

**AHARA VIDHI VISHESH AYATANA – A CONCEPTUAL STUDY****Dr. Sakshi Sharma^{*1}, Dr. Guru Prasad Sharma² and Dr. Anil Badhoria³**¹PG Scholar, Final Year, Deptt. of Rog Nidan, RGGPGAC & Hospital, Paprola, HP.²MD Kaya Chikitsa, Medical Officer, RBSK (J&K).³Reader, Govt. Medical Ayurvedic College, Jammu.Article Received on
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Corresponding Author*Dr. Sakshi Sharma**PG Scholar, Final Year,
Deptt. of Rog Nidan,
RGGPGAC & Hospital,
Paprola, HP.**ABSTRACT**

Health is the state of physical, mental, social and spiritual well being. The *Prayojana* of *Ayurveda* is to protect health of the healthy and to cure disorder in the diseased. Health as well as diseases is dependent on various factors. As *Acharyas* had described that *Ahara*, *Nidra* and *Brahmacarya* are *Triupstambha* (three sub pillars), which support the body itself. Here *Ahara* has been placed first, which shows that it is most important to maintain and sustain the life. In today's modern era, due to lack of knowledge about correct eating habits, we blindly follow the wrong dietary habits, which causes *Agnivaishmya* (digestive distress) and produces various life style disorders of unknown etiology.

In *Ayurveda*, *Ahara*, as well as the method of its intake both have equal importance. Food plays a decisive role in development, sustenance, reproduction and termination of life. Through centuries, Food has been recognized as an important factor for human beings, in health and diseased state. *Ahara* is not only needed for the continuity of life, but also for *Bala*, *Varna*, *Upacaya* etc. For the method of taking food, *Acharya Charak* has defined *Ashta Ahara vidhivisheshayatana* in a very systematic and scientific manner. It gives basic dietary guidelines about choosing appropriate food, combination of food, cooking method, quality and quantity of food. A thorough understanding of *Ashta Ahara vidhi visheshayatana* will help in reducing *Agnidushti* (digestive distress) and achieving the both *Prayojana* of *Ayurveda*.

KEYWORDS: Health, *Triupastambha*, *Ahara*, *Ashta ahara vidhi visheshayatana*, basic dietary guidelines, *Agnidushti* (digestive stress).

INTRODUCTION

Most of the lifestyle disorders prevalent these days are mainly due to the faulty dietary habits. According to *Ayurveda* the reasons for all the diseases lies within our *Agni* i.e. digestive process. Each food we take either has *Dosha prakopaka* or *Dosha shamaka* action on human body. The improper digestion (*Mandagni*) produces toxins (*Ama*) which leads to majority of diseases.^[1]

These lifestyle disorders are avoidable by following various regimen described in our *Ayurvedic samhitas*. *Ayurveda* texts in its separate chapters have clearly described the day, night and seasonal regimen which are essential for our healthiness through our lifestyle. *Acharya charak* has described 8 specific factors of method of dieting in a very systematic and scientific manner which is known as *Ashta ahara vidhi visheshayatana*.^[2] These are 8 major aspects of food convention that includes compatibility of food articles which are determinant factors for the maintenance of Health.

Ashta Ahara vidhi visheshayatana explains various factors that influence *Ahara* such as origin, season, preparation, biological properties, environmental factors, freshness and provides a logical explanation of how to balance food according to one's *Dosha* and physical needs.

Ahara Vidhi Visesayatana means the factors responsible for wholesome and unwholesome effect of the *Ahara* and methods of *Ahara sevana* (Special rule for diet intake).^[3]

These *eight* factors should be considered before taking food:^[4]

1. *Prakriti*, 2. *Karana*, 3. *Samyoga*, 4. *Rashi*, 5. *Desha*, 6. *Kala*, 7. *Upyoga- sansatha*, 8. *Upyokta*

1) *Prakriti / swabhava - Nature of food / Qualitative characterstic of food*

Prakriti is *Swabhava* (nature) which is the natural existence of properties like *Laghu*, *Guru* etc. in substance used as food and drug.^[5]

