

Sūtra 10 अभवप्रत्ययालम्बना वृत्तिर्निद्रा ॥१०॥

abhāva-pratyayālambanā vṛttir-nidrā

The mental modification that is based on the absence of all cognition is dreamless sleep.

अभाव	abhāva	absence
प्रत्यय	pratyaya	content of mind, causal principle, cognition principle
आलम्बना	ālambanā	support, base
वृत्ति	vṛtti	modification, fluctuation, activity
निद्रा	nidrā	sleep, dreamless sleep

This sūtra explains the vṛtti (mental modification) called nidrā (sleep). The term abhāva means “absence of the other four vṛttis.” These four other vṛttis are pramāṇa (right cognition), viparyaya (wrong cognition), vikalpa (imagination), and smṛiti (memory). In the state of nidrā (sleep), these four other kinds of vṛttis disappear. Therefore it is considered abhāva. The concept of nidrā in the Yoga Sūtras corresponds to the concept of suṣhupti (dreamless sleep) in Vedānta. Suṣhupti is also abhāva because it is the absence of jāgrat (waking state) and svapna (dream state).

How does the mental modification we call “sleep” (nidrā) become a cognition in the mind? The term pratyaya in the sūtra refers to four aspects: the cognition principle, the mental content of the mind, the form consciousness takes in the mind, and the object of cognition. Abhāva pratyaya is that cognition that causes the absence of the other four vṛttis. Nidrā vṛtti occurs when consciousness is absorbed in tamas guṇa (quality of inertia). In other words, when the object of cognition is tamas guṇa, it is known as nidrā vṛtti.

How is it possible that tamas guṇa (inertia) becomes an object of cognition? Just as in the darkness of the night the characteristics of objects become unclear to the eyes, in the same way, in the darkness of the mind’s absorption in tamas guṇa, which is sleep, the experience of objects becomes unclear. Sleep is that vṛtti of the mind in which awareness is very indistinct.

The word ālambana in the sūtra means “support.” In the case of nidrā vṛtti (sleep), tamas guṇa (the quality of dullness or inertia) becomes the support for the mind; the mind rests on the support of indistinct awareness. As one falls asleep the aspect of mind that experiences vṛttis (mental modifications) identifies with tamas (inertia), and the senses become temporarily deactivated. During sleep the mind observes, “I am sleeping.” The mind experiences the absence of other vṛttis, as well as this observation, as a tamasik pleasure.

Why is sleep regarded as a vṛtti? Vyāsa says, “Sleep is to be considered a particular type of cognition because one reflects about it.” If sleep were not a vṛtti, it could not be an experience. If sleep were the absence of experience, one could not have recollection of it, because a recollection implies memory of

an experience. And, without recollection, there can be no reflection. Therefore, since one reflects on sleep, it must be a *vr̥itti*.

Also it is empirically evident that the entire mind does not become inactive during sleep. In *nidrā* (sleep) the mind that is conscious of the outer world is overcome by *tamas guṇa* (inertia). Only that part of the mind sleeps that normally undergoes the changes of wakefulness, dream, and deep sleep. The rest of the mind, such as that which controls the heart, lungs, digestion, and blood circulation, continues to function normally. In fact, the entire mind never sleeps during one's lifetime.

How does *tamas guṇa* (quality of inertia) affect cognition and the modifications of the mind? The essential nature of *buddhi* (intellect) is *sattva guṇa* (purity) predominant. When *tamas guṇa* (inertia) becomes dominant in the mind, it overpowers both the *sattva* (pure) nature and the *rajas* (active) nature of *buddhi* (intellect). This overpowering by *tamas* (inertia) makes all the senses of the body inactive. In the absence of all other objects in the mind, *tamas guṇa* itself becomes the object of *buddhi*. The intellect identifies with *tamas* as an external object and inwardly becomes conscious of the notion, "I am sleeping," which carries the memory "I slept well."

Vyāsa classifies sleep according to the relative predominance of the three *guṇas* as follows:

1. *Sattvik* sleep: *Sattva guṇa* aides *tamas guṇa* in sleep. The effect, after waking, is a feeling of clarity and pleasantness of mind. From such clarity of the mind, intelligence functions with perfect discernment.
2. *Rajasik* sleep: *Rajas guṇa* aides *tamas guṇa* in sleep. The effect, upon awakening, is an observation of dullness and laziness in the mind. It is an obstacle in yoga called *styāna* (see Sūtra I:30).
3. Complete *tamasik* sleep: *Tamas* completely overpowers *sattva* and *rajas*. The effect, upon awakening, is a feeling that the energy of the mind has been stolen by others. One cannot concentrate and becomes disinclined to undertake action.

In the Vedāntic system, consciousness is understood as manifesting in four states; three of the mind and one beyond the mind:

1. *Jāgrat* (wakeful): In this state the *jñānendriyas* (sense organs), *karmendriyas* (organs of action), and *manas* (the seat of thinking) all work together. The four active *vr̥ittis*, *pramāṇa* (valid proof), *viparyaya* (wrong cognition), *vikalpa* (imagination), and *smṛiti* (memory) may be experienced.
2. *Svapna* (dream state): In this state the *jñānendriyas* (sense organs) and *karmendriyas* (organs of action) become inactive; only *manas* (the seat of thinking) remains active. *Vikalpa* and *smṛiti vr̥ittis* may be experienced as a dream.

3. *Suṣhupti* (deep sleep or dreamless sleep): In this state the *jñānendriyas* (sense organs), *karmendriyas* (organs of action), and *manas* (the seat of thinking) all become inactive. *Pramāṇa*, *viparyaya*, *vikalpa*, and *smṛiti vṛittis* are absent. *Jāgrat* and *svapna* states are not manifest.
4. *Turīya* (super-consciousness): In this state all *vṛittis* are transcended. That is, the Self abides in itself.

For the aspirant, sleep is a *vṛitti* that should be controlled, just as any other, in order to attain *samādhi* (super-consciousness).



Yogāchārya Maharshi Yājñavalkya wrote the Yājñavalkya Samhitā, which has 1012 verses divided into 3 chapters. Nothing is known about his birth date. It is believed he lived in King Janaka's palace. He was a householder with two wives, Maitreyī and Gargeyī. High sages used to come to receive his spiritual teachings.