

ROLE OF ĀHARA AND USHNODAKA IN HEALTH

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda, the 'Knowledge of life' mainly aims at positive health by preventing a person from getting any diseases as well as on the treatment of diseased person. A balanced state of *tridosha, dhatu, mala, agni, etc.* helps to keep one's life healthy. So day to day routine should be planned accordingly and strictly following the *Dinacharya, Ritucharya, and Satvritta*. Among them *Āhara*, which comes under *Trayopastambha* is important to keep the development and homeostasis of body. From different classics, we get references about the different types of *Āhara*. Rules while taking *Āhara* such as *Āharavidhividhanam, Dwadasha ashana vichara*, its importance etc: are also mentioned in different *Samhitas*. *Susrutacharya* declares that the life of a living creature is water itself. Benefits of *Ushnambu, Sitbu, Srtambu*, their restrictions, qualities, benefits should also consider for maintaining the *Avikrut vasta* of *tridosha* and *Agni*. Thus *Āhara* and *Ushnodaka* played their own role in the *Vikara Prashamana* as well as on the *Swasthya samrakshana*.

Key words: *Āhara, Ushnodaka Pna, Swasthya samrakshana*

INTRODUCTION

The condition where all *Dosha, Dhatu, and Mala* in their normal state or in equilibrium and performs normal functions can be defined as Health in Ayurveda. According to *Susruta*, a man is said to be in *Svastha* (health) when all his *Doshas, Dhatus, Malas, and Agni* are in the state of equilibrium along with mental, sensory and spiritual pleasantness and happiness.¹ *Kashyapa* elaborates the features of health such as *Annabhilasho, Bhuktasyaparipakam sukhenā* etc.² Opposite to health is disease that is the abnormal state of *dosha, dhatu* etc: which produces unhappiness is a Disease or *Vikara*³. So Acharya mentioned certain regimens that should be followed daily for preventing diseases and to keep health, such as *Dinacharya, Nishcharya, Ritucharya*. *Charaka* emphasises on food which are wholesome to the body like *shaali, mudga, yava, saind-*

hava, jangala mamsa etc: They should be consumed regularly for the health maintenance. Similarly there are several references where Acharya mentioned that *Ushnodaka Pna* also has equal importance in determining the health of a person.

The main aim of this article is to provide an awareness about the types of *Ahara* that can be given in some of the diseased conditions in the form of Semiliquid or liquid along with *Ushnodaka pana* and to aware about the dietic rules, time for food consumption etc:

Āhara has been given prime importance since the time of evolution. It is considered as Brahma in Upanishad (*Titeeripani-shad*) because it is necessary for the growth and developments of all. *Hita Ahara* is responsible for the happiness and formation of the body and *Ahita Ahara* causes several types of miseries and dis-

eases.⁴ *Ahara* increases the *Varna* (colour or complexion), *Prasada* (happiness), *tushti* (satisfaction), *pushti* (nourishment), *pratibha* (intelligence), *sowryam* (good voice) etc.⁵. Acharya Susruta mentioned that *Ahara* increases *Ayu* (life span), *Teja* (luster), *Utsaaha* (enthusiasm), and *Ojas* (energy).⁶ Bhagavatgeeta says Consumption of *Satvika ahara* makes the mind clear, increases the memory power.

Āhara prescribed for some diseases

Kāmala:- Charaka acharya mentioned that for *K mala* (Jaundice), the *Ahara* should be of that kind which should be able to alleviate both *Pitta* and *Kapha*. He emphasises the usage of *Rookha Amla Katu Mamsa Rasa* (ununctuous, sour and pungent Soup) of Peacock and Cock, *Yoosha* (another type of soup) of *Moolaka* and *Kulatha* (Raddish and Horse gram). *Matulunga juice* (pomegranate) mixed with honey, *Pippali* (Piper longum), *Maricha* (Piper nigrum), *Sunti* (dry ginger). These all will aggravate *Pitta dosha*, but are responsible for alleviating *Kapha dosha* and remove the obstruction to the bile passage. This aggravated *pitta*, then comes to the *Koshta* (GIT) from *Sakha* (periphery), thus the *Vayu Vaishamyata* can be reduced. The intake of these kinds of food can be continue till the patients stool acquires the colour of *Pitta* from its white colour and then the treatment for *K mala* can be prescribed.⁷

Grahani:- *Yoosha*, prepared with *Panchakola* and *Moolaka* by adding Pepper and Ghee is mentioned. Here both *Katu rasa* and *Snigtha ahara* is mentioned, because both can maintain the function of *Agni*. *Mamsa rasa* making sour by adding *Dadima* and butter milk can also administer. *Āranala* (a sour drink), *Arishta*, *Buttermilk*, can stimulate the *Agni*, and they are *Gr hi*, *Laghu* (constipative, light for digestion), do not cause *pitta* aggravation,

reduce the burning sensations. *Yoosha* of *Kuladha* or *Moolaka* mixed with *Katu amla kshara dravyas* are also indicated.⁸

