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A study on *Charakokta Ahara Vidhi Vidhana* w.s.r. to physiology of Digestive System

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ABSTRACT

Ahara being one of the *Upasthambha* supports our *Shareera* for day to day activities and acts as *Bala* and *Prakriti Dayaka*, When it is consumed by following the rules and regulations. Wrong diet methods which are widely followed in this modern era result into *Ajirna* (Indigestion) which is the source of many diseases. *Charakokta Ahara Vidhi Vidhana* is not only a scientific method to maintain physical health but also to Maintain good mental health which results into proper digestion of the food which inturn promotes health and prevents many diseases. An attempt is made here to understand the physiology behind these rules and regulations and how they affect the process of digestion.

Key words: *Ahara, Upasthambha, Ahara Vidhi Vidhana, Ayurveda, Dietetics*

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda specified the characteristics of food in terms of quality quantity and time which vary with age, constitution, digestive power, season, disease and also from person to person. Our *Upanishad* and classical text state that diet is essential for life. *Anna Ve Prana* virtually.

The concept of planning therapeutic diet after the assessment of nutritional status are deeply coded in *Ayurveda*. *Rasa, Guna, Virya, Vipaka* of *Ahara Varga* along with *Ahara Vidhi Vishesha Ayatana* are discussed with much importance in all the classical text.

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The *Ahara Vidhi Vidhana* mentioned by *Acharya Charaka* in *Rasavimaniya Adhyaya* emphasizes on “How to eat?” and “why?”. It is a scientific system, method, manner, way, rules, law, condition and so on. The advice of *Pathya Sevana* and *Nidana Parivarjana* in the form of *Ahara Vidhi Vidhana* not only prevents diseases but also helps in *Vikar Prashamana*.

Atmanam Abhisameekshyam i.e., having food which is *Satmya* for us enables cleansing of inner self, which further helps to alert the mind and intellect. It prevents indigestion which is *Mula* for many diseases. Thus, *Ahara Vidhi Vidhana* is designed by keeping both physical and mental health in mind and gives importance to all the minute factors related to this.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The *Ahara Vidhi Vidhana* is the rule for methods of food intake for healthy persons as well as to some of unhealthy ones, who usually take timely wholesome food. One should follow the specific rules while consuming *Ahara* to remain healthy and have long life span.

They are^[1]

Ushna Ahara

When food is consumed warm it is delicious after intake, it provokes the enzymes in the abdomen responsible for digestion, and it gets digested quickly and helps in the downward passage of *Vata* and attachment of *Kapha*.

Snigdha Ahara

Snigdha Ahara is delicious, after intake it provokes the subdued power of digestion, it gets digested quickly, it helps in *Vata Anuloma*, *Shareera Upacaya*, it increases the *Bala* of *Indriya Varnaprasadana*.

Matravat Ahara

When taken in proper quantity, it promotes longevity in its entirety without afflicting *Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha*. It easily passes down to the rectum, does not impair the power of digestion and it gets digested without any difficulty. *Matravat Ahara* should not cause *Pida*. One should eat proper quantity of food according to strength of *Agni*.

The ideal quantity of food is which gets digested in due time without disturbing the normalcy

Jeerne Ashniyat

One should take food only when previous meal is digested. If one takes food before the digestion of the previous meal The immature *rasa* Gets mixed up with a product of food taken afterwards, resulting in the provocation of all the *Doshas* instantaneously.

If food is taken after the digestion of the previous food while the *Dosha* are in their proper places and *Agni* is provoked, there is appetite, the entrance of the channels of circulation are open, eructation is purified, there is unimpaired cardiac function, downward passage of the wind and proper manifestation of the urges, for voiding flatus urine and stool, then the product of food does not vitiate the *Dhatus* of the body, but on the other hand it promotes longevity in its entirety. The *Dosha* reside in the *Swasthana* and performs its own function in the *Jirna Ahara Lakshana*. So, food should be taken after digestion of previous meal.^[1]

Virya Avirudha

One should take food having no contradictory potencies. By taking such food one does not get afflicted with such diseases as may arise from the intake of food having mutually contradictory potencies. Therefore, one should take food having no contradictory potencies. Diseases caused by intake of having mutually contradictory potencies are *Kusta*, *Visarpa* etc.

Ista Desha Ista Sarvopakarana

One should take food in proper place equipped with all the accessories. By doing so he does not get afflicted with search of the factor would result in emotional strength strain which occurs when one takes his food in improper places without the required accessories therefore one should take food in proper place equipped with all accessories. *Anista Ahara* cause *Mano Abhighata* so one should consume desirable *Sarvopakarana Ahara*.

