



CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF UTILITY OF AAHAR W.R.T. TO ASHTA AAHAR VIDHI VISHESHAYATAN

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ABSTRACT

Aahar is that inseparable part of *prakriti* that has decisive bond with an individual right from its birth, when he starts consuming it in the form of milk of his mother. After few months, he starts consuming solid food which is acknowledged as *Annaprashana Sanskara* in Indian society. Modern science considers diet as one of the principle vitals for living and physical health, but ancient *ayurvedic* scholars find it equally crucial for mental and spiritual health too, and praised it with the synonyms of *Amrita* and *Mahabhaishajya*. The fact that on one part, the consumption of diet in appropriate manner helps in the growth of living being; and contrarily, its utilization in inappropriate manner is responsible for degradation of health, exhibits the role of utility of diet. *Acharya Charaka* explained eight factors to determine the *aahar* which are known as *Ashta Aahar Vidhi Visheshayatana*. A proper knowledge of these utilities will help a person to live a healthy life in the most natural way and will allow an individual to gain the best from the diet he consumes. The present article will be an attempt to congregate the importance of diet as quoted by ancient *ayurvedic* scholars and to present the eight factors of *ashta aahar vidhi visheshayatana* in a systemic and scientific way.

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INTRODUCTION

Food are substances consisting essentially of protein, carbohydrates, fat and other nutrients used in the body of organisms to sustain growth and vital processes and furnish energy.¹ In broad terms, the substances which are swallowed are termed as food or *Aahar* – आहार्यते गलादधो नीयते इत्याहारः। Describing significance of *Aahar*, *Charaka Samhita* considers *Aahar* as the supporter of life, along with *Nidra* and *Brahmacharya*, which seems to be scientifically true since *aahar* supports all the metabolic reactions occurring in the body.² Even *Kashyapa Samhita* quotes that *aahar* is vital for living and is the cause of strength, colour and *oja*.³ Although the strength, health, longevity and vital breath also depend on

the power of digestion but this power of digestion too requires food as its fuel.⁴ *Charaka* quotes that a person following whole some diet plan lives a healthy life of 36000 fortnights.⁵ Here *Charaka* wants to implement that wholesome diet raises both the quantity and quality of life. *Aahar* sustains the life of the individual and therefore the individuals are allured towards food. Colour, clarity, pleasant voice, longevity, talent, satisfaction, nourishment, strength and intellect are conditioned by food. Professional activities leading to happiness in this world, *vedic* rituals leading to abode in heaven and observance of truth, *brahmacharya* leading to salvation are all based on food⁶. Even *Kashyapa* considers that

⁴ Shastri S N, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, Charak Samhita vol.-1, Sutra Sthana – 27/342, Edition – 2008, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi, Page no. 566.

⁵ Shastri S N, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, Charak Samhita vol.-1, Sutra Sthana – 27/348, Edition – 2008, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi, Page no. 567.

⁶ Shastri S N, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, Charak Samhita vol.-1, Sutra Sthana – 27/349-50, Edition – 2008, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi, Page no. 567.

¹ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/food>

² Shastri S N, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, Charak Samhita vol.-1, Sutra Sthana – 11/35, Edition – 2008, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi, Page no. 227.

³ Tewari P V, English Commentary, Kashyap Samhita, Khila Sthana – 5/3, Edition – 2013, Chaukhamba Visvabharati, Varanasi, Page no. 483.

none of the medications can be equivalent to *aahar*.⁷ A person cannot sustain life without *aahar* even if endowed with medications and this is the reason that *Kashyapa* praised *Aahar* by giving it a synonym of *Mahabhaishajya*.⁸ Though *aahar* is as mandatory as the nector to the deities, the above mentioned qualities of *aahar* can be achieved only when the diet is wholesome and this ultimately causes the growth of the organism. Conversely unwholesome diets are responsible for the generation of diseases.⁹ Therefore only those diets must be consumed whose colour, smell, touch and taste are pleasing to the senses. If these diets are taken according to rules, then they actually represent the life of human being.¹⁰

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this conceptual study, a review of ancient *ayurveda samhitas* like *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Ashtanga Hridaya*, *Yogaratanakara* etc and various articles have been done.

