

# Role of Ratricharya in Maintaining Sharirika and Manasika Swasthya: An Ayurvedic Literary Review

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Ayurveda advocates a holistic approach to health by emphasizing preventive and promotive measures in daily life. Among the various lifestyle guidelines described in the classical texts, Ratricharya refers to the set of practices recommended during the nighttime to support physiological restoration and mental relaxation. In recent years, changing lifestyles characterized by irregular sleeping patterns, late-night meals, excessive screen exposure, and psychological stress have increasingly affected overall health. In this context, the Ayurvedic principles of Ratricharya offer valuable guidance for maintaining balance and well-being.

**Objective:** To explore and critically analyze the concept of Ratricharya described in Ayurvedic classics and to understand its contribution to the maintenance of Sharirika (physical) and Manasika (mental) health.

**Materials and Methods:** A comprehensive literary review was undertaken using references from major Ayurvedic texts, including Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Ashtanga Hridaya, Ashtanga Sangraha, Bhavaprakasha, and other relevant literature. The collected information was systematically reviewed, compiled, and interpreted with a focus on the health-promoting aspects of nocturnal regimens described in Ayurveda.

**Results:** The analysis revealed that Ratricharya encompasses a broad range of practices such as appropriate dietary habits at night, post-meal regimens, proper sleep, observance of Brahmacharya, and measures for maintaining sensory and mental well-being. These practices collectively contribute to the preservation of Agni, proper nourishment of Dhatus, maintenance of Dosha equilibrium, enhancement of strength, and support of restorative bodily functions. Furthermore, adherence to these principles promotes sound sleep, emotional stability, mental clarity, concentration, and overall psychological well-being.

**Conclusion:** Ratricharya represents an important yet often overlooked component of Swasthivritta. Its principles extend beyond sleep and encompass a comprehensive framework for healthy nighttime living. Regular observance of these practices may help preserve physical vitality, foster mental balance, and contribute to the attainment of holistic health. Re-emphasizing the relevance of Ratricharya in contemporary life may provide a practical and sustainable approach to health promotion and disease prevention.

**Keywords:** Ayurveda, Ratricharya, Swasthivritta, Sharirika Swasthya, Manasika Swasthya, Nidra, Health Promotion.

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## INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda emphasizes health preservation through proper lifestyle practices described under Swasthivritta. Ratricharya, the nighttime regimen, includes guidelines related to diet, post-prandial activities, sleep (Nidra), Brahmacharya, and sensory care. These practices help maintain Agni, Dosha balance, proper Dhatu nourishment, and mental well-being. In modern times, unhealthy habits such as late-night eating, irregular sleep, excessive screen exposure, and stress negatively affect health. The principles of Ratricharya provide a holistic approach to preventing such disturbances and promoting both

physical and mental health. Therefore, this review explores the concept of Ratricharya in classical Ayurvedic literature and its role in maintaining overall well-being.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study is a literary review exploring the concept of Ratricharya and its role in maintaining physical and mental health. Information was collected from classical Ayurvedic texts, their commentaries, and relevant research articles, journals, dissertations, and electronic databases. Literature related to Ratricharya and associated nocturnal practices was reviewed and analyzed based on Ayurvedic principles such as Agni, Dosha Samyata, Dhatu Poshana, Bala, Ojas, and Manasika Bhavas. As this study was based solely on published literature, ethical approval was not required.

## CONCEPT OF RATRICHARYA

### Nirukti (Etymological Derivation)

The term *Ratricharya* is composed of two Sanskrit words:

#### Ratri + Charya = Ratricharya

- *Ratri* refers to the night period.
- *Charya* denotes conduct, behavior, regimen, or mode of living.

Thus, Ratricharya can be understood as the prescribed code of conduct and lifestyle practices to be followed during the nighttime for the maintenance of health and prevention of disease.

