

Ayurveda Ritucharya
(Seasonal Lifestyle Management)

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Ayurveda, the age-old science of life, has always emphasized to maintain the health and prevent the diseases by following proper diet and lifestyle regimen rather than treatment and cure of the diseases. The basic principle followed in the Ayurvedic system of medicine is **Swasthyashya Swasthya Rakshanam**, which means to maintain the health of the healthy, rather than **Aturashya Vikara Prashamanancha**, means to cure the diseases of the diseased. For this purpose, the Dinacharya (daily regimen) and Ritucharya (seasonal regimen) have been mentioned in the classics of Ayurveda.



With the change in season, the change is very evident in the environment we live in. We see various changes in bio-life around us, such as flowering in spring and leaf shedding in autumn in the plants, hibernation of many animals with the coming of winter, and so on. As human being is also part of the same ecology, the body is greatly influenced by external environment. Many of the exogenous and endogenous rhythm have specific phase relationship with each other; which means that they interact and synchronize each other. If body is unable to adopt itself to stressors due to changes in specific traits of seasons, it may lead to Dosha

Vaishamya, which in turn may render the body highly susceptible to one or other kinds of disorders.

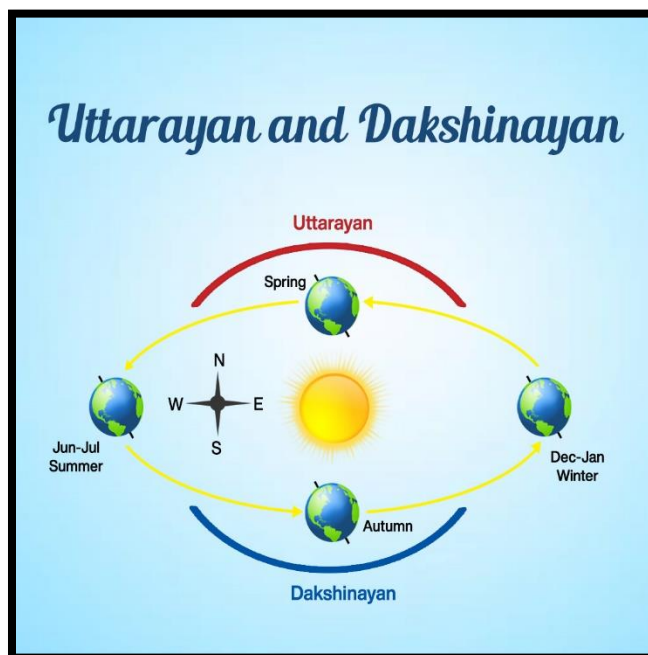
Classification of season



The year according to Ayurveda is divided into two periods Ayana (solstice) depending on the direction of movement of sun that is Uttarayana (northern solstice) and Dakshinayana (southern solstice). Each is formed of three Ritus (seasons). The word Ritu means, "To go." The nature expresses itself in a sequence in particular and specific in present forms in short, the seasons in the form. A year consists of six seasons, namely, **Shishira (winter), Vasanta (spring), and Grishma**

(summer) in Uttarayan and Varsha (monsoon), Sharada (autumn), and Hemanta

(late autumn) in Dakshinayana. As Ayurveda has its origin in India, the above seasonal changes are observed predominantly in Indian subcontinent.



Uttarayana and its effect

Uttarayana indicates the ascent of the sun or northward movement of the sun. In this period, the sun and the wind are powerful. The sun takes away the strength of the people and the cooling quality of the earth. It brings increase in the Tikta (bitter), Kashaya (astringent), and Katu (pungent) Rasa (taste), respectively, which brings about dryness in the body and reduces the Bala (strength). It is also

called Adana Kala. According to modern science, this can be compared with the gradual movement of earth around the sun to the position, in which the rays of the sun falls perpendicularly at 30 degree meridian of the North Pole on June 21st every year, called as summer solstice. The northward journey of the Sun from Tropic of Capricorn to Tropic of Cancer happens. During Uttarayana the seasonal changes in Indian subcontinent is from **Shishira (winter) to Vasanta (spring) and to Grishma (summer)**. The period can be compared to mid-January to mid-July, when warmness and dryness in weather increases. It has an overall debilitating effect on environment, to which human being is also a part.

