

## CRITICAL STUDY OF ROLE OF REGULAR USE (*SHEELAYET*) OF WHOLESOME DIET IN PREVENTION OF LIFESTYLE DISEASES

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### ABSTRACT

*Trayopsthambha* (Three sub-pillars), advised by ancient sages, are essential to maintain health. Diet is one of these three sub-pillars, plays important role in maintenance of physical and mental health and thus to get longevity of human being. Many Ayurvedic texts have mentioned wholesome diet with its qualities and functions in detail. *Vagabhata* mentioned the list of *shilayet ahara dravya*, i. e., wholesome food for regular use including food items of all tastes. Not following rules of diet mentioned in ayurvedic texts may be the reason for these life style disorders. It is necessary to review the *shilayet ahara dravya*, i. e., wholesome food for regular use as given in major ayurvedic texts i. e. *Charaka Samhita* and *Ashtanga Hridaya* in detail

and to study its role in prevention of life-style disorders. Review of *shilayet dravya* i. e. wholesome diet according to *Vagbhatacharya* shows that diet should include all six tastes and sweet is prominent. *Guna* (quality), *Virya* (potency), *Vipaka* (taste at the end of digestion), and *Prabhava* (*special effect*) all equally support for maintenance of health and prevention of disease to achieve the life's aim. *Shilayet dravya* i. e. wholesome diet certainly helps in prevention of lifestyle disorders by maintenance of balance of *dosha-dhatu-mala*.

**KEYWORDS:** *shilayet ahara dravya*, wholesome food, life-style disorders.

### INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, the traditional Indian medicinal system remains the most ancient yet living tradition with sound philosophical and experimental basis. *Brihatrayi*, i. e. three major

treatises of Ayurveda namely – *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita* and *Vagbhata Samhita* (*Ashtanga Samgraha* and *Ashtanga Hridaya*) emphasize mainly on *Tri-sutras- Hetu* (etiological factors), *Linga* (symptoms and signs) and *Aushadha* (treatment). To achieve four goals of life (*Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kama* and *Moksha*), health is given the prime importance.<sup>[1]</sup> The first aim of Ayurveda is to maintain health as well as to prevent Diseases.

As it is said, ‘prevention is better than cure’, Ayurveda has given prime importance for the maintenance of health and prevention of diseases. Various preventive measures like *Dinacharya* (daily regimen), *Ritucharya* (seasonal regimen), proper diet and dietary habits, *Sadvritta* (code of conduct) are the described in detail in major texts of Ayurveda.

*Trayopstambha* (Three sub-pillars), advised by ancient sages, are essential to maintain health. Diet is one of these three sub-pillars, plays important role in maintenance of physical and mental health and thus to get longevity of human being.

Many Ayurvedic texts have mentioned wholesome diet with its qualities and functions in detail. *Charakacharya* has classified food items into twelve *Ahar Vargas* (food groups) and in that each group one food article is said to be *pathyatama* (most wholesome).<sup>[2]</sup> *Nityasevaniya dravya* (daily consumable) food items are advised for maintenance of health. *Sushrutacharya* has also mentioned *Ahar Vargas* (food groups) with their qualities and functions in detail.

In *Ashtanga hridya*, *Vagbhatachrya* collected only the essence of knowledge from numerous texts written by sages scattered in the various major texts. He gave practical approach to many ayurvedic principles mentioned in *Charaka Samhita* and *Sushruta Samhita*. *Vagabhata* mentioned the list of *shilayet ahara dravya*, i. e., wholesome food for regular use including food items of all tastes.<sup>[3]</sup>

In present time, due to changing life style, dietary pattern has got changed. Various food articles are introduced in our daily diet like junk food, processed food, frozen food etc. Due to unhealthy and improper eating habits, competition in all fields and stress at all levels, which lead many health problems called as life style disorders such as hypertension, cardiac disorders, obesity etc. Not following rules of diet mentioned in ayurvedic texts may be the reason for these life style disorders.

The present paper is an attempt to review the *shilayet ahara dravya*, i. e., wholesome food for regular use as given in major ayurvedic texts i. e. *Charaka Samhita* and *Ashtanga Hridaya* in detail and to study its role in prevention of life-style disorders.

