physical and mental strength (*Bala-Abala*), reproductive health (*Vrishta-Klibata*), knowledge and intellect (*Gyana-Agyana*), and longevity (*Jivitam-Ajivitam*). Additionally, sleep is believed to influence skin complexion (*Varna*). *Ayurveda* recommends several sleep hygiene practices to promote healthy and high-quality sleep, such as oil application on the head, massage, bathing, foot massage, consuming specific foods and beverages, engaging in pleasurable activities, and creating a comfortable sleep environment. The assessment of sleep quality and quantity in *Ayurveda* is primarily based on an individual's *Prakriti* (constitution), with *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha Prakriti* associated with light, moderate, and deep sleep, respectively. This review highlights the significance of sleep in *Ayurvedic* medicine and the holistic approach to promoting healthy sleep habits for overall well-being.

KEYWORDS: *Nidra*, *Ayurveda*, Sleep, *Swapana*, *Susupti*.

INTRODUCTION: *Ayurvedic* literatures described *Nidra* as one among the three sub-pillars of life; which is needed for proper maintenance of health and occurs when the *Mana* (mind) & *Indriya's* (sense organs) get exhausted and withdraw themselves from the object⁽¹⁾. It is a physiological process that happens naturally to all living things, mainly at night. It is necessary to give the body and mind a break after the day's hard work.

Sleep is known as the state of unconsciousness from which a person might awaken in response to external or sensory stimulation. So, sleep is a temporary state of unconsciousness or more accurately withdrawal of

conscious from the physical world⁽²⁾. The same definition was defined from ancient acharya that *Nidra* occurs when mind, the consciousness withdraws from *Indriya* and *Indriya* from physical world⁽³⁾.

STAGES OF *NIDRA* ⁽⁴⁻⁷⁾

The temporary lack of communication between the *Manas* with *Gnanendriya* (sensory functions) and *Karmendriya* (motor functions) is known as *Nidra*. The term *Nidra* considers two stages- *Swapana* (with dreams) and *Susupti* (deep sleep without dreams). Inactiveness of *Manas* and *Indriya* (*Gnanendriya* and *Karmendriya*) leads to deep sleep and inactiveness of *Indriya* only leads to dreams. Different kinds of dreams are experienced by an individual when their mind remains active despite their sensory and motor organs ceasing to function in response to their respective objects.

PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECT OF *NIDRA* ⁽⁸⁻¹⁴⁾

Acharya explained that various physiological system depends upon *Nidra* for normal functioning and maintenance of homeostasis. The systems dependable on *Nidra* are as follow:

- **Sukha- Dukha:** *Sukha* and *Dukha* both are feeling or emotions felt by *Atma* through *Manas*. *Sukha* felt during *Arogya* and *Dukha* felt during *Vyadhi*. *Samyaka Nidra* (in terms of quality and quantity) leads to happiness and cheerfulness. On the opposite side, *Asamyaka Nidra* (Less sleep/ Excessive sleep/ Day sleep /night awakening) leads to sorrow. So, sleep having an effect on emotional system and on mental faculties.
- **Pushti- Karshya:** *Pushti* and *Karshya* both represent the growth and development of human body. *Pushti* means healthy body weight and *Karshya* means lean or emaciation. *Acharya Charaka* mentioned that sleep like food is the reason behind *Sthaulaya* (Obesity) and *Karshya* (emaciation). *Acharya Bhavamishra* mentioned the term *Vahnidipti* which means increase digestive power. So, sleep having an effect on metabolism and digestion at the level of cell, tissue and organ system level.
- **Bala- Abala:** *Bala* is representative of *Kapha* in human body. *Bala* may be broadly divided into two types- *Sharirika* and *Manasika*. *Sharirika Bala* represent the strength of all the physiological system and *Manasika Bala* is functional capabilities of mind. *Abala* means when the person not having adequate physical and mental strength. *Acharya* mentioned that person having normal sleep contains adequate *Bala*. Physical strength includes the strength of all the physiological systems.
- **Vrishta- Klibata:** *Vrishta* is healthy reproductive health and *Klibata* represent the unhealthy state of reproductive system. *Acharya* mentioned that person having normal sleep contains healthy reproductive life or capable to perform sexual activity. So, sleep influences the reproductive system.
- **Gyana- Agyana:** *Gyana* is Knowledge and *Agyana* is false knowledge. *Samyaka Nidra* helps to promote the knowledge and *Asamyaka Nidra* leads to obstruction of knowledge. So, sleep promotes higher intellectual faculties like learning, memory, special sense and motor functions.
- **Jivitam- Ajivitam:** Sleep having the restorative and rejuvenating functions sustain the life. *Acharya* mentioned that person having moderate or normal sleep lives 100 years. Through its influence on every physiological system, Sleep play an important part in maintenance of life. So, life of every cell, tissue, organ and organ system depends upon sleep.

