

Nidra sevan vidhi – a determinant of health and disease

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ABSTRACT

Nidrā is considered an essential aspect of maintaining overall health and well-being. Ayurveda describes *nidrā* as one of the three fundamental pillars (*Trayopastambha*), along with *Āhāra* (diet) and *Brahmacarya* (regulated conduct). This article examines the concept of sleep as elucidated in ayurved samhitas, emphasizing the distinction between *vidhi-sevita nidrā* (sleep practiced according to prescribed rules) and *avidhi-sevita nidrā* (improper or unregulated sleep), and highlights the importance of following an appropriate sleep regimen (*nidrā vidhi*). In the present era, rapid lifestyle changes have led to significant disturbances in sleep patterns, resulting in serious physical and mental health concerns. Improper timing, duration and regulation of sleep have emerged as important contributing factors to various disorders. Hence, this article provides a detailed overview of the right conduct related to *nidrā*, elaborating on the benefits of properly regulated sleep as well as the consequences of non-adherence to these principles. The metaphorical comparison of untimely sleep to disruptive

darkness and regulated sleep to the return of true knowledge highlights the profound physiological and psychological significance of *nidrā*. This discussion provides a practical and clinically relevant understanding of *nidrā vidhi*, establishing it as a decisive factor in the maintenance of health and the prevention of disease, which constitutes the primary *prayojana* (objective) of Ayurveda.

Keywords: *Nidra* , Prakrut *Nidra* , Sleep Hygiene, Divaswaap

INTRODUCTION:

Ayurveda the classical science of life and health management described several ways for curing and preventing disease. The holistic approach of Ayurveda establishes synchronization amongst physical body, senses, psyche and soul. Ayurveda explained that *Nidra* (asleep) is very important for the maintenance of health and prevention of disease.^[1]

Proper health is maintained when these components function harmoniously, while an imbalance leads to disease and disorder. Ayurveda describes the Tridosha:

Vata, Pitta, and Kapha as the Tristhuna (three main pillars) governing bodily functions. Similarly, Ahara, *Nidra*, and Brahmacharya are considered the three external supportive pillars that uphold the primary foundations of life.^[2]

In Ayurvedic classics, *Nidra* is recognized as the second Upastambha among the Trayopastambha. *Nidra* is essential for life, much like recharging a battery for the brain. If this pillar, *Nidra*, is compromised, overall health deteriorates.^[3] Disturbances in these sub pillars can impact numerous physiological processes and lead to various pathological consequences.^[4] Both Ayurveda and contemporary health sciences recognize sleep's foundational role, with growing research highlighting its benefits for muscle recovery, immune support, and mental resilience. However, the increasing prevalence of sleep disorders, such as insomnia and sleep apnea, and lifestyle issues, including prolonged screen exposure and stress, have significantly impacted global sleep health.^[5] Sleep regularity and duration both predict mortality risk.^[6] This underscores the urgent need to explore strategies that address these challenges through a holistic lens.^[7]

AIM:

To study how proper and improper sleep affects health and disease in Ayurveda.

OBJECTIVE:

1. To study the ideal practices related to *nidra*
2. To study the importance of ideal *nidra* in maintaining health

MATERIAL AND METHODS:

TYPES OF NIDRA:^[12] Acharya Charak has classified *Nidra* according to causes

Classical sources: *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Ashtanga Hridaya* and *Ashtanga Sangraha*. Commentaries: *Ayurved Dipika (Chakrapani)*, *Nibandhasangraha (Dalhan)*, *Sarangasundari (Arundatta)*, *Ayurved Rasayan (Hemadri)* Contemporary sources: texts and research articles on *nidra*
Method: compilation and analysis of references on *nidra*, its types, importance of prakrut *nidra*, akaal *nidra* etc.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Nidra nirukti:

The word *Nidra* is derived from the Sanskrit word "Nidi kutsyaayaam" by adding the suffix "rak" which means to lie down, rest, or sleep. It is the state of sleep.^[8]

DEFINITION:

Definition Acharya Charaka has stated *Nidra* as- "It is a special state of mind in which the mind is not associated with any type of Indriyas. This detachment from the Bahiya Vishaya is the result from the tiredness of the body as well as mind."^[9]

Ashtanga Sangraha explains the Strotas become accumulated with Shleshma and the Mana is devoid of sense organs because of fatigueness, so, individual gets sleep.^[10] Acharya Charaka describes sleep as Bhutadhatri, a natural phenomenon occurring at night that nourishes all creatures. Acharya Sushruta classifies sleep as a Swabhavika Roga (a natural condition inherent to life). Sushruta uses the metaphor Vaishnavimaya to describe *Nidra*, highlighting its role as a physiological process that provides nutrition and supports overall health. *Nidra* is believed to have emerged from Tamas at the beginning of existence, becoming most prominent at night when Tamas dominates.^[11]

SR.NO.	TYPE OF <i>NIDRA</i>	EXPLANATION
1.	Tamobhava	Caused by Tama
2.	Shleshma samudbhava	Caused by highly aggravated kapha
3.	Manah-Sharir Shrama Sambhava	Caused by physical and mental exertion
4.	Agantuj	Defines as bad prognosis leading unnatural death
5.	Vyadhi – Anuvartini	Caused by complication of ay disease like Sannipataj Jwara etc.
6.	Ratri-Swabhava Prabhava	Caused by normal physiological sleep at night.

