

“HARMONIZING WITH NATURE: A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF *RITUCHARYA* PRINCIPLES & PRACTICES”**Dr. Nidhi Kumari*¹**

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ABSTRACT

Ritu, the season, classified by different features shows different effects on the body as well as the environment. Ayurveda has various rules and regimens (*Charya*), regarding diet and behavior. *Ritu* means season and *charya* means following or discipline. *Ritucharya* in simple words means seasonal routine, the lifestyle and diet that need to be followed according to the particular seasonal requirement to maintain hormonal balance in our body and to be fit and healthy. The main principle of Ayurvedic system of medicine is preventive aspect, can be achieved by following *ritucharya*. This is a very important aspect of preventive medicine as mentioned in Ayurvedic texts. In this review article, various *Ritus* and *Ritucharya* mentioned in the classics of Ayurveda has been discussed.

KEYWORDS: *Ritu*, *Ritucharya*, Ayurveda.**INTRODUCTION**

Ayurveda is an ancient science of life that emphasizes maintaining and promoting health, preventing diseases, and curing diseases through various therapeutic measures. According to Ayurveda, there are two main aims: “*Swasthya Swasthya Rakshana*” which means preserving the health of healthy persons, and “*Aaturasya Vikara Prasamanam*” which means curing the diseases of the diseased. “*Swasthya Swasthya Rakshana*” means that Ayurveda aims to maintain the health of healthy people. It emphasizes the importance of eating healthy foods, getting enough sleep, and exercising regularly. Ayurveda also uses natural remedies like herbs and oils to help prevent illnesses. “*Aaturasya Vikara Prasamanam*” means that Ayurveda aims to cure diseases in those who are sick. It uses various therapeutic measures like herbal medicines, massages, and dietary changes to help treat various ailments.^[1]

This traditional Indian system of medicine which has been around for over 5,000 years, is based on the idea that the body, mind, and spirit are all connected.^[2] Thus, the primary goal is not simply to treat diseases but also to protect persons from the various sufferings of life that they must encounter on a daily basis.^[3]

Ritu or season has been defined as the natural periods in which the year is divided. The year according to Ayurveda is divided into two periods called *ayana* depending on the direction and movement of sun these *ayan*as are *uttarayana* and *dakshinayana*, each is formed of three *ritus*. As per Ayurveda the diet regimen of an

individual must involve consideration of *ritus* variation which are; *shishira*, *vasanta*, *grishma varsha*, *sharada* and *hemanta ritu*. In the two *ayan*as namely *uttarayan* and *dakshinayan* each one contains three *ritus* the *shishira*, *vasanta*, and *grishma ritus* are considered in *uttarayan* and *varsha*, *sharada* and *hemanta ritus* are considered in *dakshinayan*.

Ritucharya is prominently discussed in the first few chapters of most of the Samhitas of Ayurveda. Prevention of disease to maintain health is being the first and foremost aim of the holistic science of Ayurveda. In *Tasyashitiya* chapter of *Charaka Samhita*, it is said “*Tasya Shitadiya Ahaarbalam Varnascha Vardhate. Tasyartusatmayam Vaditam Chestaharvyapasarayam*,” which means ‘the strength and complexion of the person knowing the suitable diet and regimen for every season and practicing accordingly are enhanced.’^[4] Main theme of this chapter is to make people aware concerning the methods to live in accordance with the environment. In this article, the *Ritucharyas* mentioned in the classics of Ayurveda have been discussed and emphasis has been given on the likely impact of *Ritucharya* on lifestyle disorders.

State of strength

In the beginning of *Visarga Kala* and ending of *Adana kala*, that is, during *Varsha* and *Grishma*, weakness occurs. In the middle of the solstices, that is, during *Sharada* and *Vasanta*, strength remains in moderate grade and in the end of *Visarga Kala* and in the

beginning of *Adana Kala*, that is, during *Hemanta* and *Shishira*, maximum strength is seen.^[5]

To overcome this affect of seasonal changes *ayurvedic acharyas* have given the concept of *ritucharya* (season regimen; mode of living in different season).

