



**A REVIEW OF IMPACT OF AAHAR PAKA IN SHARIRIK SWASTHYA (PHYSICAL HEALTH) AND MANSHIK SWASTHYA (MENTAL HEALTH)**

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**ABSTRACT**

Aahar Paka (digestion and transformation of food) plays a central role in maintaining Sharirik Swasthya (physical health) and Manshik Swasthya (mental health) according to Ayurvedic principles. The concept of Aahar Paka encompasses the sequential metabolic processes that occur at both the gastrointestinal and tissue levels, governed by Agni (digestive fire). Balanced Agni ensures the proper formation of Ahara Rasa, which nourishes all seven Dhatus (tissues), ultimately leading to optimal physical strength, immunity, and vitality. Simultaneously, a well-regulated digestive system contributes to Sattvic mental qualities, supporting emotional stability, clarity of thought, and resistance to psychological disorders. This review explores classical Ayurvedic texts and contemporary research to analyze how disturbances in Aahar Paka—such as Mandagni (weak digestion), Vishamagni (irregular digestion), and Tikshnagni (excessive digestion)—can lead to systemic imbalances, manifesting in diseases like malnutrition, metabolic syndromes, anxiety, and depression. The paper highlights the interconnectedness of digestion, diet, and mental health, and emphasizes the need for personalized dietary interventions, mindful eating, and Agni-balancing practices for holistic well-being.

**KEYWORDS:** Aahar Paka, Agni, Sharirik Swasthya, Manshik Swasthya, Ayurveda, Digestion, Mental Health, Physical Health.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Ayurveda, the ancient Indian system of medicine, emphasizes a holistic approach to health that encompasses the body (Sharira), mind (Manas), and spirit (Atma). Among its foundational principles, Aahar (diet) and Agni (digestive fire) hold paramount importance, with the process of Aahar Paka—the digestion and transformation of food—considered central to sustaining life and preventing disease.

The classical Ayurvedic texts assert that “Rogah Sarve Api Mandagnau”, meaning “all diseases begin with impaired digestion.” This highlights the critical role of Aahar Paka in maintaining both Sharirik Swasthya (physical health) and Manshik Swasthya (mental health). According to Ayurveda, food, when properly digested, nourishes the Dhatus (body tissues), supports immune 2. function (Ojas), and fosters a calm, balanced state of mind. Conversely, improper digestion leads to the formation of Ama (toxic metabolic waste), which is implicated in a wide array of physical and psychological disorders.

In recent years, modern medical science has begun to acknowledge the profound connection between gut health and mental well-being, validating many of Ayurveda’s ancient insights. The emerging field of psychogastroenterology and the concept of the gut-brain axis echo the Ayurvedic understanding of the interdependence between digestion and mental health.

This article presents a comprehensive review of the Ayurvedic concept of Aahar Paka and its impact on physical and mental health. It explores the mechanisms through which digestion influences bodily strength, immunity, and emotional stability, and underscores the relevance of Ayurvedic dietary principles in promoting holistic wellness in contemporary life.

**Concept of Aahar Paka in Ayurveda**

**2.1 Meaning of Aahar Paka:** Aahar Paka refers to the complete transformation of food into a form that can be utilized by the body. It includes

- **Mechanical digestion** (chewing)
- **Chemical digestion** (enzymatic activity)
- **Metabolic transformation** at various levels
- **Nutrient assimilation** and tissue building

The ultimate goal of Aahar Paka is to produce Ojas—the essence of immunity and vitality.

## 2.2 Components of Aahar Paka

Ayurveda categorizes digestion into **three main stages**, governed by different forms of Agni (digestive/metabolic fire).

- Located in the stomach and small intestine.
- It is the primary fire responsible for the initial breakdown of food.
- Influenced by Pachaka Pitta, Samana Vata, and Kledaka Kapha.
- Ensures the division of food into Sara (essence) and Kitta (waste).
- Key to regulating the strength of Bhutagni and Dhatvagni.

## 2.3 Jatharagni (Gastric Digestion)

### 2.4 Types of Jatharagni (based on Dosha dominance)

Table1- Types of Jatharagni (based on Dosha dominance).

