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Ritucharya and Seasonal Doshic Variation – A Physiology Perspective

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Background:
Ayurveda views health as a dynamic state of equilibrium between the body and its external environment. Seasonal variations bring predictable changes in temperature, humidity, and atmospheric conditions, which significantly influence human physiology. To maintain internal balance amidst these environmental changes, *Ayurveda* prescribes *Ritucharya*, a seasonal regimen of diet and lifestyle**.**
Objective:
To study the seasonal variation of *Doshas* and understand the role of *Ritucharya* in maintaining physiological balance and promoting health.
Methods:
This article reviews classical *Ayurvedic* texts including *Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Ashtanga Hridaya*, and their authoritative commentaries were reviewed to understand the concepts of *Ritucharya* and seasonal *doshic* variation.
Results:
The review of classical *Ayurvedic* literature revealed a definite and systematic pattern of seasonal variation in *Doshas.* Each *Dosha* undergoes the stages of *Chaya* (accumulation), *Prakopa* (aggravation), and *Prashamana* (pacification) in specific *Ritus*. *Kapha Dosha* was found to accumulate in *Shishira*, aggravate in *Vasanta*, and get pacified in *Grishma Ritu*. *Pitta Dosha* showed accumulation during *Varsha,* aggravation in *Sharad*, and pacification in *Hemanta Ritu.Vata Dosha* accumulated in *Grishma*, aggravated in *Varsha*, and got pacified in Sharad *Ritu.*
Conclusion:
Ritucharya plays a vital role in maintaining physiological balance by harmonizing the body with seasonal changes. The study confirms that *Doshas* undergo predictable seasonal variations in the form of *Chaya, Prakopa*, and *Prashamana*, which directly influence *Agni, Dhatu Poshana*, and overall health.
Keywords:
Ritucharya, Ritu, Tridosha, Chaya–Prakopa–Prashamana, , Swasthavritta

I. Introduction

Ayurveda emphasizes preventive healthcare and maintaining the natural balance of the body in harmony with the environment. Human physiology is influenced not only by internal factors like *Doshas, Dhatus*, and *Agni*, but also by external factors such as climate, seasons, and lifestyle. Seasonal variations bring predictable changes in temperature, humidity, and atmospheric conditions, which can disturb the physiological equilibrium if not appropriately managed.

Ritucharya, the seasonal regimen described in *Ayurvedic* classics, provides guidance on diet, lifestyle, and daily routines according to each *Ritu* (season). It aims to prevent the aggravation of *Doshas* and maintain *Dosha–Dhatu–Mala* Samya, ensuring optimal physiological functioning. From a *Kriyasharir* perspective, adherence to *Ritucharya* supports Agni function, proper digestion, and *Dhatu* nourishment, thereby promoting health and preventing seasonal illnesses.

Understanding seasonal *doshic* variations is therefore crucial for implementing preventive measures and aligning human physiology with nature, which is a core principle of *Ayurveda.*

Aim
To study the seasonal variation of *Doshas* and evaluate the role of *Ritucharya* in maintaining physiological balance and preventing seasonal diseases from a *Kriyasharir* perspective.

Objectives
1. To study the concept of *Ritucharya* as described in *Ayurvedic* classics.
2. To understand the seasonal variation of *Doshas (Chaya, Prakopa, and Prashamana).*

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3. To analyze the physiological basis of *doshic* changes during different *Ritus*.
4. To evaluate the role of *Ritucharya* in maintaining *Dosha–Dhatu–Mala Samya*.
5. To highlight the preventive and promotive aspects of seasonal regimens in *Ayurveda.*
6. To correlate seasonal *doshic* variations with *Kriyasharir* principles.

II. Material and Methods

Classical *Ayurvedic* texts: Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Ashtanga Hridaya, and commentaries.
Relevant modern books, journals, and review articles on seasonal physiology and doshic variation.
Literature Collection: References related to *Ritucharya, Ritu, Tridosha, Chaya–Prakopa–Prashamana*, and seasonal regimens were collected.
Textual Analysis: Collected references were systematically reviewed and analyzed from a *Kriyasharir* perspective.
Interpretation: Seasonal variations were interpreted physiologically to explain their effect on *Dosha* balance, *Agni, Dhatu Poshana,* and overall health.
Correlation: Ayurvedic findings were correlated with preventive healthcare and health preservation principles.

