

## Concept of Balanced diet according to Brhatrayi- A Review

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## ABSTRACT

Throughout the evolution and the story of civilization, human beings have graduated in experimenting with the form of the food they take, from eating the hunted animals in a raw form to properly processing with utmost caution and precision. Ultimately, we eat to live, to sustain the life within us, to continue the life process, to evolve, and to lead a healthy life. Some of the Acaryas have called Ahara 'Brahma or the creator'. It is so true that we are all created and maintained by ahara. Right from the point of our conception in our mother's womb, we are nurtured by the ahara rasa. All the living beings originate from ahara. Ahara is responsible for the life sustenance of all living beings. Acarya Caraka has given a beautiful concept about Ahara and tells that the ahara not only forms this body but also forms the diseases which occur in us. If the wholesome food is responsible for sukha (happiness, health), the unwholesome food causes dukha (misery, unhealthy). He also tells that ahara or food is the best among the things which sustain life. Any disease can be comprehensively cured without any medicine by just following 'pathya ahara' or wholesome food whereas even hundreds of medicines and formulations cannot cure a disease in the absence of a planned wholesome regimen of diet.

**Keywords:** Ahara, Sukha, Dukha, Pathya.

## INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda the science of life is a time-tested knowledge that has been handed down to us from our great ancestors. There are two objectives of Ayurveda, maintaining the health of the healthy person & treatment of the diseased. Achievement of the first aim is not possible without the proper and balanced diet and during the treatment of disease also, various specific diet in the form of pathya and apathya has been described. So, the knowledge of ahara is essential for the fulfilment of both aims of Ayurveda. Ahara is one of the supporting pillars of our body i.e., Traya Upstambha, Ahara, Nidra and Bhramcharya<sup>1</sup>. Ahara has been enumerated first, which shows its importance. The word "Ahara" is very much familiar since time immemorial. Various classics/dictionaries have described the etymology and definition of Ahara in their unique way, likewise.,

According to Vachaspati<sup>2</sup>,

आ+हृ-घञ्, Ahara has been stated as food.

According to Shabda Kalpa druma<sup>3</sup>,

आङ्+हृ+घञ्,

द्रव्यगलाधः करणं | Ahara is a substance that is swallowed through the throat after eating.

Acarya Dalhana opines that the substance which is swallowed through anna-nalika is called Ahara. Acarya Cakrapani opines that ahara means anything which is ingested and thus it includes both diet and drugs. (Chakrapani commentary, Ch. Su-26/85)

Acarya Gangadhara says that anything which is ingested by the tongue down to the throat is called Ahara. Anything (food) which is consumed or ingested with the help of the tongue, mouth, and throat is called Ahara. The term 'Ahara' comprises all forms of foods including the foods which can be chewed, swallowed, eaten, and drunk. (Ch. Su-28/3)

Varieties of Ahara Varga mentioned in Ayurveda- Acarya Caraka has explained the various varieties of food in Annapanvidhi adhyaya only i.e., shuka dhanya, shami dhanya, mamsa varga, shaka varga, phala varga, harita varga, madya varga, ambu varga, gorasa varga, ikshu varga, kritanna, ahara yoga. (Ch. Su-27/6-7)

Acarya Sushruta has explained the various varieties of food within two adhyayas i.e., Dravadravya vidhi and Annapana vidhi, unlike Acarya Caraka. (Su. Su-46)

In Dravadravya vidhi, acarya has detailed jala varga, ksheer varga, dadhi varga, takra varga, ghrita varga, taila varga, madhu varga, ikshu varga, madya varga and mutra varga.

In Annapana vidhi, acarya has detailed shali varga, kudhanya(kshudra dhanya), mudgadivarga, mamsa varga, phala varga, shaka varga, pushpa varga, kanda varga, bhakshya varga(delicacies like laddoo, malpua etc), anupana varga,

Acarya Vagabhata has also explained the various varieties of food within two adhyayas i.e., Dravadravyavigyaniya adhyaya(A.H. Su-5) and Annaswaroop vigyaniya(A.H.Su-6)

In Dravadravyavigyaniya, Toya varga, ksheer varga, ikshu varga, taila varga, madya varga.

In Annaswaroop vigyaniya, Shuka varga(corn with spikes e.g. Rice), shimbi varga(legumes, pulses), pakwanna/kritanna varga(prepared food eg, manda etc), mamsa varga, shaka varga, phala varga and aushadha varga.

