

AHARA VIDHI VISHESHAYATANA - A CONCEPTUAL REVIEW**Gupta Deepak^{1*} and Asthana Alok²**

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ABSTRACT

Good food is essential for maintaining good health. *Ahara* plays a pivot role in the prevention as well as in the treatment of diseases. It plays an important role in establishing the phenomena of wear and tear, process of growth and repair supply of energy for all physical activities etc. *Ahara* is one of the main pillars of human body. As *Acharyas* had described that *Ahara*, *Nidra* and *Brahmacharya* are *Triupstambh* which support the body itself. *Acharyas* it is stated '*Arogyam bhojanadheenam*' Here *Ahara* has been placed first, which shows that it is most important to maintain and sustain the life. The *Prayojana* of ayurveda is to protect health of the healthy and to cure disorder in the diseased. Nowadays many lifestyle diseases are taking place due to a

lack of or incorrect information about cooking procedures, irregular timings and consuming imbalanced diet and following the prescribed rules for preparing, preserving and eating food days. The importance of food *Charak* has rightly described that the life of all living things is food and the all the world seek food complexion, clarity, good voice, long life, understanding, happiness, satisfaction in food. *Ahara* is not only required for the continuity of life, but also for *Bala*, *Varna*, *Upachaya* etc. For the method of taking food, Wholesomeness of *Ahara* is varies as person to person. *Ahara Vidhiviseşayatanana* is the factors, which are guidelines for the selection of wholesome diet. *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 vidhivisheshayatana* will help in reducing *Agnidushti* and achieving the both *Prayojana* of Ayurveda. The present article will be an attempt to congregate the importance of diet as quoted by ancient ayurvedic

scholars and to present the eight factors of *Ashta Ahara vidhi visheshayatana* in a systemic and scientific way.

KEYWORDS: Health, *Tri-upastambha*, *Ahara*, *Ashta ahara vidhivisheshayatana*.

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. These lifestyle disorders are avoidable by following various regimens described in our Ayurvedic Samhitas. In Ayurved, it clearly described the day, night and seasonal regimen which are essential for our healthiness through our lifestyle. *Acharya charak* has described eight specific factors of method of dieting in a very systematic and scientific manner which is known as *Ashta Ahara vidhivisheshayatana*. These are eight major aspects of food convention that includes compatibility of food articles which are determinant factors for the maintenance of Health. *Ashta Ahara vidhivisheshayatana* explains various factors that influence *Ahara* such as origin, season, preparation, biological properties, environmental factors and freshness and provides a logical explanation of how to balance food according to one's *Dosha* and physical needs *Ahara Vidhivishesayatana* means the factors responsible for wholesome and unwholesome effect of the *Ahara* and methods of *Ahara sevana* (Special rule for diet intake). These eight dynamics must be measured before taking food: 1. *Prakriti*, 2. *Karana*, 3. *Samyoga*, 4. *Rashi*, 5. *Desha*, 6. *Kala*, 7. *Upyoga- sansatha*, 8. *Upyokta*.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

1. To study the concept of *Ashta Ahara vidhivisheshayatana*.
2. To study understand the fundamental points of *Ashta Ahara vidhivisheshayatana*.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Literature search- Review of literature regarding *Ashta Ahara vidhivisheshayatana* is collected from *Brihatrayi*, *Laghutrayi* and available commentaries on it and research articles are also searched from various websites.

Type of study - Conceptual study.

CONCEPT OF ASHTA AHARA VIDHIVISHESHAYATANA: These are eight major aspects of food convention that includes compatibility of food articles which are determinant factors for the maintenance of Health. *Ashta Ahara vidhivisheshayatana* explains various factors that influence *Ahara* such as origin, season, preparation, biological properties, environmental factors and freshness and provides a logical explanation of how to balance food according to one's *Dosha* and physical needs *Ahara Vidhivisesayatana* means the factors responsible for wholesome and unwholesome effect of the *Ahara* and methods of *Ahara sevana*. These eight characters determine the utility of various type of food ingested.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Healthy food is dependent upon many factors such as mode of preparation, habitat, combination, time, season of intake, manner of intake, body constitution, *Agni bala* of consumer etc. This diversified aspect of dietetics and nutrition is well elaborated in Ayurveda in form of *Ashta Ahara Vidhivisheshayatane*.

