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## Concept Of *Aahar* By Ayurveda- A Review

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**ABSTRACT:** Ayurveda, the science of life, suggested many *Siddhantas* (principles), One of the most important principles is the three factors that is *Aahara* (diet), *nidra* (sleep) and *Brahmacharya* (celibacy), are mentioned as three *Upastambha* (sub supporting pillars) for maintaining the health. Ayurveda gives equal importance to *Ahara* and *Vihara*. The health of the nation depends on the health of its citizens. Advanced modern medical science has no doubt extended the life span of the human, but the new upcoming health problems are also awaiting their solution. The modern world is currently facing epidemic diseases like diabetes, obesity, heart diseases, infectious disease etc., as a result of stress, improper diet and irregular or sedentary lifestyle. Humans have to suffer many problems related with health in day to day life. Hence the person becomes psychological and physical illness and unable to enjoy full life span. Ayurveda believes that in order to achieve and maintain healthy living (*Arogya*), it is essential to practice a healthy *Vihara* like *Dinacharya* (day regimen), *Ratricharya* (night regimen), *Ritucharya* (seasonal regimen), *Ahara Vidhi* (diet rules), *Sadavritta* (code of conducts) etc. are described in detail in *Ayurveda*. Because Ayurveda is mainly based on preventive aspect first rather than curative.

**Keywords-** *Aahara, Dinacharya, Sadavritta, Prakirti, Siddhantas*

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## INTRODUCTION:

Ayurveda believes that in order to achieve and maintain healthy living (*Arogya*), it is essential to practice a healthy *Aahara like Ahara Vidhi* (diet rules), *Sadavritta* (code of conducts) etc. is described in detail in *Ayurveda*.<sup>1</sup> In all Ayurvedic texts mention how to examine & treatment of patients by various methods and which food provide. In this era of modernization and civilization the society is conscious enough about "What to eat?" The awareness about the food items, their quantity, quality and nutritional values etc. is increasing gradually, and then also the popularity of fast food is greater due to the fast life. According to Ayurveda this can be classified as "Pragya-Aparadha". Due to the demand of time, most of the people are bound to do such things, which adversely affect the health. The people who are health

conscious mostly know about "WHAT TO EAT?" but least about "HOW TO EAT?" The dietetic code or the rules for diet intake are preserved by our traditions up to some extent, but there is a big question about their awareness in today's society.<sup>2</sup> People basically know very little about them and they who know are little bothered to obey such rules, even they do not have trust enough to consider the code of diet as an important health matter. The proper method of eating is wrongly being interpreted as mere traditional affair. Though all the people cannot always follow all the rules due to the bindings of fast and forward life, the awareness is needed regarding the subject.<sup>3</sup> Amongst them lifestyle disorder & infectious disease is a prime factor develop for patient. The factors contributing to lifestyle and infectious diseases mainly

include irregular food habits, unavoidable food intake, sedentary work, pollution and stress. Lifestyle interventions like diet, exercise, stress management, de-addiction play important role in the treatment and management of diseases. Therefore *Aahara & Vihara Chikitsa* are a major *Ayurvedic* preventive and therapeutic approach for health to normal people & patients.

#### MATERIALS & METHOD:

Classical *Ayurvedic* texts like *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Ashtang Sangraha* and *Ashtang Hridaya* etc. with their commentaries as well as scientific papers, journals, research articles, data base of related to the topic.

