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Concept of *Nidra* - A Review Article

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: *Nidra* (sleep) is very essential for our body and mind. Proper sleep is useful for maintaining physical and mental well-being. It is considered one of the three sub-pillars of life (*Trayopasthambha*) along with diet and celibacy. Acharya Charaka says, when *Manas* (mind) along with *Atma* (soul) become tired (exhausted / inactive) and *Karmatamanaha/Indriyas* (sense organs) are withdrawn from their *Viśayas* (objects of sense organs) then man gets sleep. **Objectives of the study:** Provide a comprehensive overview study of *Nidra* (sleep) and review the role of *Nidra* (sleep) in maintaining the health. **Materials and Methods:** Complete review of Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Ashtang Sangrah, Ashtang Hridaya, Sharangadhara Samhita and other existing literature on published articles and online databases are referred about concerned topic, analysis of role of *Nidra* and importance in maintain of health was accessed. **Conclusion:** The review study observed that "Proper sleep helps numerous benefits for our overall health and wellbeing like-growth and development of body, Happy status of mind, nourishment of body, strength of body, virility, knowledge, and life" are the gifts of sleep.

Key words: *Nidra*, Sleep, Health, *Trayopasthambha*, *Mana*, *Atma*

INTRODUCTION

Nidra is one of the three essential supports for the life. *Nidra* happens because the mind withdraws from receiving the objects perceived by concerned sense faculties. *Nidra* (sleep) is produced by a predominance of *Shlesma (Kapha)* and *Tamogun*.^[1] The origin of sleep from *Tamas Guna*. *Tamo Guna* is predominant for sleep therefore generally at night it occurs.^[2] The three pillars continue well endowed with strength, complexion and development till the completion of life- span provided.^[3,4] In sleep the modification of mind is devoid of an object, if the state of mind does

not contain any content of object, then it is a sleep. However, in this state there is no cessation of mental activities but only the functioning of the brain is disconnected from the mind. In this state, viz., during sleep, the modification of mind is not founded on any thought content.^[5] Acharyas said Happiness or misery, stoutness or thinness, strength or debility, virility or impotence, knowledge or ignorance, life or death- all depend on sleep.^[6,7] Sleep affects our daily functioning and our physical & mental health in many ways that we are just beginning to understand. Appropriate sleep is one of the factors to look after maintenance of health. Some studies suggest that sleep deprivation affects the immune system in detrimental ways.^[8] Sleep appears necessary for the nervous systems to work properly. Too little sleep leaves one drowsy and unable to concentrate the next day.^[9] It also leads to impaired memory and physical performance and reduced ability to carry out math calculations. If sleep deprivation continues, hallucinations and mood swings may develop.^[10]

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

1. To provide a comprehensive overview study of *Nidra* (sleep).

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- To review the role of *Nidra* (sleep) in maintaining the health.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Review from Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Ashtang Sangrah, Ashtang Hridaya, Sharangadhara Samhita and other existing literature on published articles, journals and online databases are referred and compiled, analysed and discussed for understanding of the concept *Nidra*.

REVIEW OF NIDRA

Definition of *Nidra*

According to Acharya Charaka when *Manas* (mind) along with *Atma* (soul) become tired (exhausted / inactive) and the exhausted sense organs detract from their objects, then man gets sleep.^[11]

According to Acharya sushruta *Hrdaya* (heart) is the seat of *Chetana* (conscious principle/soul) in living beings, when this is invaded by *Tamoguna*, persons get sleep; *Tamoguna* is the cause for sleep and *Satvaguna* is the cause for waking; these are considered as the chief/natural cause.^[12]

According to Acharya Vriddha Vagbhata when *Shleshma* or *Kapha Dosh* encircles/covered the *Srotus*, when sense organs are overworked (fatigued) and not perform their duty of perception, so sleep is induced in human body.^[13]

According to Acharya Sharangadhara aggravation of *Kapha-Dosha* and *Tamoguna* leads to *Nidra*.^[14]

Synonyms of *Nidra* / sleep - *Shayana*, *Swap*, *Svapna*, *Sanvesh*.^[15]