The eight factors that sum up to form *Ashta ahar vidhivisheshayatana* are as follows.

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 Samstha* - Classical Ayurvedic Rules of eating
8. *Upayokta* -The person who takes the food.

1. PRAKRITI – It indicates nature of a substance. It represents the nature of diet and drugs. The presence of qualities likes heaviness; lightness etc. is the natural property of substances used in diet. Thus, heaviness is the nature of black gram and pork, and lightness that of green-gram and venison diet. As person has a specific *Sharirika* and *Manasika Prakriti*, the components of *Ahara* too have their specific *Prakrities*. A person seeking good health must consume the *Ahara* that is opposite to his *Prakriti* because *Ahara* of opposite *Prakriti* will alleviate the *Doshas* leading to stability of *Doshas*, hence providing a sound health; while *Ahara* of same *Prakriti* will exaggerate the *Doshas* leading to *Dosha vishamata* and hence generation of diseases. Thus, knowledge of prakriti of food will help in choosing the food accordingly.

2. KARANA - *Karana* means the processing of the inherent attributes of substances. Processing results in the transformation of the inherent attributes of substances. *Sanskaara* changes only those attributes that are attained after the production or birth of substance and does not interfere with the congenital features. There is some food which cannot be consumed directly and demand a change in certain attributes. The transformation or alteration in the natural attributes of food is known as *Karana* or *Sanskaara*. Transformation of the attributes is affected by dilution, application of heat cleansing, churning, storing, maturing, flavouring, impregnation, preservation and container etc. As example, paddy is *Guru*, but paddy lava, produced by applying heat to paddy is *Laghu*. Another example, Curd by nature aggravates oedema, but when it churned, even with the fat content of it remaining intact oedema.

3. SAMAYOGA - It is the combination of two or more substances. Sometimes the action of combination of diet is different from the person. Combination (*samayoga*) is also called of the union of two dominant substances. Impregnation, no doubt, involves the union of one substance with another but the substances with which the drug is impregnation is not dominantly observed; hence this union, in the present context cannot be treated as combination (*samyoga*). *Samayoga* is the basic principle behind the synergistic and antagonistic action of drugs. As examples.

[A]. *Madhu* and *Ghrita* are individually non-toxic, but a combination of these in equal proportion becomes toxic to the individual.

[B]. Milk and fish have sweet taste, but due to opposite potencies the consumption of their combination gives rise to *Kustha*.

4. RASHI - It is the measure of the total mass and of each constituent in order to determine the effect of the right and wrong doses. Every individual has his specific *Prakriti* and digestive and metabolic power accordingly, which decides the amount of food he must eat. Ingesting of complete of the food entirely is termed as *Sarvagraha*, while their ingestion individually is termed as *Parigraha*. The modern dietetics science emphasizes more on *Parigraha* type which specifies the quantity of carbohydrates, fat and protein etc. in form of calories. Ayurveda also explains another aspect of dosage if food such as considering four parts of the stomach; one should take two parts of stomach get filled by the food, one part to be filled water and one part should be kept free for movement of *vayu*. *Acharya Vagbhatta* too advises the consumption of food in appropriate quantity since this quantity stimulates the

power of digestion and assumes that food deficient in quantity will produce the following symptoms – reduction of the strength, complexion and plumpness; distension in the abdomen; impairment of longevity, virility of body, mind, intellect and senses; impairment of the excellence of dhatus; manifestation of the inauspicious conditions and causation of eighty varieties of *Vata* diseases.

