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NIDRA AND MANAS BHAVA: A CORRELATIVE REVIEW OF RAJAS AND TAMAS GUNA WITH MODERN SLEEP PHYSIOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

Background: Nidra (sleep) is an essential physiological process that contributes to physical restoration, cognitive functioning, emotional regulation, and overall well-being. Ayurveda recognises Nidra as one of the three Upastambha, along with Ahara and Brahmacharya. The Ayurvedic understanding of sleep incorporates the functioning of Manas and the influence of the three Gunas—Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas. **Aim:** To critically review the relationship between Nidra and Manas Bhava, with particular emphasis on Rajas and Tamas Guna, and to explore their conceptual correlation with contemporary sleep physiology. **Materials and Methods:** A narrative review was undertaken using classical Ayurvedic literature, including Charaka Samhita and Sushruta Samhita, along with published scientific literature concerning sleep regulation, psychological stress, cognitive arousal, and emotional functioning. Relevant concepts were examined to identify areas of conceptual convergence and differences between traditional Ayurvedic explanations and modern physiological knowledge. **Review:** Ayurvedic literature describes sleep in relation to the functional state of Manas, Indriyas, and the predominance of Tamas. Rajas, associated with activity, stimulation, and mental agitation, provides a conceptual framework for discussing persistent mental activity that may interfere with sleep. Modern research identifies psychological stress, repetitive negative thinking, and cognitive hyperarousal as factors

associated with sleep disturbances. Sleep itself also influences memory, attention, mood, and emotional regulation. These findings support an interdisciplinary examination of the relationship between mental states and sleep, although the Ayurvedic Gunas cannot be considered direct equivalents of modern neurophysiological mechanisms. **Conclusion:** Nidra and Manas Bhava represent interconnected dimensions of health in Ayurveda. The concepts of Rajas and Tamas offer a traditional framework for examining mental activity and sleep, while contemporary sleep science provides complementary explanations of sleep–wake regulation. Further empirical research using validated psychological and sleep-assessment tools is required to establish measurable associations between Ayurvedic constructs and modern clinical parameters.

KEYWORDS: Nidra, Manas Bhava, Rajas, Tamas, Sattva, Triguna, Sleep Physiology, Psychological Arousal, Kriya Sharira.

1. INTRODUCTION

Sleep is a fundamental biological process necessary for maintaining physiological stability, cognitive performance, and psychological well-being. Its significance extends beyond the temporary cessation of conscious interaction with the environment, as sleep participates in several processes associated with memory, attention, emotional functioning, and recovery.

Ayurveda presents a holistic understanding of health in which the equilibrium of Dosha, Dhatu, Mala, and Agni is considered alongside the appropriate functioning of Manas and Indriyas. Within this framework, Nidra occupies an important position in the preservation of health and the maintenance of daily physiological activities.

Acharya Charaka describes Ahara, Nidra, and Brahmacharya as the three Upastambhas that support life. Properly regulated sleep is associated with nourishment, strength, happiness, knowledge, and longevity. Disturbances in sleep may affect the physical and psychological functioning of an individual and consequently influence the maintenance of health.[1]

The Ayurvedic explanation of Nidra incorporates both physiological and mental dimensions. Charaka describes sleep in relation to the exhaustion or withdrawal of Manas and the sensory faculties from their respective objects. Sushruta discusses the association between Tamas and the manifestation of sleep.[1,2] These explanations demonstrate the importance of understanding sleep in relation to the functional state of the mind.

The concept of Manas Bhava provides an additional perspective for examining this relationship. Mental experiences such as Shoka (grief), Bhaya (fear), Krodha (anger), and Chinta (worry) may influence an individual's behaviour and physiological responses. Their relationship with sleep is particularly relevant because psychological arousal can interfere with the ability to initiate or maintain sleep.

Ayurvedic philosophy describes three Gunas of Manas: Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas. Sattva represents clarity and understanding, Rajas is associated with activity and stimulation, and Tamas is associated with inertia and obscuration. Their conceptual relationship with wakefulness, mental activity, and sleep provides an important area for investigation within Kriya Sharira.