The Ayurvedic Guide to Seasonal Living (Ritucharya)

KALA (Time is referred to as "Kala" in Sanskrit)

Aadaana Kaala (Uttarayana) (Northern Solstice)

The six months of the year during which the sun is facing north is known as *Aadaana Kaala (Uttarayana)* (Northern Solstice). The wind and sun are fierce at this time, which is also referred to as take-off time. Dehydration and weakness are caused by the sun's energy drain on humans and the cooling influence of the earth. It gets hot and dry out there. Strength is weakened because of this crippling time.^[6]

During *Uttar Ayana* in the Indian subcontinent, the seasons that change are *Vasanta* (Spring), *Shishira* (Winter), and *Grishma* (Summer). When it comes to temperature and dryness of the weather, the time frame might be likened to mid-January to mid-July. Overall, it has a detrimental impact on the ecosystem, which includes humans. The strength of *Katu* (Pungent), *Kashaya* (Astringent), and *Tikta* (Bitter) tastes within the *Rasas* (Tastes) increases as the sun moves north from the Tropic of Capricorn to the Tropic of Cancer. Modern science says that this is comparable to how the earth slowly revolves around the sun until it reaches the summer solstice on June 21st each year, when the sun's rays directly strike the North Pole's 30-degree axis.^[7]

Visarga Kaala (Dakshinayana) (Southern Solstice)

The six months of the year known as *Visarga Kaala* are whenever the sun is facing either north or south. It is often referred to as the giving season. People may access energy from the sun and the moon as it is at its strongest at this time. During *Dakshinayana* on the Indian subcontinent, the changing seasons include *Hemanta* (Late autumn), *Sarada* (Fall), and *Varsha* (Monsoon), all of which contribute to a refreshing atmosphere by cooling the earth and improving the strength of living things. When cool sets in, similar to mid-July to mid-January, anabolic activity outweighs degenerative metabolism in the environment. A person's strength increases at this time due to the unctuousness that settles in the air and the predominance of the *Amla* (Sour), *Lavana* (Salty), and *Madhura* (Sweet) *Rasas*. It is also known by the name *Visarga Kala*. This is analogous to the Earth's continuous orbit around the sun, which results in the yearly winter solstice happening on December 21, when the sun's rays directly touch the South Pole's 30-degree longitude.^[8]

Ritucharya

Regimen of different seasons

SHISHIRA (winter) RITU

General condition

Mid-January to mid-March (approximately) is considered as *Shishira ritu* (winter). During this season, the environment remains cold, along with cold wind. The predominant *Rasa* and *Mahabhuta* during this season are *Tikta* (bitter) and *Akasha* respectively. The strength of the person becomes less, deposition of the *Kapha Dosha* occurs and *Agni* (catabolism) remains in a higher state.^[9]

Diet regimen

Foods having *Amla* (sour) as the predominant taste are preferred. Cereals and pulses, wheat/gram flour products, new rice, corn, and others, are advised. Ginger, garlic, *Haritaki* (fruits of *Terminalia chebula*), *Pippali* (fruits of *Piper longum*), sugarcane products, and milk and milk products are to be included in the diet. Foods having *Katu* (pungent), *Tikta* (bitter), *Kashaya* (astringent) predominant *rasa* are to be avoided. *Laghu* (light) and *Shita* (cold) foods are advised to be prohibited.^[10]

Lifestyle

Massage with oil/powder/paste, bathing with lukewarm water, exposure to sunlight, wearing warm clothes are mentioned to follow. *Vata* aggravating lifestyle like exposure to cold wind, excessive walking, sleep at late night, are to be avoided.

2. VASANT (SPRING) RITU

General Condition- The surmised time is from mid-Walk to mid-May. This season is considered as time of blossoming and beginning of new leaves. Strength of the individual remaining parts in medium degree, vitiation of *Kapha Dosha* happens and *Agni* stays in *Manda* (low) state.

