

## Critical Review Study of Rules of Intake of Ahara

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#### Abstract:

*Ayurveda is a branch of science which deals with maintaining health and treating the diseased condition of the body. Ahara is essential for both the above works. The management of taking ahara is very useful in Ayurveda. There are various references elaborated regarding rules of taking ahara. Ahara is of prime importance in life of all human beings. No one can live without consumption of Ahara. It gives happiness, voice, life, satisfaction, power, intelligence to man. So it is base of life. Every human being should follow strictly emphasised in Ayurveda. It can be listed as Ahara vidhivisheshayatan, Ahar Vidhi vidhan, Ahar parinamkar bhava and all remaining rules. They are also helpful in giving guidance during treatment. The present study is an attempt to critical review the all the rules of taking ahara enlisted in Ayurveda.*

*Keywords: Ayurveda, Ahara, vidhi, visheshayatana.*

#### Introduction:

**A**yurveda 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. Ahara is very important for our life. Ahara is a life of living being. Happiness, voice, life, satisfaction, power, intelligence all are dependent on ahara. All work, which a man does for his life, like agriculture, business is on the base of the ahara. So ahara is base of life. <sup>2</sup> There are rules mentioned in our Ayurveda related to Ahara comprising of factors related to making of Ahara, Ingestion of Ahara and related to digestion of Ahara. Also other rules necessary for well being of the human are elaborated in *Sushrut Samhita*.

*Acharya Charaka* in *Charak samhita* stated that when food Constituents are suitable for bio-conversion and can nourish body Constituents, they are assimilated properly. On the contrary, when food Constituents are suitable for bio- conversion, yet are not able to nourish body Constituents, they are not assimilated. Ingested food is ultimately biotransformed into body entities. If food bears qualities facilitating body entities, it is able to nourish

and replenish these body entities. If food bears exactly opposite qualities to our body entities, such food keeps these body entities ill nourished or sometimes, such diet is capable of killing these body entities. Due to this, ultimate fate of food is to either facilitate or oppose body entities. All the rules related to Ahara are enlisted as follows. –

#### Aim –

To study rules related to Ahara and find its clinical significance

#### Objective:

1. To take various references related to Ahara in various *Ayurvedic Samhitas*.
2. To understand Ahar vidhivisheshayatana, Ahar vidhividhan & Aharpatinamkar bhava.
3. To understand the various references enumerated related to rules of taking Ahara.

#### Material and Methods –

Main Classical *Ayurvedic* texts are used. e.g. *Charak Samhita*, *Sushrut Samhita*, *Ashtang Hrudya*, *Ashtang Sangraha*. Many *Ayurvedic* Manuscripts are also used for this study. Various online databases, Articles, research materials are also used for this study as a source material.

**Discussion:**

*Ahara* is an extremely important factor in everybody's life. Human can not eat non – biotic material as a staple food. He has to eat biotic material. Human can not live without *ahara*. There are some rules related to intake of *ahara* in Ayurveda. Ingestion, Digestion, absorption are totally dependant on the *Ahara*. So it is necessary to overview and follow the rules of intake of *Ahara* carefully. All the rules of intake of Ayurveda can be listed under four categories namely *Aharavidhi visheshayatana*, *Ahara vidhividhan*, *Ahar Parinamakar bhava* and other rules.

**Aharavidhi Visheshayatana:**

*Ahar* is food. *Vidhi* is method. *Vishesh* is peculiar. *Ayatan* is abode. Eight types of direction for ingestion of food are given. They are – *Prakruti*, *Karana*, *Samyoga*, *Rashi*, *Desha*, *Kala*, *Upayoga Samstha* and *Upayokta*.<sup>3</sup>

**1. Prakruti –**

*Prakruti* is first factor. It is real qualities of food like heaviness and lightness. Black gram is heavy to digest having heaviness quality whereas green gram is light to digest having lightness quantity. So it is *Prakruti* these both eatables.<sup>4</sup>

**2. Karana –**

It is second factor. It is an alteration mode while cooking of *ahara*. These alteration and application of various methods like soaking, churning, cooking, roasting, washing etc. They change the quality of food. Example is raw rice and roasted rice. First is heavier than latter.<sup>5</sup>

