

Importance of *Ratricharya* W.S.R. to Modern Night Life

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Abstract:

The main aim of *Ayurveda* is “स्वस्थस्य स्वास्थ्यरक्षणं। आतुरस्य विकार प्रशमनं च ।।” which means maintaining the health of a healthy person and to treating a diseased one. To achieve that goal, *Ayurveda* explains some concepts like *Dinacharya* (daily regimen), *Ratricharya* (night regimen), *Ritu-charya* (seasonal regimen) *Sadvritta palan*(do's and don'ts) and *Acharya Rasayana*. The *Ratricharya* is not separately mentioned like that of *Dinacharya* in the *Ayurveda* classics. *Dinacharya* includes both the *Dinacharya* and *Ratricharya*. These *Ayurvedic* regimens give physical, mental, spiritual, as well as social well-being.

Now a days, *Ratricharya* is getting ignored because Today's youngsters mostly follows the western lifestyle like doing late night parties, clubbing, staying awoken at night due to over use of digital media etc. All these factors have serious ill effects on people's health. So this article is aimed at knowing the importance of *Ratricharya* in the current era.

Key Words: *Ratricharya*, Health, Modern night life.

Introduction:

According to *Ayurveda*, *Aahar*, *Nidra* and *Brahmacharya* are three pillars of life which help in maintaining the health of a healthy person.

WHO defines health as “It is a state of complete physical, mental and social well being and not merely an absence of disease or infirmity”.

One can keep himself healthy by following *Din-charya* and *Ratricharya*.

Ratricharya is explained in *Ashtangasangraha*, *Ashtanghrdaya*, *Yogratnakara*, *Nighnata ratna-kara* and *Bhavaprakash*. *Ratricharya* includes *Sandhyacharya* and *Ratricharya*, means activities that should be done from sunset till night or sleep. It has three main aspects: *Aahar* (food), *Nidra* (sleep) and *Maithuna* (sexual activity), which is helpful in prevention of disease and maintaining health. This regimen also helps in maintaining the circadian rhythm (normal bio-logical clock).

Ratricharya-

1. *Sandhyacharya*- It means a regimen that should be followed from sunset till dark i.e. from 5 -6 or 7 pm.

It includes – *Netra*, *Mukha*, and *padaprakshalan* *Ishvar chintana*/worship.

In *Ayurveda*, it is stated that *Ratri* is a *Kapha* predominant *Kala*, our eyes having *Tejoguna*, hence there are chances to get harm from *Kaphaj Dosha*. Hence it is recommended to apply *Rasanjana* once a week at night time to drain *Kapha Dosha* and to avoid *Kaphaj Vyadhi*.

Acharya Sushruta recommended regular practice of *Pratimarsha Nasya* in evening for sound sleep and to awake at the proper time.⁽²⁾

Things that should not be done during *Sandhyacharya* that are contraindications are mentioned only in *Yogratnakar* and in *Bhavaprakash*.⁽³⁾

Contraindications -

1. *Bhojan* - It leads to *Rogaotpatti* (diseases) because food is not digested properly at this time.
2. *Maithun* - It leads to *Garbhavikruti* (foetal abnormalities).
3. *Nidra* - It leads to *Daridrya*(poverty) because *Our forefathers believed that Goddess Lakshmi entered our home at this time*.
4. *Pathana* - It leads to *Ayushyahan* (loss of life). Because in ancient times there was no provision for artificial light, studying in dim light causes eye strain (*Indriyahani*) which ultimately causes *Ayuhani*.
5. *Margakraman* - It leads to *Bhaya* (fear) due to lack of bright light.

2. *Bhojana vidhi*- It has been explained in *Bha-vaprakash*.⁽⁴⁾

One should take food before the 2nd *Prahar* of the night starts, which means in the 1st *Prahar* (1 *Prahar*-3 hours).

Food should be in less quantity and should be *Laghu* i.e. easy to digest.

To make food *Laghu*, some *Samskara* like *Bharjan* (frying) should be done on it, especially on cereals.

Dadhi should be avoided at night because it is *Abhishyandi* (causing obstruction in *Strotas*) in nature and it leads to *Kapha Prakoopa* and also causes *Agnimandya*.⁽⁵⁾

Acharya vagbhat stated that one should consume Triphala mixed with honey and ghee at night to strengthen the vision.⁽⁶⁾

Bhojanottara karma⁽⁷⁾

1. *Paniprakshalan*- one should wash his hands in the proper way that is, until they completely wash off the food particles.

Dantashodhana- To remove food particles which are stuck in the teeth. *Gandhush* should be done to get rid of the smell and stickiness.

