



AHARA VIDHI VIDHAN AS DIGESTION MODIFYING LIFE STYLE INTERVENTION

¹Pankaj Jindal

¹PG Scholar in Department of Kriya Sarira, Yashwant Ayurvedic College P.G. Training & Research Centre, Kodoli, Kolhapur (Maharashtra).

Received on 02/01/2017

Accepted on 5/12/2017

Reviewed on 20/01/2018

Published on 10/03/2018

ABSTRACT

Human body requires food to provide energy for all life processes, growth, repair and maintenance. A balanced diet contains different types of foods in such quantities and proportions that the need of the body is adequately met. But without knowing proper dietary guidelines one cannot gain optimum benefit from the food consumed. In Ayurveda, Ahara forms the important component of life as it is included in the Tri-Upastambha (three pillars of life). Ayurveda describes Ahar vidhi vidhan in which many guidelines are given by Acharyas to modify digestion and to get the maximum benefit of the food that is being taken. By following these dietary guidelines one can improve his or her digestion and attain a good health and prevent many diseases arising due to faulty dietary habits. Ahara Vidhi Vidhan (Dietary Guidelines) is a unique concept of Ayurveda. This particular study deals with compilation and classification of Ahara Vidhi Vidhan described in Ayurvedic texts.

Keywords: Ahara Vidhi Vidhan, Dietary Guidelines, Dietary Rules, Dietetics.

Introduction

Ayurveda is not only a medical science but also a complete science of life, which deals with health conservation and promotion, prevention and management of the diseases. It always instructs about how to live a healthy life by the adaptation of appropriate life style, food, conducts and avoidance of etiologic factors. *Ahara* (diet) *Nidra* (sleep) and *Brahmacarya* (abstinence) are recognized as the three *Upastambhas* (sub pillars) essential for the smooth running of life. Among the three *Upastambhas*, *Ahara* is considered as the best sustainer of life. Ayurveda gives equal importance to diet as well as the method of its intake. Lots of description about food is available in the Ayurvedic texts which describe that food is the main cause of health and diseases. The importance of food in Ayurveda can easily be understood by the quote of *Charaka Samhita* which states that the whole world runs towards food, as complexion, happiness, beautiful voice, life, talent, health and satisfaction, maintenance of body, body strength and even intellectual capacities of the individual depends on food. He has further considered food intake as a practice equivalent to *Yajna* (a fire ritual), thus described the detailed *Ahara vidhi vidhan*. All professional activities leading to happiness in this world, *Vedic* (stated in the Vedas – the most ancient texts of India) rituals leading to abode in heaven and observance of truth, *Bramhacharya* (abstinence) leading to salvation have been described on the basis of food only. It is the food habits which are the way to health or disease in the body. Due to such prime

importance of food in the maintenance of health, *Acharya Charaka* has stated these *Ahara Vidhi Vidhan* (Dietary Guidelines) because healthy body is possible only if the food is digested properly. Modern science also states that Dietetics is essential for life, growth, energy, reproduction, protection from diseases and maintenance of body.

The term *Ahara Vidhi Vidhan* is used first by *Acharya Charaka* in *Vimanasthana 1st* chapter. These *Ahara Vidhi Vidhan* are given below:

1. "USNAM ASNIYAT"
2. "SNIGDHAM ASNIYAT"
3. "MATRAVAT ASNIYAT"
4. "JIRNE ASNIYAT"
5. "VIRYA AVIRUDDHAM ASNIYAT"
6. "ISTE DESE, ISTA SARVA UPAKARANAM ASNIYAT"
7. "NA ATIDRUTAM ASNIYAT"
8. "NA ATIVILAMBITAM"
9. "AJALPAN, AHASAN, TANMANA BHUNJITA"

Ahara Vidhi Vidhan is method of eating that is equally important as food. Hence it can be considered as *Asamavayi Karana*. *Ahara* is not only meant for maintenance of health but it is also very important part of therapeutic aspect. So, *Ahara Dravyas* can be considered as *Dravyabhuta* elements and dietetic rules are *Adravyabhuta* elements. All the rules of diet intake are dependent on each other and they should be considered collectively. By application of only one of these rules one cannot achieve the expected results.

