

# A Review Of The Classical Concept Of Normal Sleep In Unani System Of Medicine

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## Abstract

Sound sleep is very important for a healthy life. A normal sleep is very much important as it effects physical, mental, and emotional status of our body. Without proper sleep, an individual cannot perform his daily life routine in a better way and will face various difficulties like to concentrate or to respond quickly. In Unani system of Medicine there is a description of *Asbab sitta zaruriya* (six essential factors) which is very important for a balanced and healthy life. Any abnormality in these factors may lead to disease. *Naum wa yaqza* (sleep and wakefulness) is the fifth essential entity of these six factors. In Unani system of Medicine there is given more emphasis on proper care of health in daily life and sleep is one of the important needs that have to be fulfilled. Ancient Unani scholars has described the various aspect of sleep such as what is sleep, need of sleep, relationship of sleep and awaken with activity and rest. In Classical Unani literature there is also description about relation of sleep with *hazam jaiyyed* (good digestion), *quwa* (faculty), *rooh* (pneuma), *akhlat* (humours) and *mijaz* (temperament). It is need of hour to give emphasis on attaining a healthy and sound sleep.

**Keywords** –Sleep, Insomnia, Unani Medicine, *Naum wa yaqza*, *Asbab Sitta Zaruria*.

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## INTRODUCTION:

We spend approximately one-third of our lives asleep.<sup>1</sup> Sleep is one of the basic needs of human beings, and sound sleep helps the human body to remain healthy. Sleep re-energizes almost all body parts, like the brain, heart, and lungs.<sup>1</sup> Many researches has been done that shows that an abnormal pattern of sleep may cause many diseases like hypertension, obesity, depression, anxiety, mental disorders, etc.<sup>1</sup> Sleep is a complex biological process in our lives. Optimum quality and quantity of sleep at the right time with proper duration is essential and beneficial for a normal, healthy life. Sleep helps to maintain good physical health as well as healthy brain function. In the case of children and adolescent age groups, sleep helps growth and development. Sleep enables the body to repair itself and keeps it fit. Sleep Foundation has recommended 7 to 9 hours of sleep per day for adults aged 18 to 64 years and 7 to 8 hours for older adults aged > 65 years.<sup>2</sup> Sleep deprivation is an emerging problem among young adults. Insomnia is a sleep disturbance when a person suffers a problem related to falling asleep, maintaining sleep, and restoring sleep after awakening.<sup>3</sup> Insomnia affects approximately 20% of the adult population.<sup>3</sup> Symptoms of insomnia may occur in 33% to 50% of the adult population, either occasionally or persistently.<sup>3</sup> Insomnia is more prevalent in women than in men, and it ranges from 10% to 30% in women.<sup>3</sup> According to the Unani System of Medicine, there is an important concept of *Asbab sitta zaruriya* that is also known as six essential factors.<sup>4</sup> *Asbab sitta zaruriya* includes *hawa-e-muheet* (ambient air), *makool wa mashroob* (foods and drinks), *harkat wa sukoon badni* (physical movement and rest), *harkat wa sukoon nafsan* (psychic movement

and rest), *naum wa yaqza* (sleep and wakefulness), and *ehtebas wa istefragh* (retention and evacuation).<sup>5,6</sup> *Naum wa yaqza* is the fifth essential factor in *Asbab sitta zaruriya*. Any disturbance or abnormality in sleep or awakening leads to adverse effects on the body. Sleep is described in sufficient detail in Unani medicine to understand the importance, usefulness, and necessity of sleep. In this article vast concept of Unani medicine regarding various aspects of sleep has been discussed. **Concepts of sleep in Unani Medicine What is sleep?**

Sleep can be defined as the inactivity or relaxation of all senses and their movement towards *dakhile-badan* (inside the body).<sup>7</sup> Since the senses remain dormant when we sleep, an individual isn't aware of their surroundings. <sup>7</sup> During sleep, *rooh* moves towards the *dakhile badan* (inner side of the body), so *zahir hawas* (external senses) become *mu'attal* (disconnected), *quwwat* (power) is ceased for its belonging functions, and ultimately the *bairuni aza* (external organs) becomes cold comparatively.<sup>7</sup> As sleep is the phenomenon of the movement of the senses towards the body, the activity of the senses is possible with the movement of the body, which is an essential feature of the body. Hence, sleep occurs only when the *hararat ghareezi* (innate heat) moves inward. It is justified as, during sleep, the heat of *bairun jism* (external body) is comparatively less. The process of digestion is optimal during sleep because the *hararat ghareezi* (innate heat), which is being used for various activities and senses, is now being utilised for the metabolism and digestion of food.<sup>7</sup>