ASHTA AAHAR VIDHI VISHESHAYATANA

The eight factors that sum up to form *Ashta aahar vidhi visheshayatan* are as follows-

1. **Prakriti**- Natural qualities.
2. **Karana**- Preparation.
3. **Samyoga**- Combination.
4. **Rashi**- Quantam.
5. **Desha**- Habitat.
6. **Kaala**- Time.
7. **Upyoga Sanstha**- Rules of use.
8. **Upyokta**- User.

1. Prakriti

Prakriti indicates nature of a substance. It represents the nature of *aahar* and *aushadha* and deals with its inherent attributes.¹¹ Just as a person has a specific *shaaririka* and *maanasika prakriti*, the components of *aahar* too have their specific *prakrities*. A person seeking good health must consume the *aahar* that is opposite to his *prakriti* because *aahar* of opposite *prakriti* will alleviate the *doshas* leading to stability of *doshas*, hence providing a sound health; while *aahar* of same *prakriti* will exaggerate the *doshas*¹² leading to *dosha vishamata* and hence generation of diseases.¹³ For example, a person of *kapha prakriti* must avoid *aahar* of *guru guna* and *sheeta virya*; while these diets will be beneficial for a person of *pitta*

⁷ Tewari P V, English Commentary, Kashyap Samhita, Khila Sthana – 4/5, Edition – 2013, Chaukhamba Visvabharati, Varanasi, Page no. 468.

⁸ Tewari P V, English Commentary, Kashyap Samhita, Khila Sthana – 4/6, Edition – 2013, Chaukhamba Visvabharati, Varanasi, Page no. 468.

⁹ Shastri S N, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, Charak Samhita vol.-1, Sutra Sthana – 25/31, Edition – 2008, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi, Page no. 463.

¹⁰ Shastri S N, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, Charak Samhita vol.-1, Sutra Sthana – 27/3, Edition – 2008, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi, Page no. 525.

¹¹ Shastri S N, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, Charak Samhita vol.-1, Vimana Sthana – 1/21-1, Edition – 2008, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi, Page no. 680.

¹² Shastri S N, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, Charak Samhita vol.-1, Sutra Sthana – 1/44, Edition – 2008, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi, Page no. 15.

¹³ Shastri S N, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, Charak Samhita vol.-1, Sutra Sthana – 27/349-50, Edition – 2008, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi, Page no. 192.

prakriti. Thus knowledge of *prakriti* of food will help in choosing the food accordingly.

2. Karana

There are some food which cannot be consumed directly and demand a change in certain attributes. The transformation or alteration in the natural attributes of food is known as *Karana* or *Sanskaara*.¹⁴ *Sanskaara* can be done in following ways-

- a) **Toya samyoga** (application of water): for example, converting *the khara* and *kathina guna* of substances to *mridu* and *masrina guna* by adding water.
- b) **Agni samyoga** (application of heat): for example, paddy is *guru*, but paddy lava, produced by applying heat to paddy is *laghu*.
- c) **Shaucha** (cleansing): for example, a lethal poison can be converted into a life saving drug if purified in a proper manner.

When paddy is cleansed with water (*shaucha*) and mixed with water (*toya samyoga*) and this combination is heated at appropriate temperature (*agni samyoga*) to prepare rice; then this processing involves all the above mentioned three methods of *sanskaara*.¹⁵

- d) **Manthana** (churning): for example, curd normally exaggerates oedema, but when churned with fat content in it, it alleviates oedema.
- e) **Desha** (habitat): for example, the flesh of meat of animals has different features depending on their location, whether they belong to desert or marshy area.
- f) **Kaala** (time): for example, rice is *guru* by nature, but becomes *laghu* after 1 year and thereafter.
- g) **Bhawana** (processing): for example, when a lethal poison is processed with urine of cow for three days, then its toxicity decreases.
- h) **Kaalapakarsh** (after a passage of time): for example, when *asav* is prepared by the fermentation of a substance, then the formed *asav* has the features different from that of the substance from which it is prepared.
- i) **Bhaajana** (container): for example, *ghrita* placed in a container of bronze turns toxic.

Sanskaara changes only those attributes that are attained after the production or birth of substance and does not interfere with the congenital features. Therefore the theory that the nature of a substance cannot be changed – स्वभावो निष्प्रतिक्रियः does not gets violated.

