

VASANTA RITUCHARYA: THE AYURVEDIC GUIDE FOR THE SPRING SEASON

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Abstract

According to Ayurveda, an ancient science of life, seasonal variations are crucial in maintaining the balance of the body, mind and soul. It believes that every season has distinct characteristics requiring a customized approach to lifestyle, diet and practices to maintain the doshas. In the spring, the heat of the sun begins to liquefy the Kapha that had accumulated during the winter (Hemanta and Shishira Ritu), weakening the jaataragni (digestive fire) and leading to many kaphaja vikaras. Teekshna. (strong), Ruksha (dry), spicy (pungent), astringent and alkali-based food articles are recommended in this ritu. It is beneficial to do different types of vyayama (exercise), walking, pushups, wrestling and involvement in weight lifting. Vamana and Shirovirechana with Teekshna dravyas (strong) are highly recommended for this ritu to remove excessively collected Kapha dosha from the body. Understanding and adopting Vasant Ritucharya can help to enhance immunity, promote vitality and prevent diseases, ensuring the holistic well-being of mankind.

Keywords: Ritucharya, Kapha dosha, Ahara, Vihara, Vamana

Introduction

In Ayurveda, the ancient science of life, seasonal transitions are crucial in maintaining the balance between body, mind and spirit. According to Ayurveda, each season possesses unique qualities that require a tailored approach to diet, lifestyle and practices to keep the doshas in balance, known as Ritucharya, which is essential for maintaining health and harmony. Vasant Ritucharya refers to the seasonal regimen for Vasant Ritu i.e. Spring, which typically spans from March to May in the Indian subcontinent. An increase in warmth, lightness and moisture characterizes this period. Ayurveda prescribes specific guidelines to help the body adjust to these changes.

Aim and objectives

1. To comprehend Vasant Ritu's seasonal environmental changes and their effect on the body.
2. Vasant ritucharya – ahara (diet), vihara (lifestyle) and Panchakarma treatments, followed to maintain doshas in balance.

Materials and methods :

Vasant Ritu is considered a period of renewal and growth. As winter fades and the earth awakes with blossoming flowers and fresh greenery the environment becomes warmer and more humid. These seasonal shifts also impact the internal environment of the body.

Avyapanna Vasant ritu lakshana (characteristic features of ideal Vasant Ritu)¹

All the directions become clear and clean. Flowers of Bakula, Mango, and Ashoka trees adorn forests and gardens, while lotus flowers bloom in lakes. The pleasant sound of the chirping of various birds. Songs from Cuckoo and Bumblebee come from trees. In this season, wind from a southern direction and tender leaves of trees soothe the mind.

The kapha accumulated in the winter season (Hemanta and Shishira ritu) start to liquefy by the heat of the sun in spring, leading to the weakening of jaataragni (digestive fire), thereby causing many diseases².

1.Ahara (Diet)

Sevaniya aahara (Indicated Foods):

According to Acharya Charaka, it is advised to use more Barley and wheat in food preparations. Those who are comfortable in consuming non-veg can take the meat of rabbit, antelope, and quails. For drinks, Madvika-a variety of medicated alcohol prepared using a lot of honey and Sidhu-fermented preparation prepared by fruit juices³.

As per Acharya Sushruta, the consumption of teekshna (strong), dry, spicy (pungent), astringent, and alkali-based articles are beneficial in this ritu, which should be hot and solid. He suggests barley, green gram, and honey to use more in proportion. He also recommends shastika, a variety of rice, pointed gourd, neem, brinjal, bitter gourd, and hot potency food articles. For those who are fond of non-veg, he suggests consuming meat from hot land animals with soups of different pulses. He advocates different fermented drinks which are prepared from honey, fruit juices etc⁴.

Acharya Vaghbata recommends eating foods that are easily digestible and fat-free to balance Kapha dosha. It is recommended to use old barley, wheat, honey, and meat from animals of Jangala Desha⁵.

Varjya ahara (Contraindicated foods)

It is not recommended to consume foods which are heavy for digestion, sweet, sour in taste and unctuous (fat-containing) in nature⁶.

As per Acharya Sushruta, lavana rasa (salt predominant) pradhana aahara is also avoided in this ritu.

To the above list, Acharya Vaghbata adds sheeta pradhana (cold in nature and potency) aahara to avoid.

2.Vihara (Lifestyle)

Indications

It is beneficial to do different types of vyayama (exercise), walking, pushups and involvement in wrestling and weight lifting.

Usage of hot water for bathing and other purposes is recommended. Those who are affordable can use the application of fragrant dravyas like karpoora, agar, chandana, and kumkuma over the body after the bath⁷.

Contraindications

Day sleep is contraindicated in this ritu

3. Panchakarma and Other Therapies:

Panchakarma encompasses five treatments: Vamana, Virechana, Niruha basti, Shirovirechana and Raktamokshana. Among them, Vamana and Shirovirechana with Teekshna dravyas (strong) are highly recommended for this ritu to remove excessively collected kapha dosha from the body⁸.

Other therapies:

The following therapies using teekshna dravyas (strong medicated substances) are also advocated in Vasanta ritu⁹

Udwartana—Powder massage

Dhooma—Inhalation of medicated fumes

Kavala—Oil-pulling

Anjana—Usage of medicated collyrium

Discussion:

In Vasanta ritu, Kapha dosha is in prakopavastha (excessive vitiation). The qualities of

kapha dosha are unctuous, cold, heavy, stable and sluggish¹⁰. Hence, to balance the Kapha dosha, opposite quality foods that are dry, hot in potency, light for digestion and Teekshna (strong) in action are recommended. Also, it is very beneficial to do different types of vyayama (exercises), walking, etc.

When the dosha is in prakopavastha (excessively vitiated), it is strongly advised to expel it from the body. All Acharyas recommend Vamana for the removal of kapha dosha. Kapha sthana is thorax and above. Throw out this dosha; the nearest way is by the oral cavity and nostrils; hence, Vamana (emesis) and Shorovirechana are strongly recommended by acaharyas.

The other therapies, like Udwartana (powder massage) and Dhooma (inhalation of medicated fumes), Kavala (oil pulling) and Anjana (the use of medicated collyrium) are followed to prevent the Kapha dosha from getting further vitiated or to remove any remaining Kapha dosha.

Conclusion:

Vasant Ritucharya offers a comprehensive guide to living in harmony with the spring season, which promotes equilibrium, revitalization, and energy in the body. By following the ritucharya, we can improve our overall health and well-being and ensure a smooth transition into the warmer months. Embracing this ancient wisdom allows us to align ourselves with nature's cycles, fostering holistic health and resilience.

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