

Original Article

Facets of Nidrā - In Yogasūtra: Analysis Based on the Views from Vyāsa's Commentary and Its Sub-commentaries

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ABSTRACT

Good sleep is an important indicator and also a requisite of good health. Yoga sūtras discuss the concept of Nidrā. A survey of commentaries of Yoga sūtras reveals elaborate discussions, which are seldom noticed, regarding the concept. There are more than a dozen commentaries in Saṃskṛta on Yoga sūtras. However, this article presents the views of Vyāsa, the principal commentator and the four available subcommentaries to Vyāsa's commentary on the Nidrā. All later commentaries respect and follow Vyāsa's commentary. The study reveals that – Vyāsa's commentary and its subcommentaries address aspects on Nidrā including – Why Nidrā after Pramāṇa, Viparyaya and Vikalpa? Is Nidrā a Vṛtti?, Is Nidrā deep sleep or does it include dream state also? How does one fall asleep – the Yogic way, Guṇa-based 3-fold classification of Deep Sleep, Half Deep Sleep and Complete Deep Sleep, Nidrā vis-a-vis the states of Ekāgratā, Niruddha and Kaivalya and why should sleep be restrained like any other Vṛtti? Thus, understanding various aspects of Nidrā indeed would be handy in the correct practice of the technique based on Nidrā (PYS 1.6, Patañjali, 2015, p.24)^[2] to attain the goals specified in the Yoga sūtras. Therapeutically, the implications of the 3-fold classification of Nidrā based on Guṇas need to be developed into an elaborate model that includes the factors that induce such kinds of sleep and ways in which one can move toward the desired (Sāttvic) state of sleep, etc. A collaborative approach with allied disciplines such as Āyurveda on this topic might prove to be more beneficial.

KEYWORDS: *Dream state, Guṇas, Nidrā, vṛtti, Vyāsa, Yogasūtra*

INTRODUCTION

Nidrāyattam sukham duḥkham puṣṭiḥ kārśyam
balābalam.

Vṛṣatā klībatā jñānamajñānam jīvitam na ca.

(Ca. Sam (Carakasamhitā) 1.21.36, Gunavantrai
1949, p.354)^[1]

Dependent on (deep) sleep are happiness and misery, corpulence and leanness, strength and weakness, potency and impotency, intellect and nonintellect, life and death.

From the reference above and also from day-to-day experience, it is well known that good sleep is an important indicator and also a requisite of good health. Yoga sūtras discuss the concept of Nidrā. A survey of commentaries of Yoga sūtras reveals elaborate

discussions, which are seldom noticed, regarding the concept.

The term “Nidrā” appears three times in the Yoga sūtras. In the first instance, we find the enlisting of Nidrā as a Vṛtti (PYS (Patañjaliyogasūtra) 1.6, Patañjali, 2015, p. 16).^[2] In the second occasion, Nidrā is defined (PYS 1.6, Patañjali, 2015, p. 16).^[2] In the third occasion, utilization of experience of a good Nidrā as a technique to attain single-pointed focus is presented (PYS 1.6, Patañjali, 2015, p. 24).^[2] This article focuses on the second instance of appearance of the term Nidrā in the Yoga sūtras, where all the detailed discussions on the concept of Nidrā are centered.

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There are more than a dozen commentaries in Saṃskṛta on Yoga sūtras. However, this article presents the views of Vyāsa, the principal commentator and the four available subcommentaries to Vyāsa's commentary on the Nidrā. All later commentaries respect and follow Vyāsa's commentary. The later commentaries only add to the views of Vyāsa. The four subcommentaries on Vyāsa's commentary throw light on terse aspects of Vyāsa's views. (Vācaspati Mīśra's work is Tattvavaiśāradī. Śāṅkara's work is Vivaraṇa. Vijnānabhikṣu's work is Vārttika. Hariharānanda Āraṇya's work is Bhāsvatī) Vācaspati Mīśra (9th century CE), Śāṅkara (13th Century) Vijnānabhikṣu (15th century CE), Hariharānanda Āraṇya (19th century CE) – the four subcommentators on Vyāsa's commentary draw various interesting implications from the short commentary of Vyāsa on Nidrā.

