

MONTH: NOV: DEC 2013

VOL 1 : ISSUE 1



Punarna V Ayurved Journal Punarna V Ayurved Journal  
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# Punarna V

AN INTERNATIONAL PEER REVIEWED AYURVED JOURNAL  
ON LINE BI-MONTHLY

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RITUCHARYA: AN AYURVEDIC CONCEPT OF HEALTHY LIFESTYLE FOR  
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## REVIEW STUDY

### RITUCHARYA: AN AYURVEDIC CONCEPT OF HEALTHY LIFESTYLE FOR PROBLEMS OF PRESENT ERA

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#### ABSTRACT:

**Introduction:** Ayurveda defines perfect health in the terms of body, mind and indriyas, which leads to a life congenial to the personal development and conducive to social happiness. Therefore, health can be achieved and maintained by strict and regular following of the ways defined in samhitas such as Ritucharya. In today's fast life, diseases like respiratory tract disorders, skin related allergies are mounting in incidence everyday and are burning challenge for the medical system in the current scenario. Immunological status is continuously being degraded with the passage of time and centuries. In addition, the environmental derangement in the form of various kinds of pollution is also on rise because of industrialization and urbanization WHO estimates 300 million individuals have allergic diseases worldwide, a figure that could increase to 400 million by 2025. **Aims and Objectives:** 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. **Materials and Methods:** In this study Ayurveda elementary books were thoroughly searched where the concept of ritucharya has been described and comprehended simultaneously. **Discussion:** Ritucharya has been a very important dietary and behavioral regimen for the maintenance of health and is quintessential for healthy living. The adoption of coming Ritu and withdrawal of previous Ritu should be gradual and not random. The changeover of external environment from one season to other is very rapid, but body needs some time for this; that is specified by fifteen days of Ritusandhi. Ritusandhi is the period of the last 7 days of the present Ritu and the first 7 days of the subsequent Ritu. It acts as vyanjaka or nimitta kaarana in the aggravation of doshas and manifestation of disease. There is certainly some influence of Ritusandhi on the body and it may be within physiological limits or may become pathological. **Conclusion** Hence the role of Ritucharya is vital in the prevention of disease if followed properly, thus promoting a diseases free healthy life.

**Keywords:** Immunity, Ritucharva, Vyanjaka kaarana.

## Introduction

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The glory of Ayurveda lies in its evolution of theory for maintenance of health. Centuries have passed the nature of disease

perhaps has changed, new diseases have appeared and some of the old ones are almost eradicated. But Ayurvedic theory of maintenance of health stands for all times and circumstances justifying ancient needs and catering of the future. This theory of maintenance of positive health that is "Swasthavritta" is dealt in detail in the second Catuska of Caraka Samhita where detailed description of ritucharya<sup>1</sup> has been given. Ritucharya is nothing but certain dietary and behavioral regimen for the maintenance of health in different seasons or (ritu) of year.

Now days, every person is running after life's goal. Hence, does not have time to think and act for the healthy life. In addition, the environmental derangement in the form of various kinds of pollution is also on rise because of industrialization and urbanization. This concept of fast life has led to many allergic diseases like respiratory, skin related problems and also lifestyle disorders like obesity and diabetes mellitus. WHO estimates 300 million individuals have allergic diseases worldwide, a figure that could increase to 400 million by 2025.<sup>2</sup> And the lower immunity level in people has further increased simple diseases turning into grave, targeting lives of people. Immunity is the capacity of an individual to resist an

infection i.e. invasion, multiplication and production of a disease by an organism.<sup>3</sup> It is defined as a state of resistance through the defense activities of human body against the disease. And this can be attained by getting proper nutrition, minimal exposure to pollutants, reducing stress in one's life. The practical approach of chapter named Tasyasitiaya in Carak Samita describes the above similar benefits. By this chapter Caraka gives the ways to live in accordance with the nature. Overall he explains the ways to Sukhayu and Hitayu and gives stress on preventive and social medicine.<sup>4</sup> He explains the advantages of prevention in indulgence of three basic Hetus i.e. Atiyoga Hinayoga, Ayoga of the Kala, Prajna and Indriya. Human body is greatly influenced by external environment. Many of the exogenous rhythm and endogenous rhythm have specific phase relationship with each other; which means that they interact and synchronize with each other.<sup>5</sup> Any change in the external environment causes change in one's body. So it is advised to follow such regimen which helps in adapting the external environment smoothly, thus promoting a diseases free healthy life.

#### AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 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.

## MATERIALS AND 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.

## RITU

The word Ritu is derived from the Sanskrit root: - 'Ri' which means 'to go'. Ritu means time, suitable time, proper time for sacrifice.<sup>6</sup>

All the environmental factors like the nature of the land, water and various atmospheric phenomenon including temperature, humidity, wind, rain, clouds, and atmospheric-pressure undergo a continuous change and at a time, no two moments are exactly alike in a given place. Thus with the rising sun the temperature keeps on rising and gradually drops at night. These are known as diurnal variations in the temperature.<sup>7</sup>

The maximum and minimum temperature fluctuates daily but it is highest in summer and lowest in winter. Similarly, all these

factors show diurnal as well as seasonal variations and these variations for a particular time are known as season (Ritu)<sup>8</sup>

## Synonyms

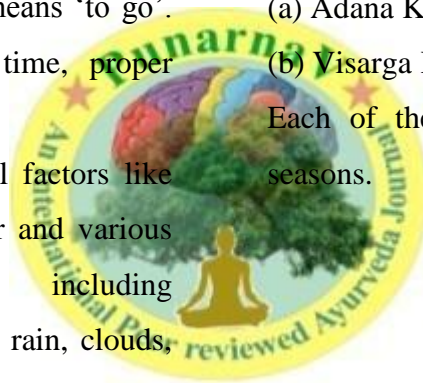
1. Any of the four main seasons of the year; spring, summer, autumn / fall and winter: the changing season<sup>9</sup>
2. Avasarah, Avakaash, kala, Samaya, Prastava, Prasanga, Kalayoga, kalasandhi<sup>10</sup>

## The division of year<sup>11</sup>

Caraka divides the calendar year into two divisions

- (a) Adana Kala
- (b) Visarga Kala.

Each of these divisions constitute three seasons.



**Table No. 1: Difference in Adana kala and Visarga kala**

	Adana Kala	Visarga Kala
Definition	That which reduces the watery part as well as the strength of the creatures of the earth, the period of absorption.	That which generates energy and increases the watery part of the earth
Movement of Sun	Northward journey of sun from tropic of Capricorn to tropic of cancer	Southward movement of sun from the tropic of cancer to Capricorn.
Season	Sisira Vasanta Grisma Agneya dominating Ritu	Varsa Sarad Hemanta Soumya dominating Ritu
Bala	Gradual decrease of Dehabala	Gradual increase of Dehabala
Rasa	Predominance of Tikta, Kasaya, Katu	Predominance of Amla, Lavana Madhura.

**Table no.2 shows: Adanakala<sup>12</sup>**

Subject	Sisira	Vasanta	Grisma
Rasotpatti	Tikta	Kasaya	Katu
Guna	Ruksa Laghu Sita	Ruksa Guru Sita	Ruksa Laghu Usna
Dosa	Kapha Caya	Kapha Prakopa	Kapha Prasama Vata Caya
Deha Bala	Maximum	Moderate	Minimum
Agni Bala	Maximum	Moderate	Minimum

**Table no.3 shows: Visarga kala**

Subject	Varsa	Sarad	Hemanta
Rasotpatti	Amla	Lavana	Madhura
Guna	Snigdha Usna Laghu	Snigdha Usna Laghu Not too Guru	Snigdha Sita Guru
Dosa	Pittacaya Vataprakopa	Pittaprakopa Vataprasama	Pittaprasama
Deha Bala	Minimum	Moderate	Maximum
Agni Bala	Minimum	Moderate	Maximum

**Lifestyle in different seasons (Ritu):**

**1. Vasanta Ritucharya:-**

In this season, increased kapha is liquefied by the heat of sun and as such disturbs the

power of digestion and causes many kapha dosha related diseases.

**Diet:** Yava (barley), godhuma (sorghum), meat of rabbit, eneya (antelope), lava

(common quail) and kapinjala (grey partridge) can be taken as food.

- Beverages such as seedhu (fermented sugarcane juice), and madhvika type of wine.
- Avoid foods that are guru, sheeta, amla, madhura and fatty. Such food increase kapha causing imbalance and hence genesis of disease.

### Lifestyle

- Administer therapies like vamana (emesis)
- Vyaayaam (exercise)
- Udavartana. (applying pastes of medicines on the body)
- Dhumapaana (inhaling fumes of medicated medicines) kavala grahana (a procedure of filling mouth with medicated water) and use of anjana (applying medicated collyrium in eyes)
- Avoid diwaswapna (sleeping during the day)
- Intake of Ushna jala (drinking of lukewarm water)
- Apply chandan (Santalum alba) and aguru lepa (Aquilaria agallocha paste) on body.

