

Nidra and Marma: An Ayurvedic Perspective on Sleep and Vital Energy Points

DR. ASHISH KATE¹, DR. SHRADDHA ATKAR²

¹Professor & HOD, Kriya Sharir, L.N. Ayurved College & Hospital, Bhopal

²PG Scholer, Rachana Sharir, Government Ayurved College & Hospital, Nagpur

Abstract- In Ayurveda Nidra (sleep) is a column of the human body along with Aahar (Diet) and Brahmacharya (celibacy). Nidra is a fundamental pillar of health in Ayurveda, essential for physical and mental well-being. Nidra stands out as one of the prominent factors to be examined in the contemporary era, constituting a vital component of a healthy lifestyle. Ayurveda defines Nidra (sleep) as the physiological state of rest for the Sharira (body), Mana (mind) and Indriya (sense organs). In recent studies lack of sleep or say sleep disorders may be factors contributing to heart disease, obesity and diabetes etc. In such cases of sleep disorders along with symptomatic medication one needs lifestyle modifications and relaxation training. Nidra is closely related to the flow of Prana. When Prana is balanced and flowing smoothly, it promotes restful sleep. Marma therapy can help regulate Prana flow, potentially improving sleep quality. This paper explores the intricate relationship between Nidra and Marma points, vital energy centers in the body by examining the Ayurvedic understanding of sleep physiology and the energetic influence of Marmas.

Index Terms- Lifestyle, Nidra, Marma, Sleep.

I. INTRODUCTION

Sleep or Nidra is one of the three fundamental pillars of health in Ayurveda, alongside proper diet (Ahara) and balanced lifestyle (Brahmacharya). It is more than just rest for the body it is a vital process that rejuvenates the mind, strengthens the immune system, and restores the body's vitality. Ayurveda emphasizes that the quality of sleep directly influences physical, mental, and emotional well-being, making it a cornerstone for achieving harmony in life.

Equally significant in Ayurveda are the Marma points, subtle vital energy centres distributed across the body. These points serve as channels for prana the life force energy and are intricately connected to the body's physiological and emotional balance. When properly stimulated, Marma points can

promote deep relaxation, alleviate stress, and enhance the quality of Nidra.

This exploration into Nidra and Marma highlights their profound interconnectedness in Ayurveda. By understanding how Marma therapy can support restful sleep and how balanced Nidra sustains Marma vitality, we uncover a holistic approach to maintaining health, enhancing energy, and achieving harmony between the mind, body, and spirit. This article delves into the Ayurvedic perspective on sleep and the significance of Marma points.

AIM-

To study Ayurvedic perspective on Nidra and Marma.

OBJECTIVES-

1. To study the nidra from Ayurvedic texts.
2. To study the marma from Ayurvedic texts.

MATERIALS AND METHODS-

Ayurvedic & contemporary classical texts, Past articles and internet sources were reviewed critically to understand nidra and marma.

OBSERVATION:

Nidra

In Ayurvedic text Nidra i.e. sleep has been explained to be more important after Ahara (diet). As Ahara (diet); Swapna (sleep) and Bhrahmacharya (celibacy) are the three columns of the human body identified as Trayopastambha.^[1]

When the mind is exhausted and the exhausted sense organs detract from their objects, the man sleeps. ^[2]

Nidra is the innate state of rest for both the mind and body, characterized by closed eyes and marked by either partial or complete loss of consciousness. This loss of consciousness results in reduced

responsiveness to external stimuli and diminished bodily movements.

Definition of *Nidra*

As per the "*Mandukya upanishad*," *Nidra* is a state where the "*Atma*" experiences no dreams or desires, known as "*Sushupti*." ^[3]

Charaka emphasized that Sleep occurs when the sensory and motor organs become inactive, and both the intellect and soul become fatigued. ^[4]

Sushruta explained that sleep occurs when *Tamas* covers the *Hridaya*, which is the seat of *Chetana*. ^[5]

The mechanism of *Nidra*

According to Charaka sleep is caused by *tamas*, *kapha*, physical exertion, mental exertion, adventitious, as sequelae to disease and normally occurring in night. The normally occurring sleep in night is that which is regarded as supporting of creatures by the experts. That caused by *tamas* is known as the root of sin while the remaining ones are observed in disease. ^[6]

According to Sushruta, *Hridaya* is considered as the seat of *Chetana*. When there is an abundance of *Tamo guna*, individuals' experiences sleep, while an excess of *Satva Guna* results in awareness of both external and internal surroundings. ^[7]

As per Ashtanga Sangraha, when an individual fell asleep the *Manovaha Srotas* become accumulated with *Sleshma* and the mind gets devoid of sense organs because of fatigue. ^[8]