3. *Netra Sparshan*- After washing the hands, one should touch his eyes with the wet fingertips.
4. *Tamboolasevana*- means chewing of betel leaves to keep the mouth clean and to have a flavorful smell.
5. *Dhoompana*- It removes excessive *Kapha Dosha* from the mouth.
6. *Chankramana*- walking for *Paadashata matra* i.e. 100 steps.
7. *Samveshana* – sleeping in the left lateral position.

Jyotsna (moon light)⁽⁸⁾

Moonlight has an effect on our body and mind, according to Bhav prakasha purvakhand.

Moon light is *sheeta* (cool) and it increases *kama* (sexual desires).

It also decreases the burning sensation (*Daha*) by stabilising *Pitta Dosha*.

It increases *Vata* and *Kapha dosha*.

In *yog ratnakara*⁽⁹⁾ it is stated that darkness is frightening, deluding, and disorienting, and it stabilizes the *pitta dosha*, it increases *kapha dosha*. It also increases the sexual desires and causes fatigue.

3. Maithun – Sexual intercourse

It is one of the natural phenomena. Sex during the night is good for health, but sex other than at night time should be avoided, which is harmful to the body.

Acharya Bhavprakash explains some symptoms when a person suppresses his sexual urges, like *Meha* (diabetes), *Medovridhi* (obesity) and *Tanu Shithiltha* (looseness).⁽¹⁰⁾

In *yogratnakar*, symptoms of *Ksheena Shukra* are stated, which include *Daurbalya* (weakness), *mukhshosha* (mouth dryness), *pandu* (Anemia), *sadanam* (bodyaches), *bhrama* (giddiness), *kle-bya* (infertility) and *shukra visaraga* (early ejaculation).⁽¹¹⁾

Kala⁽¹²⁾

- In *Sharad Ritu* (autumn) – once in 3 days.
- In *Varsha* (rainy) and *Greeshma* (summer) – once a fortnight

- In *Hemant Ritu* – As per desire, after consumption of some *Vrishya Dravya* to avoid weakness.

- In *Shishir Ritu* – As per desire, without consumption of *Vrishya Dravya*.

As per *Bhavprakash*¹³–

- *Sheeta Ritu* – Night time.
- *Greeshma Ritu* – Day time.
- *Vasant Ritu* – Day and night time.
- *Varsha Ritu* – When the thunderbolt struck.
- *Sharad Ritu* – When desired.

As per nighanta ratnakar –

- In *Hemant ritu* – As per desire, after consumption of some *Vajikaran Dravya*.
- In *shishir ritu* – As per desire.
- *Vasanta* and *sharad* – Once in 3 days.
- *Varsha* and *greeshma* – Every 15 days

As per sushruta –

- In *greeshma* – Once every 15 days
- In other *ritu* – Every 3 days.

Place according to ritu –

- *Sheeta kala* – at night
- *Greeshma* – During the day time
- *Vasanta* – Both during the day and night
- *Varsha ritu* – When the thunderbolt struck.
- *Sharad ritu* – Places near the lake.

Stree sevana Yogya Purusha⁽¹⁴⁾ – In *yog ratna-kara* qualities of person who is worthy of female consumption are stated which are *Snat* (bathed), *Chandan liptanga* (anointed with sandalwood), *Prasanna chitta* (Happy), *Bhukta Vrishya* (Consumed food that increases sexual desires), *Suvasana* (Dressed in beautiful clothes), *Suve-sha* (properly dressed), *Tambulvadana* (ate betel), who is more attached to the love of his wife and who desires to have a child.

Maithun Varjya Kala⁽¹⁵⁾ – Sex should be avoided during the evening, full moon, new moon, eclipse etc., also when cows are let out for grazing, mid night and mid day.

Benefits⁽¹⁶⁾ – Intercourse in a healthy way gives long life, delayed aging, good skin texture, physical strength, and well developed muscles.

Regimens after intercourse⁽¹⁷⁾ –

- Bath
- Drinking milk with sugar
- Food processed with sugarcane.
- Meat soup
- Calm breeze
- Sleep.

Effects of *Atimaithun* -

1. *Shoola* 2. *Kasa*
3. *Shwasa* 4. *Jwara*
5. *Karshya* 6. *Pandu*
7. *Kshaya* 8. *Akshepa* etc.

3. *Shayana vidhi*-

According to *Acharya Bhava Prakash*, after *Bhojana*, one should sleep in supine position for eight breaths, then in right lateral position for 16 breaths, and finally in left lateral position for 32 breaths.⁽¹⁸⁾

In *Ashtanga Samgraha*, after taking *Laghu* and *Hitakar Aahar*, one should sleep on his own bed after praying to God with a clear and peaceful mind and full concentration. Head of sleeping person should be at east or south and legs should not pointing towards *Guru* (elders or teachers).⁽¹⁹⁾

The sleeping bed should be comfortable; spacious in terms of length and breadth, and height of the bed should be at knee length. A Sleeping mattress should be soft and flat. Bed sheets should be clean and neat. The Pillow should be at the proper height with a clean pillow cover.

