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Utility of Ahara Matra w.r.t. Ashta Ahara Vidhi Vishesha Ayatanani

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ABSTRACT

Ahara Matra is the quantity of food to be taken and Matratvat Ahara is the proper quantity of food to be taken. Ashta Ahara Vidhi Vishesha Ayatanani are the factors considered before taking the food for maintaining health. Utility of Ahara Matra and its relation with these factors have much importance in current scenario. By understanding Ahara Matra in relation with these factors, we can easily maintain health. **Objective:** This paper aims to understand the concept of Ahara Matra, establish the relationship of Ahara Matra with Ashta Ahara Vidhi Vishesha Ayatanani and its application of Matratvat Ahara. **Data Source:** Literature review was carried in classical texts and various databases. Total 38 articles were found and are reviewed. **Result:** This paper clarifies relationship between Ahara Matra and Ashta Ahara Vidhi Vishesha Ayatanani and various utilities of Ahara Matra. **Conclusion:** By understanding these factors related, one can calculate the amount of food to be taken and can maintain health.

Key words: Ahara, Vidhi Vishesha Ayatanani, Ahara Matra

INTRODUCTION

Food is one of the three supports of life in which human body works within the physiological limits.^[1] Food is that which helps in sustaining life providing complexion, clarity, good voice, longevity, geniusness, happiness, satisfaction, nourishment, strength and

intellect.^[2] For maintaining health, one should take optimum quantity of food. Here comes the importance of Matratvat Ahara (food in proper quantity). Ashta Ahara Vidhi Vishesha Ayatanani are the factors to be followed while taking food which are eight in number explained in Charaka Samhita Vimanasthana Rasavimanadhyaya. Relation between these is explained in this paper.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

This paper aims to understand the concept of Ahara Matra (Quantity of food), establish the relationship of Ahara Matra with Ashta Ahara Vidhi Vishesha Ayatanani and its application of Matratvat Ahara.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Literature review was carried out in classical texts and relevant databases like Google scholar, PubMed, Ayush

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portal etc. Around 38 articles were found. Out of them relevant articles and abstracts were reviewed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of Matravat Ahara

Matra (amount) is that which can be measured. It is synonymous with *Raasi* and *Parimana*. That which contains proper *Matra* is *Matravat*. Substance which is swallowed through *Annalika* (oesophagus) is called *Ahara* (Food). Hence, proper quantity of food is *Matravat Ahara* which is mentioned at the starting of *Swastha Chatushka* (quadrate on regimens for maintenance of health) to highlight its importance in maintaining health.

One who takes *Matravat Ahara* will show following signs and symptoms. They are absence of undue pressure on the stomach due to the food taken, no obstruction to the proper functioning of the heart, no pressure in the sides of chest, absence of excessive heaviness in the abdomen, proper nourishment of the senses, relief from hunger and thirst, feeling of comfort in standing, sitting, sleeping, walking, exhaling, inhaling, laughing and talking, Food taken in morning gets digested by the evening and the food taken during the evening gets digested by next morning and promotion of strength, complexion and normal growth.^[3]

To calculate the amount of food, one should check whether their food gets digested and metabolised in proper time and is it without disturbing equilibrium. If so, the amount taken is considered as optimum quantity. So, it can be understood that the amount of food is not a fixed quantity and it varies from person to person.

Classification of Matra^[4]

Type	Depending Factors
<i>Ahara Matra</i> (quantity to be eaten)	<i>Agnibala</i> (power of digestion and metabolism)
<i>Bheshaja Matra</i> (dosage of the drug)	<i>Vyadhibala</i> (seriousness of disease) and <i>Aaturabala</i> (strength of the patient)

