

Study on Nidra for healthy life – Literary review

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Abstract

Irregular and unnatural food habits, suppression of natural urges and improper sleeping habits etc are the inseparable parts daily routine. Acharya of Ayurveda have quoted tridoshas (Vata,Pitta,Kapha) and three Upastambhas i.e. Ahara (diet), nidra (sleep), bramhacharya (celibacy) which plays an important role in the maintenance of life while disturbance in any of this leads to disturbance in health. Sleep is a harmonious gift bestowed by nature. Once this harmony is violated, health is hampered because sleep runs according to biological clock. Acharya Charaka has mentioned happiness, misery, nourishment, emaciation, strength, weakness, virility, sterility, knowledge, ignorance and even death all this occur due to proper or improper sleep. The various organs and the parts of the body can be given rest independently but complete rest for the entire organism is possible only when it goes to sleep. Therefore to establish the relations between sleep and the body, descriptions are needed to understand for the way of sleep to be followed.

Keywords: Sleep, Life Style, Dosha, Dhatu, Prakriti, Vegavidharana.

Introduction

In today's era everywhere people are in hurry but in fast paced life, the lifestyle is far from what the natural anatomy and physiology of human body permits. Ayurveda, the science of life has maintained its domain in the medical sciences in preventive and therapeutic aspects. The Acharyas of ayurveda have quoted Tridoshas as three pillars where Ahara, Nidra and Bramhmacharya as three factors which play an important role in the maintenance of human health. Any disturbance in this leads to disease. Quality food consumption and proper sleep are the two basic needs for making an essential aspect of personal health care. There are several theories illustrated in the medical sciences to explain the phenomenon of natural sleep and it's disturbed nature leading to many complication.

Sleep is a way to nourish our body, mind and spirit. It is an important component for a good health and peace of mind. Getting sound sleep each night imparts physical and mental balance to prepare our body and mind for the next day. Ayurveda views restful sleep as important as diet and also essential pillar of good health. Independent rest can be given to different parts of body but complete rest is possible when it goes to sleep, so to establish the relations between sleep and the body descriptions are needed to understand for the way of sleep to be followed.

Relationship between the Sleep and Dosha- Dhatu-Mala

Sleep plays an important role in the maintenance of equilibrium state of body. In Ayurvedic classics, it is mentioned that in the kaphaja Vikaras, Atinidra (excessive sleep) and in Vataja Vikaras Tandra (sleeplessness) are commonly seen, lack of sleep in Pittaja vikaras.

The equilibrium of the dhatus also depends upon sleep. Charaka and Sushruta have stated that proper sleep leads to Dhatusamyata i.e. equilibrium state of dhatus, nourishment of body, increase of strength and stability of life are achieved. When the proper sleep is enjoyed the dhatus get proper nourishment, digestion happens smoothly and the Agni functions remain normal. The bad habits of awaking at night and sleeping during day time have been stated to provoke all the three doshas.

Functions of Sleep at different Dhatu level

- **Rasa-** Pushti and Varnaprada
- **Rakta-** Varna ,Agnidipti
- **Mamsa-** Pushti and bala
- **Meda-** Shriman (Attractiveness)
- **Asthi-** Bala
- **Majja-** Varna, Utsaha
- **Shukra-** Vrishata, Utsaha

Relationship between the Sleep and Prakriti

The Sleep according to Prakriti may be divided into 2 groups:-

- 1) Deha prakriti (Body constitution)
- 2) Manasa Prakriti (Mind)

Deha prakriti- The sleep is produced by Tamoguna and shleshma .So according to the Prakriti of a person the quality and quantity of sleep varies.

Manasa Prakriti –Mind is controlled by rajas (emotions) and tamas(inhibition). The pure state of mind is Satva.

Tamasa-Sleep heavily,they sleep during day and night. Rajasa- Sleep is light and disturbed,they sleep either during day or night Satva- Sleep peacefully.

As sleep shows very close relation to Doshas and in different age groups predominance of Doshas varies and so the sleep

Age	Dominance of Dosha	Sleep Pattern
Balyawastha	Kapha	Atinidrata (excess sleep)
Yuwwawastha	Pitta	Alpanidrata (less sleep)
Vridhawastha	Vata	Nidranasha(insomnia)

duration also changes according to the changes of life.

