

## Conceptual study of Avastha Paka

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### Abstract:

Ayurveda is a branch of science which deals with maintaining health and treating the diseased condition of the body. It has many branches like Kriya Sharir, Rachana Sharir, Dravya guna, Rasa shastra, Dravyaguna, Agadatantra etc. Acharaya Charaka has mentioned that all the diseases are formed due to impairment of the digestive fire means Jatharagni. Health is totally dependant on the well being of the agni. Our digestion is also dependent on this agni. Every food particle ingested through mouth has to be passed through Gastrointestinal tract for digestion. There are three stages, through which digestion occurs. They are called as Avastha paka. These stages are described before the actual digestion completes in the Gastrointestinal tract. These are namely Madhura, Amla and Katu respectively. It is dependant on the context of dosha present in that area and breaking down of panchamahabhuta after reaching in that respective location. The present study is an attempt to conceptualize the Avasthapaka for proper understanding the stages of digestion according to our Ayurveda.

**Keywords:** Ayurveda, digestion, Avastha, dosha.

### Introduction:

Our Ayurveda is a branch of science which deals with maintaining health and treating the diseased condition of the body. <sup>1</sup> We all consume food for our living. It is utmost importance for our healthy long life. Any human can not live without the intake of food. Also after taking food, its digestion is also very important. It is helpful for getting nourishment to all parts of the body. When food is ingested, it has to be digested to get absorbed. The digestive concept of our Ayurveda says that every food particle must undergo a common path of three stages. Each of these three stages through which food particle has to pass while getting digested is called Avastha Paka. Each of these three stages is denoted by Rasa.

### Aims –

- To study in detail the concept of Avastha paka

### Objective:

- To take various references related to Avastha paka in various Ayurvedic Samhitas.
- To take various pachana in various Ayurvedic Samhitas.

- To understand the Avasthapaka concept and its resemblance to digestion

### Material and Methods:

- Compilation of different reference form texts, dictionary and Samhita related to topic.
- Explore and elaborate the concept of dosha dhatu mala according to panchamahabhuta by referring books, papers, samhita etc.
- Exploring panchamahabhutoutik utpatti of dosha dhatu mala.

### Review of literature:

#### ▪ Paka: <sup>2</sup>

To understand meaning of Avastha paka, it is needed to know the meaning of paka. Paka is digestion of ingested material. It involves changing form, structure and taste of ingested material.

#### ▪ Avasthapaka:

Following are the three stages of Avastha paka.

#### 1) First stage of Digestion (Madhura) : <sup>3</sup>

अन्नस्य भुक्तमात्रस्य षड्सस्य प्रपाकतः |

मधुराद्यात् कफो भावात् फेनभूत उदीर्यते || ...च.चि.१५/९

After food containing six rasa is ingested, foamy secretion of Madhur rasa takes place as a primary event in digestion. It occurs due to separation of Pruthvi mahabhuta and Jala Mahabhuta. It happens due to action of Jatharagni on food. Jatharagni acts

on food, which is already grinded by teeth and breaks into Panchabhoutik components. This breakage begins with Prithvi and Jala Mahabhuta. They together constitute Rasa Madhura in context to Rasa and Dosha Kapha in context to Dosha. So first stage gives rise to Dosha Kapha and Rasa Madhura. It can be compared to cooking of rice. It comprises of boiling water and formation of quickly expanding and spilling foam like uppermost layer.

By viewing this, first stage of digestion is needed to consider as digestion of food in stomach till the food gets mixed with acid and becomes acidic. According to modern science of Anatomy and Physiology, stomach is first receptacle of food, where food comes in mechanically digested status by grinding of teeth and contains salivary secretions. Cells of mucus membrane of stomach secrete very strong acid HCl. Copious amount of thick and viscid, insoluble mucus is present here to protect the mucus Membrane. It softens food and wraps it in such a fashion that even spicy food is unable to irritate mucus Membrane of Stomach. All these thoughts in certain aspects match concepts of Ayurvedic digestion of first stage.

Tongue is present only in mouth. Once food traverses beyond tongue, how these taste in terms of Rasa are realized? The answer will be as follows. It is not necessary for Rasa to submit itself to taste buds. Certain occasions call for previous experience, knowledge given by experts or judgement by means of action of unknown rasa. Hence this manifestation shown on body among spell out Rasa. Rasa in Avasthapaka is judged by means of manifestation observed on body. When ingested matter is in mouth, Rasais perceived by tongue. Once it passes beyond mouth, it is guessed by its effects on living body.

For example, suppose sweet food is ingested. It is recognised by tongue as Sweet. When it comes to location of first stage of digestion, it remains sweet; rather its sweetness is accentuated due to addition of Constituents of sweet rasa, as a result of digestion process. This is manifested in the form of accentuated Kapha dosha.

