ROLE OF AHARA AS A PRIME ETIOLOGICAL FACTOR IN THE MANIFESTATION OF DISEASE

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda considers Ahara (food) as one of the three supporting pillars. Food has been given prime importance since Vedic Period. It is considered as Brahma in Upanishad. Acharaya Kashyapa gives it the name "Mahabhaisajya". This is responsible for the growth, development and enhancement of Ojas. The body as well as diseases; both psychological and lifestyle disorders like Heart disease, Obesity, Diabetes, Hypertension and Cancer being the major health problems are formed by food, wholesome and unwholesome food are responsible for happiness and misery respectively. The disease can be cured without any medication by just following wholesome regimen, whereas even hundreds of medicines cannot be cure a disease in absence of wholesome regimen. Ahara rasa which is formed from ingested diet nourished not only our body but also nourished mind and sensory organs. Ayurveda describes that Deha is made up of Ahara and the Vyadhi also. According to Lauhimbaraja "Pathya is the secret of healthiness likewise Apathya is the root cause of all diseases". Ayurvedic Acharayas describes importance of Ahara differently especially in Brihatrayee, a special chapter has been described for Annapana Vidhi. The principle of dietetics and nutrition in Ayurvedic system of medicine include different classes of Ahara i.e. eating and drinking items, principle of Pathyahpathya (wholesome and unwholesome diet), discipline of eating (Ashta Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatan, Dvadasha Asana Vidhi etc.), Viruddha Ahara (incompatible diet). Ashta Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatan includes eight discipline of eating and Dvadasha Asana Vidhi includes the twelve discipline of eating as described by Acharyya Charaka and Sushruta respectively and is very important in daily life for promotion of positive health.

KEYWORDS: Ahara, Mahabhaisajya, Ojas, Pathya, Apathya.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is the most ancient science of life. The main aim of Ayurveda is “Swasthasya Swasthaya Rakshanam” which means to maintain the health of healthy person and “Aturasya Vikara Rasamanam Cha” means to cure the disease of diseased person. According to Ayurveda Ahara, as well as the method of its intake both have equal importance. The substance, their specific tastes, qualities, potencies and digestive transformation are responsible for equilibrium of the Doshas and Dhatu. According to one quotation of Sushruta “Sankshepta Kriya Yago Nidaan Parivarjanam”¹¹ i.e. treatment in short is to avoid the causative factors. Life style disorders are common in present era due to poor life style which include poor diet, lack of exercise, smoking, excess alcohol, poor sleep, stress due to heavy work load. Several factors results in increasing burden of life style disease which include rising income, increasing tobacco consumption, decreasing physical activity and increase consumption of unhealthy food (Ahita Ahara). According to Acharya Kashyap, since life cannot be sustained without diet and only on medicine, the proper diet is referred to as “Greatest Medicine”. Aahar, Nidra, Bramchharaya are Traya Upstambha (like pillar which supports building) in Ayurveda.¹² Ahara is not only needed for the continuity of life, but for Bala, Varna, Upacaya etc. also. In Ch.Chi 15/3 it is mentioned that Dehagni is cause of Aayu, Varna, Bala, Swasthya, Utsah, Upchaya, Prabha, Oaj, Tej, Agni, and Prana. If Agni of person gets vitiates, metabolism in his body would be disturbed resulting in diseases. Agni in living body occupies entire body as various bio-transformations are ceaselessly carried out in living body at all places. Parts of Agni carrying out different functions are named as per their functions.

Types of Agni³

1. Jatharagni

Part of this Agni, which remains in stomach, is called Jatharagni.
2. Bhutagni

It is part of Agni which is responsible to convert Panchbhautic part of food into Panchbhautic. Part of body constituents. It has to maintain proper function of sense organs by replenishing Indriya Dravya.

