

## UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF AHARA VIDHI VIDHANA

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## ABSTRACT

*AharavidhiVidhana* is one of the most important rules and regulations put forth by *Ayurvedic* classics for the attainment of the main aim i.e. maintenance of health in healthy person and curing the disease in diseased. These *Aharavidhividhana* should be applied along with proper diet. Wholesome diet if taken in improper way can lead to diseases. In the same way improper diet taken in proper manner may also lead to disorders. Hence, the equal importance should be given to type of *Ahara* along with *AharaVidhiVidhana* in maintenance of health and prevention of diseases. Diet or *Anna* can be considered as *Samavayi Karana* where as *AharaVidhiVidhana* being a kind of *Karma* or method is considered as *Asamavayi Karana* for the life entity. Both *Ahara* and *AharaVidhividhana* are helpful in getting good health and prevention of diseases. Thus *Ahara* is the *Dravyabhuta Chikitsa* where as *Aharavidhividhana* is the *Adravyabhutachikitsa*. All these *Aharavidhividhana* are dependent on each other and they should be considered collectively. By following of only one of these rules one cannot achieve the expected results. E.g. *Ushna*, *Snigdha* etc food articles should be used by considering the *Matra*, Both *Atimatra* and *Hinamatra* lead to ill health. Similarly *Matratvat Ahara* if taken without concentration, with incompatibility etc does not give desired result. Thus importance of each statement should be considered, along with the collective effect, of all the statements. Thus both *Ahara* (Diet) and *AharaVidhiVidhana* (Dietetic rules) are equally important. Proper utilization of both maintains healthy condition on contrary improper utilization leads to various diseases.

KEYWORDS: *Upasthambha*, *AharaVidhiVidhana*, *Matratvat Ahara*, *Upayogasamstha*.

## INTRODUCTION

The main aim of *Ayurveda* is to maintain the health in a healthy person and to cure the disease. To attain this *Ayurveda* mainly concentrates on various rules and regulations. *Aharavidhividhana* (rules governing the food intake) is one among those rules. *Acharya Charaka* explains eight factors determining the utility of food among which the seventh factor is *Upayogasamstha* (the rules of food) which is elaborated as *Aharavidhividhana*.<sup>[1]</sup> If the *Aharavidhividhana* is followed properly, it helps to increase health and enhance the life span. Whatever is ingested or eaten with mouth is called *Aahara* which includes solid as well as liquid food items.<sup>[2]</sup> *Ayurveda* has equated the human body with the building. Pillars are required to make the building stable. Similarly the need of three pillars (*Stambha*) and three supporting pillars (*Upasthambha*) have been emphasized for the human body. The three pillars are three doshas *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha*. The three supporting pillars are *Ahara* (diet), *Nidra* (sleep) and *abrahmacharya* (non celibacy).<sup>[3]</sup> The time, place, quantity and manner of *Ahara* intake are also necessary. *Ahara* taken in proper manner helps in the proper growth of the body on contrary if taken in improper manner leads to various diseases. Thus *Aharavidhividhana* plays a significant task in both causation and curing of the

disease. *Nidanaparivarjana* (avoiding the causative factors) is considered to be the main line of treatment. Properly followed *Aharavidhividhana* keeps the body healthy and prevents the diseases.

## Importance of Aahara

*Acharya Charaka* has mentioned the importance of *Aahara* in formation of foetus up to treatment of diseases. It is one of the factors of *Sharir Vruddhikar Bhava* and *Bala Vruddhikar Bhava*.

*AharaVidhiVidhana* are rules to be followed while eating. It should be followed by healthy and unhealthy people. According to *Acharya Lolimbaraj* if one follows *pathya* then he doesn't need any medicine but if one doesn't follow *pathya* then the medicine is of no use.

According to *Acharya Sushruta*, *Aahara* is so important that it is considered responsible for origin, maintenance and destruction of not only this world but also *Bramhadiloka*.

According to *Taitariya Upanishada*, Man is originated from food.

According to *Acharya Charaka*, Man disciplined to remain on diet, lives for 36,000 nights or hundred years without getting ill.

According to *Acharya Kashyapa*, The qualities endowed to *Aahara* is only seen when rules and regulations

regarding *Aaharasevana* is followed. He has referred *Aahara* as *Mahabhaishajya*.

