



Review Article

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CRITICAL REVIEW OF AHARA VIDHI WITH EMPHASIS ON MATRA, DESA, AND KALA IN AYURVEDIC SAMHITA

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ABSTRACT

Background: In Ayurveda, *Ahara* is considered one of the three fundamental pillars of life (*Trayopasthambha*). Proper dietary conduct described under *Ahara Vidhi* plays a crucial role in maintaining health and preventing disease. Among its components, *Matra* (quantity), *Desa* (habitat/place), and *Kala* (time) are key determinants that influence digestion, metabolism, and overall physiological balance. **AIM** To critically evaluate the principles of *Ahara Vidhi* with special emphasis on *Matra*, *Desa*, and *Kala* in Ayurvedic Samhita. **OBJECTIVES** To study the concept of *Ahara Vidhi* as described in classical Ayurvedic texts. To analyze the role of *Matra* in maintaining proper digestion and metabolism. To understand the influence of *Desa* on dietary selection and adaptability. To evaluate the significance of *Kala* in relation to meal timing and seasonal variations. To correlate these principles with present-day dietary habits and lifestyle disorders. **Materials and Methods:** This study is based on a classical literary review of major Ayurvedic texts including *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Ashtanga*

Hridaya. Relevant references were critically analyzed and correlated with modern nutritional perspectives to evaluate their practical applicability. **Results:** The concept of *Matra* emphasizes intake of food in appropriate quantity according to digestive capacity (*Agni*), preventing both undernutrition and overnutrition. *Desa* highlights the importance of geographical and environmental factors influencing food selection and digestion, suggesting that diet should be compatible with regional climate and individual habitat. *Kala* refers to both seasonal (*Ritu*) and daily timing of food intake, ensuring synchronization with biological rhythms. Improper adherence to these principles leads to *Agnimandya*, *Dosha Dushti*, and various metabolic disorders. **Conclusion:** *Ahara Vidhi* with its focus on *Matra*, *Desa*, and *Kala* provides a scientific and individualized approach to diet planning. Its principles remain highly relevant in preventing lifestyle disorders and promoting holistic health. Integrating these classical guidelines into modern dietary habits can improve digestion, metabolism, and overall well-being.

Keywords: *Ahara Vidhi, Matra, Desa, Kala, Agni, Ayurveda*

INTRODUCTION

Ahara is considered one of the most essential components for sustaining life in Ayurveda and is included under *Trayopasthambha* along with *Nidra* and *Brahmacharya*. It is not only responsible for nourishment of *Sharira* but also plays a key role in maintaining equilibrium of *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, and *Mala*. The classical texts emphasize that proper intake of food supports *Agni*, which is the central factor governing digestion, metabolism, and overall health.¹ When *Ahara* is consumed according to prescribed rules, it promotes strength, complexion, longevity, and immunity, whereas improper dietary practices become the root cause of many diseases.

The concept of *Ahara Vidhi* provides a systematic guideline for proper food intake, covering various aspects such as quality, quantity, timing, and manner of eating. Among these, *Matra*, *Desa*, and *Kala* hold special importance. *Matra* refers to the appropriate quantity of food based on individual digestive capacity (*Agni*), ensuring optimal digestion without causing *Agnimandya* or *Ama* formation. *Desa* denotes the influence of geographical region and environmental conditions on dietary habits, highlighting that food suitable in one region may not be ideal in another. *Kala* includes both seasonal variations (*Ritucharya*) and timing of meals during the day, which directly affect metabolic processes and physiological rhythms.²

In the present era, rapid urbanization, sedentary lifestyle, irregular eating patterns, and consumption of incompatible foods have led to a rise in metabolic and lifestyle disorders. These changes reflect a clear deviation from the principles of *Ahara Vidhi*. Understanding and applying the concepts of *Matra*, *Desa*, and *Kala* in daily life can help in restoring balance of *Dosha* and improving digestive efficiency. Therefore, a critical review of these principles is highly relevant for integrating classical Ayurvedic wisdom with modern nutritional practices to achieve better health outcomes.³

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

AIM

To critically evaluate the principles of *Ahara Vidhi* with special emphasis on *Matra*, *Desa*, and *Kala* in Ayurvedic Samhita.

OBJECTIVES

- To study the concept of *Ahara Vidhi* as described in classical Ayurvedic texts.
- To analyze the role of *Matra* in maintaining proper digestion and metabolism.
- To understand the influence of *Desa* on dietary selection and adaptability.
- To evaluate the significance of *Kala* in relation to meal timing and seasonal variations.
- To correlate these principles with present-day dietary habits and lifestyle disorders.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

This study is a conceptual literary review based on classical Ayurvedic texts, primarily *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Ashtanga Hridaya*, along with their relevant commentaries. Information related to *Ahara Vidhi*, with specific emphasis on *Matra*, *Desa*, and *Kala*, was systematically collected, compiled, and critically analyzed. Additional support was taken from standard Ayurvedic textbooks and published review articles to enhance clarity and interpretation. The collected data were then compared and correlated with modern nutritional concepts to evaluate their practical applicability in present-day dietary practices.

