

Sleep: Our Ancestors View

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Abstract

Sleep is one of the important components of Tripod of life (three pillars that hold the health, life and longevity). They person, in general situation sleeps during night hours. Under certain circumstances there may be need of day sleep also. Violation of the rules of sleep may lead to some untoward effects. Therefore every individual should learn and follow the rules of sleep. The Ayurvedic scholars, in their valuable classics write elaborately about sleep with special reference to pathophysiology, types, rules to be followed to gain benefit of sleep etc. which can be considered as valuable source of knowledge with scope of extensive research.

Keywords: Sleep; Longevity; Health; Ayurvedic Scholars; Extensive Research

Introduction

Sleep is an important component of life. Human beings as well as the animals spend approximately 30% to 40% time of his/her life in sleep. Sleep revitalizes us. After sleep we gain new feeling and energy to work. The body and the mental faculties become recharged. It helps in appropriate digestion, growth etc. and also refreshes memory, patience, presence of mind etc. In the modern scientific society there is extensive study on the physiology and mechanism of sleep. Study of the ancient classics on health science viz. Charaka Samhita, Susruta Samhita, Ashtanga Hridaya and Ashtanga Sangraha reflect a clear picture on the concepts of the ancient scholars. Along with the modern scientific studies a detailed scientific study on these concepts is also can be considered as important.

Definition and pathophysiology of sleep as described in the classics

- Sleep is a state of abstaining the mind and the organs from their objects due to tiredness after work [1].

- Sleep is due to the act of lord Vishnu. It causes disturbance in the good performances of the human beings [2]. It is natural and occurs due to the dominance of "Tama" (the factor related with the mind that causes dark – negative feelings) [3].

Benefit of sleep

- Sleep determines the state of health of an individual like happiness, nutritional status, strength, reproductive capacity, memory etc [4].
- Sleep gifts one with health, memory, happiness, strength, longevity and other invaluable benefits [5].
- Proper sleep gives happiness, nutrition, strength, potency, knowledge, memory and longevity. Improper sleep produces unhappiness, deficiency, weakness, impotency, defective memory and short life [6].

What happens if one sleeps improperly?

- If a person sleeps in improper time (like day time), for long time, for less time then he /she loses health [7].

- Violation of the rules of Sleep can cause a number of diseases like ,cough, breathing problem, sneez, heaviness of head ,indigestion etc. Sleeping during daytime and awakening during night time both are violation of sleeping rules and can cause a good number of disease [8].
- If a person sleeps in improper time, for more time and restrain himself totally from sleep his health and longevity are endangered [9].

Who should sleep during the day time?

- The persons busy in different types of works that can cause abstain from night sleep, patients of the diseases that cause reduction of fluid portion of the body, patients of indigestion etc. should sleep during day time [10].
- Day sleep is also indicated during the summer season as during this season there is reduction of the fluid portion of the body [11].

Benefits of Day Sleep

A person for whom day sleep is indicated they can get desired nutrition, strength and regeneration of the lost body humors [12].

Some Instructions With Regards to Sleep:

- If an individual sleeps during day time in the seasons other than summer there may be different types of diseases-like-severe type of jaundice, headache, heaviness of the body, indigestion, oedema, cough etc [13].
- A person who is having excessive fat, takes oils and fat regularly and suffering from slow poison should never sleep during day time even during Summer season [14].
- Sleep is important for the individuals like food. One should always follow the rules of sleep like the rules of diet. Both, if taken regularly in appropriate manner, can only provide good health, good resistance and long life [15].
- Sleep may be of different types depending upon the cause e.g.(i) due to mental causes, (ii)due to increase of the fluid portions of the body, (iii) due to tiredness of the mind and the body, (iv)due to unknown aetiology, (v)due to disease, (vi)due to the effect of the darkness during night . Among these 6 types the night sleep is considered as the pillar of life [16].
- One should always sleep during night hours usually. If due to any cause there is abstaining from night sleep

then should sleep for the period half of the total abstinence [17].

Study of the ancient Ayurvedic classics reflects that, during that time, before thousand years of Christ, also there was extensive study on sleep. Evaluation of the benefits of sleep, harm of improper sleep, rules of sleep etc. were studied extensively by the scholars and praisable interpretations were gained by them which should be taken as research projects. Hope the modern scientists' effort in this direction will enrich the human society [18,19].

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