



RELEVANCE OF THE AYURVEDIC CONCEPT OF FOOD INTAKE (AHARA VIDHI VIDHAN) WITH CURRENT ISSUES

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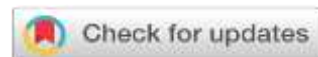
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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda aims to treat diseases and develop and retain a healthy person's strength, longevity, and overall well-being. *Aahara* is the most important aspect of existence. In *Ayurveda*, *Aahara* is regarded as one of existence's fundamental pillars (*Upstambhas*). *Aahara* is necessary for *Varna*, *Bala*, *Swara*, and *Upchaya*, all of which depend on nutrition and are necessary for life itself. The amount of *Aahara* a person has depends on their *Agni* and the type of food they eat. The components, as well as their distinct flavours, characteristics, potencies, and digestive transformations, are in charge of maintaining the balance of the *Dosha* and *Dhatu*. An appropriate diet followed correctly can improve health or, conversely, can cause disorders. The method in which food is consumed also affects how well one stays healthy, not just the quantity or quality of food. Ayurvedic guidelines on what, when, where, and how food should be taken should be followed to get the full advantages of eating. The Ayurvedic scriptures known as *Ahara Vidhi Vidhan*, which include the regulations of dos and don'ts about diet and beverages, describe many instructions. However, most individuals these days are preoccupied with TV, phone calls, computers, meetings, chitchatting, and laughing while eating. All of these variables impair digestion and cause severe digestive issues.

Keywords: *Trayupstambha*, *Aahara*, *Upchaya*, *Aahara Vidhi Vidhan*.

INTRODUCTION

Aahara is defined as food that may be eaten, licked, drunk, or otherwise consumed. From the perspective of intake, diet is one. Humans flock to food because it contains the life-giving breath of all living things. All of these traits—complexion, cheer, a clear voice, vitality, imagination, happiness, contentment, corpulence, strength, and intellect—depend on food. *Aahara* is therefore the most fundamental need for all living things. Modern society is more prone to lifestyle problems, where poor eating habits are a major contributing factor. *Ayurveda* has provided specific guidelines and a procedure for taking the *Aahara* for both a person and society at large. *Aahara Vidhi Vidhan* is the name of this discipline, where all the rules of food and This discipline is known as *Aahara Vidhi Vidhan*, and it contains all of the rules on diet and beverages. The basic premise of *Ayurveda* is that both health and sickness are manifestations of *Aahara*. *Aahara*(food), *Nidra*(sleep), and *Brahmcharya* are *Trayopstambha* (three sub-pillars), according to the acharyas, which sustain the body itself. The fact that *Aahara* is listed first in this instance demonstrates how important it is to preserve and sustain life. The body receives bioenergy from *Aahara*. Proper and sufficient nourishment, in the form of its basic components, provides this bioenergy (viz - protein, carbohydrates, fats, minerals, vitamins, and water). *Aahara* and the way it is consumed are equally important in *Ayurveda*. The source of life's satisfaction is found in foods that are taken following the manners instructed (in the scriptures). Food is a need for the *Ojas*, *Teja* (slender), *Dhatu*s, senses, *Bala* (strength), *Tushti* (mind contentment), and *Aarogya* (health). They serve as fuel for the internal fire known as *Agni*, which is the body's primary source of support. We do not worry about the effects of our eating habits and other unhealthy lifestyle choices on our health in the current modern way of life. In our classics, which serve as the basis of dietetics, *Aahara Vidhi Vidhan* is detailed. Which demonstrates the process of *Aahara*, these are *Ushna*, *Snigdha*, and *Matravat*, which are consumed after the digestion of previously ingested food, *Virya Avirudha Aahara*,

which is to be brought into, *Iste Deshe* where it is given, *Ista Sarvopakarana*, Not to be taken quickly, not to be taken too slowly, not to be taken alone, not to be taken while smiling, and not to be taken without mental focus¹.

