

**TOPIC – NIDRA IN AYURVEDIC PERSPECTIVE**

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Article Received on  
11 Sept. 2018,

Revised on 02 Oct. 2018,  
Accepted on 23 Oct. 2018

DOI: 10.20959/wjpps201811-12679

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**ABSTRACT**

Humans spend almost a third of their lifetime sleeping. 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. *Ayurveda* regards nidra (sleep) as one of the most essential factors responsible for a healthy and fulfilling life. It is one of the *Trayopastambhas* (three great subsidiary pillars) on which a person's health is firmly balanced. Sound sleep at night is a natural and nourishing phenomenon, so it is also called *Bhutadhatri* (nourishes all living beings). Quality sleep is an indicator of good health as it is stress-relieving and normalizes bodily tissues. Adequate hours of sleeping is required for all the levels of wellbeing such as mental,

physical and emotional levels. In *Ayurvedic* literature, 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. In almost all *Samhitas*, there is detail description of *Dinacharya*, *Ratricharya*, *Ritucharya*, *Ahara Vidhi*, *Adharaniya* and *Dharaniya vega*, *Sadvritta* etc. is given which are very helpful to an individual for healthy life and prevention

of diseases. *Nidra* is part of lifestyle and may cause many diseases if it is not ideal, so why ancient seers have well elaborated this topic in their literature.

**KEYWORDS:** Nidra, Health, Lifestyle, Ayurveda.

## INTRODUCTION

The word *Nidra* is derived from the prefix “*Ni*” is the Sanskrit root of our English word “Nether” or down as in “nether world” (under world). While the suffix “*Dra*” may be cognate with the English “drowsy”, to be half asleep, to be inactive or present an appearance of peaceful inactivity or isolation. The word *Nidra* is a feminine gender, the root “*Dra*” means undesired and “*Gatau*” to lead; it is a state which is hated, there for turned as “*Nidra*”.

Sleep is a naturally occurring periodic state of rest of both mind and body, in which the eyes usually close and consciousness is completely or partially lost, with decreased bodily movement and decreased responsiveness to external stimuli. Sleep determine many aspects of our life like mood, cognitive functions such as attention and working memory, homeostasis etc.<sup>[1]</sup>

In metaphoric language it is also called '*Vaishnavi maya*', indicating that nidra provides nutrition to maintain good health like Lord *Vishnu* (the sustaining god), who nourishes and sustains this world. 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. Sleep occurs when the seat of *Chetana* (consciousness) is covered by *Tamo Guna* (one among the three main qualities of mind which is responsible for ignorance) which predominates along with *Kapha*. Sleep is another form of *Tamas* (mental darkness). Sleep manifests when *Tamas* naturally predominates at night and the mind and intellect are in deep rest. Sleep occurs when bodily channels become accumulated with *Kapha* and when the mind is devoid of contact with the sense-organs because of fatigue. Types of Sleep In general, sleep is classified into two types: *Svabhavika* (natural sleep) and *Asvabhavika* (abnormal sleep). *Maharshi Charaka*<sup>[2]</sup> described seven types caused by: *Tamas*; vitiated *Kapha*; mental exertion; physical exhaustion; *Agantuka* (indicative of bad prognosis leading to imminent death); a complication of other diseases like *Sannipataja jvara* (fever having involvement of *Tridosha*); and the very nature of the night (physiological sleep). *Acharya Vagbhata*<sup>[3]</sup> follows a similar view, adding that sleep occurring at night is considered normal while the remaining are abnormal. *Acharya Sushruta*<sup>[4]</sup> describes three types as: *Vaishnavi* (created by

the sustaining god which is natural one); *Tamasi* (due to mental darkness); *Vaikariki* (due to diseases).

### Ancient Literature Review

According to *Maharishi Patanjali*, sleep is modification of mind where there is no mental contentment. *pramäëa viparjaya vikalpa nidrä smätayaù |pa. yo. su. 1. 6 ||*

There are five modification of mind Right knowledge, Indiscrimination, Delusion, Sleep and Memory. *abhävapratyayälambanä våttinidrä. pa.yo.su. 10.01*

Sleep is the state in which mental content is absent. Sleep is also called *Nidra* in *Sanskrita* language. *Nidra* is not a new word; there are so many references of *Nidra* available from the *Vedic* period. *Nidra* mentioned in *Rig Veda* as “*Swapna*”.

