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Importance of *Nidra*: A Review

Kavita G. Ambe¹, Pasha Sheikh²

¹Assistant Professor, Dept. of Samhita Siddhanta, Ramrao Patil Ayurvedic College Purna, Maharashtra, India.

²Ph.D. Scholar & Assistant Professor, Dept. of Sharira Kriya, Ramrao Patil Ayurvedic College Purna, Maharashtra, India.

ABSTRACT

Nidra is derived from the root "Dra" with a prefix 'N'. The root "Dra" means undesired. Therefore, *Nidra* is considered as state in which there will be no desire. *Nidra* is one of the important pillars of *Trayopstmbhas*. When the mind including sensory and motor organs is exhausted and they dissociate themselves from their objects, then the individual sleeps. Deprived and excessive sleep takes away both happiness and longevity. The same sleep, if properly enjoyed brings happiness and longevity in human beings as real knowledge brings about spiritual power in a *Yogi*.

Key words: *Nidra*, *Trayopstmbhas*, *Sleep*

INTRODUCTION

Sleep is one of the most misunderstood and mysterious phenomena in nature. Sleep evolved millions of years ago as a life-support function and the fact that it has persisted itself means it is not a mistake of evolution. Even microbes and plants have some form of circadian rhythm with alternating active and resting states. Man is the only species, which deliberately deprives itself of sleep for no apparent gain; thinking it is a wasteful, lazy activity to be replaced with work or a workout.

The *Trayopastmbhas* are the subsidiary pillars, which support the body throughout the lifetime, by providing the qualities like *Bala*, *Varna*, *Upachaya* etc.^[1] they're considered as subsidiary or secondary as principal pillars of life are the three *Doshas*. But their importance in normal functioning of the body cannot be over looked. In the same way that pillars sustain a

home, the body is constantly maintained by *Ahara* (nourishment), *Shayana* (sleep), and *Abrahmacharya* (non-celibacy) when practiced properly.^[2] Every one of those deserves due to importance because these factors are concerned with the essential needs of living system and over indulgence or total abstinence of any of those is also harmful to life. The *Ahara* is especially concerned with the energy production and maintenance of living tissues. The *Nidra* is that the one which offer complete relaxation to the body and mind and there it restores the potentials of the individual. The *Brahmacharya* is concerned with disciplined mode of sexual life and reproduction.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Classical texts of *Ayurveda Charak Samhita*, *Sushrut Samhita*, *Ashtang Sangrah* and *Ashtang Hridaya* were explored for the references and understanding. These references were compiled, analyzed, and discussed for a through and in-depth understanding of the concept *Nidra*.

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW OF NIDRA

Definition

Acharya Charaka clarifies *Nidra* is a unique mental state in which there are no *Indriyas* functioning within the mind. The separating of oneself from *Bahya Vishaya* is the result of mental as well as physical fatigue.^[3]

Address for correspondence:

Dr. Kavita G. Ambe

Assistant Professor, Dept. of Samhita Siddhanta, Ramrao Patil Ayurvedic College Purna, Maharashtra, India.

E-mail: kavitaambe98@gmail.com

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Hrudya is the seat of *Chetana*, and when *Tamas* rules it, sleep arises.^[4]

The *Strotas* accumulate with *Shleshma*, and because the *Mana* is exhausted and lacking sense organs, the person falls asleep.^[5]

The ideal type of sleep is natural sleep, which occurs at night. Another name for this is *Bhutadhatri*, which means "that which nurses all the living beings." Any wicked behaviors are the result of the *Tamas* - caused type of sleep, but the other forms are seen in certain circumstances and diseases.^[6]

Physiology of Nidra

Acharya Charaka asserts that when a *Mana*, including an *Indriya*, gets fatigued and separates from their belongings as a result, they fall asleep. The person falls asleep when the *Gyanendriyas* and *Karmendriyas*, as well as the *Mana* (and the soul), become tired out or inactive. *Hridaya* is the seat of *Chetna* in living things.^[7]

According to *Acharya Sushruta's* description of the physiology of *Nidra*. *Nidra* is imposed on people when *Tamo Guna* invades this. Sleep is brought on by *Tamo Guna*, and awakening is brought on by *Satva Guna*, but generally, nature is the most important factor.^[8]

The physiology of *Nidra*, according to *Acharya Caraka*, is that *Nidra* develops in the body when the sense organs are not functioning and the body's *Srotas* are covered by *Kapha*.

