



Review Article

CONCEPT OF SARAT RITUCHARYA- A PRACTICAL APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda- The science of life, has two aims, firstly it aimed at to preserve and protect the health of a healthy individual and secondly to cure the disease. As Ayurveda gives first priority to the preventive aspects to preserve and protect the health, it described preventive principles under the heading of *Swasthavritta*. *Swasthavritta* classically includes *Dinacharya*, *Nishacharya* and *Ritucharya*. These *Charyas* if followed properly, brings the balance in *Tridosha* (*Vata*, *Pitta* & *Kapha*) and thus maintains the *Samadoshavastha* (Homeostasis of humours/health). *Tridoshas* are always dynamic in nature, especially during seasonal variation. Adaptation to each *Ritu* is always a challenging to human beings, more in modern era, where people are running with mechanical life and exposing to pollutants. Ayurveda beautifully described *Ritucharya* prescription to be followed to bring balance in *Tridoshavastha* and also prevent morbid matter accumulation. There are six *Rutus* namely *Sisira*, *Vasantha*, *Greeshma*, *Varsha*, *Sharat* and *Hemantha*, among these, *Sharat Ritu* (mid-September - mid November) comes under the *Visargakala* constituting of *Ashwini* and *Karthika Masa*. In this *Ritu* physiologically *Pitta* undergoes *Prakopa*, if not followed *Ritucharya* properly, the *Pitta* will get vitiate and causes *Pitta* related diseases. In this article an honest attempt has been made to gather information regarding *Sarat ritucahrya* from all possible literature from Ayurvedic classics with practical aspects.

INTRODUCTION

The word *Ritu* has been used to characterize seasons and it was derived from root 'Ru' which means 'to go' i.e., *Ritu* represents the form in which nature expressed itself in a sequence in specific forms of two month duration. The whole year is divided into two division based on the movement of the sun as *Adanakala* (*Uttarayana*- Northward movement of Sun) and *Visargakala* (*Dakshina Ayana*- Southward movement of sun). Each division consists of 3 *Ritus* each.<sup>[1]</sup>

**Effect of *Visargakaala* (Period of Emission):** Contrary to *Adanakaala* (period of absorption), where the sun, moon behaves reversely and thereby the human beings are benefitted with their strength and vigour. During the rainy, autumn and winter seasons, the sun moves towards the south (*Dakshinayana*) and its power (heating and absorbing capacity) is slackened by various factors, viz., the time, the course of solar movement, cloud, wind and rain but on the other hand the moon remains unaffected. The hotness of the universe is subsided by the rain water and the sour, salty and sweet tastes which cause unctuousness in the body grow during the rainy season, autumn and winter, respectively. With the consequent of all these changes, the human beings also progressively enrich with strength during *Visargakaala*. *Visargakala* includes *Varsha*, *Sharad* and *Hemantha*.<sup>[3]</sup>

***Sarat Ritu* (Autumn):** After the *Varsharitu* (rainy season), *Sarat ritu* (autumn) is the second season come in the *Visargakala*. The penetrating rays of the sun reach to its moderate and thereby the untoward effects of the *Adanakaala* have reduced half of its strength. On the other hand, the gradual increase in qualities of the

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moon has also reached to its moderate and consequently, the human beings attain moderate strength and vigour in their body.<sup>[4]</sup> Based on Hindu calendar, the *Aswina* and *Kartika* months constitute

this season, while according to English calendar, the September-October and October-November are the months to come in this season.

**Table 1: Classification of Ritus According to Different Authors<sup>[2]</sup>**

| Ritu     | Charaka               |                        | Vagbhata              | Susruta                | Gregorian calendar                            |
|----------|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|---|
|          | Varsharitikrama       | Pravritritukrama       |                       |                        |   |
| Sisira   | Magha<br>Phalguna     | -                      | Magha<br>Phalguna     |                        | Mid Jan- Mid Feb<br>Mid Feb- Mid March        |
| Vasanta  | Chaitra<br>Vaishakha  | Phalguna<br>Chaitra    | Chaitra<br>Vaishakha  | Phalguna<br>Chaitra    | Mid March- Mid April,<br>Mid April- Mid May   |
| Greeshma | Jyeshtha<br>Ashada    | Vaishakha<br>Jyeshtha  | Jyeshtha<br>Ashada    | Vaishakha<br>Jyeshtha  | Mid May – Mid June<br>Mid June – Mid July     |
| Pravrit  | -                     | Ashada<br>Sravana      | -                     | Ashada<br>Sravana      | Early monsoon                                 |
| Varsha   | Sravana<br>Bhadrapada | Aswina<br>Bhadrapada   | Sravana<br>Bhadrapada | Bhadrapada<br>Aswina   | Mid July- Mid August,<br>Mid August- Mid Sept |
| Sarat    | Aswina<br>Kartika     | Kartika<br>Margasirsha | Aswina<br>Kartika     | Kartika<br>Margasirsha | Mid Sept- Mid Oct<br>Mid Oct- Mid Nov         |
| Hemanta  | Margasirsha<br>Pushya | Pushya<br>Magha        | Margasirsha<br>Pushya | Pushya<br>Magha        | Mid Nov- Mid Dec<br>Mid Dec- Mid Jan          |

