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Concept of *Vasantha Ritucharya* - An Overview

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda - The science of life has always reflected in two different of plains as "Swasthasya Swastha Rakshanam Athurasaya Vikara Prasamanam".^[1] It is well known that Ayurveda gives first priority to the preventive aspects and thus attains its first aim that is *Swasthya Rakshana*. Hence, when the main aim remains to be *Swasthya Rakshana* it in turn means homeostasis of *Doshas*, *Dhatu* and *Mala*. This can be only achieved by following proper *Dinacharya*, *Rithucharya* and *Ratricharya*. It is very essential to get accustomed to each *Ritus* as they are plenty of changes that are happening around the nature during each *Ritu*. To maintain the proper homeostasis in body it is inevitable to follow the *Pathya* and *Apathya*, *Ahara-Viahara* in each *Ritu*. All Acharyas have uniquely described regarding the same in *Samhithas*. *Vasantha Ritu* (March 15-May 15) comes under the *Adanakala* constituting of *Chaithra* and *Vaishaka Masa*.

Key words: *Vasanta Ritu*, *Rutucharya*, *Aharavihara*, *Spring Season*.

INTRODUCTION

After the chilly winter it's that time of the year again - Yes, spring season. Spring is certainly everyone's favourite season of the year. As the spring season sets in, the earth looks lovely and charming. The trees put forth new leaves and the sight of beautiful flowers blooming brings a smile to all our faces. As a matter of fact spring is the season of beautiful flowers. But have we ever wondered what happens to our body in this season??

During Spring the climate gets warmer and the heat reduces the digestive power of body, As a result

Kapha increases leading to various diseases like cough, cold, allergies, sinusitis, indigestion to name a few. It is a known fact that spring is the time of year for seasonal allergies. As the trees start to bloom and the pollen is released into the atmosphere, allergy sufferers begin their annual ritual of sniffing and sneezing.

Many people are unable to enjoy spring as they land up having Allergies and many other problems. Fortunately Ayurveda, the ancient science of life has the solution. There is a concept of *Rutucharya* in Ayurveda, '*Ritu*' meaning seasons and '*Charya*' meaning to follow a routine. Hence *Rutucharya* is the Seasonal Routine; by following the Seasonal lifestyle & diet people can stay away from seasonal diseases and can have a healthy life. As per Ayurveda, The duration from mid March to mid May constitutes the *Vasant Ritu* or spring season.

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| Ritu | Month |
|----------|---------------------|
| Sisira | Maga - Phalguna |
| Vasantha | Chaithra - Vaishaka |

| | |
|----------|-----------------------|
| Greeshma | Jyeshtha - Ashada |
| Varsha | Sravana - Bhadrapada |
| Sarath | Aswini - Kartika |
| Hemantha | Margasirsha - Paushya |

A year (*Samvatsara*) is divided into two *Kala/Ayana* according to the movement of the sun as *Adanakala* (*Uttarayana*) and *Visargakala* (*Dakshina Ayana*). Each *Kala* consists of 3 *Rutus* each (1 *Ritu* = 2 *Masa*).^[1]

Adanakala includes *Rutus Sisira*, *Vasantha* and *Greeshma*. *Adanakala* is characterised by hot sunrays and strong wind. The strong sunrays take up the strength (*Bala*) of people and cooling quality of earth thus making the body drier and decrease in strength (*Bala*).^[2] *Vasantha Ritu* includes *Chaithra* and *Vaishaka Masa* (march 15 - may 15). It succeeds the *Sisira Ritu* where the *Kapha* is in *Chaya Avastha* gets liquefied due to strong sun rays and thus there is *Prakopa Avastha* of *Kapha* in this *Ritu*.^[3] Change is inevitable in the environment we live. The human body has to get adapted to such changes that are happening to the body as there is inter relation between the body and external environment. Being a part of this ecology man needs to adapt and our *Acharyas* has advised the best way to get adapted to each *Ritus*. If body is unable to adopt itself to stressors due to changes in specific traits of seasons, it may lead to *Dosha Vaishamy*, which in turn may render the body highly susceptible to one or other kinds of disorders.