Classification according to Acarya Caraka on the basis of-

**Origin** –Sthavara (Vegetable products), Jangama (Animal products)

**Prabhava**- Hitam (wholesome), Ahitam (unwholesome)

**Nature of intake**- Ashitam (Eatables), Khaditam (Masticable food), Pitam (Beverages), Lidham (Linctus)

**Mahabhuta**- Parthiva, Apya, Tejasiya, Vayaviya, Akasiya

**Rasa**- Madhura, Amla, Lavana, Katu, Tikta, Kashaya

**Virya**- Sita, Usna

According to various other acharyas-

Acharya Sushruta, Bhavamishra, Yogratnakar, Kashyapa, Sarangdhar-

Chushya (suckables eg. Sugarcane, oranges),

Peya (drinkables eg. milk or other beverages)

Lehya (lickables eg. Honey)

Bhojya (partially masticable eg. Rice),

Bhaksya (eatables eg. Ladukam),  
Carvya (masticables eg. Chanaka)  
Shrimad Bhagavata Gita (As per the effect of Ahara  
on Manas)-Satvika, Rajsika, Tamsika  
Acharya Sushruta (Based on effect of Ahara)-Ekanta –  
Hitakara; Ekanta – Ahitkara; Hita - Ahitkara

### **Different types of meals-**

According to Acarya Caraka<sup>4</sup>

#### **Samashana:**

When the wholesome and unwholesome ingredients of food are taken together, intake of such mixed food, according to this treatise, is called Samashana.

#### **Vishamashana:**

If the food is too much or too little in quantity, and if it is taken too early or too late, then it is called Vishamashana.

#### **Adhyashana:**

If food is taken again, even before the previous meal is digested, then it is called **Adhyasana**.

All the above-mentioned three types of a meal cause death or give rise to serious diseases. (Ch. Chi-15/235-237)

According to Ayurveda Rasayana commentary on Ashtanga Hridaya<sup>5</sup>-

#### **Sankirnashana:**

If the food is taken at the contraindicated place, with contraindicated person and food which is not indicated to be taken then it is called Sankirnashana.

#### **Viruddhashana:**

Taking food which is not indicated to take is called Viruddhashana.

#### **Ajirnashana:**

When the desired amount of food is taken but does not get digested in time then it is called Ajirnashana.

#### **Samashana:**

When wholesome and unwholesome food is taken together it is called Samashana.

#### **Vishamashana:**

If the food is too much or too little in quantity, taken too early or too late, then it is called Vishamashana.

#### **Adhyashana:**

If food is taken again, even before the previous meal is digested, then it is called Adhyashana.

## **Literary Review-**

### **Concept of Matra purvaka ahara-**

One should eat in proper quantity. The quantity of food to be taken depends upon digestive power for proper maintenance of health. (Ch. Su-5/3)

The food taken in the right quantity certainly provides strength, complexion, happiness, and longevity to the person; without disturbing the normalcy. (Ch. Su-5/8)  
That shall be known as the proper quantity of food that is digested in due time without disturbing the normalcy. But this is not easy to practice for every individual. (Ch. Su-5/4)

### **Signs of Proper intake of food-**

According to Acarya Caraka-

There is no pressure on the stomach due to the food, there is no obstruction to the proper functioning of the heart, there should not be any pressure on the sides of the chest, there should not be an excessive heaviness in the abdomen, there is proper nourishment of the senses, there is relief from hunger and thirst, there is the feeling of comfort while standing, sitting, sleeping, walking, exhaling, inhaling, laughing and talking, food taken in the morning should get digested by the evening and the food taken during the evening should get digested by the next morning, there is the promotion of strength, complexion, and plumpness. (Ch. Vi-2/6)

According to Acarya Vagabhata-

One should always consume the proper quantity of food. The right amount of food activates Agni i.e., digestive power. Food that is light to digest (Laghu) and those that are hard to digest (Guru) both require a specified quantity for proper digestion. (A.H. Su-8/1)  
As a general rule, if the food is heavy to digest (such as oily food, nonveg, sweets, etc), it should be consumed till half of the satisfaction level is achieved. If the food is light to digest, it should be consumed till satisfaction is achieved. The right amount of food is that which undergoes digestion easily. (A.H. Su-8/2)

### **Signs of Improper intake of food-**

Improper quantity of food is again of 2 types-

Deficient in quantity (Hina), excessive in quantity (Adhika). (Ch. Vi-2/6)

### Signs of food deficient in quantity-

According to Acarya Caraka-

Impairment of the strength, complexion, and plumpness, distension and absence of downward movement of food in stomach and intestines, impairment of longevity, virility and Ojas, the affliction of body, mind, intellect, and senses, impairment of excellence of dhatus, causation of eighty varieties of Vataja rogas. (Ch. Vi-2/6)

According to Acarya Sushruta-

Food consumed in less quantity leads to unsatisfaction of the consumer and loss of strength as well. (Su. Su-46/479)<sup>6</sup>

According to Acarya Vagabhata-

Food consumed in less quantity does not increase strength, nourishment, or radiance (charm or lustre) and gradually over some time, it becomes a reason (causative factor) for all diseases of vata origin. (A.H. Su-8/1)