USHNA ASHNIYAT (Food should be warm)

Ayurveda advises eating warm food. It tastes great when eaten warm, stimulates the digestive elements (enzymes) in the stomach after consumption, digests fast, and aids in the downward transit of *Vata* and the detachment of *Kapha*. As a result, warm meals should be consumed. Because it doesn't have to work as hard to digest the food, the human digestive system functions better with meals and liquids that are warmer. *Agni* (digestive enzymes) is stimulated by hot food, as are *Vata* and *Kapha* activity. The first need for a cooked meal is that it be consumed with *Ushna* (hot). When eating hot food, one experiences a proper flavour that makes them salivate more. This is the initial *Ahara Vidhi Vidhan*, which is done to ensure a plentiful flow of stomach juices and saliva for the subsequent meal items².

Today's a bad habit

1. People no longer take *Ushna Aahara* because of changing lifestyles and hectic schedules.
2. Because they rely on cafeteria and dorm meals, students who moved to other locations for higher education are unable to eat at a suitable mealtime.
3. Many people are unable to eat hot meals as is due to busy work schedules. Many individuals consume cold meals since the tiffin box or dabba they use to transport their food cannot keep food warm.
4. Hotel food is heated several times after it has cooled.
5. Many individuals are unable to consume fresh, *Ushna Aahara* because of their job schedules, which causes them to arrive home after dark.

Ushna meal imparts adequate flavour and encourages the production of saliva by the salivary glands. Successful secretions of saliva and other gastric fluids are expected for good digestion. This explains why food that had been frozen, stored in a freezer, or maintained in a refrigerator required more. This explains

why food that had been frozen, stored in a freezer, or maintained in a refrigerator took longer to digest. Consuming cold food shocks, the digestive system and causes your gut to work extra hard to break down nutrients. This may result in bloating or sensitive digestion. The taste receptors frequently provide a greater signal to the brain when food is heated. Ease of digestion and easier absorption of nutrients are two benefits of eating hot meals. The body can get more nutrients as a result.

SNIGDHAM ASHNIYAT (Food should be unctuous)

The food consumed should be *Snigdha* (unctuous), which gives off the impression of having the right flavour and results in *Agnideepana*. It promotes early digestion, *Vata Anulomna*, and aids in smooth digestion. It improves the complexion and brightness of the skin while supporting the sensory organs³.

Today's a bad habit

1. Nowadays, several kinds of oils or Vanaspati ghee are utilized. However, oil adulteration and recycling reduce their quality.
2. Ghrita in meals is unaffordable for low-income families.
3. Some people regularly consume unhealthy foods including fast food, spicy food, and meals with more oil.
4. Ghrita consumption has decreased with time.
5. Increase the reuse of cooking oils, hydrogenated oils, etc.

According to Ayurveda, one should eat unctuous food because it is pleasant, prompts a tame digestive power after consumption, digests swiftly, aids in the downward movement of *Vata*, raises body fat, improves the sense organs, fosters strength, and brings out the radiance of the skin. Therefore, fatty meals should be consumed. Food products that are hard or roasted are often unhealthy in terms of their nutritional content and satiety quotient, thus these are not advised. So, consume food that is not roasted, dry, or difficult to consume. Essential fatty acids, which are found in fats and oils, are essential for development and health and offer a concentrated source of energy. They enhance the flavour of food and help some vitamins, such as vitamin "A," be absorbed. Certain fat-

ty or greasy meals include vital vitamins. Different fat nutrients are present in fats and oils. These include cholesterol, trans fatty acids, saturated fatty acids, and unsaturated fatty acids. Our body's cells are protected by specialized membranes, which are primarily made of fat. The majority of organs, including the brain and nerves, are made of fat. An excellent fuel is fat.

MATRAVAT ASHNIYAT (Food in proper quantity)

It implies eating adequate food. A person can determine that something is *Matravat* if there is no heart pain, no excessive abdominal heaviness, the gratification of the senses, subsidence of hunger and thirst, and a sensation of ease when standing, sitting, laying down, walking, breathing, exhaling, and chatting. It is usually recommended to just eat what is necessary. In actuality, the idea of a *jatharagni* is like an *Agni*, and food is like *Samidha* for it. When we feed *Samidha* to the *Agni* in the right amount, the *Agni* can digest it effectively. However, when *Samidha* is introduced in excess, the *Agni*'s function is disrupted and *Ama* is formed, which is a major cause of sickness.

