

# GLEANINGS OF ŚAYANA (SLEEP) RITUALS IN THE *PURĀNAS*

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## Abstract

The phenomenon of Sleep is a gift of God to all beings and has a social, cultural and historical aspect that has been researched by scholars all over the world from ancient times. This includes research into the sleep patterns, arrangements and accessories, rituals for sleep, sleep disorders and medicines to cure them. Ancient Indians were fully aware of several features of sleep as evident from the Vedic period. The present paper deals on such theories related to philosophical, practical, medicinal aspects of sleep as well as some rituals connected with it as described in the Purānas. A brief overview of these theories as well as the types of sleep described in Āyurvedic texts is presented. Some Post-Vedic texts deal on technological features of bed and bed accessories that show the importance given to sleep culture in ancient India. The Purānas offer a glimpse of sleep among the celestial beings in the upper realms of the Universe and some special festivals associated with donating bed and its accessories.

**Keywords :** Sleep, *Ayurvedic, Puranas, Nidra*, Bed, Rituals

## Introduction

Sleeping is a biological phenomenon in all beings gifted to us by the Creator. The evolutionary basis of sleeping has remained a mystery to researchers as there are no complete answers as to why beings fall asleep. Sleep is important for the body and brain to recover and get rid of waste materials. Sleep culture differs geographically<sup>1</sup>. Research studies have been done on the Social, historical and culture aspects of sleep<sup>2</sup>. Special attention regarding the artifacts of sleep (such as beds, pillows, night-gowns and other special dress, effects of light and sound), sleep positions, the rooms or places used for sleeping, the time of sleeping, the persons with

whom one sleeps, the time of sleep, either public or private sleep is preferred, behavior during sleep as well as the effects of dreams need to be researched from various aspects<sup>3</sup>. Likewise research into sleeping arrangements, whether people tend to use same spot every night, bed sharing practices, rituals to prepare for sleep, sleep medicine and disorders have been reported by scholars<sup>4,5</sup>. Ancient Indians had a wide knowledge about sleep that has not yet been fully studied. They have advocated various theories regarding the phenomenon of sleep as well as sleeping accessories and rituals. The present paper discusses these features in *Purāṇas* after presenting a brief Overview of Sleep in earlier literature as well as in Post-Vedic texts.

### Sleep (*Nidrā*) in Vedic, Yogic and *Āyurvedic* texts

Sleep is termed as '*Nidrā*' in early Vedic literature. There exist several synonyms for sleep in the *Ṛgveda* and other Vedic texts. The *Ṛgveda*<sup>6</sup> (RV) states that –

न स्वप्नाय स्पृहयन्ति देवाः। *na svapnāya sprhayanti devāḥ* /

The Gods are believed to lack presence of *Tamogūṇa* and thus said to have no sleeping patterns. The *Yajurveda Saṁhitā*<sup>7</sup> (SYV) states -

भूत्यै जागरणं अभूत्यै स्वप्नम्।

*bhūtyai jāgaraṇam abhūtyai svapnam* /

'Sleeping is unhealthy and awaking is a healthier one'.

Almost all the *Upaniṣads*<sup>8</sup> such as the *Māṇḍūkya*, *Maṇḍūkya*, *Kaṭha*, *Brahma* and *Taittirīyopaniṣad* describe the state of *Nidrā* in relation to the four states. In the state of sleep (*Suptāvasthā*), the underlying ground of consciousness is undistracted. The *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* describes the four states of consciousness. The verse from *Mahābhāratha* of sage Vyāsa as quoted by Ghanekar<sup>9</sup> (VSS) also mentions the merits of *Nidrā* and demerits of keeping awake at nights.

नक्तंचर्या दिवास्वप्नं आलस्यं पैशुनं मदम्। अतियोगमयोगं च श्रेयसोऽर्थो परित्यजेत्॥

*naktāncaryā divāsvapnam ālasyam paisunam madam* /

*atiyogamayogaṁ ca śreyaso'rtho parityajet* //

“Persons who are willing for good health should not indulge in keeping awake at nights, sleeping in daytime, laziness, addiction of bad things and other such factors”.