3. Dhatagni

It is name to that part of Agni, which assimilates or synthesizes Dhatus of living body. This need particular environment hence these Dhatagni are located in Srotas related to that particular Dhatu. Jathagni digest the food and transforms into Ahara rasa. This further goes on transformation by Bhutagni and Dhatagni. When Ahara rasa reaches to the Dhatu for nourishment it undergoes transformation process by respective Dhatagni of Dhatus. When Ahara rasa reaches to Rasa Dhatu it first gets metabolized by Rasagni resulting in formation of Poshak and Poshya Ansh. When Ahar Parinaman takes places the different desirable component for corresponding cell, tissue is formed. These are nothing but Poshakansh or Asthaya Dhatu or Margag Dhatu. Margag Dhatu carries the nutrients required for the nourishment of the further Sthayi Dhatu. Rupantaran of Margag Dhatu (metabolic transformation) is carried out by Dhatagni resulting in formation of Prasadabhaga and Kitta bhaga. If Dhatagni of corresponding Dhatu is in equilibrium state then it will perform its proper function of Dhatu uttupatti and Dhatutparinaman. If the Dhataghn of any Dhatu gets vitiates, the process of Dhatu Rupantaran will be disturbed resulting in formation of vitiated Poshak Ansh. This vitiates Poshak Ansh will be responsible for vitiation of further Sthayi Dhatu. These conditions will lead to reduced Dhatusart and also the reduced Bala of body which is responsible for reduced Vyadhikshmatwa of body. The proper diet, taken in proper manner can lead to better health. On the contrary, proper diet if not taken in proper manner can lead to diseases.

Classification of Ahara Dravya

Acharya Charaka has classified the Ahara Dravya (diet/food articles) in different ways. Diet is one, from the view point of intake, of two types according to source, animal origin and plant origin, Hitahara (wholesome) and Ahitahara (unwholesome) depending upon its effect on biological system. These are further classified into four categories depending upon way of intake which are Pan (drinkables), Asana (eatables), Bhakshya (chewable) and Lehya (lickable). Acharya Kashyapa classified food articles into five categories as per the concept of Panchamahabhutas which are Akasheya, Vayavya, Agneya, Apya and Parthiva. Acharya Sharangadhara and Bhavaprakasha further classified food articles into six types:

1. Bhojya
2. Bhakshya
3. Charvya,
4. Lehya
5. Chusya
6. Pehya

Ahara is also classified into six categories depending upon the Rasa it contains which are Madhur, Amla, Lavana, Katu, Tikta and Kashaya. Acharya Charaka further classified into twenty types depending upon its twenty properties Guru, Laghu, Sheeta, Ushna, Snigdha, Ruksha, Manda, Tikshna, Sthira, Sara, Mridu, Kathin, Vishada, Pichhila, Slakshna, Khara, Sukshma, Shhula, Sandra and Drava.

Table 1: Showing Dosa Prabhava according to Rasa and Gunas of Ahara

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Rasa</th>
<th>Panchbhoutik Sangathan</th>
<th>Guna</th>
<th>Dosa Prabhava</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Madhura</td>
<td>Prithvi + Jala</td>
<td>Snigdha, Sheeta, Guru</td>
<td>Kapha prakopa, Vatipitta nashaka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Amla</td>
<td>Prithvi + Agni</td>
<td>Snigdha, Ushna, Guru</td>
<td>Kaphapitta prakopa, Vatanashaka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Lavana</td>
<td>Jala + Agni</td>
<td>Snigdha, Ushna, Guru</td>
<td>Kaphapitta prakopa, Vatashamaka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Katu</td>
<td>Vayu + Akasha</td>
<td>Laghu, Ruksha, Ushana</td>
<td>Vataipitta prakopa, Kapha nashaka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Tikta</td>
<td>Vayu + Agni</td>
<td>Laghu, Ruksha, Sheeta</td>
<td>Vataprapoka, Kaphapitta naskaha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Kshaya</td>
<td>Prithvi + Vayu</td>
<td>Ruksha, Laghu, Sheeta</td>
<td>Vataprapoka, Kaphapitta shakma</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Acharya Charaka furthermore classified the Ahara Dravya into twelve major Varga (classes) depending upon its various forms, which is as follows: Shookdharya Varga, Shamidhanya Varga, Mansa Varga, Shaaka Varga, Phala Varga, Harita Varga, Maddha Varga, Jala Varga, Gorasa Varga, Ikshuvikara Varga, Kritanna Varga, Ahara Upayogi Varga.

