



# Nidra- An Ayurvedic Perspective

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## Abstract:

Ahara, Nidra and bramhcharya are the three main support of human system. They have a prime role in maintaining the health, also called as Trayaupastambha in Ayurveda. Among these, Nidra is the prime factor for happiness, growth, strength, virility, knowledge and our life depends on nidra.

Sound sleep nourishes the body that's why nidra is called as Bhutadhatri.

It is the sign of good health; it reduces stress and it help in maintaining the health so it is called as Vaishnavi Maya.

Nidra is very essential and necessary for healthy life. Physical and mental health both depends on Nidra. In Nidra our body tries to repair and heal itself. Mental functions also depends on nidra.

**Keywords:** *Nidra, Sleep, Trayopasthamba*

## 1. Introduction

Charaka Acharya described that mind in an exhaustive or inactive state leads to sense organs not able to perceive their vishaya and thereby no signal to feed the mind, In this state a person gets Nidra (sleep).

Nidra plays a vital role in maintaining our physical and mental health. In ayurveda classics nidra is considered as one of the pillars of our body, which gives great strength to the body. There is wide literature on sleep in ayurveda, which forms an important part of traya-upastambha as well as in context of various disorders.

Nidra has been described by Acharya Charaka in chapter of ashtaninditiya purusha in sutrasthana and in 80 nanatmajavatavikara. He describes nidra as a vital component of life and that our pleasure, strength, virility, wisdom depends upon good sleep.

Ashtanga Sangraha describes nidra and nidravikara in viruddhaanna-vigyaniya adhyaya, Ashtanga hridaya.

Acharya Sushruta has described it in sharir sthana in the chapter garbha 3 yakarana shariram, which explains its role in nourishing the body. [1]

Night time is described as the best time for nidra. Day sleep is best avoided as it produces kapha disorders, obesity etc. the only exceptions to day sleep are in children, elderly and in summer season. People who do night shifts can sleep during the day for half the duration of their night sleep.

Nidra varies from person to person, those who have vata prakriti are inclined to have less sleep and those with kapha prakriti are inclined towards excess sleep.

Even more important than the timing of sleep is the soundness of sleep. Sound sleep is important for health and the balance of sound sleep with adequate duration gives pleasure, happiness, nourishment, strength and life. On the contrary, inadequate sleep (alpanidra) produces disease, weakness, emaciation of body, impotence and also in rare instances premature death. Hence ayurveda gives utmost importance to nidra in maintaining our physical and mental health and longevity. Nidra is considered as one of the thirteen types Vegas (urges), suppression of which manifest in diseases.

Nidra forms a vital concept in the rules and regulations of dincharya, ratricharya and rutucharya which is advised for good health. A person following dincharya rutucharya greatly improves his/her nidra. Yogas and exercises are another way to improve the quality of nidra in quality hence improving overall health and longevity. [2]

## 2. Synonyms

<i>Shayanam</i>
<i>Svapah</i>
<i>Svapnah</i>
<i>Samvesh</i>
<i>Sambhashah</i>
<i>Suptih</i>
<i>Svapanam</i>
<i>Bhutadhatr</i>
<i>Vaishnavi-Maya</i>

## 3. Definition

According to Acharya Charaka, the perception by sense organs gradually decreases as the mind gets fatigued or becomes lethargic and reaches a point where there remains nothing to feed the mind, in this state the individual gets sleep.

Acharya Sushruta says that when Tamas covers the seat of Chethana (Activity) i.e the hridaya (heart), then the individual enters the phase of sleep.

Acharya Vagbhata, in manovaha srota, attributes sleep to accumulation of kapha dosha. On accumulation of kapha dosha, he contends, the individual falls asleep as the mind becomes bereft of sense organs due to fatigue.

Acharya Chakrapanidatta and Gangadhara said that the exhaustion or inactivity of the mind (along with aatma) and that of sensory and motor organs leads to the individual getting sleep. [3]

## 4. Types

Different Acharyas have classified nidra based on different criterias. However, two broad types can be defined as follows:

1. Swabhavika (Natural) – Occurs regularly at night
2. Aswabhavika (Abnormal) – Caused due to different diseases.

Acharya Charaka has described 6 types of Nidra:

- Tamobhava – tamo guna is the cause for this type of nidra.
- Shleshma samudbhava – kapha guna is the cause for this type of nidra.