### Literature Review

According to *Charakachrya*, 'Ahar' (Wholesome diet) is one which maintains the equilibrium of Bodily *dhatu*s and helps in promotion of health and prevention of diseases.<sup>[4]</sup>

*Ahara dravya* are classified into six categories depending upon the *Rasa* (Tastes) - *Madhura* (sweet), *Amla* (sour), *Lavana* (salty), *Katu* (pungent), *Tikta* (bitter), and *Kashya* (astringent) *rasas*. All *rasas* are included in *sada shilayet ahara* in proper quantity.<sup>[5]</sup>

*Charakachrya* has described eight factors *In Ashtau Ahara vidhi visheshayatana* (principles of diet) as follows<sup>[6]</sup>

1. *Prakruti* (Natural quality)
2. *Karana* (Preparation)
3. *Samyoga* (combination)
4. *Rashi* (quantity)
5. *Desh* (climate)
6. *Kala* (temporal factor)
7. *Upayoga Sanstha* (rules of use)
8. *Upayokta* (the user)

*Nitya sevaniya dravya* (daily consumable foods) are advised by *Charakachrya* which contain *shashtishali* (rice grown in 60 days), *shali* (rice), *Yava* (Barley), *Mudga* (green gram), *sandhava* (rock salt), *Amalaki* (*Embalica officinalis*), *Antarikshajala* (rain water), *Ghrita* (Butter), *Godugdha* cow milk, *Madhu* (honey), *jangalamamsa* (Meat of animal of desert like land).<sup>[7]</sup>

*Acharya Vagabhata* has described 'Aharavidhi' (regimen of diet) for consumption of food. Food should be consumed at the proper time, it should be the accustomed, clean, partaken with attention, and contain all the six tastes with predominance of sweet taste.<sup>[8]</sup>

In "shilayet" food all six tastes food articles are included. This is the basic requirement of wholesome diet.

*Dravyas* (Substances used as food / drugs) are of three kinds *Shamana* (those which alleviate the doshas), *Kopan* (which aggravate the dosas) and *Swasthahita* (Suitable for health / maintain health).<sup>[9]</sup>

*Swastha hitakar ahara* is necessary to maintain balance of *dosha*, *dhatu* and *Malas*. *Vagbhatacharya* advised some food items for regular use as “*shilayet*” diet which can be considered as the most wholesome.<sup>[10]</sup>

Table: 1

Sr. No.	Food article Name	English Name	Rasa (Taste)	Guna (Quality)	Virya (Potency)	Vipaka	Classification	Karma (Action)
1.	<i>Shali</i>	Rice	Sweet	Unctuous, heavy	Cold	Sweet	Cereal	<i>Vrisya</i> (Aphrodisiac), <i>Mutrala</i> (diuretic),
2.	<i>Godhuma</i>	Wheat	Sweet	Unctous	Cold	Sweet	Cereal	<i>Vrishya</i> , <i>Jivaniya</i> (nourishing), <i>Sandhankar</i> (unites the broken parts), <i>Stharyakar</i> (gives strength), <i>Pathya</i> (good for health)
3.	<i>Yava</i>	Barley	Sweet	Dry, <i>Sara</i> , <i>Guru</i>	Cold	Sweet	Cereal	<i>Vrisya</i> , <i>Stharyakar</i> , <i>Sara</i> (laxative),
4.	<i>Sastika</i>	Rice mature in Sixty days	Sweet	Unctous	Cold	Sweet	Cereal	<i>Sthira</i> ( stays long inside the body), <i>Ghrarhi</i> (constipating)
5.	<i>Jangala mansa</i>	Meat of animala of desert like land	Sweet	Unctous, light	cold	Sweet	Meat	Constipating, <i>Hitakar</i> (good), <i>pittakar</i>
6.	<i>Sunisannaka</i>		Sweet, astringent	Heavy	cold	Pungent	Vegetable	<i>Agnikar</i> (increase hunger), <i>Vrisya</i> , mitigates three <i>doshas</i> .
7.	<i>Jivanti</i>		Sweet	Dry, heavy	Cold	Sweet	Vegetable	<i>Chaksusya</i> (good for eyes)
8.	<i>Balmulak</i>	raddish	Bitter	Light, hot	Hot	Pungent	Vegetable	Mitigates the <i>doshas</i>
9.	<i>Vastukam</i>		Astringent	Light	cold	Sweet	Vegetable	<i>Varchobhada</i> (breaks up the hard faeces)
10.	<i>Haritaki</i>	Chebolic Myrobalan	Five tastes except Lavana	Light, Ruksha	Ushana	Sweet	Medicine	<i>Dipani</i> , <i>pachani</i> , <i>budhiendriya balaprada</i> (improves intelligence, strengthens the sense organs), <i>Ayushya</i> (best for long life)
11.	<i>Amalaki</i>	<b>emblic myrobalan</b>	Sour,	Dry	Cold	Sweet	Fruits	<i>Vrisya</i> , <i>Chaksusya</i> , helps elimination of urine and faeces
12.	<i>Mrdvika</i>	Dry grape Raisins	Sweet	Unctous, heavy	Cold	Slightly astigent	Fruits	<i>Vrisya</i> , <i>Chaksusya</i>
13.	<i>Patola</i>		Bitter	dry, heavy	Cold	Pungent	Vegetable	<i>Hridya</i> ( good for the heart), <i>Krumihar</i> (destroys the worms), <i>ruchiaprada</i> (gives taste)

