

## AN AYURVEDIC REVIEW ON ASHTA AHARA VIDHI VISHESH AYATANA

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(Published Online: September 2021)

## Open Access

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Article Received: 24/08//2021 - Peer Reviewed: 03/09/2021 - Accepted for Publication: 04/09/2021



## ABSTRACT

Health is that the state of physical, mental, social, and spiritual well-being. It's dependent upon food and their proper food preparation method. The *Prayojana* of *Ayurveda* is to guard the health of the healthy and to cure disorders within the diseased condition. As *Acharyas* had described that *Ahara*, *Nidra* and *Brahmacarya* are *Triupstambha*, which support the body itself. Here *Ahara* has been placed first, which shows that it's most vital to take care of and sustain life. *Ayurveda* places a special predominance on *Ahara* and the right way of eating food. For the tactic of taking food, *Acharya Charak* has defined *Ashta Ahara vidhivisheshayatana* in a very systematic and scientific manner. It gives basic dietary guidelines for choosing appropriate food, quality and quantity of food, a combination of food and cooking method etc. Proper knowledge of this *Ahar Vidhi Visheshayatana* will help in reducing diseases and help for a proper healthy diet.

**Keywords:** Health, *Triupastambha*, *Ahara*, *Ashta ahara vidhi visheshayatana*.

## INTRODUCTION

*Ahara* is one of the most important factors of life. *Ahara* is the main source of strength, complexion, and vitality. Wholesome food is one of the causes of

the growth and development of living beings, while unwholesome food produces diseases. Food material is required by the body for heat and energy, tissue

growth and the compensation of the decay of the tissues.<sup>1</sup> Food causes immediate nourishment, strength, and support to the body. It increases the expectancy of life, brilliance, enthusiasm, memory, *Ojas* and digestive capacity.<sup>2</sup> *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, long life, imagination, happiness, contentment, corpulence, strength, intellect all these depend on food.<sup>3</sup> The body as the product of food, the disease born of food, the distinction of happiness and sorrow resulting from the distinction of wholesome and unwholesome diet.<sup>4</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 the human body. Improper digestion (*Mandagni*) produces toxins (*Ama*) which leads to the majority of diseases.<sup>5</sup> Health is dependent upon food and the food looks for proper methods.<sup>6</sup> *Acharya Charak* has described 8 specific factors of the method of dieting in a very systematic and scientific manner which is known as *Ashta Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana*.<sup>7</sup>

These are 8 specific factors of the method of dieting.<sup>8</sup>

1. *Prakriti/Swabhava*- Nature of food/ Quality of food.
  2. *Karan* – Processing of food.
  3. *Samyoga* – Combination of food.
  4. *Rashi* – Quantity of food.
  5. *Desha* – Habitat of food.
  6. *Kala* – Time and seasonal variation.
  7. *Upayoga Samstha* – Rules for dieting
  8. *Upayokta* – The person who consumes the food.
1. *Prakriti / Swabhava* (Nature of food / Quality of food): *Prakriti* is *Swabhava* (nature) which is the natural existence of properties like *Laghu*, *Guru* etc. in the substance used as food and drug. As we know that everyone 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), the meat of *Shukra*

is *Guru* (heavy) and *Ena* (deer) meat is *Laghu* (light) in nature.<sup>9</sup>

2. *Karana* (Processing of Substances): *Karana* is also known as *Samskara*. It means the processing of substances which leads to alteration in the inherent properties of substances. This modification is brought about by dilution, application of heat (vaporization, distillation, and sublimation), clarification, emulsification, storing, maturing, flavouring, impregnation, preservation, and the material of receptacle. As by processing, *Vrihi* which is heavy to digest becomes light when transformed into *Laja* after frying, on the other hand, flour of roasted grains becomes heavy when processed into a cooked bolus.<sup>10</sup>
3. *Samyoga* (combination): *Samyoga* (combination) is an aggregation of two or more substances. This exhibits peculiarities that are not seen in the case of individual substances. Sometimes it is seen that the combination of diet shows the different effect from the individual effect. The combination of two or more substances results in the manifestation of special qualities, which cannot be achieved using the same article separately. The combination of 2 or more substances altogether may produce new qualities so while preparing the food it should be considered that the ingredient must be compatible with each other and should be properly mixed. For example, Honey and ghee when taken alone are wholesome to the body but when combined in equal quantity they become toxic so their combination in equal quantity is not advised. Also, milk (*Shitaveerya*) and fish (*Ushna virya*) should not be taken altogether. Though both have a sweet taste due to the contraindication in their potency they vitiate the blood and obstruct the strotas.<sup>11</sup> the concept of *Viruddha Ahara* is well explained in *Ayurveda* which tells about the incompatible food and their harmful effect on the body.<sup>12</sup>
4. *Rasi* (Quantity): *Rasi* is the measure of the total mass and each constituent to determine the effects of the right and wrong doses. The quantity of food taken in its entirety is *Sarvagraha* and the

Quantity of each of its ingredients is *Parigrha*.<sup>13</sup> A person should have his diet in proper amount; it means that a person should have diet according to his digestive power (*Agni*).<sup>14</sup> *Rashi* (quantity) consists of *Sarvagraha* and *Parigraha* which ascertain the results of the food taken in proper and improper quantity.

*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.