1.) **Usnam Asniyat:**

Ushnam is the first *Vidhana* of food

served. By taking hot food, *Vata anulomana* is achieved, *Pitta* gets stimulated and secreted, thereby, increasing *Agni* or power of digestion. *Kapha* in oral cavity, i.e; *Bodhaka Kapha* is secreted to acknowledge proper taste of food. With the above conditions, *Agni* gets activated and the digestion process is completed in proper time. This logic can be supported by modern physiology. The salivation is greatest at the temperature of mouth. Ayurveda also describes the effects of *Sita Anna*. The prepared food left for a long time if taken causes *stambhana*, *agnimandya*, *aruchi*, *hrillas*, *vistambha*, *romaharsha*.

As per modern physiology hot meals aid proper digestion because of the time it takes to consume it. This enables the individual to eat in adequate proportions which in turn gives less work to the organ that breaks down food. Also, during the preparation of the meal, the chemicals in the food would have been broken down before it is served and consumed; the body easily absorbs the nutrients as they diffuse into the system, increasing the nutritional value. It decrease the risk of bacterial contamination as it is difficult for micro-organisms to survive in hot foods. Micro-organisms die while cooking but allowing the food get cold will reintroduce the bacteria, if not careful; which makes eating the meal in a hot state healthier.

2.) Snigdham Asniyat:

Snigdha ahar should be taken as it alleviates (*Anulomana*) *Vata*. *Anulomana* is a Karma in which initially there occurs *Paka of Mala* which is continued by breaking the bondage and then it is excreted out through *Guda* (anus). For *Agnidipana*, *sneha* is required as is seen practically in the outer world as well as in body. *Snigdha dravya* promotes the first *Avasthapaka* and increases *bala* (Strength), *varna* (complexion) & power of sense organs, which rejuvenate the body by decreasing the speed of ageing process (*jara*). Here, *snigdha* term does not mean exactly *sneha dravyas* like oil or ghee only, but also *Godhuma*, *Shali* rice etc. are advised as *snigdha*.

Extreme *snigdha* (*atisnigdha*) or *asnigdha* (*ruksha*) both disturb the process of digestion. *Atisnigdha* food is 'Guru' by properties and take more time and energy to get digested, causing *praseka*, *hridgaurav*, *alasya*, *aruchi*, etc. Opposite to this, *ruksha* food causes decrease in *bala* and *varna*, dryness of skin and complains of constipation. *Ruksha* guna increases the properties of *Vata* resulting in *Agni vaigunya*.

As per modern physiology fat is essential for absorption of Vit-A, D, E and K. These vitamins are well known to increase immunity, are good for skin and eyes, Vit-E is an antioxidant, Vit-D is important for Calcium absorption which provides strength to bones. HDL is important as it reduces risk of heart disease. Consuming fatty acids can boost metabolism. Dietary fat helps in breakdown of existing fat by activation of PRAR-alfa and fat burning pathways through liver.

3.) Matravat Asniyat:

Food should be taken in proper quantity. The symptoms by which a person can decide that this is *Matrvat* are, freedom from distress in the stomach, absence of any cardiac discomfort, non-distension of sides, freedom from excessive heaviness of the stomach, gratification of the senses, subsidence of hunger and thirst, sense of ease in the standing, sitting, lying down, walking, inhaling, exhaling, talking. Ayurveda believes that every human being is unique and different from others the quantity of food needed also differs from one person to other.

According to *Acarya Chraka*, *Amatra* is of two types, viz; *hina* and *Adhika*. *Hina matra* (food deficient in quantity) causes impairment of the strength and complexion, not capable to give the feel of satiety, impairment of longevity, virility and ojas, affliction of body, mind, intellect senses and impairment of the excellence of *Dhatus*.

Adhika matra (excessive quantity of food) aggravate all the *Dosas*, which produce the *Vataj* diseases like colic pain, distension of abdomen, body ache, dryness of mouth,

giddiness, *agni vikrit*, various types of pains. Vitiated pitta causes *jwara*, *atisara*, internally sensation of burning, thirst, giddiness and delirium. Vitiated *kapha* causes vomiting, anorexia, indigestion, cold fever laziness and heaviness in the body.

