

UNDERSTANDING OF HEMANTA AND SHISHIRA RITU IN AYURVEDIC AND  
MODERN PERSPECTIVE AND ITS UTILITY IN PRESENT ERADr. Mydeen Sadik<sup>\*1</sup>, Dr. Amit Upasani<sup>2</sup>, Dr. Sreekanth V. M.<sup>3</sup> and Dr. Rathod Krishna<sup>4</sup><sup>1</sup>Final Year PG Scholar, Department of Samhita and Siddhanta, Parul Institute of Ayurveda, Parul University, Tal. Waghodia, Dist. Vadodara, Gujarat, India.<sup>2</sup>Associate Professor, Department of Samhita and Siddhanta, Parul Institute of Ayurveda, Parul University, Tal. Waghodia, Dist. Vadodara, Gujarat, India.<sup>3,4</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Samhita and Siddhanta, Parul Institute of Ayurveda, Parul University, Tal. Waghodia, Dist. Vadodara, Gujarat, India.**\*Corresponding Author: Dr. Mydeen Sadik**

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**ABSTRACT**

As per *Ayurveda*, to maintain *Swasthya Avastha* (Healthy state) of both *Shareera* and *Manas*, we should have to follow dietary and behavioural regimens according to different *Ritus* which is defined as *Ritucharya*. It is widely explained in different classics of *Ayurveda*. The Change of season will affect the external environment where we are living which in turn will affect our body. Therefore our body should adapt to this changing environment without disturbing the Homeostasis of the body. The important principle of *Ayurveda* deals with the preventive aspects which can be achieved by properly following regimens which are mentioned in our classics. Dietary and behavioural regimens of *Hemanta* and *Shishira Ritus* are highlighted here along with its modern aspects. These can be correlated to winter season in modern perspective. The main points going to deal here includes: What are the changes that are occurring in our body during these *Ritus*, What are its adverse effects on our body, How to overcome these adverse effects, How can it be correlated with modern aspects. By proper understanding of these aspects, we can easily make out whether this season will lead to good health or ill health. Lifestyle disorders are becoming a serious problem now a days. How to prevent these is the point of discussion here. For preventing these types of disorders the only way is to understand *Ritucharya* and makes the body to adjust with this changing environment.

**KEYWORDS:** *Ritucharya*, *Swasthya Avastha*, Dietary and Behavioural Regimens.**INTRODUCTION**

In the present era, various types of diseases are newly originating and some other diseases are getting disappeared. Then also the *Ayurvedic* approach towards diseases and health remains the same. *Ayurveda* gave more emphasis on how to maintain health and how to prevent the diseases by properly following healthy *Aharas* and *Viharas* according to different *Ritus*. By following these principles, we can avoid all types of life style disorders. In *Swastha Chatushka* of *Charaka Samhita*, *Acharya* clearly mentions about the *Pathya Aharas* and *Viharas* that everyone should follow for attaining healthy state of both *Shareera* and *Manas*. And also explains about its importance in preventing the diseases that can occur in future.<sup>[1]</sup> These should be followed by considering the *Ritus*. The main aims of *Ayurveda* are.

1. *Swasthasya Swasthya Rakshanam*
2. *Athurasya Vikara Prashamanam*<sup>[2]</sup>

Therefore for maintaining the healthy state, *Dinacharya* and *Ritucharya* have been explained by different *Acharyas*. *Ritucharya* is defined as the dietary and behavioural regimens that we should follow in different seasons for the maintenance of health and also for preventing the diseases. At present time, we don't have enough time to think about our health and other things as we all are behind our life goals. Changes in season will affect the environment in which we are living. As we human beings are also a part of this environment, any change in it will affect our body also. So our body should have to get familiar with this changing environment. If we are not doing so, it will affect our *Doshas* and will lead to *Dosha Vaishamya* and finally to diseases. The main key for the survival in this changing environment is to adapt quickly to these changes. In the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter of *Charaka Sutrasthana, Tasyashitiya Adhyaya* it is told like "If a person understands and follows diet and regimens in accordance with different seasons will help

the person to get *Bala*(strength) and *Varna*(complexion). By these we can prevent life style disorders.<sup>[3]</sup>

### AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1. To highlight the basic concepts of *Hemanta* and *Shishira Ritu* with dietary and life style regimens explained in *Ayurveda* classics.
2. Understanding of these two in modern perspective.
3. Importance of its understanding in present era.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

1. *Ritucharya* which has been explained in *Brihatrayees* with its commentaries.
2. Websites and other relevant articles related to *Ritucharya*.
3. All these are properly analyzed and arranged in such a manner for the proper understanding of disease prevention and health maintenance.