As we know that each and every individual has got specific *Sharirika* and *Manasika prakriti* (temperament), in the same way according to heaviness, hotness etc each food and drug substance has also got its *Prakriti*. For example *Masha* is *Guru* (heavy) and *Mudga* is *Laghu* (light), meat of *Shukar* is *Guru*(heavy) and *Ena* (deer) meat is *Laghu* (light) in nature.^[5]

Prakriti is the natural qualities of *Ahara dravya*, while consuming any food article one must keep in mind the *Virya* (potency), *Sheeta* or *Ushna*, the food is heavy or light in digestion and the effect of food on dosha either it migrates or aggravates the *Dosha* etc.

For example the individual having symptoms of *Kaphavridhi* should avoid the *Guru* and *Abhishyandi ahara*. Thus the *prakriti* of food must be considered in diet.

2) *Karana* (Processing of Substances)^[6]

Karana is also known as *Sanskara*. It means processing of substances which leads to alteration in the inherent properties of substances. This modification is brought about by dilution, application of heat (vaporization, distillation and sublimation), clarification, emulsification, storing, maturing, flavoring, impregnation, preservation and the material of receptacle. As by processing, *Vrihi* which is heavy to digest, becomes light when transformed into *Laja* after frying, on the other hand, flour of roasted grains becomes heavy when processed into cooked bolus.

3) *Samyoga* (combination/ mixing)

Samyoga (combination) is aggregation of two or more substances. This exhibits peculiarities which are not seen in case of individual substances.^[7] Sometimes it is seen that the combination of diet shows different effect from the individual effect. Combination of two or more substances results in the manifestation of special qualities, which can not be achieved using the same article separately. The combination of 2 or more substances altogether may produce new qualities so while preparing the food it should be considered that the ingredient must be compatible to each other and should be properly mixed together.

□ For example: Honey and ghee when taken alone is wholesome to the body but when combined in equal quantity they become toxic so their combination in equal quantity is not advised.

□ Also milk (*Sheet virya*) and fish (*Ushnavirya*) should not be taken altogether. though both of them have sweet taste but due to the contraindication in their potency they vitiate the blood and obstruct the strotas.

In modern era people don't choose food by their nutritional properties but by the taste. They combine various types of ingredients by using various food materials. Due to lack of knowledge of potency of food they mix the ingredients which may be incompatible to each other

and may produce harmful effect to the body. So its time to rediscover the art of food combination in such a way that the ingredients may compatible to each other. The concept of viruddha ahara is well explained in *Ayurveda* which tells about the incompatible food and their harmful effect to the body.^[8]

4) *Rasi (Quantity)*^[9]

Rasi is the measure of the total mass and of each constituent in order to determine the effects of the right and wrong doses. Quantity of food taken in its entirety is *Sarvagrha* and the Quantity of each of its ingredients is *Parigrha*.

A person should have his diet in proper amount; it means that a person should have diet according to his digestive power (*Agni*).^[10] The *Lakshana* of appropriate amount of food is that it should be digested in proper time without causing any problem in the natural *Prakriti* of the person.^[11]

The *Ahara* in gross can be divided on the basis of *Guru* and *Laghu*. The *Guru Ahara dravyas* have *Prithvi* and *Jala Guna* predominantly; that's why they pacify the *Agni* if taken in large amount so they should be taken 1/3rd or 1/2 of the *Kukshi*. On the other hand *Laghu Ahara Dravyas* predominantly have *Vayu* and *Agni Guna*, which intensify the *Agni*, so they are considered to be least harmful even if they are eaten to a surfeit though they should also taken in proper amount.^[12] As per *Vagbhatta* half of the stomach is to be filled with solid food, one quarter with liquids, another quarter should be kept vacant for the free movement of *Vata*.^[13] The absence of measure is laid down under two heads^[14] -

1. *Heena Matra* 2-*Ati Matra*

The diet which is deficient in measure (*Heena Matra*) is seen to result in the impairment of strength, complexion and plumpness, in the impairment of functions of life, virility and vitality, in vitiation of the eight body elements and in the incidence of the eighty kinds of *Vata* disorders.

