



## Seasonal Living with Ritucharya: Balancing Body and Mind, w.s.r. to Greeshma, Varsha and Sharad Ritu

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As we all know that change of seasons also causes changes in environment, these changes in environment affects all living things. Some changes are beneficial but some are not good. So, in order to achieve maximum benefit from the good qualities of environment and protect ourselves from the bad effects of changing seasons. Each season is characterized by a predominant Rasa (taste) and distinct impact on the Tridoshas - Vata, Pitta, and Kapha. So, in Ayurveda, different regimens are advised as per seasons with regards to diet, behavior and various activities collectively called as seasonal regimens or Ritucharya. This article explores the Ayurvedic concepts of Ritucharya, which emphasizes the importance of adopting lifestyle and dietary habits as per seasons to maintain balance and to promote overall well-being. In Ayurveda, there are 6 seasons namely – Shishira (winters), Vasant (spring), Greeshma (summer), Varsha (rainy), Sharad (autumn) and Hemanta (early winters). [1] Focusing on the three seasons of Greeshma (summer season), Varsha (rainy season) and Sharad (autumn season). This article highlights the unique characteristics of each season.

**Keywords:** Ayurveda, Ritucharya, Vata, Pitta, Kapha, Adana Kala, Visarga Kala, Rasa, Sharad, Varsha, Greeshma, Hemanta, Shishira, Vasant, Hamsodaka, Uttarayana, Dakshinayana, Diet and Lifestyle, Solstice

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## Introduction

*Ayurveda*, the ancient science of life, emphasizes living in harmony with nature as a key to maintaining health and preventing disease. Among its many principles, *Ritucharya* - the seasonal regimen - is a concept that guides individuals to adapt their lifestyle and diet according to changing seasons (*Ritu*). *Ritu* is synonym of time / season and *Charya* means regimens to be followed.[2]

Earth makes one revolution (movement around the sun) in 365 days, this is called as one year.

The Earth's revolution around the Sun, along with its axial tilt, results in seasonal variations that influence environmental conditions and, consequently affects human physiology.[3]

*Ayurveda* recognizes this cyclical change and divides the year into two major solstices or *Ayanas* - *Uttarayana* (northern solstice or *Adana Kala*) and *Dakshinayana* (southern solstice or *Visarga Kala*). Each *Ayana* comprises three *Ritus*, making a total of six seasons: *Shishira* (late winter), *Vasanta* (spring), *Greeṣhma* (summer), *Varṣha* (monsoon), *Sharad* (autumn), and *Hemanta* (early winter).

Each season influences the body's internal balance, especially the *Tridoshas* - *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*. These *Doshas* accumulate, aggravate, and subside in different seasons, which can lead to health or disease depending on how well a person can adapt. *Ayurveda* prescribes specific dietary habits (*Ahara*), lifestyle practices (*Vihara*), to maintain *Doshic* balance throughout the year.

So, it is important to know the *Ayurvedic* concept of seasonal changes, their impact on the *Doshas*, the role of *Rasa* (taste) in each season, and the preventive regimens to be followed.

## Aim and Objectives

### Aim

To explore and analyse the *Ayurvedic* concept of *Ritucharya* (seasonal regimen) and its impact on the *Tridoshas* (*Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha*) along with dietary and lifestyle adaptations for maintaining health and preventing diseases.

### Objective

1. To understand the *Ayurvedic* classification of seasons (*Ritus*) & seasonal variations in *Doshas*.

2. To outline the seasonal dietary (*Ahara*) and lifestyle (*Vihara*) for each *Ritu*.

## Materials and Methods

*Ayurvedic* classic texts, journal, internet,

**Methods** - Literary Review

### *Ayana* (Solistices) and *Ritu* (Seasons)

In India, there are mainly two time periods which are northern solstice (*Uttarayana*) and southern solstice (*Dakshinayana*), these two solstices form one year. Further, the year is divided into six seasons (*Ritus*), with each season made up of two *Masa* (months) starting with *Margashisha* and adding two succeeding ones. So, the six *Ritus* are named as - *Shishira*, *Vasant*, *Greeṣhma*, *Varsha*, *Sharad* and *Hemanta*. [4]