**3. Samyoga –**

*Samyoga* is third factor having meaning of combination of two or more food items together. Single item may be good, but combination may be harmful. For example, fish is good for health. Milk is good for health. Both are good for health if consumed separately. If they are eaten in combination, it is worst for health due to its poisonous action over body and responsible for causation of many diseases in the body. Honey and ghee are also good for health. Buy if they consumed in equal proportion, it is also poisonous for health. Either they should be combined in unequal proportion or should be eaten separately.<sup>6</sup>

**4. Rashi –**

It is an amount of ingestion of food. It is also important factor. It is generally observed in two ways – one way is to calculate total amount of food eaten (called as *Sarvagraha*) and another way is to calculate each quantity of food item consumed (*Parigraha*).<sup>7</sup>

**5. Desh –**

It is fifth factor. It is actually place of origin of food stuff whether it is offspring of cool country or warm country. It also denotes body, which consumes it. It means habit of body to eat specific type of food is observed here.<sup>8</sup>

**6. Kala –**

It is sixth factor. It means condition of body, whether the consumer is in healthy condition or he is sick. It also denotes season like spring, summer, monsoon, winter etc.<sup>9</sup>

**7. Upayoga Samstha –**

It is seventh factor. It denotes when to eat and when not to eat. Ideally it is expected that one should eat only when previous diet is digested. If it is not observed, it is dangerous to our digestive fire.<sup>10</sup>

**8. Upayokta –**

*Upayokta* is one who eats. He should think of his own constitution, habit and then eat accordingly.

These are eight regulations for consumption of food. These should be observed for better health. A wise person should carefully view good and bad outcomes of right and wrong eating. He should not be tempted to eat, which is not good for his health.<sup>11</sup>

**Ahara vidhividhan –**

*Ahar* is food. *Vidhi* is method. *Vidhan* is accomplishing. These are methodological related rules. Some *ahara* material are originally healthy. They should be methodological for better health. They are as follows:

1. Eat warm food because it is pleasant to eat. It feels tasty. It increases appetite and helps in increasing secretions of digestive juices. It gets digested fast. It induces flatus and decreases *Kapha*.<sup>12</sup>
2. Second rule is to eat unctuous food. It enhances weak *agni*. It digests food fast. It helps to pass flatus. It is useful for nourishing the body. It gives strength to special sense and body.<sup>13</sup>

3. Third rule is to eat food in appropriate quantity. It should not be eat in excess or less. It is useful for appropriate maintaining of level of *dosha Vata, Pitta* and *Kapha*. It passes excrete smoothly. Agni is well maintained. So food is digested perfectly.<sup>14</sup>
4. Fourth rule is to eat only when previous meal is digested. If eaten before digestion of previous meal, food to be digested gets mixed with food, which is half digested. It leads to instant vitiation of three *dosha*. If eaten when previous meal is digested, all three *dosha* remain in physiological limits, *agni* is enhanced, belching is without any smell, no pressure of heart is realized, excreta is smoothly expelled, all building blocks are well maintained and there by span of life is increased.<sup>15</sup>
5. Fifth rule is avoidance of eating together two opposite strong qualities. If it is eaten in together, it generates disease.<sup>16</sup>
6. Sixth rule is to eat in appropriate, good places. It should not be hideous place. It affects the psychology of consumer.<sup>17</sup>
7. Seventh rule is not to eat very fast. If someone eats very fast, he chokes, vomits, insults food and develops disliking towards food.<sup>18</sup>
8. Eighth rule is not to eat very slowly. If one eats very slowly, he does not gets satiety. Hence he eats more. Food gets cold.<sup>19</sup>
9. Ninth rule is not to talk or laugh while eating. It causes vitiation of all three doshas.<sup>20</sup>
10. Tenth rule is to eat in appropriate manner. One should always think of suitability of the food going to consume.<sup>21</sup>

#### **Aharparinamakara bhava**

All the factors responsible for ultimate fate of food are called as *Aharparinamakara bhava*. They are *Ushma, Vayu, Kleda, Sneha* and *Kala*. They are described as follows

#### **7. Ushma –**

It is the first factor mentioned. It is the factor, which is directly responsible for digestion. *Ushma* is parallel to fire in world. As fire boils rice from raw grains, this *ushma* digests ingested boiled rice to absorbable products. This action is done by

*Pachakagni* or Digestive fire. By this, it explains association of Digestive system.