## 2. Grishma Ritucharya

### Diet

- Madhura, laghu, drava and snigdha food should be taken.

- Intake sali rice (Oriyza Sativa) with cow's butter and milk.
- Intake of sheeta mantha along with sharkaraa (jaggery) as well as the meat of the animals or birds of jangal climate.
- Alcohol should not be taken as it can cause burning sensation and even debility. If necessary take in very little quantity along with plenty of water.
- Avoid taking diet, such as lavana, amla, katu and ushna

### Lifestyle:

- Apply chandan (Santalum Alba) paste on the body and take bath with cold water.
- Stay in cool places.
- Wear loose and light cotton dresses to keep the body temperature cool.
- Use perfumes made from substances that possess cold properties
- Diwaswapana (sleeping during the day) is permitted as nights are short.

Too much exercise and aatapa-sevana (working in sunlight) should be avoided.

## 3. Varsha Ritucharya

During the period of dehydration in previous ritu the power of digestion is weakened. It is further weakened

due to the vitiation of vata and other doshas during the rains. The power of digestion is also affected due to baspa (vapour) coming out of the earth, rainfall, increase of acidity in water and consequently vata and other doshas get vitiated. So it is advisable to be moderate as regard to diet and regimen during the Varsha Ritu.

#### **Diet**

- Intake amla, lavana and snigdha food.
- Use honey in preparing diet, drink and others.
- Take old yava (Hordeum vulgare), godhuma (Triticum Aestivum), sali rice (Oryza Sativa) along with the meat of arid animals and vegetables.
- Avoid taking mantha in excess.
- Drink madhvika or arishta type of liquor.
- Drink pure rain water or water from the well or pond –boiled and cooled.

River water is to be avoided for drinking.

#### **Lifestyle**

- Avoid sleeping during the daytime.
- Avoid bathing in rivers
- Avoid excessive exercise and moving in sun.

- Reside in a house devoid of humidity.
- Wear light and clean apparel.

#### **4. Sharad Ritucharya**

The body parts adapted for rains and cold are suddenly exposed to the heat of the sun with the beginning of sharad so the pitta accumulated during the rains gets generally vitiated. So in this season following Ritucharya should be followed.

#### **Diet**

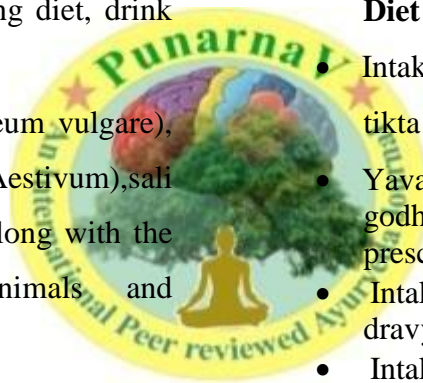
- Intake of madhura, laghu, shita and tikta diet.
  - Yava (Hordeum vulgare) and godhuma (Triticum Aestivum) are prescribed.
  - Intake of butter prepared with tikta dravya
  - Intake of hansodaka for the purpose of drinking, bathing and swimming.
- Avoid curd and meat of anoopa animals.(animals living in humid regions)

#### **Lifestyle**

- Virechana (purgation)
- Raktamokshana (Blood letting)
- Use of garlands, clean apparel and consuming the rays of moon in the evening.
- Avoid working in sunlight.
- Avoid sleeping during the daytime.

#### **5. Hemanta Ritucharya**

In this season the digestive activity becomes more powerful. Vayu is accentuated and needs to be satisfied by a heavy diet.



### Diet

- Intake of snigdha, amla, and lavana rasas related food.
- Intake the meat of anoopa (marshy) animals which are fatty.
- Drinking of alcohol in limits, honey and lukewarm water.
- Sugarcane and impurities of sugarcane, new grains should be taken.
- Avoid food and drinks which are liable to vitiate vata.
- Underfeeding should be avoided.

### Lifestyle:

- Abhyanga (Application of oils on the body)
- Jentaka swedana. (One type of procedure that causes sweating in the body)
- Wear heavy and warm clothes.
- Reside in an underground residence.
- Aguru lepa (Applying paste of Aquilaria agallocha) on the body.
- Avoid exposing oneself to direct winds.