CONCEPTUAL STUDY – *Ahara Vidhi*

Ahara Vidhi refers to the proper rules and methods of food intake described in Ayurveda. It explains not only the type of food but also the manner, quantity, time, and conditions under

which food should be consumed. Ayurveda considers *Ahara* as the main source of nourishment for *Sharira* and *Manas*, and proper dietary practices are essential for maintaining balance of *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, and *Mala*. When followed correctly, *Ahara Vidhi* supports *Agni*, enhances strength, and prevents disease. Improper dietary habits, on the other hand, lead to *Agnimandya* and formation of *Ama*, which are considered the root cause of many disorders.⁴

Method of Food Intake (*Ahara Sevana Vidhi*)

Ayurvedic texts emphasize specific guidelines regarding how food should be consumed. Food should be warm, freshly prepared, and taken in a peaceful environment. One should eat with full concentration, without talking, laughing, or experiencing emotional disturbances. Proper chewing is important for effective digestion.⁵ It is also advised that food should be taken only after complete digestion of the previous meal. These practices help in proper stimulation of *Agni* and ensure smooth digestion and absorption of nutrients.

Role of Individual Factors in *Ahara Vidhi*

Ayurveda strongly focuses on individualization of diet. The selection and intake of food should be based on factors like *Prakriti*, *Agni*, age, strength, and health condition. Each person has a unique constitution, and dietary practices should be adjusted accordingly. This personalized approach helps in maintaining internal balance and prevents the aggravation of *Dosha*. Ignoring individual differences may lead to improper digestion and disease manifestation.⁶

Significance of *Matra* (Quantity)

Matra refers to the appropriate quantity of food that should be consumed. Ayurveda suggests that food should be taken in such a quantity that it can be easily digested without causing heaviness or discomfort. Proper *Matra* depends on the strength of *Agni*. Overeating leads to *Agnimandya* and *Ama* formation, while undereating results in weakness and inadequate nourishment of *Dhatu*. Therefore, maintaining proper quantity is essential for optimal digestion and metabolism.

Matra refers to the appropriate quantity of food intake, which is primarily dependent on the strength of *Agni*. Ayurvedic Samhitas clearly mention that food should be taken in such a quantity that it gets digested properly without causing heaviness, discomfort, or lethargy. Ideally, the stomach should be divided into three parts where one part is filled with solid

food, one part with liquid, and the remaining part left empty for proper movement of *Dosha*. Proper *Matra* helps in maintaining balance of *Dosha* and ensures proper nourishment of *Dhatu*. Excessive intake leads to *Agnimandya*, *Ama* formation, and diseases like *Atisthaulya*, while inadequate intake results in weakness and *Dhatu Kshaya*.⁷ Thus, regulation of *Matra* is essential for maintaining metabolic efficiency and overall health.

Influence of *Desa* (Habitat/Region)

Desa indicates the geographical and environmental conditions where a person lives. Ayurveda explains that diet should be compatible with the region, as climate and surroundings influence digestion and body functions. For example, people living in cold regions may require heavier and unctuous food, while those in hot regions benefit from light and cooling diets. Adapting food habits according to *Desa* helps in maintaining balance of *Dosha* and supports overall health.

Desa refers to the geographical region and environmental conditions in which an individual lives. Ayurvedic texts classify *Desa* mainly into Jangala (dry region), Anupa (marshy region), and Sadharana (moderate region). Each *Desa* has a specific influence on *Dosha* predominance and digestive capacity. For instance, Jangala *Desa* is dominated by Vata and requires nourishing and unctuous food, whereas Anupa *Desa* is dominated by Kapha and benefits from light and easily digestible food.⁸ The concept emphasizes that dietary habits should be adapted according to local climate, water, soil, and seasonal variations. Ignoring *Desa* while selecting food may lead to *Dosha Vaishamya* and reduced digestive capacity. Hence, *Desa* plays a crucial role in guiding suitable dietary practices.

Importance of *Kala* (Time/Season)

Kala includes both the timing of food intake during the day and seasonal variations (*Ritucharya*). Ayurveda recommends taking food at proper intervals, mainly when true hunger is present and *Agni* is active. Seasonal changes also influence digestive capacity and dietary requirements. Following *Kala* ensures synchronization with biological rhythms and prevents digestive disturbances. Irregular meal timing and neglect of seasonal diet can disturb *Agni* and lead to disease.

