



Review Article

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EPITOME OF HITA AAHARA

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda the ancient Indian life science aims mainly on svastha-rakshana rather than vikara-prashamana. In classics acharyas have explained concepts which would help in svasthya-rakshana, wherein lies the concept of Trayopasthambha, Aahara, Nidra and Brahmacharya. Aahara is explained first and is given utmost importance as aahara is the energy supplement, thus called as prana for all creatures. All creatures thrive from Aahara; it brings about Bala, Medha, Svava, Varna and Jeevana. Aahara is called as Arogyakara because it is said to be the cause of stability for all the living being and proper administration of which also brings about disease-free state. Life cannot be sustained without aahara even endowed with medicine thus aahara is also called as mahaushada. The positive effect of aahara is bestowed when it is taken with due care, following the dietetic principle by giving importance to hita-kara, ahita-kara and satmya aahara. Intake of proper quality and quantity of food with respect to the Prakruthi, Agnibala, Desha and Satmya is important. In this paper an attempt is made to throw light on the concept of Aahara, its importance, hita aahara with special reference to desha.

Keywords: Aahara, Satmya, Hita, Ahita.

INTRODUCTION

Aahara is one among the basic need of life and is considered as an important source. For healthy living, all the physiological activities of the body are based on aahara. Only the individual having healthy body can afford to perform all activities leading to happiness, heaven and salvation and for the preservation of health intake of food is essential. Hence food is the basic factor for the attainment of all of them. Food sustains the life of living beings. For all living beings in the universe; the body and disease is the outcome of food, the distinction between ease and disease arises on account of intake of wholesome food or the lack of it respectively. While selecting the diet one should select such diet which will be useful for the maintenance of health and prevention of disease.

Definition

Aahara (food) is one which is ingested, it includes foods like Lickable, drinkable, chewable & biteable i.e. Chaturvidha (four types)¹ and Shad vidha (six types)². Upanishads considers aahara as Brahma and Acharya Kashyapa considers aahara as mahabhaishajya³ and arogyakara⁴.

Importance of Aahara

- For all creatures food is the sustainer of life, all living beings craves for food; colour, complexion, tranquility, good voice, life span, intellect, happiness, contentment, nourishment, strength and intelligence and all these are dependent on food; social and

professional activities leading to adobe in heaven and observance of truth, bramhacharya (celibacy) further leading to salvation all are based on food⁵.

- Acharya Caraka considers Anna is best among Vrttikara (helps to do work)⁶.
- Intake of proper quality and quantity of food is able to bring about a disease free state, no other medicament can be equated to aahara⁷.
- According to Bhagavat geetha, consumption of satvika-aahara makes the mind clear, when mind is devoid of blemishes thus memory power enhances. Hence we can consider that health is dependent on food.

Quantity of Food

The quantity of food intake depends on the individual, one's own prakruthi, agnibala. While describing the quantity of food intake in classics it is explained as-

- Kukshi (stomach) should be filled with one part of solid food, second part filled with liquid food and third part left for movement of doshas⁸.
- According to Koutilya Artha Shastra quantity of food as cited in Table 1.

Table 1: The quantity of food

Dravya	Pramana
Rice	1 prastha
Pulse	1/4 th of rice
Salt	1/16 th of pulse
Fat	1/4 th of pulse
Meat	20 palas.
Curd	½ prastha
Fresh vegetables	½ of meat

Aahara-varga

Aahara (food) is given the utmost importance in Ayurveda. These are explained under different vargas. Broadly it can be classified into Anna dravya (solid food item) and Drava dravya (liquid food item). This classification is made for better understanding of rasa gunaadi's (qualities) of dravya and for easy selection of best dravya among each group. Anna dravya consists of Sukadhanya, Shamidhanya, Kudhanya, Mamsavarga, Phalavarga, Shaakavarga, Pushpa Varga, Haritavarga, Krtanna Varga etc. Drava dravya consists of Jalavarga, Kshiravarga, Dadhivarga, Takravarga, Ghritavarga, Tailavarga, Madhuvarga, Ikshuvarga etc⁹.

