



IMPORTANCE OF AHARA IN AYURVEDA & EFFECT OF FOOD HABITS ON CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT

In the modern era due to the adaptation of western lifestyle and food habits, Indian children are prone to many diseases, stubborn to response by conventional medicines. Commonly consumed food in the modern era are refined flour-based food items like pizza, burgers, carbonated drinks, Indian fried food, and ready-to-cook food having a high content of sugar, fat, and salt along with preservatives and artificial flavoring agents, low nutritive value and low fiber. Frequent or daily consumption of these food items causes constipation, indigestion initially followed by IBS, nutrient deficiency, and lifestyle disorders like obesity after long-term use. To cope with these problems ayurveda recommended certain measures like daily regimen, seasonal regimen for food as per *Agni* and lifestyle to maintain good health as well as food modification for good digestion.

Keywords: lifestyle, food habits, daily regimen, seasonal regimen, agni, ahar-vihar

INTRODUCTION

As in the modern era due to the adaptation of western lifestyle and food habits, Indian children are prone to many diseases and stubborn to response by conventional medicines. Commonly consumed food in the

modern era are refined flour-based food items like pizza, burgers, carbonated drinks, and Indian fried food of market like (pakora, samosa, etc), easy to cook food stuff like Maggie, pasta, and Chinese food

containing monosodium glutamate salt/ajinomoto as flavoring agent. These are energy-dense food having a high content of sugar, fat, and salt along with preservatives and artificial flavoring agents and low nutritive value, and low fiber¹. Ready-to-cook type of food required less time for preparation so working mothers also promote this type of food as it is also promoted by advertisement.

Frequent /daily consumption of these food items causes many diseases in school-going children. These foods are readily available in the school canteen and a variety of outlets. Long-term consumption of this food by children with low physical activity led to the early development of lifestyle disorders like obesity, diabetes mellitus, and dyslipidemia². To avoid these diseases and to live healthy life ayurveda recommended certain dietary norms which should be followed by children to become healthy. In covid period there was excessive use of mobile in children with less fibrous diets like green leafy vegetables and fruit problems like constipation, sleep disturbance, depression, and gadget addiction increased in children.

Ayurveda recommended daily regimen (*Dincharya*), seasonal regimen (*Ritucharya*), and Ashtaahara vidhivishayatan, etc. *Ahar*, *Nidra*, *Bramhacharya* are the three pillars that are also explained in ayurveda for good health and longevity. As the base of Ayurveda is *Tri Dosha*, *Saptadhatu*, and *Trimala*, to main-

tain health every food /food item/physical activity should be as per doshavastha.

Aims and objectives.

To study the effect of modern food eating habits and its impact on the health of children and its Ayurvedic perspective.

Material and methods: The material was collected from Ayurvedic literature and modern literature, magazine, and Research journal.

Ayurvedic perspective

Promotion of health and prevention of disease. It will be achieved by daily regimen, seasonal regimen Food habits, body purificatory procedure, and oral medicine.

Cause of diseases according to Ayurveda

सर्वेषामेव रोगाणां निदानं कुपिता मलाः॥ तत्प्रकोपस्य तु प्रोक्तं विविधाहितसेवनम्³ । (अ. ह. निदान 1/12)

Increased and aggravated dosas (malas) are the causative factors for all diseases; and their aggravation is caused by indulgence in different unwholesome things (food and regimen).

Concept of Dosha and avastha

The foundation of Ayurveda is mainly based on the three doshas (vata, pitta, kapha). According to Susrut Samhita, the age-wise predominance of dosha is vata predominance in elderly age (>70yr), Pitta in middle age (16-70) and kapha in childhood age (0-16 yr)⁴.

Doshavastha as per Ritu⁵ (Table -1)

DOSH AVASTHA	CHAY (ACCUMULATION)	PRAKOP (AGGREVATION)	PRASHMAN (PACIFICATION)
Vata	Greeshma (Summer)	Varsha (Rainy)	Sharad (Autumn)
Pitta	Varsha (Rainy)	Sharad (Autumn)	Hemantha (Winter)
Kapha	Sisira (Late winter)	Vasantha (Spring)	Greeshma (Summer)

To maintain good health, one should follow the ahar, Vihar as per *ritu* called *ritucharya*, and *ausadhi* if required as per *doshavastha/Vyadhiavastha*.

