

**IMPORTANCE OF SLEEP IN MAINTAINING A HEALTHY LIFE- A  
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Article Received on  
20 Dec. 2017,

Revised on 10 Jan. 2018,  
Accepted on 31 Jan. 2018,

DOI: 10.20959/wjpr20183-10972

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**ABSTRACT**

Ayurveda had defined Ayu (life) as the complete integrated relation of body, sense, mind and the soul. Health is the state of equilibrium of doshas, normal functioning of dhatus and malas along with the well-being of mind and unimpaired (tranquil) senses and cheerful soul. Sleep is important because it affects our mental, physical, and emotional well-being. Sleep is a period of rest for the body and mind, during which volition and consciousness are in partial or complete abeyance and bodily functions are partially suspended. It is also described as a behavioral state with characteristic immobile posture and diminished but readily reversible sensitivity to external stimuli. Sleep is essential for normal, healthy functioning of the human body. Sleep was born at the time of commencement of the creation of the universe only, out of tamas. Sleep is another form of tamas and manifests due to the predominance of tamas generally at night. Thus,

highlighting the importance of sleep for a healthy life is necessary in today's era.

**KEYWORDS:** Sleep, Nidra, Manas, tama, satva.

**INTRODUCTION**

On average, we spend about 30% of our lives asleep, and we have little idea why. This ignorance is probably the main reason why our society has such little regard for sleep. At best, we tolerate the fact that we need to sleep; at worst, we think of sleep as an illness that

needs a cure. This attitude is not only dangerous but unsustainable. It is important to highlight that sleep disruption is much more than an individual's frustration at failing to initiate or sustain sleep, or even the sensation of feeling sleepy at an inappropriate time.

Ayurveda had highlighted the importance to Nidra (sleep) in our daily life for the maintenance of health by various Acharyas. Charaka describes the three supports of life or pillars of life (Trayopasthambha) i.e., intake of food (ahara), sleep (Nidra) and celibacy (Brahmacharya). Being supported by these well regulated factors of life, the body is endowed with strength, complexion and growth, and continues up till the full span of life, provided a person does not indulge in such regimen as are detrimental to health.

Acharya Charaka has equated human body as a building. For making any kind of stable and strong building, the role of pillars is undisputed. If any one of the pillars Ahara, Nidra or Brahmacharya gets destroyed the whole building will suddenly collapse into pieces.

Sushruta coated that sleep is enjoyment of pleasure by body and sense organs. It is like maya of Vishnu, 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.

Vagbhata mentioned sleep as one of the Adharaniya vega. It is one among the urges which should not be controlled. If suppress, produces various diseases. Symptoms of forcible suppression of sleep or urge to sleep are Moha (delusion), Murdha gourava (heaviness of head) Akshi gouravam (heaviness of the eyes), Alasya (laziness, lassitude), Jrumbha (yawning), Angabhanga (body pains).

As Nidra being one among that which nourishes of the body, it plays an important role in promotion of health and prevention of diseases.

### **NEED OF THE TOPIC**

Today it seems as though nothing what men plan “to do will be impossible for them”. Scientific advances in technology and communications boast man's ability to do anything and solve every problem. However, as confidence in man's abilities increases, there is more of work load and distress which not only disturbed his daily routine but his sleep too which leads to various health problems. So, it is the need of the hour to highlight the importance of sleep and its role in maintaining a healthy life.

## **AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

### **AIM**

To study of importance of sleep in maintaining a healthy life.

### **OBJECTIVES**

To do a literary study on Nidra (sleep) and sleeplessness or insomnia (anidra).

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Review work done and literature from the classical texts and research websites have been incorporated in the study

## **DEFINITION OF SLEEP**

According to Acharya Charaka, the mind including sensory and motor organs when tired or exhausted, retire or dissociate spontaneously from their objects to induce a state called sleep. Sleep is nothing but the location of the mind in a place unconnected with the sensory or motor organs. The sleep is caused by nature of night is the sleep par excellence; it keeps every one lively, nourishes them like a mother; this is known as bhutadhatri.

Acharya Charaka also highlighted the proper way of sleep which is over a comfortable bed at home and at proper time at which sleep is accustomed, one should go to sleep.

Acharya Sushruta describes that when tamas guna increases the person sleep and when satva guna increases the person awakens. Naturally, the tamas and satva qualities alternately are held responsible for sleep and awakening

## **RELATION OF SLEEP WITH HEALTH**

Happiness, misery, nourishment, emaciation, strength, weakness, virility, sterility, knowledge, ignorance, life and death- all these occur depending on the proper and improper sleep. Like the night of destructions, untimely and excessive sleep and prolonged vigil take away both happiness and longevity. The same sleep, if properly enjoyed brings about happiness and longevity in human beings as the real knowledge brings about siddhi (spiritual power) in a yogin.

## **RELATION OF SLEEP WITH NOURISHMENT OF THE BODY**

Vigil or awakening at the night increases dryness or roughness in the body, sleep during day time increases unctuousness and dosing in sitting posture does neither increases dryness nor

unctuousness. Like a proper diet, proper sleep is also essential for the maintenance of the body. Corpulence and emaciation are specially conditioned by proper or improper sleep and diet.

