



Review Article

RELEVANCE OF AAHAR VIDHI VIDHAN ACCORDING TO CHARAKA SAMHITA IN MODERN ERA

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ABSTRACT

Diseases are caused by various reasons. A faulty habit of taking food is one among them but it has great importance because it directly affects normal body mechanisms. So everyone must have to learn how to eat, when to eat, how much quantity, where to eat, and many more things. Answer to these questions varies according to individuals. Everyone should try to find out it by knowing the basic principles for intake of *Aahara*. These principles are described in Ayurveda which is applicable in every *Kaala*. So here the article tried to elaborate such principle of Ayurveda known as *Aahar Vidhi Vidhan*.

KEYWORDS: Ayurveda, *Aahar Vidhi Vidhan*, Food, *Aahar*, Dietetics.

INTRODUCTION

Dharma, Arth, Kama and *Moksha* are all dependent on health of a person.^[1] So everyone should take care of their health. Health should be the first priority of a person to lead good life.

The purpose of Ayurveda is to maintain health through Ayurvedic concepts and in case of diseased state, to treat it and maintain the health.^[2]

Acharya Charaka gives special emphasis on *Trayopstambha* (three sub pillars) for the maintenance of life and health. These are *Aahar* (food), *Nidra* (sleep) and *Brahmacharya* (good conduct).^[3] Here *Charakacharya* gives first preference to *Aahara*. *Varna, Prasad, Swara, Jivit, Pratibha, Sukha, Tushti, Pushti, Bala, Medha* all are dependent on *Aahara*.^[4] Again in *Agryasngraha*, *Charakacharya* gives importance of *Aahara* as *Aahara Vruttikaranam Shreshtham*.^[5]

Ayurveda explains all aspects of life by giving prime importance to *Agnibala*. *Aaharmatra* differs from person to person according to *Agnibala*.^[6] It cannot be the same for every person in the world. Ayurveda mentions many deep concepts which are useful for maintaining health by following proper diet.

In *Vimansthana*, *Charakacharya* explains about *Ashta Aaharvidhi Visheshayatana* i.e., eight factors determining the utility of food^[7] and *Aahar Vidhi Vidhanam* i.e., rules for taking food.^[8]

In ancient times, people were conscious about their *Aahara* with *Guna* and *Karma*. They were not taking food on basis of palatability but knowing the effect of *Aahara* on body. They always took *Hitakar*

Aahara. Ancient people were always giving importance to do *Sadhana* to overcome their anger, lust and greed.

In this modern era people are trying to live luxurious life. They are always disturbed physically and mentally because of high competitive society. People are so involved in them that they are least conscious about their *Aahara, Nidra* and *Brahmacharya*. Food habits like excessive intake, high protein diet, spicy, oily, harmful combination together, taking food without analysing one's *Agnibala* are leading causes for diseases. In our today's society we come across people who are wealthy but are ill due to faulty food habits. So here elaborating the *Aahar Vidhi Vidhan* which is useful for humankind because after all health is the pavement step to achieve aims of human life.

Ushna Ashniyat (Food should be warm)

Today's faulty habits

1. Due to lifestyle changes and busy schedule *Ushna Aahara* are not taken by people.
2. Students who went to other places for higher studies are dependent on canteen and hostel food, so they are not able take food at proper.
3. Due to busy work schedule many are not able to eat hot food as such. Many people carry food in tiffin box or dabba which are not able to maintain heat and thus cold food is taken by them.
4. Hotel food gets cool, which is then heated many times.

5. Many people due to work schedule are too late to reach home at night, so they are not able to have fresh, *Ushna Ahara*.

