



Conceptual Study on Aahar in Ayurveda and its Importance in Health Maintenance

Vd. Dhananjay Panchbhai¹, Vd. Shreyas Thakare²

¹Professor, Dept. of Sanskrit Samhita Siddhant, Ahinsa Institute of Ayurveda, Dondaicha, Dhule

²Assistant Professor, Dept. of Swasthavritta, Ahinsa Institute of Ayurveda, Dondaicha, Dhule

Corresponding Author: Vd. Dhananjay Panchbhai

ABSTRACT: Ahara is first among the three significant pillars of Ayurveda. It means that it is one of the fundamental principles ahead which gives health, happiness and harmony along with the nature. One should regularly take such substances which are conducive to the preservation of good health and are able to avoid the attacks of sickness. Such type of diet is called naturally healthy diet. Ayurveda is science of life. Main aim of Ayurveda is to maintain health of a person. Ahara plays important role to achieve this target. In the modern times, the ways in which the food is prepared and presented have changed drastically. Because of the rapid swiftness of lifestyle towards urbanization, one can have less access to fresh food. Today, the dependency on packaged and processed food has also increased exceptionally. It definitely has some destructive effect on both mental and physical well-being. Today Due to consumption of unwholesome diet society facing so many types of disease. Here the concept of Ahara according to Ayurveda is described.

KEYWORDS: Aahara, lifestyle, Ayurveda, Health

INTRODUCTION

Ahara is first among the three significant pillars of Ayurveda[1]. It means that it is one of the fundamental principles ahead which give health, happiness and harmony along with the nature. Ahara is concerned with diet and lifestyle and is essentially preventive in nature. Ahara is also known as the life-supporting diet and is the first and foremost pillar of Ayurveda. Ayurveda usually refers to the knowledge of proper diet and it actually provides the first approach that can create and maintain ideal health and to improve the symptoms of illness. Ayurveda call attention to that may be diet does not cure well-established diseases but with help of proper diet taking can controlled so many diseases.

Definition & Derivation of Ahara

According to Chakrapani Ahara means that which is ingested and thus it includes in itself both diet and drugs. This view of Chakrapani is also supported by Gangadhara. Therefore drugs are also included in Ahara.^[2]

Classification of Aahara in Ayurveda

Aahar can be classified in numerous ways. In Ayurveda, it is classified according to mode of use, on the basis of panchbhuta predominance, origin of Dravya, effect of Aahar on body, shadrassa, guna, vipaka, triguna, on the basis of varga (Drava dravya, Anna dravya).

Acc. to usage^[3]

1. Ashita (eatables)
2. Peeta (drinkable)
3. Leedha (linctuses)
4. Khadita (chewables)

In sharangdhara samhita, there are 6 types mentioned according to usage.^[4]

1. Bhojya-(rice and daal)
2. Bhaksya (laddu, chapati)
3. Charvya (chiwada, roasted chana)
4. Lehya-(Chutney, chyavanprash)
5. Choshya (Mango, sugarcane)
6. Peya- (Panak, milk)

Acc. To Yoni(source)

- a) Sthavara (plant source)
- b) Jangham (animal source)

Acc. To Prabhava (specific action)-

- a) Hita Aahar (wholesome)
- b) Ahita Aahar (unwholesome)

Acc. to Rasa(taste)-

- a) Madhura (sweet)
- b) Amla (sour)
- c) Lavana (salty)
- d) Katu (pungent)
- e) Tikta (bitter)
- f) Kashaya (astringent)