3. Samayoga

Samayoga is the combination of two or more substances. The product thus produced may have different features than those of its parent reactants.¹⁶ The reason behind this may be the breaking of old bonds of the reactant molecules and formation

¹⁴ Shastri S N, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, Charak Samhita vol.-1, Vimana Sthana – 1/21-2, Edition – 2008, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi, Page no. 680.

¹⁵ Shastri S N, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, Charak Samhita vol.-1, Sutra Sthana – 27/257, Edition – 2008, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi, Page no. 556.

¹⁶ Shastri S N, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, Charak Samhita vol.-1, Vimana Sthana – 1/21-3, Edition – 2008, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi, Page no. 681.

of new bonds to form a new product. The new features produced may be beneficial or may be harmful to the individual. The combination of two substances in which one substance is impregnated in other cannot be called *Samayoga* since the former is present only in minute quantities.

Few examples of *samayoga* are mentioned below-

- a) *Madhu and ghrta* are individually non-toxic, but a combination of these in equal proportion becomes toxic to the individual.
- b) Though both milk (*sheeta virya*) and fish (*ushna virya*) have sweet taste, but due to opposite potencies the consumption of their combination gives rise to *kustha*.

A proper knowledge of *samayoga* not only warns us of incompatible combinations of food but also proves helpful in notifying us the combination of those ingredients whose potency increases when consumed together. The consumption of *virudh aahar* (unwholesome diet) is strictly prohibited in *Ayurveda*. The knowledge of *Samayoga* facilitates in identification of *virudh aahar*. *Samayoga* is the basic principle behind the synergistic and antagonistic action of drugs.

4. Rashi

Every individual has his specific *prakriti* and digestive and metabolic power accordingly, which decides the amount of food he must eat. This amount is determined by *rashi*, which is the quantum of total or individual substances, which decides the results of their administration in proper and improper dosage. Consumption of whole of the food entirely is termed as *Sarvagraha*, while their consumption individually is termed as *Parigraha*¹⁷. In greed of good taste, when a person starts eating food of his choice in additional quantity, then this choice of him takes him towards the ailments like obesity, diabetes etc in future and produces lassitude, feeling of heaviness and gurgling noise inside the abdomen. Conversely when he starts avoiding the dietary components that are nutritious but he do not likes, then this makes him a prey to various malnutrition and other deficiency diseases and produces lack of happiness and strength.¹⁸ The question arises that what is the exact quantity of calorie that a person should be recommended. According to Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, the average minimum energy requirement per person per day is 7,500 kJ (1800 kcal).¹⁹ Recommendations in the United States are 2,600 and 2,000 kcal (10,900 and 8,400 kJ) for men and women respectively between 31 and 35 years of age, at a physical activity level equivalent to walking about 2 to 5 km per day at 5 to 6 km/hr in addition to light physical activity associated with typical day-to-day life.²⁰ The same levels are suggested by the French guideline too. Calorie needs for young children varies from 1,000 to 2,000 k calories/day for older children and adolescents with boys having greater intake than girls. Australia's National Health and Medical Research Council recommends that no single daily dose intake can be prescribed since the same varies with age, gender and daily activity levels. But average daily intake of 2,100 kcal (8,800 kJ) has

been recommended on Australian food products.²¹ Unlike the modern science, *Acharya Charak* considers that quantity of *aahar* that a person must consume is different for each individual and depends upon the power of digestion.²² Infect the most appropriate quantity of food is the one that gets digested in proper time without affecting the *prakriti* of the person. *Acharya Vagbhatta* too advises the consumption of food in appropriate quantity since this quantity stimulates the power of digestion.²³ Practically a person is unaware of exact volume of his stomach, therefore he may rely on the following features which explain well whether the quantity of food eaten by him is appropriate or not. *Charak* states that the food consumed is in proper quantity if it has following signs- there is no undue pressure on the stomach due to food taken. There is no obstruction to the proper functioning of heart. There is no pressure in the sides of the chest. There is no excessive heaviness in the abdomen. There is proper nourishment of the senses. There is relief from hunger and thirst. There is feeling of comfort in standing, sleeping, walking, exhaling, inhaling, laughing and talking. Food taken in the morning is digested till evening and the food taken during the evening is digested till next morning and there is promotion of strength, complexion and plumpness²⁴.