Dakshinayana and its effect

Dakshinayana indicates the descent of the sun or movement of the sun in southern direction. In this period, the wind is not very dry; the moon is more powerful than sun. The earth becomes cool due to the clouds, rain, and cold winds. Unctuousness sets in the atmosphere and Amla (sour), Lavana (salty), and Madhura (sweet) Rasa are predominant, so the strength of person enhances during this period. It is also called Visarga Kala. According to modern science, this can be compared with the gradual movement of the earth around the sun to the

position, in which the rays of the sun fall over 30 degree meridian of the South Pole perpendicularly on December 21st every year, is called as winter solstice. The southward movement of the Sun occurs from Tropic of Cancer to Tropic of Capricorn. During Dakshinayana, the seasonal changes occur in the Indian subcontinent from Varsha (monsoon) to Sharada (autumn) and to Hemanta (late autumn). This period can be compared to mid-July to mid-January, when cool sets, and due to which anabolic activity dominates over the catabolic activity in the environment.

Regimen of different seasons



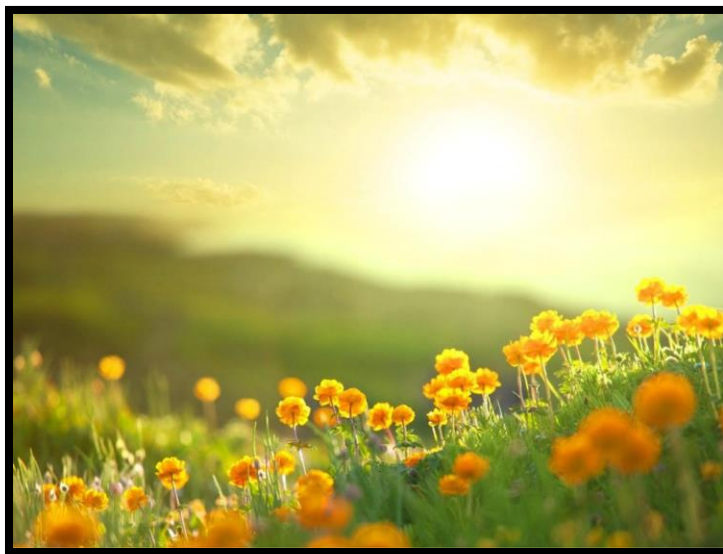
1. Shishira (winter)

- **General Condition:** - Mid-January to mid-March (approximately) is considered as Shishira Ritu (winter). During this season, the environment remains cold, along with cold wind. The predominant Rasa and Mahabhuta during this season are Tikta (bitter) and Akasha, respectively. The strength of the person becomes less, deposition of the Kapha Dosha occurs and Agni (catabolism) remains in a higher state.
- **Diet regimen** Foods having Amla (sour) as the predominant taste are preferred. Cereals and pulses, wheat/gram flour products, new rice, corn,

and others, are advised. Ginger, garlic, Haritaki (fruits of Terminalia chebula), Pippali (fruits of Piper longum), sugarcane products, and milk and milk products are to be included in the diet. Foods having Katu (pungent), Tikta (bitter), Kashaya (astringent) predominant Rasa are to be avoided. Laghu (light) and Shita (cold) foods are advised to be prohibited.

- **Lifestyle:-** Massage with oil/powder/paste, bathing with lukewarm water, exposure to sunlight, wearing warm clothes are mentioned to follow. Vata aggravating lifestyle like exposure to cold wind, excessive walking, sleep at late night, are to be avoided.

