

## Importance of AshtavidhaAhar Vidhi Visheshayatan in Daily Life: A Review

Dr. Deepika Dhimar<sup>1</sup>, Dr. G.R. Ratre<sup>2</sup>, Dr. Prema Bhagat<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>PG Scholar, Department of Ayurveda Samhita Evum Siddhant, Shri N.P.A Government Ayurveda College, Raipur, Chhattisgarh, India

<sup>2</sup>Reader, Department of Ayurveda Samhita Evum Siddhant, Shri N.P.A Government Ayurveda College, Raipur, Chhattisgarh, India

<sup>3</sup>Reader, Department of Ayurveda Samhita Evum Siddhant, Shri N.P.A Government Ayurveda College, Raipur, Chhattisgarh, India

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### ABSTRACT-

According to Ayurveda a person whose Atma, Mana and Indriya feel good is called a Healthy person. Our Health is dependent upon Ahar and Agni. Acharya Charaka mentioned Ahar, Nidra and Brahmacharya as Triupastambha, which support the body itself. According to Ayurveda Ahar is the most important thing for healthy life, but rules related to preparation and consumption of Ahar also play important role.

Today in modern Era, wrong eating habits of a person and lack of knowledge about proper nutrition are the factors of Agnivaishmya and many life-style disorders. Ayurveda lays special importance on diet and the right way of eating. Acharya Charaka has defined one of the Principle is "AshtavidhaAhar Vidhi Visheshayatan" in a very systematic and scientific way to take balanced diet. This principle gives basic dietary guidelines regarding proper food selection, food combination, method of food preparation, quantity of food and quality of food etc. It will help in reducing diseases and help for healthy diet. The importance of Ahar have been emphasized in the presented article.

### KEY WORDS-

Ayurveda, Ahar, Nutrition, AshtavidhaAhar Vidhi Visheshayatan, TriUpastambha, Agnivaishmya.

### I. INTRODUCTION-

In Ayurveda Ahar, Swapna (Nidra) and Brahmacharya are the three pillars of Shareera called as TrividhaUpastambha in which Ahar comes first<sup>[1]</sup>. Life has become very complicated these days. In this struggling life, taking proper diet has become a tough challenge. Proper Ahar not only affects the body but also affects the mind of a person. Proper diet, taken in proper manner can lead to better health or else can lead to disease.

Therefore Ayurveda described concept of AshtavidhaAharvidhiVisheshayatan for achieving health benefits of Ahar.

According to modern science a diet that is low in fat and sugar and high in Vitamins, minerals and other nutrients is called a healthy diet. Whereas Ayurveda says that diet is responsible for both health and diseases of a person. Every food we consume is either Dosha Prakopaka or Dosha Shamaka for our body. Improper digestion of food produces Ama which cause most of the disease<sup>[2]</sup>. According to Ayurveda, a balance diet is one that is easily digestible, nourishes all the tissues of the body, does not create imbalance in the Doshas. For this, Acharya Charak has described 8 specific factors of diet which are known as AshtavidhaAhar Vidhi Visheshayatan<sup>[3]</sup>. Under this Prakriti, Karan, Samyoga, Rashi, Desha, Kala, UpayogaSamsthaandUpayokta have been described.

### II. MATERIAL AND METHODS-

Information will be obtained from Brihatrayi, Research Articles, Samhitas, Books, and Websites etc.

### AshtavidhaAharvidhiVisheshayatan<sup>[4]</sup>

In this, Ahar means Food, Vidhi means Method, Vishesh means Unique or Peculiar and Ayatan means Abode. There are 8 specific factors of the method of Aharsevana-

- 1) Prakriti - Nature or quality of food
- 2) Karan - Food processing
- 3) Samyoga - Food combination
- 4) Rashi - Quantity of food
- 5) Desha - Habitat or place where food items are grown
- 6) Kala - Time and seasonal variation
- 7) UpayogaSamstha - Rules of dieting

- 8) Upayokta- Consumer or the person who consumes the food.

### PRAKRITI-

Every living being has a defined fundamental nature at birth and reflects its basic physical, physiological and psychological behaviour. The characteristic features of food substance like Sheeta, Ushna, laghu etc are called Prakriti or Nature of food. For example- Masha is Guru (Heavy) and Mudga is Laghu(Light), Shukra mans is Guru and Ena mans is Laghu in nature<sup>[5]</sup>. Every person should eat food, keeping in mind his nature and the nature of the food. Knowing the nature of food like Guru, Laghu, Sheeta, Ushna etc, will help a person to take food according to the nature of his body. Example- People with VataPrakruti should avoid Rukshadravya, Pitta Prakruti should avoid Ushnadravya and KaphaPrakruti should avoid Guru dravyas. In this way to stay healthy, a person should eat food of nature opposite to his nature.

