



## Importance of Ahara in Today's Life with Special Reference to Ayurveda.

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**Abstract:** Ayurveda is an eternal science. Among all the vise concepts of Ayurveda, *Trayaupsthambha* has prime importance as it consists of three pillars that are *Ahara*(Diet), *Nidra*(Sleep), and *Brahmacharya* (Celibacy). The longevity and happiness of life depend upon these three pillars. Each one has its importance; among them, *Ahara*achieved first position in *Trayaupsthambha*, which denotes its prime importance in *Trayaupsthambha*. Hence we must know the *Ahara* (diet) described in Ayurveda. Consuming a healthy diet in the right way can lead to good health; however, eating food that isn't wholesome can make you sick. *Ahara* gives the body power, radiance, and *Oja*; it is essential for longevity and increases mental fortitude. Our ancient seer describes some rules regarding diet that every person should follow. If not, then the most beneficial object *Ahara* will turn into a most harmful object, which can cause various diseases. The healthy physical body and mind together are responsible for health. Our ancient seer, in their commentaries, proves that Ayurveda helps in keeping the equilibrium of all physiological functions of *Sharir* and *Manas* via proper *Ahara*. This article aims to study the importance of the *ahara* in today's life. To achieve the goal of a healthy life, the *Ahara* plays a vital role. This article aims to collect and analyze the literature review of the *Sahara* and understand the dietic rules explained in Ayurveda. This article discussed the significance of *Ahara* and diseases caused by poor eating habits. If *Ahara* is not consumed properly, numerous disorders, including the effects of *Apathya-Ahara*, may be noticed.

**Keywords:** Ayurveda, *Ahara*, Diet, Diet rules, *Trayaupasthambha*, *Apathyaahara*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The *Trayaupsthambha* in Ayurveda is considered a prime concept, having three sub-pillars viz *Ahara* (Diet), *Nidra* (Sleep), and *Brahmacharya* (Celibacy). This study aims to depict the importance of *ahara* in today's life. The nourishment and protection of the body, mind, and soul there is a need *Ahara*. Food is the only source to alleviate the requirement for tissue regeneration. As per the *Taittiriya Upanishad*, the formation of the human body takes place from food. Our ancient seer says that humans are nothing but the result of what, when, how, and where they eat. Therefore, the person's food should be digestible, fresh, and healthy. A healthy and loving diet satisfies all the senses. The provision of Ayurveda is to maintain a healthy person's health and treat the unhealthy one. To achieve this goal, Ayurveda introduced various rules and regulations related to diet, which we can call a dietic rule, or in Ayurveda, it is known as *Aaharavidhividhanas* (Rules for the meal). The Rules related to healthy person proves beneficial to them; on the other hand, they are also beneficial to disease.<sup>1</sup> In modern civilization, due to excessive consumption of junk food, fast-food, fermented food, not following the dietic rules, using phones and tablets during the meal, changes in lifestyle patterns, etc. These things have become a leading cause of many disease manifestations.

## 2. AHARA

The *Ahara* word is commonly known since the involution of the person. Various ancient seers explained *Ahara* from their point of view. *Shabdakalpadrum* states that *Ahara* is a subject that can be swallowed through the throat after eating. In *Nibhanda*'s commentary, *Acharya* explained that the thing which is swallowed through the esophagus is called *Ahara*. *Acharya Chakrapani* in their commentary state that *Ahara* is nothing but the thing which is swallowed, and thus it includes both *ahara* and drugs. Hence, drugs are also included in *Aharaso*; from all the above references, we can conclude that the word *Ahara* is nothing but the substance taken in via mouth and swallowed through the throat.<sup>2</sup> In Ayurveda, any substance taken as food possesses property, potency,

resultant of metabolism. *Rasas* undertake *Gunas* and is undertaken by *veerya*, which is suppressed by *vipak*, and finally, *prabhav* makes all of them resultant. According to our ancient seer, food can be taken as medicine. The most important aspect of the Ayurvedic lifestyle is to take food in proper quantity, which can help increase the span of healthy life. What is so-called 'correct' or 'suitable' only depends on that particular person and vary person to person, and as the saying goes, 'one man's food is another man's poison.' Different food substance suits the different individual.<sup>3</sup>

## 3. IDEAL DIET<sup>4</sup>

The ideal diet should have the following properties.

