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Aahara and different Ayurvedic Aahara Upayoga Niyama: A narrative review

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ABSTRACT

Background: *Traya-Upastambha* are *Aahara* (diet/food), *Nidra* (sleep), and *Brahmacharya* (following the path of God *Brahma*). Among them, *Aahara* has been placed first. The diet and its method of intake have an important role in the continuity of a healthy life. The rules and methods of dietary intake, the principle of *Pathyapathya* (wholesome & unwholesome diet), *Ashta Aahara Vidhi Visheshayata*, *Dvadasha Asana Vidhi* (discipline of twelve eating techniques), *Viruddha Aahara* (incompatible diet), etc. have been described in Ayurveda classics, and these are all vital in the maintenance of health as well as in curative aspects for many diseases. Hence, this review was aimed at highlighting the importance of *Aahara* and different Ayurvedic *Aahara Upayoga Niyama* described in different *Ayurvedic* classics.

Materials and Methods: The classical literature of Ayurveda, like *Samhitas* contributed by *Charaka*, *Sushruta*, *Vagbhata*, *Bhava Mishra*, and others, along with various databases like PubMed, Google Scholar, etc., has been searched with the terms “*Aahara*” and dietetic concepts of “*Aahara* in Ayurveda.” Then data from *Aahara* and different Ayurvedic approaches to intake were qualitatively analysed and described to establish its importance in our daily lives.

Results and Discussion: *Aahara* has one or more properties of *Dosha* aggravating, pacifying, or balancing action on physical and mental *Dosha* of human being. The qualities endowed to *Aahara* are only seen when rules and regulations regarding *Aahara Sevana* are followed. The contemporary modern science mainly described *Aahara* according to the nutritional value of its components, not like *Hita*, *Ahita*, *Pathya*, *Apathya Aahara*, etc. in a personalised manner. So, due consideration mentioned in *Ayurveda* should be given to all aspects of diet planning in the treatment of diseases and to maintain the health of the individuals.

Conclusion: The diet and its method of intake have an important role in the daily life for promotion of positive health and continuity of a healthy life. The benefits of *Aahara* can be achieved only by following the healthy dietary guidelines. Therefore, one should try and follow the rules and methods of dietary intake for the maintenance of health as well as in curative aspects for many diseases.

Keywords: *Ayurveda*, *Aahara*, diet, dietetic guidelines, diet intake method

INTRODUCTION

Aahara are the entities that are to be swallowed. Whatever is ingested or eaten with the mouth is called *Aahara*, which includes solid as well as liquid food items.¹ Ayurveda specified the characteristics of *Aahara* in terms of quality, quantity, and time that vary with age, constitution of body, digestive power, season, diseased condition, and also from person to person. *Aahara* is one of the most important factors of *Sharira Vriddhikara Bhava* and *Bala Vriddhikara Bhava*.² *Acharya Charaka* mentioned *Deha* or body, originates from *Aahara*³ and is also considered *Prana* (life) because life exits due to *Aahara*. *Acharya*

Sushruta mentioned the importance of proper *Aahara*, *Aachara*, and *Cheshta* during sexual intercourse, which have a good impact on the foetus and vice versa.⁴ *Aahara*, *Nidra*, and *Brahmacharya* are the three sub-pillars that support the main pillar, the body itself.⁵ Here, *Aahara* has been enumerated first, which shows its importance. When these three pillars are maintained properly, then only the main pillar will be endowed with strength, complexion, and development. In Ayurveda, different *Samhitas* like *Charaka*, *Sushruta*, *Astanga Hridaya*, etc. classified and described different types of *Aahara*, different methods of *Aahara* preparation, diet regimens, specific diets for surgical procedures, prenatal as well as postnatal dietetic care, etc. *Aahara* also plays an important role in the treatment of diseases. Ayurveda has given equal importance to *Pathya-Apathya Kalpana* in the *Chikitsa* (treatment) of diseases. *Acharya Sharangdhara* mentioned different *Aahara Kalpana*, which is used as *Pathya*, like *Peya*, *Vilepi*, *Manda*, *Yush*, etc. Dietary consideration is an important component of every prescription in Ayurvedic therapy. Sometimes it becomes a complete treatment of a particular disease or health problem. Ignorance of diet guidelines caused the increasing prevalence of many lifestyle disorders.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The classical literature of Ayurveda, like *Samhitas* contributed by *Charaka*, *Sushruta*, *Vagbhata*, *Bhava Mishra*, and others, along with various databases like PubMed, Google Scholar, etc., have been searched with the terms “*Aahara*” and dietetic concepts of “*Aahara* in Ayurveda.” Then data from *Aahara* and different Ayurvedic approaches to intake were qualitatively analysed and described to establish its importance in our daily lives.