VYĀSA'S VIEW ON NIDRĀ

As can be observed from the commentary below, Vyāsa does not deal with the terms used in the Sūtra (abhāvapratyayāmbanā vṛttih nidrā PYS 1.10, Patañjali, 2015, p. 16).^[2] Rather, he goes by its intent. He states:

Sā ca samprabodhe pratyavamarśāt
pratyayaviśeṣaḥ | katham?
sukhamahamasvāpsam | prasannaṃ me
manaḥ praññam me viśāradī karoti |
duḥkhamahamasvāpsam | styānam me
mano bhramatyanavasthitam | gāḍham
mūḍho'hamasvāpsam | gurūṇi me gātrāṇi |
klāntam me cittam | alasaṃ muṣitamiva tiṣṭhātī |
sa khalvayaṃ prabuddhasya pratyavamarśo na
syādasati pratyayānubhave tadāśritāḥ smṛtayaśca
tadviṣayā na syuḥ | tasmātpratyayaviśeṣo nidrā |
sā ca samādhāvitrapratyayavanniroddhavyeti |.

And that sleep appears as a special modification (Pratyaya/Vṛtti) due to (the connecting) memory on awakening from sleep. What kind of memory is it? I have slept well, my mind is calm it makes my understanding clear. I have slept poorly, my mind is dull, being unsteady it wanders. I have slept in deep stupor, my limbs are heavy, my mind is tired and lazy and appears as if it is stolen. This kind of memory, in one who has awakened from sleep, is not possible if there were no experience of the modification; nor would these memories based on it have it as its object. Therefore sleep is a special modification. And it has to be restricted like other modifications in Samādhi. (Rukmani T.S.2010, p. 69)^[3]

The single-pointed focus of the Vyāsa's commentary is to justify the inclusion of Nidrā under the category of the modifications of the mind (Vṛttis). It is evident from the commentary above that the commentator uses three kinds of postsleep recollections to infer the modifications that had taken place during the sleep. The purpose of the painstaking effort on part of Vyāsa to establish Nidrā as a modification has also been stated by him in the last sentence, i.e., attainment of Samādhi. By implication, this also helps to distinguish sleep from Samādhi. The 3-fold classification of the postsleep recollections serves another purpose. It helps in self-evaluation of quality of sleep on waking up from sleep. Consequently, any corrective mechanism that may be required to attain the desired state of sleep can be put in place.

ELABORATION BY SUBCOMMENTATORS

Unlike Vyāsa who did not comment upon the words of the Sūtra (PYS 1.10, Patañjali, 2015, p. 16),^[2] we find interpretations of the terms of the Sūtra in the subcommentaries. Apart from this, the subcommentaries bring out various facets related to Nidrā. The ideas that are present in the subcommentaries are arranged sequentially according to their relevance.

Why Nidrā after Pramāṇa, Viparyaya, and Vikalpa?

Sūtra 1.6 of PYS enlists the Vṛttis as Pramāṇa, Viparyaya, Vikalpa, Nidrā, and Smṛti. Before commencing the discussion on the meaning of the term of the Sūtras and also the commentary of Vyāsa on it, it would be useful to understand the reason behind the positioning Nidrā after the Pramāṇa, Viparyaya, Vikalpa, and before Smṛti as discussed. Śāṅkara throws light on this issue. He states:

Nidrākhyāṃ vṛttimidānīm vyācaṣṭe –
abhāvapratyāmbanā... jāgradviṣayatvāt
prāguktasya vṛttitrayasya, tadupamardena ca
nidrāsamudbhavaḥ iti | tadanantaram nidrākhyā
vṛttirvyākhyāyate |.