Kala refers to both the timing of food intake during the day and the influence of seasons (*Ritu*). Ayurvedic Samhitas highlight that food should be consumed at proper intervals, especially when the previous meal is digested and natural hunger is present. *Kala* is also

divided into *Nitya Kala* (daily timing) and *Ritu Kala* (seasonal timing). During different seasons, *Agni* undergoes variations; for example, it is strong in winter and weak in summer. Accordingly, heavy and nourishing food is advised in winter, while light and cooling food is recommended in summer. Proper adherence to *Kala* ensures synchronization with the body's biological rhythm and maintains digestive strength. Irregular meal timing and neglect of seasonal diet lead to *Agnidushti* and predispose to various diseases.⁹

Relevance of *Ahara Vidhi* in Present Scenario

In today's lifestyle, people often ignore the principles of *Ahara Vidhi* due to busy schedules, fast food habits, and irregular eating patterns. This has led to an increase in metabolic and lifestyle disorders. Reintroducing these classical guidelines in daily life can help improve digestion, prevent *Ama* formation, and maintain overall health. *Ahara Vidhi* thus remains highly relevant as a simple, practical, and preventive approach to health care.¹⁰

Role of *Matra*, *Desa*, and *Kala*

Appropriate *Matra* + Suitable *Desa* + Proper *Kala*



Optimized *Agni* Function



Proper Digestion & Metabolism



Balanced *Dosha* and Well-Nourished *Dhatu*



No *Ama* Formation



Strong Immunity (*Vyadhikshamatva*)



Holistic Health & Disease Prevention

RESULT AND FINDINGS

- Proper adherence to *Ahara Vidhi* maintains balanced *Agni*, which is the key factor for normal digestion and metabolism.
- Regulation of *Matra* was found essential to prevent both overeating and undereating, thereby avoiding conditions like *Agnimandya*, *Ama* formation, *Atisthaulya*, and *Karshya*.

- Dietary practices adapted according to *Desa* showed better compatibility with environmental conditions, leading to improved digestion and reduced chances of *Dosha Vaishamy*.
- Following *Kala* (both daily timing and seasonal variation) was observed to enhance digestive efficiency and synchronize metabolic activities with biological rhythms.
- Improper diet intake without considering *Matra*, *Desa*, and *Kala* was associated with increased incidence of metabolic and lifestyle disorders.
- Integration of these principles supports proper *Dhatu Poshana*, maintains equilibrium of *Dosha*, and strengthens *Vyadhikshamatva*.
- Classical guidelines of *Ahara Vidhi* were found to have strong relevance in present-day lifestyle for prevention and management of chronic diseases.

DISCUSSION

The present review highlights that *Ahara Vidhi* is not merely a set of dietary rules but a comprehensive framework for maintaining physiological balance through proper food intake. The central role of *Agni* becomes evident, as all aspects of digestion and metabolism depend on its proper functioning. The concept of *Matra* directly influences *Agni*, where appropriate quantity supports efficient digestion, while excess or deficient intake leads to *Agnimandya* and *Ama* formation. This shows a clear understanding in Ayurveda that quantity of food is as important as its quality, and improper eating habits are a primary cause of disease.¹¹

The role of *Desa* and *Kala* further strengthens the individualized and adaptive approach of Ayurveda. *Desa* emphasizes that diet should be compatible with environmental conditions, which indirectly affect *Dosha* predominance and digestive strength. Similarly, *Kala* highlights the importance of timing and seasonal variations, indicating that metabolism is not constant but changes with time and climate. These principles reflect a deep insight into chronobiology and environmental adaptation, where improper alignment with these factors leads to *Dosha Vaishamy* and disease manifestation. Thus, Ayurveda promotes a dynamic and context-based dietary system rather than a fixed pattern.¹²

In the current scenario, where lifestyle disorders such as obesity, diabetes, and gastrointestinal problems are increasing rapidly, deviation from *Ahara Vidhi* is clearly evident. Irregular eating patterns, overeating, fast food consumption, and neglect of seasonal

diet disturb *Agni* and lead to metabolic imbalance. Reapplying the principles of *Matra*, *Desa*, and *Kala* can help in restoring digestive strength, preventing *Ama* formation, and maintaining overall health. Therefore, *Ahara Vidhi* remains highly relevant as a preventive and promotive tool, offering a simple yet effective approach to achieve long-term well-being.¹³

CONCLUSION

The concept of *Ahara Vidhi* in Ayurvedic Samhita provides a comprehensive and practical approach to dietary regulation, emphasizing the importance of *Matra*, *Desa*, and *Kala* in maintaining health. Proper consideration of these factors ensures balanced *Agni*, efficient digestion, and adequate nourishment of *Dhatu*, thereby preventing *Ama* formation and *Dosha Vaishamya*. In the present lifestyle, where irregular eating habits and incompatible diets are common, these classical principles offer a simple yet highly effective strategy for preventing metabolic and lifestyle disorders. Thus, integration of *Ahara Vidhi* into daily practice can play a vital role in achieving holistic health and long-term well-being.

CONFLCIT OF INTEREST -NIL

SOURCE OF SUPPORT -NONE

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