### Definition of sleep

According to Abu Sehal Maseehi, sleep is a condition when *quwa nafsania* (sensory power) ceases its *afa'al* (function). *Quwa nafsania* consists of *quwa hissiyah* (sensory power) and *quwa tahreek* (motor power).<sup>8</sup> Sleep can also be defined as the cessation of all the functions of the *quwa* (power) of the brain, as the brain is the centre of sleep.

When *quwa tahreek* is not able to move the body or function properly, the body becomes loose, and *ratubat* (fluids) *wa bukharat* (gaseous substances), which should disperse or disseminate either by awakening or movement, are gathered in the brain, and their ascendance occurs there, which is the centre of this *quwa*, and ultimately the brain becomes senseless.<sup>8</sup> This is the condition of *tabai naum* (normal sleep)<sup>8</sup>. In other words, sometimes the condition can be just opposite due to some disease or complication due to which the amount of *ratubat* increases so much that either it cannot disperse or dissipate or maximum *bukharat* is collected in the brain, and ultimately the brain gets overloaded and becomes senseless or unconscious, and *quwa nafsania* ceases its function and falls asleep. Sleep is an important part of body function because it helps *quwa ghazia* (digestive power) to function properly as it digests and distributes the food in different body organs, where organs utilize the nutrition from them, and the matter that remains in the form of waste is ready to be disposed of or excreted out of the body. Sleep occurs naturally due to *ratubat dimag* (brain fluids) and pathologically occurs due to *barudate dimag* (coldness of the brain), as *barudat* is *mukhaddir* (sedative) that produces numbness.<sup>8</sup> **Need of sleep**

*Rooh* (pneuma) is *lateef* (lightly weighted), *bukhari* (gaseous) matter, and can dissipate easily with physical or mental movement.<sup>9</sup> During awakens, *rooh* dissipates because every movement and activity is *muhallil* (i.e., breaks or dissolves the *rooh*), while *rooh* can't be revived during awakens. According to Unani physician Mulla Nafees, for the formation of new *rooh*, there is a need for pure and *lateef* blood. For the formation of new *rooh*, there is a need for *hazam jaiyad* (good digestion), and for *hazam jaiyad*, sleep is required. During awaken, *nafs* (soul) is busy or involved in vital activities like sensation and voluntary activity, so it can't digest the food properly because, when *nafs* (soul) is involved in a particular function, it cannot collaborate in other work simultaneously.<sup>9</sup> Hence, it is important for *nafs haiwani* to only be involved in the digestion process for *hazm kamil* (complete digestion), leaving or completing all other activities to some extent or for a certain period. If *nafs haiwani* is involved in two or more functions, neither of them will be completed properly. So, there is a need for sleep so that *rooh* and *quwa* will gather in *batin* (innerside) and the process of digestion will complete to its full extent.<sup>9</sup> **Sleep resembles rest, and awakening resembles activity.**

Avicenna says that sleep resembles rest, and awakening resembles activity. Sleep directs the innate heat inward, strengthens the *quwa tabiya* (physical faculty), and relaxes the *quwa nafsania* (nervous faculty).<sup>10,11</sup> An average amount of sleep helps *quwa nafsania* to function properly. It relaxes the *quwa muharrika* (motor faculty) and *quwa*

*mudarrika* (perceptive faculty), which come under the *quwa nafsania*. An adequate amount of sleep increases the *jauhar* (*roohe nafsani* i.e psychic soul) and awakens leads to dispersion of the *jauhar rooh* (essence of soul), whether it is *roohe tabiya* or *roohe nafsani* (psychic soul). Unani physician Razi has said normal sleep is responsible for *taskeen* (relaxation) and *taqwiyat* (strength) in the body.<sup>12</sup> Aristotle has elaborated that sleep is an important requirement related to the activity of the heart, from which motion and perception arise.<sup>13</sup> **Sleep resembles sukoon (relax) and awakens resembles action.**