**Table 2: Physiological Changes during Sarat Ritu**

| Factor                  | Status                    |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Dosha (Bodily humor)    | Pitta Dosha (Predominant) |
| Agni (Digestive factor) | Pravara (Increased)       |
| Bala (Strength)         | Madhyama (Medium)         |

**Pathya Ahara:** According to Bhavaprakasha, usage of ghee, food products having *Madhura*, *Tiktha* and *Kashaya rasa*, *Sheetha laghu gunayuktha* and milk added with clear white sugar, little quantities of salt, meat of animals of *Jangala pradesha*, wheat, barley, green gram along with rice, river water.<sup>[5]</sup> According to *Ashtanga Hridaya* foods which are *Tiktha madhura kashaya rasa yukta*, should take *Shali*, *Mudga*, sugar, *Dhatri*, *Patola*, *Madhu* and meat of *Jangala pradesha*.<sup>[6]</sup> According to *Ashtanga Sangraha*, medicated ghee with bitter in taste, cold easy to digest less in quantity with *Madhuratiktha* and *Kashaya* and *Shahstika shali*, wheat barley, greengram, sugar, honey, drugs like *Patola*, *Amlaka*, *Draksha* and *Jangala mamsa*.<sup>[7]</sup> According to *Caraka*, *Madhura laghu sheetha* and slightly bitter and *Pittashamaka dravya* and drinks should be taken in proper quantity, meat of *Lava*, *Kapinjala*, *Ena*, *Urabra*, *Sharaba* and *Shasha*, rice, barley and wheat.

**Pathya Vihara:** According to *Ashtanga Sangraha*, day time should be spent in sailing in lakes which are full of swans, rose of humming bees and blossomed lotus flowers and wearing light and clean dresses, garlands, anointing the body with paste of *Usheera*, night should

be spent on terrace having good moonlight.<sup>[8]</sup> According to *Ashtanga Hridaya*, one should enjoy moonlight wearing bright colored clothes and garlands made up of pearls and *Chandana*, *Usheera*, *Karpura* on a white terrace of a house.<sup>[9]</sup> According to *Caraka*, garlands of seasonal flowers, clean clothes and moon rays in early night are exceedingly beneficial during autumn.<sup>[10]</sup>

**Apathya Ahara:** According to *Caraka*, one should avoid fat, oil, dews, meat of *Anupa* and *Jangala desha*, *Kshara dravya*, curd.<sup>[11]</sup> According to *Bhavaprakasha*, one should avoid dew, *Kshara* (alkaline substances), eating full meals, *Dadhi* (curd), *Taila* (oil), *Vasaa* (fat), *Dhoopa* (smoke), strong alcohol.<sup>[12]</sup> According to *Ashtanga Sangraha*, eastern breeze should be avoided.<sup>[13]</sup>

**Apathya Vihara:** According to *Ashtanga Sangraha*, *Diwaswapna* and *Sheetha pradesha* should be avoided.<sup>[14]</sup>

**Panchakarma Procedure:** According to *Bhavaprakasha* and *Ashtanga Hridayakaara*, *Virechana* and *Rakthamokshana* are to be done in this *Ritu* because of *Pitta dosha* predominance.<sup>[15]</sup>