The school of *Sāṃkhya* philosophy maintains that *Samādhi*, *Suṣupti* and *Mokṣa* stages are identical to Brahma as stated in the ‘*Sāṃkhyadarśanam*’<sup>10</sup> of Maḥarṣi Kapila -

समाधि सुषुप्ति मोक्षेषु ब्रह्मरूपता ॥

*samādhi suṣupti mokṣeṣu brahmarūpatā* ॥

Yogic philosophers of India also explained about sleep and the *Samādhi* state which resembles sleep in their Yogic texts. The *Bhagavad Gītā*<sup>11</sup> also stresses that a Yogi should be regulated in sleep and wakefulness. Yogis are also of the opinion that among the minor vital airs in the human body, the *Devadatta Vāyu* controls the *Nidrā* of the individual. *Maḥarṣi Patañjali* mentions that sleep is a state in which all activities of thought and feeling come to end<sup>12</sup>. In sleep, the senses of perception rest in the mind in consciousness and consciousness in the being. Several *Āyurvedic* texts elaborate various aspects of sleep. In *Āyurveda*, sleep is considered to be produced as a result of ignorance (*Tamas*), the *doṣas* (like phlegm – *kapha*), bad prognosis or a side effect of a disease. The *Caraka Saṃhitā*<sup>13</sup> (CS) mentions six types of sleep based on the above factors giving their symptoms and causes. The *Suśruta Saṃhitā*<sup>14</sup> (SS) mentions three types of sleep namely - *Vaiṣṇavī*, *Vaikārikī* and *Tāmasī*. *Suśruta* states that the heart is the seat of consciousness and when it is covered by *Tamas*, person goes to sleep as stated in the text<sup>15</sup> –

हृदयं चेतनास्थानमुक्तं सुश्रुत। देहिनाम्। तमोभिभूते तस्मिंस्तु निद्रा विशति देहिनम् ॥

*hṛdayaṃ cetanāsthānamuktaṃ suśruta/ dehinām/*

*tamobhibhūte tasmīṃstu nidrā viśati dehinam* ॥

Vāgbhaṭa differs and enumerates seven types of sleep in his text ‘*Aṣṭāṅgasaṃgraha*’<sup>16</sup> (AS) –

कालस्वभावामयचित्तदेहखेदैः कफगन्तुतमोभवा च।

निद्रा बिभर्ति प्रथमा शरीरं पापात्मिका व्याधिमित्तमन्या ॥

*kālasvabhāvāmayacittadehakhedaiḥ kaphagantutamobhavā ca/*  
*nidrā bibharti prathamā śarīraṃ pāpātmikā vyādhinimittamanyā* ॥

The *Hārīta Saṁhitā*<sup>17</sup> (HS) states that centers of sleep are in the upper half part of the nose, between the two eyebrows in the cerebrum or brain. When *Tamas* reaches this sleep center, the knowledge and activity gets diminished and sleep occurs. *Āyurvedic* texts advocate sleeping during the daytime, in all seasons for young, weak, tired and those suffering from diseases. They also state that keeping awake during the night causes roughness in body. Various medical preparations are suggested in *Āyurvedic* texts to cure insomnia that have been elaborated in literature<sup>18</sup>. If one does not get sleep, it can be achieved by massage, bath or by consuming milk, rice with curds, alcohol, meat-soup or by listening to some agreeable music. *Āyurvedic* texts recognize the effects of dreams and both *Suśruta* as well as *Caraka* devote lengthy discussions on dreams and the omens they forebode. These texts also regard the efficacy of hymns in bringing about sleep and mention that one has to invoke the goddess of sleep (*Nidrādevī*) with special hymns to get sleep. The *Suśruta Saṁhitā* also mentions that among the many nerves, ten of them control various functions of the body. Man goes to sleep by using two of them and with the help of the other two nerves he wakes up. He also gives some measures for sleep such as *Abhyaṅga* (anointing the body), *Śira Abhyaṅga* (massaging oil on the head), special diet and use of soft pleasant beds. *Caraka* adds other measures such as *Akṣitarpaṇa* (application of medical drops in eyes), consuming milk, ghee, alcohol or special diets.