14.	<i>Mudga</i>	Green gram	Sweet, astringent	Light, cold	Cold	Pungent	Pulses	<i>Sangrahi</i> (absorbs water), mitigate fat, <i>kapha</i> , blood and <i>pitta</i> .
15.	<i>Sarkara</i>	Sugar	Sweet	Heavy,	Cold	Sweet	Sugar	<i>Vrisya</i> , <i>Bruhana</i> (promoting body bulk),
16.	<i>Ghrita</i>	cow Butter fat	Sweet	Unctous, heavy	Cold	Sweet	Fat	<i>Vayasthapan</i> (retaining of youth), improving intelligence, memory, long life, good for eyes,
17.	<i>Divyodak</i>	Rain water	Sweet	light	Cold	Sweet	Water	<i>Jivaniya</i> (enlivening), <i>tarpana</i> (satiating), healthy for heart and mind, refreshing, stimulating the intellect
18.	<i>Kshira</i>	cow Milk	Sweet	Unctous, heavy	Cold	Sweet	Milk	<i>Ojasa</i> (invigorating increase the tissues of the body), mitigate <i>vata</i> and <i>pitta</i> , aphrodisiac.
19.	<i>Ksoudra</i>	Honey	Sweet ,astringent	Dry	Hot	Sweet	Honey	Good for eyes, <i>chhedi</i> ( breaks up hard masses), decreases <i>kapha</i> .
20.	<i>Dadim</i>	Pomegranate	Sweet, sour	Light, unctuous	Not very hot	Sweet	Fruits	Mitigates <i>vata</i> and <i>kapha</i> , <i>Hridya</i> , <i>ghrahi</i> , <i>rochan dipanam</i> (stimulate appetite and digestion
21.	<i>Sandhava</i>	Salt	salty	light	not hot in potency	slightly sweet	salt	<i>Vrisya</i> , <i>Hridya</i> , Mitigates all <i>doshas</i> , <i>pathya</i> , <i>avidhahi</i> (not causes burning sensation during digestion), kindles digestion.

## DISCUSSION

*Dravya pradhanya* (Importance of substance)- *Dravya* (Substance) is *Panchabhutatmaka* (composed of, born from the five elements).<sup>[11]</sup> *Acharya Susruta* described *Prana* (Vital energy) depends upon the *Ahara* and *Ahara* is dependent upon the *Rasa*.<sup>[12]</sup>

Any *Dravyas* or food articles function according to their quality like *Rasa* (tastes), *Guna* (quality), *Virya* (potency), *Vipaka* (taste at the end of digestion) and *Prabhava* (special effect). Among these all, *Rasa* is given prime importance.

