

Review of Dietary rules described in Ayurveda

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Abstract

Ahara, *Nidra* and *Brahmacharya* are the three pillars of health, out of which food is the most important component, as it is required for growth and repairing of the tissue. *Ayurveda* believes that food not only nourishes the body but it also replenishes the mind. so, to strike the body and mind balance, one must follow dietary rules advised in the *Charak Samhita* under “*Ashta Ahar Vidhi Visheshayatana*” which include *Prakruti* (nature), *karana* (processing), *Samyoga* (combination), *Rashi* (quantity), *Desha* (place), *Kala* (time/stage of disease), *Upayoga-Sanstha* (rule for use), and *Upayokta* (consumer).

“*Ashta Ahar Vidhi Visheshayatana*” are the eight dietary rules to be considered before starting to eat the food which encompasses properties and quantity of food to *Jatharagni*, Methods of cooking, Combination of foodstuff, Proper time for eating, Effect of time on food properties, etc.

For proper digestion of the food, quality and quantity of food is an important factor as it directly depends on the strength of the *Jatharagni*.

In today's era of globalization, food and food habits are taken for granted which leads to digestive disorders at a comparatively younger age so Ayurvedic physicians need to emphasize the importance of “*Ashta Ahar Vidhi Visheshayatana*” with respect to the status of *Jatharagni* to make the patient realize the importance of food in health maintenance.

Keywords – *Astha Aahara Vidhi Visheshayatana*, *Desha*, *Karana*, *Kala*, *Upyogasanstha*, *Upayokta*.

Introduction

Ayurveda is a holistic healthcare system that revolves around food, health and lifestyle.

Food is the main foundation of strength, skin tone, healthy sensory organs and vitality so digestion and absorption of food is the prime requisite for which a balanced state of *Jatharagni* is essential⁽¹⁾.

Ayurveda believes that food not only nourishes the body but it also replenishes the mind. So, *Ayurveda* has stated “*Ashta Ahar Vidhi Visheshayatana*” that includes *Prakruti*(nature), *karana* (processing), *Samyoga* (combination), *Rashi* (quantity), *Desha* (place), *Kala* (time/stage of disease), *Upayoga-Samstha* (rule for dining), and *Upayokta* (consumer) which involves a different type of rule of dining and regulations regarding preparation and ingestion of food. Consideration of this concept helps to improve the nutritional value of food and provides all health benefits of ingested food.⁽²⁾

Aims And Objectives

1. To emphasize and discuss the Concept of *Astha Ahar Vidhi Visheshayatane* from *Ayurvedic Classical Literature*.
2. Implementation of *Astha Ahar Vidhi Visheshayatane* for health.

Material and Methods

In this Article, A review of various Ayurvedic classical literature with respect to the importance of *Aahara*, *Agni* and *Astha Aahara Vidhi Visheshayatana* is taken.

References are collected, compiled, analysed and discussed to understand the concept of *Astha Aahara Vidhi Visheshayatana*. The *Samhita* referred for the present study are *Charaka Samhita*, *Ashtanga Hrudaya*, *Ashtanga Sangraha*, Modern literature and other information from related websites.

According to *Charaka Samhita*, foodstuff with pleasant colour, aroma, and taste that satisfy all sensory organs should be consumed.⁽³⁾ Only attractive foodstuffs will not nourish the body but these foodstuffs should be prepared and consumed following dietary rules described under “*Ashta Ahar Vidhi Visheshayatana*”.

These eight dietary rules are -.

1. *Prakruti/ swabhava*- nature of food/ quality of food.
2. *Karana*- processing of food.
3. *Samyoga*- A combination of food.
4. *Rashi*- quantity of food.
5. *Desha* – habitat of food.
6. *Kala*- time and seasonal variation.

7. *Upayoga Samstha* – Rules for dining

8. *Upayokta* – the person who is consuming the food.

Prakruti – *Prakruti* is an innate property of food that should be considered by comparing the strength of own *Agni* with a particular foodstuff for example, black gram is heavy (*Guru*) to digest while green pulses are *Light* in nature so it can be digested easily. *Mandagni* individuals should not consume heavy food like cheese, pizza, burgers, etc. while *Tikshnagni* people can consume heavy food but avoid spicy food to maintain a balanced state of *Agni* for proper digestion and metabolism.

