

Biological Modifications in Ritusandhi: An Overview

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Abstract

The remarkable evolution of Ayurveda, from its sacred origins to the modern era, prompts reflection on the vast potential this ancient science still holds. Its continuous survival through countless centuries itself attests to the scientific methodology rooted in its distinctive core principles, which have stood the test of time. Among these, the concept of Ritu and Ritusandhi has been recognized as a fundamental doctrine, playing a key role in the manifestation of numerous diseases. Just as the human body follows a natural circadian rhythm and internal biological clock, these seasonal transitions influence every aspect of human physiology. Vagbhata elaborates on Ritusandhi at the conclusion of Ritucharya. The term Ritu denotes season, while Sandhi refers to the junction or connection between two phases. This signifies that Ritusandhi is the transitional period where one season merges into the next. It spans a total of 14 days — comprising the final seven days of the outgoing season and the first seven days of the incoming season. Because human health is closely tied to environmental factors, shielding oneself from environmental stressors during these seasonal shifts becomes essential. Such transitional periods tend to lower immunity and foster conditions that promote the onset of various ailments. Understanding and adopting preventive strategies during Ritusandhi can help refine dietary choices, lifestyle habits, and thus prevent seasonal disorders (e.g., allergic reactions, urticaria, conjunctivitis, viral infections, colds, coughs, etc.). Since the primary aim of Ayurveda is the preservation of health — or Swasthya Rakshana — the importance of Ritusandhi has been given considerable emphasis in Ayurvedic literature. This review article highlights how acknowledging and adapting to seasonal transitions, as prescribed in Ayurveda, can play a vital role in maintaining optimal health and preventing seasonal afflictions.

Keywords

Ritusandhi, Sandhi kala, Ritucharya, Swasthya rakshan

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Lipate NS, Patil YR, Deshpande PP, Perke BM. Biological Modifications in Ritusandhi: An Overview. *Int. J. Ayurveda Herbal Res.* 2025; 3(1):21-27.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54060/a2zjournals.ijahr.51>



Received
2024-10-25

Accepted
2025-01-07

Online First
2025-01-11

Published
2025-01-25

Funding
Nil

Ethical Approval
Nil



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1. Introduction

Ayurveda serves as a holistic guide to life, promoting comprehensive human well-being and development. In *Tistraveshana Adhyaya*, Acharya Charak highlights three essential desires vital for human survival—Praneshana (desire for life) [1], Dhane-shana (desire for wealth) [2], and Parlokeshana (desire for afterlife) [3]. Furthermore, Charak classifies the year into two distinct phases—Visarg Kala and Adana Kala. Each phase comprises three seasons. Adana Kala, also termed Uttarayana (northern solstice), includes Shishira (winter), Vasant (spring), and Greeshma (summer). Visarg Kala, known as Dakshinayana (southern solstice), consists of Varsha (monsoon), Sharad (autumn), and Hemant (late autumn) [4].

During Adana Kala, there is depletion of moisture content in the environment, resulting in reduced strength of all living beings. This phase represents a time of energy depletion as the sun shifts northward, from the Tropic of Capricorn toward the Tropic of Cancer. Conversely, Visarg Kala is a period of energy replenishment, characterized by an increase in environmental moisture. Here, the sun's movement is southward—from the Tropic of Cancer toward the Tropic of Capricorn.

Ayurveda prescribes various dietary regimens to manage seasonal disorders effectively. Ritusandhi emphasizes the gradual discontinuation of dietary habits, routines, and behavioral patterns associated with the concluding season, while simultaneously adopting those of the approaching season. Ayurveda recommends following this process in a gradual, stepwise manner [5], referred to as Padanshik Krama. This systematic approach ensures that the body smoothly transitions from one seasonal regimen to another, reducing the risk of seasonal imbalances and diseases, thereby preserving health and well-being in alignment with nature's cycles. These transitions should be carried out gradually, in small steps. According to the Ayurvedic principle of Loka-Purusha-Samya-Siddhant [6], changes occurring in the external environment (Loka) directly influence the individual (Purusha), and vice versa. The term Loka denotes the outer world in which humans exist. This external world provides all essential resources necessary for life, such as food, water, air, medicines, heat, and humidity. It also acts as the origin of various causative factors responsible for diseases. Therefore, Loka holds significant importance in both preserving health and supporting overall well-being.

