IMPORTANCE OF AAHAR-VIDHI-VISHESHAYATANA FOR PREVENTION OF LIFE STYLE DISORDERS: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT
Among the people, there are many miss concepts and myths about diet. Ahara is one of the main pillars of human body as included in ‘Trayopastambha’. In Ayurveda the concept of Balanced Ahara dates back more than 5000 years. The food which passes through the process of aharan is called ahara. In Ayurveda, types, processing, right method of intake of Ahara is discussed in detail very beautifully. Nowadays, many lifestyle diseases are taking place due to lack of or incorrect information about cooking procedures, irregular timings and consuming imbalanced diet and not following the prescribed rules for preparing, preserving and eating food. Vidhi means laws and aharavidhi means laws of dietetics which are beautifully explained in Ayurvedic literature. Aharvidhivisheshayatane emphasizes various factors that influence Ahara, such as its properties, origin, environmental factors, season and methods of preparation. They guide us about how to balance food according to one's Dosha, Prakriti and physical needs. This paper will highlight and explain the actual dietary regimen in Ayurveda for preventive and curative purpose of life style disorders.

KEYWORDS: Aharvidhivisheshayatana, Ahara, Life Style Disorders.

INTRODUCTION
The aim of Ayurveda is to promote and maintain the health of the healthy person (swastha) and to cure the diseases.¹¹ Ahara (diet) & Vihara (lifestyle) are the main factors which influence on our health status and are responsible for generation of diseases. Ahara is one of
the main pillars of human body as included in ‘Trayopastambha’.\textsuperscript{[2]} As ahara is kept first in this sutra of trayopastambha; it denotes that it is the main among three for maintenance of human life. Prevalence of life style disorders has dramatically increased worldwide in 21\textsuperscript{st} century. These occur neither due to single cause nor does it have single solution. Its treatment is combined effect of medicine, balanced diet, behavioural changes and exercise.

In Ayurveda the concept of Balanced Ahara dates back more than 5000 years. The food which passes through the process of aharan is called ahara. In Ayurveda, types, processing, right method of intake of Ahara is discussed in detail very beautifully. Ojas, teja, dhatus, senses, bala (strength), Tushiti (satisfaction of mind), Arogya (Health), are all dependant on food.\textsuperscript{[3]} According to Charak samhita, the life of all living things is food and all worlds seek food. Complexion, good voice, long life, understanding, happiness, satisfaction, growth, strength and intelligence are all established in food.\textsuperscript{[4]} Nowadays, many lifestyle diseases are taking place due to lack of or incorrect information about cooking procedures, irregular timings and consuming imbalanced diet and not following the prescribed rules for preparing, preserving and eating food. Also, due to competitive environment, job insecurity, desire to make extra money, fulfilment of family needs are some of the reasons why all people are getting addicted to bad eating habits or giving food as a secondary importance. In today's fast paced life; most of the health problems are developed due to some sort of digestive distress. Ayurveda strongly believes that; the reason for all the diseases lies within our digestion process and power.\textsuperscript{[5]}

Vidhi means laws and ahara-vidhi means laws of dietetics which are beautifully explained in Ayurvedic literature. Aharvidhivisheshayatane emphasizes various factors that influence Ahara, such as its properties, origin, environmental factors, season and methods of preparation. They guide us about how to balance diet according to one's dosha, prakriti and physical needs.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

All the relevant research papers published in various journals, Research papers available in Pubmed central, Google scholar, Ayush, Dhara were searched out and taken into consideration. Ayurveda Samhita, Nighantu and few important Ayurveda books along with Modern literature relevant to topic were also studied out. After studying out all of these results and conclusions were obtained.
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

One has to consume the diet; which is suitable to him in all aspects. If one doesn’t follows these laws of consuming ahara he has to face health problems. So, how we eat is as much as important as what we eat. Ashta-Ahara-Vidhi-Vishesha-Ayatanani (Eight aspects of Dietetics) means the factors responsible for good and bad effect of the ahara and methods of ahara sevan. These eight factors should be considered before taking food. They are briefly discussed below:

1. Prakriti: Qualitative characteristic of food
2. Karana: Processing of food
3. Samyoga: Combination/ mixing
4. Rashi: The Quantity
5. Desha: Habitat
6. Kaala: Time & Seasonal variation
7. Upayoga Samthta: Classical Ayurvedic Rules of eating
8. Upayokta: The person who eats the food / User.

