



## 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:

Carakasamhita is a treatise of ‘*kayacikitsa*’. *Kayacikitsa* broadly means internal medicine. *Kayacikitsa* is one of the eight divisions (*anga*) of Ayurveda. Carakasamhita 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 *sutrasthanaa* in *Charakasamhita*.

The text follows the lunar year, in which two parts of the year are *adanakala* and *visargakala*.<sup>i</sup> 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<sup>ii</sup>. 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 above description shows that total number of seasons given in the text is 7.

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. *Charakasamhita*, edited by Vaidya Yadavaji Trikamaji Acharya is used for references<sup>iii</sup>. 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 *Shishirais* 'shita' (cold - a 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<sup>iv</sup>: The characters of 'water' in *Shishira* are described. It is said that the water in *Shishirais* lighter to digest than that in *Hemanta* season. The water in *Shishira* also reduces *kapha* and *vata*.
- *Chikitsasthana* chapter 16/109<sup>v</sup>: It is mentioned that the fermentation of '*Bijakarishtha*' should be allowed double the time in *Shishira* than that in *Grishma*.



- *Kalpasthana* chapter 1/10<sup>vi</sup>: Old leaves and roots of 'shitavirya' herbs (herbs of cold potency) are to be gathered in *Shishira* season.
  - *Kalpasthana* chapter 10/9<sup>vii</sup>: *Snuhi* (*Euphorbia nerifolia*) 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<sup>viii</sup>: 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<sup>ix</sup>: Internal lubrication is done by sesame oil in the season of *Pravrut*.
  - *Vimanasthana* chapter 8/125<sup>x</sup>: 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<sup>xi</sup>: '*Amalakachurna*' is a *rasayana* (tonic). It is prepared in the *Pravrut* season.
- *Siddhisthana* chapter 2/23<sup>xii</sup>: This reference again recommends the *nasya* treatment in *Pravrut* season.
- *Siddhisthana* chapter 6/5<sup>xiii</sup>: 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 *Shishirartu* (which is described in the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter of *sutrasthana*) is same as that of *Hemanta*. It is said that, in *Shishirartu*, the weather is cold and dry because of clouds, wind and rains<sup>xiv</sup>. 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<sup>xv</sup>. 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)<sup>xvi</sup>. (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 (6<sup>th</sup>



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 *Pravrut*. Also *Pravrut* 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 *Pravrut* 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 *Pravrut* season predominantly. There are no region-wise alternatives for this treatment. Therefore logically there is no possibility to refuse the existence of *Pravrut* 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 *Pravrut* are from Drudhabala's part of the text i. e. *siddhisthana*. One reference is from the 5<sup>th</sup> 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 '*Pravrut*' was a later concept added to the text. But one reference from *sutrasthana* (chapter 13),

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. *Pravrut* 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 *Pravrut* is used as initial part of the *Varsha* season.

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





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