



A CONCEPTUAL STUDY ON AHARA VIDHI VISHESH AYATANA IN AYURVEDA

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda defines health as complete balance state of *Dosha*, *Agni*, *Dhatu*, and *Mala*, as well as the balance between three fundamental states i.e physical, mental, and spiritual states. This definition of health is in coherence with WHO's definition of health as "A state of physical, mental, social and spiritual well being and not merely an absence of disease." Prevention is better than cure, so why to take too much medicines, as we can eat healthy diet and reduce the chances of lifestyle disorders and not need to dependent on medicines. The *prayojana* of *Ayurveda* is to protect health of a healthy human being and to cure disorders within the diseased condition. As *Acharyas* had described that *Ahara*, *Nidra*, *Brahmacharya* are *triupstambha* (three sub pillars), which support the body itself. Here *Ahara* has been placed first, which shows that it is the most important to maintain and sustain the life. *Ahara* supplies bioenergy to body. This bio-energy is supplied by proper and adequate nutrition in the form of its essential's constituents viz. carbohydrates, proteins, fats, minerals, vitamins and water. In *Ayurveda*, *Ahara* as well as the method of its intake both have equal importance. Due to lack of awareness and lack of knowledge about method of *Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana*, we blindly follow the wrong dietary habits, which cause Digestive stress and produce several diseases of unknown etiology and affects the function of *doshas*. *Acharya Charak* has explained *Astaharavidhivisheshyatana* in a very systemic and scientific way. It gives basic dietary guidelines about choosing appropriate food, combination of food, processing manners, dietary rules and quantitative and qualitative characteristics of food. A proper knowledge of *Astaharavidhivisheshyatana* with help in reducing *agnidusti* and achieving the both *prayajona* of *ayurveda*.

KEY WORDS:

Agnidusti, Health, *Ahara*, *Triupastambha*, Digestive distress, *Ama*, *Astaharavidhivisheshyatana*

INTRODUCTION

Ahara is the basic need of human being, it plays important role in sustain life and maintaining normal physiological functions of human body. All the *dravyas* in this universe are *panchbhautika* and even *Ahara* is also *panchbhautika*. Most of the lifestyle disorder prevalent these days are mainly due to the faulty dietary habits. According to *Ayurveda* the reasons for all the diseases lies within our digestive process. Each food article either has *Dosha prakopaka* or *Dosha shamaka* action on human body. The improper digestion (*Mandagni*) produces toxins (*Ama*) which leads to various diseases. *Ahara* provides complexion, happiness, strength, good voice, immunity, long life etc all are dependent on *ahara*.¹ Food increases memory, *ojas*, brilliance and digestive capacity.² The relation between the faulty diet and diseases are also well explained in *Ayurveda*. Now-a-days, many lifestyle diseases are occurring due to incorrect information about cooking procedures, irregular timings and improper mixing of food article and not following the prescribed rules for preparing, preserving and eating food. *Acharya Charak* describe all these aspect in a very systematic and scientific manner which is called as *Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana*.³ *Aharavidhivisheshayatana* emphasis on health maintenance, prevention of illness and also prescribed for management for diseases. Regarding all above considerations; this article emphasizes the eight important aspects of *Ahara Vidhi Visheshyatana*.

These are eight specific factors of the food consumption.⁴

1. *Prakriti* (qualitative characteristic of food)
2. *Karan* (processing of food)
3. *Samyoga* (combination)
4. *Rashi* (the quantity)
5. *Desha* (habitat)
6. *Kaala* (time and seasonal variation)
7. *Upayoga samstha* (classical ayurvedic rules of eating)
8. *Upayokta* (user)

1. PRAKRITI (Nature of food)

Prakriti means *Swabhava* or indicates the nature of food substance i.e inherent attributes (*Laghu, Guru* etc.) of *Aahar* and *Ausadh*.⁵ It is know that each and every individuals has a specific *shaaririka* and *maanasika prakriti*. In the same way each food and drug substance too have their specific *prakritis* which depends upon the heaviness, hotness etc. For example *Masha* is *guru* (heavy) and *Mudga* is *laghu* (light) in nature. Similarly, meat of *Shukra* (boar) is *guru* and *Ena* (deer) has *laghu* property.⁶ Every person should eat by keeping should in mind about their own *prakriti* and the *prakriti* of their food. So that they are useful for our health and not doing any negative effect on our health. For example, a person of *kapha prakriti* must avoid *Aahar* of *Guru guna* and *sheeta virya*; while these diets will be beneficial for a person of *pitta prakriti*. Thus

knowledge of Nature of food will help in choosing the food consequently.