Today's a bad habit

1. There are several eating options. To satisfy their desires for various flavours, individuals are eating too much.
2. Different cuisines are popular as appetizers, entrées, and desserts at hotels. They eat more than their stomachs can hold.
3. When eating, heavy and light meals are not considered.
4. People eat while watching TV or using their phones, which causes them to consume more and for longer periods.
5. At the host's request for any supper or lunch gatherings.

One should consume meals in the right amounts, according to Ayurveda. When consumed in the right amounts, it increases lifespan as a whole without harming *Vata*, *Pitta*, or *Kapha*. It also quickly travels through the rectum and doesn't affect the ability to digest food⁴. *Matra* of diet is that which does not harm. The amount is influenced by the digestive fire. Individual differences depend on their age and the

time of year. *Rashi* (quantity) is the overall amount (*Sarvagraha*) or the amount of each ingredient (*Parigraha*) that influences the outcomes of their ingestion in the right and incorrect dose. *Sarvagraha* is the amount of food consumed in its totality, while *Parigraha* is the amount of each of its constituent parts. The lightness and heaviness of the meal may be used to assess its *Matra*⁵. In the stomach, there are three parts (imaginary divisions for 3 *Doshas*). For solid *Aahara*, there is a portion. A portion for the liquid *Aahara* and a portion left vacant for the three *Doshas-Vata, Pitta, and Kapha* respectively⁶. *Abhyavaharan Shakti* can be used to analyze stomach capacity.

JIRNE ASHNIYAT (Intake after digestion of previous meal)

It simply implies only eating once your last meal has been digested. The digestive result of the previous food, or undigested *Aahara Rasa*, becomes mixed up with the *Aahara Rasa* of food consumed later if one eats before the previous meal has been digested. It causes all the *Doshas Dushti*. When the previous meal has been fully digested, the humour has returned to its normal positions, the *Jatharagni* is stimulated, hunger is born, the channels are clear and open, the eructation from the mouth is healthy, the stomach is clear, the peristaltic movement is normal, and when the urges for flatus, urine, and faeces evacuation are well attended too. It means that food did not vitiate any of the body elements & it serves the sole purpose of promoting life⁷.

Today's a bad habit

1. As a result of colonization and the morning duty schedule, individuals have developed the habit of eating breakfast even when they are not hungry.
2. Guests are made to eat when they don't want to by the host.
3. Due to the heavy and composed meals, such as meat and greasy foods, individuals frequently eat breakfast without first checking their digestion.
4. Some people have a habit of eating through acidity, indigestion, or abdominal heaviness, which makes them unwell.

5. Adolescents consume a high-protein diet, which includes eggs and a non-vegetarian diet, to enhance their health, but they are unaware of the digestive fire.

Ayurveda states that one should only eat after their previous meal has been digested. If food is consumed before the previous food has been digested, immature *Rasa* will mix with the byproduct of food consumed later, instantly provoking all of the *Doshas*. Food doesn't damage the body's *Dhatus* if it is consumed after the previous meal has been digested, while the *Doshas* are in balance, *Agni* is stimulated, appetite is present, the entrances to the blood vessels are open, eructation is cleansed, cardiac function is unaffected, the *Vata* is moving downward, and the urges to urinate, poop, and flatus are properly manifested. On the contrary, this promotes longevity. Therefore, one should only eat after the preceding meal has been digested. The biological clock and pattern of the digestive process are distinct. It must be respected for the body to operate properly.

VIRYA AVIRUDHAM ASHNIYAT (Intake of food having no contradictory potencies)

Consume only foods that are compatible with *Virya* (potency). Consuming foods with opposing nutritional effects is bad for health. It causes several disorders. Consuming fish and milk at the same time, for instance, causes *Raktadhātu Dushti* since their potencies are opposite. Milk is *Sheet Viryatmak*, while fish is *Ushna Viryatmak*. The force of material through which action occurs is known as *Virya*.