#### ***Aahrara Vidhi Vidhana***<sup>[4]</sup>

As wholesome diet plays a crucial task in growth and development of the body, person has to patently know which is wholesome and which is unwholesome to him. Wholesome varies from person to person. The *Aahara* which is *Saatmya* (wholesome) to one person may be *Asatmya* (unwholesome) to other. Regarding the *Satmya-Asatmya* qualities of food, Ayurvedic classics have laid down some rules and regulations. A man taking wholesome food, but without pursuing the rules may become a victim of various discomforts. Unwholesome food if taken also bestows the same effect. On the other hand the wholesome food taken with proper rules aid to restore the dynamism in sick. Thus one should observe the *Aaharavidhividhana*, to achieve proper digestion, assimilation and health of the body. Both healthy persons as well as patients should follow the *Aaharavidhividhana*. Following are the *Aaharavidhividhana* which are to be considered while taking food.

#### ***Ushnam ashneeyat (consume warm/fresh food)***<sup>[5]</sup>

One should eat warm food. This is because such food is pleasant to eat, it increases appetite and secretions of digestive juices, gets easily digested, facilitates downward movement of *vata* and decreases *kaphadosha*. Therefore warm food should be consumed.

It is also said in *yajnyavalkya samhita* that the freshly prepared food enhances *prana* (life force), hence food should be consumed before it loses its temperature as it loses the *prana* once it cools down.

Food should not be too hot as it may disturb the *pitta*.

*Ushna* *ahara* is contraindicated in certain diseases like *raktapitta* (bleeding disorder) and in first trimester of pregnancy.

#### ***Snigdham ashneeyat (consume unctuous food)***<sup>[6]</sup>

One should eat unctuous food. This is because it is pleasant to eat, enhances weak *agni*, easily digested, facilitates downward movement of *vata*, nourishes body tissues, strengthens special senses, increases body strength and enhances the brightness of complexion.

Every meal must contain a minimum amount of fat as dry and light and fat free food harms the eyes and increases *vata*.

However In certain diseases like *Kushta Meha Sthoula*.etc. fat free food is indicated.

#### ***Jirne ashneeyat (intake of food after proper digestion of previous food)***<sup>[7]</sup>

Food should be taken only when previous meal is digested. If eaten before digestion of previous meal, the food gets mixed with previous semi digested food. This leads to instant provocation of all three *Doshas*. After the proper digestion of previous food, all the three *Doshas* remain in their physiological limits, *agni* is enhanced, the *strotas* gets widened; one feels hungry, belching without

any odour, no pressure on heart is felt and flatus, urine and faeces are passed smoothly. When the food is ingested after seeing the above signs, the food nourishes all *dhatu*s without vitiating them and increases lifespan.

#### ***Matrvat ashneeyat (proper quantity)***<sup>[8]</sup>

One should eat proper quantity of food. Quantity of food to be taken depends on the power of digestion. The amount of food which gets digested and metabolised in proper time without disturbing the equilibrium of *dosas* is to be regarded as the proper quantity.

***Matra of ahara in relation to guna of aahara*** Food that are light to digest (*laghu*) and those that are hard to digest (*Guru*) both require a specified quantity for proper digestion. As a general rule, if the food is heavy to digest (such as oily food, non veg, sweets etc), it should be consumed till half of the satiation level is achieved. (*Ardha Sauhitya*). If the food is light to digest, it should be consumed till one is not overly satiated. (*NaAtiTruptata*). The right amount of food is that, which undergoes digestion easily.<sup>[9]</sup>

Consuming less quantity of food does not increase strength, *ojus* (immunity). The body will not be nourished properly. Over a period of time, it leads to *Vata* imbalance disorders. Excess quantity of food is again not desirable. It causes quick increase of *Doshas*.<sup>[10]</sup>

If excess quantity of food is consumed *Vata* and other *Doshas* suddenly get increased together and associating with the undigested and vitiated food (*Ama*) produce diseases. It causes *Alasaka* disease by blocking the movement of food inside the alimentary tract and *Visuchika* (gastro enteritis) by expelling out the undigested food in both downward and upward directions (diarrhoea and vomiting) simultaneously. This is seen in persons who are not self controlled and who cannot control their craze for eating. The relation of the quantity of food and the power of digestion and metabolism, needs some explanation. How shall we know that a given amount of food is just enough for a particular individual?

This can be known only by correlating the food taken with its proper digestion within a time limit. If food taken in the evening does not disturb the equilibrium of *Doshas* as well as *dhatu*s and gets digested and metabolised by the morning then that would be the standard measurement of food to be taken by the individual. This measurement will certainly vary from individual to individual. Standard measurement can be prescribed for all individuals.

