



Remedial role of *ahara vidhi vidhan* in *swasthyarakshanam*- A conceptual study.

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ABSTRACT-

Every living being needs *Ahara* for growth, repair, survival and maintenance of body. People are so busy in achieving their life goals that lifestyle disorders are on a surge due to ignorance of people towards their dietary habits. The three basic pillars of *Ayurveda* are *Ahara*, *Nidra* and *Bramhacharya*. In this *Ahara* has been placed first which shows the importance of *Ahara* in *Swasthyarakshanam* (maintenance of health) and *Vikar Prashamanam* (curative aspects of diseases). If we follow proper dietary principles then only we can get optimum benefits from the food we consume. *Ayurveda* has mentioned guidelines regarding food intake called as *Ahara Vidhi Vidhan*. The following article is compiled based on the literature available in *Ayurvedic granths* as well as data available online. Scientific explanation for each concept is explained. As a pandemic is occurring currently people are more conscious towards increasing their immunity and *Ayurved* can provide a good basis for it just by following basic dietary guidelines. The aim of the study is to imply that tremendous research can be done to justify the literature available in

the classic textbooks.

KEYWORDS- *ahara vidhi vidhan*, *swasthyarakshanam*, dietary guidelines, *ahara*.

INTRODUCTION-

In present era, people are excessively occupied in their fight to thrive hence lifestyle diseases such as Diabetes mellitus, obesity, asthma, hypertension, anxiety are on an upswing. Despite many advances in the field of medicine, bio medical engineering, huge expenditures in invention of machines for early and advanced detection of diseases there is no way to bring down the rate of deaths in developing and developed countries. Modern medicine has been under a scrutiny for not being able to control lifestyle disorders, bring down mortality rates and increasing expectancy of life.

To tackle this problem, they have developed a branch called 'Preventive and Social medicine' or 'Community medicine'. It deals with diseases affecting community as a whole and treats by preventive and promotive aspects as food habits. *Ayurveda* has already mentioned the ways to increase *Vyadhikshamatva* (immunity) through *Ahara*, dietary guidelines (*Ahara Vidhi Vidhan*),

Dincharya, Rutucharya.

Good nutrition and what you put into your body is the foundation for good health. "Food is Medicine" is a term which was originally coined by Hippocrates, the father of Western medicine; it was his belief that eating wholesome food is the basis for good health. Hippocrates said almost 2500 years ago "Leave your drugs in the chemist's pot if you can heal the patient with food."

Acharya Charak has mentioned food as *Prana* if consumed with all the rules but if taken in a faulty manner, it may even cause death.⁽¹⁾ The healthy body as well as diseases are the results of *Ahara* we consume.⁽²⁾ In today's frantic life, the ancient norms of living a healthy life which includes the proper method of consumption of food has been forgotten, hence, this study was undertaken to evaluate the remedial role of *Ahara* in maintaining health as well as protecting from diseases.

For achieving complete health, *Ayurveda* has described three *Upasthambas* - *Ahara*, *Nidra* and *Bramhacharya*. Here *ahara* has been acknowledged first which indicates the level of importance it holds, hence *Acharya Charak* has explained *Ahara Vidhi Vidhan* in detail. Modern science has also mentioned importance of dietetics, it is a field of science that determines how nutrition and good eating affects our overall health.⁽³⁾

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES-

AIMS-

To evaluate and establish importance of *Ahara Vidhi Vidhan* (dietary guidelines) in maintenance of health of human body, mind and soul.

OBJECTIVES-

1. To study detailed review of *Ahara Vidhi Vidhan* from *Granthas*, textbooks and data available online.
2. To evaluate scientific explanation of the data available.
3. To justify numerous studies can be done in near future based on *ahara* and dietary guidelines to increase immunity and health.

MATERIALS AND METHODS-

1. All the literary data was collected from available *Samhitas*, *Granthas* and textbooks.
2. Online data was also reviewed to collect the information
3. Previous articles and dissertations were referred.

