

## RITUCHARYA AND AAHARA: A CRITICAL SCIENTIFIC REVIEW

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## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Ayurveda, often referred to as the science of life, is dedicated to maintaining health and wellbeing on Earth. Within Ayurveda, principles outlined under Swasthavritta guide individuals towards this objective. One crucial aspect of Swasthavritta is Tryopstambha, encompassing Aahara (diet), Nidra (sleep), and Brahmacharya (balanced lifestyle). Aahara, in particular, is highlighted as pivotal for maintaining Dhatusamya (balance of bodily tissues) and can lead to disease if not adhered to properly. **Materials and Methods:** Relevant references were gathered from various Ayurvedic texts and their accompanying commentaries. These sources were meticulously examined, compiled, and comprehensively discussed. **Discussion:** Numerous guidelines and regulations are delineated within these texts concerning the consumption of suitable and appropriate food. According to Acharyacharak, even wholesome food, if not consumed in accordance with Ritucharya (seasonal regimen),

may not yield beneficial results.

**KEYWORDS:** Aahara, Ritu, Ritucharya.

## INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, the science of life is a time tested treasure of knowledge that has been handed down to us from our great ancestors. Ayurveda is evaluated on earth for the maintenance of

health and various principles are described for achievement of this goal under the head of Swasthavritta. One of the important principle of its Swasthavrittais tryopstambha which includes aahara, nidra and brahmacharya. Here aahara has been enumerated first which shows its importance. Aahara is very important for the classic aim of total positive health including physical, mental and spiritual well-being. Aahara has been considered as the prime factor for the maintenance of Dhatusamya or health if utilized according to prescribed regimen as well as it has also considered as main causative factor for the causation of diseases if not taken according to prescribed regimen Therefore various rules are described in the context of Aahara utilization and Kala or time is one of those. Ritucharyahas described in context of various seasons and it includes various regimens of Aaharaand Vihara. If these regimens are not followed properly various diseases will be manifested. It may be one of the causative factors for the evolution of life-style disorders which are increasing rapidly day by day.

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1. To collect and critically re-evaluate the references regarding Aaharain the context of Ritucharya described in various Ayurvedic texts and its available commentaries. 2. Try to establish the relationship between the prescribed regimen of Aahara and evolution of rasa in particular Ritu. 3. To discuss the contemporary food pattern and its effects on health and prepare a regimen which practically and socially accepted by the people.

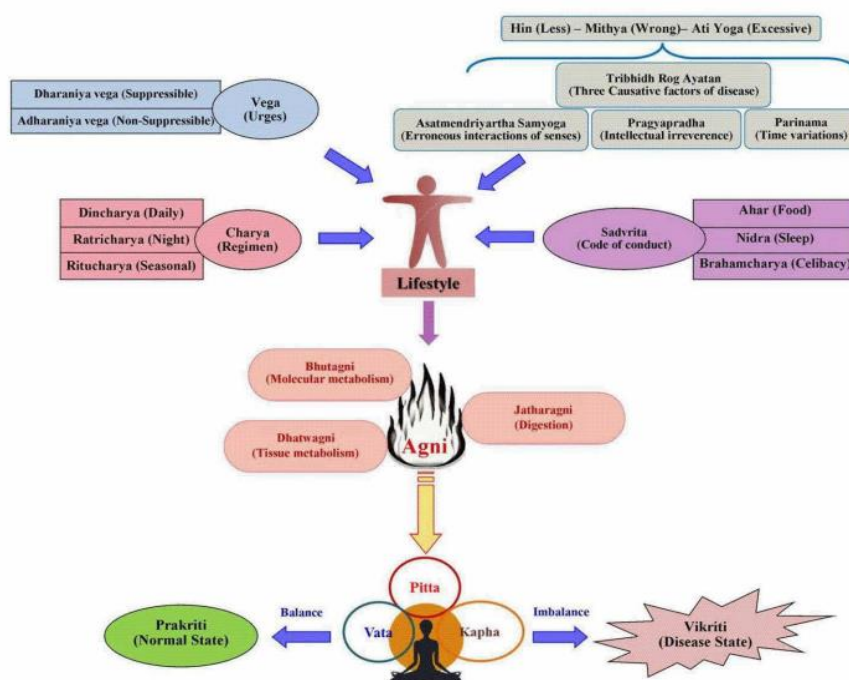


Figure 1: Principal of Ayurveda In Maintaining Healthy Lifestyle.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The related references have been collected from different Ayurvedic texts and its available commentaries. Related websites have also been searched. The collected references have been critically observed, compiled and discussed thoroughly.

