ABSTRACT: Introduction - Health is an outcome of proper food (input), proper digestion and metabolism (throughout) and proper utilization and excretion (output). Currently a vast body of information on the nutritional requirement is available and accordingly guidelines are also widely available for better health. It is interesting to note that despite this information, we are not able to achieve the goals of healthy diet even if amongst the population who are using these healthy diets. The reason for this, as described in Ayurveda is the lack of proper knowledge of individualized dietary guidelines (based on Prakriti, Desha and Kala) and the rules pertaining to consumption of diet (Ahara vidhi visheshayatan). Therefore, it is pertinent to review the whole gamut of guidelines about food and way to consume food as described in Ayurveda so as to improve the existing dietary guidelines.

Materials and methods- This study comprises collection and critical review of literature in the ancient classical texts, scientific journals, research papers, dissertation etc.

Observations - Ayurveda describes that the dietary requirements are different based on the Prakriti, place of origin and residence and time of consumption of food. The concept is alike the personalized medicine concept of modern medicine and can be termed as Personalized Diet. Further, Ayurveda lays a lot of importance on how the food has to be consumed for optimum utilization. Charaka states that there are eight important factors which can lead to proper utilization of consumed diet or otherwise. These include the nature of the food, the processing and its effect on the diet, etc. Awry consideration of these in the pursuit of taste can lead to long term harmful effect on the user.

Discussion and conclusion – It is quite evident that a more holistic dietary guideline is prescribed in Ayurveda in comparison to the present trend of dietary guideline. Following this holistic individual healthy way of eating food is the key to achieve optimum health.

Keywords: Ahara vidhi, dietary guidelines, ayurvedic, healthy eating.
INTRODUCTION:

The disease incidence pattern in the 21st century has shifted to lifestyle disorders from the infectious ones. Most of the lifestyle disorders can be rooted back to faulty dietary habits. Although, diet is the most important input in sustenance of health and life, owing to ignorance and faulty habits, people often consume food which is detrimental to their health. Ayurveda postulates that maintenance and promotion of health along with prevention of disease is far more important than management of the diseases. Ayurveda goes on state that by following proper lifestyle and appropriate diet as per the guidelines, one can remain healthy.

There is detailed description regarding the dietary guidelines in Ayurveda concerning dietary ingredients, their processing, when and how to eat them, etc. Traditionally, in India this knowledge was known to the generations but in the recent past due to the irrational westernization of our lives, people almost have lost touch with this traditional wisdom. The current trend of dietetic advice is by and large limited to the types of diet and their quantity. This approach lags behind the ayurvedic larger holistic approach of dietetics which includes individualized dietetic decisions, how to cook food and how to take it and when to take it. All these are covered under the ambit of ahara vidhi (Dietary guidelines).

Diet is said to be best sustainer of life\(^1\) so as to so much that Charaka states that the human beings and the diseases are nothing but output of their diet \(^2\). Therefore, proper
diet taken as per proper guidelines is critically required for health. But, we should not misconstrue that only proper diet can ensure health because there are other causes of diseases.  

Ayurveda in a holistic manner consider many factors like prakriti, Agni, habitat (desha), age, season, type of processing, source of ingredients, etc. for determining an individualised dietetic practice for achievement of optimum health. This paper contemplates to dwell upon such factors in order to spread greater public awareness.

MATERIALS AND METHODS-

This study comprises of:

a) Collection of literature in the ancient classical texts, scientific journals, research papers, dissertation etc. concerned with the concept.

b) Critical review of the compiled literature and suggestions derived therefrom.

DISCUSSION-

After reviewing the literature thoroughly, it is observed that the guidelines pertaining to diet can be classified into three major categories:

A. Pertaining to the person.
B. Pertaining to the nature.
C. Pertaining to the diet and dietary substances.

A. Pertaining to the person:

a) Prakriti: In case of vataja prakriti, one should prefer to have Sneha, ushnadi guna ahara. In case of pittaja prakriti, one should prefer madhura, tikta, Kashaya and sheeta guna ahara. In case of kaphaja prakriti, one should prefer to have katu, tikta, Kashaya as well as ruksha guna ahara.

b) Desha: As there are three types of desha are mentioned i.e. jangala desha, anupa desha and sadharana desha. In jangala desha, the dominancy of vata and pitta dosha is found. E.g. Bikaner, Jaisalmer, etc. here the people should prefer to have snigdha, madhura as well as sheeta ahara. In anupa desha, the dominancy of vata and kaphadosha is found. E.g. Assam, orissa, etc. in sadharana desha, the doshas are found to be in normal proportion i.e. samadosha. E.g. Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, etc.
c) **Kala:** Before consuming *ahara*, one should also know about *tha kala* whether it is *nityaga* or *awasthika kala*. In *nityaga kala*, one should prefer *ahara* intake according to *ritucharya*. In *awasthika kala*, *ahara* according to disease should be taken. As according to age, one should take diet, on the basis of disease, diet also changes and as that during pregnancy, one should not take *tikshna, ushana ahara dravya*.

d) **Upyogasanstha:** It is related to procedure of taking food i.e. rules of use. One should consume food according to the rules. These are referred to as dietetic rules. Symptoms of proper digestion should also be included in dietetic rules because intake of food before the previous food gets digested may provoke all the three doshas leading to serious consequences. An individual should not eat within three hours and do not starve beyond six hours.

e) **Upyokta:** *Upyokta* is one who consumes food. This is also the main person on which the rules of mainly depends upon as how one individual consumes food. As mentioned in *sushruta*, one should recline like a king after taking food and then walk hundred steps at leisure and then lean on left side and relax.