Acharya Charak assumes that food deficient in quantity will produce the following symptoms – impairment of the strength, complexion and plumpness; distension and misperistalsis in the abdomen; impairment of longevity, virility and *ojas*; affliction of body, mind, intellect and senses; impairment of the excellence of *dhatus*; manifestation of the inauspicious conditions and causation of eighty varieties of *vatika* diseases. *Acharya Vagbhatta* has similar views, according to whom, consumption of insufficient amount of food does not help improvement of health, growth and vigour, rather it becomes a cause of all diseases of *vatika* origin.²⁵ According to *Acharya Charak*, food taken in excess quantity aggravates all the three *doshas*. In a person who fills his stomach with solid food and then takes liquid food in excessive quantity, all the three *doshas* residing in the stomach get too much compressed and simultaneously aggravated. These aggravated *doshas* affect the undigested food and gets mixed up with it. Then they obstruct a part of the stomach and instantaneously move through upward and downward tracts to produce the following diseases in the individual who is taking food in excess- *Vata* produces colic pain, constipation, malaise, dryness of mouth, giddiness, irregularity in the power of digestion, rigidity of sides, back and waist, and contraction and hardening of vessels. *Pitta* causes diarrhoea, fever, internal burning sensation, thirst, intoxication, giddiness and delirium. *Kapha* causes vomiting, anorexia, indigestion, cold fever, laziness and heaviness in the body.²⁶ According to *Charak*, the quantity of food should be taken into consideration whether it is heavy or light indigestion. For example, *Sali (Oryza sativa)*, *swastika* (a

²¹ https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Food_energy

²² Shastri S N, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, Charak Samhita vol.-1, Sutra Sthana – 5/3, Edition – 2008, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi, Page no. 102.

²³ Tripathi B N, Nirmala Hindi Commentary, Astanga Hridaya, Sutra Sthana – 8/1, Edition – 2009, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pratishthan, Delhi, Page no. 135.

²⁴ Shastri S N, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, Charak Samhita vol.-1, Vimana Sthana – 2/6, Edition – 2008, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi, Page no. 686.

²⁵ Tripathi B N, Nirmala Hindi Commentary, Astanga Hridaya, Sutra Sthana – 8/3, Edition – 2009, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pratishthan, Delhi, Page no. 135.

²⁶ Shastri S N, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, Charak Samhita vol.-1, Vimana Sthana – 2/7, Edition – 2008, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi, Page no. 687.

¹⁷ Shastri S N, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, Charak Samhita vol.-1, Vimana Sthana – 1/21-4, Edition – 2008, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi, Page no. 681.

¹⁸ Shastri A D, Ayurveda Tattva Sandipika Hindi Commentary, Sushrut Samhita vol. – 1, Sutra Sthana – 46/476, Edition – 2011, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi, Page no. 284.

¹⁹ https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Food_energy

²⁰ <http://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/guidelines/appendix-2/>

variety of *Oryza sativa* Linn.), *mudga* (*Phaseolus mungo*), common Quail, gray Partridge, antelop, rabbit, wapiti, Indian sambar, etc inspite being light in digestion, should be taken according to the prescribed measurements. Similarly preparations of flour, sugar-cane and milk, *tila* (*Sesamum indicum* Linn.), *masa* (*Phaseolus radialis* Linn.), and meats of marshy and aquatic animals are heavy in digestion and must be taken in proper quantity.²⁷ Food that are light on digestion have a predominance of *vata* and *agni mahabhuta*, therefore if taken in excess quantity will cause less harm as compared to heavy food, which have a predominance of *prithavi* and *soma mahabhuta*. But even heavy diet in excess quantity causes less harm to those who have good digestive capacity or who exercises regularly.²⁸ *Acharya Vagbhatta* too recommend to eat the food that are heavy in digestion to only half the level of satisfaction, and the light food too shouldn't be eaten to the level of full satisfaction.²⁹ Hence, when consumed in proper quantity, the food helps in bringing strength, complexion, happiness and longevity without disturbing the equilibrium of *dhatu*s and *dosh*as.³⁰

