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AYURVEDIC CONCEPT OF NIDRA

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Abstract: Ayurveda is the most ancient science of life. As such it is not concerned only to the cure of diseases but also aims to relieve the humanity from all categories of miseries- physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual. This important triune consists of Ahara (food), Nidra (Sleep) and Brahmacharya (Good conduct). These three have been considered as Upastambha or the basis of life and health. Out of the three Upastambhas, Nidra or sleep is the secondary important pillar of life. It is a physiological state of rest for the body, mind, sense and motor organs. When the mind is exhausted and ex-hausted sense organs detract from their objects, Nidra has been given more importance and considered to be the best in Ayurveda. This article is an attempt to present information that is discussed in Ayurveda text related to Nidra (sleep).

Keywords: Ayurveda, Sleep, Nidra, Anidra

Introduction: Ayurveda, the science of life has mentioned various principles, for well being of the humans. There are two basic aims of Ayurveda, which are mentioned in the following quote-1. *Swasthasya swastha rachanam* (prevention of disease). 2. *Aturasya vikara prashanam* (cure of disease)^[1]. To fulfill the aim of life (prevention of disease) of Ayurveda, the theory of *Triupastambha* has great place, as *Acharya Caraka* says that *Ahara, Nidra and Bramhacharya* are the three *Upastambhas* of life and play a key role in the maintenance of health and long life span. Being supported by these three will regulate factors of life, the body is endowed with strength, complexion and growth, and continues up till the full life span of life, provided a person does not indulge in such regimens as are detrimental to health^[2]. While discussing about *Nidra*, the ancient *Acharyas* have stated that happiness and sorrow, growth and wasting, strength and weakness, virility and impotence and the knowledge and ignorance as well as the existence of life and its cessation depend on the sleep, It is one of the life maintaining factors and if not used properly several fatal diseases may produce^[3]. *Nidra* has been considered as *Brihana* factors (nourishing factors) in routine life means it promotes health by nourishing *Dhatus*^[4] and increasing *Kapha*

which is responsible for the strength and immunity of the body as well as mind. Increased *Kapha* promotes physical health and immunity are promoted by *Sthirita* (stability), *Snigdhatta* (unctuousness) and *Guruta* (heaviness) while mental health and immunity are promoted by *Kshama* (forgiveness), *Dhrit* (steadiness) and *Alobha* (contentment), which are the functions of *Kapha* in normal state on the other hand, *Nidra* also promotes health by increasing *Shukra Dhātu*, essence of the body and the same affects as like *Kapha*^[5].

Materials and Methods

Review of literature regarding Concept of *Nidra* has been collected from *Ayurvedic* text books, different web sites. All compiled matter is recognized and critically analyzed for the discussion and attempt has been made to draw some fruitful conclusions.

Etymological Derivation of Nidra: The word *Nidra* is feminine formed by the prefix *ni+dra+rak+ta*. This is a state of nature which causes encapsulation to the consciousness of a person^[6].

Definition: Ever since modern people are unable to define it accurately from the time it is a question in every mind that what is sleep, how it occurs and what is its role in health. But the great sages of India had the perfect knowledge

regarding the sleep. The definitions are as follows—Sleep is the mental operation having the absence of cognition for its grasp, Vyas while commenting *Patanjali Yoga Darshana* made a statement as “Sleep is a state of unconsciousness, but the consciousness remains about his own unconsciousness^[7]. Charak affirmed that when the mind (as well as soul) gets exhausted or becomes inactive and the sensory and motor organs become inactive then the individual gets sleep^[8]. *Sushruta* described the sleep occurs when the *Hridaya* the seat of *Chetana* is covered by *Tamas*^[9]. In *Astanga Sangraha*, *Vagbhata* stated that—the *Manovaha Srotas* become accumulated with *Shleshma* and mind is devoid of sense organs because of fatigue, when individual falls asleep^[10].

Proper Sleep: The sleep caused by nature of night is excellent sleep. It keeps every one lively, nourishes them like mother, so called as *Bhutadhatri*^[11]. It is like *Maya of Visnu*, it naturally comes to all beings. It is also known as *Papini* as it destroys all means, through which good action can be done at that time^[12].

