



CONCEPT OF AAHAR VIDHI VIDHAN IN AYURVEDA AND MODERN SCIENCE

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ABSTRACT

In Ayurveda, *aahar* intake has been given more importance under the heading of *Aahar vidhi Vidhan*, not only Ayurveda but also Puranas say about the importance of *aahar*. Most health problems develop due to faulty eating habits and regimens. Adequate nutrition is the basic need for a healthy life without knowing proper dietary guidelines one cannot gain optimum benefit from the food consumed. So, *Acharya Charak* has given *Aahar vidhi vidhan* (dietary rules) to prevent diseases arising from faulty eating habits.

Keywords: *Aahar vidhi Vidhan*, dietary rules, ancient, contemporary science

INTRODUCTION

Aahar is the base of life. The food we eat gives our bodies the information and the materials they need to function properly. If we don't get the right food and the right information at the proper time our metabolic processes suffer and our health declines.¹ Nowadays there is an increased prevalence of lifestyle disorders in which faulty eating habits play an important role. Ayurveda is an introducing concept that health and disease both are the product of *aahar*.² *Aahara*, *Nidra*, *Brahmcharya*, these three are the sub pillars i.e., *Trayo-upasthamba* which support the body itself.³ *Aahar* supplies bioenergy to the body. The proper use of diet not only prevents diseases but plays a major role in the management of diseases. It is possible if one uses the diet considering the tri dosha, Prakriti, and *satmya* of a person as well as the *panchmahaboutik* composition of dietary substances. *Acharya Charak* mentions food as prana or the life of living beings if taken properly but if taken in a faulty manner may cause death.⁴ According to *Charak Samhita*, the life of all living things is food. The complexion, good voice, long life, understanding, happiness, satisfaction, growth, strength, and intelligence are all dependent on food.⁵ The planning of diet mentioned in our classical literature is very rational and based on certain principles. In Ayurveda, *Aahara* as well as the method of its intake both have equal importance. Due to lifestyle changes, all of us are giving the least importance to diet and dietary rules and the consequences of our eating habits and other styles of life are harmful to us.

Aahar Matra (quantity of food)

The food and the nutritional requirement from person to person varies and depends upon the status of *Agni*, *Sharirprakriti*, *age*, etc. *Acharya Sushruta* and *Acharya vagbhata*⁶ have suggested that if stomach capacity is

hypothetically divided into four parts based on its filling, one should take two parts of solid food, one part of liquid food and one part should be left empty for easy movement of *vata*.

The sequence of food intake:

Guru, *Madhura*, and *Snigdha* food should be taken initially during the course of a meal followed by *Amla*, *Lavana* *aahar*. Food which is *Ruksha*, *katu*, *Tikta*, and *Kashaya* should be taken in the last part of the meal for proper activation of *Agni*, proper absorption, and assimilation of food.⁷ In contemporary science, eating the sweet item first enables the flow of digestive secretion because it acts quickly on the taste buds and saliva. In a hungry person, a sweet also helps overpower the *vayu* in the stomach, while sour and salty tastes in the middle of the meal help stimulate the digestive fire in the small intestine. The pungent, bitter, and astringent taste help in subduing *Kapha* dosha. After taking food, it is advised to take rest for *Muhurta Matra* for proper digestion.

Food indicated for a healthy person⁸

- *Shashtika*, *shali* - carbohydrate
- *Mudga*- protein
- *Saindhva*- minerals
- *Amalaki*- vitamin C, antioxidant
- *Rainwater*- minerals
- Ghee- good fat
- Meat of animals dwelling in aired climate and honey

Dietary guidelines for food intake (*Aahar vidhi Vidhana*)⁹

Aahar is the life of a living being. A person needs *aahar* to run his life like agriculture, or business. So, all people should follow these

rules which are given by *Acharya Charak* to remain healthy and increase their longevity of life.

1. *Ushnam asniyat*
2. *Snigdham asniyat*
3. *Matravat asniyat*
4. *Jeerne asniyat*
5. *Veerya avirudham asniyat*
6. *Ishtadeshe ishtasarvopkarnam ch asniyat*
7. *Naatidrutam asniyat*
8. *Naativilambitam asniyat*
9. *Ajalpanahasan tanmanabhunjeet*
10. *Atmanamabhisamikshya bhunjeet samyak*

1. ***Ushnam asniyat* (intake warm food)**

Food is easily digested as food has to come to body temperature for digestion. *Vata* and *Kapha* are pacified while intake warm food. It is easily digestible (*Shigrapachana*), good in taste (*Swadista*), and increases digestive fire (*Agnidipak*).

