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AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF *SHADRITUCHARYA* PRINCIPLES DESCRIBED IN THE *BRIHATRAYI*

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ABSTRACT

Background *Ayurveda* considers health a dynamic state maintained through harmony between the individual and the external environment. Seasonal changes influence *Dosha*, *Agni*, *Bala*, dietary requirements, sleep, physical activity and susceptibility to disease. The principles of *Shadritucharya* provide specific guidance regarding food, lifestyle and preventive procedures for the six seasons. The *Brihatrayi*, comprising *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita* and *Ashtanga Hridaya*, presents a systematic framework for adapting human behaviour according to seasonal variations. **Aim and Objectives** To explore and comparatively analyse the principles of *Shadritucharya* described in the *Brihatrayi* and assess their importance in maintaining health and preventing seasonal disorders. **Materials and Methods** A literary review was conducted using the relevant chapters of *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita* and *Ashtanga Hridaya*. Classical descriptions related to *Ritu*, *Ayana*, *Dosha*, *Agni*, *Bala*, *Ahara*, *Vihara* and seasonal purification were compiled. The collected information was compared and presented season-wise. **Results & Discussion** The three classical texts share the same fundamental principles, with minor differences in emphasis and practical description. *Shadritucharya* represents an individualised and climate-responsive preventive healthcare model. **Conclusion** Appropriate application of *Shadritucharya* may support digestion, strength, immunity and seasonal adaptation. Its principles can be practically modified according to geographical region, climate, age, occupation and individual constitution.

Keywords: *Shadritucharya*; *Brihatrayi*; *Dosha*; *Agni*; *Bala*; Seasonal regimen

Introduction

Ayurveda gives primary importance to the preservation of health through appropriate regulation of diet and lifestyle. The condition of the body does not remain constant throughout the year because changes in temperature, rainfall, humidity, wind and sunlight continuously influence its internal functions. *Ritucharya* means the regimen that should be followed according to a particular season. The systematic observance of seasonal food and behaviour supports the equilibrium of *Dosha*, proper functioning of *Agni* and stability of *Dhatu*.¹

The year is divided into six seasons, namely *Shishira*, *Vasanta*, *Grishma*, *Varsha*, *Sharad* and *Hemanta*. These seasons are grouped under two major periods called *Ayana*. *Uttarayana*, also known as *Adana Kala*, includes *Shishira*, *Vasanta* and *Grishma*, whereas *Dakshinayana*, also known as *Visarga Kala*, includes *Varsha*, *Sharad* and *Hemanta*. Seasonal changes influence the strength of the individual as well as the accumulation, aggravation and natural pacification of *Dosha*.²

The *Brihatrayi* provides detailed guidance regarding suitable tastes, qualities of food, beverages, physical activity, massage, bathing, clothing, exposure to sunlight, sleep and seasonal purification. These recommendations are not limited to the treatment of disease. They represent a preventive approach intended to stop the progression of *Dosha* from *Sanchaya* to *Prakopa* and further pathological stages. A comparative study of these descriptions can help in understanding their common principles and practical application in the present day.³

Aim and Objectives

Aim

To explore the principles of *Shadritucharya* described in the *Brihatrayi*.

Objectives

1. To compile the descriptions of the six seasonal regimens from *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita* and *Ashtanga Hridaya*.
2. To compare seasonal changes in *Dosha*, *Agni* and *Bala*.
3. To study the recommended seasonal *Ahara*, *Vihara* and preventive measures.
4. To understand the role of *Shadritucharya* in the prevention of seasonal disorders.
5. To assess the practical application of these principles in the present lifestyle.

