

AN OVERVIEW OF SHARAD RITUCHARYA

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Article Received on 04/09/2020

Article Revised on 25/09/2020

Article Accepted on 15/10/2020

ABSTRACT

The newly emerging diseases and diminishing immunity have made humans to seriously think about their health. Lifestyle modulation and adaptation according to climate is the need of hour. The glorious Ayurveda has its principal focus of conserving health and prevention of disease before their occurrence.^[1] To serve this purpose, *Aacharya* have described *Dincharya* (daily regimen) and *Ritucharya* (seasonal regimen). One can cherish good health by following proper *Ritucharya*, described in classical texts of Ayurveda. The living beings especially humans are hugely affected by the change in climate. The features of all the *Ritus*, dietary and habitual modulation according to changing *Ritu* has been widely explained in the foremost texts of Ayurveda. Here, the *Sharad Ritu* which is one of the *Ritu's* of *Dakshinayan* is overviewed so as to present the dietary and behavioral regimen in this season. The *Sharad Ritu* marks the transition from summers to winters. The hot sun rays in *Sharad Ritu* exaggerates the *Pitta Dosha* which is already accumulated in body in the *Varsha Ritu*. So dietary and habitual modifications which are *Pitta Shamak* in nature should be followed in *Sharad Ritu* along with the *Shodhan* procedures like *Virechan* and *Raktamokshan*.

KEYWORDS: *Sharad Ritu, Ritucharya, Dakshinayan.*

INTRODUCTION

The advent of latest technology and digital controls have, on one hand reduced the human efforts to a greater extent, but on the other hand it has created sluggishness in the physical activity of man. Also, with easy availability of junk and packaged food the authenticity of Indian food is getting extinct. As a result of which many new diseases are emerging day by day. The main cause of this is ignorance of humans towards the seasons and various conducts to be followed according to change in climate. The treasure of Ayurveda has precious knowledge of *Ritucharya* which is explained in almost all the classic text of Ayurveda. The *Ritucharya* involves, following the genuine rules regarding *Ahara* and *Vihara* according to the changing season. There is a strong need to follow some rules regarding diet and habits in order to combat the upcoming diseases. The extensive use of processed food nowadays has brought about significant imbalance in the *Doshas*, which is the root cause of all the diseases. Each *Ritu* has its own characteristics and adaptation according to the changing *Ritu* in terms of *Ahara* and *Vihara* is very essential.

The year is broadly divided into two *Ayans* which are *Uttarayana* also called *Aadan Kaal* and *Dakshinayan* known as *Visarga Kaal*. These *Ayans* are further divided into three *Ritus* in each, that means six *Ritus* in a year.

Shishir, Vasant and *Greeshma* *Ritus* being part of *Uttarayana* while *Dakshinayan* includes *Varsha, Sharad* and *Hemant Ritus*.^[2] As per the Hindu calendar the *Sharad Ritu* includes the month of *Ashwin* and *Kartik*. Whereas in English calendar it starts from 22nd September and ends on 21st December. The *Pitta* which is already accumulated in the body in *Varsha Ritu*, melts due to the hot rays of sun in *Sharad Ritu*, thereby causing its *Prakopa*. So, *Pitta Shamak Aahar Vihar* should be followed in *Sharad Ritu*.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

To highlight the features of *Sharad Ritu* along with dietary and habitual regimen explained in various classical texts of Ayurveda.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

To review the foremost Ayurvedic classics in the context of *Ritucharya* explained by the *Acharyas*. The relevant websites and journals providing information regarding the *Ritus* and *Ritucharya* will also be reviewed.

Characteristics of Dakshinayana

The *Dakshinayana* is the part of year, where there is descent of sun in the southward direction. It is also known as *Visarg Kala*, as in this *Ayana* the strength of

the body is enhanced due to the surge in the *Aapya Ansh* (moistness, humidness, fluidity). Due to the reduction of heat the *Bala* of the body increases in the *Dakshinayan*. In this *Ayana* the moon is dominant over the sun and thus the *Som Guna* of the moon gives a soothing effect.^[3] The clouds, rainfall and breeze in the *Visarga Kala*, cools down the heat developed due to *Aadan Kala*. There is influence of *Snigdha Guna* in the atmosphere. The *Rasa* that are dominant in the *Visarg Kala* are *Amla*, *Lavana* and *Madhura*, which enhances the strength of the body. The three *Ritus*- *Varsha*, *Sharad* and *Hemant* are part of *Dakshinayana*. In the preface of the *Visarg Kala* that is in *Varsha Ritu* the *Bala* of the body is *Alpa* (less), in *Sharad Ritu* there is *Madhyam Bala* (medium) whereas in *Hemant Ritu* the *Bala* is *Uttama* (best).