Various methods are discuss following -

- **Concept of *Prakirti***
- **Concept of *Dosha***
- **Concept of *Panch-Mahabhuta***
- **Concept *Aahara* intake method**
- **Concept *Aahara* type**
- **Concept of *Agni bal***

#### CONCEPT OF PRAKIRTI

Ayurveda is one of the oldest health sciences of the world with concepts of *Tridosha* and *Prakirti* being its core. These core concepts allow implementation of ways of prevention. In the light of modern

science, evidence say that these core concepts are related to metabolic pathways and chronic diseases in people. We are well aware that a person's *Prakirti* is considered to be normal for that person and any derangement of the *Doshas* of the person's constitution leads to diseases. In *Ayurvedic* texts are available of various type of *Prakirti* & also discuss about persons *Prakirti*. Three different mode of *Prakirti* are mentioned *Tridoshaj Prakirti* (7 types), *Manas Prakirti* (16 types) and *Jaataj Prakirti* (6 types).<sup>4</sup> All type *Prakirti* depends on persons (nature, behavior, body build, etc.) & this *Prakirti* vary person to person along with family members.

1. ***Vataj Prakirti***- As the *Vata Dosha* denotes activity, restlessness and irregularity, a *Vata* dominant individual should aim to follow a regular routine every day. This includes waking up at the same time every day, eating food at set times every day and going to bed early.<sup>5</sup>
2. ***Pittaj Prakirti***- The *Pitta Dosha* denotes heat, fire and transformation. Such individuals should aim to follow a lifestyle that helps pacify fire. This includes consuming cooling and refreshing foods.<sup>6</sup>

3. **Kaphaj Prakirti-** The *Kapha Dosha* represents heaviness, stability and less movement. These individuals should exercise as often as possible and drink plenty of warm water.<sup>7</sup>

This is based on the individual's basic body constitution (known as *Dosha*). To be able to follow Ayurvedic principles, one not only needs to take Ayurvedic herbs and massages according but also follow an Ayurvedic lifestyle (Dincharya, Ritucharya etc.) this suits his or her *Dosha & Prakirti*.

### CONCEPT OF DOSHA

Ayurveda is mainly based on Dosha siddhant. Dosha principal are details described present in all Ayurvedic literature. Two types of Dosha sharirk & mansik is mentioned in texts but sharirk Dosha (vata, pitta, kapha) called as three pillars of Ayurveda. So called all Ayurvedic theories are based on tridosha siddhant. Tridosha Siddhanta is the central concept of Ayurvedic medicine, the theory that health exists when there is a balance between three fundamental bodily substances called Vata, Pitta and Kapha. All Ayurvedic physicians firmly believe that these ancient ideas, based in the spiritual knowledge discovered by the Rishi and Munis, exist in harmony with physical realities.

1. **Vata Dosha-** Vata, as the symbolic mobilizing agent for bodily energy, must be identified in the proper way so that the physician can see it within the complexities of health and disease. This is accomplished in Ayurveda by defining its physical properties into a formulation about how the movement of air affects the human organism. Atmospheric air is characterized as containing seven physical properties: Ruksa, Shita, Laghu, Suksma, Chala, Vishada and Khara.<sup>8</sup>

2. **Pitta Dosha-** Pitta, the symbolic agent for energy or heat, is identified by the Ayurvedic formulation for bile that contains five physical properties called Sneha, Usna, Tiktsna, Drava, and Sara.<sup>9</sup>

3. **Kapha Dosha-** Kapha, as a symbolic agent for the nutrient source of bodily energy, is identified by the physical properties of mucus. Ayurveda defines these as Guru, Sita, Mridu, Snigdha, Sthira and Picchila.<sup>10</sup>

**CONCEPT OF PANCH-MAHABHUT-**  
Ayurveda has described our body as image of the world outside as you can easily understand that all natural elements have been contributor to our body building. According to Ayurveda this holistic approach comprises five elements of nature. The food, the planets and every living and non-living things are made up of these five elements. Ayurveda depends on the concept of *Pancha-Mahabhutas* i.e. *Aakaash, Vayu, Agni, Prithvi, Jala*. The

*Panch-Mahabhut* revolves around the normal functioning of the body (physiological), occurrence of disease (pathological) and action of drug in various part of the body (pharmacokinetics).<sup>11</sup>

On the basis of thorough knowledge and understanding of *Panch-Mahabhuta Siddhanta* one can take an account of the causative factor of imbalance of *Doshas* and thereby discover the solution for the treatment.

