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Review Article

### CONCEPT OF AAHARA DRAVYA WITH RESPECT TO AHARA-VIDHI-VISHESHAYATAN

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#### ABSTRACT

The healthy bodies as well as the diseases are nothing but the outcome of Ahara. Out of all the factors for maintenance of positive health, properly food taking occupies the most important position because diet or Ahara is the basic medicament other than any substance. Though one is not able to sustain life without Ahara. In today's fast life, many norms regarding diet & regimen have been compromised which is showing the overall declining status of health in the society. Ahara and its related codes and conducts have been long forgotten by the human being; hence to evaluate this ancient science of dietetics this study was undertaken. For this total positive health, Ayurveda has given three sub pillars- Ahara, Nidra and Brahmacharya, which comes under the social medicine. These are the code and conducts for taking diet of any dietetic science having physiological and functional consideration. Compatible food only beneficial foods should be consumed because it is responsible for maintaining good state of health. One has to consume food by due regards to Prakriti, Karana, Samyoga, Rashi, Desha, Kala, Upayogasamstha, & Upayokta.

**Keywords:** Ahara, Ahara Vidhi Vidhana, Health, diseases,

#### INTRODUCTION

The healthy bodies as well as the diseases are nothing but the outcome of Ahara. The virtue attributed to food includes the physical growth and development, appearance, intellect, the voice, physical and mental strength and stamina, finally the very existence. The gunas (qualities) of these fulfill the required nutrients in the body respectively. Values of food in Ayurveda have emerged from nature and not from the laboratory. It also has established the principles of processing of food through which the nature of the food can be altered as needed.

In Ayurveda, any substance taken as aahar (food) has guna (property), veerya (potency), vipak (resultant of metabolism), and above all prabhav (impact). Rasas undertake Gunas and is undertaken by veerya which is suppressed by vipak and finally prabhav makes all of them resultant. According to Ayurveda food is medicine and medicine is food. Eating correctly is the most important aspect of Ayurvedic life-style in both the short term and the long term. What is so-called 'correct' or 'compatible' depends on the individual and as the saying goes 'one man's meat is another man's poison'. Different foods suit different people<sup>1</sup>.

#### Ayurvedic concept of form of diet:

According to Ayurveda Body is said to be made up of Panch Mahabhutas & hence the food also needs to be Panchbhautic

(Made up of Panch (five) Mahabhutas (great elements)) then only food can get digested & be utilized for the growth of Panchamahabhutas (the basic elemental constituents of body) which in turn results in growth of body.

#### Ideal Diet

The ideal diet should have following properties:-

- 1) It should increase the strength of body.
- 2) It should be tasty/it should be such that it should be liked by the one, who is taking it.
- 3) It should give energy instantaneously / immediately after taking it.
- 4) It should have the capacity to withhold the body & give its strength & energy to carry on its regular functions.
- 5) It should satisfy the one taking it .
- 6) It should be hot, unctuous, and not dry when taken.
- 7) Should be taken in proper quantity.
- 8) It should not be incompatible. ( mentioned in uneasy combinations below)

The food (Diet) with all above properties is said to be ideal diet.

The Diet which is of all the properties explained above can only do the functions prescribed to it.

#### FUNCTIONS OF DIET<sup>2</sup> (food)

- 1) Instantly satisfying.

- 2) Gives strength/energy.
- 3) Maintains the body & maintains the functions of the body.
- 4) Increases longevity.
- 5) Increases the Digestive fire, Vitality, Recollecting Power, & Ojas

#### TYPES OF DIET

There are four types of diet

- i) That which can be drunk
- ii) That which can be licked
- iii) Easily chewable e.g. Rice etc.
- iv) Hard food substances which need to be chewed e.g. Sugarcane, meat.

Some have given 6 types in addition to the four stated above:

- v) which should be sucked e.g. Mango.
- vi) Which needs mastication by teeth, these include very hard food materials e.g. various nuts.

Some have stated 8 types / forms of food / Diet. In addition to the above 6.

- vii) Those which can only be eaten after being grinded into powder, various pastes etc.
- viii) Food substances like Sugar candy etc.

- According to Nature – Diet has been classified into 2 types<sup>3</sup>: Heavy Diet & Light diet.
- Rain water, Raktashali (Red rice), Sath Sali (Old rice), Mudga (green gram), Eina (black deer) & lava (kind of bird in arid regions) are light/laghu.
- Milk, sugarcane, fresh Rice, Udad( black gram) & meat of the animals from Anup Desh – land with abundant water & plantation (Marshy lands, equatorial Rain forests) are considered to be Guru/Heavy
- The diet should be made up of all the six tastes: Sweet, Sour, Salty, Hot, Bitter, Astringent.
- It has also been stated that according to the properties diet again can be of 2 types:
- Heavy to digest, & Easy or light to digest.

#### Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatan - EIGHT FACTORS DETERMINING THE UTILITY FOOD

The Eight factors which determine the utility or otherwise of various types of food are<sup>1</sup>.

