

**CONCEPTUAL STUDY OF ASHTA AHARA VIDHI VISHESHAYATANA**Dr. Priyanka Kaushik\*<sup>1</sup> and Dr. Namrata Khobragade<sup>2</sup><sup>1</sup>M.D. Scholar PG. Deptt. of Roga Nidan Evum Vikriti Vigyan.<sup>2</sup>Reader, M.D. Ph.D. (Kayachikitsa) P.G. Deptt. of Roga Nidan Evum Vikriti Vigyan Shri N.P.A. Govt. Ayurveda College Raipur (C.G.).**\*Corresponding Author: Dr. Priyanka Kaushik**

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**ABSTRACT**

According to ayurveda health is a complete balance state of Dosha, Agni, Dhatu and Mala. A healthy person is whose atma, mana and indriya feel well. The prajoyana of Ayurveda is to protect health of the healthy and to cure disorder in the diseased. Acharya Charak has mentioned Ahara, Nidra and Brahmcharya as tri upastambha. Adequate nutrition is the basic need for healthy life. In today's modern era, due to lack of knowledge about correct eating habits, we blindly follow the wrong dietary habits, which causes agnivaishmya (digestive distress) and produces various life style disorders of unknown etiology. Ayurveda places special emphasis on Ahara and right way of eating food. For the method of taking food, 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 vidhi visheshayatana will help in reducing agnidushti (digestive distress) and achieving the both prajoyana of ayurveda.

**KEYWORDS:** Health, Triupastambha, Ahara, Ashta ahara vidhi visheshayatana, basic dietary guidelines, agnidushti (digestive stress).

**INTRODUCTION**

Ayurveda is a science of healthy and peaceful life. The purpose or aim of Ayurvedic medical science is not only to prevent the diseases and cure it from root but also to keep the person healthy through the life time.<sup>[1]</sup> Ahara is one of the most important sub-pillor of our healthy life. The pathophysiology of diseases begins with our improper food and living habits. Ayurveda places special emphasis on Ahara and states that food is the vital breath of living beings (that is why) the people rush to the food, complexion, cheerfulness, good voice, life, imagination, happiness, contentment, corpulence, strength, intellect all these are depend on food. The sansarika kriyas are done for sukhaprapti, the vedic ones for attainment of heaven and those for emancipation(mokshaprapti) also depend on food.<sup>[2]</sup>

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.<sup>[3]</sup>

In today's modern era due to lack of knowledge about correct eating habits, irregular timing, wrong cooking procedure, imbalance diet and not following the

prescribed rules for preparing, preserving and eating food we blindly follow the wrong eating habits and suffer from various life style disorders of unknown etiology. These lifestyle disorders are avoidable by following various regimen described in our ayurvedic samhitas. Ayurveda texts in its separate chapters have clearly described the day, night and seasonal regimen which are essential for our healthiness through our lifestyle. Acharya charak has described 8 specific factors of method of dieting in a very systematic and scientific manner which is known as ashta ahara vidhi visheshayatana.<sup>[4]</sup> These are 8 major aspects of food convention that includes compatibility of food articles which are determinant factors for the maintenance of Health.

Ashta Ahara vidhi visheshayatana explains various factors that influence Ahara such as origin, season, preparation, biological properties, environmental factors, freshness and provides a logical explanation of how to balance food according to one's Dosha and physical needs.

This article emphasizes the eight important aspects of Ahara vidhi visheshayatana.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

For this conceptual study various ayurveda samhitas – charak samhita, sushruta samhita, ashtang hriday etc. literatures and articles have been reviewed.

### Ashta ahara vidhi visheshayatana

These are 8 specific factors of method of dieting,<sup>[8]</sup> which are discussed in detail furthermore and are summarized briefly below.

- 1) Prakriti/ Swabhava- Nature of food/ Qualitative characteristic of food.
- 2) Karan – Processing of food.
- 3) Samyoga – Combination/ ixing of food.
- 4) Rashi – Quantity of food.
- 5) Desha – Habitate of food.
- 6) Kaala – Time and seasonal variation.
- 7) Upayoga Samstha – Rules for dieting
- 8) Upayokta – The person who consumes the food.

#### 1) Prakriti / swabhava - Nature of food / Qualitative characteristic of food.

Prakriti is swabhava (nature) which is the natural existence of properties like laghu, guru etc. in substance used as food and drug.<sup>[5]</sup>

As we know that each and every individual has got specific sharirika and manasika prakriti (temperament), in the same way according to heaviness, hotness etc each food and drug substance has also got its prakriti. For example masha is guru (heavy) and mudga is laghu (light), meat of shukar is guru(heavy) and ena (deer) meat is laghu (light) in nature.<sup>[5]</sup>

Prakriti is the natural qualities of Ahara dravya, hile consuming any food article one must keep in mind the virya (potency), sheeta or ushna, the food is heavy or light in digestion and the effect of food on dosha either its migrate or aggravate the dosha etc.