Table 1: Effect of Rasa on Tridosha¹⁰

S. N.	Types of Rasa	Dosha	
		Aggravation	Pacification
1.	<i>Madhura</i> , <i>Amla</i> , and <i>Lavana</i>	<i>Kapha</i>	<i>Vata</i>
2.	<i>Katu</i> , <i>Tikta</i> , and <i>Kashaya</i>	<i>Vata</i>	<i>Kapha</i>
3.	<i>Amla</i> , <i>Lavana</i> , and <i>Katu</i>	<i>Pitta</i>	
4.	<i>Kashaya</i> , <i>Tikta</i> , and <i>Madhura</i>		<i>Pitta</i>

Diet and Mind: A good diet is essential for maintaining physical and mental wellness. Considering the effect of diet on mind, the following three classifications have been made:¹¹

Satvika Diet: Ideal diet containing vegetarian, non-oily, non-spicy foods that are congenial to the body. When it is taken in the right quantity, it will balance all three *Dosha*, bring mental harmony, and evoke conscious awareness.

Rajasika Diet: These diets are too spicy, hot, sour, and salty to stimulate fantasy, jealousy, and ego. Although these emotions may appear as negative aspects, some of these emotions are needed to lead a normal life.

Tamasika Diet: These are too oily, fried food, too spicy, too hot, heavy food, etc. that may need more energy to digest. Such food

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Fundamentals of dietary regimen:

Panchamahabhuta theory (theory of five elements): According to Ayurveda, everything in this universe, including the human body and the food, is composed of the five basic elements, the *Panchamahabhutas*, namely: *Akash* (space), *Vayu* (air), *Agni* (fire), *Apya* (water), and *Prithvi* (earth). The combination of *Panchamahabhutas* in different ratios/proportions forms different materials, including food.⁶ Planning and balancing is the indulging of the foods that help to maintain the body in a healthy condition.

Tridoshas (theory of three biological humours): *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha* are biological derivatives that are also made up of *Panchamahabhuta* (five basic elements), responsible for the structure and proper functioning of the body. *Vata* is made up of *Vayu* and *Akasha Mahabhuta*; *Pitta* is made up of *Agni Mahabhuta*; and *Kapha* is made up of *Jala* and *Prithivi Mahabhuta*.⁷ Each food material possesses one or more actions on *Dosha*, which may be aggravating, pacifying, or balancing actions on the human body. Ayurveda prescribes different specific diet plans to keep in balance of the disturbed *Doshas*, which are generally disturbed by various factors like season, age, *Apathya Aahara*⁸, etc.

Shadarasa (six basic tastes): The food has six basic tastes, each of which has a predominance of certain *Panchamahabhuta* that have a specific effect on the *Tridosha* and *Dhatus*.⁹ *Jala* and *Prithivi Mahabhuta* dominate *Madhura* (sweet); *Prithvi* and *Agni* in *Amla* (sour); *Jala* and *Agni* in *Lavana* (salt) *Rasa*; *Agni* and *Vayu* in *Katu* (pungent); *Vayu* and *Akash* in *Tikta* (bitter); and *Vayu* and *Prithivi* in *Kashaya* (astringent) (**Table 1**).

may enhance emotions like ignorance, greed, and laziness. These types of food categories must be included in the diet with caution.

Classification of Aahara:

Acharya Charaka has classified and mentioned the *Aahara* in different ways.¹²

- All the food substances were included in one group based on their edible nature.
- Based on source of origin, these are of two types, such as *Sthavara* (plant origin) and *Jangama* (animal origin).
- Based on effect, these are also of two types, such as *Pathya* (wholesomeness) and *Apathya* (unwholesomeness).