Ahara vihar indication and contraindications as per Ritu⁶ (Table -2)

SEASON	AHARA		VIHAR	
	INDICATED	TO AVOID	INDICATED	TO AVOID
Hemanth And Shishir	Sour, Salty, Heavy (guru) Unctous (<i>snigdha</i>) food, milk and Its Products.	Too much spice Bitter, Astringent (<i>kashay</i>), Cold drinks	Abhyang, Oil massage to the scalp, staying at warm and less windy	Sleep during the daytime.

		and food.	places.	
<i>Vasantha Ritu</i>	Light food with <i>Tikta</i> (Bitter) <i>Katu</i> (Pungent) & <i>Kashay</i> (Astringent), Honey mixed with water.	Heavy sweet, sour, oily foods,	<i>Vaman, Udvartana</i> (Dry Massage)	Avoid Day Sleep.
<i>Grisma Ritu</i>	Sweet, Cold, Unctous (<i>snigdha</i>), Liquid Food & Ghee, Milk, and Rice can Be Consumed	Avoid Excess Salt, Sour & Pungent Food	Take Rest in Home. One should apply sandalwood paste to the body.	Avoid excess exercise.
<i>Varsa Ritu</i>	One should Consume Sour, Salt & Unctous Food Eg: Old barley, wheat, Rice, Meat Soup, Dal Soup	Drinking Cold Liquid, River Water.	<i>Pragharsha Udaravartan</i> (the act of rubbing dry medicated powder), <i>Snan</i> (Bathing)	Avoid exposing it to Sunlight for Longer, Time. Avoid Day Sleep, Excessive exercise.
<i>Sharad Ritu</i>	Consume Sweet, Bitter, Light, Cold & <i>Pitta Samak</i> Food Eg: Rice, barley, wheat	Excessive eating curds, oil, and muscle fat.	One should apply chandan, and ushira to the body.	Long-term exposure to sunlight, the meat of marshy & aquatic animal

Eight Factors Determining the Utility of Ahara (Food) *Ashtaahar vidhivishayatane*⁷ :

Prakrti: It indicates the nature of the substance ic inherent attributes (heaviness etc.) *Maṣa* (black gram) is heavy and *Mudga* (green gram) is light, and the meat of *Sukra* (boar) is heavy, and that one of deer is light.

Karana (Processing of the Substances): Processing results in the transformation of attributes unaffected by dilution. application of heat, cleansing. churning storing, maturing. flavoring, impregnation, preservation, container, etc.

Samyoga: It is the combination of two or more substances. This results in the manifestation of specific attributes which cannot be manifested by individuals' substances e.g., a combination of honey and *Ghrita* or fish and milk.

Rashi (Quantum of Substance): Rashi is the quantum of total (*Sarvagraha*) or individual (*Parigraha*)

substance which determines the results of their administration in proper and improper dosage.

Desha (Habitat of substance): Desha relates to the habitat. It determines their acclimatization to that region. For example, generally, the drug of Himalaya is *Saumya* (cool), and the drugs obtained from the *Vindhya* are hot (*Agneya*).

Kala (Time): Kala stands for both the time in the form of day and night and states of the individual (viz. condition of health and age) and different types of seasons.

Upayoga samstha: (Dietetic rules): *Upayogasamtha* stands for the dietetic rules. They are dependent on the symptoms of digestion.”

Upayokta (Habit of the individual): *Upayokta* is that who takes food. He is responsible for the wholesomeness of the habitual intake of things (*Oakasatmya*).

