



Conceptual review of Ahara Vidhi in Ayurveda

Guruprasad K.

Professor and HOD, Department of Swasthavritta and Yoga,
Sri Jayendra Saraswathi Ayurveda College & Hospital,
Department of Ayurveda of Sri Chandrashekarendra Saraswathi Viswa Mahavidyalaya
Nazarathpet, Chennai – 600123,

Author Correspondence: E- Mail – punithakb@gmail.com; Mobile number - 07200715452

ABSTRACT:

Ayurveda is the eternal science of life and a comprehensive natural health care system that originated long back in *India*. *Ayurveda* is a very well-renowned medical discipline on parity with conventional Western medicine and other recognized medical systems in *India*. This medical system is expansively used as a primary health care system in *India*, and growing universally too. *Ayurveda* has unique concepts and methodologies to maintain and promote health, this system deals with various characteristics of health and well-being in their diverse aspects, such as happy life, sustainable contentment and longevity. For every living being in the world including plants food is an essential phenomenon for life which restores energy. Ancient scholars have given importance to *Ahara* and discussed different types of *Ahara* with their significance and role in the preservation of

positive health. It has been observed that all living beings have the advantage of *Ahara* to keep their body and mind energetic. *Ayurveda* is one of the conventional systems of medicine that offers extensive insights about appropriate *Ahara* to maintain health. *Ahara* is extremely important in the preservation and promotion of health based on the exceptional explanation in classical texts. This is a conceptual article therefore briefly reviews *Ayurvedic* texts to draw awareness to necessitate deeper engagement with conventional knowledge concerning *Ahara* and health.

KEY WORDS: *Ayurveda, Ahara, Swastha, Agni, Dosha, Ahara Vidhi Vidhana, Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana.*

INTRODUCTION:

Ayurveda is a well-known system of medicine and knowledge gifted by great

Indian sages to the mankind which spotlight its attention on preservation of health of a healthy individual. *Ayurveda* is science of life or knowledge of life which explains regarding right eating and right living in the name of regimens, *Ahara vidhi vidhana* and *Ahara Vidhi visheshayatana* to protect health. In conventional sense it is not merely a system of medicine in curing diseases, it is also a process of life that educate us relating to enhance and protect mental and physical health and attain longevity. Health in general known as absence of illness and a person free from diseases is considered as healthy. The primary aim of *Ayurveda* includes protecting of health in healthy person and treating diseased individual^[1]. The essential concept of *Ayurveda* also comprise 'prevention is better than cure' definition of health given by world health organization was 'Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely an absence of disease or infirmity'^[2]. Although general aims of *Ayurveda* is protecting the person getting diseases by maintaining balanced condition of *Doshas* in the body, as well maintenance of healthy state of body and protection of health mentioned as initiator in *Ayurveda* and this is the essential concept for healthy society. In classical texts of *Ayurveda* *Ahara* plays important role in preventing diseases and promoting health.

कालार्थं कर्मणां योगो हीनमिथ्यातिमात्रकः।
सम्यग्योगश्च विज्ञेयो रोगारोगैक कारणम्॥^[3]

The entire creature on the earth is subjected to the course of constant transformation *kala* which refers to time this etiological factor for disease and health is natural and

inevitable. Various seasons, Time of the day, different stages of life each and every one is correspond to dissimilar characteristic of time producing versatile consequences on human body, the changes in *Doshas* like *Chaya*, *Prakopa* and *Prashamana*, also changes in human life childhood, adulthood and old age are certain factors for disease occurrence. Hence for this purpose appropriate *Ahara* in accordance with *Kala* is indicated in classics to prevent diseases and promote health.

धर्मार्थं काम मोक्षाणां आरोग्यं मूलमुत्तमम्।
रोगास्तस्यापहर्तारिः श्रेयसो जीवितस्य च॥

Chaturvidha Purusharthas are the four absolute objectives of human life those are *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kama* and *Moksha*, to accomplish these objectives individual should require healthy life, lacking of the health individual cannot achieve these four objectives of life.^[4] Consequently for better health healthy habits are required; to achieve this superior health individual should follow the principles of *Ayurveda* and consume appropriate foods which are mentioned in classical texts of *Ayurveda*.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:

Aim of this study is to put together all available references from *Ayurvedic* classical texts and other ancient texts regarding *Ahara* and health to make easy understanding of topic.