2. **KARAN (Processing of food)**⁷

Karan means *Sanskara* that is responsible for change in property of food. *Agnisankaran*, *Jalasanyog*, *Manthana* are some example of *sanskara*.

- *Jalasamyoga*- cleansing with waters
- *Agnisamyoga*- heat processing (heating, boiling, cooking, frying, roasting) Ex. The nature of rice is *guru* but by *Agnisamyoga* it can be converted into *laghu*.
- *Manthana*- grinding, for *exdadhi* is said to be heavy for digestion and also *shothkrit* i.e, it is responsible for *shotha*, but when it undergoes churning process, it gets converted into buttermilk which is *laghu* in nature.

3. **SAMYOGA (combination)**

Though the property of substance is different it changes after mixing with another substance. i.e.. *samyog* of two or more articles results in the manifestation of special qualities, which can not be achieved by using the same article separately.⁸ Sometimes combination may be harmful or may be beneficial. For eg.

Honey and ghee are individually non-toxic but combined together, they become toxic. Also milk and fish both are sweet in taste but milk is of *sheet veerya* and fish is of *ushna veerya*. As they have contradiction in their potency it causes vitiation of *rakta* and obstruction of *srotas*. Milk with ghee used regularly is the best *rasayana*. In today's era people are using food with different combinations. We should learn the art of combination of substances that they should become compatible to each other. In ayurveda, the concept of *viruddha ahara* is well defined by acharyas. *Tropology* is the branch in modern science which is related with food combination. It provides information about specific combination of food that is good for health. For eg. It is instructed to avoid mixing of food rich in both carbohydrate and protein. For digestion of protein acidic medium is required, while for digestion of carbohydrate alkaline medium is necessary. If we take both food at same time it will not be digested and will get accumulated in stomach and cause in digestion and bloating.

4. **RASHI (The quantity)**

Ayurveda explained the importance of *Aharmatra* and its effect on Digestion. One should take diet in proper quantity. Digestive capacity varies from person to person, so *Aharmatra* also varies with same. The amount of food without

disturbing the equilibrium of *Dhatus* & *Doshas* of the body gets digested as well as metabolized in proper time is to be regarded as a proper quantity. The proper quantity of food activates Digestive functions⁹ while insufficient or excess quantity of food is harm to body. The proper quantity of food does depend upon the nature of food article. If the food article is heavy; half of stomach capacity is to be filled up. Even in the case of light food articles, excessive intake is not conducive to maintain the power of digestion & metabolism. *Ayurveda* also explains another aspect of *Matra* such as considering four parts of the stomach; one should take food such that two parts of stomach gets filled with solid food, one part to be filled by liquid and one part should be left free to facilitate the movement of *Vayu* or Gas.¹⁰

In the context of *Rashi*; the terms *Sarvagraha* & *Parigraha* have been explained by *Ayurveda*.¹¹

- *Sarvagraha*: *matra* of total food consume.
- *Parigraha*: *matra* of each food substance measured separately.

5. **DESHA (Habitat):**

Habitat is a geographic region. Quality of substance is affected by variety of soil and climate.¹² Himalaya is considered as *guru*

pradesh, substances grown in this place are *guru* in nature, while substances grown in desert are *laghu* in nature. Persons who consume *laghu ahara* and performing various activities are light in nature. *Ahara* should be taken according to both *bhoomi desha* & *deha desha*. *Desha parikshana* is vital aspect in understanding patient regarding dietary habits of patients, probability of diseases related to the diet and accordingly treatment and *Pathyapathya* aspect.

