A REVIEW ON BASIC PRINCIPALS OF BALANCED DIET BY 
AYURVEDA: AHARA VIDHI VISHESH AYATAN.

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Received on: 21/02/19; Revised on: 8/03/19; Accepted on: 10/03/19

ABSTRACT

Ayurveda defines health as balance of Dosha, Agni, Dhatu and Mala as well as the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing. This definition of health is in coherence with WHO’s definition of Health is a Physical, mental, Social and spiritual wellbeing and not merely an absence of disease. Healthy life depends on proper nutrition. According to Ayurveda ahara is the most important thing for healthy life and type of ahara we eat affect our body as well as mind. Nowadays, people are adopting sedentary lifestyle. Also, the craze for junk food is increasing in rural areas also. The change in food habit, lack of knowledge about proper nutrition are causative factors for many diseases. Ayurveda has mentioned about Astavidh ahar vidhi vishesh ayatane in which Acharyas has explained in detail about properties of food, effect of combination of different food articles, quantity of food to be consumed, properties of food substances according to their cultivation area, cooking procedure etc. These eight factors are most important ways to maintain healthy diet. It gives a fair idea about what? When? Why? How? and Which? Food material should be consumed for promotion of positive health. A proper knowledge of these Ahar vidhi vishesh ayatane will help in reducing disorders caused due to improper diet and help for healthy diet.

Keywords: Ahara, Ashtavidh Ahar Vidhivishesh ayatane, healthy diet.

1. INTRODUCTION

In Ayurveda, ‘Trividha Upastambha’ are described in Sutrasthan of Charak Samhita. Ahara, Swapna (Nidra) and Brahmacharya are the three pillars of Shareera in which Ahara is the prime need. Without Ahara life would not continue very long. If we study the Ancient Literature since Vedic era, we can easily observe the importance of dietetic concept among them. The awareness about diet and its rules and regulations can be found everywhere. Ahara plays a pivotal role in the maintenance of health. For this reason, Ahara has been given the prime place among the Trayopastambha. A man can live without clothes, without shelter, but he cannot live without Ahara for a long time. According to modern science healthy diet is that with low fats and sugar and high in vitamin, minerals and other nutrients. While Ayurveda says that, Ahara is responsible for both the states i.e. health and illness. Ayurveda divides ahara into two types, Hita and Ahita ahara. Hita word is used so many times in Bruhatrayi and Laghutrayi to indicate beneficial. In Bruhtrayi word “Hita” is mostly used for Ahara. All Acharyas have also given good or bad dietetic habit under the heading of Hita or Ahita. The term Hitakara has been used so many times in classics, even more than the word Pathya. The most accurate definition is - “The food articles,

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which maintain the equilibrium of bodily Dhatus and help in eliminating the disturbance of their equilibrium, are to be regarded as Hitakara Ahara otherwise they are Ahitakara to body.” Charaka has stated that Hitakara diet is the only cause of growth and development of body and Ahitakara diets is the only cause of disease. Nowadays, many diseases are occurring due to wrong way of food intake, irregular habits of diet, improper mixing of food articles, following faulty sequence of procedure for preparation of food. These diseases are preventable by following healthy and proper diet. Ayurveda has described about hitkara, matrayukta ahara for well-being of society. Ayurveda literature mentioned all these aspects scientifically which are called aahara vidhi vishesh ayatane. These are most important factors about food consumption which are determinant factors for the maintenance of Health. Ahar vidhi vishesh ayatane concentrate on different factors that affect Ahara, such as its properties of food, place of origin, environmental factors, season, cooking method, freshness, and explain the need of food according to deha, dosha and desh. Aahara vidhi vishesh ayatane explains important characters of food like quality, quantity and time with effect of age, constitution, digestion, season, disease and also from person to person. We should consider all these things before eating food and failure to do this will become the cause of various diseases One has to consume the diet which is suitable to him in all aspects and deviation from these may cause the disease. Aahara vidhi vishesh ayatana emphasis on health maintenance, prevention of disease and also helpful in treatment. According to Ayurveda most of diseases are caused due to digestive disorders. Considering the need of era, we should understand the importance of these dietetics in ancient science to maintain health. Regarding all above considerations; this article emphasizes the eight important aspects of Aahara vidhi vishesh ayatana.

2. MATERIALS & METHODS

2.1. Methodology

As this is conceptual study, it comprises the review of the available literature in the ancient classical texts, scientific journals, dissertations, research paper etc. concerned with this concept. Literary data was collected and analyzed.

