

AYURVEDIC PERSPECTIVES ON NIDRĀ: INSIGHTS FROM ANCIENT WISDOM

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ABSTRACT

Nidrā, to fall asleep, slumber, an essential biological process, holds profound significance, alongside diet and celibacy, as fundamental pillars of life. It is believed that nidrā is a revitalizing factor that promotes Vigor, nourishing, and fulfilment. Tailored schedules are essential to guarantee adequate rest and treat any possible imbalances in accordance with the holistic health tenets of Ayurveda. **Materials & Methods:** This paper reviews ancient Ayurvedic texts Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, and Astanga Hridaya, elucidate the understanding of nidrā. **Discussion:** Depending on a person's unique constitution and medical circumstances, different Ayurvedic suggestions for daytime sleep exist. The method emphasizes how important it is to strike a balance between these aspects for sound and rejuvenating slumber. **Conclusion:** The Ayurvedic viewpoint places a strong emphasis on getting the appropriate quantity and timing of sleep for general wellbeing.

KEYWORDS: Nidrā, Upastambha, Ayurveda.

INTRODUCTION

In Ayurveda, Aahar (diet), Nidrā (sleep), and Brahmacharya (celibacy or moderation in sexual activities) are considered the uyōpasthambha or pillars of life.

Ayurveda, often considered an eternal science, encompasses various aspects of life including Nidrā. Nidrā is a state of mind where it is detached from sensory perceptions (Indriyas) and external stimuli (Bahiya Vishaya). This detachment occurs due to fatigue of both the body and mind (sharir mana shrama sambhava). Chakrapani Datta, a notable commentator on Ayurvedic texts, suggests that nidrā can be both a cause and a treatment for conditions like obesity (Sthoulya) and emaciation (Karshya).^[1]

In Caraka Samhitā, the importance of quality sleep for maintaining physical, mental, and emotional well-being is highlighted. Adequate and restful sleep is believed to be essential for the balance of bodily doshas (Vata, Pitta, and Kapha governing various physiological and psychological functions. Imbalance in these doshas due to insufficient or poor-quality sleep can lead to the onset of diseases. Sleeping too much or too little is associated with changes in the brain that are known to precede and increase the risk of stroke and dementia later in life, a new study suggested.

Sleep disorder is condition that affect the quality, amount and timing of sleep, we are able to get at night. Common sleep disorders include insomnia, restless legs syndrome, narcolepsy and sleep apnea. Sleep disorder can affect our mental health and physical health. 1- How well we sleep (quality). 2 – When we fall asleep and if we can stay asleep. 3 - How much sleep and wakefulness we get (duration).

DISCUSSION

Sleep, according to Ayurveda and ancient Indian medical texts, is classified into different types based on various factors such as causative factors, timing, and physiological conditions.

Charaka Samhita, which is a foundational text, in ashtaninditiya adhyay describes the characteristics of sleep (Nidrā) and its causes.^[2]

1. तमोभवा (Tamobhavā): Originating from darkness or ignorance. This suggests that sleep may arise due to a state of mental or physical fatigue, or a lack of mental stimulation.

2. श्लेष्मसमुद्भवा (Śleṣmasamudbhavā): Arising from the imbalance of bodily fluids, particularly shleshma. According to Ayurveda, an imbalance in bodily humors can affect various bodily functions, including sleep.

3. मनःशरीरश्रमसम्भवा (Manahśarīraśramasambhavā): Resulting from the exhaustion of the mind and body. Mental or physical exertion can lead to tiredness, which in turn can induce sleep.

4. आगन्तुकी (Āgantukī): Caused by external factors. This refers to sleep disturbances caused by factors such as noise, light, or discomfort.

5. व्याध्यनुवर्तिनी (Vyādhyanuvartini): Following illness. Sleep is often disturbed or increased during times of illness as the body focuses on healing.

6. रात्रिस्वभावप्रभवा (Rātrisvabhāvaprabhavā): Arising from the inherent nature of night. This implies that sleep is a natural response to the darkness and quietness of the night, which allows the body and mind to rest and rejuvenate. In essence, maharshi charak highlights how the wise understand the quality of Tamas, or ignorance, as being rooted in the night. It is associated with sleep, lethargy, and inertia, leading to delusion and lack of awareness.

Overall, the verse suggests that sleep can be influenced by various internal and external factors, including bodily imbalances, exhaustion, illness, external disturbances, and the natural rhythm of day and night.

Extol of kalaswabhavaja Nidrā

Proper and adequate sleep, has on various aspects of human life including physical health, mental well-being, and overall quality of life.^[3]

1. Sukha and Dukha (Happiness and Unhappiness): Proper sleep (Samyak Nidrā) contributes to happiness by ensuring physical and mental rejuvenation. Conversely, inadequate or improper sleep (Asamyak Nidrā) can lead to unhappiness and discomfort.

2. Pushti and Karshya (Good Physique and Emaciation): Samyak Nidrā supports physical health and strength, while Asamyak Nidrā can result in weakness and emaciation.

