

# Ritushodhan: A Preventive Ayurvedic Approach for Seasonal Dosha Regulation and Health Promotion

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## ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is a unique and ancient science has always emphasized at maintaining health and preventing disease rather than laying total focus over the treatment aspects. Ayurveda's understanding of human body is very unique. Tridosha viz vata, pitta and kapha are the functional units governing the physiological functions of human body. Balanced state of tridosha is termed as health and any deviation in balance leads to disease. Therefore, literatures of Ayurveda emphasize on maintaining the balance. External factors like climatic heat, cold weather and rain also have an impact on dosha. The doshas tend to increase in some seasons beyond the level of acceptance and therefore are needed to be removed from the body. Shodhana is the therapy that removes the dosha out from the body. Timely elimination of increased Doshas by purificatory measures during specified season (Ritu) is known as Ritu Shodhana. Pravrut, Sharat and Vasanta are considered as Sadharana ritus where Basti, Virechana and Vamana should be done respectively. This present review aims to summarize the benefits of Ritu-shodhana, also explores the preventive significance of Ritushodhana from both Ayurvedic and Panchakarma perspectives.

**KEYWORDS:** Ayurveda, Ritushodhana, Panchkarma, Preventive Detoxification, Lifestyle disorders.

## INTRODUCTION

In Ayurveda a person with normal activity of Dosha, Dhatu, Mala and Agni along with Prasanna aatma, Prasanna Indriya and Prasanna manas is considered Swastha (healthy). To remain healthy Dinacharya (daily regimen), Ritucharya<sup>i</sup> (seasonal regimen), Sadvrutta (code of conduct) have been explained in Ayurveda among which Ritu shodhana is unique. The purificatory therapeutic measure in which accumulated morbid Doshas are expelled from body through nearest route is Shodhana. It includes five procedures namely Vamana, Virechana, Niruha basti, Shirovirechana and Raktamokshana. Among these, Vamana, Virechana and Basti are specially indicated for the elimination of Kapha, Pitta and Vata respectively.

➤ Benefits of timely performed Shodhana<sup>ii</sup>

- 
- Improves digestive power.
- Pacifies diseases
- Maintains homeostasis of the body
- Delays early ageing
- Provides long life without affliction of diseases

- Improves complexion, strength and nourishment.
- Improves quality of progeny
- Improves functions of sense organs

### **Basis and Importance of Ritushodhan<sup>iii</sup>:**

Along with the Ahara, Vihara and Desha, **Kala<sup>iv</sup>** also has an important role in the maintenance of status of doshas in the human body. Literatures of Ayurveda explains about the diet and regimen to be followed in a specific season in detail in ritucharya adhyaya. So, for the better understanding of Ritushodhana, one should have the knowledge about the Ritucharya. This Ritucharya word is derived from two

Sanskrit words: Ritu(season) and Charya (regimen or discipline).

Dakshinayana. This is also known as Visarga kala (the period of giving /release). The first half of the year (Adana) takes away your strength, the second half (Visarga) gives it back. How many ritus are there in one year? In the time period of one complete year (called as sanvatsar); there are 2 ayan, 6 ritu and 12 maasa.

Beginning with the month of Magha, sets of two months each consecutively form the six seasons: Shishira (Late winter), Vasanta (Spring), Grishma (Summer), Varsha (monsoon), Sharad (Autumn), and Hemanta (Early winter).

<b>Ritu (Season)</b>	<b>Maasa (Month)</b>
<i>Shishira ritu</i>	Magha- Falgun
<i>Vasanta ritu</i>	Chaitra- Vaishakh
<i>Grishma ritu</i>	Jyesth- Ashad
<i>Varsha ritu</i>	Shravan- Bhadrapad
<i>Sharada ritu</i>	Ashwin- Kartika
<i>Hemanta ritu</i>	Margshish- posh

The three seasons starting from Shishira (Shishira, Vasanta, and Grishma) constitute **Uttarayana<sup>v</sup>**. This is also known as Adana Kala (the Period of Extraction/Absorption), as it daily depletes the strength of human beings. While Varsha, Sharada, and Hemanta; these seasons constitute The unwholesome diet and lifestyles followed in a particular season causes accumulation of doshas (Sanchaya) in the body. This accumulated doshas should be eliminated from the body in the next season when they attain the stage of aggravation (prakopa) and this is called as Ritushodhan.

