



World Journal of Pharmaceutical Science & Technology

Journal homepage: www.wjpst.com

Review Article

A REVIEW OF THE AYURVEDA SIGNIFICANCE OF AHARA AND THE AHARA VIDHI VISHESHA AYATAN

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Received: 22-3-2022, Revised: 28-4-2022, Accepted: 5-6-2022

ABSTRACT

Nowadays, lifestyle problems are one of the most pressing concerns facing the world. It's all due of our new way of life. Many studies have previously been undertaken, and more are being conducted presently to find a remedy for lifestyle problems. Finally, all studies show that changing one's eating habits and adhering to a strict code of eating behaviour is the most successful treatment. Health, according to *Ayurveda*, is defined as the balance of *Dosha*, *Agni*, *Dhatu*, and *Mala*, as well as physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being. This definition of health is in coherence with WHO's definition of Health as "A state of Physical, mental, Social and spiritual wellbeing and not merely an absence of disease". The most basic requirement for a healthy existence is enough nourishment. *Ayurveda* lays a strong focus on *Ahara*, believing that good diet feeds the body, mind, and soul.

Ayurveda provides some fundamental dietary rules and regulation in form of *AharaVidhivisheshayatane*, such as selecting appropriate foods, food combinations, cooking techniques, food quality and amount, consumer nature, geographical and environmental factors, and so on. It provides a good sense of what? When and why? What's the difference between how and which? Food should be consumed in order to maintain good health. *Ayurveda* says that *Ahara* is *Mahabheshajya* since thousands of years^[1]. Effective *Ahara* is also essential for

proper *Jatharagni* functioning [2]. In the therapy of these diseases, the traditional style of eating and serving food plays an essential role. A solid comprehension of these foundations will aid in the reduction of digestive pain caused by lifestyle disorders, as well as the noble objective of sustaining health.

KEY WORDS: *Ayurveda, Ahara, Mahabheshaj, Jatharagni, Ahara Vidhivisheshayatane*

INTRODUCTION:

Many lifestyle diseases are currently occurring as a result of a lack of knowledge of methods, irregular timings, eating an unbalanced diet, and failing to follow the required rules for preparing, conserving, and eating food. *Ayurveda* says that our digestive system is the root of all ailments. Each dietary item has a *Dosha* irritating or pacifying effect on the human body. The bulk of disorders are caused by faulty digestion (*Mandagni*), which creates poisons (*Ama*) [3]. In *Ayurveda*, the link between a poor diet and disease is very extensively described. By adhering to a health-promoting regimen, these lifestyle problems can be avoided. Specific dietary and lifestyle instructions are usually advised in *Ayurvedic* therapies to aid in the restoration of homeostatic biomechanics and wellness.

Ayurveda has been used to improve health and wellness for thousands of years. *Aahar, Nidra, and Brahmacharya* are mentioned as *Upastambhas* (sub pillars) of life in *Ayurveda*, the science of life [4]. Of which *Ahara* is the most important since it is via *Ahara* that both the body and the intellect flourish. The *Atharva Veda* depicts food as "heaven on earth" for humans [5]. The *Rigveda* portrays food as having the values of the goddesses *Ila, Saraswathi, and Bharati*, since it aids in human longevity [6]. Man is said to have started from food in the *Taitiriya Upanishad* [7]. According to *Agnipurana*, *Ahara* is an important pillar of the tripod, which includes *Ahara, Nidra and Brahmcharya* [8]. The human body, according to *Charaka*, is a product of *Ahara* [9].

Longevity, complexion, contentment, strength, sustenance, and immunity are all provided by *Ahara*. *Ahara* not only provides nutrition, but also protects against infections, promotes growth and development, improves the operation of sense organs, and promotes physical and emotional well-being. When food is not prepared/consumed properly, *Ahara* gives health advantages through its nutritional value; nevertheless, when food is not prepared/consumed properly, *Ahara* does not provide major health benefits. As a result, the *Ayurvedic* idea of *Ahara Vidhi Vishesha Ayatan* was developed to achieve the mutinous health advantages of *Ahara*. This is a notion proposed by *Acharya Charaka* that entails a variety of laws and regulations around food consumption and preparation. According to modern science, a balanced diet is one that includes a variety of foods in sufficient quantities and proportions to meet the needs for energy, proteins, vitamins, minerals, fats, carbohydrates, and other nutrients for maintaining health, vitality, and overall well-being. While *Ayurveda* lays a strong focus on *Ahara*, claiming that complexion, cheerfulness, excellent voice, life,

imagination, happiness, contentment, corpulence, strength, intelligence, and so on are all influenced by *Ahara* [10].

