

Review Article

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## PROPHYLACTIC AND THERAPEUTIC PROPERTIES OF *AHARA* AND *PANCHKARMA* IN VARIOUS DISORDERS

**Dr. Sachin R. Mhaisne (Nana)**

Ayurvedachary, Panchakarma & Nadi Specialist, Vishwamauli Ayurvedic Clinic, India.

### Abstract

Food consumed provides treatment to many health problems, with *Ahara* acting as both a protective agent and as an element of the treatment process, which contributes to the healing capacities and energy of food. Therefore '*Ahara*' can be one of the sub-pillars (*Thrayo-Upasthamba*) according to Ayurvedic philosophy. Wholesome *Ahara* supports numerous health benefits and helps in maintaining normal physiological processes of growth and development. The physiological functioning of the body's system is also dependent on the food consumed; subsequent to this, the quality of the fruit consumed is also related to how food is prepared, presented, and consumed along with how food is cared for; this includes cooking style, eating conditions, hygiene, etiquette of consumption, and how it's stored. This paper describes the preventative and therapeutic effects of *Ahara* and *Panchkarma*.

**Key-Words:** *Ayurveda, Ahara, Rasa, Therapeutic, Panchkarma*

### Introduction

*Swasthya* is described as state of physical and mental well being; representing optimal health status. The structural and physiological balance of metabolic, excretory, sensory and psychological factors, etc. is essential for optimal health status. *Bala, Agni*, genetic and phenetic constitution, etc. affects health of individual. *Ahara* (ingested food) helps to balances all constitutional factors responsible for physical and mental wellbeing [1-3].

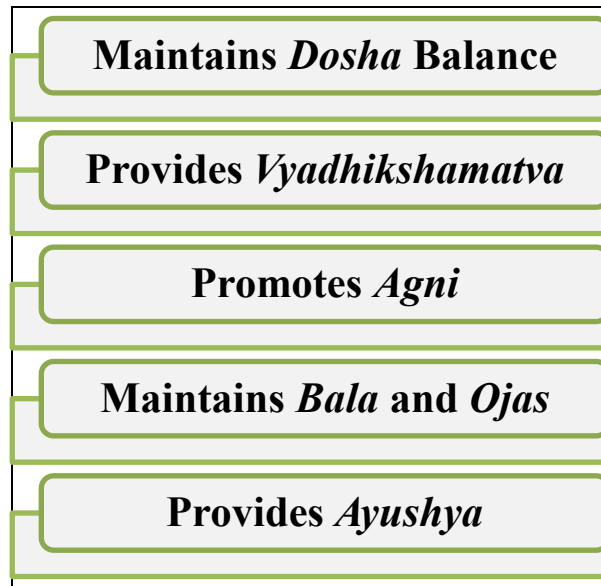
Food (*Ahara*) plays vital role in both healthy as well as diseased condition; healthy life is representation of healthy food. The consideration of dietary factors and *Hita Ahara*

contributed towards the general health promotion and prevent common infectious diseases. *Ahara* should be consumed according to the nutritional value which encompasses protein, carbohydrates, minerals and vitamins, etc. The *Pathya Ahara* (wholesome diet) provides nourishment, firmness, satisfaction, strength and immunity, etc. *Satvika Ahara* responsible for purity and harmony suggested for maintaining good mind, physical strength, longevity and health, etc. *Hita Ahara* helps to calm and purify mind, also improves physical health and imparts moral conducts [3-6].

**Table 1: Ahara for Specific Prakriti**

| <i>Prakriti</i>       | <i>Preferred Rasa</i>                                 | <i>Recommended Ahara Characteristics</i>                |
|-----------------------|---|---|
| <i>Vata Prakriti</i>  | Sweet (Madhura), Sour (Amla), Salty (Lavana)          | Warm, unctuous, nourishing, and easily digestible foods |
| <i>Pitta Prakriti</i> | Sweet (Madhura), Bitter (Tikta), Astringent (Kashaya) | Cooling, mild, less spicy, and soothing foods           |
| <i>Kapha Prakriti</i> | Bitter (Tikta), Astringent (Kashaya), Pungent (Katu)  | Light, dry, warm, and stimulating foods                 |

To help make and keep you healthy, Ayurveda sorts food into categories based on the four basic tastes (*Rasa*). For example, the *Katu* (pungent) *Rasa* is known for its ability to treat digestive problems or constipation (including loss of appetite) as well as for its ability to relieve respiratory problems. The *Madhura Rasa* is believed to provide a strong immune system, to help protect from illness, and to help relieve the feeling of burning in your stomach. The *Amla* (sour) *Rasa* is known for stimulating appetite, helping anorexics, nourishing the body, strengthening the senses, and promoting proper function of the heart muscle. The *Lavana* (salty) *Rasa* is thought to aid digestion, to have carminative properties (i.e., to help remove gas from the gastrointestinal tract), to relieve stiffness, and to help promote proper circulation of body fluids. The *Tikta* (bitter) *Rasa* contains antitoxic and/or antimicrobial properties and can help with tension headaches, itching, weakness from low blood pressure and/or fever, and to provide firmness to the tissue of muscles. The *Kashaya* (astringent) *Rasa* is said to relax the body; alleviate diarrhea and dysentery; provide relief of *Raktapitta*; and assist the body in absorbing an excess of fluid than it normally requires [4-7]. The major prophylactic and health benefits of *Ahara* are depicted in **Figure 1**.



