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## *Ahara rasa – taste and its contemporary indicators of health effects*

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### **Abstract:**

*Food is the basic need of every living creature. All body mind functions to be carried out in sync are wholly dependent on the source of energy i.e. food. In Ayurveda the concept of food – Ahara had been discussed elaborately. The source of food origin reefing to the quality of the food and there upon having specific effect on the body functions are beautifully described in Ayurveda classics. The six Rasa – taste i.e. Madura (Sweet), Amla (sour), Lavana (Salty), Katu (spicy/hot), Tikta (bitter) and Kashaya (astringent) are been mentioned in Ayurveda and their dominant presence in the food have effect on body humors i.e. Vata, Pitta and Kapha. Also the dietary rules like Ashtoaharavidhivisheshayatana, and Virrudha Aharaguides us regarding the health beneficial utility of food to be ingested. In today's contemporary world the food is considered as a taste satisfying agent rather than source of energy which when consumed rightly maintains sound health. A guidingbrief discussion is done in present article about the Ayurvedic diets and harmful food practices which are to be corrected in order to get healthy mind and body.*

**Keywords:** Ahara, Ashtoaharavidhivisheshayatana, Virrudha Ahara

### **Introduction:**

Ayurveda is called as science of life. All aspects of life are well addressed in the Ayurveda classics. The procedures which helps in living a healthy, happy life and attain the *Pursharthas* – *Dharma, Artha, Kama* and *Moksha* are mentioned in details in these texts. To keep the body in well healthy condition and function properly it needs energy from external sources. Food is the main source of energy for the body. To imbibe the right qualities of food and to gain health benefits we should know the nature of food and use it accordingly. Here Ayurveda had examined the food according to source of food, its properties according to region, specific function according to taste –

*Rasa* and combined effect of all this on body humors – *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*. Each aspect of food is described in details in Ayurveda classics. Along with it the diet rules i.e. in what combination, time hand how to consume the food in order to gain maximum desired benefit is nicely stated in the classics. Not only to maintain the sound health but also the diet rules and qualities of food are beautifully used in all of the diseased conditions. In Ayurveda the *Dravya* (including food) are classified under following manner to know its utility, *Rasa*, *Guna*, *Virya*, *Vipaka* and *Karma*. By understanding this classification one can easily select the healthy food for one's body mind and can gain sound state of the same. Here an attempt is made to make a brief review on basis of this classification and also to mention wrong food habits which can be corrected by adopting these food classification in use of various food articles.

### **Rasa – taste:**

It is important to taste our food while consuming it. Taste replenishes mind and body equally and is the gateway for healthy living. Ayurveda recognizes six *Rasa* which plays an important role in maintaining our wellbeing. Ayurveda had stated that everything is composed out of *Panchamahabhutas*. Likewise the *Rasa* are also made up of combination of these *Panchamahabhutas*.

**Table no.1 – Rasa Mahabhut Sanghatan**

<i>Rasa</i>	<i>Mahabhut Sanghatan</i>	Season of origin - <i>Rutu</i>
<i>Madhura</i>	<i>Prithavi + Aap</i> dominance	<i>Hemanta</i>
<i>Amla</i>	<i>Prithavi + Agni</i> dominance	<i>Varsha</i>
<i>Lavana</i>	<i>Aap + Agni</i> dominance	<i>Sharada</i>
<i>Katu</i>	<i>Vayu + Agni</i> dominance	<i>Greshma</i>
<i>Tikta</i>	<i>Vayu + Akash</i> dominance	<i>Shishira</i>
<i>Kashaya</i>	<i>Vayu + Prithavi</i> dominance	<i>Vasanta</i>

Depending upon their combination and dominance of *Mahabhuta*, the *Rasa* exhibits its properties accordingly. The *Guna*– virtues of each *Rasa* can be briefed in short as follows,