5. Desha

Desha represents habitat. The acclimatisation in a particular habitat is determined by the growth and migration of the substance.³¹ A person is acclimatized to the substances grown in the area from where the individual natively belongs to. But when a person consumes a substance from a different habitat, then it becomes unhealthy for him. Traveler's diarrhoea (often popularly known as Delhi Belly) can be taken as an example which occurs by change of *desha*. It is an intestinal infection with signs of passage of unformed stool, abdominal cramps, nausea, fever and bloating. Most common infecting agent is the bacteria enterotoxigenic *Escherichia coli* (ECTC).³² *Desha* is one among the four factors that is common for all inhabitants of a region (the other three being air, water and seasons).³³ A substance grown in a polluted *desha* is unwholesome to the individuals consuming it. The characteristics of polluted *desha* are- abnormality in the colour, smell, taste and touch; excessive stickiness; abundance of serpents, wild animals, mosquitoes, locusts, flies, rats, owl, vulture and jackals; having jungles of grass and weeds; abundance of excessively branched creepers; having a novel look; withered, dried and distorted crops; abundance of smoke in the wind; presence of wild cries of dogs and cats; bewilderment and disposition of various types of animals and birds; perversion or absence of religion, truth, modesty, manners, conducts and other qualities of the inhabitants of the land; constant agitation and over-flow of water reservoirs;

²⁷ Shastri S N, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, Charak Samhita vol.-1, Sutra Sthana – 5/5, Edition – 2008, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi, Page no. 104.

²⁸ Shastri S N, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, Charak Samhita vol.-1, Sutra Sthana – 5/6, Edition – 2008, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi, Page no. 104.

²⁹ Tripathi B N, Nirmala Hindi Commentary, Astanga Hridaya, Sutra Sthana – 8/2, Edition – 2009, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pratishthan, Delhi, Page no. 135.

³⁰ Shastri S N, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, Charak Samhita vol.-1, Sutra Sthana – 5/8, Edition – 2008, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi, Page no. 105.

³¹ Shastri S N, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, Charak Samhita vol.-1, Vimana Sthana – 1/21-5, Edition – 2008, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi, Page no. 681.

³² https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Traveler%27s_diarrhea

³³ Shastri S N, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, Charak Samhita vol.-1, Vimana Sthana – 3/6, Edition – 2008, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi, Page no. 692.

frequent occurrence of meteorites, thunderbolts and earthquakes; fierce looks and cries in the nature; appearance of roughness and coppery, reddish and white colour in the sun, moon and stars frequently, their appearance as if they are covered with a net of clouds; appearance of the atmosphere as if there is confusion, excitation, apprehension, lamentation and darkness and presence of excessive crying noise as if the country is seized by demons.³⁴ These features may be responsible for the destruction of a country by epidemic diseases. *Desha* is mainly of three types: *Jaangala* (desert region), *Aanupa* (Marshy region) and *Saadhaarana* (Moderate zone). Foods grown in *Jaangala desha* are known to vitiate *vata*, therefore are not beneficial for people of *Jaangala desha* but beneficial for people of *Aanupa desha*. Similarly, food grown in *Aanupa desha* is known to vitiate *kapha*, hence not beneficial for people of *Aanupa desha*, but beneficial for people of *Jaangala desha*. Therefore it is advised to take the *desha* into consideration while consuming the *aahar* grown in a particular region.

6. Kaala

Kaala may be classified as *Avasthika* and *Nityaga* in *Ayurveda*.³⁵ *Avasthika kaala* determines the kind of food eaten depending on the disease of the individual or his age. For example, a person suffering from *Kustha* (an obstinate skin diseases including leprosy) is advised to take *laghu*, wholesome food and leafy vegetables of bitter taste.³⁶ This is so because a person has a predominance of a particular *dosh*as in different stages of his life.

Predominance of doshas in different stages of life³⁷

Stage of life	Dosha
Childhood	Kapha
Middle age	Pitta
Old age	Vata

The predominance of *dosh*as also depends on the different stages of digestion of food.

Predominance of doshas in different stages of digestion³⁸

Stage of Digestion	Dosha
Initial stage of digestion	Kapha
Mid stage of digestion	Pitta
Last stage of digestion	Vata

On the other hand, *Nityaga kaala* determines the type of food intake in a particular season. For example, the power of digestion is weak in summers, so one is advised to take less amount of food or the food that is easily digestible. Special care is recommended while consumption of the type of food in various seasons and their effect on the *dosh*as of the body because *dosh*as have a particular rhythm of *sanchaya-prakopa-shamana* during a year.