He now explains the modification (of the mind) known as sleep – abhāvapratyāmbanā.... The three earlier mentioned modifications (Pramāṇa, Viparyaya and Vikalpa) pertain to the waking state and on their suppression sleep comes into being. Thus after (explaining them) the modification called sleep is now being explained. (Rukmani T.S.2010, p. 69)^[3]

One issue that Śāṅkara could have addressed is “Why Nidrā before Smṛti?” Other commentators also do not shed light on this. However, an assumption based on Vyāsa's commentary can be made. Vyāsa states that Nidrā's experience is recollected later (Pratyavamarśa/Smṛti). That is to say – Nidrā

creates Smṛti. Pramāṇa and the other two Vṛttis also create Smṛti. Hence, Smṛti is common to all the four Vṛttis and hence it might have been placed after Nidrā.

Comments on the terms of the Sūtra

There are three words in the Sūtra of PYS 1.10, namely, Abhāvapratyayālamabanā, Vṛtti, and Nidrā. The first term is a compound term whereas the second and third terms are simple terms. The first compound term is made up of the words Abhāva, Pratyaya, and Ālambana.

The views of Vācaspati Mīśra, the earliest among the subcommentators, on the terms of the Sūtra on Nidrā are presented as follows. The other three subcommentators mostly follow Vācaspati Mīśra's views. The places where the other subcommentators differ are highlighted.

Jāgratsvapnavṛttīnām abhāvas tasya pratyayah kāraṇam buddhisattvāchhādakam tamas tad evālambanam viṣayo yasyāḥ sā tathoktā vṛttir nidrā. (Śāstrī, G D, (Ed.) (2007) p. 38)^[4]

Abhāva refers to the absence of the two states namely waking and dream. Pratyaya means cause. Here the cause of such an absence (of the two states) is the Guṇa Tamas that shrouds Sattva (Guṇa) of the intellect. Ālambana refers to the object. The Vṛtti that has the aforementioned Tamas as its object is called as Nidrā.

Regarding the meaning of the term “Abhāva,” Vijñānabhikṣu and H. Āraṇya agree to Vācaspati Mīśra. However, Śāṅkara clarifies that during sleep, the absence is not absolute, and it is only the absence of the objects of waking state (abhāva iti jāgradviṣayābhāvaḥ, na tvatyantābhāva eva). It is to be noted that Śāṅkara does not include the dream state. It can be argued that dream state is filled with the involuntary and nonsequential recollection of objects of waking state. And hence by the very mention of the absence of objects of the waking state, dream can also be stated to have been mentioned. Still, for the sake of clarity, Śāṅkara could have spelt his views explicitly.

Regarding the second term “Pratyaya,” Vijñānabhikṣu and H. Āraṇya totally agree with Vācaspati Mīśra's view. Śāṅkara is silent on this term. It is to be noted that a special meaning has been attached to the term Pratyaya (cause) by Vācaspati Mīśra. Elsewhere in Yogasūtras, the term “Pratyaya” is used as a synonym for Vṛtti (PYS 2.20 & 3.19 Patañjali, 2015, p. 32 & 46).^[1] However, that meaning is not opted by Vācaspati Mīśra here.

The term “Ālambana” is a minor term and different interpretations in other subcommentaries are not found.

Is Nidrā a Vṛtti?

The second term that is found in the Sūtra is Vṛtti. As there is an interesting observation regarding the necessity

of the usage of the term, it is presented under a separate subhead.

From the context, it could be understood that Nidrā is Vṛtti. Further, in definitions (in the Sūtras) of other Vṛttis such as Pramāṇa, Viparyaya, Vikalpa, and Smṛti, the term Vṛtti is not found. Hence, the question arises as to why the term Vṛtti is used in the Sūtra on Nidrā. Vācaspati Mīśra's justification in this regard is as follows:

Adhikṛtaṃ hi vṛttipadam anuvādakam. pramānaviparyayavikalpasmṛtīnām vṛttitvaṃ prati parīkṣakāṇām avipratipatteḥ. Atā tad anūdyate viśeṣavidhānāya. nidrāyās tu vṛttitve parīkṣakāṇām asti vipratipattir iti vṛttitvaṃ vidheyam. na ca prakṛtam anuvādakam vidhānāya kalpata iti punar vṛttigrahaṇam. (Śāstrī, G.D, 2007, p. 38)^[4]