Proper Way to Sleep: Over a comfortable bed in home & at proper time at which sleep is accustomed, one should go to sleep^[13].

Relation of sleep with Health: Happiness, misery, nourishment, emaciation, strength, weakness, sterility, virility, knowledge, ignorance, life & death, all are dependent on proper or improper sleep^[3]. Untimely sleep & excessive sleep take both happiness & longevity like *Kala Ratri* i.e. fierceful night. At the same time if properly enjoyed, they bring about happiness, longevity to human being as real knowledge i.e. *Satya Buddhi* brings about *Siddhi* to *Yogi*^[14].

Relation of Sleep with Nourishment & Malnourishment of Body: Awakening at the night increase dryness in the body. Day sleep increase unctuousness in the body & sleeping in sitting posture during day time does not increase unctuousness or dryness^[15]. Like the proper diet, proper sleep is essential for maintenance of the body. Proper sleep increase weight, induces obesity where as less sleep produce emaciation^[16].

Production of Sleep: When *Tamas* increases the person sleeps. When *Satva* increases person awakens. Naturally the *Tamas* & *Satva* qualities alternately are held responsible for sleep & awakening^[17].

Effect on Heart: Heart which is like the lotus in the downward direction, blooms in wakeful state & closes while a sleep^[18].

Types of Nidra: *Ayurveda* has different opinions regarding the types of sleep. Basically *Nidra* can be classified into type's viz. *Svabhavika* (natural) and *Asvabhavika* (abnormal). Out of the former *Svabhavika Nidra* is regular every night, which offers beneficial effects for the living beings, whereas the later *Asvabhavika* is one can be due to different causes of pathological in origin. *Acharya Caraka* has classified *Nidra* in following manner according to causes^[19]

1. *Tamobhava*- caused by *Tama*.
2. *Slesmasamudbhava*- caused by vitiated *Kapha*.
3. *Manah-Sarira Srama Saambha*- caused by mental and mental exertion.
4. *Agantuki*-indicative of bad prognosis leading imminent death.
5. *Vyadhi-Anuvartini*- caused as a complication of other disease like *Sannipataja jwara* etc.
6. *Ratri-Svabhava Prabhava*- caused by the very nature of the night.

Acharya Vagbhata has classified in seven types as following manner^[20]

1. *Kalawabhawaja*- it is produces at the accustomed time. i.e. nights
2. *Amayaja*- it is produced due to effect of diseases.
3. By fatigue of *Mana*- when *Mana* is exhausted
4. By fatigue of *Sharira*- when body is exhausted
5. *Shleshmaprabhavaja*- it is produced due to predominance of *kapha*
6. *Agantuka*- this type of *Nidra* is produced by external factors e.g. traumatic etc.
7. *Tamobhava*- it is produced by predominance of *Tamoguna*.

Physiology of Sleep (Nidra): When *Manas* is exhausted then sleep occurs this phenomenon can be understood in this manner. According to Howell, sleep is due to cerebral ischemia. Cerebral cortex is the seat of higher centres like pre and post central gyres, association area etc., which have the correlation with mental activities described in *Ayurveda*. So due to the reduction in cerebral blood supply *Manas* becomes *Klanta* that causes sleep. Further, during sleep, *Indriyas* (both *Jnanendriya* and *Karmendriya*) become inactive by the detachment from their sense organs or from their work^[8].

Diseases produced due to improper sleep: Improper sleep will lead to different diseases like *Halimaka* (type of jaundice), head ache, heaviness of the body, fever, giddiness, mental disturbances, obstruction of channels, diminution

of *Agni*, oedema, tastelessness, nausea, rhinitis, half sided head ache, itching, body ache, urticaria, ulcers, cough, drowsiness, disease of throat & features of poisoning ^[21]. Excessive sleep should be treated by emesis, purification procedures, langhana, blood letting & mental stimulants ^[22].

