

Ayurvedic perspectives towards Nidra (Sleep) and its significance

Abstract

Ahara (food), Nidra (sleep), and Bramhacharya (celibacy) are three pillars of life. Sleep is equally important as food, hence we must know concept of sleep described in Ayurveda. It is also enumerated as the natural urge which should not be suppressed and if suppressed would lead to various diseases. Health of a person means healthy physical body and mind together. Ayurveda helps in keeping balance, harmony and equilibrium in all physiological activities of body and mind. Ayurveda is an eternal science. Nidra(sleep) being an integral part of our life plays an important role in promotion of health and prevention of diseases. This old concept requires to be re-evaluated. As literary research deals with assortment, classification, compilation, critical study and presentation in revised form; we have made an attempt to compile dispersed references regarding the concept of “Nidra” .

Key words: Nidra (sleep), Ayurveda, Health

Introduction

In all Samhitas Ahara, Nidra and Brahmacharya are given prime importance under the name of “*Trayopastambha*” the sub pillars of life. The strength complexion and compactness of the individual body depends on these three factors[1]. Sleep is the mental operation having the absence of cognition for its grasp. *Acharya Vyas* made a statement that - “sleep is a state of unconsciousness, but the consciousness remains about his own unconsciousness” [2]. According to Charak Acharya when mind gets tired ,when sense organs and motor organs get exhausted they no more can perceive their objects and there remains nothing to feed the mind for the sake conveying to soul , in this status , already tired mind does not perceive anything and stste of sleep occurs . In modern era of civilization, due to growing use of technologies like Laptop, Tablet, Mobile phone and increasing competition, changing lifestyle especially sleeping pattern has become a leading cause for manifestation of many diseases .

Table 1: Types of sleep according to different Acharyas [3]

CHARAKA	SUSHRUTA	ASHTANG SANGRAH	ASHTANG HRIDAY
<i>Tamobhava</i> –Due to excess	<i>Tamasi-</i> When patient faces serious	<i>Kala Swabhava</i> -Normal	<i>Mithyayog-</i> if slept

of tamas quality	problem eg. Coma.	daily routine sleep	untimely
Shleshma samudbhava - Sleep occurring due to the excess of Kapha	Swabhaviki - Sleep is natural	Amayaja	Atiyog - more hours i.e. more time in a day.
Mana Shrama Sambhava - Sleep occurring due to mental fatigue	Vaikariki - In diseased person mind is extremely weak to pick signals of sensation from sense organs hence it retire & sleep induced.	Chittakhedaja -Sleep occurring due to the disturbances of the mind or due to mental exhaustion	Hinayog - no slept properly.
Shareera Shrama Sambhava - Sleep occurring due physical fatigue	-	Dehakhedaja - Sleep occurring due to physical exertion.	Samyagyog - Timely & for certain duration.
Agantuki - Sleep occurring due to others reason like alcohol consumption	-	Kaphabhava -Sleep occurring due to the predominance of Kapha	-
Vyadhyanuvartini –Sleep occurring due to diseases like hypothyrodism, anaemia	-	Agantuki -Sleep caused due to a trauma or injury involving head.	-
Ratri Swabhava Prabhava - Sleep occurring due to the excess of the Tamoguna	-	Tamobhava -sleep occurring due to the predominance of the Taamasika guna in the mind...	-

Duration of sleep

Different individuals require different duration of sleep as per their body constitution, health status and age factor.

Table 2-According to Constitution sleep requires

<i>Kapha</i> constitution	<i>pitta</i> constitution	<i>Vata</i> constitution
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6-7 hrs sleep	7-8 hrs sleep	8-9 hrs sleep
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It is known factor that in younger age *Kapha* will be predominant, in Middle age *Pitta* and in old age *Vata*. Hence it can be noted that there is a close relation of *Dosha* with sleep. *Kapha Dosha* will induce more sleep in an individual and the *Vata Dosha* on opposite reduces the duration of sleep.

Table 3-According to age factor

Newborns upto 1 yr age	1-3 yrs	3-5 yrs	5-12 yrs	Adolescent	Adults
18 hrs sleep	12-15 hrs sleep	11-13 hours sleep	9-11 hours	9-10 hrs	6 – 9 hrs

Importance of Sleep:

- 1) According to Charak sleep is one of the factors responsible for sustaining living body. It participates in happiness, misery, nourishment, emaciation, strength, weakness, sexual urges, impotency, learning and illiteracy, life and death. merits and demerits of sleep.

Sleep is a non suppressible urge. Urge of sleep should not be avoided and one should sleep at proper time.