**Table-1 correlation of *Dosha & Panch-Mahabut*<sup>12</sup>**

| S. No. | <i>Panch-Mahabhut</i> | <i>Manas guna</i> | <i>Dosha</i> |
|--------|-----------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| 1.     | <i>Aakash</i>         | <i>Satva</i>      | <i>Vata</i>  |
| 2.     | <i>Vayu</i>           | <i>Raj</i>        | <i>Vata</i>  |
| 3.     | <i>Agni</i>           | <i>Satva-Raj</i>  | <i>Pitta</i> |
| 4.     | <i>Jal</i>            | <i>Satva-Tam</i>  | <i>Kapha</i> |
| 5.     | <i>Prithvi</i>        | <i>Tam</i>        | <i>Kapha</i> |

### CONCEPT AAHARA INTAKE METHOD

*Aahara* plays a pivot role in the prevention as well as in the treatment of diseases. It plays an important role in establishing the phenomena of wear and tear, process of growth and repair supply of energy for all physical activities etc. Not only for the

maintenance of the life and for the growth, but also have a pivotal role in convalescent state in the regarding of his previous health and vigor. These facts indicate that the food is the prime factor in the maintenance of health as well as life itself. Wholesome diet

is prime causes for the growth and development of the body, on the contrary, unwholesome diet causes several diseases. Wholesomeness of *Aahara* is varies as person to person. *Aahara Vidhi visesayatana* are the factors, which are guidelines for the selection of wholesome diet. *Acharya Charaka* described 8 factors as *Aahara Vidhi visesayatana* in *Vimana Sthana*.<sup>13</sup> *Acharya Sushruta* described 12 factor of intake of *Aahara vidhi*.<sup>14</sup> Also *Acharya charka* described intake balance food method (complete & balance diet or incomplete & unbalance diet).

#### CONCEPT OF AAHARA-

*Aahara* is a substance which builds up the body this also includes the intake of water as well as medicine. In *Ayurvedic* classics, *Dravyas* are broadly classified as ‘*Aahara Dravya*’ and ‘*Auśadha Dravya*’ on the basis of *Rasa Pradhana* and *Virya Pradhana* respectively.<sup>15</sup>

Along with what we eat, where we eat, how we eat, when we eat make all difference in our health. This thought is unique in

#### Classification of *Aahara* according to various Acharya-

##### *Acharya Charak-*

1. *Ashta ahara vidhi visheshayatana*
2. *Ahara vidhi vidhan*
3. *Ahara dravyo varga*
4. *Verodhika ahara gataka*
5. *Annapana vishayaka parikshya bhava*

*Ayurveda*. *Ayurvedic* eating is not generalized. It is “person” specific.

- Eat according to your age and body constitution.
- Eat fresh and seasonal vegetables and fruits.
- Eat freshly cooked and warm food. It strengthens Agni; digests food better, reduces excess Kaph and Vata.
- Eat food, which has enough oil, and is moist enough (not fried). It tastes better, helps Agni, Builds Dhatu and increases strength.
- Do not eat food with wrong combination. E.g. Honey and ghee when combined in equal quantities is poisonous. Mixing sour fruits and milk curdles the milk. According to Major B.N.Khan

“Food is a substance which, when taken in the body, is able to build up or repair tissue, protect against ill health (disease) and supply material for the production of health and energy”.

|                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| <i>Acharya Sushruta-</i>       | 1. <i>Dhvadhasha ashana pravicharna</i><br>2. <i>Dravdhavya varga evam anna varga</i> |
| <i>Acharya vagbhata- A.S.-</i> | <i>Saptahar kalpana</i>   |
| <i>A.H.-</i>                   | <i>Dhvadhasha ashana pravicharna</i>  |
| <i>Acharya kashyapa-</i>       | <i>Chturvishantamaka ahar vidhi vidhan</i>  |
| <i>Acharya bhel evam</i>       |   |
| <i>Yogaratnakara-</i>          | <i>Anupan vishayaka</i>   |

