ISSN 2456-3110 Vol 8 · Issue 11 November 2023



# Journal of Ayurveda and Integrated Medical Sciences

www.jaims.in

Indexed

An International Journal for Researches in Ayurveda and Allied Sciences





Journal of **Ayurveda and Integrated Medical Sciences** 

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# Study of Nidra w.s.r. to Bhutadhatri Nidra

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# ABSTRACT

To keep the balance of the body, there is description of three *Upastambha*. The three *Upasthambha* are *Ahara*. Nidra and Bramhacharya, which glorifies Nidra as an essential factor for a healthy life. Nidra (sleep) is very crucial for day -to- day life and also for physical & mental wellness of human being. A multi-dimensional approach to Nidra is found in Ayurvedic literature where many Acharyas have given their precious pronouncements and directives regarding sleep. In Samhitas, Nidra and Swapna are regarded as equivalent in many places but Vata and Raja collectively causes Swapna which is termed as Swapna Darshan (dreaming). Qualitative and quantitative sleep that occurs in proper time is appreciated as "Bhutadhatri Nidra" in Ayurveda. It rejuvenates and re-energizes body as well as mind while improper sleep can give rise to harmful effects on health. This article is designed to provide a comprehensive review of concepts, mechanism & effect of Nidra on human body by collecting the facts and information based on Ayurveda classics. In the era of modernization, sedentary life-style and desk bound professions; people are more prone to diseases like diabetes mellitus, obesity, hypertension, heart diseases etc. due to their faulty sleeping habits. Nidranasha (insomnia), Atinidra (hypersomnia), Akala Nidra (untimely sleeping habits), Diva Swapna (day sleep/ narcolepsy), Ratri Jagaran (awakening at night) etc. deteriorate their overall health. In ancient times Yogis like Arjun and Laxman had conquered sleep and achieved their goal without facing any noticeable health issues. In contemporary world the concept of Yoga Nidra is brought into vogue due to its beneficial effects on human health. Hence it is always necessary to understand the concept of Nidra, factors affecting it and its role in sustaining a healthy life.

Key words: Traya Upasthambha, Nidra, Swapna, Tamoguna.

## INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda believes in Tridosha theory i.e., Vata, Pitta and Kapha, which is responsible for maintenance of body. Together these three are called Tristhambha (three pillars) which in equilibrium state helps in nourishment and proper functioning of body. Then

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DOI: 10.21760/jaims.8.11.9

comes the concept of *Traya-Upasthambha* (supporting pillars), that keeps the body in normalcy state by helping Vata, Pitta and Kapha maintaining their natural physiological action. Traya Upasthambha is the amalgamation of three factors; these are Ahar (diet), Swapna (sleep) and Brahmacharya.<sup>[1]</sup> Swapna / Nidra being one of the main components of Traya Upasthambha, 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. Factors like Ahara, Prakriti, external stimuli also affect *Nidra*. An extensive description of *Nidra* found in Ayurveda to acknowledge its role on health. Nidra in Sanskrit is feminine gender, the word is derived from Sanskrit word root "Nidi Kustsyaayaam" by adding the suffix "Rak", it means to sleep, sleepiness, sloth, dream, shutting, budding state, dull, drowsiness etc. Shayana, Swapah, Swapna, Supti, Sushupti, Bhutadhatri, Vaishnavi, Maya etc. are the synonyms of

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*Nidra. Swapna* is often used as synonymous term for *Nidra* in *Ayurvedic* classics. In *Sanskrit* literature *Swapna* is a *Kriyavachi sabda*, which means sleep. This is why in our *Samhitas* the term *Swapna* is used primarily for *Nidra* and secondarily for *Swapna* (dream).

When the *Mana* including the *Indriyas* is exhausted, tired and they dissociate themselves from their objects, at that very time *Nidra* occurs.<sup>[2]</sup> *Acharya Chakrapani* while commenting, simplified the verse. When *Mana* along with *Atma* gets *Klanta* (inactive), also the *Indriyas* become inert and they do not receive any cognitive information from the outer world, then only *Nidra* appears.

*Hridaya* is delineated as *Chetana Sthanam* and when it is engulfed by *Tamoguna*, *Nidra* occurs. *Nidra* is caused by *Tamoguna* while *Jagaran* (awakening) is due to *Satvaguna*.<sup>[3]</sup> The concept of dominance of *Tamoguna* over others in *Nidra* was popularized among the *Acharyas* of ancient India, it also reflected in *Rigveda* where it was said that, the Gods, *Apta Purusha* etc. are said to have no sleeping patterns due to lack of *Tamoguna*.