Swasa and Hikka: *Sushka Moolaka Yoosha* (soup of dry Rad-dish), *Kasamardda Yoosha* (Cassia occidentalis), Leaves of *Vrtaka rasa* (brinjal) mixed with *Trikatu*, mixed in ghee are said to be useful in *Swasa rogas*. Patients should take food prepared of *Saali* (red rice or Paddy), *Shashtika* (a variety of rice), *Godhuma* (wheat) and *Yava* (barley). *Yavagu*, the thick gruel mixed with *Hingu* (*Asafoetida*) and other *dravyas* are also indicated. *Dasamoola Kwatha* and *Maricha Kwatha* (water boiled with *Dasamoola* and *Maricha*) will be helpful. The usage of these foods can reduce further complications on *Urah pradasha* (chest region), which occurs due to *Vata* predominance.⁹ In case of *Swasa* of *Kaphanubandha*, juice of *Sirisha* (*Albizzia lebeck*) flower along with *Pippali* and honey is useful.

Kasa:- Intake of boiling rice or *Peya*, prepared with decoction of *Dasamoola* by adding *panchakoola choorna* and jaggery. Intake of *Peya* with equal quantity of *Sesame seeds* with *Saindhava* (rock salt). Leaves of *Vastka Mlaka*, which are made *Snigdha* (oily). Food preparations from milk, sugarcane, Jaggery. Ingredients which are sour, and sweet in taste are useful in *Vatika Kasa*.¹⁰ For *Pittika Kasa*, milk boiled with decoction of *Pippali*, *Draaksha*, is useful along with honey and sugar.¹¹

Atisāra: - when the patient is hungry, light foods which are *Deepana* (digestive stimulant) and *Gr hi* (constipating) can be prescribed. Like *yavagu*, *Butter milk*, *Tarpana* (roasted flour of cereals mixed with water), alcoholic drinks or honey are also useful. Slowly can start up with *Vilepi* (a thick gruel), *Khada* (a sour appetiser), *Yu-*

sha (vegetable soup), boiled rice mixed with meat soup which are Deepana in action. Food selecting during Atisara should be Deepana (digestive stimulant) *P chana* (carminative), *Gr hi* (constipating), *Balya* (promoter of strength), and *Rochana* (appetiser).¹² If we follow the Pathya Ahara along with the treatments, they can assist the action of medicines or they themselves act like medicine. That is the reason why Acharya stress the importance of Pathya Ahara.

Time for taking normal food-different opinion: Man should take food twice daily, in the morning and in the evening. In between, it is contra-indicated¹³. Susrutacharya mentioned *Prasasta Ahara Kala*.¹³ He said, we should advise others to take food after avoiding faeces and urine. When the sense organs are pure, when there is desire for food, fatigue is relieved and abdomen is loose-that is the ideal time for food. Doing like this, one's *Vayu* gets activated and increases the action of *Agni*, causing *Laghutva* (lightness) to the body, clear belching and finally provide a healthier body and mind. Yoga Ratnakara says if one feels hunger, he can consume food otherwise *Agni* in the absence of food digest *Dhatus*, ultimately the *Pr na* (the life). So one should take food at the appropriate time based on his capacity –neither too less nor too much. Consumption of food before the feeling of lightness can produce *Mandagni* or indigestion and even death. If one takes food after a long gap regularly, his *Jataragni*, will be destroyed by the aggravated *Vayu* and produce difficulties in the digestion of food and the person does not desire to partake the second meal¹⁴. Many Acharyas contra-indicated the use of food at night. Charakacharya gives explanation for this. He said that at the night time, like a lotus, both the *Hridaya* (heart) and the *Srotas* (channels) get

drooped or closed and the *Dhatus* are in *Klinnavasta* (wet). As the cold milk mixed with hot milk gets vitiated, the *Aklinna* food at night gets more vitiated by the morning food. So the food once consume at the day time, if digest properly, then the night food can be advised and vice versa.¹⁵ So Charaka gives high importance for the intake of food at proper time for the maintenance of positive health and he mentioned wholesome and whole food articles also.¹⁶ He mentioned three factors that can cause *khora vyadhies* (dreadful diseases) and *Mruthyu* (death) through diet. They are *Sama ana*, *Visham ana*, and *Adhya ana*.¹⁷ He also mentioned about eight factors that should be considered before taking food –*Āharavidhi viseshayatan ni-Prakriti* (natural quality of food), *Karana* (processing), *Samyoga* (combination), *R si* (quantity), *Desa* (place), *K la* (time), *Upoyoga samstha* (rules of taking food), *Upayoktra* (one who habitually takes food).¹⁸

The rules we should consider before consuming food are Eat warm food, unctuous food, eat according to quantity, eat when we feel hunger, eat food which is not contradictory, eat in desired place with desired articles, not in hurry, not very slowly, eat with full concentration without laughing and talking, etc:¹⁹.

