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Importance of Ahara Vidhi Vidhana (Dietary Guidelines) in Ayurveda

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ABSTRACT:

Ayurveda's Prayojana strives to protect the health of the healthy and cure issues caused by disease. Numerous factors might affect one's health and susceptibility to diseases. As the Acharyas had said, the *Triupstamba* (three sub pillars) of *Ahara*, *Nidra* and *Brahmacarya* support the body itself. In this case, *Ahara* is named first, showing how important it is to protect and sustain life. A healthy life requires adequate nutrition, yet one cannot benefit fully from the food they consume if they do not follow suitable dietary standards. *Acharya Charak* provided *Aharavidhividhan* (dietary recommendations), which can stop many diseases from developing purely as a result of poor dietary practises. Each factor's scientific basis is described. If the *Aharavidhividhana* is properly practised, it contributes to better health and a longer life. Additionally important are the *Aahara* intake's timing, location, volume, and mode. If taken properly, *Aahara* promotes healthy body development; however, if taken incorrectly, it can cause a number of problems. As a result, *Aharavidhividhan* is crucial for both the disease's cause and its treatment.

Key words: *Aharavidhividhan*, diet, dietary guidelines, dietary rules, Dietary Ethics.

INTRODUCTION

Food is most essential for sustenance of life (*Vrittikara*).¹ The body is constituted and nourished by food. *Ahara* offers health, vigour, sustenance, satisfaction, and longevity. *Ahara* not only nourishes but also guards against infections, accelerates the process of growth and development, stimulates the working of sense organs, and promotes physical and mental wellbeing. When food is prepared or consumed improperly, it deprives the food of nutrition and does not significantly help health. *Ahara* provides health benefits when through its nutritional value. In order to maximise *Ahara's* health advantages, ayurveda described the principles of *Ahara Vidhi Vishesha Ayatan*.²

Due to a shift in lifestyle, man is placing less emphasis on his food and dietary guidelines today. Many ailments that develop solely as a result of poor food habits can be avoided if Ayurvedic dietary recommendations are followed. Poor eating habits are mostly to blame for the bulk of lifestyle issues that exist today. According to Ayurveda, all illnesses are caused by our *Agni* or digestive system. Every meal we eat either affects the human body's *Prakopaka* or *Shamaka Dosh*. *Acharya Charak's* methodically and scientifically described diet plan, known as *Ashta Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana*, comprises eight unique components. ³*Acharya Kashyapa* asserts that the



qualities given to *aahara* can only be observed when the rules and regulations related to *Aaharasevana* are observed. He referred to *Ahara* as *Mahabhaishajya*.

Literary Review

The dietetic guidelines can be considered as *Upaya* or *Adravyabhuta Ausadhi* for *Vikaraprasamana*. The eight components of diet responsible for health and diseases are depicted as "*AharaVidhi Visesa Ayatanani*".⁴ *Acharya Charaka* has given *Aharavidhi vidhan* (dietary guidelines) for which scientific explanation is explained in following points.

Ushnamashniyat (consuming warm food) –

Ushna term implies the temperature of the food and not *Ushnaguna* of the food material. Warm food tastes good and doesn't pacify *Jatharagni*. such food is pleasant to eat, it increases appetite and secretions of digestive juices, gets easily digested, facilitates passing of flatus. Taking hot food, *VataAnulomana* is accomplished. *Pitta* gets invigorated and emitted, subsequently expanding *Agni* or force of assimilation. Therefore, warm food should be consumed.⁵

Snigdhamashniyat (Diet should include fat) –

The term "*Snigdha*" refers to a variety of foods, not just *Snehadravayas* like oil or ghee; other items like *Godhuma* and *Sali* rice are also referred to as *Snigdha*. Unctuous food obviously eases *Vata* (*Anulomana*), and *Sneha* is required for *Agnidipana* because it is primarily observed in the outside world as well as in the body. *KsheergritabhyasoRasayanam* is mentioned by *Acharya Charaka*.⁶

Matravatashniyat (Balanced Diet)

According to Ayurveda, there are two types of *Matra* (amounts) *Sarvagraha* (total amount) and *Parigraha* (amount of each element separately).⁷ *Charakacaryah* had provided certain guidelines in *Vimansthan* called the "*TrividhaKuksiya*" to help people choose the right amount of food to maintain a reasonable level of wellbeing.⁸ A balanced diet promotes longevity, aids in digestion, and flows through the body without any issues.⁹ Dietary intakes should be determined by the body's *Agni* and *Bala*.