Karana – (Processing) – Processing means the transformation of food suitable for digestion and absorption. foodstuffs like grains and vegetables must be washed and cooked so that they can be digested easily by *Agni*. Washing is also an important step of processing as it protects gut health. Nowadays pre-processed food stuff is available but *Ayurveda* doesn't recommend it because according to *Ayurvedic* guidelines, food stuff must be freshly prepared for health and pre-processed food contains preservatives that are hazardous to health.

Samayoga – when two or more foodstuffs are mixed it is called *Samayoga* or a combination of foodstuffs. *Ayurveda* has given a list of foodstuffs that should not be mixed and consumed as it may vitiate *Pitta dosha* and *Rakta dhātu* giving rising to many skin diseases, for example, Fish and Milk, Fruits and Milk, *Ghee* and Honey in equal quantities, etc.⁽⁴⁾ Nowadays fruit salads, curd mixed with Tomato Puree, and Mayonnaise are examples of popular but unhealthy foodstuff which are examples of improper combinations (*Virudha aahara*) which might be imbalanced metabolism and give rise to disease.

Rashi – it means the quantity of food to be consumed. It can be *Sarvagraha* (complete) or *Parigraha* (Individual).

Parigraha and *Sarvagraha Matra* (quantity) of food are subjected to strength and type of *Agni*. It should be considered along with *Prakruti*'s foodstuffs described earlier. If a *Mandagni* person eats a larger quantity of food then it surely leads to indigestion while a *Tikshnagni* person eats a lesser quantity of food surely leads to weight loss, so *Agni* must be supplied with the proper quantity of food for its balanced state.

Desha – The place of origin of food is *Desha*. The climatic condition of the habitat does affect food qualities where it is grown, for example in India millets are grown in dry habitats so they are lighter and dry, while rice is cultivated in marshy regions so it is heavier and produces *Kleda* in the body.

Kala – *Kala* is divided into *Nityaga* and *Awasthika Kala*. *Nityaga kala* is described for climatic conditions of six

seasons and different periods of day and night. *Awasthika kala* is described for health and diseases. The diet should be according to season; it should be consumed only after digestion of previous food. After eating heavy foods, a *Mandagni* person can skip the next meal. Diabetic patients should eat light and dry food and avoid sweet food. So *Nityaga* and *Awasthika kala* are important to maintain health with respect to *Agni* and disease.

Upayogasanstha – This are Dining Etiquettes and table manners.

This is important for proper digestion. If all the rules and regulations are observed, then the food is properly digested, other vices there may be *Aama* formation, which leads to Disease formation. *Upyogasanstha* revolves around cleanliness, healthy food preparation, fresh food, foodstuffs, etc., *Ayurveda* also advises eating food with full concentration. Nowadays food is always consumed by watching television which often tends to ignore the quantity of food and consume more than capacity, which is one of the causes of obesity. Nowadays street foods prepared in unhygienic conditions are consumed more often which is also health hazardous. so *Upyogasanstha* is important for health maintains.

Upayokata – *Upayokta* is the person who takes food after considering his or her *Prakriti* and strength of *Agni*.

Rashi (quantity) should be compatible with types of *Agni*, *Desha*, *Kala*, etc. So, one can have a larger portion of food stuff in *Hemant hrutu* (mid- winter) and a lesser portion in *Grishma hrutu* (summer). One should avoid refrigerating food as it may change the natural qualities of food. Home-cooked food prepared to take all measure of cleanliness.

One should eat food grown and cultivated in the vicinity of the habitat (*Desha*) of the individual as it is freshly available.

Conclusion

“*Ashta Ahar Vidhi Visheshayatana*” are the eight dietary rules that must be considered before dining. More and more new foodstuffs should be studied according to *Astha Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatane* to study their effects on the physiology of *Dosha Dhātu Mala* and *Agni*.

Ayurvedic physicians must incorporate these dietary rules in the clinical practice for proper counseling of the patient regarding diet.

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Conflict of Interest: Nil

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