

AN APPROACH TO SLEEP AND INSOMNIA ACCORDING TO AYURVEDA – A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is a science which gives importance to prevention and promotes healthy life style. In this regard *Ayurveda* has quoted the three supporting pillars for one's health as *Ahara, Nidra, Brahmacharya*. *Nidra* is such an entity which influences both physical and mental wellbeing. Due to changed life style man has given least importance to sleep and has become a victim of more serious health problems. In this article attempt is made to understand the concept of sleep and insomnia according to *Ayurveda* and the *Nidana Panchaka* of *Nidranasha* have been elaborated in depth.

Keywords: *Nidra, Nidranasha, Nidana Panchaka, Trayopastambha*

INTRODUCTION

Sleep is one of the most significant human behaviour, occupying roughly one third of human life^[1]. It is a process the brain requires for proper functioning. Sleep can be associated with the high degree of brain activation. Sleep is regulated by several basic mechanisms and when these systems go wrong sleep disorders occur^[2]. *Ayurveda* regards *Nidra* as one among the *Trayopastambha*^{[3][4]} (Three supporting pillars). Both physical and psychological factors are mentioned which will influence a good sleep. When both the quality and quantity of sleep are optimum it leads to proper physical health and mental wellbeing. Stress and strain of day to day life affects good

sleep and leads to sleep disorders, may later develop other illnesses including depression, diabetes, hypertension and possibly even death.

CONCEPT OF NIDRA

Nidra is derived from the root "Dra" with a prefix "Ni". The root "Dra" means undesired. Therefore *Nidra* is considered as a state in which there will be no desire. Sleep is one among the 13 *Adharaniya Vega*^[5]. *Nidra* is mentioned as *Bhutadhatri* because of its nourishing phenomenon^[6]. In metaphoric language it is called *Vaishnavimaya*, indicating that *Nidra* provides nutrition to maintain good health like Lord *Vishnu* who nourishes and sustains this world

[7]. *Nidra* is an essential phenomenon to provide rest and relaxation to the body, mind and senses which gets tired and exhausted [8]. Sleep also balances mind and emotions. *Nidra* is a state where predominance of *Kapha* and *Tamas* is seen [9]. *Utpatti* (origin) of *Nidra* was explained by giving importance to *Hridaya* which is considered as *Chetana stana*. When *Chetana stana Hridaya* is enveloped by *Tamas*, the person goes to sleep [10]. Also stated that at night *Tamas* being powerful and higher psychic centres being over powered by it, then sleep occurs [11].

TYPES OF NIDRA

In general sleep is classified into 2 types *Svabhavika* (natural sleep) and *Asvabhavika* (Abnormal sleep).

Acharya Charaka has described 6 types of Sleep: *Tamobhava*- caused by *Tamas*; *Shleshma-samudbhava*- caused by *Kapha*; *Mana Shrama Sambhava*-caused by mental exertion; *Shareera Shrama Sambhava*- caused by physical exertion; *Agantuki*-Indicative of bad prognosis leading to imminent death; *Vyadhyanuwartini*- caused by complication of other disease like *Sannipataja Jwara*; *Ratri Swabhavaja*- caused by nature of the night [12].

Acharya Sushruta classifies as follows : *Tamasi*- Dominated by *Tamoguna*, then sleep known as *Tamasi*, from which person cannot be awakened, this occurs at the time of death; *Svabhavika/Vaishnavi*- sleep manifests naturally in person with predominance of *Tamoguna* both during day and night. In those with predominance of *Rajoguna* it occurs without any reason at any time. In person with predominance of *Satva guna* it occurs at mid night; *Vaikarika*- in person in whom *Shleshma* has decreased and *Vata* has increased, in those whose body and mind are in trouble by diseases, it does not appear at all, any time [13].

Vagbhata's classification of sleep is similar with *Charaka's* classification, but the names differ : *Tamobhava*-Dominance of *Tamo guna*; *Kaphabhava*-Increase in *kapha*; *Chittakhedaja*-Fatigue of mind; *Dehakhedaja*-Fatigue of body; *Agantuki*-Due to external factors; *Kalavabhava*-Sleep is produced

by the accustomed time; *Amayaja*-Effect of disease [14].

BENEFITS OF SLEEP

Sleep is one of the four basic, natural instincts and is considered as the pioneer for health, the remaining three being the desire to eat, drink and have sexual contact [15]. Properly and timely taken sleep brings the happiness, nourishment, strength, virility, knowledge and maintains the life. As the real knowledge brings about *Siddhi* in a *Yogi* similarly properly taken sleep brings about longevity in human beings [16]. Sleep makes the balance of the body constituents, provides alertness, good vision, complexion, strength and digestive power [17]. Sleep also necessary for the mental functions like peaceful mind, enthusiasm, learning, memory and happiness.

