Importance of Rutucharya in Maintenance of Health - A Critical Analysis

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ABSTRACT
Ayurveda is an ancient system of medicine for health which explains various non pharmacological techniques to prevent the diseases and promote health. Some of the methods which comprise following healthy habits like Dinacharya, Ratricharya, Ritucharya, Sadvritta, Achara Rasayana and Pathya Apathy on Ahara and Vihara in accordance with specific disease to prevent them, above stated each and every procedures are non pharmacological methods, above mentioned all the regimes one of the important regimen is Ritucharya which is having significant accountability in preventing life style and psychosomatic disorders. This study is conceptual therefore every accessible literature about Ritucharya has been collected from different Ayurveda classics to clarify significance of Ritucharya. Importance of following seasonal regimen has been discussed, study has concluded with explaining significance of Ritucharya in present day to prevent diseases and promote health of a healthy individual which is prime aim of Ayurveda.

KEYWORDS
Ayurveda, Ritucharya, Health, Ahara, Vihara
INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is one of the ancient systems of medicine for health and disease, which is having an extensive evidence of scientific experiences to authenticate the science. Ayurveda is not merely a system of medicine in conventional sense of curing diseases, as well it also instruct regarding way of life and how to preserve health. The word Ritucharya comprises of two terms ‘Ritu’ denotes seasons and ‘Charya’ means regimen, hence Ritucharya means the activities which are to be performed and activities which are to be avoided in various seasons. Acharya Dalhana explains Ritu as time factor and Charya means regimen in accordance with above said definition individual who wants to promote health has to follow seasonal regimens explained beneath without deviating from classics. 

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

Aim of this study is to collect all available references regarding Ritucharya from different classical texts and explain in such a manner to make easy understanding of subject. 

To analyze the importance of seasonal regimen in maintaining and protecting health, also prevent life style diseases which are present burden to country.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This article is conceptual hence all available references from Ayurvedic literature is collected and compiled for better understanding of seasonal regimens. Further searched different supportive literatures and humble attempt have been made to draw a conclusion.

CONCEPT OF RITUCHARYA:

Ritucharya or a seasonal regimen is one of the best practices which are mentioned in classical text of Ayurveda, under this heading Ayurveda explains do’s and don’ts in Ahara and Vihara through following this one can stay healthy and disease free life. One year or twelve months is divided into six divisions according to seasons, basing on the movement of the sun that is northward movement of the sun which brings dehydration to the body and having seasons late winter to summer. Movement of the sun southward gives hydration to the body having other three seasons from rainy to early winter.

मासेद्विसंख्यामािघाद्ैः क्रमात् ॠतवैः स्मृताैः।
र्द्िर्द्िरोऽथवसन्तश्च ग्रीष्मवषाििरद्धिमाैः \।

In Ashtanga Hridaya Acharya alienated one year in to six Ritus depending on changes in climate, those are Shishira, Vasantha, Greeshma, Varsha, Sharadh and Hemantha, each Ritu is combined of two Masas commencing from Maghamasa.
successively. First three Ritus are called as Uttarayana also known as Adanakala and last three Ritus are Dakshinayana also termed as Visargakala.

ADANAKALA (UTTARAYANA):
र्द्िर्द्िराद्ैद्धिर्द्िस्तैस्तु र्द्वद्ादयनमुत्तरम्।
आदानं च तदादते नृणां प्रर्द्तर्द्दनं बलं॥2

Uttarayana is a division of the year having a Shishira, Vasantha, and Greeshma Ritus in which accent of the sun or northward movement of the sun is distinguished. Further sun and the wind become extremely strong and due to this Kala cooling qualities of earth will be deficient. Uttarayana reduces the mild qualities of the earth. It increases the Tikta (bitter), Kashaya (astringent), and Katu (pungent) Rasa (taste), respectively, bringing dryness in the body as well decreases strength and energy of the living beings hence it is also termed as Adana Kala. The period of Uttarayana can be compared to mid-January to mid-July.

