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Understanding the Therapeutic Role of Diet in Ayurveda: A Comprehensive Perspective on Health and Nutrition

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ABSTRACT: Ayurveda is an ancient science. Of all the Ayurvedic concepts, Trayopastambha is the most important since it is based on three principles: Brahmacharya (Celibacy), Nidra (Sleep), and Ahara (Diet). These three pillars determine one's lifespan and level of enjoyment. Ahara secured the top spot in the Trayopastambha. Thus, we need to be familiar with the Ayurvedic Ahara (diet). Eating a non-wholesome diet can cause illness, but following a healthy diet plan can help you stay well. Power, radiance, and Oja are given to the body by ahara; it also boosts mental fortitude and is necessary for longevity. Dravyabhuta Aushadhi is a category that includes AharaDravyas. Therefore, for Vikaraprasamana, the dietary guidelines can be regarded as Upaya or Adravyabhuta Aushadhi. The eight dietary components known as "Ahara Vidhi VisheshaAyatanani" are thought to be responsible for both health and sickness. Ahara is regarded as considered the superior medicine, Maha bhaishajya. Inadequate eating and lifestyle choices lead to a host of lifestyle disorders and diseases that can be avoided with appropriate Ahara and eating practices. Ayurveda maintains that the individual's Prakriti, or constitution, should be taken into consideration when selecting an Ahara. The purpose of this article is to examine the significance of the ahara as aushadha.

KEYWORDS: Diet; Ahara; Trayopastambha; Mahabhaishajya; Aushadhi.

I. INTRODUCTION:

Food, or ahara, is essential for sustaining life and preserving the body's regular physiological processes. Ahara offers durability, skin tone, contentment, sturdiness, energy, and immunity. In addition to offering nutrition, ahara also promotes growth and development, guards against infections, boosts sense organ function, and promotes both physical and emotional well-being. Ahara offers health benefits due to its nutritional content; nevertheless, improper preparation or consumption of food does not result in substantial health benefits from that food. Ayurveda mentions Trayaupastambhah as Ahara, Nidra, and Brahmacharya, and it is very significant in an enduring existence today.[1]Ahara is the most important of these three for an individual's healthy life. Because of this, Acharya Kasyapa told the Ahara as Mahabhaishajya, or "the superior medicine."[2]A healthy diet taken in the right way can either promote greater health or Poor diets lead to disruptions in the activities of the body. This is the rationale behind the emphasis placed on dietary articles (Pathya-Apathya) while discussing causes of diseases. According to Acharya Charak, if a diet is followed correctly and with discipline, it can maintain life. He has discussed eight particular elements of the Ashta Ahar Vidhi Visheshayatana diet plan, which is applied in a very systematic and scientific way. Ahara has a significant role in both preserving health and treating a range of illnesses.[3] The TaitariyaUpanishad states that food is the source of the human body's creation. According to our ancient seer, what, when, how, and where people consume determines everything about them. As a result, the person should eat fresh, healthful food that is easy to digest.[4]

II. MATERIAL AND METHODS:

This study is textual based critical review. Material related to ahara was collected from Brihatrayee as main literature,being a comprehensive compilation of various concepts related to ahara, along with its commentaries for the conceptual study. Other ayurveda treatises like Bhavaprakash Nigantu and Dravyagunavignana, Aurveda Prakash, Kashyapasamhita were also examined for basic information of it.

Additionally, google scholar, pubmed, research gate, scopus like online search engines were accessed for recent researches and additional information.

The discussion was made on the basis of conceptual study and conclusion was established after taking discussion into account.