In contemporary science, warm food makes the digestion process run smoother, and nutrients from hot food are more easily absorbed. Heating also kills microbes. It makes more nutrients available to the body.

2. ***Snigdham Asniyat* (diet should include fat)**

Aahar should be *snigdha* and due to this it increases *agni* and acts as *vata anuloman*, *varnaprasadan*, *balvridhikar*. It is also helpful in the digestion of food, enhances body growth, provides strength to the senses, pacifies *Vata* due to *Snigdha guna*, and also improves the complexion and glow of the body. Tail

is *Vata-Kapha shamak* and *ghrit* is *Vata-pitta shamak*.

In contemporary science, monosaturated, fatty acids help in stabilizing blood sugar levels. Omega-3 fatty acids create a greater sense of fullness for longer periods. It also stimulates muscle protein synthesis in older adults.

3. ***Matravat Asniyat* (balanced diet)**

It means eating in an adequate amount neither more nor less which is helpful in easy digestion and also have a property of *ayurvedhak*, and also doesn't hamper *Agni*. *Matra* is of two types one is *sarvagraha* (wholemound) and one is *parigrah* (amount of individual ingredient). A balanced diet should be according to *Agni* and *Bala* of the body.

In contemporary science, quantity is based on the calorific value and satiety quotient of a particular food. A balanced diet contains all the nutrients, such that protein, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins, and minerals in the right amount.

4. ***Jirne Asniyat* (meal taken after digestion of previous meal)**

It simply means eating after the digestion of the previous meal. This prevents *adhyashan* which leads to ama formation, which is the root cause of the majority of diseases. *Acharya Charak* says *kaalbhojnam arogyakaranam*¹⁰ and *ajir nabhojana* leads to *dosh prakopaka*. In contemporary science, when the previous meal has been digested properly, the gastric fire is kindled, hunger is born, the channels are clear and open, and also the peristaltic movement is normal. So, the digestion

process has its biological clock and pattern.

5. *Veeryaviruddham* *Asniyat* (incompatible food)

Eat those food articles which are agonistic in *veerya* to prevent problems arising due to *viruddhaveerya aahar* such as *kailbya*, *rakttavikar*, *grahani*, *kustha*, and *shotha* and may even cause death.¹¹ Active potency is the power of substance by which action takes place. In contemporary science, sometimes mismatching food together may cause local irritation. e.g., milk should not be consumed with salt or sour fruits and also not with fish.

6. *Ishtadeshe ishtasarvopkarnam ch Asniyat* (meal taken at proper place and with proper instruments)

A meal should be taken in a congenial place provided with all the necessary appurtenances so that the hygiene is maintained and also gives happiness to the individuals. In contemporary science, in stressful conditions, cortisol level increases so mood plays an important role in eating, and digestion of food also the digestion is predominantly a parasympathetic activity that is activated and functions when the organism is relaxed and calm. Nowadays we can see special dining rooms in the houses of the affluent class.

7. *Na atidrutam Asniyat* (not eating too fast)

Don't eat hurriedly because too fast eating can produce various problems. *Acharya Charak* says food is tasteless when it is consumed fast.

In contemporary science, too fast eating, food particle goes into the respiratory tract which can cause choking or problems like Gastroesophageal reflux disease. Flight and fright are the responses to an emergency and due to this reason, a person is very tense and such a situation is not good for food intake.

8. *Na ativilambit Asniyat* (not eating too slowly)

Avoid eating too leisurely because it is responsible for dissatisfaction. In contemporary science, too slow eating (food becomes cold) is not properly digested and may result in excess food intake, hence must be avoided.

9. *Ajalpanahasan tanmanabhunjeet* (eating without talking or laughing, mindful eating)

No talking or laughing during the meal but it should be taken with full concentration because this food goes to its places properly.

In contemporary science, eating quietly will avoid engulfing air and ensure proper eating and early satisfaction. Talking and laughing divert the mind from the meals.