Evaluate the importance of *Ahara* in *Ayurveda* classics, and also converse the significant role of *Ahara* in promotion and maintenance of health.

MATERIALS AND METHODS:

This article is conceptual, hence all available references from Ancient literature have been searched, collected and compiled also available websites for *Ahara* have been searched for this article and analyzed for better understanding of *Ahara* and wellbeing.

To conclude the study, all available *Ayurvedic* literature referred, and humble effort has been made to draw conclusion.

CONCEPTS OF AHARA:

Ahara in *Ayurvedic* context deals with separate branch considered beneath *Swasthavritta*, which comprises of two words *Swastha* and *Vritta*, The dictionary meaning of prefix *SWA* is one's own, belonging to one self, ^[5] suffix *STHA* is standing, staying, abiding, being, and existing ^[6]. *Swasthya* is self-reliance or self-dependence ^[7]. Another word *Vritta* denotes living by one's own exertions ^[8]. On the whole the meaning is self-maintenance and its implementation is called as *Swasthavritta*. This subject also deals with *Pathya* and *Apathya* of *Ahara* in accordance with *Roga* and *Rogi*.

The maintenance of health and prevention of diseases can be accomplished through appropriate food and life style which are enlightened in the name of *Trayopasthambha* in classical texts of *Ayurveda*. *Ahara*, *Nidra* and *Brahmacharya* are three pillars of life plays significant role in maintenance of health in living beings ^[9]. In above said three pillars *Ahara* is an important factor which gives strength, enhances vitality, makes body study,

increase enthusiasm and memory, augments lifespan, luster and *Ojas* and improves *Agni*. *Ayurveda* provide special importance on *Ahara* and describe that healthy nutrition nourishes body, mind and soul. *Ayurveda* says human body and diseases that which afflicts both are the product of *Ahara*, this has been considered as one of the key pillars of life in *Ayurveda*.

DEFINITIONS OF AHARA:

Ayurveda entitle *Ahara* as *Mahabhaishajya* which means the superior medicine, individual can stay healthy and prevent diseases by consuming right food and follow the right kind of life styles as per there need in accord with season and cycle of nature. In *Shabdakalpadruma* *Ahara* has been defined as substance which is to be taken in or swallowed through the throat. Any substance which passes through the throat is called as *Ahara* mentioned in *Vaidyaka Shabdasinghu*, Approximately each and every classical texts opines the same as substance which is to be swallowed through the throat is called as *Ahara*. Significance of *Pathya* is told in *Bhagavat purana* and in *Manusmriti* Importance of respecting *Ahara* is mentioned in same context *Acharya* stated that one should never criticize *Ahara*.

AHARA VIDHI AND VIDHANA:

Individual should need to now *Ahara vidhi* and *Vidhana* to maintain better health and prevent diseases, in contrary improper intake of *Ahara* may leads to diseases. *Ayurveda* has given equal importance for both, types of *Ahara* and method of intake. Food is most important requirement of all the living beings, present day there is increased incidences of life style disorders for this

improper dietary habits plays major role. Method of intake of *Ahara* described in *Ayurveda* classics is the most important foundation for *Ayurvedic* dietetics; food which is consumed in accordance to prescribed method will enhance the health and prevent life style disorders, hence those *Ahara Vidhi Vidhanas* are enlightened beneath ^[10].

In *Ahara Vidhi Vidhana* first and foremost thing is *Ushnamasniyat*, means individual has to consume food freshly prepared and warmth. By means of *Ushna Ahara Agni* will stimulated, individual will feel the good taste, *Vatanulomana* and reduction of *Kapha* are accomplished. One should consume *Snigdha Ahara*, because *Snigdha Ahara* which is consumed is easy to digest, and also due to *Agnideepana* digestion will be quick. Diet should include with fat because it improves taste of food, enhances body growth and improves strength. *Ayurveda* dietary guidelines also mention *Matraamashniyath* means amount of diet and also all varieties of food, can be called as balanced diet which includes all types' micro and macro nutrients, in addition *Matra* can also quantity of food which is acceptable for *Agni* and *Bala* of the body. Most important dietary regulation described in *Ayurveda* is *Jeernamasneeyath*, individual should consume food after digestion of previous meal and the root cause of majority of diseases is formation of *Ama* due to *Adhyashana* (Eating before digestion of previous food), by following this dietary rules individual can prevent diseases of *Ama*. It is very essential one should take *Veerya Avirudha Ahara* to prevent the diseases arising from *Veerya virudha Ahara*.

