

REVIEW ARTICLE

Ratrijagarana as Etiological Factor of Disease: A Narrative Review of References from *Brihatrayi*

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ABSTRACT

In *Ayurveda*, *Ratrijagarana* (night awakening) is considered an important etiological factor for various diseases due to its disturbance of the natural sleep cycle, one of the *Trayopastambha* (three sub-pillars of health). Modern lifestyles often disrupt sleep patterns, particularly in professions requiring night shifts, leading to adverse health effects. This review compiles references from *Brihatrayi* to analyze *Ratrijagarana* as a causative factor (*Nidana*) and contraindication (*Varjya*) in disease pathogenesis. A systematic search of *Brihatrayi* and its commentaries was conducted using keywords like *jAgaraNa*, *rAtrijAgaraNa*, and *prajAgar* via the *e-Samhita* portal developed by the National Institute of Indian Medical Heritage (NIIMH), Hyderabad. Relevant references were extracted and analyzed. *Ratrijagarana* is related to aggravation of *Vata Dosha* and *Pitta Dosha*, leading to conditions such as *Shiroroga* (head disorders), *Pratishyaya* (rhinitis), *Urustambha* (thigh stiffness), *Vataja Prameha* (diabetes), and *Ojakshaya* (immunodeficiency). It causes *Rukshata* (dryness), impairs *Rasa Dhatu* circulation, and disrupts digestion and mental health. Contraindications include post-*Dhumapana* and post-operative procedures, pregnancy, wound healing, *Varsha Ritu* (rainy season), and eye health. *Ayurveda* emphasizes *Ratrijagarana* as a major lifestyle risk factor, disrupting *Dosha* balance and contributing to physical and mental disorders. Restoring proper sleep hygiene is essential in preventing and managing diseases, particularly *Vata*-dominant conditions. This study highlights the clinical relevance of sleep regulation in *Ayurvedic* practice and modern healthcare.

Key Words *Ayurveda*, *Abnormal Sleep*, *Night Awakening*, *Nidra Viparyaya*, *Vyadhi Nidana*

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INTRODUCTION

Nidra (sleep) is a fundamental pillar of health in *Ayurveda*, known as one of the *Trayopastambha* (sub-pillars of life) along with *Ahara* (diet) and *Brahmacharya* (celibacy). A sound sleep is therefore important to maintain proper health. The normal sleep cycle is disturbed nowadays due to modern lifestyles. Usually, occupations

like drivers, security guards, police, doctors, nurses, etc., are the jobs requiring late-night or full-night wakefulness. This habitual night awakening is referred to as *Ratrijagarana* in *Ayurveda*. It is described in *Ayurvedic* classical texts as a potent etiological factor for various diseases.

REVIEW ARTICLE

Dinacharya (daily regimen) and *Ritucharya* (seasonal regimen) are guidelines to be followed by healthy individuals to maintain health. There are specific timings indicated for sleeping. *Nidra Vega* (Urge of Sleep) is one of the natural urges that are not meant to be suppressed and are termed as *Adharaneeya Vega* (insuppressible urges). Diseases manifest either when these types of urges are suppressed or are initiated forcefully. *Ratrijagarana* is one such condition of *Nidra Vega Dharana* (suppressing the natural urge of sleep), where the natural sleep cycle is disturbed and the urge is thereby suppressed. In addition to this, nowhere in *Ayurveda* classics is *Ratrijagarana* advised for a healthy individual. However, there are some cases where it is one of the modes of treatment for a particular disease.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This review study aimed to search the main texts and commentaries of *Brihatrayi*, viz. *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Ashtanga Hridaya* for textual references for *Ratrijagarana* with the following objectives.

1. To enumerate references where *Ratrijagarana* is mentioned as a specific *Nidana* of disease.
2. To enumerate references where *Ratrijagarana* is *Varjya* in a specific disease.

METHODOLOGY

The literary search was both online and offline, mainly focused on *Brihatrayis*. A phonetic

search key words like '*jAgaraNa*', '*jAgar*', '*prajAgar*', and '*rAtrijAgaraNa*', were used in the 'Search *Samhita*' section of the *e-Samhita* portal developed by the National Institute of Indian Medical Heritage, Hyderabad. *Charakasamhita* with *Ayurveda Dipika* commentary of *Chakrapani*, *Sushrutasamhita* with *Nibandha Sangraha* commentary of *Dalhana*, *Ashtangahridayam* with *Sarvangasundara* commentary of *Arunadutta*, and *Ayurveda Rasayana* commentary of *Hemadri* were searched for the relevant references. A total of fifteen references were found in *Charaka Samhita*, eight references in *Sushruta Samhita*, and nine references in *Ashtanga Hridayam*, which included both their main texts and respective commentaries. These references were looked into the available translated textbooks for the relevant meaning and context of *Ratrijagarana* as a cause of diseases.

