

## PREVENTION OF SEASONAL DISEASE EXACERBATIONS BY RITUCHARYA W.S.R. TO VARSHARITUCHARYA

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### ABSTRACT

According to Ayurveda different diet and lifestyle regimens need to be followed in every different season. The word '*Ritucharya*' is made of two words, '*Ritu*' which stands for season and '*Charya*'; which signifies regimen i.e., the *Pathya* and *Apathya* to be followed. This seasonal regimen is of utmost importance to combat different diseases which develop or exacerbate due to different seasonal variations. The main principle of Ayurveda as mentioned in different texts being the preventive aspect along with the treatment of diseases which have already developed can be achieved by making alterations in the diet and practices in response to change in climatic conditions. *Varsha Ritu*

(rainy season) renders people with weakened immunity, body strength and digestive power; making them more prone to diseases. In order to maintain the health of people and prevent them from catching diseases, Ayurveda has given the concept of *Ritucharya*. In this review article, various regimens in diet and lifestyle as mentioned in the Ayurvedic classics along with their importance in maintaining health of an individual in rainy season and preventing the common diseases that people suffer with during the weather have been mentioned.

**KEYWORDS:** *Ritucharya*, *Varsharitu*, *Pathya*, *Apathya*.

### INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda has given special importance to seasons and their effect on our body. Various regimens in the form of *Dincharya*, *Ritucharya*, *Garbhini Paricharya*, *Rajaswala Paricharya* have been described to promote health and prevent diseases. *Ritucharya* deals with mode of

living in different seasons <sup>[1]</sup>. A year has been divided into six different seasons; which are namely:

Ayana	Seasons	Hindu season	English calendar months
<b>UTTARAYANA</b> ( <b>ADAANA KALA</b> ) (Northern solstice)	<i>Shishira</i> (Late winter)	1. <i>Magha</i> 2. <i>Phalguna</i>	January- March
	<i>Vasanta</i> (Spring)	1. <i>Chaitra</i> 2. <i>Vaishakha</i>	March- May
	<i>Grishma</i> (Summer)	1. <i>Jyestha</i> 2. <i>Aashadha</i>	May- July
<b>DAKSHINAYANA</b> ( <b>VISARGA KALA</b> ) (Southern solstice)	<i>Varsha</i> (Rainy season)	1. <i>Shravana</i> 2. <i>Bhadrapada</i>	July- September
	<i>Sharad</i> (Autumn)	1. <i>Ashwin</i> 2. <i>Kartik</i>	September- November
	<i>Hemant</i> (Early winter)	1. <i>Margashirsha</i> 2. <i>Pausha</i>	November- January

Among these six; the *Ritu* in northern solstice (*Shishir*, *Vasant* and *Grishma*) are characterised by the predominant influence of heat of sun on individual. Physically persons tend to become weak during this period, it is known as *Adaana kala*.<sup>[2]</sup> Whereas, during southern solstice (*Varsha*, *Sharad*, *Hemant*), cooling effect of moon is predominant, due to this effect, humans experience good physical strength and this period is known as *Visarga kala*. Among the triad of seasons, there is a specific pattern in which the strength among individuals varies. In the beginning of *Adaana* (*Shishir*) and the end of *Visarga Kala* (*Hemant*), one is supposed to have maximum strength. Similarly, in the middle of both *Kala* (*Vasant* and *Sharad*); moderate strength prevails. Individuals are supposed to have lowest strength in the end of *Adaana* (*Grishma*) and the beginning of *Visarga kala* (*Varsha Ritu*)<sup>[3]</sup>. This particular division has been made and explained in order to make persons aware of the fact that maximum care needs to be taken in particular seasons in people with specific *Prakriti* and those suffering with any diseases.

The three *Doshas* are considered as the three main pillars of human body. These are very sensitive towards climate changes and undergo fluctuations accordingly. These *Tridoshas* undergo *Sanchaya*, *Prakopa* and *Prasara* stages in different seasons. If this cycle is checked at very basic stages by the help of *Nidana Parivarjana*, *Shodhana* and *Shamana* etc., then different ailments which occur as a result can be prevented.

*Varsha Ritu* or the rainy season in India usually lasts from June to September. It is marked by naturally weakened *Agni* (digestive power) and *Bala* (strength). It invites certain ailments like

cough, cold, fever, skin disorders like fungal infections and joint pains etc. The *Agni* which is already debilitated due to summer, undergoes further decrease and gets vitiated by *Doshas*<sup>(4)</sup>. In this *Ritu*, *Pitta Dosha* is in *Sanchaya Avastha* (stage of accumulation) and *Vata Dosha* is in *Prakopa Avastha* (aggravated). So, adequate care needs to be taken in this season.

**“Aadaane Durbale Dehe Pakta Bhavati Durbala”<sup>[5]</sup>**

### **Aims and Objectives**

1. To analyse and evaluate the concept of *Ritucharya*.
2. To review the basic concept of *Varsha Ritucharya* and analyse its role in prevention of diseases.