Effect of Sleep

All of these things depend on how well or poorly you sleep, including happiness, misery, nourishment, emaciation, strength, and sterility. It also depends on your knowledge and ignorance.^[9]

According to the *Sushruta Samhita*, getting a good night's sleep at the right time and for the right amount of time tends to enhance body growth, strength, vigour, and complexion. The body and mind are refreshed, and the natural balance between the various body tissues is also restored, which enhances one's sense of wellbeing. It has even been suggested that getting enough sleep is crucial to a person's overall

health. A good night's sleep has a positive impact on every physiological system in the body.^[10]

Methods and measures to induce a Good Sleep^[11]

Aharaja Hetu - *Gramya-Anup-Oudak Rasa (Mamsa)*, *Shalyanna*, *Shali*, *Ksheera*, *Madya*, *Sneha* and *Dadhi*.

Meat juice or flesh of animals of the *Biskira* or *Vilesaya* class, and eating of grapes, sugar and sugarcane at night, are beneficial^[12]

Viharaja Hetu - *Abhyanga*, *Snana*, *Utsadana*, *Samvahana*, *Chakshusostarpana*, Application of soothing pastes to the head, application of soothing pastes to the face, comfortable bed, sleep in proper time.

Manasika Hetu - pleasure of mind, indulging in odours and sound of one's own taste. Person gets sleep immediately when the aetiologies of sleeplessness are removed.

Nitra - one of the *Vega*^[13]

Nidra is one of the 13 *Vegas*, which are natural urges that should not be consciously suppressed. The *Dharana* of *Nidra Vega* may result in *Moha*, *Gaurava*, *Shira* and *Akshi*, *Alasya*, *Jrumbha* and *Angamarda* and the only remedy for these symptoms is to let the person sleep. Gentle touch can also help to induce sleep.

DISCUSSION

1. Sleep tends to dial down the sympathetic nervous in favour of the parasympathetic. Which may explain why good sleep is vital for digestion and our gastrointestinal system.
2. Sleep deprivation is a sure recipe for obesity and weight gain, because sleep plays a major role in the regulation of appetite and feeding. Other animals deprive themselves of sleep, only when hungry and foraging for food. So, when sleep deprived, our brain and body misinterprets it as a signal of starvation and makes you feel hungrier, reduces satiety and promotes weight gain. Not just that it even encourages you to choose unhealthy foods over healthy ones.

3. To add insult to injury, sleep deprivation reduces motivation for exercise and in case you do exercise, you tend to lose more muscle rather than fat.
4. Excess of cortisol. To top it all, it makes the body insulin resistant and prone to getting diabetes. Just one night of total sleep deprivation may be as detrimental to insulin sensitivity as six months on a high-fat diet.
5. Sleep and the heart - It is during sleep that the heart gets some respite; blood pressure and heart rate settle down. It is no wonder that the day after daylight saving time. Starts and millions of people lose an hour of sleep; there is a sharp spike in the incidence of heart attacks and strokes.
6. The immune system and cancer - Our immune system needs rest too. Sleep. Deprivation has been shown to be associated with more infections like common colds; poorer response to vaccines and an increase in various cancers.
7. Healing of injuries and wounds - Sleep plays an especially important role in healing of injuries, soft tissue as well as broken bones. A sleep deprived person will feel more pain and have impaired recovery from various illnesses. Maybe we might want to cut down unnecessary bright lights, alarms and beeps in ICUS. (To help patients sleep!) Sleep is important for our bones, our muscles, and our gastrointestinal system. Name the organ or physiological function and sleep is important for it.
8. Infertility - Sleep deprivation adversely affects fertility in both men and women. Testosterone levels, sperm counts and testicular size is reduced by sleep deprivation. Fertility is also reduced in women who are not getting adequate sleep. We can imagine Mother Nature telling them, "If you cannot even afford to sleep adequately, how can you afford to raise a child?" Even before the question of fertility arises, the sleep deprived person looks older and less attractive.

CONCLUSION

We shall see how sleep is our best and cheapest insurance policy for health, critical for the wellbeing of

our mind, brain, metabolism. We need to sleep around 7 to 9 hours in a day. Either in one go or with a short afternoon nap. Just as a plane has to make elaborate preparations for landing, we need to prepare properly to ensure good sleep. If you fall asleep within five minutes of hitting the pillow, very likely you are sleep deprived! Have a regular schedule. Go to sleep and wake up at the same time every day. Start to relax before bedtime for example try meditation, journaling, or light stretches. Start turning down the lights and avoid exposure to blue light as in iPad or mobiles before bedtime. Expose yourself to bright sunlight soon after waking up. Apart from the quantity of sleep, the quality and consistency is also very important. Sleep schedules need to be regular, sleep needs to be undisturbed.

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