Diet Routine- One ought to take effectively edible food sources. Among oats, old grain, wheat, rice, and others are liked. Among heartbeats, lentil and *Mudga* (green gram) can be taken. Food things tasting *Tikta* (unpleasant), *Katu* (impactful), and *Kashaya* (astringent) are to be taken. Other than those, honey is to be remembered for the eating regimen. Meats like that of *Shahsa* (bunny), which are not difficult to process can be taken. Food sources which are difficult to process are to be stayed away from. Those which are *Sheeta* (cold), *Snigdha* (thick), *Master* (weighty), *Amla* (sharp), *Madhura* (sweet) are not liked. New grains, curd, cold beverages are precluded.

Life Style- One ought to involve warm water for washing reason, may do practice during *Vasant Ritu*. *Udvartana* (rub) with powder of *Chandana* (*Santalum collection*), *Kesara* (*Crocus sativus*), *Agaru* (Eagle Wood), *Kavala* (swish), *Dhooma* (sedated smoking), *Anjana* (collyrium), and *panchakarma* gauges primarily *Vamana* (medicated emesis) and *Nasya* (nasal prescriptions) are encouraged. Presenting to sun, Ghee,

Slick food sources, Cold food sources, Weighty, Sweet, harsh, pungent food things and day-rest are completely contraindicated during this season.

GRISHMA (Summer) RITU

General condition

Mid-May to mid-July (approximately) is considered as *Grishma* (summer) season. Environment is prevalent with intense heat and unhealthy wind. The river bodies dried and the plants appear lifeless. The predominant *Rasa* is *Katu* (pungent) and *Mahabhuta* are *Agni* and *Vayu*. The strength of the person become less, deposition of *Vata Dosha* occurs, but the vitiated *Kapha Dosha* is pacified during this season. *Agni* of the person will remain in mild state.

Diet regimen

Foods which are light to digest—those having *Madhura* (sweet), *Snigdha* (unctuous), *Sheeta* (cold), and *Drava* (liquid) *Guna*, such as rice, lentil, etc, are to be taken. Drinking plenty of water and other liquids, such as cold water, buttermilk, fruit juices, meat soups, mango juice, churned curd with pepper, is to be practiced. At bedtime milk with sugar candy is to be taken. *Lavana* and food with *Katu* (pungent) and *Amla* (sour) taste and *Ushna* (warm) foods are to be avoided.

Lifestyle

Staying in cool places, applying sandal wood and other aromatic pastes over the body, adorning with flowers, wearing light dresses and sleeping at day time are helpful. During night one can enjoy the cooled moon rays with breeze. Excessive exercise or hard work is to be avoided; too much sexual indulgence and alcoholic preparations are prohibited.

VARSHA (Monsoon) RITU

General condition

Mid-July to mid-September (approximately) is considered as *Varsha Ritu*. During this season the sky is covered by clouds and rains occur without thunderstorm. The ponds, rivers, etc., are filled with water. The predominant *Rasa* and *Mahabhuta* during this season are *Amla* (sour), and *Prithvi* and *Agni*, respectively. The strength of the person again becomes less, vitiation of *Vata Dosha* and deposition of *Pitta Dosha*, *Agni* also gets vitiated.

Diet regimen

Foods having *Amla* (sour) and *Lavana* (salty) taste and of *Sneha* (unctuous) qualities are to be taken. Among cereals, old barley, rice, wheat, etc., are advised. Besides meat soup, *Yusha* (soup), etc. are to be included in the diet. It is mentioned that one should take medicated water or boiled water.

Intake of river water, churned preparations having more water, excessive liquid and wine are to be avoided. The foods, which are heavy and hard to digest, like meat, etc., are prohibited.

Lifestyle

Use of boiled water for bath and rubbing the body with oil properly after bath is advised. Medicated *Basti* (enema) is prescribed as an evacuative measure to expel vitiated *Doshas*. Getting wet in rain, day-sleep, exercise, hard work, sexual indulgence, wind, staying at river-bank, etc., are to be prohibited.