³⁴ Shastri S N, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, Charak Samhita vol.-1, Sutra Sthana – 3/6-3, Edition – 2008, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi, Page no. 693.

³⁵ Shastri S N, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, Charak Samhita vol.-1, Vimana Sthana – 1/21-6, Edition – 2008, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi, Page no. 682.

³⁶ Shastri S N, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, Charak Samhita vol.-2, Chikitsa Sthana – 7/83, Edition – 2008, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi, Page no. 262.

³⁷ Tripathi B N, Nirmala Hindi Commentary, Astanga Hridaya, Sutra Sthana – 8/1, Edition – 2009, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pratishthan, Delhi, Page no. 135.

³⁸ Tripathi B N, Nirmala Hindi Commentary, Astanga Hridaya, Sutra Sthana – 1/8, Edition – 2009, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pratishthan, Delhi, Page no. 9.

Effect of Seasons on *Doshas*³⁹

<i>Dosha</i>	<i>Sanchya</i> (Accumulation)	<i>Prakopa</i> (Vitiation)	<i>Shamana</i> (Pacification)
<i>Vata</i>	<i>Greeshma</i>	<i>Varsha</i>	<i>Sharada</i>
<i>Pitta</i>	<i>Varsha</i>	<i>Sharada</i>	<i>Hemanta</i>
<i>Kapha</i>	<i>Hemanta</i>	<i>Vasanta</i>	<i>Greeshma</i>

7. *Upayoga Sanstha*

Upayoga Sanstha represents the rules of consumption of diet. It depends on the symptoms that are produced after the digestion of food.⁴⁰ In addition to these symptoms, an individual must take into consideration certain other factors under dietetics which are as follows-

- A person should consume warm food because not only it is delicious but also gets digested easily since it provokes the factors that are responsible for digestion. These factors may be the digestive enzymes secreted at various levels of digestive tract. A warm food causes proper passage of *vata* and detachment of *kapha*.⁴¹
- A person must consume *snigdha aahar* since it has all the features similar to that of the warm food. In addition, it increases the plumpness of the body, strengthens the sense faculties and provides strength to whole of the body. It also brings about the brightening of the complexion.⁴²
- Food must be consumed only after the digestion of the previously consumed food. Not following this regimen will result in mixing of the product (*rasa*) of previously undigested food to the products of the currently consumed food which will eventually lead to exaggeration of all *doshas* of the body simultaneously. On the other hand, intake of food after complete digestion of previously consumed food will help in bringing all the *doshas* to their natural places, exaggeration of the power of digestion, provoking the appetite, widening of the entrances of the minute channels of the body, purification of the eructations, proper functioning of cardiac functions and manifestations of the functions of *vata*, proper passages of flatus-urine- stool. The *doshas* of the body do not get vitiated; infect they gain longevity.⁴³
- A person must not consume a combination of food substances of contradictory potencies that may otherwise give rise to diseases.⁴⁴
- A person must consume food at a proper place, equipped with all required accessories. This will avoid any emotional strain that may be produced on intake of food at improper place.⁴⁵

- A person must not consume food too quickly. Food may not enter in stomach and rather enter a wrong passage if consumed in a hurry. The person is not able to determine the taste of food and its useful and harmful effects.⁴⁶ Consumption of food too quickly may also result in intake of foreign bodies like hair, stone pieces, etc which may have bad consequences later on.
- Intake of food slowly too must be avoided as it may not provide satiety to the person resulting in consumption of food in greater quantity than required. The food may not remain warm and also do not gets digested in a proper manner.⁴⁷
- If a person talks or laughs while eating or feeds without interest, then he faces the same bad consequences as are faced while consuming the food too quickly.⁴⁸
- And finally, one must self consider that what food is useful to the person and what is harmful.⁴⁹

8. *Upayokta*

The person who takes the food is the *Upayokta*. It is he who is mainly responsible for the wholesomeness by the habitual intake of things (*okasatmya*).

