

## Effect Of Changing Ritu (Seasons) On Sharira (Body)

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### Abstract :

*With the advancement of technology and westernization of lifestyle and food habits, the people are forgetting the scientific suggestions about the types of food to be taken in different seasons as enumerated in Ayurveda. Ayurveda in equal parlance to the modern science has explained in detail the reasons of different types of seasons which we see and the effect of different seasons on our body. Agni is considered as the most important factor in Ayurveda which determines the prevalence of disorder in our body and the northward and southward movement of sun which ultimately brings different seasons has a direct effect on Agni. The food and the lifestyle which is considered good for our body in one season may prove to be harmful in the other season. In this study I have tried to throw light on some of such issues which have been described in Ayurveda.*

### INTRODUCTION:

Seasons has been defined as the natural period in which the year is divided, which varies by weather conditions, daylight hours and temperature <sup>[1]</sup>In Ayurveda, a year is divided into two kala or periods based on apparent position of the sun in the north and southern directions. These are Uttarayana and Dakshinayana.

### 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 <sup>[2,3,4]</sup>

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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 warmth 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 Sarata (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 <sup>[5]</sup>.

Each year consists of six Ritus or seasons. Each ritu comprises two maasas or months and three such ritus constitute one kaala. Hence Aadaana and Visarga kaalas each consist of six months and three ritus <sup>[6]</sup>

Ritu	Season	Predominant Taste
Sisira	Cold and dewy	Tikta (bitter)
Vaasanta	Spring	Kashaya (astringent)
Greeshma	Summer	Katu (pungent)
Varsha	Rainy	Amala (sour)
Sharat	Autumn	Lavana (salty)
Hemanta	Winter	Madhura (sweet)

**The six ritus and their characteristics can be summarized in the following table:<sup>[7]</sup>**

Kaala (Semester)	Ritu (Season)	Maasa (Month)	Characteristics of the Season
Aadaana (Uttaraayana) (Northern Solastice)	Sisira	Magha and Phalguna (mid January to mid march)	Cold and dewy
	Vasanta	Chaitra and Vaisakha (mid March to mid May)	Spring
	Greeshma	Jyeshtha and Aashaadha (mid May to mid July)	Summer
Visarga (Dakshinaayana) (Southern Solastice)	Varsha	Shravana and Bhadrapada (mid July to mid September)	Rainy
	Sharat	Aashvina and Kartika (mid September to mid November)	Autumn
	Hemanta	Margshirsha and Pausha (mid November to mid January)	Winter

#### **Seasons & Taste:**

The following table summarizes the tastes which are more powerful and hence can be included in the diet in each of the six seasons <sup>[8,9]</sup>

#### **State of strength:**

In the beginning of *Visarga Kala* and ending of *Adana kala*, that is, during *Varsha* and *Grishma*, weakness occurs. In the middle of the solstices, that is, during *Sharata* and *Vasanta*, strength remains in moderate grade and in the end of *Visarga Kala* and in the beginning of *Adana Kala*<sup>[10,11]</sup>

#### **The Dosha - Ritu Connection:**

As we already know, our diet, activities and routine have a direct impact on our health. The environment we live in and the changing seasons also affect our health. The doshas keep changing according to the season. Hence it is important to make some changes in our diet and regimen according to the season. Following the respective Riturcharya builds body's immunity and checks the adverse impact of seasonal changes on body. The following table illustrates the dosha each season: that is, during *Hemanta* and *Shishira*, maximum strength is seen activity in each season

	Sisira	Vasanta	Greeshma	Varsha	Sarat	Hemanta
Dosha						
Vaata			↑	↑↑	↔	
Pitta				↑	↑↑	↔
Kapha	↑	↑↑	↔			
Nature of the season	Seeta-cold Snigdha-unctuous Aagneya-Increased digestive activity	Ushna-hot Snigdha-unctuous	Ushna-hot Rooksha-dry	Seeta-cold Rooksha-dry	Ushna-hot, Teekshna-penetrating	Seeta-cold Snigdha-unctuous Aagneya-Increased digestive activity

#### **Ritu Sandhi and its significance<sup>[12]</sup>**

Sandhi means conjunction. Here Ritu Sandhi is the period of the last 7 days of the present ritu and the first 7 days of the subsequent ritu. For instance, it is Vasanta ritu during Vaishakha month, after which it will be Greeshma ritu during Jyeshtha month. So Ritu Sandhi will be the last 7 days of Vaishaaka and the first 7 days of Jyeshtha. During Ritu sandhi the diet and regimen that is being followed should be stopped gradually and that of the subsequent ritu be followed.

**Ritus and Purificatory therapies, the Panchakarma<sup>[13,14,15]</sup> :-**

As seasons change so does the balance of the doshas inside our body and in the environment. To bring back the dosha equilibrium in our body, the vitiated doshas have to be expelled out of the body. This is done by performing purificatory therapies. The purificatory therapies are five in number and are called panchakarma. They are Vamana - emesis, Virechana - purgation, Vasti - enema, Nasya - nasal drops and Rakta mokshana - bloodletting. The following table illustrates the purificatory therapy done in the respective season and the dosha getting pacified.

Ritu	Purificatory therapy	Pacified dosha
Vasanta	Vamana (emesis), Nasya (nasal drops)	Kapha
Varsha	Vasti (enema)	Vaata
Sharat	Virechana (purgation), rakta mokshana (blood-letting)	Pitta

**Conclusion**

With the movement of sun towards north and south which have been described as uttaraayan and dakshinaayan in Ayurveda there comes different changes in the atmosphere. These changes in the atmosphere bring about corresponding changes in human body. Uttaraayan brings shishr, Vasant and grisham ritus. Dryness and warmth brings corresponding debilitating effect on human body. During dakshinaayan varsha, sharad and hemant ritu are seen and atmosphere become cool and anabolic activity increases in our body.

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