RESULTS

RATRIJAGARANA AS A SPECIFIC NIDANA (CAUSE) OF VYADHI

In *Ayurvedic* literature, *Ratrijagarana* (night awakening) is consistently portrayed as a harmful lifestyle habit with a wide range of adverse effects on physical and mental health. According to *Dalhana's* commentary, *Ratrijagarana* and *Divaswapna* are referred to as *Vishama Shayana*¹. They are also termed as *Swapna Viparyaya*². Commentator *Hemadri* of *Ashtanga Hridayam* in *Ayurveda Rasayana* defines

REVIEW ARTICLE

Ratrijagarana as an act of not sleeping at the proper time, and ultimately waking up till late at night. It further imparts dryness in the body, which is an obvious known cause for *Vata Vyadhi*³. In *Ashtanga Hridayam*, the author defines *Ratrijagarana* as *Akala-Jagara-Svapnam*, which refers to not sleeping when it is time to sleep⁴. It is advised that all activities, including staying awake at night, should be done in moderation, and even individuals who are habituated to this practice should avoid its overindulgence. This is what a wise person should follow⁵.

In *Charaka Samhita*, *Ratrijagarana* is counted among the important causative factors for *Shiroroga* (diseases of the head)⁶. It aggravates *Vata Dosha*, which disturbs the blood vessels in the head region and leads to severe headache⁷. Over time, such disturbance can also result in *Ojas Kshaya* (depletion of vitality or immunity)⁸. *Ratrijagarana* also causes *Rukshata* (dryness) in the body⁹, which further aggravates *Vata Dosha*¹⁰.

In the context of *Vyadhi Samprapti* (pathogenesis of diseases), *Ratrijagarana* is described as a triggering factor in *Vataja Jwara*¹¹, and also in the etiopathology of *Vataja Prameha*¹², where *Vata Dosha* is said to aggravate immediately in those who stay awake at night. It also disturbs mental balance and digestive function; even wholesome food taken in an appropriate quantity does not digest properly if the mind is disturbed due to sleeplessness¹³. In *Madatyaya* (alcoholism), if a person becomes emaciated due

to disturbed sleep, it leads to a *Vataja* dominant *Madatyaya*¹⁴. *Ratrijagarana* leads to the manifestation of *dosha* in the head region by aggravating *Vata Dosha*, giving rise to *Pratishyaya* (coryza/Rhinitis)¹⁵, and in the manifestation of *Urustambha* (thigh stiffness)¹⁶. In addition to this, excessive sleeplessness leads to aggravation of *Vata Dosha*¹⁷, and further vitiates both *Vata* and *Shonita* (blood), resulting in *Vata Shonita*¹⁸.

In the *Sushruta Samhita*, it is stated that *Ratrijagarana* and consumption of *Vata Prakopaka Ahara* (substances aggravating *Vata Dosha*) hamper proper circulation of *Rasa Dhatu*. The *Rasa Dhatu* does not circulate completely in the body, and being in less quantity, it does not circulate in the entire body, due to which the weight of that person decreases and the body becomes very thin¹⁹. It is also directly mentioned as a factor for *Vata Prakopa*²⁰. *Ratrijagarana* is responsible for causing complications related to *Vata* and *Pitta Dosha*²¹.

In *Ashtanga Hridaya*, *Ratrijagarana* is mentioned as an etiological factor in *Shopha* (edema)²², *Urustambha*²³, and *Vata Shonita*²⁴. It is also cited as an etiological factor in diseases of the nose²⁵ and diseases of the head²⁶.