### Benefits And Classification of Aahara

Food sustains the life of living beings. All living beings in the universe require food. Complexion, clarity, good voice, longevity, geniuses happiness, satisfaction, nourishment, strength and intellect are all conditioned by food. Professional activities leading to happiness in this world, Vedicrituals leading to abode in heaven and observance of truth, Brahmacharya leading to salvation are all based on food.<sup>[1]</sup> There is a detailed and exhaustive classification of dietary items available in ancient Ayurvedic texts. The basis of classification by Charaka has been mainly the type of food item i.e whether it is a cereal, pulse, Vegetables or fruits and so on.<sup>[2]</sup> Sushruta and other Acharayas have first broadly classified all the food items into liquid<sup>[3]</sup> and solid food<sup>[4]</sup> and then subdivided these in to two types accordingly.

### Classification Of Ritu

It is mentioned by Acharya Vagbhata that Ritu or seasons are recognized by the three following methods.<sup>[5]</sup>

1. Classification according to month.
2. Classification according to sun in different zodiac.
3. Classification according to characteristics of Shita, Usna, Varsha.

Considering with Ayana system all Acharya have mention these six ritus in a year Shishir (late winter), Basant (spring), Grishma (summer), Varsha (rain), Sharad (autumn), Hemant (early winter).

### Aahar And Ritucharya

#### Relationship Between Ritu & Taste (Rasa)

Rasa is an important nutritional concept in Ayurveda. Rasa is not merely incidental in terms of rendering the food palatable, but it is important in term of nutrition. As per Ayurveda, there are six Rasas, namely Madhur (sweet), Amla (sour), Lavana (salt), Katu (pungent), Tikta (bitter) and Kashaya (astringent). Rasas are also ultimately made up of the five Mahabhootas. However it is also observed that specific Rasas predominate in particular seasons and this has implications for how our food and regimen must change in various seasons.<sup>[6]</sup> Ayurved

mentioned food to eat according to different seasons. Dosaare predominant in different Rituand the specific type of food also mentioned for particular Dosha according to the season.

**Reason behind seasons:** The earth's orbit around the sun is not a perfect circle. It is an ellipse. Seasons are not caused by how close the earth is to the sun. Seasons are the result of the tilt of the earth's axis. Earth's axis is tilted 23.50. This tilting is why we have seasons like rainfall, winter, spring, summer occurs. tSummer is warmer than winter (in each hemisphere) because the sun's rays hit the earth at a more direct angle during summer than during winter. Also the days are much longer than nights during the summer. During the winter, the sun's rays hit the earth at an extreme angle, and the days are very short. These effects are due to the tilt of the earth axis.

#### *Climate & climatic zone*

**Climate:** encompasses the statistics of temperature, humidity, atmospheric pressure, wind, precipitation, atmospheric particle count and other meteorological elemental measurements in a given region over long periods. Climate can be contrasted to weather, which is the present condition of these elements and their variations over shorter periods.<sup>[7]</sup>

**Climatic Zone:** - is a region of the world where the climate can be defined using a few key parameters. There are a number of different ways to classify the world's climate zones, and a wide assortment of uses for this information.

## DISCUSSION

The significance of Aahara holds a paramount position in maintaining Dhatusamya. Various guidelines and directives are elucidated concerning the consumption of fitting and adequate nourishment in this regard. According to Acharya Charak, even a moderate diet will not yield desirable outcomes if not adhered to in accordance with Ritucharya. Ritucharya revolves around adapting to seasonal variations. The climatic conditions in any area are entirely dictated by its geographical characteristics. However, Ayurveda provides a scientific categorization for comprehending time or Kala in the context of seasonal changes.