Types of *Nidra*
Table 1. *Nidra* Types

Charaka Samhita – 6 ^[9]	Sushruta Samhita–3 ^[10]	Ashtanga Sangraha – 7 ^[11]
<i>Tamobhava</i>	<i>Vaishnavi</i>	<i>Kaalasvabhava</i>
<i>Sleshmsamudbhava</i>	<i>Tamasi</i>	<i>Aamaya</i>
<i>Manah Sharira Sram Sambhava</i>	<i>Vaikariki</i>	<i>Chittakheda</i>
<i>Agantuki</i>		<i>Dehakheda</i>
<i>Vyadhi-Anuvartini</i>		<i>Kaphaja</i>
<i>Ratri Svabhava Prabhava</i>		<i>Aagantuja</i>

		<i>Tamobhava</i>
--	--	------------------

Charaka Samhita – 6 ^[9]

- *Tamobhava* – caused by *tama*
- *Shleshmasamudbhava* – caused by vitiated *Kapha*
- *Manah-Sharir shramasaambhava* – caused by mental and mental exertion
- *Agantuki* – indicative of bad prognosis leading imminent death
- *Vyadhyanuvaritini* – caused as a complication of other disease like *Sannipatajwara*
- *Ratri-Svabhavaprabhava* – caused by the very nature of the night

Sushruta Samhita–3 ^[10]

- *Vaishnavi* (natural) – occurring daily for every person
- *Tamasi* – when *Sangyavaha strotas* become filled with *Shleshma* dominated by *Tamo guna*, *Tamsi Nidra* is produced
- *Vaikariki* (abnormal) – occurring due to troubles of the body and mind.

Ashtanga Sangraha-7 ^[11]

- *Kaalasvabhava* - Naturally occurring *Nidra*
- *Aamaya* - Due to Diseases
- *Chittakheda* - Due to Tiredness of the mind
- *Dehakheda* - Due to Tiredness of the body
- *Kaphaja* - Due to *Kapha Dosha*
- *Aagantuja* - Due to External Factors
- *Tamobhava* - Due to predominance of *Tamas*

Benefits of *Nidra*

Nidra plays a determining role in various factors such as *Sukha* (happiness), *Dukha* (unhappiness), *Pushti* (good physique), *Karshya* (emaciation), *Vrushta* (sexual strength), *Klibata* (impotence), *Gyan* (knowledge), *Agyan* (illiteracy), *Jivita* (long life) and *Ajivita* (death). *Samyak Nidra* contributes to *Sukha*, *Pushti*, *Bala*, *Vrushta*, *Gyan*, and *Jivan*, while *Asamyak Nidra* is responsible for *Dukha*, *Karshy*, *Abala*, *Klibata*, and *Agyan*. ^[12]

Sleep is the time for rebuilding, construction. It is an anabolic event and is held to be as best as the divine elixir. If sleep is lost, *Vata* and *Pitta Dosha* are likely to be vitiated. ^[13]

Sleep

Sleep is defined as temporary state of unconsciousness from which the subject can be aroused with appropriate sensory stimuli.

Physiology of sleep ^[14]

According to modern text sleep can be defined as a natural periodic state of rest for the mind and body in which the eyes usually close and consciousness is completely or partially lost, so that there is a decreased in bodily movement and responsiveness to the external stimuli. During sleep the brain in humans and other animals undergoes a characteristic cycle of brain wave activity that includes intervals of dreaming.

For more clear understanding we may say that like sleep mode of computer where computer reduces power to its peripherals in order to save energy during period of inactivity. Similarly, sleep is a state of physiological rest during which consciousness is suspended and metabolic rate is decreased. As stated before, during physiological sleep responsiveness to external events is decreased, muscles are relaxed. Growth and repair of the tissues of the body are thought to occur during sleep and energy is conserved and stored.

Sleep cycle

In humans and some other animals' scientist have identified one phase of sleep called Rapid Eye Movement (REM) as he phases in which dreams occur. REM sleep is a periodic sleep during which dreaming takes place, characterised by rapid periodic twitching movements of the eye muscles and other physiological changes such as accelerated respiration and heart rate, increased brain activity and muscle relaxation. REM sleep is the fifth and last stage of the sleep that occurs in the sleep cycle, preceded by four stages of non-REM sleep; also called as paradoxical sleep.