The body becomes relaxed during rest, while rooh and body both become relaxed during sleep. Similarly, waking up and physical movement are the same processes, i.e., in both conditions, the human body works. Abu Sehal Maseehi has explained that the body needs relaxation after tiredness, which is responsible for the *nuzuj* (maturation) of ingested food, and increases the production of *rooh*. One important indication regarding sleep and wake mentioned in Unani classical literature is that when the body is tired, one should not awaken vigorously. Similarly, if the mind is alert and active and the senses are intensified, feeling energetic, then person should not try to sleep unnecessarily.<sup>14</sup>

#### **Sleep and rest increase ratubat in the body, and awakening are responsible for yaboosat**

During sleep, the body is inactive, and *tahleel* (dissolution) is slow, due to which *ratubat* increases in the body. In rest, the body is inactive and the same process occurs. During awaken, the body is active and performing different functions and *tahleel* (dissolution) is high, due to which *yabusat* (dryness) increases in the body. **Impact of sleep on akhlat (humours)**

*Akhlat* is a fundamental part of Unani medicine; it maintains normal health while its derangement is responsible for diseases. Abu Sahel Maseehi has explained that sleep induces the production of good *akhlat* (humours). There are four humours: *khilte-dam* (blood), *khilte-balgham* (phlegm), *khilte-safra* (yellow bile), and *khilte-sauda* (black bile). If all four humours of the body are balanced in *kaifiyat* (qualities) and *kammiyat* (quantity), then it is *musakkin* (sedative) and *murattib* (moistens) for the body.<sup>8</sup> Razi said balanced humours produce *dam-e-mahmood*, which means good blood which is red in colour, odourless, *latif* (subtle), and sweet characteristics.<sup>13</sup> Ibn sina has also explained that normal sleep produces *ratubat wa hararat* in *akhlat*.<sup>11</sup> If a person has kind of humors which requires *nuzuj* (maturation), then person are advised to sleep, because sleep helps initiate *nuzuj*, and if humours in one's body requires dissolution, then person should awake, because awaken leads to dissolution.<sup>15</sup> In the case of dominancy of *barid akhlaat* (cold humours), long-duration sleep is harmful, and it is also harmful if there is a fever due to visceral inflammation because, during sleep, matters are absorbed inward into the body, which leads to further inflammation.<sup>8</sup> In *amraz barida* (Cold diseases), or the case of the presence of raw humours, movement is essential for *tahallul*. In the case of the dominance of *khilte-dam* (blood), awakening is more beneficial than sleep, especially when *quwa* is strong, but if *quwa* is weak, then sleep is better.<sup>8</sup> In the case of the dominance of *khilte safra* (yellow bile), sleep and rest are more beneficial.

#### **Impact of sleep on mijaz (temperament)**

Sleep is *murattib badan* (moistens the body), and in every condition, it does not produce *sakhunat wa barudat* (heat and cold) rather, it produces *sakhunat* (heat) some time and *barudat* (cold) another time.<sup>8</sup> *Yabusat* (dryness) generally produces *sehar* (insomnia).<sup>8</sup> *Hararat*, which produces dryness, is an abnormal pathological condition.<sup>8</sup>

#### **Sleep and awakens are both mandatory for life**

Ibn Sina has described that normal sleep increases *jauhare rooh* (essence of the soul) and decrease *tahleel* of *rooh* (dissolution of rooh).<sup>11</sup> The *jauhar* (essence) of *rooh* is *latif* (subtle) and *bukhari*, which easily disperse, so if the awakens continue, then rooh will dissolve completely and will be finished.<sup>9</sup> All the functions that are carried out in awaken are ultimately *harkat* (actions), and *harkat* are *muhallil*. The *rooh* always needs *badal ma yatahallul* (anabolic activity against catabolism), and the generation of *badal ma yatahallul* is only possible when there is the formation of new *rooh* occurs.<sup>9</sup> The formation of new *rooh* occurs with the help of lateef and pure blood and this type of blood is formed with the help of *hazam jaiyyed* (good digestion), and *hazam jaiyyed* is performed only during sleep.<sup>9</sup> Ibn Sina explained that *tabai naum* (normal sleep) leads to good digestion.<sup>11</sup> Majusi has described that sleep is good for digestion as well as it also helps in proper *nuzuj* of *akhlat*.<sup>16</sup> According to Avicenna, sleep uplifts the

digestion and assimilation of food and converts it into blood.<sup>10</sup> While awake, the human body continues to perform various functions, so it cannot focus on digesting food properly. Therefore, sleep is essential for good digestion.