Significance of Aahar

Dieticians play a crucial role in managing lifestyle diseases in a period of rising rates of illness; the Importance of Aahar cannot be overstated. The maintenance of life requires Aahar. All living things are sustained by Aahar. The qualities of Aahar include lustrous skin, shine, exquisite voice, enthusiasm, skill, excitement, fullness, nourishment, power, and intellect. The Aahar is the foundation for all that is apparently done, both on planet and in the celestial plane. Aahar refers to the sustenance that provides living entities with power, complexion, and zeal. The genesis of sharir is from the consumption of aahara. The source of illnesses can be attributed to the type of food consumed, whether it is beneficial (hita) or harmful (ahita), based on the individual's constitution. Therefore, Aahar might be attributed to the emotional states of pleasure and sadness in life.^[5]

Timing For Aahar Intake

Acharya Charak emphasises the utmost need of the consuming meals at the appropriate time to sustain good health^[6]. According to acharya sushruta, one should eat once in the morning and once in the evening, Food should only be consumed when the bowels have been evacuated, when the senses are clear, there is lightness

in the body, there is clear belching, the heart is free of blemishes, the vayu is normal, there is an interest in eating, there is an empty stomach, and hunger flares up^[7]

Aahar as Mahabhaishaja

In Ayurveda, as mentioned in Kashyap Samhita Aahar is given the term of mahabhaishjya because there is no medicine available which works like food[8]. Ayurveda's goal of "swasthasya swaasthya rakshanam, aaturasya vikar prasamnam ch'' i.e. Aahar itself is sufficient for healthy person to live healthy life and with some like medicated yavagu as described in ayurvedic texts for the diseased person. Modern healthcare systems can benefit from Ayurvedic dietary concepts by incorporating them into patient care, which places an emphasis on preventative medicine and individualized nutrition plans. Whole unprocessed foods and medicinal spices such as ginger and turmeric have been shown to improve digestive health balance the gut flora, and reduce the risks of chronic diseases, according to scientific study. Warm milk and ghee are staples in stress management diets, while (ginger and turmeric are anti-inflammatory).

ASHTA AAHAR VIDHI VISHESHAYTANA^[9]

These are the 8 factors which should be considered before taking food

1. Prakriti (nature)-

It means the natural quality of Aahar & aushadha like guru or laghu etc.

Eg. black gram is heavy, green gram is light

2. Karana (method of processing food)-

Processing of substance leads to transformation to inherent characters of the substance

Eg. raw rice is heavy and rice cooked by boiling is light.

3. Samyoga (combination)-

Combination of two or more than two substances; Results in manifestation of specific qualities, which are not present individually

eg combination of ghee and honey etc.

4. Rashi (quantity)-

Two types of quantity-1. Sarvagraha-quantity of food takes as entirety, and 2. Parigraha-quantity of each ingredients

5. Desha (place)-

Place of growth of the substance in particular locality, eg. drugs grown in Himalaya are potent etc. Desha divided in 3- janghal, anupa, sadharan desha

6. Kala (time)-

Nityaga kala-acc. to seasons

Avasthika kala- acc. to the state of disease, age(bala, madhyam, vridha)

7. Upayogasamstha (rules of food intake)

Dietetic rules, dependent on symptoms of digestion

8. Upayokta (consumer)

Person who takes the food article of the one responsible for habitual intake of things i.e. okasatmya

Rules for food intake^[10]

(Dietetic rules)

1. Ushnaasniyat- one should eat warm food
2. Snigdhaashniyat- intake of unctuous food
3. Matravadasniyat- food intake according to quantity
4. Jeernashniyat- eating after one feels hunger
5. Veeryaviruddhamasniyat-eating food which is not contradicted
6. Ishtdeshe-eat in desired place
7. Naatidrutam -do not eat in hurry
8. Naatiavlambitam-do not eat very slowly
9. Ajalapana ahasan tanmana bhunjita- eating with concentration ie, without talking and laughing
10. Aatmanamabhi-samikshya bhunjita samyaka- eating after considering one-self thoroughly.

