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Conceptual Study of *Nidra* from Various Samhitas

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ABSTRACT:

Nidra (sleep) is regarded as one of the *Trayopasthambha* (three supporting pillars of life) in Ayurveda, along with *Ahara* (diet) and *Brahmacharya* (regulated lifestyle). A conceptual study of *Nidra* from various Ayurvedic *Samhitas* such as *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Ashtanga Hridaya*, and later texts highlights its physiological, psychological, and pathological significance. The classics describe *Nidra* as a natural, essential function of the body that ensures nourishment, mental clarity, and balance of *Doshas*. *Charaka* emphasizes the role of *Nidra* in health, immunity, complexion, strength, and longevity, while also categorizing abnormal sleep into *Asatmya Nidra* (improper sleep) and *Vikara Nidra* (disease-related sleep). *Sushruta* associates *Nidra* with the withdrawal of senses and mind, considering it as a restorative phase for the body. *Vagbhata* further classifies *Nidra* according to causation—natural, doshic, psychological, and pathological origins. Disturbances in *Nidra*, whether insufficient (*Anidra*) or excessive (*Atinidra*), are seen as causative factors for a wide range of diseases including metabolic, neurological, and psychiatric disorders. Thus, the conceptual review of *Nidra* across *Samhitas* demonstrates its multidimensional role in health and disease, and its regulation is central to holistic well-being in Ayurvedic science.

KEYWORDS:

Nidra, *Trayopasthambha*, Ayurveda, *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Ashtanga Hridaya*, *Anidra*, *Atinidra*, Sleep disorders, *Dosha* imbalance, Holistic health.

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INTRODUCTION:

Ayurveda, the ancient science of life, emphasizes the harmonious balance of *Sharira* (body), *Manas* (mind), and *Atma* (spirit) for health and longevity. Among the essential pillars that sustain life, *Trayopasthambha*—namely *Ahara* (diet), *Nidra* (sleep), and *Brahmacharya* (regulated lifestyle)—form the foundation of holistic well-being. Sleep (*Nidra*) is not viewed in Ayurveda as a mere state of inactivity but as a dynamic physiological process responsible for physical restoration, psychological stability, and spiritual calmness. In the modern era, sleep disturbances such as insomnia, hypersomnia, and irregular sleep patterns have emerged as significant contributors to lifestyle disorders, including obesity, hypertension, diabetes, depression, and anxiety. Revisiting the conceptual framework of *Nidra* from the classical Ayurvedic texts (*Samhitas*) can offer deep insights into preventive and curative approaches for these conditions. This article aims to present a comprehensive review of *Nidra* as described in *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Ashtanga Hridaya*, and other authoritative texts, with emphasis on its definition, types, health impact, and modern-day relevance.

Nidra in Charaka Samhita

Charaka Samhita provides one of the most detailed explanations of *Nidra*. According to Charaka, *Nidra* occurs when the mind (*Manas*) and sense organs (*Indriyas*) withdraw from their respective objects under the predominance of *Tamas guna* and *Kapha dosha* (C.S. Sūtrasthāna 21/35).

Benefits of Proper Nidra (Samyak Nidra)

Charaka states that adequate and timely sleep contributes to:

- Nourishment and strength (*Bala*)
- Immunity (*Vyadhikshamatva*)

- Fertility and virility (*Shukra dhatu vardhana*)
- Longevity (*Ayushya*)
- Happiness and clarity of mind (*Sukha, Medha*)
- Healthy complexion (*Varna*)

Thus, proper sleep is considered essential for sustaining both the body and the mind.

DISCUSSION:**Types of Nidra (C.S. Sūtrasthāna 21/57)**

Charaka classifies *Nidra* into six types:

1. **Tamobhava** – sleep caused by predominance of *Tamas*.
2. **Shleshmabhava** – sleep due to *Kapha* dominance.
3. **Manah-sharira-shramaja** – sleep caused by physical or mental exertion.
4. **Agantuki** – sleep due to external factors like trauma, injury, or medications.
5. **Vyadhi-nimittaja** – sleep arising due to disease conditions.
6. **Ratri-svabhava-prabhava** – natural sleep occurring at night.

Charaka also warns against *Nidra Vaishamyā* (disturbed sleep), which may lead to obesity, emaciation, poor digestion, irritability, and premature aging.