Suppose spicy food is ingested. It is recognised by tongue as spicy. When it comes to location of first stage of digestion, it behaves as if it is sweet. What is meaning of food behaving as if it is sweet? Spicy food which burns tongue and mucus

Membrane of mouth, brings tears in eyes and makes nose run; should irritate mucus Membrane of stomach immediately after reaching it. Individuals eating spicy food should get burning sensation, till the food is excreted out of intestine. However this does not happen. Once taste is realised at tongue, food swallowed is not that irritant and burning as should be expected. This is because of thick coverage of mucus protecting mucus Membrane of oesophagus and stomach. In addition, saliva helps to bind and wrap this food. Since this stage is not irritant to mucus membrane of Stomach, it is called Madhura stage. This is only rasa, which never produces any irritation.

It is therefore proposed by our Ayurveda that manifestation in terms of accentuated Kapha will vary in sweet and spicy food quantitatively. With heavily sweet food, satiety will be more, drowsiness and heaviness of meal will be more than spicy food. Yet, first stage is non – irritant stage.

## 2) Second stage of Digestion (Amla):

परं तु पच्यमानस्य विदग्धस्याम्लभावतः |

आशयाच्चवमानस्य पित्तमच्छमुदिर्यते || च.चि.१५/१०

After this, half digested food which is in process of digestion is propagated downwards from Amashaya. Due to sourness of the food, Accha pitta is secreted here. <sup>4</sup>

Second stage basically occurs due to separation of Taja Mahabhuta and Jala mahabhuta. This happens due to effects of Jatharagni on food. Jatharagni acts on food, which is already grinded by teeth and breaks into Panchabhoutika Components. Breakage in second stage is with Taja Mahabhuta and Jala mahabhuta. They together constitute rasa Amla in context to rasa and Dosha Pitta in Context to Dosha. So second stage of digestion gives rise to Dosha Pitta and Amal in Rasa.

Second stage is of sour rasa. A short time of ingestion of food, thirst is felt by individual eating food. Intensity of thirst could be indicative of type of food eaten. When more agni or digestive Mechanism is active, intensity will be more. Hence in heavy or spicy or irritant food, more thirst is experienced.

Individual due to generation of Pitta, gets feeling of appetite, since food is being properly digested, feels thirst, looks nourished, likes to perform intellectual functions likes to perform deed



using bravery. All these things are in fact felt by individual front peak of second stage to end of second stage where Pitta is dominant all over Physiology of living body .

Second stage of digestion is needed to consider as digestion of food from expulsion of acidic food from pyloric sphincter to thirst part of duodenum till digested products are absorbed. This entire area comprises of mixed digested and undigested food. Hence it extends to second part of ileum almost. Over here, pancreatic and hepatic secretions along with succus Entericus, in form of Pitta digest all food components. This makes digested part of food to be separated from undigested part of food.

This part of digestive system holds agni, hence it holds food for a longer duration and this action gives it a name Grahani. It holds food till it is digested and sends it down only after digestion. <sup>5</sup>

### 3) Third stage of digestion (Katu):

पक्वाशयं तु प्राप्तस्य शोष्यमाणस्य बन्धिना |

परिपिण्डितपक्वस्य वायुः स्यात् कटुभावतः || च.चि...१५/११

When this digested food is reached to Pakwashaya, it is absorbed with the help of agni. Absorption gives digested food its shape of container. Due to Katu rasa over here, vayu is generated here. <sup>6</sup>

Third stage basically occurs due to separation of Akash Mahabhuta and Vayu Mahabhuta. This happens due to effect of Agni. Acharya Charaka names this agni as Shoshyamanasya Agni. Due to absorption of fluidly material by this agni, panchabhoutika components are revealed. This begins with Akasha mahabhuta and Vayu mahabhuta. They together constitute Rasa Katu in context of rasa and dosha Vata in context of dosha. So third stage of digestion gives rise to Dosha Vata and Rasa Katu.

Third stage of digestion is needed to consider in large Intestine where undigested food products in form of semisoild faecal form arrive. Here by absorption of fluidly material, solid mass of faecal matter is formed. Since bacteria grow in this stage, noxious and toxic substances, which are also acidic, are produced in this stage hence Katu rasa is formed and by relation of Dosha, Vata is generated.

#### ▪ Location of Avasthapa:

1. First stage – From mouth to Amashaya
2. Second stage – Amashaya

### 3. Third stage – Pakwashaya onwards

It shows effects for short duration, so it is called as ‘temporary stage’.

### Discussion and Conclusion –

- There are three stage of digestion called as Avastha paka, through which every food particle has to go passed during their digestion.
- Strength of stages of digestion depends on what type of food is ingested.
- If heavy, unctuous, sweet food is eaten, first stage of digestion proves to be strong, generating large amount of Kapha.
- If spicy, hot food which creates burning sensation to mucus membrane is eaten, second stage of digestion proves to be strong, generating large amount of Pitta.
- If very less or very light, least nourishing food is eaten, third stage of digestion proves to be strong, generating large amount of Vata.
- These stages are due to inborn locations of doshas. In upper part of the body above heart dosha Kapha prevails by default. Hence food when traverses this part of body through Gastrointestinal tract, first stage prevails.
- In middle part of the body, between heart and umbilicus, dosha Pitta prevails by default. Hence food when traverses this part of body through Gastrointestinal tract, second stage prevails.
- In lower part of body, below umbilicus, dosha Vata prevails by default. Hence food when traverses this part of body through Gastrointestinal tract, third stage prevails.

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