

ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE - ANALYTICAL STUDY

A critical re-evaluation on the concept of *Aahara w.s.r. to Ritucharya*

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: *Ayurveda* is a science of life. *Ayurveda* is evaluated on earth for the maintenance of health and various principles are described for achievement of this goal under the head of *Swasthavritta*. One of the important principles of *Swasthavritta* is *Tryopstambha* which includes *Aahara, Nidra and Brahmacharya*. *Aahara* has been considered as the prime factor for the maintenance of *Dhatusamyā* or health if utilized according to prescribed regimen as well as it has also considered as main causative factor for the causation of diseases if not taken according to prescribed regimen. **Materials and methods:** The related references have been collected from different *Ayurvedic* texts and its available commentaries. The collected references have been critically observed, compiled and discussed thoroughly. **Discussion:** There are various regimens and regulations are described in these contexts for the consumption of suitable and appropriate food. *Acharyacharak* says that even *Matravat Aahara* will not be fruitful, if not consumed according to *Ritucharya*.

Keywords : *Aahara, Ritu, Ritucharya*

How to Site the Article : Kumari M, Devi D, A critical re-evaluation on the concept of *Aahara w.s.r. to Ritucharya*, JOA XIII-1, 2019; 109 - 114



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Introduction :

Ayurveda, the science of life is a time tested treasure of knowledge that has been handed down to us from our great ancestors. *Ayurveda* is evaluated on earth for the maintenance of health and various principles are described for achievement of this goal under the head of *Swasthavritta*. One of the important principle of its *Swasthavritta* is *tryopstambha* which includes *aahara, nidra* and *brahmacharya*. Here *aahara* has been enumerated first which shows its importance. *Aahara* is very important for the classic aim of total positive health including physical, mental and spiritual well-being. *Aahara* has been considered as the prime factor for the maintenance of *Dhatusamyā* or health if utilized according to prescribed regimen as well as it has also considered as main causative factor for the causation of diseases if not taken according to prescribed regimen.

Therefore various rules are described in the context of Aaharautilization and Kala or time is one of those. Ritucharyahas described in context of various seasons and it includes various regimens of Aaharaand Vihara. If these regimens are not followed properly various diseases will be manifested. It may be one of the causative factors for the evolution of life-style disorders which are increasing rapidly day by day.

Aims & Objectives :

1. To collect and critically re-evaluate the references regarding Aaharain the context of *Ritucharya* described in various *Ayurvedic* texts and its available commentaries.
2. Try to establish the relationship between the prescribed regimen of *Aahara* and evolution of *rasa* in particular *Ritu*.
3. To discuss the contemporary food pattern and its effects on health and prepare a regimen which practically and socially accepted by the people.

Materials And Methods :

The related references have been collected from different *Ayurvedic* texts and its available commentaries. Related websites have also been searched. The collected references have been critically observed, compiled and discussed thoroughly.

Benefits And Classification of Aahara :

Food sustains the life of living beings. All living beings in the universe require food. Complexion, clarity, good voice, longevity, geniuses happiness, satisfaction, nourishment, strength and intellect are all conditioned by food. Professional activities leading to happiness in this world, Vedicrituals leading to abode in heaven and observance of truth, *Brahmacarya* leading to salvation are all based on food.^[1]

There is a detailed and exhaustive classification of dietary items available in ancient *Ayurvedic* texts. The basis of classification by *Charaka* has been mainly the type of food item i.e whether it is a cereal, pulse, Vegetables or

fruits and so on.^[2] *Sushruta* and other *Acharayas* have first broadly classified all the food items into liquid^[3] and solid food^[4] and then subdivided these in to two types accordingly.

Classification Of Ritu :

It is mentioned by *Acharya Vagbhata* that Rituor seasons are recognized by the three following methods:^[5]

1. Classification according to month
2. Classification according to sun in different zodiac
3. Classification according to characteristics of *Shita*, *Usna*, *Varsha*.