Substance clearly manifest is designated as *rasa*.<sup>[13]</sup>

*Shadrasatmaka ahara* consists of proper quantity of *Madhura* (sweet), *Amla* (sour), *Lavana* (salty), *Katu* (Pungent), *Tikta* (bitter) and *Kashaya* (astringent) *rasas* and each one is more strengthen to the body in their order of priority.<sup>[14]</sup>

In *Ayurvedic* classics, many wholesome food articles are described. *Vaghabhatacarya* has given special *Shilayet* (regular use) food which is most wholesome and advised to consume regularly. Most of the Food articles under *shilayet ahara* are *Madhura rasa* (Sweet in taste).

*Rasas* get formed from the preponderance of two *Bhutas*. *Madhura rasa* is *Parthiva* (earthy) and *Apya* (watery).<sup>[15]</sup>

Sweet is understood by its adhering to the inside of the mouth when put into it, providing a feeling of pleasure to the body and comfort to the sense organs.<sup>[16]</sup>

It being familiar since birth (*aajanma satmaya*) produces greater strength in the *dhatu*s (tissues), is very valuable for children, the aged, the wounded the emaciated, is good for the colour complexion, hair, sense organs and *Ojas* (essence of the tissues), *Bruhana* (promoting body bulk), good for the throat. It helps life activities (*Jeevana*), Prolong life (*Ayushakara*), and mitigates *Pitta* and *Vata*.<sup>[17]</sup>

Due to above mentioned qualities of sweet taste, majority of food articles advised by *Vagbhata* are *madhura*. Substance of sweet taste cause aggravation of *Kapha* but In *sada shilayeta ahara* all included food articles are exceptional food articles like old *shali* (rice), *Yava* (barly), *Mudga* (Green beans), *Ghodhuma* (wheat), *Kshaudra* (honey), *Sita* (sugar) and

meat of animals of *Jangal* land (desert like) they mitigate *Tridosha* and maintain the equilibrium of *Doshas*.

*Amla* rasatmaka dravyas cause aggravation of *Pitta dosha*, except *Dadima* (Pomegranate) and *Amalaki* (Amala) and only these two food articles are included in *shilayet* food so it will be beneficial for the maintenance of the equilibrium of *doshas*.

Salts are bad for the eyes (vision) except *Saindhava* salt and only it is advised in practice as a regular food article.

*Pungent and Bitter* tastes are non aphrodisiacs and aggravate *Vata* except *Patola* which is included in *shilayet* food.

Astringents are usually cold in potency and have obstructive quality except *Abhaya* (haritaki) and it included in *shilayet* food.

*Gunas* (qualities) – *Gunas* actually pertain to the bhutas (elements) present in the substance and *gunas* are ascribed to the tastes because of intimate co-existence.<sup>[18]</sup>

*Virya* (potency) is of two types -cold and hot. Qualities of *dravya* also depend on *virya*. *Dravya* with cold potency nourishes the body, causes *Jivana* (activities of life), and production. Most of the advised food comes under cold potency. Except *Saindhav* salt (*Anushna*) and *Haritaki* hot in potency but it has (*vayasthapana*) rejuvenation quality.<sup>[19]</sup>

*Vipaka*, According to *Vagbhatacharya, Rasao raso Tulyaphala*. It menace *Vipaka* also works like *Rasa*.<sup>[20]</sup>

Foods articles are advised in practice repeatedly are in *Madhura rasatmak* and above quote *vipak* is also *Madhura* and it works like *madhura rasa*. *Madhura vipaka* (taste at the end of digestion) nourished *dhatu*s qualitatively as well as quantitatively.

*Prabhava* is the special quality of *dravyas* which act according to their special *Guna*. In *shilayet* food *Yava, Ghee, Moong, Dadim, and Haritaki* are the *dravyas* work according to their special quality (*prabhav*).<sup>[21]</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

1. One who consume daily healthy foods, become free from all diseases.<sup>[22]</sup>



2. Review of *shilayet* dravya i. e. wholesome diet according to *Vagbhatacharya* shows that diet should include all six tastes and sweet is prominent.
3. *Guna* (quality), *Virya* (potency), *Vipaka* (taste at the end of digestion), and *Prabhava* (*special effect*) all equally support for maintenance of health and prevention of disease to achieve the life's aim.
4. *Shilayet* dravya i. e. wholesome diet certainly helps in prevention of lifestyle disorders by maintenance of balance of *dosha-dhatu-mala*.

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