

**RATRICHARYA: AN AYURVEDIC NIGHT REGIMEN FOR HEALTH PROMOTION AND DISEASE PREVENTION - A NARRATIVE REVIEW**¹Dr. Sachin Borkar, ²Dr. Rajiv Mundhane, ³Dr. Trupti Ukey¹Phd Scholar, Associate Professor, Department of Rognidan and Vikruti Vigyan, Jupiter Ayurved College, Nagpur.²Phd Guide, Professor and Hod, Dmm Ayurved College, Yavatmal, Nagpur.³Assistant Professor, Department of Shalya Tantra, Bmam Nandanwan Nagpur.

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ABSTRACT

Background: Lifestyle-related disorders, sleep disturbances, and circadian rhythm disruption have emerged as major public health concerns worldwide. Ayurveda emphasizes the preservation of health through *Swasthavritta*, among which Ratricharya (night regimen) constitutes an essential component that governs healthy conduct from evening until awakening. Classical Ayurvedic texts describe a series of practices including timely evening meals, postprandial walking, oral hygiene, regulated sexual conduct, adequate sleep, and avoidance of night vigil to maintain physiological and psychological well-being. Despite their potential relevance to contemporary healthcare, these principles remain relatively underexplored in modern scientific literature. **Objective:** To comprehensively review the concept of Ratricharya described in classical Ayurvedic literature and critically correlate its principles with contemporary scientific evidence, highlighting its role in health promotion, disease prevention, and integrative lifestyle medicine. **Materials and Methods:** A narrative review was conducted using classical Ayurvedic texts, including *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Ashtanga Hridaya*, *Ashtanga Sangraha*, *Kashyapa Samhita*, *Bhavaprakasha*, and other relevant treatises. Contemporary literature was retrieved from electronic databases such as PubMed, Scopus, Google Scholar, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, and the Cochrane Library using keywords related to *Ratricharya*, sleep hygiene, circadian rhythm, chronobiology, and lifestyle medicine. Relevant literature was critically analysed and synthesized thematically. **Discussion:** Classical Ayurvedic recommendations regarding the timing and quality of the evening meal, postprandial activities, oral hygiene, regulated sexual conduct, restorative sleep, and avoidance of prolonged night vigil demonstrate substantial conceptual agreement with current evidence in chronobiology, sleep medicine, and chrononutrition. Emerging scientific evidence indicates that synchronization of behavioural activities with endogenous circadian rhythms supports metabolic regulation, endocrine balance, immune function, cognitive performance, and psychological well-being. However, comprehensive scientific evaluation of Ratricharya as an integrated lifestyle intervention remains limited. **Conclusion:** *Ratricharya* represents a holistic Ayurvedic framework for aligning nighttime behaviour with natural biological rhythms. The available evidence suggests that its principles are scientifically plausible and highly relevant to contemporary preventive and lifestyle medicine. Further interdisciplinary research and well-designed clinical studies are warranted to strengthen the evidence base and facilitate the integration of *Ratricharya* into modern healthcare practices.

KEYWORDS: Ayurveda; *Ratricharya*; *Swasthavritta*; Circadian Rhythm; Chronobiology; Sleep Hygiene; Lifestyle Medicine; Health Promotion; Preventive Medicine.

INTRODUCTION

The increasing burden of non-communicable diseases, mental health disorders, sleep disturbances, and lifestyle-

related illnesses has shifted the focus of healthcare from disease treatment to health promotion and preventive medicine. Modern medicine increasingly recognizes the

importance of circadian rhythm, sleep hygiene, and behavioural interventions in maintaining physiological homeostasis and preventing chronic diseases. Consequently, there is growing interest in traditional systems of medicine that emphasize lifestyle regulation as a cornerstone of health.