### CLASSIFICATION OF SLEEP

- 1) The sleep caused by increased *tamas* is called *Tamobhava Nidra*.
- 2) That caused by aggravated *kapha* is called *Shleshma samudbhava*.
- 3) That caused by exhaustion of mind is called *Manashrama sambhava*.
- 4) That caused by exhaustion of body is called *Sharirashrama sambhava*.
- 5) That produced during bad prognostic indication occurring before death is *Agantuka/rishta bhuta nidra*.
- 6) That which occurs as a subsequent complication of disease is *Vyadhyanuvaritini*.
- 7) That which occurs during night, a physiological sleep is called *Ratrisvabhava prabhava*.

### TIME SUITABLE TO WAKE UP:

Though the duration of sleep is not directly mentioned in the Ayurvedic classics but indirectly it can be understood by the verse given by Acharya Vagbhata i.e. one should wake up in the *Brahmamuhurta* i.e. 48 minutes before the Sunrise following the proper digestion of food taken at night.

### AGE AND SLEEP NEEDED IN HOURS

Newborns (0-2 months) 12-18 hours

Infants (3-11 months) 14-15 hours

Toddlers (1-3 years) 12-14 hours

Preschoolers (3-5 years) 11-13 hours

School age children (5-10 years) 10-11 hours

Teens (10-17 years) 8.5- 9.25 hours

Adults 7-9 hours

### METHODS TO INDUCE GOOD SLEEP

The measures that can be adopted to induce good sleep are by massage, unction, bath, intake of soup of domestic marshy/ aquatic animals, Sali rice with curd, milk, unctuous substance and alcohol, cheering the mental attributes, by application of scents, fascinating music, rubbing the body with consoling hands, soothing eye drops, application of anointing agents on face and head, comfortable bed, home and inducing at right time (seasonal suitability).

Excessive sleep should be treated by emesis, purification procedures, langhana(fasting or taking light diet), blood-letting and mental stimulants.

### **INDICATION FOR DAY SLEEP**

Sleeping during day time are for those who are emaciated by singing, study, alcoholic drinks, sexual acts, elimination therapy, carrying heavy loads, walking long distance, suffering from pthisis, wasting, thirst, diarrhea, colic pain, dyspnea, hiccups, insanity, those who are old, too young, weak, emaciated, injured by fall, assault, exhausted by journey, vigil, anger, grief, fear, those accustomed to day sleep and during summer season.

### **CONTRAINDICATION FOR DAY SLEEP**

Other than summer, all season give away to kapha pitta vitiation on account of day sleep. Obese persons, those accustomed to fatty foods, kapha prakruti, those suffering from kapha prakopa, dushivisha are contraindicated for day sleep.

### **DISEASES PRODUCED DUE TO IMPROPER SLEEP**

Improper sleep will leads to different diseases like Halimaka (type of jaundice), headache, heaviness of the body, fever, giddiness, mental disturbance, obstruction of channels, diminution of Agni, edema, tastelessness, nausea, rhinitis, half sided headache, itching, body-ache, urticarial, ulcers, cough, drowsiness, disease of throat and features of poisoning.

### **INSOMNIA OR SLEEPLESSNESS (NIDRANASHA)**

Insomnia is the perception or complaint of inadequate or poor quality of sleep because of difficulty in falling asleep, difficulty in maintaining sleep or waking too early in the morning. It is the most common sleep disorder in elderly. Chronic insomnia can lead to severe fatigue, anxiety, depression and lack of concentration. Insomnia can be classified in terms of its duration. It comes under vata nanatmaja vikara and is called as anidra or nidranasha in Ayurveda.

This sleep disorder is 1.5 times more common in persons aged more than 65years compared to younger counter parts and incidence in women is 1.3 times greater than in men. The prevalence of Insomnia increases steadily with age and reported by up to one in 3 people aged 65years and above.

- 1) Transient insomnia- lasting from a night to a week and is usually caused travelling or sleeping in an unusual environment.

- 2) Short term Insomnia- lasts about two to three weeks and is usually attributed to emotional factors such as worry or stress
- 3) Chronic Insomnia- occurs most nights and lasts a month or more

### CAUSES OF SLEEPLESSNESS (NIDRANASHA)

Insomnia is occasionally a symptom of an underlying medical or psychological condition but it may be caused by stress or life style changes. About half of insomnia cases have no identifiable cause. Ayurveda believes that usually it is vitiated vata which disturbs the natural body physiology and results in various types of sleep disturbances. In Ayurveda following causes of insomnias are pointed by Acharya Charaka.

The evacuation of doshas from body and head through purgation including nasal instillation, emesis, suffering from fear, anxiety, anger etc. exposure to dust/smoke, physical exercise, blood-letting, fasting, uncomfortable bed, overwhelming satva guna and suspension of tamoguna, over work load, old age, yoga, disease, vata vrudhhi are likely to produce anidra.

In conventional medicine, following factors affecting the sleep pattern in general.

