

AHARA FOR NETRA POSHANA

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ABSTRACT

Ahara is compared to Lord Brahma, “*lokika karma yavadatho yat cha vaidikam karmapavarge*”- intake of proper food is essential for all day-to-day activities and to attain salvation. *Ahara* is a substance that is swallowed through the mouth. *Ahara* has considered has ***mahabhaishyaja***. *Ahara* is 1st among *trayopstamba* which depicts food as of utmost importance for healthy and long life. Many chapters in different *Samhita* are dedicated to describing *ahara*. Food for nourishment should fulfil the criteria of *Astavidha Aharavidhi Vishesha Ayatana*. i.e; 1. *Prakruti* (Natural quality of food) 2. *Karana* (method of processing the food) 3. *Samyoga* (aggregation of two or more substances) 4. *Rashi* (quantity of food) 5. *Desa* 6. *Kala* 7. *Upayogasamsta* (rules and regulations for consuming food) 8. *Upayokta*. “***Sarvendriyanam madye nayanasya pradhanatva***”- Eye as most important sense organ by quoting its importance as -if a person becomes blind, he visualizes both day and night as same² and colourful world seems to be colourless. Treatment protocols for posterior segment disorders i.e; diseases of vitreous, retina and disorders of optic nerve such as Anti-VEGF (Vascular Endothelial Growth Factor) injection and laser therapy are costlier and its therapeutic effect is not known, hence utmost care should be taken to protect the vision. Ayurveda has explained food/medicine for the maintenance of vision. If vision is lost, the person can't enjoy worldly pleasures, hence one must make habitual for food as per above-told rules and regulations.

Keywords *Ahara, Netra, Poshana, Astavidha Aharavidhi Vishesha Ayatana*

INTRODUCTION

Word “AHARA” is very much familiar since time immemorial. Taittiriya Upanishad quotes that human beings is originated from *ahara*. Kashyapa quotes that there is no medicine equivalent to food, food is responsible for the strength of humans, and it is responsible for the health of individuals and hence considers *ahara* has *mahabhaishyajya*. Shabhakalpa druma explains *ahara* is a substance that is swallowed through the mouth. Vachaspati states *ahara* as food. Acharya dalhana opines that the substance which is swallowed through *anna nalika* is called *ahara*. Acharya charakapani opine anything which is ingested. From the above statements, it can be concluded that *ahara* includes both diet and drug. Synonyms of *ahara* are –*bhojana, lehya, bakshya, khadanam*.

Acharya Sushruta quotes “*sarvendriyanam madye nayanasya pradhanatva*”¹. Acharya vagbhata has considered eye as the most important sense organ by quoting its importance as -if a person becomes blind, he visualizes both day and night as same² and colourful world seems to be colourless³. Chanakya quotes that- “*sarvendriyanam nayanam pradanam*”- among all *indriya* eye is prime one. So, every individual must protect their eyes by taking proper care of eyes.

DESCRIPTION

Ahara is 1st among *trayopstamba* which depicts food as of utmost importance for healthy and long life. Acharya charaka in his *sutrasthana* has dedicated the 7th *chatuska* from the 25th chapter to the 28th chapter regarding food called *annapaniya chatuska*. The chapters include 1. *Yajja purushiya adyaya* includes different opinion’s regarding types of *rasa*, the definition of wholesome and unwholesome diet, the origin of food articles and its form, superior among wholesome and unwholesome diet, predominant action of 156 diet/drug/regimen; such as rice for the sustenance of life, milk for invigorating, salt for taste, meat for nourishment, meat for strengthening, sour taste is good for heart, habitual use of ghee and milk for rejuvenation, application of a paste of *rasna* and *agaru* over eye reduces *sheetatva*, eighty-four types of alcoholic beverages. 2. *Atreybhadrakapya adyaya*

