

CLINICAL UTILITY OF DREAM: AN ĀYURVEDIC PERSPECTIVE**Aswathy S Nair**

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ABSTRACT

yurveda is the eternal holistic system of medicine. The fundamental principles of *yurveda*, which covers all the domains of life, are relevant irrespective of changes in time period and civilization. But it is unfortunate that many concepts in *yurveda* and other ancient science are unexplored. *Svapna* (dream) is such an untouched concept. The description of this complex phenomenon is supported by mythology and philosophy making it less palatable in present era. The understanding and analysis of *svapna* is important not only in the conceptual field but also in the clinical field. Modern system of medicine also accepts the biological importance of dreams and massive researches are being carried out to explore more of this phenomenon.

The great *critics* of *yurveda* like *Caraka*, *Susruta*, *Vagbhata*, *Krishnaya*, *Bhela*, *Harita*, *Pragadhara* and *Bhavanami* explained the concept of *svapna* with due importance in physiological and clinical view. *Carya Caraka* even devoted chapters for the same in *Indriyasthanasamhita*. The twenty ninth chapter of *Sutrasthana* of *Susrutasamhita* is named after *svapna* and explains in the prognosis view. These concepts need research, investigation and explanation on the basis of logic and laboratory.

Key words: *yurveda*, *Svapna*, Clinical utility.

INTRODUCTION

yurveda, the divine knowledge of life, recollected and compiled by Lord Brahma, is eternal. The science then divided into eight branches because of the short life span and intellect of human beings. The eight branches in particular, touch eight domains of life and hence *yurveda* should be considered as a competent life science. The ultimate aim of *yurveda* is attainment of Dharma, Artha, Karma and Moksha. It is postulated that roga is the obstacle in the achievement of purushartha. Hence, this complete medical science with its characteristic psychosomatic concept is mainly focused on the elimination of roga. The earliest reference in Indian classics about dream is available in Rgveda. Atharvaveda organized dreams more conceptually and the concepts of dream in Atharva

Vedas are very much in synchronization with that of *yurveda*.

Important Ayurveda classic like *Caraka samhita* discusses and describes dream as an important indicative symptom of disease and death. There are dreams which suggest further manifestation of disease like insanity. The nature and characteristics of dream appearing as prodromal symptom of specific disease are also discussed. Some dreams are enlisted as clear indicator of imminent death. *Carya Bhela* in the chapter *Nidra Dinirupa Pratijnā* states that, during the stage of *svapna* communication with *pitṛ* (ancestors), *deva* (deities), and *manuṣya* (human being) is possible.

Aims and objectives

1. To identify and understand the mechanism of dream described in *yurveda* classics.

2. To evaluate the clinical importance and utility of dream as it is discussed in yurveda classics.

Concept of dream in yurveda: yurveda identifies dream as a unique psychosomatic mechanism. It studies the involvement of various aspects of yu in the mechanism of dream.

Role of tma in dream: According to yurvedasvapna is an attribute of tma. Charak c ry includes de ntaragati in svapna as one of the lak a as of tma.

tma is an entity which is responsible for ahamkara, phala, karma, de ntaragati and sm ti. Hence tma can be termed to be responsible for creation of svapna.

Role of manas in dream: tma is inactive while manas is the active principle in the perception of knowledge. Manas is the initiator of svapna, which in turn is inspired by other indriyas for the process of initiation. The specific srotas involved in the genesis of svapna is manovahasrotas.

Role of indriya in dream: Charak c ry explains the initiation of genesis of when-manas got inspired by other indriy s. But according to c ry V gbha a, indriyas do not have any specific function in the dream process, since manas has withdrawn itself from the indriy s. But the cognition of knowledge, in the wakening state, giving rise to memory, which is stored and received in dreams and can be attributed to the perception by the indriy s. In this state the indriyas are in withdrawn from the externalarth s but s k ma indriy s can still be understood to participate in the process ofsvapna, even though their adhi nas are functionally asleep and eventually svapna is visualized.