Nidra in Sushruta Samhita

Sushruta Samhita (Su. Sūtrasthāna 4/33) describes *Nidra* as a state where the mind (*Manas*) and senses withdraw after fatigue, resulting in rest and restoration.

Key Perspectives from Sushruta

- Natural sleep (*Svabhavika Nidra*) is the healthiest.
- Sleep disturbances are categorized as *Atinidra* (excessive sleep) and *Anidra* (insufficient sleep).
- Adequate *Nidra* maintains *Dosha-samyata* (dosha equilibrium), aids digestion, and ensures proper nourishment of *Dhatus* (tissues).

Sushruta emphasizes that insufficient sleep results in dryness, fatigue, impaired immunity, and psychological imbalance, whereas excessive sleep leads to heaviness, sluggishness, and metabolic disorders.

Nidra in Ashtanga Hridaya

Vagbhata in *Ashtanga Hridaya* integrates Charaka and Sushruta's views and elaborates further. He classifies Nidra into physiological and pathological types (A.H. Sūtrasthāna 7/53–56).

Types of Nidra

- **Kalaja (Ratri-svabhava-prabhava)** – natural, timely sleep at night, essential for health.
- **Amayaja (Vyadhi-nimittaja)** – disease-related sleep.
- **Kleshaja (Shramaja)** – sleep due to exhaustion of body and mind.
- **Kapha-sambhavita (Shleshmabhava)** – sleep due to Kapha predominance.
- **Tamoja (Tamobhava)** – sleep caused by dominance of Tamas guna.
- **Agantuka** – externally induced sleep (injury, drugs, alcohol, etc.).

Vagbhata also stresses that **Anidra** leads to weakness, dryness, impaired senses, and unhappiness, while **Atinidra** results in heaviness, obesity, and premature aging.

Comparative Conceptual Understanding

A comparison of Nidra across *Samhitas* highlights the following:

- **Charaka:** Focus on classification and effects of proper/abnormal sleep.
- **Sushruta:** Focus on natural withdrawal of senses and restorative function.
- **Vagbhata:** Comprehensive classification combining doshic, psychological, and external causes.

All three agree that:

- *Samyak Nidra* is essential for health and longevity.

- *Anidra* and *Atinidra* are pathological states causing disease.
- Nidra has strong influence on both *Sharira* (body) and *Manas* (mind)

Impact of Nidra on Health

The classics describe profound effects of sleep on human health:

Benefits of Proper Sleep

- Promotes tissue nourishment (*Dhatu poshana*)
- Improves digestion and metabolism (*Agni deepana*)
- Enhances memory, concentration, and clarity of mind (*Medha, Smriti*)
- Maintains healthy skin and complexion (*Varna, Twak prasada*)
- Provides strength, vitality, and sexual health (*Bala, Shukra vardhana*)

Consequences of Sleep Disturbance

- **Insufficient Sleep (Anidra):** leads to emaciation, dryness, fatigue, mental instability, infertility, and reduced immunity.
- **Excessive Sleep (Atinidra):** results in heaviness, Kapha disorders, obesity, diabetes, and premature aging.

Modern Correlation

Modern science views sleep as a state characterized by reversible loss of consciousness, reduced sensory activity, and altered neural activity. Research confirms that sleep is essential for memory consolidation, tissue repair, hormonal balance, and emotional regulation.

- **Insomnia** is associated with hypertension, depression, anxiety, and impaired immunity.
- **Excessive sleep** is linked to obesity, metabolic syndrome, diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases.

Thus, the Ayurvedic understanding of *Anidra* and *Atinidra* directly correlates with modern findings. Moreover, the Ayurvedic categorization of Nidra into natural, doshic,

and disease-related causes reflects a holistic approach to sleep disturbances, aligning with psychosomatic and lifestyle-related disorders in modern medicine

CONCLUSION:

Nidra, as conceptualized in the Ayurvedic *Samhitas*, is not merely a state of rest but a vital physiological process central to health, immunity, and mental stability. Charaka, Sushruta, and Vagbhata collectively emphasize that proper and timely sleep is indispensable, while both its deficiency and excess lead to systemic and psychological disorders. In today's context, where lifestyle-induced sleep disorders are on the rise, Ayurvedic principles of Nidra offer valuable guidelines for preventive healthcare and therapeutic interventions. Integrating these ancient insights with modern sleep science can contribute significantly to the management of insomnia, hypersomnia, and stress-related conditions, thereby promoting holistic well-being.

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