**Summary of Pathya-Apathya in Sarat Ritu**

| <i>Aahaaravarga</i>      | <i>Pathyaaahaara</i>  | <i>Apathya aahaara</i>                |
|--------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| <i>Ksheeravarga</i>      | <i>Ghritha</i> (Ghee)   | <i>Ksheera dravyas-Dadhi</i> (curd)   |
| <i>Mamsavarga</i>        | <i>Jangala mamsa</i> (meat of dry land), <i>Lava</i> , <i>Kapinjala</i> , <i>Ena</i> , <i>Urabra</i> , <i>Sharaba</i> and <i>Shasha</i> | <i>Anoopamamsa</i> (meat of wet land) |
| <i>Madyavarga</i>        | -   | Strong alcohol                        |
| <i>Shukadhanyavarga</i>  | Wheat, barley, rice ( <i>Shashtikashali</i> )   | -                                     |
| <i>Tailavarga</i>        | -   | Fat, oil                              |
| <i>Shimbidhanyavarga</i> | <i>Mudga</i> (green gram)   | -                                     |
| <i>Madhuavarga</i>       | <i>Madhu</i> (Honey)  | -                                     |
| <i>Shakavarga</i>        | <i>Patola</i> (bottle gourd), <i>Dhatri</i> (gooseberry)  | -                                     |

**DISCUSSION**

**Status of Dosas:** As a rule autumn is preceded by the rainy season. With the result, the human body accustomed to cooling effects of the rainy season, subsequently, gets all of a sudden expose to the scorching rays of the sun, in autumn season. Generally this causes vitiation of *Pitta*. In this context, Caraka has rightly stated that the body parts adopted for rains and cold are suddenly exposed to the heat of the sun with the beginning of autumn and with the result the *Pitta* accumulated during the rains gets generally vitiated.<sup>[16]</sup> This vitiation can be prevented if proper steps are taken to avoid the accumulation of *Pitta* during the rainy season. Unless the *Pitta* gets accumulated during the rainy season, the contact of the human body with the autumnal scorching rays of the sun may have no effect on its vitiation.

**Drinks, Diet and Other Activities:** Prescribing the dietetics for this particular season, Caraka has taken maximum care to alleviate the *Pitta*. In this season only light food is to be taken. The lighter the food, the greater is the power of digestion. Even though the *Pitta* has been identified with the digestive fire itself, it brings about loss of appetite, due to an increase in its liquid fraction. Taking these facts in view, Caraka has said that in this season, sweet, light, cold and bitter foods and drinks which have potentialities to alleviate *Pitta* are to be taken in proper quantity when there is good appetite.<sup>[17]</sup> Here great stress has been given on proper quantity of food, as intake of disproportionate diets is always harmful, but it is all the more so during this season because it brings about many severe types of ailments.

In order to overcome the *Pitta*, there has been also mention of various therapeutic measures. One should first of all try with ghee prepared of bitter drugs. If it is not effective, one should have the purgation. If this also fails to alleviate the *Pitta* and there is apparent vitiation of *Rakta*, then one should take recourse to bloodletting. The possibility of vitiation of *Rakta* has been also mentioned by Caraka, during this season.<sup>[18]</sup> Summing up all the steps to

overcome or control the vitiation of *Pitta*, he has recommended this intake of ghee prepared with bitter medicines, purgation and bloodletting, for this season.<sup>[19]</sup> Use of garlands made up of autumnal flowers and clean apparel and also the rays of the moon in the evening (*Pradoshakala*) are exceedingly beneficial in this season.<sup>[20]</sup> Here rays of the moon have been told beneficial to health, when they are used in the evening hours. They get exceedingly cooled in the night and as such may result harmful to the health.

As regards the dietetics and regimen of life for autumnal season, *Susruta* holds more or less the same views as advocated by Caraka, but with little difference. He prefers to prescribe the astringent taste, sugarcane and milk products, and honey, green gram pulse, all types of water, sandal paste, *Sidhu* type of wine, clean and fine clothes scented with sandal or camphor for autumn season.<sup>[21]</sup>

Vridha Vagbhata has mostly followed the views of Caraka and *Susruta* and advised the use of *Patola*, *Amalaki* and grapes in autumn season<sup>[22]</sup> and *Ashtanga Hridaya* depicts a synoptic view of dietetics and seasonal regimen of life as described by Caraka, *Susruta* and Vagbhata for autumn season.<sup>[23]</sup>