5) *Desha (Habitat)*

Desha denotes place relating to growth as well as distribution of the substances and also the suitability in respect of place. It is a geographic region. Food substances differs in quality due to difference in soil and climate.^[15] In *Ayurveda* *Desha* denotes both *Bhoomi desh* and

Dehadesha. *Ahara* should be taken according to *Desha*. The food substance grown in same *Bhoomidesh* which is native *desha* for the person suits him.

Deshapariksha is one of the 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)*^[16]

Time is used in two senses, time in the general sense and time in the sense of stage. The sense of stage is used in relation to disease (*Avasthika Kala*) and the general sense is used in relation to seasonal wholesomeness (*Nitayaga Kala*), in form of day and night. Life as a whole starting from intrauterine period till death is the entire time dynamic. Peoples are bound to face major and minor changes in every moment of life and thereby, *Doshas* are also accordingly varied.

In *Swastha-avastha*, *Kala* is considered as *Nitayaga*. In this condition *Ahara* should be taken according to *Dincharya* and *Ritucharya*, which help the body function to acclimatize with the external environment. In *Rugnavastha*, *Avasthika Kala* is considered by *Vyadhi Avastha*. E.g. in *Naveen Jwara*, *Langhana* should be done for 7 days, but if *Jwara* is *Jeerna Ghritapana* is indicated.

7) *Upayoga samstha (Classical ayurveda rules of dieting)*

It denotes the rules for dieting. This depends on the digested food.^[17] *Ahara vidhi visheshatayana* has been described for taking food, it should be considered in diet.

- The *Ahara* should be ushna (warm), tasty, qualitative, easily digestible.
- The food should be snigdha.
- The food should be taken in suitable quantity according to the *Prakriti* and *Agni* of a person.
- The food should be eaten only when the last meal has been digested.
- Food antagonistic in potency or contrary to each other in action should not be taken.
- Too fast or too slow eating habit should be avoided.
- The food should include all the 6 *Rasas* (*Madhura, Amla, Lavana, Katu, Tikta, Kashaya*)
- Long term and too much use of any one of the six *Rasas* should be avoided.
- Laughing, talking, thinking or watching television while eating should be avoided.
- Food should not be taken during anxious, angry, nervous or disturbed state of mind.^[18]

8) *Upyokta* (The User)^[19]

The user is he who makes use of food, habituation depends on him. Creating wholesomeness by habitual intake of things comes under *Upyokta* and known as *Satmya* which differs person to person. As the *Prkriti* of *Ahara Dravyas* is considerable factors, the *Prakriti* of *Upyokta* is also considered for wholesomeness of diet. This factor is not considered separately by *Vridha Vagbhata*, he count this under *Upyoga Vyavatsaha*, So that he given seven *Vidhi Vidhan*, in place of *eight* of *Charaka Samhita*.

These are the factors described in our classics which are the foundation of Dietetics. After describing these 8 factors, we must look some other rules which are described in our classics. These are called as *Ahara Vidhi Vidhana* which indicates the method of taking *Ahara*.^[20] These are—*Usna*, *Snigdha*, *Matravat*, Is consumed after the digestion of previously ingested food, *Virya Aviruddha Ahara*, Is to be taken into *Iste Dese* where it provided with *Ista Sarvopakarana*, Not to be taken speedily, Not to be taken too slowly, Taken without talking with others, Taken without laughing, Taken with the concentration of the mind.

Scientific Explanation of Ahara Vidhi Vidhan

Acharya Charak has given *ahara vidhi vidhan*^[21] (dietary guidelines) for which scientific explanation is explained in following points.

***Ushnamashniyat* (consuming warm food)**

Warm food tastes good and doesn't pacify *Jatharagni*. Food is easily digested as food has to come to body temperature for digestion.^[22] *Vata* and *kapha* are pacified on taking warm food. Heating also kills microbes. On taking cold food more energy will be use for digestion which may lead lethargy. So, warm food should be consumed.

