

REVIEW ARTICLE

Role Of *Nidra* In Relieving Mental Health

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: *Nidra*, one of the three essential pillars (*Trayopstambha*) of life according to *Ayurveda*, plays a vital role in sustaining health and well-being. It is as crucial as *Ahara* and *Brahmacharya*. This study delves into the physiological mechanisms of sleep and highlights its significant influence on mental well-being. Proper sleep is necessary for the maintenance of homeostasis, mental clarity, emotional balance, and physical health.

Materials and Methods: A thorough review of classical Ayurvedic texts was conducted to understand *Nidra* and its impact on mental health. Additionally, academic journals and articles were referenced, and databases like Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and PubMed Central were extensively searched for relevant review articles.

Discussion: *Nidra* (sleep) is a foundational element in *Ayurveda*, vital for homeostasis, emotional balance, and overall health. The teachings of *Acharya Charaka* and *Sushruta* emphasize the role of sleep in preventing and managing mental and physical disorders. *Acharya Sushruta* explains that *Tamas* and *Shleshma* influence the heart and mind, inducing *Nidra*, similar to how neurotransmitters and circadian rhythms regulate sleep in modern physiology. In contrast, *Nidranasha* (lack of sleep) can lead to mental disturbances, stress, anxiety, and other psychological issues, underscoring the critical role of sleep in both ancient and modern contexts.

Conclusion: In *Ayurveda*, *Nidra* (sleep) is vital for physical restoration and mental balance, playing a crucial role in managing stress, anxiety, and overall health.

1. INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, the ancient science of life, emphasizes not only the treatment of diseases but also the maintenance of a healthy lifestyle. It is grounded in the balance of three fundamental elements, or “*Dosha*,” known as *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*. To maintain these elements in a balanced state, *Ayurvedic* teachings describe the importance of three sub-pillars, known as *Tryopstambha*. These include *Ahara* (diet), *Nidra*

(sleep), and *Brahmacharya* (celibacy) ^[1]. Proper adherence to these three pillars is essential for ensuring a long and healthy life.

Among the three, *Ahara* primarily concerns physical well-being, *Brahmacharya* relates to mental discipline, and *Nidra* is associated with both physical and mental health. It describes *Nidra* as a vital source of nourishment for the body, playing a crucial role in preventing diseases and promoting longevity. According to the classical text, sufficient and quality sleep contributes to memory, intelligence, and physical vitality. Additionally, it supports youthfulness, enhances complexion, voice, and sensory organs, and contributes to overall brilliance and immunity. This, in turn, helps prevent and

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reverse disease processes, ensuring the body's resilience and longevity. In the modern era, the fast-paced lifestyle driven by technological advancements and mechanization has led to numerous lifestyle-related health issues.

This view aligns with traditional beliefs, particularly in Ayurveda, where sleep is considered one of the three pillars of health, along with food and balanced living.

While sleep requirements vary from person to person, most healthy adults typically need 7.5 to 9 hours of sleep each night for optimal functioning. Children and teenagers generally require even more sleep to support their growth and development. Contrary to the common belief that the need for sleep decreases with age, older adults still require at least 7.5 to 8 hours of sleep each night to maintain good health and overall well-being [2]. The comfort-driven mode of living has significantly altered modern lifestyles, leading to an increase in restlessness, tension, stress, and a new array of diseases and disorders. The conveniences and advancements of contemporary life, while beneficial in many ways, have also contributed to these challenges, impacting both physical and mental health. *Nidra*, or sleep, has a significant positive impact on mental health. It calms the mind, improves focus, and alleviates symptoms of depression. Scientific evidence supports these benefits, showing that proper sleep reduces stress, enhances cognitive function, and stabilizes mood. By restoring mental balance and promoting emotional well-being, *Nidra* can serve as an effective adjunctive therapy for various mental health disorders. This highlights the importance of quality sleep in maintaining overall psychological health and suggests its potential role in the treatment of mental health conditions the importance of *nidra* are mentioned in fig 1 below.

2. AIM AND OBJECTIVE

1. To study the normal physiology of *Nidra*.
2. To study the effects of physiology of sleep on mental disorders.

3. MATERIAL AND METHODS

Here, various information regarding *Nidra* (sleep), *Nidranash* (insomnia), has been collected from classical texts- *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Ashthanga Hridaya*, *Ashthang Samghraha* with their commentaries, journals, and internet sources like Goggle scholar, PubMed, Research gate.

4. DISCUSSION

Nidra (sleep) is defined as the state in which the mind and all the *Indriyas* (both *Karmendriyas*—organs of action, and *Gyanendriyas*—organs of perception) become exhausted and disconnect themselves from their objects. This disconnection leads to the state of sleep. In this state, the mind is detached with the sensory and motor organs, resulting in unconsciousness from which a person can be aroused by sensory or other stimuli.

In *Ayurveda*, *Nidra* is produced by the predominance of *Kapha* *Dosha*, which governs stability and structure, and the predominance of *Tamas Guna*, which is associated with inertia and darkness in the organism. Together, these factors facilitate the onset of sleep.