**Figure 1: Major prophylactic and health benefits of *Ahara***

## **PANCHAKARMA**

### **Prophylactic and Therapeutic Properties of *Panchakarma***

*Deepana* and *Pachana* treatment are given as preparatory treatments for the main Panchakarma treatments in order to help improve Agni (digestion and metabolic fire) to prepare the patient for detoxifying. Shunthi (Ginger) boiled into milk is usually used for this purpose. Basti (enema) is the main procedure in pediatrics for treating Vata disorders and for relieving Blocked channels (Srotas). Snehana, or use of medicated ghee/oils for internal and external oleation of the body will help lubricate the body and promote proper growth/development of children. The use of medicated ghee/oils include Ashwagandha Ghrita, Kumar Kalyan Ghrita, and Bala Taila for children. Abhyanga with Bala Taila (self-massage) is helpful for Prana Pratyagamana and the general well-being of newborns [6-8].

Swedana (Sweat Therapy) is used to induce sweating to decrease stiffness and problems caused by excess Vata. There are many different methods of performing Swedana on an infant depending upon the age and condition of the child, and it is especially effective for the treatment of cerebral palsy and other degenerative conditions. The use of Basti is one of the most important Panchakarma therapies used in treating children.

Basti (the procedure of giving enemas) has several varieties, including Asthapana Basti, Anuvasana Basti, and Uttara Basti. Acharya Kashyapa stated that Basti should be applied after about 1 year of age and would be very beneficial for chronic diseases such as

recurrent fever and diarrhoea. Nasya karma (the procedure of applying preparations through the nose) is done to clear the head and neck of doshas and obstructions brought about by doshas, by applying herbal oils, powders, or juices in the nose. Therefore, cleaning these channels enhances the health of the respiratory system. Because of children's inclination to suffer from many respiratory diseases, Nasya karma is particularly useful in providing multisensory relief for children's respiratory conditions. Thus, all Panchakarma therapies can be appropriately modified and used safely in paediatric medicine. The following are some of the therapeutic indications for use with Panchakarma therapies in children; Vamana (giving emetics) is indicated for asthma, kasa (cough), shwasa (dyspnoea), unmada (insanity), kushtha (skin disease), and ajeerna (indigestion); Virechana (the use of laxatives) is indicated for phakkaroga (piles), krimi (worm infestation), kamala (liver disease), and galaganda (goitre); Basti (enema use) is indicated for rajonasha (any menstrual dysfunction), amavata (rheumatoid arthritis), ashmari (stones in any part of the body), and nirama atisara (chronic diarrhoea); Nasya (nose applications) is indicated for vyanga (facial paralysis), vatavyadhi (any vata disorder), shirashula (headaches), and ardita (hemiplegia); and Raktamokshana (mainly as a preventative procedure or leech therapy, e.g., vidradhi, arsha, gulma, and visarpa) [8-10].

## Conclusion

Food is vital to provide nutrients, to protect from disease, to resist or reduce the onset of infection, to help carry out bodily functions, and to grow & develop. A food that contains all of the proper tastes will nourish the body's tissues and have a positive effect on the body's appearance and the functioning of the senses. These foods will also improve our Ojas and immune system and will help prevent the transmission of infections between people. Properly prepared and consumed, food will provide a prophylactic effect against many different conditions such as gastritis, hyperacidity, bacterial/viral infections, heat stroke, diabetes, obesity, and any other digestive disorder, etc. Ayurveda has provided specific guidelines for the consumption of certain types of food that are designed to cure specific illness, such as asthma, vomiting during pregnancy, the common cold, goiter, hemorrhoids, acid reflux disease, rheumatoid arthritis, obesity, and any other disease related to excess fat.

*Panchakarma* treatment for children should only be performed when there is a need to address a particular issue or the age of the child. It also can be beneficial for promoting a

balanced growth pattern in children by providing support with this process while improving the overall health of that child through the treatment of various diseases. In the field of pediatrics, many cases can be treated using *Poorva Karma* or one of the modified detoxification therapies that are typically used. *Pradhana Karma* is only indicated in children when a comprehensive detoxification therapy is needed for serious health issues. The treatment protocol should be modified based on what type of medical condition the child has, their level of bodily strength and what age that child is. Special safety precautions should be observed during the administration of *Panchakarma* in pediatric patients.

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