Type	Description
<b>Sama Agni</b>	Balanced digestion, ideal state
<b>Tikshna Agni</b>	Excessively strong digestion (Pitta)
<b>Manda Agni</b>	Weak digestion (Kapha dominance)
<b>Vishama Agni</b>	Irregular digestion (Vata)

## 3. Sharirika Swasthya (Mental Health)

Health in Ayurveda is described in a holistic manner, encompassing body, mind, and soul. The Sushruta Samhita, one of the foundational texts of Ayurveda, defines health as:

*"Samadoshaḥ samāgniśca samadhātu malakriyāḥ / Prasannātmendriyamaṇaḥ svāsthyam ityabhidhīyate ||"*  
— Sushruta Samhita, Sutrashtana 15/41

This definition of Swasthya (health) outlines the ideal state of Sharirika Swasthya as a condition where Doshas, Agni, Dhatus, and Malas are in equilibrium, and the functions of the sensory and motor organs, along with the mind and soul, are in a pleasant state.

### 3.1 Components of Sharirika Swasthya

#### 3.1a Dosha Samya (Equilibrium of Doshas)

- The three Doshas—Vata, Pitta, and Kapha—are biological energies derived from the five elements.
- Balance among Doshas maintains physiological harmony, while imbalance causes disease.
- Dosha balance is dynamic and varies with age, season, environment, and lifestyle.

#### 3.1b. Agni (Digestive and Metabolic Fire)

- Agni governs digestion, absorption, assimilation, and transformation of food into energy.
- There are 13 types of Agni: 1 Jatharagni, 5 Bhutagni, and 7 Dhatvagni.
- Proper Agni ensures the formation of healthy tissues and prevents accumulation of toxins (Ama).

#### 3.1c. Dhatus (Body Tissues)

- Seven Dhatus: Rasa, Rakta, Mamsa, Meda, Asthi, Majja, and Shukra.
- Each Dhatu supports structure and function of the body.
- Balanced nutrition and Agni help maintain Dhatu balance.

#### 3.1d Mala (Excretory Products)

Includes Mutra (urine), Purisha (feces), and Sweda (sweat).  
Proper elimination of Malas is vital for physical cleanliness and internal balance.

#### 3.1e Srotas (Body Channels)

The body has multiple Srotas (channels) for the transport of nutrients and waste.  
Clear and functioning Srotas are necessary for health; blockage leads to disease.

### 3.2 Features of a Healthy Sharira (Body)

Ayurveda describes the characteristics of a healthy body as:

- Good strength and stamina (Bala)
- Proper growth and development (Vridhhi)
- Clear complexion and glow (Prabha)
- Efficient metabolism and digestion
- Regular sleep-wake cycle
- Absence of disease and discomfort

### 3.4. Factors Influencing Sharirika Swasthya

#### 3.4a Ahara (Diet)

- Considered one of the three pillars of life (Trayopastambha).
- Should be Satmya (compatible), Desha-Kala-Patra Anusari (season, place, and person-specific), and Agni-anusari (digestive strength-based).
- Overeating or improper food combinations disturb Doshas and impair health.

#### 3.4b Vihara (Lifestyle)

Daily routine (Dinacharya) and seasonal routine (Ritucharya) are vital.  
Adequate physical activity, sleep, hygiene, and mental discipline support physical health.

### 3.4c Nidra (Sleep)

- Quality sleep restores bodily functions and balances Vata.
- Sleep deprivation leads to fatigue, weakened immunity, and mental dullness.

### 3.4d Prakriti (Constitution)

- Every individual has a unique body constitution determined at birth.
- Knowledge of Prakriti helps in customizing diet, lifestyle, and treatment.

### 3.5 Disorders of Sharirika Swasthya

Diseases manifest when the harmony of Doshas, Dhatus, Malas, and Agni is disturbed. Examples include:

- Vata disorders: arthritis, neurological issues, constipation
  - Pitta disorders: acidity, inflammation, skin conditions
  - Kapha disorders: obesity, congestion, sluggish metabolism
- Early identification of imbalance and correction through Ahara, Vihara, and Aushadhi (medicine) can restore Swasthya.

### 3.6 Maintaining Sharirika Swasthya

#### 3.6 a Preventive Measures

- Following Dinacharya: e.g., waking before sunrise, tongue scraping, oil pulling, exercise, bath, meditation.
- Adapting Ritucharya: seasonal modifications in diet and activity.
- Panchakarma for detoxification and rejuvenation.

#### 3.6 b Positive Habits

- Mindful eating
- Avoiding incompatible food combinations (Viruddha Ahara)
- Maintaining cleanliness and hygiene
- Stress management through Yoga and Pranayama

**3.7 Modern Relevance of Sharirika Swasthya:** In the context of rising lifestyle disorders such as obesity, diabetes, hypertension, and digestive diseases, Ayurveda's emphasis on prevention and personalized health through Sharirika Swasthya is highly relevant. Integrating these principles into modern life can significantly improve physical well-being and quality of life.