Considering with *Ayana* system all *Acharya* have mention these six ritus in a year-

Shishir (late winter), *Basant* (spring), *Grishma* (summer), *Varsha* (rain), *Sharad* (autumn), *Hemant* (early winter)

Aahar And Ritucharya :

Relationship Between Ritu & Taste (Rasa)

Rasa is an important nutritional concept in *Ayurveda*. *Rasa* is not merely incidental in terms of rendering the food palatable, but it is important in term of nutrition. As per *Ayurveda*, there are six *Rasas*, namely *Madhur* (sweet), *Amla* (sour), *Lavana* (salt), *Katu* (pungent), *Tikta* (bitter) and *Kashaya* (astringent). *Rasas* are also ultimately made up of the five *Mahabhootas*. However it is also observed that specific *Rasas* predominate in particular seasons and this has implications for how our food and regimen must change in various seasons.^[6]

Ayurved mentioned food to eat according to different seasons. *Dosaare* predominant in different Rituand the specific type of food also mentioned for particular *Dosha* according to the season.

Reason behind seasons:

The earth's orbit around the sun is not a perfect circle. It is an ellipse. Seasons are not caused by how close the earth is to the sun. Seasons are the result of the tilt of the earth's axis. Earth's axis is tilted 23.5°. This tilting is why we

have seasons like rainfall, winter, spring, summer occurs. Summer is warmer than winter (in each hemisphere) because the sun's rays hit the earth at a more direct angle during summer than during winter. Also the days are much longer than nights during the summer. During the winter, the sun's rays hit the earth at an extreme angle, and the days are very short. These effects are due to the tilt of the earth axis.

Climate & climatic zone :

Climate:- encompasses the statistics of temperature, humidity, atmospheric pressure, wind, precipitation, atmospheric particle count and other meteorological elemental measurements in a given region over long periods. Climate can be contrasted to weather, which is the present condition of these elements and their variations over shorter periods.^[7]

Climatic zone: - is a region of the world where the climate can be defined using a few key parameters. There are a number of different ways to classify the world's climate zones, and a wide assortment of uses for this information.

Discussion:

The concept of *Aahara* is very important principle and have prime place for the maintenance of *Dhatusamy*. There are various regimens and regulations are described in these contexts for the consumption of suitable and appropriate food. *Acharya Charak* says that even *Matravat Aahara* will not be fruitful, if not consumed according to *Ritucharya*.

The concept of *Ritucharya* is based on adjustment with seasonal fluctuations. The climatic conditions of any region are totally depending on geographical nature of that particular region. But *Ayurveda* has given a scientific classification for the understanding of time or *Kala* in the context of seasonal fluctuations.

Ritu Classification :

1. General (*Swasthavritta*)

In *Ayurvedic* classics *Samvtsara* has been divided into six Ritus. That is *Shishir*, *Vasant*, *Grishma*, *Varsha*, *Sharad*, *Hemanta* With two months duration for each Ritu. The seasonal manifestation in different months depends upon transition of sun in various *Rashis*.

2. According to *Dosha Sanchaya*, *Prakopaand Prasara*

Another classification of *Ritu* given in *Ayurvedic* text is *Dosha* fluctuation in the body. It is well known concept that seasonal fluctuation results in *Dosha* fluctuation in the body. The purpose of this classification is the elimination of vitiated *Dosha* from the body.

In *Ayurvedic* classics the seasonal characteristics are divided into three groups that is cold, hot and rainy. Two *Rituare* kept in each group.

Cold	<i>Sharad–Hemanta</i>
Hot	<i>Vasant–Grishma</i>
Rainy	<i>Pravrita–Varsha</i>

Among two *Ritu* in each group the first *Ritu* has the mild characteristics of that season. While second *Ritu* has the intensive characteristics of that particular season. Two reasons are given for this purpose.

(1) In *Sadharan Kala*, seasonal manifestations are in mild form and weather is pleasant. Therefore, there is least chance of complications after *Sanshodhankarma* for *Dosha* elimination.

(2) Vitiating of *Dosha* occurs in *Sadharan Kala*.

Current concept

In current era, seasons are classified into four. That is spring, summer, autumn and winter. Spring starts from vernal equinox (21st march) to summer solstices (21st June). Summer starts from summer solstices and end at the autumnal equinox (22nd September). Autumn starts from autumnal equinox to winter solstices (21st December). And winter starts from winter solstices to vernal equinox.