➤ **Varna:** Varna is skin complexion. *Acharya Sushruta* and *Charaka* mentioned that person having normal sleep having good skin complexion. So, Sleep influences the physiology of skin and its appendages.

SLEEP HYGIENE IN AYURVEDA ⁽¹⁵⁻²⁸⁾

The word "sleep hygiene" refers to the positive behaviors, healthy habits, and controlled environmental factors that promote peaceful sleep. Sleep hygiene has an influence on both the quantity and quality of sleep. Good sleep habits are referred to as sleep hygiene. Because getting adequate sleep is critical for sustaining both physical and mental well-being, as well as a high level of life, people must practice good sleep hygiene. Maintaining proper sleep hygiene is critical for overcoming sleep issues and achieving high-quality sleep. Ayurveda described several practices for healthy and high-quality sleep.

The practices or behaviours described in classics are as below:

- *Acharya Charaka* specially mentioned that Application of oil on head leads to sleep. So, one should apply oil on head before go to bed.
- *Acharyas* also mentioned *Abhyanga* (massage) as an inducer of sleep.
- *Acharya* specially mentioned that *Snana* (bathing) induces sleep. So, one should bath before go to bed.
- *Acharya* also mentioned that *Padaabhyanga* (massaging the foot) induces sleep.
- Massage the foot with curd water.
- Take soup of domestic marshy and aquatic animals or meat soup.
- Take Wheat and rice flour processed with sugarcane along with milk.
- Take shali rice with curd for good sleep.
- Take milk before going to bed.
- Take sweet and unctuous food articles.
- Take Masha (Black gram) at night.
- Buffalo milk is indicated as *Swapanajanana* or inducer of sleep. So, its intake before going to bed is beneficial for healthy sleep.
- Take buffalo curd and inspissated milk.
- Take honey before going to bed.
- Take *Draksha*, sugar and sugarcane products at night.
- Take ghee with milk boiled with substances having quality of rejuvenation.
- Take alcohol in adequate amount.
- Do activities which give pleasure to mind.
- Take food which give pleasure to mind.
- Listen music or sound which gives pleasure
- Apply scent or perfumes which gives pleasure.
- Rubbing or gently pressing the body with hands (*Samvahana*).
- Application of soothing lepa and oil to head, eyes, and face.

- Enema before going to bed.
- Presence of mental satisfaction.
- Avoidance of fear, stress, greediness.
- Presence of good breeze.
- Presence of comfortable and soft bed. *Acharya Sushruta* mentioned that term *Sukhashaya Asana* for comfortable bed and seat.
- Presence of proper time.
- Presence of comfortable location.

ANALYSIS OF NIDRA

There is not any assessment parameter in ayurveda for assessment of qualitative and quantitative parameter of *Nidra*. Mostly, *Nidra* assessment has been done during assessment of *Prakriti* in ayurveda. Based on *Prakriti*, *Nidra* quality and quantity was categorised. The validated and standardised *Prakriti* assessment questionnaire differentiates the *Nidra* as below:

- *Vata Prakriti*: Light sleep, less than 6 hr. of sleep
- *Pitta Prakriti*: Normal, moderate sleep, 6 to 8 hr. of sleep
- *Sleshma Prakriti*: Deep, more than 8 hr. of sleep.

CONCLUSION:

Nidra is the outcome of a calm mental state and is one of the most important characteristics of health that are associated with happiness and well-being. Sleep is crucial for physiological functioning because it restores, rejuvenates, and calms the body. It is a vital event for the care and preservation of both the physical and mental capacities in all living beings.

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