*na svapnäya spāahayanti debäù | ågveda 8.2.78*

It is clear that gods were not having any sleep pattern because they had more *Sattva Guna* and less *Tamo Guna*. According to *Acharya Charaka*, sleep is-*yadä tu manasi klänte karmätmänaù klamänvitäù. viñayebhyo nivartante tadä svapiti mänavaù. a.su.27.35*

When body and mind fed up with the action, then mind is not capable to focus on action and sense organs also getting fatigue because of too much work load. It is finally leads to sleep.

**Importance of *Nidra*:** *nidräyattaà sukhaà duùkhaà puñöiù kärçaà baläbalam väñatä klébatä jänamajänaà jévitaà na ca ||(charaka samhita).*

*Sukha* (happiness), *dukha* (unhappiness), *Pushti* (good physique), *Karshya* (emaciation), *Vrushta* (sexual power), *Klibata* (impotence), *Gyan* (knowledge), and *Agyan* (illiteracy), *Jivita* (long life), *Ajivita* (death) all these factors are depend on *Nidra*. *Samyak Nidra* gives us *Sukha*, *Pushti*, *Bala*, *Vrushta*, *Gyan* and *Jivan*. *Asamyak Nidra* causes *Dukha*, *Karshya*, *Abala*, *Klibata* and *Aagyan*

### Merits and Demerits of Proper and Improper Sleep<sup>[5]</sup>

It is said in *Charak Sutra Sthan* 21st chapter that Happiness, misery, nourishment, emaciation, strength, weakness, virility, sterility, knowledge, ignorance, life and death—all these occur depending on the proper or improper sleep. Proper sleep leads to increase in *Agni* (digestive proper) and *Dhatusamyä* (proper structure and functioning of *Dhatu*).

### **Relationship between *Nidra and Dosha, Dhatu Malas***

As *Nidra* is said to be *kapha* dominant process it also maintains the equilibrium between three *Doshas*. In classics, it is mentioned that in *Kaphaja Vikaras Nidra and Tandra* (sleepiness) are commonly seen and in *Vataja Vikaras Nidranasa* (Loss of sleep) occurs and in *Pittaja Vikaras Alpanidra* (Less sleep) manifest. By means of proper sleep the *Dhatu*s, nourishment of the body, increase of strength and the stability of *Ayu* are achieved. By proper sleep the digestive power is properly maintained and the *agni* functions remains in normal condition. Evacuation of the bowel and emptying of urinary bladder take place properly if a person sleeps well. Bad habits like *Ratri-jagarana* (waking up during night) and *Diva-swapana* (sleeping in the day) have been stated to provoke all the three *Doshas*.

### **Demerits of *Diwaswapa***

If one sleep in daytime, whom it is contraindicated, then he may suffer from *Halimaka* (serious type of jaundice), *Shirahshula* (headache), *Staimitya* (timidness), *Gurugatrata* (heaviness of the body), *Angamarda* (malaise), *Agninasha* (loss of digestive power), *Hridaya Pralepa* (a feeling as if phlegm adhered to the heart ), *Shopha* (oedema), *Arochaka* (anorexia), *Hrillas* (nausea), *Pinasa* (rhinitis), *Ardhavabhedaka* (hemicrania), *Kotha* (urticaria), *Aru* (eruption), *Pidaka* (abscess), *Kandu* (pruritus), *Tandra* (drowsiness), *Kasa* (coughing), *Galamaya* (diseases of the throat), *Smriti-Buddhi Pramoha* (impairment of the memory and intelligence), *Srotasaam sanrodha* (obstruction of the circulating channels of the body), *Jwara* (fever), *Indriyanam asamarthya* (weakness of sensory and motor organs) an *Vishavega pravardhana* (enhancement of the toxic effects of artificial poisons).

