ABSTRACT: Ayurveda is regarded as an important science of life. In Ayurveda, two Prayojana are mentioned - first one is to protect health of the healthy person and second is to cure disorder of the diseased person. Health is the supreme foundation for the achievements of long life. Foods which are consumed according to the prescribed methods are the seat for the satisfaction of life. Ahara is among the three supporting factors of life (Trayopstambha i.e., Ahara, Nidra & Brahmacarya) which plays a key role in sustenance and maintenance of life. In today’s era, altered dietary habits may lead to various types of diseases. For intake of Ahara or food, Ayurveda has mentioned some conditions which need to be followed to obtain complete benefits of food which are known as Ashtaharavidhivisheshayatana. These are termed as rules of intake of diet mentioned by Acharya Charaka in the first chapter of Vimana Sthana - ‘Rasa Vimana’. Ahara means food, Vidhi means methodology and manners of food intake, Vishesa means peculiar and Ayatana means Hetu. These eight factors are Prakriti, Karana, Samyoga, Raashi, Desha, Kaala, Upyogasamstha, Upyokta.

Key words – Ahara, Ashtaharavidhivisheshayatana, Diet, Trayopstambh
INTRODUCTION

Health is dependent on various factors. Among these, Ahara is the most significant one. It is very much essential for the sustainment of life of all living beings. It is expressed to be liable for both Arogya (health) and Vyadhi (disease). The dietetic field is most important field of life. Health is the supreme foundation for the achievements of life. Foods which are consumed according to the prescribed methods (in the scriptures) are the seat for the satisfaction for the life. Oja, Teja, Dhatu, senses, Bala (strength), Tushita (satisfaction of mind), Arogya (Health), are all dependent on food. Ahara provides energy to body. Any Ahara which is not prepared as per the Ashtaharavidhi visheshayatana (Dietetic code) is not beneficial for the health.

1. Prakriti is defined as the natural properties (qualities) which are inborn. Here Prakriti depicts natural qualities of food substances and medicines like Guru (heavy), Laghu (light), Ushna (heat), Sheeta (cold), Snigdha (unctuous) and Ruksha (dry) etc. The food is easily digestible or not, may be classified in terms of its heavy and light qualities. For example, Masha is Guru (heavy) and Mudga is Laghu (light), meat of Shukara is Guru (heavy) and Ena (deer) meat is Laghu (light) in nature.

Kaala – time or period
Upyogasamstha – rules for food intake
Upyokta – one who takes the food

Prakriti – the character of the food

Prakriti is the innate property of substances. Before consumption of food, the natural properties of food substances must be
considered so that these may not hamper Agni (digestive fire) and three Dosha. Laghu (light) foods are simple to digest and can be eaten in large quantities.

It is known that each & every individual has got specific Sharirika and Manasika Prakriti (physical and mental temperament), similarly every food & drug substance has also got its Prakriti according to heaviness, hotness etc. Prakriti deals with the assessment of natural qualities of Ahara Dravya, i.e., while consuming food particles, one must keep in mind whether it is heavy or light for digestion, whether or not the efficiency is Sheeta or Ushna, whether the possible effect on Dosha and Dhatu is to mitigate or to aggravate etc. For example, the individual having symptoms of Vata Vruddhi should avoid the Ruksha, Sheeta and Laghu Ahara. Thus, the nature of the substance must be considered in diet. The consideration of Ahara Prakriti greatly increase the utility of food substances.

2. Karana

Karana means the processing of the substances. Processing or Samskara results in the transformation of the inherent characters or properties of the substances. In other words, we can say that Samskara transforms the food articles in eatable forms. The factor Karana, in turn has many facets like Jalasamya, Agnisannikarsha, Shaucha, Manthana, Desha, Kaala, Vasana, Bhavana, Kalapakarsha and Bhaajna. The consumption of Dadhi is done very irregularly nowadays. People are unaware of the fact that it is heavy to digest properly. Also, in an example for Manthana, it is told that plain Dadhi is a cause for Shotha. But when the same churned with Ghee, then it is an effective remedy for Shotha.