### ***Sleep (Nidrā) and Sleep accessories in the Post-Vedic texts***

Before discussing the features of sleep in the *Purāṇas*, it would be fruitful to shed light on some similar features of sleep discussed in Post-Vedic texts. Since early times, the art of spreading beds for sleep was considered to be one among the 64 arts learnt by ancient students. Beds were prepared with different types of coloured bed-sheets, covers, pillows according to different seasons of the year, in different countries and for different people. Yaśodhara, the commentator of *Vātsyāyana's Kāmasūtra*<sup>19</sup> states that beds are to be spread accordingly to the seasons and for persons who are romantic (*Raktā*), unromantic (*Viraktā*) or indifferent (*Madhyastha*). Several Sanskrit *Kāvya*s and prose texts shed some

light on such arts. Kālidāsa's *Abhijñānaśākuntalam*<sup>20</sup> states that *Śākuntala* lay on a bed of flowers spread in a bower or grove when she fell in love with king Duśyanta. Bhāsa's play namely the '*Svapnavāsavadattam*'<sup>21</sup> mentions that king Udayana's second queen Padmāvati had a serious headache and her bed was prepared at the '*Samudragrha*' [room in the middle of tank]. Bāṇabhaṭṭa's '*Kādambarī*'<sup>22</sup> mentions her lying on a soft bed of flowers pining for her beloved *Candrāpīḍa*. Daṇḍī's '*Daśakumāracaritam*'<sup>23</sup> mentions in several contexts about jeweled decorated cots (*Ratnakhacitaparyānika*) used in royalty. The text also mentions a royal cot made of ivory set with jewels and gold flowers. Daṇḍī also mentions about bed of sprouts (*Pallavaśayyā*), flowers (*Kusumaśayyā*) and *Darbha* grass (*Darbhasamstarāṇa*). Such jeweled cot descriptions are also found in the Epics. Kauṭilya in his *Arthaśāstra*<sup>24</sup> speaks of some methods to finish off enemies. One such method as described in the '*Mudrārākṣasa*'<sup>25</sup> of Viśākhadatta includes a bed-chamber on a part of the flooring and as it released, the enemy who sleeps on it goes down with his bed into the cavity. *Somadevasūri*<sup>26</sup> in the *Yaśastilaka Campū* mentions a robotic idol used in bed chambers to ply a fan for the king's relief–

उपान्तयन्त्रपुत्रिकोत्क्षिप्यमाणव्यजनपवनापनीय मानसुरतश्रमः।

*upāntayantraputrikotkṣipyamāṇavyajanapavanāpanīya  
mānasurataśramah।*

Bhoja, the king of Dhārā in his work '*Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra*'<sup>27</sup> mentions about certain *Yantras* used in the bedrooms. One such accessory includes a wooden bird in the hollow of which a small drum like piece in halves with an air passage is provided. The interior device is loosely hung and the bird oscillates with highly pleasing sound that reduces the anger of ladies while sleeping. The '*Jyotiribandha*'<sup>28</sup> of Śivadāsa dated to about 1400 -1480 c. A. D. is a big compendium of astrology and several subjects. It gives the measures of beds quoting *Śilpaśāstras*. Regarding the rules of sleeping (*Śayanavidhiḥ*), the text quotes the views of Varāhamihira stating –