*Parigraha* – *Parigraha* is that one of the individual items in food.<sup>15</sup> The *Ahara* in gross can be divided based on *Guru* and *Laghu*. The *Guru Ahara Dravyas* have *Prithvi* and *Jala Guna* predominantly; that's why they pacify the *Agni* if taken in large amounts so they should be taken 1/3rd or 1/2 of the *Kukshi*. On the other hand, *Laghu Ahara Dravyas* predominantly have *Vayu* and *Agni Guna*, which intensify the *Agni*, so they are least harmful even if they are eaten to a surfeit though they should also take in proper amount.<sup>16</sup>

The absence of measure is two heads - 1. *Heena Matra* 2-*Ati Matra*

The diet which is deficient in measure (*Heena Matra*) is seen to result in the impairment of strength, complexion, and plumpness, in the impairment of functions of life, virility and vitality, in vitiation of the eight body elements and the incidence of the eighty kinds of *Vata* disorders.<sup>17</sup>

5. *Desha* (Habitat): *Desha* denotes place relating to growth as well as distribution of the substances and the suitability in respect of place. It is a geographic region. Food substances differ in quality due to differences in soil and climate.<sup>18</sup> In *Ayurveda* *Desha* denotes both *Bhoomi Desha* and *Dehadesha*. *Ahara* should be taken according to *Desha*. The food substance grown in the same *Bhoomidesh* which is native *Desha* for the person suits him. *Deshapariksha* is one of the vital aspects in understanding patient regarding dietary habits of patient's probability of diseases related to the diet and accordingly treatment and *Pathya* aspect.

6. *Kala* (Time): Time is used in two senses, time in the general sense and time in the sense of stage. The sense of stage is used about disease (*Avastha Kala*) and the general sense is used about seasonal wholesomeness (*Metayage Kala*), in form of day and night. Life starting from the intrauterine period till death is the entire time dynamic. People are bound to face major and minor changes in every moment of life and thereby, *Doshas* are also accordingly varied. In *Swastha-avastha*, *Kala* is considered as *Nitayaga*. In this condition, *Ahara* should be taken according to *Dincharya* and *Ritucharya*, which help the body function to acclimatize with the external environment. In *Rugnavastha*, *Avasthika Kala* is considered by *Vyadhi Avastha*. E.g., in *Naveen Jwara*, *Langhana* should be done for 7 days, but if *Jwara* is *Jeerna Ghritapana* is indicated.<sup>19</sup> Food eaten at an appropriate time feels tasty, increase satisfaction and nutrition, gets digested easily and due to continuous/ prolong eating of food and indigestion the diseases do not develop.<sup>20</sup>
7. *Upayoga- samstha* (Classical *Ayurveda* rules of dieting): It denotes the rules for dieting. This depends on the digested food. *Ahara Vidhi Visheshatayana* has been described for taking food, it should be considered in the diet. *Ahara* should be *Ushna* (warm), tasty, qualitative, easily digestible.<sup>21</sup>
8. *Upyokta* (The User): The user is he who makes use of food, habituation depends on him. Creating wholesomeness by habitual intake of things comes under *Upyokta* and known as *Satmya* which differs from person to person. As the *Prakriti* of *Ahara Dravyas* is a considerable factor, the *Prakriti* of *Upyokta* is also considered for the wholesomeness of diet.<sup>22</sup> these are the factors described in our classics which are the foundation of Dietetics.

## DISCUSSION

*Ahara* is a part of our daily routine. along with the quality, quantity, and taste of food, if we concentrate a little on the right way of taking food and the regi-

mens related to *Ahara* described in *Ayurveda*, positive health can be achieved easily. Faulty dietary habits lead to the manifestation of different metabolic diseases. It is also observed that many diseases are arising merely due to this faulty dietary habit. In this context, the concept of *Ashta Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana* is most ideal in today lifestyle. *Ashta Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana* means the factors responsible for wholesome and unwholesome effects of the *Ahara* and methods of *Ahara sevana* (special rule for diet intake). These eight dynamics must be measured before taking food *Prakriti, Karana, Samyoga, Rashi, Desha, Kala, Upyoga-sansatha* and *Upyokta*.

Viewing the above points, it can be concluded that *Ahara* should be taken according to these eating habits are mentioned by *Acharyas* in the form of *Ashta Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana* which has been proven very scientific. So, by following these habits, we can prevent ourselves from various health problems and can cure many other diseases.

## CONCLUSION

*Ahara* isn't only needed for the continuity of life, but also *Bala, Varna, Upacaya* etc. In today's modern era, we are neglecting the digestive capacity nutritional value of food products, ready to eat food material. Lack of knowledge about correct eating habits is the primary reason for the increasing trend of health disorders like diarrhoea, indigestion, hyperacidity, and anorexia etc. So, for preventing these disorders, the best way is to understand *Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana* explains the various dietary habits. It helps to know about choosing appropriate food, a combination of food, cooking method, quality, and quantity of food.

*Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana* is one of the most beneficial for achieving the noble goal of maintaining health. By proper understanding and following these, we can easily achieve both the *Prayojana* of *Ayurveda*. Therefore, there's a requirement to illuminate this concept of *Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana* as described in ancient *Ayurveda* classics.

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**Source of Support: Nil**

**Conflict of Interest: None Declared**

How to cite this URL: Namrata Sahu et al: An Ayurvedic Review On Ashta Ahara Vidhi Vishesh Ayatana. International Ayurvedic Medical Journal {online} 2021 {cited September 2021} Available from: [http://www.iamj.in/posts/images/upload/2155\\_2159.pdf](http://www.iamj.in/posts/images/upload/2155_2159.pdf)