

**A UNIQUE TRADITIONAL, SEASONAL AND REGIONAL PORRIDGE PREPARATION-
KARKITAKA MASA KANJI**

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is a science of life in which; preventive aspects for a healthy person and curative aspects for a diseased person is mentioned. As Ayurveda emphasize more on the preventive aspects; it has regained its glory in last few decades as prevention has never been given the first place in any other system of medicine. To understand preventive aspect of Ayurveda; basics of Dinacharya (Daily Regimen) and Ritucharya (Seasonal Regimen) should be clear. Karkitaka masa kanji is a special rice preparation which is commonly used in kerala state during karkitaka masa as Ritucharya regimen for preventive purpose.

KEY WORD: Karkitaka masa, kanji, Ritucharya.

INTRODUCTION

As we all know that season is the result of the movement of the sun. Hence, with every two masa (months) commencing with magha are the six ritus (seasons) Sisira, Vasanta, Grisma, Varsha, Sharat and

Hima(hemanta) successively. The three commencing with sisira(sisira, vasanta,and grisma) from the uttarayana (northern solastice) also known as Adana kala because the sun takes away the strength of the people daily.^[1]

The three ritus (seasons) from uttarayana (northern solastice) or Adanakala(debilitating period).

Table 1: Adanakala.

S.No.	English months	Hindi months	Ritu	Features
1.	Mid January – Mid March	Magha & phalguna	Sisira	Cold dewy season
2.	Mid March – Mid May	Chaitra & Vaisakha	Vasanta	Spring season
3.	Mid May – Mid July	Jayestha & Asadha	Grishma	Summer season

The three ritus from daksinayana (southern solastice) or visarga kala(strengthening period)

Table 2: Visargakala.

S.No.	English months	Hindi months	Ritu	Features
1.	Mid July – Mid september	Sravana & Bhadrapada	Varsha	Rainy season
2.	Mid september – Mid november	Asvayuja & Kartika	Sharat	Autumn season
3.	Mid november – Mid January	Margasirsa & Pausa	hemanta	winter season

In varsha(rainy season) the agni (digestive activity) though weak in persons, debilitated by the adankala(summer) undergoes further decrease and gets vitiated by the dosas. The dosas get aggravated by the effect of thick clouds full of water, sudden blow of cold wind laden with snow, water gets dirty because of rain,

warmth of the earth and sourness, as a result of which and the poor strength of digestive activity the dosas start vitiating one another. Hence, all general methods which mitigate the dosas and steps to enhance the digestive activity should be adopted during this season.^[2]

Regimen during Varsha Ritu: Based on the weak agni, special purificatory procedures, food items and lifestyle is mentioned in our samhitas.

After undergoing purificatory(vamana, virechana) the person should also be administered asthapana(decoction enema therapy). He should use old grains for food, meat-juice processed with spices etc. meat of animals of desert-like lands, soup of pulses, wine prepared from grapes and fermented items, decoctions, which are old or mastu (whey, thin water of curds) processed with more of souvarchala and powder of panchkola should be used. Rain water or water from deep wells, well boiled should be used for drinking. On days of no sunlight at all, the

food should be predominantly sour, salty and fatty, dry, mixed with honey and easily digestible.^[3]

Persons should not move about on foot, use perfumes, expose his clothes to fragrant fumes, and dwell in high raised house, devoid of heat, cold and snow.^[4]

River water, udamantha (beverage prepared with flour of corn mixed with ghee), sleeping at daytime, exertion and exposure to sun should be avoided.^[5]

Distribution of Season in Kerala: Similarly, in Kerala state there is a distribution of season with slight change.

Table 3: Comparative table showing relevance of months in Malayalam era.

S.No.	Months in Malayalam Era	Sanskrit solar Months	Gregorian Calendar	Saka Era
1.	Chingam	Simha	Aug-Sep	Sravana-Bhadrapada
2.	Kanni	Kanya	Sep-Oct	Bhadrapada-Aswin
3.	Thulam	Tula	Oct-Nov	Aswina-Kartika
4.	Vrischikam	Vrischikam	Nov-Dec	Kartika-Margasirsa
5...	Dhanu	Dhanu	Dec-Jan	Margasirs-Pausa
6.	Makaram	Makara	Jan-Feb	Pausa-Magha
7.	Kumbham	Kumbha	Feb-March	Magha-Phalaguna
8.	Meenam	Mina	March-April	Phalagun-Phaitra
9.	Medam	Mesa	April-May	Chaitra-Vaisakha
10.	Etavam	Vrisabha	May-June	Vaisakha-Jyestha
11.	Mithunam	Mithuna	June-July	Jyestha-Asadha
12.	Karkitakam	Karkitaka	July-August	Asadha-Shravana

The Malayalam months follows the sanskritic sauramasa(solar month) naming convention eg.chingam is named after the corresponding Sanskrit solar month, the simham, and so on.