Jeerneashniyat (Meal taken after digestion of previous meal)

When food is consumed after proper digestion, the *Dosas* are in their usual locations, *Agni* is fueled, hunger is felt, all of the *Srotas* are clear and open, eructation from the mouth is solid, *Vata* is typical, and the tendencies for *Vata*, *Mutra* and *Purisha* are strongly correlated, as mentioned by *Charakacarya*, these conditions are present. Food consumed under such circumstances advances life and

doesn't contaminate any constituents. Thus, it is an essential viewpoint for the promotion of wellbeing.¹⁰ Accordingly, the diet should be consumed after the previous diet has been digested, as *Charak* says *Kaalbhojnam Arogyakaranam*.¹¹

Veeryaviruddhamashniyat –

To avoid issues caused by *ViruddhaveeryaAhara*, such as impotence, blindness, *Raktavikar*, *Grahani* and *Amavisha*, it is imperative to take *Veerya-Aviruddha ahar*.¹² One of *Dravya's* traits is *Virya*. Some people think there are eight types of this strength, while others think there are only two. The driving force behind any activity is *Virya*. Without *Virya*, there is no chance. Every action has an effect. When two substances with opposing *Viryas* are combined, the result is known as a *Virya-Viruddham*.

Naatidrutamashniyat (Not eating too fast)

Eating too quickly can result in a number of issues. Choking or other respiratory tract illnesses may result from food particles getting into the respiratory system. Enzymatic juices will mix effectively if food is consumed at the right pace, facilitating easy digestion. Food shouldn't be eaten in a haste. Then, food must enter other channels. Food can't be set as intended and moves when a person is incapacitated.¹³

Naativilambitamashniyat (Not eating too slowly)

Food shouldn't be consumed in an extremely comfortable manner if manifestations have already occurred when eating in that manner. Food is consumed in large quantities, gets cold, and is processed sporadically, making it impossible to feel satisfied.¹⁴

Ajalpanahasantanmanabhunjeet (Eating without talking or laughing, Mindful eating)

Meals should be consumed with complete attention conversing and laughing are not permitted. According to *Acharya Charak*, even *Pathyaahar* consumed in the recommended amount is not digested because of *Chinta* (anxiety), *Shok* (sorrow), *Bhaya* (fear), *Krodh* (rage), *Dukh* (sadness), unsuitable bedding, and improper sleeping habits.¹⁵

Atmanamabhisamikshyabhunjeetsamyak (Eating after analyzing one's needs)

When making food choices, take into account your constitution. It is possible to determine what is healthy for each individual by understanding which foods will agree with me and which foods won't. This is important because although while *Ahara's* concepts are typically healthy, they are still general rules. They should be used with consideration for the user.¹⁶

Proper quantity of food

One must take food in proper quantity. The quantity of food is person specific and depends on the strength of his *Agni* (digestive power). The proper quantity of food is digested in due time without disturbing the equilibrium.¹⁷ Dietary guidelines advise to take food according to energy requirement based upon age, gender, physiological conditions like pregnancy, lactation and level of physical activity. The goal is to maintain ideal body weight and optimal nutrition status.

Proportion of heavy and light to digest food

The right quantity always depends upon the substance itself. Based on the food-article itself, it is advised that heavy to digest articles should be taken up to one third to one half of the saturation point (of capacity of stomach). The remaining proportion shall be filled with light to digest food. Neither heavy to digest not light ones should be taken in surfeit in order to maintain the strength of *Agni*.

Eating variety of food (*Sarvagraha*) or single substance (*Parigraha*)

The healthy eating pattern includes taking all types of foods together (*Sarvagraha*) and not a particular substance (*Parigraha*) at one time. This affects the digestion and metabolism of food.¹⁸ For example, eating a dish containing all food items like roti, curry, dal, rice together has a different effect than eating only rice at one time. This also affects the overall nutrition status.