Ayurveda, the ancient science of life, adopts a holistic approach to health by integrating physical, psychological, social, and spiritual well-being. The primary objective of Ayurveda, "**Swasthasya Swasthya Rakshanam Aturasya Vikara Prashamanam Cha**", underscores the preservation of health in healthy individuals while providing appropriate treatment for those affected by disease. To accomplish this, Ayurveda advocates a disciplined lifestyle through the principles of *Swasthavritta*, which encompasses daily (*Dinacharya*), seasonal (*Ritucharya*), and nightly (*Ratricharya*) regimens, along with dietary and behavioural guidelines aimed at maintaining equilibrium of the *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, *Agni*, and *Manas*.

Among these preventive measures, *Ratricharya* constitutes an essential yet relatively underexplored aspect of Ayurvedic lifestyle science. The term refers to the ideal code of conduct to be followed during the nighttime, beginning from the evening meal until awakening the following morning. Classical Ayurvedic texts prescribe specific recommendations regarding the timing and quality of dinner, postprandial activities, oral hygiene, sleep, sexual conduct, mental relaxation, and avoidance of unhealthy nocturnal practices. These recommendations are intended to facilitate physiological restoration, maintain digestive and metabolic functions, support tissue nourishment, promote mental tranquillity, and ensure optimal health.

The nighttime represents a unique physiological period characterized by synchronized neuroendocrine, metabolic, and immunological processes essential for cellular repair, memory consolidation, hormonal regulation, immune surveillance, and restoration of homeostasis. However, rapid urbanization, occupational demands, artificial lighting, excessive digital screen exposure, shift work, irregular meal timings, and prolonged wakefulness have significantly disrupted natural sleep–wake cycles in modern society. Such circadian misalignment has been associated with an increased risk of obesity, diabetes mellitus, cardiovascular diseases, gastrointestinal disorders, mood disorders, cognitive impairment, reproductive dysfunction, and reduced quality of life.

Interestingly, many principles of *Ratricharya* closely correspond with contemporary concepts of chronobiology, circadian medicine, and sleep science. Recommendations such as consuming an early and light evening meal, maintaining regular sleep schedules, avoiding late-night wakefulness (*Ratrijagarana*), promoting mental relaxation before sleep, and regulating

nocturnal activities align with current evidence demonstrating their beneficial effects on circadian synchronization, melatonin secretion, metabolic regulation, autonomic balance, glymphatic clearance, and psychological well-being. These similarities suggest that the classical Ayurvedic understanding of nighttime physiology possesses substantial scientific relevance and may provide valuable insights for modern preventive healthcare.

Despite the growing scientific interest in circadian biology and lifestyle medicine, the concept of *Ratricharya* has received comparatively limited scholarly attention. Existing literature predominantly focuses on *Dinacharya*, sleep physiology, or isolated behavioural practices, whereas comprehensive reviews integrating classical Ayurvedic descriptions with current scientific evidence remain scarce. A systematic synthesis of these concepts is therefore essential to elucidate their physiological basis, therapeutic significance, and potential application in contemporary healthcare.

Accordingly, this narrative review aims to comprehensively examine the concept of *Ratricharya* as described in classical Ayurvedic literature, critically correlate its principles with contemporary scientific evidence, and highlight its relevance in health promotion, disease prevention, and integrative lifestyle medicine. By bridging traditional wisdom with modern chronobiological research, this review seeks to provide a scientific perspective on the enduring importance of appropriate nighttime conduct in maintaining holistic health and well-being.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Study Design

The present study was conducted as a narrative review to comprehensively examine the concept of *Ratricharya* described in classical Ayurvedic literature and to critically correlate its principles with contemporary scientific evidence. The review aimed to synthesize available information on the physiological, preventive, and therapeutic significance of nighttime regimens from both traditional and modern perspectives. A qualitative approach was adopted to integrate classical Ayurvedic concepts with recent advances in chronobiology, sleep medicine, circadian biology, and lifestyle medicine.

2.2 Literature Search Strategy

A comprehensive literature search was performed using both classical Ayurvedic texts and contemporary scientific databases. The Ayurvedic literature included **Charaka Samhita**, **Sushruta Samhita**, **Ashtanga Hridaya**, **Ashtanga Sangraha**, **Kashyapa Samhita**, **Bhavaprakasha**, **Yogaratanakara**, and other relevant classical texts and commentaries that describe the principles of *Ratricharya*, *Nidra*, *Ahara*, *Ratrijagarana*, *Brahmacharya*, and related concepts. Contemporary evidence was retrieved from electronic databases, including **PubMed**, **Scopus**, **Google Scholar**, **Web of**

Science, ScienceDirect, and the Cochrane Library.