2.2. Concept review

Sometimes, diet is the most important part of management of disease. It is said that, ‘what we eat that we are’. So how we eat and what we eat both are equally important. As mentioned in Aahara vidhi vishesh ayatana the effect of food depends on many factors like way of cooking, origin, season, dosh, sthiti of body, agni, bala etc. This diversified aspect of dietetics and nutrition is well elaborated in Ayurveda in form of Aahara vidhi vishesh ayatana. These eight principals of food consumption are as follows -

- **Prakriti**: Qualitative characteristic of food
- **Karana**: Processing of food
- **Samyoga**: Combination/ mixing
- **Rashi**: The Quantity
- **Desha**: Habitat
- **Kaala**: Time & Seasonal variation
- **Upayoga Samstha**: Classical Ayurvedic Rules of eating
- **Upayokta**: The person who takes the food

2.2.1. **Prakriti (Quality of Food)**

*Prakriti* means nature of food article i.e. characteristic features of substance (*sheet, ushna, laghu* etc.) As we know every individual has specific physical and mental characters, every food substance also has its *prakriti* which depends on *sheet, ushna, guru* etc. properties of food. For example: *Masha* i.e. black gram is very heavy (*Guru*) in nature and *Mudga* (*Phaseolus mungo*) is light (*Laghu*) so it is easy to digest. Similarly, *Shukar* (boar) mans is *guru* and that of *Ena* (deer) has *laghu* property. In this way *Prakriti* identifies inherent properties of *ahara*. So, one should take into consideration about heavy or light properties of food before eating so that one can consume food according to their digestion power. Knowledge of *sheet ushna* property of food will help in taking food according to *deha prakruti*. E.g. People with *pitta prakruti* should avoid *ushna dravya*. Thus, the nature of food should be taken into consideration before taking food.

2.2.2. **Karana (Processing of Food)**
Karan refers to method of processing of food.⁵ Karan i.e. samskara is responsible for change in property of food. Agnisanskaran, jalasanyog, Shaucha, Manthana are some examples of samskara. Some food articles are not suitable for consumption in their original form. It has to undergo some procedure or samskara so that it can be accepted by body. Some food has prakriti of vitiation of doshas, this property can be changed by different processing over food i.e. Karan.

Agni Samskara (Contact of fire): Heating, boiling, frying and roasting are different agni samskara. Different types of agni causes different change in the property of food. e.g. food cooked on coal or natural wood has better taste than food cooked over electrical one.

Jal Sannikarsh and Shaucha (Cleaning) Samskara: It includes cleaning of substances i.e. contact with water. It is done to remove impurities. e. g: Rice prepared of dunked paddy is laghu, while rice prepared of nonboiled paddy is guru.⁵

Manthana (Churning) Samskara: Manthan i.e. churning or grinding changes properties of food. E.g. Dadhi is guru and shothkrut in nature. When dadhi is churned it is converted into buttermilk which is laghu in nature. Also, it is considered as shothghna. It is well explained by modern science in terms of bioavailability of micronutrients.

Several cooking methods like thermal processing, fermentation etc. are used to increase bioavailability of micronutrients in plants. These processes increase physicochemical accessibility of micronutrients and decrease the content of anti-nutrients.⁶ For example: Fermentation-Organic acids such as citric acid and lactic acid are produced during fermentation which increases absorption of iron and zink.⁶

2.2.3. Samyoga (Combination/mixing)

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 cannot be achieved by using the same article separately. The combination altogether produces new qualities so, it should be taken in to consideration that while preparing the food; the ingredient must be compatible to each other and should be properly mixed together. For example, Honey and Ghee in same quantity is samyog virrudha i.e. it causes harmful effect on body if taken together in same quantity. Also, milk and fish both are sweet in taste but milk is of sheet veerya and fish is of ushna verya.⁷ As they have contradiction in their potency it causes vitiation of Rakta and obstruction of strotas. 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, incompatible combination of food is called as Viruddha ahara which is well explained by Acharyas. It is the cause of different types of diseases mention in Ayurveda.⁸ ‘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. e.g. It is instructed to avoid mixing of food rich in both carbohydrate and protein.⁹ 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 digested and will get accumulated in stomach and cause indigestion and blotting (formation of aama).¹⁰

2.2.4. Rashi (The Quantity)

Rashi means Matra. Ayurveda emphasis on Aharmatra. One should take diet according to individuals age, digestive capacity etc. Digestive capacity varies from person to person, so ahara matra should also be vary with same. The food which get digested in proper time without disturbing the balance of Dhatus and Doshas is called samyukt rashi i.e. proper quantity. The proper quantity of food depends upon property of substances like laghu-guru. If food is taken in proper quantity it activates digestion while excess or insufficient food will harm the body.¹¹ Laghu food also should not be ingested in excess quantity, otherwise it causes decrease digestive power.¹² For deciding the matra of food consumption of each person Ayurveda has given one rule. Stomach should be divided into four parts, out of which two parts are filled with food, one part for water or liquid, and one part
is reserved for movement of vāyu (gas). In the context of Rashi; the terms Sarvagraha & Parigraha have been explained by Ayurveda.