- Based on mode of ingestion, these are of four types, such as *Pana* (drinks), *Ashana* (eatable), *Bhakshya* (chewable), and *Lehya* (lickable).
- Based on *Rasa*, these are of six types such as *madhura*, *amla*, *lavana*, *katu*, *tikta*, and
- Based on the combination and methods of preparation of food items, it is innumerable.

Acharya Sushruta described twenty-three groups of *Aahara*¹³ (10 of *Dravadravya* and 13 of *Annadravya*). Acharya Bhavprakash has mentioned six types, such as *bhojya*, *bhakshya*, *chavya*, *lehya*, *chushya* and *peya*.¹⁴

Sources of food described in *Ayurveda*:

The Ayurvedic classics describe 12 categories of food sources on the basis of their *rasa guna*, *virya*, *vipaka*, and *prabhava*. These reflect the available varieties of food from a historical perspective¹⁵ (Table 2).

Table 2: Category of food substance

S.N.	Category of Food Substance
1.	<i>Shukadhanya Varga</i> (group of corns with bristles), for example, <i>raktasali</i> , <i>yava</i> , <i>godhuma</i> , etc.
2.	<i>Shamidhanya Varga</i> (group of pulses); for example, <i>mudga</i> , <i>masa</i> , <i>kulattha</i> , etc.
3.	<i>Mamsa Varga</i> (meat of different animals), for example, <i>ustra</i> , <i>matsya</i> , <i>hamsa</i> , <i>harina</i> , etc.
4.	<i>Shaka Varga</i> (group of vegetables), for example, <i>patha</i> , <i>kaka-machi</i> , <i>kalashaka</i> , etc.
5.	<i>Phala Varga</i> (groups of fruits), for example, <i>draksha</i> , <i>bilva</i> , <i>aamra</i> , <i>dhadima</i> , etc.
6.	<i>Harita Varga</i> (groups of salads), for example, <i>aadraka</i> , <i>yavani</i> , <i>palandu</i> , etc.
7.	<i>Madhya Varga</i> (different types of alcoholic beverages), for example, <i>sura</i> , <i>jagala</i> , <i>sarkara</i> , <i>dhatiki sura</i> , etc.
8.	<i>Ambu Varga</i> (different types of water), for example <i>nadi jala</i> , <i>samundra jala</i> , etc.
9.	<i>Gorasa Varga</i> (different types of milk and milk products), for example, <i>gokshira</i> , <i>avikshira</i> , <i>mahisakshira</i> , etc.
10.	<i>Ikshu Vikara</i> (sugarcane products), for example, <i>guda</i> , <i>madhu</i> , <i>sarkara</i> , etc.
11.	<i>Krutanna Varga</i> (different types of food preparations), for example <i>peya</i> , <i>vilepi</i> , <i>manda</i> , <i>laja manda</i> , etc.
12.	<i>Aharopayogi Varga</i> (food adjuvants), for example <i>tila taila</i> , <i>eranda taila</i> , <i>majja</i> , <i>vasa</i> , <i>pippali</i> , etc.

Ashta Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana: According to Acharya Charaka, the eight factors¹⁶ determine the utility of various types of food which are given below:

1. **Prakriti** indicates the *swabhava* (nature), that is, the inherent attributes of the diets and drugs like *guru* (heaviness), *laghu* (lightness), etc. For examples, *masha* (black gram) is *guru*; *mudga* is *laghu* (light); meat of *sukara* (pork) is *guru*; and that

of *ena* (deer) is *laghu*.

2. **Karana** means processing of the food, and it results in the transformation of the inherent attributes of food. Transformation of the properties is infused by contact of water, fire, cleansing, churning, storing, maturing, flavouring, preserving in the container, frying and processing, etc.
3. **Samyoga** is the combination of two or more food entities. This results in the manifestation of specific attributes, which can not be manifested by individual substances. For examples, combine *madhu* and *ghrita*; *matsya* (fish) and *payasa* (milk) in equal proportion.
4. **Rashi** is the quantity of food substances to be taken, and it determines the results of their administration in adequate and inadequate quantities. *Rashi* is of two types, and they are *sarvagraha* and *parigraha*. the quantity of food taken in entirely is *sarvagraha*, and the quantity of each of its ingredients is *parigraha*.
5. **Desha** denotes a place relating to growth, distribution of the substance, and suitability with respect to place. *Aushadha dravya* and food are more *gunavana*, which is collected from the Himalayas.
6. **Kala** stands for both the time in the form of day and night and the states of the individual (i.e., condition of health and age). *Nityaga* (daily) is in the form of day, night, and time to take food, for example, *ritucharya*. *Avasthika* is a condition according to diseases, so one should take food appropriately according to the diseases, age, etc.
7. **Upyogasmstha** stands for the dietetic rules. These are for the most part dependent on the symptoms of digestion.
8. **Upayokta** is an individual who consumes the food. The individual becomes conducive to wholesomeness by the habitual intake of food entities, known as *okasatmya*.