Materials and Methods

The present study was designed as an exploratory and conceptual review. Primary information was collected from the chapters related to *Ritucharya* in *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita* and *Ashtanga Hridaya*, along with their standard commentaries and English translations. Secondary information was obtained from relevant Ayurvedic textbooks and published review articles. The collected material was classified under *Ayana*, seasonal characteristics, status of *Dosha*, strength of *Agni*, level of *Bala*, recommended *Ahara*, suitable *Vihara*, prohibited practices and preventive purification. A descriptive and comparative method was used for interpretation.⁴

Ayurvedic Review

Meaning of *Shadritucharya*

The term *Shadritucharya* is composed of three words: *Shad*, meaning six; *Ritu*, meaning season; and *Charya*, meaning appropriate conduct or regimen. Therefore, *Shadritucharya* refers to the dietary and behavioural regimen prescribed for the six seasons. Its central purpose is to maintain harmony between the internal environment of the body and the changing external environment.⁵

A healthy person who follows a uniform diet and routine throughout the year may experience disturbance because the qualities of nature change from season to season. The body requires warming, nourishing and unctuous measures during cold periods, while cooling, light and hydrating measures are needed during hot periods. The rainy season requires protection of weak digestion, whereas spring demands reduction of accumulated *Kapha*. Thus, *Ritucharya* is based on adjustment rather than rigid uniformity.

Division of the Year

The *Brihatrayi* divides the year into two principal periods according to the movement and relative influence of the sun.

1. *Adana Kala*

Adana means taking away or withdrawal. During this period, the sun and dry winds gradually absorb moisture from the earth and reduce the strength of living beings. The environmental qualities become increasingly dry, rough, light and hot. *Tikta*, *Kashaya* and *Katu Rasa* progressively become more prominent. It includes:

- *Shishira Ritu*
- *Vasanta Ritu*
- *Grishma Ritu*

2. *Visarga Kala*

Visarga means release or restoration. During this period, the intensity of the sun decreases, the moon becomes relatively dominant and the environment gains cooling and nourishing qualities. Moisture returns through rainfall, and the strength of individuals gradually improves. *Amla*, *Lavana* and *Madhura Rasa* become more prominent. It includes:

- *Varsha Ritu*
- *Sharad Ritu*
- *Hemanta Ritu*

The seasonal cycle reflects a gradual alteration in environmental qualities rather than an abrupt change. Therefore, the strength of an individual is lowest around *Grishma* and *Varsha*, moderate during *Vasanta* and *Sharad*, and highest during *Hemanta* and *Shishira*.⁶

Seasonal Relationship of *Dosha*, *Agni* and *Bala*

Seasonal qualities first promote the accumulation of a particular *Dosha*. Continued exposure to similar or provocative qualities leads to its aggravation. When opposite environmental qualities appear, the aggravated *Dosha* may undergo natural pacification. This sequence provides an important foundation for the prevention of seasonal diseases.⁷

<i>Dosha</i>	<i>Sanchaya</i>	<i>Prakopa</i>	<i>Prashama</i>
<i>Vata</i>	<i>Grishma</i>	<i>Varsha</i>	<i>Sharad</i>
<i>Pitta</i>	<i>Varsha</i>	<i>Sharad</i>	<i>Hemanta</i>
<i>Kapha</i>	<i>Shishira</i>	<i>Vasanta</i>	<i>Grishma</i>

Season	General status of <i>Agni</i>	General status of <i>Bala</i>
<i>Hemanta</i>	Very strong	Maximum
<i>Shishira</i>	Strong	Maximum
<i>Vasanta</i>	Moderate and affected by <i>Kapha</i>	Moderate
<i>Grishma</i>	Reduced	Minimum
<i>Varsha</i>	Weak and unstable	Minimum
<i>Sharad</i>	Moderate and affected by <i>Pitta</i>	Moderate

These patterns should not be applied mechanically. Individual *Prakriti*, geographical location, age, occupation, existing disease, food habits and actual climatic conditions must also be considered. The condition of *Dosha* should be assessed through clinical features rather than the calendar alone.⁸

Season-Wise *Shadritucharya*

1. *Hemanta Ritucharya*

Seasonal Characteristics

Hemanta is the early winter season. The external atmosphere becomes cold, but the digestive power remains strong. Cold causes contraction of the skin pores and restricts the outward movement of internal heat. Consequently, *Jatharagni* becomes concentrated within the gastrointestinal system. If adequate food is not supplied, strong *Agni* may begin to consume the body's own tissues, leading to weakness and aggravation of *Vata*. Therefore, nourishing food should be consumed according to hunger and digestive capacity.

