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Conceptual study on *Aharapaka* in Ayurveda

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is the most ancient science of life and its main aim is to maintain health of the healthy individual and prevention of disease and treatment of disease. Ayurveda considered that *Ahara*, *Nidra* and *Brahmacharya* are three main pillars of life. In them *Ahara* plays an important role in life of all living beings. So, for the maintenance of health, healthy food and proper digestion is needed as per Ayurveda theory, like all the universal matter our body is also made up of *Pancha Mahabhutas* in this *Panchamahabhoutik Shareera* various *Paka* (metabolic transformations) are going on continuously and for this transformation *Agni* is the key factor and this *Agni* transforms consumed food into energy. *Ahara* is the practical application of the principles of nutrition. *Aharapaka* is the main process which does proper digestion of food in *Kosta* in various stages. The word *Ahaara Paaka* is a broad term and it includes various processes of digestion absorption assimilation and metabolism explained in modern science. As per Ayurvedic texts process of *Ahaara Paaka* begins from intake of food i.e., deglutition and ends at proper digestion. Not only ideal food will nourish our body but also proper digestion of the food will nourish the body and mind. *Aharapaka* process will helps in the formation of *Dosha*, *Dhathu*, and *mala* and these are the basic elements of the body. So, this present study is taken to find out importance of *Aharapaka* process in the maintenance of health.

Key words: *Ahara*, *Aharapaka*, *Avasthapaka*, *Nishthapaka*.

INTRODUCTION

The main aim of *Ayurveda* is to preserve the health of a healthy person, and to treat the disease of a diseased one. Food (*Ahara*), Sleep (*Nidra*) and celibacy (*Brahmacharya*), the three pillars of life (*Trayopastambhas*) play an important role in the maintenance of health (*Swasthya*) of an individual. Food plays an important role in healthy, diseased and convalescents states. It is more important than the medicine itself. The body can be nourished and

maintained in good health, by adopting suitable diet and full benefits of life. *Kashyapa* named *Ahara* as *Mahabhashajya*.^[1] *Ahara* in their own unique way. *Shabda Kalpa Druma* explains that *Ahara* is a substance. This is swallowed through throat after eating. *Vacaspatyam* states *Ahara* is a food.^[2] *Dalhana* states that the substance which is swallowed through *Anna-Nalika* is called *Ahara*.^[3] According to Collins dictionary defined the word food, as 'Any substances that can be ingested by a living organism and metabolized into energy and body tissue'. According to Harry Benjamin says that 'the function of the food is to supply the body with materials necessary for the growth, maintenance, repair and efficient functions of its various organs and structures.'^[4]

Classification of *Ahara (Ahara Bheda)*^[5-9]

SN	Charaka	Sushruta Drava Varga
1.	<i>Sukadhanya</i>	<i>Jala</i>
2.	<i>Samidhanya</i>	<i>Ksira</i>

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3.	Mamsa	Dadhi
4.	Harita	Takra
5.	Phala	Ghrta
6.	Saka	Taila
7.	Madya	Madhu
8.	Ambu	Iksu
9.	Gorasa	Madya
10.	Ikshuvikara	Mutra
11.	Krtanna	-----
12.	Aharayogi	-----

Table 2: Classification according to Acharya Vagbhata^[7,9]

Astanga Sangraha		Astanga Hrudaya	
Panam	Annam	Dravam	Adravam
Toyam	Sukadhanyam	Toyam	Sukadhanyam
Ksiram	Simbidhanyam	Ksiram	Simbidhanyam
Iksu	Pakvannam	Iksu	Pakvannam
Tailam	Mamsam	Tailum	Mamsam
Madyam	Sakam	Madyam	Sakam
Mutram	Phalam	Mutram	Phalam
-	-	-	Ausadhavarga

Importance of Ahara

1. Essential for life and stability^[10]
2. Body maintenance^[11]
3. Life span^[12]
4. As medicine and complication of food deprivation^[13]

Aharapaka (Process of digestion)

According to Charaka Acharya Praana is responsible to bring the eaten food in the alimentary tract. Fluids included in food and digestive juices secreted in digestive tract make the food material dispersed and dissociated from bonding. Due to presence of Snigdha of Kapha in the stomach and due to

Snigdha quality of water food becomes soft. Samana Vata is responsible to induce digestive fire to act on food, which is eaten at proper time and eaten after observing all rules and regulations about ingestion of food.^[14] According to Astanga Hridayam food which is conveyed by Praana Vaayu is brought to Amashya. It acquires sweetness and foaminess though ingested food contains all Shad Rasas. It acquires burning quality when Samana Vayu conveys into Grahani. In Grahani it turns Katu due to fire present there. If digested properly it is transformed into Rasa, if not digested properly get transformed into Ama.^[15] According to Sushruta Praana, Apana, Samana when are located in their own place, working normally, play important role in general digestion, hence these three types of vayu are taken care off, should be looked after properly and should be looked after properly and should be replenished.^[16] According to Sarangadhara difference is that Grahani by its name it's mentioned. It is located between Amashya and Pakwashya. Hence it can be considered as addition.^[17]

Stages of Aharapaka

Avasthapaka

Ingested Ahara Dravya passes through different stages of Pakakriya. In other word digestion of the food stuff in the Kosta in various stages is called Avasthapaka. Acarya Charaka has described two terms, Prapaka and Vipaka. Prapaka has been defined as Prathama Paka i.e., first outcome of Paka or chemical actions. Vipaka has been defined as the outcome of the actions of Jatharagni on the Ahara which has already subjected to the Prathama Paka. This Vipaka is judged from the Rasa assumed by the end products of Gastro-intestinal digestion viz. Madhura, Amla, Katu. All Dravya have been described to be Pancabhautika in their origin; it is the number in which the different kinds of Bhuta Paramanu. Avasthapaka has three types are there.^[18]

