

EFFECT OF SEASON (RITUS) ON HEALTH & PHYSIOLOGICAL ENTITIES DESCRIBED IN AYURVEDA

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is the knowledge for healthy long life. It is the system of traditional medicine native to India. In Sanskrit word *Ayu* means “longevity” and *Veda* means “science”. The earliest literature of Indian medical practice appeared during the *Vedic* Period. *Charak Samhita* and *Sushruta Samhita* are the foundational work of Ayurveda. Prevention and Cure of the diseases, these are the two major aim of Ayurveda. *Ritucharya* (seasonal regimen) is described for accomplish the first aim of Ayurveda. Seasons are the natural global earth clock and the rhythm of the world. Equinox and solstice make the two main divisions of the seasons, which further divide into four seasons (spring, summer, autumn, winter) & these four again divided into six. The same seasonal phenomenon is found inside the body of each living being in this world. The external seasons exist because of the air, solar and lunar systems. Similarly, the internal air, solar and lunar channels known as *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* respectively, reflect the phenomenon and give the internal seasons (Homeostasis) in the body.

Keywords: *Ayu, Kapha, Pitta, Ritucharya, Vata*

INTRODUCTION

In this universe everyone wants a long life. Ayurveda is the Science, which gives the knowledge about life along with the definition of life, explanation of joyful and miserable life, constructive and destructive life, long and short spans of life as well as their qualities and actions that prop up or move down its durability¹. For the longevity of healthy life, maintenance of equilibrium state is necessary. In Ayurveda equilibrium

state is known as *Dhatusamyā* while the imbalance state is known as *Vikara* or *Dhatuvaishamyā*. Here the term *Dhatu* is not only refers to *Dhatu* but also for *Dhoshas* and *Malas*, because all these are the basic of our body². This equilibrium state may be affected by the seasons (*Ritus*) and unbalancing state may cause diseases. For the prevention of this unhealthy state

certain seasonal regimen known as *Ritucharya*, also described in Ayurveda.

Review of Literature:

Seasons/Ritus According to Ayurveda:

In Ayurveda the term *Ritu* used in many places for various meanings, but here the term *Ritu* mainly refers to Season. Year divided into six *Ritu*/Seasons (*Shishira*, *Vasant*, *Grishma*, *Varsha*, *Sharad*, *Hemanta*). Each season has two months, So, that the whole year divided into six seasons or twelve months³. *Acharya Chakrapani* and Some other scholars has explained *Samvatsara* (year) being a combination of the two *Ayana* (solstice) and six *Ritu* (seasons) is presumable by the mention *Ritu* (seasons) itself, hence considering *Kala* (time) is especially of *Ritu* (seasons) only, the term *Ritu* here is confined specially to periods of time and excludes the periods of menstruation in women. The two *Ayana* i.e. *Uttarayana* and *Dakshinayana* are also called as *Adana Kala* and *Visarga Kala* respectively⁴. Season affects the healthy state, physiological

entities like *Doshas*, *Agni*, *Bala*, *Rasa* etc., daily routine activities and much more. Seasons are also an important factor during the formation of *Prakriti*. *Prakriti* of an individual also represents the *Doshik* state of an individual^{5,6,7}. Ayurveda is aimed for maintenance/restoration of *Prakriti* (Homeostasis). Season also affects the homeostasis⁸ or the internal environment of human being by affecting or changing the composition of blood and other relevant entities i.e. blood cholesterol etc. in physiological limits⁹.

Effect of Season on Tridosha: In Ayurveda *Tridoshas* (*Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*) are described as functional triad of the body. These *Doshas* are responsible for the origin, development and maintenance of the human body during their normal state. During abnormal state they become the main cause of demolish the human body. The seasonal variation affects the normal state of *Tridoshas*. The accumulation, vitiation and pacification of *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* occur in different season^{10,11,12}. The relation between Seasons (*Ritus*) and *Doshas* are as follows:

<i>Doshas</i>	<i>Sanchaya</i>	<i>Prakopa</i>	<i>Prashamana</i>
<i>Vata</i>	<i>Greeshma</i> (May-June)	<i>Varsha</i> (July-Aug)	<i>Sharad</i> (Sep-Oct)
<i>Pitta</i>	<i>Varsha</i> (July-Aug)	<i>Sharad</i> (Sep-Oct)	<i>Hemanta</i> (Nov-Dec)
<i>Kapha</i>	<i>Hemanta</i> (Nov-Dec)	<i>Vasanta</i> (Mar-April)	<i>Greeshma</i> (May-June)