**RITU:** It is derived from the Sanskrit root “Ri” that means “to go” It denotes time or suitable time.<sup>[4]</sup>

The year is divided into two periods i.e. *Ayana* (Solstice) depending on the direction of movement of the sun i.e. *Uttarayana* (Northern solstice) and *Dakshinayana* (Southern Solstice). Each of these is formed of three *Ritus*. A year consists of six seasons.

1. *Shishira*- Extreme Winter
2. *Vasantha*- Spring
3. *Grishma*- Summer
4. *Varsha*- Monsoon
5. *Sharad*- Autumn
6. *Hemanta*- Early Winter<sup>[5]</sup>

### HEMANTA RITU

*Hemanta Ritu* is considered as Mid- November to Mid-January. General conditions of the body include.

1. Predominant *Rasa*- *Madhura*.
2. Predominant *Mahabhoota*- *Prithvi* and *Ap Mahabhoota*.
3. Predominant *Guna*- *Snigdha*, *Sheeta* and *Guru*.
4. Effect on *Dosha*- *Pitta Prashamana*.
5. *Deha Bala*- *Pravara* (Maximum).
6. *Agni Bala*- *Pravara* (Maximum).

### AHARAS (Diet Regimens)

In *Hemanta Ritu*, the duration of night is long when compared to other *Ritus*. Due to this, feeling of hunger starts from the early morning.

- *Snigdha*, *Amla* and *Lavana* *Aahara*.
- *Anoopa* *Mamsa*
- *Mamsa Rasa* prepared by adding *Ghrita*.
- *Sura* prepared with *Molasses* and *rice flour*.
- *Pastries* prepared with *Godhuma* (*Wheat*).
- *Masha*
- *Ikshu Rasa* (*Sugarcane juice*).
- *Ksheera* and *Ksheera Dravyas* (*Milk* and *Milk products*).
- *Navamannam* (*Newly harvested grains*).

- *Tila Tailam* (*Gingili oil*).
- *Vasa* (*Bone Marrow*).

### VIHARAS (Lifestyle Regimens)

- *Vyayama* (*Exercise*)
- *Snana* with *Kashaya Dravya* prepared *Jala*.
- *Lepana* (*application*) of *kukuma Kalka* (*paste of Saffron*).
- *Agaru Dhupana* (*Fumigation with Agar*)
- For *Shaucha* (*Toiletry purposes*) *Sukhodaka* (*Hot water*) should be used.
- Covering the body with *Ushna* and *Laghu Praavarana* (*Blankets*).
- *Agaru Lepana*.
- *Yukyarkakiranaan* (*Exposing to the sun judiciously*).
- *Padatranam* (*Wearing Shoes*).
- *Vyavaya* (*indulging in Sexual pleasure*).
- Residing in *underground cellar*,
- Taking rest on bed covered with *Ajina* (*Hide of Antelope*), *Kousheya* (*Cloth prepared with silk*).
- *Niyuddha* (*Wrestling*)

### OTHER VIHARAS (including treatment procedures)

- *Abhyanga*
- *Murdha Taila* application (*Oil application on head*).
- *Vimardana* (*Body massage using palms*) with *Taila* which are *Vatahara*.
- *Jentaka Sweda*.

### APATHYA AHARAS

- *Vata Prakopa* *Aharas* like *Laghu*, *Sheeta* and *Ruksha Guna* predominant.
- Consuming *Sheeta Jala* (*Cold Drinks*).

### APATHYA VIHARAS

- Exposing itself to *direct and strong wind*.
- *Divaswapna* (*Day sleep*).<sup>[6,9]</sup>

### SHISHIRA RITU

*Shishira Ritu* is considered as Mid January to Mid March approximately. General conditions of the body include.

1. Predominant *Rasa*- *Tiktha*.
2. Predominant *Mahabhoota*- *Akasha Mahabhoota*.
3. Predominant *Guna*- *Ruksha*, *Laghu* and *Sheeta*.
4. Effect on *Dosha*- *Kapha Chaya*.
5. *Deha Bala*- *Pravara* (Maximum).
6. *Agni Bala*- *Pravara* (Maximum).

The *Hemanta* and *Shishira Ritu* in its nature are almost similar. The two differences between these *Ritus* are.

