

RITUCHARYA ACCORDING TO AYURVEDA-A REVIEW ARTICLE

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ABSTRACT

In Ayurvedic thought, each of us embodies a dominant natural constitution: either Vata, Pitta, or Kapha (or a combination of any of the above). Vata types are ruled by the qualities of air and space, Pitta types are ruled by fire and water, and Kapha types are ruled by water and earth. Each season pacifies or ignites these energies within us, meaning that our systems can be thrown out of balance if we don't take measures to adapt our bodies to the weather. It is a genuine fact that seasons leave an immense effect on our tridoshas. As per Charak Samhita, if a person follows diet and routine according to the season, the intensity of his health is improved. So, Ritucharya is the best ayurvedic practice.

KEYWORDS: Vata, Pitta, Kapha, Tridoshas, Seasons, Charak, Practice.

INTRODUCTION

According to Ayurveda, the year is divided into two periods, each containing three seasons: Uttarayana, the cold months, which contains the seasons of Sharath, Hemanta, and Shishira, and Dakshinayana, the warm months, which contains the seasons Vasanta, Grishma, and Varsha.^[1]

Dosha	Season for accumulation (Sanchaya)	Season for provocation (Prokopa)	Season for soothing (Shaman)
Vata	Grishma (mid-May to mid-July)	Varsha (mid-July to mid-September)	Sharath (mid-September to mid-November)
Pitta	Varsha (mid-July to mid-September)	Sharath (mid-September to mid-November)	Hemanta (mid-November to mid-January)

Kapha	Hemanta (mid-November to mid-January)	Vasanta (mid-March to mid-May)	Grishma (mid-May to mid-July)
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Sharath ritucharya

Sharath Ritu begins in the middle of September, and lasts until mid-November. As we get one last surge of warmth and dryness after the rainy season, your agni, or digestive fire, regains its strength. Water and fire are both prominent energies during this transitional time, which makes it the perfect period to begin to pacify those Pitta energies.

What to eat

The goal of this season is to transition smoothly into winter. In order to cleanse yourself and prep your digestive system for the heavier fare of the colder months, eat bitter, light, cold, astringent, and sweet foods that are easy on your stomach, and avoid foods high in fat and salt. The ideal Sharath diet includes rice, honey, green leafy veggies, tomatoes, root vegetables, pineapples, berries, plums, ghee (clarified butter), and other dairy products.

Hemanta ritucharya

Hemanta Ritu blows in during the middle of November, and lasts until the middle of January. During this time, your agni is at its strongest. The elemental energies of earth and water are dominant, which means that fiery Pitta becomes grounded and pacified.

What to eat

The goal of this season is to keep you warm and nourished. Now's the time to eat sweet, sour, and salty foods, as well as unctuous or oily dishes. Keep that digestive fire burning strong! Eat warming foods and lots of fermented dishes (like kimchi and sauerkraut), and avoid foods that are cold, light, and dry. The ideal Hemanta diet includes pumpkin, cabbage, spinach, corn, rice, carrots, potatoes, onions, beets, apples, dates, and dairy products.

Shishira ritucharya

The cold settles in for a few months in Shishira Ritu, which lasts from mid-January until mid-March. This wet, cold season brings with it an increase in heavy Kapha energies, which means that your agni needs to burn even brighter to keep things balanced.^[2]

What to eat

Keep up with the diet you've established during the Hemanta Ritu, with lots of sweet, sour, salty, fatty, and fermented foods served with warming spices. Avoid any astringent or cold foods. The ideal Shishira diet includes lots of dairy products, root vegetables, apples, grapes, rice, wheat, beans, and sweets (in moderation, of course!)

Vasanta Ritucharya

As nature begins to stir back into life, we transition into the Dakshinayana, or the warmer months. Vasanta Ritu lasts from mid-March to mid-May, and earth and air energies combine to make this time a lively transitional period. Kapha energies start to disperse, which douses your agni and can cause a lot of discomforts.

What to eat

This is one of the more sensitive times for our body, so focus on eating easily-digestible bitter and astringent foods, and avoid cold, viscous, heavy, sour, and sweet dishes. The ideal Vasanta ritu diet includes gut-healthy foods like barley and honey, and gently stimulating spices like coriander, cumin, turmeric, and fennel.

Grishma ritucharya

It's summer! Grishma Ritu lasts from Mid-May to Mid-July. Fire and air energies dominate this season, drying things out and increasing both the Pitta and Vata energies within the body. Your agni is at an all-time low, so keeping things light is a must.

What to eat

This is the time of year for sweet, light, cold, mineral-rich food. Eat lots of herbs and drink lots of fruit juices, and avoid sour, pungent, or warm foods. Keep hydrated with lots of water, and seek out antioxidants. The ideal Grishma diet includes lots of fresh fruit, and veggies like asparagus, cucumber, celery, and leafy greens.

Shirodhara: Shirodhara is a deeply relaxing therapy that involves a steady stream of warm oil that is poured onto the forehead. This blissful treatment is perfect for the chaotic state that fire and air can bring to the mind.

Varsha ritucharya

Varsha Ritu takes place from mid-July to mid-September. This is typically a wet, rainy season, with earth and fire energies rising to the forefront. Your agni is heavily dampened

during this season, so it's time to get that fire roaring again.^[3] (Pandey PD. Swasthya Rakshak. Indore: Nirogdham Prakashan; 2004.)

What to eat

Salty, sour, and oily foods are the star of this season. Although you want your digestive fire to begin to pick up, avoid heavy foods at first and transition slowly through the season. The ideal Varsha diet avoids uncooked foods and favors warm, freshly-cooked meals. Help your digestion out with ginger and lemon, and eat a lot of thin soups.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

According to Ayurveda, the principles of system of Ritucharya (or Rutucharya) essentially advocate living one's life according to the flow of the seasons. The energies of nature change according to the seasons, for example, trees flower in spring while they shed leaves in autumn. As human beings are also part of the ecosystem, our bodies are affected by these environmental changes. If we don't adapt to these specific changes, we will become prone to lifestyle disorders. This is Ayurvedic wisdom which works in favour of preventive medicine as a seasonal system of holistic health.

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