As per modern physiology when we eat more food than our stomach can accommodate, we cannot properly break it down. We also tend to produce more acid, thus causing reflux and indigestion. In addition, the amount of digestive enzymes produced may not be able to completely break down the volume of food ingested, which leads to more gas formation, discomfort, or bloating. Ayurveda recommends that we leave one-third to one-quarter of our stomach empty to allow space for our body to easily digest our meal.

4.) *Jirne Asniyat:*

It means eat after digestion of the previous meal. If one takes food before the digestion of the previous meal, the digestive product of the previous food, i.e. undigested *ahara rasa* gets mixed up with the *Ahara rasa* of food taken after wards, it provokes all the *Dosha*.

As per modern physiology while the food taken when the previous meal has been fully digested, the humors have returned to their normal places, the gastric fire is kindle, hunger is born, the channels are clear and open, the eructation from the mouth is healthy, the stomach is clear, the peristaltic movement is normal and when the urges for evacuation of flatus, urine and feces are well attended too, that food not vitiating any of the body elements, serve the sole purpose of promoting life.

5.) *Virya Aviruddham Asniyata:*

Virya is one of the qualities of *dravya*, every action is the result of it. Diets that are opposite to the body elements tend to disagree with the system and they are termed as '*Viruddha Ahara*'. This incompatibility of diet is of several types. Drugs and diet which are variance with

place, time, power of digestion, doses, habit, *dosa*, mode of preparation, potency, bowel, state of health, order of proscription and prescription, cooking, combination, palatability, richness of quality and rule of eating are all unwholesome (Ca. Su. 28). Some diseases that are caused by *Viruddha Ahara* are *adhmana*, *amavisha*, *grahani*, *amlapitta*, *kustha*, *pandu*, *shotha*, *jwara*, *andhata*, *indriyadaurbalya* and even death. Regular intake of *Viruddha Ahara* is very common nowadays. *Carakacarya* has mentioned only *viryaviruddha* while *Susrutacarya* has mentioned *rasa*, *virya*, *vipaka viruddha* because *Carakacarya* is the believer of *Shaktiviryavada* while *Susrutacarya* believes in *Gunaviryavada*. *Caraka* has included all types of *Viruddha*, i.e; *Dravya*, *Rasa*, *Virya*, *Vipaka* under the term "*Virya*". So *rasa viruddha*, *virya viruddha*, *vipaka viruddha*, *guna viruddha* are included under the "*Virya Viruddha*".

Eat those food articles which are not antagonistic in *Virya* (potency). Eating the food that is not antagonistic in potency one will not afflicted with disorders born of incompatible dietary. *Virya* is the power of substance by which action takes place; nothing can be done in absence of the *Virya*.

As per modern physiology when two or more foods having different tastes, energy and post digestive effect are combined, digestion becomes overloaded, inhibiting the enzyme system and resulting in the production of toxins. At the same time these foods, if eaten separately, might well stimulate digestion, be digested more quickly and even help to burn or remove toxins.

6.) *Iste Dese Ista Sarva Upakarnam Asniyata*

The place where food is been taken should be clean, hygienic and should not produce disturbing emotions like *kama*, *krodha*, *chinta*, *bhaya*, *visada*, etc. *Susrutacarya* had given some specific guidelines regarding the place for eating, place of food preparation i.e; *Mahanasa* (kitchen) and the place where the food should be

kept before serving. The place of eating should be pleasant which can provide calm and healthy state of mind needed for good concentration towards food. It should be attractive and beautiful. The food should be consumed in a place free from various hurdles like dust and dirt which is necessary for the hygienic condition as well as sound psychological condition during meals. Some contraindicated places indicated by *Acaryas* are; below any tree, not on the bed, not in the hot sunlight nor in a dark place. All these factors influence psyche as well as affect the hygiene of the place. It is very obvious that for healthy food, healthy surrounding is required. Pure and hygienic food eaten at unhygienic place can lead to unhealthy state. The weather around should be according to the seasonal conditions e.g; cool air in summer and a little warmth in winter. Though this is a relative term changing with every individual generally a pleasant atmosphere is expected while eating.