**Table no.2 – Rasa – virtues and Karma**

<i>Rasa</i>	Virtues	<i>Karma</i>
<i>Madhura</i>	That which cover mouth totally, it makes mind happy and cheerful, all sense organs get replenished	Heavy and cooling in nature, replenishes all <i>Dhatu</i> and <i>Oja</i> , is oily in nature ( <i>Sneha</i> )
<i>Amla</i>	That which cleans the mouth totally, it creates excitement	<i>Ushnavirya</i> – sheet <i>sparsha</i> , <i>Prinana</i> , <i>Hrudya</i> , <i>laghu</i>

	and sensitize teeth and causes forced closure of eyes	
<i>Lavana</i>	That which secretes saliva, develops burning sensation in throat region	<i>Aagnikrut, Stambhanashan, Ruchikar, Mamsachedan, Mala bhedan</i>
<i>Katu</i>	Hot and spicy which aggravates secretions through eyes and nose	<i>Deepen, Pachana, Sneha – meda –kledashoshana, Atisaranashaka</i>
<i>Tikta</i>	Develops despair ( <i>Vishada</i> ) of tongue and thus makes it unable to taste other Rasa for some time	<i>Kelada – meda – vasa – Purishaandmutrashoshana, laghu, Sheet, Ruksha</i>
<i>Kashaya</i>	Develops astringent feeling in mouth and induce choking sensation in throat and other orifices	<i>Guru, Raktashodhak, Twakprasadana, Grahi, Ruksha, Sheet</i>

We can thus know the effect of each *Rasa* on physiological cycles and also in pathological conditions. In Ayurveda the use of specific *Rasa* food causes specific *Dosha* to be vitiated and other *Doshas* to optimize. This can be known briefly as follows,

**Table no.3 – Rasa Dosha relation**

<i>Dosha</i>	<i>Rasa</i>
<i>Vata</i>	<i>Vitiates – Katu, Tikta, Kashaya</i> <i>Alleviates – Madhura, Amla, Lavana</i>
<i>Pitta</i>	<i>Vitiates – Amla, Lavana, Katu</i> <i>Alleviates – Madhura, Tikta, Kashaya</i>
<i>Kapha</i>	<i>Vitiates – Madhura, Amla, Lavana</i> <i>Alleviates – Katu, Tikta, Kashaya</i>

### Concept of *Ashtoahara Vidhivishetayana* –

*Acharya Charak* had elaborated factors which determine the right utility of food in order to have wholesome beneficial effect on body as well as mind.

### *Ashto Ahar Vidhi Visheshayatan*–

1. *Prakruti*– nature of *dravya*
2. *Karana* - *samskara*
3. *Kala* – time
4. *Samyoga* - combination
5. *Rashi*– amount

6. *Desh* – regional specification
7. *Upayog Samstha* – ethics to be followed
8. *Upayokta*– individual entity

### Concept of *Viruddha Ahara*:

Ayurveda had described a concept called *Viruddha Ahara*. It briefly implies food incompatibility. There are many further ramifications under this title like – *Samyog Viruddha*, *Samskar Viruddha*, *Virya Viruddha*, *Kala Viruddha* etc. there are eighteen types of food incompatibilities which are mentioned in Ayurveda classics. And number of diseases and disorders are said to occur due to consumption of such *Viruddha Ahara*. Use of various food stuffs according to its composition and its uses are well studied under Topography. The use of food made only for purpose of taste or satisfying hunger had resulted in development of many new food combinations which in their real sense come under *Virrudha Ahara* category. Hence repeated use of such food is resulting in ever increasing non communicable metabolic disorders.

### Discussion:

In present era each human is engaged in his own rat race. To make the living and to satisfy his ever increasing ambitions, led him to push his limits. In this scenario the health aspect is sidelined most of the times. Changing lifestyle had changed the food habits also. The excessive use of flavored, preserved and packed food had increased in this workaholic culture. Also the wine and dine culture had made humans to try and satisfy their taste buds with such incompatible food. Here we find the reason for exponential growth in metabolic disorders like, Diabetes, circulatory disorders, hormonal imbalance, metabolic syndrome etc.

### Conclusion:

Here we should educate the masses regarding basic food habits which are mentioned in Ayurveda classics. These habits which when followed results in sound state of body and mind. Also to accomplish ones goal one has to be physically and mentally fit, so it also serves the purpose.

*Rasa*- we should know the exact taste of food and its utility according to its virtues and *Karma* – bodily effects.

*Guna* – the properties in *Rasa* vitiates one *Dosha* and alleviates the other. Thus we should use the proper *Rasa* combination according to ones *Prakruti* or disease.

*Virya* – the potency of food plays important role in the utility of it. Like use of buttermilk in summer season is unadvisable due to its *Anushna Virya*.

*Vipaka*– the after digestion part of each food depending upon nature of it, is also important. To carry out *Bruhanaor Langhana* effect can be monitored with *Vipaka* of food.

And following the rules of *Virrudha Ahara* can result in having wholesome diet which will be beneficial in maintain god physical and mental health.

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