

Historical View on Swapna in Ayurveda

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Abstract

In Ayurveda too, the descriptions of dreams in relation to assessment of Prakriti, diagnosis of diseases, etc. is genuinely scientific and many of these concepts are seen to be parallel to the conclusions derived from recent studies carried out for years along with the help of the latest technical assistance. These rich age old concepts thus, only need to be brought to the forefront, interpreted and researched on, and represented to gain acceptance. A similar attempt is done in this dissertation work, albeit at the grass root level to collect, interpret, observe and apply these principles relating to 'Swapna'; such that a beginning is made in the search for the lost dreams.

Keywords – Prakriti, Swapna, dreams, principle, ayurveda etc.

Introduction :

Ayurveda, a science which has stood the time test, it is unchanging and eternal. It has no doubt maintained its domain in the medical sciences. Being one of the leading practiced alternative medical sciences, its sphere today, not only encompasses the traditional Indian roots but have enveloped the globe. And that which makes Ayurveda stand above the parallel medical sciences are its Basic Principles. These Maulika Siddhantas make the core of the science and are the foundation on which lie the 'Astan'gas' of Ayurveda lie. In the Ayurvedic treatises, based on these Astan'gas, an endless span of knowledge has been attempted. As a result, 'description in concise' has been the hallmark of the classical texts; and any unnecessary description was considered, undoing of any text. This has led the Ayurvedic compendiums to describe any and every thing in the shortest possible manner, leaving the expansion to the scholar. As Charaka.¹

Aim :

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Objectives :

To study the Swapna as per Ayurveda classical and focus on Ayurveda review Swapna.

Materials :

Source & collection of Data from Sharangadhara Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Charaka Samhita, Vagbhata Samhita, E-Journal, Internet Data, Research Paper

Methods - To compile available literature on Swapna and To compile the importance of Swapna. This is literary research study. In this articles all the references from Ayurveda Samhita and respective commentaries regarding Historical view on Swapna in Ayurveda.

Review of literature :

The term "Sutra" refers to that which consists of the fewest possible letters but contains the greatest amount of information—that is, verified pure knowledge—and the ability to self-expand. The Ayurveda Shastra, as a science, defines the term "Sutra" as an analogous term to itself. Sutras with such a broad speculum are gathered to understand the Samhita or Tantra, but the essence of the Samhita is extracted in its Sutra Sthana alone; of the eight Sthana, the Sutra Sthana serves as the brain of the entire treatise because it governs and represents other Sthana as well. The Sutra Sthana

is the nectar of knowledge that Acharya Charaka has beautifully stored—the Chatushka methodology—that serves as the heart of the text, nourishing the other Sthana.²

Veda -

The Rig Veda III (4000 or 6000 B.C.) contains the earliest known mention of dreams in Indian literature. It describes a nightmare, but it does not clarify whether the fear is of the dream's content (i.e., the events in the dream and the possibility that they will come true) or of the dream's experience (i.e., the bad dream experience). Another type of ambiguity arises from the mention of waking dreams in the Rig-Veda, which is described in the Rig Veda as an evil that one wishes to inflict upon one's enemies. However, other Rig Vedic verse describes an incubus who bewitches a sleeping woman in her dream. References regarding Swapna are also available in the Sama Veda. (2/2/4). The significance of dream content was the subject of the sixty-eighth appendix of the Atharva Veda, which was written in 1500 B.C.

Upanisads :

By the time of the Upanisads (700 B.C.) the question of the reality of dreams was approached in a more systematic way. These Upanishads spoke of four states of being: waking i.e Jagrita, dreaming (Swapna), dreamless sleep (Supta) and the supernatural, transcendent fourth state, (Turiya) the identity with Godhead. Other Upanisads added certain significant details to the outline of these four states mentioned above. Later the Oriental texts concentrated much of their attention on the first and fourth levels, Jagrita and Turiya Awastha. They stated that the Supta Awastha give us a glimpse of the true Brahman, the divine mind that does not create; Swapna Awastha gives us a glimpse of the God (Vishnu or Rudra) who creates us, dreaming us into existence. Almost all the Upanisads, including the Man'dukya, Manduka, Katha, Brahma, Taiteeryopanisada, Yogasara, Kenopanisada, Paingala, etc. has described the state of Swapna, in relation to the four states, to emphasize the importance of the soul and to understand its Karma

better. The Upanisads, articulates two perspectives on dreams. The first maintains that dreams are merely expressions of inner desires. The second closely resembles the Chinese belief of the soul leaving the body and being guided until awakened. It was also thought that if the sleeper was awakened abruptly, the soul might not return to the body quickly enough and the sleeper could die.