CONTRAINDICATIONS OF RATRIJAGARANA IN VARIOUS CONTEXTS

In *Brihatrayi*, *Ratrijagarana* is consistently listed as an important factor to avoid for maintaining health and preventing disease. The *Charaka Samhita* clearly warns against

November 10th 2025 Volume 23, Issue 3 Page 20

REVIEW ARTICLE

Dhumapana (medicated smoking) for someone who has had a sleepless night, stating that doing so out of ignorance or at the wrong time will severely aggravate disorders²⁷. It is included among *Sadvritta* (general forbidden codes of conduct) that it should not be indulged in night awakening²⁸. The *Sushruta Samhita* emphasizes this contraindication for specific vulnerable conditions, such as in individuals with wounds²⁹, pregnant women³⁰, and specifically during the *Varsha Ritu*³¹. In the *Ashtanga Hridayam*, the author specifically illustrates *Ratrijagarana* as a practice to be avoided to prevent diseases of the eyes³². Altogether, these texts emphasize that altering the natural rhythm of sleep by staying awake at night is a high-risk factor for disease and should be avoided.

DISCUSSION

This review of *Brihatrayi* shows that *Ratrijagarana* is a major cause of many diseases. Our body has a natural rhythm for sleep and wakefulness, and when we disturb this rhythm by avoiding sleep at night, it harms both the body and the mind. According to *Hemadri* and *Chakrapani*, staying awake at night causes *Rukshata* (dryness) in the body. This directly vitiates *Vata Dosha*, which leads to disorders like *Shiroroga*, *Pratishyaya*, *Urustambha*, *Vatarakta*, *Vataja Prameha*, and *Vataja Jvara*. It can also lead to weight loss and weakness, as the circulation of body fluids and nutrition, i.e., *Rasa Dhatu*, is disturbed. The findings also suggest

that disturbed sleep weakens our immunity and lowers the body's strength, making us more prone to illness. In the perspective of mental health, *Acharya Charaka* explains that a lack of proper sleep disturbs the mind's balance and peace. It also affects *Agni*, which shows a deep connection between the mind and the gut, what modern science now calls the gut-brain axis. Along with *Vata Dosha*, *Pitta Dosha* is also aggravated due to *Ratrijagarana*. *Acharya Sushruta* clearly links it to disorders involving both *Vata* and *Pitta*³³.

The *Brihatrayi* texts also clearly warn that *Ratrijagarana* is especially harmful in certain situations. For example, after procedures like *Dhumapana* (medicated smoking), which already dries the body, staying awake further increases *Vata* and is not advised. During pregnancy, *Ratrijagarana* may harm both the mother and the baby. In the rainy season, *Varsha Ritu* (rainy season), when *Vata* naturally becomes active, sleep loss can worsen *Vata*-related diseases like joint pain and low immunity. It is also not advised when someone is recovering from a wound, as lack of sleep delays healing. This is confirmed by modern research, which says sleep is essential for proper tissue repair and immune functioning. Similarly, sleep is important for eye health. *Ayurveda* says avoiding sleep at night may lead to eye dryness and weakness, something we also see today in people who overuse screens at night.

Thus, avoiding night awakening is not just a suggestion; it is essential for good health.

REVIEW ARTICLE

Ayurveda advises following a regular sleep routine to maintain balance in *Doshas* and to preserve *Ojas*, the vital strength of the body. For doctors and health workers, it is important to ask patients about their sleep habits, especially if they suffer from diseases related to *Vata Dosha*, such as headaches, diabetes, nerve issues, wound healing problems, digestive complaints, or weak immunity. In such cases, correcting the sleep routine should be part of the main treatment. Ancient *Ayurvedic* texts give a clear and practical explanation of how staying awake at night can cause many health problems. They describe how it increases *Vata* and *Pitta*, creates dryness, weakens the body, and affects both physical and mental health. They also caution against it in specific times like pregnancy, after injury, or in rainy seasons.

CONCLUSION

This review clearly shows that *Ratrijagarana* is not just a bad habit but a serious health risk according to *Ayurveda*. It disturbs the body's natural sleep cycle, increases *Vata* and *Pitta Doshas*, and causes many physical and mental diseases. Major *Ayurvedic* texts like *Brihatrayi Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Ashtanga Hridaya* all agree that *Ratrijagarana* can lead to weakness, poor digestion, a disturbed mind, lower immunity, and many serious illnesses like headaches, joint pain, and even diabetes-like conditions. They also warn against it during special conditions like pregnancy, injury

recovery, rainy season, and after certain treatments like *Dhumapana* and post-operative procedures. In today's fast-moving world, where late-night work and screen time are common, this ancient wisdom is highly relevant. To maintain good health, following a proper sleep routine and avoiding night awakening is very important. Doctors should also consider sleep patterns while treating patients with lifestyle-related disorders. Promoting good sleep habits is a simple yet powerful step toward better health.

REVIEW ARTICLE

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REVIEW ARTICLE

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REVIEW ARTICLE

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