<i>Vyayama Matra</i> (extent of exercise)	<i>Doshakshaya</i> (quantity of <i>Doshas</i> required to be eliminated), <i>Agnivridhi</i> (degree to which power of digestion is to be enhanced including metabolism) and <i>Sramaklama</i> (no over exertion or exhaustion during act of exercise)
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At this context classification of *Ahara Matra* is having prime importance. In *Trividhakusheeyam* chapter of *Vimanasthana*, *Kukshi* (stomach) is divided into 3 parts which contains a part of *Ahara*, a part of *Drava* (liquid) and a part of *Doshas* (humours). This classification is done for the proper intake of food to the capacity of stomach.^[5]

Classification of Ahara Matra

Basis of classification	Types
Nature of Food material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Laghu</i> (light) – <i>natitriptata</i> (not upto satisfaction) <i>Guru</i> (heavy) – <i>tribhaga souhityam/ artha souhityam</i> (upto 1/3 or ½ of saturation point)^[6]
Quantum of Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Sarvagraha</i> (total amount) <i>Parigraha</i> (individual amount)^[7]
Quantity of food taken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Matravat</i> (optimal quantity) <i>Amatravat</i> (improper quantity) <i>Heena Matra</i> (deficient quantity) <i>AtiMatra</i> (excessive quantity)^[8]

Apart from the quantity of food there are various other factors which determine the utility of food. *Caraka* categorises these under 8 factors named as *Ashta Ahara Vidhi Vishesha Ayatana* (Eight factors determining the utility of food). They are; *Prakruti* (Nature of food substance), *Karana* (Method of their processing), *Samyoga* (Combination), *Raasi* (Quantity), *Desha* (Habit), *Kala* (time), *Upayoga Samstha* (Rules governing the intake of food) and *Upayokta* (Wholesomeness to the individual who takes it)^[9] *Caraka* explains *Matra* of food in this context and it comes under headings of *Raasi* and *Upayogasamstha*

and further explanation of *Raasi/Matra* is explained in *Trividhakuksheeyavimanam*.

DISCUSSION

Relationship of Ashta Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana with Ahara Matra

Prakriti (Nature)

Prakriti indicates the nature of the substance that is inherent attributes of *Ahara* and *Aushadha* (medicine). Here the substances have *Guru* and *Laghu Gunas* which can alter the *Matra* of *Ahara*. For example – *Masha* (Black gram) is *Guru* in nature whereas *Mudga* (Green gram) is *Laghu* in nature which in turn makes a person to take less amount of *Masha* compared to *Mudga*.^[9] Similar examples such as rain water, red variety of rice, meat of deer and lava are considered as easily digestible whereas sugarcane juice, milk, blackgram are not easily digestible.

Karana (Processing)

Karana means the processing of the substances or food. It refers to alteration / modification in the qualities of food stuffs by various *Samskaras*. *Aharadravya* which have *Laghuguna* are predominant of *Vayu & Agni Mahabhuta* (Air and Fire element) and *Aharadravya* which are *Guru* are predominant of *Prithvi & Ap Mahabhuta* (Earth and Water element)^[11] Here *Laghu Ahara* digests easily whereas *Guru Ahara* takes time for digestion. For example - Rice prepared of dehusked paddy, well cleaned and filtered become *Laghu* on the other hand rice prepared of unboiled paddy, not cleaned not filtered become *Guru*. Similarly curd which is *Guru* on *Samskara* (*Manthana* - churning) turns to *Takra* which is *Laghu*.^[12]

Samyoga (Combination)

Samyoga is aggregation of 2 or more substance. Sometimes it is seen that combination of diet shows different effect from individual effect. Here equal *Matra* of drugs can lead to *Matraviruddha* (Antagonism due to ratio) caused due to *Samyoga*. For example - equal quantities of ghee and honey are said to be *Matraviruddha* which is one among 18 *Viruddhas*.^[13]

Desha (Place)

Desha usually refers to both *Deha Desha* (Human Body) as well as *Bhoomidesha* (Geographic region). Here *Dehadesha* has been dealt in *Upayokta*. Here *Bhoomidesha* which are classified into 3 produces *Dravyas* of different *Gunas*.^[14] For example - *Dravya* produced from *Janghaladesha* are *Laghu* while obtained from *Aanupadesha* are *Guru* and these *Gunas* affect *Matra* of *Ahara*.^[15]

Raasi (Quantity)

Raasi refers to quantity of food. Under this the classification of *Sarvagraha* and *Parigraha* has been mentioned.

