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. 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. Ayurveda regards Nidra as one among the Trayopastambha (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. Nidra is mentioned as Bhutadhatri because of its nourishing phenomenon. 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.
Nidra is an essential phenomenon to provide rest and relaxation to the body, mind and senses which gets tired and exhausted. Sleep also balances mind and emotions. Nidra is a state where predominance of Kapha and Tamas is seen. Utpatti (origin) of Nidra was explained by giving importance to Hridaya which is considred as Chetana stana. When Chetana stana Hridaya is enveloped by Tamas, the person goes to sleep. Also stated that at night Tamas being powerful and higher psychic centres being over powered by it, then sleep occurs. 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; Vyadhamuwartini-caused by complication of other disease like Sannipataja Jwara; Ratri Swabhavaja-caused by nature of the night.

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 Rajo guna 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.

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; Kalasvabhava-Sleep is produced by the accustomed time; Amayaja-Effect of disease.

BENIFITS 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. 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. Sleep makes the balance of the body constituents, provides alertness, good vision, complexion, strength and digestive power. 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. 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.

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 Chiktisarnava 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. 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. [17]
Table 1: Shows general recommendations of sleep for different age groups.[23]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Recommended amount of sleep</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newborn</td>
<td>16-18 hrs a day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-school aged children</td>
<td>11-12 hrs a day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School aged children</td>
<td>At least 10 hrs a day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teens</td>
<td>9-10 hrs a day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults (including the elderly)</td>
<td>7-8 hrs a day</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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, Nirdadarbalya, 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, Poorvaroopa, Roopa, Upadrava or Asadhyak lakshanas of some other disease.

CONCEPT OF NIDANA PANCHAKA IN NIDRANASHA
NIDANA (ETIOLOGICAL FACTORS): Nidana of Nidranasha can be categorised under separate headings like Aharaaja Nidana, Viharaja Nidana, Chikitsa Atiyogajanya and Manasika Nidana. Aaharaaja 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), Shirogaurava (heaviness of the head), Akshigaurava (heaviness of eyes)[29]. Acharya Sushruta describes Jrumbha (yawning), Angamarda (pain all over the body), Sharira Jad-yata (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), Jramba (yawning), Jadyata (lazyness), 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 Anya Nidana 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, Unction, 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 smoothing 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 dissociates 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 smoothing 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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