

Study of Importance of Ahara as Described in Ayurvedic Classics

Author: Singh Pragya¹

Co Authors: Singh Anil Kumar²

¹Department of Samhita & Siddhant, Guru Gorakshanath Institute of Medical Sciences Ayurveda Faculty, Gorakhpur U.P., India

²Department of Kayachikitsa Shivalik Ayurvedic Medical College Azamgarh U.P., India

ABSTRACT

Ayurveda has equated human body with a building, as pillars and sub-pillars are required to make the building stable, similarly the need of three pillars (Sthunas) and three supporting pillars (Upastambhas) have been emphasized for human body. The three pillars are the three humors; Vata, Pitta, and Kapha¹. The three sub-pillars are Ahara (diet), Nidra (sleep) and Brahmacharya (celibacy)². Here Ahara has been enumerated first, which shows its importance. Ahara (diet) and vihara (life style) both play a preeminent role in ayurvedic thought concerning the etiology of diseases and their cure. Acharya Charaka has said that, food is the foremost among those that sustain life¹. According to Susruta, Ahara (food) is the sustainer of living beings and also the cause for their strength, complexion and vigor¹. When the food is taken judiciously and according to the codes of dietetics then only the above benefits of Ahara can be achieved, while on deviating from these codes leads to an unhealthy life. The ancient rishis and pioneers of ayurveda have laid down certain rules and codes of dietetics which are to be followed by every individual to attain the healthy and long life. In this thesis work detail about the important of Ahara will be described according to Ayurvedic classics.

Key Words Ahara, Virudhaahar, Hitakaraka, Humours

Received 16th March 22 Accepted 04th April 22 Published 10th May 2022

INTRODUCTION

Ayurvedic, the "Science of Life" has given much importance to the preservation of health and the prevention of diseases. Naturally it has dealt very deeply the aspect of dietetics in view of the social and climate conditions. *Ayurvedic* defines diet' as that which is 'beneficial' (*hitakaraka*), taken in appropriate and moderate proportions and taken at proper time of the day. Here the world 'beneficial' or '*Hitakaraka*' has a special meaning of food which keeps the person healthy, maintains normal body functions, at the same

time corrects the irregularities that may occur in the body, leads to proper functioning of the organs and prevents diseases. In this modern era, due to globalization, urbanization, neck to neck competition and advancement in the knowledge and technologies, our lifestyle, diet and dietary habits are changing rapidly favorable to the onset of numerous diseases.

In *Ayurveda*, novel concept of *Viruddha ahara* has been condensed. Since the effect of this *Viruddha ahara* is indifferent from the *Ahita ahara*, this *Viruddha ahara* may be included

REVIEW ARTICLE

under the *Ahita ahara* group. According to *Charak*, the articles of food, which dislodge the morbid humors but do not eliminate them from the body, are to be regarded as unwholesome¹. Further in the discussion on the subject of incompatibility of diet, worshipful *Atreya* has said "Articles of diet that are inimical to the body elements (*Dhatus*) tend to disagree with the system (body)². Apart from the dietetic codes and conducts, certain guidelines regarding the daily routine (*Dincharya*, *Ratricharya*), seasonal routine (*Ritucharya*), behavior and mental attitude (*Swasthavritta* and *Sadavritta anusthan*) have also been laid down by the ancient scholars. One who follows these guidelines with devotion, usually never gets indulged in the web of diseases. But unfortunately, the major population of world neither ever care to follow up the dietetic codes and the guidelines of *Swasthavritta* nor they have any time to follow these guidelines. The body contains thousands of types of molecules but requires for health the intake of only a small number of organic compounds-9 essential amino acids, 1 fatty acid, and 13 vitamins in addition to sufficient energy, water and minerals. Proteins, fats and carbohydrates are sometimes referred to as proximate principles. In contrast, most inorganic molecules in food are nutritionally essential: calcium, phosphorus, potassium, sodium, chloride, and magnesium are major constituents to the body; moderate amounts of iron and zinc are required; and fluoride, copper, chromium, iodine, manganese,

molybdenum, and selenium are required in trace amounts (less than 1 mg/d).

