



## Original Article

### A SHORT REVIEW ON “IMPORTANCE OF NIDRA (SLEEP) IN AYURVEDA”

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#### ABSTRACT

In Ayurveda, Nidra (sleep) is described as one of the three pillars of life. Ahara (diet) and Brahmacharya (regulated lifestyle) and nidra (sleep) three pillars called as Trayopastambha.

Proper Nidra plays an important role in maintaining physical as well as mental well-being. During sleep, the body undergoes repair and rejuvenation process. Proper sleep nourishes the dhatus (tissues), enhances strength (bala), supports immunity (ojas), and restores energy lost during the day. Sleep plays a major role in the balance of the three doshas also.

Nidra is equally important for mental health also. It improves concentration, memory, and decision-making ability, calming stress. Proper Nidra improves skin complexion that's why, nidra is often called a "Natural cosmetic." Disturbances in sleep lead to many disorders. Thus, Nidra is not only rest but a restorative process essential for physical and mental health, immunity.

**Keywords:** Nidra, Review, Ayurveda, Sleep

#### INTRODUCTION

According to Ayurveda, *Nidra* (sleep) is one of the three pillars of health [Garde \(2009\)](#). *Aahar, brahmcharya* and *nidra* are three pillars of life. These three supports are considered essential for preserving life, maintaining health, and preventing disease. Sleep is not simply downtime but a fundamental biological and psychological function that influences strength, clarity of mind, emotional balance, and immunity.

Ayurveda regards sleep as a natural restorative process. This process brings harmony to the *doshas* (*Vata, Pitta, and Kapha*), revitalizes tissues, supports digestion (*Agni*), and stabilizes the nervous system. Disturbed or insufficient sleep (*Anidra*) is believed to be a root cause of numerous health problems. Fatigue, anxiety, poor digestion, weak immunity, and premature aging etc are due to *Anidra*.

Unlike modern views that often consider sleep a passive state. Ayurveda emphasizes its quality, timing, and duration, which vary depending on one's constitution (*Prakriti*), age, season, and lifestyle. For instance, *Kapha*-dominant individuals may need less sleep, while *Vata*-predominant individuals are more prone to irregular sleep patterns.

Man requires 6-8 hours of sleep everyday for good health. Period of sleep of infant is long (16-18 hrs), it decreases as per age. In adult it's 7-8 hours and in old age it goes down up to 4-5 hours.

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This introduction highlights *Nidra*'s role in Ayurvedic health philosophy. Its balancing functions for both body and mind. This review paper related to *Nidra* which cover Ayurvedic philosophy of *nidra* and its impact on body-mind system.

## MECHANISM OF NIDRA

In Ayurveda, Nidra (sleep) is not just a passive state but a vital physiological process. It is one of the *Trayopastambha* (three pillars of life), alongside *Ahara* (food) and *Brahmacharya* (regulated conduct).

The mechanism of *Nidra* involves the interplay of the mind (*Manas*), the senses (*Indriyas*), and the biological forces (*Doshas* and *Gunas*).

## THE CORE PHYSIOLOGICAL PROCESS

According to the classical texts (specifically the *Charaka Samhita*), sleep occurs through a specific sequence of exhaustion and withdrawal:

- **Fatigue of the Mind (Manas):** When the mind becomes exhausted by continuous sensory processing and thinking, it loses its sharpness.
- **Withdrawal of Senses (Indriyas):** As the mind tires, the sensory and motor organs (eyes, ears, etc.) detach from their respective objects (*Vishaya*).
- **Dissociation from the Soul (Atma):** When the mind and senses become inactive and dissociate from the self/soul, the individual enters the state of Nidra.

## THE THREE MAJOR THEORIES

Ayurvedic Acharyas explained the physiology of sleep through different conceptual frameworks:

### 1) The Tamas Theory (Acharya Sushruta)

The mind is governed by three qualities: *Sattva* (clarity), *Rajas* (activity), and *Tamas* (inertia).

- **Mechanism:** When *Tamo Guna* (the quality of darkness and stability) dominates the mind and covers the *Hridaya* (heart/seat of consciousness), the person falls asleep.
- **Awakening:** Awakening occurs when *Sattva Guna* becomes predominant again.

