

AYURVEDIC CONCEPT OF AHARA KALPANA IN VIEW OF UNDERSTANDING NUTRACEUTICALS

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ABSTRACT

There can be nothing else except *ahara* (diet) for sustaining life of living beings. Dietary risk factors have raised attention worldwide for Non- Communicable Diseases (NCD). According to a data published in the year 2019, 7.9 million deaths & 187.7 million DALYs (Disability-adjusted life years) were attributable to dietary risk factors and NCDs.^[1] This is alarming to the health, community and food sciences, pharmaceuticals and preventive medicine towards adopting a natural diet-based lifestyle. *Ayurveda* lays great deal of emphasis upon proper *pathya* for treatment in patients which is evident from the fact that there is specific enlisting of wholesome and unwholesome diet and regimen. If observed keenly, it can be seen that *Ayurvedic* concept of medicinal foods largely coincides with existing understanding of nutraceuticals. The ideal supplementation of natural foods, anti-oxidants, dairy products, citrus fruits, vitamins, minerals and

cereals which form major chunk of nutraceuticals, are part of *Ayurvedic* lifestyle. The identification of diet with specific benefits in right proportions is ideal for disease prevention and curative purpose. The changing trends in perception of people and growing commercial importance, it is quite important to understand the basic type of dietary supplement with

medicinal value as per *Ayurvedic* way of life. So, the current review is aimed to discuss the need and requirement of basic *Ahara kalpana* mentioned in *Ayurveda* in the perspective of herbal nutraceuticals.

KEYWORDS: Nutraceuticals, *Ahara*, *Ayurveda*, *Pathya*, *Anupana*, lifestyle.

INTRODUCTION

The diet is said to be the cause of stability for all the living beings.^[2] A good and proper *Ahara* i.e., food is worth a hundred medicines and no amount of medication can do good to a patient who does not observe a strict regimen of diet.^[3] One is not able to sustain life without diet even if endowed with medicine that is why the diet is said to be the great medicament by physician, for this the reference can be found in *Kashyapa Samhita* where he quoted *ahara* as *mahabhaishaja*. *Ahara* is considered as prime factor for development and nourishment of *sharira*. The three pillars of life i.e., *ahara*, *nidra*, *brahmacharya* (*trayostambh*) and *Samyaka indriyarth* *prayoga* ensures health to individual.^[4] Indian food science and technology have a history of at least 5,000 years. Information about these aspects is available in fragments in classical texts of *Ayurveda* such as *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Bhavaprakasha* etc. which resulted in dedicated literature on the subject like *bhojanam kutuhaklana* etc. along with later texts of *Ayurveda*. This scattered information requires systematic presentation so that people at large could understand nature and properties of each and every natural ingredient and food stuff prepared utilizing such natural food ingredients. Thus arose a necessity to systematize food science based on strictly scientific principles, keeping in view the impact of different food ingredients and food prepared out of them on human system and this article is an effort of presenting the same succinctly.

Nutraceuticals

Nutraceuticals is a broad umbrella term that is used to describe any product derived from food sources with extra health benefits in addition to the basic nutritional value found in food. The term “nutraceutical” combine the two words “nutrient”, which is a nourishing food component, and “pharmaceutical”, which is a medicine so the term means it is a product that is intended to supplement the diet. The name was coined in 1989 by Stephen De Felice, founder and chairman of the Foundation for innovation in medicine, which is an American organization located in Cranford, New Jersey. The philosophy behind nutraceuticals is to focus on disease prevention. National Standards for Health supplements and Nutraceuticals are specified under Food Safety and Regulations, 2016.^[5] These regulations cover eight

categories of functional foods namely, Health Supplements, Nutraceuticals, Food for Special Dietary use, Food for Special Medical Purpose, Specialty food containing plant or botanicals, Foods Containing Probiotics, Food containing Prebiotics and Novel Foods. The global nutraceutical market estimated to be 241 billion in 2019 is rapidly growing with an average growth rate of 7.5% year on year and is valued at 373 billion in 2025.