## **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

- 1. Study the fundamentals of Nidra.
- 2. Study the usefulness of *Nidra* in health as well as morbid conditions.

# **MATERIAL AND METHODS**

#### **Materials**

#### **Primary resources:**

Keeping in the view of the functionality and utility of *Nidra* on human body, *Brihat-Trayee* along with their commentaries and other classical literatures had been included under primary sources.

#### Secondary resources:

Articles, research papers, previous thesis papers etc. by PG and Ph.D. scholars and internet sources had been considered under secondary resources. The key word *"Nidra"* was used in online search.

#### Methods

Above mentioned materials had been gathered to study the diverse references of *Nidra*. Some concepts of *Nidra* had been devised in tabular form for easy understanding.

## RESULTS

- In many places of Ayurveda Samhitas, Swapna is used as a synonym of Nidra, while some commentators have differentiated these two terms in specific verses and used the term "Swapna Darshan" (dreaming).
- 2. Sleep is disturbed by dominance of *Vata, Raja Guna* which results in *Swapna Darshan*.
- 3. In *Brihat-Trayee, Nidra* is classified according to the cause which gives rise to it.

## Table 1: Types of *Nidra* according to *Acharyas*.

Acharya Sushrut <sup>[4]</sup> (3 types)	Acharya Charak <sup>[5]</sup> (6 types)	Acharya Vagbhatta <sup>[6]</sup> (7 types)
<i>Swavavik</i> - this type of <i>Nidra</i> occurs naturally on a daily basis in all living beings.	Ratriswabhavat - sleep produced due to the nature of night, occurs naturally in all living beings. This is also known as Bhutadhatri Nidra.	Kalaswabhavaj - routine sleep induced with effect of time
<b>Vaikariki -</b> occurs due to diseases.	<b>Sleshmasamudbhava -</b> due to excess of Kapha dosha.	<b>Kapha</b> <b>Prabhavaj -</b> due to effect of Kapha.
-	<b>Mana -</b> <b>Sharirshramasambhav</b> - due to mental and physical fatigue.	<b>Chittakheda</b> <b>Prabhavaj</b> - due to mental exertion.
-	-	<b>Dehakheda</b> <b>Prabhavaj -</b> due to physical exertion.
-	<b>Vyadhianuvartini -</b> appears in many	Amayakheda Prabhavaj -

- Agantuki - o due to exten factors.	diseases.
- Agantuki - due to exten	occurring <b>Agantuja</b> - due
due to exter	° • •
	factors.
Tamasi - whenTamobhavaSangyan Vahaexcess of TaSrotas filled withquality.Sleshmadominated bydominated byTamoguna. It isknown asAnavabodhini(Agyanakaraka).Occurs duringPralaya Kala(death).	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·

4. A substantial collection of various other sleep that mimics with sleep put together to facilitate the understating of *Nidra* which is tabularized below,

# Table 2: Classification of Prakrit/ Vikrit/ Kritrim/ conditional Nidra.

Prakrit / Swabhavik (Natural)	<i>Vikrit / Aswabhavik</i> (Unnatural / indicative of disease)	<i>Kritrim</i> (man- made)*	Conditional *
Ratriswabhavprabh av	Tamobhava / Tamasi / Tamobhavaj	Droni- Praveshik a Rasayana	Hibernation (Shita Shupti)
Swabhavik	Mana-Sharir Shramasambhav / Chittakheda Prabhavaj, Deha Kheda Prabhavaj	Yoga Nidra (Yogic Sleep)	Aestivation (Grishma- Shupti)
Kalaswabhavaj	Shleshmaprabha vaj / Kapha Prabhavaj	-	-
-	Vyadhi- Anuvartini / Vaikariki / Amayakheda Prabhavaj	-	-

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- 5. Among all types of *Nidra*, ideally *Bhutadhatri Nidra* is of the most important one for human health. It comes when there is fragmental lessening of *Satvik Guna* and slight increment in *Tamas Guna* whereas *Jagaran* (awakening state) is just opposite of it.
- 6. A good sleep pattern is regarded as *Tridosa-Samyakara, Dhatu Samyakara, Balya,* and improves *Vyadhikshamatva.*
- Acharyas have stated that proper quantity of sleep is necessary for all. Sleeping time as per different Acharyas has been summarized below.