EFFECTS OF UTTARAYANA:

Uttarayana also termed as Adanakala having more intensive sun rays and sharp velocity of wind as a result of dryness in nature it will absorb the moisture from the earth. The body strength will be reduced by increased Tikta, Kashaya and Kurasain Shishira, Vasantha and Greeshma Ritus respectively, in addition fast and dehydrated winds and extreme heat of the sun will dries the body.

SHISHIRA RITUCHARYA:
शिषीरे शीतमधिकं वातवृष्ठ्याकुलं दिशा।
शोष हेमन्तत्वं सर्व विज्ञेयं लक्षणं बुधे॥4

Acharya Susrutha explains Shishiraritu is present with more cold and rainy, further cold wind will be prominent in this season, other characters in this Ritu are comparable and similar as Hemantha Ritu.

अयमेव विधि: कार्य शिषीरेष्वपि विशेषत्।
तदाहि शीतमधिकं रौश्यं चादान कालं॥5

Shishira Ritu having characters similar to Hemantha Ritu hence regimens also should be followed stringently same as in Hemantha Ritu. Moreover dryness and loss of strength to the body will increases gradually because of commencement of Adana Kala.

VASANTHA RITUCHARYA:
In Vasantha Ritu wind blows from south direction, atmosphere is unpolluted or clean, gardens and forests are looking beautiful with blossoming of all types of flowers. Humming sound of Honey bee and singing of Nightingale bird is heard everywhere. All trees are present with tender leaves.

हेमकेति निविष्टं श्रेष्ठं दिनकृत्यामिनितं।
कालायं बाध्यं रोगांस्ततं प्रकृतं बहुतः॥6
Kapha which is increased in ShishiraRitu will be liquefied in Vasantharitu due to hot temperature of sun, further Kayagni will get diminished and leads to different types of diseases. Therefore, in this Ritu individuals should consume food made of old barley, wheat and JangalaMamsa prepared on direct fire, one should consume juices particularly made of mango having sour, unctuous, sweet and heavy in quality, in this season. Alcoholic preparations like Asava, Arishta, Sidhu, Mardhvika, Madhava are good for health and medicated water added with ginger, Kadira and Mustha should be consumed. Individual should avoid food items which are indigestible and cold in nature, avoid day sleep and food which are Madura, Amla, Snigdha are avoided.  

Additional regimens like appropriate exercise to liquefy Kapha and Udvartana by using suitable herbal drugs to pacify Kapha is indicated. One should spent time in listening stories and hearing music, sitting in southern direction surrounded with water, where sun light is avoided. Such place should be selected to spend time where different types of fragrant trees are present to avoid the heat. 

GREEESMARITUCHARYA: 
Greeshmaritu is having powerful and scorching sun rays and unhealthy wind blowing from northern direction. In this season, heat generates from the earth, flowing river becomes slender because of reduced in water quantity and also blazing visible of directions. Animals and Chakravaka birds will roam at this juncture grass and all the trees appear like lifeless and shed their leaves. 

The strong sunrays will reduces unctuousness and moisture in the body and similarly in environment as well, which may lead to reduction in Kapha and accretion of Vata.

In this season, individual should always consume sweets, unctuous and liquid foods more which are superior for health; mantha preparations which are generally cold in nature should be consumed after adding sugar. Individual should have rice, milk, ghee and flesh of terrestrial animals in this season. Alcoholic preparations should be avoided in Greeshmaritu, one who want to consume alcohol should mix it with large quantity of water. People should also avoid excessive exercise, salt, sour and pungent foods. In addition to this, regimen should also include resting in cold dwellings in daylight and resting under soothing rays of moonlight during night. Application of Sandalwood paste to entire body, wearing of precious stones, staying near water reservoirs around forest and cold places with plants full of flowers, is a favorable.
Also, one must avoid sexual intercourse during Greeshmaritu.

