

## DIETICS IN ARURVEDA W.S.R. TO ASHTAU-AHARAVIDHI-VISHESHAYATANANI

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## ABSTRACT

Aim of *Ayurveda* is maintenance of healthy state of an individual and to cure diseased. Here first preference was given to maintain healthy state of an individual, then if diseased treatment is advised. This shows that – thousands of years ago also, *Ayurveda* mentioned importance of preventive medicine. This is the peculiarity of *Ayurveda* which differentiates it from other systems of medicine which gives importance to cure of disease. Man remains healthy with appropriate foods and to gain its expected positive effects, one should think about ideal dietary methodology i.e. eight special considerations of dietary rules (*ashtau-aharavidhi - visheshayatanani*). These rules emphasizes various factors that influences diet, such as its biological properties, origin, environmental factors, season, preparations, freshness and provides logical explanation of how to adjust food according to one's *dosha* and body needs. Knowledge of dietary rules will be helpful in promotion of health and cure of diseases.

**KEYWORDS:** *Ayurveda*, Diet, *Aharavidhi*, *Visheshayatanani*.

## INTRODUCTION

*Ayurveda* is science of life, also called eternal science which deals with spiritual, psychological and physical wellbeing of an individual. In this modern era of scientific world *Ayurveda* is being rediscovered as safe and sound system of medicine and health care. Popularity of *Ayurveda* around the globe is increasing especially after COVID-19 crises.

Food is considered as one of the three important sub-pillars of life i.e. Food (*ahara*), sleep (*nidra/swapna*) and celibacy (*brahmacharya*).<sup>[1]</sup> Ancient scholars have described concept of diet (*ahara*) and its methodology (dietics) in detail. *Ayurveda* emphasizes material quality of food but places even greater emphasis on selection of food, its processing/cooking, methodology and rules of its consumption for healthy eating. Food provides nutrition which is necessary for maintaining growth. For the body development, for energy, for immunity, for replenishment of daily wear and tear of body entities, its necessary for human to eat. We cannot ignore importance of food and its methodology in our day-to-day life. It is prime requirement of every biotic entity and taken as greatest matter in the world. All medicines are found in food. The man is originated from food.<sup>[2]</sup> Foods with similar attributes replenishes and grows body entities and food with opposite qualities is responsible for to bring back overgrown body entities within

physiological limits. *Charakacharya* also mentioned that food is best for healthy status of human body. (*annam vrittikaranam shreshtham*).<sup>[3]</sup> This suggests that food can be adjusted in such a way that it fulfills body needs and brings about the homeostatic condition in the body: *Charakacharya* quoted that everything depends on food. (*samkshepane sarvam anne pratishthitam*).<sup>[4]</sup> There is no medicine like food available anywhere. Man remains healthy with appropriate ingestion of food and to gain expected positive effects of food one should pay attention towards ideal dietary methodology mentioned in *Ayurveda* i.e. eight special considerations of dietary rules (*ashtau-aharavidhi-visheshayatanani*).

## NEED OF STUDY

In present era of competition no one has time to take care of his own health. Inappropriate diet & dietary methods give rise to many public health issues. Burden of lifestyle disorders is increasing. Considering this there is need to study concept of dietics, its ideal methodology according to *Ayurveda*. Knowledge of appropriate dietary methodology and rules will help people to include them in their daily routine which will decrease health issues in society.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Collection of data from available *samhitas* especially *Charaka samhita* and text books of *Kriya-sharira*,

research papers, articles and related material available on internet. The collected data material has been analyzed and compiled to form conceptual base.

## AIM

- 1) To study concept of dietetics in *Ayurveda*
- 2) To study ideal methodology mentioned in *Ayurveda* i.e eight special considerations for dietary rules (*ashtau-aharavidhi - visheshayatanani*).

## OBJECTIVE

- 1) To stress out importance of following rules of dietetics according to *Ayurveda*.
- 2) To spread awareness about dietary methodology for promotion of health.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

**Aharavidhi** - A system, method, manner, way, arrangement, rule, law command, conduct, condition or statement for diet intake (Shabdakosha Apte).

**Aharavishesha** -- Speciality, special property, distinguished effect of *ahara vidhi*.

**Ayatana** - Cause, support, hetu etc.

Thus *ashtau aharavidhi visheshayatanai* means, the causative factors responsible for the wholesome and unwholesome effect of the methods for diet intake.<sup>[5]</sup> These *ashtau aharavidhi vishesha ayatanani* mentioned by Charakacharya are.<sup>[6]</sup>

- 1) *Prakriti* - Nature of food articles.
- 2) *Karana* - Method of processing food article.
- 3) *Samyoga* - Combination of food articles.
- 4) *Rashi* - Quantity.
- 5) *Desha* - Habitate.
- 6) *Kala* - Time.
- 7) *Upayogasamstha*- Rules governing intake of food.
- 8) *Upayokta*- Wholesomeness of the individual who consumes food.

### 1) *Prakriti*<sup>[7]</sup> (Nature of the food article.)

Natural qualities of food and medicine are expected here. *Prakriti* indicates the nature of substance. E.g. *Masha* (black gram) is heavy (*guru*) to digest whereas *mudga* is light (*laghu*) to digest. In the same way meat of *shukar* (boar) is heavy and that of deer (*ena*) is light in nature. Thus nature of substance must be considered and according to that one should adjust diet to maintain health.

### 2) *Karana*<sup>[8]</sup> (Method of processing)

It is processing (*samskara*) of inherent attributes which results in transformation of qualities of food. Application of various methods like soaking, churning, cooking, roasting, washing etc. change the quality of food.