The term Vṛtti is topical (as understood from the Sūtra 1.5) and hence it is (understood to be) carried over (to successive Sūtras also). (But) there are no differences of opinion among the investigators with regard to considering Pramāṇa, Viparyaya, Vikalpa and Smṛti as a Vṛtti. Hence, the term Vṛtti is understood to be carried over to those Sūtra and only the speciality (special characteristics of the respective Vṛtti (Pramāṇa, viparyaya etc.) is mentioned in the respective Sūtras). But with regard to Nidrā there are differences of opinion about the nature of sleep amongst the investigators. And hence sleep has to be expressly stated as a Vṛtti (to categorically express that Yogasūtra considers sleep as a Vṛtti). Hence the term (Vṛtti) that (though) topically presents itself is insufficient (to convey the assertion) and there is repetition of the term (in the Sūtra).

From the discussion above, it can be understood that there is a school of thought that subscribes to the view that sleep is not a modification of mind. It will be interesting to have an elaborate understanding of the nonacceptance of Nidrā as a modification of the mind. Vācaspati Mīśra's commentary does not throw light on this. But in the commentary of Vijñānabhikṣu, the Vedāntic view that does not accept sleep as a modification of the mind is presented and refuted. As the topic has come up in discussion it is presented below:

Yattvādhunikā vedāntibruvā āhuḥ - suṣuptau tamaḥ sāksibhāsyameva na tatra vṛttirastīti, tanna, vakṣyamāṇasmarāṇanūpapatteḥ | sāksīnyapa riṇāmini saṃskārasmṛtyoranabhyupagamāt | yacca tadekadeśī suṣuptāvajñānākhyaprakṛtere va vṛttimāha na tu cittasya, tadapi heyam |

evam sati jāgratsvapnayorapi tasyā eva
vṛttisambhava cittakalpanāvaiyarthyāditi |
tasmāt jāgratsvapnayoriva suṣupte'pi cittasyaiva
vṛtṭiḥ |. (Śāstrī, G.D, 2007, p. 39)^[4]

Some who contemporary (persons) who consider themselves as Vedāntins state that – the Tamas is activated only by the witness (the soul) and there is no Vṛtti. That cannot be the case. It would then be not possible to explain the recollection that one gains after sleep, that is mentioned later (in the commentary of the Vyāsa). As the witness is without change, it cannot have latent impressions and memory.

Further another view from a school that partially accepts (partial acceptance is with regard to absence of Vṛtti in deep sleep) the above Vedntic view states that – Sleep is nothing but a modification (Vṛtti) of ignorance/ Prakrit and not a Vṛtti of the mind. This view should also be rejected. If ignorance itself has modifications then it is possible that in waking and dream state also the same ignorance/ prakriti can have the Vṛttis (as Prakriti is the root cause of everything material and is all powerful). There would be no need of the mind. Hence as in the waking and dream states, in the deep sleep state also the modifications (Vṛtti) belong to the mind alone.

Is Nidrā deep sleep or does it include dream state also?

The third term of the Sūtra is Nidrā. It is Śāṅkara who brings up this discussion on Nidrā. He states that:

Nanu ca svapnāvasthāpi Nidrāiva | naiṣa
doṣaḥ | “svapnanidrājñānāmbanamaṃ vā”
iti sūtrakāreṇa bhedenopadiṣṭatvādiha
suṣuptāvasthaiva nidrābhipretā | kiñca
abhāvapratyayāmbanantvāt suṣuptameva |
na hi svapnasya abhāvapratyayāmbanantā,
smṛtitvāt | smṛteścānubhūtavīṣayatvāt | tathā
bhāsyakāraḥ - “svapne bhāvitasmartavyā” iti
smṛtitvaṃ darśayati | kiñca svapnasya cittavṛttitā
svasamvedyete nāśaṅkaivopapadyate | tathā ca
cittavṛttitāmāśaṅkyāha - sā ca samprabodhe
pratyavamarśāditi |.

Objection - But then even dream state is sleep.

Answer - This is not a mistake. Since the author of the Sūtras has differentiated between the two in the Sūtra “svapnanidrājñānāmbanamaṃ vā,” he desires to mention only the sleep which is a dreamless state.