2. Vasanta (spring) :-



- **General Condition:-**The approximate time is from mid-March to mid-May.

This season is considered as season of flowering and origin of new leaves.

Predominant Rasa and Mahabhuta during this season are Kashaya (astringent), and Prithvi and Vayu, respectively. Strength of the person remains in medium degree, vitiation of Kapha Dosha occurs and Agni remains in Manda state.

- **Diet regimen:-** one should take easily digestible foods. Among cereals, old barley, wheat, rice, and others are preferred. Among pulses, lentil, Mugda, and others, can be taken. Food items tasting Tikta (bitter), Katu (pungent), and Kashaya (astringent) are to be taken. Besides those, honey is to be included in the diet. Meats like that of Shahsa (rabbit), which are easy to digest can be taken. Foods which are hard to digest are to be avoided. Those which are Sheeta (cold), Snigdha (viscous), Guru (heavy), Amla (sour), Madhura (sweet) are not preferred. New grains, curd, cold drinks, and so on, are also to be prohibited.
- **Lifestyle:-** One should use warm water for bathing purpose, may do exercise during Vasant Ritu. Udvartana (massage) with powder of Chandana

(Santalum album), Kesara (Crocus sativus), Agar, and others, Kavala (gargle), Dhooma (smoking), Anjana (collyrium), and evacuative measures, such as Vamana and Nasya are advised. Day-sleep is strictly contraindicated during this season.

3. Grishma (summer)



- **General condition:-** Mid-May to mid-July (approximately) is considered as Grishma (summer) season. Environment is prevalent with intense heat and unhealthy wind. The river-bodies dried and the plants appear lifeless. The predominant Rasa is Katu (pungent) and Mahabhuta are Agni and Vayu. The strength of the person become less, deposition of Vata Dosha occurs,

but the vitiated Kapha Dosha is pacified during this season. Agni of the person will remain in mild state.

- **Diet regimen:-** Foods which are light to digest—those having Madhura (sweet), Snigdha (unctuous), Sheeta (cold), and Drava (liquid) Guna, such as rice, lentil, etc, are to be taken. Drinking plenty of water and other liquids, such as cold water, buttermilk, fruit juices, meat soups, mango juice, churned curd with pepper, is to be practiced. At bedtime milk with sugar candy is to be taken. Lavana and food with Katu (pungent) and Amla (sour) taste and Ushna (warm) foods are to be avoided.
- **Lifestyle:-** Staying in cool places, applying sandal wood and other aromatic pastes over the body, adorning with flowers, wearing light dresses and sleeping at day time are helpful. During night, one can enjoy the cooled moon rays with breeze. Excessive exercise or hard work is to be avoided; too much alcoholic preparations are prohibited.

4. **Varsha (monsoon):-**



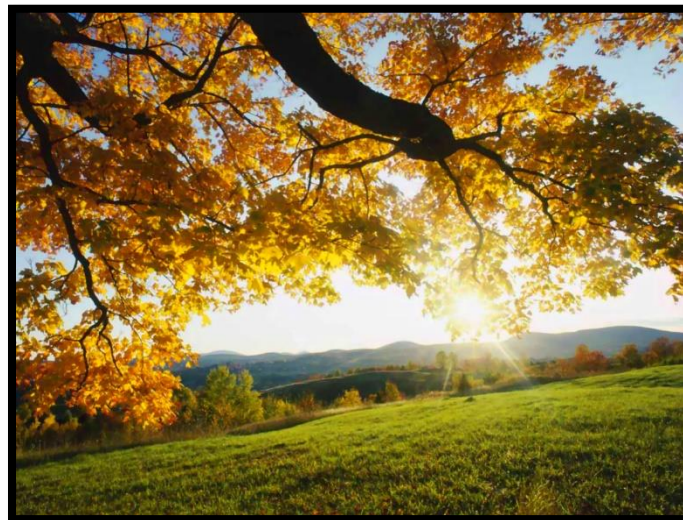
- **General condition:-** Mid-July to mid-September (approximately) is considered as Varsha Ritu. During this season, the sky is covered by clouds and rains occur without thunderstorm. The ponds, rivers, etc., are filled with water. The predominant Rasa and Mahabhuta during this season are Amla (sour), and Prithvi and Agni, respectively. The strength of the person again becomes less, vitiation of Vata Dosha and deposition of Pitta Dosha, Agni also gets vitiated.
- **Diet regimen:-** Foods having Amla (sour) and Lavana (salty) taste and of Sneha (unctuous) qualities are to be taken. Among cereals, old barley, rice, wheat, etc., are advised. Besides meat soup, Yusha (soup), etc. are to be included in the diet. It is mentioned that one should take medicated