Indulgence in sexual pleasure is advised

## 6. Shishira Ritucharya

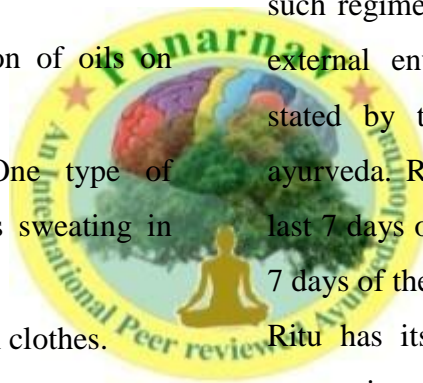
The hemanta and shishira ritu are almost similar in nature with the only difference that in the latter, dryness caused by adanakala and

cold caused by the cloud, wind and rains prevail. So the entire regimen for hemanta ritu is to be followed in the shishira as well.

### Gradual modification in Ritucharya

Human body is greatly influenced by external environment. Many of the exogenous rhythm and endogenous rhythm have specific phase relationship with each other; which means that they interact and synchronize with each other. Any change in the external environment causes change in one's body. So it is advised to follow such regimen which helps in adapting the external environment smoothly. This is stated by the concept of ritusandhi in ayurveda. Ritusandhi is the period of the last 7 days of the present Ritu and the first 7 days of the subsequent Ritu.

Ritu has its influence from the time of conception until death. To maintain the proper health and to tolerate Asatmyaja vyadhi, it is essential to follow Ritusatmya. Ritusatmya is the regimen told for the specific Ritu for specific duration.<sup>13</sup> During Ritusandhi the regimen of the previous season should be discontinued gradually and those of the succeeding season adopted slowly, Otherwise it may lead to Asatmyaja roga.<sup>14</sup> Diet and lifestyle of previous Ritu, which have become accustomed, should be discontinued by quarter and quarter (gradually) similarly diet and lifestyle of





incoming Ritu should be made use of (gradually) with intervals of one two or three days.<sup>15</sup>

Acharya Chakrapani explains this in following way:

On the first day one should give up a quarter of the apathya (don'ts) practices and correspondingly adopt a quarter pathya (do's). On the second day half of the apathya practices is to be given up and half of the pathya one is to be adopted this is to be continued for the third day also. On the fourth day three fourth of the apathya practice is to be given up and three fourth of the apathya one is to be adopted. This process is to be continued on the fifth and sixth day also. The process of giving up of apathya practice and adoption of pathya practice is completed fully on the seventh day. But Indu in his commentary on Astanga Samgraha says for Ritusandhi ,15 days of Satmya Krama is to be followed.<sup>16</sup>

**Table no.4** represents the Krama(routine) for 15 days adoption

So minimum days for Pathya in general are seven days and is specific for Ritusandhi of fifteen days. Gradually the regimen of one Ritu should be discontinued

Days	Previous ritu	Incoming ritu
1	3 Parts	1Part
2	4Parts	-
3	2 Parts	2 Parts
4	2 Parts	2 Parts
5	3 Parts	1 Part
6	1 Parts	3 Parts
7	1 Parts	3 Parts
8	1 Parts	3 Parts
9	2 Parts	2 Parts
10	2 Parts	2 Parts
11	2 Parts	2 Parts
12	2 Parts	2 Parts
13	2 Parts	2 Parts
14	1 Part	3 Parts
15	-	4 Parts

and regimen of new Ritu should be implemented. Correspondingly the previous Ritucharya is discontinued and the upcoming Ritucharya is fully adopted.<sup>17</sup>

#### How to decide ritusandhi and when to adopt regimen<sup>18</sup>

- Masa(month) of the Ritu has arrived but Rashi(horoscopic sign) is not yet arrived and also the Ritu Lakshana then one should follow very little regimen of that Ritu.
- Masa and Rashi of the Ritu is arrived but not the Lakshanas of the Ritu then little less than the complete regimen is to be followed.
- Masa, Rashi and Lakshana all are of the particular Ritu present then complete regimen of the Ritu is to be followed.
- If Masa is not arrived yet and also the Lakshana but Rashi of the Ritu

arrived then moderate Vidhi is to be followed.

- Masa and Rashi both are not yet come. Still Lakshana of Ritu is seen then complete regimen of that Ritu is to be followed.

**Table no.5** shows when to adopt a particular regimen for particular ritu

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

### Discussion:

It comes from the fact all the integrity of the human body is solely influenced by the status of Agni.<sup>19</sup> Agni is the transforming moiety of the body.

### Agni Status in the AdanaKala and VisargaKala :

Caraka explains three different types of Agni in six seasons.

Either it is Prabalagni(intense) or it is Madhyamagni(medium) or it is Mandagni (poor digestive power ). How this Agni changes according to season is explained with example of three seasons.