6. **KALA (Time):**¹³

Kaala can be *Avasthika* and *Nityaga*. *Avasthika kaala* determines the kind of food eaten depending on the condition of the body either healthy or diseased. For ex. *Langhana* is advised in *Atisara*. On the other side, *Nityaga Kaala*: In this type *Ahara* is taken according to particular season or *Ritucharya*. For ex. In summers the power of digestion is weak and hot climate, so advised plenty of drinks, cold and *madhur ahara* and to take less amount of food that is easily digestible.

7. **UPAYOGA SAMSTHA (Classical Ayurveda rules for dieting):**

It denotes the rules for dieting. It contains everything related to diet, how to eat, what to eat and when to eat.¹⁴

- Food should be warm, qualitative, easily digestible.

- Food should be *snigdha*.
- Food should be eaten only after last meal has been digested.
- Too fast or too slow eating habit should be avoided.
- The food should include all the 6 *rasas* namely (*Madhura, Amla, Lavana, Katu, Tikta, Kashaya*).
- Should avoid too much use of any particular *rasa*.
- Food should be taken in suitable quantity according to the *Prakriti* and *Agni* of a person.
- Food should not be taken during anxious, angry, nervous or disturbed state of mind.
- Laughing, watching television, thinking, talking while eating should be avoided.
- Place of food eating should be neat, clean, pleasant.

8. UPAYOKTA (User):

The person who takes the food is the *upayokta*. Food should be taken considering individuals place, digestive power, season, *kala* and *jeerna ahara lakshana*. He is the one who must take into consideration all this facts of ahara and consume food accordingly. *Upayokta* also play vital role towards achieving health benefits of consumed foods.¹⁵ If someone is *Okasatmya* of unhealthy food then the food should be reduced orderwise and come towards healthy diet.

DISCUSSION

In present era, most of parents are working, they don't have much time to take care of

their child,so, child eat junk food which cause lifestyle disorders in children. So, there is need to pay attention towards child's diet and ownself also. For eg; junk food get stuck in intestine and it takes one week to digest. *Ahara* is a part of our daily routine. Along with the quality, quantity, and taste of food, if we concentrate a little on the right way of taking food and the regimens related to *Ahara* described in *Ayurveda*, positive health can be achieved easily. Faulty dietary habits lead to the manifestation of different metabolic diseases. it is also observed that many diseases are arising merely due to this faulty dietary habits. In this context, the concept of *Astha Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana* is most ideal in today lifestyle. *Astha Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana* means the factor responsible for wholesome and unwholesome effect of the *Ahara* and methods of *Ahara sevana* . these eight dynamics must be measured before taking food *Prakriti, Karana, Samyoga, Rashi, Desha, Kala, Upyoga-sansatha* and *Upayokta*. Viewing the above point, it can be concluded that *Ahara* should be taken according to these eating habits are mentioned by acharyas in the form of *Astha Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana* which has been proven very scientific. So, by following these habits, we can prevent ourselves from various health problems and can cure many other diseases.

CONCLUSION

If person eat healthy food then he lives *hita, sukha* and *niyata aayu* and if person eats unhealthy then he lives *ahita, dukha* and *aniyata aayu*. *Ayurveda* strongly believes that; the reason for all the diseases lies within

our digestive process. The food consumed in proper way helps to balances *doshas*, *dhatu*s and *agni*. In today's modern era, we are more interested in eating tasty, ready to eat food materials and not focusing on the quantity, nutritional values and ingredients of the food which our body requires. Due to these all faulty habits many lifestyle disorder of unknown cause are arising. *Pippali*, *lavana* and *kshara* should not be use for long time. Healthier eating habits may help lower risk for type-2 diabetes, infertility, stroke, cancer, heart diseases and many other health problems. These eating habits are clearly mentioned by our *Acharyas* in the form of *Astha Aharavidhi Visheshayatna* which has been proven very scientific. So, by following these habits, we can prevent ourselves from the various diseases and can cure various diseases to some extent.

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