Ushnodaka: The water which is reduced to 1/8th part or 1/2 part or simply boiled water is known as Ushnodaka.²⁰ They are *laghu* (light), *Accha* (clear) and *sudha* (neat). They are able to eliminate *Kapha*, *Vayu* and *Meda*. They are *Deepana* and *Vastishodhana*. They can be administer in *Parsvasoola*, *Pinasa*, *Adhmana*, *Hikka*, *Trushna*, *Svasa*, *Sula*, etc: conditions. *Paryusita Jala*¹⁶-which has been kept for more than a day and should never be given to a thirsty person. One should not use water which is kept stored for a long period

and which is sour because it increases *Kapha*. It is not good for one who is suffering from thirst, alcoholic intoxication diseases and pitta disorders. Such water is considered as *Agrahyajala*. The water which is kept overnight is also not wholesome and it should not be use. *Sritaseeta Jala*-which is boiled well and then cooled, is the ideal one.²¹ Drinking *Ushnodaka* is *hita* (wholesome) for those suffering from *Vata* and *Kaphaja Jvara* because they can promote the *Agni*, removes *Srotorodha* and expel *kapha* promote appetite and sweating. For *Pittika Jvara*, water should be first boiled with bitter drugs and allowed to cool for drinking. Generally *Ushnodaka* can be recommended in several conditions like *Jwara* (fever), *Netra roga* (eye disorders), *Kushta* (skin disorders), *Mandagni* (less digestive power), *Pratisyaya* (sinutitis) etc:²²

S taJalap na is Prohibited in certain diseased conditions: *Nava-jvara, Pratisyaya, Galagraha, Kasa, Svasa, Vatakapha roga, Grahani, Svasa, Kasa* etc: as it possess reverse properties. It can increase *Jvara*. But good in *Glaani* (tiredness), *Moorcha* (giddiness), *Charddi* (vomiting), *Shrama* (weakness), *Bhrama* (vertigo), *Trushnoshna* (excessive thirst), *Daaha* (burning sensations), *Pittaasra* (bleeding disorders), *Visha* (poisoning).²³

Water also has action on one's body weight: If one drinks water in between food, he will get medium body; at the end of food he becomes obese, before taking food becomes emaciated, according to *Acharya Charaka*.²⁴

DISCUSSION:

Gradual withdrawal from unwholesome practices and food intake and adoption of wholesome practices and food, results in the maintenance of health for all. Most of

the incurable diseases are produced through the intake of *Ahita Āhara* and *Virudha Āhara*. Less and excess quantity of food can also leads to several disorders. So awareness should be given to all kinds of people about the proper timing, and Rules of taking food. An intelligent, educated and self controlled man should consume conducive food in proper quantity, at the right time to prevent diseases. Through proper diet, it is possible to make a person disease free. So we can say that the health of a person completely depends upon the food he consumes. Ideal intake of food during the diseased conditions can prevent the further complications. That is why most *Acharyas* strictly says to follow *Pathyaahara* and restrict the *sevena of Virudha Ahara*. The *Pathyaahara* which has been mentioned in our classics, definitely will have some intentions like *Deepana, Pachana, Lekhana, Vishodhana, Grahi*, etc: actions that will help to cure the diseases or they increases the action of medicinal drugs. Now a days, the fast life force people to take Fast-foods and soft Drinks. Instead of taking such Cold drinks, if one consumes Boiled and Cooled water or water boiled with any bitter drugs or medicinal drugs will be cost effective as well as good for the health. While boiling we can make water free from all pathogens, free from harmful chemicals, pleasant tastes and useful for all domestic purposes. So, pure water is considered as the 'life of living creatures' by most of our *Acharyas*'. Hence both *Ahara* and *Ushnodaka* should be taken into consideration before planning a treatment.

CONCLUSION

Āhara, and *Ushnodaka P na*, have equal importance in the life of an individual. Person who follows *Hitaahara, Vihaara* and who is not interested in worldly mat-

ters and who follows *Apta Vachana* does not develop any diseases. So man should not hold any types of Vegas or urges and follow all regimens in proper time and quantity to prevent diseases. Thus we can build up a healthy body in a healthy mind.

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