Appropriate appliances for dining are needed and indicated in detail by *Acaryas* for serving, storage and dining etc. For specific kind of food, specific material is mentioned (Su. Su. 46/448) e.g. *ghee* should be kept in iron vessel (*kantloha*) and fruits and all edible snacks be kept in vessel made of leaves. This specification is due to some chemical reactions between the food material and utensils. This reaction can be helpful for longer preservation of food as well as its healthy effect on body. Some materials are strictly contraindicated for specific foods, e.g. sour food should not kept in copper utensils, as the chemical reaction produces poison like substances and leads to many disorders. Such a detail description gives an idea about the keen observation, deep thinking and practical knowledge of our ancients. In *Sushruta samhita* there are some specific guidelines for *Desa* for *Bhojana*, the place where food to be prepared and where should be stored before serving. He advised to take food in

such a place that is devoid of unwanted people. The place should be free from the defects of construction, the defect of ventilation and light can affect the health directly and indirectly. It should be properly leveled. The place should be pleasant also which can provide calm and healthy state of mind.

As per modern physiology a complex, independent nervous system called the enteric nervous system (ENS) lines the gastrointestinal tract. Dubbed “the second brain” by Dr. Michael Gershon, a researcher and physician at Columbia University Medical Center, the ENS contains many of the major neurotransmitters that are found in the brain, including serotonin, dopamine, glutamate, norepinephrine, and nitric oxide. In fact, about 95 percent of the serotonin contained in the body at any given time is in the ENS.

This second brain controls our digestion and can work both independently and in conjunction with the brain in our head. One can briefly state that there is an intimate relationship between our brain and our gut, and our digestion responds to the thoughts and emotions. When we experience a situation that we interpret as stressful, signals from the brain can alter nerve function between the stomach and esophagus, resulting in heartburn. With extreme stress, the brain sends signals to the gut immune cells that release chemicals leading to inflammation. This inflammation can then lead to mal-absorption, and even food sensitivities if the stress becomes chronic. Now days we can see special dining rooms in the houses of affluent class. Everyone always tries to keep the dining place pleasant.

7.) *Na atidrutum Ashniyat:*

The food should not be taken in hurry. If it is eaten so, the food is liable to go into other pathways, food cannot be placed properly and one can neither know about the bad qualities nor good qualities of food. The food when eaten with hurry violates its normal route that can be

understood by an example i.e; "Hikka". The *Annaja Hikka* is the best example of *vimarga gamanam*. Due to hurry, Vata gets stimulated which misleads the food producing the symptoms like 'Hiccup'.

As per modern physiology if person eat too leisurely, naturally tend to eat more till satiety cannot be achieved. The temperature of food gets altered i.e; the hot items become cold. All these factors hamper digestion and the food is not digested properly. The taste of food is not properly felt whether it is bad or good. Good qualities like smell, taste and sight of food helps in digestion. When the taste, odours or sight of food is felt and enjoyed, it promotes the salivation and digestion.

8.) Na ativilambitam Ashniyat:

Do not eat too slowly. The food would become cold and there will be irregularity in digestion. For this reason one should not eat very slowly.

As per modern physiology very slow eating does not give satisfaction even if he eats so much. Hence he eats more than required and this will hamper digestion.

9.) Ajalpana, Ahasan, Tanmana Bhunjita:

Food should be eaten without much talking and laughing. The food should be eaten with enough concentration towards it as well as towards the eating process. Talking and laughing divert the attention from the meals and the food is eaten too hastily or too slowly. The secretion of digestive juices gets disturbed and finally the system also gets affected which affects body as well as mind. The relation between body and mind is well understood by Ayurveda. There is nothing about man that is exclusively psychic or exclusively somatic, everything is psychosomatic. So in every aspect, the concept of *sarira and mana* is interdependent and inseparable. Process of digestion is totally a psycho physiological phenomenon so better state of psyche can yield better digestion.

Ayurvedic scholars were much aware about this topic since ages.