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Hereby information pertaining to *Ritucharya* has been collected from various classical texts, journals and internet sources. Conclusion is drawn on the basis of compiled information.

### **Seasonal Regimen to Be Followed**

*Agnibala* (digestive power) is very low in this season owing to the vapours coming from ground, constant rainfall and due to *Amla Vipaka* (acidic assimilation) of water. This leads to the vitiation of all three *Doshas*.

### **Pathya Ahara (do's)**

1. All food items should be incorporated with honey.
2. Food predominant with salty (*Lavana*) and sour (*Amla Rasa*) should be consumed.
3. Food should be *Sneha Pradhan* (unctuous) i.e., considerable amount of ghee and oils should be used in meals.
4. To protect the digestive fire, aged grains like old barley, wheat and rice should be consumed.
5. Non-vegetarians should drink soup of *Jangala* animals (creatures found in the plains with moderate climate); processed with oil/ghee, *Shunthi* (dried ginger) etc. along with above mentioned food items.
6. Vegetarians should consume soup of *Mung* beans (green gram) with the earlier mentioned food items.
7. Rain water and well water can be used for drinking after boiling and cooling it down.
8. Curd, animal fat, black gram can be consumed.
9. Consume small piece of ginger with rock salt before every meal.

10. Eat food items when they are still warm and avoid uncooked foods and salads.
11. Taking *Haritaki* (*Terminalia chebula*) with rock salt is beneficial (*Ritu Haritaki*)<sup>[6]</sup>.
12. Use of *Madhvika* (alcohol made of *Madhuca longifolia*), *Arishta* (fermented alcoholic medicinal preparation) and water mixed with honey.

#### ***Pathya Vihara* (lifestyle)**

1. Sleeping during daytime should be avoided as it slows down digestion.
2. Use of scented bead necklaces, flowers, exposing clothes to fragrant fumes, use of scented *Dravya* like *Chandana* (*Santalum album*), residing in upper floor of one's house which should be protected from heat, cold and snow.
3. *Panchkarma* therapies especially *Basti Karma* (therapeutic enema) should be administered.
4. *Pragharshana* (rubbing of body with dry medicated powder), *Udvardana* (body massage with herbal paste or powder)

#### ***Apathya* (DON'TS)**

1. Sleeping outdoors under the sky.
2. Use of green leafy vegetables.
3. Person should not move bare foot and should keep one's feet dry.
4. Avoid use of *Udmantha* (beverage prepared by flour of corns or barley), *Diwaswapna* (day time sleep), *Avashyaya* (morning dew), *Nadijala* (river water), *Vyayama* (exercise), *Aatapa* (exposure to sun) and sexual activity.<sup>[6]</sup>

### **DISCUSSION**

*Varsha Ritu* can lead to imbalance of all *Doshas* if proper care is not taken to follow the recommended regimen. Metabolism is sluggish during rainy season, so there is loss of appetite as compared to other seasons.<sup>[7]</sup> *Agnibala* (digestive power) is very low in this season owing to the vapours coming from ground, constant rainfall and due to *Amla Vipaka* (acidic assimilation) of water.<sup>[8]</sup> This leads to the vitiation of all three *Doshas*. Therefore, all efforts should be made to boost the digestive fire. Light and fresh meals should be consumed. Honey being of cold potency, *Laghu* and *Madhur Rasa Pradhana* is *Vata Prakopak* in small proportions. It decreases the amount of *Kleda* (mucus) generated in body and hence, is beneficial in moderate amounts. Daytime sleep causes *Kapha Dosha* vitiation and should be avoided. *Basti* helps in relieving bloating and constipation as it controls *Vata Dosha*.

As it is rightly stated that,

“*Varshasu Shamayedvayum Praag Vikaarsamucchrayata*<sup>[9]</sup>”

In *Varsharitu*, *Vata Dosha* should be pacified with the help of internal oleation and *Vasti* like procedures.

Exposure to early morning dew in rainy season can trigger cough, cold and other *Kapha* related disorders in body. Rivers contain lots of impurities as rain water joins river and can cause diseases, especially skin disorders or digestive problems on consumption. Sexual activity during rainy season can cause exhaustion and lead to severe vitiation of *Vata Dosha*. Alcohol; in moderation stimulates the digestive system and produces more heat in body. *Rituharitati* is found to be effective in reducing severity and frequency of diseases in *Varsha Ritu* and had effect on quality of life of patients.<sup>[11]</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Monsoon season comes as a boon to provide relief from the scorching sun during summer season, but it also invites many ailments which are most likely to happen if adequate care is not taken. The regimen mentioned above needs to be followed religiously to prevent *Dosha* vitiation and ultimately the exacerbation of ailments like acidity, digestive problems, allergies, skin disorders, rheumatoid arthritis etc. One should adopt simple living and consume food items which aid digestion. All general measures should be taken to mitigate the imbalance of *Doshas*. Ayurveda has always emphasized on the maintenance of health and prevention of diseases by following proper diet and lifestyle regimens rather than treatment and cure of diseases.

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