

IMPORTANCE OF AHARA VIDHI VIDHAN (DIETARY ETHICS OF AYURVEDA) IN PRESENT ERA

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ABSTRACT

Ahara (Upsthamba) is most essential requirements of all living beings for healthy life but without knowing proper dietary guidelines we cannot gain optimum benefits from consumed food. Importance of *Ahara* as life, food and medicine. In *Ayurveda Ahara* as well as its methods of intake both have equal importance. In present era there is increased prevalence of life style disorders in which faulty or altered dietary habits play an important role. Now a days many food processing methods are in practices which are harmful to human being. Due to change in life style man is giving least importance to his diet & dietary rules. If *Ayurvedic* dietary guidelines, which has given in *Charak Samhita* as *Ahara Vidhi Vidhan* (like *Ushnam, Snigdham,*

Maatravat, Jeerne Ashniyat) are followed, many diseases can be prevented arising mainly due to faulty dietary habits. So present study is taken to find out dietary directives in *Ayurveda*.

KEYWORDS: *Ahara, Ahara Vidhi Vidhan*, dietary ethics.

INTRODUCTION

Our physical body is the product of food, ^[1] so *Ahara* is most essential requirement of all living being. The life of an individual is present in the food and this food gives life to living creatures. Food plays decisive role in development, sustenance, reproduction and termination of life. In *Charak Samhita* said that body as well as disease was caused by food.^[2] *Ayurveda* has given detail discipline and process to take *Ahara* for an individual and in general both.

This discipline is titled as *Ahara Vidhi Vidhan*, where the law of do's and don'ts about the diet and drinks are given.^[3] *Ahara* is not only needed for the continuity of life, but also for *Bala*, *Varna*, *Upachaya* etc. Now a days there is increased prevalence of life style disorders, in which faulty dietary habits play an important role. In today's modern life style, we do not take care of our health and the consequences of our eating habits and other styles of life, which are harmful for us. Our ancient *Ayurvedic* texts have laid immense emphasis on all aspects of *Ahara* and *Ahara Vidhi*. This article emphasizes the importance dietary aspects or dietetics of *Ahara Vidhi Vidhan*.

Ashta-Ahara Vidhi Vishesa-Ayatanani (eight aspects of dietetics)

For proper digestion of *Ahara*, *Ahara Parinaamkar Bhava* is essential, which is described in *Charak Sharir Sthan*. *Ashta-Ahara Vidhi Vishesa-Ayatanani* comes under the *Samyoga* (6th *Bhava*). It means the factors responsible for wholesome and unwholesome effect of *Ahara* and methods of *Ahara sevana*.

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

1. *Prakriti/Swabhava*- Nature of food/ Qualitative characteristic of food.
2. *Karan*- Processing of food
3. *Samyoga*- Combination/ mixing of food
4. *Rashi*- Quantity of food
5. *Desha*- Habitate of food
6. *Kala*- Time and seasonal variation
7. *Upyoga Samstha*- Rules for dieting
8. *Upyokta*- The person who consumes the food

Ahara Vidhi Vidhan

Ahara Vidhi Vidhan comes under the *Upyoga Samstha*, which indicates the method of taking *Ahara*.^[5] These are- *Ushna*, *Snigdha*, *Matravat*, consumed after the digestion of previously ingested food, *Virya Aviruddha Ahara*, Is to be taken into *Ishte Deshe* where it provided with *Ishte Sarvopakarana*, not to be taken speedily, not to be taken too slowly, taken without talking others, taken without laughing, taken with the concentration of the mind.

Ushnam Ashniyat

The first requisite regarding prepared meal is that it should be taken *Ushna*(hot). If one's taking hot food, feel of proper taste, stimulates the digestive fire, gets digested quickly, *Vata Anulomana* and reduction of *Kapha* are achieved.

The specific sequence of *Ahara vidhi Vidhan* is practically very important. Besides the whole meal being *Ushna*, it must begin with *Ushna Anna*, so that profuse flow of saliva and gastric juices are achieved for next food items.

In today's life full of hustle and bustle only a few people can have hot food as many of them have to carry their food in tiffins.

