

# CHAPTER-09

## THE ROLE OF AAHAR FOR HEALTHY LIVING

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## **ABSTRACT**

*Consuming sustenance is essential for our existence, serving as the fuel that enables us to live fully. Aahaara stands as the paramount element for life's sustenance, having held utmost significance since life's inception on Earth. Across our globe, every living creature tirelessly strives for a quality existence, acknowledging that sustenance surpasses all other material possessions in its indispensable role in survival. Ayurveda, an ancient repository of wisdom, is dedicated to upholding individual health and remedying ailments. This is achieved through the balance of doshas, dhātu, and mala, known as Dhātu Samyata, which can be fostered through suitable lifestyle choices and dietary habits (Pathya Ahara and Hitkara Aharas). Acharyas have explained various events which should be involved in our life style for healthy living. Ahara is the main part of once healthy living.*

**Keywords:** *Aahar, Pathya Aahar, Hitkara Ahara, Healthy Life, Ayurveda.*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Ayurveda, often hailed as the science of life, embodies a comprehensive approach to maintaining optimal health and well-being. It encompasses perfect principles that guide individuals towards leading a healthy life, catering to both the wellness of the healthy and the treatment of the diseased. This ancient system of medicine not only offers remedies for ailments but also emphasizes preventive measures to safeguard health at every stage of life.

Among the fundamental pillars of Ayurveda are Aahara (diet), Nidra (sleep), and Brahmacharya (celibacy or moderation). These pillars serve as the foundation for sustaining the body's balance and vitality. Aahara, prioritized as the first pillar, underscores its paramount importance in maintaining health and preventing diseases. The significance of a balanced and nourishing diet cannot be overstated in Ayurveda's holistic approach to well-being.

In the realm of Ayurvedic practice, dietetics plays a crucial role as the practical application of nutritional principles. It involves designing meal plans tailored to meet the specific needs of both healthy individuals and those battling illnesses. Ayurveda has long identified and prescribed a set of dietetic guidelines that promote overall health and aid in the treatment of various conditions.

Historically, Ayurvedic scholars have recognized the vital role of adhering to dietetic rules for promoting health and healing. While the practical importance of these rules has been acknowledged for centuries, modern times call for a renewed emphasis on validating these principles with contemporary methodologies. There is a pressing

need to reinforce the relevance of proper dietary practices in enhancing health quality and managing diseases effectively.

It is incumbent upon Ayurvedic research scholars and practitioners to disseminate knowledge about the importance of dietary codes to individuals of all ages, backgrounds, and socioeconomic statuses. Educating the populace about the significance of mindful eating and nutritional balance is essential for fostering a healthier society. By championing the principles of Ayurvedic dietetics, we can empower individuals to take charge of their health and well-being proactively.

### **1.1 According to Ayurveda (Aahar Evam Vyadhi Kshamatva)**

Aahar, which we intake is digested by the Jhathraagni. The Jhathraagni is mainly responsible for the digestion of Aahar., next comes the Bhootagni. and then Sapta Dhatwa Agni. Thereafter the digestion of Aahar by the Dhatwagni results in the nourishment of the SaptDhatu (Rasa, Rakta, Mansa, Meda, Asthi, Majja and Shukra). At last, the formation of Shukra Dhatu and it's Saar Bhaag results in Oja nirmaan. So, Oja is Utkrishta Saar of all the Dhatu's which give Bala to our Shareer, is the Sharirik Bala.

Aahar should be taken by proper rule known as *Ashta Aaharvidhi Visheshayatana* and *Aahar Vidhi Vidhan*.

## **2. AAHAR**

### **2.1 Definition and Derivation of Aahar:**

**Sabda Kalpadruma:** It is said that Aahar: Aang + Hriti + Ghanj

Dravyagalaadh karnama- According to this derivation, the meaning of word Aahar is substances which is swallowed through throat after eating.

**According to Dalhana :** Aahiyate Annanalakriya Yata Aahar.

Substances which is swallowed through Annanalika (oesophagus ) is called Aahar.