- 1) The diet person should increase the vigor of the body.
- 2) The diet the person takes should be delicious, and it is most important that he should like it.
- 3) It should give strength immediately after eating it.
- 4) The diet should provide the capacity for a person to perform his regular functions.
- 5) After taking the dieting person should have satisfied.
- 6) It should be very hot, very buttery, and not dry at the time of eating.
- 7) It should be taken in proper quantity and well-mannered way.
- 8) It should be compatible.

The food (Diet) having the above characteristics can be called an ideal diet.

## 4. AHARAVIDHIVISHESAAYATANANI

Ayurveda has its unique concepts, and *Aaharavidhivishesaayatanani* is one of them. Compatible food is beneficial food that everyone should consume to maintain good health status. In *Ahara Vidhi Vishesa Ayatanani*, there are some rules regarding diet are given; it said that a person should consume food by considering the terms *prakriti*, *karan*, *samyoga*, *Rashi*, *dsha*, *kala*, *upayogsanthaandupayakta* which is explained in the Table no 1 given below,

**Table I: AharaVidhiVishesaAyatanani<sup>4</sup>**

Sr no.	Factor of AharaVidhi VishesaAyatanani	Explanation	Explanation with Example
1	Prakrti	It indicates the nature of the diets and drugs.	<i>Masha</i> is heavy and <i>Mudga</i> is light.
2	Karana	Processing on food. Processing causes the transformation of the properties of substances.	Alteration of the food quality is affected by dilution, heating, washing, etc.
3	Samyoga	a mixture of two or more food substances.	the mixture of honey & ghee taken together
4	Rashi	amount of substances to be taken	<i>Sarvagraha</i> is the amount of each substance involved in diet. And the amount of every substance individually is called <i>Parigraha</i>
5	Dsha	<i>Dsha</i> denotes the territory of food substances.	It determines the variations of the qualities of the substances according to their territory due to different soil etc.
6	Kala	<i>Kala</i> denotes Time as years, age, and seasons.	The time factor is described in a dual context; one pertains to daily and seasonal variations, while the other deals with an individual's conditions of age and disease.
7	UpayogaSamstha	<i>UpayogaSamstha</i> means dietetic rules given by our seer.	Like food taken should be <i>Ushna</i> , <i>Snigdha</i> , etc
8	Upayokta	Habit and state of an individual.	Food-taking person.

In the above-given table, the factors of *AharaVidhiVishesaAyatanani* are explained with their respective examples, which shows the importance of that factors in our day-to-day life. *Ashtaharvidhivisheshayatan*, which emphasizes dietetics' methods and regulations. It focuses on the food's wholesomeness and its appreciation of uniqueness.

## 5. AAHARAVIDHIVIDHAN- (RULES FOR THE MEAL)

The *upayogasantha* is nothing but the rules our seer explains regarding the diet. They also explain some rules under the name *Aaharavidhividhan*, which are as follows,

1. *Ushnaashniyat*
2. *Snigdhaashniyat*
3. *Matravataashniyat*
4. *Jirneashniyat*
5. *Virya -Avirudhyaashniyat*
6. *Ishatadesheashniyat*
7. *Natidrutamashniyat*
8. *Nativilambatmashniyat*
9. *Tanmanabhuṇjīt*
10. *AtmanamAbhisamikshyabhuṇjīt*

*Aaharavidhividhanas* are nothing but the rules delivered by our ancient seer to achieve the *swastha* goal, which means keeping the health of a healthy person and treating the disease. In these *vidhanas*, the rules or necessary precautions regarding food and meal taken by the person are given, which have proved beneficial since many years ago.