Daily indicated and Contraindicated *Ahar* according to Charak & Vagbhata (Table no – 3)

Reference of text	Always safe /Indicated in all seasons	Food items avoided for daily consumption /habituation
As per Charak ⁸	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Shastik</i> rice (a kind of rice harvested in sixty days), <i>Sali</i> (a kind of rice harvested in the winter season) • <i>Amalaki</i>, <i>Mudga Rock Salt</i>, <i>Ghee</i>, <i>jangal</i> (meat of animals dwelling in arid climate), <i>honey</i>. • Rainwater collected before falling on the ground. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Vallura</i> (dried meat), Meat of diseased animals, pork, meat of buffalo. • dry vegetables, lotus rhizome, lotus stalk • <i>Kurchika</i> (boiled buttermilk), <i>Kilata</i>, fish, curd, <i>Masha</i> (black gram), and <i>Yavaka</i>. • heavy food like cakes, unboiled rice, etc.
As per Vagbhata ⁹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Sali</i> (rice), <i>godhuma</i> (wheat), <i>yava</i> (barley), <i>sashtika</i> (rice of sixty days crop) • the meat of animals of the <i>jangala</i> (arid) region, • <i>Sunishannaka</i>, <i>jivanti bal-amulaka</i> and <i>vastuka</i>, <i>pathya</i>, <i>amalaka</i>, <i>Mrdvika patolli</i>, <i>mudga</i> (Greengram) • <i>Sarkara</i> (sugar), <i>ghee</i>, <i>milk</i>, <i>honey</i>, <i>dadima</i>, and <i>saindhava</i> • <i>Divyodaka</i> (divine- water, rainwater collected directly), 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>kili</i> (condensed milk), <i>dadhi</i> (curd), <i>kurchika</i> (a milk product), • <i>Kira</i> (alkaline substances), <i>Sukta</i> (fermented gruel), <i>Phanita</i> (a product of sugarcane) • <i>amamulaka</i> (fresh or unboiled radish), • the meat of very lean (weak) animals, dried meat, the meat of <i>varaha</i> (boar), <i>Avi</i> (sheep), <i>go</i> (cow), <i>matsya</i> (fish), and <i>Mahisa</i> (buffalo), • <i>Masa</i> (black gram), <i>Nispava salika</i>, <i>bisa</i>, <i>Pista</i>, <i>virūdhaka</i> (germinated grains), dried vegetables, <i>Yavaka</i> (small variety of barley).

OTHER FACTORS DESCRIBED IN AYURVEDA TO MAINTAIN GOOD HEALTH & DIGESTION-

***Kukshipurana*¹⁰: (quantity of solid food)**

One should fill upto two of four parts or half of the stomach with solid/ main food, and one (of four) parts with liquid substances, and the remaining fourth part should be kept unfilled for the movement of *vata* and others. Continuous used of habitual food & prohibited food for the long term causes obesity in children.

Importance of Agni and lifestyle disorder

According to Ayurveda, most diseases arise from poor functioning of the digestive system. The digestive fire (*Agni*) is a very important factor in health. It is not only responsible to absorb nutrients, but also destroys pathogens and renders the food acceptable to our systems. Food, which is not properly digested becomes *Ama*, toxic for our body and upsetting the immune system. When *Agni* is normal, there is good

digestion, circulation, and complexion; pleasant breath and body odor; adequate energy and strong resistance to disease. When *Agni* is abnormal there is poor digestion, poor circulation, bad complexion; offensive body odor, intestinal gas, constipation; low energy, and poor resistance to disease. Hence, treating the digestive system-regulating *Agni*- is considered a radical (root) treatment for most diseases¹¹.

Types of Agni¹²

According to Ayurveda, there are 13 types of *Agni* in our body which are mainly divided into two types:

Jatharagni: This is also called *kayagni* or *koshtagni*. as it helps in digestion also called *Pachakagni*. *kayagni* works through the medium of *pachak pitta*, which is situated in *amashaya*, *sthana* of primary digestion. ***Dhatvagni*** : the *ahara rasa* formed after digestion is converted into seven *dhatu*s or tissue through this *Agni*, called tissue fire which is present in each tissue channel.

