



UTILITY OF ASHTA AHARA VIDHI VISHESHAYATANA IN PRESENT ERA

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ABSTRACT

Rapid changes in diet and lifestyle led to a major rising shift towards diabetes, obesity, arthritis, mental illness, cardiac diseases, cancer etc. *Ayurvedic* principles certainly play an important role in their prevention and management. *Ashta Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana* are the most ideal in today's life style, especially since we are lacking in the time sense and using the meal irrespective of the digestive capacity etc. all of which lead to the manifestation of disease. These *Ayatanas* are *Prakriti, Karana, Samyoga, Rashi, Desha, Kala, Upayogasamstha* and *Upayokta*.

KEYWORDS: *Ayurvedic, Prakriti, Samyoga, Upayogasamstha*

INTRODUCTION

Ahara is one of the *Upastambha* described in *Ayurveda*. *Ahara* is one of the main factors provided by nature for healthy long life of human beings. In ancient classics much significance has been given to *Ahara*, for the promotion of health and prevention of diseases. Dietary consideration is an important element in *Ayurvedic* therapy.

Rapid changes in diet and lifestyle led to a major rising shift towards diabetes, obesity, arthritis, mental illness, cardiac diseases, cancer etc. *Ayurvedic* principles certainly play an important role in their prevention and management. *Ashta Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana* are the most ideal in today's life style, especially since we are lacking in the time sense and using the meal irrespective of the digestive capacity etc. all of which lead to the manifestation of disease. These *Ayatanas* are *Prakriti, Karana, Samyoga, Rashi, Desha, Kala, Upayogasamstha* and *Upayokta*. *Ahara* and its related codes and conducts have been forgotten by the human being; hence to assess this ancient concept of dietetics, this topic is undertaken.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

References related to above mentioned topic are collected from the *Ayurvedic* classics as well as from the contemporary sciences. These references are analysed critically to draw a fruitful conclusion.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Whatever material taken by mouth into alimentary canal, which after proper digestion transformed into the tissue elements and do the function such as promotion of health, recovery of loss, protection from diseases for survival of body is termed as *Ahara*. *Acharya Charaka* has mentioned in *Agrya prakrana* that *Anna* is the best sustainer of life. He also described that the life of all living things is food and the entire world seeks food. Complexion, clarity, good voice, long life, understanding, happiness, satisfaction, growth, strength and intelligence all are established in *Ahara*. *Acharya Sushruta* has also mentioned that diet is nourishing, gives strength immediately, sustains body and promotes life span, energy, memory, *Ojas* and digestive power. He also said that diet is the causative factor for maintenance, origin and destruction of Universe.

In *Ayurveda*, *Ashta Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana* denotes various formulations of *Ahara* which clearly defines wholesomeness and unwholesomeness of *Ahara*. Eight important rules are involved in the intake of proper diet; these are called *Ashta Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana*. The eight factors are^[1]:

1. **Prakriti:-** *Prakriti* is *Swabhava* (nature) which is the natural existence of properties like *guru* etc. in substances used as food and drug such as *Masha* is *Guru* and *Mudga* is *Laghu*.
2. **Karana:-** *Karana* is the making or refinement of the natural products which means imparting the properties. These properties are infused by contact

- of water and fire, cleansing, churning, place, time, infusing etc. and also by long duration, utensil etc.
3. **Samyoga:-** *Samyoga* (combination) is aggregation of two or more substances. This exhibits peculiarities which are not seen in case of individual substances. Such as combination of honey and ghee and that of honey, fish and milk.
 4. **Rashi means quantity:-** *Rashi* (quantity) consists of *Sarvagraha* and *Parigraha* which ascertain the results of the food taken in proper and improper quantity. The accounting of the quantity of the entire food in totally is *Sarvagraha* while *Parigraha* is that of the individual items in food.
 5. **Desha:-** *Desha* denotes place relating to growth as well as distribution of the substances and also the suitability in respect of place.
 6. **Kala:-** Before the intake of food, one must also know about the time factor(*Kala*). *Nityaga* and *Avasthika* are the 2 types of *Kala* for the consumption of *Ahara*. In brief, *Nityaga* is that in which *Ahara* is consumed according to the *Ritusatmya*. In diseased conditions, the *Avasthika Kala* comes into role, by intake of *Ahara* according to the condition of the *Roga*.
 7. **Upyoga Samstha:-** It means rules governing intake of food. This depends on the digested food.
 8. **Upyokta:-** Finally comes the *Upayokta*, that is the one who uses the *Aharadravya*, and who has the *Okasatmya* or *Sharira Satmya*. He is the one who must take into consideration all these facts of *Ahara* and consume food accordingly. By doing so he gains health.