The below mentioned methods are used for processing the foods –
1. Toya Sannikarsha – Cleansing and treating with water.
2. Agni Sannikarsha – Heat processing (heating, boiling, cooking the food on fire).
3. Shaucha – Cleansing of food material to eliminate the impurities.
5. Desha – Place, region of food. The character of food will also change according to geographical variations.
6. Kaala – Time period, season etc. too will bring changes in the food substances.
7. Vasana – Adding the seasoning agents or preservatives or sweet-smelling agents.
8. Bhavana – Impregnation, the food or medicines dipped in certain liquids.
9. Kaala Prakarsha – Passage of time; change of season.
10. Bhajana – Container in which the food articles are stored; vessels; storage and preservation of food.

All steps are very essential for suppressing of Ahita Guna of Ahara. These transformations are to be made in such a way to eliminate the disturbances of Dosha and to fill up the Dhatu. Different types of Agni Sannikarsha Samskara bring about various changes in the properties of substances. For example: Food cooked on natural wood/coal fire tends to have better taste than food cooked on electric equipment. Consumption of unsanitary and unwholesome food causes several diseases.

3. Samyoga

Samyoga means combination of two or more than two Dravya. This combination results in the manifestation of some special qualities which were not present separately. Especially, it is a trend nowadays to mix various food items or products and then relish the taste of the same. Sometimes this combination may be beneficial for life; sometimes it may be harmful for health.

For example – Milk (Sheet Veerya) and fish (Ushna Veerya) should not be taken together. Though, both of them have sweet taste and good for health but when these Ahara Dravya are used in combined form then they vitiate the blood and obstruct the Srotasa. Similarly honey and Ghee taken alone is wholesome to the body but when taken together in equal quantity creates toxic effect on the body. Guda and Dahi (curd) in combination are more useful as they have Snehana, Tarpana, Hridya and Vataghna effects on body. Rice and pulse (Daal) taken in combined form are beneficial.

4. Rashi

Rashi means the quantity and total amount of food which is to be taken. It is of two types, i.e., Sarvagraha and Parigraha. The total quantity of food in diet is Sarvagraha, i.e., the combined amount of the rice, meat, pulses, condiments etc. The quantity of each ingredient is known as Parigraha. In Sarvagraha, one must consume the various Ahara Dravya in a Pinda form whereas in Parigraha one type of food is selected at a time. Ayurveda mentions about the
importance of the Matra of Ahara and its effect on the digestion.

Matra of food also plays important role towards the Hit and Ahita Guna of food substances. Matra of Ahara depends upon the Agnibal. Agni itself varies from person to person. Thus, the food digestion capacity also differs from person to person. Person with suppressed Agni should consume less quantity of food. The appropriate amount of food easily gets digested without disturbing the equilibrium of Dhatu and Dosha. Atimatra (excessive intake) of food hampers the functioning of Jatharagni (digestive fire). Use of Hinamatra Bhojana causes loss of strength in body and finally the consumer becomes victim of various diseases. Ayurveda also explains another aspect of Matra such as considering four parts of the stomach; one should take food such that two parts of stomach gets filled by the food consumed, one part to be filled by water or other liquid material and one part should be kept free for the movement of Vayu or Gas.

5. Desha

Habitat or Desha denotes the geographic region. Ahara should be taken according to both Bhoomi Desha & Deha Desha. Bhoomi Desha are basically of three types in Ayurvedic texts i.e., Anoopa, Jangala and Sadharana. It indicates variations in the qualities of food substances due to difference in soil and climate. It may be the place of growth, movement of a substance in a particular locality like drugs grown in Himalaya are more potent and drugs which are grown in desert are less potent. In the same way, the living beings consuming light articles of food or live in desert or sandy regions or indulge in many activities are also light in nature. Desha Parikshana is one of the vital aspects in understanding patient regarding dietary habits of patients, probability of diseases related to the diet and accordingly treatment and Pathya Apathya are prescribed.

For example, a person residing in the Himalayan region, can easily consume Ushna and Ruksha Dravya. Whereas a person residing in Rajasthan can easily digest Sheeta and Snigdha Dravya. Thus, by Desha, one can understand Dravya Utpatti Sthana and Upayoga including the Saamya between these two.

6. Kaala

Before the intake of food, one must also know about the time factor (Kaala). Nityaga and Avasthika are the 2 types of Kaala for consumption of Ahara. In brief, Nityaga
Kaala depends on Ritu Satmaya. For example, the food which is Satmaya in the particular Ritu for individual is beneficial for that person. In diseased conditions, the Avasthika kaala comes into role, by intake of Ahara according to the condition of the Roga. Time is considered in terms of season, age, day time or night time.