*Acharya Chakrapani* has commented in his commentary that *Ushma* is directly responsible for conversion of complex food into absorbable products. It is directly concerned with food digestion.<sup>22</sup>

#### **8. Vayu –**

It is the second factor mentioned as *Aharparinamakara bhava*. It is supplementary factor. Movement are due to Vayu. It gives stimulation of various kinds. It is supplementary in digestion. Vayu is helpful in biochemical reactions of digestion of food. Actually, *vayu* drags all the food content to proper place, where *agni* is actually present. In addition to this, *samana vayu* mainly helps in stimulation of *agni*. This again is another help to digestion of food. Supplementary actions of Vayu can be mentioned as induction of necessary movements in GI tract and induction of Secretion of enzymes in GI tract.<sup>23</sup>

#### **9. Kleda –**

It is the third factor mentioned in *Aharparinamakara bhava*. Again it is a supplementary factor. It helps in the disintegration of coarse food material into finer particles. *Kleda* means moisture. In Gastrointestinal tract, it is provided by *kledaka Kapha* in stomach or *Amashaya*. *Kledaka Kapha* soaks all food material, whether taken with fluid or dry and finally makes fine paste of chewed food in Stomach.<sup>24</sup>

#### **10. Sneha –**

It is the fourth factor mentioned in *Aharparinamakara bhava*. Again it is a supplementary factor. *Sneha* brings softness to the food.<sup>25</sup>

#### **11. Kala –**

It is the fifth factor mentioned in *Aharparinamakara bhava*. Again it is a supplementary factor. *Kala* means time required for digestion. Though there are efficient enzymes, effective movements of Gastrointestinal tract, food must get certain period to get absorbed.

Commentator of *Charaka Samhita Acharya Chakrapani* has stated the word '*paryapta*' in digestion. It is absolutely correct that *ushma* is an inevitable factor for digestion. But only appropriate amount of *ushma* is not enough for the digestion of food. It should be given necessary time required for

digestion. It exhibit the importance of time factor in process of digestion. <sup>26</sup>

**12. Samayoga –**

It is the sixth factor mentioned in *Aharparinamakara bhava*. Again it is a supplementary factor. ‘*Samayoga*’ means healthy combination of food items. If food items are mixed in wrong way or in wrong proportion or cooked in wrong blending, food becomes unhealthy for Gastrointestinal tract. <sup>27</sup>

**Other Rules:**

1. In case of viewing the appropriate quantity of food, stomach should be divided into three parts. One part should be filled with solid, one should be filled with liquid food and one should be kept empty for movement of all three *doshas*. Due to this, no pain is felt in flanks. Does not feel obstruction in cardiac area. It does not feel backache, heaviness in abdomen. Special senses feel fresh. Satisfies his hunger and thirst. It feels easy in sitting posture, sleeping posture, respiration, laughing and talking. It helps for smooth excretion of Excretory products. This adds to strength, good colour and well nourishment. <sup>28</sup>
2. All the person remaining thirsty and feeling warm, alcoholic person suffering from haemorrhagic diseases, poisoned person who is feeling giddy, who has gone weak due to indulgence in sex should eat cool *ahara*. <sup>29</sup>
3. All the person who are *Kapha* and *Vata* predominant person, person in whom snehan is done, who is not well hydrated should eat warm. <sup>30</sup>
4. All the person who are *Vata* predominant, one with dry body features, that one indulges in sex, one who exercises should eat unctuous food. <sup>31</sup>
5. All the person who are fat, *kapha* influenced person, unctuous person and diabetic person should eat dry food. <sup>32</sup>
6. All persons whose body is emaciated, who is weak and who remains thirsty should take fluid diet. <sup>33</sup>
7. Person with infected wound, should take less fluid and hence solid diet. <sup>34</sup>

8. Persons having weak *agni* should eat only once a day. <sup>35</sup>
9. Persons having *Samgani* should eat two times a day. <sup>36</sup>
10. Persons who have to take medicines should take them with food. <sup>37</sup>
11. Person having *mandagni* should eat less. <sup>38</sup>
12. A person should change his diet according to seasons, as there is variation in Vitiated *dosha*. <sup>39</sup>

**References related to rules of Taking Ahara –**

Following are the some references found in Chikitsasthana of Charak Samhita related to rules of taking *Ahara*