Anidra: By going through the previous description, it is quite evident that *Nidra* is not only an important but an essential phenomenon of life, which affects the body and mind equally in a favourable way when it is enjoyed in a rightful manner. Otherwise the inadequate *Nidra* leads to various problems like *Dukha*, *Karshya*, *Abala*, *Klibata*, *Ajnana* at last leads to death also ^[3]. *Charaka* mentions the factors are *Atiyoga* of *Vamana*, *Atiyoga* of *Virechana*, *Atiyoga* of *Nasyakarma*, *Atiyoga* of *Raktamokshana* and *Atiyoga* of *Dhoomapana*. Due to the excess use of these factors makes the *Vata* vitiation and *Anidra* is inducted. *Ati Vyayama*, *Ati Upavasa* and *Asukha Shayaa* are the causatives of *Vata* vitiation, thus the *Anidra* is induced. *Atichinta*, *Atikrodha* and *Atibhaya* are the *Manasikakarana* leading to *Tama Kshaya* and *Rajo Vruddi* induces the *Anidra* ^[23]. Along with these, *Charak* considers, some others *Chikitsa* procedures of *Atinidra* as causative factors for *Anidra*, which are as follows - *Satvaudarya* (increased *Satwa*), *Tamojaye* (conqueror of *tama*), *Karya* (engaged in work), *Kala* (old age), *Vikara* (disease), *Prakriti* (personalities such as *Vata*) and *Vayu* (*Vata Dosh*) are the causes of *Anidra* ^[24]. Further *Sushruta* has mentioned some extra *Nidana* factors which may cause *Anidra*; these factors are *Vata Vridhi*, *Pita Vridhi*, *Manastapa*, *Kshaya* and *Abhigata* ^[25].

Methods & Measures to Induce Sleep:

Sleeplessness can be treated by massage, unction, bath, soup of domestic, marshy & aquatic animals, *Sali* rice with curds, unctuous substance, milk, alcohol & psychic pleasure, smell of scents & hearing of sounds of one's own taste, comfortable touch, application of ointments to body, *Tarpana* for eyes, comfortable bed, home & sleeping at proper time ^[26].

Indications for Day Sleep: Sleeping during day time is prescribed for those who are emaciated by singing, study, alcoholic drinks, sexual act, elimination therapy, carrying heavy weight, walking long distance, suffering from phthisis, wasting, thirst, diarrhoea, colic pain, dyspnoea, hiccough, insanity, those who are too young, weak, emaciated, injured by fall, assault,

exhausted by journey, vigil, anger, grief, fear & those accustomed to day sleep. In summer when nights are shorter, *Vata* gets aggravated in the body due to absorption of fluid, so day sleep is prescribed for all ^[27].

Sleep as a Nonsuppressible (*Adharaniya Vega*): *Acharya Caraka* has described about non suppressible urges in *Sutrasthana* chapter seven. He has included *Nidra* in 13 non suppressible urges ^[28]. He has further said that various type of disease occur by the suppression of these urges. *Acharya Susruta* has accepted generation of 13 types of *Udavarta* by the suppression of these non-suppressible urges mentioned by *Caraka* ^[29]. *Acharya Caraka* has also mentioned 6 types of *Udavarta* by the suppression of these urges but he did not include *Nidra* among those ^[30].

Nidra as a Therapy: *Carakacharya* has described *Nidra* in *Astauninditiyadhyaya* where eight types of undesirable constitutions from the treatment point of view are mentioned. Among them *Atisthaulya* and *Atikrisha* are especially undesirable constitutions because they are always suffer with any disease. He has said that *Atisthula* and *Atikrisha Purusa* are to be treated by *Karshana* and *Bringhana* therapies respectively ^[31]. *Nidra* is included under *Brihana* factors. That is why *Nidra* is described here as a therapy in the management of *Karshya Roga* ^[32].

Results

- *Nidra* is one of the important *Upastambhas* of life.
- It plays great role in prevention of the disease which are produced due to improper *Nidra*.
- It promotes health when it is used as prescribed regimen.
- According to rules and regimen, *Nidra* should be used and taken seriously.
- We must use *Nidra* as a therapy in some diseases.

Conclusion: The aim of this conceptual article is to compile and re-evaluate the various principles related to different aspects of sleep (*Nidra*). Sleep is one of the basic instincts of life. Health and longevity is conquered by proper sleep. Ayurved has recognized *Nidra* as one of the most important dimensions of health associated with happiness and good health and is an outcome of relax mental state. The disturbance in *Nidra* might be related to the life style, environmental influence, mental tension, changed food habits and day to day stress which ultimately disturb the psychoneuro-biological rhythm of sleep.

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