

AHARA PARINAMAKARA BHAVA'S – THE FUNCTIONAL UNITS OF DIGESTION

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda has always given at most importance to ahara, agni and prakruthi where acharyas explain about the concept of ahara vidhividhana and ahara Parinamakara bhavas to be followed for being swastha. Exterior fire is responsible for cooking, burning and transformation of matter by changing properties whereas interior agni in the body helps in digestion of food, transformation of digested food into entities of body for its assimilation. Ingested food is bio transformed into the body tissues. If food bears qualities facilitating the body entities, it is able to nourish and replenish them. If food bears qualities opposite as such, it keeps these body entities under nourished or at times such food is capable of destroying them. Hence, the ultimate fate of food is to either facilitate or oppose body entities. So Charakacharya have explained the ahara parinamakara bhava's which are the various processes that transform food from complex form to a digestible and absorbable form.

KEYWORDS: Ahara, Agni, Ushma, Vayu, Kleda, Pachana, Aharaparinamakara bhava.

INTRODUCTION

Ahara Parinamakara bhava are the factors present in our body which are responsible for complete digestion and metabolism of ingested food.

Ahara: Substances which are required to replenish or to maintain constantly the deteriorating body is called ahara¹.

Acharya Sushruta has explained that panchaboutika substances when consumed, after vipaka (digestion) nourish respective guna of panchamahabhuta in the body is called ahara².

Parinama: The final stage or complete process of digestion and metabolism of

ingested food is parinama³.

Bhava: Factors present in the body areas called bhava. Thus the factors present in our body which are responsible for the complete digestion and metabolism of food are called Ahara parinamakara bhava⁴.

The digestion is mainly done by Agni, and assisted by other factors which are considered as ahara parinamakara bhava. They are six in number namely ushma, vayu, kleda, sneha, kala and samayoga⁵.

1.Ushma (Heat factor)⁶

Ushma (Heat) is parallel to agni (fire). "Ushmapachti" means, just as the flames of fire boil rice from raw grains, this ushma

digests ingested food. So, ushmais compared to agni. Due to its effect the food which is taken in gets digested and ahara rasa is formed. This leads to the nourishment of Rasa Raktadi dhatus.

Basically, it speaks about the various digestive enzymes secreted along with the digestive juices meant for digestion of different kinds of food.

2. Vayu (Nervous mechanism)⁷

Vayu propels the food to the next organ. 'Vayurapakarshati' means, vayu transports food near the site of agni to facilitate digestion. It also stimulates agni, thereby facilitating digestion of food. The types of vatainvolved in this process are Prana vata, Samanavata and Apana vata.

It is viewed in the modern science as the peristaltic movements and the stimulation of autonomic nervous system, leading to secretion of digestive juices in different parts of the alimentary canal.

3. Kleda (Hydrolyzing factor)⁸

Kledaha "sithilyanapadayati" means kleda disintegrates (hydrolyses) the globules of food ingredients into droplets i.e food breakdowns by kledata making it easy for digestion. This function is carried on by the actions of both kledaka kapha (in stomach) and bhodaka kapha (in oral cavity). It also

helps for deglutition of the food taken through oral cavity by forming bolus.

4. Sneha (Unctuous factor)⁹

"Snehomardhavamjanayati". The unctuous factor softens the ingredients of food. As a result, the digestive enzymes act smoothly. This action can be compared to the action of pachaka pitta especially the bile formed due to the intestinal lipase, whose basic function is to emulsify the fats can act easily and digest the food. It also enhances the function of agni.

5. Kala (Time factor)¹⁰

"kalahaparyaptinbhinirvartayati" is the time taken for the digestion of food. It means, for proper digestion of food 3-6 hours are required depending upon the type of consumed food. Even in the presence of all other factors, digestion requires time for completion.

6. Samayoga (Appropriate administration or integration)¹¹

"Samyogastweshamparinamadhatuamyaka vahasampadyate", it means appropriate administration of food. It brings about equilibrium of the dhatus. For the appropriate administration of food, one has to follow all the rules explained in ahara vidhividhana and ahara vidhi visheshayatana.

Table No. 01:

Sl.No.	AHARA PARINAMAKARA BHAVA		
01	Ushna (heat factor)	Pachana	Actual digestion of food
02	Vayu (nervous mechanism)	Apakarshna	Pranavayu helps food materials to get into the stomach, samanavayu causes sandhukshanna of jataragni
03	Kleda (moisture or hydrolysing factor)	Shithilyata	Food and food particles become loose or flaccid.
04	Sneha (unctuousness)	Mardhava	Gives softness to food

05	Kala (time)	Paryaptiabhinirvartayati	Proper duration of time is necessary for the process of digestion.
06	Samayoga (appropriate administration)	Dhatu samyakara	Samyoga is to follow ahara vidhi vidhana and visheshayatana which is necessary for maintenance of samyavastha of dhatu.

Table No. 02:

Sl.No.	CORRELATION OF AHARA PARINAMAKARA BHAVA AND PROCESS OF COOKING		
01	Ushna	Fire (heat)	Necessary for cooking the food
02	Vayu	Air	Necessary for keeping fire alive
03	Kleda	Water	It makes food particles flabby (loose)
04	Sneha	Oil or ghee	Makes the food particles soft
05	Kala	Duration of cooking	Less duration of cooking leads to apakva anna (uncooked food), excess cooking leads to burn the food. Hence proper duration of time is necessary
06	Samayoga	Samayoga of above all entity	If everything is in proper proportion then cooked food will be good.

DISCUSSION

The act of pachana (digestion) is bestowed by agni. Factors like ahara parinamakara bhavas are essential for digestion. Ushma bhava necessary for the complete digestion process can be taken as chemical/metabolic reaction and the energy or heat required for this reactions.

Among vayu, mainly pranavata processes the karma “anna praveshana kriya” where, with the help of pranavata the consumed food enters into the GIT. Kledata helps in disintegrating coarse food material into smaller particle. This is done by kledaka kapha. Sneha softens food. Samanavata which is located near agni stimulates and also maintains the agni. Kala contributes by retaining food for the purpose of admixture with the enzymes and is allied to appropriate

movements of the GIT here, samyoga includes all the factors mentioned under the eight ahara vishesha ayatanas.

CONCLUSION

Agni and ahara parinamakara bhava both are responsible for the process of transformation of ingested food into minute particle which can be absorbed by all tissues of the body. Each ahara parinamakara bhava has a specific role in the process of digestion. In the presence of all the ahara parinamakara bhavas food gets converted into ahara rasa with its optimum qualities which inturn provides nutrition to all dhatus. Lack of these ahara parinamakara bhava leads to indigestion. To tie all the knots together, vayu, kleda, sneha, kala, samayoga along with ushma bhava (agni) are pivotal for the purpose of excellent pachana kriya.

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