



IMPORTANCE OF AAHAR AND AAHAR VARGA W.S.R. SHOOK DHANYA VARGA AS PER CHARAK SAMHITA AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE IN THE PRESENT ERA

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is the science of the knowledge of life and the art of life. The uniqueness of *Ayurveda* is that it sets values on physical, mental, social and spiritual health. Every living and non-living being in this world/universe are composed of five basic elements in the Panch Mahabhoota, namely Earth, Fire, Water, Air and Ether and this is well known that all goods and medicines are also made of *Panchmahabhoot*.¹ So the *Panchbhautik* components of ingested food nourish the body and their respective tissue elements in the body as well.

Aahar is the best of all medicines, and the preventive and curative aspects of *Ayurveda* revolve around the theme of food (*Aahar*), firstly, later *Vihar* and *Vyasan*. The journey of hibernation from the bandage of living can be achieved only through the path of food because food is the Life of living beings. The entire living world runs towards food. All things, physical (Built, confirmation, strength, beauty and complexion) and mental (Happiness, calmness, satisfaction, intelligence and Goodness), depend on food. All things are obtained from food only. Hence it is proved that the basis for achieving the desired and eternal objective of *Ayurveda* science is first of all the food is consumed by man and then the medicine and then the *Vihar*, *Vyasan* and medicine.

Keywords: Shooka Dhanya Varga, Ayurveda, Panch Mahabhoota, Upa Tristambha, Aahar, Food

INTRODUCTION

The human body requires food to provide energy for all life processes, growth, repair, and maintenance. A balanced diet contains different types of foods in such quantities and proportions that the body's needs are adequately met. Eating a well-balanced diet regularly and staying at an ideal weight are critical factors in maintaining emotional and physical well-being. In Ayurveda, diet forms the vital component of life as it is included in the *Tri-Upastambha*³ (three pillars of life). Being supported by these three factors, the body is endowed with strength, complexion and growth. It continues up till the entire span of life, provided a person does not indulge in such regimens as are detrimental to health.

Any material in the universe, according to Ayurveda, is composed of five essential elements, the *Pancha Mahabhootas*, namely *Prithvi* (Earth), *Aap* (Water), *Teja* (Fire), *Vayu* (Air) and *Akasha* (Ether)⁴. The *Tridoshas* (Biological Humors), i.e., *Vata*, *Pitta* & *Kapha*, constitute the body and are also *Pancha Mahabhootas*. Each food article has a *Dosha* aggravating action or a pacifying or balancing action on the human body. To keep the homeostasis of *Doshas* (health), Ayurveda has described a specific diet. Proper planning and indulging in the diet can maintain our body.

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because food is the Life of living beings. The entire living world runs towards food. All things, including the body's physical state (Built, confirmation, strength, beauty, and complexion) and mental state (Happiness, calmness, satisfaction, intelligence, and goodness), depend on food. All things are obtained from food only. Food is the basis of life and the life of living beings. In this way, food is the basis of everything in this world, the next world and salvation.⁵

So, this proved that without a balanced and nutritious diet, man cannot achieve the four attainments of life (*Purusharth*): *Dharm*, *Artha*, *Kama* and *Moksha*. This is the reason why *Acharya Charak* has given the utmost place to food in the three sub-pillars of life⁶ (Food, sleep and celibacy). Diet or food nourishes the body, sleep nourishes the senses, and bliss and celibacy nourish the essence (*Oja*).

DEFINITION OF AAHAR-

The substance taken to nourish the body is called Food.

As per *Dalhan*, the substance swallowed through a food pipe is called *Aahar*.

The process by which the body's *Dhatu* are strengthened is called food.

Synonyms – *Jagal*, *Bhojan*, *Leh*.

TYPES OF AAHAR-

CHARAK ⁷	SUSRUTA ⁸	MODERN
ASHIT	ASHIT	Chewable
PEETA	PEETA	Drinkable
LEEDHA	LEEDHA	Lickable
KHADITA	KHADITA	Eatable

Just as there are different types of matter, the substance (*Dravyatava*) is the same in all of them; despite infinite variations in food, the substance (nutritional value, *Aahartava*) is the same. Therefore, the *Acharya* has found a solution to this problem by saying that whatever the components of the food items

are used in more forms, and which are beneficial or harmful for most Human beings, they have been described.

HITKAR AAHAR - The diet that keeps the physiological *Dhatu* in the same quantity in their natural form called *Hitkar Aahar*⁹.

Examples are Saindhav, Raktashali, Moonga, Aakashiya jal, Godugdha¹⁰, etc.

AHITKAR AAHAR—*The food that makes the even Dhatu odd and further deforms* the odd Dhatu is called *Ahitakar Aahar*¹¹.

Examples are Jaiee (Barley), Udad, Varsha jal, Gomansa, Sarson shak¹², etc.