Na Ati Druta (One should not take food too hurriedly)

If food is taken too hurriedly it enters into wrong passage it gets depressed and it does not enter into the stomach properly in this situation one can never determine the taste of food articles and detect foreign bodies like her etc mixed with them.

Na Ati Vilamba (Intake not too slow)

One should not take food very slowly because this will not give satisfaction to the individual. In this situation he would take more than what is required the food would become cold and there will be irregularity in digestion. By taking food very slowly the enzyme responsible for digestion will come and contact with food in an irregular manner and this will result in irregular digestion.

Ajalpa Ahasan Tanmana Bhunjita

One should not talk or laugh or be unmindful while taking food. One, taking food while talking, laughing or with detracted mind subjects himself for the same trouble as the one eating too hurriedly. Thus *Dosha* moves in upward direction abnormally.

Atmanam Abhisameekshya

One should take food in a prescribed manner, with due regard to his own self. The knowledge of the usefulness or otherwise of food articles is for self-preservation.

DISCUSSION

For proper digestion of food proper method of food intake is very essential. Hypothalamus is the gatekeeper in the control of food intake and appetite. Peripheral signals of energy balance may act directly on hypothalamus to control food intake.

Visual, smell and taste can override satiety signals to maintain food intake despite neutral or even positive energy balance. These sensory signals are from NTS in brainstem to cortical limbic reward centres implicated in appetite regulation. Dopamine, serotonin, opioids and nor epinephrine have been implicated an important neurotransmitter involved in signalling this network.

Stimuli include appearance, taste, smell and textural stimulate. Visual information, signals in the afferent optic fibres of cranial nerve 1 gustatory, olfactory, and orosensory information - fibres of cranial nerves 7, 9, 1 and 5.

Food should be consumed soon after cooking when it is warm. Human digestive system works better with foods and liquids that are at warmer temperatures because it doesn't have to work as hard to digest the food.

In hot food, however, nutrients are already partially broken down. Steaming, cooking, baking, or roasting foods kick starts the process of breaking down healthy chemicals and nutrients before they enter the body.

Plus, people tend to eat hot foods slower, which is also beneficial for the digestive system. When food enters the system slowly, there is more time to absorb nutrients. But heating the prepared food again and again will destroy the nutrients.

When food is warm, this receptor often sends a stronger signal to the brain. Hot food makes the digestion process run smoother; nutrients from hot

food are more easily absorbed. This makes more nutrients available to the body.

Snigdha Ahara is necessary in our food. Fat is a type of nutrient, and just like protein and carbohydrates, our body needs some fat for energy, to absorb vitamins, and to protect our heart and brain health.

“Bad” fats, such as artificial trans fats and saturated fats, are guilty of the unhealthy things all fats have been blamed for - weight gain, clogged arteries, an increased risk of certain diseases, and so forth. But “good” fats such as unsaturated fats and omega-3 fatty acids have the opposite effect. In fact, healthy fats play a huge role in helping manage our moods, stay on top of our mental game, fight fatigue, and even control our weight.

- The ideal quantity of food is which gets digested in due time without disturbing the normalcy
- There should be a right combination of light and heavy food articles in one's diet regimen. The heavy-to-digest food articles can be one third or one half of total food consumed, while the remaining should be light-to-digest food. In every composition, the digestive capacity of *Agni* is to be followed.
- If the food is taken in proper quantity, it provides strength, complexion, happiness and longevity to the person.

A well-balanced diet provides all of the: energy we need to keep active throughout the day. Nutrients we need for growth and repair, helping us to stay strong and healthy and help to prevent diet-related illness

Viruddha Ahara (mismatch of *Vipaka*, *Guna*, *Viry*, *Prabhava*) may lead to disturbance of *Agni*, poor digestion, *Ama* accumulation, vitiation of *Dhatus*, and channels obstruction. This does not allow gaining adequate nourishment. Combining foods with radically different energetics can overwhelm the digestive fire (*Agni*) and can cause indigestion, fermentation, gas, bloating, and the creation of toxins

Ista Bhojana is very important for the *Shareera* to get complete nutrition.

Nervous stimuli^[2]: are the stimuli e.x. touch of food on the tongue or the parts GI tract sight of food smell of food etc act on the sensory nerve endings and thereby nervous impulses generated which pass via the central nervous system to trigger the corresponding motor nerve of the gland into action and the secretion takes place.