### 4. Manshika Swasthya (Mental Health)

Ayurveda is the foremost life science and medical science of the universe. Ayurveda emphasizes the importance of maintenance of the health of the healthy person and restoration of the health of the patients<sup>1</sup>. The World Health Organization's definition of health is: "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely an absence of disease or infirmity"<sup>2</sup>. In the same way, the definition of swasthya

as stated in Sushruta Samhita is: "The state of equilibrium of the following components: samadosha, samaagni, samadhatu, samavastha malakriya, and prasanna atma, prasanna indriya, and prasanna manas all together is considered as swasthya or state of total health."<sup>3</sup> Here 'the manas' is an important component that is mainly responsible for the maintenance of health or illness. Manas is one amongst the karana dravya.<sup>4</sup> The meaning of the word manas is, "that which is responsible to attain knowledge and by which the buddhi or jnana is attained is called as manas".<sup>5</sup> Manas is responsible for jnana bhava and jnana abhava, the jnana bhava or attainment of jnana will be seen when the atma and indriya sannikarsha takes place, otherwise, the attainment of buddhi or jnana will not be achieved.<sup>6</sup> Manas has chanchala swabhava,<sup>7</sup> which can be considered as lakshana or quality of manas. The indriyas are capable of perceiving their respective objectives only when they are connected with the manas.<sup>8</sup> The perceived knowledge will be of anutwa rupa in manas. For example, if we perceive an object it will be perceived by shabdhendriya, chakshurendriya, sparshanendriya, rasanendriya, and ghranendriya separately. This separate perception is called "yugapad", but, the buddhi/knowledge attained by all these objects will settle together in a combination when it reaches the mind or manas. Thus, the manas has the quality of Anutwa. The manas is single and unique, that is Ekatwa. These two, anutwam and ekatwam are the lakshanas of manas.<sup>9</sup>

Manas resides in hridaya, as all the indriyas act at the impulse of the heart itself.<sup>10</sup> But another reference of Charaka states that all the indriyas are connected with the brain directly and the shiras/head is the seat of all the indriyas, so the shiras / head, can also be taken as the seat of the manas.<sup>11</sup> The manas performs the actions like chinta [thinking about the action], vichara [analyzing the action], udhyam [performing the action], dhyeya [planning future action], and sankalpa [concentrating or taking oath]. These all are the functions of the mind and only after uha and vichara the buddhi or knowledge will be attained.<sup>12</sup> While explaining the manas in-depth, our acharyas explain that for the function of all these indriyas channels are needed. These working channels of the indriyas are called srotas. Thus the manas gets the knowledge from all over, with the help of indriyas which work all over the body. Beyond indriyagrahana it is ateendriya also; moves very fast all over the body, thus, we can deduce that manas is also a srotas called 'manovaha srotas'<sup>13</sup> The samanaska bhava of manas maintains the prakruta avastha of manas, whereas the atiyoga, ayoga, and mithya yoga of manasika karmas, like, excessive thinking, no thinking, thinking irrationally lead to vikruta avastha of manas.<sup>14</sup> Where the rajasika and tamasika gunas get vitiated and manifest the diseases<sup>15</sup> The intake of improper ahara which is not prepared following the rules of asthavidha ahavidhi visheshayatana enters the body and affects the body adversely, leading to tamoguna prasara, manifesting kama, krodhadi vikaaras, leading to buddhibramsha.

