



**Review Article**

**CRITICAL ANALYSIS ON THE ROLE OF NIDRA IN THE MAINTENANCE OF HEALTH - AN AYURVEDIC REVIEW**

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**ABSTRACT**

Sleep which is often considered to be a “passive activity” is increasingly being recognized as an essential aspect in both health promotion as well as prevention of chronic diseases. Insufficient sleep, either directly or indirectly, is associated with a number of chronic diseases such as diabetes mellitus, cardiovascular diseases, obesity as well as depression. Insufficient sleep is associated with the onset of these diseases and also possesses important implications for their management and its outcome. Ayurveda considers *Nidra* as one among the *Trayo upasthambha*'s along with *Ahara* and *Brahmacharya*. These 3 factors maintained in optimum quantity and quality is essential for living a healthier disease free life. Lack of sleep is considered as *Nidranasha* in Ayurveda which is attributed to the development of multiple chronic life style disorders in longer run. The role of improper *Nidra* in the development of different chronic diseases should be understood properly to prevent the damage from them and to promote healthy living among the human beings around the world.

**INTRODUCTION**

The quality of life of a human being depends on multiple factors and among them sleep is considered to be the most important one due to its effect on both body as well as the mind of the individual. In simple words, sleep is a reversible behavioral state of perpetual disengagement and unresponsiveness to the environment. Sleep is typically (but not necessarily) accompanied by postural recumbence, behavioral quiescence, closed eyes, and all the other indicators one commonly associates with sleeping. Normal human sleep comprises two states; Rapid Eye Movement (REM) and Non-REM (NREM) sleep- that alternate cyclically across a sleep episode.

NREM sleep is usually associated with minimal or fragmentary mental activity. REM sleep, by contrast, is defined by EEG activation, muscle atonia, and episodic bursts of rapid eye movements. The onset of sleep under normal circumstances in normal adult

humans is through NREM sleep. This fundamental principle of normal human sleep reflects a highly reliable finding and is important in considering normal versus pathologic sleep. For example, the abnormal entry into sleep through REM sleep can be a diagnostic sign in adult patients with narcolepsy.

Ayurvedic literatures consider *Nidra* as one of the essential function of the living organisms. *Nidra* is very important regimen of day to day life if not taken properly can cause severe diseased condition, which will affect the physical and mental health as well. Lack of sufficient sleep due to various reasons can be termed as *Nidranasha* which leads to several ailments in longer run. There are different types of *Nidra* explained in different Ayurvedic literatures which are significant for promotion of healthy wellbeing. While describing the importance of *Nidra* Ayurveda mentions that *Nidra* creates happiness in life, maintains the consistency of the body and increases the strength along with increasing the power of brain and mind.

*Nidranasha* can be defined as loss of sleep or derangement in the quality as well as quantity of the sleep. *Nidranasha* can be attributed as insomnia in contemporary medicine. Insomnia is a common sleep disorder that can make it harder to fall asleep or to stay asleep. Lack of sleep as well as disturbed sleep in

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longer run irrespective of age or gender will lead to several chronic ailments some of which may even prove to be fatal in its course. Due to distracted sleep, the circadian rhythm of the person gets disturbed leading to changes in normal metabolism as well as even in hormone secretions leading to various functional as well as structural deformities; some of which will be irreversible. In this article, there will be a critical analysis on the role of *Nidra* in the maintenance of health using Ayurvedic as well as contemporary evidences.

### Disease Review

*Acharya Charaka* mentioned *Nidranasha* as one among the 80 *Vataja Nanatmaja Vikara's*.

### Synonyms of *Nidranasha*

There are different synonyms given for *Nidranasha* by different authors in different contexts and some of them are *Anidra*, *Alpanidra*, *Asvapna*, *Jagarana*, *Nidranasha*, *Nidravighata*, *Nidradaurbalya*, *Nidrabhramsha*, *Nidrakshaya* etc.

### *Nidana* of *Nidranasha*

There is no direct mention regarding the causative factors of *Nidranasha*. During the context of explaining the *Chikitsa* procedures of *Atinidra*, *Acharya Charaka* and *Vagbhata* have mentioned that if *Atiyoga* happens in any of these procedures it may lead to *Nidranasha*. By considering this opinion of *Acharya Charaka*, the *Atiyoga* of any of those procedures along with other factors can be considered as the *Nidana* for *Nidranasha*. They are as follows:

- ✓ *Vamana Atiyoga*
- ✓ *Virechana Atiyoga*
- ✓ *Nasya Atiyoga*
- ✓ *Raktamokshana Atiyoga*
- ✓ *Dhoomapana Atiyoga*
- ✓ *Ati chinta*
- ✓ *Ati krodha*
- ✓ *Vata Vriddhi*
- ✓ *Pitta Vriddhi*
- ✓ *Manastapa*
- ✓ *Dhatu kshaya*
- ✓ *Abhigata*

*Ashtanga Sangraha* mentions some other *Nidana's* along with these for the cause of *Nidranasha* such as *Lobha*, *Harsha*, *Vyatha*, *Atimaithuna*, *Atikshudha*, *Rukshanna sevana* etc.