1. *Rukshata* as it is the beginning of *Adana Kaala*.
2. *Sheeta Adhika* (more cold) due to *Megha Marutha Varsha* (*Cloud, Wind and Rain*).<sup>[8,9]</sup>

### SEASON

For proper understanding of *Hemanta* and *Shishira Ritu* in modern perspective, it can be correlated with the winter season. The Earth is tilted at an angle of 23.44 degree to the plane of its orbit. It causes different latitudes to face the sun directly as the Earth moves

through its orbit. Due to these variations, Seasons get produced. Winter Season is produced by the axis of the Earth in that hemisphere which being oriented away from the sun. During this time, there will be shortest day and longest night. When we go through the different aspects of this season, a question will be raised like: **Is cold season always bad or good for our health?** For that, we have to understand its effect on our health and how our body respond to this changing condition i.e. low temperature.

### WINTER

**Etymology:** The word winter derives from the Proto-Indo-European root “wend” which relates to “water”.

**Definition:** Winter is the coldest season of the year in polar and temperate climates between autumn and spring season.<sup>[10]</sup>

**Diet Regimens:** This is the best season for improving the Immunity. So Immunity boosting foods which possess the qualities like fresh, organic, easy to digest, pure and wholesome should be included. Mainly these include fresh vegetables and fruits, dairy products, nuts, oil seeds, whole grains/legumes and ghee, spices. During this time, warm foods are needed to satisfy craving and also for providing nourishment to the body.

- Vegetables which take time to grow, the edible part of it which grows beneath the surface of the ground usually possess the quality of warming and it should be taken.
- Certain dry fruits (Dates), Nuts, Oil seeds (Sesame).
- Spices
- Foods coming under animal category like meat, fish etc.
- Whole grains cereals, proteins and healthy fats.
- Carrot- Beta-carotene present in it is a great source of Vitamin A and also a powerful antioxidant.
- Potato- They help in providing the energy needed for our body.
- Onion, Garlic, White radish- They provide good flavour for our food and is rich in isothiocyanates and phytochemicals which is good in preventing cancer.
- Leafy vegetables- like palak, pudina, coriander, amaranth etc. Are good sources of Beta-carotene and Vitamin C which will help our body to fight against diseases and for improving immunity.
- Green beans and Peas.
- Fresh fruits- Pappaya and Pineapple because of their warming quality.
- Indian Gooseberry- A great source of Vitamin C and a good aid for providing immunity.
- Dry fruits- Dates possess the qualities like warmness, good source of iron, magnesium, calcium and vitamins C and B3. They can be consumed alone or by adding it in shakes etc.
- Spices- Mustard, black pepper, turmeric etc are good sources for acting against microbes and also a good immunity builder.

- Tulsi- protects against fever and coughs and will improve the immunity.<sup>[11]</sup>

### Behavioural regimens that should be followed

- Staying in Inner Furnace- It helps to generate heat from within.
- Use of layering principle in dressing- Dressing should be done with layer containing dresses which contains three layers. A close fitting base layer to wipe out the sweat if any physical exertion occurs, insulating mid layer and outer layer which is waterproof and loose fitting.
- Routine of sleep should be modified. As days get shorter, we have to shift the routine of our sleep like going to bed earlier and that allows the body to take more rest.

### Physical risks

- Heart Attacks- The increase of heart attack frequency is more in winter season and it is usually affecting those who have already the history of it.
- Blood Pressure
- Hypothermia- Condition in which temperature of the body core falls less than 35C.
- Skin will become super dry by winter air as there is less humidity in air.
- SAD (Seasonal Affective Disorder)- In winter, people become more depressed as Brain is sensitive to low temperatures.
- Gaining Weight.
- Disturbance in sleep cycle

### Disease risks

- Colds and Flu
- Influenza
- Sore throats
- Asthma
- Migraines
- Swelling in joints
- Irritation in eyes

### Behavioural regimens that should be avoided

- Staying late at night.
- Working at night.
- Exposing the body to more stress and fatigue.
- Sleeping during day time.

### Health Benefits

- Burning Fats
- Reduction in disease carrying organisms.<sup>[12,13]</sup>

### DISCUSSION

Charaka Acharya mentions that if we follow *Pathya Aharas* and *Pathya Viharas* daily, it is the best way to attain *Swasthya Avastha* (Healthy state) and to prevent *Ajathanam Vikaranaam* (those diseases that can occur in future).