### 2) The Kapha-Srotas Theory (Acharya Vaghbata)

This theory focuses on the physical blockage of the channels of consciousness.

- **Mechanism:** Accumulation of *Kapha Dosha* (the water/earth element) occurs in the *Manovaha Srotas* (channels of the mind).
- **Result:** This "heavy" accumulation blocks the flow of sensory information, leading to the heaviness and stillness of sleep.

### 3) The Fatigue Theory (Acharya Charaka)

Sleep is viewed as a restorative necessity following exertion.

- **Mechanism:** Physical and mental exertion (*Shrama*) leads to the exhaustion of the *Indriyas*. To recover, the body naturally induces a state of inactivity (Nidra).

## NIDRA [ACCORDING TO CHARAKA SAMHITA]

### Definition of Nidra [Tripathi \(2010\)](#):

*Yada tu manasi klante karmatmanah klamanvitah /*

*Vishayebhyo nivartante tada svapiti manavah //*

### Meaning of the Definition:

*Manasi Klante:* When the Mind (*Manas*) becomes exhausted or fatigued.

*Karmatmanah Klamanvitah:* When the Sensory (*Jnanendriya*) and Motor (*Karmendriya*) organs also become tired.

*Vishayebhyo Nivartante:* When the mind and senses detach or withdraw from their respective objects (external stimuli).

*Tada Svapiti Manavah:* At that moment, the human being enters the state of sleep.

In simpler terms, *maharshi Charaka* defines sleep as a state where the mind and senses are so fatigued that they can no longer perceive external objects, leading the individual to disconnect from the surroundings to rest.

### Contraindications (Day Sleep) [Tripathi \(2010\)](#) :

Charaka generally prohibits sleeping during the day (Diva-swapna). Diva-swapna increases Kapha and Pitta, leading to obesity, heaviness, and skin diseases.

Exception: Sleeping during the day is only permitted in the Grishma Ritu (summer season). In the Grishma Ritu the nights are short. The body's Vata and Rukshata (dryness) increase due to the heat.

**Nidra as Adharniya vega *Tripathi (2010)* :**

A In *charak samhita* nidra is mentioned under *adharniya vega*.

### **TYPES OF NIDRA (ACCORDING TO CHARAKA SAMHITA)**

In charak samhita there is description of 6 types of nidra.

**1) Tamobhava Nidra:**

Tamobhava Nidra is occurs Due to prominent Tamasguna. Due to increase of TamasGuna will give rise inertia, dullness, mental heaviness to body. Its increase laziness and heaviness of body and mind too.

**2) Shleshmasamudbhava Nidra:**

Shleshmasamudbhava Nidra is occurs due to prominent Kaphadosha. In this type of nidra heaviness occurs in body .Its Natural, restorative nidra

**3) ManahShramaSambhava Nidra:**

Nidra occurs due to mental, In this type of nidra, the body naturally demands rest after fatigue.

**4) ShariraShramaSambhava Nidra:**

Nidra occurs due to physical exertion. In this type of nidra, the body naturally demands rest after fatigue.

**5) Agantuki Nidra:**

Agantukinidra occurs due to injury, poisoning, alcohol, or medicines. This type of nidra is Consider as abnormal and not healthy.

**6) VyadhiAnubandhini Nidra:**

VyadhiAnubandhini Nidra is occurs due to complication of disease as one of the symptom. Example: excessive sleep in conditions like diabetes (Prameha), depression, fever stages, etc.

**7) RatriSwabhavaprabha Nidra (Bhutadhatri Nidra):**

RatriSwabhavaprabha Nidra is occurs at night due to nature's cycle. Its called as normal nidra. This nidra is Consider as best nidra. Its nourishing sleep for body and mind.

### **NIDRA [ACCORDING TO SUSHRUT SAMHITA]**

The primary and most detailed reference for Nidra (sleep) is found in the sushrut samhita.

Description of nidra found in "Garbha Vyakarana Shariram",which is Sharira Sthana's fourth adhaya.While most Ayurvedic samhita discuss nidra in the context of daily routine (Sutrasthana). Sushruta places nidra in the section on Anatomy/Embryology (sharir sthana) to highlight how sleep is an essential physiological process tied to the heart and consciousness.