Ayurveda also recommends that you drink your water warm, as cold water can weaken your *Agni*. Benefits of *Ushnodak*- Warm water stimulates hunger & digestive fire, helps in digestion, soothes throat, cleanses bladder, reduces hiccups and alleviates increased *Vata* and *Kapha*. It removes *Ama* (the metabolic toxin) of body. Warm water is best in winter and after eating preparations of flour and those which are difficult to be digested.^[6]

Snigdham Ashniyat

The meal taken should be *Snigdha*(unctuous) because it tastes well, *Agnideepan*, facilitates early digestion, *Vata Anuloman*, it makes the body plump, strengthens the sense organs, increases strength, increases clarity of complexion.

In stead of rice, daal, ghee which is healthy, people are turning to junk food. Today's food is paav-bhaji, baked food, which causes indigestion and constipation.

Matravat Ashniyat

It means eat in proper quantity. Food taken in adequate amount without disturbing *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* only promotes life span, easily passes down to anus, does not disturb the digestive fire, gets digested with discomfort.

Jirne Ashniyat

It simply means eat after digestion of previous meal. If one eats during indigestion, the digestive products of the previous food, i.e. undigested *Ahara Rasa* gets mixed up with the *Ahara rasa* of food taken afterwards, it provokes all the *Dosha*.

While the food taken when the previous meal is digested well, the *Dosha* are situated in their locations, Agni is stimulated, appetite is arisen, entrances of the channels are open, eructations is pure, flatus passes down and urges of flatus, urine and feces are attended too, that food not vitiating any of the body elements, serve the sole purpose of promoting life.

Virya Aviruddham Ashniyat

One should take food consisting of the items non-antagonistic in potency. Eating the food that is not antagonistic in potency one will afflicted with disorders born of incompatible dietary. *Virya* is the power of substances by which action takes place.

Ishte Deshe Ishte Sarvopkaranam Ashniyat

Eat in favourable (congenial) place with favourable accessories. (with all necessary appurtenances) While eating in favourable place one does not fall victim to psychic disturbance due to unpleasant environment. Similarly while having favourable accessories. Therefore the place should be pleasant which can provide calm & healthy state of mind.

Now a days we can see special dining rooms in the houses of affluent class. Everyone always tries to keep the dining place pleasant.

Na Atidrutam Ashniyat

Do not eat hurriedly. One should not eat fast because by eating fast the food may enter into a wrong passage, the food is not established in its place,; over and above, detection of the defects of food and achievement of the merits of the same are not certain.

Na Ativilambitam Ashniyat

Do not eat leisurly. One should not eat too slow because by eating too slow one does not get satisfaction, eats much, food becomes cold and is digested irregularly.

Ajalpana, Ahasan, Tanmana Bhunjitam

One should eat while not talking or laughing and with concentration. By taking food while talking or laughing or with mind elsewhere, he is inflicted with the same defects as by eating too fast. Talking and laughing divert the attention from the meals and the food is eaten too slowly or too hastily.

Aatamanam Abhisamikshya Bhunjitam

Eat rightly, considering your constitution. This is suitable or unsuitable for me if known in this way then only it becomes suited to his self.

These were the dietetic rules for both healthy and unhealthy person but Sushrut has given *Dwadasha Ashana Pravicharnaa* for unhealthy peoples.^[7]

According to *Sushrut*, *Achokshyam* (dirty), *Dushta* (affected by poison etc.), *Utsrutam* (left over), *Pashana-truna-Lashtavata* (containing stone, grass and dust), *Dwishta*, *Vyushitam* (stale), *Aswadu* and *Puti* (purified food) should be discarded. *Chirsiddham* (food which is cooked long before), *Sthira*, *Sheetam*, *Ushnakrutam puna* (reheated), *Ashantam* (incompletely strained) and *Upadagdham* (over burned) is not palatable and such should be discarded.

