

AAHAR MATRA AND AAHAR SEVAN KALA W.S.R. TO CHARAKA SAMHITA

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ABSTRACT

Aahar is one of the pillar of life. Today there are various concepts regarding diet plan. People are very confused about their diet and continuously asking their *vaidyas* what should I eat which diet plan should I follow? Are there any answers for these questions? Yes, *Charakacharya* (Father of Medicine) had given the answer centuries ago. He explained the concept of *Aahar matra* (Diet), *Aahar sevan kala*, characteristics of *matrapurvaka aahar* in details. *Charakacharya* explained that, *aahar* should be taken in appropriate quantity depending upon their respective *agni bala* (digestion power). *Aahar* should be taken as per *swa prakruti* (own constitution). Answer for the question When to eat –is after the digestion of previous taken *aahar* in proper time. Role of *Agni* is important in decision of *aahar matra*. Inappropriate *aahar* and vitiation of *agni* are root causes of many diseases. Following the guidelines of *Charakacharya*, people can achieve healthy life.

Keywords: *Aahar, Agni, Kala, Matra, Charak, etc*

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda the science of life is a time-tested treasure of knowledge that has been handed down to us from our great ancestors. *Ayurveda* has given three sub pillars- *Aahar, Nidra* and *Brahmacharya*^[1] which support the body itself. *Aahar* has been enumerated first, which shows its importance. Breast milk is the first and well-balanced *aahar* for the newly born baby. The milk that has got its more or less direct bearing *aahar* on taken by the mother plays decisive role in development, sustenance, reproduction and termination of life. It is a well-known fact that, *aahar* supplies energy to body. In *Ayurvedic* view, the *aahar* and its utilization represent a fundamental parameter and the entire concept of health and disease revolves round

this doctrine. *Charak* says the human body is product of *aahar (aaharsambhav)*^[2], even so diseases arise on account of unwholesome *aahar*. The difference between ease and disease is correlated to the wholesome and unwholesome diet. Also *agni* is equated to life. *Bala, aarogya*, etc is dependent on *agni*. And the proper functioning of *agni* is dependent on *aahar*. *Charak* proceeds to observe that *agni* in its turn waxes being fed with *indhan* i.e. fuel in the form of *aahar* and drinks and that it wanes in it's a scene. *Aahar* in turn depends on *agni* as *rasadidhatus* cannot be formed from *aahar* that has not been digested and metabolized. *aahar* is of no use to the body if it is not properly digested and assimilated. *Agni* is directly

concerned with the process of digestion and there are other supporting factors also. For improved digestion, other factors like, *aahar matra* (how much to eat), *aahar sevankala* (when to eat) etc. keep their own importance

Today there are various concepts regarding diet plans. People are very confused about their diet & continuously asking their *vaidyas* what should I eat which diet plan should I follow? Are there any answers for these questions? Yes, *Charakacharya* (Father of Medicine) had given the answer centuries ago.

LITERARY REVIEW - CONCEPT OF AAHAR

1] ORIGIN

The word “*Aahar*” is very much familiar since time immemorial. Various classics / dictionaries describe *Aahar* in their own unique way. From era of *Veda*, it is taken for granted that living being is kept alive principally because of *aahar*.

Living organisms get their life from *aahar*^[3]. All living beings on earth live on *aahar*.

3] CLASSIFICATION:

Classification According to *Acharya Charaka(cha.su.25/36)*^[6].

S. No.	Classification Basis	Types	Name
1	Edible	1	<i>Ahara</i>
2	Origin	2	<i>Sthavaram</i> (Vegetable products), <i>Jangama</i> (Animal products)
3	<i>Prabhava</i>	2	<i>Hitam</i> (wholesome), <i>Ahitam</i> (unwholesome)
4	Nature of intake	4	<i>Ashitam</i> (Eatables), <i>Khaditam</i> (Masticable <i>aahar</i>), <i>Pitam</i> (Beverages), <i>Lidham</i> (Linctus)
5	<i>Mahabhuta</i>	5	<i>Parthiva</i> , <i>Apya</i> , <i>Tejasiya</i> , <i>Vayaviya</i> , <i>Akasiya</i>
6	<i>Rasa</i>	6	<i>Madhura</i> , <i>Amla</i> , <i>Lavana</i> , <i>Katu</i> , <i>Tikta</i> , <i>Kashaya</i>
7	<i>Viryā</i>	2	<i>Sita</i> , <i>Usna</i>
8	<i>Viryā</i>	8	<i>Guru</i> , <i>Laghu</i> , <i>Sita</i> , <i>Ushna</i> , <i>Snigdha</i> , <i>Ruksha</i> , <i>Manda</i> , <i>Tikshna</i>
9	<i>Guna</i>	20	<i>Guru</i> , <i>Laghu</i> , <i>Sita</i> , <i>Ushna</i> etc 20 <i>gunas</i>

