

INTEGRATIVE AYURVEDIC APPROACHES TO *NIDRA* IN THE ASPECT OF HARMONIZING MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH

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ABSTRACT

Aahaara (Diet), *Nidra* (Sleep) and *Brahmacharya* (Celibacy) are considered as *Trayopastambha*, means three supportive pillars of life. *Ayurveda* recognized *Nidra* (sleep) as one of the most important dimensions of health and is an outcome of relax mental state. Happiness and unhappiness, proper nourishment or emaciation, strength and debility, sexual powers and impotence, knowledge and ignorance, life and its absence (death) all dependents on sleep. Sound sleep at night is a natural and nourishing phenomenon, so it is also called *Bhutadhaatri* (nourishes all living beings). On the other hand, sleeping at inappropriate times, sleeping more than required or not sleeping even a little, destroys the happiness and longevity of life. This type of irregular sleep is like *Kaalaraatri* (night of destruction). The disturbance in *Nidra* (sleep) might be related to the life style, environmental influence, mental tension, changed food habits and day to day stress. It is also enumerated as the natural urge which should not

be suppressed and if suppressed would lead to various diseases. However the pattern of sleep and duration of sleep are individualized depending up on various factors. It is hence a very important concept of life, which if taken and practiced accordingly it will lead to a healthy state of body, mind and spirit.

KEYWORDS: *Ayurveda*, *Nidra*, *Trayopastambha*, *Bhutadhaatri*, Health.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda believes in *Tridosha*^[1] theory i.e., *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*, which is responsible for

maintenance of body.^[2] Together these three are called *Tristhoona* (three pillars) which in equilibrium state helps in nourishment and proper functioning of body.^[3] Then comes the concept of *Traya-Upastambha* (supporting pillars), that keeps the body in normalcy state by helping *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* maintaining their natural physiological action. *Traya Upastambha* (supporting pillars) is the amalgamation of three factors; these are *Aahaara* (diet), *Swapna* (sleep) and *Brahmacharya* (Celibacy).^[4] *Swapna / Nidra* being one of the main components of *Traya Upastambha* (supporting pillars), assists in nourishment and vitalizing body, mind and spirit. It is the basic need of all living beings. *Kapha Dosha* and *Tamas* collectively cause *Nidra* (sleep). Factors like *Aahaara* (diet), *Prakriti* (nature), external stimuli also affect *Nidra* (sleep). An extensive description of *Nidra* (sleep) found in *Ayurveda* to acknowledge its role on health.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Review of Literature regarding *Nidra* (sleep) are collected, compiled and interpreted From *Brihatrayi* and their commentaries and various relevant articles related to *Nidra* and sleep.

Physiology

When the *Mana* including the *Indriyas* (sensory organs) is exhausted, tired and they dissociate themselves from their objects (*Vishaya*), at that very time *Nidra* (sleep) occurs.^[5] *Acharya Chakrapani* while commenting, simplified the verse. When *Mana* along with *Aatma* gets *Klaanta* (inactive), also the *Indriyas* (sensory organs) become inert and they do not receive any cognitive information from the outer world, then only *Nidra* (sleep) appears.

As per *Ashtanga Sangraha*, when an individual fell asleep the *Manovaha Strotas* become accumulated with *Shleshma* and the mind gets devoid of sense organs because of fatigue.^[6]

Acharya Sharangadhara mentions that aggravation of *Kapha Dosha* and *Tama Guna* leads to *Nidra* (sleep).^[7]

Hridaya is delineated as *Chetana Sthaanam* and when it is engulfed by *Tama Guna*, *Nidra* occurs. *Nidra* is caused by *Tama Guna* while *Jaagarana* (awakening) is due to *Satva Guna*.^[8] The concept of dominance of *Tama Guna* over others in *Nidra* was popularized among the *Acharyas* of ancient India, it also reflected in *Rigveda* where it was said that, the Gods, *Aapta Purusha* etc. are said to have no sleeping patterns due to lack of *Tama Guna*.

Classification

Acharya Charaka^[9] has similarly classified *Nidra* into 6 types i.e.,

- *Tamobhava* (Due to *Tamas*)
- *Shleshmasamudbhava* (Due to *Shleshma* or *Kapha Dosha*)
- *Mana-Sharirashramasambhava* (Due to tiredness of mind and body)
- *Aagantuki* (Due to external factors)
- *Vyaadhyanuvaritini* (Due to diseases)
- *Raatrisvabhaavaprabhava* (Due to the nature of night)

Acharya Vagbhata^[10] has classified *Nidra* into 7 types in *Ashtanga Sangraha*, i.e.,

- *Kaalasvabhaava* (Naturally occurring *Nidra*)
- *Aamaya* (Due to Diseases)
- *Chittakheda* (Due to Tiredness of the mind)
- *Dehakheda* (Due to Tiredness of the body)
- *Kaphaja* (Due to *Kapha Dosha*)
- *Aagantuja* (Due to External Factors)
- *Tamobhava* (Due to predominance of *Tamas*).

