Review on description of Seasons in Charakasamhita

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ABSTRACT

Charakasamhita is one of the old texts of Ayurveda. It describes not only treatment of diseases but also the preventive measures. It describes the healthy way of life. The code of conduct and preventive measures of the diseases (rutucharya) for each season are described in the sixth chapter of sutrasthana in Charakasamhita.

One type of classification of seasons is Varsha, Sharad, Hemanta, Shishira, Vasanta, and Grishma. Another type of classification is Pravrut, Varsha, Sharad, Hemanta, Vasanta, and Grishma. The present literature review study discusses about the mentions of Shishira and Pravrut seasons in the text and their significance.

Earlier carakas have elaborated the concept of Shishira season which was indicated by Agniveśa. Special features of Shishiraseason are mentioned. The code of conduct is given to be same as that of Hemanta season. Pravrut is initial time of Varsha season. It is very important for a clinician. It is used to perform ‘shodhana treatment’ as well as certain medicines. This important time of the year has special significance. Therefore even though it is not a separate season, it is treated as a separate season.

Therefore, even though 7 seasons are mentioned in the whole text, the number of the seasons is said to be 6 only.

Key words: Season, Shishira, Pravrut, shodhana treatment, nasya, basti

Introduction:

Charakasamhita is a treatise of ‘kayacikitsa’. Kayacikitsa broadly means internal medicine. Kayacikitsa is one of the eight divisions (anga) of Ayurveda. Charakasamhita is one of the old texts of Ayurveda. It describes not only treatment
of diseases but also the preventive measures. It describes the healthy way of life.

Six seasons of the year are described in the text. The code of conduct and preventive measures of the diseases (rutucharya) for each season are described in the sixth chapter of sutrasthana in Carakasamhita.

The text follows the lunar year, in which two parts of the year are adanakala and visargakala. Each part is of six months. Adanakala includes Shishira, Vasanta and Grishma. Visargakala includes Varsha, Sharad and Hemanta. Each season has two months. It is described that the natural strength of a person is reduced due to climatic conditions of adanakala. On the contrary, a person gains natural energy in visargakala. This is one type of classification of seasons.

Another type of classification is given while describing the examination of a patient. Here the base of classification is ‘shodhanacikitsa’ (treatment of internal cleansing of the body). In this classification, the season ‘Shishira’ is excluded and ‘Pravrut’ is added. The order of the seasons is Pravrut, Varsha, Sharad, Hemanta, Vasanta, and Grishma.

The present study discusses about the mentions of Shishira and Pravrut seasons in the text and their significance.

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY:

Following questions arise regarding the description of seasons.

- Why do the authors describe the total number of seasons six instead of seven?
- Shishira is classified as a part of adanakala. But Pravrut is not put in any category.
- Rutucharya (code of conduct) is not described for Pravrut.
- No region wise allocation to Shishira and Pravrut seasons is specified in the text.

This study is an effort to seek answers to these questions.

METHODS:

This is a literature review study. Carakasamhita, edited by Vaidya Yadavaji Trikamaji Acharya is used for references. The history books are referred to correlate the historical facts.

OBSERVATIONS:

Following are the key mentions of Seasons in the text:
1. References of Shishiraseason: In sutrasthana chapter 6, the word Shishirais mentioned six times as a name of the season. There are otherwise 42 references in the whole text in which the word Shishirais used. Out of these references, in 38 cases the meaning of the word Shishira is ‘shita’ (cold character). These references are not at all related to the season Shishira. Only 4 references indicate the meaning ‘a season’. Following are the references (except chapter 6 of Sutrasthana) where the season Shishirais mentioned –

- **Sutrasthana** chapter 27/205: The characters of ‘water’ in Shishira are described. It is said that the water in Shishira is lighter to digest than that in Hemanta season. The water in Shishirais also reduces kapha and vata.

- **Chikitsasthana** chapter 16/109: It is mentioned that the fermentation of ‘Bijakarishta’ should be allowed double the time in Shishirathat in Grishma.

- **Kalpasthana** chapter 1/10: Old leaves and roots of ‘shitavirya’ herbs (herbs of cold potency) are to be gathered in Shishira season.

- **Kalpasthana** chapter 10/9: Snuhi (Euphorbianeriifolia)latex is collected at the end of Shishiraseason.

2. There is no reference of ‘Pravrut’ season in sutrasthana chapter 6.

3. Following are the references where Pravrut is mentioned –

- **Sutrasthana** chapter 5/57: While describing the appropriate time to use ‘anutaila’ for nasya (to use it as nasal drops), the season Pravrut is mentioned.

- **Sutrasthana** chapter 13/18: Internal lubrication is done by sesame oil in the season of Pravrut.

- **Vimanasthana** chapter 8/125: The seasons are assigned to cleansing process i.e. shodhana treatment. In this regard Pravrut is a recommended
season for ‘basti’ treatment (medicated enema).

- **Chikitsasthana** chapter 1/2/8\(^{xi}\): ‘Amalakachurna’ is a rasayana (tonic). It is prepared in the **Pravrut** season.

- **Siddhisthana** chapter 2/23\(^{xii}\): This reference again recommends the nasya treatment in **Pravrut** season.

- **Siddhisthana** chapter 6/5\(^{xiii}\): The months of **Pravrut** season are mentioned in which shodhana treatment is given. They are Ashadha and Shravana.