Kala (time)

Kala refers to the time period which can be *Nityaga* (ever moving time) or *Aavastika* (duration from standpoint of a condition). Both have interrelation with *Matra*. Considering *Nityaga*, *Matra* varies from season to season i.e., *Agni* increases in *Hemanta Rtu* (winter season) while it decreases in *Varsha* (rainy season) and hence seasonal changes affect *Agni* and results in change of *Ahara Matra*. On daily basis intake of 2 meals is advised in day time. Considering *Aavastika Kala*, *Ahara* after treatment is given based on *Agni* which moves from *Laghuta* to *Guruta* i.e., *Peyadisamsarjana Krama* is given based on the order of *Laghutwa*.^[16]

Upayogasamstha (Rules of use)

Guidelines to be followed while taking food are mentioned under these i.e., One should eat only food in proper quantity which is *Ushna* (hot), *Snigda* (unctuous), *Viryavirudham* (non-antagonistic) etc. and should be taken not too slow, not too fast, not while talking or laughing and with full concentration.^[17]

Upayokta (Consumer)

One who uses these *Ahara* are *Upayokta*. *Ahara Matra* is depended on *Agni* of each person, their strength, age, *Prakriti*.^[18]

These are the physiological aspects in which *Matra* gets changes. There are certain pathological aspects where *Matra* gets changed. But these can lead to diseases or unhealthy conditions. Various types are as follows;

Amatrata

Amatrata indicates improper amount in which it can be *Heena Matra* or *Ati Matra*. Intake of *Ahara* in *Heena Matra* can cause *Vatakopa* (*Vata* vitiation) which further leads to reduction in strength, complexion, and nourishment of body tissues and these lead to 80 types of *Vatavikaras* (Disorders of *Vata*). Intake of *Ahara* in *Ati Matra* vitiates *Tridosha* which produces *Ama* and hence, produces various *Vikaras*^[19]

Agni

Agni is the bridge in between *Ahara* and nourishment of *Dhatu*s as latter cannot get originated from undigested food particles even though the former is vital essence of *Ojas*, strength and complexion. Types of *Agni* which occur due to vitiation of *Doshas* are

- *Vishamagni* is caused by *Vata* vitiation or predominance
- *Teekshnagni* for *Pitta*
- *Mandagni* for *Kapha* and
- *Samagni* for *Samadosha* which is considered as normal.^[20]

Ajirna

It is a state of incomplete digestion of the ingested food. Derangement of *Agni* leads to vitiation of *Doshas* which leads to *Ajirna* like *Ama Ajirna* by *Kapha Dosh*, *Vishtabda Ajirna* by *Vata* and *Vidagda Ajirna* by *Pitta Dosh*^[21]

Ama

Rasa Dhatu due to weakness of *Agni* remains uncooked (not digested, not properly processed) and becomes vitiated, accumulates in *Amasaya* (stomach) is known as *Ama*. *Doshas* and *Dushyas* get mixed with *Ama* and diseases arises from them which are termed as *Ama Pradoshajavyadhi*. *Ama Pradoshajavyadhi* include

- *Alasaka* is the condition in which the food neither gets expelled through the upper and lower orifices, nor does it undergo digestion. It remains stagnant within the stomach.
- *Visucika* is the condition of different types of body pain, as if being pricked simultaneously with

several pins, caused by the extreme vitiation of *Doshas*.^[22]

Amavisha is a condition which resembles *Visha* (poison) caused by *Viruddhasana*, *Adhyasana* and *Ajirna* which is difficult to treat due to its opposite nature.^[23]

Matraviruddham

Here incompatibility occurs due to food substances taken in equal quantity such as taking equal quantities of *Madhu* and *Sarpi* can have effect of taking *Visha*. Similarly, combination of equal quantities of two, three or all among honey, ghee, fat, oil and water are *Matraviruddha*.