Effect of Season on Strength (Bala):

In the beginning and the end of the sun's period of liberation and absorption respectively, the bodily vigour of men is at its lowest, in the middle of these periods it is moderate, while it is well known that at the end of the former and the beginning of the latter period the bodily vigour is at its highest¹³. It is considered that men having good strength during *Visarga Kala*,

though loss of strength is slightly during *Shishira Ritu* which is beginning of *Adana Kala* still will remain strong, just like nights at the end of *Pausha* which be long during *Maagha* and *Falguna* though tend to decrease in length gradually still remain longer than the day. On this analogy debility of men during *Grishma* & *Varsha Ritu* and moderate strength during *Vasanta* & *Sharad Ritu* are to be understood.

<i>Ayana</i>	<i>Ritu</i>	Month	Hindi Month	<i>Bala</i>
<i>Uttarayana</i> Or <i>Adana Kala</i>	<i>Shishira</i> <i>Vasanta</i> <i>Grishma</i>	Jan-Feb Mar-April May-June	<i>Magha-Falguna</i> <i>Chaitra-Vaishakh</i> <i>Jyeshtha-Ashadha</i>	<i>Uttama</i> (Maximum) <i>Madhyama</i> (Medium) <i>Heena</i> (Minimum)
<i>Dakshinayana</i> Or <i>Visharga Kala</i>	<i>Varsha</i> <i>Sharada</i> <i>Hemanta</i>	July-Aug Sep-Oct Nov-Dec	<i>Sravan-Bhadrapada</i> <i>Ashwina-Kartika</i> <i>Margashisha-Pausha</i>	<i>Heena</i> (Minimum) <i>Madhyama</i> (Medium) <i>Uttama</i> (Maximum)

Effect of Season on Rasa: Each season consists of two months, in this way year is divided into six seasons. These divisions have been made for normal condition and origin of Rasas. These six Ritu/seasons are divided into two Ayana i.e. *Dakshinayan* (southern) and *Uttarayana* (northern), based on predominance of effect of the sun and moon. During *Dakshinayana*

(*Varsha, Sharad, Hemanta*), Lord Soma (Moon) is predominant and because of this *Amla, Lavana* and *Madhur Rasa* are more powerful. During *Uttarayana* (*Shishira, Vasanta, Grishma*), Lord Arka (Sun) is predominant and because of this *Tikta, Kashaya* and *Katu Rasa* are more powerful¹⁴. The relation between seasons (*Ritus*) and the predominant rasa are as follows:

Ayana	Ritu	Month	Hindi Month	Predominant Rasa
Uttarayana Or Adana	Shishira	Jan-Feb	Magha-Falguna	Tikta (Bitter)
	Vasanta	Mar-April	Chaitra-Vaishakh	Kashaya (Astringent)
	Grishma	May-June	Jyeshtha-Ashadha	Katu (Pungent)
Dakshinayana Or Visharga	Varsha	July-Aug	Sravan-Bhadrapada	Amla (Sour)
	Sharada	Sep-Oct	Ashwina-Kartika	Lavana (Salt)
	Hemanta	Nov-Dec	Margashisha-Pausha	Madhur (Sweet)

Effect of Season on Agni: According to Ayurveda, at the beginning and end of *Visharga* and *Adana* periods respectively, the *Agni* of the individual will be weak. During middle of *Adana Kala* and middle of *Visharga*

Kala Agni will be moderate/medium. During the end and beginning respectively the *Agni* of individual will be best.

Ayana	Ritu	Month	Hindi Month	Agni
Uttarayana/Adana	Shishira	Jan-Feb	Magha-Falguna	Teekshnagni
	Vasanta	Mar-April	Chaitra-Vaishakh	Madhyamagni
	Grishma	May-June	Jyeshtha-Ashadha	Mandagni
Dakshinayana/Visharga	Varsha	July-Aug	Sravan-Bhadrapada	Mandagni
	Sharada	Sep-Oct	Ashwina-Kartika	Madhyamagni
	Hemanta	Nov-Dec	Margashisha-Pausha	Teekshnagni