Possible Ayurvedic parlance of nutraceuticals

Ayurveda has mentioned the importance of food, its uses in maintenance of the health and also its usage in management of diseases. *Ayurveda* gives much more importance to food for both curative and preventive health aspects. *Aharavidhi* or the rules for consumption of food is beautifully explained in one of the classical text of *Ayurveda* named *Ashtanghridya*, according to which *Ahara* should be consumed at the proper time, it should be accustomed clean, suitable to health, unctuous, hot and easily digestible, should contain all the six rasa, partaken with due attention and neither very quick nor very slow, after taking bath, after having good hunger, mindfully, satisfying the Pitra gods, guests, children, perceptors and after carefully considering one's own constitution (likes and dislikes), without too much of talk, and served by those who are clean and faithful to him. *Ayurveda* describes many references related to diet in various context eg, *dinacharya* (daily regimen) and *ritucharya* (seasonal regimen), *pathya-apathya*, *anupana*, types of *ahara* and its *kalpana*, rules for intake of *ahara*, food items that should not be taken for longer use. Although, the modern nutraceutical industry dates to 1980s in Japan, its roots can be traced to the native culture of foods in India which is primarily guided by *Ayurvedic* concepts. *Ayurveda* lays great deal of emphasis upon proper *pathya* for treatment of each and every disease reference related to wholesome and unwholesome food ingredients were also described.

Concept of Pathya

The root term for *pathya* is *patha* which means channels of the body. The one which is wholesome and soothing to our body is called as *pathya*. *Pathya* is useful for maintenance of *swastha* and *atura vyadhi parimoksha*.^[6] Opposite to this is called as *apathya*. *Pathya* can include *sahpana*, *anupana*, *ahara*, *vihara*. The concept of nutraceuticals in modern era closely resembles to the concept of *pathya*. Given below the table shows various *pathyas* with their properties prescribed in different diseases-

Disease	Pathya	Properties
<i>Jwara</i>	<i>Yusha</i> prepared with <i>munga</i> , <i>channa</i> and <i>kulatha</i>	Nourishing, supports digestion, boosts metabolism
<i>Rajyakshama</i>	<i>Yusha</i> prepared with <i>muli</i> , <i>kulatha</i> <i>Yusha Parnini Dravya siddha jala</i>	Antioxidant, improves digestion
<i>Atisara</i>	<i>Khadayusha</i> prepared with <i>munga</i> , <i>masura</i> alongwith <i>changeri</i> , <i>kanji</i> , etc.	Antimicrobial, hepatoprotective, probiotic action
<i>Pandu</i>	<i>Panchmula siddha jala</i> , <i>dadima</i>	Nourishing, antioxidant, promotes strength
<i>Arsha</i>	<i>Shaaka sevana</i> <i>Dhana saktu</i> with <i>takra</i> <i>Sidhu</i> , <i>madira</i>	Detoxifying, probiotic, anti-inflammatory,
<i>Grehni(vataj)</i>	<i>Yavagu sevana</i>	Appetizer, nourishing, retentive, digestive
<i>Grehni(Pittaja)</i>	Cooked unripe banana	Prebiotic, digestive
<i>Netra roga</i>	<i>Trifla</i> along with honey and ghee	Anti-oxidant, antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory
<i>Kasa (pittaja)</i>	<i>Munnaka rasa/kwatha</i>	Anti-oxidant, antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory
<i>Kasa (kaphaja)</i>	<i>Paushkaradi hima</i>	Antifungal, antiallergic
<i>Kasa (kshyaja)</i>	<i>Kanthakari rasa siddha mudga Yusha</i>	Antioxidant, protein rich, expectorant,
<i>Prameha</i>	<i>Mantha</i> , <i>yavachurna leha</i> , <i>Trinadhanya anna</i> .	Promotes strength, fibrous, anti-cancer

Similarly *ahara kalpana* can also be considered in the field of nutraceutical, few examples are given below in the table with their actions.