5. SHARAD (AUTUMN) RITU

General Condition—The period between mid-September to mid-November is *Sharad Ritu* (fall). During this time the Sun turns out to be brilliant, the sky stays clear and once in a while with white cloud, and the earth is covered with wet mud. The strength of the individual remaining parts medium, placation of vitiated *Vata Dosha* and vitiation of *Pitta Dosha* happen, and movement of *Agni* increments during this season.

Diet Routine—Food sources are having *Madhura* (sweet) and *Tikta* (harsh) taste, and of *Laghu* (light to process) and cold properties are encouraged. Food varieties having the properties to mollify vitiated *Pitta* are encouraged. Wheat, green gram, sugar sweets, honey, *Patola* (*Trichosanthes dioica*), tissue of creatures of dry land (*Jangala Mamsa*) are to be remembered for the eating routine. Hot, harsh, sweet, and astringent food varieties are to be stayed away from. The food things, like fat, oils, meat of amphibian creatures, curds, and so forth, are additionally to be excluded from the eating regimen during this season.

Life Style—Propensity for eating food, just when there is a sensation of craving is suggested. One ought to take water decontaminated by the beams of sun in day time and beams of moon at evening for drinking, washing, and so on. It is encouraged to wear bloom festoons, and to apply glue of *Chandana* (*Santalum collection*) on the body. It is said that moon beams in the initial 3 hour of night is helpful for wellbeing. Operations, like *Virechana* (cured purgation), *Rakta-Mokshana* (phlebotomy), and so forth, ought to be finished during this season. Day-rest, extreme eating, unreasonable openness to daylight, and so on, are to be kept away from.

Hemanta (late autumn) RITU

General condition

Mid-November to mid-January is considered as *Hemanta* (late autumn) *Ritu*. Blow of cold winds starts and chillness is felt. Predominant *rasa* during this season is *Madhura* and the predominant *Mahabhutas* are *Prithivi* and *Apa*. The strength of a person remains on highest grade and vitiated *Pitta Dosha* get pacified. Activity of *Agni* is increased.

Diet regimen

One should use unctuous, sweet, sour, and salty foods. Among cereals and pulses, new rice, flour preparations, green gram, *Masha*, etc., are mentioned to be used. Various meats, fats, milk and milk products, sugarcane,

products, *Sidhu* (fermented preparations) *Tila* (sesame), and so on, are also to be included in the diet. *Vata* aggravating foods, such as *laghu* (light), cold, and dry foods are to be avoided. Intake of cold drinks is also contraindicated.

Lifestyle

Exercise, body and head massage, use of warm water, *Atapa - Sevana* (sunbath), application of *Agaru* on body, heavy clothing, sexual indulgence with one partner, residing in warm places is recommended. Exposure to strong and cold wind, habit of day sleep, etc., are mentioned to be avoided.^[11]

DISCUSSION

Grasp the idea of wellbeing and health. Comprehend the significance of occasional changes. The information on 'Variation and Acclimatization' Have a cheerful and solid existence in legitimate transformation with the nature/climate. To forestall occasionally influencing contaminations, sicknesses (in which month the hypersensitive problems, loose bowels, jungle fever and so on.

CONCLUSION

A significant number of the exogenous and endogenous cadence have explicit stage relationship with one another; and that implies that they intermix and fit one another. In the event that body is unfit to take on itself to stressors because of modification in unambiguous person of seasons, it might prompt *Dosha Vaishamya*, which thus might deliver the body exceptionally powerless to one or different sorts of problems. As variations as per the changes, is the key for endurance, the information on *Ritucharya* (routine for different seasons) is in this way significant. With an Earth-wide temperature boost and dissimilarity in the appearance of season, securing information about *Ritucharya* in the current scenario is vital. Severe dietary regimens and customary activity can go quite far in avoidance the Non transferable sicknesses. The information on *Ritucharya* and its severe consistence as per the *Ritu* assists with keeping up with the concordance of the *Tridosha*, *agni*, *dhatu* and *srotas* and to lead sickness free life.

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