धान्यगोगुरुहुताशसुराणां न स्वपेदुपरि नाप्यनुवंशम्।

नोत्तरापरशिरा न च नग्नो नैव चाऽऽर्द्रचरणः श्रियमिच्छन्॥

स्वगृहेः प्राविशाराः शेते श्वाशुर्ये दक्षिणाशिराः।

प्रत्यविशाराः प्रवासे तु न कदाचिद्दुदविशाराः॥

*dhānyagoguruhutāśasurāṇāṃ na svapedupari nāpyanuvaiśam/  
nottarāparaśirā na ca nagno naiva cā''rdracaraṇaḥ śriyamicchan//  
svagrheḥ prākśirāḥ śete śvāśurye dakṣiṇāśirāḥ/  
pratyakśirāḥ pravāse tu na kadācidudakśirāḥ//*

“One must not sleep over a heap of grains, cows, over one’s preceptor, fire or the places of Gods. He must not sleep with his head either in North-South, or being naked or with wet feet if he desires wealth. In one’s own house, he must sleep with his head faced East but in his wife’s brother’s house (or in case of women in her husband’s brother’s) house one must sleep with his head faced South. In case of travels, one must avoid sleeping with his head towards North”.

Quoting the views of *Sugrīva* the text states in some extreme difficult situations, one may sleep with his head facing South –

संकटेऽपि च याम्याङ्घ्रिः स्वपेत्सुग्रीवमुच्चरन्॥

*saṅkaṭe'pi ca yāmyāṅghriḥ svapetsugrīvamuccaran//*

It adds that one must meditate on Lord *Mādhava*, *Mucukunda*, *Narasīnha*, Goddess *Lakṣmī*, sages *Agastya* and *Kapila* while going to sleep. The '*Śivatattvaratnākara*'<sup>29</sup> (STR) of *Keladi Basavarāja*, an encyclopaedic text of *Karnataka* deals on different types of beds (made from feathers of peacock or swan, cotton or fibres of silk-cotton tree, fur, creepers or flowers) in the text as follows and describes them –

हंसपिच्छमयी कापि शाल्मलीतूलजाऽपरा। कार्पासरचिता चान्या केसरैरितरा कृता ॥

पल्लवैः कलिता काचित् काचित्कुसुमनिर्मिता। पानीयपूरिता काचिच्छयैवं सप्तधा स्मृता ॥

*haṁsapicchamayī kāpi śālmalitūlajā'parā/  
kārpāsaracitā cānyā kesarairitarā kṛtā //*

*pallavaiḥ kalitā kācit kācitkusumanirmitā/  
pāniyapūrītā kācicchayyaivaiṃ saptadhā smṛtā//*

Some other varieties (*Mañca*) especially eight types are also mentioned. Of these beds, the text also describes the types of auspicious and inauspicious trees whose wood can be used for making them and those that are to be avoided. *Basavarāja*

enumerates the types of beds to be used according to the seasons in the text<sup>30</sup>–

वसन्ते हंसजा शय्या क्रीडायां पुष्पपत्रजा ॥  
 निदाघे तूलजा शय्या मध्याह्ने तोयजा शुभा ।  
 हेमन्ते शिशिरे चैव वर्षासु च विचक्षणः ॥  
 भजेत शय्यां कार्पासीं नृप शीतापनुत्तये ।  
 शरत्काले तु कैञ्चलकं डोलामञ्चं मनोहरम् ॥  
*vasante haṁsajā śayyā krīḍāyāṁ puṣpapatrajā ॥*  
*nidāghe tūlajā śayyā madhyāhne toyajā śubhā ॥*  
*hemante śiśīre caiva varṣāsu ca vicakṣaṇaḥ ॥*  
*bhajeṭa śayyāṁ kārpāsīm nṛpa śītāpanuttaye ॥*  
*śaratkāle tu kaiñjalakam ḍolāmañcam manoharam ॥*

The text<sup>31</sup> also describes the characteristics of lighting arrangements in the bedroom. The flame of the lighted lamp must be clockwise, bright, not making sound by its fluttering, colored like gold, with an orb and shining all around. Likewise the inauspicious characteristics of the lamp in bedroom are also stated. The 'Mānasollāsa'<sup>32</sup> of Chālukya king Someśvara (1131 c. A. D.), another encyclopaedic text of Karnataka also enlist the same seven types of beds as stated by Basavarāja. Of these one of them is a resonant couch (*Ravamañcha*) in which mechanical bird fittings sing. It is described as follows –