DISCUSSION

Ayurveda is an ancient science of life since time immemorial. *Ayurveda*, apart from providing various therapeutic measures for diseases, emphasizes on maintenance, promotion of health and prevention of diseases through diet and lifestyle regimens. As per *Ayurveda*, life is sustained by a tripod of mental, physical and spiritual factors constituted by body (*Sharir*), senses (*Indriyas*), mind (*Satwa*) and spirit (*Atma*). The physical world including the human body is derived from the specific combinations of five fundamental entities viz. *Akash, Vayu, Teja, Jala* and *Prithvi* which are known as *Panchamahabhutas* and the soul. *Panchamahabhutas* form the *Tridoshas* viz. *Vata Dosha, Pitta Dosha* and *Kapha Dosha, Dhatus* (tissues) and *Malas* (excretory products). *Tridoshas* carry out the physiological activities and are responsible for the integrity of the human body.

Due to the faulty diet and lifestyle normalcy of the *Tridoshas* is disturbed and they aggravate in the body. Vitiated *Tridoshas* disturb the normalcy of *Dhatus* and *Malas* causing their vitiation which manifests as various diseases in the body. Thus, the health of an individual depends upon the normalcy of the *Doshas, Dhatus* and *Malas*.

Health of an individual can be known by Proper nourishment, Proper strength, Desire and appetite for intake of food, Proper digestion of food ingested at proper time, Sleep at proper time, Absence of pathological or dreadful dreams, Feeling of freshness after waking up in the morning, Proper evacuation of faeces, urine, and flatus at the proper time, Proper functioning of mental faculties, intelligence and senses in all respect and absence of any kind of pain.

How the lifestyle must be modified according to the seasons is explained as below: *Hemanta Ritucharya:*

During this season, people gain strength, having powerful digestive fire, because it gets obstructed from flowing outward due to external winter. One should consume food predominant with sweet, sour and salt tastes. A person feels hungry early in the morning due to longer nights. So, after attending to *Ablutions*, one should resort to *Abhaynga* (oil massage) especially on scalp and forehead with oils that have *Vata* balancing properties. Mild massage of the body is recommended. After this, oil is washed off with astringent powders and bathing. Some aromatic herbs are used like *Gulab Pattar* in this. The body is exposed to the fumes of *Aguru* (*Aquilaria agallocha*). Food prepared with wheat flour, black gram products of sugarcane and of milk, food prepared from freshly harvested corn, muscles, fat and edible oils should be partaken as food. Warm water should be used for *Ablutions*, thick sheet made of cotton, leather, silk, wool or bark of trees that are light in weight should be used during sleep. Exposure to sunlight and fire should be resorted to judiciously. Footwear should be worn always. Overall, in *Hemanta Ritu*, the strength and digestion power are more. Hence one can exercise, undergo oil massage, eat heavy foods and may have sex.

Sisira Ritucharya: Even in *shishira Ritu*, the above regimen should be adopted with more intensity as there is severe cold and more dryness in this season.

Vasanta Ritucharya: *Kapha* which was increased in *Shishira* (cold season) becomes liquefied by the heat of the Sun in *Vasanta* (spring). It diminishes the digestive fire (*Agni*) and gives rise to many diseases because of which *Kapha* should be controlled quickly, by resorting to strong emesis therapy (*Vamana Panchakarma* procedure), *Nasya* (nasal medication) and other therapies. In order to balance the *Kapha*, avoid hard to-digest, cold, fatty, sour & sweet food along with sleeping during daytime. Food should also be chosen to mitigate *Kapha*, which is easily digestible and dry (moisture-free, fat-free). Physical exercises, dry massage and little physical work out should be done. The person should take bath along with the paste of *Karpura* (camphor), *Chandan* (sandalwood),

Aguru (*Aquilaria agallocha*), and *Kumkuma* (saffron). Have one-year old barley, wheat and honey as food; Drink the juice of mango fruit mixed with fragrant substances, in the company of friends, thereby producing satisfaction. Beverages can be taken such as *Asava* & *Sidhu* (fermented infusion), *Arista* (fermented decoction), or water mixed with honey, or water boiled with *Jalada* (*Musta* – Nut grass). The main thing to be noted here is that *Vasant* is the period of *Ritusandhi* when the weather changes. It becomes necessary for our body to adopt itself to the new conditions. That's why Hindu *Navratras* & even Muslim's *Rmzan* comes during this period and fasting is done. Scientific reason behind it is that body needs detoxification & cleansing this time. *Pitta* reduces which weakens the body's appetite and body can digest only light food.

