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Critical analysis of *svapna* (dream) in *Hridayabodhika* commentary of Ayurveda: A review

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Abstract

Hridayabodhika (HB) is one of the popular commentaries of *Ashtangahridaya* (AH), written by Shridasa Pandita. The period of *Hridayabodhika* is believed to be 14th Century CE. The concept of dream and its interpretations are subjected to discussion in ancient times onwards. The dreams are considered a pathway of communication of God with humans in ancient times. In Ayurveda, the concepts of dreams can be found in its main treatises like *Caraka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Ashtangahridaya* and others. The interpretation of these dream concepts is elaborated in their commentaries. The objective of the study to critically analyse the concept of *Svapna* (dream) in the *Hridayabodhika* commentary of *Ashtangahridaya*. The manuscripts and the edited text of unpublished *Hridayabodhika* are critically analysed on the concept of dream in this study. The analysis found that the concept of dreams is explained in various domains such as *prakriti*, types of dreams and others. The concept of dream in Ayurveda needs to be modified by integrating with the contemporary science. That can benefit Ayurveda in the assessment of *prakriti*, diagnosis and prognosis.

Keywords: Commentary, dreams, *svapna*, *Hridayabodhika*

Introduction

Hridayabodhika is one of the popular commentaries of *Ashtangahridaya*, written by Shridasa Pandita. The period of HB is believed to be 14th Century CE ^[1]. The HB commentary comprises the various citation from different commentaries such as *Sarvangasundara*, *Indu* and others. The Malayalam translation of Sanskrit words can be found in the manuscripts of this commentary. It is one of the reasons that HB is believed to be a commentary from Kerala.

The concept of dream and its interpretations are subjected to discussion in ancient times onwards. The dreams are considered a pathway of communication of God with humans in ancient times. This belief was existed among Mesopotamian, Greeks and others ^[2]. In later period, the great diviner *Artemidorus* approached the dream in a more logical way. He describes more than 30,000 dreams and their interpretations in his book *Oneirocritica*. He considered the dreams as a tool to predict the future ^[3].

In Ayurveda, the concepts of dreams can be found in its main treatises like *Caraka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Ashtangahridaya* and others. The interpretation of these dream concept is elaborated in their commentaries. Hence, to understand the concept of dreams, one should study the main treatises and their commentaries. AH is a well written and famous for its well-structured narrative style. Even though, AH has a lot of commentaries to elaborate the brief concept such as dreams and others. Among these commentaries, HB has a unique position because it compiles all other important commentaries. Hence, this study focuses on the concept of dream in HB commentary and its critical analysis.

Objective

To critically analyse the concept of *Svapna* (dream) in the HB commentary of AH

Materials and methods

The manuscripts and the critically edited commentary are collected from the Nodal agency for Ayurveda manuscriptology, National institute of Ayurveda, Jaipur. The manuscripts and the edited text of unpublished HB are critically analysed on the concept of dream.

Concept of Svapna in HB

1. Prakriti and dreams

HB states that the *pitta prakriti* person may see the flowers of *karnikara* and others in dreams. They may see the parts of sky very red and hot in his dreams. *Kapha prakriti* person see things in dreams such as fish, water reservoir such as ponds, lake etc. Also, he may see lotus, birds and clouds.

2. Disease and dreams

When a person dreams like he is drinking alcohol with people who are already dead and he gets bit by dog then that person is going to die in few days by getting affected by *Jvara*. A person who is wearing red ornaments, having red body color or wearing red cloths, is laughing dreams like kidnapping or being kidnapped or attracted or overpowered by woman, then he dies quickly getting affected by *raktapitta*. If a person dreams like he is travelling to south on the back of buffalo etc. then he is supposed to die, affected by *Rajayaksma*.

When a person with *gulma* dreams like shrub having thorns or bamboo or palm is growing in his heart region, then he is going to die soon. When a man who is massaged with ghee, uttering oblations to fire which has no flame, dreams of a lotus is growing in his chest, then he will be dying with *kusṭha* soon. If a person dreams like he is drinking different types of *sneha* such as ghee, oil etc. with *candala* then he will die soon with *prameha*. If a person dreams like dancing along with *raksasa* and drowning in water, then he is supposed to die with *unmada*. When a person dreams like he is dancing with and being dragged by ghosts, dies by *apasmara*. When a person dreams like he is travelling over donkey etc. going to die very soon. If someone dreams of solar or lunar eclipse then he will get eye diseases. If one dreams of the sun and moon falling down destroys the eye vision.

3. Types of dreams

The dreams are of seven types. They are *drishta*, *shruta*, *anubhuta*, *prarthita*, *samkalpita*, *bhavika* and *doshaja*. The things that a person is seen when consciousness is present (at day time), experiences the same things in a dream, that type of dream is called as *drista*. Likewise, *shruta* is the previously heard sound and it is experienced in a dream, that dream is *shruta*. When the person has some wishes and he experiences fulfillment of that wishes in his dreams, that type of dream is *prarthita*. *Kalpita* is something imagined. When an object is imagined in the waking state, it is ascended into consciousness and then perceived as such in the sleeping state is called *kalpita*. And he who dreams the things which are going to happen in future other than *drista*, *shruta*, etc. without any cause, is called as *bhavika*. The *doshaja* dream is as per the characteristics of *dosha*. According to Indu, the dream is the cause of good and bad, seen by the subject himself or by someone else with reference to him.