Types of Asanas (intake of food)

Even though it's advised to take *Ahara* in proper *Matra*, it is mentioned that one should take *Ahara* in proper time after digestion. These 3 types of *Asana* are unhealthy food habits which are capable of causing death or dreadful diseases.

Samasana: Taking an admixture of desirable and undesirable food items.

Vishamasana: The food taken untimely which is quantitatively either excess or low.

Adhyasana: Taking food over and again the previous meal (before it gets digested).^[24]

Consequences of intake of these foods are mentioned in *Ashtanga Samgraha Agryasangraheeya Adhyaya*. Intake of *Gurubhojana* (heavy food) leads to improper digestion, excessive food intake causes *Amadosha*, vitiation of *Grahani* (duodenum) occurs due to *Ajirnasana* and proper food intake at proper time is for healthy being.

In case of a disease, *Ahara Nidanas* especially *Matra*, *Guru-Laghu Ahara*, contribute to the disease manifestation. For example, excessive intake as well as *Guru Ahara* are *Nidana* (cause) for *Atisthoola* (obese) persons. Similarly, less intake of food is one among the *Nidanas* of *Atikrisa* (emaciated). In the treatment protocol for *Jwara* (fever), it is advised to take *Laghu Ahara*. Following chart will show improper *Aharanidana* in each disease.

Diseases	Nidanas related to improper Ahara
ज्वर	अनशन, अतिसेवितम्, विषमाहार, अतिसेवनम्
रक्तपित्त	अतिमात्रआहार
गुल्म	अध्यशन, अजीर्ण, अतिसेवन
प्रमेह	विषमाशन, अतिसेवन, अतिमात्रआहार, अजीर्ण, अनशन
कुष्ठ	अजीर्ण, अतिमात्रआहार, विदाहि
शोष	विषमाशन - one among main 4 Nidanas
उन्माद	विषमाशन, विरुद्धआहार, दुष्टअशुचिअहार
अपस्मार	विषमाशन, अहितदुष्टअशुचिअहार
श्वयथु	विरुद्धदुष्टअशुचिअहार
उदर	विदाहि, विरुद्धअशुचिअहार
अर्शस्	अजीर्ण, प्रमिताशन, विरुद्धआहार
ग्रहणि	विदाहि, प्रमिताशन, अतिसेवन, अतिमात्रआहार
पाण्डु	दुष्टअहार, विदाहि, विरुद्ध, अहितआहार
हिवक्क	विषमाशन, अजीर्ण
श्वास	विषमाशन, अजीर्ण
कास	अनशन, प्रमिताशन
अतिसार	प्रमिताशन, अतिमात्रआहार, अतिसेवन
च्छर्दि	अजीर्ण, विदाहि
वीसर्प	अतिसेवन, विदाहि, अहित, विरुद्धआहार

CONCLUSION

Ahara is the most essential factor for the sustenance of life. Food taken with proper *Matra, Kala, Prakriti* etc., which is *Pathya, Hita & Satmya* to oneself helps to maintain the health. Diet and drinks whose color, smell, taste and touch are pleasing to the senses and conducive to health, if taken in accordance with the rules represent very life of human being. Significance of Proper Quantity of Ahara is highlighted in *Charaka Samhita Sutrasthana* 5th chapter i.e., *Matravat Ahara* helps the individual to bring happiness & longevity without disturbing equilibrium of *Doshas & Dhatus*. One should follow *Pratipurusha Siddhanta* as the quantity differs from Person to Person. So, one should use proper diet and regimens and by removing the obstacles in the path which helps to attain good health as well as to prevent the diseases.

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