### **What is shodhana kala<sup>vi</sup>?**

According to Acharya vagbhatta (Ref-A.Hr.Su 13/33)

**श्रावणे कार्तिके चैत्रे मासि साधारणे क्रमात्॥३३॥**

**ग्रीष्मवर्षाहिमचितान् वाय्वादीनाशु निहरित्**

Shravana, Kartika and Chaitra months are considered as Sadharana kala as these months are not extremely rainy, cold and hot respectively. In the months of Shravana,

Kartika and Chaitra, one should promptly eliminate the accumulated Doshas (Vata, Pitta and Kapha) that have accumulated(sanchita) during the seasons of Varsha(monsoon), Sharad(autumn), and Vasanta (spring) respectively.

**अत्युष्णवर्षशीता हि ग्रीष्मवर्षाहिमागमाः॥३४॥**

**सन्धौ साधारणे तेषां दुष्टान् दोषान् विशोधयेत्**

So, here comes the concept of **Ritusandhi<sup>vii</sup>** which is the junction between two seasons. It includes time period of 14 days i.e., last 7 days of departing season and the first 7 days of the next upcoming season. Ideally, Ritushodhana is performed during the Ritusandhi specifically in the moderate lunar months (Chaitra, Shravana and Kartika)

**स्वस्थवृत्तमभिप्रेत्य<sup>viii</sup>**, means above concept is basically indicated for healthy individual.

### **Seasonal Dosha Dynamics<sup>ix</sup>**

Ayurveda explains the cyclical nature of dosha variation with seasonal changes.

**चयप्रकोपप्रशमा वायोर्ग्रीष्मादिषु त्रिषु॥२४॥**

वर्षादिषु तु पित्तस्य, श्लेष्मणः शिशिरादिषु॥२५॥  
(अ.ह.सू १२/२४)

Seasonal Dosha Pattern<sup>x</sup>

DOSHA	Sanchay(accumulation)	Prakop(aggravation)	Prashaman(pacification)
Vata	Grishma	Pravrut	Varsha
Pitta	Varsha	Sharad	Hemant
Kapha	Hemant/Shishir	Vasanta	Grishma

Unique preventive measure of Ayurveda<sup>xi</sup>- Ritu shodhana

Ritu	Dosha Prakopa	Shodhana
Vasanta	Kapha	Vamana,Nasya
Sharad	Pitta	Virechana, Raktamokshana
Varsha	Vata	Basti

### MATERIAL AND METHODS:

Various Ayurvedic Samhita Charak Samhita, Sushrut Samhita, Ashtang hridaya, Sharangdhar Samhita, were studied to understand about Ritushodhana. E-Ashtang Samhita with Arundutta commentary Sarvangsundara studied. Several Research articles published in ayurvedic journals were studied. A thorough review of literature was done.

### DISCUSSION

Ritushodhana is a unique preventive and promotive concept described in Ayurveda in which periodic purification therapies are administered according to seasonal variations (Ritu) to eliminate accumulated Doshas. The classical texts explain that Doshas undergo three physiological stages in relation to seasonal changes: Sanchaya (accumulation), Prakopa (aggravation), and Prashama (pacification). If the aggravated Doshas are not expelled at the appropriate time, they may lead to various pathological conditions. Therefore, seasonal Shodhana therapy is recommended to maintain equilibrium of Doshas and prevent disease occurrence.

According to Charak Samhita and Ashtanga Hridaya, specific purification procedures are advised during particular seasons. Vamana (therapeutic emesis) is recommended in Vasanta Ritu to eliminate aggravated Kapha, Virechana (therapeutic purgation) in Sharad Ritu to pacify Pitta, and Basti (medicated enema) in Varsha Ritu to balance Vata Dosha.

These therapies help remove accumulated toxins (Ama) and restore physiological homeostasis. The concept highlights the importance of synchronizing therapeutic interventions with natural environmental cycles.

### Vamana as Ritushodhana (Vasantika Vamana)

Vamana works by mobilizing the liquified kapha from the peripheral tissues (*shakha*) back to the gastrointestinal tract (*koshtha*) through specialized pre-procedures(*purvakarma*):

1. Snehana (Oleation): Both internal as well as external oleation lubricates the channels to detach the sticky kapha.
2. Swedana (sudation): Further liquefies the toxins for easy movement.
3. Vamana: The final expulsion through the oral route using *Vamaka Dravyas* (emetic herbs like *Madanphala*).

### Clinical significance in spring (Vasanta ritu:chaitra -vaishakh maas): -

Performing Vamana during this window prevents the onset of:

1. Respiratory issues: Allergic rhinitis, asthma, and bronchitis.
2. Metabolic sluggishness: Heaviness, obesity, and lethargy.
3. Dermatological conditions: Seasonal itching or eczema.