***Snigdhamashniyat* (Diet should include fat)**

Fat improves the taste of diet, increases *Agni* so food easily digested, pacifies *Vata* due to *Snigdha Guna*, enhances body growth, provides strength to senses, improves strength and also improves complexion and glow of the body. Fat provides a concentrate source of energy and essential fatty acids are needed for growth and development, building of nerve cells and brain. 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. *Ruksha ahara* may cause obstruction in *srotas*. *Ghrita* is best *vata-pitta shamak* and *tail* is best *vata-kapha sahamak*^[23] so if diet contains both then it pacifies *tridosh*.

Acharya Charak mentions *ksheergritabhyaso rasaynanam*. Monounsaturated fatty acids help in stabilizing blood sugar level. Omega -3 fatty acid create a greater sense of fullness for longer periods so that stomach doesn't want food again, preventing obesity, it also boosts serotonin level in brain helping improvement in mood and motivation. It also stimulates muscle protein synthesis in older adults.

***Matravat Asniyat*^[24] (Balanced Diet)**

It means eat in adequate amount. The *Lakshna* by which a person can decide that this is *Matravat* are,^[25] Freedom from distress in the stomach, Absence of any cardiac discomfort, The 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.

Easeful digestion and assimilation of food in the evening and the morning, the imparting of strength, complexion and plumpness.

***Jirne Asniyat*^[26] (Meal taken after digestion of previous meal)**

It simply 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 afterwards, it provokes all the *Doshas*(humor). 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.

Veeryaviruddhamashniyat

It is essential to take *Veerya-aviruddha ahara* to prevent problems arising due to *Viruddhaveerya* ahara such as impotency, blindness, *raktavikar*, *grahani*, *amavisha*, hypersensitivity, *kustha* (skin disorders), *shotha*, fever, etc and may even cause death.^[27]

***Ishtadeshe ishtasarvopkarnam chashniyatm* (Meal taken at proper place and with proper instruments)**

Meal should be taken in proper place and with proper utensils so that hygiene is maintained and no stress arises during meal. In stressful condition, cortisol level increases. In a study conducted on 59 healthy women, they were exposed to both a stress session and a control session on different days, stress increases cortisol level, so they consumed more calories on stress day than on control day. More sweet food was consumed.

Increase in negative mood in response to stress lead to greater food consumption.^[28]

***Na atidrutum Ashniyat*^[29] (Not eating too fast)**

Do not eat hurriedly. One should not take food too hurriedly. If food is taken too hurriedly it enters into a wrong way or it is not properly placed, as food taken in hurry can obviously affect the power of digestion by increasing the *Vata*.

***Na ativilambitam Ashniyat*^[30] (Not eating too slow)**

Do not eat too leisurely. One eating too leisurely is not satisfied even if he eats much. The food would become cold and there will be irregularity in digestion.

***Ajalpana, Ahasan, Tanmana Bhunjita*^[31] (Eating without talking or laughing, Mindful eating)**

Do not talk or laugh while eating, one who talks and laughs while eating is liable to suffer the same disorders as the one who eats too hastily. In this most important one is that the food should be eaten with concentration. Talking and laughing divert the attention from the meals and the food is eaten too slowly or too hastily.

***Aatamanamabhisamiksya Bhunjita*^[32] (Eating after analyzing one's needs)**

Eat rightly, considering your constitution. The food will agree with me, this food will not agree with me, such knowledge makes for the determination of what is wholesomeness for each individual. This one is very important, as rules of *Ahara* are definitely wholesome, but they are general rules. They should be applied by considering own self. These were the

dietetic rules for both healthy and unhealthy persons but *Sushruta* has given *Dwadasa-Asana-Pravicharana*^[33] especially for unhealthy peoples. These *pravichara* facilitate the use of different type of *Ahara* and *Ahara Vidhi* according to the status of health of a person but whenever a person takes food.

CONCLUSION

Ayurveda strongly believes that; the reason for all the diseases lies within our digestive process. In today's fast paced life 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 dietary habits many lifestyle disorders of unknown cause are arising. Healthier eating habits may help lower risk for type-2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, cancer, infertility and many other health problems. These eating habits are clearly mentioned by our *Acharyas* in the form of *Ashta Aahar Vidhi Vishesh Aayatna* 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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