4. **Hemant, Grishma and Varsha** are winter, summer and rainy seasons respectively. The intermediate seasons are considered to be moderate seasons. Moderate seasons are appropriate for shodhana (cleansing of the body) treatment. The season after **Grishma** and before **Varsha** is called **Pravrut**. In this count of seasons, **Shishira** is not included. It is explained that this type of classification is useful for shodhana (cleansing of the body) treatment.

5. In *sutra* chapter 6, a year is divided into two parts – **adanakala** and **visargakala**. If **Pravrut** is considered to be intermediate of **Grishma** and **Varsha** and if **Shishira** is not taken into consideration then there is a problem. In which part of the year **Pravrut** is to be categorized? - **adanakala**or **visargakala**? This is not clearly mentioned anywhere in the compendium.

6. The rutucharya (the code of conduct of the season) of **Shishiraṛtu**(which is described in the 6\(^{th}\) chapter of sutrasthana) is same as that of **Hemanta**. It is said that, in **Shishiraṛtu**, the weather is cold and dry because of clouds, wind and rains\(^{xiv}\). The winter rains are common in north-western parts of India. It can be said that this chapter of *carakasamhita* is written in north-western part of India.

7. The code of conduct for **Pravrut** season is not described anywhere.

8. **Cakrapani** has quoted Kashyapa’s opinion in this regard\(^{xv}\). Kashyapa says that southern parts of Ganges River experience longer rainy season and shorter winter. The northern parts of Ganges get shorter rainy season and longer winter. Accordingly in the northern
part Hemanta and Shishira are experienced and in the southern part Pravrut and Varsha are experienced. Chakrapani does not agree with this opinion. Pravrut is taken as a separate season to specify the correct time for basti/nasya/snehana (internal lubrication). Charaka himself says that, this type of classification of seasons is done to specify time for shodhana treatment.

DISCUSSION:

The initial part of the chapter 6 of sutrasthana (i.e. para 4 and 5) is in sutra style. According to Dr. P. V. Sharma this part is probably written by Agnivesha. The next description is almost a repetition of the same content but written in a mature style (i.e. para 6 and 7). The authorship of this part may go to earlier carakas (sages of Atreya tradition). The remaining chapter is in poetry form. This can be attributed to later carakas (disciples of Atreya tradition)\(^{xvi}\). (There are multiple opinions about the identity of Caraka. The internal evidences - the evidences from the text show that many sages from the same tradition attributed to Charakasamhita. Therefore the authors of Charakasamhita are referred as ‘carakas’ in this study).

In this chapter, earlier carakas have elaborated the concept of Shishira season which was indicated by Agnivesha in sutra style. The core area, where carakas would roam around, was north-western part of India. The description of Shishira is appropriate to the condition in this region. But as the advanced research was gradually incorporated in the description of the seasons, the name of Pravrut was introduced. In this case, to change the number of seasons (i.e. 6) was against the tradition of accomplishment of the text. This has been seen in some other examples as well (the number of pramanas, the number of dashapranayatana). This may be one of the reasons of unchanged number of seasons.

Shishira is a part of Adanakala. The concept of Adanakala and Visargakala is not relevant as far as the treatment is concerned. In other words, any type of treatment is not specified for Adanakala and Visargakala. Pravrut is mainly related to ‘basti’ and ‘nasya’ treatment. It is also related to the preparation of certain drugs. Therefore wherever Pravrut is mentioned, no relevance of Adanakala and Visargakala is shown.

The code of conduct (rutucharya) for Pravrut is not described in the text. The explanation for this question may be as follows: There is a single chapter (6th
chapter of sutrasthana) where rutucharya is described. There is no other chapter where this topic is elaborated again in the text with the mention of Pravruti. Also Pravruti is an initial stretch of Varsharutu. Therefore the dos and don’ts for this season are similar to those of Varsharutu.

A region wise allocation to Shishira and Pravruti is not approved by Chakrapani, a well-known commentator of Charakasamhita. It is a rule for every physician to carry out the treatment of basti and nasya in Pravruti season predominantly. There are no region-wise alternatives for this treatment. Therefore logically there is no possibility to refuse the existence of Pravruti season in northern parts of India. It may create a problem to decide the correct time for basti and nasya in those areas.

Two references of Pravruti are from Drudhabala’s part of the text i. e. siddhisthana. One reference is from the 5th chapter of sutrasthana in which a possibility of later addition is found as the part of the text is not mentioned in the summary of the chapter. At these three places it may be said that ‘Pravruti’ was a later concept added to the text. But one reference from sutrasthana(chapter13), one from Vimanasthana and one from chikitsasthana are from Caraka’s part of the text. Similarly the word Shishira, as a name of a season, is found in Drudhabala’s part of the text (in kalpa and chikitsa chapter 16).

It may be said that the division of the year is generally done along with Shishira season. Pravruti is initial time of Varsha season. It is very important for a clinician. It is used to perform ‘shodhana treatment’ as well as to formulate certain medicines. This important time of the year has special significance. Therefore even though it is not a separate season it is treated as a separate season.

CONCLUSION:

- The official number of seasons described in Charakasamhita is six.
- The classification changes according to the context.
- The word Pravruti is used as initial part of the Varsha season.

The period of two months was allotted to Pravruti to confirm the time period in which a basti/nasya treatment or internal lubrication with sesame oil is recommended.
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