**Chakrapani:** Aahiyate Iti Aharo Bhesajamapi

Aahar means, that which is taken in. it includes both the diet and drugs, during the explanation of Ahita Ahar.

**Sushrut Samhita:** Aahar is that which restore the vigor, provides strength immediately after talking it, sustains body and increases life span, happiness, memory power, Ojas and digestive capacity.

## 2.2 Modern Dictionary meaning of word Food

According to OXFORD Dictionary Food is defined as „things that people or animals eat.

According to LOYAL’S Medical Dictionary, Food is defined as „ Anything which when taken into the body supply heat, produce energy and maintains growth by building up the tissues.

## 3. SYNONYMS OF AAHAR

In Sabda Kalpadruma, Jagdha, Bhojana, Lehyah, Nidhasa, Nuada, Jaman, Vidahasa, Pratyavasanam, Bhushanam, AbhyavAahar, Khadanam, Nigara·

### 3.1 Classification of Aahar Dravya’s according to edibility by Charak

Table-1: Classification of Aahar Dravya’s according to edibility by Charak

Edibility common (1)	Source(2)	Action on body (2)	Swarupa(4)	Taste(6)	Quality(20)	Combination and preparation
	- Jangama	- Hita	- Pana	- Madhura	Guru-Laghu	Innumerable
	- Sthavara	- Ahita	- Asana	- Amla	Seeta -Usna	
			- Bhaksya	- Lavana	Snigdha-Ruksa	
			- Lehya	- Katu	Manda-Teeksna	
				- Tikta	Sthira-Sara	
				- Kasaya	Mridu-Kathina	
					Visada-Picchila	
					Slaksna-Khara	
					Sthoola-Sooksma	
					Drava-Sandra	

Depending upon the combination of different food articles the food types are innumerable. examples of Pathya (wholesome) and Apathya (unwholesome) articles.

### **3.2 Shresht Hitkar Aahar**

- Red type of rice is the best among paddy having bristles
- Among pulses, green gram is the best
- Among water rain water collected before fall on ground is the best
- Among salt rock salt is the best
- Among pot herbs, Jivanti (*Leptadenia reticulata* W. and A) is the best
- Among of meat of big animals, Ena (antelope)
- Among meat of birds Lava (common quail)
- Among meat of animals living in holes Godha (ingwana)
- Among fish Rohita (type of fish)
- Among ghee cow Ghee
- Among milk cow milk
- Among vegetable fats sesame oil
- Fats of marshy animals Lard (pig fat)
- Fish fat – fat of Chuluki (gangetic dolphin)
- Fats of aquatic birds – fat of Pakahamsa (white swan)
- Fats of Vishkira (gallinaceous types of birds with beak) fat of hen
- Fats of tree branch eating animals fat of goat

### **3.3 Shreshta Ahitkar Dravya**

- Among Shuka Dhanya (paddy having bristles), Yavaka (a variety of barley) is most unwholesome
- Among pulses (Shami Dhanya) black gram is most unwholesome
- Among water river water in rainy season is most unwholesome
- Among salt Ushara (salt collected from saline water) is most unwholesome
- Among pot herbs mustard is the most unwholesome
- Among the meat beef is most unwholesome
- Among the meat of birds Kana Kapota (young dove) is most unwholesome
- Among the Bileshaya (meat of animals living in the hole) frog is most unwholesome
- Among the fish Chilichima is most unwholesome
- Among the ghee - Ghee of sheep milk is most unwholesome
- Among the milk sheep milk is most unwholesome
- Vegetable fat oil from Kusumbha (*canthamus tinctorius* linn) is most

unwholesome

- Fats of marshy animals fat of buffalo is most unwholesome
- Fats of aquatic animals fat of Kakmadgu (water fowl) is most unwholesome
- Fats of aquatic animals fat of Kumbhira (corocodile) is most unwholesome.