The environment, or Loka, and the living being, or Purusha, share a dynamic and interdependent relationship. The external world influences the internal state of an individual through changes in climatic conditions such as temperature fluctuations, humidity levels, and atmospheric variations. These environmental shifts directly affect the fundamental components of the human body, influencing physiological processes.



2. Materials and Methods

An attempt has been made to identify any practical value in the current scenario by exhaustively searching elementary Ayurvedic books, newspapers, manuscripts, authoritative websites that express the concept of Ritucharya, analyzing and comprehending it for optimal application in disease prevention.

2.1. Review of Literature

The name Ritu is derived from the root word "R," which signifies "to go." Additionally, it has meanings related to epochs, times, seasons, phrases, etc. The Vedic literature itself introduces the concept of Ritusandhi. The Chaturmasya sacrifices in Kousitaki Brahmana and Gopatha Brahmana are carried out in Ritu sandhis because they are considered restorative in nature. Diseases arise because of the shift from one to the other. An illustration of Varsha-sharad Ritusandhi is the jubilant cries of peacocks blended with the melodies of swans, the fresh blue lotuses with the Kadambas still showering, and their blossoms. Ritusandhi is not mentioned by name in the Charaka or Sushruta Samhita. In order to safeguard one's health and avoid Kalaja Vyadhi, Acharya Charaka recommended Ritu Satmya. It is the recommended routine for a certain time of year. In the Ritucharya chapter of Sangraha-kala, Vagbhatta makes the first mention of Ritusandhi. This idea was condensed by Acharya Sharangadhar to encompass only fifteen days.

Just as humans have no control over the motion of heavenly bodies like the sun, moon, etc., we also have no control over changes in the environment. They have a significant influence on human physiology. Because of this, our Acharyas has a regimen that is recommended for each season. Digestive fire is the source of all pleasures, power, health, and longevity. Because the external environment affects the digestive fire during seasonal variations, our diet and activity should be adjusted in accordance with our Jatharagni. A condition of health arises from the balance of Dosha, Dhatu, and mala, an imbalance results in disease in the human body [7].

Table 1. Characteristics of Uttarayana and Dakshinayan.

Uttarayana[8]	Dakshinayan[9]
Ritu- Shishir, Vasanta, Grishma	Varsha, Sharad, Hemanta
Sun & air- Teekshana, Ushana, Ruksha	Moon is strong, sun weaker, air colder
Earth's Samyansh decreases	Due to clouds and rain earth cools down
Tikta, Kashaya, Katu ras	Madhur, Amla, Lavana ras
Aagneya pradhan	Saumya
Jatharagni- Mand	Teekshana

So by, following proper Dincharya, Ritucharya and Swasthavritta the equilibrium of Dosha, Dhatu, Mala is maintained during Kartik (October-November, (November-December), Yamadamshtra Kala [10].

Astangahridaya was followed by the Charak Samhita commentators, including Chakrapani, Gangadhar, and Yogindranathsen. Astangahridaya was written after Srinivasa's Chikitsa-tilaka, a 17 century combinatory masterpiece. While acknowledging Ritusandhi, Nagarjuna, the author of Rasavaisheshika, called it Sadharana Ritu. It won't be extremely hot or cold during the Pravrat, Vasantha, and Sharad seasons (rainy). The Sadharana ritu and Ritusandhi are the names given to these seasons as a result. If a person follows the right diet and exercise routine for each season, their strength will remain intact. It's the time when the body adjusts to the stresses of the new season. A person remains healthy when they are aware of the appropriate food and routine for each season and follow it. This demonstrates their vigor and lustre. Withdrawing from a season's regimen and diet gradually is advised to prevent Asatmyaja roga. As a result, in Ritusandhi, the previous season's regimen should be progressively abandoned and the following season's should be gradually introduced. It is necessary to follow a specific order in order to prevent the illness during Ritusandhi.