- 1) Prakriti or Nature of food articles
- 2) Samskara or method of their processing
- 3) Combination
- 4) Quantity
- 5) Habitat
- 6) Time
- 7) Rules governing intake of food.
- 8) Wholesomeness to individual who takes it.

**Prakriti:** This is the nature of food .each food substance has its own nature or characteristics, for ex .the Black gram has heavy nature & the green gram has light nature.

**Samskara:** This means transformation of qualities through various process like Soaking, churning, cooking, roasting, washing etc. Due to this quality gets changed.

**Combination:** Combination of different foods may enhance the qualities of the original substance or it may produce altogether new qualities. Honey and ghee are very useful if taken independently but if both are combined together they can be equally harmful.

**Quantity:** Quantity of food to be taken it is decided according to digestive capacity of Agni . If Agni is weak then one should take food only once or should take food in less quantity. Food taken once i.e. at one time which gets digested completely & properly, is said to be Matra/Quantity of food to be taken. Considering four parts of the Stomach, one should take food such that 2 parts of the Stomach get filled by the food taken, one part to be filled by water or other liquid matter & one part should be kept free for the ‘Vayu’ / Gas to move<sup>4</sup> One should take diet in proper quantity. The quantity of diet to be taken depends on the digestion capacity of the person which varies from person to person & so does the Matra. The amount of food, which without disturbing the equilibrium of dhatus & doshas of the body gets digested as well as metabolized in proper time is to be regarded as the proper quantity. The proper quantity of food does depend upon the nature of food articles. If the food article is heavy only three fourth or half of the stomach capacity is to be filled up. Even in the case of light food articles excessive intake is not conducive to the maintenance of the power of digestion & metabolism.

#### IMPORTANCE OF FOOD TAKEN IN PROPER QUANTITY

Taken in Appropriate quantity, food certainly helps the individual in bringing about strength, complexion happiness & longevity without disturbing the equilibrium of dhatus & doshas of the body<sup>3</sup>.

Indicated Food:-

One should regularly ( can take every day) take Shastika (a kind of rice harvested in sixty days), Sali (oryza sativum), yellow gram , food cooked in Rock Salt, Amalaka (emblica officinalis), Rain Water, Ghee, Meat of animals dwelling in arid climate & Honey. Contradicted Food: One should not regularly take heavy articles such as dried meat, dry vegetables, lotus rhizomes & lotus stalk. One should never take meat of a diseased animal. Moreover, one should not regularly take boiled buttermilk, in spissiated milk with pork, beef, meat of buffalo with fish curd, & barley.

**ORDER IN WHICH ONE SHOULD TAKE THE DIET** First, one should eat food of sweet taste for the purpose of Vata Pitta pacification. Sweet taste is helpful for pacification of vata dosha present in the digestive tract or intestines. Then one should take sour & salty substances for they do the function of increasing the digestive juices. Lastly one should take food of bitter and pungent taste for the purpose of pacification of ‘Kapha’ .One should take fruits like pomegranate first in the diet. Then one should take liquid material & then lastly semisolid & solid food.

The modern dietetic science emphasizes more on Parigraha aspect of Matra, as it specifies the quantity of Carbohydrate, Fats, Proteins etc. in Ahara; whereas, Ayurveda gives equal importance to both types of Matra i.e. Sarvagraha and Parigraha.

**Desha:** Desha is such a factor which is to be understood in three ways in relation to Ahara, i.e. Bhoomi, Ahara Dravya Desha and Atura Desha. It is common to a larger mass of people but its effect regarding the Ahara taken by an individual will change in accordance to this.

Modern science is not thinking in a different way about Desha but presenting in own way. It also says that the study of disease is really the study of man and his environment. Hundreds of millions of people are affected by preventable diseases originate in the environment in which they live. For human beings the environment is not limited, as it normally is for plants and animals, to a set of climatic factors.

The aspect of Human host is well defined in Ayurveda when Acharyas said about Vyadhita Desha Pariksha. So Vyadhita Desha Pariksha is one of the vital aspects of understanding the patients before starting the Pariksha. The examination of it should be done not only before Cikitsa but also before taking the food. Hence one should always take Ahara according to Bhoomi Desha as well as Atura Desha.

**Kala:** Considering the most important causative factor for the proper benefits of Ahara the involvement of Kala is on each and every state of Ahara Dravya as well as it's all the stages of Ahara consumption.

Here for achieving maximum benefits of the consumed Ahara, the Kala related to the consumer also needs to be taken into consideration, i.e. His Awastha, both in terms of Swasthya or Rugna and Vayah too, Nityaga Kala i.e. The rutu, Time of the Day, etc. where ever there is a Dravya and the existence of Kala there is always Parinaman. Hence Kala has an impact on the principles governing Ahara. To decide the frequency, the longevity of day and night, age, Prakriti, etc. need to be taken into consideration e.g. on long days frequency will be more and vice versa.