Modern sleep research independently demonstrates that sleep and psychological functioning influence one another. Stress and persistent cognitive activity may interfere with sleep, while inadequate sleep may adversely affect emotional regulation and cognitive performance.[3,4]

Therefore, a critical review of Nidra and Manas Bhava may provide a useful interdisciplinary framework for examining the relationship between classical Ayurvedic concepts and contemporary understanding of sleep physiology.

2. AIM AND OBJECTIVES

2.1 Aim

To critically review the relationship between Nidra and Manas Bhava, particularly Rajas and Tamas Guna, from Ayurvedic and modern physiological perspectives.

2.2 Objectives

1. To describe the concept and physiological significance of Nidra according to classical Ayurvedic literature.
2. To explain the relevance of Manas Bhava and Triguna in understanding mental functioning.
3. To examine the conceptual relationship between Rajas, Tamas, and sleep.
4. To review modern evidence concerning psychological arousal, sleep regulation, and emotional functioning.
5. To identify research gaps for future interdisciplinary studies in Kriya Sharira.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present article follows a narrative review approach. Classical Ayurvedic sources, particularly Charaka Samhita and Sushruta Samhita, were considered for their descriptions of Nidra, Manas, and the Gunas.

Contemporary scientific literature concerning sleep regulation, insomnia, psychological arousal, stress-related sleep disturbances, and sleep-dependent emotional functioning was also reviewed. Relevant publications were selected according to their conceptual relevance to the objectives of the article.

The material was analysed descriptively to identify similarities, differences, and potential areas of correlation between Ayurvedic explanations and contemporary physiological knowledge.

This review is conceptual in nature and does not constitute a systematic review or meta-analysis. No original clinical data were collected. The discussion of Rajas, Tamas, and modern sleep mechanisms is intended to generate research hypotheses rather than establish direct physiological equivalence.

4. CONCEPT OF NIDRA IN AYURVEDA

4.1 Definition and Understanding of Nidra

Nidra refers to the natural state of sleep in which responsiveness to the external environment is reduced and normal waking awareness is temporarily altered.

In Charaka Samhita, Sutrasthana, Chapter 21, Nidra is discussed in relation to the functional state of Manas and the sensory faculties. The description emphasises that sleep cannot be understood solely as a physical phenomenon; the condition of the mind and senses is also relevant.[1]

Sushruta Samhita, Sharirasthana, Chapter 4, discusses sleep in relation to the predominance of Tamas and contrasts this state with wakefulness associated with Sattva.[2]

These classical explanations offer a framework in which sleep is understood through the interaction of mental, sensory, and bodily processes.

4.2 Nidra as an Upastambha

Nidra is one of the three Upastambhas described in Ayurveda, along with Ahara and Brahmacharya. These supporting factors contribute to the maintenance of health and the sustenance of life.

Charaka Samhita, Sutrasthana, Chapter 21, describes several benefits associated with appropriate sleep, including happiness, nourishment, strength, knowledge, and longevity.[1]

From a contemporary perspective, sleep is also recognised as essential for normal cognitive and psychological functioning. Persistent sleep disruption may be associated with fatigue, impaired attention, irritability, and reduced daytime performance.[5]

The traditional and modern perspectives therefore both recognise sleep as an important determinant of overall well-being, although their explanatory frameworks differ.

4.3 Classification of Nidra

Charaka Samhita describes six categories of Nidra according to their causes.[1]

1. **Tamobhava Nidra:** Sleep associated with Tamas.
2. **Shleshma Samudbhava Nidra:** Sleep associated with Kapha.
3. **Manah-Shrama Sambhava Nidra:** Sleep associated with mental exertion.
4. **Sharira-Shrama Sambhava Nidra:** Sleep associated with physical exertion.
5. **Vyadhi-Anuvartini Nidra:** Sleep occurring in association with disease.
6. **Ratri-Svabhava-Prabhava Nidra:** Sleep associated with the natural characteristics of night.

Terminology and classification may differ slightly across editions and commentaries.
The categories collectively indicate that Ayurvedic literature recognises multiple influences on the occurrence of sleep.

The inclusion of mental and physical exertion among the causes of sleep is particularly relevant to the present review. It suggests that mental activity and bodily conditions should be considered when examining sleep patterns.

