



A Review on The Significance of *Ratricharya* (Night Regimen) In The Promotion of Health.

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Abstract:

The most important goal of human life is to attain the state of perfect health, health is not the absence of disease, and it is the harmonious balance of physical, mental and social well-being. Thus to attain the state of perfect well-being, one has to practice healthy regimen like *dinacharya* (daily regimen), *ritucharya* (seasonal regimen) and *ratricharya* (night regimen). In this 21st century people are working continuously day and night which could have serious implications on their health and well-being. The concept of *ratricharya* (night regimen) is very important for the promotion of health. By following the regimen of *Swasthavritta* (which includes *dinacharya*, *ratricharya*, *ritucharya* and *sadvritta*) one can live for hundred years without any disease or illness.

Keywords: Health, *Ratricharya*, *Ahara*, *Nidra*, Sleep.

INTRODUCTION:

Health is an important component of human life. Health is defined as the condition of being sound in body mind of spirit, especially freedom from physical diseases or pain. Health in the broad sense of the world does not merely mean the absence of disease or provision of diagnostic, curative and preventive services. It also includes as embodied in the WHO defines a state of physical mental and social well-being. The harmonious balance of this state of the human individual integrated into his environment constitutes health¹. In *Ayurvedic* classics, various principles have been explained for the maintenance of good health. They include *dinacharya* (daily regimen), *ratricharya* (night regimen), and *ritucharya* (seasonal regimen). *Ratricharya* deals with the regimen that has to be followed from dusk, through the night up to the dawn which helps in promotion of health and prevention of diseases². Therefore the study is aimed at exploring the various aspects of *ratricharya* and its role in the maintenance of healthy well-being.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1. To understand the concept of *ratricharya* conceptually.
2. To understand the role of the *ratricharya* in the present era in the promotion of health and prevention of diseases.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

- A. Literature search - Review of Literature regarding the concept of *ratricharya* is collected from the classical texts of *Ayurveda*
- B. Type of study - Fundamental Study - Literary study on *ratricharya* and its role in health promotion and disease prevention.

RATRI (Night)

Night is considered to be full of *tamas* (darkness). It is said to create fear and in the minds of the people. It is said to enhance *moha* (delusion). It is said to pacify the pitta dosha and it increases the *kapha dosha*. It also enhances *kama* (desire) and reduces *klama* (fatigue)³.

JYOTSNA (Moonlight)

As per the *Ayurvedic classics* the moonlight that falls on the body has a direct effect on the body and mind. The moonlight is said to be *sheeta* (cool). It enhances *kama* (desires). It is said to pacify the pitta dosha and it reduces *daha* (Burning sensation). Because of its gentle properties, it enhances *kapha* and *vata dosha*. It revitalizes the body⁴.

SANDHYACHARYA (Regimens to be followed in dawn and dusk)

Sandhyacharya is the conjunction of the last part of the day and the first part of the night and also vice versa. *Ratricharya* begins and ends with *Sandhyacharya* viz dawn and dusk. This period is considered to be inauspicious and many regimens are contraindicated in this *kala* (time). We are not supposed to consume any type of *ahara* (food) at *sandhyakala*. If we consume food at *sandhyakala* we may become prey to many diseases and ill health. It is forbidden to have sex in the *sandhyakala* as it can cause foetal anomalies. Sleeping at the *sandhyakala* is strictly prohibited as it could lead of loss of wealth and fame. One must also abstain from studying in the *sandhyakala* as it leads to loss of lifespan⁵.

RATRICHARYA

The three important aspects of *ratricharya* are *Ahara* (Food), *Shayana* (Sleep), *Mithuna* (Sexual life).

On Ahara (food)

As per *Ayurvedic classics* one must consume food in the first part of night itself so that that the food will be properly digested. The quantity of food consumed should also be of less quantity. Heavy foods which are difficult to digest should be avoided as digestion is weak during the night than in the day⁶. We are not supposed to consume curd at night time as it is *abhishyandhi* (obstructive) and will cause *mandagni* (weak digestive fire) and weakens the digestion⁷.

On Sleep

One must habituate to sleeping at the right place and at the right time. Night sleep nourishes the body and mind whereas staying awake in the night is *ruksha* (dry)⁸. One must not sleep in a cot which is too tall or too short. One must also abstain from sleeping on a broken cot as it might cause injury to the body and even it may lead to disturbed sleep. One must not sleep under a tree because of the excess carbon di oxide produced by the tree. One must not sleep in curved position as it may lead to spinal deformities and disturbed sleep and hence one must try to sleep in comfortable position⁹. Sleeping at the proper time and proper duration leads to equilibrium of *dhatu*s (tissues) and alleviates lethargy. Adequate night sleep provides nourishment, good complexion, strength, enthusiasm, restores gastric fire and enhances digestion¹⁰. Staying awake at night is said to be *ruksha* (dry). Proper night sleep pacifies kapha and destroys poisonous compounds in the body. One must only sleep in proper places and one must not stay in improper places like sacred places, cross roads, gardens, cremation ground etc. during night time¹¹.