### Ayurvedic Definition of Ratricharya

Although a direct definition of Ratricharya is not explicitly available in the Brihatrayi, the concept can be derived from the various references describing the activities to be performed and avoided during nighttime. In Ayurveda, Ratricharya encompasses dietary regulations, post-prandial activities, sleep practices, Brahmacharya, sensory care, and behavioral disciplines intended to maintain equilibrium of Doshas, proper functioning of Agni, nourishment of Dhatus, and stability of the mind.

Acharya Vagbhata emphasizes the importance of being constantly aware of one's daily and nightly regimen:

"नक्तं दिनानि मे यान्ति कथंभूतस्य सम्प्रति ।दुःखभाग् न भवत्येवं नित्यं सन्निहितस्मृतिः ॥"

(*Ashtanga Hridaya, Sutrasthana 2/47*)

This verse highlights that an individual who remains mindful of his daily conduct and continuously evaluates his lifestyle practices is less likely to become afflicted by disease and suffering.

### Conceptual Understanding of Ratricharya

Ayurveda emphasizes alignment of lifestyle with the natural cycle of day and night. Ratricharya, an important component of Swasthavritta, refers to the nighttime regimen that supports health promotion and disease prevention. Described across classical Ayurvedic texts, it includes practices such as appropriate evening diet, post-prandial activities, Nidra, Brahmacharya, and sensory care. These measures help maintain Agni, Dosha balance, Dhatu nourishment, Bala, Ojas, and mental well-being. Thus, Ratricharya serves as a holistic approach to preserving both physical and mental health.

**Table 1: Components of Ratricharya with Classical References**

| Component               | Classical Reference                     | Important Ayurvedic Concept                     |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Sandhyakala Charya      | Bhavaprakasha Purvakhanda 5/261-262     | Activities to be avoided during Sandhyakala     |
| Ratricharya Vidhi       | Bhavaprakasha Purvakhanda 5/265         | Light and wholesome dinner during first Prahara |
| Bhojanottara Karma      | Ashtanga Sangraha Sutrasthana 10/13     | Post-prandial regimen                           |
| Shatapada Gamana        | Sushruta Samhita Sutrasthana 46/487     | Walking after meals                             |
| Vamaparsva Shayana      | Sushruta Samhita Sutrasthana 46/487     | Left lateral sleeping position                  |
| Shayana Vidhi           | Ashtanga Sangraha Sutrasthana 3/120-121 | Proper sleeping environment and posture         |
| Nidra                   | Charaka Samhita Sutrasthana 21/25-27    | Nidra as Trayopastambha                         |
| Anjana                  | Charaka Samhita Sutrasthana 5/15-17     | Maintenance of ocular health                    |
| Dhumapana               | Ashtanga Sangraha Sutrasthana 10/13     | Elimination of accumulated Kapha                |
| Triphala Sevana         | Ashtanga Sangraha Sutrasthana 10/20     | Eye health and Rasayana effect                  |
| Brahmacharya (Maithuna) | Bhavaprakasha Purvakhanda 5/266-298     | Regulation of sexual activity                   |

## IMPORTANT SHLOKAS RELATED TO RATRICHARYA

### 1. Importance of Following Dinacharya and Ratricharya

नक्तं दिनानि मे यान्ति कथंभूतस्य सम्प्रति । दुःखभाग् न भवत्येवं नित्यं सन्निहितस्मृतिः ॥

**Reference:** Ashtanga Hridaya, Sutrasthana 2/47

#### **Interpretation**

An individual who remains constantly aware of and reflects upon his daily and nightly conduct is less likely to suffer from diseases and miseries.

### 2. Contraindicated Activities During Sandhyakala

एतानि पञ्च कर्माणि संध्यायां वर्जयेद् बुधः । आहारं मैथुनं निद्रां स्वाध्यायं गमनं तथा ॥

**Reference:** Bhavaprakasha Purvakhanda 5/261

#### **Interpretation**

A wise individual should avoid eating, sleeping, sexual intercourse, excessive study, and travelling during Sandhyakala.