Principle of Balanced Diet

According to Ayurveda, one should divide the stomach into 4 parts i.e., two parts filled with solid, one part for liquid and another one part should be left empty for the Doshas. The diet which nourishes both the mental and physical built is called Balanced Diet. Balanced diet in Ayurveda can be defined as “the diet enriched with Shadarasa (all six rasa), required
Gunas (properties), Veerya and given to the individual after consideration of Prakrati, Agni (digestive power), Kostha (digestive system) and Ritu (season variation). In Ayurveda, Matratvatshniyata Ahara[6] is considered as balanced Diet. Matra (amount) is of two types one is Sarvagrahya (whole amount) another Parigrah (amount of individual ingredient) so the diet must consist of variety of food items in proper amount from different groups so that it contains all micro and macro nutrients. Further Acharya Charaka specifies the quantity of food according to its quality.[7]

- If the food article is Guru (heavy), only one third or half of the stomach capacity is to be filled up.
- In the case of Laghu food (light) articles excessive intake is not conducive to the maintenance of the power of digestion and metabolism.

Balanced diet does not disturb Doshik status of body, enhances longevity, gets digested and passes out without any problem. Amount of the diet should be according to Agni and Bala of the body.

**Dushta Ahara**

Dushta Ahara can be understood as the diet whose natural properties are modified by various processes. Properties of processed food are depended on two matters i.e., proper selection of food process and conduction of them in proper way. Error in these two results in adverse properties of processed food and lead to adverse effects in the consumed food articles this can be termed as Dushta Ahara. Over maturity is also reason for adverse effects, for e.g. over ripened fruit, stale water and stale Madya (alcohol). Stale water has been kept for more than one day should never be given to thirsty person because it becomes Abhishyandi and increase Kapha. Maharshi Sushrut has given to detail description of proper storage of food item in proper utensil.[8] If food item stored in improper utensil it gives rise to adverse effect for e.g., Ghrita kept in bronze vessels for more than ten days bring out poisonous properties in Ghrita. In comparative study of food prepared conventionally and in microwave oven published by Raum and Zelt in 1992 states that microwave food contains both molecule and energies not present in food cooked in the way humans have been cooking food since the discovery of fire. Naturally occurring amino acids have been observed to undergo isometric change (change in shape morphing) as well as transformation in a toxic form, under the impact of microwaves produced in ovens. Microwaves ovens are frequently used for reheating previously cooked food and bacterial contamination may not be killed if the safe temperature is not reached, resulting in food borne illness as with all inadequate reheating method. Processed food including freezing, dehydration, canned foods, bakery items or items made of refined flour, packaged high caloric snack foods etc. Food is processed to extend its shelf life, more digestible and tastier. It also diminishes the nutritional value the food had in its fresh and natural form. Canning process also destroys the nutrients present in food i.e. substantial reduction of vitamins and minerals. Processed food is harmful for health due to:

a) Increased sugar, fat and high carbohydrate clogged arteries causing heart attacks & stroke.
b) Additives (emulsifiers)-Cause Inflammatory bowel disease (due to changes in gut bacteria, increasing intestinal permeability by damaging the tight epithelial cell junctions which strengthens the defense barrier), Colorectal cancer (processed meat), Anxiety, Depression (serotonin level disturbed), Nutritional deficiency disorders.

**Ashuchi Ahar**

Food should be used after cleaning process. Acharya Charaka mentions that if this process not done properly like meat of “Haridrak” mixed with ashes dust and honey causes instant death. Some impurities may remain in water and water leading to adverse effects. By storing water for long time there increases chance of contamination. Contamination often cause wide spread sickness and disease. Stale water i.e. water kept for many days should not be used for drinking as it becomes “Abhishyandi” and increases Kapha. Similarly if uncleaned vegetables and other food articles are consumed chance of contamination increase and lead to infection by bacteria, parasites etc.