Features of Sharad Ritu

In *Sharad Ritu* the sky is covered with blue and white clouds. The earth is slightly muddy. Due to the removal of clusters of clouds, incisive rays of sun fall on the earth giving it a reddish-brown appearance. The directions become pure and clean in which the rows of crane birds start flying. The cultivation of *Shali Dhanya* beautifies the earth. *Kash*, *Saptaparna* and lotus begin to bloom. In the lakes, high waves arise due to the fishes and swans hidden between the lotuses and waves breaking due to the collision of shoulders of swan, but the water remains pure.^[4] Due to the cold weather of *Varsha Ritu* the body becomes accustomed to the coolness and in *Sharad Ritu* when the body receives fierce rays of sun, the *Pitta* which was already accumulated in *Varsha Ritu* gets exaggerated.^[5]

Hansodak

दिवासूर्यशुसंतप्तनिशीचंद्रांशुशीतलम ।

कालेन पक्वं निर्दोषमगस्तनाविषिकृतम् ।

हंसोदकमिती ख्यातं शारदं विमलं शुचि ॥^[6]

During *Sharad Ritu*, *Acharya Charak* and *Acharya Vagbhat* have, specifically mentioned about the water, which has qualities equal to the nectar and called as *Hansodak*. The word *Hansodak* derives from the fact that, a swan drinks only the purest form of water, so in *Sharad Ritu*, the water which gets detoxifies by the rise of *Agasti* star as well as by sharp sun rays, is considered to be in the purest form. As explained by the *Acharyas*, the *Hansodak* gets heated up by the fierce rays of sun during the day time and during the nights it gets cold due to gentle moonlight. *Acharya Bhavmishra* has denoted *Hansodaka* as *Anshudak*. *Acharya Vagbhatt* has specified the qualities of it, as, free from physical, chemical and biological impurities, free from toxic elements, non-arid, pacifies the *Dosha*, and *Anabhishtyansdi* (does not obstruct the *Rasvaha Sira*).^[7] This *Hansodak* should be used for drinking, bathing and swimming.

Status of Agni In Sharad Ritu

As said earlier, that there is predominance (*Prakopa*) of *Pitta* in *Sharad Ritu* so the *Agni* in this *Ritu* is languished. The reason behind *Agnimandya*, with the dominance of *Pitta* is very well explained by *Acharya Charak* in *Grahani Chikitsa*. According to *Acharya Charak* excessive consumption of *Katu Rasa*, *Amla Rasa*, *Kshara* and indigestion leads to exaggeration of *Pitta* and this *Pitta* diminishes the digestive fire by lodging it completely just like the fact that the fire is extinguished by pouring hot water and presence of hot water cools down the fire.^[8] So according to this the excessive *Pitta* in the *Sharad Ritu* weakens the *Agni*.

Aahara and Vihara To Be Consumed in Sharad Ritu

Aahara

- *Rasa*- Food stuffs with *Tikta*, *Madhura* and *Kashaya Rasa* should be taken.^[9]
- *Guna*- *Sheeta* and *Laghu Gunatmak Aahara*.
- *Shuk Dhanya* (Cereals)- *Shaali* rice, wheat, Barley and *Sathi* rice.
- *Shimbi Dhanya* (legumes)- pulses like *moonga*.
- Foodstuffs like milk, products of sugarcane according to *Acharya Sushrut*.^[10]
- Fruits and vegetables- *Amalki*, *Draksha* and *Patola*
- Non vegetable food- Meat of birds and animals which are habitats of *Jangal Desha*, like *Lava*, *kapinjal*, deer, reindeer, lamb and rabbit.^[11]
- *Hansodak*, sugar dissolved water and Honey are ideal fluids during *Sharad Ritu*.

Vihara

- Anointing the body with the paste of *Chandana Ushira* and *Karpura*.
- Wearing garlands of pearls.
- Dressing up with light coloured and clean clothes.
- To reside in the house painted with lime root.
- Consuming cooling rays of moon in the late evening.

Panchakarma Procedures During Sharad Ritu

तिक्तस्य सर्पिषः पानं विरेको रक्तमोक्षणम्^[12]

Virechan- Due to the *Prakopa Avastha* of *Pitta Dosha*, *Virechan* is the eminent *Panchkarma* procedure to be followed during the *Sharad Ritu*. *Virechan* is the best procedure for eliminating excessively vitiated *Pitta Dosha* from the body through anal canal with purgation.

Raktamokshan- During *Sharad Ritu* the *Rakta* of every individual gets vitiated naturally due to the presence of excessive *Pitta*, giving rise to various skin diseases. So, for the purpose of *Rakta Shuddhi* the consumption of *Tikata Ghrita* followed by *Raktamokshan* (bloodletting) should be conducted.

Contraindicated Ahara and Vihara During Sharad Ritu

- Consumption of fatty and oily diet and meat of habitats of *Anoop Desha* like fish and pork should be avoided.