For example the individual having symptoms of kaphavridhhi should avoid the guru and abhishyandi ahara. Thus the prakriti of food must be considered in diet.

#### 2) Karan (Processing of food)

Karan means the processing of food (i.e. samskara).<sup>[6]</sup> it is the making or refinement of the natural products which means imparting other properties. It refers to alteration/modification in the qualities of food stuffs by various samskaras i.e. jalasamyoga, agnisamyoga, shaucha, manthana, desha, kala, bhavana, kalaprakarsha and bhajana. These transformations are to be made in such a way to eliminate the disturbances of doshas and to replenish the dhatus. Henceforth the desirable changes can be achieved.<sup>[6]</sup>

**Jalasamyoga** – Kathina and khara guna dravya can be converted into mridu and masrina guna by jalasamyoga.<sup>[6]</sup> Kalpanas like kwath, phant, shrit, kalk,

kashaya can be prepared according to sheeta guna requirement by jalasamyoga.

**Agnisamyoga** – The nature of rice is guru but by agnisamyoga it can be converted into laghu (dhana ka lawa).<sup>[6]</sup>

**Shauch** – Cleaning of food material gto eliminate the impurities is known as shauch.

Acharya chakrapani has explained all the three samyoga by a single example Rice prepared of dehusked paddy, well cleaned and filtered, become laghu(light), on the other hand rice prepared of unboiled paddy, not cleaned not filtered become guru (heavy).<sup>[6]</sup>

**Manthan** – To transform the properties of the substance manthan or churning sanskar is done. For example –Dahi is said to be heavy for digestion and also shothkrit i.e., it is responsible for shotha/inflammation, but when it undergoes churning process, it gets converted into buttermilk having laghu property i.e. light for digestion and used as the best medicine for shoth.<sup>[6]</sup>

There are some more methods of sanskara like desha, kala, bhavana, bhajana etc by which the desirable changes on substance can be achieved.<sup>[6]</sup>

#### 3) Samyoga (combination/ mixing)

Samyoga (combination) is aggregation of two or more substance. This exhibits peculiarities which are not seen in case of individual substances.<sup>[7]</sup>

Sometimes it is seen that the combination of diet shows different effect from the individual effect. Combination of two or more substances results in the manifestation of special qualities, which can not be achieved using the same article separately. The combination of 2 or more substance altogether may produce new qualities so while preparing the food it should be considered that the ingredient must be compatible to each other and should be properly mixed together.

- For example: Honey and ghee when taken alone is wholesome to the body but when combined in equal quantity they become toxic so their combination in equal quantity is not advised.
- Also milk (sheet virya) and fish (ushnavirya) should not be taken altogether.<sup>[7]</sup> though both of them have sweet taste but due to the contraindication in their potency they vitiate the blood and obstruct the strotas.

In modern era people don't choose food by their nutritional properties but by the taste. They combine various types of ingredients by using various food materials. Due to lack of knowledge of potency of food they mix the ingredients which may incompatible to each other and may produce harmful effect to the body. So its time to rediscover the art of food combination in such a

way that the ingredients may compatible to each other. The concept of viruddha ahara is well explained in ayurveda which tells about the incompatible food and their harmful effect to the body.<sup>[8]</sup>

#### 4) Rashi (The quantity)

In ayurveda the importance of Aharamatra and its effect on digestion has been explained. A person whether in a healthy or diseased state has to consume food only in limited quantity. This limit of quantity is dependent upon the Agni i.e. the digestive capacity of the particular person. Again, the quantity depends upon the nature of the drug or food whether it is guru i.e. digested with difficulty or laghu i.e. digested with ease. The amount of food without disturbing the equilibrium of dhatus and doshas of the body gets digested as well as metabolized in proper time is to be regarded as a proper quantity. The proper quantity of food activates digestive functions. while insufficient or excess quantity of food is harmful to health.<sup>[9]</sup>

The matra (quantity) of food which has to be consumed depends on the nature of the food substance taken. "Guru" food may be consumed only upto half the way before the point of satisfaction. "Laghu" food may be taken in only upto the point of satiti. This limited quantity is defined again as the quantity, which gets digested on time without causing any type of difficulty during the process of digestion.<sup>[10]</sup>

Ayurveda also explains another aspect of matra. While eating, the stomach should be filled up with two parts of solid food, one part of liquids and the fourth part should be left free to facilitate the free movement of air or vayu.<sup>[11]</sup>

Rashi (quantity) consists of sarvagraha and parigraha which ascertain the results of the food taken in proper and improper quantity.<sup>[12]</sup>

- **Sarvagraha** – The account of the quantity of the entire food in totality is sarvagraha i.e. the combined quantity of the rice, meat, pulses, condiments etc.<sup>[12]</sup>
- **Parigraha** – parigraha is that one of the individual items in food.<sup>[12]</sup>

Ayurveda gives equal importance to both types of matras i.e. sarvagraha and parigraha. But the modern dietic emphasizes more on parigraha type of matra. As, it specifies the quantities of carbohydrates, fats, proteins etc. in form of calories.