4.1 Conceptual Review of *Nidra*-

4.1.1 *Nidra* Utpatti –

The term “*Nidra*” origine as “*Nindyate iti Nidra*” (*Sabdakalpadrumam*).

The word “*Nidra*” is derived from *Nind+ ruk+tap= na lopa*. Means that “Nothing there is lost”. *Nidra* is derived from the root “*Dra*” with a prefix “*Ni*”. The root “*Dra*” means undesired [3]. The concept of *Nidra* (sleep) in *Ayurvedic* classical text like the *Amarakosha* and *Mandukya Upanishad*, is described as a state devoid of desires. This state is considered natural and is associated with the withdrawal or encapsulation of consciousness.

Synonyms: *Shayanam*, *Svapah*, *Svapnam*, *Sambashah* (*Amarakosha* *Sambasaha Suptih* , *S vapnam* (*Vaidyak a Sabdhasindhu*) *Susupti* (*Manduka Upanisad*)

Nidra cannot be explained in a concise form. From the time immemorial, it is a question in every mind that what is sleep, how it occurs and what is its role in health. Though there are various views regarding sleep but all considered it as one of the essential functions for the living beings.

Acharya Charaka, classifies “*Nidra*” (sleep) as a foundational Pillar in *Ayurveda*, based on its causes in the following manner: [4]

1. *Tamobhava* (Caused by *Tamas*): Sleep arising from the predominance of the *Tamas Guna* (one of the three fundamental qualities, characterized by inertia, darkness, and ignorance).

2. *Shleshmasamudbhava* (Caused by Vitiated *Kapha*): Sleep induced by an imbalance or excess of the *Kapha Dosha*, which is associated with qualities like heaviness, coldness, and stability.

3. *Manah-sharirshramasaambhava* (Caused by Mental and Physical Exertion): Sleep that occurs due to exhaustion of the body and mind after significant physical or mental effort.

4. *Agantuki* (Indicative of Bad Prognosis): Sleep that appears suddenly or due to an external factor and is considered ominous, often indicating a bad prognosis or serious underlying condition.

5. *Vyadhyanuvartini* (Caused by Other Diseases): Sleep that is symptomatic or a result of another disease or condition.

6. *Ratri-swabhavaprabhava* (Caused by the Natural Process at Night): Sleep that occurs naturally during the night, following the body's circadian rhythm, and is considered a normal physiological process.

These classifications reflect the different ways sleep can manifest in an individual, emphasizing the importance of understanding its root cause for proper diagnosis and management in *Ayurvedic* practice.

According to *Acharya Sushruta*, there are three types of *Nidra* (sleep) classified as follows:^[5]

1. Tamasī Nidra: This type of sleep is dominated by *Tamo Guna* and results in a deep unconsciousness from which the person cannot be woken. It typically occurs at the time of death.

2. Svabhavika/Vaishnavi Nidra: This is the natural sleep that occurs in individuals. It is influenced by the *Gunas*:

- **Tamasik Prakriti:** Sleeps during both day and night.
- **Rajasik Prakriti:** Sleeps anytime without reason.
- **Sattvik Prakriti:** Sleeps only after midnight.

3. Vaikariki Nidra: This type of sleep occurs when there is any disturbance in the mind and body. If sleep does arise under such conditions, it is termed *Vaikariki Nidra*, which is often associated with delirium or disturbed sleep.

Acharya Vagbhata, an ancient scholar of *Ayurveda*, has classified *Nidra* (sleep) into seven types in his text *Ashtanga Sangraha*^[6].

4.1.2 Impact of Sleep -

Sleep disorders are linked to a range of issues, and their effects can be profound:

Physical well-being: Lack of sleep or disrupted sleep patterns can lead to chronic conditions such as cardiovascular disease, obesity, diabetes, and immune dysfunction.

Mental health: Sleep disorders often co-occur with mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, and stress-related disorders. These conditions can both result from and contribute to poor sleep, creating a vicious cycle.

Nidrayattan Sukham Duhkham Pushtih Karshyam Balabalam |

Vrishta Klibta Jnanamaganam Jeevithan na ch ||^[7]

Figure No. 1- Importance of Nidra

Adequate sleep is a fundamental pillar of mental health, impacting various aspects of cognitive and emotional well-being. *Sukha*, *Pushti*, and *Bala* all benefit from getting quality sleep. These benefits include increased emotional stability, mental acuity, and stress tolerance. Sleep is essential for memory consolidation and learning, aiding in the processing of information and enhancing cognitive functions such as attention, reasoning, and problem-solving.

On the other hand, inadequate sleep can lead to *Duhkham* (sorrow), *Karshyam* (malnourishment), and a reduction in cognitive abilities, which compromises emotional equilibrium and hinders mental processes. Sleep deprivation has far-reaching effects beyond mere fatigue, contributing to emotional distress and impairing cognitive functions.