Satmya and Asatmya Aahara: A substance that is suitable for an individual is called *Satmya*.¹⁷ It is also called *upashaya*. It is beneficial for both body and mind. *Desha*, *kala*, *jati* (race), *ritu* (climate or seasons), disease, physical exercise, water, day sleep, *rasa*, etc. are the important factors that decide the conduciveness or otherwise of an individual. This *satmya* leads to one's wellbeing.¹⁸ There are two types of *satmya*: inherent *satmya* and habitual *satmya* (*okasatmya*). Any *rasa* practiced continuously from the very birth itself for a considerable time or long time, that particular *rasa* becoming conducive to that individual for lifelong, is *satmya* by inherence. Making a food entity conducive to the body by its habitual intake is *okasatmya*. *Satmya* is of three types, namely: 1. *Pravara satmya* (superior), 2. *Avara satmya* (inferior), and 3. *Madhuya satmya* (mediocre).

Use of all the *rasas* is of *pravara* (superior) type of *satmya*. Use of only one *rasa* is of *avara* type. The mediocre type stands for the habitual intake of two to five *rasas* jointly.

Viruddhahara: This is the incompatibility of food. Certain diets

and their combinations, which interrupt the metabolism of tissue, inhibit the process of tissue formation, and have the opposite property to the tissue, are called *viruddha anna* or *viruddha-ahara* (incompatible diet).¹⁹ In *viruddhahara*, the *doshas* are dislodging from their site and unable to eliminate from the body that causes contamination of the *rasadi dhatus* and giving rise to various diseases; for example, *gulma*, *jwar*, *varna*, *eczema*, allergic dermatitis, and others skin diseases. *Acharya charaka* enlisted eighteen types of *viruddhahara*.²⁰

1. *Desha viruddham* (incompatible due to variance in place or habitat)—for example, consumption of *ruksha-tikshna guna* substances in a place of desert land and *snigdha-shita dravyas* in marshy land.
2. *Kala viruddham* (incompatible due to variance in time/season)—for example, intake of *shita-ruksha* substances during *shita kala* and *katu-ushna dravyas* in *ushna kala*.
3. *Agni viruddham* (incompatible due to variance in digestive power)—for example, intake of heavy food in *mandagni* and light food in *tikshnagni*.
4. *Matra viruddham* (incompatible due to variance in dosage/quantity)—for example, intake of *madhu* and *ghrita* in equal quantity.
5. *Satmya viruddham* (incompatible due to variance in habit/*satmya*)—for example, intake of *madhura* and *shita* substances by the person accustomed to *katu-ushna* food entities.
6. *Dosha viruddham* (incompatible due to *doshas*): for example, utilisation of drugs, diets, and regimens having similar properties to *dosha* but contrary to the practice of individuals.
7. *Samskara viruddham* (incompatible due to variance in mode of preparation)—for example, flesh of *mayura* roasted on the flame of castor firewood through the stem of castor plant.
8. *Virya viruddham* (incompatible due to variance in potency)—for example, simultaneous consumption of food entities having *ushna* and *shita virya*.
9. *Kostha viruddham* (incompatible due to variance of bowels): for example, administration of drugs having mild potency and less purgative action to the person having *krura kostha* and highly potent, drastic purgative and heavy dosage to the person having *mridu kostha*.
10. *Avastha viruddham* (incompatible due to variance in state of health)—for example, eating *vata* aggravating food after exhaustion, sexual intercourse, and physical exercises; and *kapha* aggravating food after sleep or idleness.
11. *Krama viruddham* (incompatible due to variance in the order): for example, intake of the diet without excreting the stools and urine; and consumption of food when there is no appetite or when the hunger is too much aggravated.
12. *Parihara viruddham* (incompatible due to avoidance)—for example, intake of hot substances after taking pork and cold

substances after taking ghee.