### 1. *Ushnaashniyat*

This means everyday person has to eat *Ushna*(hot) meal. Due to this, the *Agni* (Digestive fire) gets stimulated, which facilitates easy and proper digestion of food taken. Also, *Vatanuloman* (Carminates Flatus) occurs easily.<sup>5</sup>

### 2. *Snigdhaashniyat*

This means a person has to eat *Snigdha*(unctuous) meal. Due to this, along with the benefits mentioned above, the growth and development of all that occurs due to *snigdhaahara*. Oiliness is responsible for the lubrication of the visceral organ. It also strengthens the sense organs, increases *dhatus*, and increases the skin's complexion.<sup>6</sup>

### 3. *Matravataashniyat*

*Matravataashniyat* Means the proper quantity of food taken. Because the diet taken in proper quantity does not vitiate the three *doshas*, such food maintains Dosha's physiological level and increases life's longevity. Due to this, the excretion of waste products becomes easy. The *jatharagni* (Digestive fire) remains normal, and digestion becomes easy.<sup>7</sup>

### 4. *Jirneashniyat*

This means after the digestion of previously taken food, the next food should be taken. So one should eat only when the previous meal is digested, which can be decided by Signs like –feeling hungry, light, and defecation normally. So the person has to follow their timing of meals daily.<sup>8</sup> *Acharya Kashyapa*, in their commentary, states that the person should take the water only after feeling trust.

### 5. *Virya-Avirudhyaashniyat*

Opposite quality- two opposite strong qualities should be avoided to eat together. If this rule is not followed properly, it will lead to disease manifestation. For example, the fish and milk will cause *Rakta* *dhatu* vitiation if taken together. Because fish has *Ushna* (hot) *virya*, while milk is *Shit* (cold) *Virya*.<sup>9</sup>

### 6. *Ishatadesheashniyat*

This means where a person eat should be appropriate and clean. Along with the position taken for the meal should be comfortable. Eating unpleasant food to the mind and heart will cause many psychological disorders. Also, the food taken will not get digested.<sup>10</sup>

### 7. *Natidrutamashniyat*

This means the food should be eaten properly by churning it. Not so fast. Because fast eating may cause missed paths for food, that food will enter the trachea.<sup>11</sup> eating very fast will develop vomit, choking,

insults food & disliking food.

### 8. *Nativilambat mashniyat*

This means the person should not eat so slowly because eating very slowly will not get satisfaction. The food becomes cold and digested irregularly.<sup>12</sup>

### 9. *Tanmanabhuṇjīt*

During meals, the person should refrain from talking or laughing. Furthermore, the meal should be taken with proper concentration. If not done so, the digestive juices necessary for digestion will not get secreted properly. This causes disturbances in digestion. On the other hand, as discussed earlier, if the person eats food with talking and laughing, there are chances of entering food particles into the trachea. This will obstruct it.<sup>13</sup> This is also a serious situation.

### 10. *AtmanamAbhisamikshyabhuṇjīt*

Before taking food, the person should analyze himself and what food is suitable for him or not. And also, he should take note of his strength of digestive fire or capacity to how much food he will digest easily. These two things will help the person for proper digestion of food.<sup>14</sup>

**Table 2: Food recommended for balancing Dosha according to their Rasa**

Dosha	Rasa	Food balances dosha
Vata	Madhur, Amla, Lavan	Butter, Grains, Vegetables, and Nuts
Pitta	Tikta, Madhur, Kashaya	Salad, Milk, and seeds
Kapha	Katu, Tikta, Kashaya	Intense food, Millet, and corn flour