DISCUSSION

The concept of *Ashta ahar vidhi visheshayatan* was put on decades ago but holds strong even in today's era. Need is to assimilate it in our daily routines. In order to remain healthy, individual must take into consideration the basic nature of food that will suit to his *prakriti*, because it is this diet that will stabilise his *doshas* and replenish his *dhatus*. In context of *karana*, one observes that food cooked on coal or wood has much more nutritional values than that cooked in microoven. But it is not that the use of technology should be completely restricted. Some studies have shown that some methods of *sanskaara* like thermal processing, soaking, fermentation, etc increase the physicochemical accessibility of micronutrients and decrease the content of anti nutrients such as phytates or increase the content of compounds that improve the bioavailability. For example, thermal processing improves the bioavailability of micronutrients such as thiamine and iodine by destroying some anti nutrients factors such as goitrogens. Fermentation produces low molecular substances like citric acid and lactic acid which enhances the iron and zinc production.⁵⁰ The concept of *samayoga* should be kept in mind while prescribing a combination of drugs to a patient. Now-a-days, the unawareness of people leads them to consume unwholesome combination of diets. These combinations are called *virudh aahar* in *ayurveda*. The knowledge of *samayoga*

³⁹ Kumari A, Tewari P V, English Commentary, Yogaratnakara part – 1, 1/813, Edition – 2010, Chaukhamba Visvabharati, Varanasi, Page no. 100.

⁴⁰ Shastri S N, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, Charak Samhita vol.-1, Vimana Sthana – 1/21-7, Edition – 2008, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi, Page no. 682.

⁴¹ Shastri S N, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, Charak Samhita vol.-1, Vimana Sthana – 1/24-1, Edition – 2008, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi, Page no. 683.

⁴² Shastri S N, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, Charak Samhita vol.-1, Vimana Sthana – 1/24-2, Edition – 2008, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi, Page no. 683.

⁴³ Shastri S N, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, Charak Samhita vol.-1, Vimana Sthana – 27/349-50, Edition – 2008, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi, Page no. 1/24-4.

⁴⁴ Shastri S N, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, Charak Samhita vol.-1, Vimana Sthana – 1/24-5, Edition – 2008, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi, Page no. 684.

⁴⁵ Shastri S N, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, Charak Samhita vol.-1, Vimana

Sthana – 1/24/6, Edition – 2008, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi, Page no. 684.

⁴⁶ Shastri S N, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, Charak Samhita vol.-1, Vimana Sthana – 1/24-7, Edition – 2008, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi, Page no. 685.

⁴⁷ Shastri S N, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, Charak Samhita vol.-1, Vimana Sthana – 1/24-8, Edition – 2008, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi, Page no. 685.

⁴⁸ Shastri S N, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, Charak Samhita vol.-1, Vimana Sthana – 1/24-9, Edition – 2008, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi, Page no. 685.

⁴⁹ Shastri S N, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, Charak Samhita vol.-1, Vimana Sthana – 1/25, Edition – 2008, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi, Page no. 685.

⁵⁰ Histine Hotz and Rosalind S. Gibson, Traditional food processing and preparation practices to enhance the bioavailability of micronutrients in plant based diets. The Journal of Nutrition, Date of Publication, volume issue-April(2007) Vol.137. No:4. Page no. 1097.

will prevent the intake of these diets. In a run for money, man has made his routine so busy that he has almost forgotten the importance of *desha* and *kaala* in context of his diet which is a serious issue. Therefore the impregnation of all these eight features in our daily life is not an option, but is a necessity.

Conclusion

Aahar if consumed according to above mentioned eight features, proves the best medication and a prophylactic treatment of most of the diseases. On the other hand, avoiding these regulations may lead to generation of diseases. People in ancient era used to live a healthy long life, but in modern era,

due to the busy daily routine, the diet pattern of individual has changed which has decreased both the longevity and quality of life. Scientific evaluation of the *Ashta aahar vidhi visheshayatan*, when presented in front of people, may provoke their interest towards these eight norms again. Why to waste money, time and resources when a person may live a sound health by just following these eight rules. By following these, the body never reaches to the stage of diseases. These eight features are responsible for useful and harmful effects and are conditioned by one another. One should be curious to know them and utilize them for the beneficiary of health. If a substance is felt pleasant instantaneously but is harmful in long run, then it shouldn't be consumed either intentionally or by ignorance⁵¹.

⁵¹ Shastri S N, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, Charak Samhita vol.-1, Vimana Sthana – 1/23, Edition – 2008, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi, Page no. 683.