13. *Upacara viruddham* (incompatible caused by prescription), for example, drinking cold water after *snehapana* or after a steam bath.
14. *Paka viruddham* (incompatible due to cooking): for example, preparation of food with bad or damaged firewood; grains being not properly cooked or excessively cooked or burnt.
15. *Samyoga viruddham* (incompatible due to combination of two or more substances)—for example, intake of milk along with sour substances.
16. *Hrida viruddham* (substance which is not pleasant in taste)—for example, any substance that is not pleasant in taste.
17. *Vidhi viruddham* (incompatible caused by not following the rules of eating)—for example, intake of food in public places or not taken in privacy.
18. *Sampat viruddham* (incompatible due to richness in quality)—for example, intake of substances that are yet to be ripened, overripened, or putrefied.

Matraahara and Amatraahara (measurable and non-measurable) Aahara: Ayurveda clearly explained over the amount of food that one should take every day. One has to take food in proper quantity, digest it in proper time, and it does not cause any disturbance in the equilibrium of body components. This is called *matrahara*.²¹ The quantity of food is directly related to the power of digestion (*agnibala*) and his strength. Taking an appropriate quantity of food leads to the maintenance of the equilibrium state of the body components as well as bestowing body strength, complexion, happiness, and longevity.²² The diet, which is excessive in measure, is a provocation of morbidity of all three humours. While deficient measure leads to impair function of the body, complexion, lusture, virility, and vitality of the body.

Seasonal Consideration of Diet: In Ayurveda, the whole year is divided into six seasons. According to each season, different dietetic regimens are prescribed,²³ which are described below:

Hemanta Ritu: Due to the contact of cold breezes, the body temperature retains inside the body only and increases the power of digestion (*jatharagni*). Due to this, human beings can be able to digest more quantity of food than their usual capacity and even hard substances. During the winter one should take substances having *snigdha* (unctuous), *amla* (sour), *lavana* (salty), *rasa*, and meat of aquatic and marshy animals. One should also eat the meat of the animals and birds that eat their food by snatching and animals who dwell in burrows. After eating meat of the above animals and birds, one has to take *madhira* and *sidhu* (alcoholic preparations) and honey. Regular intakes of milk products, byproducts of sugarcane, oil, new rice, and hot water during the winter increase the lifespan.

Shishira Ritu: The features of *hemanta ritu* and *shishira ritu* are almost similar with slight variation, so all the measures prescribed for *hemanta ritu* are to be followed in the *shishira*. especially during this season, one should stay in a hot room, avoiding

excessive consumption, and avoid taking such of the diets that possess *katu*, *tikta*, and *kashaya rasa*.

Vasanta Ritu: In this *ritu*, the accumulated *kapha* is liquefied by the heat of the sunrays and, as such, disturbs the power of digestion and results in many numbers of diseases. Hence, *vaman* and other purificatory measures are advised to eliminate the vitiated *dosha*. One should avoid taking *guru*, *amla*, *snigdha*, and *madhura dravyas*. One should take food consisting of barley and wheat, meat of rabbit, antelope, grey quail, and grey partridge. One should drink wholesome seeded or *sidhu* and *mdrika* types of wine.

Grishma Ritu: One should take cold, liquid, and unctuous diets, and drink is prescribed for the pacifying of *pitta dosha*. One should also take cold *mantha*, sugar, ghee, milk with *sali* rice, coconut water, and meat of forest animals. One should avoid taking diets that are salty, sour, pungent, or hot.

Varsha Ritu: In this *ritu*, aggravation of *vata* occurs due to cold climate, so *vata shamaka dravyas* like honey; sour, salty, unctuous food and drink are preferred to maintain normal power of digestion. One should take old barley wheat and *sali* rice. One should abstain from taking *mantha* (groat) diluted in excess, day sleep, frosts, water from rivers, exercise, moving in the sun, and indulgence in sexual intercourse.