Recommended *Ahara*

- Foods predominant in *Madhura*, *Amla* and *Lavana Rasa*
- Unctuous, heavy and nourishing preparations
- Freshly harvested rice and wheat
- Black gram and other strengthening pulses
- Milk, milk products, *Ghrita* and suitable oils

- Sugarcane products and jaggery
- Warm soups and meat soup for suitable individuals
- Warm water and appropriately prepared beverages
- Adequate food in response to increased hunger

Recommended Vihara

- *Abhyanga* with suitable oil
- *Udvardana*
- Proper physical exercise
- Warm water bath
- Exposure to mild sunlight
- Wearing warm and thick clothes
- Residence in a warm, protected place
- Footwear and adequate bedding
- Appropriate sexual activity according to strength

Excessive fasting, intake of very light food, exposure to cold wind and inadequate clothing should be avoided. The three texts agree that *Hemanta* is a period of strong digestion and high physical strength requiring nourishing food and protective measures.⁹

2. Shishira Ritucharya

Seasonal Characteristics

Shishira is the late winter season and is generally colder, drier and windier than *Hemanta*. The regimen of *Hemanta* is largely continued because *Agni* and *Bala* remain strong. However, greater protection from cold and dryness is required. During this period, *Kapha* undergoes *Sanchaya* because the cold and heavy qualities of the season resemble the qualities of *Kapha*. The accumulated *Kapha* usually remains stable due to low temperature but becomes vulnerable to aggravation in the following *Vasanta Ritu*.

Recommended Ahara

- Warm, fresh and nourishing meals
- Foods containing *Madhura*, *Amla* and *Lavana Rasa*
- Wheat, rice and black gram
- Milk, *Ghrita* and oil
- Warm soups and strengthening preparations
- Warm water for drinking
- Spices in suitable quantities to support digestion

Recommended Vihara

- Regular *Abhyanga*

- Moderate to strong exercise according to capacity
- *Udvartana*
- Warm bath
- Sun exposure during a suitable part of the day
- Warm clothing and protected accommodation
- Avoidance of cold wind and excessive dryness

Cold, dry and stale foods, prolonged fasting and unnecessary exposure to cold should be avoided. Compared with *Hemanta*, the regimen of *Shishira* requires stronger protection against environmental dryness and cold.¹⁰

3. *Vasanta Ritucharya*

Seasonal Characteristics

In *Vasanta*, the increasing warmth of the sun liquefies the *Kapha* accumulated during *Shishira*. This liquefied *Kapha* spreads through the body, reduces the strength of *Agni* and may produce heaviness, loss of appetite, excessive sleep, cough, nasal discharge and respiratory complaints. The principal aim of *Vasanta Ritucharya* is to reduce and eliminate aggravated *Kapha* through light food, physical activity and properly selected purification.

Recommended *Ahara*

- Light and easily digestible food
- Barley, wheat and old rice
- Pulses such as green gram
- Foods predominant in *Katu*, *Tikta* and *Kashaya Rasa*
- Honey in an appropriate quantity
- Warm water
- Light soups prepared with digestive spices
- Roasted or dry food in place of excessively oily preparations

Recommended *Vihara*

- Strong exercise according to capacity
- *Udvartana* with dry powders
- *Dhumapana* when clinically suitable
- *Gandusha* and *Kavala*
- Warm water bath
- Application of fragrant pastes
- *Vamana Karma* in suitable individuals after proper assessment

Practices to Be Avoided

- Daytime sleep
- Excessive intake of sweet, sour and oily foods
- Heavy meals
- Cold drinks
- Lack of physical activity
- Excessive dairy products

Vasanta is considered an appropriate period for therapeutic *Vamana* because aggravated *Kapha* is already in a liquefied and mobile state. However, purification must be undertaken only after proper examination and under qualified medical supervision.¹¹

4. *Grishma Ritucharya*

Seasonal Characteristics

Grishma is characterised by intense heat, dryness and depletion of environmental moisture. The sun progressively reduces the strength of individuals. Sweating and fluid loss increase, while appetite, endurance and physical strength decrease. The dry and light qualities promote *Vata Sanchaya*, although *Vata* does not become fully aggravated because of the prevailing heat.