**CONCEPT OF AHAR VIDHIVISHESHAYATAN**

According to Charaka, all the Dravyas are Aushadhis (Nanausadhibhutam) and these are of two types depending on the nature of composition.[9]

- Dravyabhuta Aushadhi
- Adravyabhuta Aushadhi

Ahara Dravyas can be considered under the category Dravyabhuta Aushadhi. So, the dietetic rules can be considered as Upaya or Adravyabhuta Aushadhi for Vikaraprasamana. The eight factors of diet responsible for health and diseases are described as “Ahara Vidhi Vishsha Ayatanani.”[10]

1. Prakriti (Nature of food)

It indicates the nature of substances, i.e. inherent attributes (heaviness etc) such as black gram is heavy and Mudag is light. The natural quality will undergo change by mixing with other substances.

2. Karan (Processing of food)

Processing is the result of contact with water or fire, washing, churning, place, time, mode and vessel used for cooking. Thus preparatory processes
like putting rice in water for soaking, grinding the rice with dal, roasting, frying, health, burning, boiling in water, frying in fats, cooking in steam, baking etc. also affect the quality of the food.

3. Samyoga (Combination of food)

It is combination of two or more substances. This result is manifestation of specific attributes which cannot be manifested by individual substance e.g. Combination of honey and ghee etc.

4. Rashi (Quantity of food)

Rashi is quantum of total (Sarvagraha) or individual (Parigraha) substance which determines the result of their administration in proper and improper dosage. The quantity of food is Sarvagraha and quantity of each of its ingredients is Parigraha.

5. Desha (Habitat of food)

Desha refers to both the region in which article of food is grown and also to the region where the user lives. Desha also refers to body of the user which means giving consideration to the state of his health, strength, constitution and digestive system.

6. Kala

Kala stands for both the time in the form of day and night and states of individuals (e.g. condition of health and age). Latter is relevant to the disease e.g. manifestation of disease due to Kapha during childhood and fever etc.

7. Upayogsamstha

Upayogsamstha stands for dietetic rules. They are for the most part dependent on symptom of digestion.

8. Upayokta

Upayokta is that who take food. He is in the main responsible for the wholesomeness by the habitual intake of things.

These eight factors are associated specially with useful and harmful effects neither due to ignorance nor intentionally one should resort to such food articles or other things (drugs, regimens etc.) as are instantaneously pleasing but harmful in the long term leading to unhappy consequences in form of life style disorders etc.

Similarly, Sushruta describes 12-fold considerations to be followed during the consumption of food and termed them Dvadasha Asana Vidhi. [11]

Role of Diet (Ahara) In Manifestation of Disease

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Disease</th>
<th>Ahara as a Nidana</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Raktapitta</td>
<td>Intake of hot, sharp, sour, pungent, salty diet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Gulma- Vataja - Pittaja - Kaphaja</td>
<td>Rough food and drink, excessive activity. Excessive use of pungent, sour, irritant, hot, wine. Cold heavy, unctuous food, excessive sleep in day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Prameha</td>
<td>Idle sitting, over sleep, excessive use of curd, meat of domestic, aquatic,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
animals, milk, new cereals, all other cough promoting regimens.

4. Kushta
- Intake of incompatible food and liquid, excessive use of cold and hot diet.
- Applied cold water immediately after intensive exposure to sun, take food during indigestion. Use of excessive new cereals, curd, fish, salt, sleep regularly in day.

5. Unmada
- Antagonistic, defective and impure food.

6. Apsmara
- Abundant morbidity due to intake unwholesome and unclean food, injury of mind by anxiety, passion, fear, anger.

7. Shotha
- Regular intake of alkaline, sour, irritant, hot and heavy substance, excessive use of curd, uncooked food.

8. Udara Roga
- Excessive use of hot, alkaline, burning, sour, poisoned, antagonistic and uncleaned food.

9. Grahani
- Eating during indigestion, over eating, intake of unsuitable, heavy cold, too rough, contaminated food.

10. Pandu
- Intake of alkaline, sour, salty, too hot, incompatible and unsuitable food, excessive use of black gram, oil, cake, Tila.

11. Vatarakta
- Excessive intake of salt, sour, pungent, alkaline, unctuous, hot and uncooked food, curd, Arnala, Sauwira, Sukta, Buttermilk, putrified, dried meat of aquatic or marshy land inhabiting animals, Virudhahara.