The forthcoming diseases can be compared to life style disorders.<sup>[14]</sup> So for preventing these, *Ritucharya* plays a

vital role as for the above mentioned we have to take in account about the different seasons also. In *Hemanta Ritu* due to its *Sheeta Guna* the air in the atmosphere is cold. Due to the *Yogavahi* quality of *Vata*, the *Sheeta Guna* will do *Agni Avarodha* in humans. By the coldness in the environment, it obstructs the normal flow of the *Agni* to the outside. A potter who is making earthen vessels by placing them in a pit and covering them after keeping the fire will produce more heat. Same is happening in our body like *Sheeta Vata* will cover our whole body which has already *Agni* inside. Due to these more heat will be produced in our body i.e. *Agni* (Digestive fire) will become more. This enhanced *Agni* is capable of digesting large quantities of food. Therefore *Guru Aharas* are to be properly given during this *Ritu* which includes Newly Harvested grains etc. If not giving proper *Aharas* at proper time, *Agni* will start to attack the *Rasa Dhatu* and will finally lead to *Vata Prakopa*. Therefore we should provide *Guru Aharas* and proper food at proper time inured to prevent this *Vata Prakopa*.<sup>[15]</sup>

Life style disorders are the outcome of inappropriate or improper relation of humans with their environment. These life style disorders will occur in our body very slowly and they are difficult for curing. A study conducted jointly by the All India Institute of Medical Sciences and Max Hospital shows that the incidence rate of Hypertension, Obesity and Heart diseases are increasing in an alarm rate. According to the opinions of experts, the main reasons for these disorders are sedentary life style along with increased usage of fatty food and alcohol.<sup>[16]</sup> Asthma symptoms will get worsens during this time due to the more dryness of the air. Barometric pressure will get decreased by cold temperature and due to these drastic changes, it will lead to migraine. Due to low temperature, swelling in the joints will increase and will be very difficult for patients suffering from Arthritis. Dry air will cause eye irritation. Due to lack of light in this season, it will adversely affect the sleep cycle and make the people feels like tired throughout the day.

As in this season hunger is more, our body will crave for food. So we have to provide rich foods which will provide warmth and nourishment to the body. This is the good season for improving immunity because during this season, hunger will be more and the digestive system of our body works better. As a result, foods are digested easily. By this it will help in providing nourishment to the body. So during this season, our body should be provided with more nourishing foods like spices having anti microbial properties that will help us to get protection from cold and other infections. They will act as a media for increasing digestive enzymes and cellular metabolic functions and thus ensuring the complete assimilation of nutrients.

**Peripheral vasoconstriction and Cold Diuresis-** When our body becomes cold, it will reduce the circulation to

the extremities and skin surface by the process called as Peripheral Vasoconstriction and will result in concentrating a greater volume of blood in the body core. Due to these, arterial blood pressure will get increase. The body will response to this by trying to reduce this increased arterial blood pressure. The kidneys will reduce the volume of circulating blood by removing water and this will go outside in the form of urine which is defined as Cold Diuresis.

**Heart attack frequency-** will be more in this season as during this season there will be drop in temperature. This drop in temperature will increase the blood pressure. This will create more strain on the heart. At the same time, our body has to work harder for generating additional heat when it is cold. To prevent this, the best way is to keep warm all the times. As a response to the low temperature of this season, constriction of blood vessels take place and in turn it will raise the blood pressure.

Human body contains several types of fat. Among these the prominent ones are White and Brown fats. White fats have the quality of storing extra energy. It is one of the important features of Obesity and Diabetes. Brown fat has the quality of burning chemical energy for creating heat and will help in maintaining body temperature. Studies have proved that when humans were exposed to cold climate overnight for one month, it will lead to an increase in brown fat. This can be used for burning fat and also to corresponding changes in body metabolism. Best way to escape from this cold climate is to warm up by wearing more clothes. Layer principle of dressing is mentioned as it is one of the effective ways of staying warm as air gets trapped between the layers and within the layers. Flu virus flies more easily in cold air. So we have to take care as chances of Flu occurrence are more.<sup>[17]</sup>

## CONCLUSION

*Ayurveda* makes the people understand about their body types and insist them to live according to this. As changes in the environment affect our body also, it is very important for our body to get familiar with these changes. If we are not doing so it will affect our body and mind leading to *Dosha Vaishamya*. In the latter stages, these imbalances will lead to various types of life style disorders. So for preventing these disorders, the best way is to understand *Ritucarya* which explains about the various dietary and behavioural regimens according to different seasons. By proper understanding and following these regimens, we can easily achieve our primary goal "*Swasthasya Rakshanam*". It also brings about Strength, Complexion and longevity without disturbing the equilibrium of the body and mind.

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