Ahara Vidhi Vidhan is the description of ways on "How to consume food" hence it is a crucial way for *Swasthyarakshanam*. In many diseases *Viruddha Ahara* or *Vikruta Ahara* is considered to be an important *Hetu* and *Nidana Parivarjana* is one of the way to treat diseases hence *Ahara Vidhi Vidhan* can be used in *Vikara Prashamanam* as well.

Acharya Charak has first mentioned *Ahara Vidhi Vidhan* in first chapter of *Vimansthan*.

Following concepts are mentioned under *Ahara Vidhi Vidhan*. Scientific and modern explanation has been tried to evaluated for each concept.

USHNAM ASHNIYAT-

This is the first concept under *Ahara Vidhi Vidhan*. It means consuming warm food.

Firstly warm food is more palatable. Heating the food also kills microbes since many organisms cannot survive at a high temperature. Consumption of warm food will help in *Vata anulomana*. Due to *Ushna Guna*, secretion of *Pitta* is

increased and *Pitta* plays an important role in digestion.

- If cold temperatures - such as ice water or cold food in the diet- enter the stomach, the body works quickly to warm it and it may cause lethargy.⁽⁴⁾ According to Ayurveda as well *shita anna*, the prepared food left for a long time if taken causes *Stambhana*, *Agnimandya*, *Aruchi*, *Hrillas*, *Vistambha*, *Romaharsha*.⁽⁵⁾
- Cold foods, especially drinks, can send a shock through the entire body, forcing your digestive system to work harder to break them down and absorb the nutrients. As cold food is harder for the body to digest, you're more likely to experience bloating or wind following a cold meal, and you could also experience some digestive sensitivity through the day too.⁽⁶⁾ According to *Ayurveda Vata Dosh* *Prakop* is responsible for symptoms like *Aadhman*, *Aatop* and *Shita Guna* is responsible for *Vata Dosh* *Prakop*.
- Even on a hot day, warm liquids generally soothe the system, Colonoscopy patients find warm liquids infused in the colon help alleviate pain or spasms. The wisdom from our grandmothers was to drink warm liquids — the belief being that warmth caused the muscles to relax - even the minuscule muscles that support the blood vessels.⁽⁴⁾
- Food allergies have become increasingly common around the world, and some of the most popular allergies to food include milk and egg. Interestingly, a large percentage (70% and over) of those who are allergic to

milk and eggs can tolerate them when they've been cooked as the cooking process changes the structure of the proteins which can affect allergic reactions. Again, more research needs to be done in this area.⁽⁶⁾

- If the food is warm, the person will eat slowly hence the amount of food consumed will be less because of the "20 minute eating rule". When the food goes in the gut, glucose starts absorbing between 5 to 20 minutes and the satiety hormones in the gut are released due to glucose surge and spike in insulin.⁽⁷⁾
- If the food is heated repeatedly then it becomes *Vidahi* which is not healthy. People who carry tiffins in the offices or schools lack the benefits of *ushna ahara*.
- *Ushnam Ashniyat* is the first concept mentioned in *Ahara Vidhi Vidhan* providing the possibility of concept that consumption of food should be started with *Ushna Ahara*. That's why appetizers or starters are served first in any restaurants and not ice-creams.

SNIGHDHAM ASHNIYAT-

- Fatty food enhances the taste of food stuff because flavors dissolve in fats.⁽⁸⁾
- It increases the *Agni* (digestive power) hence the food gets easily digested. This can be explained by the example of adding oil to fire to increase it.
- Due to *Snigdha Guna* it helps in *Vata Anuloma* hence it helps in preventing flatus and also relieves constipation.
- *Snigdha Dravyas* promotes the first

Avasthapak. Because of *Kledan Guna Kapha Dosha* increases. *Kledak Kapha* promotes *Madhura Avasthapak*. *Bodhak Kapha* is secreted on the tongue which increases the *Ruchi* in food.