Pathya Avastha

The *Dosha* predominant in this *Ritu* is *Kapha*. *Kapha Dosha* is in *Prakopaavastha* during *Vasantha Ritu*.^[4]

Agni

The *Kayagni* is said to be diminished (*Mandagni*) during *Vasantha Ritu*. This could be due to the *Kapahaprakopa* in the body diminishing the *Kayagni*.^[5]

Bala

This *Ritu* the people are supposed to have *Madhyamabala*.^[6]

Pathya Ahara

Acharya Caraka explains food products which are *Laghu* (light) and easily digestible like barley (*Yava*), wheat (*Godhuma*), Meat of *Sarabha*, *Sasa* (rabbit), *Ena* (antelope), *Lava* (quails), *Kapinjala*, *Vishkira* (*Jangala Mamsa*) etc. and drinks like *Madhvika* and *Sidhu*.^[7]

Acharya Susruta has advocated intake of *Tikshna* (strong), *Ruksha* (dry), *Katu* (pungent), *Kshara* (alkali), *Kashaya* (astringent), *Ushna* (hot) and *Adrava* (soild) kind of food articles like *Yava* (barley) *Mudga* (green gram) and *Madhu* (honey).^[8]

Acharya Vagbhata explains the use of *Laghu* (light), *Ruksha* (dry), *Tiktha* (bitter) and *Katu* (pungent) *Rasa* predominant food articles. He indicates use of *Purana Yava* (barley), *Godhuma* (wheat). *Kshoudra* (honey) and *Jangala Mamsa*. Liquids like *Sringaverambu* (water boiled with *Shunti*), *Madhvambu* (honey+ water), *Jaladhambu* (*Musta* + water), *Sarambu* (*Asana Chandanadi* drugs + water).^[9]

Acharya Bhavamishra quotes the intake of *Yava* (barley), *Godhuma* (wheat). *Kshoudra* (honey) and *Jangala Mamsa*. Food articles which are *Laghu* (light), *Tikshna* (strong), *Ruksha* (dry), *Katu* (pungent) in nature.^[10]

Pathya Vihara

Vyayama (exercise) is advised by all *Acharyas* during *Vasanta Rithucharya* without fail. Types of *Vyayama* like wrestling, walking with bare foot etc. are mentioned.

Acharya Bhavamishra has also quoted the same to have regular *Vyayama* procedure

Apathya Ahara

Acharya Charaka advised not to consume *Guru*, *Snigdha*, *Amla* and *Madhura Ahara Dravyas*.

Acharya Susruta explains not to consume much of *Drava Ahara* during this *Ritu*.

Acharya Bhavamishra quotes food which are sweet and sour, curds, fats, foods which are hard to digest should be avoided.

Apathya Vihara

All *Brihathrayees* have unanimously told about *Divaswapna* (day sleep) which is strictly contraindicated during this *Ritu*.

Acharya Bhavamishra also opines the same to avoid *Divaswapna* (day sleep).

Panchakarma Procedure

Vamana - emesis during *Vasantha Ritu* is one of the important *Rutu Shodhana* a healthy person has to undergo so as to eliminate the excess *Kapha* from the body thus, maintaining the homeostasis of the body.^[11]

Shirovirechana / Nasya - It is a procedure where the *Kapha* is expelled from the *Jathruurdhwapradesha*. *Niruha Basti* is also advised in *Vasanta Ritu* by *Acharya Susrutha*.^[12]

Udwartana, Nasya, Vamana and *Lepa* is explained by *Acharya Vagbhatta*.^[13]

Kavala / Gandusha / (gargling and oil pulling), *Anjana* (application of collyrium), *Dhoomapana* (smoking) - these *Kriyas* are specially mentioned by *Acharya Charaka* along with *Vamana, Udwartana* and *Lepa* - of *Chandana, Agar* etc. is mentioned especially for *Srotoshodhana*.^[14]

Vamana (emesis) Nasya (nasal medication) *Kavala / Gandusha /* (gargling and oil pulling), *Anjana* (application of collyrium), *Dhoomapana* (smoking), *Udwarthana*, licking of powder of *Abhaya* with honey are advised by *Acharya Bhavamishra*.^[10]

DISCUSSION

Vasantha Ritu falls under *Adanakala* which includes *Chaithra* and *Vaishaka Masa*. The main features of the this *Kala* is that the sunrays and wind will be more *Tikshna* and *Ruksha* in nature which consumes all the unctuous properties of earth thus diminishing the *Bala* (strength) of a person. There is also *Agnimandyata* that is diminishing of digestive fire and