**VISARGAKALA (DAKSHINAYANA):**

Dakshinayana points towards southward movement of the sun and reduction in sun rays which provide strength to the body. Visargakala, has three Ritus, viz., Varsha, Sharad and Hemantha, during this period sun moves towards south and the strength of sun rays is reduced because of various reasons. The heat on the earth is reduced due to rain which in turn increases unctuousness in the body and Amla (sour), Lavana (salty), and Madhura (sweet) rasa are predominant. Therefore, living beings gradually develops strength throughout Visargakalabecause of several reasons.

**VARSHA RITUCHARYA:**

In this Ritu rivers and lakes are filled and overflowing, trees which are present on the banks of the river are uprooted due to the current of water flow. Lake looks attractive due to blossoming of white and blue lotus in this season, earth is enclosed with grass and it appears gorgeous with different kind of grains. Further, Varsharitu present with rain barely audible sound, without thunderbolts, because of cloud sun and stars are invisible in this season.

In addition Acharya Vagbhata explained that Agni is extremely weak in this season hence it gets vitiating by Doshas, further doshas get aggravated due to this seasonal changes and poor strength of digestive activity, the doshas start vitiating one another causing many diseases, hence to balance the Doshas and improve digestive activity individuals should adopt general measures.

Due to seasonal consequences of Adanakalabody and Agnitogether gets extremely weak. Especially Agni and Doshas are vitiating and particularly Vatadosha is aggravated. Individuals should drink medicated water and one must consume rice with honey. Further people should consume sour, salt, unctuous food items in this season to pacify aggravated Vata. Old barley, wheat, meat soup, dal soup and little quantity of alcoholic preparations like Madhvika, Arishta along with honey is beneficial for health.

Individual must avoid usage of river water, churned preparations should also be avoided and in addition one should not indulge in day time sleep, exposure to mist, extreme exercise, exposure to burning sun and indulging in sexual intercourse in this season.

**SHARATH RITUCHARYA:**

In Sharadritu the sun shines with copper colored rays with intense heat, due to white clouds sky looks extremely clear. The ponds and lakes are filled with lotus leaves and one can find moving swans in those
ponds, hills and earth are filled with wet mud. This is the season of flowering in trees like Arjuna, Sapthaparni, Bandhuka, Kasha, and Asana. Acharya Charaka further explained that changes in climatic conditions of Ritus, while body is habituated for coldness in atmosphere and unexpected heat of the sun rays in SharadRitu make body hot, may aggravate the pittadosha accumulated throughout VarshaRitu, this might cause Paittika disorders.

Individual must consume Pittashamaka Aharadravyas. Accordingly one should consume sweet, bitter, light and cold Aharadravyas. One should eat flesh of lava, Kapinjala, Urabhra, Shali, Barley and Wheat in this season. Person must avoid day sleep and keep away from consuming oil, fat, aquatic animals, alkali and curd. Individual should consume HamsodakaJala which is devoid of Doshas and which is also a pure, clear and equal to nectar.

Other regimens that are followed in this Ritu are wearing of garlands made up of flowers bloomed in Sharath Ritu and wearing of clean clothes is mentioned in this season. Exposure to moon rays during early hours (first three hours) of night is conducive for health in this Ritu. Individual should keep away from mist, sleeping in day hours, and exposure to Pragvatha which may increases Kapha.

HEMANTHARITUCHARYA: Acharya Susrutha described that, HemanthaRitu which is having cold wind blowing from northern direction with the presence of extreme dust and smokes everywhere. Since this is the season for mating of Animals and birds therefore they get wild, in this season we can also find bloomed flowers like Lodhra, Priyangu and Nagakesara.