- Since *Snigdha Guna* helps in digestion it helps in increasing *Bala*, slows down ageing process, gives strength to *Indriyas* (sense organs), increases complexion of the body.
- *Ghrita* is *Vata Pitta Shamaka* and *Taila* is *Vata Kapha Shamaka* hence if the food contains both *Ghrita* and *Taila* then it can decrease all the three *Doshas*.⁽⁹⁾
- *Snigdham Ashniyat* doesn't only mean consumption of *Ghrita* and *Taila*, it also means consumption of food with *Snigdha Gunas* like *Godhuma, Shali* etc.
- According to modern Science, fats provide high concentrated source of energy since they can store more energy than other macro nutrients like carbohydrates and proteins hence our body stores them as reserves.⁽¹⁰⁾
- There are vitamins which are only soluble in fats like vitamin A,D,E,K. hence body needs these fats to be able to use these vitamins.
 - Vitamin A is known to increase vision and immunity.
 - Vitamin D is used for absorption of calcium by bones.
 - Vitamin E is an antioxidant which again helps in providing immunity against diseases.
 - Vitamin K is helpful in blood clotting.

- Modern Science has divided fats into saturated fatty acids, unsaturated fatty acids and Trans fat.⁽¹¹⁾
 - Unsaturated fatty acids are in the liquid form at room temperature. They can improve blood cholesterol levels, ease inflammation, stabilize heart rhythms. Mono Unsaturated fatty acids and poly unsaturated fatty acids are types on unsaturated fatty acids.
 - Omega 3 which is a poly unsaturated fatty acid create a greater sense of fullness for longer periods so that stomach doesn't want food again, preventing obesity, it also boosts serotonin level in brain helping improvement in mood and motivation. It also stimulates muscle protein synthesis in older adults.⁽¹²⁾
 - Saturated fats are one of the bad fats. They are mostly solid at room temperature. In large quantities they can increase the risk of heart disease, weight gain.⁽¹³⁾
 - Trans fatty acids, more commonly called trans fats, are made by heating liquid vegetable oils in the presence of hydrogen gas and a catalyst, a process called hydrogenation. (11) Trans fats are worst type of fats for body because- Raise bad LDL and lower good HDL. Create inflammation- a reaction related to immunity – which has been implicated in heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and other chronic conditions. Contribute to insulin resistance. Can have harmful health effects even in small amounts – for each additional 2 percent of calories from trans fat consumed daily, the risk of coronary heart disease increases by 23 percent.
- *Atisnigdhta* (extreme greasiness) or

asnigdhta (roughness) can cause delay in digestion. Extreme oily and fatty food is hard to digest causing lethargy (*Gauravta*), *Praseka*, *Alasya*, *Aruchi* etc. *Ruksha Ahara* increases property of Vata hence causing decrease in *Bala*, *Varnya* etc.

- Knowledge about *Snigdhta* can help in choosing the right types and quantity of fats in food thereby increasing immunity of body.

MATRAVAT ASHNIYAT-

- Food taken in proper quantity is termed as *Matravat Ahara*. *Ayurveda* has described 2 types of *Matra- Sarvagraha* (quantity of whole meal) and *Parigraha* (individual quantity).
- Every individual is different hence the quantity of food required by every individual will be different. One standard quantity cannot be applicable to everyone. Quantity of food also depends on *Prakriti* of the individual as well *Gunas* of the food stuffs.
- *Acharya Charaka* has mentioned '*Ahara Matra Tu Agni Bala Apekshini*' this proves that quantity of *Ahara* depends on digestion as well as *Bala*.⁽¹⁴⁾
- A balanced diet consists of all macronutrients as well as micro nutrients to ensure proper growth and protection of body.
- A person consuming *Matravat Ahara* shows following symptoms- no heaviness on abdomen, proper functioning of heart, no any kind of distension on sides of abdomen due to food, satisfaction of all *Indriyas* (sense organs), fulfillment of hunger and thirst, no hurdles in sitting, standing, lying down, walking, breathing or

laughing, proper digestion of food eaten, increase in strength and complexion of body.⁽¹⁵⁾

- Modern Science has suggested consuming food on basis of calories. Calorie requirement is different for every person according to age, gender, type of lifestyle they live.