The search incorporated keywords and Boolean combinations such as "Ratricharya," "Ayurveda," "night regimen," "sleep hygiene," "circadian rhythm," "chronobiology," "melatonin," "biological clock," "sleep physiology," and "lifestyle medicine." Relevant review articles, clinical studies, observational studies, experimental studies, and practice guidelines published in English were included to establish correlations between classical Ayurvedic concepts and current scientific understanding. The retrieved literature was critically reviewed, organized thematically, and synthesized to present an evidence-informed narrative on the significance of Ratricharya in health promotion and disease prevention.

3. Concept of Ratricharya

3.1 Nirukti (Etymology) of Ratricharya

The term **Ratricharya** is derived from two Sanskrit words: *Ratri* (रात्रि), meaning night, and *Charya* (चर्या), meaning conduct, regimen, or prescribed mode of living. Thus, Ratricharya literally denotes the regimen or code of conduct to be followed during the nighttime. In Ayurveda, *Charya* encompasses a series of disciplined activities that are intended to maintain harmony between the individual and the natural biological rhythm. Therefore, Ratricharya refers to a scientifically planned sequence of activities beginning in the evening and continuing until the individual awakens the following morning, with the objective of preserving physiological equilibrium and promoting holistic health.

3.2 Definition of Ratricharya

Ratricharya comprises the set of lifestyle practices recommended for the nighttime to facilitate physical restoration, mental relaxation, and optimal physiological functioning. Although classical Ayurvedic texts do not provide a single explicit definition of the term, its concept is elaborated through descriptions of appropriate evening meals (*Ratribhojana*), postprandial activities, oral hygiene, sleep (*Nidra*), sexual conduct (*Maithuna*), and the avoidance of inappropriate nocturnal practices such as *Ratrijagarana* (night vigil). Collectively, these practices are intended to preserve the equilibrium of **Dosha**, maintain **Agni**, promote proper nourishment of **Dhatu**, support **Ojas**, and ensure restorative sleep.

From a contemporary perspective, Ratricharya may be understood as a chronobiologically aligned nighttime lifestyle that synchronizes behavioural activities with the body's endogenous circadian rhythm. Such synchronization supports neuroendocrine regulation, metabolic homeostasis, immune competence, tissue repair, cognitive function, and psychological well-being.

3.3 Classical Description of Ratricharya

The principles of Ratricharya are described across several classical Ayurvedic treatises, including the **Charaka Samhita**, **Sushruta Samhita**, **Ashtanga Hridaya**, **Ashtanga Sangraha**, and **Kashyapa Samhita**.

Rather than presenting Ratricharya as a single, isolated chapter, these texts discuss its components under topics related to *Swasthavritta*, *Dinacharya*, *Nidra*, *Ahara Vidhi*, *Sadvritta*, and *Vega Dharana*. Together, these descriptions provide a comprehensive framework for healthy nighttime conduct.

The classical recommendations emphasize consuming a light and easily digestible evening meal at an appropriate time, engaging in gentle postprandial walking (*Shatapavali*), maintaining personal and oral hygiene, avoiding excessive physical or mental exertion, regulating sexual activity according to individual strength and seasonal variations, and obtaining adequate nocturnal sleep. Simultaneously, Ayurveda advises against late-night meals, excessive wakefulness, emotional disturbances, incompatible dietary habits, and behaviours that disturb normal physiological rhythms. These measures collectively contribute to maintaining digestive efficiency, balancing **Dosha**, nourishing body tissues, preserving mental stability, and promoting longevity.

The concept of Ratricharya reflects Ayurveda's profound understanding of the cyclical relationship between environmental changes and human physiology. By aligning nighttime activities with the natural rhythm of day and night, Ayurveda aims to optimize restorative processes that are essential for maintaining health, preventing disease, and enhancing the quality of life.