Kala is the constant factor which is the basic cause for the Parinamana of immature substance to gets its maturity and maturity to its destruction i.e. for Utpatti-Sthiti-Pralaya. Nothing is left behind which cannot be affected by the Kala. Desha is the second factor which also influences the every aspect of substance because of its intimate relation with it. Kala and Desha both go hand in hand but still Kala is one which is having always superior in them. Madhura-Amla and Lavana Rasas, which are having mostly Jala and Pruthvi dominance categorized under Santarpanajanya Rasas and remaining three Katu, Tikta and Kashaya Rasas categorized under Apatarpanajanya. The basic point of discussion is that the classification according to Guru and Laghu Gunatmaka Ahara is having mutual relation between Matra of that particular Ahara. The second point is that this region i.e. Desha is said to be Jangala, Sadharana Desha according to privileged climatic conditions. The textual references shows that Jangala Sadharana Desha is having dominancy of Tikta-Kashaya Rasa and Ruksha Guna. This dietary pattern is in harmony of this particular Desha also.

#### TIME OF TAKING DIET

Proper excretion of urine & Stools, Doshas go to the there respective sthanas i.e sites, strotasas are clean and free from blockage & indriyas i.e. sense organs are sharp and attentive, one feels lightness of body, Belching with proper smell to it. With proper excretion of 'Apan vayu', Heart becomes Nirdosha i.e. we feel like eating & drinking. When all the above signs are present then only one should eat; as this is the proper time for taking the diet. It is said that when the Doshas go to their own respective places & the Strotaras

(channels) become clean then only one should take Food.

#### RULES FOR TAKING FOOD

Healthy individuals as well as patients should observe the following:

While having food articles which are most wholesome by nature; one should eat only that food in proper quantity which is hot, unctuous & not contradictory in potency & that too after the digestion of the previous meal, food should be taken in proper place with all the accessories, without talking & laughing with concentration of mind & paying due regard to oneself, not too fast or too slowly.

Important Rules And Regulations Related to Diet

1) Eat to live but don't live to eat.

2) Eat food which is beneficial.

3) Eat food in a moderate quantity.

4) Don't eat food, properties of which are not known to you.

5) Don't eat food in a hurry or when you are in a disturbed state of mind, full of tensions, strains, and emotional outbreaks. Regain peace of mind and then enjoy food with happy and hearty mood.

6) Wash your hands, feet and mouth, using clean utensils in a clean place which is well lighted and well-ventilated.

7) Fill half quantity of stomach with food, one fourth quantity with water and liquid substances and keep the remaining one fourth for air.

8) A person who takes only one full meal a day is called Yogee (or Yoga – practitioner). He takes light breakfast in the morning and the healthy and happy life.

9) A person who takes two full meals in a day is called 'Bhogi' i.e. a lusty and greedy person who lives mostly to eat and suffers from illness and or ill health from time to time.

10) A person who takes full meals more than two times is called Rogee or a sick person. He a gluttonous person and lives only to eat. He is always sick and away from health.

11) Don't do yogic exercises immediately after taking food. It is safe to do them four hours after taking food. It is better therefore to do Yogic exercise early morning or in the evening when the stomach is empty.

12) Don't take food immediately after doing yogic exercises, but one hour after doing them.

13) Don't go to bed immediately after taking supper wait for a minimum of one hour after it.

14) According to Ayurveda well balanced diet consists of food stuffs having six tastes namely Sweet, Sour, Salty, Pungent, Bitter and Astringent.

#### CONCLUSION

The healthy bodies as well as the diseases are nothing but the outcome of Ahara. Out of all the factors for maintenance of positive health, properly food taking occupies the most important position because diet or Ahara is the basic medicament other than any substance. Though one is not able to sustain life without Ahara. In today's fast paced life, many norms regarding diet & regimen have been compromised which is showing the overall declining status of health in the society. Ahara and its related codes and conducts have been long forgotten by the human being; hence to evaluate this ancient science of dietetics this study was undertaken.

For this total positive health, Ayurveda has given three sub pillars- Ahara, Nidra and Brahmacharya, which comes under the social medicine. Here Ahara, has been enumerated first, which shows its importance. Nature manages it earlier to create living being on the earth. Breast milk is the first and well-balanced food for the newly born baby. Emphasizing the importance of mother the term “Ma” has been defined as humanity is nourished at whose breast and civilization cradles in whose lap. The milk that has got its more or less direct bearing on Ahara taken by her; it plays decisive role in development, sustenance, reproduction and termination of life. It is a well known fact that, Ahara, supplies bio-energy to body. This bio-energy is supplied by proper and adequate nutrition in the form of its essential constituent's viz. protein, carbohydrates, fats, minerals, vitamins and water<sup>8</sup>. Through centuries food has been recognized as important for human being, in health and diseased state. Ayurveda, the science of

life has not only emphasized on Ahara but also entire quality of it. From all above statements one can say that ' In short **everything** depends on diet.

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