Types of bed and their effects⁽²⁰⁾ -

1. *Anukula shayya* (Comfortable bed): It is considered good for proper sleep, nourish-ment, pleasure, relives tiredness, pacifies the vitiated *Vata*, and aphrodisiac.
2. *Bhumishayya* (On ground): It can pacify the vitiated *Vata*, nourishes human body gives strength and aphrodisiac.
3. *Khatva* (Cot): Causes vitiation of *Vata*.
4. *Darupatta* (Wooden planks): It is unctuous and highly vitiates *Vata*.
5. *Andolika* (Hanging bed): It relieves tired-ness, leads to long life, plumpness aphrodisiac, alleviates vitiated *Vata*, decreases sweating, pleasing to mind.
6. *Talpa*: It helps to decrease weight. It is good for health of skin.

Padaabhyanga is recommended by *Acharya Vagbhat* before sleep for sound sleep and for health eyes.⁽²¹⁾

Triphala for Eye Health⁽²²⁾ -

According to *Vridha Vagbhata*, one should take *Triphala churna* mixed with honey and ghee daily at night going to bed to strengthen the eyes and to improve the vision 10.

All foods which are good to maintain health and all those which cure diseases also should be used daily.

According to *Vagbhat*, it is always better to sleep in left lateral position because *Agni* lies in the left side of the body above the *nabhi* (umbilicus), which is responsible for proper digestion.⁽²³⁾

Nidra- *Nidra* is one of the important aspects of *Trayopstambh*.

Nirukti- Nindyate iti (*Shabdakalpadrum*).

Physiology of sleep-

“यदा तु मनसि क्लान्ते कर्मात्मानः क्लृप्तीन्विताः । विषयेभ्यो निवर्तन्ते तदा स्वपिति मानवः ॥” च...सूत्र. 21/25.

When *Atma* (soul), *Mann* (mind), *Indriya* (sensory and motor organs) gets exhausted then senses are not able to get their subjectivity. Sleep is produced when the mind and the senses do not come together.

Benefits of proper *Nidra* and bad effects of im-proper *Nidra*-

“निद्रायत्तं सुखं दुःखं पुष्टिः कार्यं बलाबलम् । वृषता क्लीबता ज्ञानमज्ञानम जीवितं न च ॥” च...सूत्र. 21/26-27.

As per *YogRatnakara*⁽²⁴⁾ – Sleep, when taken in the right way, causes *Dhatu samya*, *Analyasa* (freshness), good complexion, energy, and good appetite.

Ratri Jagrana Guna – It produces dryness in the body. It also helps to reduce *kapha dosha* and *visha*.⁽²⁵⁾

Remedies for peaceful sleep⁽²⁶⁾ - Consumption of Powder of tender leaves of *bijapura* mixed with honey at bedtime causes easy movements of *faltus* (*athovayupada*) and leads to peaceful sleep.

Benefits of drinking water before sunrise – Before sunrise, one should drink eight *prasara* of water to be free from disease and old age.⁽²⁷⁾

Harmful effects of not following regimens – Those who do not follow this regimen get disease. That is disease caused by walking against the rules that are stated. Therefore, one should follow the regimens.⁽²⁸⁾

Modern night life –

According to modern science, “early to bed and early to rise keeps man healthy, wealthy, and wise.”

Many diseases have developed due to an un-healthy lifestyle, which is termed as “Diseases of Civilization”. Time and hours of sleep play an important role in health. A Person who sleeps early will have more qualitative sleep than a person who sleeps late at night. Now days, Use of cellular phones, T.V, laptops, elec-tronic media, etc. is becoming an essential part of our lifestyle, which affects our normal sleeping pattern.

Clubbing includes the consumption of caffeine, alcohol, drugs, and nicotine to stay awake, which also affects normal sleeping pattern. For a short time, Alcohol has sedative activity, but later it causes insomnia. An late night parties, people eat fast foods like burger, pizza, fries, etc. which are not easily digestible, which ham-pers digestion and leads to hyper acidity, indigestion, etc.

As per study done by suri and pradhan (2010) night snacking syndrome is associated with a number of harmful behaviors-physical and psychological, including poor dietary quality. Also skipping the main meal and nibbling at night may have led to significant changes seen in eat-ing patterns and lifestyles of late adolescents. Fluctuations and changes in patterns may put the children at risk of developing various chronic illnesses, further disrupting their health and eating habits. Night eating syndrome is found more common in the obese and can result in further obesity.