अष्टापदमयः प्रोक्तो मञ्चकोऽयं चतुष्पदः ।  
 यन्त्रिपत्रकृतैर्नादैरानन्दं तनुते नदन् ॥  
 वर रवमञ्चः समाख्यातो रतिकेलिषु कामुकैः ।  
 उपवेशनमात्रेण गच्छत्यूर्ध्वमधश्च यः ॥  
*aṣṭāpadamayah prokto mañcako'yaṁ catuṣpadaḥ ॥*  
*yantripatrakṛṭairnādairānandaṁ tanute nadan ॥*  
*vara ravamañcaḥ samākhyāto ratikeliṣu kāmukaiḥ ॥*  
*upaveśanamātreṇa gacchatyūrdhvamadhaśca yaḥ ॥*

He also describes the uses of beds according to seasons similar to that of Basavarāja's views. The 'śaṅmukhakaḥ' <sup>33</sup>, a treatise on the art of theft gives some interesting rites and *mantras* used by thieves to put others to sleep till dawn invoking Kumbhakarṇa. Several Tantric texts also offer some customs and rituals pertaining to sleep. In ancient days when people used to sleep in remote

places while travelling, they used to perform 'Dikbandhana' by sprinkling charmed water around them so as to avert the attack of wild animals, snakes and other spirits. To avoid the trouble of spirits, there were practices of either keeping iron nails under the pillows or driving iron nails on the four legs of the cot. Dream infections depend on where one sleeps, with whom he sleeps, the time of sleeping and what one thinks while sleeping. One is advised to meditate on Lord Lakṣmī Narasiṃha with the special *mantras* while going to sleep. The '*Kālī Tantra*'<sup>84</sup> specifies that one has to charm a lemon with the '*Mahākālīmantra*' 108 times and keep it under the pillow while sleeping in the night. This removes bad dreams. Likewise, sleep disorders can be cured by performing the '*Chin Mudra*' in the chest region before going to sleep and chanting the *mantra* '*Om aim hrīm śrīm*'. There also exist specific massaging techniques with herbal oils to cure sleep disorders. Some of these include the massaging of the head by fingers in a wavy fashion, then slightly beating over the head, then with both the hands rubbing over the head, the action repeated with friction and also massaging the palms and feet of the person. These have been discussed and illustrated in a recent work on massaging of limbs (*Angarmardana*)<sup>35</sup>.

### ***Śayana rituals in the Purāṇas***

Several interesting aspects of sleep as well as beds and accessories are found in the *Purāṇas*. Many *Purāṇas* elaborate on the beliefs regarding sleep of the Gods. An excellent description regarding this sleep is elaborated in the conversation of sage Nārada and sage Pulastya in the *Vāmanapurāṇam*<sup>36</sup> (VP). When the Sun reaches *Aṣāḍha* after *Uttarāyana*, then the Lord of Gods – Viṣṇu sleeps on the celestial serpent Ādiśeṣa. Various Gods have been attributed various days to sleep after Lord Viṣṇu has slept during the *Cāturmāsya* period. When the Sun is in Gemini (*Mithuna*), on *Śukla Ekādaśī* (the 11<sup>th</sup> day of bright fortnight), the Lord prepares the bed. Then worshipping Lord Keśava wearing the sacred *Pavitrā* (made of *Darbha* grass), He honours the Brahmins. On the day of *Dvādaśī* (the 12<sup>th</sup> day), clad in yellow silk garments He goes to sleep. On the 13<sup>th</sup> day, Kāma (the Lord of love) sleeps on a bed of *Kadamba* flowers, on the 14<sup>th</sup> day the *Yakṣas* sleep on