1. Prakriti: (Qualitative characteristic of food)
Prakriti means natural quality or properties of food. As each and every person has specific physical and mental characteristics (Prakriti), in the same way, food also has specific characteristics like heavy, light, hot, cold etc. For example Masha (Phaseolus roxburghii) is very heavy (Guru) and Mudga (Phaseolus mungo) is light (Laghu). In the same way meat of Shukar (boar) is heavy and that of Ena (deer) is light in nature. Nowadays, maximum hybrid food items are available, their characteristics are altered and natural one is being destroyed. So, such food effects on our body. While consuming food items one should always keep in mind the properties of food & also the status of agni, dosha, prakriti of himself. For example, the person having pitta vridddhi symptoms should not eat hot, spicy, oily food. He should eat dry, cold, sweet food to pacify pitta. This is how one can follow this vidhi of ‘prakriti’ to maintain health.

2. Karana: (Processing of food)
Karana means the processing of food (i.e. Samskara). It means alterations and modifications in food items to improve the good qualities and to cut off the bad qualities of food items. It’s also helpful to improve the taste of food and make it easy for digestion. By processing, Vrihi which is heavy to digest becomes light when transformed in to Laja after...
frying. On the other hand, flour of roasted grains becomes heavy when processed in to cooked bolus.\textsuperscript{[11]} Various Samskaras explained in our texts are; Jalasamyoga, Agnisannikarsha, Shaucha, Manthana, Desha, Kala, Bhavana, Kalapakarsha and Bhaajna.\textsuperscript{[12]} These transformations are made to pacify doshas of food items and to improve their qualities to nourish body elements.

- **Jalasamyoga (water contact) & Shaucha (cleaning) samskara:** Unhygienic food is responsible for many diseases. So, cleaning sanskar is done to remove impurities.

- **Agnisannikarsha (contact of fire/ cooking):** Fire is responsible for change in properties of substances. Ayurveda always advises to eat well cooked food and minimum use of raw food. Different types of substances make different Changes in food. For example, food cooked on natural wood /coal fire tends to have better taste than food cooked on electric equipments. Because of Agni samskara, food becomes easy to digest, so that better qualities of food can be achieved.

- **Manthana (churning) samskara:** It results in transformation of the substance in another type. For example, Dadhi is said to be heavy for digestion (Guru) and also Shothkrut (responsible for inflammation). But when it undergoes churning process, it gets converted into buttermilk having laghu property (light for digestion) and is used as the best remedy for Shotha.\textsuperscript{[13]} Several traditional household food processing and preparation methods can be used to enhance the bioavailability of micronutrients in plant based diet. These include thermal processing, mechanical processing, soaking, fermentation and germination. These strategies aim to increase the physicochemical accessibility of micronutrient, decrease the content of anti nutrients or increase the content of compounds that improve the bioavailability.\textsuperscript{[14]} But nowadays many unwanted transformations are being done in food items for long time preservation purpose. These kinds of samskara can be harmful to body and may cause lifestyle disorders. Hence, food should always be processed properly.

- **Desha samskara:** Different places have different methods of preparation of food items. So these methods should be followed, because they are so as per the prakriti of that environment and maintenance of one’s health in it. For example, south Indian people have more use of tamarind, coconut while north Indians use more tomatoes.

- **Kala samskara:** Time brings so many desirable or undesirable changes in food. For example, vegetables are not good to eat after some time; they should always be consumed fresh. Old rice, honey, ghee are more beneficial for health than newly produced one.
- **Bhavana, bhajana, etc**: keeping in contact with useful drugs or roasting is also important for making food more potent and tasty.

3. **Samyoga**: (Combination/ mixing)\(^{[15]}\)

