

Old Hag Syndrome and the Human Experience

Avra Sen

Research Scholar
Department of Adult, Continuing Education & Extension
Jadavpur University, Kolkata, India.

Abstract: The paper explores the human experience of having sleep paralysis and subsequent hallucinations. The condition is also popularly known as Old Hag Syndrome, and it has substantial impact on the human mind due to the frightening nature of the hallucinatory experience. The intricacies of the syndrome have been explored in the course of this article through elucidation of the experience, while also exploring the scientific perspective of the syndrome in context. The various reasons that are taken to be catalytic to the condition of sleep paralysis have also been documented in the text. Thus, the writing aims to provide a perspective about the syndrome making one comprehend how the condition can impact the life of an individual.

IndexTerms –Old Hag Syndrome, sleep paralysis, hallucination, REM sleep.

I. Introduction

Old Hag Syndrome has remained one of the most intriguing intricacies of human experience for thousands of years. While scientific analysis has shown neurological links in the experience of sleep paralysis, it should be remembered that for many years at a stretch, the experience has been linked to some kind of supernaturalism. While there have been academic explorations in the path of comprehending the key aspects behind sleep paralysis, this particular paper aims to delve into the human experience of Old Hag Syndrome by elucidating the manner in which the syndrome encompasses the mind and psyche of the individual. As the author of this paper, it should be mentioned that the individual interest in the study of Old Hag Syndrome was initiated only after experiencing the nightmare-like imagery and physical-mental condition on a continual basis for a substantial amount of time. It is aimed through this article to provide a voice for the first-hand experience of Old Hag Syndrome which is considered to be one of the rarest of human experiences in the entire human population.

II. Elucidation of the Experience

As a subject who has experienced the condition, it would be correct to opine that experiencing Old Hag Syndrome on a personal level could be termed as more terrifying than watching a nightmare. What makes this experience fundamentally different from a nightmare is the fact that while watching a dream, a person has control over his physical movements, in spite of being in sleep. He or she has the ability to voluntarily or involuntarily move the body. However, in the case of experiencing this syndrome, a person is left in a state of temporary paralysis making him or her unable to move even one of the tiniest muscles of the body. What makes the experience scary on a personal level is that the person is in a state of partial consciousness, which means that he or she is able to see the surroundings with the eyes open. However, the state of paralysis makes the person incapable of movement or even making any sound. In a state of complete inability of movement the experience finds an inception.

As a subject, sleep paralysis and the alleged supernaturalism could be experienced in the wee hours of the night sleep. While traditional notion about the condition elucidates that a supernatural figure is found to sit on the chest of the person concerned, the supernatural figure could be found to stand on the side of the bed. It should be noted in this context that every time the experience would occur the same supernatural figure would be seen, placed in the same position. This figure could be described to be characterized by the common notion of devilish traits in its appearance, while being encompassed with a sort of incandescence. It would be right to describe this figure as extremely scary. The recurring endeavor to make a movement of the body or some part of it at least is something that can be taken to be the last resort of the individual to feel that he or she is alive or in a state to face the situation. However, the endeavor would surely be found to be impossibility every single time. At this juncture, as a subject, the primary try could be comprehended to be aimed at giving out a call to others in the house or the other room. However, this endeavor too could be described to have been proven futile as the movement of the mouth is not possible in such a condition.

What makes the experience of seeing the supernatural figure is that the person is found in a state of paramount inability to escape or combat the scenario. At one point of time, the individual might very well come to question the very state of the self, being left in a state of helplessness. For a subject, it is a situation that put to question to state of life and death being left in a state of paralysis with the supernatural figure advancing toward the human body. What happens next is that the human individual gives in to the condition, and the experience blurs out while the person goes back to sleep. While the experience does not occur every day, its recurrence and striking resemblance to the previous one could be described to have the ability to make a shiver run down the spine of the individual making him or her feel jeopardized.

III. From the Perspective of Science

It should be noted in this context that sleep paralysis is closely associated with REM atonia in a person. The paralysis that is faced by the individual is a natural stage of REM or rapid eye movement sleep. One should reckon that sleep paralysis happens when a person is either falling asleep, or is waking up. If the condition is faced while falling asleep, the individual remains aware during the time the body shuts down for the REM sleep. This is called hypnagogic sleep paralysis. On the other hand, when the condition is faced while waking up, the individual comes to be aware before the completion of REM cycle. This is known as hypnopompic sleep paralysis. One should remember that the state of paralysis can last from some seconds to many minutes at a stretch. During this span of time, the individual goes on to face panic symptoms. The correlation with REM cycle goes on to suggest that the condition of the paralysis is not a complete one. The usage of EOG traces have come to show that the individual is able to make eye movement while experiencing such episodes in his or her sleep.

Sleep paralysis might be accompanied by scary hallucinations along with this acute feeling of being in jeopardy. The experience can be described to be frightening for the person due to the fact that the hallucinations are extremely vivid in nature. Since the experience is characterized by hallucinatory elements, one can be inclined toward interpreting the contextual experience as a dream. Apart from the images seen through one's normal vision, totally fanciful objects might come to appear inside the room while the person is in the midst of experiencing the paralytic state. Thus, the entire premise goes on to blur the line between scientific explanation and supernatural experience on the part of the individual having the syndrome in context. It should be noted that the syndrome is not treated as a problem in any way medically.

IV. Factors Enhancing the Chance of Hallucinations and Sleep Paralysis

There are certain factors that can be held responsible for catapulting the chances of a person experiencing hallucinations and sleep paralysis. These factors have been listed below:

- Sudden lifestyle or environmental transformations
- Enhanced stress
- When a person sleeps in a supine position or with face upwards
- A lucid dream that goes on to precede the episode of paralysis immediately
- Too much consumption of alcoholic drink at a time when the individual does not sleep adequately

Scientifically, these factors have been found responsible for the mentioned experiences. However, one might experience sleep paralysis and the hallucinations even if none of the mentioned factors come into play.

V. Conclusion

On an individual level, Old Hag Syndrome or sleep paralysis along with hallucinations can be a truly chilling experience that can leave a lasting impression on the mind. While quite akin to a dream, the experience is far scarier as the human individual is aware of the surroundings. The experience blurs the line between the real and the unreal, while confusing the human mind to make the distinction between the two. While sleep is considered to be a major requirement for life, when a person recurrently experiences sleep paralysis and hallucinations, it can initiate a feeling of helplessness, anxiety, fright, and confusion. The implications of the mentioned condition on the human mind and body are extremely intriguing as it does no harm, yet affects the wellbeing of the individual in a substantial manner.

REFERENCES

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