golden lotuses with pillows, on the Full Moon day - Lord *Śiva* sleeps on the tiger skin covering his matted hair with other skin. Thereafter the Sun enters the constellation of Cancer (*Kaṭaka*) and *Dakṣiṇāyana* begins. On the first day of the dark half fortnight (*Kṛṣṇapakṣā*), Lord Brahma sleeps on blue lotuses. He is followed by Lord Viśvakarma (the celestial architect) on 2<sup>nd</sup> day, Goddess Pārvatī on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, Lord Vināyaka on the 4<sup>th</sup>, Yama on the 5<sup>th</sup> day, Lord Skandha on the 6<sup>th</sup> day, the Sun on the 7<sup>th</sup>, Goddess Kātyāyāni on the 8<sup>th</sup> day, Goddess Lakṣmī on the 9<sup>th</sup> day, all the serpents and their chief Vāsukī on the 10<sup>th</sup> day and the Demi-Gods called *Sādhyas* on the 11<sup>th</sup> day. As all the Gods sleep, rainy season arrives and the day on which Lord Viśvakarma retires for sleep on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day is termed '*Aśūnya śayana*' (the non-vacant bedstead). The text adds that one should fast on this day and worshipping Lord Viṣṇu and Goddess Lakṣmī with scents and flowers, one must donate a bedstead with idols of both Lord Viṣṇu and Goddess Lakṣmī sleeping on it praying to them so that one's married life does not get disturbed by quarrels, divorce or separation. These are then to be donated to a Brahmin and one must seek his blessings. The *Vāmanapurāṇam* also states that the 8<sup>th</sup> day of the dark fortnight of the month of *Bhādrapada* is called *Kālāṣṭamī* especially when it falls in *Mṛgaśīras* constellation. It also adds that since Lord Śiva is said to sleep in all the *Liṅgas*, one must worship him on that day. When the Sun enters the constellation of Scorpio (*Vṛścika*) and the *Cāturmāsya* period ends, the Gods are said to get awaked in sequential order as before. When the Sun is in Sagittarius (*Dhanu*), Lord Viṣṇu awakens and then on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day after it, Kāma gets awakened. The text specifies that one must donate the idol of Lord Viṣṇu and Goddess Lakṣmī with bedsteads. The *Padmapurāṇam*<sup>37</sup> (PP) states that it was customary to donate a bedstead placing the idols of Lord Kṛṣṇa and Goddess Rādhā. Ghanekar quotes from *Padmapurāṇam* stating that<sup>38</sup> –

सुखेन दान्तः स्वपिति सुखं च प्रतिबुध्यते ॥

*sukhena dāntaḥ svapiti sukhaṁ ca pratibudhyate ॥*

“One who has his senses under control, sleeps happily and awakes happily at the correct time”

The *Matsyapurāṇam*<sup>39</sup> (MP) mentions the gifting of bedstead during the '*Aśūnyaśayana*' day as stated in the text. The text<sup>40</sup> also

states that on *Śivarātrī*, a bedstead with water-filled jar is to be given. On the day of *Kamalāsaptamī Vrata*, one is enjoined to donate a bedstead with golden lotuses as specified in the text<sup>41</sup> along with a cow made from jaggery. The *Brahmavaivarta-purāṇam*<sup>42</sup> (BVP) states that Lord Paraśurāma gave a divine bedstead along with cows and gold when he performed the last rites of his father namely Sage Jamadagni. In the context of *Janmāṣṭamīvrata* of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the text<sup>43</sup> states that Goddess Rādhā is to be propitiated and donated a bedstead smeared with sandal-paste and decorated with flowers. The same text<sup>44</sup> mentions that Goddess *Mahālakṣmī* is to be offered a bedstead and also goddess *Sāvitrī* is to be offered a bedstead similarly as in the text<sup>45</sup>. The *Bhaviṣyapurāṇam*<sup>46</sup> (BHP) mentions that one should prepare an idol of oneself from iron or gold and donate it with sandals and an umbrella placing it on the bedstead. The *Garuḍapurāṇam*<sup>47</sup> (GP) states that in the context of funeral rites, a bedstead along with cloth filled with cotton is to be donated for getting free from the state of death and attain a place among the Manes (*Pitṛs*). In this context, the text also advocates that a bedstead made of wood or ivory, ornamented with gold threads, covered with a red cloth along with a pillow should be donated by placing the jars filled with ghee as stated in the text. The text also states that one who is stricken with poverty, or who is the servant of another, who steals another's articles or takes sexual interests in another's wife does not get (sound) sleep. The *Garuḍapurāṇam* as quoted by Ghanekar states that a person who is not having any debts or diseases always takes meals slowly and not doing untoward sexual contacts with wife always gets proper sleep and stays happily<sup>48</sup> –