### **REFERENCES AND CONCEPTS OF NIDRA**

- 1) **The Mechanism of Sleep (The Heart & Tamas) *Sharma (2010)*:** Sushruta explains that sleep occurs when the heart—the seat of consciousness—is "covered" by Tamas.  
"Hridaya is the seat of consciousness (Chetana) in living beings. When it is overwhelmed by Tamas, sleep enters the body."
- 2) **The Lotus Analogy *Sharma (2010)*:** He compares the heart to a lotus flower to explain the waking and sleeping states:
- 3) The heart is shaped like a downward-facing lotus. It opens (expands) when a person is awake and closes (contracts) when the person sleeps.
- 4) **Classification of Nidra:** Sushruta describes Nidra as "Vaishnavi Maya" (the divine illusive energy of Lord Vishnu) because it naturally affects all living beings. He classifies it based on the dominance of the Trigunas:

### **TYPES OF NIDRA (ACCORDING TO SUSHRUT)**

- 1) **Tamasi:** Predominance of Tamas : Occurs at the time of death (unconsciousness) or causes excessive sleep during day and night.
- 2) **Swabhaviki:** Predominance of Sattva :Natural, healthy sleep that occurs at midnight.

3) **Vaikariki:** Increase in Vata/Pitta or Disease : Pathological sleep or insomnia (Nidranasha) caused by mental or physical distress.

**The Effects of Proper Sleep** [Sharma \(2010\)](#):

Sushruta emphasizes that the following "pairs" of life depend entirely on the quality of sleep :

**Table 1**

<b>Table 1 Showing Effect of Samyak Nidra</b>	
<i>Sukha-Dukha</i> (Happiness and Misery)	<i>Pushti-Karshya</i> (Nourishment and Emaciation)
<i>Bala-Abala</i> (Strength and Weakness)	<i>Vrishata-Kleebata</i> (Virility and Impotence)
<i>Jnana-Ajnana</i> (Knowledge and Ignorance)	<i>Jivita-Mrityu</i> (Life and Death)

- In sushrut sutra stan they Mentions the importance of sleep in the management of surgical patients (Vranita). [Sharma \(2010\)](#)
- In sushrut chikitsa stan Discusses the management of sleep disorders and the benefits of timely sleep for balancing the Dhatus. Here they mention that never sleep with head down position [Sharma \(2010\)](#)

**NIDRA [ACCORDING TO ASHTANGA SANGRAH]**

In Ashtanga Sangraha, Reference of Nidra (sleep) is more extensive and detailed than in the Ashtanga Hridayam. While both texts share the same core philosophy, the Sangraha provides a specific physiological mechanism and a unique seven-fold classification.

**The Physiology of Sleep (Samprapti)** [Ranade and Paranjape \(2006\)](#)

Vaghbata explains the onset of sleep through the involvement of Kapha and the exhaustion of the sensory channels. When the Manovaha Srotas (channels of the mind) are covered or filled with Shleshma (Kapha) and the sense organs (Indriyas) withdraw from their functions due to fatigue (Shrama), the individual enters the state of sleep.

**Types of Nidra ( According to Astang sangrah )** [Ranade and Paranjape \(2006\)](#)

Unlike other texts that may list six types, Ashtanga Sangraha explicitly identifies seven types of sleep based on their origin:

**Benefits of proper sleep (Nidra)** [Ranade and Paranjape \(2006\)](#)

Acharya Vaghbata states that the following factors are directly dependent on proper sleep:

**Sukha (Happiness):** Quality sleep fosters a positive state of mind and emotional stability.

**Pushti (Nourishment/Growth):** It is essential for the proper development of body tissues (Dhatus) and maintaining a healthy physique.

**Bala (Strength):** Sleep rejuvenates the body, replenishes energy, and enhances physical and immunological strength.

**Vrishata (Virility):** It supports reproductive health and sexual potency.

**Jnana (Knowledge/Intelligence):** Proper rest allows the mind to process information, leading to better clarity, memory, and wisdom.