If we compare the traditional and modern classification of season, the *ayurvedic* classification is more comprehensive and elaborative. It includes the all the possible changes occurs in environmental only but also in the body. In other words first classification described here based on the seasonal changes and provides bases for the modification and adjustment in lifestyle. While Second classification is intended for *dosha* fluctuations according to external seasonal fluctuations and its eliminations.

If we see the current classification, there is not much scope for the lifestyle modification and it is not indicated in the context of seasonal variation. Another important thing is that one season is of three month duration. It is too long for single lifestyle. Because there is a lots of environmental changes occurs in this long duration.

Evolution of *Rasa* in different *Ritu* and its relation with diet and *Sanchya*, *Prakopa* and *Prasara* of *Dosha*

It has been mentioned in *Ayurvedic* text that movements of sun is responsible for the changes in season, *Bala*, *rasa* and *Dosha*. When sun moves through northward its intensity is increasing gradually. So dryness in environment increases and *Bala* of human being decreased gradually. Due to this increase in dryness, *Ruksha Rasa* become potent in respective *Ritu*; that is *Tikta* in *Shishir*, *Kashay* in *Vasant*, *Katu* in *Grishma*. The opposite thing is happened, when sun moves through southwards intensity of sun become feeble and thus intensity of moon is increased. This result in evolution of *Snigdha Rasa* in respective *Ritu*; that is *Amla* in *Varsha*, *Lavanain Sharad* and *Madhur* in *Hemanta*.

This pattern for evolution of *Rasa* in different season plays important role in *Sanchay*, *Prakopa* and *Prasar* of *Dosha*. One more thing is also important in this regard is diet pattern and status of *Agni*. These are both external and internal factors responsible for accumulation and vitiation of *Dosha*.

***Aahar* and *Ritucharya*:**

Seasonal changes in different *Ritu* are responsible

for the changes in human body. Especially status of *Agni*. This *Agnistatus* is bases for the design of diet pattern for particular *Ritu*. Each season will be discussed one by one.

Hemanta & Shishir (Cold season):

These both *Ritu* consider together because their characteristics are same. Only difference in *Shishir Ritu* is more cold and dry than *Hemanta*. So the diet planned for this season must have *Madhur*, *Amla*, *Lavana Rasa Guru*, *Snigdha*, and *Ushna Guna*

Predominantly. Some eg. are given.

Cereals- New grains-example *Rice*, *Wheat*, *Jwar*, *Bajra*, *Maize* etc, **Pulses** – *Udad*, *Tuar*, *Chana*, *Rajma* etc. **Meat** – meat, fishes and poultry, **Vegetables** – seasonal vegetables **Fruits & dry fruits** – orange, guava, chikku, grapes, banana, pomegranate, dates, kiwi, passion, apple, cashew nuts, **Milk & milk products**, **Sugar & its products**, **Oils & animals fat**, **Prepared food items** – *stuffed parantha & puri*, *kheer*, *halwa*, *gravy dishae*, *laddu*, *gajak*, *paapad*, *khichdi* etc, Water should be consumed slightly warm

Vasant Ritu

It is the season of *Kapha* aggravation and thus power of *Agni* is reduced. *Katu*, *Tikta* and *Kashay Rasa*, *Laghu*, *Tikshna* and *Ushna Guna* should be included in diet. To fulfill these requirements old grains should be consumed.

Cereals – *Yava*, rice, wheat etc, **Pulses** – *Munga*, *Masur*, *Tuar*, **Vegetables** – seasonal vegetables, *Lokki*, *Parval*, *Brinjal*, *bitter guard* etc, **Fruits** – seasonal fruits *Grapes*, *Aawla*, *Bitter Melon*, *Strawberries*, *Pineapple*, **Prepared food items** – *veg. soup*, *daal soup*, *roti (thin)*, *rice*, *kadhi*, thin *gravy* preparations, Fermented traditional food items like *idly*, *dhokla* should be taken.

Grishma Ritu

In this season two major changes occurs in body that is *Agni* become more feeble and body is totally exhausted due to intensive heat of that atmosphere. To counteract this *Madhur Rasa*, *Sheeta*, *Snigdha* and *Drava Gunas* should be taken predominantly.