#### 5) Desha (Habitat)

Desha denotes place relating to growth as well as distribution of the substances and also the suitability in respect of place. It is a geographic region. Food substances differs in quality due to difference in soil and climate.<sup>[13]</sup>

In ayurveda desha denotes both Bhoomi desh and Dehadasha. Ahara should be taken according to desha. The food substance grown in same bhoomidesh which is native desha for the person suits him.

Deshapariksha is one of the vital aspect in understanding patient regarding dietary habits of patients probability of diseases related to the diet and accordingly treatment and pathyapathya aspect.

#### 6) Kaala (time and seasonal variation)

To maintain proper health in both healthy and diseased condition the seasonal regimen must be followed. Kala is eternally moving (time) as well as conditional.<sup>[14]</sup>

Nityaga and Avasthika are two types of kala.

**Nityaga:** In this Ahara is consumed according to Ritusatmya.

**For example:** In hemant ritu the agni gets aggravated so heavy food substances should be taken.

In varsha ritu due to cold climate vata gets aggravated hence vatashamaka sweet, sour and salty food and drinks are preferred.

In Grishma ritu the sun draws up excessively the moisture of the nature, hence sweet, cold, liquid food and drinks are preferred.

**Avasthika** – Ahara taken according to healthy or diseased condition of body is known as avasthika kala.

#### 7) Upayoga samstha (Classical ayurveda rules of dieting)

It denotes the rules for dieting. This depends on the digested food.<sup>[15]</sup>

Ahara vidhi visheshatayana has been described for taking food, it should be considered in diet.

- The ahara should be ushna (warm), tasty, qualitative, easily digestible.
- The food should be snigdha.
- The food should be taken in suitable quantity according to the prakriti and agni of a person.
- The food should be eaten only when the last meal has been digested.
- Food antagonistic in potency or contrary to each other in action should not be taken.
- Too fast or too slow eating habit should be avoided.
- The food should include all the 6 rasas (madhura, amla, lavana, katu, tikta, kashaya)
- Long term and too much use of any one of the six rasas should be avoided.
- Laughing, talking, thinking or watching television while eating should be avoided.
- Food should not be taken during anxious, angry, nervous or disturbed state of mind.<sup>[16]</sup>

### 8) Upayokta (the person who takes the food/user)

Upayokta is that who consumes the food. On him depends the 'oka-satmya' (suitability developed by practice). Thus are described the specific factors of the method of dieting.<sup>[17]</sup>

### DISCUSSION

Ahara, nidra and brahmacharya are the tri-upastambha i.e. supporting factors of life. Ahara plays a very important role in the promotion of health and prevention of disease. Ahara is a part of our daily routine. Along with the quality, quantity and taste of food if we concentrate a little about the right way of taking food and the regimens related to ahara described in ayurveda, a positive health can be achieved easily.

Ayurveda strongly believes that; the reason for all the diseases lies within our digestive process. In today's fast paced life we are more interested in eating tasty, ready to eat food materials and not focusing on the quantity, nutritional values and ingredients of the food which our body requires. Due to these all faulty dietary habits many lifestyle disorders of unknown cause are arising. So the concept of Ashta ahara vidhi visheshayatana is most beneficial in today's lifestyle.

It gives basic ideas about the quality, quantity, timing, method of eating and nature of the food which should be consumed. By the concept of prakriti we can easily choose our food material according to prakriti. By karan and samyoga we can bring out the new, desirable and adaptable properties in food materials and omit the undesirable or harmful effect of the food material. The concept of Rashi gives the idea about quantity of food that digests comfortably and increase positive health. The concept of Desha helps in selection of food material suitable to one's body constitution. It also explains the origin and properties of food material. Kala is also a very important factor to choose food according to ritu and state of the body. Upayogasamstha are the code and conducts for taking diet should be followed in today's lifestyle. Upayokta means consumer should be aware about the good or bad outcome of the food he is taking.

### CONCLUSION

In today's fast paced life wrong dietary habits and patterns are one of the most important cause of agnidushti and declining status of health in society. The rules of dieting and the right way of eating has been forgotten. So the concept of ashta ahara vidhi visheshayatana is one of the most beneficial and helpful for achieving the noble goal of maintaining health. The main aim of ayurveda is not only to cure the diseases but also to maintain a positive health, so the both prayojanas can be fulfilled by the concept of Ashta Ahara vidhi visheshayatana.

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