Types / classification of *Nidra* / sleep

Acharya Charaka described following types of sleep^[16]

- Tamobhava* - caused by *Tamas*
- Shleshma Samudbhava* - caused by *Kapha*
- Mana-Shareer Shrama Sambhava* - caused by physical and mental exertion
- Aagantuki* - due to external cause, indicative of bad prognosis (*Rista* / fatal sign)

- Vyaadhianuvartinee* - due to complication of other disease
- Raatrisvabhaava Prabhavaa* - normally occurring in night by the nature of the night or physiological sleep.

Acharya Sushruta described following types of sleep^[17]

- Tamasi* - When *Sanghyavaha Srotamsi* (channels carrying sensation) become filled with *Shleshma (Kapha)* and dominated by *Tamo Guṇa*, then sleep known as *Tamasi Nidra*, from which persons cannot be awakened; this occurs at the time of death or in coma.
- Swabhaviki* - When sleep is natural it is called *Swabhaviki*. It is of three types again *Tamobhuyiṣtha*, *Rajobhuyiṣtha* and *Sattvabhuyiṣtha*.
 - Tamobhuyiṣtha* - When a person sleeps day and night with predominance of *Tamo-Guna* it is called *Tamobhuyiṣtha*.
 - Rajobhuyiṣtha* - When a person sleeps any time, sometime in day sometime in night, without any regulation, with predominance of *Rajo Guna* it is called *Rajobhuyiṣtha*.
 - Sattvabhuyiṣtha* - When a person sleeps only at midnight with predominance of *Satvaguna* is called *Sattvabhuyiṣtha*. (This is *Svabhaviki Nidra*/natural sleep).
- Vaikariki* - In persons whom *Shlesma (Kapha)* has decreased and *Anila (Vata)* has increased, and in those whose mind and body are in trouble by diseases etc. The sleep does not appear at all, any time; It is called *Vaikariki* (abnormal).

Acharya Vriddha Vagbhata described following types of sleep^[18]

- Kala Svabhava* - natural sleep
- Aamayaj Kheda (Vyadhi)* - due to disease
- Citta Kheda (Mana)* - due to psychological (mind) disorders

4. *Deha Kheda (Sharir)* - due to body related causes (tired etc.)
5. *Kaphaja* - due to *Kapha* vitiation
6. *Agantuja* - accidental/traumatic
7. *Tamobhava* - due to *Tamoguna*.

Acharya Laghu Vagbhatta on Ashtang Hridaya described following types of sleep - as per time of sleep.^[19]

1. *Mithya Yoga* or *Mithya* type of sleep - If slept untimely, it is *Mithya Yoga* of sleep.
2. *Ati Yoga* or *Ati* type of sleep - If slept more hours and more times a day, it is *Ati Yoga* of sleep.
3. *Hina Yoga* or *Hina* type of sleep - If no slept properly, it is *Hina Yoga* of sleep.
4. *Samyak Yoga* or *Sama* type of sleep - Timely and of certain duration of sleep is very healthy.

Physiological significance of Nidra / Sleep:

Proper sleep is very important for health. Happiness or misery, stoutness / corpulence or thinness / leanness, strength or debility, virility / potency or impotence, knowledge/intellect or ignorance/ non-intellect, life or death- all depend on proper and improper sleep.^{[20],[21]}

As wholesome diet is needed for maintenance of body so also is the sleep. Obesity and leanness/emaciation are particularly caused by sleep and diet especially.^[22] With proper sleep the person will be free from diseases, will have a pleasant mind, endowed with strength, colour/complexion and virility; neither very stout nor very lean, with beautiful appearance and lives for a hundred years.^[23]