which explains the *rasa, anurasa, dravya, pan-chamahabhuta, virya, vipaka, prabhava* and about wholesome food and treatment for diseases caused by unwholesome food.³ *annapaniyavidhi adyaya* includes the importance of a wholesome diet, twelve classifications of food articles with their properties and action⁴. *Vividashitapitiya adyaya*- includes four types of food according to the forms of food i.e; a. eatables b. drinkables c. linctus and d. masticable, metabolism of food, the meaning of wholesome and unwholesome food, *dhatugata vyadi*, and causes of *shakagata* and *kostagata dosa gati*. Acharya sushruta in *sutrasthana* has dedicated two chapters particularly for food they are *drava dravya vidi adhyaya, annapaana vidhi adyaya*. Acharya vagbhata has dedicated three chapters for food itself they’re *dravadravya vignaniyaadyaya, annasvarupavignaniyam adyaya, annasamrakshniyam adyaya*. “Let food be thy medicine, medicine be thy food” as said by Greek physician Hippocrates.

Food is compared to lord brahma, meaning which is responsible for life. *Ahara* provides *preenana* – nutrition, *bala*-strength, *deha dharaka*-support, *ayu vivardhan*- enhances the life span, *tejo vivardhan*-enhances trayodasa agni, *utsaha vivardhan* - enhances enthusiasm, *smruti vivardhan* -enhances memory, *Ojo vivardhan*-enhances immunity, *arogya* –imparts health, *pranam abhidhavati*-helps in the sustenance of life, *varna prasadana*-imparts complexion, *sausharyam*-imparts good voice, *jeevitam*-imparts longevity of life, *praatibha*-provides memory, *sukham*-provides happiness and pleasure, *tushti*-contentment, *pusti*- nourishment, *balam*-strength, *medha*-intelligence, *lokika karma yavadatho yat cha vaidikam karmavarge*-intake of proper food is essential for all day to day activities and to attain salvation.

Food for nourishment should fulfil the criteria of *Astavidha Aharavidhi Visheshha Ayatana* as quoted by acharya charaka in *rasavimaniya adyaya* of *vimanasthana*; that is, it includes eight factors for fulfilling the criteria of wholesome food. *Astavidha Aharavidhi Visheshha Ayatana*⁴ are-

1. Prakruti (Natural quality of food) – nature of food and medicine which is inborn such as heavy (*guru*) and light (*laghu*). *Guruahara* are black gram, pork, milk, paste made of sesame seeds (*pistaka*) and meat of carnivorous animals, these are predominantly composed of *pruthvi* and *apya bhuta* which are heavy for digestion. *Laghuahara* are *shastika saali*, *mudga* (green gram), *ena* (deer flesh), rabbit flesh and meat of other arid animals, these are predominantly composed of *agni* and *vayu bhuta* which are light for digestion.

2. Karana (method of processing the food)- Transformation of nature of food by

- Cooking with fire and Washing (*agni sannikarsa*, *shoucha*)-*tandula* transforms into *laja* by losing its *jaliya bhava* and *raktashaali* attains *laghuta*
- Churning(*manthana*)- curd by nature causes oedema but churned curd i.e; buttermilk alleviates oedema.
- *Desha* and *Kala*- for *rasayana* preparations such as *amalaka ghruta* and *amalka avleha*, medicines are kept in a particular vessel and borrowed in a heap of ash for 6 months in order to attain its medicinal properties.
- Vessel (*Vasana*)-*Triphala* paste is smeared to the new iron vessel and left overnight and that *Triphala* paste is used to prepare lemonade by mixing it with honey and ghee. Intake of this lemonade benefits the person to live for 100 years without diseases.
- *Bhavana*- pounding the drug with any of *kashaya* will cause the *kashaya guna* to transform into the drug.
- Other procedures like pounding and thaumaturgical water transform the nature of the drug.

3. Samyoga (aggregation of two or more substances) - *Samyoga* of substances exhibits the new properties were were not present before aggregation. Example mixture of ghee and honey in unequal quantity is beneficial whereas when used in equal quantity it becomes poisonous even leading to death. A mixture of milk and fish produces *kusta* (skin disorder). But *bhavana* dravya (a substance used for pounding) is not poisonous as it's used in less quantity.