While prohibiting the certain dietetics and regimens during autumn, all the Acharyas are similar in mentioning, one should avoid taking sun bath, fat, oil and *Audaka & Anupamamsa* (meat of aquatic and marshy animals) and *Kshara* (alkaline) preparations and *Dadhi* (curd) in food. One should not sleep during day time and should not expose himself to frost and easterly wind.<sup>[24]</sup> *Susruta* has contra-indicated extra like night awakening and excessive sexual indulgence.<sup>[25]</sup> Vagbhata added in this list taking full diet and sharp alcohol in this season.<sup>[26]</sup> The *Sharat Purnima* during *Sharad Ritu* is one of the significant days as the moon is closest to the Earth on that day and its rays are said to have certain healing properties that nourishes the body and soul. Due to the strong rays of sun the body is likely to get dehydrated soon so the prolonged exposure to sun rays is prohibited in

this season, and consumption of *Sharkara Mishritha Jala* (water mixed with sugar) is suggested by *Acharyas* which maintains the electrolyte balance of the body

**Special Quality of Water (Hamsodaka):** In the preceding rainy season the rain water gets polluted due to its contact with earth and also because of an increase in slimness and acidity. All these are subsided during the autumn and so the water gets rid of such factors which are responsible for the vitiation of *Doshas*. Again during rainy season, the water also gets infected due to contact with snakes and poisonous spiders etc. With the advent of the star *Agasthya* (Canopus) all the poisonous effects of the water gets neutralized and it becomes purified, during autumn season. This autumnal water has been designated as *Hamsodaka* by Caraka.<sup>[27]</sup> It has got two connotations, where the first one *Hamsa* stands for the sun and the moon and the second one *Udaka* for the water, so the water purified by the rays of sun and moon is known as *Hamsodaka*. It has been given name *Hamsodaka* also because this is the type of purified water which indicates swan will consume only pure water. Bhavamisra has given new name *Amsudaka* in place of *Hamsodaka* and stated to have the qualities of unctuousness and controlling the *Tridoshas*.<sup>[28]</sup> The water which is exposed to the heat of sun during the day time and to the cooling rays of the moon during night, it also purified by the time and is detoxicated by star Canopus (*Agasthya*) and thus called *Hamsodaka*, which is spotlessly clean and is as beneficial as nectar for the purpose of bathing, drinking and swimming.<sup>[29]</sup> In a study, on comparison between *Hamsodaka* and *Tadagajala* (pond water), it shows that, there are definite positive changes in almost all microbiological parameters in *Hamsodaka* due to combine effect of intensive sunlight during the day time, smoothening effect of moon light during night time and *Agasthya* star rays and *Kalaprabhava* in *Saratritu*.<sup>[30]</sup> Bhavamisra suggested to take *Haritaki* (*Chebulic Myrobalan*) with *Sarkara* (sugar) as *Anupana* (adjuvant vehicle) to get *Rasayana* effect.<sup>[31]</sup>

Walker *et al* study on seasonal variation reveals that, striking seasonal variation has been demonstrated in the plasma and saliva levels of the glucocorticoid, cortisol, which promotes carbohydrate metabolism. The lowest levels of cortisol were found in healthy individuals during spring and summer, while the highest levels were found during autumn and winter seasons.<sup>[32]</sup>

In a study conducted by Manoj kumar *et al*, 2017 on Adaptive thermal comfort in the offices of North-East India in autumn season reveals that preferred temperature in the offices is 24.5°C, that is 8°C lower than comfort temperature and Logistic analysis shows that at 31°C about 50% fans in the offices are opening.<sup>[33]</sup> In a study to evaluate the effect

of *Sneha sweda yukta virechana* in *Sarat ritu*, it is found that, the *Sneha sweda yukta virechana* is having high potential to improve the health status of volunteers in the study group, thereby preventing health problems associated with *Pitta* and also to diminish the severity of health problems as compared with the control group.<sup>[34]</sup>

## CONCLUSION

During, autumn (*Sarat ritu*), which falls in the months of mid-September to mid-November, physiologically *Pitta prakopa* (aggravation of *Pitta*) takes place, to prevent pathological state of *Pitta* and also to prevent *Pitta* related disease one should consume food articles having *Madhura* (sweet), *Tikta* (bitter) and *Kasahaya* (astringent) *Rasa*, *Laghu guna* (light in digestion) and usage of ghee, milk with adding sugar, little quantity of salt, wheat, barley, green gram along with rice (*Kichadi*) are advised. Wearing light and clean dress, garlands, anointing the body with paste of *Usheera* (*Khas khas grass*) and early night should be spent on terrace to expose body to moonlight. As a prophylactic measure, medicated ghee with *Tikta rasa* (bitter taste) drugs can be taken to maintain normalcy of *Pitta*.

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