Table-2 According to Rasa and Dosha<sup>16</sup>

| S. No. | Ras           | Mahabhut              | Shamk Ras           | Prakopak Ras        |
|--------|---------------|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 1.     | <i>Madhur</i> | <i>Prithvi + Jal</i>  | <i>Vata, Pitta</i>  | <i>Kapha</i>        |
| 2.     | <i>Amla</i>   | <i>Prithvi + Agni</i> | <i>Vata</i>         | <i>Pitta, Kapha</i> |
| 3.     | <i>Lavana</i> | <i>Jal + Agni</i>     | <i>Vata</i>         | <i>Pitta, Kapha</i> |
| 4.     | <i>Katu</i>   | <i>Vayu + Agni</i>    | <i>Kapha</i>        | <i>Vata, Pitta</i>  |
| 5.     | <i>Tikta</i>  | <i>Vayu + Aakash</i>  | <i>Pitta, Kapha</i> | <i>Vata</i>         |
| 6.     | <i>Kshyay</i> | <i>Vayu + Prithvi</i> | <i>Pitta, Kapha</i> | <i>Vata</i>         |

### CONCEPT OF AGNI BAL

According to Ayurveda body buildup important role of Agni & detail description available of Agni in Ayurvedic texts. In Ayurveda Agni (Jathraagni) is said to be responsible for the digestion of food products. Agni converts food in the form of biological energy which is responsible for all the vital function of our body. Agni plays a vital role of physiological,

psychological & pathological levels. Majority of the disease are outcome of malfunctioning of Agni. *Acharya charka* has mentioned that after stoppage of the function of Agni, the individual dies and when the Agni of an individual is saamagni, then that person would be absolutely healthy and would lead a long happy healthy life.<sup>17</sup>

**Type-4 Agni according to Acharya –**

| S. No. | Acharya     | No. of Agni   |
|--------|-------------|---|
| 1      | Charaka     | 13 (Jataragni-1, Bhutagni-5, Dhatvagni-7)                       |
| 2      | Sushruta    | 5 (Pachakagni, Ranjakagni, Alochkagni, Sadhakagni, Bhrajakagni) |
| 3      | Vagbhata    | 18 (Bhutagni-5, Dhatvagni-7, Dhoshagni-3, Malagni-3)            |
| 4.     | Sharandhara | 5 (Pachak, Bharajk, Ranjak, Alochak, Sadhak)                    |

1. One type agni- *Jatharagni*
2. Five type agni- *bhutagni*
3. Seven type agni- *dhatvagni*
4. Four types agni-

**Table- 5 Jatharagni**

| S.No. | Type of <i>Jatharagni</i>    | <i>Dosha</i> involvement |
|-------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1.    | <i>Vishamagni (variable)</i> | <i>Vata</i>              |
| 2.    | <i>Tikshagni (high)</i>      | <i>Pitta</i>             |
| 3.    | <i>Mandagni (low)</i>        | <i>Kapha</i>             |
| 4.    | <i>Samagni (normal)</i>      | <i>Sam Dosha</i>         |

**RESULTS**

*Ayurveda* always promotes a how to eats and what can eats & lifestyle that's in harmony with nature. It's used to treat a variety of ailments including depression and eating disorders. Importance of *Aahara*

is mentioned in all Samhita such as *Charka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Kashyap Samhita*, *Ashtang Hridaya* etc.



**DISCUSSION-**

*Aahara* plays a pivotal role in the maintenance of health. It is for this reason, that the *Aahara* has been given the prime place among *Trayo-Upastambha*. A man can live without clothes, without shelter but one cannot live long without *Aahara*. According to Ayurveda Body is said to be made up of *Panch-Mahabhutas* & hence the food also needs to be *Panchbhautic* (Made up of *Panch (five) Mahabhutas* (great elements)) then only food can get digested & be utilized for the growth of *Pancha-Mahabhutas* (the basic elemental constituents of body) which in turn results in growth of body.