DISCUSSION

Each food substance has its own nature or characteristics. The nature of the food or its quality is known as *Prakriti*. Depending on whether the food is easily digestible or not, food is classified as *Guru* (heavy) or *Laghu* (light) in quality. Considering the property of food, intake of heavy one (*Guru Ahara*) is advised as one third or half of the saturation point and not excessive saturation even in case of light food (*Laghu Ahara*) in order to maintain the proper *Agni*.^[2] *Charaka* has said that *Guru Ahara Dravya* should not be taken after meal.^[3] By consuming whether it is heavy or light for digestion, whether the potency is *Sheeta* or *Ushna*, the *Dosha* it may possibly mitigate or aggravate etc. for example a person who already has excessive *Vata* in his body, must try to avoid the dry and cold food stuffs. Similarly, an individual with increased amount of *Kapha* in his bodily constitution must avoid oily, fattening food substances.

How food is prepared or processed is known as *Karana* or *Samskara*. This means transformation of qualities through various processes. Due to this, quality gets changed. The factor *Karana*, in turn has many facets like *Jala* and *Agni Samyoga*, *Shaucha*, *Manthana*, *Desha*, *Kala*, *Bhavana*, *Kalapakarsha* and *Bhaajna*.^[4] The consumption of the *Dadhi* is done very irregularly nowadays. People are unaware of its heavy to digest

property. Also an example for *Manthana*, it is told that plain *Dadhi* is a cause for *Shotha*. But when the same churned with ghee, then it is an effective remedy for *Shotha*.

Food combination is known as *Samyoga*. Combination of different foods items 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.^[5] Similarly it is advised that *Dadhi* should be taken in combination with *Ghee*, Sugar, *Mudga*, *Madhu*, *Amalaki*.^[6] Especially, it is a trend now a day to mix various food items or products and then relish the taste of the same. Knowledge of the proper as well as improper combinations is essential, in order to prevent any of the disease resulting out of the latter.

While eating one has to consider the individual ingredient quantity as well as the total quantity of the food that is consumed. *Parigraha* takes into consideration the quantity of each item and *Sarvagraha* means the total quantity to be consumed. According to *Charaka* one must eat in measure and the measure of food is determined by the power of digestion and his strength.^[7] He has further stated that 'A proper measure of food, when taken is digested in the time without impairing one's health'.^[8] Measured diet positively promotes strength, complexion, health and life. Man should always consume the proper quantity of food since it is the activator of *Agni*. But in today's busy world none of the individual considers this aspect.

Habitat or *Desha* is the next entity. Classics say that before consuming particular food stuff, it is essentially to know from which land or country it has been derived. The soil has its own effect on the crop. The homologation or the *Satmya* to a particular food entity is to be considered. 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. The aspect of Human host is well defined in *Ayurveda* when *Acharya* 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 *Chikitsa* but also before taking the food. Hence one should always take *Ahara* according to *Bhoomi Desha* as well as *Atura Desha*.

Timing is everything. Only when the previous meal has been properly digested, one should consider eating the next meal. Everyone should change the type of food as well as the quantity and quality of food in accordance to seasonal changes. In *Ayurveda* the whole year is divided into six seasons. According to each season different dietetic regimen is prescribed. Like in *Hemant Ritu*, one should take *Snigdha Padarth*, *Amla* and

Lavana Rasa.^[9] Similarly in *Shishir Ritu*, everyone is advised not to take *Katu, Tikta, Kashaya Rasa*.^[10]

Proper excretion of urine & Stools, *Dosha* go to their respective *Sthana* i.e sites, *Strotas* are clean and free from blockage & *Indriya* (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.

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.^[11] Food ideally should be consumed while it is hot. This will naturally increase the digestive fire. Likewise, meals must be taken in a relaxed, calm and cheerful atmosphere. One should not eat when one is nervous, angry, anxious or in a disturbed state of mind. Similarly, eating too slowly or too rapidly along with eating while talking, laughing, thinking or watching television is not advisable. It is better if we concentrate on the food only with the thought that this food is going to benefit both the body and mind. Smoking or drinking too much water or any other liquid after eating is also not advisable.

CONCLUSION

Healthy citizens are the roots for development of any nation. So we have to improve the health of every people. Physical, mental, social, intellectual, emotional and spiritual, these all proportions of health could be balanced by taking genial diet. The healthy bodies as well as the diseases are nothing but the outcome of *Ahara*. To get the total benefits of the *Ahara*, it is necessary to have the knowledge about "*Ashta Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana*". *Ashta Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana* are one of the most important rules and regulations put forth by the *Ayurvedic* classics for the attainment of the main aim i.e. maintenance of health in healthy person and curing the disease in diseased.

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