



## Review Article

### SIGNIFICANCE OF AHARA-VIDHI-VISHESHAYATAN IN TODAY'S ERA

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#### ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is the science focusing on the way of living. It is a lifestyle which must be adopted for a healthy and sustainable living. Food has remained an important part of our cultures, faith, regions, communities etc. It is the basic requirement of life and plays a crucial role in the nourishment and protection of the beings. Food not only meets the bodily requirements but also nurtures the mind, senses and soul. In this regard we have the concept of *Ashtahar vidhi visheshayatan*, which emphasizes on the way and rules of dietetics. It emphasizes on the wholesomeness of the food and its considerations with respect to individuality. This age old concept is very much relevant in today's time also. The following article focuses on this concept, its application and significance in modern era. Here we focus on these 8 factors individually and take detailed insight into this novel concept.

**KEYWORDS:** *Aahar vidhi, Visheshayatan, Dietetics.*

#### INTRODUCTION

This concept of *Ashtahar vidhi visheshayatan* must be understood in a way that could be applied and followed as a lifestyle according to people of different communities, trades, geographical regions etc. Keeping in pace with today's lifestyle, thought must be given into what to be eaten? When and where to eat? Why and how much to be consumed?

According to Ayurveda, *Aahar* is not merely the physical entity that we ingest through mouth but in our science it involves the whole process of food preparation, time and place of dining, psyche during eating, nutritional value (*Ras, Guna, Virya, Vipaka*) of food. All these have effect on the nurturing of the body and these factors decide whether the food we eat has nourishing or deteriorating effect on our health. Contemplation regarding diet is an important element in advising treatments to diseased in Ayurvedic prescriptions.

*Aahar* is the food which is ingested; it includes all foods items like eatables, lickables, drinkables etc<sup>[1]</sup>. It is given most importance among the 3 *Upstambhas* i.e., *Aahar, Swapna* and *Brahmcharya*<sup>[2]</sup>. No medicine is equivalent to food. It is possible to make a person disease free with just proper diet. *Charak* accentuate the importance of food; by stating that body as well as diseases are caused by food; wholesome and unwholesome food are responsible for happiness and misery

respectively and is best among things which sustain life<sup>[3]</sup>.

Ayurvedic classics laid down some methods of examination, rules and regulations of taking diet for proper digestion, assimilation and nourishment to the body. Most of the incurable diseases are produced due to improper food. So intelligent and self-controlled person should consume conducive food in right quantity, at the right time to prevent diseases.

#### MATERIALS AND METHODS

***Aahar Vishesha***- Specialty or distinguished effect of *Aahar*.

***Vidhi Vishesha***- Special system/ method/ manner/ special arrangement or command for diet intake.

***Ayatana***- Cause, support, *Hetu* etc.

1. *Prakriti* - Nature of substance
2. *Karana* - Processing of substances
3. *Samyoga* - Combination of different substances
4. *Rashi* - Quantum of substances
5. *Desha* - Habitat of substances
6. *Kala* - Time-Age, seasons, condition
7. *Upyoga Samstha* - Dietetic rules
8. *Upyokta* - Habit of individual<sup>[4]</sup>

#### 1) ***Prakriti***

Natural or inherent attributes of food and drugs. Eg:- *Masha* (black gram) is *Guru*, *Mudga* (green gram) is *Laghu*, pork is *Guru*, deer's flesh is *Laghu*<sup>[5]</sup>. Whether food is heavy or light to digest,

potency is *Sheeta* or *Ushna*, it will mitigate the *Doshas* or aggravate them accordingly.

## 2) *Karana*

It is the processing of the substances which result in transformation of the inherent attributes. These alterations are brought about by the treatment with water, heat, cleaning, washing, churning, storing, maturing, flavoring, impregnation, preservation, container etc.<sup>[6]</sup> Example- Rice prepared by boiling it after cleansing and filtering the water out- cleaning, heat application and washing transforms quality of rice from being heavy to light in digestion. *Toya*, *Agni*, *Shauch*- By churning, edema aggravating property of curd is transformed into edema alleviating one. *Manthan*- By impregnation with the juices of various drugs the main drug gets modified with attributes of the impregnating material. *Bhavna*- The processed *Amalaki* along with other drugs is required to be kept under heap of ash. *Desha*- Addition of drugs like *Utpala* in water illustrates the transformation of attributes by flavoring. *Vasan*- Certain preparations are required to be kept in a jar smeared with ghee for 15 days before use illustrates transformation through preservation. *Kala prakarsh*- Smearing of *Triphala kalka* to iron vessel is an example *Bhajan*<sup>[7]</sup>.

## 3) *Samyog*

It is the combination of two or more substances which results in manifestation of new attributes which were absent in individual drugs. Certain food combinations which have harmful effects example- Honey and Ghee combined in equal quantity is fatal, Milk and Fish taken together causes skin diseases<sup>[8]</sup>. Useful combinations of drugs - Using *Guda* (jaggery) and *Dadhi* (curd) is more useful as it has *Snehana* (oleation), *Tarpana* (nourishing), *Hridya* (pleasant) and *Vataghna* (*Vata* pacifying) effects<sup>[9]</sup>. Regular use of milk with *Ghrita* (clarified butter) is best *Rasayan* (rejuvenating therapy)<sup>[10]</sup>. Roasted gram flour mixed with equal quantity of *Ghrita* is best *Vrishya* (aphrodisiac) and alleviate *Udavarta* (flatulence)<sup>[11]</sup>.