SN	Masa (month)	Ritu (season)	As Per English Calender
1.	Margashisha -Pausha	Hemanta (winter)	Mid Nov - Mid Jan
2.	Magha - Phalgun	Shishira (cold, dewy)	Mid Jan - Mid March
3.	Chaitra - Vaishakha	Vasanta (spring)	Mid March - Mid May
4.	Jyeshtha - Ashada	Greeṣhma (summer)	Mid May - Mid July
5.	Sravana - Bhadrapada	Varsha (rainy)	Mid July - Mid Sept
6.	Ashawin - Kartik	Sharad (autumn)	Mid Sept - Mid Nov

The three seasons namely *Shishira*, *Vasant* and *Greeṣhma* mark the *Uttarayana* when the sun movement is towards north, also called as *Adana Kala* and rest half year constitute *Varsha*, *Sharad* and *Hemanta Ritu* mark the *Dakshinayana* when the sun's movement is towards south, also called as *Visarga Kala*. [5] During *Uttarayana* period, sun and wind becomes strong and dry which takes away all the moisture of earth, this *Adana Kala* is *Agneya*, extremely hot in nature. [6] During *Dakshinayana* period, moon becomes powerful so the earth becomes cool by the effect of moon rays and cool winds. So, this *Visarga Kala* is *Saumya*, cool in nature. [7]

### *Rasa* predominance in Seasons [8]

During occurrence of different seasons, *Rasa* becomes predominant in a specific season.

Seasons	Rasa Predominance
Shishira	Tikta (bitter)
Vasanta	Kashaya (astringent)
Greeṣhma	Katu (pungent)
Varsha	Amla (sour)
Sharad	Lavana (salty)
Hemanta	Madhur (sweet)

## Diet, Lifestyle as Per Seasons and Effect of Changing Seasons on *Doshas*

Seasonal Effect on *Tridosha* - *Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha*

### Seasonal effect on *Vata*

*Vata Sanchaya* (accumulation of *Vata*) - during summer season, person's strength is low and digestive power becomes weak and people loses body water through perspiration, this all causes accumulation of *Vata* but the heat of sun rays during summers does not allow excessive accumulation of *Vata* (*Vata Prakopa*).<sup>[9]</sup> *Vata Prakopa* (aggravation of *Vata*) - during rainy season, digestive power and strength are still low as summers, so sudden change in temperature from hot to cold results in further accumulation of *Vata* in body causes *Vata Prakopa*.<sup>[10]</sup> *Vata Shaman* (alleviation of *Vata*) - during autumn season, humidity and heat of autumn pacifies the increased *Vata* i.e. *Vata Shaman*.<sup>[11]</sup>

### Seasonal effect on *Pitta*

*Pitta Sanchaya* (Accumulation of *Pitta*) - The sun's heat of *Greeshma* (summer) *Ritu* increases the heat which causes exhaustion of the body. The strength and digestive power are further reduced in the rainy season (*Varsha Ritu*). During *Varsha Ritu*, food and water dominate in sour taste and weak digestive power causes indigestion. The dominant sour taste and indigestion result in the accumulation of *Pitta* in the body leading to the *Pitta Sanchaya* stage but the cool environment does not allow *Pitta* to accumulate in excess.<sup>[12]</sup> *Pitta Prakopa* (aggravation of *Pitta*) - heat in *Sharad Ritu* results in further accumulation of *Pitta* giving rise to *Pitta Prakopa* stage.<sup>[13]</sup> *Pitta Shamana* (Alleviation of *Pitta*) - The sweet *Rasa* dominant in nature and the cool environment pacifies the increased *Pitta* in *Hemanta* (winter).<sup>[14]</sup>