Measurement of food is, in fact, of two types, viz. Food as a whole and of its different ingredients having different tastes like sweet, sour, etc. If food as a whole is taken according to the prescribed measurement but its ingredients having different tastes like sweet, sour, etc.

are not in prescribed ratio, the equilibrium of *dhatu*s and *dosa* gets definitely disturbed due to imbalance in the ratio of the composing *rasas* (tastes).<sup>[11]</sup>

#### **Virya Avirudhham ashneeyat (Compatibility)**

While eating, food items possessing contradictory potencies should be avoided together. Consumption of such food items generates various diseases like *kushtha*, *visarpa*, impotency, hereditary disorders, etc and even death. The *viruddhaaaharasevana* results in the formation of *dushitaahararasa* which starts the vicious cycle of *vikrutdhatuutpatti*, leading to above mentioned diseases. The one who doesn't eat such combination of food item is protected from such diseases.

#### **Viruddha Ahara according to Acharya caraka<sup>[12]</sup>**

1. *Desa Viruddha* : Intake of dry and sharp substance in deserts; unctuous and cold substance in marshy land.
2. *Kala Viruddha* : Intake of cold and dry substance in winter; pungent and hot substance in the summer.
3. *Agni Viruddha*: Intake of *Guru Dravya* when the power of digestion is mild (*Mandagni*); intake of *Laghu Dravya* or light food when the *Agni* is *Tikshna*.
4. *Matra Viruddha*: Intake of honey and ghee in equal quantity.
5. *Satmya Viruddha*: Intake of sweet and cold substance by persons accustomed to pungent and hot substance
6. *Dosa Viruddha*: Utilization of diets and regimen has similar qualities with *Dosas* but at variance with the *Satmya* of the individual.
7. *Samskara Viruddha*: Diets which when prepared in a way produce poisonous effects, for example meat of peacock roasted on a castor spit.
8. *Virya Viruddha* : intake of substances have *Sheeta Virya* in combination with these of *Ushna Virya*.
9. *Koshtha Viruddha*: Administration of a mild purgative in a small dose for a person of *Krura Koshtha* and administration of strong purgative in strong dose for a person having *Mridu Koshtha*.
10. *Avastha Viruddha*: Intake of *Vata* aggravating food by a person after exhaustion, sexual act and physical exercise or intake of *Kapha* aggravating food by a person after sleep or drowsiness.
11. *Krama Viruddha*: If a person takes food before his bowel and urinary bladder is clear (empty) or when he does not have appetite or after his hunger has been aggravated.
12. *Parihara Viruddha*: Intake of hot thing after taking pork etc. and cold things after taking ghee.
13. *Upachara Viruddha*: after intake of *ghruta* resuming to *sheeta* regimens.
14. *Paka Viruddha*: Preparation of food etc. with bad or rotten fuel and under cooking, over cooking or burning during the process of preparation.
15. *Samyoga Viruddha*: Intake of sour substance with milk.

16. *Hrudya Viruddha*: Any substance which is not pleasant in taste.
17. *Sampada Viruddha*: Intake of substance that is not matured over matured or putrefied.
18. *Vidhi Viruddha*: Taking meal without follow the rules of eating.

#### **Viruddha Ahara according to Acharya Sushruta<sup>[15]</sup>**

1. *Samyoga Viruddha* Substances which are incompatible by combinations come under this like *Mulaka* along with milk; Fruit of *Amra* and *Jambu*; Products of sugarcane along with fish.
2. *Karma Viruddha* Substances which are incompatible by processing, ex- ghee kept in a bronze vessel for ten days or more; honey either along with hot substances or in hot Seasons, etc.
3. *Mana Viruddha* Substances which are incompatible by proportion, like honey and ghee or honey and water mixed in equal quantities should not be consumed.
4. *Rasa Viruddha* Foods which are incompatible by tastes sweet and salt are incompatible in respect of taste and potency.

#### **Ishta Deshe And Ishta Sarvopakarana (Desired Place And Vessels)**

The dining place should be appropriate and the utensils or cutlery should be proper. Dining in improper or unhygienic place and using wrong cutlery has bad psychological effects. Proper dining place and use of proper cutlery prevents one from these bad psychological effects.

#### **Na Ati Drutam (Not In Hurry)**

One should not eat very fast. If eaten very fast, the food may go into trachea, lungs ect or other cavities instead of digestive tract or may cause choking. One may unknowingly ingest the grit or hairs present in the food. Thus one should avoid eating very fast.

Acharya Chakrapani has explained in his commentary that since one doesn't realize the dosha i.e. grit / hairs in the food and unknowingly ingest the food therefore the benefits offered by the food is not received by the person.

#### **Na ati vilambitam (not too late)**

One should not eat very slowly. Due to eating slow, satiety is not reached even after ingestion of excess food, the food gets cold and it is digested disproportionately.

#### **Ajalpan, ahasan, tanmana bhunjita (without talking, laughing and with due concentration)**

One should not indulge in talking or laughing but concentrate on the food while eating meals. If one talk, laugh or indulge in some other activities while taking meals, he suffers from same drawbacks as that of eating fast.