Moreover it is only the dreamless state that is based on the absence of any knowledge content. The dream state is not based on the absence of any knowledge content but on memory; and memory has something experienced as its object. Thus the commentator indicates what constitutes memory (through the words) “svapne bhāvitasmartavyā.” (In dream one remembers imagined-objects).

Moreover in the case of dream, it is known to oneself, there is no doubt about its being a modification of the mind. Thus he (Vyāsa) raising a doubt regarding its (deep sleep's) being a modification of the mind says, “That sleep appears to be a special modification due to (the connecting) memory on awakening from sleep”. (Rukmani T.S. 2010, p. 70)^[3]

On keen observation of the Sūtras of Patañjali themselves, the above view becomes evident. Still, for the sake of clarity, this is stated by Śāṅkara. It becomes evident from the above discussion that dream is kind of “memory,” whereas deep sleep is a different kind of “experience” where the notion of “Abhāva” (absence) is crucial.

As stated earlier, though Vyāsa does not deal with the meanings of the terms in the Sūtra on Nidrā, the subcommentators fill up that gap in line with the views of Vyāsa.

How does one fall asleep – The Yogic way

The process of attainment of sleep in terms of Guṇas presented by Vācaspati Mīśra is worth noting. He states:

Buddhisattve hi triḡuṇe yadā sattvarajasī
abhibhūya samastakaraṇāvarakam āvirastī
tamas tadā buddher viṣayākārapariṇāmābhāvād
udbhūtatamomayīm buddhim avabudhyamānaḥ
puruṣaḥ suṣupto+antaḥsamjña ity
ucyate |. (Śāstrī, G.D, 2007, p. 39)^[4]

When Tamas, which blinds all the senses, having subdued Sattva and Rajas, is manifest then the intellect, which is made up of the three Guṇas, does not attain modifications in the form of the objects. The Puruṣa, then, becomes aware of the intellect that has intensified levels of Tamas. Such Puruṣa is stated to be in deep sleep, having inner awareness.

The term “antaḥsamjña” (endowed with inner awareness) is a unique term. This implies that deep sleep is not a state of total black out rather there is inner awareness. As mentioned earlier, this term differentiates the Yogins view of sleep from that of the Vedāntins.

Guṇa-based 3-fold classification of deep sleep

It could be noted from Vyāsa's commentary that, he presents three types postsleep recollections, to establish that – “as there are recollections (memory), sleep should be a modification of the mind (Vṛtti).” Commenting upon this section, among all subcommentators, it is Vijñānabhikṣu who first mentions that these three types of postsleep recollections refer to 3-fold classification of deep sleep experiences, viz – Sāttvic, Rājasic, and Tāmasic. The following are his comments in that regard:

Yasyāṃ sattvasacivaṃ tama āvirbhavati
tasyāḥ sātvikyāḥ nidrāyāḥ utthitasya
smaraṇākāramāha – sukhāmiti. (Śāstrī, G.D,
2007, p. 39)^[4]

The state where Tamas manifests along with Sattva is called as Sāttvik Deep Sleep. A person on waking up from such an experience recollects- I slept comfortably etc.

Yasyāṃ rajassacivaṃ tama āvirbhavati
tasyāḥ rājasyāḥ nidrāyāḥ utthitasya
smaraṇākāramāha - duḥkhamiti. (Śāstrī, G.D,
2007, p. 40)^[4]

The state where Tamas manifests along with Rajas is called as Rājasic Deep Sleep. A person on waking up from such an experience recollects- I slept painfully, etc.

Tāmasyā nidrāyāḥ utthitasya
smaraṇākāramāha - gāḍhamiti. (Śāstrī, G.D,
2007, p. 40)^[4]

A person who wakes up from a Tāmasic Deep sleep recollects – Slept very deeply, etc.

Vijñānabhikṣu also quotes from the Smṛtis to validate his views on the 3-fold Guṇa-based classification of deep sleep. The quotation provided by Vijñānabhikṣu is as follows:

Jāgrat svapnaḥ suṣuptaṃ ca
guṇātaścittavṛttayaḥ. (Śāstrī, G.D, 2007, p. 39)^[4]

Waking, dream and deep sleep are all made of modifications of the mind influenced by the Guṇas.