Acharya Sushruta,^[11] though doesn't directly provide a classification of *Nidra*, and divides *Nidra* based on the *Guna* more present in the mind of an individual i.e.

- In *Saatvika* People (*Nidra* happens at midnight)
- In *Raajasika* People (*Nidra* happens randomly without any cause for it)
- In *Taamasika* People (*Nidra* happens both in day and night).

Sushruta also considers death as a type of *Nidra* which is named as *Taamasi Nidra* which happens when *Shleshma* along with *Tamas* enters into *Sangyaavaha Strotas* i.e., the channel which carries consciousness.

Benefits of Sleep

Proper sleep brings *Sukha* (happiness), *Pushti* (nourishment), *Bala* (strength), *Vrishata* (Potency/fertility), *Gyaana* (knowledge) and *Jiva* (longevity) to a person. Improper sleep cause *Dukha* (misery), *Kaarshya* (emaciation), *Abala* (weakness), *Klibata* (sterility), *Agyaana* (ignorance) and *Marana* (death).^[12]

A person who desires long life should be indulge in *Kaala Nidra* (Sleep in proper time).^[13]

Conversely, sleep indulged in either out of time or over-much or not at all, swallows up life and happiness like another Night of Destruction.^[14]

The aspects of happiness, nourishment strength, virility, knowledge and long life are attained by sound and timely sleep whereas improper sleep leads to sorrow, emaciation, weakness, impotence, ignorance and even death.

Sleep is the time for rebuilding, construction. It is an anabolic event and is held to be as best as the divine elixir. If sleep is lost, *Vata* and *Pitta Dosha* are likely to be vitiated.^[15]

***Divaasvapna* (day time sleep)**

Divaasvapna or sleeping during the day is generally considered unhealthy. According to *Acharya Sushruta*, *Divaasvapna* does *Prakopa* of all the three *Doshas*.^[16] But as *Hemadri*^[17] pointed out that *Divaasvapna* does the *Prakopa* of only *Pitta* and *Kapha Doshas* while *Bhela* opines that *Divaasvapna* in a supine position only increases *Kapha* in the *Koshtha*. Everybody however, agree that generally, *Divaasvapna* is unhealthy.

However, there have been exceptions mentioned. According to *Sushruta Samhita*^[18], *Divaasvapna* can be done by those who stay awake at night, it is advisable to sleep during the day for half the time they stay awake at night. Also, *Divaasvapna* is mentioned to be permitted during *Greeshma Ritu* or Summer Season. Along with that, *Acharya Vagbhata*^[19] mentions *Divaasvapna* can be done in many diseased conditions like *Raajayakshma*. *Divaasvapna* can also be done by old aged people and children.

***Nidranaasha* (loss of sleep)**

Nidranaasha or loss of sleep is also considered unhealthy.^[20] It is caused by *Vata*, *Pitta*, worry, *Kshaya* and injury.^[21] *Nidranaasha* has been mentioned generally as a condition caused due to multiple factors in *Sushruta Samhita*, and the treatment for this condition is mentioned as *Abhyanga*, Keeping oil on head, *Udvartana* and general *Brimhana Chikitsa*.^[22]

***Atinidra* (excess of sleep)^[23]**

Sleeping excessively is considered a Pathological condition which happens because of increase in *Shleshma Dosha*. In Such a condition, treatments like *Dhumapaana*, *Virechana*, *Nasya*, and *Langhana* are advised. Intake of barley on a regular basis is said to relieve one of this condition.

Nidra as a *Vega*

In almost all *Samhitas*, *Nidra* is an urge which should not be controlled nor induced. Inducing or controlling this *Vega*^[24] or Urge is said to cause a lot of symptoms like heaviness of head, blackouts, heaviness of the body and body pains. The treatment for this is to take proper *Nidra* (sound sleep) and *Samvaahan* (massage) over the hand and foot.^[25]

DISCUSSION

Ayurveda regards *Nidra* (sleep) as one of the most essential factors responsible for a healthy and fulfilling life. Sound sleep at night is a natural and nourishing phenomenon. Good sleep is essential and advantageous to the quality of life. A number of vital physiological changes occur during sleep and help people stay healthy and function at their best. Quality sleep is an indicator of good health as it is stress relieving and normalizes bodily tissues. Sleep is one of the four basic, natural instincts, and is considered as the pioneer for health; the remaining three being the desire to eat, drink and have sexual contact. Concept of Sleep When the mind along with the soul gets exhausted, or becomes stationary, and the sensory and motor organs also become inactive, the individual sleeps. So, an utmost importance should be given to *Nidra* for the maintenance of healthy body, mind and soul.

CONCLUSION

Nidra promotes health when it is applied appropriately and when it is needed. If executed incorrectly, though, it can result in a number of health problems. Embracing sleep is essential for optimal mental and physical health, as it enhances cognitive function, emotional resilience, and bodily recovery. Prioritizing restful sleep fosters overall well-being and improves quality of life.

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