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Ritucharya as Preventive Medicine

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Ayurveda the age old science of life, has always emphasized at maintaining health and preventing diseases rather than laying total focus over the treatment aspects. It has highlighted various rules and regimens regarding *Ahara* (diet), *Vihara* (regimens), *Achara* (conduct) and *Vichara* (thoughts) which are mandatory for attaining the desired healthy life. One among such regimens is "*Ritucharya*", which plays an important role in acclimatizing the seasonal enforcement easily without altering body homeostasis. **Purpose:** *Ritu* (season), classified by variation of *Doshas* in the environment, expresses its effects on the body, hence disturbing its equilibrium (*Prakruthi-Purusha Samyata Siddantha*), this disequilibrium occurs due to failure in following the appropriate rules which leads to imbalance among *Doshas* in the body and thereafter leading to disease manifestation. Hence there arises a need to understand and implement these guidelines in accordance with the changes in *Ritu*. **Methods:** In this study Ayurveda elementary books were thoroughly searched where the concept of *Ritucharya* has been described and comprehended simultaneously. **Result/Discussion:** In this work an attempt is made to understand various concepts evolving around *Ritucharya* including: 1) Scientific background of *Ritu* 2) Seasonal regimens and diet 3) Prevention of seasonal diseases through *Ritucharya* 4) Increased morbidity during *Ritusandi* and its prevention 5) *Ritu Vaiparyata* and corresponding modifications. **Conclusion:** Although the concept of *Ritucharya* seems very simple, but it is crucial for balancing the constitutional entities as per seasonal changes. These guidelines thus become very important for maintaining a disease free body-mind, thus reducing morbidity to various seasonal disorders and improving one's immunity.

Key words: *Ritucharya*, Preventive Medicine, *Rituvaiaryata*, Modification.

INTRODUCTION

The basic principle followed in the Ayurvedic system is "*Swasthasya Swasthya Rakshanam*"^[1] i.e. preventive aspect. Here the importance is given to prevention rather than cure. To maintain health and to prevent diseases various rules and regimens have been told.^[2] One among such regimen is *Ritucharya*. The word *Ritu* is derived from the Sanskrit root : '*Ri*' which means 'to go', time factor and season.^[3] *Ritu* means time, season and *Charya* means regimen.^[4] The year

according to Ayurveda is divided into two periods *Ayana* (solstice) depending on the direction of movement of sun that is *Uttarayana* (northern solstice) and *Dakshinayana* (southern solstice). Each is formed of three *Ritus* (seasons). namely, *Shishira* (winter), *Vasanta* (spring), and *Grishma* (summer) in *Uttarayan*; *Varsha* (monsoon), *Sharad* (autumn) and *Hemanta* (late autumn) in *Dakshinayana*.^[5] As Ayurveda has its origin in India, the above seasonal changes are observed predominantly in Indian subcontinent.

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Fundamentals of *Ritucharya*

1. While passing through six seasons our body is bound to face different variations and accordingly it is likely to get affected if the same routine is followed in all seasons.
2. A particular rhythmic pattern of three *Doshas* occur in relation to six seasons. *Sanchaya* (Accumulation), *Prakopa* (Aggravation) and *Prashaman* (Mitigation) of all three *Doshas* takes

place when the sun changes from one *Rashi* to the other.

3. The basic principle of *Ritucharya* is to preserve the equilibrium of *Doshas* through the concept of *Samanya* and *Vishesha*.
4. Knowledge and regular observance of suitable *Ritucharya* (*Ahara* and *Vihara* for different

seasons) is mainly for the maintenance of health and prevention of diseases. For diseased persons *Ritucharya* has to be modified accordingly.

5. The seasons are differentiated according to month, *Rashi* and characteristics. More importance has been given to the appearance of characteristics, as there is *Rituvaiaryata*.