Table 2. Characteristics of each Ritu according to Astanghridayam [11].

Ritu	Ruksha	Sneha	Bala	Rasa
Shishir	+	-	+++	Tikta
Vasant	++	--	++	Kashaya
Greeshma	+++	---	+	Katu
Varsha	-	+	+	Amla
Sharada	--	++	++	Lavana
Hemanta	---	+++	+++	Madhura

Table 3. This table represents Aaharakrama for 14 days of Ritusandhi according to Acharya Hemadri [12].

Days of Ritusandhi	Aahara of preceding season	Aahara of succeeding season
1 st day	3 parts	1 Parts
2 nd day	4 Parts	-
3 rd day	2 Parts	2 Parts
4 th day	2 Parts	2 Parts
5 th day	3 Parts	1 Parts
6 th day	1 Parts	3 Parts
7 th day	1 parts	3 parts
8 th day	1 parts	3 parts
9 th day	2 parts	2 parts
10 th day	2 parts	2 parts
11 th day	2 parts	2 parts
12 th day	2 parts	2 parts
13 th day	2 parts	2 parts
14 th day	2 parts	3 parts
15 th day	-	4 parts

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Biological Changes According to Ritu Sandhi

According to Indian calendar, there are six seasons. So, there would be six Ritu sandhis seasonal connections. These are as follows:

3.1.1. Varsha-Sharad Ritusandhi

Due to coldness of Varsha ritu when sunrays fall upon in Sharad ritu, the accumulated Pitta in the body gets vitiated. To pacify the enraged Pitta during this time Ghrita, Virechan and Raktamokshana should be used. Use of Tikta, Madhur, Kashaya ras aahara are also taken. Hansodak, which possesses the majority of essential qualities, is also utilized. This Hansodak pacifies Tridoshas which gets infuriated in Varsha ritu.

3.1.2. Sharad Hemanta Ritusandhi

This is the last phase of Visargkala, it gives more strength to the man. Srotasa are completely blocked, so the digestive fire is increases in the body. In this Ritusandhi the Agni, after receiving less heat gets inspired by the air and starts digesting the Dhatus of the body. Therefore, one should consume food containing Madhur, Amla and Lavana ras.



3.1.3. Hemanta Shishir Ritusundhi

As this period falls under Visarga Kaala, individuals tend to possess enhanced strength during Hemanta Ritu, which gradually declines with the onset of Shishira Ritu. The extended nights lead to a heightened sense of hunger in the early hours of the day. The skin becomes dry and prone to cracking, primarily due to the increased influence of Vata in the environment.

Throughout this time, sweet, sour, and salty tastes dominate. Consumption of nourishing and unctuous foods is beneficial, whether during the day or night. The intensifying cold in the surroundings helps retain body heat, resulting in a robust digestive fire (Jatharagni), which allows food to be processed efficiently.

3.1.4. Shishir-Vasanta Ritusandhi

Accumulated Kapha in Hemanta & Shishir ritu, gets liquefied due to solar heat and weakens Pachakagni. Arrival of Vasant ritu makes physical strength weaker due to which all human beings become more vulnerable to diseases. Due to weaker Jatharagni, less hunger is felt. Abstinance from taking food containing Snigdha, Amla and Lavan ras should be followed. Avoiding daytime sleep is advised as it elevates the body's Kapha energy.

3.1.5. Vasanta-Grishma Ritusandhi

In this seasonal conjoint decrease in cough and increase in Vayu is seen because the sun with its intense rays absorbs Snehanash of the planet. Along with Madhur ras, Laghu, Snigdha, Sheeta and liquid food should be advised gradually. Cold bath and Shramhar dravyas should be taken due to heat increases in the atmosphere. Digestive power becomes weak so Laghu aahara is followed.