f) **Agni:** *Agni* is considered to be the root or the most important sustaining factor (moola) of living beings. As mentioned in *charaka*, diminished *agni* leads to death of an individual. (ref) *Agni* is of four types: *vishamagni, teekshanagni, mandagni* and *samagni*. In *vishamagni*, *ahara* gets digested in *vishamaawastha* i.e. sometimes it gets easily digested whereas sometimes, it is difficult to digest even the *laghu ahara dravyas* and hence *agni* is also the main factor. In *teekshanagni*, *ahara* gets digested very fastly, no matter the person is eating *guru* or *laghu ahara*. In *mandagni*, it is difficult to digest even *laghu ahara* and hence it causes *vidaha*, which results in formation of *aama* and ultimately it leads to various disorders. In *samagni*, food gets digested normally without causing any discomfort to the person.

g) **Matravata:** One should prefer to take *ahara* in proper proportion and quantity which do not causes vitiation of *doshas*, propels ahead smoothly, so that excretion is smooth. Quantity also depends upon the quality of the food i.e. *guru* substances should be taken in such
a way that one still feels hungry and laghu substances should be taken till one feels just full.

h) **Jeerne:** Food should be consumed only when the previous food gets digested. As when food gets digested, agni also gets dipta, strotas gets clear and open and there is no chance of having discomfort.

i) **Viryu- viruddha:** Avoid eating incompatible food i.e. honey with hot substances, fish with milk, sour substances with milk, etc. as it leads to various disorders.

j) **Atidruta:** One should not consume food very fastly as it may enter into a wrong passage. In this situation one can never determine the taste of food articles and the food taken so hurriedly can obviously affect the power of digestion by increasing the vata.

k) **Ativilambhita:** One should not eat food very slowly as the person didn’t get any satisfaction after eating that food and even the food gets cold which didn’t taste well and hence it leads to vishamata of ahara paka.

l) **Ajalpana, ahasana, tanmanabhunjita:** one should not laugh, talk and with distracted mind while having food as it may vitiate doshas and hence causes improper digestion of food.

m) **Aatamanamabhisamikshyabunjita:** one should take food in a prescribed manner, with due regard to his own self. The person should eat rightly by considering one’s own constitution, compatibility and needs.

B. **Pertaining to the nature:**

a) **Desha:** According to desha, properties of substance also change which grows in that particular area and it becomes oksatmya to the person living over there.

b) **Kala:** kala also plays an important role as in nityaga kala, one should take diet according to dincharya and ritucharya as mentioned in the text.

c) **Ishte desha sarvopakarna:** While taking food, person should also give importance to the environment as environmental factors also plays an important factor as it affects our psychology. Consuming food in healthy environment leads to healthy lifestyle as well as intake of food in an unhealthy environment leads to various manovikaras.
C. Pertaining to the diet and dietary substances:18

a) Prakriti: It is the quality or nature of ahara dravya. It means we should know about its quality whether it is guru or laghu, sheeta or ushna, etc. for e.g. person having aggravated vata in his body should avoid consuming sheeta as well as ruksha ahara as it will aggravate vata dosha more predominantly. As in texts, the gunas of some dhanya is also given as mudga having laghu guna and masha having guru guna.

b) Karana: It is processing of substances or sanskara. By doing sanskara, the alteration in the quality of dravyas is seen. Samskara may be jalasamyoga, Agni sannikarsha, manthana, bhavana, etc. e.g. Dadhi is said to be heavy for digestion but after doing samskara, dahi becomes laghu i.e. dahi is mainly responsible for shotha vikaras but when it undergoes churning process, it becomes buttermilk having laghu nature i.e. light for digestion and helps in reduction of shotha.

c) Samyoga: It is defined as the combination of two or more than two substances and these results in the manifestation of new qualities which cannot be obtained by using the same substance separately. For e.g. the combination of honey and ghee, they should not be taken in equal quantity as it is toxic to body. Also milk and fish should not be taken together, though both of them tastes sweet but due to the contradiction in their potency they obstruct the strotas and hence causes various diseases.

d) Ushna ahara: Ahara dravya should be taken ushna (hot) as it tastes well, digests easily, eases vata and lowers kapha.

e) Snigdham: Snigdha ahara tastes more, increases digestive enzymes, digests easily, eases vata, builds tissues, increases strength, improves complexion also.

f) Rashi: It is preffered as quantity. One should take ahara in proper quantity. Quantity of food depends upon the agni of an individual. It is divided into two types i.e. sarvagraha and parigraha. Sarvagraha refers to the ahara
dravya which is taken in pinda form i.e. combined form of pulses, rice, etc. and parigraha refers to quantity of each of its ingredients. In modern era, they mainly focus on parigraha as they specify the amount of carbohydrate, protein etc. to be taken.

CONCLUSION-

- **Ahara** is the most important factor for maintenance and promotion of health.
- Dietary practice should be determined in an individualised manner.
- Dietary practice is a dynamic process and it involves all the factors mentioned above.

Acknowledgement:- Nil
Financial Assistant:- Nil
Conflict of interest :- Nil
REFERENCES


5. Pt. Kasinatha Sastri and Dr. Gorakha Natha Chaturvedi ji, Agnivesh; Charaka Samhita with Vidyotini hindi commentary, Varanasi. Reprint year: 2009 Chaukhamba Bharati Academy,, kalpa sthan chapter 1, Pg. 893

6. Pt. Kasinatha Sastri and Dr. Gorakha Natha Chaturvedi ji, Agnivesh; Charaka Samhita with Vidyotini hindi commentary, Varanasi. Reprint year: 2009 Chaukhamba Bharati Academy,


8. Ibid. Charaka Samhita vimana sthan. Pg. 682.


14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.