And many permutations and combinations are expected. Concluding, *Charak-Samhita* classifies basically into one group as to everything that is swallowed is called ‘*Aahar*’.^[6]

4] IMPORTANCE OF “AAHAR”

Ayurveda has given three sub pillars- *Ahara*, *Nidra* and *Brahmacharya*^[1] which support the body itself. *Aahar* has been enumerated first, which shows its importance^[6]. *Aahar* is one of four factors meant for growth of body^[7]. *Aahar* is essential for stability of

Aahar, which is prime requirement of every biotic entity, is taken as the greatest matter in the world.

2] DEFINITION OF AAHAR:

Shabdakalpadruma explains that *Ahara* is a substance swallowed through throat after eating^[4].

Acharya Dalhana opines that the substance which is swallowed through *Anna-nalika* is called *aahar*.^[5]

Whatever is swallowed is called “*Aahar*”. *Charak Samhita* states that there is a variety of *aahar* items human eat. Yet due to necessity of “swallowing act” whatever is undergone process of deglutition is *Aahar*^[6].

Acharya Charak commentator *Chakrapani* opines that *Ahara* means anything which is ingested and thus it includes both diet and drugs. *Acharya Charak* commentator *Gangadhara* says that anything which is ingested by the tongue down to the throat is called *Ahara*. Therefore, drugs are also included in *aahar*. From the above statement, it can be concluded that the word *aahar* means any substance which is taken in via the mouth and swallowed through throat.

human. *Aahar* is best for ‘Healthy states’ of living body^[8].

Aahar is life of human being. All Animals yearn for *aahar*. *Aahar* offers them colour, lustre, speech, life, innovation, happiness, content, nourishment, strength, intelligence etc. It is strongly advised that a person should never consume *aahar* out of greed or when he is unaware of what he eats. One should knowingly and decidedly eat *aahar*. Living body is principally grown out of *aahar*; hence it is vital of test what you are con-

suming.^[10, 11] Man, disciplined to remain on wholesome diet lives for 36000 nights or hundred years. He lives healthy life and gets blessings of good people^[9]. There is nothing like *aahar* to let a person live. There is no medicine like *aahar* available anywhere^[9]. Almost everything depends upon *aahar*.

5] AAHAR MATRA- APPROPRIATE QUANTITY OF AAHAR

Along with so many rules & regulations, very important direction should be kept in mind i.e. *Aahar matra*.

A] Matrashee syaat. Aaaharmatra punah agni-balapekshini. cha.su.5/3-4^[12]

Matra [quantity] of diet is that which does not harm. The root '*ash*' here includes all types of diet.

The quantity depends on the strength of digestive fire. Explaining this *chakrapani* says that looking to first, second & third degree of digestive fire the quantity of diet is also decided accordingly^[12].

The word '*punah*' eliminates the dose of drugs etc. & the amount of exercise etc. because all quantities do not depend only on digestive fire. For instance, the dose of drugs depends on the severity of disorder and strength of patient. Likewise, exercise depends on condition of appearance of diminution of *dosha* and stimulation of digestive fire as well as non appearance of fatigue, exhaustion etc.

Alternatively, the word "*punah*" denotes periodical review of quantity according to variation in strength of digestive fire because it varies in the individual according to variation of season and age.

For instance, digestive fire is strong in winter and youthful age whereas in rainy season and old age it is mild. Hence the diet also can't be fixed for ever but is modified according to the present state of digestive fire.

The measure of the quantity should not affect normalcy. The word '*prakrti*' here has been interpreted as 'the State of normalcy'^[22] (equilibrium of *doshasvata* etc.) and *dhatu*s (*rasa* etc.)

The quantity can't be the same for all persons because the strength of digestive fire varies in each individual. The point has been raised as to how a quantity which is digested properly in time can harm normalcy. *Chakrapani*, in this context, emphasises on the importance

of balanced diet and says *Charaka* has said in *Rasavimana* that the quantity is considered in two ways

B] RASHI-cha.vi.1/21

(1)*Sarvagraha* (in respect of total *aahar*) and

(2) *Parigraha* (in respect of individual items). This is very important from the view of the concept of 'balanced diet' because in it each item is considered with regard to their requirement for the body^[13].