Discussion

Ayurveda emphasizes the harmony between the body and nature. Seasonal changes influence the physiological functions of *Doshas, Agni, Dhatus, and Malas*, leading to predictable patterns of *Chaya* (accumulation), *Prakopa* (aggravation), and *Prashamana* (pacification). Understanding these patterns is essential for maintaining *Dosha–Dhatu–Mala Samya*, the state of health.

***Ritucharya* (Seasonal Regimen)**

Ritu = season, *Charya* = regimen
It emphasizes adapting food, habits, and activities according to seasonal *doshic* variations
The term *Ritucharya* is derived from two Sanskrit words*: Ritu* (season) and *Charya* (daily regimen or conduct). Thus*, Ritucharya* refers to a systematic seasonal regimen involving diet *(Ahara),* lifestyle *(Vihara*), and behavior (*Achara*) designed to maintain equilibrium of the *Tridoshas—Vata, Pitta*, and *Kapha* throughout the year.
According to *Ayurvedic* classics, *doshas* do not remain constant; they undergo a natural cycle of accumulation (*Chaya)*, aggravation *(Prakopa*), and pacification *(Shamana)* with the progression of seasons. If appropriate seasonal regimens are not followed, the aggravated *doshas* may lead to various diseases*. Ritucharya* helps in counteracting these seasonal effects, thereby preserving health, strength, digestion, immunity, and longevity.
Thus, *Ritucharya* forms a preventive and promotive approach in *Ayurveda*, highlighting the importance of adapting one's lifestyle in harmony with nature to achieve *Swasthya* (optimal health).
Ritucharya is an important preventive principle of *Ayurveda* which emphasizes adapting one's diet, lifestyle, and behavior according to seasonal changes in order to maintain the equilibrium of *Doshas* and preserve health. The term *Ritucharya* is derived from "*Ritu*" meaning season and *"Charya*" meaning regimen or discipline. Since the external environment directly influences the human body, seasonal variations cause predictable changes in the *Doshas*. If a person does not modify food habits and lifestyle in accordance with these changes, imbalance of *Doshas* occurs, leading to disease. Therefore, *Ritucharya* aims at protecting health by maintaining harmony between the individual and nature.
According to the year is divided into two major phases—*Uttarayana* (*Adana Kala*) and *Dakshinayana* (*Visarga Kala*)—and further into six seasons, namely *Shishira* (late winter)*, Vasanta* (spring), *Grishma* (summer), *Varsha* (monsoon), *Sharad* (autumn), and *Hemanta* (early winter). Each season possesses specific qualities such as heat, cold, dryness, or humidity, which influence the *Doshas*. These seasonal qualities result in the natural cycle of *Dosha Sanchaya* (accumulation), *Prakopa* (aggravation), and *Prashama* (pacification).
Kapha Dosha undergoes accumulation during *Shishira* due to the dominance of cold and heavy qualities. In *Vasanta*, the increasing warmth liquefies the accumulated *Kapha,* leading to its aggravation and causing disorders such as cough, cold, heaviness, and allergies. During *Grishma,* the intense heat and dryness reduce *Kapha*, resulting in its pacification. Hence, spring is considered the most important season for *Kapha*-related disorders and purification therapies.
Pitta Dosha accumulates during *Varsha Ritu* because of weak digestive fire and increased acidity caused by improper digestion. In *Sharad Ritu,* the sharp heat of the sun aggravates the accumulated *Pitta*, leading to manifestations such as hyperacidity, skin diseases, fever, and inflammation. *Pitta* is naturally pacified in *Hemanta Ritu* due to

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the cold environment and strong digestive fire, which help in stabilizing and balancing this *Dosha*. *Vata Dosha* accumulates during *Grishma Ritu* because of excessive heat, dryness, and dehydration. In *Varsha Ritu*, the cold, damp, and irregular climatic conditions along with weakened Agni aggravate *Vata*, resulting in joint pain, abdominal distension, neurological complaints, and digestive disturbances. *Vata* becomes pacified in *Sharad Ritu* as the environment becomes stable and warmth returns, helping restore balance.