सुखं स्वपित्यनृणवान् व्याधिमुक्तश्च यो नरः ।

सावकाशस्तु वै भुङ्क्ते यस्तु दारैर्नसङ्गतः ॥

*sukhaṁ svapityanṛṇavān vyādhimuktaśca yo naraḥ |*  
*sākkāśastu vai bhun̄kte yastu dāraīmasaṅgataḥ | |*

The *Agnipurāṇam*<sup>49</sup> (AP) also enjoins the donation of a golden idol of oneself after worshipping Lord Viṣṇu along with clothes that allows one to attain the abode of Lord Viṣṇu –

अन्यविप्राय शय्यायां हैमं विष्णुं प्रपूज्य च ।

आत्मनश्च तथा मूर्तिं वस्त्राद्यैश्च प्रपूजयेत् ॥

सर्वपापविनिर्मुक्तो विप्रविष्णुप्रसादतः।

विष्णुलोकं गमिष्यामि विष्णुरेव भवाम्यहम्॥

*anyaviprāya śayyāyām haimam viṣṇum prapūjya ca /  
ātmanaśca tathā mūrtim vastrādyaiśca prapūjayet//  
sarvapāpavinirmukto vipraviṣṇuprasādataḥ/  
viṣṇulokam gamiṣyāmi viṣṇureva bhavāmyaham//*

The *Skandhapurāṇam*<sup>50</sup> (SKP) states that –

ये स्वपन्ति सुखं रात्रौ तेषां कायाग्निरिध्यते।

आहारं प्रतिगृह्णाति ततः पुष्टिकरं परम्॥

*ye svapanti sukham rātrau teṣām kāyāgniridhyate/  
āhāraṁ pratigrhṇāti tataḥ puṣṭikaram param//*

“It states that *Nidrā* (sleep) taken at the proper time and in proper quantity increases the digestion power of human beings”.

The *Skandhapurāṇam*<sup>51</sup> (SKP) states that at *Jagannāthapurī*, a great festival is associated with the sleep of Lord Kṛṣṇa, Lord Balarāma and Goddess Subhadrā on the 11<sup>th</sup> day of bright fortnight of *Āṣāḍha* and 11<sup>th</sup> day of bright fortnight of *Kārtikā*. Further the *Skandhapurāṇam* states<sup>52</sup> –

शयने वामदिग्भागः कलत्राणामुदाहृतः।

दक्षिणे बन्धुलोकानां तत्कालोचितशयिनाम्॥

*śayane vāmadigbhāgaḥ kalatrāṇāmudāhṛtaḥ/  
dakṣiṇe bandhulokānām tatkālocitaśayinām//*

“The left side is meant for wives and right side for other relations on the bedstead”.

Thus various aspects of sleep have been treated in the *Purāṇas*. In today’s Modern world with so many stresses tending to swallow this wonderful gift of God namely Sleep, one must strive to get sound sleep that promotes a sound body and mind. This will go in developing a healthy society that is free from the weaknesses of the mind caused due to loss of sleep. As lack of sleep causes a whole range of other bad tendencies such as indulgence in night food, gambling, drinking, crimes, watching crime and sexual scenes at night and other vices, society should try to develop on the healthier aspects of sleep as promoted by our ancient Indian texts that have deep-rooted philosophy behind the Art of sleeping.