Acharyas	Sleeping time
Sushrut	Time for <i>Diva Swapna</i> should be half of the time of night awakening.
Vagbhatta	2-3 Yama (6- 9 hours) for Swabavik Nidra
Dalhan Nivandha Samgrah Teeka on Sushrut Samhita	1 Muhurta (48 minutes) for Diva Swapna
Bhav Mishra (Bhav Prakash)	1 Muhurta (48 minutes) for Diva Swapna

 Table 3: Recommended sleep as per Ayurveda.

- 8. Improper sleep like *Ratri Jagaran* causes aggravation of *Vata-Pitta*, *Diva Swapna* causes *Tridosha-Prakopa*. Its ill-effects can be reduced by elevating *Satvik Guna* and diminishing *Raja-Tamo Guna* by taking *Satvik Ahar-Vihar*. Complication and harmful effects of Irregular sleep can be controlled to normalcy by *Padamshika Krama Vidhi* and *Okasatmyata*.
- People who indulge in *Ratri Jagaran* can implement the habit of *Aseenaprachalayitam* (sleeping while sitting) and should sleep half of the time of *Ratri Jagaran* in day time.
- 10. *Nidra* has been kept under *Adharaniya Vega* (nonsuppressible urges). That means it is a natural

phenomenon of human body which should not be suppressed. On suppression it causes *Jrumva* (yawning), *Angamarda* (malaise), *Tandra* (drowsiness), *Siraroga* (diseases of head), *Akshigaurav* (heaviness in eyes) etc.<sup>[7]</sup>

11. There are so many factors which affect *Nidra* like *Doshas, Prakriti,* diseases etc.

# Table 4: Characteristics of Nidra according toShareerika Dosha.

Shareerika Dosha	Swabhavika Avastha	Vridhi Avastha	Kshaya Avastha
Vata	Less and disturbed sleep	Loss of sleep (Nidra Nasha)	-
Pitta	Moderate sleep	Less sleep (Alpa Nidra)	-
Kapha	Sound sleep	Excess sleep (Atinidra/ Tandra)	Prajagaran

 Table 5: Types of Nidra according to Manasika

 Prakriti<sup>[8]</sup>

Manasika Prakriti	Characteristic features
Satvika	Sleep occurs in midnight as there is slight reduction in <i>Satva Guna</i> and increase in <i>Tamoguna</i> .
Rajashika	Animitta (without any cause), Aniyat Kala (untimely sleep).
Tamasika	Although Nidra occurs due to Tamoguna, but here due to excessive accumulation of Tamas leads to Tamasika Nidra.

#### Table 6: Sleep pattern and disease.

Sleep pattern	Disease
Diva Swapna	Kasa, Swasa, Pratishyaya, Shira Gaurav, Angamarda, Arochaka Etc.
Ati-Nidra	Snigdhata, Santarpaniyajanya Roga

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Nidra Nasha	Karshya Roga, Rukshata, Vata-Pitta Prakopa.
Nidra Vega Dharan	Jrumva, Angamarda, Tandra, Shira Roga, Akshi Gaurav etc.
Vishamasayana	Vata Vridhhi

12. Yoga Nidra (yogic sleep): In ancient Hindu scriptures Lord Vishnu is believed to be in the state of "Yoga Nidra". In modern world Yoga Nidra is practiced by taking the individual in Savasana and inducing guided meditation, which helps in physical, mental and spiritual wellness.

### DISCUSSION

During sleep all the *Indriyas* dissociate themselves from their objects but *Mana* remains intact hence *Swpana* occurs.<sup>[9]</sup>

Non-existence of *Bodha* (state of awakening) is *Swapah* i.e., *Swapna*. The things perceived by sense organs which are collected in the form of *Smruti* (memories) or the things which are felt by body and inner mind of the individuals when affected by *Rajaguna, Swapna* occurs which is known as *Swapna Darsana*.

When a human sleeps, due to his *Raja Yukta Mana* he receives certain things in his mind and this is known as *Swapna* (dream).<sup>[10]</sup>

Ratriswabhavat / Swabhavik / Kalaswabhavaj Nidra are the natural sleep which occurs in all living beings in night. Vaikariki Nidra characterized by some factors that occurs due to anomalies includes Sleshmasamudbhava/ Kapha Prabhavaj, Mana-Sharirshramasambhav/ Amayakheda - Chittakheda-Dehakheda Prabhavaj, Vyadhianuvartini, Agantuki/ Agantuja etc. Nidra like Tamobhava/ Tamasi/ Tamobhavaj etc. occurs due to dominance of Tamaguna in excess.