Samyoga means combining two or more substances. Sometimes the action of combination of diet is different from the individual. Combination of two or more substances results in the induction of special qualities, which cannot be achieved by using the same food item separately. But while making combinations, the food items must be compatible to each other and should be properly mixed, because some combinations are harmful too. For example, combination of Honey and Ghee in equal quantity is not advised. Honey and ghee when taken alone is wholesome to the body but combined in equal quantity, they become toxic. Also Milk (Sheetveerya) and fish (Ushnaveerya) should not be taken together as their combination makes poison in body.\(^{[16]}\) The concept of incompatible food (Viruddha Ahara) is well explained in Ayurveda.\(^{[17]}\) We can say that though Samyoga is very useful; but it may become harmful too. A few examples of its usefulness are Guda and Curd in combination is more useful as it is having Snehana, Tarpana, Hridya and Vataghna effects.\(^{[18]}\) Milk with Ghee used regularly is the best Rasayana.\(^{[19]}\) In modern Science; there is a special branch known as ‘Trophology’ which deals with science of Food combination and proposes a nutritional approach. For example, modern science doesn’t allow mixing of carbohydrate-rich food and protein-rich food in the same meal.\(^{[20]}\) Breakdown of protein requires an acidic medium, while digestion of carbohydrate dense foods requires an alkaline medium. So, such combination of food will not digest but will sit there fermenting, producing indigestion, bloating and gas.\(^{[21]}\)

4. **Rashi**\(^{[22]}\) (The Quantity)

Rashi is the measure of the total food and of each constituent of food in order to determine the effects of the right and wrong doses. Ayurveda states the importance of Ahara matra. Dose of ahara affects digestion. The quantity of food to be taken depends on the digestive capacity (Agni) of person. The amount of food which is digested in proper time, without disturbing the equilibrium of Dhatus & Doshas of the body is said to be of a proper quantity. This proper quantity of food activates Digestive functions.\(^{[23]}\) While less or excess quantity is harmful to health. The quantity (rashi) of food to be eaten depends on the nature (prakriti) of the food item. If the food is heavy; half of stomach capacity is to be filled up. Even in the case of light food, excessive intake is not conductive to maintain the power of digestion &
metabolism. Ayurveda also explains another aspect of dosage of food such as considering four parts of the stomach; one should take two parts of stomach gets filled by the food, one part to be filled by water or other liquid material and one part should be kept free for the movement of vayu. In the context of Rashi; the terms Sarvagraha & Parigraha have been explained by Ayurveda. Quantity of entire food taken is Sarvagraha and the quantity of each of its ingredients is Parigraha. The modern dietetic science emphasizes more on Parigraha type which specifies the quantity of Carbohydrates, Fats and Proteins etc. in form of Calories. Heena Matra (less) ahara brings 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. Ati Matra (excess) ahara is considered as Sarvadosha Prakopka, it aggravates all the Doshas.

5. Desha (Habitat)
Habitat is a geographic region. It indicates variations in the qualities of food substances due to difference in soil and climate. Food items grown in the region of Himalayas are heavy in property while those grown in the desert or sandy region are light. Ahara should be taken according to both Bhoomi Desha & Dehadesha. Bhumi Desa too is grouped in three classes according to the preponderance of different doshas, on the cause and effect relationship with the climate of that region i.e. sun, wind etc. These are Jangla, Anoopa and Sadharana Desha. Charaka says that in the Jangala desha the Vata and Pitta are in predominance, where as in the Anupa desha the predominance of Vata and Kapha is witnessed. One can acclimatize to the different type of desha by using opposite qualities substances e.g. use of hot substances in marshy land and cold substances in deserts. Deha desha means examination of status of dosha of one’s body. Deshaparikshana is also included in dashvidh parikshya bhava of patient for clear understanding of the disease, treatment and Pathyapathya aspect.

6. Kaala (Time& Seasonal variation):
Kala is a basic cause for the Parinaman of immature substance to mature & also its destruction i.e., Uttpati-Sthithi-Laya. Nityaga and Avasthika are two types of Kala.
- Nityaga: is one in which Ahara is consumed according to Rutu. For example, during rainy season sweet, sour and salty foods are preferred to pacify increased vata. During summer, the sun draws up the moisture of the nature. Hence, sweet, cold, liquid food and more drinks are beneficial.
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1. **Avasthika**: Intake of Ahara according to condition of body i.e. vyadhi awastha. For example, langhana is advised in atisara, spicy food should be avoided in jaundice, in navajwara, langhana should be done for 7 days, but in jeernajwara ghritapana is indicated. Also, food should be taken only after complete digestion of previous food.

2. **Upayoga Samstha** (Rules of eating)

These are the directions to be followed for appropriate food digestion like; how to eat, when to eat, what to eat. These rules are known as Aahar-vidhi-vidhan. Following are some of the rules described in our classics:

- **Ushnam Asniyat**: Meal should be taken usnha (hot) for feeling of proper taste, stimulation of agni (digestive power), vatanulomana and kapha nashana. Also, profuse flows of saliva, gastric Juices are achieved for next food items.