12. Swasa
- Use of cold water, habitual intake of dry foods, or intake of food deficient or excessive in quantity and before /long after the meal time. Excessive intake of sesame oil, Vidahi and heavy food, curd, unboiled milk, Abishyandhi, Kapha Vriddhi Ahara.

13. Amavata
- Virudhahara, Excessive indulgence in Guru Ahara and Kandashaka (Tubercous Vegetable)

14. Kasa
- Intake of unctuous, cold, astringent, Pramitashana, Vidahi, Sour, alkaline food, Guru, Abishyandi, Madhura, Snigdha Sevan, Visama or irregular type meal.

Apart from Ahara considering as a Nidana for various diseases, concept of Viruddhahara or incompatible diet (i.e., certain diet and its combinations, which inhibits the process of formation of tissue and which have opposite property to the tissue) is also mentioned in our Ayurvedic Literatures. If above said rules for the diet are not followed then the diseases occurring due to Viruddha Aahara can occur which are; Impotency, Erysipelas, Blindness, Ascitis, Bullus, Insanity, Fistula-in-ano, Coma, Intoxication, Abdominal distension, Stiffness in neck, Varieties of Anemia, Indigestion, Various Skin Diseases, Diseases of Intestine, Swelling, Gastritis, Fever, Rhinitis, and Infertility. Some other nutritional deficiency induced disorders are summarized as follows in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nutrient</th>
<th>Intake/Day</th>
<th>deficiency Induced Disorder</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin A</td>
<td>5000 IU</td>
<td>Xerophthalmia, Bitot’s spot, Immune dysfunction, Keratomalacia, night blindness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin B1</td>
<td>1-2 mg</td>
<td>Beriberi, Ophthalmoplegia, Cardiomegaly, Neuropathy, Wernick’s encephalopathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin B2</td>
<td>1-2 mg</td>
<td>Angular stomatitis, sore tongue and mouth, Cheilosis, Dermatitis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin B3</td>
<td>15-20 mg</td>
<td>Pellagra, sore mouth and tongue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin B5</td>
<td>5-10 mg</td>
<td>Weakness, tenderness of heels and feet, Paraesthesias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin B6</td>
<td>12 mg</td>
<td>Cheilosis, Glossitis, peripheral neuropathy, hypochromic anemia, convulsions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin B7</td>
<td>100-200 µg</td>
<td>Alopecia, myalgia, Seborrhoeic dermatitis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin B9</td>
<td>400 µg</td>
<td>Megaloblastic anemia, Glossitis, Diarrhea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin B12</td>
<td>5 µg</td>
<td>Megaloblastic anemia, Dementia, Diarrhea, Ataxia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin C</td>
<td>100 mg</td>
<td>Bleeding, purpura, scurvy, joint effusion, depression, poor wound healing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin D</td>
<td>400IU</td>
<td>Rickets, Osteomalacia, Osteoporosis, Tetany, muscle weakness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin E</td>
<td>10-15 IU</td>
<td>Neuropathy, Hemolysis, abnormal clotting, retinopathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin K</td>
<td>80 µg</td>
<td>Easy bruising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zinc</td>
<td>15 mg</td>
<td>Impaired taste and smell, alopecia, hypogonadism, growth retardation,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CONCLUSION

Besides Vayu and Jala, Ahara is the third basic need for all the living organisms in the universe. Ayurveda since long is describing the beneficiary effect of Ahara as well as its adverse effects. Modern science is now coming towards the concept but is far away from Ayurvedic aspects because Ayurveda describes Ahara as Mahabhaisaya but Modern dietics has particularly described Ahara according to the nutritional value of its components, having no scientific division on the basis of Prakruti, Desha, Kala, etc what the Ayurveda describes which seems to be too much practical. So it is too much necessary to take Hita Ahara if someone wants to live a healthier life to attain the “Trayee Eshanas “or “Purusarth Chatushtaya”. In short; Pure diet in the form of balanced diet; Pure body with moderate exercise; Pure mind with stress management; Pure devotion in terms of Spiritual health that helps our body immunity to build up and prevent human beings from various consequences which comes in the form of Life style disorders and other Nutritional deficiency disorders.

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