According to Ayurveda one should take warm food. When taken warm, it is delicious, after intake, it provokes the factors (enzymes) in the abdomen responsible for digestion, it gets digested quickly and helps in the downward passage of *Vata* and detachment of *Kapha*. Therefore, one should take warm food.^[9]

The human digestive system works better with foods and liquids that are at warmer temperature because it doesn't have to work hard to digest the food. Cold foods shock the digestive system and make your gut work overtime in order to breakdown nutrients in the food. This can lead to bloating or digestive sensitivity. When food is warm the taste receptors often send a stronger signal to the brain. Hot food makes the digestion process smooth, nutrients from hot food are more easily absorbed. This makes more nutrients available to the body.^[10]

Snigdham Ashniyat (Food should be unctuous)

Today's faulty habits

1. Various types of oils or *Vanaspati* ghee are used now days. But their qualities are lowered by adulteration and recycling of oil.
2. Poor families cannot afford *Ghrita* in their food.
3. Some use spicy, oilier or fast food in their daily life which are also dangerous to health.
4. Today people do not consume *Ghrita* as in older days.
5. Increase in reuse of cooking oils, hydrogenated oil etc.

According to Ayurveda, one should take unctuous food is delicious, after intake, it provokes the subdued power of digestion, it gets digested quickly, it helps in downward movement of *Vata*, it increases plumpness of the body, strengthens the sense faculties, promotes strength and brings out the brightness of complexion. Hence one should take unctuous food.^[11]

Food products which are hard, roasted are generally unwholesome in their nutritive value and satiety quotient is also very less hence these are not recommended. So eat food which is not roasted, hard to eat and dry to eat.^[12]

Fats and oils provide a concentrated source of energy and the essential fatty acids are needed for growth and health. They aid for the absorption of some vitamins such as vitamin 'A' and improve the taste of meals. Some fatty/oily foods contain important vitamins. Fats and oil contain different fat nutrients. These include unsaturated fatty acids,

saturated fatty acids, trans fatty acids and cholesterol.^[13]

Each cell in our body is covered by a specialized membrane composed mostly of fat. Fat forms a major portion of organs such as brain and nerves. Fat is an excellent fuel.^[14]

Matratvat Ashniyat (Food in proper quantity)

Today's faulty habits

1. There are many types of food available. So people are eating too much to fulfill the cravings for different tastes.
2. In hotels people have demand for different cuisines as starters, main course and then desserts. They take food above capacity of stomach.
3. Heavy and light foods are not taken in consideration while eating.
4. Meals are taken by watching TV or mobile which keeps them eating for longer time and in more quantity.
5. By request of host in any dinner or lunch parties or get together.

According to Ayurveda one should take food in proper quantity. When taken in proper quantity, it promotes longevity in its entirety without afflicting *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*, it easily passes down to the rectum and it does not impair the power of digestion and it gets digested without any difficulty.^[15]

Matra of diet is that which does not harm. The quantity depends on the digestive fire.^[6] It varies from individual to individual according their age and season.

Rashi (quantity) is the quantum of total (*Sarvagraha*) or individual (*Parigraha*) substances which determines the results of their administration in proper and improper dosage. The quantity food taken in its entirety is '*Sarvagraha*' and the quantity of each of its ingredients is '*Parigraha*'.^[16]

Matra of food can be determine on the basis of lightness and heaviness of food.^[17]

Stomach is divided into three parts (imaginary divisions for 3 *Doshas*). One part is for solid *Aahara*. One part for liquid *Aahara* and one part kept empty for movement of three *Doshas Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*.^[18] Capacity of stomach can be analysed by *Abhyavaharan shakti*.

Jirne Ashniyat (Intake after digestion of previous meal)

Today's faulty habits

1. Due to Colonisation, people have a habit of having breakfast though there is no hunger because of morning duty schedule.

2. By request of host, guests are forced to eat without appetite.
3. Due to heavy and composed food including non-veg and oily food, people have a habit of taking breakfast without assessing digestion.
4. When there is acidity, indigestion, heaviness in abdomen, some people have a habit of taking food over it and become ill.
5. High protein diet including eggs and non-veg diet are taken by adolescents to improve their health but they are not aware of their digestive fire.