*Acharya Susruta* has added some more *Nidana's* along with these and has been further classified into *Aharaja Nidana*, *Viharaja Nidana* and *Manasika Nidana's*.

### *Purvarupa*

There are no specific *Purvarupa's* mentioned in our classics for *Nidranasha* as such and *Acharya Charaka* has told *Avyakta lakshana* as *Purvarupa* since he has considered it as a *Vataja Vyadhi*.

### *Rupa*

Ayurveda describes *Nidranasha* as a symptom, as a disorder and even sometimes as a complication of certain diseases. Peculiar symptoms arising during *Nidranasha* are yawning, body ache, lethargy, headache, giddiness in the head and eyes, apathy, fatigue, indigestion and diseases produced by *Vata Dosha*. Troubled sleep can lead to unpleasantness, emaciation, weakness, impotency, terminating in death.

### General Treatment

Ayurveda has described treatment protocol of *Nidranasha* in meticulous fashion. It is more or less similar in all classics, considering the involvement of *Doshas*. It directs the rectification of diet, certain procedures in routine with or without single or compound medicine. Ayurveda indicates consumption of flesh of domestic and aquatic animals, meat of buffalo and buffalo milk, wheat, black gram. Milk products like curd, ghee are also responsible to alleviate insomnia. Fruits like grapes, preparations of jaggery and sugar and wine are also indicated in *Nidranasha*.

Certain procedures like Bath, oil massage especially on the head, perfumes made from flowers and pleasant music is also helpful to induce sleep. One should keep his/her mind calm and happy, without worry, painful thoughts and greed. *Abhyanga* and *Padabhyanga* can also be practiced.

### DISCUSSION

#### Role of *Nidra* in maintaining equilibrium of *Dosha's*

According to Ayurvedic literatures, the health of an individual is dependent on several factors including equilibrium of *Dosha's*, *Agni*, *Dhatu's* etc along with following proper *Ahara* and *Vihara's*. Nowadays, maintaining the equilibrium of all these above said factors are near to impossible due to the present day lifestyle and dietary habits and the quality of life depends on the extent of maintaining those factors in its optimum level. One of the important factor in *Vihara* of an individual is proper *Nidra*. The properness of *Nidra* should be assessed in terms of both quality as well as quantity of the same. Proper *Nidra* helps in the maintenance of optimum health by maintaining proper levels of *Dosha* as well as *Dhatu* along with *Agni* whereas improper *Nidra* hampers everything in the body.

*Anidra* causes *Vata dosha prakopa* whereas *Atinidra* causes *Kapha dosha prakopa*, both of which has its own detrimental effects on the body as well as mind of the individual. Proper *Nidra* maintains the *Tridosha's* in its equilibrium which increases the productivity and quality of life of the individual. *Nidra* along with the maintenance of *Tridosha's* helps in providing *Bala* to the person and clarity of thoughts in the mind as well.

### Role of *Nidra* in maintaining proper digestion

*Nidra* has its effect on maintaining proper digestion in an individual. If *Nidra* is irregular, it derails the *Agni* leading to *Ajeerna* and *Ama* formation. This formed *Ama* leads to further formation of *Ama* and this *Ama* will be leading to disturbances in *Agni* eventually causing *Shiro guruta* etc symptoms and thus leading to again disturbances in sleep i.e., *Nidranasha* and this vicious cycle continues. On the longer run, this cycle hampers the total digestive as well as metabolic functions of the body and eventually leads to the manifestation of different acute as well as chronic diseases of multiple systems eventually leading not the decrease in the quality of life as well as the life expectancy of the individual.

### Role of *Nidra* in maintaining hormonal levels in the body

The proper functioning of endocrine system in the body is related to the maintenance of proper circadian rhythm. The circadian rhythm to be properly maintained, the sleep pattern plays an important role. Any disturbances in the pattern of sleep either quantitatively or qualitatively leads to the disruption of circadian rhythm which triggers the imbalances in hormone levels in the body. These imbalances for longer duration causes several conditions like thyroid variations such as hyperthyroidism, hypothyroidism etc. Along with proper treatment proper *Ahara* as well as *Nidra* is required for correcting hormonal disturbances. Hence *Nidranasha* has negative detrimental impact on the functioning of endocrine system and receptors in the brain which controls the production of hormones.

Since *Nidranasha* causes abnormalities in all these levels leading to the disruption of normal functioning of the bodily systems, it easily leads to the development of different diseases pertaining to different organ systems of the body, making an individual deprived of good health irrespective of age or gender.

### CONCLUSION

Proper amount of sleep on a daily basis is important in maintaining efficiency of all organs especially brain. Improper sleep can lead to physical as well as mental imbalances in the body and will eventually lead to manifestation of different diseases. Ayurvedic literatures mentioned the importance of sleep in a broader way when they explains *Nidra* in its optimum quantity and quality provides *Bala*, clarity of mind as well as optimum efficiency in the work done by an individual and if the same *Nidra* is improper, it derails the total metabolism of the body eventually leading to wide range of problems from hormonal imbalances to metabolic and lifestyle disorders in the longer run. Hence, the maintenance of proper sleep is as important as correcting dietary habits and sedentary habits for improving the quality of life and to prevent diseases.

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