Acharya Sushruta has classified *Nidra* into following types:

SR.NO.	TYPE OF <i>NIDRA</i>	EXPLANATION
1.	Tamasi	When Sangya vaha Srotas fills with Shlesma dominated by Tamoguna, Tamasi <i>Nidra</i> is produced.
2.	Swabhaviki	<i>Nidra</i> which occurs naturally and daily in all living beings.
3.	Vaikariki	If Mana and body is disturbed, <i>Nidra</i> vanishes. But if <i>Nidra</i> is occurred, it is Vaikariki <i>Nidra</i> .

Acharya Vagbhata has classified *Nidra* in to 7 types-

Sr.No.	Type of <i>Nidra</i>	Explanation
1.	Kaal swabhava	Naturally occurring <i>Nidra</i>
2.	Aamaya	Due to disease
3.	Chitta khedda	Due to Tiredness of the mind
4.	Deha kheda	Due to Tiredness of the body
5.	Kaphaja	Due to Kapha Dosha
6.	Agantuja	Due to external factor
7.	Tamobhava	Due to predominance of Tamas

PRAKRUT *NIDRA*-

The concept of healthy/ideal sleep consists of three key dimensions: duration, timing, and quality. Ayurvedic texts, such as the Charaka Samhita and the Sushruta Samhita, define ideal sleep as “Ratri swabhava prabha” and “Vaishnavi/Swabhavik,” respectively. These terms translate to “naturally occurring sleep during the night”

and “spontaneous sleep/occurring on its own.” Acharya Charaka further emphasizes this point with the term “Bhudhatri,” here the term “Dhatri” indicates, to take care of to hold up while the term “Bhuta” refers to all created beings on this earth. Therefore, the collective term Bhudhatri means “nourishing sleep.” This natural, nocturnal sleep, occurring regularly and not due to

exhaustion or weakness, is considered essential for optimal health.^[13]

TIMING OF NIDRA

Timing of *Nidra* According to Ashtanga Sangraha, sleep which is prevalent everywhere manifest at night as Tamo guna is more predominant during night hours. Acharya Susruta explains the significance of being awake during the day and sleeping at night. As per Kaiyadeva Nighantu, the optimal time for sleep is after the initial two Yamas, approximately six hours after sunset. In Ayurveda, a healthy individual typically experiences sleep during Night hours known as Ratri Svabhava Prabhava. It is recommended to refrain from sleeping during the early and late night hours and to awaken before sunrise.^[14]

FACTORS AFFECTING NIDRA :

NIDRA AND VAYO-AVASTHA: ^[15]

Sr.No.	Sleeping position (Head)	Effect on body
1.	Purva (East)	Medhavi (Improves Intellect)
2.	Paschima (West)	Manasantapa (Mental Distress)
3.	Uttara (North)	Mrityu (Death)
4.	Dakshina (South)	Dirghayu (Long Life)

Sleep also depends on vayo-awastha (age); in balyawastha kapha is predominant so sleep is comparatively more than yuvavastha. In vrudhdhavastha vata is predominant so they get very less sleep. Recommended amount of sleep in different stages of life:

Sr.No.	Age	Amount of sleep
1.	New born	16-18 hrs/day
2.	Pre school aged children	11-12 hrs/day
3.	School aged children	At least 10 hrs/day
4.	Teens	9-10 hrs/day
5.	Adults(including the elderly)	7-8 hrs/day

Nidra and shayya(Bed):^[15]

Sr.No.	Type of shayya	Effect on body
1.	Cot	Neutralises all three doshas
2.	Bed on ground	Neutralises vata & kapha
3.	Ground	Increases vata, neutralises rakta and pitta, obesity.
4.	Plank of wood	Increases vata
5.	Comfortable bed	Increases happiness, sexual desire and helps in getting rid of excess of vata and exhaustion.

Sleeping posture :^[15]

According to YogaRatnakara, it is always advised to sleep in left lateral position because agni lies in the left side of the body above the nabhi (umbilicus), which is responsible for the proper digestion.