### KARAN-

Karan is also known as Samskara. It refers to method of processing of food. By Samskara or processing substances, the inherent properties of those substances are increased and changed. Certain foods are not only suitable for the body but are also of the nature of vitiating the doshas when consumed in their original form, so it is made suitable through some process or Samskara so that it can be easily accepted by the body. For example- Vrihi that is heavy to digest, becomes lighter after being fried and converted in to Laja. Similarly pure Poison is fatal, it can be used in medicinal preparations only after purification as it reduced the lethality. These properties are acquired by contact with water (Jalsanyoga), by cleansing (Shaucha), churning(Manthana), place, time, pouring, frying and also by storage and processing<sup>[6]</sup>. Its details are as follows-

#### 1) Jalsannikarsh-

It is also called Jala samyoga and Shauch (cleansing) or cleaning of substances with water. This is done to remove impurities. For example- washing rice with water removes its impurities.

#### 2) Agnisamskara-

It is also called Agni samyoga or contact of fire. Heating, boiling, frying and roasting are different Agnisamskara. It changes the properties

of food. For example- the property of rice is Guru, but it can be converted into Laghu by a combination of Agni.

#### 3) Manthana-

Manthana means churning or grinding. It also changes the properties of food. Example- Dadhi is Guru for digestion and also Shothkrut in property. It is responsible for Shotha but when Dadhi is churned it gets converted into buttermilk which is Laghu and easily digestible in nature.

### SAMYOGA-

Combination of substances or mixture of two or more substances is called as Samyoga. Although the properties of a substance are individual, it changes when it is mixed with another substance. The combination of two or more substances results in the manifestation of special properties, which cannot be obtained by taking the same thing separately. For example- A mixture of equal quantity of honey and Ghee or a mixture of honey, fish and milk become toxic. If taken separately, both milk and fish are good for health, but their combination is very harmful for health. They both are sweet in taste but milk is SheetaVeerya and fish is UshnaVeerya, therefore both of them should not be taken altogether. Since their potency has the opposite effect, it causes vitiation of blood and obstruction of Strotas<sup>[7]</sup>. This combination sometimes leads to VirruddhaAhar, when this VirruddhaAhar is consumed it acts as Dhatu Guna Vipreet for the body and hence it causes disease.

In modern era, people are using different combination of food for taste. And thus, they are unknowingly consuming the VirruddhaAhar. That's why we should learn the art of combining substances so that they compatible with each other.

### RASHI-

Rashi means AharMatra or quantity of food. In Ayurveda Acharyas have explained about importance of AharMatra and its effect on digestion. Whether a person is healthy or diseased, he has to eat only in limited quantities. This limited quantity is dependent upon the Agni (digestive capacity), Nature of food, age etc. The digestive capacity of each individual differs from each other, so the dietary quantity should also vary with that.

Rashi is the measurement of the total Mass and of each component to determine the effect of correct and incorrect dosage. It consists of Sarvagraha and Parigraha<sup>[8]</sup>.

- 1) **Sarvagraha**- It consist the full amount of food i.e. the combined quantity of the rice, meat, pulse, condiments etc.
- 2) **Parigraha**- The amount of each of its ingredients in a food is Parigraha.

Ayurveda also explains another aspect of AharMatra on the basis of LaghuAhar and Guru Ahar. Guru Ahar mainly consists of Prithvi and Jala Guna so they cause Agnimandya when taken in large quantities, therefore it should take  $1/3^{\text{rd}}$  or  $1/2$  of the Kukshi. While LaghuAhar mainly have Vayu and Agni qualities, which intensify Agni, they are least harmful when consumed in excess, although they should also be taken in proper amount<sup>[9]</sup>.

Apart from this, two parts of stomach should be filled with solid, one part with liquid and the fourth part should be left empty so that Vata (air) can move freely<sup>[10]</sup>. Ayurveda has also described two types of AharMatra-

- A. **Heenamatra**- Taking food in less quantity is called Heena Matra. There are 80 types of Vata disorders caused by the consumption of Heena AharMatra.
- B. **Atimatra**- Taking food in excess quantity is called Atimatra. All the three Doshas of the body get vitiated by consuming AtiAharMatra<sup>[11]</sup>.

At present many types of diseases arise due to the consumption of food by people without taking care of the AharMatra. That's why it is very important to have knowledge of the quantity of food.

#### DESHA-

Deshais the geographical area where food is produced, grown, cultivated and distributed<sup>[12]</sup>. This reflects the variation in the properties of AharDravyas due to variation in soil and climate. In Ayurveda Desha denotes both Bhoomi Desha and DehaDesha.