1. Excessive intake of *Ushna, teekshna, Amla, Katu, Lavana* diet is responsible for formation of *Raktapitta Vyadhi*.
2. Excessive consumption of dry food (*ruksha Ahara*) is responsible for formation of *Gulma Vyadhi*.
3. Excessive intake of curd, milk, newly formed crops, food prepared form *Jaggery* and sugar are responsible for formation of *Prameha Vyadhi*.
4. Intake of *Viruddha Ahara* (having opposite qualities) and excessive intake of liquid diet, taking diet before complete digestion of prior diet is responsible for formation of *Kushtha Vyadhi*.
5. Taking diet which is complete opposite to *Ahar Vidhi vidhan* is responsible for formation of *Rajayakshma Vyadhi*.
6. Intake of *Viduddha ahara* is perspective of *Desh, Kala, Samyoga, Veerya* is responsible for formation of *Unmad Vyadhi*.
7. Intake of unhealthy and impure food is responsible for formation of *Apasmara Vyadhi*.
8. Intake of dry diet, diet having predominance of only one *rasa* is responsible for formation of *Urakshata Vyadhi*.
9. Intake of *Kshara, Amla, Teekshna, Ushna*, heavy diet after fasting for long duration is responsible for formation of *Shoth Vyadhi*.
10. Intake of dry, less diet is responsible for formation of *Vataj Udar Vyadhi*.

11. Intake of excessive *Ushna, teekshna* diet is responsible for the formation of *Pittaj Udar Vyadhi*.
12. Excessive intake of liquid diet destroys *Jatharagni* and causes *Jalodar*.
13. Excessive intake of heavy, Sweet, *Sheeta, Viruddha ahara* is perspective of *Desh, Kala, Samyoga, Veerya* is responsible for formation of *Arsha Vyadhi*.
14. Intake of diet which is excessive *sheeta* and dry, doing fast, taking diet in excessive quantity and excessive frequency, more heavy is responsible for formation of *Grahani Vyadhi*.
15. Intake of *Kshar, Amla, Lavana*, excessive *Ushna, Viruddha ahara*, intake of black gram, oil made from black gram is responsible for formation of *Pandu Vyadhi*.
16. Excessive intake of dry and *Visham ahara* is responsible for formation of *Hikka* and *Shwas Vyadhi*.
17. Consumption of dry, cool and pungent tasty food in excess quantity, eating less food, consumption of only one or two *rasa*, complete fasting is responsible for formation of *Vataja Kasa*.
18. Consumption of *Ushna, teekshna* and *katu rasa* food in excess quantity is responsible for formation of *Pittaj Kasa*.
19. Consumption of heavy, *abhishyandi*, unctuous and sweet tasty food in excess quantity is responsible for formation of *Kaphaja Kasa*.
20. Excess intake of *Lavana, Amla, Katu rasa*, Curd, alcohol causes *Visarpa*.
21. Excessive fasting, consumption of alcohol, hot, dry diet causes *Trushna roga*.
22. Excessive intake of *kashaya, tikta* and *Katu rasa*, dry food causes *Udavarta*.
23. Consumption of diet containing unctuous, hot, light, cool, dry, curd, milk, meat, food prepared from black gram etc. before complete digestion of prior diet is responsible for formation of *Urustambha Vyadhi*.
24. Excessive consumption of dry food, cool, less quantity is responsible for *Vatavyadhi*.

25. Intake of *Viruddha ahara* is responsible for *Vatashonita Vyadhi*.

**Conclusion:**

Ahara is most important factor in life of human beings. If becomes fruitful only if it is taken as per the rules mentioned in Ayurveda. Aharvidhi visheshayatana contains rules like Prakruti, Karana, Samyoga, Rashi, Desha, Kala, Upayoga Samstha and Upayokta. Ahara Vidhi vidhan includes rules containing eating of warm, unctuous, appropriate quantity food, taking food after digestion of previous meal, should not eat very slowly, should not eat very fast, should eat in appropriate manner and at appropriate place. Ahar parinamkar bhava contains Ushma, Vayu, Kleda, Sneha, Kala and Samayoga etc. Remaining rules contains when to eat cool, when to eat warm, unctuous, dry, fluid diet, solid diet, less and medicines in food.

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