## **4. DIETETIC REGULATION IN AYURVEDA**

### **4.1 Ashta Aaharvidhi Viseshayatana**

If one eats in conformity to these rules, he is not liable to any type of the ill effects coming from eating without measure. Bhavamisra and other Acharyas have also supported the same view. Acharya Charak has laid down eight factors, determining the utility of food, which are known as “Astavidha Aahar Visheshayatanas”. They are as under:

1. **Prakrti:** Here Prakrti denotes the natural qualities of the Aahar Dravyas i.e. it inherent a tribute like Guru and Laghu etc. of the diets and drugs. For example, Masa is Guru in nature. Likewise, Mudga is Laghu in nature. Similarly, the meat of Sukara is Guru and of Yena is Laghu.
2. **Karana:** Karana means the process or preparation. The mode of preparation or processing, changes the natural properties of the substances. Thus there is a change of qualities of the Dravyas due to the processing like dilution, application of heat, cleaning, storing, germination, flavouring, preservation and the material of the receptacle etc.
3. **Samyoga:** The combination of individual things with two or more things is known as Samyoga.
4. **Rasi:** The quantity of food which is to be taken in is known as Rasi.
5. **Desa:** Desa denotes the habitat. It determines the variations of the qualities of the substances according to their geographic region, due to different soil, use and adjustment to that particular region.
6. **Kala:** Time factor is described in dual context; one pertains with daily and seasonal variations while other deals with individuals’ conditions of age and disease.
7. **Upayoga Samstha:** It consists of dietetic rules.
8. **Upayokta:** It means the person who takes food. However, Astangasamgrahakara Vagbhata has illustrated only seven types of Aahar Vidhi Viseshayatanas. He has

explained Upyogasamstha and Upayokta together and counted them as “Upayogavyavastha”

#### **4.2 Pathya Aahar and Apathya Aahar**

As per Charak Acharya, Pathya refers to the nourishing diet and remedies that positively impact both body and mind, while Apathya denotes substances or practices that have adverse effects. The renowned medical text from the medieval era, "Vaidya Jivan" by Lolimbraj, emphasizes the significance of adhering to Pathya-Apathya guidelines in treatment. It highlights that following the appropriate dietary guidelines for a specific illness diminishes the need for medicinal intervention. Conversely, deviating from these guidelines renders drug treatment ineffective in curing the ailment.

#### **4.3 Importance of Pathya Aahar**

As Acharya Charak has stated, if one takes Pathya Aahar, there is no chance for disease pathogenesis. Like a Ahita Agni who takes diet conducive to the power of digestion being aware of the wholesomeness of food and drinks, who resort to meditation of Brahma and charity enjoys bliss without any diseases during the present as well as further lives. Also, Pathya is said to be one of the synonyms of Bhesaja (medicine).

### **5. HITA AND AHITA AAHAR**

Hita word is used so many times in Brhatrayi and Laghutrayi to indicate beneficial. In Brhatrayi word “Hita” is mostly used for “Aahar.

As **Sushruta** stated in **Sutra 20**, there are four types of Dravyas viz:

1. Ekanta Hitakara - i.e. - Always / totally wholesome (Hitakari) viz. Milk, Ghee.
2. Ekanta Ahitakara - i.e. - Always / totally unwholesome (Ahitakari) viz. Agni, Ksara, Visa
3. Avasthanusara Hitakara - i.e. - Conditional wholesome (Pathya) viz. Agnikarma in Grudhrasi
4. Avasthanusara Ahitkara - i.e. - Conditional unwholesome (Apathya) viz. Milk in Navajvara.

Therefore, conditional unwholesome is called Pathya e.g. - Milk is always Hitkari in healthy state of body but when one individual is suffering from Navajvara, milk is not Hitkari in this condition. So, milk is called Apathya in Navajvara.

Another point is that Hitkari term is used mostly in healthy state of individuals while Pathya term is used mostly in ill conditions (Aturavastha).

