



GREENTREE GROUP PUBLISHERS

IJAPC

Volume 10 Issue 3

10 May 2019

WWW.IJAPC.COM
E ISSN 2350 0204



Importance of *Ritucharya* in Maintenance of Health - A Critical Analysis

Guruprasad K^{1*} and Sandeep V. Binorkar²

¹Department of Swasthavritta, Sri Jayendra Saraswathi Ayurveda College & Hospital, Nazarethpet, Chennai, TN, India

²Department of Agadatantra, R.A. Podar Ayurveda Medical College, Worli, Mumbai, MS, India

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*, *Acharya 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*



Greentree Group Publishers

[Received 15/12/19](#) [Accepted 20/03/19](#) [Published 10/05/19](#)



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 classics¹.

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.

मासैर्द्विसंख्यैर्माघाद्यैः क्रमात् षड् ऋतवः स्मृताः ।
शिशिरोऽथवसन्तश्च ग्रीष्मवर्षाशरद्धिमाः ॥²

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):

शिशिराद्यैस्त्रिभिस्तैस्तु विद्यादयनमुत्तरम् ।

आदानं च तदादत्ते नृणां प्रतिदिनं बलं ॥²

Uttarayana is a division of the year having a *Shishira*, *Vasantha*, and *GreeshmaRitu* 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 *AdanaKala*. The period of *Uttarayana* can be compared to mid-January to mid-July.

उत्तरां दिशां प्रति अयनं गमनम् इति उत्तरायणं ॥³

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

Katurasain Shishira, *Vasantha* and *GreeshmaRitu* respectively, in addition fast and dehydrated winds and extreme heat of the sun will dry the body.

SHISHIRA RITUCHARYA:

शिशिरे शीतमधिकं वातवृष्ट्याकुलाः दिशः ।

शेषं हेमन्तवत् सर्वं विज्ञेयं लक्षणं बुधैः ॥⁴

Acharya Susruta 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 *HemanthaRitu*.

अयमेव विधिः कार्यः शिशिरेऽपि विशेषतः ।

तदाहि शीतमधिकं रौक्ष्यं चादान कालजं ॥⁵

ShishiraRitu having characters similar to *HemanthaRitu* hence regimens also should be followed stringently same as in *HemanthaRitu*. Moreover dryness and loss of strength to the body will increase gradually because of commencement of *AdanaKala*.

VASANTHA RITUCHARYA:

In *VasanthaRitu* 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 leaves⁴.

हेमन्ते निचितः श्रेष्ठा दिनकृद्भाभिरीरितः ।

कायग्रिं बाधते रोगांस्ततः प्रकुरुते बहून् ॥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.⁵

Additional regimens like appropriate exercise to liquefy *Kapha* and *Udvardana* by using suitable herbal drugs to pacify *Kapha* is indicated. One should spend 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 heat⁵.

GREESMARITUCHARYA:

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 leaves⁷.

The strong sun rays will reduce unctuousness and moisture in the body and similarly in environment as well, which may lead to reduction in *Kapha* and accretion of *Vata*⁶.

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 wants to consume alcohol should mix with large quantity of water. People should also avoid excessive exercise, salt, sour and pungent foods. In addition to this, regimens 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*⁶.

VISARGAKALA (DAKSHINAYANA):

Dakshinayana points towards southward movement of the sun and reduction in sun rays which provide strength to the body⁸. *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 develop strength throughout *Visargakala* because of several reasons⁹

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 season⁴.

In addition *Acharya Vagbhata* explained that *Agni* is extremely weak in this season hence it gets vitiated 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 measures¹⁰.

Due to seasonal consequences of *Adanakala* body and *Agni* together gets extremely weak. Especially *Agni* and *Doshas* are vitiated 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 health¹¹.

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 season⁶.

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*⁴.

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* disorders¹¹.

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 nectar¹¹.

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 increase *Kapha*¹¹.

HEMANTHARITUCHARYA:

Acharya Susruta 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*¹².

Throughout *HemanthaRitu*, body heat will be preserved inside by constraint due to atmospheric cold. By this *Jatharagni* will increase, hence if appropriate heavy food will not be consumed it will burn away the *Rasadi Dhathus*. Therefore in this *Ritu* individuals should consume *Madhura*, *Amla* and *LavanarasaPradhanaAharaDravyas*¹³.

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 cane¹⁴.

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 season⁵.

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 environmental factors during different seasons mentioned in *Ayurvedic* classics are acceptable for all the times. Further ecological phenomenon's like temperature, wind, humidity, rain, clouds, nature of land and atmospheric pressure these features undergo constant changes continuously.

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*. *DoshaVridhhi* 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.¹⁵ Therefore to avoid the diseases of seasonal changes individual should follow *Charyas* which are mentioned in *Ritusandhi*.

Another concept *Yamadanshtra 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.



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