Ishtadeshe and Ishtasarvopakaranam Ashniyath which means meal should take at proper place and proper utensils, by following this hygiene will be maintained and one can consume food without stress. Another essential dietary regulations mentioned in classical text is *Nathidruthamashneeyath* means one should not eat too fast, eating fast may produce various problems like food particle may enter in to respiratory tract and causes chocking and other respiratory problems akin to infections. Contradictory to this also person should not eat too slow which called as *Nathivilambhithamashniyath*, if food is taken slowly it will not digested properly which leads to improper digestion, also individual does not get satisfied hence chances of eating more food, as well eating slowly food will gets cold. Dietary regulations in *Ayurveda* also includes *Ajalpanahasana Tanmanabhunjeeth* meaning is individual should not talk and laugh during eating food one should consume food with full concentration, more over *Acharya Charaka* mentions even *Pathyahara* consumed in appropriate quantity will not be digested properly and food taken in *Chintha, Krodha, Bhaya* and *Dukha* not at all nourishes body. Last but not the least one in dietary rules is *Atmanambhisamiksyas Bhunjeeth Samyaka* is food should be taken according to *Satmya, Prakrithi, Agni* and *Bala*, eating after analyzing individuals need is very essential, taking in consideration of age, sex and nature of work and diseased condition one should consume food.

AHARA VIDHI VISHESHAYATANA:

Dietetic consideration is a remarkable component of each and every prescription in *Ayurvedic* treatment. The majority of the time dietary management is itself a complete treatment, hence applying of appropriate diet in treatment is most important factor for every clinician. *Ayurveda* suggest various fundamental dietary guidelines which comprise selecting of appropriate food, incorporation of food, method of food preparation, quality and quantity of food, nature of consumer, geographical and environmental circumstances these are the factors explained in *Ayurveda* classics in an exceptionally systematic and scientific manner which is named as *Ashta vidha Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana*. Therefore at this juncture those eight factors related to food intake are discussed in detail beneath.

Healthy food is reliant up on a number of factors, how we eat is as essential as what we eat hence qualitative characteristics of food is also particularly important for dietary management. Each individual have basic *Prakrithi*, this will be determined at time of birth and this denotes person's physical, Physiological and psychological behavior. Correspondingly all the food substances comprise its own *Prakrithi* this is a natural characteristic of a substance which is inherited naturally for example black gram is *guru guna* property and green gram is *laghu guna* property, also meet of deer is having property of *laghu* and meat of *shukara* is *Guru*. Hence people should have self-discipline and awareness regarding food constitutions. The fundamental causes for diseases are wrong food habits, improper life style, lack of awareness regarding one's own physical constitution and constitution of

food substances. For instance, individual having *kapha vriddi lakshanas* supposed to avoid *Guru* and *Abhishyandhi Ahara*. Therefore, every individual should consume food by considering about their *Prakrithi* and food constitution, to stay healthy individual should consume food of contrary to their *Prakrithi*.^[11]

Karana is also called as *Samskara* means processing of food substance, *Karana* is imparting special properties to food stuffs by making or refining of natural products. Those various *Samskaras* are *Jalasyama*, *Agnisamyoga*, *Shoucha*, *Manthana*, *Desha*, *Kala*, *Bhavana*, *Kalaprakarsha* and *Bhajana*. These food processes will carry to enhance the properties of food substances and to achieve desirable changes by eliminating *Dhoshas* present in natural food stuffs^[12]. The most important factor of diet consideration is *Samyoga*, the combination of two or more food substances might result in manifestation of unusual qualities, thus while preparing the food it is supposed to be considered that the component of food substances must be compatible to each other and should mixed appropriately together. Due to lack of awareness regarding potency of food substances people use to mix food components which could incompatible to each other they might produce harmful results to the body. In present day people choose food on their taste but not on nutritional values and moreover everyone is unaware about *Viruddhahara*, explained in *Ayurveda* texts which evidently mentions about incompatible food combinations and their harmful consequences on body^[13]. Another important factor of *Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana* is *Rashi*, it is a quantity