### **Virechana as Ritushodhana**

- During *Varshsa ritu* (rainy season), the acidic atmosphere and water, combined with weak digestion, cause Pitta to accumulate in a “latent state”. i.e., *Sanchaya*.
- As the clouds clear in Sharad Ritu, the sudden, intense heat of the autumn sun (*Vikriti Vishama Kala*) acts on the accumulated Pitta, causing it to “boil over” or aggravate i.e., *Prakopa*. This leads to Pitta-dominant disorders like skin eruptions, acidity, blood-borne diseases (*Raktapradushaka Vikara*) and burning sensations.

Unlike Vamana, which moves upward (Urdhva Bhaga), Virechana moves downward (Adho bhaga). It is considered as the most effective way to clear the blood (Rakta prasadana) because Pitta and Rakta have an inseparable relationship (Ashraya-Ashrayi Bhava).

The transition into Sharad Ritu (autumn) marks a critical phase in the Ritucharya (seasonal regimen), characterized by the sudden intensification of solar radiation following the dampness of the monsoon. This environmental heat triggers the *Prakopa* (aggravation) of Pitta Dosha, which has undergone *Sanchaya* (accumulation) during the preceding rainy season. Sharadika Virechana stands as the definitive Ritushodhana protocol to mitigate this seasonal Pitta surge. By targeting the Adho-Marga (lower GI tract), Virechana not only cleanses the metabolic waste from the intestines but also purifies the Rakta Dhatu (blood tissue), thereby serving as a preventive shield against inflammatory, dermatological, and hematological pathologies prevalent in the autumn months.

### **Basti as Ritushodhana**

During Grishma Ritu in Adana kala (summer), the intense heat causes dehydration and exhaustion in the body, leading to the accumulation of Vata i.e., *Chaya* (accumulation).

When the rains arrive in Varsha Ritu, the sudden cold, dampness, and wind—

combined with the acidic earth vapors (Amla Vipaka of water)—trigger the full-blown aggravation of Vata i.e., *Prakopa*.

Basti is the only Shodhana that can be performed when the body is slightly weak, as it provides Tarpana(nourishment)while simultaneously performing Shodhana (purification).

The onset of Varsha Ritu (monsoon) represents a period of profound physiological instability characterized by the aggravation of Vata Dosha. Following the depleting heat of summer, the environmental cold and dampness of the rains act upon a weakened body (Alpa Bala), leading to systemic dryness, joint pain, and digestive irregularities. Basti Chikitsa, hailed as the 'prime therapy' (Pradhana Tama) in Panchakarma, serves as the cornerstone of Ritushodhana during this season. By delivering medicated emulsions directly to the Pakvashaya, Basti exerts a systemic influence that stabilizes the nervous system, modulates the gut microbiome, and prevents the manifestation of Vatavyadhis (neuromusculoskeletal disorders) before they take root.

Modern lifestyle factors such as irregular diet, sedentary habits, and environmental pollution can lead to early accumulation of Doshas and metabolic toxins. In this context, Ritushodhana may act as a preventive detoxification approach, enhancing metabolic efficiency and strengthening immunity. Seasonal Panchakarma procedures may improve digestive fire (Agni), promote tissue nourishment (Dhatu Poshana), and maintain proper functioning of body channels (Srotas).

As a perspective of contemporary biomedical, Ritushodhana can be taken as a biological reset or metabolic cleansing mechanism that helps the body adapt to environmental crises and seasonal variations. Detoxification therapies like vaman and virechana may assist in reducing oxidative stress, improving gut health, and enhancing immune response.

Another significant aspect of Ritushodhana is its preventive health perspective. Unlike

symptomatic treatments, Ayurveda emphasizes early elimination of Doshas before disease manifestation. This aligns with modern preventive medicine principles that focus on maintaining health and preventing chronic disorders. Regular seasonal purification may reduce the risk of metabolic disorders, musculoskeletal diseases, and lifestyle-related illnesses. However, the practice of Ritushodhana requires proper patient selection, assessment of strength (Bala), digestive capacity (Agni), and Dosha predominance. Improper administration or ignoring contraindications may lead to complications.

## CONCLUSION

*Ritushodhana* represents an important concept that is seasonal purification as therapeutic interventions for maintaining dosha balance and preventing disease. Means, it acts as a health preservation. *Shodhana* therapy according to *ritu* is necessary because the *dosha* predominance varies depending on the climatic conditions. *Ritu shodhana* contributes to *Swasthya rakshana* and *Vikara prashamana*. The *Ritu-Shodhana* restores physical strength and delays the onset of premature ageing. *Ritu-Shodhana* not only prevents or helps to treat diseases but also improves general health.

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