Ritu	Masa	Month	Rashi	Bala	Rasa	Guna	Dosha	PMB	Agni
Shishira	Maga	Jan-feb	Makara	Srestabala	Tikta	Ruksha	Kapha	Akasha	Teekshna
	Phalguna	Feb-mar	Kumba				sanchaya		
Vasanta	Chaitra	Mar-apr	Meena	Madyabala	Kashaya	Ruksha	Kapha	Prithvi	Manda
	Vaishaka	Apr-may	Mesha			Tara	Prakopa	Vayu	
Grishma	Jyesta	May-june	Vrisha	Alpa	Katu	Ruksha	Vata	Agni	Manda
	Ashada	June-july	Mithuna	Bala		Tama	Sanchaya, Kapha Prashama	Vayu	
Varsha	Sravana	July-aug	Karka	Alpa	Amla	Snigda	Pitta	Prithvi	Vishama
	Bhadrapada	Aug-sep	Simha	Bala			Sanchaya, Vata Parakopa	Agni	
Sharada	Ashvija	Sep-oct	Kanya	Madyabala	Lavana	Snigda	Pitta	Aap	Teekshna
	Karthika	Oct-nov	Tula			Tara	Prakopa, Vata Prashama	Agni	
Hemanta	Agahana	Nov-dec	Vrischika	Srestabala	Madhura	Snigda	Pitta	Prithvi	Teekshna
	Pausha	Dec-jan	Dhanu			Tama	Prashama	Aap	

PURPOSE

- To enlighten the basic concept of *Ritucharya* to its full perspective.
- To understand this concept and utilize it thoroughly in prevention of various diseases by revealing ways to a healthy lifestyle.
- To overcome *Rituvaiaryata* by modification.

METHODS

In this study Ayurveda elementary books were thoroughly searched where the concept of *Ritucharya* has been described. It was analyzed and comprehended for proper utilization in prevention of diseases.

RESULTS

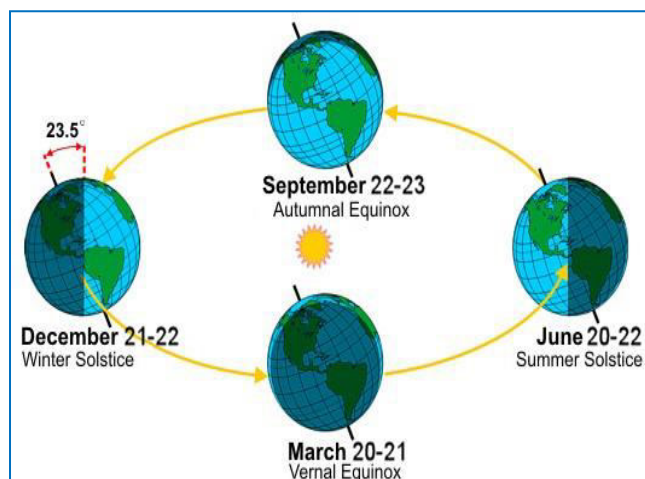
In this work an attempt is made to understand various concepts evolving around *Ritucharya*.

1. Scientific background of Ritu (season): The reason for season is due to following factors;

- The tilt of the earth’s axis which causes the season.
- The shape of its orbit around the sun.
- Presence or absence of a significant atmosphere.
- Its average distance from the sun. All these influences the season.

The movement of the earth around its own axis is responsible for occurrence of day and night. Along with rotation, the earth revolves around the sun in elliptical path which is responsible for occurrence of seasons.

During *Uttarayana* the rays of the sun fall perpendicularly at 23.5 degree meridian of north pole on June 21st of every year. It is called northern summer solistice. then gradually earth moves and the rays of the sun fall on the equator perpendicularly on September 21st (autumnal equinox), March 21st (vernal equinox) and on this day length of day and night are same. During *Daksinayana* the earth continues its movement and now the rays of the sun directly fall over 30 degree meridian of south pole perpendicularly on December 21st and it is called as southern summer solistice.^[6]



2. Seasonal regimens and diet

Hemantha Ritucharya

In this *Ritu* blow of cold winds starts and chillness is felt.