◆Hemanta for Prabalagni.

◆Vasanta for Madhyamagni

◆Varsa for Mandagni.

#### (1) Hemanta Prabalagni<sup>20</sup>

Atmospheric air becomes cold because of the winter. As Vata because of yogavahi

and sheeta guna becomes a source of Agnisamrodha in human and coldness of the Hemanta obstructs the normal flow of heat from human bodies. As a potter baking raw earthen vessels,

places them inside a pit and covers them after keeping fire and the fire material inside

produces more heat, similarly the cold Vata covers up the whole body which has enough fire and fire material inside. This hemmed in heat increases and

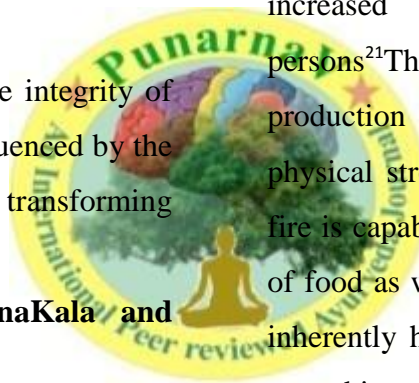
augments the digestive fire leading to increased Agni in physically strong

persons<sup>21</sup>This explains that the Agnibala production is directly proportional to the physical strength. The enhanced digestive fire is capable of digesting large quantities of food as well as those edibles which are inherently heavy e.g. new food grains. In

case this enhanced Agni does not get the heavy edibles for consumption it acts upon he Rasa Dhatu and consumes it. As a result deficiency of Rasa Dhatu consequently causes provocation of Vata during Hemanta. The provoked Vata also causes the enhancement of Agni as it is seen in case of Sthoulya explained by Caraka.<sup>22</sup>

#### (2) Vasanta Madhyamagni<sup>23</sup>

The Kapha is accumulated during Hemanta because of the use of Guru, Snigdha and cold articles get liquefied by the sun rays of the Vasanta. This melts



Kapha from the various parts of the body. It not only hinder the activity of Dhatvagni but also affects the whole Agni system controlled by Jatharagni. The Kapha having affected Jatharagni causes destruction of Jatharagni which in turn causes many diseases.

### (3) Varsa Durbalgni <sup>24</sup>

The digestive power is directly proportional to the body strength; during Adana Kala as the strength is reduced, following the same principle the digestive power is also reduced.

The humid air by its sheer effect is vitiates Tridosha.

- ◆The rain vitiates of Vata and Kapha.
- ◆Acidic tendency of water vitiates Pitta and Kapha.

The weakened state of digestive power is Agnimandya which causes vitiation of Kapha and Pitta. When food is not properly digested consequently there is deficient production of Ahara Rasa resulting in Dhatuksaya. which in turn causes vitiation of Vata. Thus during the rainy season because of weakened Agni the vitiation of Vata etc. takes place and the vitiating Dosa in turn causes weakening of the digestive power.<sup>25</sup>

On analysis of the condition in each and every ritu, the dosas which get vitiating by the virtue of conditions, get pacified by adopting the particular regimen in that particular ritu because Charaka has

propounded that for finding a definite homologation in a particular country or disease one should follow the principle of Viparita Gunatva or opposite quality factors.<sup>26</sup>

### CONCLUSION

One should follow the regimen as described by acharyas to protect ourselves from diseases just like an officer who is in charge of a city, is Vigilant about his duties and towards the internal problems of the city, similarly a wise man has to be attentive towards his body, not only towards its external need but also towards maintenance of internal stability. There are two objectives of ayurveda i.e. the treatment of patient suffering from diseases and maintenance of positive health. Thus by following the regimen given in six different seasons one can fulfill the latter objective effectively. By following ritucharya the preventive aspect of medicine has come fore front. It helps the individual in bringing about strength, complexion, happiness and longevity without disturbing the equilibrium of Dhatus and Dosas of the body, thus mending ways for a healthy living.

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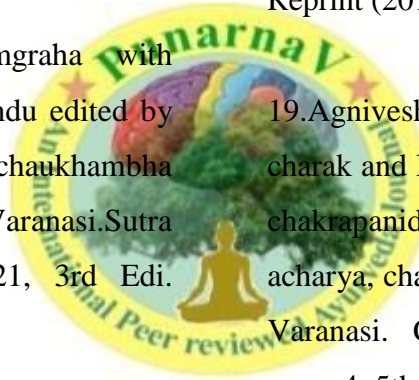
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