- Effects of over eating-⁽¹⁶⁾

1. Overeating causes the stomach to expand beyond its normal size to adjust to the large amount of food. The expanded stomach pushes against other organs, making you uncomfortable. This discomfort can take the form of feeling tired, sluggish or drowsy. Your clothes also may feel tight, too
2. Eating too much food requires your organs to work harder. They secrete extra hormones and enzymes to break the food down.
3. To break down food, the stomach produces hydrochloric acid. If you overeat, this acid may back up into the esophagus resulting in heartburn. Consuming too much food that is high in fat, like pizza and cheeseburgers, may make you more susceptible to heartburn.
4. Your stomach may also produce gas, leaving you with an uncomfortable full feeling. Your metabolism may speed up as it tries to burn off those extra calories. You may experience a temporary feeling of being hot, sweaty or even dizzy.

JEERNE ASHNIYAT-

- It means food should be consumed only after previously consumed meal is digested.
- If food is consumed when the previous food is undigested then the undigested food i.e. *Ahara Rasa* gets mixed with this food and produces *Ama* which increases all the *Doshas* and is the main cause of every disease.
- *Acharya Charaka* has also said *Kalabhojanam Aarogyakaranam*⁽¹⁷⁾

hence food should be consumed on proper timings.

VIRYA AVIRUDHAM ASHNIYAT-

- One should consume *Ahara* which is not opposite in its *Virya* i.e. the food should not be opposite in its potency. This ensures that body is protected from diseases caused due to *Viruddha Ahara*.
- According to modern concept it can be explained as agonist and antagonist foods.
- A new branch called topography (a science related to combination of food) is emerging, which tells about the combination of basic categories of the food.⁽¹⁸⁾
- Even in chinese medicine a term similar to *Virya* of food has been described called as *YinYang* food.⁽¹⁹⁾ *Yin* food are called as cold foods because they have cooling effects on body and *Yang* foods are called as Hot foods because they bring warmth to the body.
- *Acharya Charak* has also mentioned that wong combinations of food can also cause death.⁽²⁰⁾ Hence a detailed knowledge about it can help in protection of the body.

ISHTA DESHE ISHTA SARVA UPKARNAM ASHNIYAT-

- It means one should eat food in a place with good ambience, which is favourable to us which does not cause any kind of mental or physical stress to our body. One should also use proper clean utensils in order to avoid transmission of germs causing diseases.
- If while consuming food our body is subjected to emotional stress then a person tends to overeat, because

adrenal glands release hormone called cortisol, and cortisol increases appetite and may also ramp up motivation in general, including the motivation to eat. Studies have shown that physical or emotional distress increases the intake of food high in fat, sugar, or both. High cortisol levels, in combination with high insulin levels, may be responsible. Other research suggests that ghrelin, a "hunger hormone," may have a role. Once ingested, fat and sugar-filled foods seem to have a feedback effect that dampens stress related responses and emotions. These foods really are "comfort" foods in that they seem to counteract stress- and this may contribute to people's stress-induced craving for those foods.⁽²¹⁾

- If there is negative environment then there is constriction of the muscles, adrenalin and increased heartbeat. Nothing could be less compatible with good digestion. Adrenalin and acids are flowing into the stomach and there is an increased arousal, a general stress reaction. This can be followed by headache, stomach cramps and a crummy mood.⁽²²⁾
- Clean utensils are also necessary because if utensils are unclean then it can cause cross contamination between utensils and food eventually causing diseases. If utensils touched by a carrier of the disease is uncleaned then the chances of spread of diseases to others increases manifold. It is an important point which should be applied in this era of pandemic.
- *Ishta Upkarnan* can also mean the different types of metals and alloys from which utensils is made of. For

example eating in gold and silver utensil alleviates *Doshas* and improves eye sight, cooking in iron vessel can treat anemia, eating on leaves is appetizing and stimulates *Agni*. Similarly in Indian households water is stored in earthen utensils.⁽²³⁾

NA ATIDHRUTAM ASHNIYAT-

- One should not consume food in a hurry. By doing so food can enter respiratory tract causing choking or hiccups.
- If food is taken in proper speed the enzymatic juices get mixed properly with bolus leading to proper digestion.
- Eating food fast can lead to metabolic syndrome which is collection of five risk factors namely high blood pressure, high triglycerides, high blood sugar, low level of good cholesterol and a large waist line.
- In a study conducted among Japanese people, it was concluded that eating speed was associated with obesity and future prevalence of Metabolic syndrome. Eating slowly may therefore indicated to be a crucial lifestyle factor for preventing metabolic syndrome.⁽²⁴⁾

NA ATIVILAMBIT ASHNIYAT-

If food is eaten very slowly then satiety cannot be achieved, also, the digestion becomes improper.