Throughout HemanthaRitu, body heat will be preserved inside by constraint due to atmospheric cold. By this Jatharagni will increases, hence if appropriate heavy food will not be consumed it will burn away the Rasadi Dhatus. Therefore in this Ritu individuals should consume Madhura, Amla and LavanarasaPradhanaAharaDravyas.

During this season, accumulation of Kapha and pacification of Pitta are predominant changes occurring in the body, accordingly one should consume water animals, carnivorous and animals which are residing in burrows. In this cold season individuals must consume sweet, Sidhu, honey, milk and juice of sugar cane and other products made up of sugar cane.

Additional regimens mentioned in Hemantha Ritu comprise Abhyanga, shiroabhyanga, applying of Amalaki
powder, taking bath from hot water, entire body should be applied with Kunkuma and Kasthuri, taking fumigation of Agaru and thick clothing should be used to avoid cold effect in this season.

RESULTS

Ayurveda is one of the ancient systems of medicine, which explains several non-pharmacological methods under the name of Charyas those are Dinacharya, Ratricharya and Ritucharya extra. By following these regimens accordingly without deviating from classics, individual can stay healthy and lead disease free life. Ritucharya is also one of such regimen, which is having added importance in preventing life style diseases and protecting health. Results of this conceptual study shows that, by following seasonal regimen absolutely as explained in classical texts individuals can leave happy and disease free life.

DISCUSSION

The current concept of season denotes four divisions of the year, those are spring season, summer season, autumn season and winter season noticeable by meticulous weather patterns and daylight hours, ensuing from the earth’s shifting position by considering the sun. Similarly in Ayurveda, Acharyas give detail explanation concerning Adana and Visargakala or Uttarayana and Dakshinayana having six Ritus considering movement of the sun. The knowledge about Ritucharya or seasonal regimen is instantaneous guide to the concept of Kriyakala, where in describes development of diseases, modes and stages of disease pattern, with consider to condition of Doshas in accordance with altering of time. Understanding of this concept is extremely necessary for early diagnosis of disease and prognosis, intern to adopt preventive and curative measures to control and treat the disease primarily. Ayurveda has given additional importance for Ritucharya, which means living one’s life in context of seasons and following Ahara and Vihara in accordance with seasons to balance the Doshas. DoshaVridhi and Kshaya will occur due to different factors in seasons and during change of season which intern leads to diseases, hence to balance the Doshas it is extremely important to follow the regimens like Ahara and Vihara, which are explained...
in classical texts. Through following these methods one can control and prevent the seasonal diseases and lead happy and healthy life.

The concept of *Ritusandhi,* explained in *Ritucharya* elucidates that last week of previous season and the first week of approaching *Ritu* together fourteen days is termed as *Ritusandhi.* Previous seasonal regimens must be discontinued by following *PadamshaAbhyasa* and regimens of coming *Ritu* should be adapted gradually. This is because abrupt modification in the regimens might produce diseases of *Asathmya* or incompetence. Therefore to avoid the diseases of seasonal changes individual should follow *Charyas* which are mentioned in *Ritusandhi.*

Another concept *Yamadjanshtra kala* which is described in *Ritucharya* explains, last eight days of *Karthikamasa* and initial eight days of *Margashira masa,* these sixteen days is called as *Yamadanshtra* means teeth of *Yama.* During above mentioned days chances of getting diseases are more, as seasonal changes will occur and body may not adjust for these changes rapidly, hence individual has to consume light and easy to digest food and follow the other regimens which are explained in classical text to preserve health.

**CONCLUSION**

This study is conceptual, hence after referring all available classical texts and other supportive literatures concern to *Ritucharya,* it can be concluded that by following seasonal regimens appropriately without deviating from classics, individuals can stay healthy and blissfully, further one can prevent the diseases concerned to season. In addition *Ritucharya* will assist in treating diseases successfully, since *Pathya* plays significant role in curing diseases, if person follow suitable *Ahara* and *Viharain* accordance with *Ritus* one can cure the diseases effortlessly.
REFERENCES