Puranas :

Many of the traditional dreams analyzed in the philosophical and medical texts were also incorporated into the narratives of the Hindu Epics and Puranas. For example, in Valmiki's Ramayana, after Sita was taken by the demon Ravana and was being held captive on the island of Lanka, the ogre Trjata had a dream that symbolized the defeat of Ravana in the hands of Rama. (Ramayana 5.24, 27) Bharata also had dreams that symbolized the death of his father and the dream seen by Lord Hanumana, both of which are detailed. In the Mahabharata, the Kurus' Swapna of the Pandavas, signifying their defeat at the hands of the Pandavas, is described (Mahabharata.5/42, 141), just as those of Parsurama and King Krtavirya signaled their success and defeat, respectively. (ibid. 32 and ibid. 34 and 35 respily.)

Darsanas :

All the Astika Darsanas have described the Swapnawastha. Kan'ada defines dreamcognition as the consciousness produced by a particular conjunction of the self with the mind (Manas) in co-operation with the subconscious impressions of past experience, like recollection. (V.S. ix 2, 6-7). The commentators of Vaisesika Darsana namely, Prasastapada, Sridhara, Sam'kara Misra, Sivaditya and others also recognize the central origin of dreams similar to the original author. Though they hold that certain dreams are produced by organic disorders within the body, they do not recognize the origin of dreams from the external senseorgans. Thus the Vaisesikas generally advocate the presentative (i.e. that they are direct and immediate presentations of a definite and determinate character) theory of dreams.³

Samhita Kala⁴ :

The Brihatrayi, i.e. Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita and Ashtanga Sangraha along with Ashtanga Hridaya has mentioned Swapna. While each treatise has mentioned its importance as the Purvarupa in Arista Lakshanas, Sushruta has described specific dreams denoting the sex of the unborn child and along with both the Vagbhata have mentioned it for assessing the Doshika Prakriti. Charak Acharya who has given the in-depth description of the

Purusa or Aatma, has also described Swapna as its Lingaa. He also states that the absence of Vaikarika Swapna is an indication of health, similar to the description among the Vikaropasamana Lakshanas according to Sushruta. Swapna have also been described by the other Acharyas as an omen, i.e. Su-Swapna and Duh-Swapna hinting towards recovery or the Vyadhi Utpatti or death stage respectively. The regimen followed incise of a Duh-Swapna is also described. "निद्रोपप्लुतेन रजोयुक्तेन मनसा विषयग्रहणं स्वप्नः!"

(सु.सु.२९/५४)

When the waking functions of the Manas are hindered in the Nidrawastha by the Tamas, at a stage when the Raja Gun'a increases and the Manas cognizes the Visaya as if in the waking state (albeit without any contact of the Arthas with the Indriyas) it is called as Swapna.

The western philosophers and psychiatrists defined Swapna as –

A dream is further described by the Oxford dictionary as a series of pictures or events in a sleeping person's mind.

Dreams are the images, thoughts and feelings experienced while asleep, particularly strongly associated with rapid eye movement sleep by Wikipedia.

Adhunika Kala -

As time advanced the description of Swapna has not been given much emphasis in the classics. With the advent of the British Empire and the influence of the Allopathic science over the

traditional Indian sciences the philosophical and metaphysical concepts took a back stage. The science took a clinical outlook where the present health scenario and the new diseases took the centre stage. Hence not much description is available in the literature written in the Adhunika Kala.⁵

Result & Discussion :

It included the chronology of evolution of the knowledge of Swapna, decline of its knowledge, and its resurgence on the global front. A brief account of the concept of Swapna in the Veda, Upanisadas, Puran'a and Samhita Granthas, Sam'graha Granthas and according to the various civilizations around the world along with the western psychiatry was elaborated along with their individual outlook towards the basic concept of dreaming. The Veda and Upanisadas elaborated the dreams in the description of the empirical soul or the Atma. The Darsanas but showed a gross difference in their outlook towards the dreams. Though their theories intersected, it showed the various angles in which they saw the same phenomenon. The Sam'hitas and the Sam'grahas have described the Swapna in terms of diagnosing the Prakriti, Vyadhi and Arista. Their description is more related to the physiological and pathological aspects of Swapna, sans the philosophy.

The ancient western civilizations, especially the Greeks, Chinese, etc. have a rich knowledge of the Swapna, and especially related them to the Gods or the cosmic powers.

Conclusion :

To conclude the following one the points derived from the above data-

The proper knowledge of the Swapna helps in understanding the process physiological phenomenon normal functions in the body. The familiarity of Swapna is helpful for getting the knowledge Swastha Purusha Health.

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