Abnormalities of Agni:

Ama: Undigested material

“उष्मणो अल्पबलत्वेन, धातुमाद्यमपाचितम् ॥ दुष्टमामाशयगतं रसमामं प्रचक्षते¹³॥२५॥ (अ. ह. सूत्र . 13/25)

The rasa which has not been digested properly due to reducing the strength of heat (of digestive fire), is vitiated and remains in *amashaya* is known as ama.

Cause-Combination of meals dangerous to health¹⁴

There are three types of meals that may cause dangerous diseases described by *vagbhat*.

- Eating beneficial and non-beneficial foods together is called *samashana* (normal meal).
- *Adhyasana* is eating more after taking a meal i.e., eating before the digestion of the food taken before.
- Eating very little and in excess at an improper time is *Vişamaśana*.

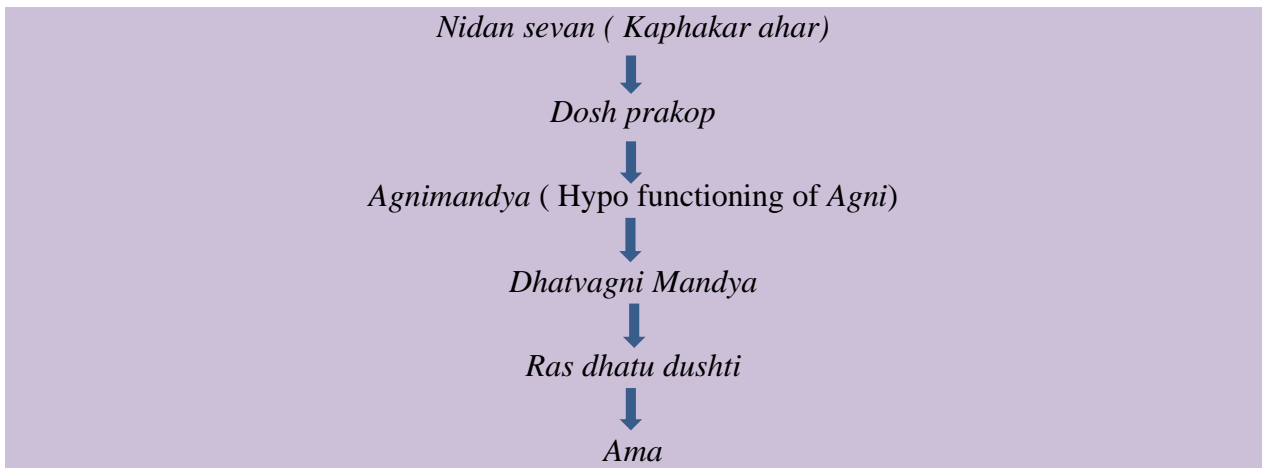
FOOD ITEMS CAUSE SUDDEN VITIATION OF DOSHAS¹⁵

Food items	Dosha vitiation
<i>Bhaktam</i> (cooked rice)	Kapha-kar
<i>Dal</i> (cooked pulses)	<i>Vishtamba</i> (heavy to digest)
<i>Kachori</i> (fried in oil & ghee)	<i>Pittakar, vistabhi, vidahi</i>
<i>Kabab</i>	<i>Pittakar vistabhi, vidahi</i>
Paneer	<i>Kaphakar, vistabhi, vidahi</i>
Cheese	<i>kaphakar, vistabhi, abhishyandi</i>
French fries	<i>kaphakar, vistabhi</i>
burger	<i>Kapha-Pittakar, vistabhi, vidahi</i>
pizza	<i>Kapha-Pittakar, vistabhi, vidahi</i>

Food items of the current era, mainly fast foods made of refined flour could lead to issues with digestion, immunity, inflammation, heart health, and obesity if these are in regular use without any physical activity. As per ayurveda *shrotovarodha* takes place and *Medovridhhi* and other *amaja vyadhi* manifest.