Today's a bad habit

1. People today have a propensity of experimenting with novel milk and fruit shake combinations. *Ayurveda* advises taking foods that don't have opposing potencies. By consuming such foods, one avoids contracting such illnesses, as many are brought on by consuming foods with incompatible properties. Therefore, one should take food having no contradictory potencies⁸.

ISHTE DESHE ISHTA SARVA UPKARANAM ASHNIYAT (Intake in the proper place and with all accessories)

Eat in a welcoming setting that has all the equipment you need. When eating somewhere comfortable, one does not experience mental tension. Therefore, it is important to eat in a comfortable setting. The area ought to be clean and well-lit. The relationship between *Bhojya Desha* and *Bhojan* is stated in Sushruta Samhita. It ought to be a solid, level, and comfortable area. These days, a separate dining room is available for this use when building. A positive dining experience promotes a good state of mind. Utensil use for cooking and eating is important in the same manner that place is. Always avoid using copper or other metallic utensils to prepare or consume *Amla Rasatmak Aahara Dravya* because there is a danger that the acid, one of the ingredients in *Amla Rasa*, would react chemically with the metal.

Today's a bad habit

1. There are a lot of hotels or street vendors where there is a lot of noise or poor cleanliness.
2. Consuming food or beverages while travelling by bus or train is dangerous.
3. Many individuals eat while standing up since they are in a rush.
4. Buffet events

According to *Ayurveda*, one should take food in a proper place equipped with all the accessories. By doing this, he avoids the aspects that would cause emotional stress, which happens when one takes their meal in the wrong areas without the necessary accessories⁹. Therefore, one should eat in a decent setting with all the necessary equipment. Eating is always healthier when done in a peaceful, relaxed, enjoyable, and joyful state of mind. Since digestion is primarily a parasympathetic action, it works best when a person feels at ease and at ease with all of their accessories. While everyone like the idea of dining at wedding buffets while standing. We often forget that it is a bad habit. Experts claim that just as drinking water while standing is unhealthy for you, eating while standing is terrible for your body and digestive system.

NA ATIDRUTAM ASHNIYAT (Intake, not in hurry) not to eat too quickly. Eating quickly may obstruct the food pipe and cause nausea. Additionally, it is advisable not to eat too slowly. Eating slowly might

take a long time, and in that time the food in the thali cools. This interferes with the digestive process.

Today's a bad habit

1. People don't have time to eat because of their hectic schedules.
2. People are too influenced by TV shows, smartphone apps, and social media during meals. It is impossible to eat in silence.
3. People are eating inconveniently in moving cars.
4. Eating out of stress or guilt.
5. Generally faster eater.

According to *Ayurveda*, one should not take food too hurriedly. When food is consumed hastily, it enters the incorrect route, becomes depressed, and does not properly enter the stomach. Under this condition, it is impossible to judge the flavour of food items or find foreign objects like hair or other materials mixed in with them. As a result, eating should not be rushed¹⁰. Overeating can cause sympathetic activity, or the flight or fear reaction, which decreases digestive output and shifts blood circulation from the central pool to the periphery. Eating in this circumstance is inappropriate, which results in poor digestion. Digestion is aided by chewing food slowly and thoroughly, which breaks down larger food particles into smaller ones. Eating too quickly is one of several things that might cause stomachache. Eating quickly causes poor digestion because larger bites and more food demand more efficient digestion, which our bodies are not designed to handle. In turn, this results in gas or bloating, which can hurt the stomach. Regularly eating rapidly slows down the body's metabolism, which is thought to lower good cholesterol levels and raise bad cholesterol. Your heart is in danger if your bad cholesterol levels suddenly rise since it raises your chance of developing heart conditions including heart attack and stroke.

NA ATIVILAMBITAM ASHNIYAT (not too slow intake)

One shouldn't eat extremely slowly, according to *Ayurveda*, because doing so won't make one feel satisfied. In this circumstance, he would consume more than is necessary, the meal would cool, and indigestion would result¹¹. As a result, eating shouldn't be

done slowly. When food is consumed slowly, the digestive enzymes come into irregular contact with the meal, which causes irregular digestion.