On Sexual Activities

Sexual desires are present in all human beings. If one does not indulge in sexual activities appropriately it could lead to many diseases like obesity, Diabetes and general weakness¹². Sexual regimen should be practiced only on auspicious days and it should not be practiced on specific inauspicious days and time like *Sandhyakala* or mid-day or mid night¹³. One must indulge in sex in private only after assessing his state of health.

Seasonal regimen for Sexual practices

In winter one can indulge in sexual activities as per desire after taking *vrishya* (Aphrodisiac) drugs. In *sharath ritu* (autumn) sex is advised only once in three days. In *varsha* (rainy) and *greeshma ritu* (summer) it is advised only once a fortnight¹⁴.

Post Sexual activities

One should take bath, Consume milk mixed with sugar, Consume food mixed with sugar, Consume meat and Have good sleep¹⁵. These diet and sleep is advised to restore the vigour and energy lost during the act of sexual intercourse. By following proper sexual activity as per the regimen mentioned in *Ayurvedic* classics one could attain long life, delayed ageing, increase in colour and complexion, strength, and good muscle tone¹⁶.

Other activities

Night travel

In *Ayurvedic* classics Night travel was forbidden except in case of emergencies probably due to the fear of thieves and wild animals. While travelling one must only go out carrying a head gear stick, Umbrella and foot wear for self-protection¹⁷.

On study

One having good health should get up in the morning and do essential routines. One must worship gods, sages, cows, Brahmins, elders, teacher's one must sit on a clean ground and study. *Acharyas* have said that one can study in the mid-day, afternoon and night without wasting time¹⁸.

Discussion

As we are living in the fast forward era of 21st century, people are preoccupied with their work day and night. Their health is grossly affected. Entire circadian rhythm of the body is affected. By the kind of work people are doing, it is hard to differentiate between day and night. People are not eating food at an appropriate time or are they sleeping adequately hence the end result is the manifestation of so many diseases in the body. In this era the reality is that people are not even aware of any regimen to be followed at night for the promotion of health and well-being. Thus it is equally important to follow the regimen of *ratricharya* as like *dinacharya* for a good health. *Ratricharya* or night regimen is an important concept which was first mentioned in *Ayurvedic* classical literature. Even in modern literature it is hard to find a single direct reference about the regimen to follow at night for the maintenance of health and well-being although we get scattered yet inconclusive research articles. The major regimen of *Ratricharya* consists of Food, Sleep and Good Sexual life or Complete Abstinence. *Ayurveda* says that food should be consumed in the first part of the night. Modern research has proved that heavy food intake during bed time can lead to obesity and other metabolic syndrome. Limiting or avoiding food during night time has been proposed as both a weight loss strategy and approach to improve health and body composition. Negative outcomes have been demonstrated in response to large meals in population that consume a majority of daily food intake during the night. Data is beginning to show that it is better to consume small or low energy foods at night rather than large meals¹⁹.

As per a study done by *Suri & Pradhan* (2010) night snacking syndrome is associated with number of harmful behaviours - Physical and Psychological, including poor dietary quality, and also skipping main meal and nibbling at night may have led to significant change seen in eating pattern and lifestyle of late adolescents. As shown in this study, these fluctuations and changed patterns together could force the youngsters at risk of various chronic illnesses further disrupting their health status and eating attitude causing clinical eating disorders so awareness about healthy eating is important. Night eating syndrome is found to be a syndrome more common in the obese and it can result in further obesity²⁰. As per research done by *Chaput JP et al*, 7-8 hours of sleep is associated with lower prevalence of metabolic syndrome and reduced overall cardio-metabolic risk in adults. Sleeping less than 6 hours per night is associated with an elevated cardio-metabolic risk²¹. As per the research conducted by *Grandner et al*, (2013), the technology

use was associated with sleep patterns, the more type of devices used, the more individuals reported difficulty falling asleep and maintaining sleep especially if use of technology was active. Apart from sleep, healthy sex life is said to be important for the maintenance of good health of both males and females²². As per Liu & Waite (2013) woman are especially vulnerable to cardiovascular problems from poor relationship quality or marital loss²³. In older ages especially moderate frequency of sex may bring some health benefits but having sex too frequently or extremely high level of physical or emotional enjoyment might be a risk factor for experiencing Cardiovascular diseases over time²⁴. The role of celibacy in the maintenance of good health is not much known. Further research is needed to establish the same Thus it is important to follow various rules of *rathricharya* appropriately as said in *Ayurveda* classics for the maintenance of health and well-being.

Conclusion

To achieve the better health/positive health and prevent diseases one has to practice the principles mentioned in *Swasthavritta* like the concept of *ratricharya*. It is said that one who does not resort to *dinadi dinacharya* (daily regimen) including *sandhyacharya* (evening regimens) and *ratricharya* (night regimen) will fall prey to diseases. Thus effort should be made to practice the same on a daily basis so as to maintain a good health. Thus it is inevitable to say that we have to practice *dinacharya* and *ratricharya continuously* to attain the highest state of well-being especially people who are working in IT sector can modify their lifestyle accordingly.

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