Ayurveda classics, known as *Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatane*, cover all of these characteristics in a methodical and scientific manner. These are the eight key components of food convention, which include food compatibility, which is a deciding factor in maintaining health. *Ahara vidhi vishesh ayatan* stresses a variety of aspects that impact *Ahara*, including biological qualities, origin, environmental conditions, season, preparation, and freshness, and offers a rational explanation of how to balance food according to one's *Dosha* and physical demands. The necessity of the hour is to investigate the possibilities of these *Ayurvedic* dietetics code and conducts, as well as to develop ways and means to attain the noble objective of keeping health.

Definition of Ahara

According to *Shabdakalpadruma* - *Ahara* is a material that is ingested through the throat after eating [11].

According to *Mahabharata* - “*Aaharat sarvabhootani sambhavanti*”

It signifies that *Ahara* is the source of all living things [12].

Importance of Ahara –

"*Ahara is Brahma*," according to the *Taittiriya Upanishad* [13]. It is true that *Ahara* is the sole one who created and maintains us. *Ahara*, according to *Aacharya Charaka*, is the human being's life. *Varna, Prasad, Souswarya, Jivita, Pratibha, Sukha, Tushti, Pushti, Bala, Medha*, and more are available. It is extremely recommended that a person never consumes *Ahara* out of greed or while he is oblivious to what he is eating [14]. A man who is disciplined enough to stick to a healthy diet can live for 36000 nights, or hundreds of years. He has a healthy lifestyle and is surrounded by excellent people [15].

MATERIALS & METHODS:

Conceptual study comprises the review of the available literature in the ancient classical texts, scientific journals, dissertations, research paper etc. concerned with this concept.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

In *Ayurvedic* therapy, dietary consideration is an integral part of every prescription. Dietary control might be a comprehensive therapy in some cases. So, it's possible that how we eat is just as significant as what we consume. Many elements influence the quality of food, including method of preparation, habitat, combination, time, season of intake, way of intake, body constitution, consumer *Agribala*, and so on. *Ayurveda's Ahara vidhi vishesh ayatan* elaborates on this multifaceted area of dietetics and nutrition.

In *Ayurveda*, *Aacharya Charaka* gives these 8 factors which determines utility of various types of foods [16].

In *Ashtang Sangraha*, *Aacharya Vagbhat* explained only 7 types of *Ahara vidhi visheha ayatan*. He quotes it as “*Saptavidha Aahar Kalpana*”. He has combined “*Upayoga Samstha*” and “*Upayokta*” and termed it as “*Upayoga Vyavastha*” [17].

These are eight special considerations [18] which are discussed in detail furthermore and are summarized briefly 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 Samstha*- Classical *Ayurvedic* Rules of eating
8. *Upayokta* -The person who takes the food/ User.

Prakriti - (Qualitative characteristic of food)

It denotes the nature of dietary items, i.e., the diet's intrinsic characteristics (*Laghu, Guru*, etc.) [19]. It is well known that each and every human has a unique physical and mental temperament (known as *Prakriti*), and that each food and medicine item have its own *Prakriti*, which is determined by the heaviness, hotness, and other features of certain goods. For Example -

Masha (*Phaseolus roxburghii*) - Heavy (*Guru*), *Mudga* (*Phaseolus mungo*) - Light (*Laghu*)

Shukar (boar) - heavy, *Ena* (deer) meat – light [19].

Prakriti is concerned with the evaluation of *Ahara dravya's* inherent attributes, such as whether the meal is heavy or light for digestion, if the potency is *Sheeta* or *Ushna*, and whether the likely influence on *Doshas* is to ameliorate or exacerbate, and so on. Individuals suffering with *Pitta vruddhi*, for example, should avoid hot foods. As a result, the type of the drug must be taken into account while planning a diet.