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III. DISCUSSION:

Ahara: Taittariyopanishad considered Ahara (diet) as Brahman: "Annam Brahmeti Vyajaanat". According to Acharya Chakrapani's commentary, ahara refers to everything that is swallowed, which means that ahara and drugs both are included in this definition. As a result, medicines are also included in the term Aharaso. The term Ahara refers to any material that is consumed by mouth and then swallowed down the throat.[5]Acharya Susruta states, the diet, which comprises of six rasas and again depends on ingredients, is the original source of living beings and their power, complexion, and Ojas.[6]

The significance of Ahara: According to Ayurvedacharya Vagbhata, Aahar, Nidra, and Brahmacharya are the three pillars of human wellness.
आहारशयनाब्रह्मचयैयुक्तय्याप्रयोजितै।शरीरंधायुतेजन्यमा गारजमवधारणै: The body is supported in the same manner that a home is supported by pillars by carefully employing these three in accordance with the instructions found in Scripture. The body maintains its power, brilliance, and confirmation throughout life by employing these three Upastambhas. However, the aforementioned advantages are occasionally unavailable if an improper diet and lifestyle are followed. Ahara is also required for Bala, Varna, Upachaya, etc other things. All Dravyas are Aushadh is (Nanausadhibhutam), according to Acharya Charaka[7],
त्रयउपस्तम्भाइजतआहारैः, स्वप्नो, ब्रह्मचयुजमजत,
एजभजिजभयुयजियियिरुपस्तब्धमयपस्तम्भै:
शरीरंबलवणोपचयोपजचतमनयवतुतेयावदायैः
यससंकारात्संस्कारमजहतमनयपसेवमानस्य,
यइहवोपदेक्ष्यते।।३५।। and they can be divided into two categories based on their composition:

Adravyabhuta Aushadhi and Dravyabhuta Aushadhi Dravyabhuta Aushadhi is the category that Ahara dravyas fall under. Thus, for Vikarapasamana, the dietary guidelines might be regarded as Upaya or Adravyabhuta Aushadhi. Acharya Sushruta described the advantages of having a healthy Ahara in the Sushruta Samhita. Sushruta states in Sutrasthan chapter 46 that food nourishes the body, produces strength rapidly, maintains the body, and enhances age, sharpness, enthusiasm, memory, energy, and fire.
आहारैःप्रीणनैःसद्योबलकृद्देहधारकैः।।६८।।आयुस्तेज:
समुत्साहस्मृत्योजोऽग्निविवर्धन:|

Ayurveda explained ahara in detail under different aspects like Ahara samyakamatra, kala, desha, aharavidhividhan (rules for taking ahara), concept of viruddha anna (incompatible diet), AharaVidhi Vishesh Ayatan. The concept of what is deemed "appropriate" or "correct" is subjective and varies from person to person. As they say, "one man's food is another man's poison." Different food substances are suitable for different people according to ayurveda.

पथ्येसतिगदार्तस्यकिमौषधनिषेवणम्।पथ्येऽसतिगदार्तस्यकि मौषधनिषेवणम् वै. सु. सा.Vaisheshika sutra says the person who follows pathya there is no need of medicine and the one who don't follow pathya there is no use of giving medicines. नचआहारसमंकिचिद्भैषज्यम्उपलभ्यते। शक्यतेऽ पिअन्नमात्रेणनरः कर्तम्निरामयः।।- का.स.खि.४/५ Achrayakashypa states no aushadhi has equivalentto ahara. The right amount of ahara is able to treat the diseases.

Aharavidhividhan (rules for consumption of ahara): Ushnaashniyat; Snigdhaashniyat; Matravatashniyat; Jirneashniyat; Virya Avirudhyaashniyat; Ishatadesheashniyat; Natidrutamashniyat; Nativilambatmashniyat; Tanmanabhunjit; Atmanam Abhisamikshyabhunjit are the rules that acharya charaka has provided to accomplish the swastha goal maintaining a healthy individual's condition and healing the sick are known as the Aaharavidhividhanas. These vidhanas provide guidelines or required precautions about eating and meals that an individual should follow, which have been helpful for a long time.

Aharavidhivishesaayatanani: One of the distinctive ideas of Ayurveda is Aaharaavidhivishesaayatani. Food that is compatible is healthy food that everyone should eat to stay in good health. It includes 8 factors that's must be considered while consuming food. Prakruti (nature of food and person consuming to it); Karan (food processing); Samayoga (mixture of two or more foods); rashi (amount of food to be consume/taken); desha (the soil or area where food grown); kala (the year, month, duration of food growth and kala for consumption of it); upayogasamstha (rules for consumption of food i.e. Aharavidhividhan**);** upayokta (the indiviusal persons habit of eating) are the factors stated in astovidhaaharavidhivishesasyatana.