thus producing diseases. The season is predominant of *Kaphadosha* in its *Prakopaavastha* which is the main reason for diminishing *Agni* within body. Thus *Acharyas* has clearly described the *Pathya-Apathya, Ahara-Vihara* during each *Rutus* keeping in the view of maintaining homeostasis (*Sama Dasha Avastha*) in body, through which diseases can be prevented. *Ahara* which are predominate in *Laghu, Ushna, Ruksha Gunas-Katu, Kashaya* and *Tiktha Rasa* are advised, keeping in the view that due to *Kapha* vitiation (*Prakopa*) there is *Agnimandhya* hence *Laghu Ahara* which is easily digestible is advised. To counteract the same vitiated *Kapha, Ruksha* and *Ushna* quality food articles should be consumed. *Snigdha, Guru* and *Madhura Rasa* predominant food articles has to be avoided as it can increase *Kapha* in body, hampers the *Jathragni* and thus evolving diseases. *Acharyas* have particularly mentioned the intake of *Jangala Mamsa* and not *Anoopa Mamsa* which is devoid of *Snigdha* properties and has more *Rukshaushna* properties. *Madhvika* (grape juice), *Sarambu* (*Asana, Chandanaadi*), *Jaladambu* (*Mustakwathitha Jala*), *Sringaverambu* (*sunti Qwathitha Jala*), *Asava, Arishta, Sidhu, Madhuambu* etc. are drinks which are advised and *Sukoushnajala* (lukewarm water) is to be used for all purpose. The importance of *Vyayama* is well explained in *Vasantaritu* as it is very essential to do exercise daily so as to decrease the *Kapha* present in body. Wrestling kind of exercises are told in classics. *Divaswapna* is one of the most important *Apathya Vihara* told as it increases the *Kapha* present in body which may worsen the bodily condition. Thus, *Vamana* is the main *Panchakarma* procedure advised so as to eliminate the *Kapha* from the body which has spread all over the body by liquification due to the strong sunrays during the *Adanakala*. Along with *Vamana, Acharya Vagbhatta* and *Susrutha* explains *Thikshna Shirovirechana / Nasya* to be followed so as to expel the *Kapha* from the *Jathru Urdhwasthas* (as it is also *kapanashaka*). Succeeding to these and on daily basis *Kavala* (oil pulling), *Gandusha* (gargling), *Anjana* (collyrium) and *Dhoomapana* (smoking). This is to expel the *Kapha* which is leftover after the main *Panchakarma* procedure and as a in a regular basis to

maintain the *Kapha Dosha* within limits. Use of *Rasanjana* helps in eliminating the excess *Kapha* from eyes. For *Kavala Irimedhadhitaila*, for *Gandusha*, *Triphala Qwatha* etc. can be used. *Chadanadi Agaru Lepa* is another one procedure which is used for *Sroto Shodhana*. *Niruha Basti* is explained by *Acharya Susrutha* and can be given to people who cannot undergo *Vamana* procedure (*Ayogya*). *Udwarthana* (dry powder massage) is given more importance in spite of *Abhyanga* again keeping in the view of *Rukshana* and *Swedhana* property. *Kola Kullathadhichoorna*, *Yavachoorna* etc. are useful in this. *Acharya Bhavamishra* has quoted the use of *Abhaya* with honey which pints towards the preventive measures taken for easy digestion and *Aamapachana* that should happen in the body.

While explaining about the *Ritucharya*, *Rithusandhi* is an important concept. It is that last seven days of the previous and first seven days of the ensuing season (total -14 days) is called *Ritusandhi*. This time is more critical in terms of *Dosha* imbalance, hence one should be more vigilant during these days. One should slowly give up and at the same time start adopting regimens of new *Ritu* simultaneously.

CONCLUSION

Vasantha Ritu thus being one of the *Sadharana Ritu* and succeeding the early winter, one should undergo *Vamana Karma* to eliminate the excess *Kapha*. Food articles such as, *Yava*, *Godhuma*, *Purana Sali*, *Madhu*, *Mudga Jangala Mamsa* (rabbit, antelope, quails etc.), drinks which are *Ruksha* and *Ushna* is advised like *Asava*, *Arishta*, *Madhvambu*, water processed with *Sunti*, *Asana*, *Chandana*, *Mushta* etc. Food items which are cold in nature and sweet substances has to be avoided (milk products). it is also to be noted that during *Vasantha Ritu* people should indulge activities that give pleasantness to mind and body along with friends and family. *Dinacharya* procedure like *Kavala*, *Gandusha*, *Anjana* and *Dhoomapana* should be practiced daily so as to remove the excess *Kapha*. Preventive principles in Ayurveda gives main focus on *Dinacharya*, *Ritucharya* and *Rathricharya*. Each season has its own features and changes that happen

in terms of temperature, humidity etc. the same way human body will also undergo certain *Doshik* imbalances which may produce diseases. One's diet (of various types) leads to promotion of strength and complexion only if he knows the wholesomeness according to (different) seasons dependent on behaviour and diet. So as to balance them and to maintain a healthy state of mind and body *Acharyas* has explained about *Ritucharya*, where both *Ahara* and *Vihara* suitable for the specific *Ritu* is explained.

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