**Jivita (Life/Longevity):** Consistent, healthy sleep patterns are linked to a longer, healthier lifespan.

**NIDRA [ACCORDING TO ASHTANGA HRIDAYAM]**

One of the core classical texts of Ayurveda written by Acharya Vaghbata, Nidra (sleep) is treated as a vital physiological function. It is categorized as one of the Trayopastambha (Three Pillars of Life), alongside Ahara (food) and Brahmacharya (regulated conduct).

**The Significance of Sleep:**

Happiness and misery, nourishment and emaciation, strength and weakness, virility and impotence, knowledge and ignorance, life and its cessation all these depend on sleep. [Garde \(2009\)](#)

**Benefits of Timely Sleep (Kala Nidra)**

When taken at the right time and in the right proportion, sleep provides:

**Table 2**

**Table 2 Showing Benefit of Kala Nidra**

<b>Sukha:</b> Physical and mental happiness	<b>Pushti:</b> Proper nourishment of the body tissues
<b>Bala:</b> Physical strength and immunity	<b>Vrushata:</b> Sexual vigor and fertility
<b>Jnana:</b> Clarity of mind and intellect	<b>Jeevitam:</b> Long, healthy life

**TYPES OF NIDRA (ACCORDING TO VAGBHATA)**

Vagbhata classifies sleep into seven types based on its origin:

- 1) **Kala-svabhava:** Natural sleep occurring at night (physiological).
- 2) **Amaya:** Sleep caused by diseases.
- 3) **Chitta-kheda:** Sleep due to mental exhaustion.
- 4) **Deha-kheda:** Sleep due to physical exhaustion.
- 5) **Kaphaja:** Sleep caused by an increase in Kapha Dosha.
- 6) **Agantuja:** Sleep caused by external factors (e.g., injury or poisoning).
- 7) **Tamobhava:** Sleep caused by the predominance of Tamas (the quality of darkness/dullness).

**RULES AND CONTRAINDICATIONS**

The text provides specific guidelines on when to sleep and when to stay awake:

- 1) **Ratri Jagarana (Night Awakening):** Staying awake at night increases Vata and causes Rukshata (dryness) in the body. [Garde \(2009\)](#)
- 2) **Diva-svapna (Daytime Sleep):** Generally prohibited as it increases Kapha and Pitta, leading to heaviness, indigestion, and skin diseases.
  - **Exceptions:** Day sleep is allowed in summer (Grishma Ritu), for the elderly, children, those exhausted by travel/work, or those suffering from grief or respiratory issues. [Garde \(2009\)](#)
  - **Sitting Sleep:** If one must sleep during the day, doing so in a sitting posture is considered less harmful as it does not excessively increase Kapha.

**SUPPRESSION OF SLEEP (NIDRA VEGA) [Garde \(2009\)](#)**

In Roganutpadaniya Adhaya, sleep is listed as one of the 13 Natural urges (Adharaneeya Vegas) that should never be suppressed. Suppressing the urge to sleep leads to:

**Table 3****Table 3 Showing Side Effect Due to Suppression of Sleep (Nidra Vega)**

<b>Delusion or confusion (Moha)</b>	<b>Heaviness in the head and eyes</b>
Lassitude and frequent yawning	Body aches

**The Impact of Improper Sleep [Garde \(2009\)](#)**

Ayurveda warns against two extremes: *Nidranasha* (Insomnia) and *Atinidra* (Excessive sleep).

**NIDRA [ACCORDING TO YOGA AND VEDANTA PHILOSOPHY]**

In Yoga philosophy, Nidra is seen as a state of consciousness rather than just a physiological need.

**Nidra according to Yoga Sutras (Patanjali)**

Patanjali describes *panchvrittis* [Satchidananda \(1985\)](#) (mental modifications), Nidra is one of them.

**Definition of nidra : (Accordingly patanjali)**

*"Abhavapratyayaalambanavrittinidra"*

In yoga sutra nidra is defined as, it is a mental modification based on the absence of conscious activity.

**Types of Nidra (Accordingly patanjali)**

There are descriptions of types of nidra based on guna dominance

- 1) **TamasicNidra:** heavy, dull, leading to ignorance.
- 2) **RajasicNidra:** restless sleep, filled with dreams, disturbances.
- 3) **SattvicNidra:** deep, calm, restorative sleep (closest to Yoga Nidra).