## **6. AAHAR VIDHI VIDHANA**

The health is the supreme foundation for the achievements of life. Therefore, Ayurveda aims to maintain the condition of health i.e. Swasthya Rakshana. Health as well as diseases are dependent on various factors.

**Dietetic rules**, i.e., Aahar - Vidhi - Vidhana. are specified for "How to eat?" This is Swasthya aspect.

Aahar Vidhi Vidhana (Dietary Guidelines):

1. Ushnam Asniyat
2. Snigdham Asniyat
3. Matravat Asniyat
4. Jirne Asniyat
5. Virya Aviruddham Asniyat
6. Ishte dese, Ishta Sarva Upkaranam Asniyat
7. Na Atidrutam Asniyat
8. Na Ativilambitam Asniyat
9. Ajalpan, Asan, Tanmana Bhujitam
10. Aatanamabhisamikashya Bhujitam

Unfollowing these dietic rules leads to imbalance of doshas and dhatus in the body and as a result various disease condition like rajyakshma, bhagander (fistula), grahni etc.

Intake of rukshan, teekshan, sheeth ahara and excessive exercises standing for long duration swimming can lead to variation of VAAT doshas and disease like Grahdrasi, vaatvyadhi etc

Intake of guru, snigdha, mandha sheeth yukya ahara leads to variation of KAPHA doshas and diseases like cough, asthma, excessive sleepiness.

Intake of tikta ahara, ushna, laghu ahara leads to variation of PITTA doshas and disease like rakpitta, udavart, kushtha and other skin disorders.

Acharyas have mentioned the various number of diseases occurring due to the variation of their consecutive doshas known as the Nanatmaj Rog.

Vaat Nanatmaj Roga are 80 Pitta Nanatmaj roga are 40 Kapha nanatmaj roga are 20

## **7. MATERIAL AND METHODS**

The existing traditional Ayurveda Samhita and also the related manuscripts, books on veda are the materials for the study. The available classical texts, commentaries on each of the classical texts, current information from the net, various review articles from magazines, journal. Help from the previous review work done through various thesis of MD and PG Scholar, were taken as study materials. Original manuscripts, which are obtainable at Bhandarkar's Oriental Research Institute. It is to be noted that, the study of Samhita is important because, the original Samhitas are helpful in enriching the basic principles of the science and if the original Samhitas are not understood properly, then the guiding principles of the respective commentaries are followed so as to understand and solve the controversies.

## **8. DISCUSSION ROLE OF AAHAR**

Aahar plays a very important role in maintaining the health. It is for this reason that the Aaharis the prime place among Trayopastambhas (Aahar, Nidra, Bharmcharya).

A man cannot live without Aahar. From the etymology and definition of Aahar given by various Acharyas it is clear that the word Aahar denotes both Aahar and Aushadha taken through the oral root by differentiating Aahar from Aushadha. Aahar is Rasa Pradhana while Aushadha is Virya Pradhana. So considering this, by Aushadha Dravyas one can get mostly Guna of that particular drug. Especially Sheet and Ushana Gunas. While by Aahar Dravaya, one can get nourishment of the body.

Aahar nourishes the body when it is Pathya (Hitkari Aahar) and its wholesomeness depends upon the variation in Matra, Kala, Method of preparation, Desha, Prakriti Vyadhi and the Vayaof an individual.

According to Ayurveda, we can say that the terms Hita, Pathaya, Satmaya and Upshaya are used to find out the wholesomeness (Pathaya) of Dravyas. Even through these technical terms of Ayurveda imports a similar meaning yet these are not synonyms of each moreover most of ancient scholar have used these as synonyms for each other.

- **Pathya**- Aahar nourishes all Dhatus leading to Uttam Bala whereas Apathya creates imbalance of Dhatus formation and Dosh Vikriti.
- **Satmaya** - Satmaya Aahar results in the wellbeing of an individual. Sathmya Aahar depends upon the Agni of person. So, a person with Samagni will have Uttam Bala

It is also said that if a person follows proper Aahar and proper Vihara (Dincharya, Ritucharya, Ratricharya) as mentioned in Ayurvedic classics, he/ she will get proper benefit of Aahar.