- Mana shareera shrama bhava – mental and physical exertion is the reason for this type of nidra.
- Agantuki – is an indication of bad prognosis and can even progress to immediate death
- Vyadhianuvastini – caused as complication of disease
- Ratri swabhava prabhava nidra – it is described as a natural phenomenon occurring during night.

Ratri swabhava prabhava nidra is also described as bhootha dhatri because just like dhatri, nidra also nourishes every living being.[4]

Seven types of Nidra :

- Kalaswabhava: During night as a natural phenomenon
- Amaya: Caused by disease
- Chitta Kheda: Caused by mental exertion
- Deha Kheda: Caused by physical exertion
- Kaphaja: Due to Kapha
- Agantuja: Due to injury
- Tamobhava: Due to tamo guna [5]

## 5. Benefits

A good, quality sleep provides

- Sukha (wellness)
- Pushti (nourishment)
- Bala (strength)
- Vrishata (potency)
- Jnana (knowledge)
- Jiva (life or longevity) [6]

Sleep is a vital part for the normal functioning of the human body in ayurveda. Its importance is exemplified by the fact that it is considered as a subpillars or upastambhas in ayurveda, the other two being brahamacharya and aahara. Good quality and quantity sleep provides one with wellness, strength, knowledge, potency, nourishment and life or longevity. On the other hand, inadequate sleep leads to weakness, illness, ignorance, impotency, emaciation and even death.

Good sleep constitutes not just a good duration of sleep, but also good quality of sleep at a suitable time. Night time is considered the best time for good sleep and day sleep is contraindicated in the samhitas except in the summer or grishmaritu. Persons with shlaishmika constitution, excessive fat or substance abuse users should never sleep in the daytime.[7]

## 6. Physiology of Sleep

Four theories for explaining mechanism of sleep

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

### Tamoguna Theory

In the darshanik theory of sleep, tamas is responsible for ignorance, inertia, inattention and sleep. As the higher centers get overpowered by tamas at night and that results in sleep. Also, if tamas covers the seat of consciousness ie Hridaya, then the person goes to sleep.

### Kapha Dosha Theory

Whenever tamas accumulation occurs in chetna, kapha obstructs the sensory channels in the body as a result of which the person falls asleep.

### Depression Theory

When the mind and the sense organs are tired to an extent that they cannot be aroused by activity, then the person goes to sleep. This can occur as a result of natural processes as well as pathological processes.

### Svabhava Theory

Sushruta said that natural instincts are the most potent cause of sleep to which the night serves as the causative factor.[8]

## 7. Nidra and its relationship with Dosha dhatu malas

There is a close link between nidra and equilibrium between the three doshas. In the classics, kaphaja vikaras are correlated to nidra and tandra, nidranasa or loss of sleep is observed in vataja vikaras whereas alpanidra or less sleep is implicated in pittaja vikaras. The functions of agni or digestive process is also intricately linked to proper nidra, and evacuation of bowel and bladder are normal and timely in a person that sleeps well, which in turn helps in maintain a long ayu. On the other hand bad habits like diva-swapana or daytime sleep and ratri jagarana or waking up at night provoke and vitiate all three doshas resulting in various ailments.[9]

## 8. Duration

It is common knowledge in both ayurveda and modern science that good duration of sleep is important for a healthy body as well as mind. Although the best duration for sleep is different by different sources, most accepted consensus is that, 7-8 hours of sleep is considered adequate for adults.[10]

## 9. Conclusion

For maintaining the health and to cure the diseases we have to take proper sleep-in proper time. Quantity and quality of sleep both are important. Nidra is the state where our body and mind both are at rest condition. Good health, long life, wellness, strength, virility, wisdom depends on nidra. Apla nidra or nidranasha manifests so many diseases. Nidra is considered as one among troyoupastambha, which gives support to the body like pillars. Sound sleep nourishes the body it doses brumhana of the body. It rejuvenates the body, it is Vrushya, it gives bala, pusti and tusti [bala means strength, pusti means nourishment of the body and tusti means satisfaction of the mind.] For maintaining the health and to cure the diseases we have to take proper sleep at proper time. Quantity and quality of sleep both are important.

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