- **Snigdham Asniyat**: The meal taken should be snigdha (unctious) for agni deepana, early and easy digestion, vatanulomna, movement of digestive organs. It also strengthens the sense organs, gives complexion.

- **Matravat Asniyat**: It means eating in adequate amount. The lakshana by which a person can decide that this is matravat are, lightness in the stomach, absence of any cardiac discomfort, non-distension of sides, gratification of the senses, subsidence of hunger and thirst, sense of ease in every activity, proper indulgence of natural urges. So, after appearance of these symptoms only, one should take next meal.

- **Jirne Asniyat**: It simply means one should always eat after digestion of the previous meal. If one takes food before the digestion of the previous meal, the previous undigested ahararasa gets mixed up with the next and imbalances doshas. Symptoms of complete digestion of previous food are; returning of doshas to their normal places, feeling of thirst & hunger, clear and open channels, empty stomach, normal peristaltic movements and excretion of urine and feces at proper time.

- **Virya Aviruddham Asniyat**: Eat those food articles which are not antagonistic in Virya (potency) to each other. Virya is the power of substance by which action takes place; nothing can be done in absence of the Virya. For example, Fish and milk, sour fruits and milk should not be eaten together.

- **Ishte Deshe Ishta Sarva Upakarnam Asniyat**: Eat in a proper place provided with all the necessary appurtenances. So that one does not get depressed in the mind by negative environment. In Sushruta samhita the place where food to be prepared and where should be stored before serving is also explained. Eating area should be devoid of
unwanted people, well constructed having proper levels, good ventilated and should have enough light. The place should be pleasant for good health of mind. Now days we also have special dining rooms with pleasant decorations in the houses.

- **Na atidrutum Ashniyat:**[42] this means food should not be eaten very fast, otherwise this affect the power of digestion by increasing the vata.
- **Na ativilambitam Ashniyat:**[43] also, one should not eat too slowly, because it doesn’t give satisfaction to the person and food becomes cold which in turn hampers digestive power.
- **Ajalpan, Ahasan, Tanmana Bhunjita:**[44] one should not talk or laugh while eating, this causes same disorders as the one who eats too fast. The most important is, one should eat food with concentration for better satisfaction and gratification (trupti).
- **Aatmanam-abhisamiksyah Bhunjita:**[45] This rule tells that, one should eat by analyzing his own body needs, hunger, digestive capacity, prakriti, doshadi awastha, etc. Whether this food will suits me or not, such knowledge makes for the determination of what is wholesomeness for each individual.

8. **Upayokta** (The person who takes the food/ User)

It is the one who uses the Ahardravyas. Every person must take into consideration his own constitution, capacity of digestive power, the season, time of day and whether the previously taken food has been digested or not and should take the food accordingly.

These were the dietetic rules for both healthy and unhealthy persons. Acharya Sushruta has also given dwadasha-asana-pravicharana especially for unhealthy people.[46] They facilitate the use of different type of Ahara and Ahara Vidhi according to the status of health of a patient. Also, Achokshyam (dirty), Dushta (affected by poison etc.), Utsrutam (left over), Pashana-truna-lashtavata (containing stone, grass and dust), Dwishta (disliked), vyushitam (stale), Aswadu (unpalatable) and Puti (putrified food) should be discarded. Chirsiddham (Food which is cooked long before), Sthira (hard), Sheetam (cold), ushnikrutam puna (reheated), Ashantam (incompletely strained)[47] and Upadagdham(over burned) is not palatable (loses its natural taste) and as such food should be discarded.

Acharya Sushruta has described methods of par taking of diet (aaharopachara) as items of ahara should be served in the successive order of increased sweetness. One should wash his mouth with water often in between the dinner, when his tongue is clean, relish for food will
be greater than ever before, the tongue is becoming satiated with sweet taste in the beginning itself will not be able to appreciate other tastes, hence it should be washed in between.\textsuperscript{[48]}