Aaharkaal-When faeces and urine are expelled, hridaya gets clear, doshas traverse in their appropriate paths, belching becomes clear, hunger starts, the body becomes light and capable of detecting the senses, then only food or Aahar may be consumed^[11]

Aharmatra is mentioned as half of the stomach filled with food and 1/4th with water. The rest of the stomach is to be left empty for the dosha's^[12] And acc. to Charak Samhita, quantity of food depends upon the strength of agni. Most of the incurable diseases are produced due to improper Aahar. So one should have intelligence and self-control to consume conducive food in right quantity, at the right time to prevent diseases^[13]

Diet According To Ritu

1. In Hemanta Ritu:

In this Ritu the power of digestion and metabolism are proportionate in a healthy individual, because of its contact with the skin, restrain the outward movement of the inner heat and enhance the power of digestion and metabolism. Hence, the cold wind is transformed into fire & it enhances the inner heat only by obstructing its outward movement. During the winter one should take unctuous, sour and salt juices of the meat of the aquatic and marshy animals which are fatty. One should also eat the meat of burrow-dwelling animals and Bharta prepared of animals of Prasaha type. Thereafter, one should drink Madira and Sidhu and honey. Intakes preparation of cow's milk, cane juice, fat, oil, new rice and hot water during the winter is good for health.[14]

2. In Shishira Ritu:

The Hemanta and Shishira seasons are almost analogous in nature. So the entire prescription for Hemanta is to be followed in the Shishira. Especially during this season, one should stay in a windless warm home and avoid to take such of the diets possessed of Katu, Tikta and Kasaya Rasa.[15]

3. In Vasant Ritu:

In this Ritu the accumulated Kapha is liquefied by the heat of the sun. Due to this reason there is disturbance the digestion capacity and it can cause many diseases. So, one should avoid taking such diets containing, Snigdha, Amla and Madhura Rasa & should manage elimination therapies of Panchkarma to eliminate the vitiated Dosha. Specially Vamana Karma to eliminate Kapha Dosha.

One should to take food consisting of Yava and wheat, meat of Sarabha, Shasha, Ena, Lava and Kapinjala. One should drink Sidhu and Mrdvika.[16]

4. In Grisma Ritu:

In this Ritu, the moisture of the earth is absorbed by sun. In this Ritu, one should have intake of sweet, cold liquid diets and drinks, cold Mantha along with sugar, meat of the animals or birds of Jaangal climate, ghee and milk along with Shali rice. One should either drink alcohol in little quantity or should not drink at all and even if one drinks, it should be taken along with plenty of water. One should avoid taking diets which are salty, sour, pungent or hot. Physical exercise is also included during this season.[17]

5. In Varsa Ritu:

In this Ritu the body and digestion power is weakened, increase of acidity in water. One should generally use honey in all diets and drinks. One should take diets which are noticeably sour, salty and unctuous. In order to maintain normal power of digestion one should take old barley, wheat and Shali rice, along with the meat of arid animals and vegetable soup. Moreover, one should drink the Madhvika or Arista, pure rain water or water from the well or pond-boiled and cooled, mixed with little honey. Even though by nature, honey is responsible for the vitiation of Vata, its intake in small quantity is prescribed to overcome Kleda in the rainy season.[18]

6. Dietetics for Sharada Ritu:

In this Ritu, sweet, bitter, light and cold foods and drinks which have ability to subside Pitta are to be taken in proper quantity. Furthermore, the meat of Lava, Kapinjala, Ena, Urabhra, Sarabha, and Shasha, rice, barley, wheat, Intake of ghee prepared with bitter medicines and purgation should be done during this season. One should avoid taking fat, oil and meat of aquatic and marshy animals and curd in food. Use Hamsodaka for the purpose of bathing, drinking and swimming. It is a type of water which is heated by the sun during the day time and cooled by rays of the moon during night. It is also purified and detoxified by Agastya star.[19]

Relation between Agni and Food^[20]

It is important to consume an appropriate amount of food. Jatharagni is not activated when there is insufficient or excessive food intake. For example, When Agni is not provided with a sufficient amount of wood, it will expire. Similarly, even if an insignificant fire is given an excessive amount of wood, it will also expire. The excessive consumption or lack of food can lead to the deterioration of agni, therefore emphasising the need of consuming an appropriate quantity of food for the proper functioning of the body.

