

ROLE OF HEMANT RITU (EARLY WINTER) FOR MAINTENANCE AND ENHANCEMENT OF BALA (STRENGTH)

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ABSTRACT

Seasons (*Ritus*) are the inherent global earth clock and the rhythm of the world. As per Ayurveda year is divided into six seasons, in which three season *Shishira*, *Vasanta* and *Greeshma* are known as *Aadanakala*. Other three seasons *Varsha*, *Sharad* and *Hemanta* are said to be *Visargakala*. In *Visarga kala*, as the Sun is located in southwards position, its heat reduces or slows down due to the effect of time and its position with respect to the Earth, wind, cloud and rain. The power of the Moon is predominant. Rainwater decreases the heating effect of nature. All of these lead to the predominance of non-dryunctuous, *amla* (sour), *lavana* (salty), and *madhura* (sweet) *rasa* respectively and step by step rise of body strength in human beings during these three seasons. Out of all the *Ritus*, *Hemanta Ritu* is a unique *Ritu* in terms of having *uttam bala*. Falling in *Dakshinayana*, moon is very powerful than sun, *Madhur rasa* is predominant in this *Ritu*, so the strength (*Bala*) of person enhances during this period. This article focuses to disclose thorough review of literature of *Hemant ritucharya* and its implication towards maintenance and enhancement of *Uttam Bala*. In Ayurveda *oja*, *veerya*, *prana*, *kapha* etc terms are considered as synonyms of *Bala*. Besides *prakruti*(genetic), *sara*(physiological) and *aahar*(diet), *kala* (season) is one of the prime factors to govern the *Bala* of the person. *Bala* stands for the strength of the body in terms of physical, mental, immunological and resistance to the body, the word *Bala* is being used in different contexts to denote various aspects accordingly.

Keywords: *Visarga kala*, *Hemant ritu*, *Bala*

INTRODUCTION

Ritu means (season) and *Charya* means (guidelines), it is a seasonal guideline for living healthy life, according to our *Acharyas* movement of sun is responsible for the different types of *Ritu* (season), this divides year into two *Ayans* and each *Ayan* comprises of three *Ritus*, which gives a total of 6 seasons in a year. Each season lasts for two months and these seasons are precisely found in Indian subcontinent. The two *Ayans* are *Uttarayan* and *Dakshinayana* depending upon the direction of the movement of the sun. In *Uttarayan* sun takes north way course and is said to be *Adankala* (*Shishira*, *Vasanta* and *Greeshma*) because sun takes away the strength of the people and in *Dakshinayana* sun follows south way course and is said to be *Visarga kala* because power of the moon is more in this *kala* so it gives strength to the people. In human body same seasonal pattern exist. The seasons in the external world exist because of air, solar, and lunar system. Likewise, the internal air, solar and lunar system known as *vata*, *pitta*, *kapha* respectively, shows the same events and maintain the internal atmosphere (Homeostasis) in the body¹. For living healthy life, the balanced state of all these *Doshas* are essential. Similarly, for the longevity of life maintenance of *Bala* is also necessary. The equilibrium state of this *Bala* is surely affected by seasons (*Ritus*). Ayurvedic classics defines about seasonal variation of the strength. In the starting of *Visarga kala*(*varsha*) and at the end of *Adana kala* (*greeshma*), human beings on the Earth have less *Bala* experience debility. In the middle of these two periods that is in *sharad* and *vasanta*, humans have *madhyam Bala* possess medium strength. At the end of the *visarga kala*(*hemant*) and at the beginning of *adana kala* (*sheeshir*) the strength in human beings is maximum that is *uttam Bala*.²

Concept of Bala As Per Ayurveda

Strength of mind body and its components is said to be *bala*. According to *Sushruta*, “*Bala*” is defined as “the factor due to which one obtains the nourishment and stability of *Mamsa dhatu* (the muscular tissues of the body), ability to perform various tasks efficiently,

good complexion, clearness and pleasantness of voice along with clear and efficient working of all the organs either external like *Gyaanendriya* (sense organs) or *Karmendriya* (organs with motor functions) and internal like *Manas* (mind), *Aatma* (spirit).³ *Bala* also refers to *prakrut kapha* which is responsible for strengthening and lubrication of the body.⁴ One more synonym of *bala* as per Ayurveda is *Oja*⁵, defined as the nectar of all the *dhatu*s. It can be said as bioenergy that helps in sustaining the life and for nurturing the immune system of the body in normal state. *Acharya Charaka* classifies *Bala* as three types namely *Sahaja*, *Kalaja* and *Yuktikrita*. Among the three, *Kalaja* type is explained as the *bala* developed due to seasonal variations.⁶