4. Rashi (quantity of food) - One should take the food should be as per digestion power (*agni bala*). It's advised to take two parts of solid substances; one part of liquid food and one part should be left free for air. Food that doesn't vitiate *doshas* and *dhatu*s and digests at the proper time is termed *maatravat ahara*. *Matravat ahara* increases strength, complexion, happiness and is benefitted from a long healthy life. An adequate amount of food is considered wholesome, an inadequate amount rather than a little amount of food is considered unwholesome. *Rashi* is of 2 types-

1. *Sarvagraha* –taking all the items together without knowing the quantity of each food item. This implies intake of food on the basis of quantity alone.
2. *Parigraha*- taking each food item separately with knowledge of the quantity of food. This implies the quantity of food consumed depends upon the nature of the food (*guru*, *laghu*). *Parigraha* type of consumption of food is considered wholesome.

5. Desa-includes the place where the individual grew up and the location from where food is cultivated. A wholesome diet for a person is when the crop is cultivated in his location. Medicinal Plants grown in the Himalayas are more potent than in the arid region. The meat of physically active animals is said to be lighter for digestion whereas the digestion of meat of carnivorous animals is heavier. *Okasatmya* means a gradual reduction of unwholesome food and introducing wholesome food in the diet and finally having wholesome food alone.

6. Kala-it's of 2 types,

- *Nityaga* – intake of *kaphahara ahara* in *vasanta rutu* and *pittahara ahara* in *shard rutu*.
- *Avastika* - in diseased conditions such as *langana* in *jwara*, *atisara* and *ama avasta*; *chaksushya dravyas* in *netra vikaras*, *sheetala ahara* in *rak-tapitta*, *guru ahara* in *bhasmaka roga*.

7. Upayogasamsta (rules and regulations for consuming food) – one should have hot, unctuous, adequate quantity of food at a comfortable place, shouldn't consume food too slowly nor fast, *jiirne ahara* and *viryaviruddha ahara*, without laughing

and speaking, *Manoanukula ahara*, with all concentration over food and *Aatmabhisamiksa*.

- Intake of a hot substance increases the taste of the food, kindles the digestive power, digests early, downward movement of vata and liquefies the kapha.
- Intake of unctuous substance makes the food tastier, kindles digestive power, digests early, downward movement of vata, nourishes the body, empowers sense organs, strengthens the body and imparts complexion.
- Intake of *matravath ahara* doesn't vitiate dosas, digests easily and easily reach till colon and doesn't vitiate the *agni*.
- *Jirne ahara*- that's the intake of food before digestion of ingested food produces *apakva rasa* leading to an increase in all dosas. Symptoms of proper digestion of food are –dosas at their location, normalcy of *dhatu*s, lightness of heart, patency of all *srotas*, proper formation of *mala* and *mutra* hunger at the proper time, pure belching's, downward movement of *vata* and increases the life span of the individual.
- *Viryavirudda ahara* - intake of *virya virudda ahara* causes multiple diseases such as *kusta*, *amavisa*, impotency, *andya*(blind), *grahani*, *raktavikara*, *shota*, *jwara* and may even lead to death. Hence one should avoid intake of *virya virudda ahara* such as milk with curd, citrus fruits with milk and milk with fish.
- *Manoanukula ahara* - intake of food in a comfortable place with likeable food items beside him. This doesn't affect the mental status of a person. Affecting mental status causes *kama*(lust), *kroda*(anger), *moha*(confusion), *ersha*, *ghruna*, *maana* and *udvega*.
- Intake of food fast-causes movement of food in an upward direction through the nose, it can't progress further i.e, it stays in the stomach as digestion is hindered, intake of small stones without noticing does not cause taste perception i.e, *bhodaka kapha* doesn't act on that food and thus aggravates the *dosas*.