5. CONCEPT OF MANAS BHAVA

5.1 Manas in Ayurveda

Manas plays an important role in perception, cognition, attention, decision-making, and

emotional experience. Its functions are discussed throughout classical Ayurvedic literature in relation to the interaction of the individual with sensory objects and the surrounding environment.

Manas Bhava may be understood in this context as mental states and emotional experiences that influence behaviour and physiological functioning.

Examples include

- **Harsha:** Joy or exhilaration.
- **Shoka:** Grief or sorrow.
- **Bhaya:** Fear.
- **Krodha:** Anger.
- **Chinta:** Worry or persistent thinking.
- **Kama:** Desire.

These states may vary in intensity and duration and may influence the individual's response to environmental and personal circumstances.

5.2 Relationship Between Manas Bhava and Sleep

The state of the mind before sleep may influence the transition from wakefulness to sleep. Persistent worry, emotional distress, or repetitive thinking can maintain mental alertness and make relaxation difficult.

Modern research on insomnia identifies cognitive and physiological hyperarousal as important components of several explanatory models of sleep disturbance.[3,4]

The Ayurvedic concepts of Manas Bhava and Rajas may provide a traditional framework for examining these experiences. However, the relationship must be investigated carefully because an individual mental state cannot be classified as a direct indicator of a particular Guna without an appropriate assessment method.

The relationship is also bidirectional. Inadequate sleep may affect mood, concentration, and emotional responses, thereby influencing subsequent mental functioning.

6. ROLE OF TRIGUNA IN MANAS AND NIDRA

Ayurvedic philosophy describes Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas as three fundamental Gunas associated with the functioning of Manas. Their relevance to sleep can be explored through

their classical characteristics and their possible conceptual relationships with modern psychological observations.

6.1 Sattva Guna

Sattva is associated with clarity, knowledge, discrimination, stability, and understanding.

Within the context of sleep, a balanced mental state may be conceptually associated with the ability to relax, maintain regular routines, and respond to stress without excessive agitation.

Adequate sleep also supports attention and emotional functioning, which are relevant to the broader discussion of mental balance.

However, Sattva should not be equated directly with a specific sleep stage, neurotransmitter, or measurable neurophysiological process. Its interpretation belongs to the Ayurvedic conceptual framework unless validated research establishes a more precise association.

6.2 Rajas Guna

Rajas is characterised by activity, movement, stimulation, desire, and mental agitation. In the context of Manas, these characteristics may be used to explore experiences involving persistent thoughts, restlessness, and heightened mental activity.

When a person remains preoccupied with concerns or experiences sustained psychological stress near bedtime, the transition into sleep may become difficult.

The hyperarousal model of insomnia describes how cognitive, physiological, and emotional activation can contribute to difficulties in initiating or maintaining sleep. Stress-related worry and rumination may be relevant to this process.[3,4]

Conceptual correlation: Rajas may provide an Ayurvedic framework for investigating mental agitation and psychological arousal in relation to sleep disturbances.

This interpretation does not establish that Rajas causes insomnia or that Rajas and hyperarousal are identical constructs. Such associations require empirical investigation using clearly defined and validated measures.

6.3 Tamas Guna

Tamas is associated with inertia, heaviness, obscuration, and reduced activity. Classical

Ayurvedic literature identifies Tamas as an important factor in the manifestation of sleep.[2] Its role must be interpreted within the traditional framework rather than through an exclusively pathological understanding of reduced activity.

Normal physiological sleep differs from excessive daytime sleepiness, pathological drowsiness, and impaired consciousness. These conditions cannot be considered equivalent simply because they involve reduced alertness.

Conceptual correlation: The classical association between Tamas and Nidra may provide a starting point for investigating the relationship between Ayurvedic descriptions of reduced activity and the physiological transition from wakefulness to sleep.

Nevertheless, Tamas cannot be directly equated with a specific sleep stage or the activity of an individual brain region.

6.4 Interrelationship of the Three Gunas

Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas should be examined as components of the Ayurvedic understanding of mental functioning rather than as isolated physiological entities.

The relevance of these concepts to sleep may depend on the context in which mental activity, rest, and sensory responsiveness are described.

A research approach that assesses these constructs separately and compares them with validated psychological and sleep parameters may help determine whether clinically meaningful associations exist.