which consists of *Sarvagraha* and *Parigraha* means in account of whole substance or unit and part of substances or single part in case of combination of multiple ingredients respectively, which ascertain the effects of food substances taken in proper and improper quantity ^[14]. Individual should consume food according to one's own *Agnibala*, *Ahara* which is consumed more quantity leads to *Agni Mandya* intern leads to several diseases since it is told in *Ayurveda* texts '*Rogah Sarvepi Mandagni*'. Hence person who wants stay healthy should consume food in appropriate quantity and intensity. One more significant aspect of diet rules is *Desha*, which represents geographical region of food substances is local or widespread and thus suitable to ^[15]. There are basically three types of *Desha* explained in *Ayurveda* texts those are *Jangala*, *Anoopa* and *Sadharana*, each and every region have their own specific environment and specific food in accord to *Desha*. Individual who lives in particular region becomes *Satmya* to the environmental factors and food substances grown in that region therefore usually they are not vulnerable to diseases of particular environment and food substances of those region. Hence individual travelling to other regions gradually adjust to particular region by slowly adopting to *Ahara* and *Vihara* those regions to live delightfully. *Kala* plays significant role in dietary management, *kala* is an etiological factor for disease and health is natural and predictable. Different seasons, dissimilar time in a day, various stages of life all these are correspond to distinct characteristics of time producing versatile consequences on human body, the changes

in *Doshas* like *Chaya*, *Prakopa* and *Prashamana*, as well changes in human life that is *Avasthika kala* ^[16] those are *Bala*, *Yuva* and *Vridhdha* are certain factors for disease occurrence. Therefore, for this purpose appropriate *Ahara* in accordance with *Kala* and the age of an individual is indicated in classics to prevent diseases and promote health. Another dietary rule in *Ahara vidhi visheshayatana* is *Upayoga samstha*, sometimes food should be consumed for specific purpose and particular condition may also be termed as rules of intake. This depends upon characteristics of food digestion, basically it indicates when to consume food and when not to ^[17], *Ayurveda* advocates individual be supposed to consume when previous meal is digested properly. The last but not the least in dietary consideration is *Upayoktha*, individual who consumes food everything depends on him he is the one is termed as *Upayoktha*. Habituation developed by the practice is called as *Okasatmya*, ^[18] some of the food substances are habitual to the consumer by constant consumption of such substances even contraindicated to his bodily constitution. Individual should think of his bodily constitution and according to climatical changes consume the food substances accordingly.

RESULTS:

In subsequent to referring all available classical texts in *Ayurveda* the concepts of *Ahara* in *Ayurveda* are more evidently and elaborately explained. Regarding *Ahara Vidhi Vidhana* and *Ashta Vidha Ahara Visheshayatana* are described in detail in classical texts of *Ayurveda*, individual who

follows these dietary prescriptions they can maintain *Dhoshha* and *Dhathu Samyata* as prime aim of attaining superior health, this equilibrium condition of *Dhatus* is termed as *Arogatha* or devoid of diseases. The health is also depends upon other factors like *Agni*, excretory products, *Vihara*, Daily regimens and seasonal regimens, therefore considering all these factors and following dietary principles of *Ayurveda* one can stay healthy.

DISCUSSION:

The prime significance of *Ayurveda* is to preserve and promote the health of healthy individual and alleviate the diseases in sick person. *Ayurveda* offer several tools to maintain and augment the health and attain state of healthiness. Tools like *Ahara Vidhi Vidhana* and *Ahara vidhi Visheshayatana* are indicated for promotion of health additionally *Acharyas* given importance for *Pathya* and *Apathya* of *Ahara* and *Vihara*. Significance of *Nityasevaniya Ahara Dravyas* and *Rasayana Dravyas* by consuming regularly individual can enhance immunity and intern promotes health.

Universe is moving through unanticipated circumstances of health issues, because diseases are gradually becoming a major troublesome to each and every developed and developing country. The increase in life style diseases like Diabetes, Hypertension, and obesity further many more diseases are burden to the country in the terms of morbidity and mortality, these life style disorders will hamper growth and development of the country. Irrespective of the rapid growth of medical science, there are permanent rise in health associated issues, owing to increase in life style disease

factors in world community people started paying attention to health and its enhancement and prevention of diseases. Supporting to above said explanation people conscious about importance of positive health in fact individuals are unaware about actual meaning of health.

Classical texts of *Ayurveda* consider significant aim of *Ayurveda* is to maintenance of superior health in support of this our *Acharyas* have explained several concepts to maintain health in different circumstance. Health is depending on the *Prakrithi* of an individual, furthermore composition of *Dhoshas* and *Dhathu* is depends upon individuals *Prakrithi*. Consumption of *Ahara* and following of *Vihara* which is unsuitable to body constitution may imbalance *Doshas*, considering all these factors individual should follow principles of *Ayurveda* regarding dietary considerations and adopt in their lifestyle to maintain healthiness.