- Intake of food too slow-it doesn't satisfy the being, consumes an excessive quantity of food without his knowledge, and food becomes cold and causes improper digestion as gastric juice is released inadequate time, not for too long.
- Food taken without laughing and speaking with all concentration digests the food properly forming *rasadi dhatu*.
- *Aatmabhisamiksa*- every individual should think which is wholesome and unwholesome for him and then consume the food.

8. Upayokta- the individual should adopt taking *matravath ahara* and adopt *okasatmya* in order to have a long healthy life.

The visible portion of the eye is two angula, *Krishna mandala* is 1/3rd of *sukla mandala*. *Dristimandala* is 1/7th of *Krishna mandala*⁵. Dimension of *drusti mandala* is compared to red lentil (*masura dala*) it glows like *kadyota* insect i.e, anything that glows is composed of *tejo bhuta* predominantly⁶. Eyes are predominantly composed of *agni bhuta*. *Tejo bhuta* is opposite to *jala tatwa* hence *kaphaja vyadhis* are more susceptible than *vataja* and *pittaja vyadhis*. Therefore, measures to alleviate *kapha dosa* are taken for the maintenance of good vision⁷.

Kapha alleviating measures include intake of drugs of bitter, acrid and astringent taste which are hot, dry and sharp, performing the exercise, procedures like sudation, emesis, and herbal smoke, gargling and er-rhine are conducted with above-stated properties of drugs. These measures are conducted by considering *maatra*(quantity) and time i.e; *maatra* of medicine depends on strength of patient and disease, exercise is done for half of a person's strength, excessive intake of above said types of drugs increases *vata dosa* causing more severe disease and *kala* includes the time of intakes of food like after the digestion of prior taken food and little quantity of food, drugs taken at night are said to be beneficial in diseases of supraclavicular region, in *shishira* and *hemanta rutu* exercise is indicated for more than half of individual strength in *varsha* and *grishma rutu* lighter exercises are indicated, exercise is performed in empty stomach, emesis is ideal to perform in *vasanta rutu* in a healthy

individual or in *bahudosa lakshana*, longer time intake of alcoholic beverages errhine is done on a clear day. Awakening at night, purgation, intake of honey and *medogna aushada* and fasting also alleviates *kapha dosa*. *Vamana* is said as best procedure to eradicate *kapha dosa* because it removes the *dosa* from the root place i.e; *amashaya/ uras*. Simile for the action of Emesis is given has, as *shaali* and *shastika* crop gets dried up by the removal of water, so does the emesis. Locally *souvirañjana* (type of collyrium) can be used regularly and *rasañjana* once in five or seven days. By performing Anjana, eyes will shine like a moon in clear sky (*nabasi induvat*) and as for gold lustres when cleaned by different materials. Procedures such as *anjana*, *aschotana*, purgation, *pratisarana*, *tarpana*, errhine, bloodletting, application of medicinal pastes, *seka* and poultice. An individual should avoid anger, greed, envy, aversion, competitive mentality, attachment. The application of medicinal paste should be thickly applied for the wholesomeness of the eye. *Tarpana* is done with ghee generally to correct the vitiated *pitta* but in few conditions *taila*, *vasa* are indicated in vitiated *vata* conditions.

Food for the nourishment of eye as per *Astavidha Aharavidhi Visheshā Ayatana-*

1. Prakruti- Drugs of *tikta guna*, light in property is wholesome for the eye. *Tikta guna* is composed of *vayu* and *akasa bhuta* and does *shoshana* (drying up) of mucous, visceral adipose fat, subcutaneous adipose fat, bone marrow, faeces and urine, *agni deepana* by stimulating *samana vata*, *sroto shodana* (cleanses the blood vessels) and thus pacifies *kapha* and *vata* which is main aliment for eye disease. The drug should possess *chaksuhya guna* (good for an eye) by its specific action (*prabhava*).