Concept of Hemant Ritu As Per Ayurveda

According to Hindu calendar *Margashirsha*(*saha*) and *Pausha* (*sahasya*) forms *Hemanta Ritu*. As per English calendar, *Hemanta Ritu* starts from nov15 to jan15. The month of November begins with the gradually dropping temperature that makes way for *Hemant Ritu*, the early winter season. As per *Ayurveda*, *Hemant Ritu* begins with *Sharad Purnima* and it continues for two months, during which the earth cools down, giving rise to an energy that makes us feel rejuvenated. Some special changes occur in the environment and in our body during this season which is responsible for the development and enhancement of *Uttam Bala* in our body as follows: Due to atmospheric cold, the heat of the body is trapped inside the body(like in a closed chamber) due to vasoconstriction and gets obstructed from flowing outward, that leads to increase of *Jatharagni* (digestive fire). If this physiological action of the body doesn't occur it will causes death due to excessive cold.⁷ This provoked *agni* is capable of digesting the food which is inherently heavy (*dravya guru*) and in excess quantity (*matra guru*) and this properly digested food will surely nourishes the *sapta dhatu*s successively will enhance the *bala* of the body. So if adequate heavy food is not consumed, it will burn away the *Rasadi dhatu*s, as the food in the form of fuel is not available and it in turn will lead to

aggravation of *vata dosha*.⁸ As described earlier *bala* is equivalent to *prakrut kapha* and in this *ritu* accumulation of *kapha* takes place in the body,⁹ this accumulated (*sanchita*) *kapha* is surely one of the reason for developing *uttam bala* in this season. Another reason for *shreshth bala* is the dominance of *Madhur rasa*, overwhelming *Mahabhutas* are *Prithivi* and *Apa* in *Hemant ritu*. As said in our classics from birth *Madhur rasa* is *satmya* (adapted or habituated) for the body and it gives strength to the *rasadi sapta dhatus*¹⁰ this in turn will lead to increase in *oja* (the essence of all the *dhatus*) and is very essential vital component of our body and as said by *acharya Sushrut oja* is the *karana* and *bala* is its *karya*, accordingly this *oja* will tend to cultivate and enhance *bala* (strength) in the body¹¹. Hence in this way superiority of *Madhur rasa* in this *ritu* induces *uttam bala* in the body.

All these above-described factors are responsible for generating *Shreshtha Bala* in *Hemant ritu* and to maintain this strength in the body one should follow the seasonal regimen. Ayurveda prescribes specific foods, exercise, and lifestyle changes suited to the season. This process is called as *Ritucharya*.

Do's of Hemant Ritucharya (Diet and Lifestyle)¹²

- ❖ Unctuous, Sweet (*madhur*), sour(*amla*) and salt (*lavana*) food items should be consumed predominantly.
- ❖ Meat of fatty, aquatic and marshy animals should be taken. Meat of burrowing animals and roasted meat of animals that eat by snatching the prey should be consumed
- ❖ Drinking of *madira* and *sidhu* type of wines are advised.
- ❖ Dairy foods like cow milk, butter, ghee, edible oils and new rice are recommended.
- ❖ Drink lukewarm water throughout the season.
- ❖ Include honey in your diet.
- ❖ Have warm soups regularly.
- ❖ Consume sugar cane juice and sugar, jaggery, *khand* as these provide abundant energy.
- ❖ Abundance of healthy fruits and vegetables like *Amla*, fig, apple, lemon, raisins, spinach, pumpkin, carrots etc. should be consumed.

- ❖ In *hemanta ritu*, *abhyanga* (massage), *utsadana* (anointing), *murdhni taila* (applying oil on the head), fomentation by *jentaka* (a type of fomentation/sudation) method, sunbath, spending time in hot underground houses and warmer, inner rooms of the house, regular use of shoes is indicated.
- ❖ In winter season, vehicles, beds and seats should be well covered and spread over with thick quilts, deer or tiger skins, silken sheets, gunny-cloth sheets or blankets.
- ❖ Always wear thick and warm clothes and the body should be anointed with thick paste of *Aguru* (Eagle wood)

Don'ts of Hemant Ritucharya: At the beginning of winter season intake of food and drinks that cause *vata* vitiation and inherently light to digest in property (like *udmantha*), getting exposed to strong winds, sleeping in daytime, inadequate quantities of food, and intake of diluted gruel are contraindicated.¹³

CONCLUSION

Human being function like a microcosm of the universe and the physiological changes are predominantly affected by the changes in macrocosm e.g., geothermal changes due to the Sun or the effects of the Moon and other celestial bodies. The rotation of the Earth around the Sun and rotation of Moon around the Earth result in changes in season. The Sun is responsible for temperature variations on Earth and this leads to changes in the physical and mental strength of microcosm.¹⁴ As changes in the environment affect our body, it is very important for our body to get familiar with these changes. The *Bala* of a person varies according to change in seasons. *Bala* i.e. Strength is the ability of the body to do the activities and it also provide resistance to disease and boost the immune system. *Hemant ritu* plays an important role for developing *uttam bala* in the body. *Bala* of body depends on excellence of all *dhatus* and they all are produced by the action of *agni* on food. In *Hemant ritu*, *agni* is the strongest and is responsible for proper digestion. Food consumed is digested

properly with the help of *jatharagni* to produce good *ahar rasa* which when administered through *Dhatwagni* leads to formation of good *rasadi dhatu*. Accumulation of *Kapha* takes place in this season. *Kapha dosha* is *Bala* of body & the principal element of *kapha* are *Prithvi* and *Jala*. Regarding *bala*, *prithvi* represents *sthiratva* (stability), *gurutva* (heaviness and bulky) while *Jala* provides nourishment. Hemant ritu has predominancy *Madhur rasa*, this *rasa* itself described as strength promoting property. Hence wise man should adopt strictly regimens of *Hemant ritu* to regain perfect and sound health as this *ritu* is endowed with *uttam bala*.

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