Thus, seasonal *doshic* variation is a predictable physiological phenomenon described in *Ayurveda. Ritucharya* guides individuals to adopt appropriate dietary measures, daily routines, and seasonal purification therapies to counteract *Dosha* imbalance. By following *Ritucharya*, digestive fire remains strong, immunity is enhanced, and the body adapts smoothly to environmental changes, thereby preventing seasonal and lifestyle disorders and promoting long-term health and longevity.

Classification of Seasons in *Ayurveda*[1]

Ayurveda divides the year into 6 *Ritūs,* grouped into two *Ayanas:*

1. *Uttarayana* (*Adana Kala* – Depleting phase)

Strength of the body gradually decreases.

Ritu	**Season**	**Months**
Shishira	Late winter	Jan–Feb
Vasanta	Spring	Mar–Apr
Grishma	Summer	May–Jun

2. *Dakshinayana* (*Visarga* Kala – Nourishing phase)

Strength of the body gradually increases

Ritu	Season	Months
Varsha	Monsoon	Jul–Aug
Sharad	Autumn	Sep–Oct
Hemanta	Early winter	Nov–Dec

Seasonal *Doshic* Variation[2]

Each *Dosha* undergoes *Chaya* (accumulation), *Prakopa* (aggravation), and *Prashama* (pacification) in different seasons.

Dosha	*Chaya* (Accumulation)	*Prakopa* (Aggravation)	*Prashama* (Pacification)
Kapha	*Shishira*	*Vasanta*	*Grishma*
Pitta	*Varsha*	*Sharad*	*Hemanta*
Vata	*Grishma*	*Varsha*	*Sharad*

***Ritucharya* According to *Dosha*[3]**

1. *Shishira & Vasanta – Kapha* Dominance

Effects: Heaviness, cold, sluggish digestion

Regimen:

Light, warm, dry foods

Barley, millet, honey

Regular exercise, dry massage *(Udvartana*)

Avoid heavy, oily, cold foods

2. *Grishma & Varsha – Vata* Dominance

Effects: Dryness, fatigue, weak digestion

Regimen:

Sweet, cooling, liquid-rich foods

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Rice, milk, ghee
Avoid excessive travel, exertion
Oil massage (*Abhyanga*)

3.*Sharad – Pitta* Dominance

Effects: Heat, inflammation, acidity

Regimen:

Cooling, bitter, sweet foods
Ghee, milk, sugarcane juice
Avoid spicy, sour, salty foods
Moonlight exposure (traditional practice)

Basis of Seasonal *Doshic* Variation

Seasonal *doshic* changes occur due to:

1. Variation in Agni (digestive fire)
2. Change in environmental *Gunas (Sheeta, Ushna, Ruksha, Snigdha)*
3. Influence of Sun & Moon
4. *Adana* and *Visarga* Kala

***Adana* & *Visarga* Kala**

Adana Kala (Uttarayana)

- Sun becomes powerful
- Draws strength from earth and body
- Dominance of *Tikta, Kashaya, Katu Rasa*
- Leads to *Rukshata* (dryness)
- *Bala* decreases

Visarga Kala (Dakshinayana)

- Moon becomes dominant
- Nourishment of body
- Dominance of *Madhura, Amla, Lavana Rasa*
- Leads to *Snigdhata* (unctuousness)
- Bala increases

Detailed Seasonal *Doshic* Cycle

KAPHA DOSHA

Stage	Season	Explanation
Chaya	*Shishira*	Cold → Kapha solidifies
Prakopa	*Vasanta*	Heat liquefies accumulated Kapha
Prashama	*Grishma*	Dry heat reduces Kapha

Clinical relevance:

→ Spring allergies, cough, asthma, rhinitis

PITTA DOSHA

Stage	Season	Explanation
Chaya	*Varsha*	Weak Agni → acidic buildup
Prakopa	*Sharad*	Sudden heat aggravates Pitta
Prashama	*Hemanta*	Cold stabilizes Pitta

Clinical relevance:

→ Hyperacidity, skin diseases, jaundice

VATA DOSHA

Stage	Season	Explanation
Chaya	*Grishma*	Excessive dryness
Prakopa	*Varsha*	Cold + dryness
Prashama	*Sharad*	Warmth + unctuousness

Clinical relevance:

→ Joint pain, neurological disorders, bloating

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