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Aaharvarga by different acharya's: Every food group contributes significantly to a general healthy eating pattern and consists of a range of foods with comparable nutritional profiles. Some dietary groups are studied in further detail divided into smaller groupings to highlight foods that are especially excellent providers of specific vitamins and minerals. In the 27th chapter of the Charaka Samhita, Sutrasthan, Acharya Charka describes the Ayurvedic classification of Aahar Varga into 12 Varga. (Table 1) Sukdhanya, Shamidhanya, Maash, Phal, Shaka, Harita, Ambu, Madhha, Ikshu, Gorash, Kristanna, and Aaharyogi Varga are among the twelve vargas in total. Although Sushruta (Table 2) and Vagbhata (Table 3) are also referred to as Aahar Varga, they are divided into two groups: annapanvidhiadhyaya and dravdravyavidhiadhyaya. All liquid diet groups—such as various forms of water, milk, curd, ghee, oil, honey, sugarcane juice, wine, and urine—are included in dravdravyavidhi. Additionally, all grains, cereals, legumes, meats, fruits, vegetables, flowers, turbos, salts, processed foods, bhakshya, and liquids to go with or after meals are included in annapanvidhiadhyaya. Each aharvarga has specific gunakarma useful in various diseases. Acharya emphasized the use of ahardravya appropriately in daily routine as well as diseased condition. Aharaj Pathya and apathya can be advised by the detailed study of these aharavarga. All acharyaexplained concept of aharain different chapter's emphasizing concept of ahara, importance of ahara etc.(table 4)

The acharya Kashyap states that aahara is a mahabhaishyajya. The goal of Ayurveda is to cure the sick and maintain the health of healthy person. Aahara accomplishes her objective. Agni runs on the aahara as fuel. This demonstrates the reciprocal connection between Aahara and Agni. To meet the demands of the body, the aahara must go through a series of transformations that transform it into the aahararasa. These changes are made possible by the digestive process. If dietary guidelines are adhered to consistently, life expectancy can be increased without disrupting the body's dosha and dhatus equilibrium. The foods we select and eat are greatly influenced by these factors. They advise us on the forms, amounts, and combinations of meals that are healthful to eat as well as their wholesomeness. They additionally aid in our understanding of the appropriate eating circumstances, including time and location. There, it becomes essential that everyone understand these facts.

The human body can be protected against some types of disease by following aharavidhivisheshayatan guidelines for a healthy and balanced diet, especially non-infectious diseases such diabetes, obesity, heart disease, certain kinds of cancer, bone disorders, and for a good and happy existence, all eight types of special direction food are essential. People and doctors who understand the specifics of nutrition are advantageous for long and healthy lives. This information is extremely useful for treating patients of any kind and improving their social, mental, and physical circumstances. The concept of NityaSevaniyaDravyas, which is discussed by both Acharya Charka and Vagbhata, clarifies the importance of food in contemporary living. Aahara provides assistance in appropriate bodily growth when consumed in the appropriate manner and dosage. It supports tissue health and imparts strength, energy, and a youthful appearance. On the other hand, if taken in error, certain illnesses may arise. It follows that NityaSevaniyaDravya is essential for upholding a healthy lifestyle and averting imminent disease.[8]The characteristics of Nityasevaniyaaahara medications prescribed in Ayurveda are such that they maintain the balance of all three doshas and do not vitiate any of them. The majority of these medications are light (Laghu), or light to digest, which protects the body from the build-up of ama, or undigested food, which is the etiology of a number of disorders. [9]

Ayurvedic literature from ancient times state that the best cure is aahara. The benefits of food are immeasurable by any prescription, and maintaining good health requires merely eating the correct foods.[10] "Deho Hi Aahar Sambhava" emphasizes that food is a bioproduct of the human body. A healthy life is correlated with eating well. Ahar is responsible for improve, prevent and promotion of health as well as it is an etiological factor for many diseases. A person can only get stronger and look better if they maintain a healthy diet and exercise schedule.