Mechanical stimuli^[3]: Are those which stretch or district the organs example gas or food either solid or liquid and thereby stimulate the sensory nerve endings and local reflex occur.

The sensory stimulus for the unconditioned reflex may arise from various sources as follows;

From the mouth the act of chewing, the sensation of taste, the irritation caused by the presence of food upon the mucous membrane of mouth this entire act as the sensory stimuli which reflex Produce salivation.

Esophago salivary reflex ^[4]: Is necessary to provide enough saliva necessary to wash away the irritating substance and swallowing of saliva will set up peristalsis like movement of esophagus which is likely to drive on the irritant.

Atidruta and *Ati Vilambita* cause *Vishama Pacana Kriya*. Food should be chewed properly which is essential for getting the benefits of consumed food. As the food is chewed the contractions of muscles of mastication help to press out the saliva accumulated in the ducts and acini of the glands. Hence mastication acts through its mechanical effect.

The sensory stimulus for the unconditioned reflex Arises in the mouth during chewing and swallowing of^[5] The sensory nerves are the, 5th, 7th and 9th cranial nerves. The motor nerve is the Vagus.

Atmanam Abhisamikshya Samyak is *Satmyasatmya* to the individual self. This *Atma Satmya* is related to individual. Food should be consumed which is accustomed to our nature. The existence of conditioned reflex is proved by the fact that sight or smell of the accustomed food stimulates gastric secretion.

Various other conditioned stimuli can be established which can arouse gastric secretion without the contact

of food in the mouth the sensory nerves are those of special sensors like vision, smile and hearing.

Response to food^[6]

- Meat increase both the quantity and the HCL content
- Bread stimulates a secretion having the greatest digestive power.
- Fat inhibits secretion both in quality and quantity. It also inhibits the movements of stomach. This depressing effect maybe due to a chemical substance called enterogastrone. The inhibitory effects off fats are more strongly exerted from the duodenum then from the stomach.
- Water, tea, Coffee spices, condiments, vegetable juices etc stimulate gastric secretion.
- Mechanical dissention of stomach by gas such as aerated waters, stimulates gastric secretion and moments.
- Caffeine and alcohol are strong secretory stimulants, producing juice of high acidity and rich in mucin.^[7]

The stimulus for the pancreatic secretion reflex arises in the mouth during mastication as well as in the stomach when food enters the later that is gastro pancreatic reflex.^[8]

It is believed that during digestion reflex stimulation of gall bladder occurs. The stimulus for the reflex may arise in the mouth during eating all due to the presence of food in the duodenum and probably also in the stomach.

In the pancreatic secretion there are two phases. The first is nervous phase which starts one to 2 minutes after taking food. The reflex is purely unconditioned. Unlike gastric juice there is no conditioned reflex here. The stimulus for the secretion arises both in the mouth during chewing As well as from the stomach after the food is swallowed.

The foodstuffs like fats and proteins stimulate the bile secretion. it has been noted that bile secretion increase about one hour after meal, Remains high for about 2 to 5 hours and then declines.

The *Ajalpa*, *Ahasan*, *Tanmana Bhunjita* avoids the *Doshas* moves in upward direction abnormally. Deglutition or Swallowing is a reflex act occurring in 3 stages (1) oral (2) pharyngeal and (3) esophageal.

In the first stage due to upward and backward movement of tongue the bolus of food which remains on the upper surface of the tongue is thrown back through the pillars of the fauces into the pharynx. During this phase mastication ceases and respiration is inhibited reflex.

In the pharyngeal reflex stage the vocal cords are adducted and there is momentary stoppage of respiration and speech. With the entrance of bolus in the larynx, contraction of superior pharyngeal constrictor occurs including rapid pharyngeal peristaltic wave which moves down the pharynx, propelling the bolus in front of it.

The epiglottis is carried into horizontal position by the backward movement of tongue and forward movement of larynx and these movements result drawing up of larynx under the base of the tongue where it is completely out of way off oncoming bolus.

CONCLUSION

The concept of *Ahara* in Ayurveda has a broader view beyond ingestion of food. It is not only restricted only to the concept of calorie consumption, Ayurveda recommends methods of taking food, its quality and quantity based upon individual's capacity to digest (*Agni*). When food enters mouth and passes through the digestive system, it sends a multitude of interacting signals to the brain, loaded with sensory, nutritive, and other information. Thus, the digestion and metabolism is not limited to ingestion of food only; but it is affected

by how the brain and nervous system receives and processes the information too. Hence *Ahara Vidhi Vidhana* is important in maintenance of both physical and mental status of the body.

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