Cereals – *Yava*, wheat, rice, **Pulses** – *Munga*, *Masur*, *Tuar*, *Rajma*, *Chana* etc. **Vegetables** – *lokki*, *bitter guard*, *lady finger*, *parval*, *cucumber*, **Fruits** – seasonal fruits mango, papaya, water melon, musk melon, grapes, bel, apricots, honeydew melon, **Milk & its products** – *cold and sweet milk*, *ghee*, **Sugar & its products** – sugar cane juice, **Prepared food items** – veg. soup, daal soup, thin kheer, buuter milk, raita, sharbat, paanak, manth, coconut water, thin gravy items, thin roti, thin daliya and khichdi, sweets, fermented food items. Seasonal fruits juice and plenty of water should be taken.

Varsha Ritu

In this season *Agni* is feeble and all three *Doshas* are vitiated. *Amla*, *Lavana*, *Katu* and *Kashaya Rasa*, *Ruksha*, *Ushna* and *Deepan Guna* predominant diet should be taken.

Cereals – *Yava*, wheat, rice, **Pulses** – *Munga*, *Masur*, *Chana*, **Vegetables** – seasonal vegetables *lokki*, **Fruits** – seasonal fruits mango, **Sugar & its products** – honey (old), **Prepared food items** – soup, roti, boiled rice, butter milk, fermented food items, *Madhudak*

Sharad Ritu

It is the season of *pitta* aggravation. So *Madhur*, *Tikta*, *Kashaya Rasa*, *Laghu*, *Sheeta Guna* predominant diet should be taken.

Cereals – *Yava*, wheat, rice, **Pulses** – *Munga*, *Masur*, **Vegetable** – *parval*, *lady finger*, *turyi*, *bitter guard*, **Fruits** – seasonal fruits, **Milk & its products** – sweet milk, **Sugar & its products** – honey, **Prepared food items** – soup, roti, rice, thin and cold kheer, butter milk, sweets, thin gravy items. *Ghee* should be taken but oil should be avoided.

Conclusion:

- ❖ *Aahara & Ritucharya* are important principles of *Swasthviritta* and thus play an important role in health maintenance.
- ❖ Concepts of *Ritu* and meteorological environment approximately have similar characteristics.

- ❖ *Aahara* is a very important principle and should be followed according to *Ritucharya* for health maintenance.
- ❖ This study is on conceptual bases and can be elaborated as experimental and survey projects.

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सारांश:

आयुर्वेद एक जीवन विज्ञान है। इस सृष्टि पर आयुर्वेद का अवतरण स्वास्थ्य संरक्षणार्थ हुआ है, इस उद्देश्य की पूर्ति के लिय आयुर्वेदोक्तस्वस्थवृत्त में बहुत से सिद्धान्तों का उल्लेख मिलता है जिनमें से त्रयोपस्तम्भ एक प्रमुख सिद्धान्त है। जिसके अन्तर्गत आहार, निद्रा और अब्रह्मचर्य आदि प्रमुख स्वास्थ्य संरक्षक विषय सम्मिलित है। आहार काशात्रोक्त विधि से युक्ति युक्त प्रयोग किया जाए तो धातु साम्य का प्राथमिक कारण बनता है परन्तु शात्रोक्त विधि से प्रयुक्त नहीं करने पर रोगों का कारण बनता है। सामग्री एवं कार्य पद्धति: उपरोक्त शोध-पत्र को पूर्ण करने हेतु संदर्भ आयुर्वेदीय ग्रंथों तथा उन पर उपलब्ध टीकाओं से लिये गये हैं प्रस्तुत संदर्भों का विधिपूर्वक संकलन करके उनका आलोचनात्मकविवेचन किया गया है। विमर्श: इन ग्रंथों में मात्रावत् एवं उचित आहार ग्रहण हेतु विभिन्न विधि-विधान एवं नियम बताए हैं। आचार्य चरकानुसार मात्रावत् आहार भी यदि ऋतुचर्या के अनुसार नहीं लिया जाए तो वह युक्ति युक्त नहीं है।