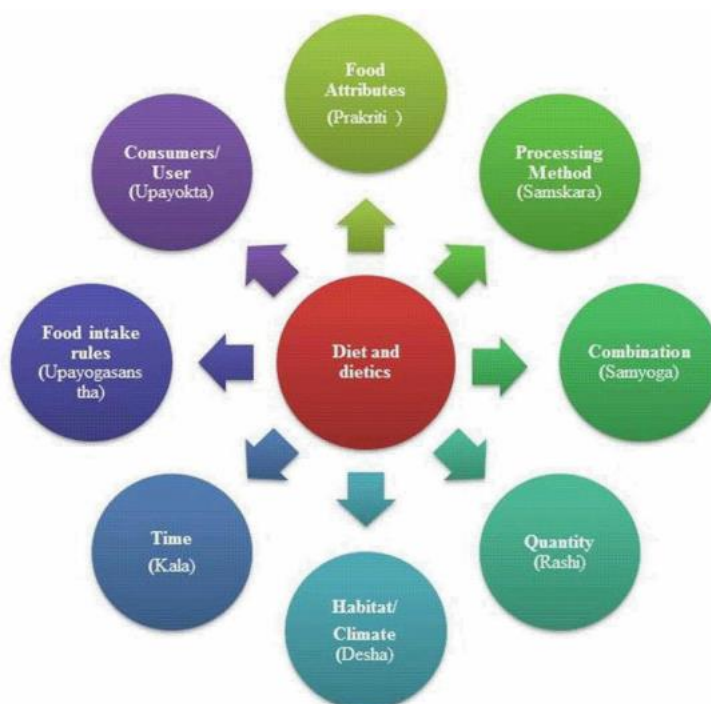
## Ritu Classification

### 1. General (*Swasthavritta*)

In Ayurvedic classics Samvtsara has been divided into six Ritus. That is Shishir, Vasant, Grishma, Varsha, Sharad, Hemanta With two months duration for each Ritu. The seasonal manifestation in different months depends upon transition of sun in various Rashis.

### 2. According to *Dosha Sanchaya, Prakopa and Prasara*

Another classification of Ritu given in Ayurvedic text is Dosha fluctuation in the body. It is well known concept that seasonal fluctuation results in Dosha fluctuation in the body. The purpose of this classification is the elimination of vitiated Dosha from the body. In Ayurvedic classics the seasonal characteristics are divided into three groups that is cold, hot and rainy. Two Ritu are kept in each group.



**Figure 2: Factor should be considering during diet designing.**

Among two Ritu in each group the first Ritu has the mild characteristics of that season. While second Ritu has the intensive characteristics of that particular season. Two reasons are given for this purpose.

- (1) In Sadharan Kala, seasonal manifestations are in mild form and weather is pleasant. Therefore, there is least chance of complications after Sanshodhankarma for Dosha elimination.<sup>[2]</sup>

(2) Vitiation of Dosha occurs in Sadharan Kala.

### **Current Concept**

In current era, seasons are classified into four. That is spring, summer, autumn and winter. Spring starts from vernal equinox (21st march) to summer solstices (21st June). Summer starts from summer solstices and end at the autumnal equinox (22nd September). Autumn starts from autumnal equinox to winter solstices (21st December). And winter starts from winter solstices to vernal equinox.

If we compare the traditional and modern classification of season, the ayurvedic classification is more comprehensive and elaborative. It includes the all the possible changes occurs in environmental only but also in the body. In other words first classification described here based on the seasonal changes and provides bases for the modification and adjustment in lifestyle. While Second classification is intended for dosha fluctuations according to external seasonal fluctuations and its eliminations. If we see the current classification, there is not much scope for the lifestyle modification and it is not indicated in the context of seasonal variation. Another important thing is that one season is of three month duration. It is too long for single lifestyle. Because there is a lots of environmental changes occurs in this long duration.

### ***Evolution of Rasa in different Ritu and its relation with diet and Sanchya, Prakopa and Prasara of Dosha***

It has been mentioned in Ayurvedic text that movements of sun is responsible for the changes in season, Bala, rasa and Dosha. When sun moves through northward its intensity is increasing gradually. So dryness in environment increases and Bala of human being decreased gradually. Due to this increase in dryness, Ruksha Rasa become potent in respective Ritu; that is Tikta in Shishir, Kashay in Vasant, Katu in Grishma. The opposite thing is happened, when sun moves through southwards intensity of sun become feeble and thus intensity of moon is increased. This result in evolution of Snigdha Rasa in respective Ritu; that is Amla in Varsha, Lavanain Sharad and Madhur in Hemanta.

This pattern for evolution of Rasa in different season plays important role in Sanchay, Prakopa and Prasar of Dosha. One more thing is also important in this regard is diet pattern and status of Agni. These are both external and internal factors responsible for accumulation and vitiation of Dosha.