- A. **Bhoomi Desha**- In Ayurveda mainly three types of Bhoomi Desha have been described, i.e. Anoop, Jangala and Sadharandesha<sup>[13]</sup>. Each specific Desha has specific climate and specific food according to the environment.
- B. **DehaDesha**- According to Ayurveda the Doshas are mainly distributed in three different regions of the body. The first region extending from the Hridaya to the upper portion is place of Kapha dosha, the second region extending

between the Hridaya and Nabhi is place of Pitta dosha, while the third region extending from the Nabhi to the extreme bottom is place of Vata dosha.

The people who live in a particular area become Satmaya for that area, for Ahar and Vihaar. But when people change their Desha during the journey, they take the food of changed Desha. Due to this, their entire physiology gets disturbed and hence the person becomes a victim of many diseases.

DeshaParikshana is an important aspect to understand the dietary habits of the patient, to understand the possibility of Aharrelated disease and to treat the patient accordingly.

#### KALA-

Kala means time and seasonal variations. Seasonal regimen to be followed in phases of health and illness to maintain proper health. There are two types of Kala- Nityaga kala and Avasthik kala<sup>[14]</sup>.

- A. **Nityaga kala**- In Ayurveda, different Ahar and Vihar has been described according to each Ritus (season). In this type of period Ahar is taken according to Ritucharya and Dincharya. For example- Varsha Ritu is considered as VataPrakopaka kala, so food containing VataShamakasubstances is given priority in this season. Similarly, in the GrishmaRitu, due to the hot weather Sheeta, MadhurgunatamakaAhar is taken. Lots of drinks are also advised.
- B. **Avasthika kala**- In this type of period Ahar is taken according to the condition of body and stage of diseases. This is also called VyadhiAvasthakala. The Avasthais divided into three kala, Balaavastha (childhood), Yuvaavastha (adulthood) and Vridhaavastha (oldage). Kapha predominates in Balaavastha, Pitta in Yuvaavastha and Vata in Vridhaavastha. In order to remain diseases free, a person should eat food with Vipreetagunato his Avastha, so that the balance of Doshas remains in the body.

At present due to the unorganized lifestyle, people do not pay attention to their eating time and physical condition and do not eat according to their age, which cause diseases.

#### UPAYOGA SAMSTHA<sup>[15]</sup>

UpayogaSamstha means rules of dieting. It depends on the digestible characteristics of the

food. It contains everything related to diet, how to eat, when to eat, what to eat, what not to eat etc. Ahar should be Ushna, Tasty, qualitative, easily digestible and should consist of six Rasas etc. According to Ayurveda, food should be taken only when the last meal is digested.

#### UPYOKTA<sup>[16]</sup>.

Upyokta means user or the person who takes the food. The user is the one who consumes the food and the Oka-Satmya depends on him. Oka-Satmya differs from person to person. Oka-Satmya refers to one's eating habits which develop according to one's likes and dislikes and frequent consumption of any food substances.

These are the factors mentioned in our Samhitas which are the foundation of dietetics.

#### III. DISCUSSION –

Ahar is a part of our daily life. Along with the quality, quantity and taste of food. Positive health can be easily achieved if we pay attention to the right way of consuming food and the rules related to diet mentioned in Ayurveda.

In the current modern life style we are neglecting the understanding of digestibility nutritional value of food products, timing of meals and are more interested in eating tasty, ready-to-eat foods. All these factors give rise to various metabolic disorders. For this in today's life style AsthavidhaAhar Vidhi Visheshayatan is most ideal concept.

By analysing the Prakriti of the food material, desirable combinations or Samyoga can be made to overcome the unwanted or harmful effects of the food material. Prakriti and Karan help in bringing out new desirable and adoptable properties in food ingredients. Rashi states that proper Matra of Aharis easily digested and promotes life. The concept of Desha suggests that we should be aware of the origin and quality of food items as the soil has its own impact on the crop. Kala is considered to be an important factor in getting all the benefits of the Ahar, so timing should be taken care of every time you eat. In today's life style, the code of food intake and code of conduct is UpayogaSamstha. By considering all the above rules of food intake, Upyokta, i.e. a wise person should understand the good and bad consequences of eating rules we can achieve healthy life and remedial action on diseases, hence it's time to understand the valuable guidance of Ayurveda Samhitas.

#### IV. CONCLUSION-

In today's era we follow faulty food habits due to busy schedule and modern life style which results in various diseases. Hence there is a need to explain this concept of AsthavidhaAhar Vidhi Visheshayatan as explained in ancient Ayurveda Samhitas. Ayurveda mainly has two Prayojanas-SwasthyarakshanaandVyadhiparimoksha. By understanding and following this principle properly, we can easily achieve both the Prayojanasof Ayurveda.

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