

DIETETICS ACCORDING TO SEASON: AN AYURVEDIC CONCEPT**Pramod Kumar Singh***

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ABSTRACT

According to Ayurvedic principle, there are strong correlation between body, mind, and consciousness. Therefore, the concept of health must address all of these aspects. The best preventive medicine and support of the natural healing process is a diet and lifestyle along with seasons and cycles of nature. *Tridosha* is considered as basic humors which are responsible for health and diseased condition. Beside this, there is description of different *roga (disease)* which occur in a particular season and their treatment for maintenance of health along with this *pathya-apathya* is indicated. Ayurvedic literature emphasizing

the *ritucharya*, greater importance is given to *ahara* and *vihara* according to particular *ritu* or time of vitiation of *doshas* as per season.

KEYWORDS: Ayurveda, Dietetics, Season.**INTRODUCTION**

Season has been defined as the natural periods in which the year is divided, which vary by weather conditions, daylight hours and temperature.^[1] A season is a division of the year, marked by changes in weather, ecology and hours of day light. Seasons result from the yearly revolution of the earth around the sun and the tilt of earth axis relative to the plane of revolution.^[2]

According to Ayurveda year is divided in to six seasons, in which three season *shishira*, *vasanta* and *greeshma* are known as *aadana (uttarayan)* when the sun takes north way course. Other three seasons *varsha*, *sharad* and *hemanta* is considered as *visarga* with the sun following its southern course.^[3,4]

Visarga is *saumya* due to predominance of *soma* (moon). On the other hand *aadana* is *agneya* due to predominance of *agni*. Thus the sun, the wind and the moon are responsible for

appearance of *time, season, rasa, dosha and bodily strength* to the nature.^[5] *Sushruta* has also described *visarga* (releasing) and *aadana* (receiving) *karma* of *soma* and *sun*^[6] respectively.

***Hemanta* (winter season)**

Due to the coldness of the atmosphere in winter season the cold *vayu* (wind) causes the digestive *agni* to remain in the digestive tract itself, hence result in its aggravation. The digestive *agni* during this period is able to digest the food items *guru* (heavy) in amount as well as in attributes i.e. meals which are heavy to digest and taken in large quantity can also be digested in this season. If in this condition the *agni* does not get the required amount of food then it starts digesting bodily tissue causing harm to them. Winter season is predominated by *sheeta* (cold), *ruksha* (dry) and less sun light exposed wind hence *vata* inside body gets vitiated by this external *vayu* (wind) which causes provocation of digestive *agni* and cause digestion of *rasa, rakta* etc. *dhatu*s (tissues) if does not get the desired food. As the body's digestive *agni* is very sharp in this season so ancient *ayurvedic* texts have advocated the use of all the types of food articles which are heavy in quantity and quality and food predominated by *madhura* (sweet), *lavana* (salty) and *amla* (sour) taste, so as to increase *kapha* and pacify the aggravated *vata*. The diet must be heavy both in nutrients and amount otherwise the aggravated *agni* will start consuming the bodily reserves and result in malnutrition. So all the food items which are heavy to digest like new varieties of cereals, black gram etc. are prescribed as wholesome and the *laghu* (light) and *kapha* pacifying food items are told as unwholesome in this season.^[7]

***Shishir* (cold and dewy season)**

Shishir ritu has excessive *sheeta* (cold) and *rukshata* (dryness) so the regimen of *hemanta* is palatable in this season too, but in a bit more amount. This season is almost same in characteristics as *hemanta* and all the features of *hemanta ritu* get increase in strength in this season, so all the regimen of *hemanta* season is advisable in this season. As this season is more cold and dewy than the winter season so the dietary regimen of winter is advised in a bit more quantity as compared to the previous season.^[8]

***Vasant* (spring season)**

The *kapha* which got physiological *chaya* (accumulation) in *shishir* (winter) season gets diluted by the sun rays in *vasant* (spring) season and starts circulating in whole body causing the vitiation of bodily *agni* which result in many disorders, hence we should adopt *shodhna karma* (purification) to purify our body i.e. *Panchkarm*. The food items which can vitiate

kapha such as *madhura* (sweet), *amla* (sour) and *lavana* (salty) taste, *Snigdha* (demulscent) and *guru* (heavy) food items must be taken in least amount in this season. In this season the *kapha* which was accumulated in the winter season gets vitiated due to rays of sun hence all the dietary particulars prescribed in this season are the one which pacify *kapha* or at least keep *kapha* in equilibrium so the food items like *tikshna* (sharp), *ruksha* (dry) and *laghu* (light) are palatable.^[9]

Grishma (summer season)

In the summer season the strong sun rays extract the watery part of human beings hence all the food items which are *svadu* (sweet), *sheetal* (cold) and *snigdha* (demulcent) in nature which maintain the necessary hydration of body are wholesome. The effect of sun causes a gradual decrease in quantity of *kapha* and increase *vata* hence one should avoid *lavana* (salty), *katu* (pungent) and *amla* (sour) taste.