Although Vācaspati Mīśra also mentions the same different combinations of varying proportions of the Guṇas, it is Vijñānabhikṣu who ventures to name them as Sāttvic, Rājasic, and Tāmasic.

Half deep sleep and complete deep sleep

This is a curious comment of Vijñānabhikṣu. In trying to resolve two contradictory Vedic verses on deep sleep, it seems that he is pushed to postulate the two kinds

of sleep that the subheading indicates. Vijñānabhikṣu states:

“Na tu taddvītyamasti tato 'nyadvibhaktam
yatpaśyed” (Br. Up (Bṛhadāranyakopaniṣad) 4.3.23,
Madhavananda, 1950, p. 672)^[5] iti sausuṣuptāśrutāvapi
tadānīm jñānābhāvasyaivāvagamād ityāśāṅkyāha sā
tu samprabodha iti|.

“There is no separate second entity other than that (the perceiver/the soul) which can be seen” from such statements (in the Vedas) on deep sleep there is no knowledge in the sleep state. Concerned that such a doubt that may arise it has been stated that on waking up etc., (there is recollection of sleep experience, etc., hence sleep is a thought).

This statement brings out one view point from the Vedic texts on the state of deep sleep. The second Vedic view on the sleep is brought out by the following statement of Vijñānabhikṣu:

“Triṣu dhāmasu yadbhogyam bhoktā bhogaśca
yad bhavet” (Kaiv.Upa. (Kaivalyopaniṣad) 18,
Devarupananda 1998, p. 313.)^[6] ityādiśrutayaḥ
suṣuptasthāne'pi bhogyamastīyāhuḥ.

“In all the three states (waking, dream and deep sleep) that which is the object of experience, the experience and the experience...” this (Vedic) statement indicates that there is experience in deep sleep.

It can be observed that there is contradiction in the two Vedic passages cited. Vijñānabhikṣu resolves this contradiction as follows:

Na ca evaṃ śrutyorvirodha iti vācyam|
ardhasamagrābhedenā suṣupterdvaidhyāt|
mugdhe'rdhasampattīriti vedāntasūtrāt|
anyathā śrutyorvirodhasyāparihāryatvāc
ca| kadācit gāḍhatamasā cittasattvasya
tamogocaravṛttāvapyasāmarthyam ca
sambhavatyeveti|. (Śāstrī, G.D, 2007, p. 39)^[4]

The two statements should not be taken contradictory to each other (This can be resolved by stating that). Deep sleep is of two types – complete and half deep sleep. The same idea is reflected in the Vedānt Sūtra “mugdhe' rdhasampatti.” The contradiction between the two Vedic statements cannot be resolved otherwise. Sometimes, due to dense Tamas the mind stuff becomes incapable of grasping the Tāmasic state of mind.

Evidently, this 2-fold classification seems to have been necessitated due to academic purposes, i.e., to resolve

contradicting Vedic passages. It has to be studied scientifically whether such state of half deep sleep and complete deep sleep are possible at all.

Nidrā vis-a-vis the states of Ekāgratā, Niruddha, and Kaivalya

Being bereft of contact with world outside, Nidrā resembles states like Ekāgratā (one-pointedness), etc.,. The distinctness of Nidrā from these states and consequently the necessity for the restraining Nidrā is discussed elaborately in the subcommentaries.

Is Nidrā not equivalent to one-pointedness?

Vācaspati Miśra differentiates Nidrā from Ekāgratā. He states:

Nanu pramāṇādayo vyutthānacittādhikarāṇā
nirudhyantām samādhipratipakṣatvān
nidrāyāstvekāgravṛttitulyāyāḥ katham
samādhipratipakṣatetyata āha - sā ca samādhāv
iti/ekāgratulyāpi tāmasatvena nidrā sabījanir
bījasamādhipratipakṣeti sāpi nirodhvavyety
arthah. (Śāstrī, G.D, 2007, p. 40)^[4]

Let Pramāṇa and others be restrained as they are based on the substratum of the mind that is outwardly, which is not conducive to the attainment of Samādhi. How can sleep be considered nonconductive to Samādhi as it is similar to one-pointedness? To clarify this (Vyāsa) states – That has to be in the state of Samādhi... Though sleep is similar to one-pointedness, still being Tamasic in nature Nidrā is nonconductive to the Sabija and Nirbija states of Samādhi and hence has to be restricted.