As per modern physiology when we speak, air has to get out from our lungs, through the trachea and the vocal cords to our mouth and the outside environment. Because the trachea and the esophagus (food pipe) share the same entry there's a small tongue-like blocker called epiglottis which blocks the trachea when the food comes, and blocks the esophagus most of the time - when the air comes. When we speak, the trachea must be open (because speech, as we said, is basically air moving the vocal cords and different parts of the mouth). However, when we eat - it must be closed. The body "prefers" breathing over eating, so when we try to do both, it opens the trachea, thus closing the esophagus. If the food comes down at this point, it falls right into our lungs. If it is a very small bit of food, it is the most dangerous, because it can actually can enter into the lungs and probably do some damage (and quite possibly infections) in the lungs. Usually, it isn't such a small bit, and it gets stuck in the way to our lungs - then we cough. This is the body's natural reflex which tries to get it out of the way ASAP. So we should avoid talking or laughing while eating.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The data has been collected from *Chraka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita*, compiled and analyzed for the discussion and attempt has been made to draw some conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In today's life style uncomfortable GI symptoms such as bloating, gas, or indigestion, acidity etc are very common problems. Most probably the underlying root problem is faulty dietary habits. Unfortunately, in Western medicine, they aren't trained to ask the key question, How strong is your digestive fire? Instead, they

concentrate solely on the foods going in. When a patient goes to a health care provider trained in conventional allopathic medicine, the treatment options for digestive issues are typically medications, which serve to control symptoms, but do not treat the underlying cause.

Even when a provider's approach includes testing and the elimination of offending foods, this is still only addressing part of the problem. While this treatment addresses the agent (or food) being ingested, it doesn't look at why it is not being digested properly. Although eliminating foods that are bothersome can often alleviate symptoms, it is often difficult for patients to continually avoid those foods. It can often begin to disrupt their quality of life. The Ayurvedic concept of *Ahara Vidhi Vidhan* allows us to expand the conversation into answering the most important questions: "Why did the body begin to improperly digest, or not tolerate, this food?" and "How can we both eliminate the offending agent and concurrently increase agni or digestive power?" This approach opens up the possibility of re-introducing the food at a future time, allowing the person to fully experience

Ayurveda recommends a variety of practical techniques for keeping our digestive fire strong. Incorporating these practices into daily life can strengthen Agni and, in turn, facilitate metabolism of food, and minimize uncomfortable GI symptoms.

CONCLUSION:

The intake of Aahara in appropriate quantity is not enough to bestow good effects on the person's health. To receive the total benefits of the Aahara it is also necessary to have the knowledge about "Aaha Vidhi Vidhan". Simply, following simple cautions and minute life style changes one can protect himself from various type of diseases. In the end we can

say that the proper application of these rules is effective in maintenance of positive health as well as in the curative aspect for various diseases. From all above references it can be conclude that ahara should be taken according to ahara vidhi vidhan (dietary guidelines) which are truly scientific as mentioned by our Acharyas. Many diseases can be pre-vented arising merely due to faulty dietary habits.

REFERENCIES:

1. Ach Ch.Vi.1/24 Agnivesha, Charak Samhita With Vidyotini hindi Commentary of Pt. Kasinatha Sastri and Dr. Gorakha Natha Chaturvedi Ji, Chaukhambha Bharati Academy, Varanasi. Reprint year: 2005, Viman Sthana Chapter 1 Verse 24-1.
2. Agnivesha, Charak Samhita With Vidyotini hindi Commentary of Pt. Kasinatha Sastri and Dr. Gorakha Natha Chaturvedi Ji, Chaukhambha Bharati Academy, Varanasi. Reprint year: 2005, Viman Sthana Chapter 1 Verse 24-2.
3. Agnivesha, Charak Samhita With Vidyotini hindi Commentary of Pt. Kasinatha Sastri and Dr. Gorakha Natha Chaturvedi Ji, Chaukhambha Bharati Academy, Varanasi. Reprint year: 2005, Viman Sthana Chapter 1 Verse 24-3.
4. Ch.Vi.2/6 Agnivesha, Charak Samhita With Vidyotini hindi Commentary of Pt. Kasinatha Sastri and Dr. Gorakha Natha Chaturvedi Ji, Chaukhambha Bharati Academy, Varanasi. Reprint year: 2005, Viman Sthana Chapter 2 Verse 6.
5. Agnivesha, Charak Samhita With Vidyotini hindi Commentary of Pt. Kasinatha Sastri and Dr. Gorakha Natha Chaturvedi Ji, Chaukhambha Bharati Academy, Varanasi. Reprint year: 2005, Viman Sthana Chapter 1 Verse 24-4.
6. Ch.Vi.1/24 Agnivesha, Charak Samhita With Vidyotini hindi Commentary of Pt. Kasinatha Sastri