### ***Yoga Nidra***

- A guided relaxation practice (conscious sleep).
- Helps balance doshas, reduce stress, and restore body-mind harmony.

## **NIDRA IN MODERN CLASSIFICATION** [Ramar et al. \(2021\)](#)

Modern medicine, "normal sleep" is no longer defined solely by its duration. It is viewed as a multidimensional construct. This multidimensional construct includes duration, quality, timing, efficiency, and the absence of disorders

Modern science also classifies sleep into two main types, cycling through the night:

### **1) Non-REM Sleep (NREM)**

- Stages 1-4, from light to deep sleep.
- Stage 3 & 4 = Slow-wave deep sleep (restorative).

### **2) REM Sleep**

- Characterized by rapid eye movement, dreams, memory consolidation.
- Description of Ayurveda's RatriSwabhavaprabhaNidra aligns with modern 'NREM deep sleep', being the most restorative.

## **MODERN BIOLOGICAL MARKERS**

Beyond time and stages, "normal" sleep is evaluated by several objective and subjective markers:

**Sleep Latency:** The ability to fall asleep within approximately 30 minutes of going to bed.

**Sleep Efficiency:** The proportion of time spent asleep relative to the total time spent in bed

**Wake After Sleep Onset (WASO):** A key indicator of sleep quality; normal sleep has minimal fragmentation or long periods of wakefulness after initially falling asleep.

**Metabolic Clearance:** A modern discovery suggests sleep is a period of "cleaning" where the glymphatic system clears metabolic waste products (like amyloid-beta) from the brain.

## **IMPORTANCE OF NIDRA IN AYURVEDA**

In Ayurveda, *Nidra* (sleep) is regarded as one of the three pillars of life (*Trayopastambha*), along with *Ahara* (diet) and *Brahmacharya* (regulated lifestyle). Just as a building rests firmly on strong pillars, the balance of these three factors ensures health, vitality, and longevity.

Proper *Nidra* plays a crucial role in maintaining both physical and mental well-being. During sleep, the body undergoes repair and rejuvenation. It nourishes the *dhatus* (tissues), enhances strength (*bala*), supports immunity (*ojas*), and restores energy lost during the day. Adequate sleep also maintains the balance of the three doshas- *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*.

For the mind, *Nidra* is equally important. It improves concentration, memory, and decision-making ability, while calming stress and promoting emotional stability. Classical texts also highlight the role of sleep in enhancing beauty, complexion, and radiance; hence *Nidra* is often called a "natural cosmetic."

Disturbances in sleep lead to disorders: insufficient sleep (*Nidranasha*) [Ranade and Paranjape \(2006\)](#) causes weakness, anxiety, and premature aging, while excessive sleep (*Ati-nidra*) [Garde \(2009\)](#) results in obesity, diabetes (*prameha*), and lethargy. Ayurveda emphasizes that natural night sleep (*RatriSwabhavaprabhaNidra*) is the healthiest. Day sleep which called as *Diwaswap* is generally discouraged. In summer, children, elderly, and the sick can be skip from this rule. Thus, *Nidra* is not merely rest but a restorative process essential for health, immunity, mental peace, and longevity. *Nidra* is a cornerstone of Ayurvedic lifestyle.

## **DISCUSSION**

Ayurveda recognizes *Nidra* (sleep) as one of the three essential supports of health, along with food and a regulated lifestyle. Quality sleep is vital for physical, emotional, and mental well-being. It replenishes energy, strengthens immunity, supports digestion, and enhances longevity.

Insufficient or disturbed sleep disrupts doshic balance and causes many disorders. Nidra is not merely rest but a profound therapeutic process that renews body and mind.

## CONCLUSION

In Ayurveda, Nidra is considered one of the three pillars of health. It is essential for maintaining physical, mental, and emotional balance. Ayurvedic samhita like Charaka Samhita emphasize that 'sound sleep nourishes the body' just like wholesome food does.

In short, Nidra is not merely rest, but a vital therapeutic process that allows the body and mind to heal and rejuvenate.

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