**DISCUSSION**

Improper dietary habit is primary reason for the increasing trend of health disorders in present era. There is need to awake the people about the importance of fresh food and the method of diet intake. These methods of cooking and eating food which are mentioned in Ayurveda are known as “Aharvidhivisheshayatana”. The application of these rules is very important for maintenance of health as well as preventive & curative aspect for many diseases. Nowadays, we are neglecting the digestive capacity, nutritional value of food products and time sense of food intake and are more interested in eating tasty, ready to eat food materials. It is also observed that many diseases are arising merely due to these faulty dietary habits. In this context, concept of 8 Aharvidhivisheshayatana is most ideal in today's lifestyle. Life style diseases are defined as the diseases linked with the way people live their life. Obesity, Stroke, HT, some Cancers, Diabetes Mellitus are some of the life style disorders. Ayurveda explained this phenomenon under the heading of “Prajnaparadha”, which is one of the three basic causes of any disease. Management of these life style disorders include various aspects such as Dinacharya, Rutucharya, Panchakarma and Rasayana. As ahara is the main part of day to day life it has a great clinical importance in treatment of diseases.

Today’s generation is more concerned about appearance, presentation, taste, packaging and cost of food. Food is not chosen on the basis of its nutritional values. One should always keep in mind the good and bad effects of food to be consumed. Nowadays, use of refrigerator is the most common cause for alterations of properties of food. Use of fresh food is a dying art today. Refrigerated food, packed food, added preservatives, canning, frozen food are hard to digest, as it brings about ama (toxins) formation after digestion of food and alters its natural prakriti (properties) and benefits. Modern cooking allows too much less time than previous centuries. Microwaving of food causes water molecules in it to resonate at very high frequency which cooks instantly and saves time; but at the same time it alters chemical and nutritional properties of food. Ayurveda emphasizes on gradual cooking of food. Agnisanskar for specific time makes food easy for digestion. Also, use of non stick cookware, german metal cookware is proved to be toxic to us. They bring about some toxic chemical changes in the food which is cooked in it. Eating food which is cooked in these utensils is carcinogenic. Hence, use of traditional cookware should be preferred. Again plastic is at the top position for
storage purpose of food nowadays. Plastic brings chemical changes in the food which is in contact with it. It is a non-degradable substance which is most dangerous to our body.

Now to think about samyoga (combination of food items) is the main cause of health disturbances. Fruit salads, desserts, sizzlers, curries with milk cream, junk food are some of the examples of bad food combinations which are widely appreciated as best food by today’s generation. This type of food items act like slow acting poison in our body. Moving to the next point, Ayurveda tells us to eat in right quantity (rashi) at right time. People are living very fast life today. They are following wall clocks, but not the own body’s circadian clock. People eat food whenever they get time whether the body is demanding or not. Sometimes they keep skipping the meals in duty hours. These reasons are again responsible for generation of many health disturbances. So, people should be made aware of importance about following of body’s needs and timings of food consumption. Also, methods of cooking should also be adopted as per habitat in which the person is living. With this we should change our eating habits according to Kala of rutu (seasonal variations), doshas (bodily variations) and diseased conditions (avasthik kala). Along with all these factors, everyone should follow dos & don’ts of diet which are discussed in aharavidhidhana. Eating while watching television or mobile, sitting in inappropriate position, eating while travelling, eating while working on computers, eating with distractions, too quick/ too slow eating are some of the examples of generation of digestive distress. Because of it one cannot get gratification (trupti) i.e. complete nutritional values from food. Hence, every person should always think about what to eat, how to eat, where to eat, how much to eat. While eating everyone should always keep in mind about status of his/ her digestive power, body need, hunger, dosha status, prakriti, habitat, etc.

**CONCLUSION**

In today’s fast paced life, many rules regarding diet have been compromised which is showing overall declining status of Health in the society. The rules & regulations related to Ahara have been forgotten. Ayurveda is a store house of much valuable knowledge for a disease free life. Therefore, in this context, there is a need to enlighten the concept of Ahar Vidhi Visheshayatana. The aim of Ayurveda is Swasthyarakshana and Vyadhparimoksha which can be fulfilled by these dietetic rules. Diet is considered as basic most need and as a supporting pillar of life. Not only diet but also method of food intake is important for healthy life. According to Kashyap Samhita, food as always been an important way to treat
illness and maintain health and that’s why he called food as Mahabhaishyajya\textsuperscript{[51]} (most important Medicine). So, many diseases can be prevented arising merely due to faulty dietary habits. Thus, healthier eating habits i.e. knowledge and application of Ahar-vidhi-visheshayatana can help to lower the risk for many lifestyle disorders in present era.

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