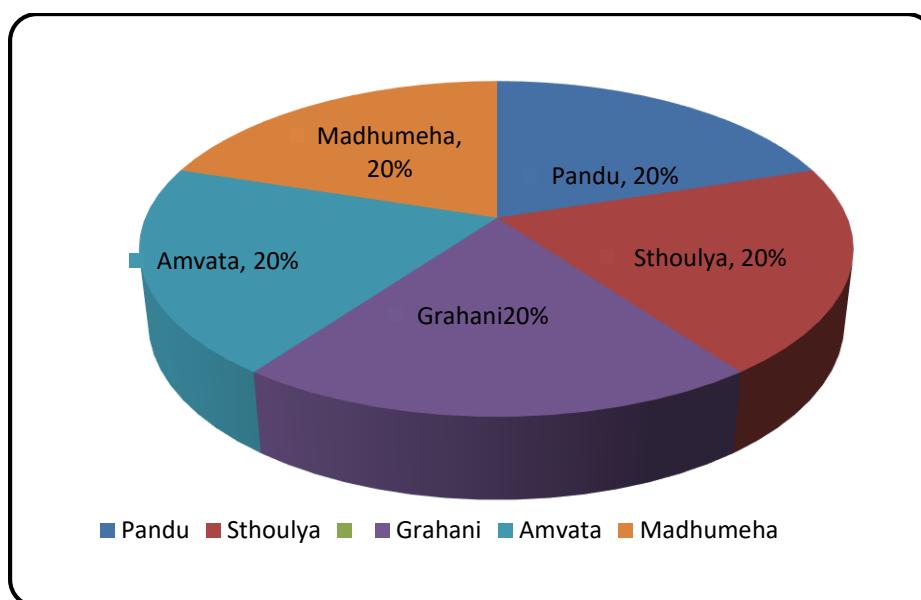
**Table 3: Food vitiating Dosha according to their Rasa**

Dosha	Rasa	Food Vitiating dosha
Vata	Katu, Tikta, Kashaya	Fruits, Raw Salad
Pitta	Amla, Lavan, Katu	Hot, spicy, and fermented food
Kapha	Madhur, Amla, Lavan	Cheese, meat, rice, and milk products

Tables No. 2 and 3 show the relation of rasa with dosha. This rasa helps in pacifying the vitiated dosha to normalcy. Vata, Pitta, and Kapha are the three Tridoshas, and they are thought to be in charge of normal and disordered bodily physiological functions. It is thought that biochemical processes related to food assimilation and digestion impact this Tridoshic equilibrium in various ways. If Ahara exacerbates Doshas, then illnesses conditions may be seen, whereas Dosha pacification leads to proper physiology (healthy condition).<sup>15</sup>

## 5. Aahara and Disease<sup>15</sup>

According to Acharya Charaka, incompatible Ahara can cause a variety of diseases. Consumption of incompatible foods affects the immune, endocrine, digestive, neurological, and circulatory systems. The disease occurring due to improper intake of aahara includes *Jwara*, *Amlapitta*, *grahani*, *lavish*, *pandu*, *kusht*, and *unmad*, etc.; some are shown in the figure below.

**Fig1: Disease pathogenesis depending on Aahara**

## 6. Diet Specific Disease

Extremely hot meals can lead to illnesses like *Mada*, *Daha*, *Trushna*, *Amlapitta*, and *Bhrama*. Overeating can lead to *Vimargagamanam*, which in turn leads to *AnnajaHikka*, *Abhojana*, *Ajeerna*, *Atibhojana*, *AsatmyaBhojana*, and *Vishamashanamay*.<sup>15</sup> bring on the symptoms of Grahidosha:

## 7. Food intake sequence

Food such as *guru*, *madhur*, and *snigdha* should be consumed first, followed by *amla* and *lavanaahara*. For optimal *Agni* activation, proper absorption, and proper assimilation of food, food that *Ruksha*, *Katu*, *Tikta*, and *Kashaya* should be consumed in the last half of the meal. For appropriate digestion, it is advised to rest for *MahurtaMatra* (48 min) after eating.<sup>16</sup>