Relationship Between The Sleep And the Suppression of Natural Urges (Vegavidharana)

Sleep is one among the Adharniya Vega explained by Acharyas. Suppression of urge for sleep causes yawning, malaise, drowsiness, headache, and heaviness in the eye.

Bhavamishra have quoted that proper sleep causes balance in body constituents, alertness, good vision, good complexion, good digestive fire.

Ancient Authors like yadavji Trikamji Yadav have also quoted that happiness and sorrow, growth and wasting, strength and weakness, virility and impotence, knowledge and ignorance as well as existence of life and its cessation depend on sleep.

When to sleep: Untimely and excessive sleep take away both happiness and longevity. Naturally the night is described as a proper time for sleep because vigil during night causes roughness in the body and sleep during day causes Snigdhatā (unctuousness) in the body. Hence the person should not sleep in day time and should not awake at night because both vitiates Doshas. So it is advised to take sleep avoiding the first and the last parts of night i.e. in the evening and morning. If at all person has to stay awake at night due to some reason it can be compensated with day sleep for half the normal period of the time of awakened at night.

When to Wake up: Though the duration of sleep is not directly mentioned in the Classics but it can be understood by the verse given by Acharya Vagbhatta “*Bramhimurta uttishtheth*” i.e. one should wake up 48 min before sunrise.

Where to Sleep: Yogaratnakar has explained the effects of different kind of beds as follow :-

- Sleeping on a cot is Tridosha nashaka and is conducive to good health.
- Sleeping on ground neutralizes Vata and kapha.
- Sleeping on ground results in obesity, increases virility, increases Vata.
- Sleeping on plank of wood increases Vata.
- Sleeping on a comfortable bed increases happiness, sleep, sexual desires, and helps in getting rid of excess Vata and exhaustion.

How to sleep : After dinner one should walk for hundred steps before going to bed, then one should lie down in recumbent posture up bed taking 8 times breath and should change posture to right lateral till taking 16 times breath and thereafter to left lateral taking 32 times breath and then can sleep in any posture. But it is always advisable to sleep in left lateral position because the Agni(digestive fire) lies in the left side of the body above the Nabhi (Umbilicus) , which is responsible for digestion.

How long to sleep : According to Bhagvat Gita, sleeping for six hours in the middle of the night and keeping awake during the first and last quarters as well as during day time are generally considered as regulated sleep and wakefulness.

Relationship between Age Group and Duration of Sleep (National Sleep Foundation)

Age	Sleep required
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(5-10 years)	10-11 hours
Teens (10-17 years)	8-9 hours
Adults	7-9 hours

Discussion

Acharya Charaka has considered Sleep among three upastambhas for the maintenance of the health of human being. While discussing about sleep Acharya Charaka has stated that Sukha & Dukkha, Pushti & Karshya, Bala & Abala, Vrishata & Klibata, Jnana & Ajnana all these entities depend on the sleep. Untimely excessive sleep and prolonged vigil takw away both happiness and longevity.

In Ashtanga Hridaya, Sleep disorders and their treatments are mentioned under Annarakshadhyaya where Trayopastambhas are explained. Sharangadhara has quoted Anidra in Vataja nanatmaja vikara, Alpanidra in Pittaja nanatmaja vikara, Anidra under Kaphaja nanatmaja vikara .By observing these descriptions it can be concluded that all Acharyas have given the importance to Sleep.

State of health can be ascertained from-

- Getting sleep at appropriate time.
- Absence of dreams indicating morbidity.
- Happy awakening

Yogaratnakar has mentioned that the patient who gets sound sleep, who feels lightness in the body and whose sense organs work properly will be consider as healthy.

Recent advancement in the field of neurophysiology, neurochemistry, and phychiatry has provided much understanding about the mechanism of sleep and sleep disorders. During sleep many physiological changes occur in cardio respiratory functions, body temperature, muscle tone, hormone secretion and blood pressure. Sleep is one of the most important physiological functions that influence the daytime activity, vigilance, concentration and performance. (Richard H,Hall,1998). Hence maintain good quality sleep would be crucial to health.

Conclusion

Unlike other entities, Sleep has both physiological and pathological importance. In physiological normalcy, it maintains the health and in pathological condition it hampers health. Above mentioned explanation can be taken as the standard guidelines towards the right way to proceed for sleep for healthy living.

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