## Conclusions

Research into the phenomenon of sleep has been growing for years in order to understand the meaning of sleep and its importance for the well-being of human beings. There is a distinction between relaxation, sleep as well as deep meditation. True relaxation is an experience beyond all these and brings about the oneness of the inner consciousness with God during sleep. *Yoga Nidrā* is one such art of relaxation that combats stressful influences and rectifies the imbalance in the body. It is helpful in treating several diseases. There were several ancient sleeping practices associated with some customs in societies of the world. Scholars have conducted research studies on the culture and history of sleeping, sleeping arrangements, insomnia, sleep surroundings, bed accessories and so on. Ancient Indian literature also abounds in various theories regarding sleep beginning from the Vedic period as has been discussed in literature<sup>53</sup>. The philosophical texts offer various theories related to the consciousness as well the four states of the body. *Āyurvedic* texts elaborate on the causes of sleep classifying it into various types and also giving some rules to be followed for good sleep. Various medicinal preparations to cure insomnia have been elaborated in these texts. Just as sleep is closely connected with dreams, several sages have given a broader view of the dream phenomenon listing the causes, types as well as the omens they forebode. These get entwined with a closer relation to the schools of Yoga, Tantra, *Āyurveda* and *Vedānta* to get a deeper understanding of sleep phenomenon. Various rituals and customs associated with sleep are found to be described in the *Āyurvedic*, Tantric texts as well as in local folklore that these need to be researched on a broader scale. The development of the art of spreading beds has been well illustrated in the *Kāvya*s and prose literature of ancient India. Ancient works of Kauṭilya, Bhoja and Somadevasūri as well as texts on *Śilpaśāstra* give various technological details of bed furniture that many need to be studied from a scientific perspective. Elaborate rules regarding sleep are found in the *Smṛtis*, texts of Varāhamihira and some astrological texts that can be practiced even to this day. These will help in curing various diseases and stress related problems to insomnia as well as ascertaining the causes of such sleep disorders due to various

factors. Post-Vedic texts of Basavarāja, Someśvara and other texts also offer rich information on bed and bed accessories. The phenomenon of sleep could be controlled by many means such as hymns described in some special texts such as the *ṣaṅmukhakaḷpa* and some *Dhanurveda* texts (to put the enemy to sleep during warfare by magical means). The *Purāṇas* offer a glimpse of sleep among the celestial beings in the upper realms of the Universe and describe how these are seasonally related to certain festivals thus enjoining the donations of the bed with its accessories in various occasions. This assumes significance since the donation of such articles is upheld by the *Dharmaśāstras* and *Smṛtis* to ward off sins and gain merit for the next life birth. Interestingly some ancient Indian Veterinary texts devoted to horses, elephants and cows also describe the sleep patterns of these animals and offer several pacificatory ceremonies to protect them during night. Some such ceremonies related to elephants have been discussed in recent literature<sup>54</sup>. All these discussions indicate that ancient sages were fully aware of the phenomenon of sleep as well as their other aspects. A deeper Inter-disciplinary research into these aspects would refine our understanding of Sleep in all beings and the various effects it has on the body.

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13. CS [*Sūtrasthāna*, 21.58-59]
14. SS [*Śārīrikasthāna*, IV.33]
15. SS [*Śārīrikasthāna*, IV.34-35]
16. AS [*Sūtrasthāna*, 9.48]
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38. VSS [21.15]
39. MP [92.73]
40. MP [94.27]
41. MP [80.24]
42. BVP [*Gaṇapatikhaṇḍa*, 28.49]
43. BVP [*Prakṛtikhaṇḍa*, 55.38]
44. BVP [*Prakṛtikhaṇḍa*, II.8.29]
45. BVP [*Prakṛtikhaṇḍa*, 39.40]
46. BHP [*Uttarakhaṇḍa*, 185.3]

47. GP [XIII.59-74]
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50. SKP.
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