Then it enters the hridaya and affects manovahasrotas, giving rise to manovikaaras or manasika vyaadhis.<sup>[16]</sup> The diseases like unmada, apasmara, sanyasa roga, and atatwabhinivesha all are having similar pathology of manifestation. As a general principle of treatment of all the manasika rogas, the person has to differentiate ishta labha which are kaama, harshaadi from anishta labha which are shoka, bhayaadi.<sup>[17]</sup> and has to perform the duties of dharma, artha, and kama in accordance with the desha, kaala, kula, bala and Shakti.<sup>[18]</sup> One has to undergo the satwavajaya chikitsa, like, obtaining the adhyatmic jnana - spiritual knowledge, vignana - scientific knowledge, dhairya - courage, smriti - recollection of the actions, and Samadhi - keeping the mind away from all the vishayas or actions.<sup>[19]</sup> which cures the manovikaaras. One has to follow achara rasayana.<sup>[20]</sup> like, ahimsa, prashantam, tapas, etc., and sadvritta palana.<sup>[21]</sup> that is 'na krodha, na harsha' etc., also has to follow medhyarasayana.<sup>[22]</sup> like, satata adhyayana, vaada, paratantravalokanam, achara sevanam, etc, and all these help to avoid the manasika dosha avastha. By following all other principles like nityasevaneeya ahara, dinacharya, ratricharya, and ritucharya,<sup>[23]</sup> etc., One can maintain the dhatusaamyavasta,<sup>[24]</sup> thereby leading to the prakruta avastha of manas, buddhi, and indriyas. Mental health is maintaining a balance between the individual and the surrounding world which maintains harmony with oneself and others.<sup>[25]</sup> Mental health can be assessed by the following principles: Free from internal conflicts, Well-adjusted with others Searching for identity in the society Strong self-respecting personality knowing own needs, problems, and goals, etc. Self-control in the personality – balances one's rationality and emotionality. Faces problems and tries to solve intelligently. By these parameters, a mentally healthy person can be identified and are the qualities of a mentally healthy person and will show bestowed personality in the society.

## 5. Impact of Aahar Paka on Sharirik Swasthya (Physical Health)

### 5.1 Nourishment of Dhatus

Effective Aahar Paka leads to proper formation of Ahara Rasa, which nourishes all seven Dhatus:

1. Rasa (plasma/lymph)
2. Rakta (blood)
3. Mamsa (muscle)
4. Meda (fat)
5. Asthi (bone)
6. Majja (marrow/nervous tissue)
7. Shukra (reproductive tissue)

Any disruption in Agni leads to improper nourishment, weakening of tissues, and predisposition to diseases.

### 5.2 Strength, Immunity, and Longevity

Balanced Agni and Aahar Paka promote

- Bala (strength)
- Vyadhi Kshamatva (immunity)
- Ojas formation (vital essence)

Disturbed digestion weakens the immune response and increases vulnerability to infections, allergies, metabolic disorders, and degenerative diseases.

### 5.3 Role in Metabolic Health

Conditions like obesity, diabetes, indigestion, and constipation are rooted in defective Aahar Paka. Agni impairment leads to the accumulation of Ama, which blocks channels (Srotas) and disrupts cellular nutrition.

## 6. Impact of Aahar Paka on Manshik Swasthya (Mental Health)

### 6.1 Gut-Mind Connection in Ayurveda

Ayurveda suggests a strong correlation between digestion and the mind. Modern science also supports this via the gut-brain axis. A well-functioning digestive system supports a Sattvic (balanced and pure) mind, while disturbed digestion results in Rajasic (agitated) and Tamasic (dull) mental states.

### 6.2 Agni and Manas (Mind)

When Agni is balanced

Mental clarity increases.

Emotions remain stable.

Anxiety, irritability, and depression are minimized.

On the other hand, Mandagni or irregular digestion affects Prana Vata, disrupting mental functions and emotional regulation.

### 6.3 Role of Ama in Mental Disorders

Accumulated Ama, due to incomplete digestion, can enter the Majja Dhatu (nervous system), potentially leading to conditions like:

Depression

Anxiety

Insomnia

Lack of concentration

Detoxifying Ama and restoring Agni is often the first step in Ayurvedic management of psychological disorders.

### Diet and Lifestyle for Optimal Aahar Paka

#### Ahara Vidhi (Dietary Guidelines)

Classical Ayurvedic texts prescribe rules for eating:

- Eat freshly prepared, warm food.
- Avoid overeating or undereating.
- Maintain regular meal timings.
- Eat with mindfulness and gratitude.

#### Agni-Enhancing Practices

- Use of spices like ginger, black pepper, and cumin.
- Regular exercise and yoga.
- Panchakarma therapies to eliminate Ama.
- Stress management through meditation and pranayama.

## 7. DISCUSSION

Aahar Paka is not merely a physiological process but a holistic mechanism involving the transformation of food into physical and mental vitality. A compromised

digestive system is often the root of both somatic and psychological disorders. With growing global interest in integrative medicine, Ayurvedic concepts like Agni and Aahar Paka offer valuable frameworks for preventive and therapeutic strategies.

## 8. CONCLUSION

The quality of digestion (Aahar Paka) directly determines the quality of physical and mental health. Ayurveda's detailed approach to understanding and managing digestion is relevant even in today's context of increasing lifestyle-related and psychosomatic disorders. By maintaining balanced Agni and following mindful dietary practices, one can achieve optimal **Sharirik** and **Manshik Swasthya**, the true markers of holistic well-being.

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