Clinical significance of Nidra / sleep

1. *Akala Nidra*
2. *Nidra Naash/ ANidra*
3. *Divaswaap*
4. *Ati Nidra*

(i) Akaala Nidra (Untimely sleep or improper sleep) -

Sleeping during improper time produces *Moha* (confusion/ delusion), *Jvara* (fever), *Staimitya* (stiffness

or dullness of organs), *Pinasa* (running nose or nasal catarrh), *Siroruk* (headache) *Shoph* (inflammation or dropsy), *Hrillasa* (belching or nausea), *Srotorodha* (obstruction of passages and channels) and *Agnimandya* (poor digestion or dyspepsia).^[24]

In these conditions, *Upavasa* (fasting), *Vamana* (emesis), *Swedana* (sudation) and *Nasya* (nasal instillation) should be done.^[25]

(ii) Nidranaasha / Anidra (loss of sleep/ Insomnia) -

Loss of sleep is caused by aggravation of *Anila (Vata)* and *Pitta*, exhaustion of the mind, loss of tissues and injury to the body.^[26] *Nidranaasha* or Loss of sleep results in body ache (pain all over the body), feeling of heaviness of the head, excessive yawning, inertia, fatigue, giddiness, indigestion, laziness and other diseases due to vitiation of *Vata*.^[27]

The person, who is suffering from loss of sleep should practice and treated himself in the following; consuming (more) milk, liquors, meat-juice (soup), curd, and *Abhyanga* (application of oil to body, head etc.) / massage, *Udvardana* (upward powder massage), *Snana* (bath), *Sirovasti* (retention of oil in scalp), *Karnatarpana* (installation of oily ear drops) and *Akshitarpana* (retention of medicated ghee in the eyes). Enjoying in the embrace of the creeper-like arms of wife, feeling happy and getting done the desired, enjoying the things which are desired and pleasant to the mind. All these things bestow happiness by inducing good sleep.^[28]

Nidranaasha is gets cured by indulgence in opposites. For loss of sleep, anointing the body, oiling the head, massaging and trampling over the body are beneficial. Use of *Shaali* rice, wheat, flour of grains, eatables prepared from sugar cane juice are ideal food; such food being sweet in taste, unctuous, used along with milk and soup of meat etc.; soup of meat of animals which live in burrows, and of *Viskira* birds; *Draksha*, sugar and products of sugarcane juice should be used at nights; cot/ bed, seats and vehicles should be pleasant and soft; any other thing which bestows sleep may be adopted by the intelligent person.^[29]

Massage, anointing, bath, meat-soup of domestic, marshy and aquatic animals, *Shaali* rice along with

curd, milk, fat, wine, mental ease, pleasant smell and sound, gentle rubbing on the body, applying *Tarpana* (nutritious medicines like ghee) to the eyes, applying pastes of drugs on the head and face, lying on a well-covered bed, comfortable room for sleeping and proper time of sleep. These bring shortly the sleep which is disturbed by some factor or diseases.^[30]

(iii) *Divaswapna* (Day-time sleep)

Indications of Day Sleep / *Divaswapna*

According to *Acharya Charaka* - Those who are emaciated from indulgence in more of singing, reading/ study, drinking/ wine, sexual intercourse, evacuative therapy, weight-carrying and travelling on foot, who are having indigestion, are injured, wasted/ debility, old people, children and women; weak persons, suffering from thirst, diarrhoea, colic pain, dyspnoea and hiccup; who are lean, fallen, wounded and insane, exhausted by journey and vigils and also by anger, grief and fear and are accustomed to day-sleep all these persons may indulge in day sleep always in all seasons.^[31] In the summer season, because of roughness due to *Adana*, aggravation of *Vayu* and shortness of nights, day-sleep is recommended.^[32]

According to *Acharya Sushruta* - Sleeping during day is prohibited in all seasons except summer; though prohibited (generally) sleep of one *Muhurta* (28 minutes) during day is not prohibited for children, the old aged, those fatigued from woman (copulation), the injured, the emaciated; who drink wine habitually, exhausted by journey in chariots, riding on animals, walking long distances, hard physical activities; those who have not partaken food, who are having decrease of fat, sweat, *Kapha*, *Rasa* and *Rakta* and who are having indigestion. For those who had kept awake at night, sleeping during day for half of that period (of wakefulness) is desirable.^[33] Sleeping during day is beneficial for those suffering from thirst, pain in the abdomen, hiccup, indigestion and diarrhea.^[34]