Recommended *Ahara*

- Foods predominant in *Madhura Rasa*
- Light, cooling, liquid and unctuous preparations
- Rice with milk or *Ghrita*
- Fresh fruits with high water content
- Cool water that is hygienically stored
- Light beverages and fruit preparations
- Milk, where suitable and well tolerated
- Small and easily digestible meals

Recommended *Vihara*

- Staying in a cool and well-ventilated place
- Wearing light and loose clothes
- Use of sandalwood or other cooling applications
- Rest during the hottest part of the day
- Daytime sleep when required because nights are short and heat causes exhaustion
- Sleeping in a cool place at night
- Avoiding direct exposure to intense sunlight

Practices to Be Avoided

- Excessive exercise
- Excessive sexual activity
- Prolonged fasting
- Alcohol or strong fermented drinks
- Excessively salty, sour, pungent and hot foods
- Direct exposure to intense sunlight
- Unnecessary physical strain

The central principle is conservation of fluid and strength. The food should be cooling and hydrating but not so heavy that it suppresses the already reduced digestive capacity.¹²

5. *Varsha Ritucharya*

Seasonal Characteristics

During *Varsha*, the body remains weak from the preceding *Adana Kala*. Rainfall, cloud cover, humidity and environmental changes further disturb digestion. Contamination of water, altered acidity and dampness may affect gastrointestinal function. The accumulated *Vata* becomes aggravated, while *Pitta* begins to accumulate. *Agni* is especially weak and unstable during this season. Therefore, the main aim is to protect digestion, control aggravated *Vata* and avoid contaminated food and water.

Recommended *Ahara*

- Warm, fresh and easily digestible food
- Old rice, barley and wheat
- Light soups of pulses
- Food containing moderate *Amla* and *Lavana Rasa*
- Properly processed *Ghrita* or oil in small quantities
- Honey in a suitable quantity
- Warm water or safely boiled water
- Digestive spices according to tolerance
- Small meals taken only after previous food is digested

Recommended *Vihara*

- Staying in a dry, clean and warm residence
- Protecting the body from rain, cold wind and dampness
- Wearing dry and clean clothes
- Gentle oil application
- Mild fomentation when indicated
- *Basti Karma* in suitable individuals under supervision

- Maintenance of environmental and food hygiene

Practices to Be Avoided

- River water or unsafe water
- Raw and contaminated food
- Excessive liquid intake
- Heavy, oily and difficult-to-digest meals
- Daytime sleep
- Excessive exercise
- Exposure to rain and damp surroundings
- Suppression of digestive complaints

Basti is advised as an important seasonal measure for aggravated *Vata*. Its application must depend on the strength, age, disease status and digestive capacity of the individual.¹³

6. Sharad Ritucharya

Seasonal Characteristics

In *Sharad*, the sky becomes clear and sunlight becomes strong after the rainy season. The *Pitta* accumulated during *Varsha* is aggravated by the increasing heat. Individuals may become prone to burning sensation, acidity, excessive thirst, skin eruptions, bleeding tendencies and other *Pitta*-predominant conditions. The principal aim of *Sharad Ritucharya* is to pacify aggravated *Pitta* through cooling, light and mildly drying measures.

Recommended Ahara

- Foods predominant in *Madhura*, *Tikta* and *Kashaya Rasa*
- Light and cooling food
- Rice, barley, wheat and green gram
- Bitter vegetables
- *Ghrita* in an appropriate quantity
- Clean and naturally cooled water
- *Hamsodaka*, as described in the classical texts
- Milk and cooling preparations where suitable

Recommended Vihara

- Wearing light and clean clothes
- Exposure to cool moonlight during a suitable period
- Use of cooling floral garlands and pastes
- Avoiding intense afternoon sunlight
- *Virechana Karma* in suitable individuals

- *Raktamokshana* where specifically indicated

Practices to Be Avoided

- Excessive sunlight
- Excessive exercise
- Daytime sleep
- Alkaline and very spicy foods
- Excessive sour, salty and hot food
- Curd, heavy oil and unsuitable fermented food
- Anger and excessive mental strain

Virechana is recommended for eliminating aggravated *Pitta*. *Raktamokshana* may be considered in selected *Rakta-Pitta*-predominant conditions after proper clinical evaluation.¹⁴