7. CORRELATION BETWEEN NIDRA AND MANAS BHAVA

The relationship between sleep and mental functioning can be discussed through three interrelated dimensions.

7.1 Influence of Mental States on Sleep

Mental and emotional experiences may influence the ability to initiate and maintain sleep. Stress, worry, and repetitive negative thinking can contribute to cognitive arousal and interfere with relaxation before bedtime.

Within an Ayurvedic interpretative framework, these experiences may be explored in relation to Manas Bhava and the characteristics attributed to Rajas.

This is a conceptual application rather than a diagnostic rule. The presence of worry or restlessness alone does not establish the predominance of a particular Guna.

7.2 Influence of Sleep on Mental Functioning

Sleep contributes to attention, memory, learning, and emotional processing. Insufficient or disturbed sleep may be associated with irritability, reduced concentration, and difficulty regulating emotional responses.[5]

This relationship is important because mental functioning cannot be evaluated independently of sleep quality and duration.

The Ayurvedic emphasis on Nidra as an essential support for health provides a traditional context for considering the broader consequences of disturbed sleep.

7.3 Bidirectional Relationship

Sleep and mental functioning influence one another continuously.

Psychological stress may disrupt sleep, while inadequate sleep may increase vulnerability to emotional distress and impair responses to subsequent stressors. Repeated disruption may reinforce a cycle of poor sleep and heightened psychological arousal.[3,4]

This bidirectional relationship provides a useful basis for interdisciplinary research examining Nidra and Manas Bhava.

8. MODERN PHYSIOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF SLEEP

Modern sleep science explains sleep through the interaction of homeostatic regulation, circadian timing, and neural mechanisms responsible for maintaining wakefulness and initiating sleep.

8.1 Homeostatic Regulation of Sleep

Sleep pressure increases during sustained wakefulness and decreases during sleep. This process contributes to the regulation of sleep timing and intensity.

Homeostatic regulation is one component of the physiological explanation of sleep and should be distinguished from the Ayurvedic concept of Tamas.

8.2 Circadian Rhythm

Circadian rhythms organise biological processes across approximately 24-hour cycles. The timing of sleep and wakefulness is influenced by the internal circadian system and environmental signals, particularly light.

Irregular schedules and changes in light exposure may influence sleep timing and daytime alertness.

8.3 Psychological Hyperarousal

Hyperarousal is an important concept in contemporary explanations of insomnia. It includes cognitive, emotional, and physiological processes that may interfere with the initiation or maintenance of sleep.[3,4]

Persistent worry and rumination may contribute to difficulty disengaging from waking concerns. These findings provide a relevant area for conceptual comparison with the Ayurvedic description of Rajas.

However, the comparison remains theoretical because Rajas and psychological hyperarousal are defined within different knowledge systems.

8.4 Sleep and Emotional Regulation

Sleep is associated with the functioning of cognitive and emotional processes. Disturbed sleep may affect mood, attention, and responses to challenging situations.

These relationships are relevant to Manas Bhava because emotional functioning and sleep may influence each other over time.

The modern physiological perspective complements the Ayurvedic discussion but does not replace the need to examine the specific meanings of Manas, Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas within their original theoretical context.

9. INTEGRATIVE CORRELATION: AYURVEDIC AND MODERN PERSPECTIVES

The concepts discussed in this review can be organised into a comparative framework.

Ayurvedic concept	Traditional interpretation	Potential area for modern investigation
Nidra	Natural state of sleep and an important support for health	Sleep duration, sleep quality, and sleep–wake regulation
Manas	Mental functioning, cognition, and coordination of sensory activity	Cognitive and psychological processes
Manas Bhava	Mental and emotional states	Mood, perceived stress, and emotional functioning
Sattva	Clarity, understanding, and mental balance	Cognitive performance and emotional regulation
Rajas	Activity, stimulation, and agitation	Cognitive arousal, stress, and rumination
Tamas	Inertia, obscuration, and a classical factor associated with sleep	Sleep-related changes in alertness, as a research question rather than an established equivalence

The table presents possible areas for comparative research. It does not imply that Ayurvedic constructs have already been validated as equivalents of modern physiological variables.