According to *Acharya Vagbhatta* - During *Greeshma Ritu* (summer season), sleeping during day-time is beneficial (and healthy) because of the accumulation of *Vata* in this season, of the dryness caused by the *Adana* period (absorption of moisture by the sun) and

because of the short nights. The day-time during other seasons aggravates *Kapha* and *Pitta Dosha*. It is, however, good and beneficial (for health) to the persons, those who are exhausted by (too much of) talking, journey/ riding, walking alcoholic consumption, sexual intercourse, carrying heavy load, physical activities, tired by anger, grief and fear. It is also good for those suffering from dyspnoea, hiccup, diarrhoea, for the old aged, children, weak, emaciated person, those suffering from chest injuries, thirsty, intense pain, indigestion, who are hurt and intoxicated. and the ones who are habituated to sleep during daytime.^[35]

Benefit of day Sleep/*Divaswapna* - By this they are endowed with equilibrium of *Dhatu*s and strength, *Kapha* nourishes their body-parts and their life-span becomes stable.^[36] In such exempted cases, day time sleep brings about normalcy of *Dhatu*s and *Kapha* resulting in nourishment of body.^[37]

Contra indication for Day-Sleep/ *Divaswapna* - By day-sleep in seasons other than summer, *Kapha* and *Pitta* are vitiated, hence day-sleep is not indicated in those seasons. The obese, those having regular fatty diet, *Kapha*, *Kaphaja* disorders and suffering from latent poisons should never sleep during day.^[38] Persons having increased *Medas* (obesity) and *Kapha*, who are habituated to oily things daily, should not sleep during day time. Sleep is totally contraindicated to those persons, who are affected by poison and throat diseases. They should not sleep even during night.^[39]

Disease occurs due to Day-Sleep - *Divaswapna* - *Halimaka* (chlorosis), headache, inactivity (*Staiymitya*), feeling of heaviness in body parts, bodyache, loss of appetite and digestion, feeling as though heart is smeared (with *Kapha*), oedema, anorexia (loss of taste), nausea, rhinitis, migraine, urticarial patches, pustules, boils (eruptions), itching, stupor, cough, disorders of throat, derangement of memory and intelligence, delusion, obstruction of channels, fever, incapability of sense organs, intensity in effect of poisons- all these are produced by indulging in day-sleep. Hence the wise person should indulge in happy sleep understanding its good and bad effects.^[40]

Day sleep is definitely abnormal; it is unrighteousness (improper) on the part of the sleeper and aggravates all the *Doshas*; from such aggravation, cough, dyspnoea, nasal catarrh, feeling of heaviness of the head, bodyaches, anorexia, fever and weakness of digestive fire develop.^[41]

(iv) Ati-Nidra (excess sleep) (Ati-Nidra Nahsak Upaaya) - Purgation therapy to the body and head, emesis therapy, fear, worry / anxiety, anger, exposure to smoke, physical exercises, blood-letting, fasting, uncomfortable bed, predominance of *Satva Guna*, conquest of *Tamoguna* and unsuitable atmosphere for sleep - these check the unwholesome and excessive occurrence of sleep. These very factors may be taken as causes of insomnia, along with (over) work (*Karya*), time (*Kala* - such as old age), disorder (*Vikara* / diseases), constitution/ nature (*Prakriti* such as *Vatika*) and aggravation of *Vata* in the body.^[42]

In condition of excess sleep, administration of emesis (especially), mild purificatory therapies, fasting, blood-letting and inducing worry into the mind are to be done.^[43]

In case of excessive sleep administration of strong emetics, eye ointments (*Anjan*/ collyriums), nasal medications (*Navan* - nasal drops) and fasting therapy are recommended. Further worry, sexual intercourse, grief, fear and anger. are also suggested. By doing so, *Kapha* gets decreased resulting in loss of sleep.^[44]