Table 2: Hita ahara and its dosha karma according to Acharya Sushruta

S. No.	Aahara	Dosha Karma
1	RakthaShaali	Tridosha-shamaka
2	Sastika	Tridosha-shamaka
3	Kanguka	Vata-pittahara-Kaphakara
4	Mukundaka	Vata-pittahara-Kaphakara
5	Panduka	Vata-pittahara-Kaphakara
6	Pitaka	Vata-pittahara-Kaphakara
7	Pramodhaka	Vata-pittahara-Kaphakara
8	Kalaka	Vata-pittahara-Kaphakara
9	Asana pushpaka	Vata-pittahara-Kaphakara
10	Kardamaka	Vata-pittahara-Kaphakara
11	Sakunahrita	Vata-pittahara-Kaphakara
12	Sughandhaka	Vata-pittahara-Kaphakara
13	Kalama	Vata-pittahara-Kaphakara
14	Nivara	Pitta-hara
15	Kodrava	Pitta-hara
16	Uddalaka	Kaphahara-Vata-pitthakara
17	Syamaka	Pitta-hara
18	Godhuma	Vatha-pittahara-kaphakara
19	Yava	Tridosha-hara
20	Venuyava	Kaphahara-vathakara
21	Makushtaka	Pittta-kaphahara-vatakara
22	Kalaya	Vatakara
23	Masura	Pitta-kaphahara-vatakara
24	Mudga	Alpa-vatakara
25	Vanamudga	Alpa-vatakara
26	Mangalya	Pitta-kaphahara-vatakara
27	Canaka	Vatakara-kaphahara-raktha-pitta hara
28	Harenu	Vatakara-kapha-pittahara
29	Adhaki	Kapha-pittahara-alpa-vatakara
30	Satina	Tridosha-hara
31	Cilli	Tridosha-hara
32	Vastuka	Tridosha-hara
33	Sunisannaka	Tridosha-hara
34	Jivanti	Tridosha-hara
35	Tanduliyaka	Alpa-Vata-kaphakara
36	Mandukaparni	Pitta-hara
37	Cowghee	Tridosha-hara
38	Saindhava	Tridosha-ghna
39	Dadhima	Pittakara-vathahara-kapha-utkleshakara
40	Amalaka	Tridosha-hara ¹⁰

Terminologies mentioned in the context of Aahara

Hita, Ahita, Pathya and Apathya; all the words have similar meaning i.e. wholesome, unwholesome, suitable and unsuitable according to Monnier Williams.

Concept of Hita (Wholesome) and Ahita (Unwholesome)

In the context of hita-ahita in Sushruta samhita it is said that the dravya which is pathya to vata is apathya to pitta which means there is no substance which is absolutely suitable or unsuitable. Substantiating which Acharya Sushruta states that a dravya can be differentiated based on swabhava (natural), and samskara (processes)¹¹ like-

- Ekanta-hita
- Ekanta-ahita
- Hita-ahita

The term ekanta-hita represents to the substance which are always suitable and accustomed to man by birth like water, ghee, milk, rice and similar others. Ekanta-ahita is by dahana (burning), Pachana (cooking) and Marana (destroying) etc. such as fire, caustic alkali and poisons etc. Combination of which becomes similar to poison. Hita-ahita indicates the substance which are considered to be suitable for vata and unsuitable to pitta and various viruddhata (incompatible) can be considered like samyoga viruddha, rasa viruddha etc.

Conducive Foods (HITA)

- According to Bhava prakasha- taking ginger and salt before food is always good as it enhances agni (digestive fire), taste, clears tongue and throat¹².
- According to Caraka -the substance that can be consumed daily are Sastikashali, Mudga, Saindava, Amalaka, Yava, Anthariksha-jala, Paya, Sarpi, Jangala-mamsa and Madhu¹³.
- Arunadatta while commenting on Satmya explains satmya and asatmya is nothing but pathya and apathya, so satmya can be defined as one which is conducive or that which is consumed for long duration¹⁴.
- Acharya Dalhana narrated some references regarding satmya, where the satmya was grouped into many sub types like¹⁵.

1. Desha-satmya

Desha is of two types i.e. Atura-sharira-satmya and Bhumi-satmya.

Atura-sharira-satmya divided into 2 types-

Samudaya Satmya – collective conducive example is sweet as it is conducive for all dhatus.

Avayava Satmya – Conducive to one organ i.e. eyes, hairs etc.

2. Bhumi-Satmya

Bhumi-satmya again divided into 2 like.

Samudaya-satmya – conducive to one part of desha. Jangala-desha aahara is suitable to jangala-desha and opposite to jangala, is anupa and aahraa followed is anupa desha aahara.

Avayava-satmya – conducive to some parts. For Bahlika-desha- Masha/black gram, Pallava-Desha- Godhuma/wheat, Cina – Madhvika

3. Jati Satmya

Food conducive to humans is rice etc. For animals and birds - grass, insects etc.

4. Ritu Satmya

Food consumed particular to seasons.

5. Roga Satmya

Satmya according to particular disease, like –

For gulma – milk

Udavartha- ghee

Prameha – honey

Like this understanding of aahara into different entities is very much important.

Other Points mentioned in Ayurveda in Relation to Aahara

Mantra for proper digestion

The food is the lord Vishnu and its digestion, transformation is also by lord Vishnu, so the food I consumed may also be digested with the grace of lord Agasthya, Agni, Vayu be kind enough to perform the digestion of my ingested food and bestow the sukha and health with beautiful body. The physician who pays respect daily to Angaraka, Agasthya, Agni, Surya and Ashvini Kumara the divine physician whose food is digested properly¹⁶.