**Aahar and Ritucharya:** Seasonal changes in different Ritu are responsible for the changes in human body. Especially status of Agni. This Agnistatus is bases for the design of diet pattern for particular Ritu. Each season will be discussed one by one.

**Hemanta & Shishir (Cold season):** These both Rituconsider together because their characteristics are same. Only difference in Shishir Ritu is more cold and dry than Hemanta. So the diet planned for this season must have Madhur, Amla, Lavana Rasa Guru, Snigdha, and Ushna Guna.

Predominantly. Some eg. are given.

**Cereals-** New grains-example Rice, Wheat, Jwar, Bajra, Maizeetc, **Pulses** – Udad, Tuar, Chana, Rajma etc. Meat – meat, fishes and poultry, **Vegetables** – seasonal vegetables **Fruits & dry fruits** – orange, guava, chikku, grapes, banana, pomegranate, dates, kiwi, passion, apple, cashew nuts, **Milk & milk products, Sugar & its products, Oils & animals fat, Prepared food items** – stuffed parantha & puri, kheer, halwa, gravy dishae, laddu, gajak, paapad, khichdietc, Water should be consumed slightly warm.

### Vasant Ritu

It is the season of Kapha aggravation and thus power of Agni is reduced. Katu, Tikta and Kashay Rasa, Laghu, Tikshna and Ushna Guna should be included in diet. To fulfill these requirements old grains should be consumed.

**Cereals** – Yava, rice, wheat etc, **Pulses** – Munga, Masur, Tuar, **Vegetables** – seasonal vegetables, Lokki, Parval, Brinjal, bitter guard etc, **Fruits** – seasonal fruits Grapes, Aawla, Bitter Melon, Strawberries, Pineapple, **Prepared food items** – veg. soup, daal soup, roti (thin), rice, kadhi, thin gravy preparations, Fermented traditional food items like idly, dhokla should be taken.

### Grishma Ritu

In this season two major changes occurs in body that is Agni become more feeble and body is totally exhausted due to intensive heat of that atmosphere. To counteract this Madhur Rasa, Sheeta, Snigdhaand Drava Gunashould be taken predominantly.

**Cereals** – Yava, wheat, rice, **Pulses** –Munga, Masur, Tuar, Rajma, Chanaetc. **Vegetables** – lokki, bitter guard, lady finger, parval, cucumber, **Fruits** – seasonal fruits mango, papaya,

water melon, musk melon, grapes, bel, apricots, honeydew melon, **Milk & its products** – cold and sweet milk, ghee, **Sugar & its products** – sugar cane juice, **Prepared food items** – veg. soup, daal soup, thin kheer, buuter milk, raita, sharbat, paanak, manth, coconut water, thin gravy items, thin roti, thin daliya and khichdi, sweets, fermented food items. Seasonal fruits juice and plenty of water should be taken.

### Varsha Ritu

In this season Agni is feeble and all three Doshas are vitiated. Amla, Lavana, Katu and Kashaya Rasa, Ruksha, Ushna and Deepan Guna predominant diet should be taken.

**Cereals** – Yava, wheat, rice, **Pulses** – Munga, Masur, Chana, **Vegetables** – seasonal vegetables lokki, **Fruits** – seasonal fruits mango, **Sugar & its products** – honey(old), **Prepared food items** – soup, roti, boiled rice, butter milk, fermented food items, Madhudak.

### Sharad Ritu

It is the season of pitta aggravation. So Madhur, Tikta, Kashaya Rasa, Laghu, Sheeta Guna predominant diet should be taken.

**Cereals** – Yava, wheat, rice, **Pulses** – Munga, Masur, **Vegetable** – parval, lady finger, turyi, bitter guard, **Fruits** – seasonal fruits, **Milk & its products** – sweet milk, **Sugar & its products** – honey, **Prepared food items** – soup, roti, rice, thin and cold kheer, butter milk, sweets, thin gravy items. Ghee should be taken but oil should be avoided.

### CONCLUSION

<sup>TM</sup> Aahara & Ritucharya are important principles of Swasthivritta and thus play an important role in health maintenance.

<sup>TM</sup> Concepts of Ritu and meteorological environment approximately have similar characteristics.

<sup>TM</sup> Aahara is a very important principle and should be followed according to Ritucharya for health maintenance.

<sup>TM</sup> This study is on conceptual bases and can be elaborated as experimental and survey projects.



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