Alcohol is restricted or advised in less quantity due to the dehydrated state of the body, if consumed, must be taken with large quantity of water. Due to the intense sun rays in summer season the body water gets depleted hence the food items *svadu* (sweet), *sheetal* (cold) and *snigdha* (demulcent) in nature, which are nourishing, replenish the body water or conserve it are advised as wholesome and on the other side the food items such as that of *lavana* (salty), *katu* (pungent) and *amla* (sour) taste cause further depletion of body water and evoke thirst and thus increase the need of water consumption in this season.^[10]

Varsha (rainy season)

This season falls in *adana kala* (northern solstice), so there is less strength in body due to consumption of *sneha* and fluid which results in the weakness of digestive *agni*. Further weakness of digestive *agni* occurs due to vitiation all three *doshas* in this season.

The *vayu* which was in *chaya* (accumulated) state in summer season gets to next *prakopa* (vitiation) stage in rainy season. The *amla* (sour) *vipaka* water, the depleted *agni*, and the vitiation of *vata* all these factors cause several disorders in body hence normal purificative measures i.e. all the measures which pacify *doshas* and ensure the normalcy of *agni* are palatable in this season.

In this season there is physiological *prakopa* (vitiation) of *vata* hence all the food items and habits which cause the *vata* to pacify such as *madhura* (sweet), *amla* (sour), *lavana* (salty)

and oily food items are considered as whole some. As there is a bit of vitiation of all three *doshas* hence the consumption of *katu* (pungent), *tikta* (bitter) and *kashaya* (astringent) taste is also advocated in this season to maintain the equilibrium of all three *doshas*.^[11]

Sharad (autumn)

Due to the effect of rainy season the body parts gets wet and sudden exposure of sun in the *sharad ritu* (autumn season) causes *pitta* in *chaya* (accumulated) stage of rainy season to *prakopa* (vitiates) in *sharad*. Hence the food items which pacify *pitta* are beneficial in this season. Use of *tikta* (bitter) ghee, *virechan* (purgation) and bloodletting in this season are advisable as all these measures help in pacifying *pitta*. Physiologically the *pitta* which was in *chaya* (accumulation) stage in rainy season, due to the sudden exposure to sunlight in *sharad ritu* transforms to next stage of *prakopa* (vitiates). Hence there is vitiation of *pittadosha* in this season, so all the food items which are *madhura* (sweet) *tikta* (bitter) *kashaya* (astringent), *laghu* (light), *sheeta* (cold) in nature which help in pacifying *pitta* are wholesome^[12] whereas foods which are excessive *tikshna* (sharp), *amla* (sour), *ushna* (hot), *kshar* (alkali) in nature are unwholesome in nature.^[13]

Ritu Sandhi

One should simultaneously start following up the prescriptions of the succeeding season and the avoidance of those of the preceding season sometime between the last week of the preceding season and the first week of the succeeding season. By suddenly withdrawing the prescriptions of the succeeding season, a person falls in diseases.^[14]

A wise person should give up by and by unwholesome practices to which he is addicted and he should correspondingly adopt ones which are wholesome.^[15]

Whoever observes these rules for the different seasons of the year does not suffer from the evil consequences due to the change of seasons.^[16]

DISCUSSION

In seasons during which the nights are very long (*Hemanta* and *Shishira*). Persons should take food in the morning itself, such food being predominant in qualities opposite of the qualities of the season. Seasons in which the days are very long (*Grishma* and *Pravrita*) suitable food to the season should be taken in the afternoon. Seasons in which both day and

night are equal (*Sharad* and *Vasant*) food should be partaken at the middle, dividing the day and night equally.^[17]

One should not be in a hurry to give up previous season *Ahara* and to adopt next season *Ahara* practices respectively. A sudden change in habits is likely to cause immense harm to the body. By slowly and gradually giving up the unwholesome (previous season *Ahara*) practices and by increasing the wholesome (next season *Ahara*) practices correspondingly the unwholesome practices are eradicate and the wholesome practices are fully adopted^[18] as described by *acharya Charaka* in *sutrasthana* chapter 7 (*Navgandharniya adhyaya*) should be followed in case of *ritu sandhi* also. Whoever observes these rules for the different seasons of the year does not suffer from the evil consequences due to the change of seasons.^[14]

CONCLUSION

Variations of *doshas* take place in various seasons, age, day and night etc. which slightly influences the body physiological functions. Accumulation, exacerbation and pacification of *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha* occur in respective seasons i.e. *kapha* is aggravated in spring, *pitta* in summer and *vata* in autumn and winter. One who follows seasonal regimens never suffers from severe disorder caused by seasonal influences.

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