3. Vrushta and Klibata (Sexual Power and Impotence): Proper sleep is associated with virility and sexual vigor, while poor sleep can lead to sexual dysfunction and impotence.

4. Gyan and Agyan (Knowledge and Illiteracy): Adequate sleep is crucial for cognitive function, learning, and knowledge acquisition. Lack of sleep can impair cognitive abilities and contribute to ignorance or illiteracy.

5. Jivita and Ajivita (Long Life and Death): Proper sleep is linked to longevity and overall health, while inadequate sleep or sleep disturbances can negatively impact health and decrease life expectancy.

6. ratri swabhavaja nidrā referred as bhutadhatri is essential for physical and mental health, including growth, digestion, energy metabolism, hormonal balance, and the restoration of bodily tissues. Sleep influences the secretion of hormones that regulate appetite, energy metabolism, and glucose metabolism. Disruption of sleep patterns can disturb the balance of these hormones, affecting overall health. Both insufficient and excessive sleep, as well as irregular sleep patterns, can have detrimental effects on happiness, health, and longevity.

Indications of Divāsvapna

- It is recommended that people who are Karshita (exhausted) sing, practice Adhyayana (study), abstain from drinking, the eradication of Karma-Panchakarma therapy, Bhara (heavy lifting), Adhva (long distance walking).
- People experiencing Ajirna (indigestion), Kshata (damage), Kshina (debilitated), Vriddha (old age), Bala (children), Abala (less strength), Trishna (thirst), Atisara (diarrhea), Shula (colic pain), Shwasa (dyspnea), Hikka (hiccup), Krisha (emaciation), Patita (damage from fall), Abhihata (damage caused by assault), Unmatta (insanity), people fatigued from Yana (journey) by a car, Prajagara, or night sleeper, suffering from Krodha (rage), Shoka (grief), Bhaya (fear), and Divāsvapna Uchita (day sleepers).
- All but the Grishma Ritu do not recommend divāsvapna (day sleep). Vata Dosha in Grishma Ritu is at the accumulative stage (Chaya), while Bala is less so daytime slumber is recommended.^[4]

Divāsvapna Phala

Maintaining strength and dhatus equilibrium is ensured by Kapha, which also nourishes the organs and promotes lifespan. The Ruksha Guna of Adana Kala signifies Diva Swapna in Grishmaritu, as the nights get shorter and the body's Vata becomes more irritated. Because it aggravates Pitta and Kapha, it is therefore not suggested to use Diva Swapna during seasons other than Grishmarutu. According to Chakrapani in Ayurveda Dipika, if someone didn't get

enough sleep at night, then spending half of that time throughout the day will be enough to make up for it. in a healthy state. Day sleep is not advised after eating; instead, it should be done on an empty stomach. Through that method, Rōgi is also acquired by Swastha people.^[5]

Divāsvapna Nishedha: (Contraindications)

- It is not a good idea to sleep during the day in any season other than summer because it vitiates Pitta and Kapha.
- Individuals suffering from Meda (overindulgence in fat), Sneha Nitya (addiction to sensual substances), and Shelshkala (Kappa) never sleep during the day.^[6]

रात्रौ जागरणम् रुक्षम्। च. सू. 21/50

Ratri Jagarana (Effect of night awakening)

The body experiences rukṣatā (roughness) when awakened during the night; Snigdhatā (unctuousness) when sleeping during the day; and there is no roughness or unctuousness (Arukshata or Abhishyandi) associated with sitting posture.

Ratri Jagarana, according to Chakrapani Datta, raises the Ruksha Guna due to its inherent character.^[7] All seasons contraindicate sleeping during the day, with the exception of summer; nonetheless, sleep of one muhurta (48 minutes) during the day is generally forbidden. Not forbidden for children, the elderly, the weary from childbirth, the wounded, the malnourished; those who regularly consume wine; those who are weary from long walks, long rides on horses, or strenuous physical exertion; those who have not eaten; those who are experiencing a decrease in fat, perspiration, Kapha, Rasa, and Rakta; and those who suffer from indigestion. It is preferable for individuals who stayed awake during the night to sleep during half of that duration of waking.^[8]

Nicety of nidrā

- Day sleep is undoubtedly aberrant; it is the sleeper's unrighteousness (improper) and exacerbates all the doshas; as a result of such symptoms include discomfort, cough dyspnoea, nasal catarrh, headache, body aches, anorexia, fever, and weakening of the digestive fire. The sickness caused by Vata and Pitta can even strike people who stay up late.^[9] As a result, people should avoid resting during the day and staying up late at night because they both irritate the Dosha. People who are accustomed to sleeping during the

day or being awake at night do not experience any negative effects from their sleep or wakefulness.^[10]