## 8. The modern concept related to Aahara

According to modern medical knowledge, certain foods can increase your risk of developing pathological illnesses like food poisoning, stomach burn, diarrhea(*Atisara*), and constipation(*Malabaddhata*). At the same time, diseases like obesity and diabetes may be seen as chronic problems linked to poor eating habits. High blood pressure and heart disease

symptoms increase when unwholesome food is consumed combined with stress or anxiety. One other concept of modern research is the study of food allergies. Certain foods can cause unfavorable reactions, and since these reactions differ from person to person, some people may be allergic to particular foods while others may not be. The person affected by some allergic food should avoid that kind of food for a healthy life. Individuals in the population may regard foods with a strong flavor or odor to be allergenic. Food poisoning is a type of illness that results from eating tainted food. Non-vegetarian foods are more likely to be contaminated by microorganisms (bacteria, viruses, and environmental toxins) than vegetarian meals.<sup>15</sup>

## 9. Wrong Eating habits

In Ayurveda, as well as in modern science, there are many dos and don'ts are given related to the *aahara* for the proper digestion of food. The proper digestion of food is essential for the *aahararasa* to form with all qualities. Because of these qualities, the *nextsaptadhatu* formed from *aahararasa* gets nourished. Bad eating habits affect this chain of nourishment of *saptadhatu*s. These eating habits include,<sup>17</sup>

1. Eating before the previous taken food digestion.
2. Consuming even while not hungry.

3. Eating at the incorrect time of day.
4. Consuming insufficient food combinations.
5. Eating too much heavy food and not enough light food.
6. Overeating.
7. Drinking chilled or cold water, particularly during meals.
8. Frozen and fermented food.
9. Too sour, salty, or spicy food.

## 10. SUMMARY

According to the *acharyaKashyap*, *aahara* is a *mahabhaishyajya*, or good medicine. Ayurveda aims to retain healthy individuals and heal those who are ill. *Aahara* succeeds in her goal. The *aahara* serves as *Agni*'s fuel. This demonstrates the reciprocal connection between *Aahara* and *Agni*. The *aahara* must undergo a sequence of changes to serve the body's needs, which turns the *aahara* into the *aahararasa*. The digestive process enables these modifications. *Aaharaparinamkarbhavas* do it in Ayurveda. 18 Each of these is crucial to the digestive process. If they are not functioning properly, *Agni* becomes vitiated, which in turn causes *tridosha*, *dhatu*, and *mala* to go out of balance. As a result, *aaharparinamkarbhavas* are important.<sup>18</sup> *Bhaishajya* means *ausadhi*, i.e., medicine. They treat *ahara* as a medicine. The person should eat at the proper time in the morning and evening. As much as desirable and habitual to him. One should sit for a meal at a comfortable place in a pleasant environment. It will add a little bit of fragrance to food. When food is taken in proper quantity, it helps the individual bring strength to the body, skin texture, and pleasure. If all the rules regarding diet are followed regularly, it will help increase life span without upsetting the equilibrium of *dosha* and *dhatus* of the body. These circumstances have a significant impact on the food we choose and consume. They inform us about the wholesomeness of the foods we should eat and the amount, type, and combination of foods we should consume. They also help us understand the context in which we should eat, such as the place and time. There, it becomes crucial for everyone to have a clear understanding of these circumstances. Ayurveda addresses both *Swasthyarakshana* and *Vyadhiparimoksha*. Both of these *Prayojanas* will be easier to complete if the *AshtaAharaVidhiVisheshayatanas* idea is modified.<sup>16</sup> The idea of *NityaSevaniyaDravyas*, which *AcharyaCharka* and *Vaghbata* both discuss, makes obvious the significance of nourishment in modern life. *Aahara* helps in proper body growth when ingested in the right way and quantity. It gives energy, vitality, and a youthful appearance and nurtures the health of the tissues. On the other hand, if consumed incorrectly, different ailments can result. It can be inferred that *NityaSevaneeyaDravya* is crucial to maintaining a healthy lifestyle and preventing impending illness.<sup>19</sup> The diet planning described in our classic literature is logical and founded on a few guiding principles. Because "Deho hi *Aaharasambhava*," a person's food should be designed by age, season, habitat, and *Prakriti*. According to ancient Ayurvedic texts, *aahara* is the finest treatment. No medication can compare to the advantages of food, and only the right diet can maintain good health.<sup>20</sup> A *Mandagni* person should avoid eating too much *Snigdha*, while *Teekshnagni* should not consume too little *Aahara*. Each diet intake rule is interdependent; therefore, they should all be considered simultaneously. Applying only one of these rules cannot obtain the desired effects. Hence one must abide by all of *AaharaVidhiVidhana*.<sup>21</sup> Food ingested while taking into mind *Prakriti* helps to maintain the balance of *Dosha*, and so helps in

