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## Nidra - A Literary Review

Sankanagoud Patil<sup>1</sup>, Samyam SG<sup>2</sup>, Pallavi SL<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Associate Professor, Department of PG Studies in Swasthavritta, JSS Ayurvedic Medical College and Hospital, Mysuru, Karnataka, India.

<sup>2,3</sup>Post Graduate Scholar, Department of PG Studies in Swasthavritta, JSS Ayurvedic Medical College and Hospital, Mysuru, Karnataka, India.

### ABSTRACT

Sleep plays a key role in the survival of a human being. Sleep deprivation has more negative effects on the quality of life of an individual than food deprivation. More than 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of a human's life is spent in sleeping. Sleep is one of the 13 *Adharaniya Vegas*,<sup>[1]</sup> i.e., the urges that should not be controlled. Sleep is also one of the *Trayopasthambhas* according to *Ayurveda*<sup>[2]</sup> i.e., the three pillars of life. Sleeplessness has been mentioned as a symptom in multiple diseases.

**Key words:** *Nidra, Sleep, Trayopasthambha, Ayurveda.*

### INTRODUCTION

The Life of a person depends on the three pillars of life, i.e., *Aahara, Nidra* and *Brahmacharya*. Among them, *Nidra* is a phenomenon which has been widely mentioned to intend different meanings in a wide array of *Sanskrit* literature. For example, In *Markandeya Purana*,<sup>[3]</sup> *Nidra* is a word associated with *Yoga Nidra* i.e., The sleep of *Vishnu* which causes the illusion that this entire world is real, when in fact, it is illusionary. However, in *Ayurveda*, *Nidra* is generally referred to the day to day sleep a person does with a few exceptions.

#### The causes for *Nidra*

According to *Sushruta Samhita*,<sup>[4]</sup> *Nidra* is caused mainly due to habit or nature, in the sense that it is the nature of living organisms to sleep. According to *Charaka Samhita*<sup>[5]</sup> and *Ashtanga Sangraha*,<sup>[6]</sup> *Nidra* is

induced due to tiredness of the person and due to the person needing rest due to continuous work in a day. Also, according to *Ashtanga Sangraha*,<sup>[7]</sup> *Nidra* also happens due to the characteristic of night i.e., a time in which *Tamas* is more predominant.

#### Physiology

According to *Sushruta*,<sup>[8]</sup> *Nidra* happens when *Tamas* and *Shleshma* enter the heart, causing the heart to slow down its activities which is told by an example of a lotus blooming and closing its petals around itself. According to *Bhela Samhita*,<sup>[9]</sup> *Nidra* happens when *Shleshma* and *Tamas* together enter Heart, Ears and Eyes where it's also mentioned that only the *Praana, Mind*, and *Agni* are active during sleep and depending on the sleep, *Indriyas* can also be active.

#### Classification

*Acharya Vagbhata* has classified *Nidra* into 7 types in *Ashtanga Sangraha*,<sup>[10]</sup> i.e.,

- *Kaalasvabhava* - 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 Dosh*
- *Aagantuja* - Due to External Factors
- *Tamobhava* - Due to predominance of *Tamas*

#### Address for correspondence:

Dr. Sankanagoud Patil

Associate Professor, Department of PG Studies in Swasthavritta, JSS Ayurvedic Medical College and Hospital, Mysuru, Karnataka, India.

E-mail: ayursank@gmail.com

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Acharya Vagbhata says, the first type preserves life, the last type is considered a *Paapa* or a sin and the rest of the others are related to an unhealthy state of Mind and Body.

Acharya Charaka<sup>[11]</sup> has similarly classified *Nidra* into 7 types i.e.,

- *Tamobhava* - Due to *Tamas*
- *Shleshmasamudbhava* - Due to *Shleshma* or *Kapha Dosh*
- *Manahshramasambhava* - Due to tiredness of mind
- *Sharirashramasambhava* - Due to tiredness of body
- *Agantuki* - Due to external factors
- *Vyaadhyanuvaritini* - Due to diseases
- *Raatrisvabhaavaprabhava* - Due to the nature of night

*Sushruta*, though doesn't directly provide a classification of *Nidra*, and divides *Nidra* Based on the *Guna*<sup>[12]</sup> more present in the mind of an individual i.e.,

- In *Saatvika* People - *Nidra* happens at midnight
- In *Rajasika* 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 *Samjnaavaha Srotas* i.e., the channel which carries consciousness.

### **Divasvapna**

*Divasvapna*<sup>[13]</sup> or sleeping during the day is generally considered unhealthy. According to Acharya *Sushruta*, *Divasvapna* does *Prakopa* of all the three *Doshas*. However, as mentioned by *Hemadri*, there are other opinions also i.e., *Khaaranadi*<sup>[14]</sup> says that *Divasvapna* does the *Prakopa* of only *Pitta* and *Kapha Doshas* while *Bhela* opines that *Divasvapna* in a supine position only increases *Kapha* in the *Koshtha*. Everybody however, agree that generally, *Divasvapna* is unhealthy.

However, there have been exceptions mentioned. According to *Sushruta Samhita*,<sup>[15]</sup> *Divasvapna* can be done by those who stayed awake at night for half the time stayed awake at night by them. Also, *Divasvapna* is mentioned to be permitted during *Greeshma Ritu* or Summer Season. Along with that, Acharya *Vagbhata*<sup>[16]</sup> mentions *Divasvapna* can be done in many diseased conditions like *Rajayakshma*. *Divasvapna* can also be done by old aged people and children.

### **Nidranaasha**<sup>[17]</sup>

*Nidranaasha* or loss of sleep is also considered unhealthy. It is caused by *Vaata*, *Pitta*, worry, *Kshaya* and Injury. *Nidranaasha* has been mentioned generally as a condition caused due to multiple factors In *Sushruta Samhita*,<sup>[18]</sup> and the treatment for this condition is mentioned as *Abhyanga*, Keeping oil on Head, *Udvaartana* and General *Brimhana Chikitsa*.

### **Atinidraa**<sup>[19]</sup>

Sleeping excessively is considered a Pathological condition which happens because of Increase in *Shleshma Dosh*. In Such a condition, treatments like *Dhumapana*, *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**<sup>[20]</sup>

In almost all *Samhitas*, *Nidra* is an urge which should not be controlled nor induced. Inducing or controlling this *Vega* 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 told to be sleeping itself.

## **DISCUSSION**

In *Ayurveda*, *Nidra* has been explained both as a physiological phenomenon and as a pathological condition. The proper sleep, the time in which sleep has to be done and the undesired effects of *Nidra* not properly done has also been told. Physiological Sleep has also been classified among healthy individuals based on their *Prakriti* and their General Mental State. Sleep has also been discussed as an urge which when

controlled can lead to a wide array of diseases. Sleep during the day has been given special importance in the context of diseases as an etiological factor.

## CONCLUSION

*Nidra* done at the proper time in a proper way helps in keeping the person healthy but the same *Nidra*, if done otherwise can lead to multiple problem in the health of an individual. Thus, the proper maintain of sleep regimen is important.

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