Sequence of eating food items

Foods having a sweet flavour should be consumed first, then those with sour and salty flavours. The last food to be consumed should have flavours such as bitter, astringent, and pungent. Fruits should be consumed first, followed by liquid gruel, advises the food source (*Peya*). The diversity of solid foods (*Bhojya and Bhakshya*) can thereafter be consumed. Indian gooseberry is the fruit that should be consumed first (*amalaka*).¹⁹ This method of eating is based on how well the digestive factors (*Agni*) and post-digestive effects (*vipaka*) of the food are functioning. When consumed initially while the digestive system is at its full strength, sweet foods, which are generally difficult to digest can be easily absorbed (*Agni*). Following meals, the effects of sweet taste (*Madhura Avasthapaka*), sour taste (*Amlavasthapaka*) and pungent flavour dominate the initial phase of digestion (*KatuAvasthapaka*). Only people with regular digesting capacities should follow this order (*Agni*).²⁰ The order can be altered in cases of improper digestion depending on the severity of the illness. Recent studies revealed taste-producing cells in the stomach.

During digestion, these cells are crucial for integrating physiological responses. These taste receptors affect eating habits as well. More research is required to determine how the order in which food is consumed affects the taste receptors in the gut.

DISCUSSION

Ahara Vidhi is a framework, technique, manner, way, arrangement, course of action, rule, law, command, order, conduct, condition or proclamation for diet intake. *Visesa* is a Speciality, uncommon property, recognized impact (of *Ahara Vidhi*). *Ayatana* - Cause, Support, *Hetu*, and so on. *Ushna*, *Snigdha*, and other food items should be used while taking the *Matra* into consideration. Both the *Atimatra* and the *Hinamatra* are unhealthy. Similar to *MatravatAhara*, if used carelessly or with other factors like incompatibility, it will not produce the desired results. Therefore, the significance of each statement should be taken into account, as well as the overall impact of the statements. Violent *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha* can be calmed down with proper food management. The right diet balances a person's Prakriti. As a result, hyperacidity, indigestion, and diarrhoea can all be treated with *Pitta*. Diet balances *Kapha* and aids in the treatment of cold and cough symptoms as well as anorexia symptoms, preventing heaviness. Consideration of *Kala* is essential to maintaining Dosha equilibrium; in *Baiya Awastha*, one should consume a diet that balances *Kapha*, in *Madhyam Awastha*, *Pitta* must be balanced, and in *Vridhdha Awastha*, *Vata* must be balanced by the consumption of the proper foods. Infertility, diabetes, obesity, cardiovascular issues, anaemia, infectious diseases, gastrointestinal disorders, and metabolic irregularities are only a few of the diseases whose development is prevented by the conduction *Ahara Vidhi Vishesh Ayatan Ahara Vidhi's* efficient operation reduces the production of poisons and *Aama* and increases *Dhatus*. *Ahara* is part of our daily routine. Achieving excellent health is simple if we pay attention to the right eating habits and the *Ahara* regimens described in *Ayurveda*, in addition to the quality, amount, and flavour of the food. Poor eating habits lead to the emergence of several metabolic disorders. In addition, it has been highlighted that many diseases are only now becoming more prevalent as a result of this unhealthy eating pattern. The *AshtaAhara Vidhi Visheshayatana* idea is in this case the most appropriate for contemporary existence. The term "*AshtaAhara Vidhi Visheshayatana*" refers to the causes of both the positive and negative consequences of the *Ahara*

and the techniques used for *Aharasevana* (special rule for diet intake). The importance of the *Ahara* (diet) and *AharaVidhiVidhana* (dietetic rules) is therefore equal. On the other hand, inappropriate use results in a variety of ailments, whereas proper use maintains health.

CONCLUSION

In order to achieve the primary goal of maintaining health in healthy people and curing sickness in those who are ill, *AharavidhiVidhana* is one of the most significant laws and regulations presented by Ayurvedic classics. A healthy diet might cause diseases if it is consumed incorrectly. Similar to how an inappropriate diet consumed properly causes disorders. Thus, when maintaining health and preventing sickness, the equal relevance of *Ahara* and *AharaVidhiVidhana* should always be taken into account. *Sushruta* particularly advised *Dwadasa-Asana-Pravicharana* for individuals who were unhealthy, although these dietary recommendations extended to both healthy and unhealthy people. Depending on the person's health, but every time they eat, these *Pravichara* make it simpler to use various sorts of *Ahara* and *Aharavidhi*. These *AharavidhiVidhana* should be used in conjunction with a healthy diet. When it comes to maintaining good health and preventing diseases, both *Ahara* and *AharaVidhiVidhana* are beneficial. Accordingly, *Ahara* is the *DravyabhutaChikitsa* whereas *AharavidhiVidhanais* the *Adravyabhutachikitsa*.

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