Thus even if the total quantity is proper but the quantity of individuals items which are necessary for health is not adequate it affects normalcy and also proper digestion thus bringing about premature old age because of imbalance in individual items of diet.

Others interpret it in different ways. They extract some significant meaning out of the three words "*Aasya, Ashan, and Ashitam*". From the first word they mean the careful consumer, from the second the diet not incompatible in respect of nature, processing, combination, place and time etc. and from the third one taking meals according to prescribed rules.

Thus the diet endowed with all these qualities is known as '*matravan*' (in proper quantity).

Lightness and heaviness of dietary items may also be considered in respect of processing apart from their natural characters. For instance, parched paddy is light and bolus of parched grain flour is heavy due to processing.

Though light substances are predominant in *akasa, vayu* and *agni mahabhutas*, *Charaka* omits *akasa* here because it is not so favourable for stimulation of fire as such.

The light substance do not harm even if consumed with '*Sauhitya*'. '*Sauhitya*' is interpreted as 'Saturation' with over quantity.

Digestive fire becomes stronger due to particular season such as in winter and also due to physical exercise. Out of these two, the latter is more patent.

'*Yukti*' of *agni* is 'its position in normal condition'.

The point has been raised as to how light substance being similar to *agni* in composition causes diminution of fire due to use in over quantity. *Chakrapani* has replied it as follows the excessive quantity overpowers the similarity of light substances and thus

causes diminution of fire such as vision is *taijasa* and acts with aid of *tejas* (light) but is destroyed if the light is excessive and so on.

Here 'avasyam' (certainly) should be understood in relation to the absence of some others antagonistic factor such as normal time, intellectual error etc.

C] As Per Stomach [Kukshee] Capacity -cha.vi.2/3 Stomach should be divided into 3 parts. One part should be filled with solid *aahar*, one should be filled with liquid *aahar* and one should be kept empty for movements of three *dosha,vata, pitta & kapha*. Capacity of stomach can be analyzed by ingestion capacity of a person. If this is observed, it fetches good results^[14].

Only quantity of food is not sufficient, other rules & regulations like eight regulations etc offer various results.

"*Ahara Vidhi Vishesa Ayatana (cha.vi.1-21)* is indicative of wholesome and unwholesome diet^[13] whereas *Ahara Vidhi Vidhana (cha.vi.1-24)* indicates the method of intake of diet. Health is dependent upon *aahar*. There are the dietetic rules which are to be followed while taking the *aahar*.^[15,16] One should consume only that in proper quantity which is –

1. *Ushna*.
2. *Snigdha*.
3. *Matravat*.
4. After the digestion of previous eaten *aahar*.
5. Avoiding *Viruddha Ahara*.
6. *Ishte Desha*.
7. *Na ati druta* [not eat very fast]
8. *Na ati vilambitam* [not eat very slowly]
9. *Ajalpan ahasanam* [not eat while talking or laugh while eating]
10. *Aatmaan abhisameekshya,tanmana bhunjeet* [one should eat for himself with appropriate manner]

This description given by the *Acharya Charak* is both for the healthy and unhealthy persons

D] HOW TO RECOGNIZE AAHAR EATEN IS APPROPRIATE AMOUNT?

Manifestations fetched by eating in proper amount are as follows- after *aahar* no pain is felt in flanks. One does not feel backache. One does not feel heaviness in abdomen. One does feels that his special senses are

fresh. One satisfies his hunger & thirst. One feels ease in sitting posture, sleeping posture, respiration, laughing, and talking. Morning & evening smooth excretion of excretory products takes place. This adds to strength, good color, & well nourishment that one should eat proper amount of *aahar*^[16].

E] IMPORTANCE OF TIMELY AAHAR CONSUMPTION:

While explaining *kalabhojana*, *Gangadhar* says that time of meal is as suited to the individual. However, generally the second meal is taken after seven & half hours of the first meal & night meal before three hours in the night

A person should take meal only when he feels hungry. Lunch should be taken early between 12 and 1P.M. this coincides with the peak *Pitta* period, *Pitta* is responsible for the digestion. *Ayurveda* recommends that the lunch should be the largest meal of the day. Dinner should be lesser and lighter than lunch.

F] IMPORTANCE & SEQUENCE OF RASA IN AAHAR CONSUMPTION:

Madhur (sweet) *rasa aahar* like fruits are advisable to take in the beginning of meal, *aahar* with *Amla* and *Lavana* (sour and salty) *rasa* in the middle and *Katu, Tikta, Kashay* (bitter ,astringent and pungent) *aahars* should be taken at the end of meal for healthy one^[17]. This serial of *aahar* intake will prevent over eating by inhabiting satiteary centre.