Greeshma Ritucharya: In *Greeshma* (summer) the sun rays become powerful and appear to be destructive. *Kapha* slowly decreases and in turn *Vata* starts increasing, hence avoid use of salt, pungent and sour foods, heavy physical exercises and exposure to sunlight, during this season. Wrong thing which people do during this period is the poor diet and intake of more cold water in its place which not just weakens the body but also lowers the digestive *Agni* which in turn causes digestion related disorders. Water should be taken at room temperature. Antioxidant food items must also be taken so maintain good appetite & health. Food which are sweet, light (easy to digest), fatty, cold and liquid should be taken, take corn flour mixed with cold water and sugar after taking bath in cold water. *Madya* (wine) is strictly avoided during this period. One must also include good herbs in their food like *Amla* which are cool in nature as their use will help the body in keeping strong appetite, itself healthy & maintain its temperature. At nights, one should sleep in the comfortable atmosphere in cool environment, but it doesn't mean to sit in AC as it is harmful for health. People should wear very light and cotton cloths to remain comfortable & sleep with ease. *Varsha Ritucharya:* In rainy season, the *Agni* (digestive activity) is weak. It is already debilitated by summer; it undergoes further decrease and gets vitiated by the *Doshas*. The *Doshas* get aggravated by the

effect of thick clouds full of water, cold wind having snow, dirty water because of rain, warmth of the earth and sourness. Due to the poor strength of digestive activity, the *Doshas* start vitiating one another and cause many diseases. Hence, all general measures to mitigate imbalanced *Doshas* and to improve digestive activity should be adopted. One should undergo *Panchakarma* therapies & administered *Asthapana Basti* (decoction enema therapy). One should use old grains for food, meat juice processed with spices etc., soup of pulses, wine prepared from grapes and fermented decoctions, which are old or *Mastu* (thin water or curds) processed with more of *Suvarchal* salt and powder of *Panchakola*, should be used. Well boiled & filtered water should be used for drinking. On days of no sunlight at all, the food should predominantly sour, salty and unctuous, dry, mixed with honey and easily digestible. Avoid river water, beverage prepared with flour of corns mixed with ghee, daytime sleeping, sexual indulgence, exertion and exposure to Sun.

Sharath Ritucharya: The person becomes accustomed to the cold of rainy season. When he gets suddenly exposed to the warm rays of Sun, the *Pitta*, which has undergone increase in *Varsha* (rainy season) becomes greatly aggravated during *Sharath* (autumn). In order to get over it, *Tikta ghruta* (medicated ghee recipe described in the treatment of *Kustha* chapter 19 of *Chikitsa sthana*), purgation therapy and *Mokshana* (bloodletting) should be resorted to. When hungry, the person should take foods which are of bitter, sweet and astringent tastes, and easily digestible such as Rice, green gram, sugar, *Amla*, *Patola*, honey and meat of animals of desert-like lands. The importance of this season is that *Sharath* is also the period of *Ritusandhi* like *Vasanth* when the weather changes. It becomes necessary for our body to adopt itself to the new conditions.

CONCLUSION

Based on above-mentioned literature, we can say that the sun, the wind and the moon are respectively for appearance of time, season, *Rasa*, *Dosha* and bodily strength according to the nature and course of time they follow. Two seasons (*Dakshinayan* & *Utaaraya-*

na) have opposite forces and energy. Summer should be hot in general, and winter should be cold. This is the natural phenomenon that is reflected in the internal body temperature changes and which could bring a better health by expulsing or concentrating the body energies and toxic products. Spring is the waking up from the deep winter sleeping and the increasing of heat that melts the frozen *Kapha*. Autumn begins to increase the external cold and concentrates the heat by expelling the bile energy (*Pitta*). These seasonal changes make then heat and cold cycle, and maintain a balance of energy and humours, as well as the sustainment of the psychic equilibrium. *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha Doshas* are also vitiated naturally in different *Ritus* (seasons) & leads to different types of diseases. But these vitiated *Doshas* again become pacified naturally in next seasons. Seasonal changes also affect the strength of individuals, digestive power of individuals taste etc. If we take proper *Aahara* & *Vihaar* according to that season (*Ritu*), then we can prevent the occurrence of many diseases & maintain our healthy state.

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