### 3. Ratribhojana Vidhi

रात्रौ तु भोजनं कुर्यात् प्रथमप्रहरान्तरे । किञ्चिद्भूतं समश्रीयात् दुर्जरं तत्र वर्जयेत् ॥

**Reference:** Bhavaprakasha Purvakhanda 5/265

**Interpretation-** Dinner should be consumed during the early part of the night. The quantity should be comparatively less, and heavy-to-digest food should be avoided.

### 4. Ideal Conduct Before Sleep

सायं भुक्त्वा लघु हितं समाहितमनाः शुचिः । सास्तारमनुसंस्मृत्य स्वाचार्यं चाथ संविशेत् ॥

**Reference:** Ashtanga Sangraha Sutrasthana 3/118

**Interpretation** -After consuming light and wholesome food, maintaining purity of body and mind, and reflecting upon one's actions, one should retire to bed peacefully.

### 5. Proper Sleeping Arrangement

युक्तोपधानं स्वास्तीर्णं विस्तीर्णमविषमं सुखम् । जानुतुल्यं मृदु शुभं सेवेत शयनासनम् ॥

**Reference:** Ashtanga Sangraha Sutrasthana 3/120

**Interpretation-** The bed should be clean, comfortable, spacious, even, soft, and suitable for sound sleep.

### 6. Importance of Triphala

त्रिफलां मधुसर्पिभ्यां निशि नेत्रबलाय च । स्वास्थ्यवृत्तिकरं नित्यं रोगोच्छेदकरं तथा ॥

**Reference:** Ashtanga Sangraha Sutrasthana 10/20

**Interpretation-** Regular nighttime consumption of Triphala with honey and ghee promotes eye health, preserves wellness, and helps prevent disease.

## 7. Physiology of Sleep

यदा तु मनसि क्लान्ते कर्मात्मानः क्लमान्विताः । विषयेभ्यो निवर्तन्ते तदा स्वपिति मानवः ॥

**Reference:** Charaka Samhita Sutrasthana 21/25

**Interpretation-**Sleep occurs when the mind, sensory organs, and motor organs become fatigued and withdraw from their respective objects.

## 8. Importance of Proper Sleep

निद्रायत्तं सुखं दुःखं पुष्टिः कार्श्यं बलाबलम् । वृषता क्लैब्यं ज्ञानमज्ञानं जीवितं न च ॥

**Reference:** Charaka Samhita Sutrasthana 21/26

**Interpretation-**Happiness and sorrow, nourishment and emaciation, strength and weakness, fertility and infertility, knowledge and ignorance, and even life itself depend upon proper sleep.

### ROLE OF RATRICHARYA IN MAINTAINING SHARIRIKA SWASTHYA

According to Ayurveda, *Sharirika Swasthya* is maintained through the equilibrium of *Doshas*, proper functioning of *Agni*, adequate nourishment of *Dhatus*, normal elimination of *Malas*, and preservation of *Bala* and *Ojas*. Ratricharya plays a vital role in achieving these objectives by promoting physiological restoration and maintaining internal balance.

Proper *Ratricharya* with *Laghu* and *Hita Ahara* supports *Agni*, ensuring efficient digestion and preventing the formation of *Ama*. The dietary and behavioral practices of Ratricharya also help maintain *Dosha Samyata* by regulating the natural fluctuations of *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha* during the night. Through proper digestion and restorative sleep, Ratricharya facilitates *Dhatu Poshana*, leading to the nourishment and maintenance of all seven *Dhatus*. *Nidra*, one of the *Trayopastambhas*, enhances *Bala* by restoring energy, promoting recovery, and improving the body's resistance to disease. Ratricharya also contributes to the preservation of *Ojas*, the essence of all *Dhatus*, by supporting healthy digestion, tissue nourishment, and adequate sleep. Furthermore, it aids the proper formation and elimination of *Purisha*, *Mutra*, and *Sveda*, thereby maintaining physiological cleanliness and balance. As a preventive health measure, Ratricharya helps reduce the risk of diseases arising from impaired digestion, sleep disturbances, and lifestyle irregularities. By regulating *Ahara*, *Nidra*, and *Brahmacharya*—the three pillars of life (*Trayopastambha*)—it promotes overall physical health and supports the Ayurvedic goal of *Swasthasya Swasthya Rakshanam*.