Karana - (Processing of food)

Food processing (i.e., *Samskara*) is referred to as *Karana* [20]. It refers to the adjustment of food quality by several *Samskaras*, such as *Jalatomyoga, Agnisannikarsha, Shaucha, Manthana, Desha, Kala, Bhavana, Kalapakarsha, and Bhaajna* [20]. These transformations must be carried out in such a way that the *Doshas* are removed and the *Dhatu*s is replenished, allowing for the expected / desired modifications to occur.

Sannikarsh Samskara Agni (Contact of fire) Distinct forms of *Agni* cause different changes in material characteristics. Food cooked over a natural wood/coal fire, for example, has a superior flavour than food cooked using electric equipment.

Shauch (Cleaning) & *Jal Sannikarsh* (Water Contact) *Samskara* Impurities are removed from food by cleaning it. As a result, *Shauch Samskara* is recommended. e.g., *Laghu* rice is made from dehusked paddy that has been thoroughly cleaned and filtered (light), On the other hand, *Guru* rice is made from uncooked paddy that has not been washed or filtered (heavy) [20].

Samskara Manthana (Churning) The *Manthan* is responsible for the actual churning of material, which results in changes in their characteristics. for example,

Dadhi – Heavy (*Guru*), *Shothkrut*/inflammation.

When it is churned, - becomes buttermilk – *Laghu* (Light), *Shothahara*/Cure inflammation [20].

The mechanics of food processing in terms of micronutrient bioavailability are thoroughly explained by contemporary dietetic research. To improve the bioavailability of micronutrients in a plant-based diet, a variety of traditional home food processing and preparation methods can be applied. Thermal processing, mechanical processing, soaking, fermentation, and germination are all examples. These tactics attempt to enhance the physicochemical accessibility of micronutrients, reduce the presence of antinutrients such as phytates, and raise the content of bioavailability-enhancing compounds [21].

***Samyoga* (mixing/combination) -**

Sometimes the action of a diet combination differs from the individual effect, i.e., when two or more substances are combined, distinctive attributes emerge that cannot be attained by consuming the same item independently. Because the combination develops new traits, it is important to remember that while cooking the dish, the ingredients must be compatible with one another and correctly blended together.

For example ,

Honey and *Ghee*: Combination in equal quantity - become toxic.

Honey and *Ghee* - Alone - Wholesome to the body

Milk (*Sheet Veerya*) and fish (*Ushna veerya*) - should not be taken together [22].

Though, both of them have sweet taste but due to the contradiction in their potency they vitiate the blood and obstruct the *Srotasas*.

As a result of the incompatible combination, the body may be harmed. In *Ayurveda*, the notion of unsuitable food, or *Viruddha Ahara*, is clearly discussed [23].

In contemporary research, a section known as 'Tropology' deals with the science of food combination and recommends a dietary strategy that promotes particular food combinations as fundamental to optimum health (for example, not combining carbohydrate-rich meals with protein-rich foods in the same meal) [24]. Protein digestion necessitates an acidic environment, and digestion of protein rich animal protein necessitates high quantities of hydrochloric acid (HCl) Because the digestion of carbohydrate-dense foods needs an alkaline environment, high carbohydrate foods combined with high protein foods will not digest and will instead ferment. Causing bloating, gas, and indigestion Since, this the digestion of carbohydrates will be hampered by the fermentation of carbohydrates. Proteins will cause increased gas, bloating, and discomfort [25].

Rashi (The Quantity)

The relevance of *Ahara matra* and its influence on digestion is mentioned in *Ayurveda*. Diet should be consumed in the right quantities. The amount of food to be consumed is determined by the individual's digestive capacity, which varies from person to person, as does the *Matra*. An appropriate quantity is defined as the amount of food that is digested and processed in a timely manner without disrupting the body's *Dhatu*s and *Doshas* balance. The right amount of food activates digestive activities [26], but too little or too much food is damaging to one's health.

Ayurveda also discusses another component of *Matra*, such as taking meals in such a way that two sections of the stomach are filled by the food taken, one half is filled by water or other liquid material, and one portion is left empty to allow *Vayu* or Gas to circulate freely [27].

In the context of *Rashi*; the terms *Sarvagraha* & *Parigraha* have been explained by *Ayurveda* [28].