Order of Doshavridhhi with respect to aahara

The Vata dosha increases after digestion of the food, during the digestion pitta dosha increases and during the eating process kapha dosha is increased¹⁷.

Effect of food on different dhathu's

The Madhura (sweet) rasa promotes raktha-dhathu, amla (sour) rasa increases majja, lavana (salt) rasa strengthens asthi, bitter food improves medho-dhathu, katu (pungent) food promotes mamsadhathu, kashaya rasa (astringent) food increases rasa dhathu and anna containing all these rasas promotes shukradhathu¹⁸.

Aaharavidhivishesha-ayathana i.e. specific conditions for intake of food and rules for taking food is been explained¹⁹.

Activities to be performed after intake of food

After eating one should take rest for 1 muhurtha and should walk slowly for 100 steps then should sit comfortably and should listen the stories, songs with sounds of musical instruments like veena, venu etc. and later should rest in vaamaparshvena i.e. right lateral side²⁰.

DISCUSSION

Aahara is one among the basic needs of life and food is considered to be an important source for healthy well-

being. Many physiological functions throughout the body are carried out through the food only, which is a keen observation by Ayurveda acharyas. For the treatment of any ailment preventive principles were much appreciated in the samhita's, so the tool to achieve is hita or pathya-aahara i.e. wholesome diet, which is the key for any ailment. Knowledge of diets is very much stronger in Ayurveda, many references can be traced out like, cooking of rice, preparation of different varieties of soups, other various food stuffs including pickle and oil based food items prepared in more hygienic and scientific way. Quantity of food intake with respect to physiology of an individual is more precisely explained in samhita, than present day's modern sciences. In the universe judiciously we can't select the food grains and other items because of innumerability, but Ayurveda acharya's when there was no modern equipment's, they categorized the whole aahara-varga into different groups and mentioned the importance of each food stuffs by quoting best variety in each one of them. The best one which is mentioned in each grouped were analysed in terms of scientific and modern background, it was found to have higher nutritive value. Digestion and metabolism plays vital role when food stuff suspended into the stomach and this knowledge pertaining to these was unique from those days. One such example is the explanation of doshic fluctuation in relation to food. Acharyas were very keen in understanding any morbidity in terms of pariksha i.e. examination. Desha pariksha is one among them. Desha in terms of patient body and in terms of external environment should be considered. As acharya's were wandering from one place to other, they had immense knowledge in fluctuation of climatic condition in relation to various food items grown in particular region. Many such references are there like people living in the eastern part habituated with taking fish which is wholesome, southern part intake of peya (thin gruel) is wholesome and the people living in the middle part intake of barley, wheat and milk products dealt to be wholesome. So Hita and Satmya plays a vital role in deciding any food stuffs. Recent report of NSSO shows that onion, potato and green chilli are most widely eaten vegetables in India; more than 8 out of 10 households report consumption of these food items. Similarly, tur-dal (yellow gram) appears to be country's favourite dal with more than 60 percent households reporting its consumption²¹. By this report it is understood that diet followed in present era does not match to that explained in classics. Knowledge of food stuff with the knowledge of desha is presumed to be more appropriate. For example considering Karnataka and dividing north, southern and coastal as jangala, sadharana and anupa, the diet followed in northern part is said to be dry as the area is considered to be dry but it won't trouble the people over there, it may be due to satmya and similar, in Konkan belt also where fish from sea origin is said to be kapha-kara but, people used to consume the same which increases kapha, where in anupa food should be ruksha-pradhana but, here also by satmya dosha's not affected. Dietetic rules are very necessary in achieving healthy life. A present day research explains that there is a interrelation between the food habits, brain functions and the metabolic disorders So these diet rules mentioned by

Ayurveda acharya are proved to be much scientific, because when we analyse the food stuffs mentioned under the heading of hita-aahara of classics, majority of them are tridosha-hara or vata pitta-hara in nature. In diet rule personal hygiene along with the cleanliness of the desha (place of cooking) and dining area are dealt and to prevent the contamination with heavy metals and also to enhance the properties of food, different types of utensils are mentioned. Silver was preferred because of its antibacterial properties. Food substances that may react were served in stone vessels²² like-wise each and every aspects of aahara has been enumerated.

CONCLUSION

Aahara considered as Brahma, which means auspicious, so one who follows pathya or hita in righteous manner will be unaffected by diseases. Concept of hita proves to be more scientific and should adopt in routine life. Majority of the food stuffs mentioned under the category of pathya or hita are not followed nowadays due to the lack of knowledge regarding the food stuff or because of non-identification. As our scripture says if a person follows the hita or wholesome diet, and would be respected by noble person lives for 36000 nights without any disease. Thus, eating wholesome food is much essential to have a disease free state.

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