By this comment of Vācaspati Miśra, it becomes evident that Samādhi is a Sattva-dominant state and hence cannot be attained by mere sleep.

Nidrā - Niruddha and Kaivalya states

Niruddha and Kaivalya states are bereft of any Vṛtti (modifications). Is Nidrā equivalent to them? If not why? This is clarified by Vācaspati Miśra as follows:

Kasmāt punarniruddhakaivalyayoriva
vṛttyabhāva eva na nidretyata āha - sā ca
samprabodhe pratyavamarśāt sopapattikāt
smaraṇāt pratyayaviśeṣaḥ. katham, yadā
hi sattvasacivaṃ tama āvirasti tadedrśaḥ
pratyavamarśaḥ suptotthitasya bhavati sukham
aham asvāpsam prasannaṃ me manaḥ
prajñāṃ me viśārādīkaroti svacchīkarotīti.
yadā tu rajaḥsacivaṃ tama āvirasti tadedrśaḥ
pratyavamarśa ity āha - duḥkham aham
asvāpsam styānam akarmanyam me

manaḥ kasmād yato bhramatyavanavasthitam.
nitāntābhībhūtarajaḥsattve tamaḥsamullāse
svāpe prabuddhasya pratyavamarśam
āha - gāḍhaṃ mūḍho + aham asvāpsam gurūṇi
me gātrāṇi klāntam me cittamalasam muṣitam
iva tiṣṭhatīti. (Śāstrī, G.D, 2007, p. 39-40)^[4]

Is there any additional reason as to why we can't equate Nidrā to the states of Nirodha and Kaivalya, where there are no Vṛttis? To this it is stated (by Vyāsa) - And that sleep appears as a special modification due to (the connecting) memory on awakening from sleep. How? When Tamas is manifest (during Nidrā) along with Sattva then a person who awakens from such a sleep would experience the following memory - I have slept well, my mind is calm it makes my understanding clear.

When Tamas is manifest (during Nidrā) along with Rajas then a person who awakens from such a sleep would experience the following memory - I have slept poorly, my mind is dull, being unsteady it wanders.

When both Rajas and Sattva are extremely subdued and Tamas is very clearly manifest (during Nidrā) then the following will be the memory of the person after waking up from Nidrā- I have slept in deep stupor; my limbs are heavy, my mind is tired and lazy and appears as if it is stolen.

It has already been stated under the subhead “How does one fall asleep – The Yogic way” that the consciousness becomes reflective of the Tamasic state of mind, indicating the Tamasic modification of the mind during deep sleep. As this passage under discussion adds additional argument supporting the above view (that deep sleep is a modification of the mind), it has been rightly mentioned as “additional reason” for differentiating Nidrā from Niruddha and Kaivalya states.

Further, it could be noted that under 3.4 the same three states of Nidrā were discussed by Vijñānabhikṣu, where he classifies them as Sāttvic, Rājasic, and Tāmasic Nidrās. The difference is that Vācaspati Miśra describes the same combination of Guṇas for differentiating Nidrā from Niruddha and Kaivalya states (without naming them as Sāttvic, Rājasic, and Tāmasic states) whereas Vijñānabhikṣu uses the same description of three kinds of Nidrās to emphasize the necessity of restraining of Nidrā. This aspect of Vijñānabhikṣu's commentary is elucidated under the following subheading.

Why should sleep be restrained like any other Vṛtti?

Nanu nidrāvṛttirāpi tamasyekāgrā
viśayaduḥkhaśūnyā ceti, sā kimarthaṃ
niroddhavyā ityāśaṅkyāha - sā ceti
itaravṛttivat sukhaduḥkhamohātmakatvena
samādhiratipakṣatvena ca nidrāpi samādhau
niroddhavyetyarthaḥ |. (Śāstrī, G D, 2007, p. 40)

Objection: (Though sleep is) In the state of Tamas (still) it is one-pointed and is bereft of suffering generated by the objects of the sense. Hence why should the modification sleep be restrained?