### **8.1 Effects of Apathaya Aahar on Bala**

Intake of Apathaya Aahar will vitiate Doshas (Vata, Pitta, Kapha), this results in improper function and nourishment of Dhatus (Rasa Raktadi). So, a person will receive Bala Kshaya which ultimately gives rise to different types of Vyadhis in one's body.

### **8.2 Effects of Pathaya Aahar on Bala**

- Pathya Aahar will maintain the balance of Shareer Dosha in the body
- Pathya Aahar will nourish all the rasa Raktaadi Dhatus
- It results in proper excretion of Mala - Mutra in proper way
- So, one should take Pathaya Aahar (wholesome) which will nourish all the Dhatus and maintain Bala in our body i.e. Immunity.

### **8.3 What is the importance of Aahar Vidhi?**

- The Ashta Aahar Vidhi Vishesh Ayatan are responsible for proper digestion of food. So one should have desire to know these Ashta Aahar Vidhi Vishesh Ayatan and should remind these Ayatan in their daily routine life.
- A person should not eat Aahar Dravyas just for pleasure or taste of tongue. Which results in illness.
- These Aahar Vidhi Vidhana are mentioned for both a healthy person and diseased/ unhealthy persons.
- This results in proper functioning of Doshas (Vata Pitta Kapha) nourishment of Rasa Rakta etc Dhatus and Elimination of Mala (M u t r a , Purish, Swedadi)
- The Hitkara Aahar and Vihara rules mentioned in Ritucharya and Dincharya should be followed for healthy living.

### **8.4 What type of Aahar effects Guna's of body?**

- Aahar is Panchbhautik and Shareer is also Panchabhautik So Panchbhautik Guna Prithvi Mahabhoot Guna Dravyas. Aahar will nourish Prithvi Mahabhoot in Shareer and soon.

- Aahar is taken by keeping mind the Sharirik Doshas (Vata, Pitta Kapha).
- Vata Vardhak Aahar increase Vaat Dosha, Pitta Vardhak Aahar increase Pitta Dosha and Kapha Vardhak Aahar increases Kapha Dosha.
- Similarly, Satvik Aahar increases Satvik Guna in body, Rajsik Aahar increases Rajsik Guna and Tamsik Aahar increases Tamsik Guna in Body.
- Therefore, the type of Aahar which is intaken by a person will increase/ nourishes the Same type of Guna Aahar. Example intake of Mamsa will increase Mamsa Dhatu

### **8.5 Discussion on Bala**

Bala is considered as Aarogyata or it is state of being disease free. Various aspects like Dosh, Agni, Aahar are important in maintenance of Sharirik Bala or Immunity. Garamya Aahar also result in Daurbalyata. Viyayam shakti clearly indicates Bala Pramana.

The Bala is the Sara of the Seven Dhatus and Dhatu Poshan depends on the type of Aahar i.e. Hitkara -Ahitakar, Pathya-Apathya Aahar we intake.

Bala as a result of Aahar Prakrita Karma, is the basic necessity of life, the immunity is largely dependent on the Aahar we consume as it is the building block of the body Aahar is definitely the prime source of Bala hence unbalanced Aahar will result in various Vyadhi.

## **9. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

- Aahar can be consider as “Amrit”.
- One should eat Aahar keeping in mind, the different aspects of Aahar i.e. Ashta Aahar
- Vidhi Vishesh Aytan, Aahar Vidhi Vidhan, Pthaya Aahar, Hitakar Aahar, Satmya Aahar which are responsible for Swasthaya (Healthy Living) of a person.
- As it also fulfills the first Prayojan of the Ayurveda i.e. “Swasthasya Swasatha **Rakshanam**”
- Aahar plays a very important in our life style.
- Healthy dietary habitats will make a healthy person i.e. diseased free person and longevity of a life.
- Oja is the Sharirik Bala or Rogpratirodhak Kshamta of the body.

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