According to Ayurveda, one should take food only when previous meal digested. If one takes food before the digestion of the previous food, i.e. immature *Rasa* gets mixed up with the product of food taken afterwards, resulting in the provocation of all the *Doshas* instantaneously. If food is taken after the digestion of previous food while *Doshas* are in their proper places and *Agni* is provoked, there is appetite, the entrances of the channel of circulation are open, eructation is purified, there is unimpaired cardiac function, downward passage of the *Vata* and proper manifestation of the urges for voiding flatus, urine and stool, then the product of food does not vitiate the *Dhatu*s of the body, but on the other hand it promotes longevity in its entirety. So one should take food only after digestion of the previous meal.^[19]

Digestion process has its own biological clock and pattern. Honouring it is very important to ensure smooth functioning of the organism.^[12]

Virya Avirudham Ashniyat (Intake of food having no contradictory potencies)

Today's faulty habits

1. Now a day's people have a habit of trying new combination of milk with different types of fruits in the form shake.
2. Curd intake during night.
3. Fish products with milk.
4. Ice cream in winter season.
5. *Pavbhaji, Misal* etc spicy food in summer season
6. Making cake from biscuits as it already cooked food being cooked again.
7. Frequently heating of oils by road side vendors.
8. Cheesy food like pizza with cold drink
9. Intake of fruits immediately after meal
10. Combination of yogurt and fruits.
11. Meat with curd or milk.
12. Use of artificial colours, food preservatives, over roasting.
13. Use of excess salt, oil, sour, sugar or spices.
14. Reusing of leftover food or oil

According to Ayurveda one should take the food having no contradictory potencies. By taking such food does not get afflicted with such diseases as many arise from the intake of food having mutually contradictory potencies. Therefore, one should take food having no contradictory potencies.^[20]

Ishte Deshe Ishta Sarva Upkaranam Ashniyat (Intake in proper place and with all accessories)

Today's faulty habits

1. Many hotels or road side vendors where unpleasant noise were present or there is no cleanliness around
2. Eating or drinking in moving vehicles (bus or train) is also harmful
3. Many people are taking food in standing position in hurry burry.
4. Buffet parties

According to Ayurveda one should take food in proper place equipped with all the accessories. By doing so he does not get afflicted with such of the factors as would result in emotional strain which occurs when one takes his food in improper places without the required accessories. Therefore, one should take food in proper place equipped with all accessories.^[21]

Taking food in relaxed, calm, pleasant and happy mood is always beneficial. Because digestion is predominantly a parasympathetic activity which functions at its best when a person is feeling relaxed and comfortable with all accessories.^[12]

While we all love the concept of buffet eating (stand and eat) at the weddings. We often forget that it is a bad habit. According to experts, the way drinking water in standing position is bad, similarly eating while standing position is dangerous for digestive system and the body.^[22]

Na Atidrutam Ashniyat (Intake, not in hurry)

Today's faulty habit

1. Due to busy schedule people don't have time to eat.
2. TV shows, mobile features, social media affects a person too much during his or her meal. One cannot take meal in peace.
3. In moving vehicles people are eating uncomfortably.
4. Eating out of guilt or stress.
5. Faster eater in general

According to Ayurveda one should not take food to hurriedly. If food is taken too hurriedly it enters into a wrong passage, it gets depressed and it does not enter into a stomach properly. In this situation one can never determine the taste of food articles and detect foreign bodies like hair etc., mixed

with them. Thus, one should not take food too hurriedly.^[23]

Eating too fast may activate the sympathetic activity i.e., flight and fright responses, which lowered the digestive secretion and blood circulation is shifted from central pool to periphery. This situation is not proper for eating which leads to improper digestion.^[12]

Slowing down to properly chew your food helps to breakdown larger particles of food into smaller ones, aiding digestion.

A number of factors can trigger pain in abdomen and one of them is eating too fast. Eating quickly leads to poor digestion, as larger morsels and a higher quantity of food require more efficient digestion, something our body not prepared for. This in turn leads to gas or bloating, which can cause abdominal pain.