G] EXAMINATION OF INTAKE & DIGESTIVE CAPACITY

Examination of *aaharshakti* is done with the help of intake of *aahar* & digestive capacity. *Bala* & life span is dependent on *aahar*^[18]. "*Agni jaranshaktya parikshet*" *cha.vi.4/8*^[19]. *Agni* is examined by *jaranshakti* i.e. digestive capacity by *anuman praman*^[19].

Agni in digestive system, which digests *aahar* is supposed to be most important entity, like a king is important to his people.

H] CLINICAL SIGNIFICANCE

1] *Aahar*, after complete digestion is brought in bio-form of various body entities.

Whatever *aahar* items are eaten body is replenished accordingly. e. g. *parthiva aahar* components will

replenish *parthiva* components of body. nails, bones, teeth, *mamsa*, skin, hair on head, hair on body, beard, tendons etc. are predominantly *parthiva*.^[20]

Wheat, meat etc are also *parthiva*. Hence to replenish above mentioned body entities, these *aahar* items should be eaten. If *aakashiya aahar* items are eaten to

strengthen *parthiva* body entities, then these body entities will not be nourished well.

This is not only true for *aahar* but it is true for oral medicine for which the same group of factor become responsible.

2] Following Table shows the concept of Diet to be taken daily as per *Acharya Charka*^[21].

Sr.no	Ahara Dravya varga	Hitakar Aahar as per Charak
1	<i>Sukadhanya</i>	<i>Sashtika shali</i>
2	<i>Shami dhanya</i>	<i>Mudaga</i>
3	<i>Lavana</i>	<i>Saindhava</i>
4	<i>Phala</i>	<i>Mridvika</i>
5	<i>Shakha</i>	<i>Jivanti</i>
6	<i>Udaka</i>	<i>Rain water</i>
7	Milk	<i>Godugdha</i>
8	<i>Sarpi</i>	<i>Goghurut</i>
9	<i>Mamsa</i>	<i>Jangala Mamsa</i>
10	<i>Iksu Vikara</i>	<i>Madhu</i>

DISCUSSION

Ahara is that substance which is swallowed through throat. The description of *Ahara* according to *Charakacharya* regarding origin, *gunas*, *aahar matra*, manifestations fetched by eating in proper amount, timely *aahar sevankala* etc. seems to be more logical & scientific. Ingestion of balanced, nutritious *aahar*, proper digestion of this ingested *aahar* with the help of *agni*, and absorption of digested *aahar* are principle factors for growth of body.

The quantity can't be the same for all persons because the strength of digestive fire varies in each individual. So everyone should ingest *aahar* as per the capacity of stomach & strength of *agni*. *Matra* [quantity] of *aahar* is that which does not harm. The measure of the quantity should not affect normalcy. Ingestion of appropriate *aahar* gives strength, lustre, speech, happiness & well nourishment.

Along with the quantity of *aahar* other dietetic rules & regulations are to be followed which fetches good results. A person should take meal only when he feels hungry. *Madhur* (sweet) *rasa* is advisable to take in the beginning of meal, *aahar* with *Amla* and *Lavana* (sour and salty) *rasa* in the middle and *Katu*, *Tikta*,

Kashay (bitter, astringent and pungent) *aahars* should be taken at the end of meal for healthy one^[17]. This serial of *aahar* intake will prevent over eating by inhabiting sati teary centre.

Whatever *aahar* items are eaten body is replenished accordingly, so following these guidelines one can boost healthy life & enhances life span. Following all these guidelines, *Vaidyas* could suggest appropriate *aahar* for common people as per their age, *agni*, *prakriti* etc. Today's era a lot of diet plans are trending but *Charakacharya's* statements of *Aahar* are true forever. A wise person should understand good & bad outcomes of 'right' & 'wrong' *aahar* consumption. By no means is he tempted to eat, what is not good for his health.

CONCLUSION

Aahar is 'life' of living being. Just as oxygen is essential for life, *aahar* is essential too. As long as living being is ingesting *aahar*, he remains alive. Role of *Agni* is important to calculate *Aahar matra*. The quantity of *aahar* is decided as per the digestive capacity of an individual. Persons with appropriate digestive power (*samagni*), should be given two meals a day. If

Aahar matra & Aahar sevankala is followed properly, it helps to boost healthy life and enhances life.

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