Answer: Like any other modification (Vṛtti) (Nidrā) is also of the nature of happiness, sorrow and delusion (caused by Sattva, Rajas and Tamas respectively), and hence opposed to the state of Samādhi and so has to be restrained towards attaining the state of Samādhi.

Vācaspati Mīśra stated (subhead “Is Nidrā not equivalent to one-pointedness?”) that Nidrā is Tāmasic in nature and hence has to be restrained during Samādhi. However, Vijñānabhikṣu is not convinced at the fact that mere Tāmasic nature of Nidrā is reason enough to state that Nidrā is to be restrained. He states that Nidrā is like any other Vṛtti, in being influenced by the three Guṇas. Hence, it should be restrained during Samādhi. The above argument of Vijñānabhikṣu seems more comprehensive than that of Vācaspati Mīśra, with regard to restraining Nidrā-Vṛtti.

CONCLUSION

The spiritual and therapeutic implications of the facets of the Nidrā brought out by the above discussion need to be worked out.

From the view point of spirituality, the following is to be noted – It has been mentioned in the introduction to this article that the third occurrence of the term Nidrā in the Yogasūtras is with regard to utilization of experience of a good Nidrā as a technique to attain single-pointed focus (PYS 1.38, Patañjali, p. 24).^[2] Indeed, understanding various aspects of Nidrā would be handy in the correct practice of the technique based on Nidrā to attain the goals specified in the Yoga sūtras.

Moreover, the detailed discussions on Nidrā and the necessity of restraining of the Nidrā Vṛtti will also provide a spiritual aspirant clarity with regard to the attainment of the ultimate of goal of yoga exemplified by the Sūtra - Yogashcittavṛtti nirodhah (PYS 1.2, Patañjali, p. 16).^[2]

Therapeutically, the implications of the 3-fold classification of Nidrā based on Guṇas need to be developed into an elaborate model that includes the factors that induce such kinds of sleep and ways in which one can move toward the desired (Sāttvic) state of sleep, etc.

Patañjali classifies all the vṛttis into Kliṣṭa and Akliṣṭa (PYS 1.5, Patañjali, p. 16)^[2]. As Nidrā (deep sleep) has not been excluded from the above classification, it becomes evident that it is also of two types Kliṣṭa-nidrā and Akliṣṭa-nidrā. This implies that the influence of the Kleśas such as Avidyā, Asmitā, etc., and Yogic practices that are associated with weakening of the Kleśas (Kriyayoga) should be considered even at the level which is beyond just the waking and dream states.

Furthermore, the general observation of Vācaspati Mīśra regarding the relationship between kliṣṭa and Akliṣṭa vṛttis merits attention. He states that:

Kliṣṭānāmakliṣṭābhiḥ nirodhah tāsām ca pareṇa vairāgyeṇa iti. (Śāstrī, G D, 2007, p. 25)

The kliṣṭa Vṛttis are to be restrained by the Akliṣṭa vṛttis and these Akliṣṭa Vṛttis, in turn, are to be restrained by highest detachment.

On applying this mechanism to Nidrā, it can be stated that Kliṣṭa-nidrā is to be overcome by Akliṣṭa-nidrā and the Akliṣṭa-nidrā is to be finally overcome by highest detachment in attaining Cittavṛttinirodha. Going by this suggestion, Nidrā becomes the antidote for Nidrā. The implications of this have to be reflected upon by practitioners.

It is also interesting to note that Āyurvedic texts also speak of Sāttvika, Rājasika, and Tāmāsika Nidrās (Su. Sam (Suśrutasaṃhitā) 3.4.33, Ghanekar, 1940, p. 119).^[7] The role of the three Doṣas in inducing such Nidrās is also discussed there. Hence, it would be useful to compare these two streams of therapies in the developing the aforementioned therapeutic model.

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