Sarvagraha: Total measurement of the entire meal as a whole i.e., the combined quantity of the rice, meat, pulses, condiments etc [28].

Parigraha: Detailed measurement of each article of diet separately [28].

Modern dietetic science places a greater emphasis on the *Parigraha* form of *Matra*. Because it defines the amount of carbohydrates, fats, proteins, and other nutrients in the form of calories, whereas *Ayurveda* values both forms of *Matras*, i.e., *Sarvagraha* and *Parigraha*, equally.

Desha (Habitat) –

The term "habitat" refers to a geographical area. It refers to differences in the quality of food ingredients as a result of differences in soil and climate [29]. For Example -

The food cultivated in the Himalayan region – Heavy

Desert or sandy region - Light.

Both *Bhoomi Desha* and *Dehadasha* should be followed when taking *Ahara*. *Deshaparikshana* is one of the most important aspects in determining a patient's food habits, the likelihood of diseases connected to the diet, and the appropriate therapy, as well as the *Pathya Apathya* component.

***Kaala* (Time& Seasonal variation) –**

To maintain optimal health, the seasonal routine in the stage of health and sickness must be followed. *Kala* is the fundamental reason for the *Parinaman* of immature substance to mature and mature to destruction, i.e., *Uttpati-Sthithi-Laya*.

Nityaga and *Avasthika* are two types of *Kala* [30].

Nityaga - According to *Ritusatmya*, *Nityaga* is one in which *Ahara* is eaten. For example

The cold climate during the rainy season aggravates *Vata*, thus *Vatashamaka* sweet, sour, and salty foods and beverages are favoured.

During the summer, the Sun's rays absorb an excessive amount of moisture from the environment. As a result, sweet, cold, liquid foods and drinks are favourable throughout that season.

Avasthika: *Ahara* intake based on bodily status, whether healthy or ill. For example

Langhana in – *Atisara*

Spicy food - Avoided in Jaundice.

Ayurveda also explains the Ideal time for food intake i.e., only when the previously taken food is completely digested.

***Upayoga Samstha* (Classical *Ayurveda* Rules of eating) -**

These are the directions necessary for appropriate food digestion [31].

Do's

- The food should be flavourful, warm, high-quality, filling, and easy to digest;
- It should be consumed only when hungry and after the previous meal has been digested.
- All *Rasas*, including *Madhura*, *Amla*, *Lavana*, *Katu*, *Tikta*, and *Kashaya*, should be included in the daily diet.
- Should consume foods that are nutritious and appropriate for their disposition.
- It is recommended that you eat with full focus and the belief that the meal will improve both your body and mind.
- Food should be consumed in a comfortable environment with all essential utensils.

Dont's

- Food items that are potentially hostile or behave in opposition to one another.
- Eating too quickly or too slowly.
- Eating while laughing, conversing, thinking, or watching television.
- Eating when you're frightened, angry, anxious, or otherwise upset.
- Excessive usage of any of the six *Rasas* over a long period of time.

Upayokta (The person who takes the food/ User) –

Finally, the *Upayokta* appears. This is the one who makes use of the *Ahara dravyas*. Every individual must evaluate his or her own constitution, digestive strength, season, time of day, and whether or not the previously consumed meal has been digested. He is the one who must take into account all of *Ahara's* facts and eat in accordance with them.

CONCLUSION

Ahara is an important part of life that has various health advantages, especially when drunk properly. Food ingested in the correct method aids in the balance of *Doshas*, *Dhatu*s, and *Agni*. Dietary factors that are appropriate balance physical, mental, and spiritual wellbeing. The notion of *Ahara Vidhi Vishesha Ayatan* was introduced by *Ayurveda* as a set of principles for preparing and eating meals that help to acquire the health benefits of food. *Swasthyarakshana* and *Vyadhiparimoksha* are both addressed in *Ayurveda*. The use of the *Astha Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatanas* idea will aid in the completion of both of these *Prayojanas*.

According to *Ahara Vidhi Vishesha Ayatan's* ayurvedic considerations, it gives lifespan, complexion, vigour, and immunity, among other things. Avoiding the notion of *Ahara Vidhi Vishesha Ayatan* not only deprives food of its nutritional content but also produces a variety of health problems such as diarrhoea, indigestion, hyperacidity, and anorexia, among others.

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