Indication of Nidra/Sleep or Time of Sleep - One should sleep at proper time at nights daily as much as desirable and become habituated to it. If one keeps himself awake during night, due to non-habit, he should sleep for half of the time (of keeping awake) next morning without taking any food.^[45] Wakefulness during night is dry or causes dryness in the body, while sleeping during day-time is unctuous or produces moisture in the body. Casual sleep in a comfortable sitting posture (*Asinapracalayita*) is neither dry nor *Abhisyandi* / unctuous (does not produce dryness nor unctuousness in the body).^{[46],[47]}

Ratri Jagaran - Those who keep awake at nights, the same diseases produced by *Vata* and *Pitta* may arise.^[48]

Indication of Ratri Jagaran - For person suffering from aggravation of *Kapha*, *Medas* (fat) and *Viṣa* (poisons) keeping awake at nights is beneficial.^[49]

Nidra / Sleep- Adharneeya Vega / suppression urge of sleep -

By suppression of sleep, yawning, body-ache, stupor / drowsiness, head disorders and feeling of heaviness in eyes are caused for which sleep and gently pressing the body (massaging the body by hand or mild trampling by feet) are recommended.^[50] Insensibility/ delusion, feeling of heaviness of head and eyes, absence of enthusiasm, (excessive) yawning and breaking pain all over the body are caused by the suppression of sleep. In this condition sleep and smooth massage of body are desirable.^[51,52]

DISCUSSION

Sleep is a natural activity of all living beings. It is the period of rest for fatigued and worn-out tissues. Every person should try to get good sleep the natural way by maintaining health, regulating the activities of the body and mind and leading a contented and calm life. Sleep is induced by the predominant of *Shleshma* and *Tamoguna*. Among six types of *Nidra* according to Acharya Charaka *Ratriswabhavaprabhava Nidra* is also known as '*Bhutadhatri*' (it nurses the living beings just like a mother); *Tamobhava Nidra* results due to *Adharma* (sinful acts) and the rest five can be included under disease. Among three types of *Nidra* according to Acharya Sushruta *Vaishnavi Nidra* is known as *Swabhaviki Nidra*. It is the physiological *Nidra* that usually takes place at night. It nourishes and makes one free from different types of fatigue and is essential for everyone to be healthy. This is otherwise known as '*Bhutadhatri*'. Among seven types of *Nidra* according to Acharya Vruddha Vagbhatta, the *Kala Swabhava Nidra* is a natural sleep, which occurs at night. Among four types of *Nidra* according to Acharya Laghu Vagbhatta, Timely and of certain duration of sleep (*Samyak Yoga* of sleep) is very healthy and other three types are (*Mithya*, *Hina* and *Ati Yoga* of sleep) unhealthy.

Sukha etc. are benefits of proper sleep while *Dukha* etc. are bad effects of improper sleep. By doing proper

sleep the person will be free from diseases, will have a pleasant mind, endowed with strength, colour/complexion and virility; neither very stout nor very lean, with beautiful appearance and lives for a hundred years. *Akala* means prohibited time such as morning which is *Mithyayoga* of sleep. *Akala Nidra*, *Nidranasha*, *Divaswapna* and *Ati Nidra* is harmful for our body. Avoiding sleep either during day or night causes dryness, but during day dryness does not create much trouble because of more unctuousness during the previous night, whereas keeping awake at night causes more dryness. *Asinapracalayita* means sleeping lightly while sitting which people say is common in *Vihara* (picnics or in monasteries).

CONCLUSION

Nidra is very important for life and health. Man requires proper sleep every day for maintenance of good health. Slight variations either less or more for short periods may not cause harm. The present-day trend of inducing sleep artificially by consuming drugs-sedatives, narcotics etc. (sleeping pills) should not be indulged at all since such drugs are habit forming and deleterious to health. Absence or inadequacy of sleep gives rise to many disorders of the mind, sense organs and also many functional systems of the body such as digestive, excretory, reproductive etc. Sleep is as essential to the body as food, air and water. *Vegas* are urges which develop naturally in the body, sleep is one of them. It should not suppress otherwise it causes certain diseases.

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