IMPORTANCE OF AAHAR-

Aacharya Charak has given the first place to food in three sub-pillars (*Upa Tristambha*) and said that consuming food without rational means is the cause of disease¹³. The use of beneficial and harmful food items gives auspicious and inauspicious results¹⁴. Thus, it is not advisable to overindulge in food because it tastes good. Always consume healthy food only after examination because the whole body grows only by timely consumption of good food items¹⁵.

AAHAR VARGA –

A group of substances that can carry the vital energy needed for activities like walking, speech, etc., as per their capacity during the period of body retention and use, is called *Annapan varga*.

Acharya Charaka has described twelve food group¹⁶

1. *Shooka dhanaya varga* (Class of Corns)
2. *Shami dhanya varga*(Class of Pulses)
3. *Mansa varga*(Class of Fleshes)
4. *Shak varga* (Class of Vegetables)
5. *Phal varga*(Class of Fruits)
6. *Harit varga*(Class of Greens)
7. *Madya varga*(Class of Madya)
8. *Jala varga*(Class of waters)
9. *Goras varga*(Class of milk and its products)
10. *Ikshu varga*(Class of Sugarcane)
11. *Kritanna varga*(Class of Cooked Foods)
12. *Aaharopyogi varga*(Class of Adjuvants of Foods).

SHOOKA DHANYA VARGA-

Shook means spike like structure .

Paddy, which has a spike-like structure, is called *Shooka Dhanya*. This is the class of Paddy grains. All grains of this class are found with peel.

As per Modern, all grains of this class come under the family Poaceae, and wheat seeds have only one cotyledon. So, it is proved that the Shooka Dhanay

Varga is based on the Cotyledon and shooka-like structure of Grains.

Special features of Shooka Varga-

- There are a total of 15 types of grains in this class.
- Red paddy is the best among all the Paddy grains because Red Paddy pacifies the *Tridosha*.¹⁷
- **Shashtic Dhanya** -These grains are grown from summer till the end of the rainy season. All these are ready in about 60 days. Hence, they are called *Shashtic*. Ex- *Sathi, Kaguni, Dardur* .
- White-coloured *Sathi* is considered the best in *Shashtic Dhanya Varga*¹⁸.
- **Brihi Dhanya**- These grains vitiate the *Tridosha*. Ex- *Kondo, Sava*, etc. All these grains are *Sheeta veerya, Grahi*, absorbs *Dhatu* and Pacify *Kapha-Pitta* due to its *Madhur Kashaya Rasa*¹⁹
- **Properties of Kodo and Sava**²⁰ -Astringent and sweet, Aggravate *Vata* and pacify the *Kapha-Pitta* due to its *Sheeta Veerya*.
- **Properties of Barley (Yava)**²¹ - *Yava* is dry, cold in potency, easy to digest, sweet, aggravates *Vata*, increases stool, astringent, and eliminates *Kaphaj rog*.
- **Properties of Wheat**²²- Healer of broken places, pacify *Vata*, sweet, cold in potency, vitaliser, *Vrishya* and make the body stable and heavy.
- Another example of **Shook Dhanya Varg Grains**-Maize (*Makka*), Oats (*Jai*), Barley (*Jow*), Pearl Millet (*Bajra*) and other minor millets such as Finger Millet (*Ragi*), Kodo Millet (*Arikalu*), Proso Millet (*Cheena*), Foxtail Millet (*Kauni*), Little Millet (*Kutki*;) and Barnyard Millet (*Sanwa*).

Utility of Shook Dhanya Varg at present-

Cereal grains other than wheat and rice, mainly used for brewing or animal feed, are called coarse grains. These grains are warm-season cereals that are prized over the globe for their usage as food, feed and fodder. Coarse grains are abundant in dietary energy, vitamins, minerals (particularly micronutrients like iron and zinc), insoluble fibre and phytochemicals with antioxidant qualities. The highest calcium content is in finger millet (300-350 mg/100 grain).

Minor millets are an excellent source of iron and phosphorus. They are nutritionally comparable or even superior to significant cereals, such as wheat and rice, owing to their higher protein levels. Based on multiple epidemiological studies, it has been demonstrated that these cereals can help lower the risk of several chronic illnesses, including cancer, heart disease, type 2 diabetes and gastrointestinal disorders. In addition to numerous fermented meals, they can be used to make porridge, biscuits, cakes, cookies, tortillas, bread, *ladoo*, *ghatta* and flakes.

CONCLUSION

Ayurveda is a science that teaches about a healthy lifestyle, a code of conduct, spiritual practices, medicine, and a well-balanced diet.

As per *Acharya Charak*, in the *Shook Dhanya Varg*, food items have been described in a scientific and well-planned manner based on their properties as per the nature of person/individuals. Nowadays, food habits are entirely changed due to modernisation, lifestyle modification, and hectic life schedules, which ultimately leads to malnutrition, lifestyle disorders and various life-threatening diseases like DM, Renal failure, cancer, etc.

Therefore, in today's world, the relevance of diet knowledge has proven meaningful. Coarse cereals mainly help cure diseases and maintain good health.

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