An experimental study published in *BMJ* says that, an illustrated by the expression 'beauty sleep' an individual's sleep history may play an integral part in the perception and judgement of his or her attractiveness and health. Sleep deprived people are perceived as less attractive, less healthy, and more tired compared with when they are well rested [18]. Recent work points to sleep acting as an adjuvant to enhance the early stage of immune response. It has been observed that people sleeping for 7-9 hours /day have significantly lower rates of illness [19].

IDEAL TIME AND DURATION OF SLEEP

Ayurveda regards sleep as *Ratrisvabhava Prabhava* (naturally occurring at night). It is further advised to avoid sleep during the first and last parts of the night and wake up before the sun rises. The ideal time for sleeping is mentioned in *Kaiyadeva Nighantu* and in *Chikitsarnava* is after the first two *Yama* (approximately 6 hrs) of sunset. It is also advised that just before sleeping one should remember and pay respect to the God, Sages and their Teachers [20][21]. Excess and less duration of sleep leads to physical as well as psychiatric problems. Large prospective cohort studies have shown that short sleep is associated with a higher risk of mortality [22].

Table 1: Shows general recommendations of sleep for different age groups [23].

Age	Recommended amount of sleep
Newborn	16-18 hrs a day
Pre-school aged children	11-12 hrs a day
School aged children	At least 10 hrs a day
Teens	9-10 hrs a day
Adults(including the elderly)	7-8 hrs a day

CONCEPT OF NIDRANASHA

The word *Nidranasha* is formed by composition of two words i.e. *Nidra* and *Nasha*. *Nidra* means the phenomenon which is happening at night with the *Samyoga* of *Ratri*. *Sabdastoma Mahanidhi* explains *Nasha* as *Kshaya*, *Samkshaya*, *Apachya*, *Hrasa*, *Adarshana* and *Bhagna*. So *Nasha* means being lost, elimination, disappearance, destruction etc. Based on above *Nirukti* (etymology) the term *Nidranasha* can be broadly defined as the loss of sleep or the derangement in the quality and quantity of sleep. The word *Nidranasha* is described in different names in different contexts as *Anidra*, *Alpa Nidra*, *Asvapna*, *Jagarana*, *Nidra Vighata*, *Nasta Nidra*, *Nidradaurbalya*, *Nidrabhramsa* etc.

CLASSIFICATION OF NIDRANASHA

Nidranasha can be classified under the following 2 heading by considering its etiological factors

1. *Svatantra Nidranasha* (Primary insomnia)- here *Nidranasha* is considered as a independent disease. *Nidranasha* is explained under *Nanatmaja Vatavyadhi Vikara* [24] as well as *Pitta Vridhi Lakshana* [25]. *Acharya* Sushruta has given the causative factors of *Nidranasha* as vitiated *Vata* and *Pitta*.
2. *Paratantra Nidranasha* (Secondary insomnia)-Here *Nidra nasha* appears as a *Nidana*, *Poorvaroopo*, *Roopa*, *Upadrava* or *Asadhya lakshanas* of some other disease.

CONCEPT OF NIDANA PANCHAKA IN NIDRANASHA

NIDANA (ETIOLOGICAL FACTORS): *Nidana* of *Nidranasha* can be categorised under separate headings like *Aharaja Nidana*, *Viharaja Nidana*, *Chikitsa Atiyogajanya* and *Manasika Nidana*. *Aahararaja Nidana* are *Rookshanna Sevana*, *Yavanna Sevana*;

Viharaja Nidana like physical exercise, fasting, uncomfortable bed, hunger, and excessive indulgence in sex; *Chikitsa Atiyogajanya Nidanas* are emesis, purgation, *Nasya*, bloodletting, *dhoopana*, *Sveda*, *Anjana*, *Langhana*; *Manasika Nidanas* are fear, anxiety, anger, Conflicts, grief, tension, *Harsha*, *Lobha*, decrease in *Tamo Guna*, increase in *Satva Guna* [26]. In addition injury, loss of tissue, diseases [27], *Vata Prakriti*, and old age is mentioned as *Nidana* of *Nidranasha*.

POORVA ROOPA (PREMONITORY SYMPTOMS): *Nidranasha* is one of the *Vataja Naaanathmaja Vikara*. According to *Acharya Charaka Poorva Roopa* of all *Vataja naanathmaja Vikara* is *Avyakta*(not manifested clearly) [28], but *Nidranasha* is explained as a Premonitory symptom in various diseases like *Jvara*, *Apasmara*, *Atisara*, *Vatavyadhi*, *Vrikkaroga* etc.

ROOPA (SYMPTOMS): *Acharya Charaka* has described following symptoms due to restrain of sleep like *Jrumbha* (yawning), *Angamarda* (pains all over the body), *Tandra* (stupor), *Shirogurava* (heaviness of the head), *Akshigaurava* (heaviness of eyes) [29]. *Acharya Sushruta* describes *Jrumbha* (yawning), *Angamarda* (pain all over the body), *Sharira Jadyata* (laziness of body)), *Shiro Jadyata* (laziness of head) and *Tandra* (stupor) as *Lakshana* of *Nidranasha* [30]. *Acharya Vagbhata* explains *Angamarda* (pain all over the body), *Shiro Gaurava* (heaviness of the head), *Jrumbha* (yawning), *Jadyata* (laziness), *Glani* (tiredness), *Bhrama* (giddiness), *Apakti* (indigestion), *Tandra* (stupor) and *Vataja Roga* (produced by increased *Vata Dosha*) as symptoms of *Nidranasha* [31].