Droni-Praveshika Rasayana is a form of Rasayana treatment, where the person is advised to take stomach full of special kind of formulation made up of 38 herbs and made to lie down (unconscious) in a wooden casket for a period of 6 months.

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Yoga Nidra (Yogic sleep): Yoga Nidra is linked to meditation in Shaiva and Buddhist Tantras, while some medieval Hatha yoga texts use "Yoga Nidra" as synonym for the meditative state of samadhi. In Upanishads and Mahabharat a state called "Yoga Nidra" is also mentioned. In ancient time Yogis, Apta Purush etc are said to practice Yoga Nidra by increasing Satvik Guna and took the advantage of Nidra even without following sleeping patterns. In Hinduism lord Vishnu is picturized in a state of Yoga Nidra. One can take the benefit of Bhutadhatri Nidra by practicing Yoga Nidra. It is a state of consciousness between waking and sleeping, induced by a guided meditation, immensely powerful meditation technique and one of the easiest form Yoga practices to develop and maintain healthy mind and spirit. In modern times, Satyananda Saraswati claimed to have experience Yoga Nidra. In this Yoga Nidra, the practitioner rests comfortably in Savasana and the systematic meditation takes it through the Pancha Maya Kosha (five layers of self), leaving with a sense of wholeness.

**Hibernation** - It is a state of minimal activity and metabolic depression undergone by some animal species. It is characterized by low body temperature, slow breathing and heart rate and low metabolic rate, commonly occurs in winter season.

Aestivation - It is characterized by inactivity and low metabolic rate, that is entered in response to high temperature and arid condition. It takes place during times of heat and dryness, which are often the summer season.

## Bhutadhatri Nidra<sup>[12]</sup>

The Nidra that comes naturally due to the effect of night is known as Ratriswabhavprabhav Nidra. It is otherwise known as Bhutadhatri Nidra. Here Acharya Chakrapani beautified the term Bhutadhatri, Bhuta i.e., Prani (all living beings) + Dhatri i.e., nursing mother, so this is the Nidra that gives nourishment, strength, care and support to the body as of a nursing mother.

It is a form of sound, good sleep and indicative of good health, causes refreshment of both body and mind, improves happiness and restores the natural symmetry of *Dosha, Dhatu, Mala* in human body. It also assists in keeping mental health in a jovial and enthusiastic condition.

When sleep is taken properly provides *Sukha* (pleasure), *Pushti* (growth and development), *Bala* (immunity/ vitality), *Vrishata* (sexual vigor), *Gyanam* (knowledge/ intellect) and *Jeevanam* (longevity). Taking sleep in appropriate time and amount causes *Dhatusamya* (equilibrium state of dhatu), *Bala Vridhi* (increases power of body and mind), *Anga Pushti* (nourishment of body), *Ayuh Sthirata* (gives stability to life span).<sup>[14]</sup>

Improper and inadequate sleep has harmful effects on both body and mind. The consequences of improper sleep include *Karshyam* (emaciation of body), *Abalam* (loss of strength), *Dukkha* (grief), *Kleevta* (impotency), *Agyanam* (ignorance).<sup>[15]</sup>

In *Ayurveda* literature improper sleep majorly described as *Nidra Nasha* (lack of sleep/ reduced sleep time) and *Ati Nidra* (excess of sleep). Prolonged awakening often associated with some serious physical and mental morbid condition, improper function of sense organs, thought process and causes abnormal behavior.

When an individual stays up night or lack good sleeping pattern, it causes increase of *Vata Dosha* which causes emaciation and roughness of body. *Nidra Nasha* caused due to many factors but *main* five reasons are *Karya* (workload), *Kala* (time), *Vikara* (diseases of body and mind), *Prakriti* (constitution of body and mind), *Vayu* (*Vata Dosha*).<sup>[16]</sup> It is also caused by *Vata, Pitta, Manah Santap* (sorrowful mind), *Sharirik Khsinata* (weakness of body), *Abhighata* (traumatic condition of body).<sup>[17]</sup>

Ati Nidra is characterized by excess sleeping. Aggravated Kapha Dosha and Tamoguna obstruct the Srotas (channels) and cause heaviness of body developing laziness, drowsiness, and increased amount of sleep. When an individual involves in excess sleeping, it causes Kapha Dosa increment in body which in turn gives rise to denseness of body mass and unctuousness of body.