### ROLE OF RATRICHARYA IN MAINTAINING MANASIKA SWASTHYA

Ayurveda considers mental health (*Manasika Swasthya*) as an essential component of overall well-being. A healthy mind is characterized by the predominance of *Satva* and the balanced regulation of *Raja* and *Tama*. Among the various principles of *Swasthavritta*, Ratricharya plays an important role in maintaining mental equilibrium through proper sleep, sensory regulation, and disciplined conduct. The practices included in Ratricharya promote *Manasika Prasannata* by facilitating relaxation and reducing mental fatigue. *Nidra*, one of the *Trayopastambhas*, is essential for cognitive restoration, emotional stability, and mental strength. Acharya Charaka emphasizes the importance of sleep:

"निद्रायत्तं सुखं दुःखं पुष्टिः कार्श्यं बलाबलम् । वृषता क्लैब्यं ज्ञानमज्ञानं जीवितं न च ॥"

(Charaka Samhita, Sutrasthana 21/36)

Proper observance of Ratricharya supports the predominance of *Satva*, while helping regulate excessive *Raja* and *Tama*. It also contributes to the enhancement of *Dhi* (intellect), *Dhriti* (self-control), and *Smriti* (memory), thereby improving cognitive functions and emotional resilience. Practices such as *Anjana*, *Dhumapana*, and adequate sleep help maintain *Indriya Prasannata*, while a regulated nighttime routine reduces mental disturbances such as *Chinta*, *Bhaya*, *Shoka*, and *Krodha*. Furthermore, the discipline and self-regulation encouraged through Ratricharya support the principles of *Sadvritta* and promote psychological stability.

Thus, Ratricharya contributes significantly to the maintenance of *Manasika Swasthya* by fostering mental clarity, emotional balance, cognitive efficiency, and overall psychological well-being.

## SUMMARY

From an Ayurvedic perspective, Ratricharya plays a vital role in maintaining both physical and mental health. It helps preserve Agni, maintain Dosha balance, nourish Dhatus, enhance Bala and Ojas, support proper Mala Nirharana, and promote restorative Nidra. Additionally, it supports mental well-being by enhancing Satva, regulating Raja and Tama, improving Dhi, Dhriti, and Smriti, and maintaining emotional and cognitive balance. Thus, Ratricharya serves as an important preventive and promotive measure for overall health within the framework of Swasthavritta.

## DISCUSSION

The present review highlights that Ratricharya is a vital component of Swasthavritta, encompassing dietary, behavioral, and lifestyle practices that promote health and prevent disease. Proper observance of Ratricharya supports Agni, Dosha Samyata, Dhatu Poshana, Bala, and Ojas, thereby contributing to physical well-being. Nidra, one of the Trayopastambhas, plays a key role in physical restoration and mental health. Ratricharya also promotes Manasika Prasannata, supports Satva, regulates Raja and Tama, and enhances Dhi, Dhriti, and Smriti, contributing to emotional and cognitive balance. In the modern era of irregular sleep, late-night eating, and stress, the principles of Ratricharya remain highly relevant and serve as an effective strategy for preserving both physical and mental health in accordance with the Ayurvedic goal of Swasthasya Swasthya Rakshanam.

## CONCLUSION

Ratricharya is an important component of Swasthavritta that promotes both physical and mental health. It supports Agni, Dosha Samyata, Dhatu Poshana, Bala, and Ojas, while enhancing Manasika Prasannata, supporting Satva, regulating Raja and Tama, and preserving Dhi, Dhriti, and Smriti. In the modern era of irregular lifestyles and stress, Ratricharya provides a practical and holistic approach to health promotion and disease prevention, supporting the Ayurvedic goal of Swasthasya Swasthya Rakshanam.

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