SAMPRAPTI (PATHOGENESIS): As *Nidranasha* is not explained as a separate disease in *Ayurveda*, so its *Samprapti* is also not available. However it can be constructed on the basis of *Dosha*, *Dushya*, etc involved. During the description of *Nidra Utpatti Acharyas* have mentioned that *Shareera Dosha Kapha*, *Manasika Dosha Tama*, *Chetana Sthana Hridaya* and *Saanjnavaha Srotas* are responsible for *Nidra*. *Aaharaja*, *Viharaja*, *Manasika* and *AnyaNidana* cause aggravation of *Shareera dosha Vata*, *Pitta* and decrease in *Kapha dosha*, also aggravation of *Manasika doshas Satva*, *Raja* and decrease in *Tamo Dosha*. Due to Decrease in *Kapha* and *Tamo Dosha*, lack of *Avarana* to *Chetana Sthana Hridaya* and *Manovaha Srotas*, further leads to *Nidranasha*.

UPASHAYA (EXPLORATIVE THERAPY): All *Kapha Vardaka Aahara* and *Vihara* are considered as *Upashaya* and opposite to it are considered as *Anupashaya* to *Nidranasha*. Massage, Uction, bath, intake of soup of domestic marshy and aquatic animals, *Shali* rice with curd, milk, unctuous substance and alcohol, psychic pleasure, smell of scents and bearing of sounds of one's own taste, *Samvahana* (rubbing the body by hands), application of smoothening ointment to the eyes, head and face, comfortable bed and home and proper time, Eatables prepared from sugar cane juice, sweet food articles, *Snigdha Dravya* used with milk^[32], Drinking of milk boiled with *Jeevaniya* group of drugs are considered as *Upashaya*. Whereas Causative factors like *Rukshanna*, *Yavanna*^[33], anger, fear etc. can be considered as *Anupashaya*.

DISCUSSION

Importance of sleep is highlighted by considering sleep as one of the *Trayopasthambha*. The timely taken sleep is an indicator of good health because it brings the normalcy in body tissues and relaxes the person, like food the adequate sleep is essential for maintenance of the body. While looking into the description of *Nidra*, one can also classify sleep as *Kalaja* and *Akalaja*. When the mind including sensory and motor organs is exhausted and they dissoci-

ates themselves from their objects which is produced by the accustomed time (night) then it can be considered as *Kaalaja Nidra* (Timely taken Sleep). Sleeping during day time (except in some conditions), due to effect of diseases, excess fatigue of body and mind, excessive increase in *Kapha* and *Tama Guna* leads to *Akaalaja Nidra* (untimely taken sleep).

Irregular and unnatural food habits, suppression of natural urges or inappropriate sleep habits due to work shifts, watching T.V or electronic gadgets till late night etc have become inseparable parts of daily routine. In *Ayurveda* these factors have mentioned under *Aharaja* and *Viharaja Nidana*. One feels sleepy when body, mind and senses are in rest or in relaxed state. But in present era stress and strains of day to day life increases tension, anxiety, fear etc. People themselves are inviting various physical as well as mental disorders, because of indulging in *Manasika Nidana*. In *Nidranasha* premonitory symptoms are *Avyaktha* (not clearly manifested) but when person develops problem in initiating and /or maintaining sleep then that can be considered as a premonitory symptom of *Nidranasha* and effort should be made to find the root cause for the disturbance of sleep and advice is given to avoid the causative factor or treatment should be started at the earliest for the early recovery. While looking into the symptom like *Jrumbha*, *Angamarda*, *Shirogaurava* etc one can elicit the vitiation of *Vata* and *Kapha Dosha*. This is the reason all *Vatahara* and *Kaphakara* treatment measures are considered as *Upashaya* to *Nidranasha*. One which gives psychic pleasure like meditation, *Pranayama*, relaxation technique and smoothening music can be practised in the present era.

CONCLUSION

Sleep plays a very essential role in physical and mental wellbeing. Abnormal sleep patterns leads to misery, improper growth, weakness, sterility, ignorance, and finally death. So while treating *Nidra-*

nasha physician should give importance to *Nidana Panchanka* for better management of *Nidranasha*.

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Source of Support: Nil

Conflict Of Interest: None Declared

How to cite this URL: D'souza Vinitha et al: An Approach To Sleep And Insomnia According To Ayurveda – A Review. International Ayurvedic Medical Journal {online} 2018 {cited August, 2018} Available from: http://www.iamj.in/posts/images/upload/1794_1799.pdf