Today's a bad habit

1. Due to late ordering or talk, people are taking too long to finish their food at events.
2. People are unable to enjoy their meals at home because they are too preoccupied with watching TV programs.
3. Some people work on their computers or mobile devices while eating.

AJALPANA AHASANA TANMANA BHUNJITA (Intake with concentration)

Jalpa means to talk. Therefore, it is advisable to avoid talking and laughing excessively or loudly when eating. It is important to take your diet seriously. Our thoughts are diverted from meals and food by talking and laughing, whether we eat quickly or slowly.

Today's a bad habit

1. People take food with debate on various topics, and they become emotional.
2. While eating, they watch episodes of the Laughter Club on television.
3. While eating, students read or study books.
4. During any celebration and parties' people have gossips during eating food.

According to *Ayurveda* one should not talk or laugh or be unmindful while taking food. A person who eats while talking, laughing, or with their focus diverted experiences the same problems as someone who eats hastily. Therefore, one should not chat, laugh, or act carelessly when eating¹². Aerophagy may be prevented by eating silently, smiling, and paying close attention, all of which promote appropriate digestion and enjoyment. The phrase "*Atmanam Abhisamikshya Bhunjita*" means "Intake with self-confidence." One should eat healthily while keeping the above factors in mind. Consider the Prakriti of the customer while selecting a diet¹³. Always consider food to be Purnabrahma. Whatever we eat will help us to replenish ourselves.

Today's bad habits

1. Consuming a large amount of food while experiencing diarrhoea, vomiting, or other digestive issues.
2. Diabetic patients consume more sugar or sweet foods.
3. Consuming a diet strong in protein without understanding one's digestive fire.
4. Dietetic plans are based on food's calorie content without taking a person's ability to digest into account.
5. A person with acidity eating oily, spicy food.

One should take food in a prescribed manner with due regard to himself. Understanding whether food products are beneficial or not is important for self-preservation. So, one should take food in a prescribed manner with due regard to his self. This helps to choose what to eat, what not to eat, how much to eat etc., to maintain the equilibrium of *Tridoshas*. It may not be beneficial for all patients to consume hot meals, etc. Cold meals will be helpful to a person with Raktapitta, a condition marked by bleeding from many bodily sites. Some people may not benefit from a dietary item that is healthy by nature. Since they are uncommon, these exceptions are not considered in this situation.

DISCUSSION

As mentioned here current faulty and altered habits of food are *Hetus* for lifestyle disorders. These can be *Hetus* for any kind of disease. *Ayurveda* places a greater emphasis on *Aahara* and its usage guidelines. The majority of individuals consume *Aahara* following their schedule, i.e., without being aware of or thinking about its *Jirna Avastha*. According to *Ayurveda*, diseases and *Sharira* are both products of *Aahara*. So, people have to take food according to the rules of food intake. It must help improve human health. Vaidyas should be interested in considering the patient's *Hetus*. They need to find out the patient's eating habits and kind of food. It provides a hint for determining the correct illness *Hetus*. It is also beneficial to have wholesome food available in restaurants and our own homes.

CONCLUSION

Every human should be aware of proper eating habits since they are necessary for survival. The application of these rules is effective in the maintenance of health as well as in the curative aspect of many diseases. According to *Kashyap Samhita*, food has always been an important way to treat illness and maintain health and that's why he called food *Mahabhaishyaja*¹⁴. In the present modern lifestyle, we do not take care of our health and the consequences of our eating and drinking habits and other styles of life. It is a very important aspect regarding dietetics when to take food. Many diseases can be prevented from arising merely due to faulty dietary habits. The number of illness symptoms will diminish, and health will be maintained if today's hotels and food makers adhere to the norms and standards provided by our science. In the end, appropriate eating habits are what sustain *Dosha* in the body, properly nourish *Dhatu*s, and excrete *Mala* to ensure a long and healthy life.

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