- Those who experience the aggravation of Kapha, Medas (fat), and Visa (poisons) benefit from napping during the day and remaining awake at night. sleeping during day is beneficial for people experiencing hiccups, diarrhoea, indigestion, thirst, and abdominal pain.
- Daytime sleep is preferred during Grishma Ritu (Summer season) due to the dryness of Adanakala (Period of extraction), short nighttime length, and Caya (accumulation) of Vata.
- Sleeping during the day is not prohibited in any Ritus for those who are prone to excessive talking, long commutes, excessive walking, drinking alcohol, having sex, gaining or losing weight, people who are fed up with feeling angry, sad, or afraid, those who have asthma, Hidhma (belching), and Atisara (diarrhea), elderly people, young children, the frail, the exhausted, those who have chest injuries, those who are thirsty, those who experience intense pain, indigestion, trauma, insanity, and those who are accustomed to sleeping during the day. In these exceptions, daytime slumber promotes Dhātusāmya, or tissue homeostasis, and the body is nourished by an increase in Kapha as a result.^[11]
- Individuals who are overly fat, have too much Kapha, or are accustomed to using Sneha Dravya (fats) are not allowed to sleeping during the day is completely forbidden for people suffering from poisoning or throat diseases, even at night.

Nidrānasa

In healthy people, excessive Dosha removal from the body and head through Vamana (emesis) or Virēcana (purgation) might result in insomnia. extreme stress, fear, anxiety, anger, or grief, excessive smoking, physical activity or sexual contact, bloodletting, fasting, difficult sleeping conditions, advanced age, illnesses, and particularly conditions specifically related to Vata vitiation, such as colic discomfort, etc. Some people are naturally sleep deprived. The main reasons of insomnia are depletion of Kapha Dosha, aggravated Pitta and Vata Dosha.^[12]

The pooled estimates for prevalence of insomnia found were 25.7%, OSA 37.4% and RLS 10.6% an increased population. In addition to Karya / Karyasakta (engaged in work or inherently dedicated to work), the previously listed elements Vikara (caused by an agonizing

illness), Kala (old age), mostly as a result of Vata vitiation, which causes sleep obstruction and insomnia. There are over 80 different types of sleep disorders the most common include chronic insomnia, obstructive sleep apnea, restless legs syndrome, narcolepsy, shift work sleep disorder, delayed sleep phase syndrome, REM sleep behavior disorder.

Anidrā's administration

For whatever reason, sleeplessness can be promptly treated with abhyāṅg, Snigdha, Snana, eating soup made from domestic, marshy, or aquatic animals, drinking milk and yogurt with Shali rice (a red type of rice), indulging in sensual substances, alcohol, indulging in pleasant scents, and taking in pleasant and calming music, Samvahana, or gentle massage, and applying calming cream to the head and eyes and face, a cozy bed and house, and an appropriate time.^[13]

Modern Concept of Sleep

The interactions between the two main nerve cell systems in the upper pons and in the cerebellum maintain the brain's attentive state during waking. The thalamus receives inputs from the midbrain, which produces acetylcholine, its neurotransmitter (NT), in order to activate it. The cerebral cortex is then stimulated, resulting in a waking Electroencephalography (EEG) pattern. Though the brain is in Random Eye Movement (REM) sleep, the cholinergic nerve cells, thalamus, and cortex are in a state that is comparable to alertness during this period. Three groups of nerve cells in the top portion of the brain stem provide the difference: the neurotransmitter-containing nerve cells. The arousal-regulating brain stem cell types are in turn controlled by two subsets of hypothalamic nerve cells. The ventrolateral pre-optic nucleus is home to a particular subset of nerve cells that carry GABA and inhibitory neurotransmitters (NTs). The suprachiasmatic nucleus, which regulates the body's circadian rhythm, has a significant impact on the sleep cycle. The clock genes found in these hypothalamic nerve cells follow a biochemical cycle that approximates a full 24-hour sleep cycle. hormones and other physiological processes. Over the course of the sleeping time, the depth of sleep fluctuates from hour to hour. Most adults sleep deepens quickly until the end of the first hour, at which point it starts to reduce suddenly and gradually increases till the moment of waking. Sleeping during the day usually results in lighter sleep than sleeping at night.

CONCLUSION

The significance of nidrā cannot be overstated in maintaining both physical and emotional well-being and in treating illnesses effectively. Achieving the appropriate quantity and quality of nidrā is essential for entering a state of Nidrā, where our body and mind are at ease. nidrā is nothing but the location of the mind in a place unconnected with the sensory or motor organs. Nidrā is pivotal for good health, longevity, wellness, strength, virility, and wisdom. Conversely, the absence or disruption of Nidrā, known as Aplanidrā or Nidrānasha, can lead to various health issues, often exacerbated by imbalances in Vata Dosha, Pitta Vṛddhi, and Kapha Kshaya.

Recognized as one of the trayōpasthambha, or pillars of support for the body, sleep plays a crucial role in rejuvenating the body, enhancing strength (Bala), nourishing (Pusti) the body, and satisfying (Tusti) the mind. Therefore, it is imperative to prioritize obtaining the right amount of sleep at the appropriate times to safeguard our health and effectively manage any existing illnesses. Sleep is a prime pillar of brain health, sleeping too much or too little is associated with poor brain health.

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