A. Seasons - In spring season, Kapha Dosha is more predominant. Therefore, ghee, milk, dairy products and sweets should be avoided which increases Kapha Dosha. Dry, rough, hot and pungent substances which decrease Kapha Dosha may be better to eat. In summer season, Pitta Dosha is more aggravated. Therefore, bitter, hot should not be taken, as they will increase Pitta Dosha. Fruits available in this season may be consumed like grapes, watermelon. In rainy season, Vata Dosha is dominant and therefore one should consume oils, ghee, rice, wheat and sweets, sour and salty substances to balance the Vata Dosha. One should avoid taking cold or dry foods, pungent, bitter and astringent tastes at this time.

B. Age –

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.NO.</th>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>AGGRAVATED DOSHA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Childhood</td>
<td>Kapha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Young</td>
<td>Pitta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Old</td>
<td>Vata</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

C. Day and night –

In daytime –

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.NO.</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>AGGRAVATED DOSHA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>6 -10 a.m</td>
<td>Kapha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>10-2 a.m</td>
<td>Pitta</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>2-6 p.m</td>
<td>Vata</td>
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At night –

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<th>S.NO.</th>
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Therefore, diet should be adjusted to the natural constitutions and according to these timings.

7. Upayoga Samstha\textsuperscript{12}

Upayoga Samstha simply means the dietetic rules. Thus, under the pressure of time lack and also due to busy schedule one fails to concentrate on the food. These are the directions necessary for appropriate food digestion. Food should be taken in relaxed, calm and cheerful atmosphere. One should not eat, when the person is nervous, angry, anxious, or in disturbed state of mind. As well as, eating too slowly or too rapidly, eating while talking, laughing, thinking or watching television is also not advisable. Smoking or drinking too much water or any other liquid after eating is not healthy for body. Eating with full concentration and with the thought that this food is going to benefit both body and mind.

8. Upyokta\textsuperscript{13} -

It means the person who consumes the food. This means consuming food according to one’s own constitution, capacity of digestive power, the season, time of day and whether the previously taken food has been digested or not. It is termed the one who uses the Ahara Dravya, and who has the Okasatmya or Sharira Satmya.

For example – due to continuous utilization of curd it becomes Satmya to the person and is not harmful for the body of that person. Upyokta is the person who must take in to consideration all these facts of Ahara and consume food accordingly.

DISCUSSION

Ashtaharavidhivisheshayatana should be considered as most beneficial in today’s lifestyle, especially since we are lacking in the time sense, neglecting the capacity of
digestive fire, using the meal irrespective of the digestive capacity etc. One must also be aware of the bad effects of certain food processing. The honey and Ghee, individually are best for one’s health but their combination in equal quantity, is certainly harmful. Similarly, there are other such combinations. The concept of Prakriti & Karana (Samskara) helps to bring about the new, desirable and adaptable properties in food material. By analysing the Prakriti of food material, the desirable combinations (Samyoga) can be made to omit the undesirable or harmful effects of the food material. The concept of Rashi as explained above states that food taken in proper quantity is very essential. Since less quantity of food causes malnutrition while excess quantity of food leads indigestion and felling of heaviness. The Concept of Desha explains that the place of meal affects process of digestion and which particular meal is required taking in specific geographic region. The involvement of Kaala also affects nutritious value of food. Thus, season, age, time (day and night) should be considered before taking meal. Upyoga Samstha are the code & conducts for taking diet should be followed in today’s lifestyle. By considering all above said regulations of food consumption, Upyokta also play vital role i.e., a wise person should understand the good & bad outcome of right or wrong eating.

CONCLUSION –

On understanding the concept of Ashtaharvidhivisheshayatana in detail, we have come to the point that everyone should follow the rules and regulations during the meal consumption in their daily routine. The intake of Ahara in proper manner helps to balance Dosha, Dhatu and Agni. Therefore, there is a need to enlighten this concept of Ashtaharvidhivisheshayatana as explained in ancient Ayurveda classics. The adaptation of practice of the concept of Ashtaharvidhivisheshayatana will be helpful in fulfilment of both Prayojana of Ayurveda, first one being Swasthyarakshana and second is Vyadhiparimoksha.

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