- 2) Properly and timely taking sleep brings the happiness, nourishment, strength, Virility, knowledge and maintains the life. [4,5]
- 3) As the real knowledge brings about Siddhi (enlightenment) in a yogi similarly properly intake of sleep brings about happiness and longevity in human beings.[6]
- 4) Properly sleeping at the night time makes *Dhatuamyata* (balance of the body constituents) and provides alertness, good vision, good complexion, good strength and good digestive power.[7]

(A) Divaswapna

Sleep during day time increases unctuousness in the body.[8]

Demerits of Diwaswapa:[9]

If one sleeps in the daytime, whom it is contraindicated, then he may suffer from Halimaka (a serious type of jaundice), Shirahshula (headache), Staimitya (timidness), Gurugatrata (heaviness of the body), Angamarda (malaise), Agninasha (loss of digestive power), Hridaya Pralepa (a feeling as if phlegm adhered to the heart), Shobha (edema), Arochaka (anorexia), Hellas (nausea), Pinasa (rhinitis), Ardhavabhedaka (hemisrania), Kotha (urticaria), Aru (eruption), Pidaka (abscess), Kandu (pruritus), Tandra (drowsiness), Kasa (coughing), Galamaya (diseases of the throat), Smriti-Buddhi Pramoha (impairment of the memory and intelligence), Srotasaam sanrodha (obstruction of the circulating channels of the body), Jwara (fever), Indriyanam asamarthyaya (weakness of sensory and motor organs)

(B) Ratrau jagarana

Remaining vigil during night causes roughness in the body.[10]

Demerits of Ratrau Jagarana:

If one remains awake in Vatakala i.e. in late-night (approx. 2 am to 6 am if sunrise at 6 is), then Vata gets vitiated which vitiates the Agni and leads to inappropriate digestion of food. Vitiating of Vata is more harmful for digestion than Pitta and Kapha. If one remains awake in Kapha and Pitta Kala i.e. first two Prahara, and sleep in Vatakala i.e. in last Prahara then definitely food gets digested properly

Role of improper Nidra in disease manifestation

1. According to Charak Sleeping in day time except in Grishma Ritu causes vitiation of Kapha and Pitta.
2. It can cause Krimi, Prameha, Sthaulya, Visarpa, Medovaha Strotas Dushti, Yonikanda, Asrigdara.
3. Sleeping on Cot (Khatva) leads to the vitiation of Vata.
4. Sleeping on wooden planks can highly vitiate Vata because it is un-unctuous.
5. Excess sleeping leads to Kaphaprakopa, Antarvidradhi.[11]
6. Sleeping on an uncomfortable bed leads to Vatavyadhi.[12]
7. Excess sleep especially in day time leads to Kaphaprakopa, Pratishyaya,(Allergic Rhinitis) Arsha (piles).[13]
8. Sleeping in the day time and keeping awake in night time leads to Samana Vata Dushti, Shiroroga, Urustambha, Vatarakta, Ajirna, Nijashotha, Vatavyadhi.
9. Sleeping in irregular posture leads to Vata-gulma.

Role of Nidra in Treatment

1. Treatment of Ratrau Jagarana: A person should sleep on proper time at night as much as desirable and become habituated to it.
2. One should sleep in a comfortable bed. It alleviates the vitiated Vata and work as an aphrodisiac.
3. Sleeping on the floor alleviates the vitiated Vata , nourishes, gives strength and it is aphrodisiac.
4. Ratrau jagarana as a treatment of disease: Sthaulya, Kaphaja Madatyaya, Prameha
5. Nidra as a treatment of disease: Karshya,Unmada (insanity)
6. Sukha Shayya as a treatment of disease: Karshya,Vatarakta
7. Asukha Shayya treatment of disease: Atinidra

For treatment purpose Panchakarma offers Shirodhara and shiroabhyanga for Anidra.[14, 15].Few studies related to sleep in different groups were reported[16,17]. Studies on quality of sleep among doctors and medical students were reported [18-19]. Other studies on beneficial effects of Ghrelin[20] and Yoga [21] were reviewed[22-25].

CONCLUSION:

Causes of the rapid increase in non-communicable diseases are mostly related to Lifestyle such as physical inactivity etc. Increasing a sedentary lifestyle due to the growing use of technologies in daily life causes higher levels of physical inactivity. In modern era of civilization, due to growing use of technologies like Laptop, Tablet, Mobile phone and increasing competition, changing lifestyle especially sleeping pattern has become a leading cause for manifestation of many diseases like Hypertension, Migraine, Diabetes mellitus, Obesity etc. Hence, Nidra(sleep) being an integral part of our life plays an important role in promotion of health and prevention of diseases. It has been observed that all the living beings enjoy sleep to keep their body and mind active.

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