Madhura Avastha Paka

As soon as the food enters the mouth, it comes into contact with the Bodhaka Kapha which leads to the perception of taste, the property of Bodhaka Kapha,

which is mainly fluid, is to dissolve substances, otherwise the sensation of taste cannot be noticeable. In this stage insoluble *Madhura* portion of food sufficiently soluble and mixed up with the *Kledaka Kapha* present in the *Urdhwa Amashaya*.^[19]

The fraction of *Ahara Dravya* which is meant to undergo *Amlabhava* remains in this stage up to mixed with *Kledaka Kapha* particles. Thus, *Aharadravya* of all kinds attain *Madhurabhava*, as soon as they reach *Adho Amashaya*.^[19] This stage can be compared with digestion of carbohydrate as when we consumed food, firstly digestion of carbohydrate occurs and even it starts in oral cavity itself by salivary amylase, and end products of carbohydrate digestion are monosaccharide's i.e., glucose, fructose and galactose and these are sweet in taste.

Amla Avastha Paka

It is the second stage or step of *Avasthapaka*. This is brought about by the secretion of *Accha Pitta* in the *Adho Amashaya*. *Acarya Caraka* stated this stage as *Vidagdha Avastha*. *Acarya Cakrapani* interpreted this term as *Pakvapakvama* or *Kincidpakvama*. The *Ahara* in this stage is not yet fit absorption and utilization for *Bhutagni Paka* or *Dhatvagni Paka*.^[20]

This stage can be compared with digestion of proteins as when we consume food, after formation of bolus, it becomes acidify and breakdown into minute particles by the action of HCL and when chime reaches further in second part of duodenum, pancreatic juices and bile juice mixes here and complete digestion of proteins and fats.^[21] Most of the amino acids i.e. end product of protein digestion have PH around 6 means they are slightly acidic,^[22] can be compare with acidic chyme.

Katu Avastha Paka

When the food reaches *Pakvashaya* it dries by the heat of *Jatharagni* and renders it in the form of lumps. In this stage, the *Ahaara* assumes *Katubhava* and formation of *Vayu* takes place. *Acharya Chakrapani* commented on the above clearly as in the words '*Paripindita Pakvashaya*'. This aspect relates to the acid and pungent nature of reactions that occur in the

large intestine during formation of faces. All three stages of *Avasthapaka* reveals complete digestion of carbohydrate, proteins and fat and formation of faces in its last stage.^[23]

Nistha Paka

Even though the clear definition of this is not mentioned in *Charaka Samhita* and *Susruta Samhita* but detailed description is there. By the word *Vipaka* itself means it is different from other *Pakas-Visista Paka Vipakha*. *Acarya Vagbhata* in *Astanga Hrudaya* has explained that the *Rasa* which is converted into another *Rasa* after *Jatharagni Paka* is called as *Vipaka*.^[24]

Rasa	Vipaka
Madhura, Lavana	Madhura
Amla	Amla
Katu, Tikta, Kashaya	Katu

Ahara → Influence of *Jatarangi* → Transformation of *Rasa* → Final transformation is called *Vipaka/Nistapaka*

DISCUSSION

Concept of *Aharapaaka* is basic fundamental physiological process that occurs in body by the action of *Prana Vayu*, *Samana Vayu*, *Bodhaka Kapha*, *Kledaka Kapha* and *Paachaka Pitta*. Ingested food is to be digested, absorbed and assimilated which is unavoidable for the maintenance of life and that occurs under the process of *Ahaara Paaka*. Similar to description of chapter of digestion and metabolism, in Ayurvedic texts description of *Ahara Paaka* is given in detailed stage by stage. Ingested food is to be digested, absorbed and assimilated which is unavoidable for the maintenance of life and that occurs under the process of *Ahaara Paaka*. Similar description of chapter of digestion and metabolism, in Ayurveda texts description of *Ahaara Paka* is given so beautifully divided into stage by stage. Each stage has complete correlation with modern texts such as *Avasthapak* is the stage of conversion of food form

i.e., similar to digestion i.e., conversion of macro and non-suitable form of absorption into micro and suitable form of absorption, Similar to stages of carbohydrate, protein and fat digestion

CONCLUSION

Ahara is that substance which is swallowed through throat; hence even *Ausadha* (medicine) can be considered as *Ahara* and the norms for *Ahara* can be applicable to *Ausadha* also. The *Ayurvedic* description of *Ahara* according to *Gunas*, *Satmya*, *Dosa*, *Kala* etc. seems to be more logical & scientific as compared to the modern aspect. Every factor described in *Ahara Vidhi Vidhana* has a functional logic and is responsible for maintaining health. The *Ahaara Paaka* is basic fundamental physiological process that occurs in body by the action of *Prana Vayu*, *Samana Vayu*, *Bodhaka Kapha*, *Kledaka Kapha* and *Paachak Pitta*.

Ingested food is to be digested, absorbed and assimilated which is unavoidable for the maintenance of life and that occurs under the process of *Ahaara Paaka*. Similar to description of chapter of digestion and metabolism, in *Ayurvedic* texts description of *Ahaara Paaka* is given so beautifully divided into stage by stage. Here each stage of *Ahaara Paaka* has clinical importance. If people consume balance diet at proper timing there will be proper digestion and he will live healthy life. So, for maintain healthy status of healthy living being its compulsory to have a normal functioning *Jathragni*, *Bhutagni* and *Dhaatwagni*. As when these *Agni* will be normal functioning, process of *Ahaara Paaka* will be proper and all *Dosha*, *Dhatu* will be formed properly and nutrition of basic *Bhoutika* element will be proper and *Mala* will also be formed and excreted at proper time from body.

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