Comparative Analysis of *Shadritucharya* in the *Brihatrayi*

Parameter	<i>Charaka Samhita</i>	<i>Sushruta Samhita</i>	<i>Ashtanga Hridaya</i>
Division of year	Detailed description of <i>Adana</i> and <i>Visarga</i>	Seasonal division with practical regimen	Concise and systematic seasonal presentation
Primary emphasis	<i>Dosha, Bala, Agni</i> , diet and conduct	Diet, conduct, seasonal qualities and purification	Clinically useful integration of diet and lifestyle
<i>Hemanta</i> and <i>Shishira</i>	Nourishing diet and protection from cold	Strengthening regimen	Similar advice in a concise form
<i>Vasanta</i>	Reduction of aggravated <i>Kapha</i>	Light diet and <i>Kapha</i> -reducing measures	Exercise, <i>Udvardana</i> and <i>Vamana</i>
<i>Grishma</i>	Cooling, sweet and liquid food	Protection from heat and exhaustion	Conservation of strength and permission for day sleep
<i>Varsha</i>	Protection of weak <i>Agni</i> and aggravated <i>Vata</i>	Safe water, light food and dry residence	<i>Vata</i> -pacifying regimen and <i>Basti</i>
<i>Sharad</i>	<i>Pitta</i> -pacifying diet	Cooling food and purification	<i>Virechana</i> and avoidance of heat
Common principle	Seasonal adaptation	Seasonal adaptation	Seasonal adaptation

The three texts do not present contradictory systems. Their descriptions are complementary. *Charaka Samhita* gives a strong physiological foundation, *Sushruta Samhita* provides detailed practical observations and *Ashtanga Hridaya* presents the principles in a concise and clinically applicable manner.

Concept of *Ritusandhi*

Ritusandhi is the transitional period between two seasons. It generally includes the final seven days of the preceding season and the first seven days of the succeeding season. During this

period, the previous regimen should be gradually discontinued and the new regimen should be introduced step by step.

A sudden change in diet, exercise, sleep or clothing may disturb physiological adaptation. For example, abruptly changing from a nourishing winter diet to a highly restricted spring diet may weaken the individual, while continuing heavy winter food during warm spring may aggravate *Kapha*. Gradual modification allows the body to adjust safely.

Seasonal Purification

Seasonal purification is intended to eliminate aggravated *Dosha* before it produces disease. The main classical relationship is:

Season	Predominant aggravated <i>Dosha</i>	Principal purification
<i>Vasanta</i>	<i>Kapha</i>	<i>Vamana</i>
<i>Varsha</i>	<i>Vata</i>	<i>Basti</i>
<i>Sharad</i>	<i>Pitta</i>	<i>Virechana</i>

These procedures are not compulsory for every person. Before their administration, the physician should assess age, strength, digestive capacity, constitution, disease status, suitability and contraindications. They should not be attempted without supervision.

Samprapti Due to Non-Observance of *Shadritucharya*

- Changes in heat, cold, rainfall, moisture and wind influence the body.
- Continued intake of unsuitable food and adoption of an inappropriate lifestyle intensify seasonal qualities.
- *Agni* becomes weak, irregular or excessively strong.
- A season-specific *Dosha* undergoes *Sanchaya* and *Prakopa*.
- Improper digestion may lead to the formation of *Ama*.
- Aggravated *Dosha* spreads through the body and enters a susceptible *Srotas*.
- Interaction between *Dosha* and *Dushya* produces clinical disease.
- Appropriate *Ritucharya* can interrupt this sequence before disease manifestation.

Practical Application in the Present Era

The exact calendar months of classical seasons may not correspond uniformly to every geographical region. Climate change, urbanisation, air conditioning, altered work schedules, migration and irregular rainfall have modified seasonal exposure. Therefore, *Ritucharya* should be applied after observing actual climatic qualities rather than following calendar dates rigidly.

A person living in a hot coastal region, a cold mountainous region and a dry desert region cannot follow an identical seasonal regimen. Similarly, recommendations should be modified according to *Prakriti*, *Vaya*, *Satmya*, *Agni*, occupation, physical activity and disease condition.