Avoid *Nidra* in all seasons except *Grishma Ritu* (summer season). However, children, old aged persons, persons who have become weak due to excessive coitus, persons having low amount of *Meda-Sweda-Kapha-Rasa-Rakta* can take sleep during daytime. The persons, who stay up in the night, should take day sleep (preferably half of the time of night awakening).<sup>[18]</sup>

Day sleep is regarded as *Vikriti* (diseased condition). *Adharma* (non-righteous things) and *Sarva Dosha Prakopa* (vitiation of all doshas) is said to occur by taking day sleep. From the vitiated *Doshas* diseases like *Kasa, Swasa, Pratisyaya, Siragaurav, Angamarda, Aruchi, Jwara, Agnimandya* etc. takes place.<sup>[19]</sup> Children, old aged, weak persons, people involved in *Adhyayan*, weak due to *Madya, Stree* and excessive work, *Ajirna, Kshatakheena, Trishna, Atisara* etc. can take sleep at day time.<sup>[20]</sup>

Due to *Ratri Jagaran Vata- Pittaj* diseases arise; therefore it should be avoided. But people with *Kaphaj*, *Medaj Prakriti* and suffering from *Visha Vyadhi* can practice *Ratri Jagaran*.<sup>[21]</sup>

Ratri Jagaran causes Rukshta (roughness) in body and Divaswapna causes Snigdhata (unctuousness). Aseenaprachalayitam (Sleeping while sitting) doesn't give rise to such conditions.<sup>[22]</sup>

One should not remain awake late at night deliberately and should not take sleep at day time as *Doshas* gets aggravated in these two conditions so one should compliance timely sleep. By practicing such one can become free from diseases, can have a joyful state of mind. It also increases *Bala* (immunity/ strength), complexion of skin, libido, maintains body weight and opulence.<sup>[23]</sup>

#### **Sleeping posture:**

It is always advised to sleep in left lateral position<sup>[24]</sup> because *Grahani* which is the site of *Agni* lies in the left side of the body above the *Nabhi* (umbilicus), which helps in proper digestion.

Now-a-days people with stationary and helter-skelter lifestyle are likely to get less/ disturbed/ untimely/ over sleep. They can prevent themselves just by following the directives of sleep stated in *Samhitas*. People who cannot have sleep at night due to their profession (night-shift workers) can reduce the ill-effects on their health by practicing *Okasatmyata*. People with disturbed sleep pattern should first avoid its causative factors, if in special conditions they are unable to do so, they can increase *Satvik Guna* by taking *Satvik Ahara-Vihar*, reducing the deleterious effects of improper sleep on health by *Padamsika Krama Vidhi*.

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In ancient time of *Ramayana, Mahabharat* there is also mention of *Nidra*. In *Ramayana,* Laxman is said to remain sleepless for 14 years this is why he is known as *Nidrajayee*. In *Mahabharat, Arjun* is well known as *Gudakesh* (*Gudaka - Nidra + Ish - Devata*) i.e., who has mastered over sleep.<sup>[25]</sup> This depicts if we can get control over our sleep, we can achieve goal of our life.

## **CONCLUSION**

Nidra is one of the salient components of human physiology and its importance can be understood from inclusion in *Traya-Upasthambha*. Health and longevity can be obtained by quantitative and qualitative sleep as it is needed for every individual to maintain balance of body, mind and soul. The physical and mental status of an individual merely depends upon sleep. The ultimately goal here is to get sound sleep by increasing Satvik Guna and diminishing Tamas and averting all the factors that affect sleep. People who wish to take day sleep but do not want to get diseased should practice Aseenprachalayitam. Habits of irregular and untimely sleep and its effect on health can be reduced with the help of Padamshika Krama and Okasatmyata. More research and studies should be conducted to record the consequences of reducing irregular sleep by Padamshika Kram and Okasatmyata on human health. Relaxing mind, stress- free lifestyle, yoga, pranayama, proper diet etc. can help to achieve good sleep.

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**How to cite this article:** Puspa Priyadarshani, Vijay Shankar Pandey. Study of Nidra w.s.r. to Bhutadhatri Nidra. J Ayurveda Integr Med Sci 2023;11:70-76. http://dx.doi.org/10.21760/jaims.8.11.9

Source of Support: Nil, Conflict of Interest: None declared.

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