Eating quickly on a regular basis reduces the body's metabolism, which is said to reduce good cholesterol levels and increase bad cholesterol levels. A sudden spike in bad cholesterol puts your heart at risk as it increases the risk of heart disease like stroke and heart attack.^[24]

Na Ativilambitam Ashniyat (Intake, not too slow)

Today's faulty habits

1. In parties, people are taking too much time to complete their food because of late orders or gossips.
2. At home people are too busy in entertainment on TV shows during eating food, and so taking slowly foods.
3. Some of people are busy in other works on mobile or computer during taking foods.

According to Ayurveda one should not take food very slowly because this will not give satisfaction to individual. In this situation he would take more than what is required, the food would become cold and there will be indigestion. Therefore, one should not take food very slowly.

By taking food very slowly, enzymes responsible for digestion will come in contact with food in irregular manner and this will result in irregular digestion.^[25]

Ajalpana Ahasana Tanmana Bhunjita (Intake with concentration)

Today's faulty habits

1. People take food with debate on various topics and they become emotional.
2. People show laughter club episodes on TV during taking a food.
3. Students read or study books during taking food.

4. During any celebration parties people have much gossips during eating foods

According to Ayurveda one should not talk or laugh or be unmindful while taking food. One taking food while talking, laughing or with detracted mind subjects them to the same trouble as the one eating too hurriedly. So one should not talk, laugh or be unmindful while taking food.^[26]

Eating without talking, laughing and with concentration will avoid aerophagy and ensure proper eating and satisfaction.

Atmanam Abhisamikshya Bhunjita (Intake with self-confidence)

Today's faulty habits

1. Eating heavy food when one has loose motion, vomiting or any digestive problems.
2. Eating more sugar or sweet products by diabetic patient.
3. Taking high protein diet without knowing one's digestive fire.
4. Dietetic plans are on the basis of calories in food, without considering digestive power of a person.
5. Person having acidity taking spicy, oily food.

One should take food in prescribed manner with due regard to his own self. The knowledge of the usefulness or otherwise of food articles is essential for self-preservation. So one should take food in a prescribed manner with due regard to his own self.^[27]

This helps to make choice regarding what to eat, what not to eat, how much to eat etc., to maintain the equilibrium of *Tridoshas*.^[12]

Taking hot food etc., may not be useful for all types of patients. To an individual suffering from *Raktapitta* (a disease characterised by bleeding from different parts of the body), cold food will be useful. A food article which is by nature wholesome may not be useful for some individuals. But such exceptions are rare, they are not taken into account here.^[28]

DISCUSSION

As mentioned here current faulty and altered habits of food are *Hetus* for lifestyle disorders. These can be *Hetus* for any kind of diseases. Ayurveda gives more importance to *Aahara* and rules of taking it. Most people are taking *Aahara* according to their time schedule i.e., without knowledge and consideration of *Jirna avastha* of *Aahara*.

According to Ayurveda *Sharira* is result of *Aahara* and diseases are also result of *Aahara*.

So people have to take food according to rules of food intake. It must provide better health to human life.

Vaidyas should have to take interest in pondering the *Hetus* of patient. They must question the patient about their type of food intake and routine. It gives clue to find out proper *Hetus* of disease. It is also helpful to provide healthy food in hotels and also in our kitchen.

CONCLUSION

Every human being should know the rules of taking food as it has much importance in life. If today's hotel and food manufacturers follow the rules and regulations told in our science, it will decrease many disease manifestations and maintain health. After all, good food habits are responsible in maintaining *Dosha* in body, proper nourishment of *Dhatus* and excretion of *Mala* which gives healthy life.

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Cite this article as:

Bharat L. Jamaiwar, Shamshirkhan Pathan. Relevance of Aahar Vidhi Vidhan According to Charaka Samhita in Modern Era. International Journal of Ayurveda and Pharma Research. 2021;9(5):50-55.

Source of support: Nil, Conflict of interest: None Declared

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