### Signs of food taken in excessive quantity-

According to Acarya Caraka-

Food taken in excessive quantity aggravates all the 3 Doshas. One who fills up his stomach with solid food and then takes liquid food in excessive quantity, all the 3 Doshas, viz. Vata, Pitta, and Kapha residing in the stomach get too much compressed and simultaneously aggravated. (Ch. Vi-2/7)

According to Acarya Sushruta-

An excessive quantity of food causes laziness, heaviness, abdominal distension along with gurgling sound and reduced digestive fire. (Su. Su-46/480)

According to Acarya Vagabhata-

An excessive quantity of food is again not desirable. It causes a quick increase of doshas. (A.H. Su-8/1)

### Importance of Ahara-

Food sustains the life of living beings. All living beings in the universe require food. Complexion, clarity, good voice, longevity, geniuses, happiness, satisfaction, nourishment, strength, and intellect are all conditioned by food. (Ch. Su-27/349-350)

Food is the root of the life of living beings which provides strength, enhances complexion, and promotes Ojas. (Su. Su-47/3)

In Shariravichaya Shariraadhyaya of Caraka Sharirsthana, the importance of ahara has been mentioned under the 13 Bala Vriddhikara Bhavas which shows its importance. (Ch. Sha-6/13)

### Rules of Healthy eating-

One should regularly take such articles which are conducive to the maintenance of good health and are capable of preventing the individual from suffering. (Ch. Su-5/13)

If the food is heavy, only one-third or half of the stomach capacity should be filled up, and even if the food is light complete stomach should not be filled up. (Ch. Su-5/7)

First of all, madhura rasa dravyas should be taken, then amla and lavana rasa dravyas, and finally the remaining katu, tikta, and kashaya rasa dravyas should be followed. (Su. Su-46/466)

**Ashta ahara vidhi visheshayatana** should be followed i.e., **Prakriti** (food should be taken considering the nature of food), **karana** (It refers to modification in the food properties), **samyoga** (It denotes the combinations of food which either augment or nullify the actions of the individual components), **rashi** (this represents the quantum of food required to each person), **desha** (the dynamics and kinetics of the food consumed are dependent on the habitat of the individual and also the area from where the substance has originated), **kala** (this represents time in terms of climate, phase of digestion, the timing of the day), **upayoga samstha** (food should be taken as per the rules of dietetics), **upayokta** (It denotes the consumer of the food), **Ahara Vidhi Vidhana** i.e., every individual should follow these rules of healthy eating; One should eat only that food in proper quantity which is hot, unctuous and not contradictory in potency and that too, after the digestion of the previous meal. Food is taken in proper place equipped with all the accessories, without talking and laughing, with a concentration of mind and paying due regard to oneself should be followed.

## DISCUSSION

All the substances in nature including our body, are made up of pancha mahabhutas and on the basis of the dominancy of individual mahabhutas, the constitution of different substances have been decided. The Source of these mahabhutas is food, which is required for energy, growth, metabolism, and the compensation for wear and tear phenomenon in the body. We have a limited capacity to store various food components in the body, so we need to take food regularly and in the desired quantity. Carbohydrate, protein, and fats, forms the basic components of the balanced diet along with micronutrients. A balanced diet is responsible for balancing the homeostasis of dosha, dhatu, agni, mala, etc. So, it is very important to focus on such type of food material which have proper nutritive value and is conducive to the health. Since the various component is present in variable ratios in different food materials, so, knowledge of the proper amount of food is very important. There are various diseased conditions where there is a need to balance that particular component in our diet which is considered to be the main cause of the disease.

## CONCLUSION

Food is said to be the cause of stability for all living beings. There is nothing else except diet for sustaining the life of living beings in a healthy way. One is not able to sustain life without diet even when endowed with medicine that is why the diet is said to be the great medicament (Mahabhaisajya) by our acharyas. Food is said to be the basis of life, strength, complexion, ojas, growth, and development, functioning of indriyas, happiness, clarity of voice, luster, pleasure, an increase of Dhatus, intellect, health, etc. Satisfaction, nutrition, patience, buddhi (critical understand-

ing) enthusiasm, virility, strength, good voice, ojas, glare, life, geniuses, radiance, etc. are developed only from a diet that is why the person desirous of long life should eat the diet which is congenial and appropriate in quantity. Food consumed in a proper manner helps to balance doshas, dhatus, and agni. The appropriate dietary considerations synchronize physical, mental, and spiritual health. Consumption of meal according to the rule imparts many health benefits and gives maximum nutritious value to consumed food and avoiding such rules of food intake may causes various health ailments. So, it is too much necessary that one should take meals following the proper rules of food intake that too in proper quantity to ensure the maximum health benefits.

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