- Alkaline food, curd, strong alcohol should not be consumed.^[13]
- Along with this eating in excessive quantity with stomach full should be avoided in this season.
- Prolonged exposure to sunlight, dew and winds from east direction should be avoided.
- Besides this sleeping in daytime, night awakening and sexual intercourse is also prohibited in this season.

DISCUSSION

The lifestyle disorders are increasing day by day and the main reason behind this is not following proper ethics in terms of diet and habits. The ethics regarding diet and behaviour are explained by the *Acharyas* in terms of *Ritucharya*. Every season has its own significant features. The variation in the climate brings about multiple effects on our body and its very essential to harmonize according to the changing season. In *Sharad Ritu* there is metamorphism of hot weather to cold climate so the effect of dynamics of the climate strongly impacts the body. The predominance of *Pitta* in its *Prakopa Avastha* in *Sharad Ritu* gives rise to numerous *Pittaj* and *Raktaj* disorders. The *Agni* is also suppressed in this *Ritu*.

So, the diet and behavioral regimen which is mostly *Pitta Shamak* in nature should be followed in *Sharad Ritu*. The food articles which *Tikta*, *Madhura*, *kashaya* in *Rasa* should be consumed. The *Tikta*, *Madhura* and *Kashaya Rasa* have the *Pitta Shamak* properties, so it will help in balancing the exaggerated *Pitta Dosh*. The intake of *Dravyas* having *Sheet Veerya* (potency) is indicated as it works contrary to the *Ushna Guna* of the *Pitta*. The consumption of *Laghu Gunatmak* diet kindles up the diminished digestive fire in the *Sharad Ritu*. The *Acharyas* have specially advised to consume *Jangal Mansa* instead of *Anoop mansa* as it is more *Ruksha* in nature, which counteracts the excessive moistness in the *Sharad Ritu*. The concept of *Hansodaka* explained by the *Acharyas* is also very much relevant, as the water which gets detoxified with the furious rays of sun and since the impact of *Saumya Guna* of moon dominates in this season and showers the elixir of life. The *Sharad Purnima* during *Sharad Ritu* is one of the significant days as the moon is closest to the Earth on that day and its rays are said to have certain healing properties that nourishes the body and soul. Due to the strong rays of sun the body is likely to get dehydrated soon so the prolonged exposure to sun rays is prohibited in this season, and consumption of *Sharkara Mishrit Jal* is suggested by *Acharyas* which maintains the electrolyte balance of the body.

The *Virechan* is the prominent *Panchkarma* procedure stated by the *Acharyas* to achieve the homeostasis of the *Pitta Dosh* (*samya avastha*). The *Virechan* has the impeccable effect on the exaggerated *Pitta Dosh* by cleaning the channels by removal of accumulated toxins

mainly from the gut. It also enhances appetite, power of digestion and absorption of food. The exaggerated *Pitta* often vitiates the blood humor, so the *Raktamokshan* is another proficient *Panchkarma* procedure suggested during this season which is very effective therapy for various kinds of *Raktaj* disorders.

One of the remarkable concepts of *Ritusandhi* is also explained by the *Acharyas* along with *Ritucharya*. The period of last 7 days of ongoing *Ritu* and first 7 days of upcoming *Ritu* is said to be *Ritusandhi*. The *Doshas* are likely to get vitiated to their peak during this period, so one needs to be cautious about the well being. Slowly giving up the regimen of present *Ritu* and adopting the ethics of upcoming *Ritu* is the principle to be followed in this period. *Acharya Sharangdhar* has mentioned the *Yumdanshra Kaal* which involves the last 8 days of *Kartik* month and first 8 days of *Margashirsha* month. In this period there is said to have some harmful effect on the body, so one must consume light and limited food during this.^[14]

CONCLUSION

This review summarizes, various significant aspects of *Sharad Ritucharya* explained by the *Acharyas* and its positive approach towards health. *Ritucharya* and *Dincharya* explained by *Acharya* is not less than a boon for mankind, looking at present scenario. The external environment has a strong impact on our body and its necessary to change the diet and behavior according to changing seasons. *Saamya Awastha* (State of equilibrium) of all the three *Doshas* is the ultimate aim to stay healthy and as said by *Acharyas*, the changing seasons brings about the changes in the concentration of the *Doshas* giving rise to their various stages like *Sanchay*, *Prakop* and *Prasar* etc, which is responsible for deterioration of health. Following proper *Ritucharya* as stated by *Acharyas* brings about homeostasis of *Doshas* and let us remain in harmony with health. The *Sharad Ritu* is one the most dynamic season as the climate doesn't remains the same where there are sharp rays of sun on hand and on other hand there is beginning of winters. So, in order to cope up with this transition, the *Sharad Ritucharya* must be carefully followed.

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