10. *Aatamanamabhisamiksya bhunjeet samyak* (eating after analyzing one's needs)

Eat rightly, considering your constitution. Diet should be taken according to *agni*, *satmya*, *Bala*, and *Prakriti*. According to *Acharya Charak*, it maintains the equilibrium of *Tridosha*. In contemporary science, it helps to make choices regarding what to eat what not to eat how much to eat.

➤ **The proper time for Meal** ¹²

It is a very important aspect of dietetics that when taking food

- 1.) When he gets free of urination and defecation
- 2.) When sense organs are having light and free
- 3.) When Apana Vayu is normal and eliminated
- 4.) When 'kukshi' become light
- 5.) Body feels lightness
- 6.) When he feels hungry
- 7.) When there is Shudha udagara.

G.) *Peya* in a silver bowl (silver vessels helpful alleviate anorexia, good for eyesight)

H.) Cool boiled water in a copper vessel (boost immunity and improves the functioning of organ and metabolism)

I.) Other drinks, wines, and cordials in earthen pots

J.) Preserved chutneys in stone utensils

K.) Different preparation is dry and fried in golden plates (gold vessels are auspicious, stimulate the digestive fire, and alleviates pitta)

Arrangement of food items when we serve a meal ¹³

A.) In front of the person

- Soup of pulses in attractive and wide bowls and utensils,
- Rice in attractive trays and other food articles which are to be licked.

B.) On the left side

- All the fluid food items, soup of meat, drinking water, milk, *panaka*.

C.) On the right side

- All types of fruits, dry fruits, and other *bhaksya* and dried food items.

D.) In b/w left and right

- Eatables prepared from *Jaggery*, *Ragasadva*, and *Staka* should be served midway between the food items described above.

E.) *Ghrit* should be served in a vessel of *kantaloha* (improve strength, anemia, and jaundice)

F.) Fruit and confectionary on banana leaves and baskets (banana leaves heals ulcer and alleviates pitta)

➤ **Practice regarding taking diet** ¹⁴

One should not take food:

1. Without reciting mantras
2. Without taking a bath
3. Without washing hands, feet, and face
4. With face turned towards the north
5. In unclean dishes
6. Without offering oblations to the gods
7. Without making an offering to the departed ancestors, teachers, guests, and dependents.
8. Which is dirty
9. Not too fast, not too slow
10. Which is served by the opponents
11. Diet does not have Madhur rassa in quantity
12. Food that is heated again and again
13. Rich in salted

DISCUSSION

Good food is the most essential requirement for a healthy body. Unfortunately, hardly one or two percent of individuals in India

follow these rules of dietetics. One who won't follow will end up with lifestyle disorders like obesity, diabetes, hypertension, etc. All these rules for a diet are to be followed by every individual to attain proper health. A healthy diet helps reduce stress and negative effect on our bodies. A good diet builds solid and firm muscle, a more enduring foundation for our body by reducing oxidation and inflammation and by helping to reduce weight gain, because "what we eat we become". So, there is a need to awake people about the importance of fresh food. According to *Charaka Samhita*, the processing of substances that leads to alteration in the inherent properties of substances is known as Sanskar.¹⁵ The *aaahar-vihar* which is beneficial to the body and also gives happiness to the mind is known as *pathya* and the opposite to that is known as *apathya*. Vaidya Lolimbraj in his book "Vaidya-jeevanam" indicated the importance of *pathya aahar* by stating that if a patient intake wholesome food then there is no need for medicine and if a patient continuously consumes unwhole then there is also no need for medicine.¹⁶ Following a healthy diet in our daily routine will make us healthy because "Prevention is better than cure".

CONCLUSION

Our classics are store-houses of valuable thoughts. Viewing the above points it can be concluded that *aaahar* should be taken according to *Aahar vidhi Vidhan*. Many diseases can be prevented from arising merely due to faulty dietary habits like heart diseases, stroke, cancer, diabetes, and many more. Diet is considered the basic root cause of life. Not only diet but also method of taking diet play an important role in maintaining a healthy life.

"DEHO HI AAHAR SAMBHAVA"¹⁷

It means the human body is said to be the bio-product of food.

- The strength and complexion of a person will enhance only if he practices the correct diet and regimen.

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