Some IT professionals, doctors, police man works in shift duty or night duty which also alters the sleeping pattern. Due to lack of exercise, yoga and meditation many people are facing problems like obesity, hypertension, stress. obesity leads to some sleeping diseases like sleep apnea which further leads to impaired glucose control. Less sleep increases cortisol level which causes food craving and leads to obesity or weight gain. Person who stay awoken at night later becomes irritable, feels sleepy on next day, disoriented and also has lack of con-centration which directly affects working ability of the person. The body's circadian rhythms control the sleep-wake cycle. All this factors interfere with circadian cycle of body.

As per research done by Chaput JP et al, 7-8 hours of sleep is associated with lower prevalence of metabolic syndrome and reduced over-all cardiometabolic risk in adults. Sleeping less than 6 hours per night is associated with an ele-vated cardio-metabolic risk. As per the research conducted by Grandner et al, (2013), the tech-nology use was associated with sleep patterns, the more type of devices used; the more individuals reported having difficulty in sleeping and maintaining sleep especially if use of tech-nology was active.

Apart from sleep, healthy sex life is said to be important for the maintenance of good health of both males and females. As per Liu & Waite (2013) woman are especially vulnerable to car-diovascular problems from poor relationship quality or marital loss.

In older ages especially moderate frequency of sex may bring some health benefits but having sex too frequently or extremely high level physical or emotional enjoyment might be a risk factor for experiencing Cardiovascular diseases over time. The role of abstinence in the maintenance of good health is not much known. There is further scope to study the same. Thus it is im-portant to follow various rules of *Ratricharya* appropriately as said in Ayurveda classics for the maintenance of health and well-being.

Discussion:

Ayurveda is the science of life which deals with both preventive and curative aspects. *Din-charya*, *Ritucharya*, and *Ratricharya* all these regimens are useful for disease prevention and health promotion.

Ratricharya refers to the time between sun set and sun rise, hence *Sandhya Kala* is also included in *Ratricharya*. In *Sandhya Charya*, do's and don'ts with their effect are also explained in detail, which helps in the prevention of diseases and promotes health. The Role of *Rasanjana* and *Pratimarshya Nasya* in preventing *Kaphaj Vyadhi* is also mentioned, as *Sandhya kala* and *Ratri kala* are *Kapha* predominant.

The effects of moon light on the human body are also explained in *Bhavaprakash*, which is also a unique concept.

Ratricharya also explains the time of food con-sumption that is in the first *Prahar* of night means first 3 hours after sunset, and also the nature of food that is light and nutritious diet is recommended. *Bhojanottara karma* like walk-ing hundred feet after food, lying down in left lateral position for proper digestion are also ex-plained. As discussed earlier, in today's night life, most people consume fast food, cold drinks, and liquor in the evening. All of these foods are not easily digestible and cause adverse effects on health and give rise to diseases like lifestyle disorder, which are mostly irreversible.

Sexual intercourse is also included in night regimen. *Ayurveda* has mentioned some concepts like time and season wise sexual intercourse.

Diet before and after intercourse has also been explained. Place of sexual intercourse, fit and unfit men and women for sexual intercourse, contra indicated time of sexual intercourse has also been explained.

Ratricharya includes another topic named "*Nidra*". The benefits of proper sleep have been mentioned in this physiology of sleep, as have the negative effects of improper food. Sleeping places, sleeping postures, and measures to induce sleep have also been mentioned. All these factors induce sound sleep, which is necessary for the physical, mental, and social health of the person.

But in today's life due to night shifts, most peo-ple are unable to get enough sleep, which results in changes in their sleeping pattern. Altered sleeping patterns harm the *Bala* (immune sys-tem) of that person. It causes irritability, de-creased working ability, obesity, sleep disorders like sleep apnea, insomnia, etc.

Means it affects the physical, mental, and social health of the person.

Conclusion:

Ratricharya is the exclusive non pharmacological therapy (*Adravya Chikitsa*) which helps in the prevention of disease and promoting the health of healthy people. All of the regimens in-cluded in *Ratricharya*, such as *Sandhyacharya*, contra indicated works in *Sandhyacharya*, *Bho-jan vidhi*, *Bhojanottar karma*, effect of moon light on human body, Rules of *Maithun karma*, *Shyana vidhi*, and the importance of

Nidra, play an important role in preventing disease and promoting health that are caused by faulty lifestyle.

After referring to the classical texts of *Ayurveda*, it can be concluded that the basic principles of *Ayurveda* like *Dincharya*, *Ratricharya*, *Ritucharya*, *Sadvritta palan* and *Achar Rasayana* will help a person fulfill the criteria of health, Which is to keep a person healthy physically, mentally, socially and spiritually.

From the entire discussion, we concluded that *Ratricharya* is important for physical and mental health, which plays a vital role in improving the *Bala* (Immunity) of a person, which helps to fight with various diseases, including the life style disorders that are caused by today's modern night life.

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