Samprapti of Ama :

In Ayurveda, there are so many diseases that are explained by different Acharyas like *medo-rog* which can be correlated with obesity in the modern day, and other diseases like Hypertension, diabetes mellitus, hyperlipidemia, etc. The root cause of these diseases according to ayurveda is *agnimandya* and the formation of ama. The factors responsible for disease occurrence are-



Treatment of sama¹⁶ the *doshas* which are associated with *ama*, and which are widely spread all over the body and intermingled in *dhatu*s and which are not mobile, so cannot be eliminated forcibly (from the body by purification process); because such an attempt may lead to the destruct the seat (*Asraya-receptacle*). These doshas should be subjected to the treatments of *pachna* (digestive) and *dipana* (stimulators of digestion), oleation, and sudation (*snehana* & *swedana*) and then they should be eliminated by purification process at the appropriate stage, according to the strength and also through suitable nearby routes.

Childhood obesity-It is the rising trend under lifestyle disorder due to junk food ingestion and fewer outdoor games in the current era. There are so many Recipes and kalpa along with ahara vihar explained in samhita for *Medoroga* (obesity).

Ahara vihara¹⁷

- Old bamboo rice, *kodrava*, *Syamaka*, *Nivara*, *priyangu barley (yava)*, *kulattha*, *gram (chanaka)*, lentil, *mudga*, pigeon peas, honey, poppy of pad-dy, edibles and juice s having bitter tastes, butter-milk, liquor, cingata variety of fishes, fried *brinjal*, *triphala*, *guggulu*, *lauha bhasma*, *trikatu*, mustard oil cardamom, all dry materials, sesame oil, leafy vegetables, poultice of *agara*, warm water, *silajatu*, drinking water before meals.
- These measures and eatables are very much helpful in curing the problem of obesity: physical activity, waking during the night, langhana (fasting), facing the sun, and traveling apatarpana.

Recipes¹⁸

1. Intake of water (100ml) mixed with honey (25ml) in the morning decreases obesity.
2. Hot *manda* (scum) of the rice which comes out during boiling it along with *Vyosha* then he becomes thin (free from obesity)
3. *Peya* (thin gruel without containing any grains in it) cooked along with the *kalka* of the leaves of *Badari* (25gm) and *kanji* (a type of vinegar) (1litre) cures obesity.
4. The juice of *agnimantha* (50ml) and *silajatu* (500mg cures obesity).

Kalpa¹⁹

1. *Vidangadyam Lauham*
2. *Tryusnadyam Lauham*
3. *Lauha Rasayanam*
4. *Navak Guggula*
5. *Amritadya Guggula*
6. *Lauharista*

Tailam used for massage/snehana.

- 1) *Triphaladya Tailam*²⁰
- 2) *Sahacharadi tailam*²¹

DISCUSSION

Adaptation to western lifestyle and food habits in Indian children gives rise to many diseases, and is stubborn to response to conventional medicines. Currently, both parents are working, so many times home-cooked food is replaced by outside food made up of refined flour and chicken or potato kebab /fritter with cheese and preserved sauces ingested along with carbonated drinks. These are energy-dense food having a high content of sugar, fat, and salt along with preservatives and artificial flavoring agents and low nutritive value, and low fiber. Ready-to-cook type of food required less time for preparation so working mothers also promote this type of food. Frequent /daily consumption of this food item causes many diseases in children starting from stomach problems like indigestion and constipation. Long-term consumption of these food items by children with low physical activity led to the early development of lifestyle disorders like obesity, diabetes mellitus, and dyslipidemia. To live healthy life ayurveda recommended food and lifestyle changes as per season/weather, the quantity of food, daily regimen, list of combination food to be avoided ,list of food can be taken /safe in all seasons etc. To avoid these diseases many formulations described in Ayurveda as shaman *chikitsa* start from *rasa dushti* to *medodushiti*, *deepan*, and *amapachana* to disease-wise treatment also. *Shodhana chikitsa* is also described as per the condition and bala of patients. Currently, we cannot completely avoid the modern culture so once a fortnight, this junk food ingested by children can be acceptable only if he does physical activity like cycling

swimming, or any outdoor game and eat healthy home food daily.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that to avoid lifestyle disorders proper *Aharvihar* and *matra* of food as mentioned in Ayurveda should be followed to maintain good health.

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