Some of bitter substances are *mahat panchamula* (*bilva*, *agnimanta*, *syonaka*, *patola*, *kasmari*), *patola* (*trichosanthus agunia*), *trayanti* (*bacopa monniere*), *ushira* (*vettiveria zizanionides*), *katuka* (*picrorrhiza kurroa*), *candana* (*santalum album*), *bhunimba* (*andrographis paniculata*), *nimba* (*azadirachta indica*), *tagara* (*valeriana jatamansi*), *agaru* (*aquilaria agallocha*), *vastaka* (*holarrhena antidysentrica*), *naktamala*

(*pongamia pinnata*), *Rajni* (*curcuma longa* and *coscinium fenestratum*), *musta* (*cyperus rotundus*), *murva* (*achyranthus aspera*), *vasa* (*adahoda vasica*), *patha* (*cyclea peltata*), *apamarga* (*achyranthus aspera*), *amrta* (*tenospora cardifolia*), *duralabha* (*targia involucrate*), *vyagri* (*solanum anguivi* and *solanum xanthocarpum*), *visala* (*citrullus colocynthis*), *ativisha* (*aconitum heterophyllum*), *vaca* (*acorus calamus*), snake gourd, bronze and iron.

Yogaratanakara⁸ mentions a few drugs as wholesome for the eye are- Plant origin- green gram, *shaali*, *shastika*, *kodrava*, wheat, barley, red rice, *surana*, *patola*, *vartaka*, *karkotaka*, *karvellaka*, tender banana, tender radish, *punarnava*, *brungaraja*, *kakamachi*, *pattura*, *kustumburu* (*coriander*), grape, *manimanta* (*saindava lavana*), *rodra*, *triphala*, *dadi-ma* (*pomegranate*), *draksha* (*grape*), horse gram, *can-dana* and *indukhantha*.

All types of leafy vegetables are not good for the eye by their specific action (*prabhava*), yogaratanakara mentions *shakapancakam* i.e; five vegetables as wholesome for eye by their *prabhava* they are- *jivanti* (*leptidina reticulate*), *vastuka* (*chenopodium murule*), *matsyakshi* (*alternanthera sessile*), *meghanada* (*amaranthus spinosus*) and *punarnava* (*boheavia diffusa*). *Gadanigraha* says four *shaka* are wholesome for the eye such as *patola* (*trichosanthus agunia*), *kakamachi* (*solanum Nigrum*), *vastuka* and *punarnava*.

Animal origin- *Koumba sarpi* (111 years old ghee), the meat of peacock and fowl and tortoise, honey, breast milk, cows' ghee, cow's milk and sugar.

Mineral origin- *Swarna*, *kasisa*, *tamra*, *swarna makshika*, *abhraka*, *kantaloha*, *yasada*, *vanga*, *kapardika* and *tutta*.

Water- rainwater is beneficial for the eye.

2. Karana- drugs should be thoroughly washed before consumption. *Laghuta* of *ahara* is increased by *agni sannikarsha* i.e; cooking with fire. Preparations- Soup, *tisane* (*peya*), *vilepi* prepared from above said drugs.

3. Samyoga- eye shouldn't be exposed to heat; hence sudation is contraindicated, whereas *snigha sweda* is indicated in the form of *tarpana*, *pindi* and *vidalaka*.

4. Rashi – quantity of food to be consumed is compared as *shakunasanatha*⁹(bird consumes its food) i.e, food should be taken in little quantity and frequently. Light food is advised for the wholesomeness of the eye, doesn't mean the quantity should be excessive. An excessive amount of food hinders the Agni thereby causing *dosa vruddi*.

5. Desa- Food/medicines cultivated in fertile sand is good for the eye.

There are seven types of diseases as per cause among them, *Kukunaka* disease can be considered among *janmabala pravrutta vyadhi*, *sanimittaja linganasha* is considered among *sanghatabalapravrutta vyadhi*, *animittaja linganasha* is considered among *daivabalapravrutta vyadhi* and other 73 diseases of the eye are considered under *dosabalapravrutta vyadhi*.

