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NIDRA (SLEEP)- A PATH TO A HEALTHY LIFE

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ABSTRACT

Nidra or sleep has been described in Ayurveda as one of the three *Upsthambhas* (sub-base pillars) needed for a healthy life. In Ayurveda the mankind has been instructed to have routine, proper and sound sleep to attain good health and long life. Today's researches also support the importance of a deep, sound and routine sleep, whose lack contributes to the development of to several diseases.

KEYWORDS- *Nidra*, *Upsthambhas*, good health, long life.

INTRODUCTION-

Nidra or sleep has been described in Ayurveda as one of the three *Upsthambhas* (sub-base pillars) needed for a healthy life. It is very essential part for a healthy mind and body. According to *Acharya Charaka*, when the mind is exhausted or inactive, the sense organs are unable to perceive their *vishaya*, which results in no signal to feed the mind. A person enters *Nidra* (sleep) in this situation.

Nidra mentioned in Ayurvedic texts^{1,2,3,4}

Acharya Charaka provided descriptions of *nidra* in 80 *nanatmajavata*vikara and chapter of *Ashtauninditiya Purusha* in *sutrasthana*. He says that *nidra* is an essential part of life and that getting enough sleep is essential to our enjoyment, vigour, virility, and knowledge. In the *Ashtanga hridaya viruddhaanna-vigyaniya adhyaya*, *Ashtanga Sangraha* discusses *nidra* and *nidravikara*. Its function in providing the body with nutrition has been detailed by *Acharya Sushruta* in the chapter 3 *garbha-yakarana shariram* of the *sharir sthana*.

Definition According to *Acharya Charaka*, as the mind grows weary or lethargic, perception by the sense organs gradually declines until there is nothing left for the mind to feed on, at which time the person falls asleep. According to *Acharya Sushruta*, a person enters the sleep phase when *Tamas* covers the *hridaya* (heart), which is the seat of *Chetana* (Activity). Sleep is attributed by *Acharya Vagbhata* in the *manovaha srota* to the build-up of *kapha dosha*. He claims that as *kapha dosha* builds up, the person falls asleep because of fatigued sense organs in the mind.

According to *Acharya Chakrapanidatta* and *Gangadhara*, sleep is the result of the body's sensory and motor organs becoming exhausted or inactive, as well as the mind (together with *aatma*). Different types of *nidra* had been categorised by several *Acharyas* using various criteria. However, the following two general types can be identified: 1. *Aswabhawika* (abnormal)- Caused by many disorders. 2. *Swabhavika* (natural)- Occurs frequently at night. *Acharya Charaka* outlined six different varieties of *nidra*:

1. *Tamobhava*
2. *Sleshma samudhbhava*
3. *Manah sharir sambhava*
4. *Agantuki*
5. *Vyadhianuvartini*
6. *Ratri swabhava prabhava nidra (bhoot dhatri)*

In ayurveda Seven types of *Nidra* are also described-

1. *Kalawabhava*
2. *Amaya*
3. *Chitta Kheda*
4. *Deha Kheda*
5. *Kaphaja*
6. *Agantuja*
7. *Tamobhava*

Benefits of *Nidra* mentioned in ayurveda-

A good sound sleep is essential for life. It nourishes *sukra* and body, it provides strength, fertility, intelligence and long life.

DISCUSSION-

The ideal time for *nidra* is said to be at night. Daytime sleep should be avoided as it causes obesity, *kapha* issues, and other problems. Children, the elderly, and summertime are the only exceptions to the rule against daytime sleep. People who work night shifts can snooze for half as long as they do at night. *Nidra* differs from person to person; those with *vata prakriti* tend to sleep less, while those with *kapha prakriti* tend to sleep more. The quality of sleep is more significant than the time of it.

In recent researches it is also observed that a sound sleep is necessary for a peaceful mind and healthy body. Sleep is categorized under two phases- NREM (Non-rapid eye movement) and REM (Rapid eye movement). Sleep starts with NREM sleep which constitutes about 75%-80% of sleep where as REM sleep constitutes about 20%-25% of later phase. Dreams are associated with REM sleep.

In deep phases of sleep, various neurohormonal changes occur which relaxes our brain cells and muscles. Deep sleep promotes important physiological changes and promotes testosterone synthesis in males and reduces stress. It is seen that cardiovascular health is also related to the sound sleep. People with reduced sleeping time or disturbed sleep are more prone to cardiovascular diseases. Disturbed sleep also imbalances glucose metabolism and contributes to insulin resistance. Improper sleep is always linked to digestive complains.

For optimal health and to enjoy pleasure, happiness, sustenance, strength, and life, one must have the proper amount of peaceful sleep for the appropriate length of time. On the other hand, sleep deprivation (*alpanidra*) results in disease, exhaustion, physical malnutrition, impotence, and in severe cases, early death. Therefore, *nidra* is of utmost significance to ayurveda in maintaining our longevity and mental and physical health. One of the thirteen different types of *Vegas* (urges) that can cause illness if they are suppressed is *nidra*.

CONCLUSION-

A sound sleep or *nidra* is very essential for a healthy mind and body. The science of Ayurveda has identified its importance long time ago and had included it in the three sub-pillars of life. In Ayurveda the mankind has been instructed to have routine, proper and sound sleep to attain good health and long life. Today's researches also support the importance of a deep, sound and routine sleep, whose lack contributes to the development of to several diseases.

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