IV. CONCLUSION:

Ahara, or diet, is an essential aspect of our lives that plays a significant role in maintaining health and avoiding illness. All living things can maintain an active and healthy body and mind if they like eating and adhere to the dietary guidelines outlined in Ayurveda. Their lives become prosperous as a result. Ahara taken with appropriate guidelines according to Ayurveda it acts as aushadhi.

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Table 1: Ahara varga by Acharya Charaka

	Acharya Charaka

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Sr. No.	Aannapan varga
1	Shukadhanyavarga (Cereals)
2	Samidhanya varga(pulses and legumes)
3	Mamsa varga (Fleshand meat)
4	Shaka varga(Vegetables)
5	Phala varga (Fruits)
6	Harita varga (Class of green)
7	Madhya varga (Alcoholic beverages)
8	Jala varga (Water)
9	Gorasa varga (Milk and milk products)
10	Ikshu varga (Sugarcane and Madhu)
11.	Kratanna varga (Class of cooked foods)
12	Aharopyogi (Class of useful contents for diet)

Table 2: Ahara varga by AchryaVagbhata

	Acharya Vagbhata	
Sr. No.	**Dravavarga**	**Annavarga**
1.	Toyavarga(water)	Shukadhanya varga-it further classified into Shali varga and Kudhanya varga(Cereals)
2.	Ksheervarga (Milk)	Shimbidhanya varga (pulses)
3.	Ikshuvarga (Sugarcane and its products)	Kratanna varga (processed food)
4.	Madhu varga (honey): Further divided into 6 Types Makshik, Bhramar, Kshaudra, Paitikka, Chhatra, Adharya, Dal	Mamsa varga (meat, flesh, and fish)
5.	Taila varga (Oils)	Shaka varga (vegetables)
6.	Madhya varga (Alcohols)	Phala varga (Fruits)
7.	Mutra varga (Urine)	Aushadh varga (herbs)

Table 3: Ahara varga by Achrya Sruhruta

	Acharya Sushruta	
Sr. No.	**Drava varga**	**Anna varga**
1.	Paniya varga (water) It is of eight types- Kaupya, Nadi, Prasravan, Saras, Tadak,Chauntya, Audabhida,Vapi.	Shali varga
2.	Dadhi varga(curd)	Mudgadi varga
3.	Ksheer varga(Milk)	Kudhanya varga
4.	Taila varga(Oils)	Mamsa varga (meat, flesh, and fishes)
5.	Ghrit varga (clarified butter)	Phala varga(Fruits)
6.	Madhu varga (honey): Further divided into 6 Types Makshik, Kshaudra, Paitikka, Dal, Adharya, Chhatra, Bhramar.	Shaka varga(vegetables)
7.	Ikshu varga (Sugarcane and its products)	Pushpa (edible flowers)
8.	Mutra varga(Urine)	Kannda varga (roots and tubers)
9.	Madhya varga(Alcohols)	Kratanna (processed food)
10.		Lavana varga (salts)
11.		Anupana(drinks after or with a meal)
12.		Bhakshya (hard eatables)

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Table 4: Reference on different views of acharya on Ahara

Sr. No.	Acharya	References
1.	Acharya charaka	Trayopasthambha; Ashtoaharavisheshaayatana; Aharaparinamkarbhava; Aharavidhividhan; Satmya - Asatmya; Pathya – Apathya; 12 aharavarga; concept of viruddhaahara; nityasevaniyadravya
2.	Acharya Sushruta	Drava varga; Anna varga; pathya-apathyaahara; concept ofviruddhaahara; Dwadasha Ashan Pravicharana;
3.	Acharya Vagbhata	Drava varga; Anna varga; nityasevaniyadravya;
4.	Acharya Kashyap	Ahara panchabhautikta: Akasheya, Vayaveya, Agneya, Apya and Parthiva; aahara as mahabhaishyajya
5.	Acharya Bhavprakash	6 types of ahara:Chushya, Peya, Lehya, Bhojya, Bhakshya, Charvya
6.	Vaishesikh sutra	Explains importance of aushadha;