Nidra and Dosha :^[15]

As *Nidra* is said to be kapha dominant in process, it also maintains the equilibrium between three doshas. Bad habits like ratri-jagarana (awakening during night) divaswapa (sleeping in the day) vitiates all the three doshas.

Sr.No.	Dosha	Nature of Sleep
1.	Vata dosha	<i>Nidranasha</i> (loss of sleep)
2.	Pitta dosha	Alpa <i>Nidra</i> (less sleep)
3.	Kapha dosha	Ati <i>Nidra</i> (excess sleep) & Tandra (drowsiness)

Nidra and disease:^[15]

Sr.No.	Sleep pattern	Disease
1.	Day sleep	Sthoulya (obesity), kaphajajwara (type of fever due to kapha), kaphajaarsha (type of haemorrhoid due to kapha), visarpa (skin disease), vatarakta (gout)
2.	Sleep in excess	Antahvidradhi (internal abscess)
3.	Sleeping in daytime and keeping awake in night	Shirorogas (diseases of head), nijashotha (oedema)
4.	Sleeping with face down	Mukharoga (diseases of mouth)
5.	Untimely sleep pattern	Ajirna (indigestion)
6.	Sleeping on uncomfortable bed	Vata vyadhi (diseases due to vata dosha)
7.	Comfortable sleep for long time	Prameha (group of urinary disorder), madhumeha (diabetes)
8.	Staying awake at night	Karshya (emaciation), pratishyaya (catarrh)

SLEEP HYGIENE

According to Acharya yogaratnakara, After having dinner, one should walk for hundred steps before going to sleep, then one should lie down in recumbent posture in bed taking 8 times breath and changes the posture to right lateral till taking 16 times breath and thereafter to left lateral taking 32 times breath and then can sleep in any posture. Left lateral position is more preferred for

easy digestion of the food as the 'Jatharagni' is located over the Nabhi region. Ayurveda provide guidance for promoting peaceful sleep. Additionally, it is suggested to avoid sleeping on your back. The mattress should be soft and comfortable, with the bed positioned at knee level. It is recommended to focus on positive thoughts during the beginning and end of the night, as well as when falling asleep and waking up, while avoiding negative thoughts. Assuming a different position while lying down will have an opposing effect. Lying down in a relaxed position on a comfortable bed helps alleviate fatigue, soothes Vata Dosha, encourages sleep, restores lost memory to the mind (Dhriti), acts as an aphrodisiac,

and supports overall body growth. Gentle massage, known as Samvahana, exhibits calming, sedative, and aphrodisiac effects. It alleviates Kapha and Vata Doshas, relieves fatigue and soothes the body.^[16]

INDICATIONS AND
CONTRAINDICATIONS OF
DIVASWAAP:

Rules of Day Sleeping: If one remains awake at night due to non-habituation and unavoidable causes, then one should sleep

for half of that period or for a period long enough to provide good rest during the following morning without having breakfast or eating any food.

Indications for Day Sleep: Sleeping during the day is indicated for those who are exhausted by singing, study, alcohol, sexual acts, detoxification therapies, carrying heavy weights or walking long distances; for those suffering from indigestion, phthisis, wasting, who are too old, too young, weak, thirsty, suffering from diarrhoeas, colic pain, dyspnoea, hiccup, or emaciated; for those injured by fall or assault, afflicted with insanity, or exhausted by traveling, vigil, anger, grief or fear; and for those who are accustomed to it, day sleep is allowed. In all seasons, such sleep equalizes the dhatus (bodily tissue) and increases bala (strength). Sleshma/kapha nourishes body parts, provides stability and promotes the life span. During the summer, day sleep is advised for all as the nights are short and Vata Dosha accumulates due to heat, dryness and aadaana kaala (period of absorption of fluid). Day sleep (up to one muhurta (48 min.)) is also permitted for those suffering from loss of fat, kapha dosha or blood, to those of scanty perspiration or ruksha (dry) and krisha (lean/ emaciated) constitution, and also to those who have been suffering from indigestion. Sleeping during the day is always beneficial for those in whom Vata and other Doshas get aggravated if they do not sleep.^[17]

Contraindications of Day Sleep: Persons with excessive fat, those who are accustomed to take unctuous substances regularly, those with kapha constitution, persons suffering with kapha disorders and

suffering with artificial poisoning should not sleep in daytime.^[18]

IMPACT OF DAYSLEEP AND NIGHT WAKEFULNESS:

Ayurveda advises not to sleep during the day or stay awake at night. Day sleep increases Guruta and Kapha-Pitta disorders. Seasonal changes affect all living beings, and to benefit from these changes and avoid harm, Ayurveda recommends Ritucharya. Divaswapa (Daytime sleep) is advised only during Grishma Ritu, as short nights and dry, rough weather increase Vata Dosha. Except in summer, day sleep aggravates Kapha and Pitta, raising the risk of related diseases; therefore, it is not recommended in those seasons. In the Ashtang Sangraha, Diwaswapa and Ratrijagrana are enumerated in Garbhopghatkar Bhava. He also quoted that Ratrijagrana increases Vata in Sarvroga Nidana Adhyaya. Staying awake at night causes dryness, increases Vata and Pitta, and reduces Kapha. Elevated Vata leads to dizziness, body stiffness, restlessness, poor concentration, and headaches. Increased Pitta can cause digestive problems, especially when one is awake during the Pitta phase, disrupting digestion. Lack of proper sleep impairs judgment, mood, memory, and learning, and increases the risk of accidents. Acharya Charak enumerated Diwaswapa and Ratrijagrana in Nidana of Shiroroga. Those who work night shifts often experience disturbed sleep patterns, lack of concentration, disorientation, and insomnia.^[19]

SUPPRESSING THE URGE TO SLEEP:

One should not suppress the alarming urge of *nidra*.^[20] Suppression of the urge of sleep (*nidra*) leads to the following disorders: Jumbha (yawning), Angamarda (body pain), Tandra (drowsiness), Shiroroga (heada

che)Akshi Gaurav(heaviness in the eyes).management includes svapna(to have good sleep) and samvahana.chakrapani has explained samvahana as gentle rubbing with hands on lower limbs and other body parts so as to feel relaxation.^[21]

MEASURES TO GET GOOD SLEEP:

Abhyanga, utsadana, snana,intake of muton soup prepared by the meat of domestic,marshy and aquatic animals intake of rice prepared by shali dhanya along with curd ,milk,unctuous substances ,alcoholic beverages ,psychological happiness,pleasant odour and sounds rubbing the body with soft hands ,akshitarpana,shirolepa,mukhalepa,comfort able bed and sleeping in proper time.^[22]

EFFECTS OF SLEEP:Happiness and misery, nourishment and emaciation , strength and weakness, virility and sterility knowledge and ignorance life and death all these occur depending on the proper and improper sleep. Excessive, improper and sleeplessness leads to misery and also death similar to kaalaratri (Goddess of death). Proper sleep will make for happiness and for long life just as the mind of the sages became clear from the knowledge of the soul. ^[23]

Impact of *Nidra* on human physiology: ^[24]

Domain	Significance/understanding
<i>Sukham</i>	Holistic well-being
<i>Dukham</i>	Physical and psychological distress
<i>Pushti</i>	Proper nourishment and growth/replenishment
<i>Karshya</i>	Malnourishment (tissue depletion, overweight, or underweight)
<i>Bala</i>	Physical strength, capacity to work, mental strength to

	withstand difficult situations, ability to fight against diseases
<i>Abala</i>	Inability/difficulty to perform physical tasks, mental distress
<i>Vrushata</i>	Fertility/potency to reproduce
<i>Kleebata</i>	Impotency/inability to reproduce
<i>Gyana</i>	Cognitive abilities – conscious decision-making, directed attention, grasping, concentration, memory, etc.
<i>Agyana</i>	Cognitive limitations, ignorance
<i>Jivitam (Deerghayu)</i>	Long and healthy life
<i>Mrityu</i>	Health implications may lead to death

DISCUSSION:

Sleep (*Nidra*) is one of the three pillars of health in Ayurveda. Proper sleep directly influences overall health. Good quality sleep nourishes the body, improves immunity, enhances mental clarity, supports digestion, and promotes longevity. Imbalanced sleep disturbs body and mind. Inadequate, excessive, or irregular sleep can lead to fatigue, poor concentration, weakened immunity, stress, and various lifestyle disorders. Ayurveda emphasizes the proper method of sleeping. It provides clear guidelines on: The ideal time to sleep and wake up, proper sleeping posture ,Pre-sleep routines ,Seasonal considerations ,Suitable environment for restful sleep.Sleeping at the right time aligns with the body’s natural rhythm. Ayurveda

recommends sleeping early and waking up during Brahma Muhurta for optimal health benefits. Correct sleep practices act as preventive medicine. By regulating sleep, many stress-related and lifestyle disorders can be prevented naturally.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the classical concept of *Nidra Sevan Vidhi* provides systematic guidelines for achieving balanced and restorative sleep through proper timing, environment, and lifestyle discipline. In the context of modern challenges such as increased stress, irregular routines, and excessive screen exposure, the relevance of these principles has become even more significant. Therefore, integrating Ayurvedic sleep guidelines into daily life can contribute substantially to long-term health promotion and holistic well-being.

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