Diet form(ahara)	Quantity	Action
<i>Peya</i>	Rice: 1 part Water: 14 parts	<i>Laghu Sweda-agni janan</i> , <i>Vatanulomana</i>
<i>Vilepi</i>	Rice:1 part Water:4 parts	<i>Tarpana</i> , <i>hridya</i> , <i>Grahi</i> , <i>vrishya</i> , <i>Madhura</i> , <i>pittanashak</i>
<i>Yusha</i>	Grain pulses:1 part Water:16 part	<i>Kanthya</i> , <i>laghupaki</i> , <i>Kaphanashaka</i>
<i>Yavagu</i>	Rice: 1 part Water: 6 part	<i>Grahi</i> , <i>balya</i> , <i>tarpana</i> , <i>vatanashana</i>
<i>Krishara</i>	Prepared by adding rice and green grain	<i>Kapdha- pittakara</i> , <i>balya</i> <i>vatanashaka</i>
<i>Manda</i>	Rice: 1 part Water :14 parts	<i>Dipana</i> , <i>pachana</i> , <i>Vatanulomana</i> , <i>hridya</i>
<i>Mantha and Panaka</i>	<i>Kharjura</i> , <i>chinha</i> , jaggery, water	<i>Sadya</i> , <i>tarpaniya</i>

Also the *anupana* similar to *pathya* and *ahara Kalpana* symbolizes the nutraceuticals, examples of *anupana* in various conditions are given below-

Conditions	Anupana ⁷
<i>Kshaya</i>	<i>Mamsa rasa</i>
<i>Upwas, bhashya, stri, maruta, atapa,</i>	<i>Kshira</i>
<i>Krusha</i>	<i>Sura</i>
<i>Sthula deh</i>	<i>Madhuudaka</i>
<i>Alpagni, anidra, tandra, shoka, bhaya, klama</i>	<i>Madya, mamsa</i>

few examples in *Ayurveda* which can be considered having properties similar to nutraceuticals

Nutraceuticals	e.g. in <i>Ayurveda</i>	Properties
Probiotics	<i>Takra</i>	<i>Laghu, kashaya, Deepana</i> <i>Kaphavaatahara</i>
Prebiotics	<i>Rasona, kadali</i>	<i>Deepana, pachana,</i>
Dietary fibres	<i>Triphala, kadali</i>	<i>Vrshya, Rasayana,</i> <i>Pittakaphahara</i>
Antioxidants	<i>Amalaki</i>	<i>Rasayana, anti-cancer, anti-diabetic</i>
Polyphenols	<i>Pippali</i>	Analgesic, antimicrobial, anti-cancer, anti-stress, anti-epileptic, hepato protective, immunomodulatory
Spices	<i>Ela</i>	Anti-cancer, anti atherogenic

DISCUSSION

Qualities of food are *tusti, pusti, driti, budhi, utsaah, pourush, svarya, ojas, tejas, jivitam, pratibha, prabha*.^[8] Proper knowledge about *ahara* is very important. *Ahara* when eaten in appropriate quantity gets digested easily and does not become contradictory to health, maintains or sustains life and *agni* (digestive fire) and activities of the body. Nutraceuticals in today's era is somewhere limited to health supplements but as far in *ayurveda* one can go through various regimens like *Dinacharya, ritucharya, pathya-apathya, anupana*, types of *ahara* and its *kalpana* etc. *Ayurvedic* considerations of *ahara* not only proposes mere food materials, but also gives equal importance to the rules of consumption and preparation of food such as *ashta ahara vidhi vishesha ayatana and ahara vidhi vidhana*. *Ayurveda* does not merely emphasize dietary guidelines but it focuses on fulfilling both the aim of *Ayurveda* which is disease curing and preventive properties, for example *haritaki* which is considered *amrittulya* which is rejuvenating, nutritional, restorative, all disease curative, enhances intelligence and senses power. The identification of dietary foods with specific benefits in right proportions is ideal for disease prevention and curative purpose.

CONCLUSION

The man who eats methodically according to time, congeniality etc, obtains properties of the same and the abnormalities related to these do not trouble him. Nutraceutical is a novel concept in the modern dietetics but its existence in *Ayurvedic* science is very old. Similar concepts can be found across *Ayurvedic* literature written thousands of year back. The rules and regulations related to nutraceuticals needs to be refined to suit to the present day lifestyle. The ideal supplementation of natural foods, anti- oxidants, dairy products, citrus fruits, vitamins, minerals and cereals which forms major chunk of nutraceuticals, are part of *Ayurvedic* lifestyle. Considering the changing trends in perception of people and growing industrial market, it is quite important to discuss the basic type of dietary supplement with medicinal value by understanding it through *Ayurvedic* way of life.

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