Sharada Ritu: In this season, *pitta dosha* aggravation occurs. So, foods and drinks that have the potential to alleviate *pitta* are to be taken in proper quantity, like bitter drugs processed with *ghee*, coolant, bloodletting, purgation, and a light diet. One should avoid fat oil, meat of aquatic and marshy animals, alkaline salt preparation, and curd in food. Thus, the seasonal homologation relation to the regimen and diet has been explained.

Aahara Vidhi Vidhan (Rules of taking food)²⁴

1. **Ushna aahara (warm food):** One should take *ushna* food because it provokes the digestive fire, responsible for easy digestion. A certain temperature is required for proper digestion, as all the chemical reactions take place very well only at high temperatures. It also helps in the downward passage of *vata* (wind) and detachment of *kapha*.
2. **Snigdha Aahara (unctuous food):** One should take *unctuous*. Here, *snigdha* means food composed of *snigdha dravya*, i.e., *ghritha*, *tailam*, etc. after intake of *unctuous* food, it provokes the subdued power of digestion to get digested quickly, passes flatus, nourishes the body, strengthens the sense faculties, increases strength, and provides colour and lustre to the body.
3. **Matravata Aahara (food in proper quantity):** One should take food in proper quantity. Using the proper quantity of food, it promotes longevity in its entirety without afflicting *vata*, *pitta*, or defecation, occurs smoothly, does not disturb the power of digestion, and gets digested without any difficulty.
4. **Aahara Jeerna Ashniyat (intake food after digestion of previous meal):** One should take food only when previous meal is digested. When one takes food before the digestion

of the previous meal, the immature *rasa* gets mixed with the previous semi-digested food, resulting in the provocation of all three *dosha* quickly, and it vitiates *agni*. Due to vitiation of *agni*, the digestion gets hampered and produces *aamarasa*, which ultimately produces many diseases.

5. **Virya avirudham ashniyat (intake of food having no contradictory potencies):** One should take food having no contradictory potencies. By taking such food, which has contradictory potencies, it generates various diseases like *sotha*, *kustha*, *visarpa*, *amavisha*, impotency, hereditary disorders, etc., and even death.
 6. **Ishta Deshe Ishta Sarva Upkaranam Ashniyat (intake of food in proper place and with all accessories):** One should take food in a proper place equipped with all the accessories. When one takes his/her food in improper places without the required accessories, it creates emotional strain on the mind and disturbs the digestive process. So, a proper place should be equipped with all the accessories that prevent one from these bad psychological effects.
 7. **Na Atidrutum Ashniyat (intake food, not in a hurry):** One should not take food too hurriedly. When food is taken too hurriedly, it enters the wrong passage (does not enter the stomach properly). When one takes food at proper speed, then all the enzymatic secretion mixes properly, so food gets easily digested.
 8. **Na Ativilambitam Ashniyat (intake, not too slow):** One should not take food very slowly because this will not give satisfaction to the individual even after ingestion of excess food. In this situation, the food becomes cold and it is digested disproportionately.
 9. **Ajalpana, Ahasan, Tanmana Bhunjita (intake of food with concentration):** One should not talk, laugh, or be unmindful while taking food. One should not talk or laugh during taking food that can distract one's mind and subject one to the same trouble as that of eating hurriedly.
 10. **Aatmanam-abhisamikshya Bhunjitam (intake of food with own requirements):** One should always eat according to one's own *satmya*, *agnibala*, and *prakriti*. It should also be taken according to self-energy and nutrient requirements, as in the case of children, pregnant women, old people, or sick people.
- Dvadasha Ashana Pravicharana (twelve factors to be considered in relation to food):** Acharya Sushruta has mentioned twelve-fold dietary considerations to be followed during the consumption of food and termed them *dvadasha asana vidhi*. He stated which types of *Aahara* are suitable for whom. These twelve fold²⁵ dietary considerations are:
1. **Shita Aahara (food with cold potency):** Those afflicted with thirst, intoxication, heat, burning sensation, and those who are suffering from internal haemorrhage, poisoning, fainting, and in emaciated individuals, *shita aahara* is preferred.