Ahara	
Grahya	Varjya
Amla, Lavana, Madhura, Guru and Snigdha Dravya, New rice and Wheat, Fats and Oils, Black Gram and its products, Milk and its products, Sugarcane products, Warm Water, Honey, Anupa (animals of marshy land) and Audaka (aquatic animals) Mansa, Liquor.	Laghu and Vatala Dravya, Pramitahara, Udmantha.
Vihara	
Grahya	Varjya
Protection from cold by warm cloths and beddings, Living in warm house, Regular use of shoes, Bathing with warm water, Abhyanga, Utsadana, Vyayama, Atapa Sevana, Maithuna.	Diwaswapna, Direct Air.

Shishira Ritucharya

It is similar to *Hemanta Ritucharya*. Specially live in warmer house and protect from direct air. Avoid *Katu, Tikta, Kashaya, Laghu, Sheeta* and *Vatala Dravya*.

Vasantha Ritucharya

This season is considered as season of flowering and origin of new leaves.

Ahara	
Grahya	Varjya
Katu, Tikta and Kashaya Dravya, Ruksa, Laghu and Ushna Dravya; Old Wheat, Rice and Barley; Water medicated with Ginger, Khadira, Musta and Honey; Jangala Mansa, Liquor.	Madhura, Amla, Guru, Snigdha and Sheeta Dravya, Curd.

Vihara	
Grahya	Varjya
<i>Kavala dharana, Anjana, Dhumpana, Vyayama, Udvartana, Chandan and Agaru Lepa, Maithuna, Vamana & Nasya.</i>	Direct sunlight, <i>Diwaswapna</i> , Sleeping under Dew.

Grishma Ritucharya

Environment is prevalent with intense heat and unhealthy wind. The river-bodies dried and the plants appear lifeless.

Ahara	
Grahya	Varjya
<i>Madhura, Drava, Sheeta, Laghu and Snigdha Dravya, Mantha with Sugar, Ghee, Milk, Shali Rice, Jangala Mansa (meat of terrestrial animals).</i>	<i>Lavana, Amla, Katu and Ushna Dravya</i> , Curd, Liquor.
Vihara	
Grahya	Varjya
<i>Diwaswapna</i> , Living and sleeping in cold place, Protection from heat, bathing with cold water, <i>Chandan Lepa</i> , Wearing of light clothes.	<i>Vyayama, Atapa Sevana, Maithuna.</i>

Varsha Ritucharya

During this season the sky is covered by clouds and rains occur without thunderstorm. The ponds, rivers, etc., are filled with water.

Ahara	
Grahya	Varjya
<i>Madhura, Amla, Lavana, Snigdha and Ushna</i>	<i>Ruksha and Ati-Drava Dravya, Udmantha, River</i>

<i>Dravya, Old Wheat, Rice and Barley, Yusa, Food with Honey, Boiled & cooled Water, Jangala Mansa, Liquor.</i>	water.
Vihara	
Grahya	Varjya
Living in dry place, Wearing of light clothes, <i>Pragharshan, Udvartana, Vasti, Virechana, Vamana</i> , Use of flowers and perfume.	<i>Diwaswapna, Vyayama</i> , Living under dew, Eastern wind, Excessive Sunlight exposure, <i>Maithuna.</i>

Sharad Ritucharya

During this time the Sun becomes bright, the sky remains clear and sometimes with white cloud, and the earth is covered with wet mud.

Ahara	
Grahya	Varjya
<i>Madhura, Tikta and Kasaya Dravya, Laghu, Ruksha and Sheeta Dravya</i> , Wheat, Rice, Barley and <i>Mudga</i> , Milk, Sugar and Sugarcane, <i>Tikta Sarpi</i> , River water, <i>Hansodak, Jangal Mansa.</i>	<i>Amla, Katu, Tikshna and Ushna Dravya, Kshara</i> , Oils and Fat, Curd, Ginger, <i>Anupa and Aaudak Mansa</i> , Liquor
Vihara	
Grahya	Varjya
<i>Virechana, Raktamokshana</i> , Living under Moon light, Wearing of flowers, pearls, clean cloths.	<i>Diwaswapna, Vyayama</i> , Eastern wind, Living in dew, <i>Atapa Sevana.</i>