DISCUSSION ON CONCEPTUAL STUDY

Mode of action according to *ayurvedic* principles-

Ayurveda has described various types of *Viruddha Ahara*. all these types of *Viruddha Ahara* may not do harm to every individual. Similarly, only one *Viruddha* type of *Ahara* is not harmful to everybody, i.e., one *Viruddha Ahara* can be harmful to one individual, but the same *Ahara* may not do harm to other individual. This is because of having the different constitutions or **personality, Agni, Dosha, Kala, Satmya and Sampat etc, not only these rule, Viruddha Ahara** will immediately act on those who is having weak Agni, old age people, children or diseased persons. One who indulged in *Virudha Ahar* for long time, due to imbalance of digestive Agni, proper digestion of food materials hampered and causes *Amotpatti*, which is the main agent of disease manifestation. Due to the *Ama* formation lack of *Rasa dhatu* production will take place and simultaneously "*Amayukta*" (indigested food material) *Ahara* will enter into the *Rasavaha* and *Raktavaha* channels causing *Sroto Avarodha* (blockage of micro-channels) and symptoms related to these channels appears first. Later on it proceeds to different organs, places and according to their *Sthana*, the diseases symptomatology can be seen. This whole process

REVIEW ARTICLE

of pathogenesis has been explained by *Sushruta* in terms of *Shatkriyakalas viz. samchya, prakopa, prasara, sthanasamsreya, vakti and bheda.*

Discussion on Modern Review:

Nutrition is a matter of life - long eating habits which become set with age. Dietary habits also vary from person to person, according to the difference of cultural, geographical and environmental conditions along with the bioavailability of local food items. Eating is considered as one of the most important parts of our everyday living which we can't expect the life to exist. The foods we eat are the single source of energy & nutrition by knowing the eating habits & the type of food consumed, we can get a person's life style. The primary goal of eating is to enable the body to function normally. Dietary habits are the habitual decisions a person or culture makes when choosing what foods to eat. When a person didn't took balance diet may causes disease of starvation or over diet as obesity.

Possible mode of action of *Krama Viruddha Ahara*

Ayurveda deals with the human body both in its physiological and pathological aspects. The three root humors, viz. *Vata, Pitta, Kapha* along with the blood makes the body and they are responsible for both physiological and pathological functions in the body. Apart from these three doshas there are *dhatu*s and *malas* also in the body and a perfect equilibrium or homeostasis maintains the body in a healthy condition. Any shift or alterations in this

homeostasis results in disease. Body always tries to maintain its physiological equilibrium provided certain conditions are favorable to it, but failure of the body to maintain its normally of doshas or equilibrium provided certain conditions are favorable to it, but failure of the body to maintain its normally of *Doshas* or equilibrium of *Dhatu*s predisposes some pathological changes inside the body leading to disease manifestation results. In contrast, the *Viruddha* substance, due to their nature, fail to be broken down and digested, and due to their *Viruddhabhava* or poor affinity towards the tissues of the body and its opposing nature, excites the humours therein.

SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

Summary is the replica of a thesis work. The subject which, is described and discussed in elaborative way in the thesis is to be summarized at the end by reading the summary, one can get an idea about the subject in the glimpse of a thesis description. The aim and objective of investigations is to reach up to a definite conclusion, by understanding the concepts in their correct manner. Study of any concept under various headings gives it complete orientation, but correct understanding and proper interpretation of the concept helps to achieve the determined goal and it is possible only with the help of discussion. A short summary of the dissertation titled as "A study of importance of *Ahara* as described in *Ayurvedic classics*" is as follows: -Food is base of life. It is the basic

REVIEW ARTICLE

need to function our body. It maintains the homeostasis of the body. Every organ or part of body is depended on food to extract nutrition from it. In ayurvedic Samhitas food is considered as one other pillar of the body which itself signifies the importance of food.

- Acharya Charak has included Ahara in three Upastambhas which are basic of life. Out of three *Upastambhas* (supports of life) i.e., *Ahara* (Diet), *Nidra* (sleep) and *Brahmacharya* (observance of celibacy); the first one has been given more importance and considered to be the best in *Ayurveda*. A proper, skillful and optimum use of this triads, leads human body to maintain its integrity, being enriched with *Bala* (physical and immunological strength), *Varna* (complexion) and *Upachaya* (growth or nourishment), till full length of life, provided the person concerned does not get involved in the regimen detrimental to health.

- It is also important to understand what type of food should be taken so that it can serve the purpose in best way. Food timing is also very important according to *Ayurveda*. Regarding this *Sushruta* advice that food should be easily digestible, energetic, soft, warm, and in proper quantities when one is hungry. Thus, *Sushruta* has very clearly described the essence of ideal dietetics in one sentence.