the production of *aaharrasa*, which nourishes all *Dhatu*.<sup>22</sup> According to "Deho Hi *AaharSambhava*," food is stated to be the bio-product of the human body. With healthy eating comes a healthy life. In both healthy and unhealthy conditions, *aahar* is essential. A person's strength and appearance will only improve if they follow the right diet and exercise routine.<sup>23</sup> According to *AcharyaCharaka*, the diet should be consumed by dividing the stomach capacity into three sections: A portion of it is filled with solid food, another with liquids to create the *Kled* in the stomach, which is essential for healthy digestion, and the third portion is left for *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*. *Vata* creates *Ushma* for the food movement, *Pitta* creates *Ushma* for food digestion, and *Kapha* structures *Sneha* since hard foods don't digest as predicted.<sup>24</sup> Anomalies of the digestive fire will result from eating foods that are dry, incompatible, and cause constipation.<sup>25</sup> The body continues to grow, gain strength and gradually mature from the moment of conception. One of the elements contributing to body growth is *Aahara Sausthava* (Excellence of Food Properties).<sup>26</sup> Our body is a creation of *Aahara* (food). This food, or *aahara*, portends human happiness and suffering in sickness and health. Health is caused by eating wholesome food, whereas ill states of the body are caused by eating unwholesome food.<sup>26</sup> Properties of *Nityasevaniyaahara* drugs given in Ayurveda are such that they do not vitiate any of the *doshas* and keep all three in a balanced state. Most of these drugs are light (*Laghu*), i.e., easy to digest, which protects the body from the formation of *aama* i.e., indigested food responsible for the pathogenesis of several diseases.<sup>27</sup> One of the lifestyle disorders brought on by overeating, junk food, sugar-rich beverages, etc., is diabetes. In Ayurveda, similar factors are listed. Also, a thorough examination of recent studies on food and diabetes has revealed striking similarities to the *hitkaraahara* prescribed in Ayurveda for the treatment of *Madhumeha*.<sup>28</sup> Frequent use of *viruddhaahara* acts as a poison which in turn provokes all the *doshas*.<sup>29</sup>

## 11. CONCLUSION

The physical inactivity and sedentary lifestyle due to the excessive use of technologies in daily life leads to various diseases like DM, Migraine, HTN, Obesity, etc. In today's era of modernization and technology, the higher use of laptops and mobile phones and the race to be the best among the crowd cause ignorance toward proper diet. People need to follow the time to take a meal. Also, the excessive consumption of fast foods, junk foods, and fermented food greatly contributes to the disease manifestation. Hence *Ahara*(Diet), an integral part of our life, is important in promoting health and preventing disease. If all living beings enjoy food by following the dietetic rules explained in Ayurveda, they can keep their body and mind active and healthy. This brings prosperity to their life.

## 12. AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Dr. Swapnali Yewale conceptualized and gathered the data about this manuscript. Dr. Prasad analyzed these data and added necessary inputs to the manuscript's construction. All authors discussed the methodology and contributed to the final manuscript.

## 13. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Conflict of interest declared none.

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