4. Effects of dreams

Among these dreams, the initial five dreams such as *drista*, *shruta* etc. are ineffective. They cannot give any fruitful effect, good or bad. *Bhavika* and *doshaja* are effective. When *doshaja* dream is according to one's own *prakriti*, that also will be ineffective. They cannot give any fruitful effect, good or bad. Also, the dreams that cannot be remembered are also ineffective. The dream which is seen at the early

time of night, is effective even though it will give slow and less result. After seeing the auspicious dream, one did not wake up from that dream gives more effect. Otherwise less effect (if one wake up). The dreams which are not obstructed by bad words, will give good great effect.

5. Inauspicious dreams

Akalyana means inauspicious. If one person perceives an inauspicious dream and just after that perceives a soft, not cruel, auspicious dream, he will get the effect of auspicious dream. The meaning is that he did not get the effect of previous bad dream. Indeed, the dreams are like this, sometimes dreams will give some undetermined effect. If death happens due to unexpected effect of dream, in that case there is no determined cause. The dreams which are explained as the particular cause of *raktapitta* like diseases, are not cause. It is explained that the bad effects of dreams are determined or non-determined. As for an instance, some dreams have determined effect as one who perceives a dream like alcohol is taken along with ghost. There is no way to change the determined effect of dreams. The dreams said in the textbook- *mūrdhni vaṁśa lalāṭādina* have undetermined effect due to previous deeds and strength of the symptoms. The change in these dreams can also cause good effect.

6. Management of inauspicious dreams

The bad inauspicious dreams become less effective with donation and others. *Yama*, *Niyama*, *Prayashcitta* also controls the mind from bad things.

7. Soumya dreams

He, who sees (in dream) gods, *brahmana*, the living cow, or bull; friends, kings, persons of good nature and prosperous, fire with flame, reservoirs of water which a clean; the virgin, young boys, those who are white, wearing white dress and of radiant complexion; the umbrella, mirror, poison (roots such as aconite etc.), meat, white flowers, white cloth, body smeared with dirt, fruits; climbing on hills, palaces, fruit tree; riding on lion, man, elephant, bull or horse; swimming in a river, lake or sea; travelling either to the east or north, copulating with a forbidden women, death (of someone else) getting relieved from troubles, being praised by the gods and dead ancestors, weeping, uplifting the sinners and subduing those who hate attains long life, health and great wealth.

Discussion

The frequency of dream and threatening events in dreams are increased in the pandemic community of Covid 19 compared to pre pandemic [4]. This finding justifies the process of occurrence of dreams in Ayurveda. The channels which are located in heart are *Manovaha srotas*. When the highly polluted strong *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha* humors are accumulated in those *manovaha* channels, the inauspicious dreams are seen by the person. The doshic status of body and mind may be susceptible for impairment during Covid 19 like pandemic situation.

The Hippocratic theory based on various humors believed external factors known as vapours in the origin of various dreams and each humor can be related to specific dreams. For instance, the people with predominant of black bile usually dreams darkness, earth quakes, lightning, thunders and others [5]. This concept of Hippocrates is similar to the concept of dreams related to Ayurveda *prakriti*. Freud in his

early life interpreted the dreams of his patients and found out specific pattern in the motives and psychological issues^[6]. The number of dreams, characteristics of dreams, the dreaming time and the ability to recall are considered for analyzing the dreams. For instance, in the depressive patients, the number of dreams increases, the characteristics of dreams are negative emotions, the dreaming time may be at morning time and the ability to recall will be less. However, in the manic state of bipolar disease, the number of dreams will be less and the patient has difficulty to sleep. The analysis of dreams helps the physician to diagnose and to find the prognosis of different diseases. In Ayurveda, the dream analysis is used to assess the prakriti and to determine prognosis especially imminent death.

In contemporary science, the treatment procedures are so much advanced so that the fatal signs explained in Ayurveda need to be updated. In the case of explanation of dreams also, the Ayurveda principles should be modified. In Ayurveda, characteristics of dream, the dreaming time and ability to recall are considered in dream analysis. HB insinuates that the dream cannot recall, may not be fruitful.

Hobson and Mc Carley proposed that the dreaming sleep is a physiological activity of brain stem^[7]. When the cholinergic is more, hallucination and dreaming occur. Ayurveda considers the *rajas* and *tamas* are responsible for dreams. The *rajas* and *tamas* are responsible for the all-mental illness in Ayurveda. The contemporary medicine focuses on the specific neurophysiology of dreams. Ayurveda mainly focuses on the subjective characteristics. Hence, the concept of dreams in Ayurveda needs to be examined with recent developments in neuroimaging and functional brain exposure.

Conclusion

HB explores the concept of dreams in AH. The critical analysis revealed that HB followed the main treatise AH even though it is explained the various aspects of dreams such as different kinds of dreams and others. The concept of dream in Ayurveda needs to be modified by integrating with the contemporary science. That can benefit Ayurveda in the assessment of prakriti, diagnosis, prognosis and others.

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