Wrong eating habits in present era^[9]

1. Eating when not hungry
2. Eating soon after meal
3. Eating at the wrong time of the day
4. Eating incomplete food combinations
5. Eating too much heavy, too little light food
6. Eating when constipated
7. Eating food one cannot digest
8. Eating hurriedly
9. Overeating
10. Preserved and stale food
11. Frozen and fast food
12. Too spicy, sour, salty food
13. Drinking cold water during meal
14. Too much water or no water at all during meal

DISCUSSION

Ahara, *Nidra* and *Brahmcharya* are three subpillars which support the main pillar, the body itself. *Ahara* plays an important role in the promotion of health and prevention of disease. Along with the quality & quantity if we concentrate on the right way of taking food and the regimens related to *Ahara* described in *Ayurveda*, a positive health can be achieved easily.

In present era, improper dietary habits (intake of frozen, canned, processed food) are primary reason for health disorders. So there is need to awake the people about the importance of food and methods of intake. In the process of freezing large ice crystals are formed that can damage cell walls and destroy the texture and flavour of foods. Some nutritional value (minerals and vitamins) may be lost during the freezing process. At present many newer food processing methods are in practice, these methods brings chemical as well as physical changes. They definitely improve the appearance, taste, flavour, shelf life, preservation of food but not good for health. Microwaving the food causes water molecules in the food to resonate at very high frequency which cooks food instantly and saves time but it alters the chemical structures of the food. The plastic containers are used to cook food in microwave oven, carcinogenic toxin can leach out of these plastic and paper containers, and enters into food.^[10] Traditional methods of cooking prescribed by *Ayurveda*, gradual cooking helps the food to become more digestible, which is not achieved by microwaving.

In today's modern era due to lack of knowledge & lack of time, not following the prescribed rules for preparing, preserving and eating food we blindly follow the wrong eating habits and suffer from various life style disorders of unknown etiology. These life style disorders are avoidable by following various regimen described in our *Ayurvedic Samhita*. Viewing the above points it can be concluded that *Ahara* should be taken according *Ahara Vidhi Vidhan* (dietetics) and which are truly scientific as mentioned by our *Acharyas*. So the concept of *Ahara Vidhi Vidhan* is most beneficial in today's lifestyle.

CONCLUSION

Diet and method of food intake has an important role in the continuity of healthy life. In today's fast paced life we are more interested in eating tasty, ready to eat food materials and follow the wrong dietary habits & patterns, which are the important cause of *Agnidushti* and declining status of health in society. The rules of dieting and right way of eating has been forgotten. So the concept of *Ahara Vidhi Vidhan*, which is described by *Acharya Charak* in a systematic and scientific manner, is most beneficial and helpful for maintaining health. It can be concluded that *Ahara* should be taken according to *Ahara Vidhi Vidhan* (dietetics) which are mentioned by our *Acharya*. Many disease can be prevented arising merely due to faulty dietary habits. Healthier eating habits may help lower risk for type-2 diabetes, herat disease, stroke. Infertility, cancer and many other health problems.

Purpose

Ahara (Upsthamba) is most essential requirements of all living beings for healthy life but without knowing proper dietary guidelines we cannot gain optimum benefits from consumed food. In *Ayurveda Ahara* as well as its methods of intake both have equal importance. In present era there is increased prevalence of life style disorders in which faulty or altered dietary habits play an important role. Now a days many food processing methods are in practices which are harmful to human being. Due to change in life style man is giving least importance to his diet & dietary rules.

So following purpose of this study-

1. To find out dietary ethics in *Ayurveda*.
2. To explain scientific explanation for each factor.

METHODS

To fulfil the aims & objectives of this study, the conceptual materials has been collected from ancient *Ayurvedic* texts, scientific journals, internet etc.

RESULT

If *Ayurvedic* dietary guidelines are followed, many diseases can be prevented arising mainly due to faulty dietary habits. Healthier eating habits may help lower risk for type-2 DM, heart disease, stroke, infertility and many other health problems.

CONCLUSION

Ahara Vidhi Vidhan are like *Ushnam, Snigdham, Maatravat, Jeerne, Veerya aviruddham, Ishta Deshe, Ishta Sarvopakarnam, Na Atidrutam, Na Ativilambitam, Ajalapan, Ahasan, Tanmnabhunjitam, Aatmanm Abhisamikshyam Bhunjitam*. Following dietary ethics describe by ancient Indian medicine highly effective in reducing the life style disorders which are arising due to faulty or altered dietary habits. These rules also helps to live healthy life and enhance the span of life.

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