As per the definition and derivation of *Aahara*, given by various *Acharya*, it is clear that the *Aahara* denote both *Aahara* and *Ausadha*, the substance which is taken through the oral route. While differentiating *Aahara* from *Ausadhi* *Vagbhatta* says that, *Aahara* is *Rasa Pradhana* and while *Ausadhi* *Virya Pradhana*. With this consideration, it can be said that, by *Aahara Dravyas* one can get nourishment of the body elements and body humors while by *Ausadha Dravyas* one can get mostly *Gunas* of that particular drug likewise *Sita* and *Usna Guna*.

*Vegadharana* has been contraindicated by *Acharyas* as it is a direct cause of many diseases. Researchers have been proved that voluntary suppression of defecation delays gastric emptying and retention of urge of micturition causes significant increase in the level of blood pressure, pulse rate, respiratory rate. Proper excretion of urine & Stools, *Dosha* go to the their respective *sthanas* i.e. sites, *srotas* as are clean and free from blockage & *indriyas* i.e. sense organs are sharp and attentive, one feels lightness of body, Belching with proper smell to it. With proper excretion of 'Apaan vayu', Heart becomes Nirdosha i.e. we feel like eating & drinking. When all the above signs are present then only one should eat; as this is the proper time for taking the diet. *Prakirti* is the most important factor out of these 8 factors in "Asta aahar vidhi visheshaytan", because *Prakirti* is considerable factors for all i.e. in the application of *Karana* and *Samyoga*, it is to be considered to avoid antagonist effect, in the determination of *Aahara Rasi*, *Prakirti* is also important. And *Prakirti* is varied as per the *Desa* and *Kala*. *Prakirti* is to be examined, because the digestive capacity and *Satmya Aahara* varies in person to person.

One cannot tolerate *Aahara Dravya* of *Usna Prakirti* and *Sita Prakirti*, as well as to decide the *Aahara Matra*, the knowledge of *Prakirti* is important, viz. *Guru Aahara Dravya* should be taken in less quantity while *Laghu Aahara Dravya* can be taken in more quantity.

*Vishamashana* means taking food in irregular quantity and at irregular time. Now a day, due to irregular job or business schedule people take meal at irregular time and irregular quantity. Irregular time of food intake disrupts the normal digestive pattern which adhered to daily activity. Intake of *Ushna Aahara* has been advised by *Acharya*. It helps for digestion. It lacks due to intake of cold food items which results in indigestion.

## CONCLUSION

The first aim of *Ayurveda* is to prevent the health of healthy person. For this purpose, *Aahara*, *Nidra* and *Brahmacarya* are important, which are counted as *Trayo-Upastambha*. Out of them *Aahara* is most important. For the better health, proper food is required. The significance of *Aahara* can be well appreciated during intrauterine life, even from the very day of conception till to

the death. So *Aahara* is the most important factor for the self sustentation of life. It is also important because *Bala*, *Varna*, *Upacaya* etc. are also belongs to *Aahara* without disturbing the equilibrium of *Dhatu* & *Dosha* of the body. The body is continuously broken down and rebuilds. So in this manner, *Aahara* plays an important role. *Aahara* nourishes the body, when it is wholesome. The wholesomeness depends upon the variation in *Dosha*, time, method of preparation, habitat and constitution of the body, disease and the age of an individual. Wholesomeness of *Aahara* is varies as person to person. *Ayurvedic Aahara* and *Vihara*, if experienced daily, can produce excellent results in the prevention or cure of diseases. *Aahara* & *Vihara* can help manage stress in daily life and reduce the use of modern medicine and their side effects that give rise to untoward complications.

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