Karkitaka Masa: In the Malayalam calendar, Karkitaka masa which is the 12th masa corresponds to July-August month. The 1st of karkitaka marks the summer solstice (dakshinayanam) according to the Malayalam calendar and according to the astronomical calendar the summer solstice is on June 21st, and the winter solstice on December 21st.

The karkitaka falls in July-August which is actually varsha ritu. Varsha ritu marks the beginning of visarga kala.

The renowned traditional Visha Vaidya Shri Brahmadatha from Ullannoor Mana, Kerala says that though the common practice of "considering a new year" is from simha masa(chinga masam) the actual year starts from mesha itself.

In Kerala state, ritu consideration is slightly different as all the 6 ritus do not occur here instead it receives excess rain and heat. So, the sisira in this part is considerably negligible and varsha ritu is in excess. Hence, the total time period of varsha ritu is considered as 4 months sub

divided into praavrut and varsha. The first part of the varsha is considered as praavrut and the latter is considered as varsha ritu.

The reference regarding ritu consideration for the south to Vindhya is available in Susruta Samhita.^[6]

As the praavrut and varsha can be considered as varsha only, this causes the actual ritu sandhi of greeshma and varsha which is actually seen in the beginning of June. Again, because of the geographical presence of Western Ghat as a barrier between Tamilnadu and Kerala, the latter being a coastal region; receives heavy rain during praavrut itself. As the rain starts from the beginning of June itself which means the actual praavrut ritu starts in mid vrishabha masa itself(beginning of June). Hence, people become ritu saatmya i.e. adjusted with the ritu as soon as the Karkitaka starts. And, therefore it can be considered as Saadhaarana kaala but without proper agni bala. As a result, dosha prakopa may not be significant as compared to alpagani during this season. And, hence agnideepana aahara should be used as karkitaka kanji is a good appetite enhancer and samaahaara. The sama kaalatwa is the reason for karkitaka chikitsa also.

Karkitaka masa kanji: Many popular formulations are available to prepare karkitaka masa kanji but the most common one is mentioned here.



Formulation

Ingredients

1. Ajamoda(*Apium graveolens*), Shunthi (*Zingiber officinale*), Jeerakam(*Cuminum cyminum*), Sarshapam(*Brassica juncea*), Maricham(*Piper nigrum*), Dhaanayaka(*Coriandrum sativum*), dried Haridra(*Curcuma longa*), dried Lasuna(*Allium sativum*), all 5 gms each
2. Methi(*Trigonella foenum-Graceum*)- 25gm
3. Navara(Rice)- 100gm

Alternatively, following drugs are also used for its preparation. Dhanayak, Ela, Sathapushpa, Jeera, Bakuchi, Vidanga, Pippali, Pippali moola, Chavya, Chitraka, shunthi.

Method of preparation: Take all the drugs in the given quantity and powder it. 100gm of navara(rice) or njavara(shastika) is washed properly and boiled in 1 litre of water. Once it is properly cooked half teaspoon powder is added. Coconut milk, ghee or both can be added as per requirement.

Rasapanchaka: All the drugs mentioned in the main formulation is predominantly katu and tikta in rasa, laghu, ruksha, tiksna in guna, katu in vipaka and usna virya.

Action & Uses: All the drugs are predominantly agni deepana, paachana, krimighna, vrsya, balya in nature with kaphavatashamaka property.

DISCUSSION

Karkitaka masa kanji is a unique traditional, seasonal and regional porridge preparation from Kerala state specially designed to be taken during Karkitaka masa. This masa falls in July to August month and is Varsha ritu, which marks the beginning of visargakala. Varsha ritu has

special ritucharya mentioned in our samhita to protect the agni which has become weak in persons, debilitated by the adankala(summer) undergoes further decrease and gets vitiated by the dosa during this season. Hence, all general methods (which mitigate the dosas) and measures to enhance the digestive activity should be adopted during this season.

CONCLUSION

Karkitaka masa kanji is a very special preparation used during Karkitaka masa to boost immunity. It is an interesting topic for further research and Needed to be popularized as it is helpful in maintaining health during rainy season where maximum number of infectious cases is reported because of low immunity. Hence, this can be a very important preventive diet to enhance agnibala. Also, it may be useful as diet in clinical cases where the disease has occurred because of weak agni.

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