5. DESHA - It is a geographic region and place in which food originates. It indicates variation in qualities of substances due to difference in soil use and climates. Substances growing in the *Himalayas* are very efficacious and heavy and those in deserts are in light. Thus the food likes hot and unctuous types (opposite qualities) of the original substances are in good in cold or marshy land, whereas the cold and unctuous types of substances are in good to deserts inhabitants. *Desha* is mainly of three types, *Jaangala* (desert region), *Aanupa* (Marshy region) and *Saadhaarana* (Moderate zone). Foods grown in *Jaangala Desha* are known to vitiate *Vata*, therefore are not beneficial for people of *Jaangala Desha* but beneficial for people of *Aanupa desha*. Similarly, the foods grow in *Aanupa Desha* is known to vitiate *Kapha*, hence not beneficial for people of *Aanupa Desha*, but beneficial for people of *Jaangala Desha*. Therefore, it is advised to take the *Desha* into consideration while consuming the *Ahara* grows in a region.

6. KAALA- It stands for both the time in form of day or night and the states of the individual condition of health and age. *Kaala* may be classified as *Avasthika* and *Nityaga* in Ayurveda. *Avasthika kaala* determines the kind of food eaten depending on the disease of the individual or his age. For example, a person suffering from *Kustha* (an obstinate skin diseases including leprosy) is advised to take *Laghu*, wholesome food and leafy vegetables of bitter taste. This is so because a person has a predominance of a *Doshas* in different stages of his life. Predominance of *Doshas* in different stages of life Stage of life *Dosha* childhood *Kapha*, Middle age *Pitta*, Old age *Vata* the predominance of *Doshas* also depends on the different stages of digestion of food. Predominance of *Doshas* in different stages of digestion Stage of digestion *Dosha* Initial stage of digestion *Kapha* mid stage of digestion, *Pitta* Last stage of digestion, *Vata* on the other hand, *Nityaga kaala* determines the type of food intake in a season. For example, the power of digestion is weak in summers, so one is advised to take less amount of food or the food that is easily digestible. Special care is recommended while consumption of the type of food in various seasons and their effect on the *Doshas* of the body because *doshas* have a particular rhythm of *sanchayaprakopa-shamana* during a year.

7. UPAYOAGA SANSTHA - It represents the rules for dieting and depend on the digested food. *Ahara vidhi visheshatayana* has been described for taking food, it should be considered in diet.

1. *Ahara* should be *Ushna* (warm), tasty, qualitative and easily digestible. The food should be *Snighda*.
2. The food should be taken in suitable quantity according to the *prakriti* and *Agni* of individuals.
3. A person must not consume food too quickly or too slowly.
4. Food antagonistic in potency to each other action should not be taken.
5. Food should be eaten only when the last meal has been digested.
6. Food should not be taken angry, anxious or disturbed state of mind.
7. Food should not be taken during laughing, thinking and watching the television.

8. UPAYOKTA - The person who takes the food is the *Upayokta*. He is main responsible for the wholesomeness by the habitual intake of things. Habitual intake of substances that are not conducive to the health in general, does cause no harm to the body. *Acharya Sushruta* has also given *Dwadasha-asana-pravicharana* especially for unhealthy people.

DISCUSSION

The concept of *Ashta ahara vidhivisheshayatan* was put on decades ago but holds strong even in today's era and need is to assimilate it in our daily routines. In order to remain healthy, individual must take into consideration the basic nature of food that will suit to his *prakriti*, because it is this diet that will stabilise his *Doshas* and replenish his *Dhatus*. Improper dietary habit is primary reason for the increasing trend of health disorder in present era. 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 material. In this context, concept of *Ashta Aharvidhivisheshayatana* is most ideal in today's lifestyle. Nowadays, use of refrigerator is the most common cause for alterations of properties of food. Man should always consume the proper quantity of food since it is the activator of *Agni*. According to Ayurveda, one must consume only two meals in a day. But with the entry of various snack foods, the adaptation of this discipline seems almost nil. But adopting the rule of quantum of food in one's life is not possible.

CONCLUSION

In today's fast paced life, many norms regarding diet & regiment have been compromised which is showing overall declining status of health. Therefore, there is a need to enlighten this concept of *Ahara vidhivisheshayatane* as explained in ancient Ayurved classics. Ayurveda deals with both *Swasthyarakshana* and *Vyadhiparimoksha*. The adaptation of the concept of *Ashta ahara vidhi visheshayatanas* will be helpful in fulfilment of both these *Prayojanas*.

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