Role of ar ra in dream: The above discussed components are more subtle. ar ra is the component which is grosser and is the raya of other components. The optimum combination of above four factors is

the main tool for the sustenance of yu and thus responsible for the generation of svapna.

Mechanism of dream: The srotas involved in the genesis of dream (svapna) is manovahasrotas. When the manovahasrotas gets completely filled with dominantly powerful trido s in d ru a k la d ru a svapna are seen. The person should not be in a stage of deep sleep for the dreams to happen. The driving factor behind the whole mechanism is manas itself which is inspired and catalyzed by other indriy s. Meanwhile all the four components of yu-participate and attribute equally in the whole process.

Clinical utility of dream: The therapeutic utility of dream can be discussed and summarized under the following heads.

- Dream denoting the specific prak ti of the person.
- Dream indicating the sex of unborn child.
- Dream specific for ari a of each vy dhi.

Dream denoting the specific prak ti of person: All important texts excluding Caraka samhita, have described different types of svapna peculiar and specific to each prak ti. The dominance of a particular do a in prak ti is responsible for the types of scene and the mah bh ta dominating the characters in svapna are homologous to mah bh ta dominant in the particular do a.

Dream indicating the sex of unborn child: c ry Su ruta in third chapter of ar rath na describes svapna, indicating the sex of unborn baby, particularly seen by the pregnant lady. If the female during her gestational period sees dream in which she eats or drinks as that of male, does activities as that of male, visualizes flowers such as padma , utpala, kumuda sees amr taka and other fruits denoting male gender, these dream may be indicative of birth of a male baby. Offspring will be female if

sees object that are just opposite to the objects which are indicative of male offspring.

Dream specific for ari a of each disease: P rvarupiyaindriyam chapter of indriyasthana explains dream specific for each disease. In this chapter Caraka explains svapna in the perspective of prognosis and simultaneously he advises the physician to understand the prognosis of disease by analyzing these ari a lak a dreams.

There are detail descriptions about various types of svapna occurring as p rvar pa ari a. Caraka enumerates seven types of svapna. These are again classified into saphala and aphala. Da, ta, anubh ta, pr rthita and kalpita are aphala in nature; while do aja and bh vika are saphala. Aphala svapna does not have any impact on person's health or life. Aphala svapna is supposed to occur as a result of past deeds and experience.

The saphala variety of svapna is of huge clinical importance especially in the prognosis point of view. The bh vika svapna indicates ubha (pleasant) or a ubha (unpleasant) result in future. The do aja svapna, is the result of vitiated vatadido, and obviously indicates the occurrence with the prognosis of vy dhi in the concerned future. Contextually, in twenty ninth chapter of s trastana, Susruta provides splendid and similar explanations regarding the clinical importance of svapna.

DISCUSSION

Dream or svapna is a psychosomatic mechanism which fascinated and thrilled the human race from the very beginning. Some of Ayurveda scholars like Caraka Bhela discussed the metaphysical nature of svapna. Satva, tma, ar ra and indriya play important roles in the mechanism of dream.

ayurveda classics explain the dream to occur when the person is not in a stage of deep sleep. Generally dreams are considered as the outcome of vi aya, that the person perceived when he was awake and conscious; but such dreams are aphala. The dreams which do not have any relation with past experience or imagination are fruitful and are termed saphala svapna. Do aja and bh vika svapna are saphala and possess clinical importance.

The concept of ari a is esoteric to ayurveda, and reflects the wisdom of our ancient scholars. There are dreams which are analyzed as ari a lak a a to evaluate the prognosis of disease.

Even though dream or svapna is not accepted as prama, this complex mechanism has great importance in the field of diagnosis, treatment and prognosis.

CONCLUSION

Dream is perceived as a metaphysical phenomenon by many scholars, but it is a physiological process occurring in every individual. Satva, tma, ar ra and indriya play important roles in the mechanism of dream. Dream or svapna has much evaluated and appreciated clinical utility especially in the field of diagnosis, treatment and prognosis. The concept of svapna explained in ayurvedic and other Indian classics require exploration, interpretation and application.

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