- Substance abuse; such as smoking, caffeine, alcohol and recreational drugs.
- Disruption of circadian rhythms; such as shift work, change in work schedule.
- Uncomfortable and unusual sleeping environment
- Psychiatric and neurological conditions; such as depression, manic depressive disorder, restless leg syndrome(RLS), post- traumatic stress disorders
- Biological factors- by advancement of aging, the internal biological clock that regulate sleep creeps slightly forward, compelling older people to go to sleep earlier and to wake up earlier
- Sleep disordered breathing- sleep apnea
- Chronic medical illness
- Certain medications- decongestants, bronchodilators, beta blockers and long term use of sleep medication.
- Pregnancy
- Physical pain and discomfort.
- Waking up at night to use the bathroom, common in men with enlarged prostate.
- With age, sleep patterns tend to change. Many people find that aging causes them to have a harder time falling asleep, and that they wake up more often.

## **PATHOGENESIS**

Sleep disorders are associated with an impairment of melatonin production. Melatonin produced by the pineal gland at night, plays a role in regulation of sleep- wake cycle and diminished –melatonin secretion may cause insomnia.

## **CLINICAL FEATURES**

Common symptoms of insomnia include:

1. Not feeling refreshed
2. Difficulty falling asleep at night
3. Waking up during the night
4. Waking up too early
5. Not feeling well-rested after a night's sleep
6. Difficulty paying attention, focusing on tasks or remembering
7. Inability to sleep despite being tired
8. Day time drowsiness, irritability, difficulty in concentrating
9. Impaired ability to perform normal activities
10. Body-ache and heaviness of the body

## **MANAGEMENT APPROACHES**

### **a) Prevention**

- In Ayurveda number of ways are described, which can help a person to fall asleep more easily. The most important of these is to establish a bed time ‘ritual’ composed of a daily time table and proper sleeping environment
- Short-term sleep disturbances can be overcome by adopting samvahana (rubbing the body by hand), application of smoothening ointment to the eyes (like ghee), head massage, comfortable bed, home and proper time
- Simple measures like cutting back on coffee and tea, especially in the late evening hours and avoiding alcohol, taking a light and timely dinner, avoiding late night awakening
- Following an exercise schedule to reduce stress and help in bringing sound sleep
- Ayurveda offers many herbs and other classical medicines and herbal therapies for good sleep and most of these are safe and devoid of any hangover or addiction.

**b) Medical management**

**1. Nidana parivarjana** (avoidance of etiological factors)- before starting medication for insomnia any psychiatric, neurological condition and chronic medical illness should be treated first and smoking, excessive consumption of caffeine, alcohol, excessive computer work or T.V. watching should be avoided.

**2. Panchakarma** procedures followed by samana chikitsa (palliative therapy) should be advocated such as-

- a) Virechana (purgation) with Eranda taila 10-20ml with half glass of milk at night
- b) Abhyanga (body massage), pada abhyanga (foot massage), shiroabhyanga (head massage) with medicated oils
- c) Shirodhara with medicated liquids (milk/ water/ oils- Narayana taila) daily 45-90 minutes for 21 days
- d) Picchu with candanabala taila/ himasagara taila
- e) Takradhara daily 45minutes for 14days.

**3. Drug therapy**

**a. Single drug:** *Asvagandha churna* (*Withania somnifera* Dunal powder), *Jatamansi churna/ svarasa* (*Nardostachys jatamansi* DC), *Brahmi churna* (*Bacopa monnieri* Linn) and *Mandukaparni churna/ svarasa* (*Centella asiatica*) are effective in the management of insomnia.

**b. Compound formulations-** such as *Asvagandha arista*, *sarasvatarista*, *brahmi vati*, *sarpagandhaghana vati*, *akika pishti* are found effective in inducing good sleep.

**c. Yogic practices:** duration should be decided by the yoga therapist.

- Practice of *Pranayama* (*anuloma viloma*, *ujjai*, *bhramari pranayama*) and medication along with the practice of *Yama* and *Niyama*.
- *Suryanamaskara*, *Tadasana*, *Matsyasana*, *Makrasana*, *Bhujangasana*, *padmasana*, *Pascimottanasana* and *svasana*
- Deep relaxation techniques and Yoga nidra.

**d. Counseling**

- drink warm milk before going to bed
- do some light physical activities before going to bed



- take warm bath before bed time
- sleep on comfortable bed
- use the bed and bedroom only for sleep
- maintain a regular sleep/ wake up schedule
- practice Yoga and medication
- leave the bed if unable to fall asleep
- avoid stressful conditions
- avoid heavy meals at bed time
- avoid consumption of coffee, tea, soft drinks, alcohol and smoking
- avoid irregular sleep habits and nap during the day
- avoid watching TV at bed time

## CONCLUSION

Sleep is considered as one of the pillars of a body. If any one of the pillars gets destroyed the whole building (body) will suddenly collapse into pieces. Therefore, a person with sufficient sleep according to the age, climatic, physical etc factor can attain positive energy and an enthusiasm to perform work and ultimately lead to a better and healthy life. It occurs due to increased Tamo guna. Improper or excess sleep leads to various diseases. Thus proper sleep is essential for maintaining a healthy life.

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