Paradoxical sleep is the physiological sleep that appears to be deep but characterised by a brain wave pattern similar to that of wakefulness, rapid eye movements and heavier breathing. Out of these two stages of sleep REM takes of 25% of slumber, stretching into longer periods in the morning. The rest is spent in NREM which has four stages. Sleep disorders are conditions that affect how much and how well you sleep. Sleep disorders mess the normal sleep cycle and hampers good night rest. Duration of

daily needed sleep may vary from person to person: infant needs 16 hours sleep; teenager needs 9 hours of the sleep, whereas adult needs 7-8 hours of the sleep.

Modern Lifestyle Factors affecting *Nidra* ^[15]

Electronic media and devices such as computer, television, use of cellular phones these are essential part of our lifestyle which interfere with normal sleep or wake patters.

Substances such as caffeine, nicotine, alcohol and drugs are commonly consumed in attempt to maintain either alertness and arousal or to achieve sleepiness and tranquillity. Alternative duty schedules also affect sleep pattern in different profession such as call centres, IT jobs, policemen etc.

Bright light during night time has also been found to have immediate effects on physiological and behavioural measures. Such exposure has become extremely common in various contexts in the modern world.

Insufficient physical exercise, overweight, obesity are major issues in modern society which are also associated with sleep disturbance.

Marma

Marma is an anatomical location that connects muscles, veins, ligaments, bones, and joints.^[16] There are 107 vital spots in body. They are also the places where not just *Tridosha*, but also their subtle forms *Prana*, *Ojus*, and *Tejas*, as well as *Sattva*, *Raja*, and *Tama*, may be found.^[17] *Marma*, according to *Vagbhata*, is the meeting point of *Mamsa*, *Asthi*, *Sira*, *Snayu*, *Damni*, and *Sandhi*, as well as the location of *Prana*.

Marma points are vital energy points in the body where muscles, bones, joints, ligaments, and blood vessels meet. They are considered to be sites where *Prana* (life force) is concentrated.

These points are connected through an intricate network of channels called *Nadis*, which carry *Prana* throughout the body.

Stimulation or manipulation of *Marma* points can influence various physiological functions, including

circulation, respiration, digestion, and even mental and emotional states.

Marma Points and Nidra

Marma Chikitsa focuses on energizing the body to relieve occupational illness and stress-related diseases. Hence the complete knowledge of the basic principles of *Marma* and its clinical application can play an important role in treatment modalities.

Nidra is closely related to the flow of *Prana*. When *Prana* is balanced and flowing smoothly, it promotes restful sleep. *Marma* therapy can help regulate *Prana* flow, potentially improving sleep quality.

Certain *Marma* points are known to have a calming effect on the mind. By stimulating these points, it may be possible to reduce mental chatter, anxiety, and stress, all of which can interfere with sleep.

Physical and emotional tension can disrupt sleep. *Marma* therapy can help release tension held in the body, promoting relaxation and facilitating sleep.

Specific *Marma*:^[18]

Talridaya Marma – *Tal* means palmar aspect of hand and *Hridaya* means centre so essentially the *Marma* present at the centre of the palm is termed as *Tala Hridaya Marma*.

Sthapani Marma- The *Marma* present at *Sthapani* i.e., the space between the eyebrows where *Agya Chakra* or third eye exists is designated as *Sthapani Marma*.

Seemant Marma – *Seemant Marma* is present on the skull and is mainly correlated with different sutures such as coronal suture, sagittal suture and lambdoid suture.

Apanga Marma – *Apanga Marma* is in the root of eyebrows discovered at the midpoint of bridge of nose and the outer corners or depressed part of the temples which are just of the size of pulp of index fingers.

Adhipati Marma: Located on the crown of the head, this point is associated with the *Sahasrara Chakra*.

Kshipra Marma: Located between the big toe and second toe.

Application of *Marma* Therapy:

Marma chikitsa as a strong backbone of ayurveda. Basically *marma chikitsa* is the the therapy which deals with *marma* points present naturally in our body and heals the body from the instinctive force within.

Gentle massage or pressure applied to specific *Marma* points can help balance energy flow and promote relaxation.

Using essential oils with calming properties (like lavender or chamomile) during *Marma* massage can enhance the therapeutic effects.

DISCUSSION

The demanding workload and fast-paced lifestyle, combined with improper dietary habits, can lead to numerous health issues, especially disorders of *Nidra*. *Marma* therapy, involve gentle stimulation of these points, can balance energy flow, release blockages, and promote relaxation. This can improve sleep quality, regulate sleep cycles, and alleviate insomnia. Techniques like *Marma* massage, acupressure, and aromatherapy can also be used to stimulate these points and improve sleep.