AJALPANA AHSANA TANMAN BHUNJITA-

While consuming food, our mind should be fully concentrated on eating. We should not laugh or talk while eating. In today's era people have the habit of consuming food while watching TV or scrolling through their smartphones. Even small kids are made to watch TV or phone while eating. Such kind of disturbed

concentration while eating can lead to choking hazard or can result in eating too much or too less.

Eating in front of a TV induces Pavlovian response. It is a method to cause reflex response or behaviour by training with repetitive action.⁽²⁵⁾ So, if you habitually eat in front of a TV, you will feel hungry as soon as you turn on TV.⁽²²⁾

Acharya Charak has also mentioned that even *Pathya Ahara* will not be digested because of *Chinta* (worry) *Bhaya* (fear) *Krodh* (anger) *Shokh* (sorrows) and due to improper bed and sleeping habits.⁽²⁶⁾ If food doesn't get digested properly then it will eventually lead to decreased immunity as *Dhatu Poshan* will not be completed.

ATMANAM ABHISAMIKSHYA BHUNJITAM-

Diet of a person depends on his *Prakriti*, *Agnibala*, *Jaranshakti*, *Abhyavaranshakti*, *Satmya*, *Dosha*. If a person is already suffering from any disease then also his diet changes. Pregnant women, lactating mothers, labourers need more amount of food and nutrition in order to maintain *Swasthya*.

DISCUSSION-

Improper dietary habit is primary reason for the increasing trend of health disorders in current era. Intake of frozen, canned, processed food play an important role. So there is need to awake the people about the importance of fresh food. Diet play a vital role in maintaining health and treating diseases by some following proper rules according to need in both condition.

One should consume only that food in proper quantity which is *ushna*, *snigdha* and *matravata*. Food should be consumed after the digestion of previously ingested food, food should be *virya aviruddha*, taken in an *ishta desha* and provided with

sarvopakarana. Food should not be taken speedily or too slowly, without *Ahara Vidhi Vidhana*. These are the code and conducts for taking diet of any dietetic science.

Above mentioned explanation of *Ahara Vidhi Vidhan* according to Ayurvedic and modern point of view has tried to cover each and every aspect of food ethics to increase the *Swasthya* of people at the very basic level. Along with *Pathya*, healthy *Ahara* its *Vidhi* should be considered equally important. A good physician should have knowledge of *ahara* and its rules so that he can guide people properly. In the modern era of westernization providing a scientific basis to the ancient values provided by *Ayurveda* can attract people to follow the norms and protect themselves from lifestyle diseases even before the disease manifests itself. As the time goes by, people will be more conscious towards protecting their health. *Ahara Vidhi* can be considered as *Asamvayi Karana* of health and diseases hence extensive research can be made in this field to ensure *Swasthyarakshana*. Many diseases can be prevented arising merely due to faulty dietary habits. Healthier eating habits may help to lower the risk for many health problems.

CONCLUSION:

Our *granths* are store houses of valuable thoughts. Diet is considered as basic most cause of life. Not only diet but also method of food intake has an important role in the continuity of healthy life. The application of these rules is effective in maintenance of health as well as in the curative aspect for many diseases. Each *Ahara vidhi vidhan* has a specific role in digestion and maintenance of health. In presence of all the mentioned factors, food gets utilized properly to get optimum benefits.

According to *Kashyap Samhita*, food has always been an important way to treat illness and maintain health and that's why he called food as *Mahabhaishyajya*. Based on the above mentioned points, a person can decide the pros and cons of the food and the manner in which he consumes food. Proper changes can be made to diet regimen to increase one's health and immunity by following the rules of dietics i.e. *Ahara Vidhi Vidhan*.

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