DISCUSSION

All living are considered to experience stability as a result of the diet. Diet is the only means of sustaining life for all living things. Kashyap claims that Ahara is Mahabhaisajya. In other words, only food is it possible to make a person disease-free (congenital diet). Even with medicine, one can survive without food, which is why doctors often refer to diet as the greatest medicine. Diet is supposed to be the foundation of everything, including life, strength, complexion, ojas, growth and development, Indriya function, happiness, clarity of voice, lustre, pleasure, growth of Dhatus, intellect, and health. Only through diet can one develop satisfaction, nutrition, tolerance, Buddhi(critical understanding), enthusiasm, virility, that is agreeable, appropriate in quantity and time, and contains six Rasas. All living things life, colour and power come from their food. Six tastes reside in food, and these tastes are responsible for the Doshas augmentation, diminution, and normality. The Food items, their flavour, qualities, potency, after digestive flavour, and actions of each one individually, prepared in the form of eatables, drinkables, likeable, and chewable, by the combination of many substances,

using many different processes, and having various special effects, maintains health and prevents diseases. By consuming healthy foods, a self-controlled man can live a hundred years without contracting any diseases. Food keeps life in motion for all living things in the cosmos. Food affects a person's complexion, clarity, good voice, longevity, happiness, satisfaction, sustenance, strength, and intellect. All professions that lead to worldly happiness, Vedic rituals that lead to a place in heaven and observance of the truth, and Brahmacharya that lead to salvation are based on food. Only those with a healthy body can afford to engage in all activities that lead to happiness, heaven, and salvation, and eating is necessary to maintain health.

CONCLUSION

Ahara is defined as a substance that is ingested down the throat, hence even Ausadha (medicine) can be categorised as Ahara and subject to the same regulations as Ahara. In comparison to the modern perspective, the Ayurvedic description of Ahara according to Ganas, Satmya, Dosa, kala etc. seems more rational & scientific. Every element mentioned in Ahara Vidhi Vidhana has a purpose and is in charge of preserving health. The value of it on a somatic, psychological and spiritual level is highlighted in addition to an importance on a somatic level. Ayurvedic dietetics relies on the status of Agni Bala for each and every individual rather than adhering to current rules that fix a constant amount of Aahara for all people generally. Kala is the most crucial element of all the elements mentioned for Ahara. As Matra, Ahara Parinama, Bala, and even Agni depend on Kala, so do the other variables like them, such as Agni. The sunrise is later than usual when the days are shorter, which is why Ahara Kala is referred to as Pratah. But because the sun rises earlier over longer days. Apranah is also known as Ahara Kala. These three variables affect one's health. At least two of the components must be taken into account for health maintenance, and if even one more of these factors is compromised, health deteriorates and disease results.