**Sarvagraha:** matra of total food consume.

**Parigraha:** matra of each food substance measured separately.

In modern science more importance is given to parigraha, whereas Ayurveda gives equal importance to both types of Matras i.e. Sarvagraha & Parigraha.

### 2.2.5. Desha (Habitat)

Habitat is a geographic region. Quality of substance is affected by variety of soil and climate. Himalaya is considered as Guru Pradesh, substances grown in this place are guru in nature, while substances grown in dessert are laghu in nature. Persons who consume laghu ahaara and performing various activities are light in nature. Ahaara 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.

### 2.2.6. Kaala (Time & Seasonal Variations)

The seasonal regimen in the stage of health & disease must be followed to maintain proper health. Parinaman, maturity of substances and destruction i.e. Utpati-Sthithi-Laya are dependent on kala. Nityaga and Avasthika are two types of Kala.

**Nityaga:** In this type ahaara is taken according to Rutusatmya. For example: Rainy season is considered as vataprakopak kala. So, food containing vatashamak gunatmak substances is preferred in this season. In summer days as climate is hot, rasa dhatu kshay occurs, hence cold, madhur gunatmak ahaara is taken. Also, plenty of drinks are advised.

**Avasthika:** Food is taken depending on the condition of body i.e. either healthy or diseased. For example, Langhana is advised in Atisara, Spicy food is better to avoid in Jaundice.

Ayurveda also explains the ideal time for food intake i.e., only when food taken earlier is completely digested.

### 2.2.7. Upayoga Samstha (Classical Ayurveda Rules of Eating)

These are the directions necessary for appropriate food digestion.

#### Do’s
- Food should be ushna, hridya.
- The food should be eaten after the last meal has been digested.
- Should include all the Rasas namely - Madhura, Amla, Lavana, Katu, Tikta, Kashaya in daily diet.
- Should eat food which is nourishing and suitable to particular temperament.
- Eating with full concentration and one should bring only good thought in mind that this food is good for me.
- Place for eating should be neat, clean and pleasant.

#### Don’t’s
- Food articles antagonistic in potency or contrary to each other in action.
- Too fast or too slow food eating.
- Laughing, talking, speaking or using mobile while eating.
- Taking food during nervous, angry, anxious state of mind
- Long term & too much use of any of six Rasas.

### 2.2.8. Upyokta (The person who takes the food/ User)

Finally comes the Upyokta. That is the one who uses the Ahradrayyas. Food should be taken considering individuals place, digestive power, season, kala and jeerna ahar lakshana.

### 3. DISCUSSION

Ahaara is one of the three supporting factors of life i.e., Ahaara, Nidra and Brahmcharya, which plays a key role in the promotion of health & prevention of diseases. Physical, Mental, Social, Intellectual, Emotional health could be balanced by congenial diet. Ahaara being a part of daily routine, if one concentrates a little more on dietetic rules along with quality, quantity and mode of intake then overall effect on health can be enhanced. Nowadays, we are neglecting the digestive capacity, nutritional value
of food products, time sense of food intake and are more interested in eating tasty, ready to eat food materials. All these factors lead to manifestation of different metabolic diseases. It is also observed that many diseases are arising merely due to these faulty dietary habits. In this context, concept of Ashta Ahara vidhi vishesh ayatane is most ideal in today's lifestyle. It gives a fair idea about What? When? Why? How? And Which food material? should be consumed. In today’s era; due to Urbanization & Industrialization, the basic inherent properties of gut flora have been changed to certain extent. The concept of Prakruti & Karan (Samskara) helps in this aspect, to bring about the new, desirable and adaptable properties in food material. By analyzing the Prakruti of food material; desirable combinations (Samyog) can be made to omit the undesirable or harmful effects of the food material.

The concept of Rashi as explained above states that ahara in proper matra gets digested comfortably and promotes the life span. The Concept of Desha explains that we must essentially know about the origin as well as properties of food material as the soil has its own effect on the crop. So, we can choose food according to body. Kala is taken into consideration every time of food consumption. Hence, to get all benefits consumed Ahara; the Kala is to be considered as an important factor. Upyog samstha are the Code & Conducts for taking diet should be followed in today’s lifestyle. By considering all above said regulations of food consumption; Upyokta i.e., a wise person should understand the good & bad outcome of right or wrong eating.

4. CONCLUSION

Nowadays life has become superfast. So, people are adopting convenient ways of diet which is causing various health problems. The codes & conducts related to Ahara have been forgotten. Therefore, there is a need to enlighten this concept of Ahar Vidhi Vishesh ayatane as explained in ancient Ayurveda classics. Ayurveda deals with both Swasthyarakshana and Vyadhiparimoksha. The adaptation of the concept of Ashta Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatanas will be helpful in fulfillment of both these Prayojanas.

5. REFERENCES

Cite this article as:

Source of Support: Nil;    Conflict of Interest: None declared.