

IMPORTANCE OF PRINCIPLES RELATED TO AHARA AS PREVENTIVE AND CURATIVE MEASURE: AN AYURVEDA REVIEWDr. S. N. Tiwari*¹ and Dr. Shivshankar Soni²¹Associate Prof., Govt. Ayurved College, Rewa (M.P.) India.²Associate Prof., Shivalik Ayurved College, Azamgarh (U.P.) India.***Corresponding Author: Dr. S. N. Tiwari**

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ABSTRACT

Ahara (food) is one of the most important pillars of healthy living and health status of human being mainly depends upon the quality of food. Physical & mental strength, complexion, *Oja*, longevity & energy comes from the consumed *Ahara*. It is also believed that *Rasa*, *Virya*, *Vipaka* and *Guna* of *Ahara* contribute significantly towards the equilibrium of *Dosha* and *Dhatu*. The healthy diet not only served as nutritional source but also boost immunity & strength thus protect from diseases & infection. Ayurveda described various concepts related to *Ahara* such as; *Virudha-Ahara* and *Ahara Vidhi* which should be practiced in day to day life to acquire optimum benefits of food. Considering importance of *Ahara* present article deals with various aspects and pathological considerations related to the *Ahara*.

KEYWORDS: Ayurveda, Samhita Siddhant, Ahara, Ahara Vidhi, Virudha-Ahara.**INTRODUCTION**

Ayurveda is traditional Indian system encompasses various health related principles described by the ancient *Rishis* or practitioners. These basic principles of Ayurveda mentioned in classical *Samhitas* such as; *Sushrut Samhita*, *Charaka Samhita* along with other classical text like; *Ashtanga Samgraha* & *Ashtanga Hridaya*.^[1-6] Ayurveda mainly deals with health related issues of human being and mentioned various principles for the management of good health status. *Ahara* is one of the principles described by Ayurveda as a pillar of healthy living. *Ahara* not only provides energy for biochemical processes that occur inside the body but it also boost growth & development process, improves repairing and regeneration mechanism and strengthen immune system. It is believe that consumption of balanced diet help to maintain healthy physical and mental status while unwholesome diet can induces various pathological ailments.^[3-7]

The quality of food affects balances of *Tridosha* (*Vata*, *Pitta* & *Kapha*) and consumption of unwholesome diet may imbalance *Tridoshic* components that further leads abnormal physiological functioning of body. Therefore it is prerequisite to consume good quality of *Ahara* to maintain normal health status, additionally consideration of principles like; *Virudha-Ahara* and *Ahara Vidhi* in daily routine also suggested for health benefits. Present article described importance of *Ahara* and its principles in a view to explore this area for future scope.^[6-9]

Ayurveda food for specific *Dosha*

Ayurveda recommended specific diet for balancing particular *Dosha*, in this regard it is suggested that one should consume grains, butter, vegetables and nuts for balancing *Vata Dosha*. Similarly salads, cooked grains, seeds and milk suggested for balancing *Pitta Dosha* while *Kapha Dosha* can be pacify by consuming corn flour, buckwheat, soups, quinoa and hot food items.

Ayurveda also described some food items that can vitiate *Dosha* therefore need to be avoided. In this regards it is suggested not to consume raw salads, fruits, beans, salty foods and soft drink that can deteriorate *Vata*. Similarly hot, sour, spicy & fermented foods, uncooked foods and heavy food items can vitiate *Pitta* thus one should avoid excess consumption of such food items. The *Kapha* vitiation can be observed during excessive consumption of cheese, meat, rice & cold food stuffs.^[8-11]

Properties of *Ahara* as per Ayurveda

The *Guna* and *Rasa* of *Ahara* contribute towards the qualities of foods and it is recommended that *Ahara* should be consumed as per its *Guna* and *Rasa* that is compatible to the person of specific constitution (*Prakriti*). *Ahara* generally offers six types of *Rasa* including *Madhura*, *Amla*, *Lavana*, *Katu*, *Thikta* and *Kashaya Rasa*; these *Rasa* offers specific health benefits. The effect of *Ahara Rasa* on *Tridoshas* & *Dhatu*s helps to promote growth and repair mechanism and maintain normal physiological functioning of body. Ayurveda also

correlates *Panchamahabhoota* elements with *Ahara rasa*; it is believe that each *Rasa* associated with specific *Panchamahabhoota* elements as follows:

- *Prithvi & Aap*: *Madhura Rasa*
- *Prithvi & Agni*: *Amla Rasa*
- *Aap & Agni*: *Lavana Rasa*
- *Agni & Vayu*: *Katu Rasa*
- *Vayu & Akash*: *Thikta Rasa*
- *Prithvi & Vayu*: *Kashaya Rasa*

Role of unwholesome diet (*Virudha-Ahara*) in disease pathogenesis

Ayurveda described that consumption of incompatible *Ahara* can initiates pathogenesis of various disorders including disorders of endocrine system, digestive

system, immune system, circulatory system and nervous system. **Table 1** described various health ailments that can occur due to the consumption of unwholesome diet. Ayurveda recommended some food combinations (*Virudha-Ahara*) which should be avoided to prevent any chances of health ailments. In this regards it is suggested not to consume *Kurchika & Curd* with fish. *Dadhi*, *Kurchika* and *Avi dugdha* along with *Avi grita* should not be consumed. Germinated grains & uncooked *Moolaka* also contradicted. One should not consume cold food stuffs just after consuming hot food. Ayurveda promptly recommended that one should consume food by considering concept of *Kala*, *Desha*, *Ritu* and *Prakriti*.^[8,12]

Table 1: Diseases associated with unwholesome diet/incompatible foods.