2. **Ushna Aahara (food with hot potency):** It is indicated in the patients suffering from disorder of nervous system (*vata*), body fluids (*kapha*), purgated, drinking oil fats (*sneha*), and an unmoistened body.
3. **Snigdha Aahara (food rich in fats):** It is indicated in individuals of *ruksha* and *vata prakrati*, *vataja* disorders, and the individuals emaciated by excess sexual acts.
4. **Ruksha Aahara (rough food):** People suffering from obesity who have received *snehan* (oil therapy), suffering from *madhumeha* (diabetes), and excess *kapha* in the body should take food of rough quality.
5. **Drava Aahara (liquid Diet):** A liquid diet should be given to persons with emaciated bodies, thirst, and weak individuals.
6. **Shushka Aahara (dry food):** Useful in those patients having a lot of *kleda*, accumulated water in the body, suffering from wounds, and *madhumeha* (diabetes) should take a dry diet.
7. **Ek-kalika Aahara:** *Ek-kalika Aahara* that is once a day. It is indicated in the individuals with impaired *agni* (digestive power).
8. **Dvi-kalika Aahara:** *Ahara*; twice a day is indicated in individuals with normal digestion.
9. **Aushadha Yukta Aahara:** The diets mixed with required drugs should be used in those patients who have aversion for the particular medicine.
10. **Matraheen Aahara:** The individual with impaired *agni* and the diseased individual should take the diet in deficient quantity.
11. **Prashamaka Aahara:** The diet advised according to seasonal variation and place is *dosha prashamaka* that pacifies all the *doshas*.
12. **Vratiprayojaka Aahara:** Food containing all *rasas* should be advised in healthy individuals to promote psychosomatic health.

On the basis of above all interpretation, all dietetic principles have due importance in the digestion process. Food is the vital essence of all seven *dhatu*s, from *rasa* to *shukra*.²⁶ Without food, the existence of a human being is impossible. In different Ayurvedic texts, it gives equal importance to *aahara dravyas* and *aushada dravyas* and is explained elaborately. Ayurveda assumes *Aahara* as *Mahabhaishajya*²⁷ that is, food is a great medicament. Ayurveda has described *aahara* (food) and *aahara vidhi* (code) in details. The practice of *aahara vidhi* (dietetics) is an ancient, empirical, and sometimes elegant art. 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. Use of *hita ahara* (wholesome diet) promotes health and longevity, and *ahita aahara* (unwholesome diet) promotes manifestation of different disorders.²⁸ Proper dietary rules also play a crucial role in the digestion process, maintenance

of equilibrium of *doshas* and *dhatu*s, and bestowing strength to the mind and sense organs.²⁹ Ayurveda also explains the planning of meals for both the normal and sick person. The qualities endowed to *aahara* are only seen when rules and regulations regarding *aahara sevana* are followed. The improper digestion produces *aama*, which leads to the majority of diseases like *amavata* (rheumatoid arthritis), *Madhumeha* (diabetes), etc. The majority of the lifestyle disorders are due to avoidable faulty diets, habits, and practices. The contemporary modern science has particularly described *aahara* according to the nutritional value of its components and not described *hita*, *ahita*, *pathya*, *apathya aahara*, etc. for each individual. Ayurveda also provides an entirely different view and proposes an entirely different approach to food, diet, and nutrition that is in strong contrast to the conventional approach. The concepts on nutrition and dietetics are a treasure trove in Ayurveda, which needs further exploration. Therefore, due consideration mentioned in Ayurveda should be given to all aspects of diet planning in the treatment of diseases and to maintain health.

CONCLUSIONS

The three basic pillars of Ayurveda are *aahara* (food), *nidra* (sleep), and *brahmacharya* (following the path of God, *Brahma*). Among them, *aahara* has been placed first, which shows its importance to maintain and sustain life. The principle and concept of dietetics and nutrition in the Ayurvedic system of medicine include different classes of *aahara*, the principle of *pathyapathya* (wholesome and unwholesome diet), *viruddha aahara* (incompatible diet), *ashta aahara vidhi visheshayatan* (eight discipline of eating), and *dvadasha asana vidhi* (twelve discipline of eating) and are described well in Ayurveda literature. The diet and its method of intake have a vital role in the daily life for promotion of positive health and continuity of a healthy life. The rules and methods of dietary intake are effective in the maintenance of health as well as in curative aspects for many diseases.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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