An important distinction is that Ayurvedic Gunas belong to a traditional philosophical and medical framework, whereas contemporary sleep physiology relies on operational definitions, measurable parameters, and experimentally testable mechanisms.

The value of integration therefore lies in developing research questions that can be examined systematically rather than assuming that the two systems describe identical mechanisms.

10. DISCUSSION

The present review examines the relationship between Nidra and Manas Bhava through classical Ayurvedic concepts and contemporary understanding of sleep physiology.

Ayurveda recognises Nidra as an important determinant of health and describes its occurrence in relation to the functioning of Manas, Indriyas, and Tamas. The classification of Nidra according to different causes further suggests that sleep is influenced by multiple factors rather than by a single process.[1,2]

The concept of Rajas is particularly relevant to discussions of mental activity and agitation. Contemporary research on insomnia identifies psychological and physiological hyperarousal as important components of sleep disturbance. Stress-related cognitive activity may interfere with sleep initiation and contribute to persistent sleep difficulties.[3,4]

Nevertheless, the similarities between the descriptions should not be overstated. Rajas is an Ayurvedic construct with a broader philosophical meaning, whereas hyperarousal is a modern scientific concept that is investigated through defined psychological and physiological parameters.

Similarly, the association between Tamas and Nidra provides a classical explanation of sleep but cannot be directly translated into the activity of a particular neural pathway or a specific stage of sleep.

The bidirectional relationship between sleep and mental functioning is another important area of convergence. Modern research demonstrates that sleep disturbances may affect mood and cognitive functioning, while psychological stress may disrupt sleep.[3–5] This relationship

supports further investigation of Manas Bhava in sleep-related research.

Future studies could assess whether operationalised measures of Ayurvedic Guna predominance are associated with validated sleep-quality scores, perceived stress, and emotional functioning. Such studies would require appropriate assessment tools, clear inclusion criteria, suitable sample sizes, and robust statistical analysis.

The present review is limited by its narrative design and the absence of original clinical data. It also does not establish a direct causal relationship between individual Manas Bhava and sleep disturbances. The proposed correlations should therefore be interpreted as a foundation for future research rather than as established clinical conclusions.

11. RESEARCH GAPS AND FUTURE SCOPE

The relationship between Nidra and Manas Bhava provides several opportunities for future research.

1. **Assessment of sleep quality:** Observational studies could examine the relationship between Manas Bhava and validated sleep-quality measures.
2. **Evaluation of Triguna:** Researchers could investigate whether reliable and reproducible assessments of Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas are associated with measurable sleep parameters.
3. **Stress and sleep:** Studies could examine associations between perceived stress, repetitive negative thinking, and sleep disturbances within an explicitly defined Ayurvedic conceptual framework.
4. **Interdisciplinary methodology:** Collaborative research involving Ayurveda, psychology, and sleep medicine could develop testable hypotheses without assuming direct equivalence between traditional and modern constructs.
5. **Clinical relevance:** Future studies should distinguish normal sleep variation from clinically significant sleep disturbances and should use validated assessment tools.

   Such research may help clarify whether the conceptual relationship between Nidra and Manas Bhava has measurable relevance in contemporary clinical practice.

12. CONCLUSION

Nidra and Manas Bhava are interconnected concepts within the Ayurvedic understanding of health. Classical literature recognises the importance of sleep and describes its relationship with Manas, Indriyas, and Tamas. The characteristics attributed to Rajas provide a conceptual basis for examining mental activity and agitation in relation to sleep.

Modern sleep science demonstrates that sleep is regulated through homeostatic and circadian processes and may be influenced by psychological stress and cognitive arousal. Sleep disturbances may also affect emotional regulation and cognitive performance, supporting the importance of examining sleep and mental functioning together.

Although these observations provide opportunities for interdisciplinary research, Ayurvedic Gunas should not be treated as direct equivalents of modern neurophysiological mechanisms. Their relationship with validated sleep and psychological parameters must be established through appropriate empirical studies.

A scientifically rigorous integration of classical Ayurvedic concepts with contemporary sleep research may contribute to a more systematic understanding of Nidra and Manas Bhava and provide a valuable direction for future research in Kriya Sharira.

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