S. No.	Unwholesome diet/incompatible foods	Associated diseases
1	<i>Asnigdha Ahara</i>	Diminishes <i>Bala</i> and produces constipation
2	<i>Atisnigdha Ahara</i>	<i>Hridayagaurava</i> , <i>Praseka</i> , <i>Alasya</i> and <i>Aruchi</i>
3	<i>Atiruksha Ahara</i>	Dryness of skin, constipation and lethargy
4	<i>Atiushna Ahara</i>	<i>Trushna</i> , <i>Daha</i> and <i>Mada</i>
5	<i>Abhojana</i>	<i>Pandu Roga</i> , weakness, diminishes strength and fatigue
6	<i>Atibhojana</i>	<i>Ajeerna</i> , <i>Udarshoola</i> , obesity and lethargy
7	<i>Asatmya</i> and <i>Vishamashana Bhojana</i>	<i>Grahani dosha</i>
8	Eating food too quickly	<i>Vimargagamanam</i> and <i>Annaja Hikka</i>
9	Consumption of excessive sour and spicy foods	<i>Shukra Dhatu Dushiti</i>
10	<i>RutuVaishamy</i> and <i>Kala Vaishamy</i>	<i>Agnidosha</i> .

Importance of *Ahara Vidhi* (standards method of preparation and consumption of foods)

Ahara Vidhi plays vital for acquiring maximum beneficial effects of *Ahara* that describes method of preparation & consumption of food in most appropriate way; *Samskara Vidhi*. The ancient practitioner of India described different groups of *Ahara* as *Ahara Varga* & *Kritanna Varga* and concept of food processing specified on the basis of *Ahara Varga*. The concept of *Ahara Vidhi* suggested best way of food processing as follows (by *Charaka*):

1. *Mamsa* can be processed as *Rasa*, *Veshavara* and *Khaanishka*.
2. *Shami Dhanya* can be processed as *Soopa*, *Paayasa*, *Parpata* and *Khadayoosha*
3. *Panaka*, *Raga* and *Shadava* used for *Fala Varga*
4. Vegetables can be processed as *Shaaka*, *Khada*
5. *Rasaalaa*, *Koorchika*, *Dadhimanda* and *Kilata* for *Gorasa*
6. *Kaambalika*, *Aasuta* and *Upadamsha* for *Harita Ahara Varga*.

Ayurveda mentioned various types of processed foods and specified them on the basis of their physical appearance such as; *Manda*, *Peya*, *Vilepi*, *Yavagu* and *Krishara* (**Figure 1**). These categories of processed foods offer specific health benefits i.e; *Manda* offers carminative and digestive qualities, *Peya* help to nourishes tissue, *Vilepi* possesses excretory benefits,

Yavagu improves strength while *Krishara* acts as supplements.

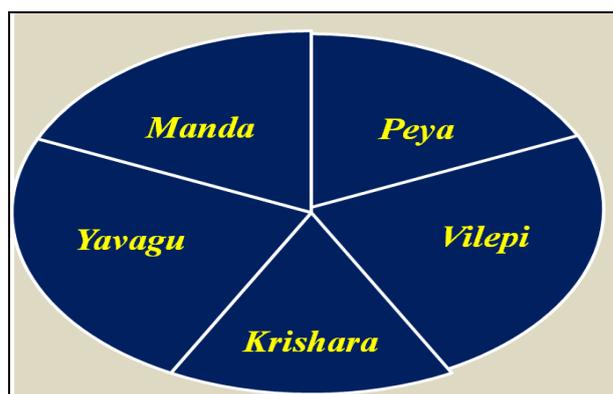


Figure 1: Processed foods on the basis of their physical appearance.

Beneficial effects of *Ahara Vidhi*

The consumption and digestive utilization of raw food stuff is very difficult therefore food processing is very important to acquire nutritious value of food. *Ahara Vidhi* also converts food into digestible form therefore it is very essential to process food appropriately before its consumption. The processing of food in specific forms (*Ahara Vidhi*) boost inherent qualities of *Aharadravya*, enhance palatability, offer favorable transformations of food, *Aharadravya* becomes free from toxins, improve digestible and edible properties of food stuffs.

Ahara Vidhi involves various methods of food processing including; frying, boiling, cooking and drying, etc. The use of appropriate food processing techniques not only restores nutritious value but also imparts some medicinal value of processed foods. On the other hand consumption of improperly processed food may results vitiation of *Doshas*, *Dhatu Dushti* and production of *Ama*. The diseases such as constipation, abdomen pain, diarrhea and gas trouble may occur due to the consumption of improperly processed food stuffs.

CONCLUSION

Ayurveda described *Ahara* as one of the pillars of healthy well being and it is believe that if one consume *Ahara* in proper manner then he/she never get affected by illness. In this regards it can be say that *Ahara* act as preventive measure and restrict disease invasion inside the body. Ayurveda also emphasized that consumption of unwholesome diet enhance chances of disease *Ahara* pathogenesis and imparts many health ailments. In this regards ayurveda described concept of *Virudha-Ahara* which means food combinations and incompatible food that should be avoided for maintaining normal physiological functioning of body. *Ahara Vidhi* is another concept described by ancient ayurveda practitioners that dealt food processing. The *Ahara Vidhi* encompasses information regarding methods of preparation and consumption of food materials so to acquire optimum health benefits of foods. Finally it can be concluded that *Ahara* is very important for various biochemical and physiological process of body and well being. Article also emphasized that one should consider various principles related to *Ahara* like; *Virudha-Ahara* and *Ahara Vidhi* to acquire nutritious and medicinal value of food materials.

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