6. Kala-

- Intake of medicines at bedtime (*nishi*) is recommended for diseases of supraclavicular region as it treats *prana vata vikruti*, which is seated in the head (*shiras*).
- Intake of medicine after food (*paschatbhakta*) is indicated in *vyana vata vikruti*. *Unmeshana* and *nimeshana*(blinking)karma are done by eyelid (*Vartma*) for which *vyana vata* is responsible. So, in disorders of *vartma*, *vyana vata* should be treated.
- **Intake of water through the nose as a person wakes up i.e; in the early morning imparts excellent vision as that of an eagle.**
- Dinner is contra-indicated in eye ailments, as (*srotorodhana*) blockage of the channel [similar to lotus flower] occurs at night and makes it difficult for digestion
- Suppression of natural urges such as *adhovata* (flatus) causes *drstivadha* (loss of vision), *kshwatu*(sneeze)-*ardhita* (facial palsy) so one shouldn't suppress the natural urges and should suppress *manasika vikara* such as *kopa* (anger), *shoka* (anger) and *klesha* (jealous).
- *Netra kriyakalpa* (ocular therapies) such as *seka*, *aschotana*, *pindi* and *vidalaka* are indicated in *ama lakshana* and *tarpana*, *putapaka* and *anjana* are indicated in *nirama lakshan*.

- For patients suffering from *vatabhishyanda* and *vatahdhimanta* –meat soup of arid and marshy and aquatic animals along with fats and fruit juices (*draksha*, *dadima*) and milk processed with vata alleviating drugs such as *vidaryadi gana* is advised. After his/her meal he's advised to drink ghee processed with *triphala* decoction or old ghee¹⁰.
- For patients of *anyatovata* and *vataparyaya* – intake of ghee before having meals or drinking of milk during the meals. Or intake of ghee processed with paste and decoction of *vrukshadana*, *kapitta* and *bruhatpanchamula* with milk and *karkata* meat juice or ghee processed with *pat-tura*, *artagala* and *chitraka* paste and decoction is used, or ghee processed with *mesasringi*, and milk or ghee processed with *arjuna* is used as a drink¹¹.
- In *kaphaja abhishyanda*, *balasagrathi*, *pistaka* – after nasya *smasarjana krama* should be followed as told in purgation¹².

7. Upayogasamsta (rules and regulations for consuming food)- should be followed as described above.

8. Upayokta – the individual should have an idea which is wholesome and unwholesome for him/her and consume the food.

Pindi(poultice) of *amalakki* fruit treats *pittaja abhishyanda*. Intake of *payasa* prepared out of *amalakki swarasa* is used for the treatment of *timira*. *Amalakki swarasa* is applied around the eyes treats *nava netrabhishyanda*.

CONCLUSION

Ahara is compared to lord brahma and is considered *mahoushada*. It's 1st among *trayopstamba*. Food when had with desirable *varna* (colour), *gadha* (smell), *rasa* (taste) and *sparsha* (touch –soft/hard) imparts life, provide positive mental health and enthusiasm, nourishes *saptadhatu*, enhances strength, complexion and **enhances sense organs**¹³. Eyes are important sense organs among all. If a person becomes blind, he visualizes both day and night as the same and colourful world seems to be colourless. As the charioteer takes care of the chariot, and the of-

ficer-in-charge takes care of village; so, the wise person should take care of his body.

Treatment protocols for posterior segment disorders i.e; diseases of vitreous, retina and disorders of optic nerve such as Anti-VEGF (Vascular Endothelial Growth Factor) injection and laser therapy are costlier and its therapeutic effect is not known, hence utmost care should be taken to protect the vision. Ayurveda has explained regarding food/medicine for *poshana* of *netra*. If vision is lost, a person can't enjoy worldly pleasures, hence one must make habitual for food as per above-told rules and regulations.

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