Quality of life: Sleep deprivation can severely diminish a person's productivity, relationships, and overall sense of well-being. Restlessness, irritability, and difficulty concentrating

are common symptoms of poor sleep, impacting daily functioning.

Typically, the symptoms are classified according to the reasons they occur or how they manifest themselves. Behavior, issues with regular sleep-wake cycles, breathing difficulties, the inability to fall asleep, and lethargy throughout the day are definite markers of sleep disorders.

Today, we observe that up to 80% of diseases are psychosomatic, meaning they have both physical and psychological origins. Every emotion—such as anger, hostility, frustration, violence, or depression—triggers specific chemical secretions in the body that can affect our health.

In recent years, there has been increased attention toward the importance of sleep and its essential role in mental well-being. Depression is a serious public health issue worldwide^[8]. It affects more than 300 million people of all ages around the world^[9].

4.1.3 Effect of Sleep Quality on Mental Health-

Sleep deprivation has significant effects on mental health, and its role in cognitive, emotional, and psychological well-being is well-established. Insufficient or excessive sleep has been linked to various mental health issues, with studies highlighting how restricted sleep negatively impacts key cognitive functions. A single night of total sleep deprivation can lead to marked declines in cognitive flexibility, decision-making, and attention prioritization, all of which are crucial for maintaining mental balance. The restorative benefits of deep sleep, particularly for the prefrontal cortex, support executive functions that are vital for mental health stability.^[10]

Furthermore, sleep quality directly affects emotional regulation and stress management. Poor sleep quality and short sleep duration often result in increased cognitive interference, manifesting as intrusive, unwanted, or ruminative thoughts, which heighten stress levels and exacerbate mental health issues. Conversely, stressors experienced throughout the day can disrupt sleep patterns, contributing to a cycle of irregular bedtimes and wake times that can further disturb mental equilibrium. Based on the available literature, some studies, such as an American study and two Chinese studies, investigated this association and showed that short sleep duration at night is associated with a higher risk of mental disorders. However, other studies indicated that there is a U-curve association between sleep duration and mental health, showing that 6–9 hours of sleep duration is associated with a lowered risk of mental disorders^[11].

In populations with serious mental illness, such as young adults, sleep deprivation is strongly associated with worsening depressive symptoms. Interestingly, while physical health and behaviors may not always directly correlate with sleep quality in these individuals, their mental health is closely tied to the quality of their sleep.

Sleep deprivation leads to increased irritability, mood swings, anxiety, and depression, as sleep plays a key role in emotional regulation. When sleep is lacking, negative emotions are amplified, exacerbating mental health challenges, in *Ayurveda*, which leads to *Dukham*. Sleep deprivation disrupts these processes, impairing memory, reducing mental clarity, and hindering the ability to absorb or recall information effectively in *Ayurveda*, which leads to *Agyanam*.

In *Ayurveda*, avoiding proper sleep during the designated *Nidra Kala* can lead to anxiety, stress, and depression. Rising during *Brahmi Muhurta* (approximately two hours before sunrise) is highly beneficial. The term “*Brahma*” signifies knowledge, which is best acquired during this serene and ideal time for learning and self-improvement. *Nidra*, also an *Adharniya Vega* (suppression of sleep), profoundly affects cognitive and emotional functioning. It leads to *Jadya* (mental stiffness), *Tandra* (drowsiness), and *Gaurava* (heaviness), impairs thinking, *Angamarda* (body aches), and *Bhrama* (dizziness), heightens mental distress and disorientation, while *Alasya* (laziness) reduces motivation, leading to procrastination. *Agnimandya* (weak digestion), mental agitation, and stress. *Manodourbalya* (mental fatigue) increases stress and anxiety. *Anidra* (insomnia) worsens mental health, contributing to *Shiroruja* (headaches) and mood disturbances like anxiety and irritability^[12].

The article discusses *Nidra* (sleep) and highlights its essential role in sustaining physical, mental, and spiritual health. Alongside *Ahara* (diet) and *Brahmacharya* (self-discipline), quality sleep is crucial for health and longevity. However, modern lifestyle shifts, irregular work hours, prolonged stress, and anxiety have contributed to a rise in sleep disorders, leading to increasingly disrupted sleep patterns.^[13]

5. CONCLUSION

Sleep is a homeostatic process that involves an active and periodic biological resting state crucial for good physical and mental health^[14]. Sleep durations that are too short or too long have been associated with many negative health outcomes. It is during sleep that the body undergoes essential processes like tissue repair, muscle growth, and hormone regulation. Altered sleep results in compromised physical, mental, emotional, and social health. Hence, proper concern is needed for the management of altered sleep patterns and regulating sleep cycles. Additionally, the brain consolidates memories, processes information, and clears out toxins accumulated during the day. Thus, ensuring adequate sleep is crucial for optimal mental health.

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10. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Nil.

11. DATA AVAILABILITY

This is an original manuscript and all data are available for only review purposes from principal investigators.

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Figure No. 1- Importance of Nidra