3.1.6. Grishma-Varsha Ritusandhi

Because of Aadankala and due to vitiation of Doshas of Varsha ritu Agni becomes weaker. Also due to clouds in the sky and raining the water gets polluted and Tridoshas get vitiated. During this Ritusandhi amla, Lavana and Snehayukta dry food should be used with honey. In this time Sadharana Ritucharya should be adopted so that Agni can be strengthened.

The doshic tendencies observed during each Ritusandhi (seasonal transition) are as follows [13]:

- During Shishira to Vasanta Ritusandhi, Kapha dosha begins to accumulate and is likely to get aggravated.
- In the transition from Vasanta to Greeshma, Kapha dosha reduces due to the intense heat and strong sunlight.
- When moving from Greeshma to Varsha, Vata dosha starts to become aggravated.
- In Varsha to Sharada Ritusandhi, there is a tendency for Pitta dosha to aggravate.
- During the shift from Sharada to Hemanta, Pitta dosha gradually subsides.
- In Hemanta to Sisira Ritusandhi, Kapha dosha enters a depleted state (Kshaya avastha).

Ritu	Kshaya	Prakopa	Shaman
Shishir	Kapha	-	-
Vasant	Vata	Kapha	-
Grishma	-	Vata	Kapha
Varsha	Pitta	-	Vata
Sharad	-	Pitta	-
Hemant	Kapha	-	Pitta

3.2. Disease Onset and Relation of Ritu

Vata sambadhit vyadhi—Pravrutt [14]

Pitta sambadhit vyadhi – Sharad [15]

Sleshma sambadhit vyadhi – Vasanta [16]

Vatika Arsus - Hemanta



Paittika Arsas - Sharad, Grishma

Slatshmika Arsas - Shitakala

Raktaja Vyadhi - Sharad

Udarda, Pratishyaya - Shita Ritu

Visarpa, Chardi - Sharad

Maintaining optimal health holds great significance, as Ayurveda's primary objective is "Swasthasya swasthya rakshanam, aaturasya vikara prashamanam", meaning to protect the health of the healthy and to manage the ailments of the diseased. In Ayurvedic texts, preventive care is given utmost importance [17, 18]. Concepts like Swasthavritta, Sadvritta[18], Rasayana, and Vajikarana Tantra are some key examples reflecting this preventive focus. This emphasis on prevention is central to the purpose of Ayurveda.

The foundational practices of Dinacharya (daily routine) [19] and Ritucharya (seasonal routine) form a crucial part of Ayurvedic medicine. They are specifically recommended to ward off diseases that stem from improper diets and unhealthy lifestyles, which disrupt the body's natural rhythms.

4. Conclusions and Future Scope

Ayurveda, the ancient science of life, places great importance on maintaining good health. Our sages introduced several concepts, including Dinacharya, Ritucharya, and Ratricharya, to explain this approach. One crucial aspect discussed is the protocols to be followed during seasonal transitions. According to Ayurveda, Kala (time/season) is considered a significant factor in the development of diseases. Therefore, the guidelines prescribed by the Acharyas should be followed as per the changing seasons.

However, even with adherence to these rules, the sudden shift in lifestyle caused by seasonal change can still make a person vulnerable to illnesses. This highlights the importance of understanding Ritusandhi Charya, which focuses on gradually letting go of dietary habits, lifestyle practices, and seasonal regimens from the previous season, allowing a smooth adaptation to the upcoming one. By following this transition process, one can reduce the risk of seasonal illnesses.

The principle of gradual change is not limited to seasons alone; it holds relevance in many other scenarios as well. This article aims to shed light on the connection between seasons, diet, and daily routines. Additionally, it seeks to emphasize the importance of seasonal awareness in the management and care of patients.

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