water or boiled water. Intake of river water, churned preparations having more water, excessive liquid and wine are to be avoided. The foods, which are heavy and hard to digest, like meat, etc., are prohibited.

- **Lifestyle:-** Use of boiled water for bath and rubbing the body with oil properly after bath is advised. Medicated Basti (enema) is prescribed as an evacuative measure to expel vitiated Doshas. Getting wet in rain, day-sleep, exercise, hard work, wind, staying at river-bank, etc., are to be prohibited.

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5. Sharada (autumn)



- **General condition** The period between mid-September to mid-November is Sharada Ritu (autumn). During this time the Sun becomes bright, the sky remains clear and sometimes with white cloud, and the earth is covered with wet mud. The predominant Rasa is Lavana (salty) and predominant Mahabhutas are Apa and Agni. The strength of the person remains medium, pacification of vitiated Vata Dosha and vitiation of Pitta Dosha occur, and activity of Agni increases during this season.
- **Diet regimen** Foods are having Madhura (sweet) and Tikta (bitter) taste, and of Laghu (light to digest) and cold properties are advised. Foods having the properties to pacify vitiated Pitta are advised. Wheat, green gram, sugar candy, honey, Patola (*Trichosanthes dioica*), flesh of animals of dry land (*Jangala Mamsa*) are to be included in the diet. Hot, bitter, sweet, and astringent foods are to be avoided. The food items, such as fat, oils, meat of aquatic animals, curds, etc., are also to be not included in the diet during this season.
- **Lifestyle:-** Habit of eating food, only when there is a feeling of hunger is recommended. One should take water purified by the rays of sun in day

time and rays of moon at night time for drinking, bathing, etc. It is advised to to apply paste of Chandana (*Santalum album*) on the body. It is said that moon rays in the first 3 hours of night is conducive for health. Medical procedures, such as Virechana (purging), Rakta-Mokshana (blood letting), etc, should be done during this season. Day-sleep, excessive eating, excessive exposure to sunlight, etc., are to be avoided.

6. Hemanta (late autumn)



- **General condition** Mid-November to mid-January is considered as Hemanta (late autumn) Ritu. Blow of cold winds starts and chillness is felt. Predominant Rasa during this season is Madhura and the predominant Mahabhutas are Prithivi and Apa. The strength of a person remains on

highest grade and vitiated Pitta Dosha gets pacified. Activity of Agni is increased.

- **Diet regimen:-** One should use unctuous, sweet, sour, and salty foods. Among cereals and pulses, new rice, flour preparations, green gram, Masha, etc., are mentioned to be used. Various meats, fats, milk and milk products, sugarcane products, Sidhu (fermented preparations) Tila (sesame), and so on, are also to be included in the diet. Vata aggravating foods, such as Laghu (light), cold, and dry foods are to be avoided. Intake of cold drinks is also contraindicated.
- **Lifestyle: -** Exercise, body and head massage, use of warm water, Atapa-sevana (sunbath), application of Agaru on body, heavy clothing, residing in warm places is recommended. Exposure to strong and cold wind, habit of day sleep, etc., are mentioned to be avoided.