3. Prevention of seasonal diseases through Ritucharya

In Ayurveda, the knowledge of *Ritucharya* is a first-hand guide to the concept of *Kriya-Kala*, which describes the modes and stages of the development of diseases, with regard to the state of different

Doshas - Vata, Pitta, and Kapha in accordance with the changes of time. A good understanding of it is very much essential for early diagnosis and prognosis for adopting preventive and curative measures. With changes in season, there are changes in the state of *Tridosha*, which is bound to affect us, resulting disharmony, causing diseases. *Ritu* acts as *Vyanjaka* or *Nimittakarana* in the aggravation and manifestation of disease.^[7] For example, an evening headache is essentially with *Vata* predominance. Diseases due to *Vata* show a tendency to aggravate during the rainy season. It has been observed that there is an increased occurrence of flu, dry skin in winter, heat stroke in summer, pollen allergy in spring, high incidence of air and water borne diseases in rainy season, and skin diseases in autumn. By modifying diet and regimen according to season one can prevent these seasonal diseases. Studies have even revealed the increased incidence of Asthma attack in winter season. There is also a reference of Seasonal Affective Disorder in modern science. Hence by following *Ritucharya* one can prevent diseases, thus promoting a disease free healthy life.

4. Increased morbidity during *Ritusandi* and its prevention

Study showed that man bathed in 15 degree Celsius water for 1½ hour over 9 consecutive days before a trip to arctic showed less signs of cold induced stress than non-treated men. This indicates that cold-adaptive mechanism influencing morbidity and mortality as well. In the same way to adapt the changes between two seasons, *Ritusandi* is mentioned. Time of seven days at the end and commencement season is known as *Ritusandi*. During this period regimen of previous season should be discontinued gradually and that of subsequent season should be adopted gradually i.e, diet and regimen of previous *Ritu*, which have become accustomed should be discontinued by quarter and quarter similarly diet and lifestyle of incoming *Ritu* should be made use of (gradually) with intervals of one, two or three days.

A human clinical study was carried out by Dr. Mallika et al. to assess the biophysical and biochemical

changes occurring due to *Ritusandi*. It shows provocation of *Tridosha* with the dominance of *Vata* and *Kapha*. In this study during *Ritusandi* frequently *Jwara*, *Pratishyaya* and *Alasya Lakshnas* were met with. In *Agnibala* also although remarkable changes are seen, they are not up to pathologic mark. The variation in bio-chemical values is seen but not remarkable.^[8]

Sharangadhara gives special reference about *Ritusandi* as *Yamadanshra Kala* i.e, the last eight days of *Karthika* (oct-nov) and first eight days of *Agahana / Margashirsha* (nov-dec) representing a junction period of *Kartika*, *Agahana* and also 2 *Ayanas* of the year i.e, *Visarga* and *Adana*. This period has been designated to be influenced by *Yamaraja*. During this period mainly *Pitta* aggravates, which causes improper digestion, many diseases and fatal consequences. So, only those people can live happily who take easily digestible and less amount of food.

5. *Rituvairyata* and corresponding changes

When we get the unnatural and unexpected season characteristics untimely - it is called as *Rituvairyata*. Due to increased population, urbanization, deforestation and pollution there are lots of changes taking around such as global warming and seasonal variations which is effecting both directly and indirectly the human health. In order to prevent these ill effects of seasonal variations, one has to bring modification in lifestyle. For which the knowledge of *Ritu*, *Ritucharya* and *Rituvairyata* is must.

Method of modification

Masa	Rashi	Lakshana	Ritu regimen
+	-	-	Mild
+	+	-	Moderate
+	+	+	Complete
-	+	-	Moderate
-	-	+	Complete

CONCLUSION

We can't go against nature, if we, the life would be a disaster. *Ritucharya* is totally a principle based on blending with nature. It helps individual in bringing about strength, complexion, happiness and longevity without disturbing the equilibrium of *Dhatu*s and *Dosh*as of the body, thus preventing diseases. *Ritucharya* as preventive medicine provides way for healthy living.

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