CONCLUSION

The intersection of *Marma* points and *Nidra* reveals a profound connection within Ayurvedic principles. *Marma* points, as vital energy centers, play a crucial role in regulating various physiological and psychological functions, including sleep. By stimulating these points is aim to balance the flow of *Prana* (life force), release blockages, and induce a state of deep relaxation conducive to restful sleep. Specific *Marma* points, such as *Stapani*, *Adhipati*, and *Talahridaya*, are particularly associated with calming the mind, regulating the nervous system, and promoting sleep.

Therefore, *Marma* therapy offers a holistic and potentially effective approach to addressing sleep disturbances by working with the body's subtle energy system. While further rigorous scientific investigation is warranted to fully validate its efficacy, the traditional wisdom of Ayurveda combined with clinical experience underscores the promising potential of *Marma* therapy as a valuable

tool for promoting healthy sleep and overall well-being.

REFERENCES

- [1] Agnivesha. Charaka Samhita. Yadavji Trikamji Acharya, editor. 1st ed. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Surbharati Prakashan; 2008. Sutra sthana 11/33.
- [2] Agnivesha. Charaka Samhita. Yadavji Trikamji Acharya, editor. 1st ed. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Surbharati Prakashan; 2008. Sutra sthana 12/35
- [3] Sharma S. Mandukyopanishat, Jnanakhanda 108. 4th ed. New Delhi: Parimala Publication. 2005, pg.362.
- [4] Sharma R. Charaka Samhita Cakrapani Ayurveda Deepika. Sutra 21/35, 1st ed. Varanasi: Choukhambha Sanskrit Samsthan. 2012; 1:381.
- [5] Jadavji T. Susruta samhita, Dalhana Nibandha Sangraha. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Subharati. 1994; 4/33- 5:277.
- [6] Agnivesha. Charaka Samhita. Yadavji Trikamji Acharya, editor. 1st ed. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Surbharati Prakashan; 2008. Sutra sthana 21/58-59
- [7] Sharma, Anant Ram. Suśruta-saṁhitā Reprint Edition. Varanasi (India): Chaukhambha Surbharati Prakashan, Dalhaṇa commentary on Susruta Samhitā sarira Sthāna, 2012; 4/34, 35.
- [8] Gupta, Atrideva. Aṣṭāṅgasaṅgraha. Varanasi (India): Reprint Edition. Krishna Das Academy, Aṣṭāṅgasaṅgraha Sūtrasthāna, 2005; 1: 9/20.
- [9] Shastri, Kasinatha & Chaturvedi, Gorakha Natha. Caraka-saṁhita. Reprint Edition. Varanasi (India): Chaukhambha Bharati Academy, Caraka Samhita Sutrasthana, 2011; 21/58
- [10] Sharma, Anant Ram. Suśruta-saṁhitā Reprint Edition. Varanasi (India): Chaukhambha Surbharati Prakashan, Dalhaṇa commentary on Suśruta Samhita Sarira Sthana, 2012; 4-33.
- [11] Vagbhatas: Astanga Samgraha with Hindi commentary Vol-1 by Kaviraj Atridev Gupta & Rajvaidya Pandit Sri Nanda Kishor Sharma Bhisagacarya, Krishnadas Ayurveda Series-31, Krishnadas Academy, Varanasi, Edition-2002, Sutrasthana 9/49
- [12] Agnivesha. Charaka Samhita. Yadavji Trikamji Acharya, editor. 1st ed. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Surbharati Prakashan; 2008. Sutra sthana 21/36
- [13] Brahmanand Tripathi. Astanga Hridayam of Srimad Vagbhata. Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pratishthan; 2019. Reprint Edition 2019, Sutra Sthan Chapter 7/53.
- [14] Indhu Khurana, Arushi Khurana and Narayan Gurukripa Kowlgi. Textbook of Medical Physiology. 3rd edition. Elsevier RELX India Private Limited.
- [15] Syed Mehrukh Fatima, Sawai Rajesh (2021). A Review on Ayurvedic concept of significance of Nidra in Lifestyle Disorders. Ayurlog: National Journal of Research in Ayurved Science, 9(02).
- [16] Sharma SP. Shareera Sthana chapter 7 verse 24 Astanga Sangraha with Sashilekha Sanskrit commentary of Indu. 2nd ed. Varanasi (India): Chaukambha Orientalia; 2008; p.326.
- [17] Acharya YT. Shareera Sthana chapter 6 verse 26 Sushruta Samhita with Nibhandhasangraha commentary of Dalhanacharya. Reprint ed. Varanasi (India): Chaukambha Sankrit Sansthan; 2010.;p.55.
- [18] Joshi SK. Marma Science and Principles of Marma Therapy. 1st ed.Delhi: Vani Publications; 2010. ISBN: 8189221-64-7.