**Atmana Abhisamikshya Bhunjita (keeping in mind what is wholesome for the individual)**

One should always eat according to one's own requirement i.e. whether the food is beneficial or not to the person.

**Rules of food according to astanga hrdaya**

*Kale Satmyam* - Food should be consumed at the proper time,

*Shuchi Hitam* – it should be the accustomed, clean, suited to health,

*Snigdha, Ushna, Laghu* – unctuous, hot and easily digestible;

*Tanmanaa* – consuming food with due attention Shadrasa,

*Madhurapraayam* – should contain all the six tastes with predominance of sweet taste,

*Na Atidruta, Vilambitam* – partaken neither very quickly nor very slowly;

*Snataha* – after taking bath,

*Kshut vaan* – after having good hunger,

*Viviktastha* -sitting in solitude,

*Dhauta Pada kara aananaha* – after washing the feet, hands and face,

*Tarpayitva pitrun, Devan, Atitheen, Balakaan, Guroon* – after satisfying the *Pitrus* (manes), gods, guests, children and Guru. After satisfying even the dependents maintained in the house (such as servants, horses and other animals for receiving service, parrots and other pets etc.), after carefully considering one's own constitution, likes and dislikes, without scolding / abusing the food, without too much of talk; should partake more of liquid food, that which is liked, in the company of the liked persons, and served by those who are clean and faithful to him.

**Food not to be consumed regularly<sup>[13]</sup>**

Kilata (dairy product – sweet in taste), Dadhi – Curds, Kuchika (solid part of curds), Kshara (alkalies), Sukta (fermented gruel), Ama Mulaka – Uncooked radish, Meat of animals which are emaciated, dry meat, meat of the boar, sheep, cow, fish and buffalo, Masha (black gram), Nishpava; Saluka, Bisa, Pista (powdery, starchy), germinated grains, dried vegetables, Yavaka (small barley), Phanita (half cooked molasses) – those should not be consumed habitually.

**Food to be consumed regularly<sup>[14]</sup>**

Shali (rice), Godhuma (wheat), Yava – Barley – *Hordeum vulgare*, Shashtika (rice maturing in sixty days), Jangala (meat of animals of desert like lands), sunisannaka, Jivanti – *Leptadenia reticulata*, Balamulaka (young radish), Pathya (Haritaki) Amalaka (Amla – Indian gooseberry), Mridwika – dry grapes, Mudga – green gram, Sarkara (sugar), Ghrita (ghee), Divyodaka (rain water or pure water), Ksheera (milk), Kshoudra (honey), Dadima – Pomegranate - *Punica granatum* and Saindhava – Rock Salt (salt) can be consumed habitually.

**Food to be rejected**

Food which is contaminated with grass, hairs etc; reheated, which consists more of vegetables and undesirable grains, which is very hot and very salty should be rejected.

**DISCUSSION**

*Ushna* and *snigdha* food aids in proper digestion and assimilation of food and energy. It is also said that freshly prepared food keeps the person full of enthusiasm where as stale food makes a person lazy. *Jeerne ashniyat* can be correlated to Concept of two meals a day. It is ideal as there is ample amount of time to digest the meal properly without the room for *ama* and rest for digestive system until the next meal. This concept is also accepted by new generation nutritionists in the name of intermittent fasting. *matrvat aahara* is linked with the *rashi* of *aahara*, though the *matra* is a simple word includes *guna* or *prakruti* of food article, *upayoga samstha* is nothing but all these *vidhi vidhanas Viruddha* is something which has to be considered especially in the era of *smoothies* and milkshakes because these foods are highly marketed in the name of *superfoods*. In the name of white poison people are avoiding milk sugar and rice which are categorised under *nitya sevaniya aahara* by our *acharyas*. All food articles may not be congenial to everyone in every season or disease condition, hence the diet is always designed depending on the likes and dislikes and health status of the individual. milk is said to be very healthy food with many vital nutrients but it may increase kapha and kledata, hence it is contraindicated in *prameha*(diabetis).

**CONCLUSION**

*Asta aahara vidhi vishesha ayatanas* and *aahara vidhi vidhanas explained* in *caraka vimana sthana* gives complete knowledge regarding the factors to be considered and the rules to be followed while consuming food. These two factors are interlinked with each other which is evident when we understand the deeper aspects of *aahara*. Even an *ekanta hita aahara* can cause diseases if consumed without considering the *aahara vidhi vidhana*. Hence we can conclude that these rules are designed considering all the aspects and hence are valid even today. If a person follows these rules for consuming food, he would never suffer from the diseases. As said by sages “there is no need of medicine for the person who has healthy food habits and for a person with unhealthy food habits, medicine is of no use”.

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