### Seasonal Effect on *Kapha*

*Kapha Sanchaya* (Accumulation of *Kapha*) - In *Hemanta Ritu*, physical strength and the digestive power are good. So, people can eat as per their hunger in *Hemanta Ritu*. This eating habit, most of the time continues in *Shishira*, but during *Shishira Ritu*, digestive power is slightly reduced. This factor along with cold environment leads to the accumulation of *Kapha* (*Kapha Sanchaya*).<sup>[15]</sup> *Kapha Prakopa* (Aggravation of *Kapha*) - In *Vasanta* (spring) *Ritu*,

The heat causes liquefaction of the accumulated *Kapha* and gives rise to the stage of *Kapha Prakopa*.<sup>[16]</sup> *Kapha Shamana* (Alleviation of *Kapha*) - The dry, light and hot qualities dominant in summer season pacifies the increased *Kapha*.<sup>[17]</sup>

***Greeshma Ritu*** - Sun rays appear like *Atasi* flower (light blue in color) and are very hot. Being very hot, sunrays evaporate the moisture of earth. The sunrays take away the strength of all things present on earth, so humans become weak during this season.<sup>[18]</sup> Every day *Kapha* gets decreased which results in increase of *Vata*, hence one should avoid food items having *Vata Vardhak Rasa* which are salty, pungent and sour *Rasa*. Exercise should be avoided as it increases *Vata*.<sup>[19]</sup> Fatigue caused by heat of sunrays can be relieved by following measures like paste of *Chandan* is applied to body and forehead, wearing garlands, wearing very light and cool colored clothes, use of fan made of leaves of *tala* or big leaves of *Padmini* which can be made wet by sprinkling water on them, use of fans made of peacock feather.<sup>[20]</sup> Intake of sweet, cold, liquid items, unctuous diet and drinks is prescribed for people. Cold *Mantha* is advised which is groat mingled with cold water and *Ghee* - it should not be too cold not too liquid not too solid.<sup>[21]</sup> Meat of animals and birds from *Jangala Desh* (arid climate) is advised to take, *Ghee* and milk along with *Shali* rice (*Oryza sativum* Linn.) is advised to take.<sup>[22]</sup> During the summer, alcoholic drinks are generally prohibited, however for those who are addicted to drinking, they should drink alcohol in little quantity or drink along with plenty of water. If the liquor is diluted with plenty of water, it reduces hotness and sourness of alcohol. Otherwise, it will produce *Shopha* (oedema), *Shaithilya* (loosening of joints), *Daha* (burning sensation in body), *Moha* (delusions).<sup>[23]</sup> It is prescribed to sleep during day time during summer season only. One should sleep in cold place. Visiting gardens and enjoy cold water and flowers during this season.<sup>[24]</sup>

***Varsha Ritu*** - during summer season, power of digestion becomes weak, it gets further weakened due to vitiation of *Vata* during rainy season. The power of digestion gets affected during this season is due to the gases coming out of the earth, rainfall increases the acidity of water and consequently *Vata* gets vitiated, so it is advised to remain moderate with regards to diet and regimen during this season.<sup>[25]</sup> One should abstain from taking *Mantha* (groat) diluted in excess,

One should generally use honey in almost all food items. Even though honey is responsible for the vitiation of *Vata* but if it is consumed in small quantity, it overcomes dampness (*Kleda*) of rainy season., During rainy season, some days have heavy rains with storms, it may further vitiate *Vata Dosh*, so it is advised to take sour, salty and unctuous diet. pure rain water, water from the ponds and rivers must be boiled and cooled mixed with little honey.[26] Day sleep, water from river, excessive exercise, moving in sun, indulgence in sexual intercourse is to be avoided.[27]

**Sharad Ritu** - People who have been exposed to rain and cold are suddenly exposed to the heat of sun rays during *Sharad Ritu* which leads to *Prakopa* (aggravation) of the *Sanchita* (accumulated) *Pitta*. [28]