REFERENCES

1. Charaka Samhita, Edited by Pt. Kashinath pandy, Chaukhamba Bharti academy, Varanasi, Reprinted Edition 2005, Sutrasthana, Trishtreshniya Adhya, 11/34, Pg.no.226.
2. Charaka Samhita, Ayurveda dipika sanskrita commentary by Sri Chakrapanidutta, dr laxmidhar diwedi, chowkhamba Krishna das academy, Varanasi, edi. 2012, sutrasthana atryabhadrakapya adhyaya, 26/85, pg. no. 507.
3. Kushwaha, Vd.H.C.S.(2018b). Trividhakukshi [Hindi]. In Charaka Samhita (reprint 2018, vol.1, p.606). Chaukhamba Orientalia.
4. Tripathi, Dr. B.(n.d.). Aharaadigatikathnam [HINDI]. In Sharangadhara Samhita (P. 53). CHAUKHAMBHA SURBHARTI PRAKASHNA.
5. Kushwaha, Vd.H.C.S. (2018c). Vividhaashitpeetiya [HINDI]. In Charak Samhita Sutrasthan 28/45 (2018th ed., Vol.1, p.481). CHAUKHAMBHA ORIENTALIA.
6. Kushwaha, Vd.H.C.S. (2018d). Yajjapurushiya [HINDI]. In Charak Samhita Sutrasthan 25/40 (2018th ed., Vol.1, p.353). CHAUKHAMBHA ORIENTALIA.
7. SHASTRI, K.DR.A. (2016 b). Swasthavrittam [HINDI]. In Sushruta Samhita Uttartantra 64/85-86 (Vol.2, P. 626). CHAUKHAMBHA SANSKRIT SANSTHAN.
8. Sharma, P.H.(2010). Yushnirdeshiya [HINDI]. In Kashyap Samhita Khilasthan 4/6 (Reprint 2010, p. 249). Chaukhamba Sanskrit Series.
9. Kushwaha, Vd.H.C.S. (2018). Rasavimanam [HINDI]. In Charak Samhita Vimanasthan1/21-22 (Vol.1, pp.595-598). CHAUKHAMBHA ORIENTALIA.
10. Kushwaha, Vd. H.C.S.(2018). Rasavimanam [HINDI]. In Charak Samhita Vimanasthan 1/24 (Vol. 1,pp. 598-600). CHAUKHAMBHA ORIENTALIA.

11. TRIPATHI, DR. B.(2022). Matrashitiyam [HINDI]. In Astangahrdayam Sutrasthana 8/55 (reprint, p. 144). CHAUKHAMBHA SANSKRIT PRATISTHAN.
12. TRIPATHI, DR. B. (2022 a). Matrashitiyam [HINDI]. In Astangahrdayam Sutrasthana 8/46 (reprint, p. 142). CHAUKHAMBHA SANSKRIT PRATISTHAN
13. Kushwaha, Vd. H.C.S.(2018b). Matrashitiyam [HINDI]. In Charak Samhita Sutrasthan 5/3 (Vol. 1,p 71). CHAUKHAMBHA ORIENTALIA.
14. Charaka Samhita, Edited by Pt. Kasinath pandy, Chaukhamba bharti academy, Varanasi, Reprinted edi. 2005, sutra sthana, tasyashetya Adhyaya, 6/10-13, pg. No. 136-37
15. Charaka Samhita, Edited by Pt. Kasinath pandy, Chaukhamba bharti academy, Varanasi, Reprinted edi. 2005, sutra sthana, tasyashetya Adhyaya, 6/19-20, pg. No.141.
16. Charaka Samhita, Edited by Pt. Kasinath pandy, Chaukhamba bharti academy, Varanasi, Reprinted edi. 2005, sutra sthana , tasyashetya Adhyaya, 6/22-24, Pg. No.141
17. Charaka Samhita, Edited by Pt. Kasinath pandy, Chaukhamba bharti academy, Varanasi, Reprinted edi. 2005, sutra sthana, tasyashetya Adhyaya, 6/27-29, pg. No.142.
18. Charaka Samhita, Edited by Pt. Kasinath pandy, Chaukhamba bharti academy, Varanasi, Reprinted edi. 2005, sutra sthana, tasyashetya Adhyaya, 6/33-41, pg. No.143-45
19. Charaka Samhita, Edited by Pt. Kasinath pandy, Chaukhamba bharti academy, Varanasi, Reprinted edi. 2005, sutra sthana, tasyashetya Adhyaya, 6/33-41, pg. No.145-46
20. Kushwaha, Vd. H.C.S.(2018b). Grahanidoshachikitsa [HINDI]. In Charak Samhita Chikitsasthan 15/211 (Vol. 1,p 416). CHAUKHAMBHA ORIENTALIA