- Increase nourishment when cold increases appetite and digestive capacity.

- Reduce heavy and oily food when warmth liquefies accumulated *Kapha*.
- Conserve fluid and physical strength during extreme heat.
- Protect digestion and food hygiene during rainfall and high humidity.
- Reduce excessive heat, spices and sour food when *Pitta* is aggravated.
- Introduce seasonal changes gradually during *Ritusandhi*.

Results and Findings

- The *Brihatrayi* recognises six seasons and classifies them under *Adana Kala* and *Visarga Kala*.
- Environmental qualities exert a predictable influence on *Dosha*, *Agni* and *Bala*.
- *Vata* accumulates in *Grishma*, aggravates in *Varsha* and pacifies in *Sharad*.
- *Pitta* accumulates in *Varsha*, aggravates in *Sharad* and pacifies in *Hemanta*.
- *Kapha* accumulates in *Shishira*, aggravates in *Vasanta* and pacifies in *Grishma*.
- Physical strength is highest during *Hemanta* and *Shishira*, lowest during *Grishma* and *Varsha*, and moderate during *Vasanta* and *Sharad*.
- Digestive strength is generally strong in winter and weak or unstable during summer and the rainy season.
- Winter requires warm, nourishing and unctuous food, while spring requires light, dry and *Kapha*-reducing food.
- Summer management is based on cooling, hydration and conservation of strength.
- Rainy-season management gives priority to digestive protection, safe water, warm food and *Vata* control.
- Autumn management focuses on cooling and *Pitta*-pacifying measures.
- *Vamana*, *Basti* and *Virechana* are seasonally indicated for aggravated *Kapha*, *Vata* and *Pitta*, respectively, in properly selected individuals.
- The three texts show broad agreement, although they differ in emphasis and arrangement.
- *Ritusandhi* supports gradual physiological adaptation between two seasons.
- The practical application of *Shadritucharya* should be based on actual climate, geographical location and individual factors rather than calendar months alone.

Discussion

The findings indicate that *Shadritucharya* is based on a logical relationship between environmental qualities and internal physiological responses. The progressive rise and fall of temperature, moisture and wind alter appetite, fluid balance, sleep, activity and bodily strength. The classical sequence of *Dosha Sanchaya*, *Prakopa* and *Prashama* provides a framework for identifying periods of increased disease susceptibility. Thus, *Ritucharya* acts at the preventive stage by modifying exposure before a disturbed *Dosha* becomes clinically active.¹⁵

The comparative analysis showed substantial agreement among *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita* and *Ashtanga Hridaya*. All three texts recommend nourishment during cold seasons, reduction of *Kapha* during spring, conservation of strength during summer, protection of *Agni* during the rainy season and pacification of *Pitta* during autumn. Differences are mainly related to the level of explanation and selection of examples. The principles should be individualised because the same season does not affect every person equally. *Prakriti*, age, digestive capacity, occupation, habitual diet, strength and existing illness determine the final response.

In the present era, seasonal living remains relevant, but literal application without considering regional climate may be inappropriate. The six-season model developed mainly in relation to the climatic pattern of the Indian subcontinent. Its practical value lies in recognising environmental qualities and making corresponding changes in food, activity, sleep and protection. Contemporary research is required to examine the relationship of these regimens with digestive function, metabolic markers, respiratory illness, skin disorders, sleep, immunity and seasonal variations in the gut microbiome. When applied rationally, *Shadritucharya* can serve as a low-cost, person-centred approach to seasonal health promotion.

Conclusion

The principles of *Shadritucharya* described in the *Brihatrayi* present a systematic approach to maintaining health through seasonal modification of diet and lifestyle. The six seasons influence *Dosha*, *Agni* and *Bala* in a predictable pattern. Appropriate food, physical activity, sleep, clothing, environmental protection and selective purification can prevent seasonal *Dosha* aggravation and its progression into disease. Although the classical principles remain valuable, their present application should be adjusted according to actual climatic conditions, geographical region, individual constitution, age, strength and digestive capacity. Thus, *Shadritucharya* may be considered an important preventive and promotive component of personalised healthcare.

Conflict of Interest Nil.

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