- Proper intake of food serves the purpose. Its benefits are also described in *Sushrut samhita*. *Susurta* has also stated that it nourishes as well as instantly promotes strength and keeps up the

integrity of the body. The span of life, luster, enthusiasm, memory, *Ojas* and digestive fire too are increased and dependent to *Ahara*.

- *Vridhdha-Vagbhata* has accepted *Ahara* as a causative factor for the desired sense objects and life itself as *ojas*, lusture, body tissues, acuteness of the sense, body strength, delightness, plumpness, complexion and disease-free state of the body are totally governed by it.

- Food classified in many ways. It may be veg or non veg according to form of food, according to taste or according to its properties etc. Acharya *Charaka* has also given classification of *Ahara* in various ways.

- ✓ It is of two types according to sources immobile i.e. Plant Kingdom and mobile i.e. animal kingdom also of two types according to effect wholesome and unwholesome.

- ✓ It is of four types according to the way of intake, drinks, eatables, chewable and lickable.

- ✓ It is of six types according to taste.

- ✓ It is of twenty types according to properties.

- ✓ *Charak* has classified the food articles into twelve different groups:

- Its well known that we get nutrients from food. But there are many factors which decide the outcome of food. Food quantity, quality and timing is very important for everyone. Even in ayurvedic Samhitas there are proper description regarding this. For this *Charak* has given the concept of *Aharavidhi vishesayatan* which are eight and make the *Ahar* bebeficial to body. He

REVIEW ARTICLE

has mentioned that it is not possible to derive nature's beneficial effects of food only on the basis of its quantity, because all the eight factors of the method of dieting such as *prakriti* etc. have their divided (or individual) effect. So, it is very clear that *Charakacarya* has tried to make this concept of balance diet a full proof and simple system.

- **Ahara** is the sub-pillar of the body, Charaka has very rightly said that the food is the foremost of the articles that support the life.

- **Ahara** has beneficial effect if used wisely i.e. if it is wholesome. in terms of quantity and quality. conversely the unwholesome diet as well as **viruddhahara** has an exciting effect on the formation of the diseases.

- Classical description of dietetic codes mentioned in *Ayurveda* was compiled from the different *Ayurvedic* classics.

- Description of **Ahara** as mentioned by **Charaka**, **Sushruta** and **Vagbhata**, as well as the possible mode of action of **Viruddhahara** was also compiled and analyzed.

- ✓ aggravation of three *Dosha*.

- ✓ Vitiating of seven *Dhatus*.

- ✓ Vitiating of *Srotas*

- ✓ Manifestation of symptom according to different *Srotodusti* and *Dhatudusti*.

- Body always tries to maintain its physiological equilibrium provided certain conditions are favorable to it, if we take improper **Ahara** equilibrium of the body became hampered,

it can be concluded that **Ahara** is important for maintaining the equilibrium of the body.

- In above literary research I had to compiled the various views on **Ahara** described in available *Ayurvedic Samhitas* and literatures.

REVIEW ARTICLE

REFERENCES

1. Shastri Ambika Dutta editors Sushruta, Reprint [2019], Samhita, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, Sutra Sthan 21/3, Vol I, Varanasi: Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan: P 112.
2. Pandey Kashinath, Chaturvedi Gorakhnath, Reprint [2018], editors Charaka Samhita, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, Sutra Sthan 11/35, Vol I, Varanasi: Chaukhambha Bharati Academy: P 227.
3. Pandey Kashinath, Chaturvedi Gorakhnath, Reprint [2018], editors Charaka Samhita, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, Sutra Sthan 25/40, Vol I, Varanasi: Chaukhambha Bharati Academy: P 467.
4. Shastri Ambika Dutta, Reprint [2019], editors Sushruta Samhita, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, Sutra Sthan 1/28, Vol I, Varanasi: Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan: P 09.
5. Pandey Kashinath, Chaturvedi Gorakhnath, editors Charaka Samhita, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, Sutra Sthan 26/85, Vol I, Varanasi: Chaukhambha Bharati Academy: P 521.
6. Pandey Kashinath, Chaturvedi Gorakhnath, Reprint [2018], editors Charaka Samhita, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, Sutra Sthan 26/81, Vol I, Varanasi: Chaukhambha Bharati Academy: P 517.