4. Components of Ratricharya: Classical Perspectives and Scientific Correlations

4.1 Ratribhojana (Evening Meal)

Classical Perspective

Ahara (diet) is regarded as one of the **Trayopastambha** (three pillars of life) in Ayurveda and is considered indispensable for sustaining life, strength, complexion, vitality, and longevity. The evening meal (*Ratribhojana*) forms an integral component of **Ratricharya** and has been described in classical texts as requiring careful attention to its timing, quantity, quality, and method of consumption. Since digestive activity gradually declines during the evening and night, Ayurveda recommends that dinner should be **light (Laghu)**, **warm (Ushna)**, **freshly prepared**, **easily digestible**, and **consumed in an appropriate quantity**. Heavy, unctuous, incompatible, stale, or excessively spicy foods are discouraged at night because they impair **Agni**, promote **Ama** formation, and disturb the equilibrium of **Dosha**.

Classical texts further advise that the evening meal should be consumed before the onset of deep night, allowing sufficient time for digestion before sleep. Eating immediately before bedtime or delaying dinner until late at night is considered detrimental, as it interferes with normal digestive processes and predisposes individuals to disorders of the gastrointestinal tract and metabolism. Meals should be consumed with mindfulness, in a calm environment,

avoiding excessive talking, emotional disturbance, or distraction. Such practices ensure optimal digestion, proper assimilation of nutrients, and maintenance of physiological balance.

Scientific Correlation

Contemporary research strongly supports the Ayurvedic principles governing the evening meal. Human metabolism follows a circadian rhythm, with greater insulin sensitivity, glucose tolerance, and digestive efficiency during the daytime compared to the late evening. Consuming large or calorie-dense meals late at night has been associated with impaired glucose metabolism, increased postprandial hyperglycaemia, reduced lipid oxidation, gastroesophageal reflux, obesity, metabolic syndrome, and cardiovascular risk.

Chrononutrition research demonstrates that early and lighter dinners improve glycaemic control, facilitate weight management, enhance sleep quality, and support circadian synchronization. Furthermore, maintaining a consistent meal schedule helps regulate peripheral biological clocks located in the liver, pancreas, adipose tissue, and gastrointestinal tract, thereby promoting metabolic homeostasis. Late-night eating, in contrast, disrupts circadian gene expression, alters hormonal secretion, and contributes to chronic low-grade inflammation.

Thus, the Ayurvedic recommendations of consuming a timely, light, wholesome, and easily digestible evening meal exhibit remarkable concordance with current evidence in chronobiology and nutritional science. *Ratricharya* serves not only to satisfy hunger but also to optimize digestive efficiency, preserve metabolic health, and prepare the body for restorative nocturnal physiological processes.

5. DISCUSSION

Ratricharya represents one of the fundamental lifestyle principles described in Ayurveda for preserving health and preventing disease. Although often overshadowed by the more extensively discussed concept of *Dinacharya*, the nighttime regimen constitutes an equally important component of *Swasthavritta*, as it governs the period during which the body undergoes physiological restoration, tissue repair, metabolic regulation, and psychological rejuvenation. The present narrative review demonstrates that the classical recommendations of *Ratricharya* are not merely behavioural prescriptions but reflect a comprehensive understanding of biological rhythms that closely aligns with contemporary concepts of chronobiology and circadian medicine.

The classical Ayurvedic emphasis on consuming a timely and light evening meal, engaging in mild postprandial activity, maintaining oral hygiene, observing moderation in sexual activity, obtaining adequate nocturnal sleep, and avoiding unnecessary night vigil collectively aims to preserve the equilibrium of *Dosha*, maintain *Agni*,

promote *Dhatu Poshana*, and protect *Ojas*. These principles recognize that physiological functions vary according to the time of day and that appropriate synchronization of behaviour with environmental rhythms is essential for maintaining health. Modern research similarly demonstrates that disruptions in circadian rhythm adversely affect endocrine, metabolic, immune, neurological, and cardiovascular functions, thereby increasing susceptibility to chronic diseases.

