

**A REVIEW ON RITU AND RITUCHARYA**

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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,<sup>[1]</sup> mentioned in the classics of Ayurveda has been discussed.

**KEYWORDS:** Seasonal regimens, ritu, ritucharya.

**INTRODUCTION**

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 *ayanas* 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 *ayanas* 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*.

**Ritus**

|             |                                 |              |
|-------------|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Uttarayan   | Shishira, vasanta, and grishma. | Adana kala   |
| Dakshinayan | Varsha, sharada and hemanta.    | Visarga kala |

*Uttarayana* indicates the ascent of the sun or northward movement of the sun and termed as *aadan kal*, in this period the sun and the wind are powerful, heat and dryness in the environment increased, which causes dryness in the body and thus reduces *bala*.

| Kaal (semester)              | Ritu (season) | Maas (month)   | Properties of the season | Powerful taste       | Dosha prevalent |
|------------------------------|---------------|--|--------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| Aadaan (Northeren Solastice) | sishira       | Magha and Phalguna (mid January to mid march)        | Cold season              | Tikta (bitter)       | Pitta           |
|                              | Vasant        | Chaitra and Baisakh (mid March to mid May)           | Spring season            | Kashaya (astringent) | Kapha           |
|                              | grishma       | Jyeshtha and Aashadha (mid May to mid July)          | Summer season            | kattu                | Vata            |
| Visarga (Southern Solastice) | Varsa         | Shravan and Bhadrpada (mid July to mid September)    | Rainy season             | Amala (sour)         | Vata            |
|                              | Sharad        | Aashvin and Kartika (mid September to mid November)  | Autumn season            | Lavan (salty)        | Pitta           |
|                              | Hemant        | Margshirsha and Pausha (mid November to mid January) | Winter season            | Madhura (sweet)      | Pitta           |

*Dakshinayana* indicates the descent of the sun or movement of the sun in southern direction. In this period, the wind is not very dry; the moon is more powerful than sun. The earth becomes cool due to the clouds, rain and cold winds. The strength of person enhances during this period. It is also called *visarga kala*. The six weathers are also the part of these *kaals* as summer, Spring & Cold seasons forms the *Uttrayan Kaal* & Rainy, Autumn & Winter season forms the *Dakshinayaan Kaal*.

### 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 Sharata 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.<sup>[1]</sup>

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

### Ritucharya

#### Regimen of different seasons

##### Shishira (winter)

#### 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.

#### 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.

#### 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.

##### Vasant (spring)

#### General condition

The approximate time is from mid-March to mid-May. This season is considered as season of flowering and origin of new leaves. Predominant *Rasa* and *Mahabhuta* during this season are *Kashaya* (astringent), and *Prithvi*

and *Vayu* respectively. Strength of the person remains in medium degree, vitiation of *Kapha Dosha* occurs and *Agni* remains in *Manda* state.

#### Diet regimen

One should take easily digestible foods. Among cereals, old barley, wheat, rice, and others are preferred. Among pulses, lentil, Mugda, and others, can be taken. Food items tasting *Tikta* (bitter), *Katu* (pungent), and *Kashaya* (astringent) are to be taken. Besides those, honey is to be included in the diet. Meats like that of *Shahsa* (rabbit), which are easy to digest can be taken. Foods which are hard to digest are to be avoided. Those which are *Sheeta* (cold), *Snigdha* (viscous), *Guru* (heavy), *Amla* (sour), *Madhura* (sweet) are not preferred. New grains, curd, cold drinks, and so on, are also to be prohibited.

#### Lifestyle

One should use warm water for bathing purpose, may do exercise during *Vasant Ritu Udvartana* (massage) with powder of *Chandana* (Santalum album), *Kesara* (Crocus sativus), *Agaru*, and others, *Kavala* (gargle), *Dhooma* (smoking), *Anjana* (collyrium), and evacuative measures, such as *Vamana* And *Nasya* are advised. Day-sleep is strictly contraindicated during this season.

##### Grishma (summer)

#### 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)****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.

**Sharat (autumn)****General condition**

The period between mid-September to mid-November is Sharat Ritu (autumn). During this time the Sun becomes bright, the sky remains clear and sometimes with white cloud, and the earth is covered with wet mud. The predominant rasa is Lavana (salty) and predominant Mahabhutas are Apa and Agni. The strength of the person remains medium, pacification of vitiated Vata Dosha and vitiation of Pitta Dosha occur, and activity of Agni increases during this season.

**Diet regimen**

Foods are having Madhura (sweet) and Tikta (bitter) taste, and of Laghu (light to digest) and cold properties are advised. Foods having the properties to pacify vitiated Pitta are advised. Wheat, green gram, sugar candy, honey, Patola (*Trichosanthes dioica*), flesh of animals of dry land (Jangala Mamsa) are to be included in the diet. Hot, bitter, sweet, and astringent foods are to be avoided. The food items, such as fat, oils, meat of aquatic animals, curds, etc., are also to be not included in the diet during this season.

**Lifestyle**

Habit of eating food, only when there is a feeling of hunger is recommended. One should take water purified by the rays of sun in day time and rays of moon at night time for drinking, bathing, etc. It is advised to wear

flower garlands, and to apply paste of *Chandana* (*Santalum album*) on the body. It is said that moon rays in the first 3 h of night is conducive for health. Medical procedures, such as *Virechana* (purging), *Rakta - Mokshana* (bloodletting), etc, should be done during this season. Day-sleep, excessive eating, excessive exposure to sunlight, etc., are to be avoided.

**Hemanta (late autumn)****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.<sup>[3]</sup>

**DISCUSSION**

This is the way the ancient sages set up the regimen for various seasons on analytical reasoning to obtain Swastha (health) and prevent the diseases. The examples set by them stand as a hint to decide other dos' and don'ts' in the regimen—Ritucharya. The environmental factors include the nature of the land, water, and various atmospheric phenomena, including temperature, humidity, wind, rain, clouds, and atmospheric pressure. All these environmental factors undergo a continuous change and at a time, no two moments are exactly alike in a given place. Thus with the rising Sun the temperature keeps on rising and gradually drops at night. The maximum and minimum temperature fluctuates daily but it is highest in summer and lowest in winter. Similarly, all these factors shows seasonal variations and these variations for a particular time are known as season.<sup>[4]</sup> We should follow ritucharya that mentioned in ayurvedic classics to obtain swastha and prevent from diseases.

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