*Pitta Dosh* which has been increased during the rainy season, to neutralizes aggravated *Pitta* people should take *Tikta Ghrita*, *Virechan*, *Rakta Mokshana*. People who feel very hungry are advised to take food items having *Tikta*, *Madhura* and *Kashaya Rasa* and food items like *Shali* rice, honey, meat of *Jangala* region animals, sugar, *Dhatri*. [29] People should avoid taking sun bath, fats, oil, meat of aquatic and marshy animals, alkaline salt preparations, curd in food. It is advised to avoid sleep during day time and people should not expose themselves to frost and easterly winds.[30] Water exposed to the sun rays during day time and cooled with the moon rays during night time, water gets detoxified by the star Canopus (*Agastya Tara*) - this water is called as *Hamsodaka*. *Hamsodaka* is clear, pure water and beneficial for many purposes like drinking, washing, bathing etc.[31]

## Discussion

The concept of *Ritucharya* in *Ayurveda* reflects the understanding of the cyclical relationship between the external environment and the internal biological rhythms of the human body. The year is divided into six seasons (*Ritus*), each have a unique influence on the body's homeostasis, especially on the *Tridoshas* - *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*. This interaction makes it necessary to the seasonal adjustments in diet, lifestyle, and behaviour to maintain equilibrium and prevent disease. The classification of seasons into *Adana Kala* (northern solstice) and *Visarga Kala* (southern solstice) is central to *Ayurvedic* seasonal science.

During *Adana Kala*, due to the increasing strength of the sun and wind, the environment becomes dry and hot, leading to depletion of body strength and qualities. This period, considered as *Agneya* (fiery), is associated with the gradual accumulation and aggravation of *Vata* and *Pitta Dosh*s. But on the other hand, *Visarga Kala* being *Saumya* (cool and nourishing) is dominated by the moon's cooling effect, allowing restoration of strength and balance in the body. During this phase, *Kapha* accumulation and *Pitta* pacification take place. The seasonal dominance of specific *Rasas* (tastes) - such as *Tikta* (bitter) in *Shishira*, *Kashaya* (astringent) in *Vasanta*, and *Katu* (pungent) in *Greeshma* - further explores the *Ayurvedic* view that taste directly impacts the *Dosh*s. These *Rasas* help to explain seasonal *Doshic* responses and provides a prescription like seasonal diets to avoid aggravation and support balancing of *Dosh*s. Practices like the use of *Hamsodaka* (sun-moon purified water), application of sandalwood paste, wearing cooling clothes, and modifying sleep and exercise routines serve both preventive and curative purposes. Thus, *Ritucharya* explains the holistic and preventive approach of *Ayurveda*. Its practical application can greatly enhance lustre, strengthen immunity, and maintain *Doshic* balance.

## Conclusion

*Ayurveda*, through the principle of *Ritucharya*, offers a systematic approach to health maintenance by emphasizing seasonal alignment with nature's cycles. The understanding of how the *Tridoshas* - *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha* - fluctuate with seasonal transitions, and how specific *Rasas* (tastes) and regimens can pacify or aggravate them, highlights the preventive essence of *Ayurvedic* wisdom. By dividing the year into *Adana* and *Visarga Kalas*, and further into six *Ritus*, *Ayurveda* provides not only a chronological framework but also a physiological one. Appropriate seasonal modifications in diet, lifestyle, and behaviour help maintain *Doshic* balance, enhance digestive power, and support overall health. The integration of practices such as dietary adaptations, specific *Ahara-Vihara* guidelines, and environmental considerations like the use of *Hamsodaka* underline the holistic vision of *Ayurveda*. In today's world things such as lifestyle disorders and immunity disorders which makes it more important to have the knowledge of *Ritucharya*.

In conclusion, adapting to seasonal rhythms as prescribed in *Ritucharya* not only prevents diseases but also maintains a deeper connection with nature, enabling a sustainable path towards overall well-being.

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