One of the most notable observations emerging from this review is the remarkable concordance between Ayurvedic principles and current scientific evidence. Chrono-nutrition supports the recommendation of an early and easily digestible evening meal, while sleep medicine reinforces the importance of regular sleep schedules and sufficient sleep duration for cognitive performance, hormonal regulation, immune function, and metabolic homeostasis. Likewise, chronobiological studies have established that exposure to artificial light, irregular meal timing, prolonged screen use, and sleep deprivation disrupt circadian synchronization and contribute to obesity, diabetes mellitus, cardiovascular diseases, mood disorders, gastrointestinal disturbances, and impaired quality of life. These findings provide a plausible scientific basis for several classical recommendations described under *Ratricharya*.

The increasing prevalence of shift work, digital dependence, irregular dietary habits, and chronic sleep deprivation has created a substantial mismatch between modern lifestyles and intrinsic biological rhythms. Consequently, the principles of *Ratricharya* have acquired renewed relevance as practical, low-cost, and culturally acceptable lifestyle interventions that may complement contemporary preventive healthcare. Their integration into health promotion programmes, sleep hygiene education, workplace wellness initiatives, and lifestyle modification strategies may contribute to reducing the burden of lifestyle-related disorders.

Despite these encouraging correlations, the available scientific literature specifically evaluating *Ratricharya* as a comprehensive intervention remains limited. Most published studies investigate individual components such as meal timing, sleep hygiene, circadian rhythm, or physical activity independently rather than examining the integrated Ayurvedic nighttime regimen. Furthermore, heterogeneity in study designs, outcome measures, participant characteristics, and intervention protocols limits direct comparison across studies. Robust clinical trials, longitudinal cohort studies, and interdisciplinary research combining Ayurvedic principles with chronobiological assessments are therefore required to establish stronger evidence regarding the effectiveness of *Ratricharya* in disease prevention and health promotion.

The present review also has certain limitations. As a narrative review, it is dependent upon the available published literature and does not include a systematic

assessment of study quality or quantitative synthesis of evidence. Nevertheless, it provides a comprehensive conceptual overview by integrating classical Ayurvedic literature with contemporary scientific findings and highlights important areas for future investigation.

Overall, the synthesis presented in this review suggests that *Ratricharya* represents a scientifically plausible and clinically relevant lifestyle framework whose principles remain applicable in the context of present-day healthcare. Strengthening the evidence base through well-designed translational and clinical research may facilitate its wider incorporation into integrative medicine and public health practice.

6. CONCLUSION

Ratricharya embodies the Ayurvedic philosophy of harmonizing human behaviour with the natural rhythm of day and night to preserve health and prevent disease. The classical recommendations encompassing appropriate evening meals, postprandial practices, oral hygiene, regulated sexual conduct, adequate sleep, and avoidance of unnecessary night vigil collectively promote physiological restoration, metabolic balance, mental well-being, and optimal functioning of the body.

The findings of this narrative review indicate that many principles of *Ratricharya* exhibit notable concordance with contemporary evidence from chronobiology, sleep medicine, and lifestyle science. Scientific advances in circadian biology increasingly support the importance of synchronized meal timing, restorative sleep, and regulation of nocturnal activities in maintaining metabolic, endocrine, neurological, and immune homeostasis. These observations reinforce the continuing relevance of Ayurvedic nighttime regimens in modern preventive and integrative healthcare.

Although encouraging evidence exists for several individual components of *Ratricharya*, comprehensive scientific evaluation of the complete nighttime regimen remains limited. Future interdisciplinary research, including well-designed clinical trials and implementation studies, is warranted to evaluate its effectiveness, underlying mechanisms, and potential role in preventing lifestyle-related disorders.

In an era characterized by irregular work schedules, excessive digital exposure, and widespread circadian disruption, *Ratricharya* offers a holistic and practical framework for promoting healthy living. Integrating its evidence-informed principles into contemporary lifestyle medicine may contribute to improving sleep quality, metabolic health, psychological well-being, and overall quality of life while preserving the preventive essence of Ayurveda.

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