## 4) *Raashi*

It is the quantity of food to be taken. It is of 2 types:-1) *Sarvagraha*- Total food taken 2) *Parigraha*- Quantity of individual ingredient taken<sup>[12]</sup>. The amount of food which without disturbing the equilibrium of *Dhatu*s and *Doshas* of the body gets digested as well as metabolized in proper time is to be regarded as proper quantity of food<sup>[13]</sup>. Quantities of food consumption vary from person to person as per his *Prakriti*, *Desh*, *Kala*, *Vaya* and *Agnibala*.

## 5) *Desha*

It relates to habitat. It determines attributes due to procreation, movement of substance in a particular locality and their acclimatization to that region<sup>[14]</sup>. *Desha* is divided into 3 i.e., *Jangal*, *Anoopa* and *Saadharan*. Different *Desha* (regions) have discrete environmental conditions and specific food items accordingly. *Desha parikshan* is the vital aspect in understanding dietary habits of patients, probability of diseases, management of diseases and *Pathya*- *Apathya* aspects. *Desha* determines variations of the qualities of the substances according to their geographic region, different soils and acclimatization to that particular region.

## 6) *Kala*

Life as a whole starting from intrauterine period till death is the entire time dynamic. *Kala* stands for both the time in the form of 1) Day- Night and seasons 2) Status of individual according to disease and age<sup>[15]</sup>. Dietary regimen explained in *Ritucharya* must be practiced in different seasons. If diet not taken according to *Ritu*, it creates antagonistic effect in the body. In *Rugnavastha* (diseased state), *Avasthika kala* is considered like in *Nav Jwara*-*Langhana* is indicated for 7 days<sup>[16]</sup>.

## 7) *Upyoga Samstha*

It stands for dietetic rules and depends on the symptoms of digestion. Intake of food before digestion of previous meal may provoke all three *Doshas* leading to serious consequences<sup>[17]</sup>. Dietetic rules which must be considered are *Ushna* (hot and freshly prepared), *Snigdha* (unctuous), *Matravat* (sufficient quantity), consumed after the digestion of previously ingested food not consuming *Virya Viruddha* (incompatible) food, taken without talking or laughing, food must be taken in proper place and equipped with all accessories, must not be consumed speedily or very slowly, with proper concentration of mind, taken after paying due regard to oneself<sup>[18]</sup>.

## 8) *Upyokta*

Is the one who takes food, is responsible for the wholesomeness by habitual intake of things i.e., *Oka Satmya*. One should assess and contemplate about one's own constitution and eat accordingly<sup>[19]</sup>.

These 8 factors are associated specifically with useful and harmful effects and they are conditioned by one another. One should try to understand them and resort to useful things alone.

## DISCUSSION

*Prakriti* (natural attributes) of *Aahar dravya* must be taken into consideration to suggest diet according to *Prakriti* of the person. Diet having opposite qualities that of the person must be taken in order to maintain health and abstain from diseases. Food items cultivated in their natural climatic conditions, soil and other physical components have specific nutritional value which differs from the ones grown in different regions, with hybrid seeds and non-seasonal food items. In this regard if certain food products are not suitable or recommended to a person; then it can be advised after proper *Samskar* (processing of food items). Transformations are to be made in such a way to eliminate disturbances of *Doshas* and to replenish the *Dhatus*. Through various *Karana* (processing) we can also improve the value of food. Like thermal processing may improve the bio-availability of micronutrients. Fermentation produces low molecular weight organic acids like citric acid, lactic acid and enhances the iron and zinc absorption in the body. Processes like washing, boiling etc makes food free from microbes and other contaminations. It initiates metabolism inside food products which are easier to digest post ingestion. Then further we consider the topology i.e. food combinations. *Samyoga* (Combinations) can be harmful or fruitful for the body as discussed above. Incompatible food combinations disturb the digestive system which in long run has adverse effects on the whole body. It also disturbs the *Doshik* balance of the body. In contrast proper food combinations can markedly change the digestion, absorption and assimilation process of the nutrients in them, thus nourishing the body. Next level in this series is the consideration of *Raashi* i.e., quantity of food. In today's time it helps physicians and dieticians to plan diet according to the person's nutritional needs. People in different occupation have different calorie requirement. Nutritional needs of an old age person are different from growing age children. *Parigraha* can be implemented in planning diet for different nutritional deficiencies accordingly. Further comes *Desha* i.e., habitat, which is crucial in deciding which food stuff we should consume and which not. Different regions, continents, countries, states and communities have different cuisines specifically made and cultivated there. This specificity is needed as food products and their nutritional values differ according to places and indigenous products are best suitable to meet the requirements of the population. Food must be consumed according to *Kala* (time) i.e., taking into consideration the seasons and body conditions. One should follow the basic hygiene rules while dining. *Upyoga Samstha* i.e., the rules while

consuming food must be followed to gain its nourishment. Stress is the leading cause of major GIT disorders like Irritable Bowel Syndrome, Gastritis etc. The consumer i.e., *Upyokta* must also look into what is nourishing to the body and what is not.

## CONCLUSION

The concept of *Ashta Aahar vidhi visheshayatan* discussed in the given article elaborates its significance in modern era. It also leaves physicians with the scope to modify and manipulate the diet and dietary rules according to different people residing in different regions. Unhealthy eating habits are the root cause of many diseases occurring today, so we must eat rightfully.

## Further Scope

Each of the 8 factors must be studied individually in detail and their effect must be seen at cellular level with the help of various investigations. Evidence based data must be created in order to meet the needs of the scientific era. These dietetic rules must be promoted in general public to create a healthier and happier nation.

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