### **Demerits of *Ratrau Jagarana***

If one remains awake in *Vatakala* i.e. in late night (approx. 2 am to 6 am if sunrise at 6 am), then *Vata* gets vitiated which vitiates the *Agni* and leads to inappropriate digestion of food. Vitiating of *Vata* is more harmful for digestion than *Pitta* and *Kapha*. If one remains awake in *Kapha* and *Pitta kala* i.e. first two *Praharas*, and sleep in *Vatakala* i.e. in last *Prahara* then definitely food gets digested properly.

### **Types of bed and their effects<sup>[6,7]</sup>**

1. ***Anukula shayya* (Comfortable bed):** It is considered good for proper sleep, nourishment, pleasure, relieves tiredness, pacifies the vitiated *Vata*, and aphrodisiac.

**2. Bhumishayya (On ground):** It can pacify the vitiated *Vata*, nourishes human body gives strength and aphrodisiac.

**3. Khatva (Cot):** Causes vitiation of *Vata*.

**4. Darupatta (Wooden planks):** It is unctuous and highly vitiates *Vata*.

**5. Andolika (Hanging bed):** It relieves tiredness, leads to long life, plumpness aphrodisiac, alleviates vitiated *Vata*, decreases sweating, pleasing to mind.

**6. Talpa:** It helps to decrease weight. It is good for health of skin.

### **Nidra and Disease**

1. According to Charak Sleeping in day time except in *Grishma ritu* causes vitiation of *Kapha* and *Pitta*.
- 2 It can cause *Krimi, Prameha, Sthaulya, Visarpa, Medovaha Strotas Dushti, Yonikanda, Asrigdara*.
- 3 Sleeping on Cot (*Khatva*) leads to vitiation of *Vata*.
- 4 Sleeping on wooden planks can highly vitiate *Vata* because it is un-unctuous.
- 5 Excess sleeping leads to *Kaphaparakopa, Antarvidradhi*.
- 6 Sleeping on uncomfortable bed leads to *Vatavyadhi*.
- 7 Excess sleep especially in day time leads to *Kaphaparakopa, Pratishyaya*, ( Allergic Rhinitis) *Arsha* (piles).
- 8 Sleeping in day time and keeping awake in night time leads to *Samana Vata Dushti, Shiroroga, Urustambha, Vatarakta, Ajirna*
- 9 Sleeping in irregular posture leads to *Vata-gulma*.
- 10 Keeping awake at night leads to *Udavarta, Punaravartaka Jwara, Stanyaroga, Pratishyaya, Kshaya*.
- 11 Sleeping without taking pillow under the head leads to *Kaphaparakopa, Shiroro*
- 12 Sleeping improperly or too much in quantity or in lateral position or with covered face leads to *Pratishyaya*.
- 13 Sleeping with keeping pillow very low or very high under head leads to *Pratishyaya*
- 14 Sleeping with face down leads to *Mukharoga*.
- 15 Sleeping in daytime by *Rajaswala* (menstruating woman) leads to birth of a child who is always sleepy.
- 16 Sleeping in day time during the period of *Snehapana* leads to *Sneha-vyapada*.

- 17 Constantly giving into sleep by pregnant woman makes the offspring drowsy, dull and deficient in digestive power.
- 18 Sleeping in day time by *Sutika* leads to *Sutikaroga*.
- 19 *Divaswapna* causes impediment in healing the ulcers and also causes pain.
- 20 Sleeping by patients suffering from *Shoatha*, *Jwara*, *Visarpa*, *Vatarakta*, *Kushtha*, *Netraroga* leads further complication related to disease. *jashoatha*, *Vatavyadhi*.

## CONCLUSION

In ancient times, people were following ideal Lifestyle. Therefore people were not much get affected by various types of diseases. Afterwards, it has been turned into sedentary lifestyle. In modern era of civilization, due to growing use of technologies and increasing competition, changing lifestyle especially sleeping pattern has become a leading cause for manifestation of many diseases like Hypertension, Migraine, Rhinitis, Diabetes mellitus, Obesity etc. Sleep is an important part of our personality. In ancient *Yoga* texts sleep is defined as the state in which mental content is absent. Para sympathetic nervous system is responsible for sleep. *Yogic* relaxation technique which is described in *Ayurveda* stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system and helps to calm down the mind. *Yoga* has been gaining popularity as a tool for developing both physical and mental faculties and reducing stress.

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