आरोग्यं विद्वता सज्जनमैत्री महाकुले जन्मा

स्वाधीनतां च पुंसां महदैश्वर्यं विनाप्यर्थैः॥^[19]

This quote from *Vaidyakiya Subhasitha Sahithya* explains that health, knowledge, friendship of virtuous people, being born in an esteemed family, individual liberty or have a freedom to make individual preference these are the possessions that person can achieve even without money. Therefore, obviously this will indicate health cannot be achieved only by money, it needs something besides which are evidently mentioned in *Ayurvedic* contexts. Intellectual person supposed to listen to *Aphthopadesha* and pursue *Ayurveda*

literature to accomplish positive health, maintain and promote health of an individual.

CONCLUSION:

Ayurveda constantly emphasizes on preventive aspects rather than treating the diseases, additionally pays more attention on avoiding factors which cause diseases. *Ayurveda* is not merely a medical system which treats the diseases moreover a conventional system of medicine which teaches everyone to living by way of positive health. This system recommends multifaceted concepts of health, which markedly describes significance of health and healthiness. Moreover individual who follows principles of *Ayurveda* like *Ahara Vidhi Vidhana* and *Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana* as explained in literatures without deviating individual will forever keep pace with physically, mentally and socially healthy.

REFERENCES:

1. Vaidya Yadavji Trikamji Acharya, Editor, Charaka Samhitha by Agnivesha Revised by Charaka and Dridhabala, Ayurveda Deepika commentary of Chakrapanidatta, Sutrasthana 30/26, Reprint 2007, Choukamba Prakashana, Varanasi, 2007, pp 187.
2. K Park, Park's textbook of Preventive and social Medicine, Twenty second Edition, M/s Bhanarasidas Bhanot, Jabalpur (M.P), 2013, PP 13.
3. Dr T Sreekumar, Ashtanga Hridaya, Sutrasthana 1/20, Vol I, Reprint

2007, Harisree Hospital, Trissur, 2007, pp 47.

4. Vaidya Yadavji Trikamji Acharya, Editor, Charaka Samhitha by Agnivesha Revised by Charaka and Dridhabala, Ayurveda Deepika commentary of Chakrapanidatta, Sutrasthana 1/15, Reprint 2007, Choukamba Prakashana, Varanasi, 2007, pp 6.
5. Vaman Shivaram Apte, The students Sanskrit English Dictionary, Second edition, Motilal Banarasidass Publishers Private Limited, Varanasi, 2000, pp 630.
6. Ibid, pp 631.
7. Ibid, pp 633.
8. Ibid pp 631.
9. Vaidya Yadavji Trikamji Acharya, Editor, Charaka Samhitha by Agnivesha Revised by Charaka and Dridhabala, Ayurveda Deepika commentary of Chakrapanidatta, Sutrasthana 11/35, Fifth edition, Choukamba Prakashana, Varanasi, 2001, pp 74.
10. Cha vim 1/24 Vaidya Yadavji Trikamji Acharya, Editor, Charaka Samhitha by Agnivesha Revised by Charaka and Dridhabala, Ayurveda Deepika commentary of Chakrapanidatta, Vimanasthana 1/24, Fifth edition, Choukamba Prakashana, Varanasi, 2001, pp 236.
11. Ibid, 1/24/1, pp 234.
12. Ibid, 1/24/2, pp 235.
13. Ibid, 1/24/3, pp 235.
14. Ibid, 1/24/4, pp 236.
15. Ibid, 1/24/5, pp 236.
16. Ibid, 1/24/6, pp 236.

17. Ibid, 1/24/7, pp 236.
18. Ibid, 1/24/8, pp 236.
19. Compiled by Dr Bhaskar Govind Ghanekara, English Translation by Dr Mahadev N Joshi, Vaidyakiya

Subhasitha Sahityam or
Sahityikasubhasitha Vaidyakam,
Reprint 2015, Choukamba
Prakashana, Varanasi, 2015, pp 10.

Conflict of Interest: Non

Source of funding: Nil

Cite this article:

*Conceptual review of Ahara Vidhi in Ayurveda
Guruprasad K.*

Ayurlog: National Journal of Research in Ayurved Science- 2023; (11) (02): 01- 09