- and Dr. Gorakha Natha Chaturvedi Ji, Chaukhambha Bharati Academy, Varanasi. Reprint year: 2005, Viman Sthana Chapter 1 Verse 24-5.
7. Ch.Sut.26/65 Agnivesha, Charak Samhita With Vidyotini hindi Commentary of Pt. Kasinatha Sastri and Dr. Gorakha Natha Chaturvedi Ji, Chaukhambha Bharati Academy, Varanasi. Reprint year: 2005, Sutra Sthana Chapter 26 Verse 65.
 8. Ch.Vi.1/24. Ch.Vi.1/24 Agnivesha, Charak Samhita With Vidyotini hindi Commentary of Pt. Kasinatha Sastri and Dr. Gorakha Natha Chaturvedi Ji, Chaukhambha Bharati Academy, Varanasi. Reprint year: 2005, Viman Sthana Chapter 1 Verse 24-6.
 9. Ch.Vi.1/24 Agnivesha, Charak Samhita With Vidyotini hindi Commentary of Pt. Kasinatha Sastri and Dr. Gorakha Natha Chaturvedi Ji, Chaukhambha Bharati Academy, Varanasi. Reprint year: 2005, Viman Sthana Chapter 1 Verse 24-7.
 10. Ch.Vi.1/24 Agnivesha, Charak Samhita With Vidyotini hindi Commentary of Pt. Kasinatha Sastri and Dr. Gorakha Natha Chaturvedi Ji, Chaukhambha Bharati Academy, Varanasi. Reprint year: 2005, Viman Sthana Chapter 1 Verse 24-8.
 11. Ch.Vi.1/ Agnivesha, Charak Samhita With Vidyotini hindi Commentary of Pt. Kasinatha Sastri and Dr. Gorakha Natha Chaturvedi Ji, Chaukhambha Bharati Academy, Varanasi. Reprint year: 2005, Viman Sthana Chapter 1 Verse 24-9.
 12. Ch.Vi.1/24 Agnivesha, Charak Samhita With Vidyotini hindi Commentary of Pt. Kasinatha Sastri and Dr. Gorakha Natha Chaturvedi Ji, Chaukhambha Bharati Academy, Varanasi. Reprint year: 2005, Viman Sthana Chapter 1 Verse 24-10.
 13. Su.U.64/50 Maharsi susruta, susrutasamhita with Ayurveda-Tattva-Sandipika hindi commentary by Kaviraja Ambikadutta Shastri ji, Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan Varanasi, fourteenth edition. Utter Tantra Chapter 64 Verse 50.
 14. Astanga Hrdaya with Sarvangasundara by Arundatta and Ayurveda Rasayana by Hemadri, Chaukhambha.
 15. Digestion and metabolism in Ayurveda by C. Dwarakanath, 1997.
 16. http://iamj.in/posts/images/upload/966_969_1.pdf
 17. <https://lifestyle.thecable.ng/health-hot-foods>
 18. <http://www.chopra.com/articles/6-ayurvedic-practices-to-improve-your-digestion>.
 19. <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/11/091104085230.html>

CORRESPONDING ADDRESS

Dr. Pankaj Jindal,
PG Scholar, Department of Kriya Sharir
Yashwant Ayurvedic College, P.G. Training &
Research Centre, Kodoli, Kolhapur
(Maharashtra).
Email id: dr.p.k.jindal@gmail.com

Source of support: Nil

Conflict of interest: None Declared