## DISCUSSION:

These days sleep disorder has become a big problem. Sleep disorder may include difficulties in falling asleep, or to maintain deep sleep and even insomnia too. Sleep disorder may increase risk of depression, mood disorder, and anxiety that reduces quality of life. Insomnia affects approximately 20% of the adult population.<sup>3</sup> Symptoms of insomnia may occur in 33% to 50% of the adult population, either occasionally or persistently.<sup>3</sup> Insomnia is more prevalent in women than men, and it ranges from 10% to 30% in women.<sup>3</sup> Inadequate sleep can also interfere with normal physical, mental, social and emotional wellbeing. Insufficient sleep can also result in motor vehicle accident decreased work performance and cognitive work function. Non-restorative sleep can affect overall health, safety and quality of life. As we all know healthy sleep is very important for us, hence there is need to focus on causes and reasons behind the sleep disturbance. In Unani system of medicine there is given much emphasis on *Asbab sitta zaruriya* (six essential factors) and its one of the important factors is *naum wa yaqza* (sleep and awakening). In USM there is given more importance on proper ways of sleep attainment.

As mentioned in Unani classical literature sleep is defined as relaxation of all senses and their movement towards *dakhile badan* (inner side of the body).<sup>7</sup> As we all know during sleep *rooh* moves towards inner side of the body, so *zahir hawas* (external senses) becomes *muattal* (disconnected) and all the activity of senses is connected with movement of the body.<sup>9</sup> In Unani classical literature there is emphasized great role of *quwa* in sleep phenomenon especially *quwa nafsania* (i.e. sensory and motor power). According to definition of sleep *quwa nafsania* ceases its function so brain being centre of sleep, all the *quwa* of brain is also ceased.<sup>8</sup> *Tabai nawm* is a condition during which *ratubat* and *bukharat* of the body which should be disseminated by awakening or by activity is gathered in brain and makes it unconscious or senseless in response to which *quwa nafsania* ceases its function.<sup>8</sup>

Need of sleep to human body is greatly connected to *rooh* (pneuma). During *awaken rooh* dissipates in response to activities or movement as they are *muhallil* (i.e. dissolve the rooh).<sup>8</sup> So, for the formation of new *rooh* there is need of good and pure blood which can be achieved by good digestion and good digestion is proceed during sleep.<sup>8</sup> While in awaken condition *nafs* is busy in other vital and voluntary and *hazam jaiyyed* is not attended. Hence there is great need of sleep so that process of digestion completes to its full extent and formation of new *rooh* occur which is essential for continuity of life.<sup>9</sup>

In normal condition sleep is proceed by *ratubat dimag* (wetness in brain) and pathologically it may occur due to *barudat dimag* (coldness in brain) and the concept behind it is that *barudat* is *mukhaddir* (sedative) which produce numbness.<sup>8</sup> If there occurs any imbalance between sleep and awakefulness it leads to predominance of *yabusat wa hararat* (dryness and hotness) in the brain.<sup>1</sup> *yabusat wa hararat* in the brain will ultimately leads to *sehar* (insomnia).<sup>1,17</sup> hence, it is very important to have normal sleep so that all body function would perform in better way with full extent.

## CONCLUSION

Sleep is a vital human need essential for physical and mental well-being. In Unani System of Medicine (USM), it is one of the important factors of *Asbab Sitta Zaruriya* (six essential factors) and is viewed holistically. Scholars like Avicenna and Razi described sleep as a time for rest, repair, and balance restoration. It supports *rooh*, *quwa*, *akhlal*, and *mijaz*, impacting immunity, metabolism, and mental health. Hence, reviving sleep principles mentioned in USMs offers holistic solutions for sleep disorders.

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