- **Toya samskara** -Cleaning and washing of food material before cooking to remove impurities.
- **Agni samskar** -Raw food is heavy to digest as compared to cooked food.
- **Manthana Samskar** - Curd (*Dadhi*) is heavy to digest and also *shothkrut*, but when it undergoes churning process it becomes buttermilk (*takra*) which is light (*laghu*) and also *shothaghna* (reduces *shotha*).
- **Kala samskara**- Potency of honey & ghee increases with time. Fruits, vegetables should be eaten fresh.

### 3) *Samyoga*<sup>[9]</sup> -(Combination of substances)

Combination of two or more food articles results in the manifestation of special qualities, which can not be achieved by using same articles separately. Combination altogether produces different qualities other than qualities of individual food articles which may be either harmful or useful too. We should consider this aspect of *samyoga* while preparing food. Concept of incompatible diet (*viruddha ahara*) also based on *samyoga*.

- **Honey and ghee** -*Samyoga* of equal combination is harmful. Either they should be combined in unequal proportion or should be eaten separately.
- **Milk and sour food**-This combination is also harmful.
- **Honey, Milk and Fish**- They are healthy for us when eaten separately but when combined together causes *kushtha*.

### 4) *Rashi*<sup>[10]</sup> (Quantity)

It is nothing but the quantum of food to be taken. An individual should always consume proper quantity of food (*matrashi syat*).<sup>[11]</sup> The amount which without disturbing the normalcy of *doshas* & *dhatu*s of the body, gets digested in proper time is to be considered as proper quantity of food. This quantity may vary according to consumers *deha prakriti*, *agni bala*, *desha*, *kala* etc. Therefore this aspect of diet is also taken into consideration.

The proper quantity of food also depends on nature of food. E.g. If food article is heavy (*guru*) half of the stomach capacity is to be filled up and in case of light (*laghu*) food, excessive intake is not conducive to maintain power of digestion metabolism.<sup>[12]</sup> There are two types of *Rashi*

- **Sarva graha** - Food taken in its total quantity of all things involved is known as *sarvagraha* e.g. combined quantity of chapati, rice, curry/ sabji.
- **Pari graha** - Separate measurement of individual food article involved e.g. quantity of proteins, carbohydrates etc.

Both types of *Rashi* are essential for proper development of body & health of user.

**5) Desha<sup>[13]</sup>** (Habitat / Place)

*Ayurveda* considered two types of *desha* viz- *Bhoomi desha* & *Deha desha*

- **Bhoomi desha** - The place where the drugs & dietary substances grow, as well as where the individual using food articles was born or is residing. According to *bhoomidesha* properties of food articles may vary. E.g. Food grown in the Himalayas are heavier than the food grown in the desert or in sandy area.
- **Deha Desha** - This refers to body of the individual who consumes the food. Selection of food can be adjusted according dietary habits, *prakriti*, *agnibala*, *avastha* etc. of consumer.

**6) Kala<sup>[14]</sup>** Kala are of two types.

- **Nityaga** - Here *ahara* is consumed according to *rutusatmya*. Eg. During *Varsha rutu*, aggravation (*prokopa*) of *Vata* occurs due to cold climate, therefore *vataghna*, hot, sweet, sour and salty food is suggested in *varsha ritucharya* (regime).
- **Avasthik** - Here *ahara* is consumed according *avastha* (stage) of disease and condition of body either healthy or diseased.eg. In *Nav jwara langhana* is indicated for 7 days and in *jirna jwara brihana* is indicated.

**7) Upayog samstha<sup>[15]</sup>** (Dietary rules)

These are the rules governing the intake of food. One should eat only when previous food is digested properly. These rules are also known as *ahara-vidhi-vidhana*.<sup>[16]</sup>

1. Food should be warm.
2. It should be unctuous.
3. It should be taken in proper quantity.
4. It must be taken after digestion of previous meal.
5. No Contradictory (potency) food items should be taken together.
6. Food should be taken at proper place with proper accessories.
7. One should not eat very fast or very slow.
8. Food intake should be with concentration
9. One should not talk or laugh while eating.
10. One should pay attention towards himself and and eat as per own requirement/needs.

**8) Upayokta<sup>[17]</sup>** (one who eats)

*Upayokta* is the individual who is using foods. One should asses and contemplates about one's own constitution, habits (*okasatmya*) and eats accordingly.

**DISCUSSION**

*Acharya Charaka* quoted importance of food - All living beings are sustained because of food, all living animals yearn for food. Food provides them color, glow, good speech, life, innovations, happiness, satisfaction, nourishment, strength, intelligence etc. Food when consumed in proper manner maintains health of healthy

person and helps to cure diseases of diseased. This dietary methodology (i.e. eight special considerations) is peculiarity of *Ayurveda* science. The appropriate diet when taken in proper manner can lead a better health. On the other hand, appropriate diet if not taken properly can lead to diseases. Therefore *ashtau-aharavidhi-visheshayaranani* are most important from preventive and curative aspect.

**CONCLUSION**

There is no medicine like food available anywhere; man remains healthy with appropriate diet. There is no point in taking drugs without considering appropriate diet and dietary methodology. Unhealthy food habits are leading contributors for increasing burden of life style disorders. It is alarming for our society to wake up, this is the time to recall our ancient science. *Ayurveda* dietics methodology, rules must be followed by everyone to achieve aim of *Ayurveda* i.e. "swasthasya swasthya rakshanam and aturasya vikar prshamanam." A wise person should understand good & bad outcomes of right & wrong eating habits. He should ask himself- What is good for me? and What is to be avoided? It is responsibility of every *Ayurveda* physician to make common public aware about importance of dietics methodology and rules mentioned in *Ayurveda*.

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